

**Trespassing former chief**

Former Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Dalbir Singh Suhag, was named ambassador to Seychelles a few days ago by the same party that opposed his appointment as COAS. He was placed under a "disciplinary and vigilance ban" by General V K Singh, the then Army Chief and currently a minister of state in the Ministry of External Affairs. Subsequently, V K Singh did everything to stymie General Suhag's appointment to any post. Now, if General V K Singh returns to the Ministry of External Affairs, General Suhag will report to him. Elections seem to have played a central role in General Suhag's life. He was appointed Army Chief by the Congress-led UPA-2 government on May 14, 2014, just two days before the Lok Sabha election results were announced. Now, with weeks to go for the announcement of results a full five years later, he has got a post-retirement position. The question is, how did the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) pick up the courage to overlook and ignore V K Singh?

**'Silence tells its own story'**

It has to be a campaign to beat all campaigns. Shatrughan Sinha begins every campaign speech with "Khamosh"! (Silence) then adds, "ki main sankshap mein kuch points bolonga (I will be brief)." At one place, someone in the crowd shouted out: "Don't be brief. Give us all the details." To which Sinha replied, "Shanti mein bhi kranti hoti hai. Kuch toh majboori hogi jo main bewafaa hua (Silence also tells its own story. There must be a good reason why I became disloyal)".

**OPINION**

XI JINPING

## We will continue to advance along path of socialism

As a line of a classical Chinese poem goes, "Spring and autumn are lovely seasons in which friends get together to climb up mountains and write poems." On this beautiful spring day, it gives me great pleasure to have you with us here at the Second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation (BRF). On behalf of the Chinese government and people and in my own name, I extend a very warm welcome to you all.

Two years ago, it was here that we met for the First Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, where we drew a blueprint of cooperation to enhance policy, infrastructure, trade, financial and people-to-people connectivity. Today, we are once again meeting here with you, friends from across the world. I look forward to scaling new heights with you and enhancing our partnership. Together, we will create an even brighter future for Belt and Road cooperation.

Over the past seven decades, we in China have, based on its realities, constantly explored the way forward through practices, and have succeeded in following the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Today, China has reached a new historical starting point. However, we are keenly aware that with all we have achieved, there are still many mountains to scale and many shoals to navigate. We will continue to advance along the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics, deepen sweeping reforms, pursue quality development, and expand opening-up. We remain committed to peaceful development and will endeavour to build a community with a shared future for mankind.

Going forward, China will take a series of major reform and opening-up measures and make stronger institutional and structural moves to boost higher quality opening-up.

First, we will expand market access for foreign investment in more areas. Fair competition boosts business performance and creates prosperity. China has already adopted a management model based on pre-establishment national treatment and negative list, and will continue to significantly shorten the negative list. We will work for the all-round opening-up of modern services, manufacturing and agriculture, and will allow the operation of foreign-controlled or wholly foreign-owned businesses in more sectors. We will accelerate the adoption of supporting regulations to ensure full implementation of the Foreign Investment Law. We will promote supply-side structural reform through fair competition and open cooperation, and will phase out backward and excessive production capacity in an effective way to improve the quality and efficiency of supply.

Second, we will intensify efforts to enhance international cooperation in intellectual property protection. Without innovation, there will be no progress. Full intellectual property protection will not only ensure the lawful rights and interests of Chinese and foreign companies; it is also crucial to promoting China's innovation-driven and quality development. China will spare no effort to foster a business environment that respects the value of knowledge. China will strengthen cooperation with other countries in intellectual property protection, create an enabling environment for innovation and promote technological exchanges and cooperation with other countries on the basis of market principles and the rule of law.

Third, we will increase the import of goods and services on an even larger scale. China is both a global factory and a global market. With the world's largest and fastest growing middle-income population, China has a vast potential for increasing consumption. To meet our people's ever-growing material and cultural needs and give our consumers more choices and benefits, we will further lower tariffs and remove various non-tariff barriers. We will steadily open China's market wider to quality products from across the world. China does not seek trade surplus; we want to import more competitive quality agricultural products, manufactured goods and services to promote balanced trade.

Fourth, we will more effectively engage in international macro-economic policy coordination. A globalised economy calls for global governance. China will strengthen macro policy coordination with other major economies to generate a positive spillover and jointly contribute to robust, sustainable, balanced and inclusive global growth. China will not resort to the beggar-thy-neighbour practice of RMB devaluation. On the contrary, we will continue to improve the exchange rate regime, see that the market plays a decisive role in resource allocation and keep the RMB exchange rate basically stable at an adaptive and equilibrium level. China is an active supporter and participant of WTO reform and will work with others to develop international economic and trade rules of higher standards.

Fifth, we will work harder to ensure the implementation of opening-up related policies. We Chinese have a saying that honouring a promise carries the weight of gold. We are committed to implementing multilateral and bilateral economic and trade agreements reached with other countries. We will strengthen the building of a government based on the rule of law and good faith. A binding mechanism for honouring international agreements will be put in place. Laws and regulations will be revised and improved in keeping with the need to expand opening-up. We will see that governments at all levels operate in a well-regulated way when it comes to issuing administrative licences and conducting market oversight.

These measures to expand opening-up are a choice China has made by itself to advance its reform and development. It will promote high-quality economic development, meet the people's desire for a better life, and contribute to world peace, stability and development. We are convinced that a more open China will further integrate itself into the world and deliver greater progress and prosperity for both China and the world at large.

*Edited excerpts from the speech of Chinese premier, Xi Jinping at the opening ceremony of the Second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in Beijing, April 26*

**DID THEY REALLY SAY THAT?**

**"Modi ji, will you topple every government run by an opposition party by buying lawmakers? And from where do you bring so much money to buy MLAs? You have tried to buy our MLAs many times. Buying AAP leaders is not easy"**

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Chief and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, in a Twitter response to Vijay Goel's allegation about 14 lawmakers moving out of AAP



ILLUSTRATION BY BINAY SINHA

Ashok Bharti, chairman, All India Ambedkar Mahasabha; and principal advisor, National Confederation of Dalit and Adivasi Organisations talks to Aditi Phadnis on the growing Dalit disenchantment with the ruling party and where does the future of Dalit leadership lie

## 'New leadership is on the horizon'

**Are you seeing evidence of Dalit disenchantment with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and when did it begin?**

Certainly, Dalit disenchantment with the BJP is widespread. This disenchantment is not localised or limited to a few states or regions. It is nationwide; and has continuously been growing for last few years.

In 2014, Dalits voted in large numbers in favour of the BJP. Like others, they also accepted Prime Minister Narendra Modi's pitch for developmental transformation of government and governance. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's (RSS) resolve, "one well, one temple, and one crematorium" to end the exclusion of Dalits was significant.

But everything changed in October 2015, when two children Vaibhav (three) and Divya (nine-month old) were charred to death at Sunpade in NCR Town Faridabad, when Rajput strongmen torched their household. Instead of condemning the act of his caste men, one Rajput minister in the government made derogatory comments about Dalits. Dalits demanded action against the minister, but no one cared. This was the beginning of disenchantment of Dalits with the BJP. Since then, every incidence of atrocity and gov-

ernment inaction against the perpetrators, has strengthened this.

Apart from this, the government's actions or lack of action on critical interests of Dalits such as reservation, reservation in promotion, judicial pronouncements due to poor defence by the government resulting in dilution of constitutional rights or well-being of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes has also contributed to this disenchantment.

**PM has repeatedly invoked Dr Ambedkar as a source of his inspiration. He has washed the feet of scavengers at Kumbh. His ministers are eating in Dalit homes, making common cause with them. The BJP has changed many candidates in reserved constituencies. Has all this had some effect?**

There is no doubt that the PM has repeatedly invoked Dr Ambedkar and much more than any other PM in the country. He has publicly admitted his humble background and has attributed his election as PM to the constitution and Dr Ambedkar. There is no doubt that his government has constructed Dr Ambedkar memorials, which saw no progress in many previous regimes.

**CHECKLIST CONSTITUENCIES TO WATCH IN BIHAR (MAY 6)**

**Sitamari:** The seat went to the Janata Dal United. But the candidate named by JD(U), Varun Kumar returned the ticket to party president Nitish Kumar alleging non-cooperation by local NDA leaders. In the meantime, local BJP leader Sunil Pintu crossed the floor to formally join the JD(U) and is contesting the seat. Pintu was born BJP MLA from Sitamarhi twice and was also minister in the previous NDA government. The *mahagathbandhan* (grand alliance) has fielded Arjun Rai, considered close to Loktantrik Janata Dal candidate from Madhepura, Sharad Yadav.

**Madhubani:** After he was denied a ticket from the constituency, former union minister Shakeel Ahmad has quit all posts in the Congress and will fight as an independent candidate. Congress ceded to the grand alliance constituent Vikasheel Insaan Party (VIP), which has fielded Badri Purbe. Purbe, a

businessman from neighbouring Darbhanga, as the official candidate. However, there is extensive support for Ahmad, with even the local Congress MLA, Bhawna Jha, working for him. He is seen as the only person who can defeat BJP.

**Muzaffarpur:** VIP floated by Mallah (boatman) community leader Mukesh Sahni, is making its debut appearance. The Mallah caste comes under extremely backward class bracket, carrying surnames like Nishad, Sahni and sometimes Manjhi. The VIP party's candidate in Muzaffarpur is Raj Bhushan Choudhary Nishad, a medical doctor by training. The BJP has fielded its sitting MP Ajay Nishad. Whoever wins will have legitimate claim for Mallah leadership in Bihar. Phoolan Devi is considered the most famous Mallah leader. Muzaffarpur is still known for socialist leader George Fernandes's legacy.

In our country, where two-cup system, one for Dalits and other for the non-Dalits, still exists in large parts of the country, one requires a huge courage to wash the feet of scavengers publicly. Even if it was for the optics, washing feet of the scavengers by none less than the India's executive head is historic. This signifies that the Dalits are coming of the "age" where no one could undermine their political worth; and the scale is now tilting from upper caste to the so called lower castes. The ministers eating in Dalit homes, making common causes with them is the continuation of what the PM has been directing.

But, follow up on these acts of reverence, washing feet or having common meal with the Dalits by robust policy framework, ensuring equal dignity, development and justice to the Dalits, remains largely ignored. It would have been much better had the government strengthened the mechanism, machinery, budgetary allocations to ensure Dalits their constitutional rights as enshrined in the Constitution.

Members of Parliament who were elected on the reserved seats, could have lobbied for a "fair deal" for the Dalits in the government. They could have also alerted the PM or the government on the dissatisfaction of the community, but they failed to do so and it was natural in the design of selection of the candidates for the reserved seats. In present political electoral systems, parties choose candidates from among its members and not the leaders of the community. In my opinion, it is all linked to Dalit disenchantment.

**What is the evidence that the political compact between Dalits and Yadavs is also a social compact?**

In 1993, the Bahujan Samaj Party-Samajwadi Party (BSP-SP) representing Dalits and Yadavs (OBCs) were joined by others and they formed the government. Currently, the SP-BSP-RLD (Rasthriya Lok Dal) in Uttar Pradesh and Rashtriya Janata Dal-Rashtriya Lok Samta Party-Hindustani Awam Morcha-Vikasheel Insaan Party (RJD-RLSP-HAM-VIP) in Bihar are the political compact leading socially marginalised communities.

But, in order to understand this as a social compact, one must ponder over the caste and *varna* dynamics of the Indian society. In the *varna* system, Yadavs or the OBCs are part of the *shudra varna* and touchable. But Dalits are not the *shudra*; are outside the *varna*; and are untouchable.

One must look at the individual Caste/Tribe Census of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, which simply indicates that in most of the states, five-six castes/tribes out of 30 to 100 state specific castes/tribes form the 85 to 95 per cent of the Scheduled Castes or the Scheduled Tribes. Usually, one or two state specific caste/tribes dominate the population of these communities in all the states. Same is true for the Other Backward Castes in most of the states.

Therefore, once political compact between the Dalits and Yadavs (or OBCs) is in place, this enhances proximity and their

social interaction significantly. Both, the Dalits and the OBCs, have faced or continue to face exclusion, humiliation and domination from the same *varna* groups. Therefore, as soon as they join in political compact, social leadership gets active for social compact. In Hindi heartland, specifically in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, mobilisation of Dalits and Yadavs is much larger than any other OBCs. Incidentally, in both the states, Yadavs are the most numerous OBCs and Dalits have significantly large population.

**How do you see the future of India's Dalit mobilisation? Its leadership?**

I see India's Dalit mobilising more and more. They have learnt that social contract signed between Hindu leaders, including India's business interests led by Mahatma Gandhi and Dr Ambedkar as Poona Pact in 1932, has been made redundant.

Commitment of the state, which is reflected in policy framework, its representation in court cases, budget allocations for the socio-economic development, representation of Dalits in top bureaucracy, judiciary and

outsourcing etc. is declining. A large reservoir of talent, creativity and innovations, Dalits are constrained by its leadership, be it their own, regional or national political parties.

But, they are innovating and a new Dalit leadership could be seen at the horizon. They are leading national platforms like National Confederation of Dalit and Adivasi Organisations, All India Confederation of SC/ST Employees Associations, Rashtriya Dalit Mahasabha, National Campaign for Dalit Rights, Rashtriya Dalit Mahila Andolan, All India Mahila Adhikar Andolan etc. They have a robust system of Dalit-*bahujan* youtube channel, which is growing day by day. All these may be in infancy, but are indicative of the future leadership. This leadership is not limited to reservation or atrocities on Dalits, but has a larger development canvas.

**What do you think the nature of the opposition will be in the next five years?**

The nature of opposition in the next five years would be creative disruption. This would compel the conscience of this country to re-invent its national project of Dalit empowerment. This opposition will inspire Dalit leadership to mobilise for distributive justice.

We will not tolerate any effort to dilute or limit the fundamental freedoms and the idea of equality, liberty, justice and fraternity. We will leave nothing at our disposal to oppose anything that curtails our constitutional rights and the duties of the state towards the weak and the needy.

Lastly, being a huge success story of human advancement, Dalits would like to upscale our success. Hardly having any assets, land, industry or wealth, but Dalits have immensely contributed in creating and sustaining all of these in India. At a time, when India's success inspires people globally, our opposition would aim at limiting this success to only those having a class or the caste. After all, we also have a dream.

## Touching lives, one at a time

Delhi-based Bravo Foundation provides ailing children with medical assistance to help them lead a normal life, writes Meghna Chadha

Fourteen-year-old Sanjid Kumar Aararez's life took a turn when he was diagnosed with cancer in 2017. The light went out of his life and all that remained was to survive the ordeal. His worried and helpless family reached out to Bravo Foundation, an organisation that provides ailing children with medical aid to help them lead an independent life. Today, Aararez is on his way to recovery with the hope that he will resume school and play with his friends soon.

"No child should be deprived of education, because of poor healthcare. That is the mission of our initiative" says Rakesh Pandey, founder of Bravo Foundation. The year-old organisation is based out of New Delhi, organising health seminars in Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Bihar. It also takes pivotal steps in providing prosthetics to children who are specially abled.

Currently, they have helped more than 4,000 children who are suffering from cancer and other disabilities. Children across India, Africa, Uzbekistan and Central Asia have benefited from the foundation's initiatives. "Over the next five years, this initiative will be scaled to provide good healthcare to more than 10,000 children across India. We are targeting children in government schools for healthcare check-ups, which will help us locate

more children in several states across the country" Pandey says.

Bravo Foundation is also supported by Bravo Pharmaceuticals, an organisation dedicated to improve human health and quality of life by providing innovative diagnostics, e-health solutions, personalised treatment, high quality affordable pharmaceuticals and new generation health products.

For a foundation to help with medical aid, costs can be very high. How does Bravo Foundation cater to those challenges? An optimistic Pandey responds that the funds come from different organisations across the globe that are dedicated towards providing better healthcare for children. Further in India, they have tied up with several hospitals and NGOs in different metros as well as tier 2 and 3 cities in order to reach out to children in need.

"We are a research oriented organisation so some of our teams provide us data of such children who are in severe need of help," he adds. Some of the foundation's Indian and global partners are Max Healthcare, Apollo Hospital University College London, Tallinn University of Technology, Oxford Consultancy, MMC Healthcare, RIL chemicals PLC and Science Park Tehnopol.

Talking about the impact that Bravo Foundation has had in several lives, Pandey reminisces an experience close to his heart. Shivam from Motihari, a district in Bihar, was



Over the next five years, Bravo Foundation is looking to provide good healthcare to more than 10,000 children across India

PHOTO: BRAVO FOUNDATION

12-year-old when he lost his legs in an accident. He had to leave his school and his life had come to a standstill. The foundation assisted him in procuring prosthetic legs and now he is learning to walk again. "These aren't just his legs but they are his wings now," Pandey believes. He also talks about Vivek Mishra and Shivam Mishra from Gopalganj, both brothers suffering from Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy. Bravo Foundation has stepped in providing everything from counselling, medical aid as well as assistance needed to combat and improve their rare condition.

"India is a country where poor healthcare is impacting education and the quality of life

of children. I see immense talent around, which is going waste and hence the idea of Bravo Foundation was propagated in order to help these children and their families," Pandey says. When asked more about the story behind the inception of the foundation he adds that all his inspirations and incidents are from his own childhood, which was marred by poverty. The story behind the foundation is the hollow space of poverty, hunger and poor healthcare.

"More than the story there is a need for such foundations across India for the betterment of the quality of living of the children across the country. Life needs to be fulfilling in whatever little or more we have," concludes Pandey.



THE OTHER INDIA

# The Yeti syndrome

Yet another myth goes viral

The apparent “discovery” of Yeti footprints by an Indian army mountaineering expedition last week is a reflection of sorts of a growing trend in the national public discourse. After some centuries of earnest search, including in the last one, scientists and biologists have reliably concluded that the Yeti is about as real as the Loch Ness monster or Bigfoot. So how did mountaineers attempting to summit the world’s fifth-highest peak suspend disbelief and convince themselves that the mega-sized footprints they photographed belonged to this mythical beast? Could it be the result of oxygen deprivation in the rarefied air?

Himalayan mountaineers over the decades report all sorts of visions in the “death zone” — that is above 26,000 feet, where there is insufficient oxygen to support human life. For instance, Reinhold Messner, the celebrated alpinist who summited Mount Everest solo and without oxygen in 1980, imagined the ghost of George Mallory, who disappeared during a summit attempt in 1924, guiding him down the perilous north-east ridge during his descent in a storm. Now, Makalu is over 27,000 feet but the base camp where the footprints were discovered is roughly 17,000 feet above sea level, low enough for reasonably fit trekkers to access. If oxygen deprivation can be ruled out,

what explains the army expedition’s decision to jump the gun and tweet this dubious discovery? The rate at which the tweet went viral is indicative of the credulous nature of the Indian public. Only some of the response was disbelieving — one former MP of saffron persuasion instantly tweeted out his congratulations. No surprise, the international media reported on the “discovery” in amused undertones.

But this is not the first time that India has been rocked by such miracles. In the last decade of the 20th century, long before the advent of social media, the myth of the milk-drinking Ganesh gained such wide credence that reasonably sane individuals felt compelled to coax images of the elephant god to sip spoons of milk — on national TV. Only the manifest failure of this “experiment” countrywide launched the rumour even if no one explicitly acknowledged the hoax. In the 21st century, this trend of conflating myth and reality found

fresh impetus with the emergence of politicians of muscular nationalist inclination. They strive to draw a connection between India’s “Golden Age” (itself a discredited theory among serious historians) embedded in the mists of pre-history and India’s impending greatness (if, of course, these people were voted to power).

Thus, over the years, the electorate is regularly treated to such novel theories as ancient India’s knowledge of plastic surgery (which is how, we are informed, Ganesh came to acquire his elephant head) to the possession of nuclear capabilities (thanks to the Sudarshan chakra and assorted mythic materiel). When such information is imparted by senior politicians to an imperfectly educated public, it tends to acquire a dangerous credibility, more so when it is linked to modern India’s scientific and military achievements. If an Indian Air Force MiG can apparently shoot down an F16 in Pakistani airspace and our space scientists can demon-

strate the capability to blow low-orbiting enemy satellites to smithereens, the sensational discovery of the abominable snowman by our brave soldiers would have been an opportune nationalist cause celebre. If only biologists had not played spoilsport and clarified that the abnormally large footprints were probably the overlapping paws of a Himalayan brown bear and a cub (the effect of the sun on ice accounts for the enlargement).

The Yeti continues to figure in folklore and myth even today. Even Hergé created one of his more memorable Tintin stories around it, and it still figures in Bengali popular entertainment. As with the subcontinent’s abundant legacy of myths and legends, these stories enrich our society and speak volumes for the richness of our collective imagination. Trying to retrofit them into a tangible reality is futile but also reflects a somewhat pathetic effort at achieving fame.

# The power of informality

The informal sector is an untapped reservoir of entrepreneurship that can accelerate the pace of economic growth, job creation and poverty reduction in developing countries

EJAZ GHANI

Informal firms account for up to half of economic activity in the developing world. Contrary to conventional wisdom, their importance has not declined over the last several decades. The persistence of the informal sector has gone hand in hand with a faster pace of structural transformation and pro-poor economic growth.

India is no exception to these global trends. India’s informal sector accounts for over 80 per cent of jobs and 99 per cent of entrepreneurs in the manufacturing sector. Even in highly industrialised states like Gujarat, jobs are expanding in the informal sector. India’s young demographics, and limited employment generated by the formal sector, has increased the future importance of the informal sector. Its flexibility has enabled millions more women to find jobs and better-manage work-life balance.

Despite its huge size and importance, the role of the informal sector in economic development remains controversial. Some view it as the enemy of the formal sector, and as a parasite competing unfairly with law-abiding formal firms. Others say formal and informal firms are fundamentally different and cater to different markets. And optimists view the informal sector as an untapped reservoir of entrepreneurship that can further accelerate the pace of economic growth, job creation and poverty reduction.

We examined these trends in India using plant-level data for formal and informal enterprises in some 500 districts (see Ghani, Ejaz; O’Connell, Stephen D.; Sharma, Gunjan. *Friend or Foe or Family? A Tale of Formal and Informal Plants in India*. Policy Research Working Paper No. 6588. World Bank, Washington, DC. ©World Bank).

## Friends not foes

Empirical evidence shows that there are huge horizontal and vertical linkages between formal and informal firms. Informal firms are important suppliers of inputs to formal firms. Employment and output have increased in the formal sector in those states in India that also have a greater presence of informal firms. Conversely, informal employment and output are greater in those states that have a greater presence of formal buyers of inputs. Formal enterprises are more competitive in the presence of informal firms, as they change their product mix, adapt to new technology, and outsource more labour-intensive tasks to informal firms. The input-output linkages between formal and informal firms are very strong.

A 10 per cent increase in employment and output in the informal sector is associated with a 16 per cent increase in employment in the formal sector and increase in output by 12.6 per cent. As formal enterprises become more productive, they demand better inputs from informal enterprises, and strengthen the forward spillovers. The backward spillovers are also strong, as informal enterprises purchasing from formal enterprises induce greater output in the formal enterprises. Although the productivity of the informal sector is more important for the formal sector, than vice versa, the two sectors act like friends and family members supporting each other. These linkages generate huge spillovers by working together.

## New forms of globalisation

Much of the manufacturing sector’s employment growth has come in the form of informal establishments in the tradable sector. The exceptional increase of employment in the informal tradable



sector in India exceeded 10 million jobs, equivalent to the entire net growth of the manufacturing sector. This rise in the informal tradable employment coincided with a strong decline in the non-tradable sector. The concentration of informality in the tradable sector suggests that the growth in traded industries is not due to plants achieving larger economies of scale and shipping goods at a distance, as might have initially been imagined, but an important role played by the informal sector. Informal firms in the tradable sector provide an opportunity to leapfrog the development process, by connecting to global value chains, resulting in greater opportunities for domestic suppliers, increased exports, and higher productivity.

**A 10-per cent increase in employment and output in the informal sector is associated with a 16 per cent increase in employment in the formal sector**

business ownership, subcontracting, and “push” entrepreneurship (entrepreneurs who start businesses out of necessity rather than growth desires) played a smaller role in the rise of informality.

## Emerging pro-poor growth agenda

The vast informal sector affects everything from structural transformation, the allocation of activity in the economy, job creation and poverty reduction. Conventional wisdom has focused on the formalisation of the informal sector, but this has not been very successful in most countries. It drives informal establishments out of business, leading to destitution of informal workers and entrepreneurs. Shifting the focus towards strengthening the linkages between

formal and informal firms needs more attention. Economic growth is the cure for informality, and the policy focus should be on boosting the informal sector, strengthening their linkages (product, input, financial and technological) with formal firms, and unleashing the untapped reservoir of entrepreneurship.

The role of urbanisation in strengthening the dynamism of small firms deserves more attention. Cities generate huge agglomeration economies and externalities, and this is greater in the informal compared to formal sectors, which makes a strong case for informal development being an integral part of the urbanisation strategy. Urban planners need to find ways to ensure that informal enterprises are integrated into urban plans, they participate in government procurement schemes, and their concerns are reflected in policy-making processes on land allocation, zoning regulation, and urban infrastructure services. The more the city mayors recognise the influx of the informal sector in cities, and design appropriate policies and investments to support it, the more effective pro-poor growth policy interventions will be.

Industrial and trade policies too should not be targeted just on formal enterprises. Friendships and linkages between formal and informal firms can open new doors for economic growth, job creation, and gender inclusion. Policies are needed to improve access of informal sector to finance, training, technology, quality and productivity, which can induce the formal sector to outsource more higher-end tasks to the informal sector.

The informal economy has played the biggest role in reducing extreme poverty, but this is not enough. The rise of the informal sector is also associated with the rise in the number of people living with no social safety nets. Informal workers may not be poor today, but they can easily fall back into extreme poverty, due to economic shocks.

