

Winners, losers and fence sitters

The downfall of Jet Airways has produced at least one long-term winner, one short-term gainer and a few fence sitters



OUT OF THE BLUE

ANJALI BHARGAVA

Even as the industry mourns the downfall of Jet Airways, there are winners, losers and a few fence sitters emerging from the episode. Passengers — like employees — were among the biggest losers as airfares sky-

rocketed. To cite one instance, the return flight between Dehradun and Delhi (30-minute-flight) was ₹14,000 and ₹21,000 on two different days last week. I decided to stay home!

Jet's shutdown led to a shortage of capacity and vacating of routes, freeing-up of airport slot timings and an oversupply of Boeing commanders, first officers and cabin crew. Moreover, almost the entire Jet fleet that was on lease is available for any taker. Like vultures swooping in on a dead corpse, the players have quickly cornered as many slots as they could, hired the best of Jet staff and some have taken aircraft.

In the short term, SpiceJet appears to be the biggest gainer. The airline is taking 22 of Jet's aircraft, has gained 122 slots so far and has hired around 1,000 ex-Jet pilots and crew. Unlike others who have been silent on their conquests,

SpiceJet's steady stream of announcements on new flights have attracted the ire and envy of many. Its chief Ajay Singh has even been labeled the "Naresh Goyal" of the moment on social media.

But all's fair in love and war, as I see it. What I find more worrying is the fact that the airline suddenly has on its hands a whole bunch of aircraft with a configuration quite different from its usual. Unless the airline can charge a premium for these seats, the cost per available seat kilometre (CASKM) will rise. When I asked Singh, he said the airline will be offering a business class product on trunk routes and international sectors from May 11. Whether this turns out a calculated risk or a reckless one, time will reveal.

A second concern with this kind of sudden expansion is what happens if the oil prices don't play ball? In the second quarter of 2018 — when oil prices rose

and the rupee weakened — IndiGo and SpiceJet reported losses of around ₹650 crore and ₹390 crore respectively. So while it's nice to make hay when the sun shines, a rainy day can reverse the fortunes rather quickly. The larger you are, the higher the price you pay.

The neither here nor there airline — GoAir — too managed to get some slots out of those vacated by Jet but what it hopes to do with them is anybody's guess. I for one have lost count of how many people have resigned in the last six months but I do know that the airline is as rudderless as ever. In fact, things have been so grim since this February that the airline has been struggling to keep its full fleet in the air, let alone add new capacity.

There were unconfirmed reports that Vistara was thinking of taking up to 10 B737-800s from Jet's lot. Now, this sounds rather rash to me. From my limited understanding of this business, it makes almost no sense to bring in a second type of aircraft in your fleet — even on a wet lease — for all the other com-

plications that operating a mixed fleet bring with it. That too for just 10 planes!

In fact, if I were Vistara, instead of worrying about today, I'd be focusing on tomorrow. Kingfisher, Jet and even Air India's record would be giving me the jitters. A more existential question has arisen: Can a full service airline in India actually succeed? Is India some kind of aberration where only a low-fare model can thrive? Do I need to find some innovative way to withdraw from domestic routes and leave that bit to the likes of Air Asia India? It's time for some real introspection here.

In the final analysis, I wouldn't be surprised if the biggest long-term gainer from the Jet episode is again the market leader IndiGo. The airline is adding almost one aircraft a week in any case. It has taken whatever slots it could and hired as much of the Jet staff as it required. It's sticking to the knitting as far as possible. In a business like aviation, that's almost always the best route.

PS: Interesting addendum: Poor old Air India got no slots as it has apparently no aircraft to add and the government is slotting slots only to players who add new capacity

CHINESE WHISPERS

Sleepless elections



Forty-five minutes of sleep is all that your body needs, if Union minister and Bharatiya Janata Party candidate from Delhi's Chandni Chowk constituency, Harsh Vardhan (pictured), is to be believed. However, this prescription from the minister, who is also a doctor, is not without a rider. During a press conference held in the capital on Monday, he said if one was "able to put one's conscious and sub-conscious mind to sleep through meditation and other practices for a long time... 45 minutes of sleep is sufficient." He was talking about his own schedule during the campaign season — he said he was sleeping for three-four hours only every day. His latest views on sleep patterns may or may not be backed by research but this is not the first time Vardhan has aired views that challenge conventional wisdom. Last year, he had controversially said that the late physicist Stephen Hawking had once remarked that the Vedas might have a theory superior to Albert Einstein's iconic equation, $E=mc^2$, but could not attribute the source.