*The writer is lead economist, World Bank*

# Why NYAY is unlikely to deliver results

SWATI NARAYAN

The Congress Party’s poll promise of Nyuntam Aay Yojana (NYAY) has earnestly attempted to shift the pre-election sluffest to real-world priorities. An injection of one to two per cent of GDP is undoubtedly welcome, in a country renowned for social underpending. But while details are sketchy, unless the strait-jacket design of “₹6000 per month to 20 per cent of the poorest households” is judiciously fine-tuned, NYAY is unlikely to reap its full potential of anti-poverty or political dividends.

For one, NYAY targets a mere fifth of Indian households. For perspective, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) provides employment to as many homes at a sixth of the cost. Further, currently a poor Bihari family will receive ₹72,000 annual NYAY handouts without lifting a finger, which is more than the maximum NREGA wages they can earn across four years. So, it is unclear if the maths of this cash transfer makes prudent fiscal sense. It is also unlikely that NYAY’s restricted coverage will sufficiently translate into a pan-Indian vote magnet.

Crucially, NYAY as a “surgical strike” on the poorest quintile erodes the fundamental advantage of Universal Basic Incomes (UBIs) as universal transfers. After all, as Amartya Sen has pointed out, “benefits meant exclusively for the poor often end up being poor benefits.” A recent “Hit and Miss” Development Pathways research, of 38 cash transfers across low and middle-income countries, demonstrates that poverty-targeted programmes ironically miss over half of the poorest quintile of entitled recipients. The exclusion rate of intended beneficiaries ranged from 97 per cent in Rwanda’s Vision 2020 which used community targeting to 44 per cent in Brazil’s Bolsa Familia even with the simplest means-test.

Similarly, NYAY’s centralised income cut-offs especially in a country with entrenched rent-seeking is likely to increase the vulnerability of the poor to middlemen. In the last five years, for example, four of every five families with starvation deaths, predominantly dalits, adivasis and minorities, were invariably denied their eligible subsidies. NYAY too, if opaquely targeted, even with the best of “data science”, is unlikely to stem this inhuman starvation in the sweltering heat of rural oppression. Instead, lucid universal “categorical targeting” increases the agency of beneficiaries to be aware of and demand their rights. Georgia’s Old Age Pension paid to all the elderly or Mongolia’s universal Child Money Programme for all children under 17 years, had error rates of less than two per cent.

Therefore, riper than experimental pilots, the time is ripe to expand time-tested lifecycle safety nets, championed by social movements for decades, which

could be neatly dovetailed into NYAY. These could include a diverse basket of cash transfers.

For instance, while NYAY can subsume social pensions the lifeline must also be universalised. Currently, more than half of the 160 million elderly, widows and differently-abled persons are excluded as those below the poverty line (BPL) or income thresholds are eligible. Worse, the centre pays only an insulting ₹200 per pensioner each month at a tight-fisted 0.04 per cent of GDP, among the lowest in the world. Instead, as illustrated by Jean Drèze, one option is for NYAY to provide individual rather than household entitlements to all pensioners of at least ₹1200 per month.

The second crying need, especially after the suppressed job survey pegs unemployment at its highest peak in 45 years with women acutely impacted, is an urban employment guarantee akin to NREGA. Recently, the victorious Congress in Madhya Pradesh has already introduced a scheme, modelled on Tripura and Kerala. A similar nationwide urban guarantee can be rolled out at the proposed national floor minimum wages.

Lastly, it is paramount to halt starvation deaths. While the National Food Security Act (NFSA) feeds 75 per cent of the rural population, due to pervasive corruption, elite capture and Aadhaar, acutely marginalised families remain vulnerable to exclusion. On the other hand, Odisha, West Bengal and Chhattisgarh with universal coverage, have had fewer deaths. So, the NFSA can be universalised solely in rural areas or left-out families compensated with a cash allowance.

The cumulative cost of these three initiatives for social pensions, urban employment and rural allowance would be less than the current peak NYAY estimates of ₹3.6 trillion, with double the reach of at least 110 million families and fewer expected exclusion errors. There are also several other options to slice the cake.

However, one aspect of NYAY which is insufficiently appreciated is the transfer to female heads of households, as highlighted by Priyanka Gandhi, unlike the BJP’s farmer support PM-KISAN. Given that intra-household distribution of resources in India, including food, is heavily gender-biased, the three proposed NYAY variants will further strengthen the support for poor women — to tide over women’s disproportionate brunt of unemployment, care-giving of the elderly and household kitchens.

In any case, the mere announcement of NYAY on the back of PM-KISAN heralds a welcome new competitive chapter in electoral politics to prioritise welfare. This alone is a giant leap forward. Now the electoral pulse of the nation will determine the verdict on NYAY and its potential variants — to cash in on time-tested lifelines.

*The writer is a social activist*

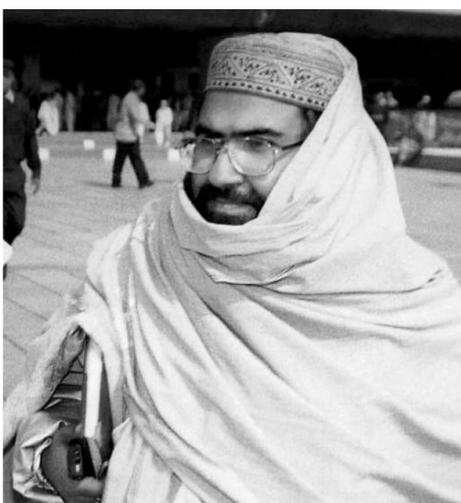
## OTHER VIEWS

### Naming of Azhar as global terrorist a victory for India

But this chapter will end only when Pak take steps to shut down the JeM

Only The designation of Masood Azhar, the leader of the Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), the group behind most of the recent big attacks in India from Pathankot to Uri and the February 14 bombing in Kashmir that killed 40 CRPF jawans, is a diplomatic victory for India. Though JeM itself had been designated as early as 2001, Azhar managed to escape the global terrorist tag mainly due to China’s “technical hold” against such listing, including earlier this year, when France moved a resolution in early March, with the US and UK as co-sponsors, after the Pulwama attack. But with several shifts in world politics, and despite its own determination to stand by Pakistan in this matter, Beijing had clearly begun to realise the diminishing returns of shielding Azhar, especially as he was fast becoming known as “China’s favourite terrorist”.

For India, the inclusion of Azhar in the UNSC 1267 list by itself does not bring closure on a chapter that began in 1994 with Azhar’s arrest in Kashmir, the hijack of IC 814 to Kandahar, his release in exchange for the passengers, and his setting up a terrorist shop in Pakistan, which then went on to plan and carry out the 2001 attack on Parliament. Pakistan has to take the next steps required under UNSC 1267, which means it must



freeze Azhar’s assets, impose a travel ban on him, and put in place an arms embargo against him.

*The Indian Express, May 3*

### The Maoist challenge

A holistic solution is needed

The death of 15 security personnel in a landmine attack in Gadchiroli on Wednesday is another grim reminder of the Indian state’s continued failure to crush naxalism. A Quick Response Team was going down the road to Dadpur in Kurkheda where extremists had set fire to three dozen vehicles of a road construction company earlier in the day when the explosion blasted the team to smithereens. The ease with which the extremists were able to torch so many vehicles is alarming, and the manner in which the response team blithely drove into an ambush is a shocking example of poor planning. In the process, standard operating procedures, including letting a road-opening team lead the

way, seem to have been ignored.

That the naxals should be able to control the narrative, remain on top of the intelligence, stay nimble and several steps ahead of the security planners should be a matter of deep concern. On top of everything else, most of the police personnel who perished in this latest attack seem to have been local citizens. What effect could this have on the larger process of weaning away the populace from the naxalites? Reality beckons. Even in the prevailing circumstances of a hostile external environment, India cannot afford to take the challenges of internal security lightly.

*The Hindu, May 3*

### An unhealthy situation

EC must respond to people’s concerns

Independent institutions tasked with guarding the democracy thrive on public confidence. The Election Commission, for example, has the enormous task of ensuring free and fair elections throughout the country. At the time the democratic republic was taking shape, however, even the most visionary of statesmen could not have foreseen the complications and conflicts, the multiplying ideologies, higher stakes and canny strategies that the burgeoning democracy would bring forth with changing times and mindsets. The model code of conduct for elections has always been a token of its firmness and fairness, something everyone can fall back on.

So it is deeply unfortunate

that the 2019 elections and a few assembly elections in the last five years have gradually been denting public confidence. Early in April, 66 retired bureaucrats took the unprecedented step of writing to the president of India a letter expressing their pained doubts about the EC’s neutrality. It is not that the EC has fallen completely silent regarding MCC violations. But, in spite of admonishing Mr Adityanath for talking about “Modiji ki sena”, the EC finds no violation in Narendra Modi’s exhortation to first-time voters to cast the first vote in the name of Balakot and Pulwama. It is best if the EC thinks of ways to respond to people’s concerns.

*The Telegraph, May 3*

# Spotlight

SUNDAY, MAY 5, 2019



## WORKOUT CONNECT

Recent research conducted at the University of Colorado Boulder revealed that smoking cannabis may help people get rid of lethargy and get active. For the study, researchers surveyed 600 cannabis users in California, Colorado, Nevada, Oregon and Washington

ISHA ARORA

**A** TA CONFERENCE held in New Delhi late last year, speakers debated the many uses of cannabis, generally seen as only a psychotropic substance. One after the other, they threw light on the many positive uses of the plant and its derivatives—as medicine, fibre, fuel and fodder. The message was clear: it is myopic to blindly ban plants and their processing just because they yield some harmful substances. As Jitendra Singh, minister of state for Prime Minister's Office, said at the conference ('Cannabis R&D in India: A Scientific, Medical & Legal Perspective'), "Since ancient times, cannabis-based products like *bhanga* have been a part of Indian culture, social customs and festivals. There is a very thin line between use, misuse and abuse of a substance, and it is our responsibility to draw that line, so that we do not throw the baby out with the bathwater."

It, indeed, is a fine line. But the good news is that many states in India are attempting to reap the benefits of the plant without overstepping the line.

The central law that deals with cannabis in India is the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985. As per it, sale, production, consumption and trade of cannabis resin and flowers is prohibited. But state governments have the right to alter or devise rules pertaining to cannabis-related cultivation and sale, with respect to the purposes it's being done for.

The Act defines cannabis as "the flowering or fruiting tops of the cannabis plant (excluding the seeds and leaves when not accompanied by the tops) from which the resin has not been extracted, by whatever name they may be designated." Since the consumption of *bhanga* is an integral part of a lot of Hindu festivities, it was carefully dropped from the Act. That is precisely why *bhanga* tablets (made from seeds) are easily available at every shop selling cigarettes.

The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), established by the Government of India as an autonomous institution, was granted a licence by the J&K government two years ago to undertake research activities with respect to identification of the medicinal value of cannabis. The institution collaborated with startups such as Bombay Hemp Company (BOHECO) and Nirog Street to dig deep into the subject. BOHECO was founded as a hemp research company, but ventured into online sales of hemp-based merchandise soon after. Nirog Street, on the other hand, is a platform exclusively for Ayurveda practitioners to connect with patients and build their digital reputation. Since many other countries have taken to legalising cannabis for medicinal purposes, Ram Vishwakarma, director of CSIR-Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine sees it becoming a reality in India as well. "Many countries are legalising cannabis for one purpose or the other, so eventually, India will have to follow suit as well. We can't say when and how though. That is under consideration with the central government," Vishwakarma told *Financial Express*.

In July last year, the Uttarakhand government issued a licence to the Indian Industrial Hemp Association (IIHA) for commercial cultivation of industrial hemp. The Uttar Pradesh government also recently spoke of its plan to issue research licences for marijuana cultivation. In February last year, Patanjali Ayurved, too, had said it's studying cannabis at its Haridwar campus. The Odisha government has also reportedly granted licences for medicinal consumption of cannabis-based products—Bhubaneswar-based Ayurveda medicines manufacturer Vedi Herbals has, in fact, been granted permission by the state government and the ministry of AYUSH to manufacture and sell cannabis-based capsules. It also has a doctor onboard to assess a patient's medical history and prescribe medication accordingly.

On the global front, Uruguay and Canada are the only two countries that have fully legalised the consumption and sale of recreational cannabis nationwide. Several countries such as Australia, Chile, Colombia, Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, Norway, the Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Sri Lanka, Thailand and the UK have taken to legalising marijuana sale and consumption for medicinal purposes—industrial hemp's sale and manufacture is mostly allowed everywhere. As per *Hemp Business Journal* (a US-based newsletter that provides business data, high-level analysis, market research and trends around the hemp industry), the US market for hemp-based CBD (cannabidiol, a cannabis compound) products was estimated at \$390 million in 2018 and could expand up to \$1 billion by 2022.

In the US, 33 states and the District of Columbia have reportedly legalised the medical use of cannabis even as its use remains prohibited for any purpose at the federal level.

## High on medicinal value

Cannabis and its various uses have been known in India since 1500 BC. However, only recently have government institutions and startups resorted to working in the field of cannabis-based research and development to find cures of certain ailments. CSIR's tie-up with Nirog Street, a marketplace for Ayurveda doctors, bears testimony to the recognition that cannabis as a medicinal drug is getting now. "Our

# THE CANNABIS CONVERSATION

Legalisation of cannabis is a much debated topic. Is it right to outrightly ban its cultivation and production or can we use it selectively for our benefit?

aim is to identify good-quality strains and then identify the medicinal properties of those strains," says CSIR director Vishwakarma. "Two cannabis-based drugs have globally been approved for pain management and to treat epilepsy. There are several others that are under clinical trial," he says, adding that, "...The development of drugs that can be used to treat ailments is still work-in-progress, Vishwakarma says.

"Cannabis is a native plant of India yet its legality currently is quite nightmarish," says Ram N Kumar, founder of Nirog Street. "With the tie-up with CSIR, we aim to bring scientific validation to traditional Indian knowledge in cannabis. Further, we wish to use that (knowledge) to create modern medicine categories, which can help in pain management and other ailments like epilepsy," he says, adding that the cannabis medical industry also faces strong opposition from traditional pharmaceutical companies manufacturing painkillers since ages. "Since pain management is one of the largest categories in healthcare, big pharmaceutical companies are scared of losing their share in the pain management revenue bracket, which is huge," he says.

Ayurveda recommends small doses of it to treat ailments ranging from joint pain to epilepsy and anemia. It has also been recommended for increasing appetite of people suffering from terminal illnesses. As MoS Jitendra Singh said at the Delhi conference: "In the middle of the last century, continued research in the domain gave us mint, which has now become an internationally-used product. We need to replicate this kind of success by exploring the full medicinal potential of cannabis for the treatment and management of pain and health conditions for which there is currently no effective cure."

The first step towards considering legalising the use of cannabis is to understand the chemicals in it. Of all the compounds, or cannabinoids, found in cannabis, the major ones are tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD). THC is the psychotropic agent that gives the feeling of intoxication or being 'high', while CBD permeates a soothing effect sans the high. Medicinal experts and practitioners of Ayurveda have prescribed CBD-based treatments for conditions like epilepsy, chronic pain, Crohn's disease, post-traumatic stress disorder, etc.

At the Delhi conference, medical experts, policymakers and researchers concluded that cannabis-based medicines can offer a high-quality, cost-effective solution for patients of chronic diseases, even as they called for extensive amendments to the NDPS Act. "The bar under Section 10 (2) (d) of the NDPS Act, 1985, requiring cannabis to be delivered by the cultivators to the officers of the state government is a major impediment in the cultivation of cannabis plant for medical and scientific purposes through extraction of cannabinoids," said Prasanna Nambodiri, a senior high court advocate dealing with matters related with the NDPS Act. "The failure of many state governments in India to frame NDPS rules providing for cultivation of cannabis is a major hurdle. Such cultivated cannabis can't be resold to private entities by state governments for extraction of cannabinoids in the absence of any provision in the NDPS Act," he added.

## Industrial perspective

The Indian Industrial Hemp Association (IIHA) became the first company to receive a licence to cultivate industrial



The govt always perceived cannabis as a liability... it was an uphill task to educate them that it can be food, clothing, shelter

— JAHAN PESTON JAMAS, CO-FOUNDER, BOMBAY HEMP CO, A HEMP RESEARCH COMPANY



hemp in Uttarakhand in July last year. "The industrial hemp industry is huge outside of India... it has so many uses, but because of lack of adequate knowledge, it remained an untapped area until recently," says Rohit Sharma, president, IIHA. "We are seeing this trend of people wanting to move from traditional fabrics to hemp due to its manifold benefits and I personally don't think that there's any fibre more sustainable than hemp. The dialogue is on... it has moved from 'hemp education' to 'why not hemp?'" says Sharma.

BOHECO is another frontrunner in the segment that is actively selling hemp-based merchandise. Its primary product offerings are raw hemp fibre (bast and hurd), processed fibre, yarn, fabrics, garments, accessories and hemp seed oil for external application. Jahan Peston Jamas, co-founder, BOHECO, says they source raw fibres and seeds from farmer groups and government nodal agencies based out of Uttarakhand and also rely on Romania, Taiwan, Italy and China to get higher grades of hemp fibres, yarn and fabric.

BOHECO has partnered with CSIR-National Botanical Research Institute (NBRI), Lucknow, and CSIR-IIIM, Jammu, to focus on research and development of industrial hemp and medical cannabis. The project with NBRI is focused on Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh, which have already issued government orders for research and commercial propagation of hemp, says Jamas. "With the IIIM, we are looking at developing medical products (phytopharma and generics) from the cannabis plant using chemical compounds in the forms of THC and CBD, which will be directed towards diseases, including epilepsy, pain management and cancer

studies," he adds.

Bengaluru-based Namrata Hemp Company has also been manufacturing a range of hemp-based skin and hair products since 2017 and is working on launching hemp textiles and hemp bio-degradable composites in years to come. "Our brand has grown from eight orders per month to 200 since the time of launch, with 58% returning customers. We are projecting to triple the number in the following year," says Harshaavardhan Redi Sirupa, founder of the company.

## Challenges to production

Bhubaneswar-based Ayurveda medicines manufacturer Vedi Herbals did not have it easy while trying to procure a licence for manufacturing medicines with CBD or THC oil. "It took me three-four years to figure out how I can procure a licence to make cannabis-based medicines... I got the approval to use cannabis in making medicines only six months back," says Sourab Agarwal, director, Vedi Herbals. "We faced a lot of challenges... educating the government was one... we started by selling Ayurveda products and ventured into cannabis-based products only recently. Also, CBD is being hyped nowadays, but THC also has its benefits. In fact, it is much more beneficial than CBD. When you have everything together, like a full-spectrum extract, all cannabinoid oils, then it works like a miracle drug," Agarwal adds.

"When we started approaching the government in 2012, we were the first company to present to them a proposal to explore cultivation of low-THC cannabis under Section 14 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Act, 1985," recalls Jamas of

BOHECO. "Until then, the government always perceived cannabis as a liability and it was an uphill task to educate them that cannabis can also be food, clothing and shelter," he adds.

BOHECO was founded in 2013 and, till the end of 2015, remained a largely bootstrapped business. Lack of understanding of the regulatory authority behind the grant of licences and state mechanism were two major hurdles that BOHECO faced upon inception. "The complexity of state mechanism to formulate rules for cultivation of industrial hemp is the biggest regulatory hurdle. The secondary regulations include understanding and acceptance of FSSAI (Foods Safety and Standards Authority of India) of industrial hemp as foods, which are already globally becoming one of the biggest industries," Jamas adds.

Namrata Hemp Company did not have it easy either. "The policy is that chicken is legal, but eggs are not. Hemp fibre is legal and has a tax rate, whereas the main straw is illegal," says founder Sirupa. "Though NDPS Section 14 clearly gives the power to the state to issue a licence for cultivation of cannabis for the purpose of seeds, fibre for industrial purpose and for medicinal research and medical products, there is no policy or regulation as to who has to issue the licences... the required application process is also not available," he adds.

## Cannabis crusaders

An Ahmedabad-based professional who didn't want to be named says he consumed capsules infused with CBD oil and coconut oil to treat chronic back pain arising from a slip disc ailment some time back. "I had been consuming the painkiller Tramadol for a while, which did not offer much respite. It also damages the liver as one of the side-effects. Then I got to know of CBD oil being beneficial via support groups on Facebook," he says. What followed was months of extensive research by him, which ended at Vedi Herbals' doorstep. "I took CBD capsules for 20 days and my pain subsided," he says.

While he had easy access to CBD oil, the procurement picture was very grim just a few years back. In 2014, 26-year-old Priya Mishra thought she was going to die a painful death after the directly observed treatment she was undergoing for lymphocytic tuberculosis failed to provide any respite. "I knew that I was dying. I had stopped eating, I wouldn't get out of bed, the swelling had increased instead of reducing, and there was no way for the pain to subside," she says. It was then that she turned to cannabis. Mumbai-based Mishra, who is also India's first cannabis activist, started consuming the alleged drug by smoking it in the form of joints (made by mixing tobacco with marijuana or by just crushing marijuana) while on medication, and then stopped the medication altogether in two weeks. The decision to stop the allopathic medication, Mishra claims, stemmed from her noticing the positive effects of consuming marijuana in the form of reduced swelling, pain, increased appetite, etc. "I had figured that I would do nothing, but take cannabis to cure myself," she adds. Mishra today claims to have been declared tuberculosis-free.

While undergoing the cannabis-only treatment, Mishra also got in touch with doctors across India and overseas to understand the benefits of the herb better. She took to travelling extensively in the years to follow to educate people and spread awareness on the medicinal properties of



There's nothing like less lethal or more lethal... if anything is even remotely lethal, it is just plain lethal

— PANKAJ CHATURVEDI, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, CENTER FOR CANCER EPIDEMIOLOGY, TATA MEMORIAL CENTER, MUMBAI

cannabis. She also founded two companies—Hempvati and Quantum Botanica—with the purpose of guiding people with various ailments to the right doctors for natural treatments. As of now, the two companies are only involved in educating patients and providing consultancy services since there is lack of adequate knowledge with respect to the use of cannabis for purposes other than recreational.

## What about tobacco, alcohol?

Addictive substances such as tobacco and alcohol are openly purchased and consumed in the Indian market, while marijuana consumption, even for medicinal purposes, is frowned upon. Among the two, alcohol still has medicinal properties and health benefits, while tobacco is downright poison for the human body. Yet the two substances are categorised as 'luxurious products' and yield the highest tax rate among commodities. "Though cannabis is a psychoactive drug and causes intoxication, its addictive potential is lower than that of tobacco, alcohol, heroin and cocaine," says Vivek Benegal, professor at the Centre for Addiction Medicine, Nimhans. "In fact, the cannabis plant and its commonly used forms like *ganja*, *bhanga*, *charas* contain many chemicals that are not psychoactive, and are seen to have opposite actions to that of the predominant chemical that causes intoxication and addiction," he adds.

As per a February 2019 report titled 'Magnitude of Substance Use in India', released by the ministry of social justice and empowerment, about 14.6% of the population (between 10 and 75 years of age) in our country consumes alcohol. In absolute terms, there are about 1.6 crore Indians who consume alcohol on an everyday or recreational basis. On the contrary, about 2.8% of the country's population consumes marijuana in the form of *bhanga* and *ganja/charas*.

Pankaj Chaturvedi, deputy director of the Center for Cancer Epidemiology at Mumbai-based Tata Memorial Center, who has been advocating to not legalise cannabis, says the number of people consuming marijuana in the form of *bhanga* and *ganja/charas* might rise unconditionally if cannabis is legalised. As far as the difference in the legality status of tobacco/alcohol and marijuana is concerned, Chaturvedi says there should be no basis for differentiation between the damage caused by these substances, as all of them are lethal and dangerous for the human body. "In public health, there is nothing like less lethal or more lethal... if anything is even remotely lethal, it is just plain lethal. You can't give someone the choice to jump from either the 13th or fifth floor," he adds.

## Voice of caution

It's true that the health consequences of marijuana addiction are too many to ignore. "Adults who smoke marijuana regularly show impaired neural connectivity. Marijuana users are also at an increased risk of developing chronic psychotic disorders (including schizophrenia). There is an increased incidence of vehicle accidents in those who may be either short-term or long-term users of marijuana," wrote Chaturvedi in a column for *Financial Express* recently. "Cannabis smoking is also associated with an increased risk of bronchitis, pneumonia, respiratory distress, stroke, myocardial infarctions, cannabis arteritis," he wrote.

Commenting on the citations from India's ancient history regarding the use of cannabis for recreational or other purposes, Chaturvedi says going back to the Stone Age can't yield any benefits. "Living in the current times of technological advancements, if we say that our ancestors and sages used to consume it so we should as well, then that doesn't make sense... giving examples from history is illogical because we had ill practices of *sati*, dowry that have now long been abolished," he says. Another fact that needs to be considered before legalising marijuana is the state of the country's youth, as per Chaturvedi. "The youth is living in times of affluence... in the throes of rebellion, they are not able to distinguish between right and wrong. Once the product becomes legal, aspects of branding, marketing, advertisement will come into place and youngsters who are currently socialising with alcohol will begin to socialise with weed," he says.

One might argue that countries worldwide have taken to legalising the drug despite its known risks, but Chaturvedi points out how the legalisation drive in Colorado and Uruguay has gone terribly wrong. In the five years since Colorado legalised marijuana, vehicular fatalities involving people having taken cannabinoid-only or cannabinoid-in-combination medicines increased by 153%. "Organised crime almost tripled in five years. Marijuana possession-related arrests have halved, but not decreased dramatically as anticipated. Post-legalisation, new types of crimes emerged, such as illegal cultivation, sale, production," he notes.

In the case of Uruguay, the medical use of marijuana, which was supposed to be a major source of income for the industry, failed to yield the expected benefits.

ACROSS THE AISLE



P CHIDAMBARAM

I HAVE before me a copy of *The Indian Express* dated May 1 and I am reading various reports on the on-going elections. There is a story with a prominent headline: 'Modi: Party that can't have Oppn leader in LS dreams of having PM'. It reports in considerable detail the speeches of Mr Narendra Modi in Lucknow and Muzaffarpur.

Uttar Pradesh, India's largest state, is a key battleground for all parties. It is especially important for the BJP in 2019 because it is fighting to retain the 71 (out of 80) seats that it had won in 2014. The 71 seats propelled the BJP to form a government with an absolute majority in the Lok Sabha. If the BJP loses even half of the seats it won in UP, it will not be able to form a government on its own strength. It is, therefore, no surprise, that Mr Modi is devoting a great part of his time to UP.

Nothing wrong with that, except that with every new speech, Mr Modi is making more extraordinary claims and straining credulity. He is challenging the intelligence of the average school- or college-educated voter. He is also testing the limits of the liberty a person may take with truth. Consider Mr Modi's claims:

NO BOMB BLASTS?

After chastising the Congress and others for their inability to fight terrorism, Mr Modi said, 'Do you hear of blasts at temples, markets, railway or bus stations any longer? Have these bomb blasts stopped or not? They have stopped due

There are so many real issues on which the PM can speak and so much the people want to hear from the PM. But for strange reasons, Mr Modi will not talk about his party's manifesto, unemployment and jobs, farmers' distress and debt...

# Can we have *sachhe din* please?

to the fear of Modi.' Earlier, he had claimed repeatedly that there were **no** bomb blasts in his five-year tenure!

The facts, unfortunately, are otherwise. Here is a *partial* list of the *major* bomb blasts in the last five years, including one on the very day Mr Modi made his false claim:

Date	Place	Number of casualties
5-12-2014	Mohra, J&K	10
10-4-2015	Dantewada	5
27-1-2016	Palamu	6
19-7-2016	Aurangabad, Bihar	10
2-2-2017	Koraput, Odisha	7
10-5-2017	Sukma	25
27-10-2018	Awapalli, Chhattisgarh	4
14-2-2019	Pulwama	44
9-4-2019	Dantewada	5*
1-5-2019	Gadchiroli	15

\*including a BJP MLA

NEEDS HISTORY LESSONS

Another favourite subject of Mr Modi is that he caused the first 'surgical strike' against Pakistan and that never before had the government of the day authorised the Indian Army to cross the border and enter Pakistan's territory. I wonder if Mr Modi had not heard (or read) of what the Army did in 1965 and 1971! Did the Indian defence forces win the wars, and liberate Bangladesh in 1971, without entering Pakistan's territory? Besides,

Army generals had pointed out that Mr Modi's claim was wrong and asserted that 'this was not the first time and this will not be last'. Here is a table of previous cross-border actions:

21-1-2000:	Nadala Enclave, across Neelam river
18-9-2003:	Baroh sector, Poonch
19-6-2008:	Bhattach sector, Poonch
30-8-2011:	Sharda sector, across Neelam river
6-1-2013:	Sawan Patra check post
27-7-2013:	Nazapir sector
6-8-2013:	Neelam Valley

Mr Narendra Modi is not a mere leader of a political party and campaigner. He is the Prime Minister of India. People wonder why the Prime Minister of the country repeats an untruth many times over. It cannot be a case of memory loss because Mr Modi has been reminded time and again that his claims on bomb blasts and surgical strikes were demonstrably wrong. Nor can it be a clever electoral tactic because people will be angry when they hear an untruth repeated again and again. I think the answers lie deeper in the personality of Mr Modi.

SILENCE ON REAL ISSUES

Recently, Mr Modi claimed that he had never referred to his humble origins (*chaitwallah*) or to his caste (OBC). I was stunned, and did some research. There are statements made by Mr Modi on sev-

eral dates. The earliest I could find where he referred to himself as *chaitwallah* was on September 28, 2014, and there have been many after that. Likewise, there are several statements where Mr Modi referred to his backward caste status: two recent examples were on March 25, 2018, and April 18, 2018. It would be embarrassing to record his exact words here because he is the Prime Minister of India and I respect that office. Mr Modi should be happy that there is no one running a fact-check simultaneously like they do on Mr Donald Trump's speeches!

The sad aspect is there are so many real issues on which the Prime Minister can speak and so much the people want to hear from the Prime Minister. But for strange reasons, Mr Modi will not talk about his party's election manifesto; he will not talk about unemployment and jobs; he will not talk about the farmers' distress and debt; he will not talk about declining prices for farm produce or the colossal failure of the crop insurance scheme; and he will not talk about the fears of women, the Dalits, the Scheduled Tribes, academics, scholars, journalists, NGOs etc.

Mr Modi pretends that the *achhe din* that he had promised have arrived. Nothing can be further from the truth. People know there is no *achhe din*. The people are tired and angry hearing the lies and yearn for a few doses of truth.

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FIFTH COLUMN



TAVLEEN SINGH

# Advice from the Raj

WHEN NARENDRA Modi has made mistakes, this column never hesitated to point them out. There have been big mistakes in the past five years. In my short list, I would put demotivation at the top. His next big mistake was to remain silent when rabid gangs of cow vigilantes attacked and killed Muslims and Dalits. At number three in my list comes his change of economic direction, because he was taunted by Rahul Gandhi with running a government for the suited and booted. This veering off course and returning to the 'socialist' path set by our Imperial Dynasty was probably his biggest mistake. Private investment dried up, as did jobs, and this may have been the objective of the taunt in the first place.

But under Modi, many things have also changed for the better. At the top of this list is Swachh Bharat. It is a formidable achievement that in five years, sanitation in rural India has gone from less than 40 per cent to more than 90 per cent. In this period, he has also dragged India into the digital age. Forcing nearly every Indian to open a bank account is another huge achievement. It is because of this that rural corruption has come down since beneficiaries of government welfare schemes now get money transferred directly into their bank accounts.

There has also been a political upheaval. That tiny group of entitled heirs who once controlled all the levers of power from Lutyens Delhi are now threatened by people who are more representative of the real India. Of course, there is much, much more to be done. But it is important to remember that Modi inherited a country that was in such bad shape that most of India continues to resemble a vast, hideous slum. He should have done more to introduce planned urbanisation, and more to bring sanitary living conditions to our squalid urban settlements. But he cannot be denied credit for drawing attention to these unsightly flaws. If India's impatient, aspirational voters feel that he has not been a good enough prime minister, then he will be voted out in two weeks.

This will happen without *The Economist's* advice to Indians to throw him out because he is 'despicable' and 'dangerous'. This British newspaper endorsed the Congress party in 2014 as well. But what really annoyed me about the leader it published last week was that the writer seemed ignorant of events that happened in India before Modi. If this were not true, he would never have dared suggest that the Congress party deserved India's votes as it did not 'set Indians at each other's throats'. You do not need to delve deep into history books to discover just how many times the Congress party did this. Google will do the job.

The other astonishingly ignorant bit of analysis was of Modi's Kashmir policy. The Valley has been in turmoil for more than three years now. But, it was not because of Modi that the movement for 'azaadi' changed into a movement for the creation of an Islamic state. It was the killing of Burhan Wani that began the turmoil. And Wani had made it clear in all his videotaped messages that his struggle would end only when Islamic law was imposed in the Valley. *The Economist* may believe this to be a worthy cause, but most Indians do not.

One of the reasons for the ugly, beligerent Hindutva we see today in too many parts of India is because of the ugly, warped secularism that parties like the Congress have preached and practised for too long. When an Indian prime minister says that Muslims have the first right to India's resources, it is not just sick but provocative. When a senior Congress leader tries to blame 26/11 on the RSS, it is truly wicked.

As someone who worked for many years for a British newspaper, I need to add that this experience taught me that most foreign correspondents see India through the lens of a Delhi drawing room. It also taught me that foreign correspondents are more comfortable when the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty rises because they can at least talk to them in English. And, also because they are westernised enough for westerners to not think of them as natives.

Modi has brought with him some very nasty Hindutva leaders, and if he wins again, he should get rid of them. But, he has also given a voice to Indians who do not speak a word of English and who have never put a foot in those rarefied spaces where India's levers of political power exist. This is a very good thing for India because it deepens the roots of democracy and weakens the roots of dynastic succession. It may not be a good thing for *The Economist*. The new genre of Indian politicians has probably never heard of this magazine.

Follow Tavleen Singh on Twitter @tavleen\_singh

INSIDE TRACK



COOMI KAPOOR

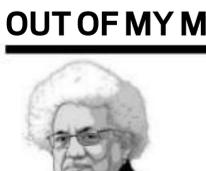
VHP'S CLOUT

The VHP and the RSS have taken total charge of Pragya Thakur's campaign in Bhopal and her campaign headquarters is located in the VHP office. Unlike a section of the BJP, the VHP does not feel the need to be apologetic about Thakur's remarks against late Maharashtra ATS chief Hemant Karkare. Uma Bharati was furious when the inexperienced Thakur was nominated from Bhopal instead of her. Bharati's credentials as a *sadhvi* are far more impressive — she had delivered religious discourses as a young girl and is a veteran of the Babri Masjid movement. As an OBC Lodhi, Bharati was recognised as a major political asset for the party and has won multiple parliamentary elections, including from Bhopal. So Bharati made known her displeasure by remarking sarcastically that no doubt Thakur is a "great *sadhvi*" and she a foolish nobody. But clearly, someone in the Sangh Parivar at the highest level reprimanded Bharati. She subsequently called on Thakur and touched her feet. Similarly, Sumitra Mahajan, who usually weighs her words carefully, and Poonam Mahajan seem to have been instructed to make statements justifying Thakur's remarks. The VHP is focusing on three constituencies to establish the primacy of its views on Hinduism: Bhopal; Begusarai, where Kanhaiya Kumar is contesting; and Pathanamthitta in Kerala, where the Sabarimala temple is located.

WRONG SIDE

Priyanka Gandhi Vadra played an important role in choosing the Congress candidates for Uttar Pradesh. She was helped by Pravin Chakravarty, the party's data head, who provided the breakdown of castes and religions in different constituencies. Priyanka's claim that the first priority is to defeat the BJP has not mollified the BSP's Mayawati and Samajwadi Party leader Akhilesh Yadav. Both are furious, believing that Congress candidates in UP have harmed the *gathbandhan* more than the BJP. The Congress even fielded Muslim candidates in seven to eight seats which are minority-dominated. The bad blood between the *gathbandhan* and the Congress over the UP parliamentary contest could linger on and make the formation of a post-election alliance harder.

OUT OF MY MIND



MEGHNAD DESAI

IT MAY be a great festival of democracy, but it is depressing as well. Forget the bad manners, abusive speeches, intimidation, and violence; not to say the sheer hypocrisy of every kettle calling the pot black (or not black enough). The tendency to rush to the Supreme Court for these trivial issues makes one wonder if the court should punish people rushing to it for just publicity. As it is, the judicial backlog is bad and likely to exceed the

INVISIBLE ALLIANCE

NCP supremo Sharad Pawar and MNS chief Raj Thackeray became close after a programme in Pune six months ago where Thackeray was the interviewer and Pawar the chief guest. Pawar wanted Thackeray's MNS as an ally, but the Congress vetoed the suggestion since Thackeray's campaign against north Indians in Mumbai had alienated its voters. So the two came up with an interesting via media. Thackeray attracted the maximum crowds in the Maharashtra election campaign by targeting Narendra Modi forcefully. Using video presentations, he recalled Modi's 2014 promises and failure to deliver on them. The beneficiary of Thackeray's oratory could be the Congress and NCP since the MNS did not contest the parliamentary polls. Thackeray hopes to formalise his ties with Pawar for the Assembly elections.

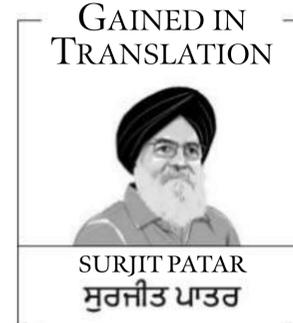
SQUABBLING SIBLINGS

Tejashwi Yadav, who heads the RJD campaign in Bihar, recently cancelled his appearance at two major TV channel programmes in Patna at the last moment. Tejashwi blamed his absence on ill-health, but many suspect he does not want to answer uncomfortable questions about the rift in the family. Elder brother Tej Pratap Yadav is furious with Tejashwi for sidelining him in the campaign and not heeding his demand that his estranged father-in-law Chandrika Rai should not be given a party ticket from Saran. The real worry for Tejashwi is not Tej Pratap, who is known to be a maverick, but his older sister Misa Bharati, who is fighting the election from Pataliputra. Misa is believed to have encouraged Tej Pratap to embarrass Tejashwi, who did not show up to even campaign for his sister, though her Pataliputra contest is said to be tough. Mother Rabri Devi at home and father Lalu Prasad in jail can do little to control the squabbling siblings.

ACTION VIDEO

According to the grapevine in Amethi, it was a pro-Congress photographer who shot the video of BJP candidate Smriti Irani working furiously at a hand pump and shouting at a district magistrate over the phone for not being at the spot when some fields in Purab Dwara, a village in Amethi district, were burning. The lensman presumed that Irani was throwing her weight around during election time, especially when a fire tender had reached the spot. He had hoped the video would work against Irani. A miscalculation, since the video when loaded onto YouTube went viral and BJP sympathisers were quick to add laudatory captions.

# Of meetings and separations



IN MY childhood, I heard a folk couplet sung by Punjabi girls performing the folk dance *giddha*. They sang: *Nachaan main Patiala/ Meri dhamak Jalandhar paindi* (I dance in Patiala/Jalandhar can feel the beat).

But only last year I heard the following couplet: *Main Moge nachaan jaago vich/ Meri paindi dhamak Chicago vich* (I am dancing in Moga in a *jaago*) My beat can be felt in Chicago).

It can be vice-versa, Punjabi girls could be dancing in Chicago and their beat would vibrate in Moga. Today Punjabis have migrated to more than 150 countries, but no matter where they live, Punjab lives on in their hearts. Professor Puran Singh, one of the founders of modern Punjabi poetry, rightly described Punjab as a land of great meetings and great separations. Being a frontier province, it has become the melting pot of many races and cultures.

It was the sacred rendezvous of great saints and sufis belonging to different places, faiths and castes. They include Baba Farid, a Muslim Sufi whose grandparents migrated to Punjab from Kabul; Baba Namdev, a Beethal bhagat from Maharashtra; Sant Kabir and Sant Ravidas from Varanasi; Krishan Bhagat Jaidev from Bengal; Dhanna Bhagat from Rajasthan and many others. Coming from different regions, religions and races, they sang along with the Sikh gurus. It was a divine orchestra, a great interfaith festival, going on day and night under the skies. It is in Guru Nanak's cosmic anthem: *Gagan mein taal ravi chand deepak bane/ Taarika mandal janak moti/ Dhoop malianon pawan chavro kare/ Sagal banrai phoolant jyoti* (Upon the cosmic platter of the sky/ the sun and the moon are the lamps/ the stars and their orbs are the pearls/ the wind coming from the sandalwood of the Malayagiri hills is the incense).

It was a meeting not only of races, religions and castes, but also stars and lamps. The greatest separation occurred in 1947. Cyril John Radcliffe drew on the map



Illustration: CR Sasikumar

a line that began at the borders of Kashmir, cut through the middle of Ravi, severed Amritsar from Lahore, separated villages from their fields, rivers from their canals, Sikhs from their holy places, and ended at the border of Bahawalpur.

The line tore apart not only the land but also the hearts of the men, and the pure bodies of this land's daughters. The water of five rivers can't wash off the cursed marks 1947 left on the heritage of the Punjabis. The bloodthirsty line swallowed 60 lakh Punjabis in a few days. Over 1.2 crore Punjabis lost their homes and had to cross the border. Ten lakh daughters were separated from their families. And then, 1984.

*Maatam, hinsa, khauf, bebasi te anyaay/ Eh ne aj kal mere panjaan daryaanva de naam* (Mourning, violence, fear, helplessness and injustice) These are the names of my five rivers today).

I am reminded of Dr Noor's love poem: *Tethon vichhar ke/ Main vichhraya hi chala gaya* (After separating from you/ I went on separating again and again).

This short love poem is relevant to Punjab too. The "you" in the poem can be interpreted in many ways. This I leave to the imagination of my readers.

Today's Punjab is suffering so many separations. Not only because its sons and daughters are migrating in thousands to foreign lands but also because custodians of our values relating to religion, politics and education have failed us. We, the intellectuals, are seeking ways of escape: *Panchhi taan udd gaye ne/ Rukh vi salaahaan karan/ Chalon ithon chaliye* (The birds have already flown away/ Now even the trees converse/ Let us go somewhere else).

Another great separation is in the schools built on the land in which the language of the land is being insulted with

impunity. Its young sons and daughters are discouraged and fined if they utter a word in their mother tongue. This attitude is creating anxiety, silences and inferiority complex in the minds of our children. I am not against learning English, but the right way to learn any language other than your mother tongue, as we are told by linguists, psychologists and educationists, is through your mother language. We must adopt the scientific way, it will make our children more creative and confident.

The government is neglecting its own schools so as to give a fillip to private schools.

On August 18, 2015, Sudhir Agarwal, a high court judge, in a ruling, asked the chief secretary of Uttar Pradesh to issue an order to government officials and the representatives of people and judiciary to send their children only to government schools.

Guru Nanak, whose 550th birth anniversary we are celebrating this year, had said: "Neechan andar neech jaat/ Neechi hoo att neech/ Nanak tin ke sang saath/ Wadya seo kya rees/ Jithe neech samaliyan/ Tithhe nadar teri bakhsees" (Nanak seeks the company of the lowest of the low class. Why should he try to compete with the rich. On the lands where the lowly are cared for, God's blessings rain down)."

Punjab, the land of great meetings and separations has suffered too many separations. Now it needs a great meeting.

*Hovaan ik din/ Raag, shaayiri, hussan, mohabbat ate nyaay/ Mere panj daryaanva de naam* (Let us aspire, pray and strive to make music, poetry, beauty, love and justice the new names of our five rivers).

Patar, a celebrated Punjabi poet, is chairman of Punjab Kala Parishad. Translated from Punjabi by the author

# Caste race: A dismal prospect

numbers voting any day soon. Despite that, politicians of all parties treat the court as a publicity vehicle. They should be fined for time-wasting. Enough is enough.

When did it become required to declare your caste on the nomination form? In my teenage years, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru harangued us week after week in the weekly newsreel shown in cinemas. He told us to reject casteism and communalism since independent India had to strive for equality, and while casteism prevailed, equality would be impossible to achieve.

And so it has proved. Who would have thought that the most significant political change in the history of modern democratic India would be initiated by Morarji

Desai? He commissioned the Mandal Report. Another who fell foul of the dynasty, V P Singh, implemented it. I recall that when he announced he was going to implement Mandal, both the Congress and the BJP, solid upper caste parties, were against it. It was the Lohiaite parties, given a new life by the Janata Party's anti-Emergency movement, who welcomed and profited from the Mandalisation of Indian democracy.

The Congress had been coasting successfully on a coalition of upper caste landholders, Dalit sharecroppers and Muslim artisans in the BIMARU belt until Mandal came along. The BJP was stuck with the three upper castes and was not getting far. But then Muslims abandoned the Congress after the Babri Masjid dem-

olition, and the BJP discovered the OBCs. *Jaati* calculus in choice of candidates, as well as canvassing and electoral promises, has become the norm. Any hope that India will overcome the incubus of unequal caste relations is gone.

It was one thing to put SC/ST reservations in the Constitution, though the 15-year limit seemed reasonable to fight centuries of injustice. We thought then that rapid growth and modernisation will remove the need for reservations. That urbanisation will erase the identifying marks of being a Dalit. Alas, no. Not enough growth occurred. Reservations for SC/STs had to be extended. Then the 40 years of economic stagnation made it clear to the OBCs that government jobs were the only ones which were safe and

well-paying. So Mandal made every Indian carry his/her *jaati* status like a pin code at an ATM, except that this was the government doling out jobs if you flashed your *jaati* pin code.

Hence the paradox of equality of one-person-one-vote to elect a government (of any party whatsoever) will cement the inbuilt inequality of the forward and the backward castes. Indeed, as BSP chief Mayawati's criticism of Prime Minister Narendra Modi showed, backwardness is a precious possession. Do not let anyone move you ahead. Stay behind.

Class inequality is also debilitating, but in theory, it is possible to escape the class in which you were born and be upwardly mobile. No such luck in *jaati*. You die the same as you are born.



REUTERS

## Points of conflict

Why has the Supreme Court given an ultimatum to the Reserve Bank of India on loan defaulters?

PRASHANTH PERUMAL J.

**The story so far:** On April 26, the Supreme Court directed the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to disclose to the public the names of wilful defaulters on loans and also other information gathered by the central bank during its annual inspection of commercial banks. The RBI and the Supreme Court have been at loggerheads over this issue for a while now, with the central bank repeatedly refusing to obey the orders of the Supreme Court.

### What did the RBI do?

In January 2016, the RBI refused to comply with demands made by activists under the Right to Information Act (RTI) to disclose copies of the annual inspection reports on banks such as the State Bank of India, Axis Bank, and ICICI Bank despite orders from the Supreme Court. The RBI also refused to provide information regarding the derivative losses suffered by

The outcome of the battle between the Reserve Bank of India and the Supreme Court will determine the amount of information on banks that will be made public

banks and the fines imposed on banks by the RBI for violating various norms. The Supreme Court has this time around given the RBI a "last opportunity" to abide by its orders or face serious penal action. The disclosure of information about banks, however, is not the only point of conflict between two of the nation's powerful institutions. In early April,

the Supreme Court quashed the RBI's circular issued on February 12, 2018 which directed banks to resolve their troubled loans within a period of 180 days. If banks failed to resolve their bad loans within the given deadline, the bad loan cases would be sent to bankruptcy courts.

### Why does it matter?

The outcome of the battle between the RBI and the Supreme Court will determine the amount of information related to banks that will be made available to the public. Supporters of the Supreme Court's position believe that greater transparency will allow the general public and investors in public and private sector banks to make better decisions with their money. In particular, they point to the problem of wilful defaults that has been plaguing banks. According to data gathered by TransUnion CIBIL, the amount of wilful defaults has risen by four times in the last five years from ₹39,504 crore at the end of March 2014 to ₹1,61,213 crore at the end of December 2018. At the same time, the number of wilful defaulters has doubled over the same period. State Bank of India, the largest public sector bank, has suffered the largest amount of wilful defaults among all banks.

The disclosure of the names of wilful defaulters to the public, many believe, will help bring about better credit discipline in the country by exposing problems brewing within banks sooner rather than later. In fact, they find it surprising that the RBI which has been spearheading the fight against bad loans is unwilling to release vital information on wilful defaulters to the public. The RBI, on its part, has argued that the disclosure of auditing information related to banks can lead to the exposure of sensitive information that may not be in the commercial interest of banks or even in the interest of the wider economy. The RBI also seems to believe that releasing information about defaulters can unfairly shame borrowers who may genuinely not be able to pay back their loans due to various financial difficulties. Such shaming could have the unintended consequence of impeding genuine business activity in the economy. The central bank has also put forward the argument that it has the fiduciary duty to protect certain information about banks.

### What lies ahead?

It is hard to predict what will happen next in this battle. The Supreme Court may begin contempt proceedings against the RBI if it chooses to disobey its latest order, but the impact this will have on the RBI's freedom remains to be seen. The RBI has chosen not to obey orders coming from the Supreme Court in the past, including previous proceedings of contempt against it. If the RBI is forced to abide by the Supreme Court order, it will certainly increase publicly available information on banks. Greater transparency will also help make the RBI more accountable. If there are legitimate reasons for banks and the RBI to withhold certain information from the public domain, however, the forced disclosure of information following the Supreme Court's order may lead to various unintended consequences both within the financial sector and the broader economy. The RBI, for instance, may choose to not include in its annual inspection reports certain sensitive information about banks that it feels shouldn't be in the public domain.

# Steering away from diesel

Leading passenger vehicle markets such as the European Union are opting for other fuels. What is the trend against this heavy polluter fuel in India?

G. ANANTHAKRISHNAN

**The story so far:** On April 25, Maruti Suzuki, India's top carmaker, announced that it would phase out production of diesel models from April 1, 2020, when stricter Bharat Stage VI emission standards come into force. What does this mean for the auto industry?

### Why did Maruti take this decision?

Explaining its rationale, the leading passenger vehicle manufacturer said the enhanced emission standards would make diesel engines costlier by up to ₹1.5 lakh, and the acquisition cost of diesel vehicles for consumers would be markedly higher than petrol equivalents. Given the market dynamics, it would not make business sense for the company to invest in developing new diesel engines to meet the BS VI norms. Compressed Natural Gas could be a replacement for both fuels, according to Maruti.

Diesel cars account for about 23% of Maruti's domestic sales and it sold a total of 4.63 lakh diesel-powered vehicles during 2018-19.

On the consumer side, diesel vehicles are not particularly attractive today. The traditional advantage of lower operating costs due to a wide gap between expensive petrol and lower cost diesel has narrowed significantly. On Saturday, the price of diesel in a city like Chennai was ₹70.48 per litre compared to ₹75.92 per litre for petrol.

Environmentally, diesel is a heavy polluter and is losing ground in leading passenger vehicle markets such as the European Union. The rigging of emissions data by Volkswagen to show lower levels of nitrogen oxides accelerated the move away from diesel. Even in Germany, which is a leading maker of diesel cars, cities want to ban them.

### Why is the move significant?

India has a growing vehicle-to-population ratio, although it is still lower than several other big countries. While Maruti's is a business decision, policy decisions on emission norms will steer the industry, and are therefore critical to improving air quality.

Ambient air quality has deteriorated so badly that 15 Indian cities led by Gurugram are among the 20 most polluted cities globally as per the IQAir AirVisual 'World Air Quality Report' for 2018, based on fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) that penetrates the lungs and bloodstream. Transport emissions, particularly from diesel, are a major contributor.

As of 2017, India's installed capacity for vehicle production stood at 7 million four-wheelers and 27.56 million two and three-wheelers. Commercial three-wheelers, such as large autorickshaws, sold in the past include heavily polluting diesel models that continue to operate even in densely populated cities.

During 2017-18 the auto industry produced over four million passenger vehicles and just under 900,000 commercial vehicles, according to the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers.

After the decontrol of diesel pricing about five years ago, the share of diesel models in car sales has dropped from nearly 43% in 2012-13 to 23% at the end of 2018.

### What is diesel's pollution profile?

The Auto Fuel Vision and Policy 2025 published by the erstwhile Planning Commission, which laid out the road map for a transition to less polluting fuels, pointed out that sulphur in diesel is a contributor to particulate matter both in the vehicular exhaust and in the

### Paying through the nose

The conversion costs involved in upgrading from BS-IV to BS-VI are higher for diesel cars compared to petrol and CNG cars

There has been a significant fall in the number of diesel car sales over the past six years. In 2012-13, these accounted for nearly 43% of passenger vehicle sales in the country while in 2018-19, the share of diesel cars is only 23%

### Sulphur content in diesel

Diesel	BS I (2000)	BS II	BS III	BS IV	BS VI
Sulphur (ppm max)	2,500	500	350	50	10

### Cost of upgrade

Four-wheelers (Passenger cars and LCVs, Less than 3.5T<sup>#</sup>)

Category	BS IV to BS V (₹)	BS V to BS VI (₹)
Petrol	3,000 to 5,000	4,000 to 6,000
Diesel	30,000 to 50,000	20,000 to 40,000
CNG*	3,000 to 5,000	4,000 to 6,000

Four-wheelers (Heavy duty vehicles, More than 3.5T<sup>#</sup>)

Category	BS III to BS IV (₹)	BS IV to BS V (₹)	BS V to BS VI (₹)
Diesel	70,000 to 1 lakh	80,000 to 1 lakh	80,000 to 1 lakh
CNG*	30,000 to 40,000	30,000 to 40,000	40,000 to 50,000

Pollution levels in major Indian cities have been consistently recorded well above permissible limits. This has prompted the government to leapfrog from BS-IV to BS-VI, skipping BS-V

\*CNG-Compressed natural gas  
#T-tonne

Source: Auto Fuel Vision & Policy 2025

Compiled by Sumant Sen

atmosphere. Sulphur is found in petrol too, but for comparison, it was 2,000 parts per million (ppm) in petrol before introduction of standards in 2000, but in diesel it was 10,000 parts per million (ppm) in 1996. Sulphur content was reduced with each phase of upgradation of emission standards to touch 50 ppm under BS IV. In BS VI, which is already dispensed in Delhi, it is 10 ppm.

Sulphur plays a key role since higher concentrations have an impact on technologies for control of other pollutants in the emissions, such as carbon monoxide, particulates, oxides of nitrogen and hydrocarbons.

The importance of cleaner diesel was studied in Karnataka, and data show that adoption of Bharat IV diesel in 2015 had an impact on the sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) concentrations. The sulphur content of diesel changed from 350 ppm to 50 ppm.

There was a 25% drop in nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) concentrations too, which could also be linked to change in the fuel quality. But such gains were neutralised by traffic growth. The rise in larger PM<sub>10</sub> concentrations by 50%, was linked to growing numbers of vehicles and dust resuspension, besides construction activity.

Even with cleaner fuel, increase in vehicle numbers, especially those running on diesel cut into the gains. It was witnessed in Delhi, where, in spite of a shift of buses and autorickshaws to CNG during 1998-2002, the air quality gains were soon lost to explosive motorisation.

Bengaluru also had a similar experience, as a study by the Air Pollution Knowledge Assessment City Program by Urbanemissions.info showed. The city has steadily motorised, and number of vehicles registered per 1,000 population increased from 150 in 1990 to 300 in 2001 and 600 in 2016.

Within the transport sector, more than 70% of PM<sub>2.5</sub> emissions were found to originate from a small fraction of diesel-powered vehicles. Also an estimated 200 million litres of diesel are used by diesel generator sets in the city annually.

Data for Delhi from 2011 led researchers to conclude that on-road commuters are exposed to 1.5 times the average ambient concentrations. Automotive emissions add to the pollution burden imposed by manufacturing and construction activity, power plants, biomass burning for cooking and heating, and incineration of farm residues and garbage.

# Chips at stake in the PepsiCo-farmers fight

Who has infringed on rights under the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Act, 2001?

PRISCILLA JEBARAJ

**The story so far:** A David versus Goliath story has played out in Gujarat over the last month, with food and beverages giant PepsiCo dragging potato farmers to court for allegedly growing its registered potato variety used to make 'Lays' chips. Four small farmers from Sabarkantha district were sued ₹1.05 crore each, although they cite a law allowing them to grow and sell even registered plant varieties. Faced with growing social media outrage, boycott calls from farmers groups and condemnation from major political parties, the company finally agreed to withdraw cases after talks with the Gujarat government.

### When was the variety introduced?

PepsiCo introduced, in 2009, the FC5 variety of potato that it uses to make its popular 'Lays' potato chips to India. The potato variety is grown by approximately 12,000 farmers who are a part of the company's collaborative farming programme, wherein the company sells seeds to farmers and has an exclusive contract to buy back their produce. In 2016, the company registered the variety under the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Act, 2001 (PPV&FRA).

Finding that farmers who were not part of its collaborative farming programme were also growing and selling potatoes of this variety in Gujarat, PepsiCo filed rights infringement cases under the Act against some farmers in Sabarkantha, Banaskantha and Aravalli districts in 2018 and 2019. Farmers allege that the company hired a private detective agency to pose as potential buyers, take secret video footage and collect samples from farmers' fields without disclosing its real intent.

### What is the farmers' stand?

The ₹4.2 crore lawsuit against four small farmers in Sabarkantha district was heard by an Ahmedabad commercial court on April 9, and an ex-parte injunction ordered against the farmers. However, farmers' rights groups across the country began a campaign against PepsiCo, requesting the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Authority to intervene in the case and bear the farmers' legal costs using the National Gene Fund. At the April 26 hearing, the company offered an out-of-court settlement to the farmers on the condition that they give an undertaking not to grow the registered variety and surrender existing stocks or to join its collaborative farming programme.

Demanding an unconditional withdrawal of cases,



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

farmers unions affiliated to the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) as well as the Left parties joined in boycott calls against PepsiCo products and stoked outrage on social media as well. In the midst of an election season in which agricultural issues are in the spotlight, senior political leaders from the Congress and BJP added their criticism. On April 27, the Gujarat government announced that it would back the farmers and join the legal case on their behalf, although it later indicated it was working toward an out-of-court settlement. Finally, on May 2, PepsiCo agreed to withdraw all nine cases after discussions with the government.

### What is the legal basis for the suit?

Both PepsiCo and the farmers cite the same Act to support their opposing positions. The PPV&FRA was enacted in 2001 to comply with the World Trade Organisation's Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights.

PepsiCo based its suits on Section 64 of the Act dealing with infringements of the registered breeder's rights and subsequent penalties. The farmers' legal case depended on Section 39 of the Act, which allows the cultivator to "save, use, sow, resow, exchange, share or sell his farm produce including seed of a variety protected under this Act" with the sole exception of branded seed. As this section begins with the words "Notwithstanding anything contained in this Act...", farmers claim their rights have precedence.

Over the last decade, more than 3,600 plant varieties have been registered under the Act, with more than half of the registration certificates going to farmers themselves. This was the first case of infringement of rights under the Act, according to the central agency set up to implement the Act.

### How can eliminating diesel improve health?

Air pollution is a leading contributor to non-communicable diseases and accounts for a large number of premature deaths. The World Health Organisation describes diesel exhaust as an occupational cancer-causing agent.

In India, the Global Burden of Disease Study 2017 attributed 8% of the disease burden, and 11% of premature deaths in people below 70 years of age to air pollution.

An assessment by researchers published by *The Lancet Planetary Health* in December 2018 said most Indian States, particularly those in north India, and 77% of the country's population were exposed to an annual population-weighted mean [fine particulate matter], PM<sub>2.5</sub>, greater than the 40 microgrammes per cubic metre of air limit recommended by the National Ambient Air Quality Standards.

Even with a reduction in the sulphur content in BS VI fuels, the health effects of lower emissions would be lost due to a growing number of vehicles. The best scenario to reduce PM<sub>2.5</sub> exposure in India is, therefore, not just shifting to BS VI fuels but bringing about a reduction in use of private vehicles through augmented public transport and promoting alternative fuels including the use of electric vehicles.

In his book, *The Invisible Killer*, air pollution scientist Gary Fuller says diesel cars were promoted by a variety of actors, such as oil companies, governments, and vehicle manufacturers in the 1990s in order to create a market for the middle fractions of crude oil. Real-world emissions in new cars have not always aligned with expected type-approval tests. While test cycle nitrogen oxide emissions decreased by 80% since 1992, the real driving emissions from diesel cars increased about 20%, says Prof. Fuller in a recent paper.

In Europe, trucks and buses were already running on diesel, and industries and governments promoted its use in cars, giving petrol a lesser profile. Car makers produced newer diesel engines and promoted them citing lower carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions compared to petrol equivalents.

India has slowly moved towards stricter regulation through mass emission norms for vehicles. The first standards came into force in 1991 for petrol vehicles, and a year later, for diesel vehicles. Based on Supreme Court orders of 1999, the Central government notified the Bharat Stage II norms for the National Capital Region and Bharat Stage I for the rest of India, from 2000. After transitioning over the years to BS III and BS IV, BS VI (the equivalent of Euro VI) standard will cover vehicles manufactured on or after April 1, 2020. (BS V has been skipped altogether.) Its 10 ppm sulphur standard will be less polluting, since the current level is 50 ppm.

### Who are the stakeholders and what are the stakes?

"The company is harassing us. I am not a crorepati, I cannot afford to pay these damages they want," says Haribhai Patel, who owns four acres and was sued for ₹1.05 crore. He claims he bought potato seeds locally, and is within his rights to grow and sell any variety. Even PepsiCo supporters admit that they lost the perception battle by dragging small farmers to court for large sums in election season.

However, some of the farmers sued in 2018 seem to be larger players with bigger stakes in the game. Fulchand Kachchhawa reportedly owns over 150 acres of land, as well as cold storage facilities, and is a potato grower and trader selling much of his produce to 'Balaji Wafers', the major regional competitor of 'Lays' chips. It is alleged that he sells the registered variety of seeds to smaller farmers and buys their produce as well. It is unclear whether his activities would be protected under Section 39 of the PPV&FRA.

PepsiCo says its collaborative farming programme and registered variety rights are under threat. While 'Lays' claims to be a leader in the country's ₹5,500 crore potato chips market, regional players are eating into the market share.

Farmers rights groups such as the Alliance for Sustainable and Holistic Agriculture saw the issue as a test case on farmers rights in India under the WTO regime, and warned that a bad precedent could hurt farmers of other crops and endanger the country's food sovereignty.

### What happens next?

While farmers have claimed victory, they also demanded an apology from PepsiCo and plan to sue for compensation for "harassment" by the company. They are also wary of any future government-facilitated negotiations on seed protection and the rights of breeders. PepsiCo's decision to withdraw the cases was "backed by an assurance from the government for a long term amicable settlement", according to sources familiar with the development, who added that both the Gujarat government and the Centre were involved in that assurance for further talks.

CAPSULE



Living on poison

Arsenic is known to be poisonous, but recently, researchers have identified micro-organisms in the Pacific ocean that breathe arsenic. In the study, the team analysed DNA from the seawater, noting two pathways to gain energy from arsenic-based molecules. Biologists think this is remnant from Earth's early history. The study was published in *PNAS*.



Violent birth

A violent collision of two neutron stars took place 4.6 billion years ago and may have been the source of several heavy elements on Earth such as gold, platinum and uranium, a new study finds. According to the study, published in *Nature*, nearly 0.3% of such elements were created in this collision. The study adds to existing knowledge on origin of our solar system

# IIT Kanpur identifies novel molecule to control hyper inflammation

Hyper inflammation compromises pathogen-clearing ability, also destroys the tissues surrounding the inflamed area

R. PRASAD

Researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kanpur have identified and characterised a novel small protein molecule that can effectively control inflammation leading to better treatment outcomes. In contrast, inflammation control by molecules that are undergoing clinical trials may not be optimal due to inherent drawbacks. The work was done in collaboration with the University of Queensland.

Hyper inflammation

While some amount of inflammation at the site of infection is required for effective clearance of pathogens, too much inflammation compromises pathogen-clearing ability. Hyper inflammation also destroys the tissues surrounding the inflamed area leading to inflammation disorders such as sepsis, inflammatory bowel syndrome, rheumatoid arthritis and psoriasis.

A small protein (C5a) that is a part of the innate immunity (immediate defence against pathogens that have never been encountered before) gets activated when a pathogen enters the body. The C5a



**Multitasking molecule:** Unlike the molecules now being tested, our peptide molecule also reduces the amount of IL-6 being released, say Arun Shukla (right) and Shubhi Pandey.

protein then binds to a particular receptor (C5aR1) found on the surface of certain cells such as macrophages and neutrophils to begin the process of inflammation and pathogen clearance.

Neutrophils are already present in the body and circulate in the blood. Once the small protein binds to the C5aR1 receptor found on neutrophils, there is increased

migration towards the site of infection leading to hyper inflammation. At the same time, binding of the small protein to the receptor on macrophages reduces the amount of a pro-inflammatory cytokine called interleukin-6 (IL-6) that is released, which is desirable to overcome inflammatory symptoms.

Therapeutic agents now under-

going clinical testing prevent the C5a protein from binding to the receptor found on neutrophils leading to reduced migration of neutrophils to the site of infection. Hyper inflammation is thus prevented. However, it has the opposite effect on interleukin-6 release. Unlike the C5a protein, the drug candidate molecules do not reduce the amount of IL-6 being released thereby causing more inflammation.

Role of IL-6

"There is more inflammation when the amount of IL-6 at the site of infection is more. So it is desirable to reduce the amount of IL-6 being released to overcome the inflammatory symptoms," says Arun Shukla from the institute's Department of Biological Sciences and Bioengineering. He is one of the corresponding authors of a paper published in the *Journal of Biological Chemistry*.

The small protein molecule identified by IIT Kanpur researchers addresses the shortcomings seen with the drug molecules now undergoing clinical testing. The drug molecule that IIT Kanpur team used for this study is already known to bind to the C5aR1 recep-

tor. But its effects were not characterised in term of IL-6 release and neutrophil migration.

"Our peptide molecule binds to the C5aR1 receptor found on neutrophils and reduces their migration to the site of infection. And unlike the molecules now being tested, our peptide molecule also reduces the amount of IL-6 being released," says Prof. Shukla. Under *in vitro* conditions, the combined effect may lead to reduced inflammation.

"The molecule only reduces and not blocks neutrophil migration. There should be sufficient inflammation at the infection site to clear the pathogens," says Shubhi Pandey from IIT Kanpur and first author of the paper.

The peptide molecule identified by the team is smaller than the C5a protein so the binding to the receptor is weak. "So we have to use higher concentration of our synthetic peptide to achieve better results. Future work would be to increase the strength of binding by improving the molecule so that less concentration is needed," Prof. Shukla says. The team plans to carry out animal studies in future to measure the therapeutic potential of the molecule.

# Why is northeast India drying up rapidly?

Decreasing monsoon rainfall is associated with natural changes in the subtropical Pacific Ocean

ASWATHI PACHA

Northeast India, one of the wettest places on the Earth has been experiencing rapid drying, especially in the last 30 years. Some places which used to get as high as 3,000 mm of rain during the monsoon season have seen a drop of about 25-30%.

A team of researchers from the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune, and Assam University set out to understand whether this decline is caused by anthropogenic activity or is it part of natural changes.

The results published recently in *JGR-Atmospheres* show that the decreasing monsoon rainfall is associated with natural changes in the subtropical Pacific Ocean.

Pattern of fluctuations

"We found that changes in the Pacific decadal oscillation (PDO) – a pattern of fluctuations in the ocean, particularly over the north Pacific basin – are mainly associated with this declined rainfall," explains Abida Choudhury, a Ph.D. scholar at Assam University and the first author of the paper. "Just like El Nino/La Nina in the tropical Pacific, PDO has a signature for a longer time (on the decadal scale) in the sea surface temperatures and its interaction



**Root cause:** Rainfall reduction over the last 36 years is associated with natural phenomena. ■ S. S. KUMAR

with the atmosphere, which in turn affects the northeast Indian summer monsoon."

Natural and manmade

The team used observed rainfall and sea surface temperature data for the period 1901-2014 for the study. The results show out that the reduction in rainfall during a major part of the last 114 years may be associated with global man-made factors, while the trend during the last 36 years is associated with natural phenomena.

"Only about 7% of the rainfall in this region is associated with local moisture recycling, which means that anthropogenic activities can affect only this small percentage. So we concluded that the recent rapid drying is a part of interdecadal variability of monsoonal rainfall which is strongly associated with the PDO," says

Subodh Kumar Saha from IITM, Pune.

The researchers note that this study can be used to predict the monsoon rainfall over the northeast region on a decadal time scale using Pacific Ocean region data. Previous studies have found that a dry spell may be preceded by a wet spell, so the researchers warn that "change in land cover and deforestation could potentially result in more natural disasters, for example, flash flood, landslides from torrential rains, and damage to crops and biodiversity".

"Policymakers should take these long-term predictions into account while planning construction of dams, power plants, etc. to prevent loss of property," adds Mahen Konwar, the corresponding author of the study from IITM, Pune.

# IIT Delhi 3D prints human skin

The model can reduce and even replace testing cosmetics on animals

R. PRASAD

Researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi have successfully 3D bioprinted human skin models that have certain anatomically relevant structural, mechanical and biochemical features similar to native human skin. The bioprinted skin produced in the lab by the team is already being used by ITC Ltd for experiments.

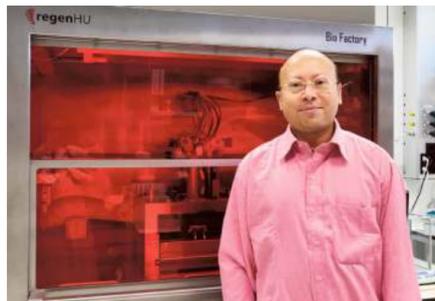
The bioprinted skin model will have wide applications in testing cosmetics. It can also reduce and probably even replace testing on animals.

It can also be used for testing dermatology drugs on human skin and at a future date even help in testing drugs for personalised medicine.

Testing on animals

The European Commission has prohibited testing finished cosmetic products and cosmetic ingredients on animals. It even prohibits marketing of finished cosmetic products and ingredients in the European Union.

The skin is composed of two important layers – the inner dermis (made of fibroblasts) and the outer epidermis (keratinocytes, melanocytes). The junction between the two layers is not flat but is undulatory or wavy. The undulatory morphology is important as it provides biochemical cues



**Commercialised:** The bioprinted skin produced in the lab by the team is already being used by ITC Ltd for experiments, says Sourabh Ghosh

and mechanical support to the epidermis layer, provides structural stability to the skin by making the two layers adhere to each other, and not allow cells to cross the junction.

Unlike the currently available tissue-engineered skin equivalents, the team led by Sourabh Ghosh from the institute's Department of Textile Technology was successful in creating this wavy junction in the bioprinted skin model. The results were published in the journal *Bioprinting*. The study was funded by ITC Ltd.

The undulatory junction was designed using 3D CAD and 10 layers of dermis were constructed through bioprinting followed by eight layers of epidermis. "We designed the pattern so that both layers fit and the interface had a wavy pattern," says Prof. Ghosh.

Silk bioink mixed with fibroblasts was used for growing the dermis, while bioink mixed with keratinocytes and melanocytes was used for growing the epidermis.

No shrinkage

The bioprinted skin also retained the original dimension without any shrinkage for up to three weeks. Traditionally, collagen used for developing skin constructs start shrinking within a few weeks thus affecting the morphology. Testing on such skin constructs therefore cannot be carried out beyond one week.

The bioink containing the cells are deposited in a criss-cross pattern leaving gaps in between. "The keratinocytes in the epidermis were seen migrating and filling the pores. This type of migration, which was very clear and striking, and

cellular self-assembly recapitulate wound healing-like situation in native skin," says Prasad Admane from IIT Delhi and first author of the paper.

The keratinocytes in the epidermis differentiate and form into four distinct layers. "We studied three proteins – fibronectin, cytokeratin 1 and 14 – that are biomarkers of keratinocyte differentiation. They are produced in the bioprinted skin though the amount was comparatively less than native skin," he says.

Most importantly, gene and protein expression analysis showed 60% similarity in gene expression between bioprinted and native skin. "We identified 56 proteins expressed in bioprinted skin which play an important role in skin development, extracellular matrix organisation and keratinocyte differentiation," says Abhishak C. Gupta from IIT Delhi and co-author of the paper.

"We will now explore the possibility of growing hairs on the bioprinted skin," says Dr. Gupta.

Prof. Ghosh's team has already developed a 3D construct for hair follicle structure in collaboration with ITC Ltd.

"Our goal is set up a start-up to focus on developing different diseased skin conditions to test different drug molecules in patient-specific manner," he says.

# Robot from IIT Madras checks pipelines for leakage

Endobot is a low-cost solution to identify faults and stealthy connections

SHUBASHREE DESIKAN

At a time when water scarcity pervades many urban centres, it is important to ensure that water being transported through pipes is not lost through leakages. In an attempt to address this issue, researchers from IIT Madras have developed a robot to check pipelines for leaks and other faults. Named Endobot, this robot is to be marketed by an IIT Madras incubated startup, Solinas Integrity, founded by the researchers.

Quite often, pipes that transport water suffer from low maintenance and neglect which causes them to develop leakages. These often go unnoticed except when the water seeps to the surface. Periodically, water pipelines are dug up, and this may bring leaks to notice, but this is left to chance and is a costly process at best. Water is also lost through connections that have not been



**Mobile eye:** The electrically-powered robot runs on four wheels connected using a conveyor belt and is tethered at one end.

sanctioned officially. Endobot is presented as a solution that can identify these faults and stealthy connections, at a low cost.

The electrically-powered robot looks like a small tank, runs within the pipe on four wheels connected using a conveyor belt. It is

tethered to the entry point outside the pipe. This construction allows it to run over tough terrain within the pipe without stalling. "Endobot is about 6 inches high and can study any pipe having a diameter more than 8 inches. Since water pipes typically have

**The robot captures videos and transmits a live feed to the base at the entry point. It also uses laser-based techniques to examine the pipes as it moves.**

VISHWA SAI PRATHYUSHA  
CTO, Solinas Integrity

an inner diameter of at least 15 inches, it suits the purpose well," says Prabhu Rajagopal from the Centre for Nondestructive Evaluation in IIT Madras, where the robot was developed. He is also a non-executive director of the company.

"As the robot, which is electrically powered, runs through the pipes at about 15 cm per second, it captures videos and transmits a live feed to the base at the entry point. It also uses laser-based techniques to examine the pipes as it moves," explains Vishwa Sai Prathyusha, who is the Chief

Technology Officer of the company and alumna of IIT Madras. These feeds are conveyed to the user's computer and may be analysed later using software developed by the team.

"Of course, the robot has noteworthy features, but also the software and tools for analysis developed by our team give us a major advantage over competition," adds Ms Prathyusha.

Additional sensors

Any technology goes through phases of development and Endobot is no exception. "As a next step, we plan to add more sensors – ultrasonic and electromagnetic – which can help us find out whether the pipes develop corrosion or cracks on the outer side," says Krishnan Balasubramanian, a director of the company. He is a chair professor in the Mechanical Engineering department of IIT Madras and head of the Centre for Nondestructive Evaluation. "As of now, not many people

are working on such small robots," says Prof. Rajagopal. He acknowledges, however, that there is competition at an international level. "Having small robots is a novelty even there, and open source electronics is driving this here," he adds. So while such robots may not be out of reach of international companies, they still have not focused on such solutions. "Recently, the Indian government and corporations and municipalities are increasingly looking at outsourcing operation and management of water resources to private players, and we are in a sort of Goldilocks zone," says Prof. Rajagopal.

The team has already completed one set of trials within IIT Madras campus, where many pipes and installations are nearly 40 years old. They are now in talks with various urban corporations to allow them to try out the robot. Some municipalities have expressed interest in pilot studies using the robot.



## To follow a code of life

Dealing with oneself, and those around you

MINI KRISHNAN

Life is full of lessons and ringing messages.

Recently, in order to take a flight back home, I travelled by road from Palakkad to Coimbatore. Driver Mani deposited me at my elegant cousin's flat. For a considerable length of time after I stepped in with my suitcase, my cousin did not close and lock her door. It remained ajar. So I myself got up and locked it.

"Do you often forget to close your door?" I asked jocularly. "Ah... no," she said, "It's just that I didn't want to close the door in Mani's face." She further regretted that she hadn't yet offered him something to drink.

I was so struck by her acute empathy and courteous thought that I felt I had to share it. We teach children so many things to socialise them into our families and larger social circles. Sit up straight, don't cross your legs, don't grab things at meal-time, stand up when an older person enters the room... The list depends on how particular families are and how often a parent is around to advise children on cultured behaviour. Indeed, recognising that parents do not spend the kind of time they once did with their children (given the contemporary work timings) some of the caretaking has been outsourced to schools.

The educationists have put much thought into designing lessons and classes on Ethics Education and Life Skills in schools. At one time the phrase meant learning how to fix light bulbs, how to iron a shirt or mend fuses, but today it encompasses a whole philosophy that trains children in attitudes and value-enhanced patterns of dealing with oneself, the people around you and the environment.

Speaking of which... a few hours later at the airport, I was seated next to a middle-aged sardar who was deep in a book. As I was the only other traveller who settled down to wait with a book rather than with a phone, I asked him what he was reading. He flipped the cover in my direction: *Jappi*, from the Guru Granth Sahib. He had discovered his religion rather recently because he enthusiastically explained the tenets and said how much he regretted not having paid attention to his father.

"He was a very religious man and I never bothered to ask him what comfort it gave him. His death a year ago struck a spark in me and I am now slowly learning about my religion," he said. More than missing his father, the gentleman regretted not having absorbed his religiosity. "I have so many questions which I know he would have answered, but it is too late."

I merely consoled him saying that the greatest gift a parent can give a child was what he had received from his father: a code of life.

Because, really, that's what 'life' skills are.

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# The pigeon LIFE CYCLE

A fascinating family drama, sans emotions, unfolds on the balcony of a home

SUJIT KUMAR CHAKRABARTI

For some 20 to 25 days, a pigeon pair was nesting in our balcony. It all began when we found them fidgeting around on the plant tub in our balcony that had a tulsi plant in it. We guessed they were trying to make a nest. Our initial reaction was to try to shoo them away. But nature preempted this: within a day we found they had laid two eggs. We stopped trying to get them to fly away.

Endless series of hatching sessions began. One of the two birds would always be found hatching the eggs. And yes! They would take turns lasting eight to 10 hours, in our estimate. Initially it was hard to know which of the two was sitting at any given point. To solve that confusion, my mom came up with a (somewhat kind but effective) solution. One day, she smeared one of them with oiled vermilion on the head. Also, we arbitrarily decided that one of them - the one without vermilion smeared on its head - must be the father; probably because it was the more restless and less trusting of the two.

The funniest moments during the hatching period was when the pigeons would change shifts. The one coming in would fly in from one side of the balcony. The one finishing its duty would fly out from the other end. In

between there would be some minimal exchange between the two. However, they wouldn't take enough time even to face or touch each other. The change-over would happen ritualistically, diligently, promptly. No show of romance or affection that the poets so love to associate with love-birds.

We would enjoy thoroughly making guesses about what information they passed between them while changing shift, what the other parent pigeon would do during its absence, and what would even make it come back to relieve its partner.

Of course, there's no way to answer these questions. Scientists wash their hands of all such questions with a single word: evolution. I believe in evolution. But I find it hard to believe that it provides the complete explanation for such spectacles. Considered casually, they appear funny, even comic. But on a second look, all this looks nothing less than a miracle.

On Sunday, it was already a few days since we had started feeling that it was taking the eggs too long to hatch. Probably the eggs would go bad; probably they already had. Why wasn't the pigeon couple just giving up this futile routine?



ILLUSTRATION:  
J.A. PREMKUMAR

But that afternoon, I casually strolled into the balcony. And what did I see? Two tiny creepy crawly creatures had replaced the two eggs. It was the father who was watching over them. I shouted out in excitement. The others at home rushed out into the balcony to have a look. Each one of us was equally excited, as if it was a childbirth in our own family.

The presumed mother, however, didn't turn up for several hours. We were eagerly waiting for that moment when she would come and find that her chicks were out. We waited for what would be a memorable moment.

Finally, by dusk it arrived. The father was hatching the chicks pretty much the same way he would hatch the eggs. The changeover routine began. The father shifted himself. The chicks got revealed from under him. Now was the moment!

The mom quietly took position, nudged the chicks under her wings, and started hatching.

No fluttering of wings. No cooing. No dance of joy. No 'emotion'. Nothing! Come on lady, you've got to be kidding me!

This anti-climax was kind of really sad. It did appear that after all these are probably not conscious creatures, but puppets being controlled through invisible strings. Who is pulling the strings? God? Evolution?

Childbirth is a matter of joy and excitement! They ought to have felt joyous as we would have; and should have expressed it the way we would. Maybe it's this emotion and its expression that distinguishes people from them.

Or does it? Why is childbirth supposed to make us feel happy? Do we know? Or are these all strings too - coloured and strengthened differently - with which some invisible hand is making us play the drama of life, both humans and pigeons alike?

It's been two days. The chicks are growing. The parents feed them out of their own mouth with regurgitated food. We watch. The whole mystery, miracle, science, God, evolution, life... unfold before our eyes on the plant tub. It makes us wonder and smile. It overwhelms and makes eyes well up.

Meanwhile, the tulsi plant has withered. My mom says its offspring will come back to life once this family vacates; there are plenty of seeds dropped by the drying tulsi. Hopefully, the pigeons haven't devoured them.

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## Mothering across generations

Striving to earn and deserve the advantages of nurturing received as a young one

NANDINI PATWARDHAN

I grew up in the 1960s in Mumbai. My family comprised my parents and two siblings, and my mother's parents. Our home was small - four rooms, each ten feet square, in a chawl tenement. The living room doubled as bedroom at night. The home was too small for everyone to even eat together. Dinners were consumed in waves - first the children, then the men, and finally the women.

Aji, my grandmother, had studied till fourth grade. She spent almost all her time at home, cooking and performing the many tasks related to that, such as cleaning the grain, cutting vegetables, and boiling the milk twice daily to keep it from spoiling (we did not have a refrigerator). The cooking took place in multiple waves too - first the lunches to be packed for the ones who left home for school or work, then the lunches for those who stayed back home, then the afternoon snack for children who are home from school, and then the dinner.

After lunch, Aji would have a few hours of unscheduled time and she would use it to read the Marathi newspaper, darn clothes, and re-purpose clothes that we children had outgrown, into shopping bags and other useful things.

Aji was born in Myanmar (Burma then), where her father worked for the British Customs. The only thing I recall she ever mentioning about him was that he was known for his honesty. The only thing I know about her mother - er was that she died during, or soon after, childbirth. How I wish I had asked Aji more questions when I had the time. Aji was the oldest of several children and was married at 14. So, there was not much mothering for her.

Since we were a joint family, Aji was more like a co-mother to me and my siblings. She told us stories from Hindu mythology and taught us the Marathi alphabet. Her greatest skill was in comforting us when our mother disciplined us. She managed to do this in a loving and gentle way, while also reinforcing rather than undermining our mother's authority.

Aji had come of age at a time when women were "lesser". Hobbled as they were by insufficient education, it was common to also see women of her generation



as having judgment, authority and agency of a lower order. In my family, this translated into Aji being shielded from the larger world and being taken care of by her husband, as well as by her daughter (my mother). In turn, she performed her assigned role by offering care and comfort unreservedly to all who crossed her path.

A side-effect of this particular kind of socialisation was that Aji had grown up in a time when

women were taught that their virtue lay in sacrifice and service. As a result, they were self-effacing - discouraged from having preferences and, if they had any, dissuaded from asserting those preferences.

Aji would often ask my sister or me, when we returned home from school, if we felt like eating *pohe*, or *chiwda* or some other home-made snack. Considering the question literally, we would answer yes or no, purely on the basis of our own interest in that particular item of food and our level of hunger.

One day our mother overheard this conversation and called us aside. "Whenever Aji asks about preparing something for you, you should just say yes. Usually she asks you when she feels like eating that snack." We nodded yes, and returned to our play. And from that day onwards, we answered in the affirmative regardless of which snack Aji offered to make for us.

As a happy and secure child, I accepted things as they happened. Living in the garden of childhood, for those like me

who are fortunate enough to have such a garden, means enjoying the flowers, without having to give a thought to the gardeners who plant the seeds, water them regularly and trim the weeds. But this also means that the task of the rest of life is to live up to the privileges granted, to pay them forward to my children and to others who cross my path. Most important, it means striving to earn and deserve the nurturing received.

I celebrate the fact that the society of my childhood had changed sufficiently that granddaughters were not expected to live lives of denial, by self or others, that had been the lot of grandmothers. I appreciate the emotional intelligence of my mother who understood her mother and found a way to support her without drawing attention to it.

Who was mothering whom? Was Aji mothering her daughter and her daughter's daughters? Was my mother mothering her mother? Or were the granddaughters mothering their grandmother?

I think it was all of the above. My life was the richer, though I did not know it then, because of mothering so thoughtfully and generously offered and so easily, and now, gratefully, received.

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## The restaurant with dynamic costing

When the cost accountants tried an inter-disciplinary approach at their business venture

GADEPALLI SUBRAHMANYAM

A couple of cost accountants came together to start a restaurant. They made quite a few enquiries about the possible clientele, number of eateries around that area, offices nearby that would have both floating and regular customers. They then started it with as little fanfare as possible, to reduce overheads on advertisement costs. They decided that people who are hungry would themselves look for the signboard of an eatery and that would be sufficient advertisement.

They expected that given their reasonable and transparent pricing policy, they would have the advantage of word-of-mouth publicity, which does not cost the establishment anything.

For each dish on the menu, the quantity and the price, based on raw material costs, overheads such as rent, electricity, wages, possible leakages of revenue, breakage of china, loss of small cutlery, profit margin, leftovers and so on, were factored in. In fact, they took pride in making every possible expense being taken into account, making the costing of the merchandise strictly as per cost accountancy norms.

The first week was dull, except on opening day. They had made provision for a dull first week, and took it in their stride. Slowly, the clientele grew. One of the partners used to go to the market each day to buy perishables, of course from a wholesale market. But it was found that buying in quantity led to



ILLUSTRATION: SREEJITH R KUMAR

high levels of spoilage, so resorted to buying as per immediate requirement from the retail market.

But then they found that the prices in the market fluctuated on a daily basis. But

they were supposed to offer a certain quantum of each item they sell in terms of size, thickness and quantity. Initially they resorted to asking the chef to reduce the diameter of the dosa and the

thickness of the idli when the price of blackgram went up. Some regular customers started grumbling about the reduced size at the cash counter, while paying the bill.

They discussed this at their meeting that night before the eatery closed for the day. Instead of reducing the size, they thought that they could have dynamic pricing, as the airlines, even the railways, now do. They put up a notice that the prices of individual items would be set on a dynamic basis, and would vary according to the wholesale price index, and adjusted to the nearest rupee in view of the problem with small change. Each day the customer was given a menu that showed the dynamic rates for the day. There was a proviso that these were sub-

ject to change without notice even on intra-day transactions if there was any change in the circumstances.

One day there was an autorickshaw strike, which necessitated taking a cab to bring vegetables, fish, meat and eggs. Correspondingly, the menu was displaying the changed, higher prices.

As far as cost accountancy norms went this system was very satisfactory, but the clientele was equally dynamic, and soon enough they looked for other eateries that had static prices, at least on a longer-term basis.

The cost accountants were left breaking their heads as to what went wrong, before their establishment closed its doors permanently.

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### An election-day experience

How the democratic exercise worked in a village in Bihar in 1991, with the seeming concurrence of all  
SUSHIL PRASAD

### Riding the wave of technology

The changes over the past few decades have been phenomenal, but are we missing the human touch?  
P.J. XAVIER

### The big snow story

In freezing Canada, enjoying every minute of the first winter season has its share of excitement  
MALAVIKA SELVARAJ

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# नई जमीन

## तूफान से लड़ना ओडिशा से सीखें

हरि कुमार, जेफरी जेट्लमैन, समीर यासिर

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फैनी की चेतावनी जारी होते ही ओडिशा सरकार ने पिछले तूफानों से सबक लेते हुए करीब दस लाख लोगों को सुरक्षित जगह भेजा। विकासशील देश के एक गरीब राज्य द्वारा तूफान का मुकाबला करने की यह उपलब्धि बहुत बड़ी है। बीस साल पहले की तुलना में यह एक बड़ा बदलाव है, जब ओडिशा में आए तूफान से हजारों लोग मारे गए थे।

उड़ानें रद्द कर दी गईं। ट्रेन सेवा रोक दी गई। कई वर्षों के बाद भीषण चक्रवाती तूफान उस ओडिशा में आ रहा था, जो भारत के सबसे गरीब राज्यों में एक है और जहां लाखों लोग निचले समुद्रतटीय इलाकों में मिट्टी और बांस से बनी झोपड़ियों में रहते हैं। पर भारत के पूर्वी इलाके में स्थित ओडिशा के सरकारी कर्मचारी चुपचाप खड़े नहीं थे। लोगों को तूफान की भयावहता की चेतावनी देने के लिए उनके लिए जो कुछ भी संभव हो सकता था, वह उन्होंने किया-उन्होंने 26 लाख टेक्स्ट मैसेज किए, 43,000 स्वयंसेवक और करीब 1,000 आपातकालीन कार्यकर्ता तैनात किए, टेलीविजन पर और बसों में जानकारी देकर, तटीय इलाकों में सीटी बजाकर, पुलिस अधिकारियों को जिम्मेदारी देकर और स्थानीय भाषाओं में लाउड स्पीकर के जरिये घोषणा कर लोगों को लगातार बताया जाता रहा कि 'तूफान आ रहा है, सुरक्षित इलाकों में जाएं।'

ऐसा लगता है कि इसका व्यापक असर हुआ। चक्रवाती तूफान फैनी शुरूवार की सुबह 120 मील प्रति घंटे की रफ्तार से

ओडिशा के समुद्र तट पर दखिल हुआ। पेड़ उखड़ गए और तटीय इलाकों में अनेक झोपड़ियां ध्वस्त हो गईं। वह तूफान भीषण रूप ले सकता था। पर शनिवार की सुबह को साफ हो गया कि खतरा टल गया है। नुकसान का पूरा ब्योरा तो अभी स्पष्ट नहीं है, पर खबरें तूफान से निपटने की सफलता के बारे में ही बताती हैं। ऐसा लगता है कि खतरों की पूर्व चेतावनी के कारण सबसे कमजोर लोग बच गए।

विशेषज्ञों का कहना है कि विकासशील देश के एक गरीब राज्य के लिए तूफान का मुकाबला करने की यह उपलब्धि बहुत बड़ी है। सरकार ने पिछली त्रासदियों से सबक लेते हुए काफी तेजी से लगभग दस लाख लोगों को संवेदनशील इलाकों से सुरक्षित जगहों में भेजा। एक पूर्व नौसेनाधिकारी और ऑब्जरवर रिसर्च फाउंडेशन के प्रमुख अभिजीत सिंह कहते हैं, 'बहुत कम लोगों ने इतनी सांगठनिक कुशलता की उम्मीद की थी। यह एक बड़ी सफलता है।' इस तूफान का असर पड़ोस के बांग्लादेश में भी दिखा। पर वहां भी समय पर करीब दस लाख लोगों को



संवेदनशील इलाकों से निकालकर सुरक्षित जगहों पर पहुंचाते हुए नुकसान की आशंका खत्म कर दी गई।

बीस साल पहले की तुलना में यह एक उल्लेखनीय बदलाव है, जब इन्हीं इलाकों में आए एक तूफान ने गांवों को ध्वस्त कर दिया था, जिसमें हजारों लोग मारे गए थे। उस समय अनेक लोग अपने घरों से बाहर निकल भी नहीं पाए थे और मारे गए थे। तब अनेक लोगों की लाशें उनके घर से कई किलोमीटर दूर पाई गई थीं, जो उस तूफान की भयावहता के बारे में ही बताती थीं।

## देशभक्तों से मुलाकात

पैंतीस साल पहले दो पूर्व सैनिकों से मिलना मेरा सौभाग्य था, तो अभी ऐसे समय में उनके बारे में लिखना जरूरी लगा, जब तिरंगे के साथ ऐसे लोग खुद को जोड़ रहे हैं, जिन्हें बहुत कम पता है कि आखिर हमारे गणराज्य का निर्माण कैसे हुआ।



रामचंद्र गुहा

जाने-माने इतिहासकार

हम ऐसे भारत में रह रहे हैं, जहां सभी लोग मातृभूमि से अपने अटूट लगाव की घोषणा कर रहे हैं। सोशल मीडिया, टेलीविजन और खासतौर से चुनावी रैलियों में जोरशोर से राष्ट्रवाद, देशभक्ति इत्यादि के दावे किए जा रहे हैं। किसी के लिए किसी बहस को जीतने न सही, तेजी से खत्म करने का आसान तरीका है कि वह इस बात पर जोर दे कि बहस करने वाले की तुलना में वह भारत माता से कहीं अधिक प्रेम करता है।

मैंने अपनी पेशेवर जिंदगी का बड़ा हिस्सा ऐसे पुरुषों और महिलाओं के बारे में लिखने में व्यतीत किया है, जिन्होंने इस देश को बनाया है, ऐसे पुरुष और महिलाएँ, जिन्होंने अपनी देशभक्ति को अपनी आस्तीनों में बांधकर दिखावा करने के बारे में कभी विचार नहीं किया। उनके शब्दों ने नहीं, बल्कि उनके कामों ने हमें बताया कि वे किस गहराई तक भारतीय थे। अन्य लोगों के साथ ही गांधी, नेहरू, पटेल, आंबेडकर, कमलादेवी चट्टोपाध्याय और डॉ एम ए अंसारी के जीवन पर शोध करना और यह जानना सौभाग्य की बात है कि कैसे उन्होंने इस पदानुक्रमित और विभाजित भूमि को एक लोकतांत्रिक गणराज्य में बदल दिया। मेरा यह कॉलम भी देशभक्तों के साथ मेरी मुलाकातों पर केंद्रित है, जिनसे मैं अभिलेखागारों में नहीं, बल्कि रूबरू होकर मिला। 1980 के दशक की शुरुआत में मैं जब चिपको आंदोलन के मूल गढ़वाल हिमालय पर शोध कर रहा था, तब मैंने बड़ियार घाटी में घूमकर अपने शोध के लिए जमीनी काम किया था, जहां वाणिज्यिक वानिकी के उत्पीड़न के खिलाफ एक बड़ा चिपको प्रदर्शन हुआ था। मैंने इस आंदोलन में हिस्सा लेने वाले पुरुषों और महिलाओं से बात की और उन्होंने वहां जो कुछ किया और कहा उसे अपने शोध में दर्ज किया। बाद में यही शोध मेरी पहली किताब के रूप में सामने आया। चिपको पर मेरे प्रकाशित काम में हालांकि जो चीजें छूट गईं, उनमें दो बुजुर्ग गढ़वालियों से हुई मुलाकातें भी थीं। इनमें से पहली मुलाकात थी पूर्व सैनिक बी.एस. पुंडीर से, जिन्हें 1947-48 के भारत-पाकिस्तान युद्ध में हिस्सा लेने के लिए वीर चक्र से सम्मानित किया गया था। हम दोनों एक शादी में हिस्सा लेने के लिए पैदल चलते हुए एक गांव से दूसरे गांव तक गए थे। युद्ध में मिली चोटों के कारण वह लंगड़ा कर चल रहे थे, लेकिन उस पहाड़ी रास्ते

पर उनकी तेजी से तालमेल बिठाने में मुझे अड़चन आ रही थी, जबकि वह मुझेसे तीस वर्ष बड़े थे। चोट के बावजूद, पुंडीरजी शरीर और आत्मा में पूरी तरह दुरुस्त थे, और मैं देख सकता था कि देश की सुरक्षा करने और सेवानिवृत्ति के बाद वापस आकर उनके बीच रहने के कारण अपने साथियों के बीच उनकी कितनी इज्जत थी। मैंने वीर चक्र विजेता से उनके नायकत्व पर अतीत के बारे में बात करने की कोशिश की, लेकिन उन्होंने मेरे प्रश्नों को नजरअंदाज कर दिया और इसके बजाय मेरे शोध के बारे में बात करने लगे।

अगली मुलाकात कहीं और दिल को छूने वाली साबित हुई। एक सुबह मैंने एक पुराने स्वतंत्रता सेनानी शेर सिंह मेवाड़ के घर का रुख किया। वह छोटे शहर के क्षीण से व्यक्ति थे और अस्थमा के पुराने मरीज होने के कारण लगातार खांस रहे थे। इससे उनसे लंबी बात करना मुश्किल नहीं था, लेकिन उन्होंने मुझे से कहा कि मैदानों की ओर लौटने से पहले मैं उनसे एक बार जरूर मिलकर जाऊं। दो दिन बाद जब मैं लौटा, तो उन्होंने मुझे 'टिहरी गढ़वाल का क्रांतिकारी इतिहास' शीर्षक से एक हस्तलिखित पांडुलिपि सौंपी। यह देशभक्ति की भावना से ओतप्रोत चालीस पेज लंबा एक असाधारण दस्तावेज था, जिसे तैयार करने में न उनकी उम्र आड़े आई थी और न ही उनका खराब स्वास्थ्य। एक आंगतुक के प्रवास ने उस समय की यादें ताजा कर दीं, जब इतिहास रचा गया था और उन्होंने यानी शेर सिंह मेवाड़ ने उसके घटित होने में मदद की थी। वह 1946-47 के उस महान किसान विद्रोह का हिस्सा थे, जिसके कारण टिहरी गढ़वाल रियासत भारत संघ का हिस्सा बनी। इस आंदोलन की शुरुआत जमीन पर अधिकारों को लेकर हुई थी, मगर इसने महाराजा के खिलाफ विशाल आंदोलन का रूप ले लिया। इसका अंत राजधानी टिहरी पर कब्जे और 'आजाद पंचायत' की घोषणा के साथ हुआ। महाराजा जब अपने वाहन से महल की ओर

लौट रहे थे, तब उन्हें भागीरथी नदी पर बने एक पुल पर रोक दिया गया। शेर सिंह मेवाड़ ने लिखा, उस तरफ राजा, इस तरफ प्रजा। यानी राजा का कोई वफादार नहीं बचा। दीवार पर लिखी इबारत को देखकर राजा ने तुरंत भारत संघ में विलय के दस्तावेज पर हस्ताक्षर कर दिए। शेर सिंह मेवाड़ ने मुझे जो पांडुलिपि सौंपी थी, वह अहिंसक तरीके से तानाशाही से लोकतंत्र में हस्तांतरण का एक जमीनी सैनिक द्वारा लिखा गया लेखा-जोखा था। शेर सिंह ने किसान विद्रोह और उसके नेताओं, टिहरी गढ़वाल के बाहर से इसे मिले समर्थन तथा प्रोत्साहन और महाराजा के भ्रम और समर्थन के बारे में लिखा। उल्लेखनीय है कि उन्होंने अपनी खुद की भूमिका को महत्व नहीं दिया। शेर सिंह ने अपने बारे में सिर्फ यही लिखा कि वह संदेशों को एक नेता से दूसरे तक और एक घाटी से अगली घाटी तक पहुंचाते थे।

आक्रमणकारियों को बाहर रखने वाले सैनिक और महाराजा के पतन में मदद करने वाले सत्याग्रही, इन दोनों ने ही अपनी देशभक्ति का प्रदर्शन नहीं किया। उनकी देशभक्ति शांत और शालीन किस्म की थी, न कि शोर-शराबा या धमकाने वाली। जो लोग उन्हें जानते थे या जिन्हें उनके बारे में पता था, वे उनका बहुत सम्मान करते थे, लेकिन इसके लिए उन्हें किसी से कहना नहीं पड़ा। 1980 के दशक की शुरुआत में मैं जब उनसे मिला, बी एस पुंडीर और शेर सिंह मेवाड़ को अपने शब्दों नहीं, बल्कि कृत्यों से अपनी देशभक्ति को अभिव्यक्त किए पैंतीस वर्ष हो चुके थे। अब पैंतीस वर्ष बाद भी उन मुलाकातों की स्मृतियां मेरे मन में ताजा हैं। मैं देख सकता हूँ कि किस तरह से पुंडीरजी अपनी लाठी थामे संकरे पहाड़ी रास्ते पर चलते हुए मेरे प्रश्नों का गरिमा और संयम के साथ जवाब दे रहे हैं और मैं यह भी देख सकता हूँ कि शेर सिंह अपनी झोपड़ी से खांसते हुए बाहर निकल रहे हैं, और उनके हाथों में पांडुलिपि है, जो वह मुझे दे रहे हैं। उस समय इन दो देशभक्तों से मिलना मेरा सौभाग्य था, तो अभी ऐसे समय में उनके बारे में लिखना जरूरी लगा, जब तिरंगे के साथ ऐसे लोग खुद को जोड़ रहे हैं, जिन्हें बहुत कम पता है कि आखिर हमारे गणराज्य का निर्माण कैसे हुआ और उन्हें इसकी परवाह भी नहीं है।

## इस चुनाव में ये भी मुद्दे

आरक्षण, क्षेत्रीय भाषायी विभेद, वंशवाद, मजहबी कट्टरता, घोटाले आदि से मतदाता परिचित हैं। रघुवीर सहाय ने लिखा था, 'व्यवस्था की बुराइयों से समझौता किए बिना सत्ता तक नहीं पहुंचा जा सकता।'

सत्रहवीं लोकसभा का चुनाव कोई सामान्य चुनाव नहीं है। यह क्षण भारत की नियति और भविष्य को तय कर देगा। जिस खतरनाक मोड़ पर देश की अस्मिता फंस गई है, जिन राष्ट्रविनाशक षड्यंत्रों के दलदल में भारत धंसता जा रहा है, जिन कुतर्कों द्वारा तथाकथित शहरी नक्सलियों, 'सत्ता लोभियों' और 'देशद्रोहियों' ने भारत माता के अंग-भंग करने के लिए दुरभिर्सांधी कर ली है, उन सबसे आम आदमी अनजान और

यह आम मतदाता कौन है? 1951 से 2019 तक अज्ञान और सतही प्राथमिकताओं के कारण लोकसभा के 16 चुनावों से भी ऐसा लगता है कि मतदाता अधिक सीख नहीं पाया। गत कुछ वर्षों से यूरोपीय प्रवास के दौरान, निष्पक्ष दृष्टि से भारतीय लोकतंत्र की त्रासदी, और उस पर मंडरा रहे आसन्न संकट को देखने, समझने और बरतने का मुझे अवसर मिला। कई विश्वविद्यालयों, संस्थानों में पढ़ने-पढ़ाने के दौरान एहसास हुआ कि 1947 की अथूरी आजादी के शिकार भारत के मूल में तात्कालिक परिस्थितियों के अलावा ब्रिटिश औपनिवेशिक षड्यंत्र से अधिक जिम्मेदार उस समय का नेतृत्व था। 15 अगस्त 1947 को त्रिचनापल्ली ऑल इंडिया रेंडियो से भारतीय राष्ट्रवाद के मसीहा महान क्रांतिकारी महायोगी श्री अरविंद का राष्ट्र के नाम यह कालजयी संदेश प्रसारित हुआ था - 'भारत

का विभाजन अधूरी आजादी का दुर्भाग्य है, जो मानवीय कमजोरियों के कारण घटित हुआ। यदि यह विभाजन समाप्त नहीं हुआ, तो देश अनंत काल के लिए विध्वंस और पतन के गर्त में चला जाएगा।' गुलामी की मानसिकता से जकड़ी जनता इस महामानव के आजादी मंत्र को समझ नहीं सकी। इतिहास साक्षी है। चर्चिल और जिन्ना अपने षड्यंत्र में सफल रहे। भारत और पाकिस्तान। एक लोकतंत्र दूसरा फौजी तंत्र। आज भी पाकिस्तान का मुस्तकबिल वही गुलामी का है। भारत को लोकतंत्र मिला पर शीघ्र ही भारत के लोकतंत्र को अजीबो गरीब 'प्रयोगों' ने घेर लिया।

जातीय आरक्षण, तुष्टीकरण, क्षेत्रीय भाषायी विभेद, राजनीति में वंशवाद, मजहबी कट्टरता, अनेक घोटाले आदि से भारतीय मतदाता पहले से परिचित हैं। जिसने आजाद भारत के 70 वर्ष निगल लिए। पिछली सरकारें आश्वस्त थीं कि भ्रष्टाचार के सहारे ही सत्ता हथियाई जा सकती है। प्रख्यत साहित्यकार रघुवीर सहाय की याद आ रही है। उन्होंने लिखा था, 'व्यवस्था की बुराइयों से समझौता किए बिना सत्ता तक नहीं पहुंचा जा सकता।'

अब, चुनाव के दौरान कुछ नए प्रयोग दिखाई दे रहे हैं, जो लोकतांत्रिक स्थिरता के लिए ज्यादा घातक साबित हो रहे हैं।

यहां कुछ प्रयोगों की चर्चा करेंगे। पहला, कश्मीर के



वंशवादी नेता यथा फारूक अब्दुल्ला, महबूबा मुफ्ती पाकिस्तान के तर्ज पर पुनः दो प्रधानमंत्री, दो डंडे, दो संविधान यानी फर्जी जनमत संग्रह की मांग करने लगे। अर्थात् खुले तौर पर देश को पुनः जिन्ना जैसे विभाजन की आग में झोंकने का काम। उनके खुले और छिपे समर्थन में भारत के कुछ राजनीतिक दल भी शामिल हो गए हैं। इस मानसिकता में प्रमुख विपक्षी दल ने कश्मीर में अनुच्छेद 370, 35 ए की खुला समर्थन दिया है। और उसे देशहित में समाप्त करने की योजना को रोककर क्षति पहुंचाई है। अलावावादी ताकतों की यथास्थिति मांग को बनाए रखने की कुछ दल वकालत

किसानों को अनंत काल के लिए भिखारी बनाए रखने का है, इसे कर्मजाफी कहते हैं। राष्ट्र के धन-पैसने की कमाई, करोड़ों करोड़ों करोड़ों का खन, ये राजनीतिक दल सत्ता हथियाने के लिए कर्मजाफी के नाम से लुटाते हैं। पांचवां, आबादी विस्फोट एक नया प्रयोग है, जिसके पीछे एक षड्यंत्र उजागर हुआ। विश्व में सबसे तेज गति से भारत की आबादी बढ़ी है, जो 2022 तक चीन के बराबर हो जाएगी। यह चुनाव तुष्टीकरण से मुक्ति का पर्व है। मतदान से पहले अपनी आत्मा को टटोलने का समय है।

- विजिटिंग प्रोफेसर, वेस्टमिंस्टर यूनिवर्सिटी, लंदन



सुधीर विद्यार्थी

## उदास चित्रकृति के रचयिता

हरिपाल त्यागी ख्यातिलब्ध चित्रकार, जाने-माने लेखक, कवि और एक समय कम्युनिस्ट पार्टी के होलटाइमर थे। पर उनका कलाकार इन सब पहचानों पर हावी था। बीड़ी सुलगाते हुए मुक्तिबोध का चित्र उनकी सर्वाधिक लोकप्रिय चित्रकृति थी। *मुक्तिबोध रचनावली* के मुखपृष्ठ पर छपाकर उनकी यह रचना अमर कला संपदा बन गई। अपने चित्रों के एक किनारे वह सिर्फ 'हरिपाल' लिखा करते थे, त्यागी नहीं। उनकी सुपरिचित हल्की दाढ़ी वाले चेहरे की शिनाख्त हर किसी की स्मृतियों में विद्यमान है। साधारण वेश भूषा और बेहद सरल स्वभाव। हंसी में अजब खुलापन। ऐसा, जो सामने वाले को सुवासित कर दे। बोली-बानी में कोई दुराव-छिपाव नहीं। उंगलियां और आंखें गोया किसी जादू से लबालब और छलक जाने को बताव। उनसे मिलना हर बार किसी वाद्य के तरंगित होने जैसा अनुभव रहा होता।

हरिपाल त्यागी एक प्रतिबद्ध लेखक और कवि थे, जिसका पता कम लोगों को था। वह अपने लेखों और कविताओं में भी चित्रों का ही सृजन करते थे। उनके पास गजब का व्यंग्य था। उनकी दृष्टिसंपन्नता और तंज का सबसे बेहतर नमूना देखने को तब मिला, जब उन्होंने

*महापुरुष* शीर्षक से लेखों को शृंखलाबद्ध किया। नामवर सिंह से लेकर अशोक वाजपेयी तक कोई उनकी कलम से अछूता नहीं रहा। उस शृंखला का अंतिम लेख *निम्नपुरुष* उन्होंने स्वयं को आर-पार देखते हुए अत्यंत संतुलित ढंग से उकेरा था। उनके सर्वश्रेष्ठ संस्मरणों में भाऊ समर्थ और राजेंद्र झा पर लिखे उनके दीर्घ निबंध हैं। त्यागी जी को चित्रों की रचना करते देखना एक विचित्र प्रकार का अनुभव था। हाथ में ब्रश और आंखें कैमब्रस पर। किसी चित्रकृति में रंग भरते हुए भी वह निरंतर किसी से बातें करते रह सकते थे। पर वह क्या रच रहे होते थे, यह जानना किसी के लिए भी बेहद कठिन होता। कल्पना की उनकी उड़ान पर आंखें टिका पाना एक जोखिम भरा काम था। मां और बच्चा, उदास किसान, कॉफी हाउस या फिर मिथक कथा उनके चर्चित चित्र थे। शीर्षकहीन चित्र में वह स्त्री, घोड़ा, बच्चा और एक चिड़िया उठे हुए हाथ पाठक को शोकविद्ध कर देते हैं।

वह अक्सर कहते थे कि जरूरी नहीं कि किसी चित्र को कोई शीर्षक दिया ही जाए। रंग और जीवन एक साथ बोलते हों, तो चित्र अपने आप आकर्षक हो जाते हैं। त्यागी जी के पास तैलचित्र थे, तो मिश्रित माध्यम के चित्रों का विशाल भंडार भी उनके पास था। इंक और एक्रैलिक से वह प्रकृति और जीवन को एक साथ उकेर सकते थे। लोक गायक, परंपरा, स्नान के लिए, दुःस्वप्न और हादसा-उनकी तूलिका से कुछ भी नहीं छूटता था। हादसा एक लगातार सिलसिला है, जिस पर त्यागी जी ने पूरी एक शृंखला तैयार की थी। खुशनुमा और चलती-फिरती जिंदगी के उजड़ जाने की खामोश कर देने वाली उनकी रेखाएं और रंग कला के साथ ही उनके विचार पक्ष का भी अद्भुत साक्ष्य हैं। मेरे दिवंगत पुत्र के यादनामा पर उन्होंने एक अद्भुत रेखांकन का सर्जन किया था, जिसमें अनंत में उड़ते राजहंस को पकड़ने के लिए मां-पिता के व्याकुल उठे हुए हाथ पाठक को शोकविद्ध कर देते हैं।

त्यागी जी लेखकों के सर्वाधिक प्रिय चित्रकार थे। किसी साहित्यिक कृति का कवर डिजाइन यदि त्यागी जी ने बनाया, तो वह उस लेखक के लिए गौरव की बात होता है। उनके बहुचर्चित चित्रों में मैक्सिम गॉर्की, ब्रेख्त और मुक्तिबोध के तैलचित्र हैं। कला की रूढ़ अवधारणाओं और फैशनब्लैक अकादमीय रास्तों से अलग खड़े त्यागी जी एक स्व-प्रशिक्षित कलाकार थे। उनके चित्रों की न जाने कितनी प्रदर्शनियां अनेक शहरों में लगीं और ढेर सारे चित्र प्रशंसित हुए। जिंदगी के लंबे संघर्ष में ही उन्होंने कला की समझ और शैली विकसित की। उनके चित्रों का मुख्य स्वर पीड़ा रहा। मैंने उनका ऐसा कोई चित्र नहीं देखा, जिसमें चहरे हंसते और खिलखिलाते हों। हां, बच्चों की किताबों और पत्रिकाओं के लिए बनाए गए उनके रेखांकनों की दुनिया थोड़ी अलग है। वहां नन्हें-मुन्नों का अपना संसार पूरी सहजता और स्वाभाविकता के साथ उपस्थित रहता है। त्यागी जी अंतिम तक प्रतिबद्ध और सचेत वाममार्गी चिंतक ही बने रहे। उनका नक्सलवादी रुझान बातचीत में बार-बार सामने आ जाता था। वह अद्भुत शैलीकार भी थे। उनके पास अत्यंत समृद्ध भाषा और अभिव्यक्ति का सरल और सचेत ढंग था। कुछ वर्ष पहले उन्होंने एक आत्मकथात्मक उपन्यास की भी रचना की और हंसराज रहबर की भांति हिंदी के अनेक 'महापुरुषों' को अपनी कलम से बेनकाब भी किया, पर वह रहबर को शैली से सर्वथा भिन्न प्रकृति का था। उत्तर प्रदेश के बिजनौर जिले के रहने वाले त्यागी कई दशक से दिल्लीवासी हो गए थे, पर दिल्ली न तो उनके भीतर थी और न ही वह दिल्ली के हो पाए। राजधानी के सादरतपूर की गंवाई बस्ती में नागार्जुन और विष्णु चंद्र शर्मा जैसे वरिष्ठ साहित्यकारों के बीच वह चित्रकार और साहित्यकार, दोनों की छवियों के साथ छियासी वर्ष की उम्र तक सर्वथा सक्रिय जीवन जीते रहे। उदास चित्रकृति के उस रचयिता को मैंने जिंदगी के किसी पल में कभी उदास नहीं देखा। उनकी चित्रकृतियां कभी विस्मृत नहीं होंगी।



अवधेश अग्रिनोहरी



दैनिक जागरण

शिखर की शुरुआत भी शून्य से ही होती है

## आतंक की आहट

श्रीलंका के सेना प्रमुख महेश सेनानायक का यह दावा भारत की चिंता बढ़ाने वाला है कि उनके यहां भीषण हमले करने वाले आतंकी कश्मीर, कर्नाटक और केरल से आए थे। नि:संदेह इस दावे की जांच-पख करनी होगी, क्योंकि सेनानायक यह नहीं स्पष्ट कर सके हैं कि नेशनल तौहीद जमात के आतंकी किस खास मकसद से भारत आए थे? उन्हें यह अंदेशा है कि आतंकी प्रशिक्षण पाने के लिए कश्मीर या केरल आए होंगे। उनके दावे की सच्चाई जो भी हो, इससे इन्कार नहीं किया जा सकता कि श्रीलंका के नेशनल तौहीद जमात जैसा एक संगठन तमिलनाडु में भी है। तमिलनाडु तौहीद जमात नामक यह संगठन अपने अतिवादी विचारों के लिए जाना जाता है। यह संगठन सड़कों पर उतरकर कश्मीर को स्वतंत्र करने की मांग करने के साथ ही भारत सरकार पर कश्मीर में फ्लस्तीन जैसे हलाल पैदा करने का भी आरोप लगा चुका है। बात केवल इतनी ही नहीं कि श्रीलंका और तमिलनाडु के इन दोनों अतिवादी संगठनों के नाम में समानता है, बल्कि यह भी है कि उनके विचार भी काफी मिलते हैं। माना जा रहा है कि नेशनल तौहीद जमात को भारत से धन भी मिलता रहा है। कहीं यह धन तमिलनाडु तौहीद जमात के जड़िये तो नहीं भेजा गया? सच जो भी हो, इसकी अनदेखी नहीं की जा सकती कि इन दोनों संगठनों में गहरे संपर्क-संबंध होने का संदेह है। चिंता की बात यह है कि दक्षिण भारत के कई नेता तमिलनाडु तौहीद जमात के प्रति नरम रवैया रखने के लिए जाने जाते हैं। जाहिर है कि ये नेता देश की सुरक्षा से अधिक वोट बैंक की अपनी राजनीति को महत्व दे रहे हैं। केंद्र सरकार को यह सुनिश्चित करना होगा कि किसी भी तरह के अतिवादी संगठनों को राजनीतिक संरक्षण और समर्थन न मिलने पाए। उसे यह भी सुनिश्चित करना होगा कि केरल आइएस सरीखे खूंखार आतंकी संगठन के प्रति हमदर्दी रखने वाले तत्वों से मुक्त होए।

यह तथ्य गहन चिंता का कारण है कि केरल के कई युवक आइएस में शामिल होने के लिए सीरिया जा चुके हैं। कुछ ऐसे भी हैं जो सीरिया जाने में नाकाम रहे तो जिहाद करने अफगानिस्तान चले गए। तमिलनाडु और केरल में जिहादी आतंक के प्रति लगातार रखने वाले तत्वों की संख्या बढ़ना शुभ संकेत नहीं। एक ऐसे समय जब श्रीलंका की तरह बांग्लादेश में भी आइएस और अलकायदा के समर्थक बढ़ते दिख रहे हैं तब भारत को कहीं अधिक सतर्क रहना होगा। यह स्वाभाविक ही नहीं, आवश्यक भी है कि भारत सरकार श्रीलंका के उस दावे की तह तक जाने के ठोस कदम उठाए जिसके तहत कहा जा रहा है कि आत्मघाती हमलावर भारत आए थे। इसी के साथ उन कारणों की तह तक भी जाना होगा जिनके चलते श्रीलंका ने भारत की ओर से दी गई खुफिया सूचना की अनदेखी कर दी। भारत ने चर्चों में आतंकी हमले को एक तरह से सटीक सूचना दी थी, लेकिन कहा जा रहा है कि श्रीलंका सरकार ने यह मानकर उसकी उपेक्षा कर दी कि इस सूचना का मकसद पाकिस्तान को बदनाम करना हो सकता है। अगर वास्तव में ऐसा है तो श्रीलंका ने एक तरह से आत्मघाती भूल की।

## ठोस पहल जरूरी

उत्तरखंड में हाथियों का बढ़ता कुनवा सुकून देने वाला है, मगर बदली परिस्थितियों में इनके झुंड में कम होती संख्या हैरत में डाल रही है। एक दौर में यहां के हाथी बहुल क्षेत्रों में एक-एक झुंड में 90 तक की संख्या में हाथी दिखते थे, वह संख्या सिमटकर अब 32 से 40 के बीच आ गई है। उस पर गंगा के मैदानों में तो ये समूह और भी छोटे हो गए हैं। इस स्थिति के मद्देनजर फिजा में सवाल तैरना लाजिमी है कि आखिर इसकी वजह है क्या। वह भी तब जबकि उत्तरखंड में हाथियों के लिए यमुना से लेकर शारदा तक 6643.5 वर्ग किलोमीटर में फैला विशाल वन क्षेत्र उपलब्ध है। फिर भी झुंड में इनकी संख्या कम हो रही है, जबकि हाथी निरंतर बढ़ रहे हैं। वन महकमे के आंकड़ों पर ही गौर करें तो एक दशक पहले यहां हाथियों की संख्या 1582 थी, जिसमें वर्ष 2017 की गणना के अनुसार 257 का इजाफा हुआ। जाहिर है कि हाथियों की संख्या बढ़ने पर इनके झुंड भी बड़े-बड़े दिखने चाहिए थे, लेकिन झुंड में इनकी संख्या लगातार कम होती जा रही है। ऐसे में प्रश्न उठना लाजिमी है कि कहीं जंगल में खाद्य श्रृंखला तो नहीं गड़बड़ा गई है या फिर बदली परिस्थितियों में हाथियों ने भी अपने झुंडों का आकार छोटा किया है। हालांकि, विशेषज्ञों की मानें तो यहां खाद्य श्रृंखला खासी सशक्त है। दिक्कत है तो सिर्फ यह कि हाथियों को यहां एक से दूसरे जंगल आने-जाने में खासी मुश्किलों का सामना करना पड़ रहा है और यही झुंड का आकार छोटा होने की वजह भी है। हाथी लंबी प्रवास यात्राएं करने वाला प्राणी है और इसके लिए वन क्षेत्र भी लंबे-चौड़े होने जरूरी हैं। यह वन क्षेत्र विभिन्न कारणों से सिमटे हैं। हाथियों की निबांध आवाजाही वाले गलियारों में मनुष्य ने बाधाएं खड़ी कर दी हैं। कहीं इनके परंपरागत रास्तों यानी गलियारों में मानव बस्तियां उग आई हैं तो कहीं सड़क व रेल मार्गों ने बाधाएं उत्पन्न कर दी हैं। ऐसे में हाथी कुछ इलाकों तक ही छोटी-छोटी प्रवास यात्राएं कर पा रहे हैं और इसी का असर उनके झुंडों के आकार पर भी पड़ा है। हाथियों की आवाजाही को चिन्हित 11 गलियारों की निबांध हो जाएं तो प्रवास यात्राओं के दौरान झुंडों में इनकी बड़ी संख्या दिखने लगेगी। साफ है कि इन गलियारों को खोलने के लिए सरकार को ठोस एवं प्रभावी पहल करनी होगी।

## ब्रह्मांड के इतिहास की अहम कड़ी

मुकुल व्यास

अरबों वर्ष पहले हमारे सौरमंडल के नजदीक दो न्यूट्रॉन तारों के बीच जबरदस्त भिड़ंत हुई थी। पृथ्वी पर पाई जाने वाली कुछ बहुमूल्य धातुओं का उद्गम संभवतः इसी टक्कर से हुआ था। गौरतलब है कि ब्लैकहोल्स के अलावा न्यूट्रॉन तारे ब्रह्मांड के सबसे सघन पदार्थ हैं। इनका अद्विवास बहुत कम होता है जो आम तौर पर 30 किलोमीटर तक होता है। न्यूट्रॉन कणों से भरपूर होने के कारण इसे न्यूट्रॉन तारा कहा जाता है। उनकी उत्पत्ति उस समय होती है जब एक विशाल तारा अपना ईंधन खत्म होने के बाद खुद अपने ऊपर ढह जाता है। 'नेचर' पत्रिका में प्रकाशित एक अध्ययन में यूनिवर्सिटी ऑफ कोलंबिया के खगोल वैज्ञानिक सर्जाबोक्स मार्का और यूनिवर्सिटी ऑफ फ्लोरिडा के खगोल वैज्ञानिक इमरे बार्तोस ने बताया कि 4.6 अरब वर्ष पहले दो न्यूट्रॉन तारों के बीच प्रचंड भिड़ंत हुई थी। हमारे सौरमंडल के करीब हुई इस ब्रह्मांडीय घटना ने पृथ्वी की भारी धातुओं के करीब 0.3 प्रतिशत हिस्से को जन्म दिया। इन भारी धातुओं में सोना, प्लूटोनियम और यूरेनियम शामिल हैं। आपको यह जानकर हैरानी होगी कि हम लोग

वैज्ञानिकों की यह कोशिश उन सवालों के जवाब तलाशने की है कि हम कहां से आए हैं और ब्रह्मांड में हमारा स्थान कहां है

किसी न किसी रूप में इन धातुओं से जुड़े हुए हैं। बार्तोस ने कहा कि हमारे भीतर इन धातुओं का अंश मौजूद है। जैसे आयोडीन जो जीवन के लिए अनिवार्य है। विवाह की अंगूठी का भी हमारे ब्रह्मांड के इतिहास से गहरा संबंध है। अंगूठी में शामिल तत्व पृथ्वी और मानवता के इतिहास से भी पुराने हैं। अंगूठी का करीब 10 मिलीग्राम हिस्सा संभवतः 4.6 अरब वर्ष पहले ही बन चुका था। बार्तोस ने बताया कि आरंभिक सौरमंडल में बने उल्का पिंडों में रेडियोधर्मी आइसोटोप के अंश मौजूद हैं। दूसरे खगोल वैज्ञानिक मार्का का कहना है कि इन आइसोटोप में क्षय होता रहता है। यह क्षय घड़ी के रूप में काम करता है जिसका उपयोग वैज्ञानिक आइसोटोप की उत्पत्ति के समय को पुनर्निर्मित करने के लिए कर सकते हैं। अपने निष्कर्षों पर पहुंचने के लिए बार्तोस और मार्का ने उल्कापिंडों की संरचना की तुलना मिलकी-वे

आकाशगंगा के मॉडलों से की। उनका अनुमान है कि न्यूट्रॉन तारों की टक्कर पृथ्वी के निर्माण से करीब दस करोड़ वर्ष पहले हुई होगी। तारों की भिड़ंत की जगह हमारे सौरमंडल को जन्म देने वाले गैस के बादल से एक हजार प्रकाश वर्ष दूर थी। मार्का ने कहा कि आज यदि हमारे सौरमंडल से इतनी ही दूरी पर ऐसी घटना दोबारा घटित होती है तो उससे निकलने वाले रेडिएशन से समूचे आकाश को रोशनी फीकी पड़ जाएगी। शोधकर्ताओं का खयाल है कि उनके अध्ययन से हमारे सौरमंडल की उत्पत्ति और संरचना में शामिल समस्त प्रक्रियाओं पर नई रोशनी डालने में मदद मिलेगी। बार्तोस ने कहा कि इस अध्ययन से ब्रह्मांडीय गूथी को सुलझाने के लिए रसायनशास्त्र, जीव विज्ञान और भूभ्रम शास्त्र जैसे विषयों में नए किस्म के शोध को बढ़ावा मिलेगा। मार्का का कहना है कि हमारे नतीजे मनुष्य के इस बुनियादी सवाल का उत्तर देने की कोशिश करते हैं कि हम कहां से आए हैं और ब्रह्मांड में हमारा स्थान कहां है। अंतर्निष्ठ में प्राकृतिक जीवन की तलाश के लिए एक रही खोज में वैज्ञानिकों के इस तरह के अध्ययन बहुत उपयोगी होते हैं। (लेखक स्वतंत्र टिप्पणीकार हैं)



संजय गुप्त

चूँकि बालाकोट हमले के बाद विश्व में भारत की प्रतिष्ठा बढ़ी है इसलिए इसका लाभ उठाया जाना चाहिए और मसूद अजहर पर पाबंदी के बाद भी पाकिस्तान पर दबाव बढ़ाना चाहिए

लगभग एक दशक के प्रयासों और खासकर मोदी सरकार की कूटनीतिक सक्रियता के बाद संयुक्त राष्ट्र सुरक्षा परिषद ने जैश ए मुहम्मद के सरगना मसूद अजहर पर पाबंदी लगा दी। इसी के साथ वह अंतरराष्ट्रीय आतंकी घोषित हो गया। उसे अंतरराष्ट्रीय आतंकी घोषित करने में इतना समय इसलिए लगा, क्योंकि चीन गेड़ा बना हुआ था। वह इस आतंकी सरगना पर पाबंदी लगाने में भारत और अन्य देशों की कोशिश को कई बार नाकाम कर चुका था। चीन सुरक्षा परिषद में अपने वीटो अधिकार का इस्तेमाल करके एक ओर जहां पाकिस्तान की ढाल बना हुआ था वहीं भारतीय हितों की अनदेखी भी कर रहा था। उसके इस रवैये के चलते भारत से रिश्तों में तल्खी भी आई। यह तो चीन ही जाने कि वह किस आधार पर इस आतंकी सरगना पर पाबंदी लगाने में तकनीकी बाधा उत्पन्न कर रहा था, लेकिन उसकी अड़गंवाजी भारतीय हितों के खिलाफ थी। शायद पाकिस्तान का अंध समर्थन करने की जिद में वह इसकी भी अनदेखी कर रहा था कि उसकी अंतरराष्ट्रीय छवि दमदार हो रही। आखिरकार वह भारत के साथ ही अमेरिका, ब्रिटेन, फ्रांस आदि देशों के कूटनीतिक दबाव में झुका, लेकिन इसका अंदेशा अभी भी बना हुआ है कि वह पाकिस्तान की भारत विरोधी हस्तियों की अनदेखी कर आगे भी उसका बचाव करेगा।

मसूद अजहर पर संयुक्त राष्ट्र सुरक्षा परिषद की पाबंदी लगाने का अर्थ है उसकी आगजाही पर रोक, संपत्तियों की जब्ती और उसके हथियार

रखने पर प्रतिबंध। सुरक्षा परिषद के फैसले के बाद पाकिस्तान ने कहा है कि उसने ये सारे कदम उठा लिए हैं, लेकिन उस पर भरोसा नहीं किया जा सकता। कायदे से मसूद अजहर पर पाबंदी की मांग तभी मान ली जानी चाहिए थी जब 2009 में पहली बार इसकी मांग उठी थी, क्योंकि उसका संगठन प्रतिबंधित कर दिया गया था। मसूद अजहर को अपहृत भारतीय विमान के यात्रियों के बदले रिहा किया गया था। संसद के साथ पठानकोट एयरबेस पर हमले में भी उसका हथ रखा। पुलवामा का हमलावर भी जैश सदस्य था। यह मानने के अच्छे-भले कारण हैं कि इस हमलावर को पाकिस्तान से मदद मिली। मसूद अजहर भारत में आतंक फैलाने में इसीलिए समर्थ बना रहा, क्योंकि उसकी पीठ पर पाकिस्तानी सेना का हथ था। पाकिस्तानी सेना कश्मीर में भारत के खिलाफ जो छद्म युद्ध छेड़े हुए है उसमें उसे जैश, लश्कर जैसे आतंकी संगठन उसका साथ देते हैं। पाकिस्तानी सेना भारत से इसलिए खुन्नस खाती है, क्योंकि वह भारत के हथों बार-बार पराजित हुई है। मुश्किल यह है कि पाकिस्तान की असली सत्ता उसके पास ही है। चूंकि पाकिस्तानी सेना भारत से बदला लेने की मानसिकता से ग्रस्त है इसलिए इसके आसार नहीं कि मसूद अजहर पर पाबंदी लगा जाने के बाद कश्मीर में पाकिस्तानी पोषित आतंकियों की घुसपैठ में कमी आएगी। स्पष्ट है कि भारत को यह उम्मीद नहीं करनी चाहिए कि पाकिस्तान आसानी से सही रास्ते पर आ जाएगा। मोदी सरकार ने सत्ता में आने के बाद इस



अवधेश राजगुप्त

उम्मीद में पाकिस्तान के प्रति दोस्ताना रवैया दिखाया था कि वह शांति की भाषा समझेगा, लेकिन ऐसा नहीं हुआ। पाकिस्तान की मौजूदा सरकार तो इस हलत में ही नहीं कि वह अपनी सेना के दबाव से मुक्त हो सके। इस पर आश्चर्य नहीं कि पाकिस्तानी प्रधानमंत्री इमरान खान को सेना की कठपुतली माना जाता है। उड़ी हमले के बाद मोदी सरकार ने पहले पाकिस्तान के खिलाफ सर्जिकल स्ट्राइक का फैसला लिया और फिर पुलवामा हमले के बाद एयर स्ट्राइक का फैसला किया है। फिलहाल यह कहना कठिन है कि अब पाकिस्तान के प्रति भारत की रणनीति क्या होगी, लेकिन माना यही जा रहा है कि अगर मोदी सरकार फिर सत्ता में आई तो प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी उसके खिलाफ सख्ती बरतने की नीति पर चलते रहेंगे। यह आवश्यक भी है, क्योंकि पाकिस्तान को यह पता चलना ही चाहिए कि अब भारत उसकी आतंकी गतिविधियों को बंदी रखने के लिए तैयार नहीं। भारत को पाकिस्तान के खिलाफ दबाव बनाने में

अंतरराष्ट्रीय समुदाय का साथ लेने के साथ ही चीन के रवैये को लेकर सतर्क भी रहना होगा। चूंकि बालाकोट हमले के बाद विश्व समुदाय में भारत की प्रतिष्ठा बढ़ी है इसलिए इसका लाभ उठाया जाना चाहिए। इसमें दो राय नहीं कि मसूद अजहर पर पाबंदी लगाना एक बड़ी सफलता है, लेकिन इसके बावजूद आवश्यक यह है कि भारत पाक की गतिविधियों से सतर्क रहे। उसे पाकिस्तानी आतंकी संगठनों के साथ अन्य आतंकी गुटों से भी सावधान रहना होगा। पहले श्रीलंका में भीषण आतंकी हमला और फिर इस हमले की जिम्मेदारी लेने वाले आतंकी संगठन आइएस के सरगना का वीडियो सामने आना यही बताता है कि भारत को कहीं अधिक चौकन्ना रहना चाहिए। भारत को आतंकी संगठनों से सतर्क रहने के साथ ही उनकी गतिविधियों के बारे में सटीक खुफिया सूचनाओं के आदान-प्रदान की भी कोशिश करनी चाहिए और उनके धन स्रोतों पर लगाम लगाने की भी। हालांकि मसूद अजहर पर पाबंदी के बाद अमेरिका ने पाक को नए सिरे से चेताया है, लेकिन भारत इसकी अनदेखी नहीं कर सकता

## चुनावी चक्रव्यूह खत्म होने का इंतजार

हार्य-व्यंग्य



चुनाव अंतिम चरणों में है। नेता जनता के चरणों पर पड़े-पड़े उतारवले हो रहे हैं। पत्रकारों और लेखकों पर वक्त बहुत भारी पड़ रहा है। अपने जान, मेधा और अनुमान को एक में दबाए पोल विचारद बैठे हैं। उनकी दुविधा को वही प्रेमी समझ सकता है जो प्रेमिका को रसोई में आंटी जी को इम्रूस करने के लिए सिलेंडर लगा रहा हो। एक्जिट पोल पर लगे बैंक के माहौल में चुनावी विश्लेषक 'जल बिन मखली' वाली अवस्था में लोट रहे हैं और अपने ज्ञान की एकाकी ज्वाला में तप होने को अभिशप्त हैं। जो समय रहते पोल पॉइंट के साथ-साथ नेताओं की दोहरी भूमिका में आ गए, वाणी संयोजन की कला का उपयोग करते हुए चैनलों के प्रिय बने हुए हैं, वहीं कुछ खालिस विश्लेषक परिणामों को लेकर जनता को भ्रमित करने के सुख से वंचित हैं। निरहिंगा का दुखी हृदय जिस प्रकार प्रेम परिणय के दिन याद करके दुखी होता है, उसी प्रकार प्रेम परिणय के दिन याद करने के बाद भी वह वे एक साथ प्रत्याशी के हारने और जीतने, दोनों का दावा पेश करके दोनों ओर सफलता का रमाल धर देते थे। लंबी चुनाव अवधि अपने साथ एक विचित्र सा निरुत्साह घेर लाई है। सब चक्रव्यूह घेरे जा चुके हैं। सब असत्य बोले जा चुके हैं। सब विवादों का दूध उबलकर पतिले के बाहर फैल चुका है। गुवराज का गला चुनावी गर्मी में कुछ भी उमल रहा है। न्यायालय ने इस प्रकार राजनीति में लपेटे जाने का संज्ञान लेते हुए विरोध नेताजी को प्रेषित किया। नेता जी ने इस जुटे भाषण का ठीका एक आधुनिक युवा की भांति चुनावी गर्मी पर डालकर मान झुड़ाने का प्रयास किया, किंतु न्याय व्यवस्था इत आति लंबे चुनाव के दौरान जनता की दिलचस्पी बनाए रखने को

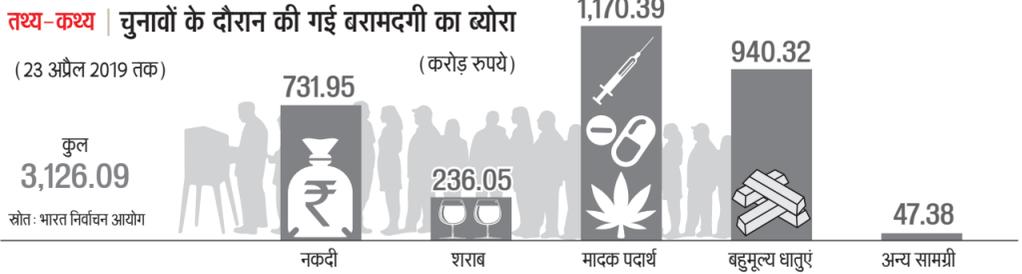


माहौल बड़ा रोचक है। कांग्रेस प्रत्याशी सपा का, सपा प्रत्याशी कम्युनिस्टों का और कम्युनिस्ट कांग्रेसी का प्रचार कर रहे हैं

तत्पर है। में व्यक्तिगत तौर पर क्षमा देने और लेने की उस परंपरा का समर्थक हूँ जिसमें निरर्थक आरोप-प्रत्यारोप का दौर चलता रहता है। इससे राजनीति में प्रवाह बना रहता है और चुनाव काल में लॉग वीकेंड पर जाने को तत्पर जनता की राजनीति में रुचि बनी रहती है। बंगाल की संप्रभु नेत्री भारतीय लोकतंत्र में ऐतिहासिक वीरगणपू आचरण की पुनर्स्थापना के लिए कटिबद्ध है। वीरभोग्या वसुंधरा के अमर सिद्धांत को बूथ कैम्पिंग के पुरुषार्थपूर्ण दिनों के इतने समय बाद आज के ईवीएम युग में भी जीवित रखने के लिए और आधुनिक भीरुता से भारतीय समाज को बाहर लाने के लिए समाज उनका सदैव अनुग्रहित रहेगा। उत्तर प्रदेश और बिहार में माहौल बड़ा ही रोमांचक हो गया है। कांग्रेस प्रत्याशी सपा का प्रचार कर रहा है, सपा प्रत्याशी कम्युनिस्टों और कम्युनिस्ट कांग्रेस के नेता का। ऐसा लगता है कि जिसको जल में खाली दिखावा है, वह वही किसी भी प्रत्याशी के प्रचार में उतर जाता है। जनता भी हेलीकॉप्टर किसी का देखने जाती है और वोट किसी और प्रत्याशी को देती है। उग्र नेता भी गाली गलौज करके थक चुके हैं। क्रांतिकारी नेता अब

अपनी सफलता के लिए प्रतिद्वंद्वी के नामांकन के निरस्त होने पर निर्भर हैं। बुजुर्ग कांग्रेस वोटकटवा बनकर संतुष्ट हैं। ऐसे बोरियत भर माहौल में रहलु जी की नागरिकता जैसे प्रश्न उठाकर निरुत्साहित जनता में उत्साह फूंकने का प्रयास हो रहा है, किंतु निरुत्साह का संगीत भी बोर हो रही जनता को उबारने में असमर्थ हैं। भारत एक कमेटी प्रधान देश है। हर समस्या का समाधान हम कमेटी में ढूंढते हैं। इस विषय पर बाकायदा एकाध घण्टे का चर्चा है, किंतु निरुत्साह का संगीत भी बोर हो रहा है कि उस कमेटी के कार्यकलाप में ऊर्जा प्रदान करने के लिए एक अन्य कमेटी नियुक्त की जाए ताकि अधिक से अधिक संख्या में जनता का मन लगा रहे। भारतीय समाज में कमेटी का वही स्थान है जो रोमान साम्राज्य में ग्लेडिएटर परंपरा का था। समाजवाद का हंस वेगुसराय से दाना चुगकर पूंजीवादी के क्षितिज की ओर उड़ चला है। ब्यूज पर भाषण देने के बाद पूंजीवाद से रोटी का प्रबंध किया जा रहा है। गरीब को गरीबी के महात्म्य का गायन सुनाने के बाद गायक-दल गुच्चो का चरमा लगाकर अमेरिका पहुंच गया है। समाजवादी दलों के नेता आर्थिक स्थिति में पूंजीवादी नेताओं के समान संपन्नता प्राप्त कर चुके हैं। शीघ्र ही यह समानता सर्वहारा तक भी पहुंचेगी, ऐसी बुद्धिजीवियों में सर्वसम्पत्ति है। अंतरराष्ट्रीयकरण के इस दौर में प्रचारक और समर्थक अंतरराष्ट्रीय हो रहे हैं। ईश्वर ने चाहा तो आगे प्रत्याशी भी अंतरराष्ट्रीय हो सकेंगे। वर्तमान में यही प्रतीक्षा है कि शीघ्रतिशीघ्र चुनावी चरण पूर्ण हो और नेतागण जनता के चरणों में पड़े चारों की छद्म मुद्रा से बाहर आकर पुनः नेतासुलभ भ्रष्ट भाव धारण करें और लोकतंत्र अपने स्वाभाविक स्वरूप में लौटे।

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कांग्रेस की हताशा

रहुल गांधी भले ही चुनावी रैलियों में प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी को सीधे चुनौती देने की बात करते हों, लेकिन चुनाव के लिहाज से देश के सबसे बड़े राज्य उत्तर प्रदेश में कांग्रेस पार्टी में हताशा साफ नजर आ रही है। आम जनता के बीच गठबंधन और भाजपा की चर्चा तो है, लेकिन कांग्रेस की नहीं है। अमेठी, रायबरेली समेत जिन सीटों पर कांग्रेस के बड़े नेता चुनाव लड़ रहे हैं, वहां भी चर्चे व्यक्तिगत रूप से उम्मीदवार की जरूरत हो रही है, लेकिन पार्टी के रूप में कांग्रेस की नहीं। कांग्रेस की हताशा का अंदाजा इस बात से लगाया जा सकता है कि रायबरेली में सोनिया गांधी को जीतने के लिए सपा का सहारा लेना पड़ रहा है। यहां सपा के मंच से प्रियंका गांधी ने सोनिया गांधी को जीताने की अपील की। बताया जाता है कि सपा के एक विधायक को इसके लिए बाकायदा अखिलेश यादव की ओर से निर्देश दिया गया था।

चुनावी संसाधन का संकट

देश में लोकतंत्र के सबसे बड़े त्योहार लोकसभा चुनाव का आधे से ज्यादा हिस्सा खत्म हो चुका है। राजनीतिक पार्टियां इसी आधार पर अपनी जीत तो विरोधी की हार का दावा करने लगीं हैं। मगर इन दावों के बीच चुनाव के बचे हुए हिस्से की

राजंरग

बाजी और प्रबंधन को लेकर इनकी अपनी चुनौतियां भी हैं। मसलन कांग्रेस के कई उम्मीदवारों की चुनौती बृथ प्रबंधन के लिए संसाधन जुटाने की है। इसीलिए पार्टी के ऐसे प्रत्याशी जिनकी चुनावी खर्च की अपनी सीमाएं हैं, वे पार्टी के अलग-अलग बड़े नेताओं को बृथ प्रबंधन के खर्च का इंतजाम करने की गुहार लगा रहे हैं। वे तर्क दे रहे हैं कि सत्ताधारी भाजपा या राजग के उम्मीदवार चुनाव और बृथ प्रबंधन के लिए पैसा ही सही नहीं है। मगर कम से कम वोटिंग के दिन बृथ प्रबंधन कार्यकर्ताओं के लिए जरूरी खर्च देना अपरिहार्य है। दिलचस्प यह है कि पार्टी की ओर से कुछ एकर को थोड़ी बहुत मदद देकर कहा जा रहा कि राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर चुनाव प्रचार प्रबंधन चलाने में ही बड़ी मशक्कत करनी पड़ रही है और वे अपने खर्च का प्रबंध खुद करें। पार्टी के ऐसे उम्मीदवारों के सामने अब बेचारी से जनता की ओर निहारने के अलावा विकल्प भी क्या है?

जेट के पायलटों का दर्द

जेट एयरवेज के बंद होने के कारण इन दिनों उसके कर्मचारियों के हाल बेहाल हो जाना स्वाभाविक ही है। शायद ही कोई उनके दुःख-दर्द को समझ सकता हो। उनमें से कुछ को जो दूसरी विमानन कंपनियां ले भी रही हैं उनके कुछ इन कंपनियों का रीवाज भी सही नहीं है। हाल में जेट के प्रति पायलटों ने एक दूसरी एयरलाइन में भर्ती के लिए इंटरव्यू दिया तो वहां भी उनकी खासी बेइज्जती की गई। वेतन के बारे में बात करते हुए इंटरव्यू लेने वाले अधिकारी ने जेट के पायलट से कहा कि तुम इतने वेतन के बारे में सोच भी कैसे सकते हो। हम तुम्हें इतना

कि वह आतंकियों के खिलाफ दिखावटी कार्रवाई करने में माहिर है।

इस समय देश में चुनाव चल रहे हैं और तमाम अन्य मुद्दों के साथ यह बात भी चर्चा में है कि मोदी सरकार ने पाकिस्तान पर पहले सर्जिकल स्ट्राइक की और फिर एयर स्ट्राइक। भाजपा इन दोनों सैन्य अभियानों को राष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा से जोड़ रही है। इसी के साथ वह विपक्ष और खासकर कांग्रेस को इसके लिए कठघरे में खड़ा कर रही है कि उसने सत्ता में रहते समय आतंकवाद व डटकर मुकाबला नहीं किया। चुनाव प्रचार भाजपा नेता मसूद अजहर पर पाबंदी का भी जिक्र कर रहे हैं। इस आतंकी सरगना पर पाबंदी भारत की एक बड़ी कूटनीतिक कामयाबी है। आम तौर पर इसका सभो ने स्वागत किया है, लेकिन कांग्रेस यह भी उल्लेख कर रही है कि एक समय भाजपा सरकार ने ही इस आतंकी सरगना को रिहा किया था।

कांग्रेस का यह भी दावा है कि उसके समय भी कम से कम छह सर्जिकल स्ट्राइक की गईं। कांग्रेस का यह दावा उसकी हताशा का ही परिचायक है। कांग्रेस एक ओर तो यह कह रही है कि सेना के परामर्श का ढिंढोरा नहीं पीटा जाना चाहिए और दूसरी ओर वह छह सर्जिकल स्ट्राइक का दावा करके ठीक यही काम कर रही है। समझना कठिन है कि कांग्रेस ने सर्जिकल स्ट्राइक की जानकारी देश-दुनिया को क्यों नहीं दी? सवाल यह भी है कि इस समय छह सर्जिकल स्ट्राइक के दावे का क्या मतलब? क्या कांग्रेस को यह पता नहीं कि जब कभी इस तरह की सैन्य कार्रवाई होती है तो जनता का मनोबल बढ़ता है? यह वही कांग्रेस है जिसका यह कहना रहा है कि सरकार को सेना की कार्रवाई का बखाना नहीं करना चाहिए। कम से कम उसे तो यह पता होना चाहिए कि सेना सरकार की अनुमति से ही किसी अन्य देश में कोई कार्रवाई करती है और इस तरह की कार्रवाई का एक बड़ा मकसद शत्रु देश को सख्त संदेश देना होता है।

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सार्थक जीवन

आजकल सभी वृद्धि और विकास के आकांक्षी बने हुए हैं। व्यक्ति से लेकर तक राष्ट्र तक सभी इसके लिए प्रयत्नशील हैं। मगर विकास है क्या? क्या भौतिकता का प्रसार ही विकास का पर्याय है। हर एक के जीवन में भौतिक चमक-दमक। किसी के पास भौतिक सौभाग्य का कोई अभाव नहीं। भौतिकता में आकंट डूबा मनुष्य अब कुछ कदम भी पैदल नहीं चलना चाहता। उसके पास बड़े से बड़े मकान हो चारों इंचों के लिए अगल-बगल में लगे वातावरण को स्वच्छ करने वाले पेड़ों को ही क्यों न काटना पड़ जाए। आज का मनुष्य समाज में सबसे बड़ा दिखना चाहता है। सभी ओर होड़ मचा है। मनुष्य नहीं देख पा रहा है कि हमें इस संसार में मानव जीवन किसलिए प्राप्त हुआ है। वह बाहर के प्रपंचमय जगत में आकर्षित होकर उलझ गया है। यहां पर शांत होकर धैर्यपूर्वक विचार करने की आवश्यकता है। हमें इस दिशा में सोच बढ़ानी होगी कि मानव जीवन मिलने के बाद हम बालक से युवा होते हैं। युवावस्था के बाद बुढ़ापा और फिर भौतिक शरीर समाप्त हो जाता है। भौतिक शरीर रहने तक ही सभी मानव इस जगत के सदस्य माने जाते हैं। शरीर समाप्त हो जाने के बाद इस जगह से पूर्ण रूप से नाता टूट जाता है। अब देखना होगा कि शरीर रहते हमने कैसे विकास को करने का प्रयास किया। भौतिक समृद्धि के लिए पिरते पड़ते रहे या आत्म-उन्नति के लिए भी कुछ प्रयत्नशील हुए। अपने आप आंतरिक विकास के लिए किंतुनी तेजी दिखाएं। आंतरिक विकास के बिना बाहरी विकास करते रहने से मनुष्य किसी एक स्थान पर जाकर किंकरांतव्यविमुद्ध हो जाता है, क्योंकि एक निश्चित समय के बाद उसमें से जो रस प्राप्ति की प्रतीति हो रही थी, वह बंद हो जाती है। तब छटपटाहट बढ़ जाती है। यही स्थिति आज चारों ओर दिखाई पड़ रही है। वाद्य चमक-दमक के कारण आज का मानव विशिष्टता की ओर बंधा जा रहा है। उसे समझ में नहीं आ रहा कि वह विकास के पथ पर है अथवा विनाश के मुखाभे पर। अब मनुष्य को अपनी वाद्य ऊर्जा को समेटकर आंतरिक चेतना को जगाना होगा। आंतरिक चेतना को जगाकर वाद्य क्रियाओं को निष्पादित करते हुए मानव सच्चे विकास की सही मंजिल को प्राप्त कर सकेगा। तभी जीवन सही मादनों में सार्थक होगा।

अशोक वाजपेयी

वेतन नहीं दे सकते। आखिर तुम मजबूरी में हमारे पास आए हो और तुम्हें नौकरी देकर हम तुम्हारे ऊपर एहसान कर रहे हैं। इसलिए जितना वेतन और सुविधाएं मिलें चुपचाप स्वीकार कर लो। वरना तुम्हें लेना हमारी मजबूरी नहीं है। बेचारा जेट का पायलट खून के आंसू पीकर रह गया। विवशता में उसने नौकरी तो स्वीकार कर ली, लेकिन अपने साधियों को इस वाक्य का व्योरा देने से खुद को रोक नहीं सका। जेट की पायलट एसोसिएशन नेशनल एविएटर्स गिल्ड को जब इस बारे में पता चला तो उसने इस पर गहरी आपत्ति जताते हुए उक्त एयरलाइन के प्रबंधन के समक्ष अपना विरोध करवा दिया। अब वो एयरलाइन सफाई देते घुम रही है कि हो सकता है कि उक्त घटना में किसी अधिकारी विशेष ने अपने निजी विचार रखे हों। एयरलाइन जेट के पायलटों का सम्मान करती है।

दुविधा में नौकरशाही

नई सरकार बनने का वक्त जैसे-जैसे करीब आ रहा है, नौकरशाही भी सक्रिय होती जा रही है। नई सरकार के लिए एजेंडा तैयार करने का काम जोरों पर शुरू हो गया है, लेकिन नौकरशाही का एक वर्ग इस बात को लेकर भ्रम में है कि किन नीतियों व कार्यक्रमों को एजेंडे में रखा जाए। सरकार का स्वरूप क्या होगा, इसे लेकर व अफसर लगातार मीडिया के लोगों और अन्य स्रोतों के संपर्क में हैं। ये अफसर इस बात से संतुष्ट हो जाना चाहते हैं कि जो एजेंडा बने वह किसी की भी सरकार के कामकाज में फिट हो जाए। इसलिए वे ऐसी घोषणाओं को एजेंडे में आखिरी वक्त तक शामिल करने से रोकें रखना चाहते हैं। हालांकि नौकरशाही का एक बड़ा वर्ग ऐसा भी है जिसने मौजूदा सरकार के कार्यक्रमों के अगले चरण की रूपरेखा तैयार करनी भी शुरू कर दी है। अब देखना होगा कि 23 मई के बाद उन्हें कौनसी रणनीति को आगे बढ़ाने का अवसर मिलेगा।



## दूसरी नजर

- पी चिदंबरम**

मेरे सामने एक मई का इंडियन एक्सप्रेस रखा है और मैं इन दिनों चल रहे चुनावों की रिपोर्ट पढ़ रहा हूँ। एक खबर प्रमुखता से लगे शीर्षक वाली यह है, ‘जिस पार्टी का विपक्षी नेता नहीं है वह प्रधानमंत्री का सपना देख रही है : मोदी’। इस रिपोर्ट में नरेंद्र मोदी के लखनऊ और मुजफ्फरपुर में दिए गए भाषणों का अच्छा-खासा ब्योरा है।

भारत का सबसे बड़ा राज्य उत्तर प्रदेश सभी दलों के लिए प्रमुख रणक्षेत्र बना हुआ है। 2019 में भाजपा के लिए यह खासतौर से महत्वपूर्ण है, क्योंकि 2014 में उसने अरसी में जिन इकहतर सीटों पर जीत हासिल की थी, उन्हें बनाए रखने के लिए वह संघर्ष कर रही है। इन इकहतर सीटों की बदौलत ही भाजपा ने लोकसभा में बहुमत हासिल कर सरकार बनाई थी। अगर भाजपा उत्तर प्रदेश में अपनी इन जीती हुई सीटों से से आधी पर भी हार जाती है तो वह अपने बूते सरकार नहीं बना पाएगी। इसलिए, इसमें कोई आश्चर्य नहीं कि मोदी अपना ज्यादातर वक्त उत्तर प्रदेश को दे रहे हैं। इसमें कुछ गलत भी नहीं है, सिवाय इसके कि हर नए भाषण में मोदी जबर्दस्ती भोलापन दिखाते हुए असाधारण दावे कर रहे हैं। वे औसत स्कूल या कॉलेज में पढ़े मतदाता की समझ को भी चुनौती दे रहे हैं। सच्चाई के मामले में कोई व्यक्ति कितनी आजादी ले सकता है, इसकी सीमा भी वे परख रहे हैं। मोदी के कुछ दावों को देखिए-

### कोई बम विस्फोट नहीं?

आतंकवाद से लड़ने में अक्षमता के लिए कांग्रेस और दूसरों के खिलाफ रोने-कलपने के बाद मोदी ने कहा- ‘फिर कभी आपने मंदिरों, बाजारों, रेलवे स्टेशनों, बस स्टैंड या कहीं और विस्फोट सुने? ये बम विस्फोट रुके या नहीं? ये विस्फोट मोदी के डर से रुके हैं।’

इससे पहले उन्होंने बार-बार यह दावा किया था कि उनके पिछले पांच साल के कार्यकाल में कोई बम विस्फोट नहीं हुआ!

दुर्भाग्यवश, तथ्य कुछ और कह रहे हैं। पिछले पांच साल में हुए बड़े बम विस्फोटों की एक



ये ति मिल गया है। हां, उसके साक्षात दर्शन तो अभी नहीं हुए हैं, पर उसके चरण चिह्न भारतीय सेना के सौजन्य से जरूर उपलब्ध हो गए हैं। सेना की तरफ से हाल ही में एक टवीट जारी की गई थी, जिसमें इस मिथक मानव के कदमों के निशान दूर तक तस्वीरों में देखे जा सकते हैं। सेना का कहना था कि उसका एक पर्वतारोही दल मकालू श्रृंखला पर लगभग साढ़े तीन हजार मीटर की ऊंचाई पर था, जब उसे अचानक इस भीमकाय आदि मानव के पैरों के निशान बर्फ पर अंकित मिले थे। सेना के दल ने इनकी फोटो तो ली ही, साथ-साथ पैरों की पूरी माप-तोल भी कर ली थी।

टवीट के आते ही सब तरफ सनसनी फैल गई। फैलती भी क्यों न? येति अपने में एक बड़ा ही रोचक जीव है, जिसकी खोज पिछली दो सदियों से बड़े जोर-शोर से चल रही है। इस हिममानव का जिक्र बहुत सारी नेपाली और तिब्बती किस्सों-कहानियों में भी आता है। चूंकि पदचिह्न सेना ने जारी किए थे, इसलिए टिवटर पर राष्ट्रवादी ताकतों ने उसको बेहद गंभीरता से लिया। उनके मुताबिक येति को अब मिला ही मान लेना चाहिए। एक साहब ने तो यहां



येति को आमतौर पर द्विपाद के रूप में वर्णित किया जाता है, पर अधिकतर वैज्ञानिकों का विश्वास है कि कभी-कभी वह कुछ देर के लिए दो पैरों पर खड़ा हो जाता था।

एवरेस्ट पर चढ़ने का प्रयास करते समय एरिक शिप्टन ने सागर तल से लगभग बीस हजार फीट ऊपर बर्फ में अनगिनत बड़े-बड़े निशानों की तस्वीरें ली थी। 1953 में सर एडमंड हिलेरी और तेनजिंग नोर्गे ने माउंट एवरेस्ट पर चढ़ने के समय बड़े-बड़े पदचिह्नों को देखने की खबर दी थी। 19 मार्च, 1954 को डेली मेल में एक लेख छपा था, जिसमें कथित तौर पर अभियान दलों द्वारा पैगबोचे मट में पाए गए येति की खोपड़ी की खाल से बालों के नमूने प्राप्त करने का वर्णन था। नमूनों का वैज्ञानिक विश्लेषण भी हुआ था, पर वे किस प्राणी के बाल हैं, पता नहीं आमतौर पर पाए जाने वाले बालू के है।

वैसे येति, जिसे अंग्रेजी में अंबोमिनेबल स्नोमैन (घुणित हिममानव) भी कहा जाता है, का किस्सा काफी पुराना है और रोचक भी। माना जाता है कि वह एक पौराणिक प्राणी और एक वानर जैसा क्रिप्टेड है, जो कथित तौर पर नेपाल और तिब्बत के हिमालय क्षेत्र में निवास करता है। उसके लिए येति और मेह-तेह नामों का उपयोग आमतौर पर क्षेत्र के मूल निवासी करते हैं, और यह उनके इतिहास और पौराणिक कथाओं का हिस्सा है। यह उत्तरी अमेरिका के बिग फुट किंवदंती की तरह माना जाता रहा है।

‘घुणित हिममानव’ पद को 1921 तक नहीं गढ़ा गया था। उस वर्ष लैफ्टिनेंट कर्नल चार्ल्स हॉवर्ड-बरी ने अल्पाइन क्लब और रॉयल जियोग्राफिकल सोसाइटी के संयुक्त एवरेस्ट रिकॉनिंसन्स एक्सपिडिशन (एवरेस्ट टोही अभियान) का नेतृत्व किया था, जिसका वृत्तांत उन्होंने ‘माउंट एवरेस्ट द रिकॉनिंसन्स’, 1921 में लिखा था। इस पुस्तक में हॉवर्ड-बरी इक्कीस हजार फीट में लहाक्पा-ला को पार करने का एक विवरण शामिल करते हैं, जहां उन्हें कुछ ऐसे पदचिह्न मिले, जिन्हें देख कर उनके शेरपा पथप्रदर्शकों ने उन्हें तुरंत बताया था कि ये निशान ‘बार्फों के जंगली मानव’ के हैं, जिन्हें वे मेतोह-कांगमी कहते हैं। मेतोह का अर्थवाद मानव-बालू है और कांग-मी का मतलब हिममानव है।

‘घुणित हिममानव’ शब्द की उत्पत्ति निश्चय ही रंगीन है। इसकी शुरुआत तब हुई, जब हेनरी न्यूमैन, जो किम उपनाम से कोलकाता के द स्टेट्समैन अखबार में लिखते थे, ने दार्जिलिंग लौटने पर एवरेस्ट रिकॉनिंसन्स एक्सपिडिशन के कौलियों का साक्षात्कार लिया था। न्यूमैन ने शायद कलात्मक अनुज्ञप्ति के कारण ‘घुणित’ शब्द की जगह ‘मेतोह’ शब्द को ‘घिनोने’ या ‘गंदे’ शब्दार्थों के रूप में गलत अनुवाद किया था। जैसा कि लेखक बिल टिलमैन वर्णन करते

हैं, न्यूमैन ने लंबे अरसे बाद द टाइम्स के लिए एक पत्र में लिखा : पूरी कहानी एक ऐसी आनंदमय रचना लगी कि मैंने इसे एक या दो समाचारपत्रों को भेज दिया।’ साफ है कि न्यूमैन ने शेरपाओं की कहानियों में नमक-मिर्च लगा कर अपनी लेखनी चमकाने के लिए घृणित हिममानव रच डाला था।

बीसवीं सदी के दौरान खबरों की आवृत्ति में वृद्धि हुई, जब पश्चिम वासियों ने इसके बारे में कई पर्वतों की खाक छाननी शुरू कर दी और समय-समय पर अजीबोगरीब प्राणियों या अजीब तरह के पदचिह्नों को देखने की सूचना दी। 1925 में एनए टॉबाजी, जो एक फोटोग्राफर और रॉयल जियोग्राफिकल सोसाइटी के सदस्य थे, एक मिनट तक जेम् गुलेशियर के पास एक प्राणी को देखा था। ‘इसमें कोई संदेह नहीं कि उसकी कद-काठी बिल्कुल एक इंसान की तरह थी, जो सीधा चल रहा था और कुछ बौनी बुरुश झाड़ियों को तोड़ने के लिए कभी-कभी बीच-बीच में रुक रहा था। यह बर्फ की तुलना में काला दिखाई दिया और जहां तक मैं समझ सकता था, इसने कपड़े नहीं पहने थे।’

तारीख	जगह	मृतकों की संख्या
5-12-2014	मोहरा (जम्मू-कश्मीर)	10
10-04-2015	दंतेवाड़ा	5
27-01-2016	पलामू	6
19-07-2016	औरंगाबाद (बिहार)	10
02-02-2017	कोरापुट (ओड़ीशा)	7
10-05-2017	सुकमा	25
27-10-2018	अवापल्ली (छत्तीसगढ़)	4
14-02-2019	पुलवामा	44
09-04-2019	दंतेवाड़ा	5 (एक भाजपा विधायक सहित)
01-05-2019	गढ़चिरौली	15

नहीं कराया? इसके अलावा, सेना के जनरलों ने भी मोदी के दावों को गलत बताया है और दावे के साथ कहा कि ‘ऐसा न तो पहली बार हुआ था और न ही आखिरी बार होगा’। सीमापार हुई पिछली कार्रवाइयों की एक सारणी यह है-

नरेंद्र मोदी सिर्फ राजनीतिक दल के नेता और चुनाव प्रचारक नहीं हैं। वे भारत के प्रधानमंत्री हैं। लोगों को ताज्जुब तो इस बात का है कि देश का प्रधानमंत्री बार-बार झूठ को ही क्यों दोहराता है। यह याददास्त

21-01-2000	नदाला एनक्लेव, नीलम नदी के पार बरोह सेक्टर, पुंछ
18-09-2003	भल्लल सेक्टर, पुंछ
19-06-2008	शारदा सेक्टर, नीलम नदी के पार सावन पत्रा चौक पोस्ट
30-08-2011	नाजापिरे सेक्टर
06-01-2013	नीलम घाटी
27-07-2013	
06-08-2013	

मुझे मोदी की भक्तन कहते हैं मेरे कई पत्रकार बंधु और सोशल मीडिया पर भारत के राजपरिवार की समर्थक। इसके बावजूद जब भी मुझे लगा है कि मोदी ने कोई गलती की है, मैंने डट कर उस थी। आज तकरीबन पूरे देश में यह बंद हो चुकी है। साथ में

गलती की आलोचना की है। गलतियां हुई हैं। कुछ तो बहुत बड़ी गलतियां। अपनी निजी फेहरिस्त में नंबर एक पर मैं नोटबंदी रखती हूं। मेरी राय में नोटबंदी से भारत का नुकसान ज्यादा हुआ है। लाभ बहुत कम। दूसरे नंबर पर मैं रखती हूं गोरक्षकों की हिंसा और प्रधानमंत्री का उस पर मौन रहना। तीसरे नंबर पर मैं रखती हूं मोदी का घबरा कर अपनी तय हुई आर्थिक दिशा बदल डालना, जब राहुल गांधी ने ‘सूट-बूट की सरकार’ वाला उन पर ताजो कसा था।

मोदी ने 2014 के चुनाव अभियान में वादा किया था आर्थिक दिशा बदलने का। कहा करते थे तब कि भारत को समृद्धि का सपना देखना चाहिए, सिर्फ गरीबी हटाने का नहीं। कहा करते थे कि सरकार का कोई बिजनेस नहीं होना चाहिए। सो, इशारा गया उस वक्तव्य से कि निजी निवेशकों का स्वागत है भारत की अर्थव्यवस्था में। इशारा था कि जिन समाजवादी नीतियों के कारण भारत गरीब और पिछड़ा रहा है, उनको बदल कर वे देश की अर्थव्यवस्था में परिवर्तन लाने का काम करेंगे। इस वादे को पूरा किया होता मोदी ने, तो मुमकिन है कि आज रोजगार की बहार आ गई होती भारत में और उनके इस चुनाव में हारने की चर्चा भी न होती।

राजनीतिक क्षेत्र में मोदी परिवर्तन लाए हैं। एक नए किस्म का भारतीय राजनीति में आ गया है। जिन मुद्दी भर राजनीतिक परिवारों में संसद में प्रवेश पाने के सारे टिकट हुआ करते थे, उनको इस नए किस्म के राजनीतिज्ञ से खतरा है, सो वे मोदी के आज सबसे बड़े दुश्मन हैं। महगटबंधन बना ही है इस डर से कि मोदी अगर दुबारा प्रधानमंत्री बन जाते हैं, तो देश का राजनीतिक चरित्र और बदल डालेंगे। मगर इस बदलाव से भारत को लाभ हुआ है, क्योंकि वे लोग राजनीति में आने की सोचने लगे हैं अब, जो किसी राजनीतिक परिवार या राजनीतिक

स्वच्छता की क्रांति आ गई है, जिसके सिपाही बन गए हैं ग्रामीण भारत के युवा और युवतियां। काश कि शहरी भारत में भी यह क्रांति आई होती। लेकिन यह भी याद रखना जरूरी है कि अगर हमारे सारे शहर और महानगर गंदी बरिस्तयों जैसे दिखते हैं, तो यह हाल पैदा हुआ है दशकों की लापरवाही के कारण। मोदी ने कम से कम इशारा तो किया है कि यहां परिवर्तन लाना जरूरी है। मोदी ने बहुत कुछ किया है देश के लिए, लेकिन मतदाताओं की दृष्टि में यह सब काफी नहीं है। तो, मोदी को प्रधानमंत्री नहीं रहने देंगे तेईस मई के बाद, बिना किसी ब्रिटिश पत्रिका की नसीहत लिए। इस पत्रिका ने पिछले हफ्ते एक संपादकीय में लिखा है कि मोदी ने भारत में इतनी गंफरत फैलाई है, इतनी गलतियां की हैं कि कांग्रेस पार्टी को जिताना जरूरी हो गया है। साथ में कांग्रेस पार्टी की तरफदारी इस आधार पर की है कि

आदालत के गलत हवाले से कहे गए वाक्य पर अदालत के आगे राहुल ने खेद जताया। लेकिन राहुल को राहत नहीं दी गई। अदालत ने कह दिया कि फिर से हलफनामा दें।

इस पर कई चैनल प्रतियोगिता में आमने-सामने रहे। एक कहता कि राहुल संकट में दूसरा कहता कि राहुल परेशानी में! इसके आगे बहसें खड़ी थीं। लेकिन इसमें बहसें क्या करेंगी? करना तो अदालत को है और अदालत ने कह दिया कि फिर से साफ-साफ लिख कर दो! तब काहे की बहस?

लेकिन कुछ एंकरों को ‘राहुल फोबिया’ है। वे जब तक राहुल को टोक न लें, तब तक उनको चैन नहीं पड़ता दिखता। कई एंकरों में कंपटीशन-स दिखता है कि कौन किस तरह से राहुल को शर्मिंदा करता है, उनकी शेम शेम करता-कराता है और सीधे माफी मांगवाता है।

एक बार फिर राहुल की नागरिकता पर सवाल उठाए जाने लगे। और इस बार नागरिकता का सवाल किसी छोटे-मोटे ने नहीं उठाया, बल्कि सुब्रह्मण्यम स्वामी ने उठाया कि राहुल की नागरिकता स्पष्ट हो!

ज्यों ही नागरिकता पर सवाल उठा, त्यों ही सब चैनल ‘बिजी’ हो गए। एक चैनल पर कांग्रेसी प्रवक्ता ने साफ कर दिया कि पहले भी यह मुद्दा उठाया गया था और सर्वोच्च अदालत ने उसका फैसला भी कर दिया था कि वे भारत के नागरिक हैं।

लेकिन सवाल तो सवाल है। और वह भी राहुल की नागरिकता का सवाल! आप उठा भर दें और पूरे दिन आनंद लें। चैनल सवाल लपक लेंगे और पहले से ही उत्तरित सवाल को फिर से दिन भर धुनते हुए पूछते रहेंगे कि राहुल जी आप किस देश के नागरिक हैं? ताकि राहुल की नागरिकता को लेकर फिर से संदेह का जाल बुन दिया जाय!

एक दिन जब कोई बड़ा मुद्दा न मिला, तो एक न्यायप्रिय एंकर आयोग के ही पीछे पड़ गया। कहने लगा कि चुनाव आयोग में महीने पुरानी ढेर सारी शिकायतें पड़ीं हैं, लेकिन आयोग विचार ही नहीं करता!

# सच्चे दिन मिल सकते हैं !

कमजोर पड़ने का मामला तो नहीं हो सकता, क्योंकि नरेंद्र मोदी ने बार-बार यह याद दिलाया है कि बम विस्फोटों और सर्जिकल स्ट्राइक के उनके दावे प्रमाण के रूप में गलत थे। यह कोई चुनावी चतुराई भी नहीं हो सकती, क्योंकि जब लोग बार-बार एक ही झूठ को सुनेंगे तो भड़क उठेंगे। मेरा मानना है कि इसका जवाब मोदी के व्यक्तित्व में कहीं गहरे मौजूद है।

### असल मुद्दों पर चुप्पी

हाल में मोदी ने दावा किया कि उन्होंने कभी भी न तो अपने को चायवाला होने का जिक्र किया, न जाति का। मैं भौचक रह गया, और कुछ जानकारी जुटाई। श्री मोदी ने अलग-अलग तारीखों को ऐसे कई बयान दिए। सबसे पहले मुझे जो देखने को मिला, वह 28 सितंबर 2014 का बयान था जिसमें उन्होंने खुद को चायवाला बताया था, और उसके बाद कई बार वे यह कह चुके हैं। इसी तरह, ऐसे कई बयान हैं जिनमें मोदी ने अपने को पिछड़ी जाति का बताया। दो बयान तो हाल ही के हैं, एक 25 मार्च, 2018 का और दूसरा 18 अप्रैल, 2018 का। उनके कहे शब्दों को हूबहू यहां कहना जरा अपमानजनक होगा क्योंकि वे भारत के प्रधानमंत्री हैं और मैं इस पद का सम्मान करता हूं। मोदी को खुश होना चाहिए कि कौंकि भी तथ्यों पर ऐसी निगरानी नहीं कर रहा है जैसी कि डोनाल्ड ट्रंप के भाषणों में की जाती है!

दुखद पहलू तो यह है कि ऐसे कई बड़े और प्रमुख मुद्दे हैं जिन पर प्रधानमंत्री बोल सकते हैं और ज्यादातर लोग प्रधानमंत्री से इस बारे में सुनना चाहेंगे। लेकिन विचित्र कारणों से मोदी अपनी पार्टी के चुनावी घोषणापत्र के बारे में बात नहीं करेंगे, वे बेरोजगारी और नौकरियों के बारे में बात नहीं करेंगे, वे किसानों के संकट और कर्ज के बारे में बात नहीं करेंगे, वे कृषि उत्पादों के गिरते दाम और कृषि बीमा योजना की नाकामी के बारे में बात नहीं करेंगे, और वे महिलाओं, दलितों, अनुसूचित जातियों, शिक्षाविदों, अध्येताओं, पत्रकारों और एनजीओ आदि में फैले खौफ के बारे में कुछ नहीं बोलेंगे।

नरेंद्र मोदी दावा करते हैं कि अच्छे दिन, जिसका उन्होंने वादा किया था, आ गए हैं। पर यह सच से काफी दूर है। लोग जानते हैं कि कोई अच्छे दिन नहीं है। झूठ सुन कर लोग थक चुके हैं और गुस्से में हैं और सच्चाई की थोड़ी सी खुराक के लिए तरस रहे हैं।

# बदलाव के बावजूद

दल के वारिस नहीं हैं। यह बहुत अच्छी बात है।

मेरी राय में मोदी की सबसे सफल योजना स्वच्छ भारत है। जहां ग्रामीण भारत में 2014 में एक भी जिला नहीं था, जिसमें खुले में शौच करने की गंदी प्रथा पूरी तरह समाप्त कर दी गई थी। आज तकरीबन पूरे देश में यह बंद हो चुकी है। साथ में



## वक्त की नब्ब

- तवलीन सिंह**

महगटबंधन बना ही है इस डर से कि मोदी अगर दुबारा प्रधानमंत्री बन जाते हैं, तो देश का राजनीतिक चरित्र और बदल डालेंगे। मगर इस बदलाव से भारत को लाभ हुआ है, क्योंकि वे लोग राजनीति में आने की सोचने लगे हैं अब, जो किसी राजनीतिक परिवार या राजनीतिक दल के वारिस नहीं हैं।

स्वच्छता की क्रांति आ गई है, जिसके सिपाही बन गए हैं ग्रामीण भारत के युवा और युवतियां। काश कि शहरी भारत में भी यह क्रांति आई होती। लेकिन यह भी याद रखना जरूरी है कि अगर हमारे सारे शहर और महानगर गंदी बरिस्तयों जैसे दिखते हैं, तो यह हाल पैदा हुआ है दशकों की लापरवाही के कारण। मोदी ने कम से कम इशारा तो किया है कि यहां परिवर्तन लाना जरूरी है।

मोदी ने बहुत कुछ किया है देश के लिए, लेकिन मतदाताओं की दृष्टि में यह सब काफी नहीं है। तो, मोदी को प्रधानमंत्री नहीं रहने देंगे तेईस मई के बाद, बिना किसी ब्रिटिश पत्रिका की नसीहत लिए। इस पत्रिका ने पिछले हफ्ते एक संपादकीय में लिखा है कि मोदी ने भारत में इतनी गंफरत फैलाई है, इतनी गलतियां की हैं कि कांग्रेस पार्टी को जिताना जरूरी हो गया है। साथ में कांग्रेस पार्टी की तरफदारी इस आधार पर की है कि

# हारी हुई आलोचना

यारो! ये क्या बात हुई? इस देश में चुनाव करवाना हंसी ठट्ठु है क्या? हर आदमी दूसरे की शिकायत करने को तैयार रहता है। किस-किस से निपटें?

और भई! हमें तो अपने सभी नेता, वक्ता, प्रवक्ता और अधिवक्ता ‘आदर्श’ नजर आते हैं। वे जानते हैं कि जब तक जोरदार ‘बाइट’ का प्रहार न करें, कोई सुनता ही नहीं। चैनलों को चटपटी बाइट न दें तो खबर कैसे बने? और खबर न बने तो चुनाव कैसे जीतें?

पहले तो एंकर ही कुरेद-कुरेद कर कुछ न कुछ कड़वा-



बस एक ही सुंदर और प्रसन्न क्षण तब बनता दिखा, जब चैनलों में खबर ब्रेक हुई कि यूनन द्वारा मसूद अजहर को अंतरराष्ट्रीय टेरिस्ट घोषित कर दिया गया है। अपने कई एंकर इसे सुन अपना सीना ऐसे फुलाए रहे, मानो उनके ही पुण्य प्रयत्नों से ऐसा हुआ हो।

तीखा कहलवा लेते हैं, फिर हाय हाय करते-कराते हैं, फिर दूसरे आ जुटते हैं और पूरे दिन हाय हाय करते-कराते रहते हैं। इस सब में बताइए आयोग करे तो क्या करे? बुरका बंद किया श्रीलंका ने और प्रेरणा मिली शिवसेना को और ‘सामना’ को। उसने फौरन लाइन कि इधर भी बुरका बैन जरूरी!

इंडिया टुडे पर एक भाजपा प्रवक्ता ने बताया कि भाजपा इस मांग से सहमत नहीं। शाम तक उद्भव ठाकरे ने भी ‘सामना’ की लाइन से शिवसेना को अलग कर लिया। लेकिन इससे क्या?

कांग्रेस मजहब और जाति को लेकर भारतीयों में फूट नहीं डालती है। मैंने जब यह पढ़ा तो ऐसा लगा जैसे किसी ऐसे व्यक्ति ने यह लेख लिखा होगा, जिसको भारत का इतिहास बिल्कुल मालूम नहीं होगा। इतिहास पढ़ने की जरूरत ही नहीं है आज। गूगल करके ही क्षणों में पता लग जाता है कि कितने दंगे हुए हैं किस साल में, जाति-मजहब को लेकर। बिना उस जनसंहार की बात किए, जो 1984 में राजीव गांधी का कार्यकाल शुरू होते हुआ था और जिसमें तीन हजार से ज्यादा बेगुनाह सिख मारे गए थे। राजीव ने इस जनसंहार को जायज ठहराया था।

इकोनॉमिस्ट अखबार का आरोप है कि मोदी की नीतियों के कारण कश्मीर घाटी में अराजकता फैली है। इस आरोप को पढ़ कर मुझे फिर से लगा कि इस लेखक ने अज्ञानवश यह लेख लिखा है। कश्मीर की समस्या दशकों पुरानी है और पैदा हुई है कांग्रेस प्रधानमंत्रियों की गलतियों के कारण। यह सच है कि मोदी घाटी में अराजकता खत्म नहीं कर पाए हैं, लेकिन यह भी याद रखना चाहिए कि इसकी शुरुआत हुई थी बुरहान वानी की मुठभेड़ में हत्या के बाद। और बुरहान वानी ने अपने हर वीडियो में स्पष्ट किया था कि वह भारत के खिलाफ अपना जंग तब तक जारी रखेगा जब तक कश्मीर घाटी में शरीअत का निजाम नहीं नाफिस होता है।

ऐसा अगर किसी ब्रिटिश राज्य में किसी जिहादी ने करने की कोशिश की होती तो ब्रिटेन की सरकार क्या करती? क्या शरीअत नाफिस होने देती? या उन जिहादियों को दूँढ़ कर मारती, जो उनके देश में इस्लामी रियासत का निर्माण करना चाहते हैं? मोदी ने हर तरह से कोशिश की है कश्मीर घाटी में शांति लाने की। पहले सख्ती दिखा कर और बाद में ‘कश्मीरियत, इसोनियत, जम्हरियत’ का नारा देकर। अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी ने यह नारा दिया था अपने दौर में और काफी हद तक शांति ला सके थे घाटी में। लेकिन तब कश्मीरी लड़ रहे थे ‘आजादी’ के नाम पर। आज इस मुहिम का नेतृत्व जो कर रहे हैं उनकी मांग है शरीअत। निजाम-ए-मुस्तफा। यह ऐसी मांग है, जिस पर कोई भी भारतीय प्रधानमंत्री बहस करने को तैयार नहीं हो सकता। कांग्रेस का भी कोई प्रधानमंत्री नहीं।

एक बार फिर राहुल की नागरिकता पर सवाल उठाए जाने लगे। और इस बार नागरिकता का सवाल किसी छोटे-मोटे ने नहीं उठाया, बल्कि सुब्रह्मण्यम स्वामी ने उठाया कि राहुल की नागरिकता स्पष्ट हो!

ज्यों ही नागरिकता पर सवाल उठा, त्यों ही सब चैनल ‘बिजी’ हो गए। एक चैनल पर कांग्रेसी प्रवक्ता ने साफ कर दिया कि पहले भी यह मुद्दा उठाया गया था और सर्वोच्च अदालत ने उसका फैसला भी कर दिया था कि वे भारत के नागरिक हैं।

लेकिन सवाल तो सवाल है। और वह भी राहुल की नागरिकता का सवाल! आप उठा भर दें और पूरे दिन आनंद लें। चैनल सवाल लपक लेंगे और पहले से ही उत्तरित सवाल को फिर से दिन भर धुनते हुए पूछते रहेंगे कि राहुल जी आप किस देश के नागरिक हैं? ताकि राहुल की नागरिकता को लेकर फिर से संदेह का जाल बुन दिया जाय!

एक दिन जब कोई बड़ा मुद्दा न मिला, तो एक न्यायप्रिय एंकर आयोग के ही पीछे पड़ गया। कहने लगा कि चुनाव आयोग में महीने पुरानी ढेर सारी शिकायतें पड़ीं हैं, लेकिन आयोग विचार ही नहीं करता!

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