'Sadhvi' Swara Bhaskar?

So is she prepping for a political debut? Actress Swara Bhaskar, who was in Bhopal on Monday, courted controversy with her remarks about Bharatiya Janata Party candidate Pragya Singh Thakur. Bhaskar, who was in the city to attend an event hosted by an NGO, called her a "Hindu terror suspect". "I will also put on a bhagwa (saffron) sari and urge everyone to call me 'sadhvi' Swara Bhaskar. Is that possible?" Though not in active politics, Bhaskar has been a vocal critic of the government and has attacked trolls for criticising her on Twitter over her repeated criticism of the government. In April, she had campaigned for the Communist Party of India's Begusarai candidate Kanhaiya Kumar and said the country needed leaders like him.

IT cell for Kishor

Much like the information technology cell he had helped set up for the Bharatiya Janata Party five years ago, Janata Dal (United) National Vice-President Prashant Kishor is working behind the scenes to set up another such unit to bolster his image as a bankable leader in Bihar and nearby states. To this end, Kishor is learnt to have planned a "yatra" which will include politically active and enthusiastic student leaders from the grassroots. Preference will be given to students who do not belong to a political family. These students will be groomed to become future leaders in the party. Scholarship along these lines is also being considered.

Mini-ministerial and its contents

Nations still differ widely on the key issues that will be discussed at the meeting being held in India on May 13 and 14

SUBHAYAN CHAKRABORTY

India wants the upcoming mini-ministerial in New Delhi to focus on ways to reduce protectionism in global trade and uphold the sanctity of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Come May 13, however, it will be hard pressed to also discuss global e-commerce rules, something it has avoided so far.

After five rocky years of choppy global trade, increasing protectionism in most markets and little headway in key trade policy debates, the government is keen to end its term with a final push at the WTO. Subsequently, the commerce department obtained Election Commission approval to hold the two-day long event. It is expected to see attendance by at least 25 key WTO member-nations, including China, Brazil and South Africa. However, most other participants are least developed countries (LDC).

Although the focus will firmly remain on the creation of a global coalition against the United States, to reduce counter-protectionism and affirm support to multilateral talks at the WTO, India and participating nations have a different view of even the topics that should get the most discussion time.

Rich vs poor nation

India is no stranger to mini-ministerial trade diplomacy, with New Delhi having held a two-day mini-ministerial in March, last year with 50 participant nations. India's focus then — the liberalisation of services trade and the creation of a trade facilitation agreement for global services — had been discussed

in working group meetings at the WTO but has lost impetus since then.

"While we will bring up the services agreement, we also have a responsibility to voice the serious concerns on behalf of the developing nations who are fighting to sustain their eligibility to get Special and Differential Treatment (S&DT) at the WTO," a senior Commerce Department official said. The S&DT debate has seen richer nations increasingly voice their opposition towards developing countries continuing to enjoy special provisions such as longer time periods to implement agreements and commitments, and clauses to safeguard their trade interests, among others.

Similarly, development-based issues of great importance to India, such as a permanent solution to agricultural stockpiling for the purpose of food security, are expected to be sidelined at the upcoming talks. Instead, richer nations led by

the European Union, Japan, Canada and the US, have consistently pushed for newer issues such as investment facilitation, and rules for small and medium enterprises, promoting gender equality, and most importantly, e-commerce.

E-commerce battle hardens

While the proposal to create a set of global rules for e-commerce has been pushed by the developed world since the last WTO ministerial conference in Buenos Aires in 2017, things have moved fast since January this year when 77 nations agreed to officially initiate talks on the subject. On May 3, the EU submitted a nine-page proposal to the general body that aims to shield traders



from attempts to restrict data flows or seize their data and source code.

The move was unprecedented since WTO protocol dictates nations set the agenda for and start talks on issues that are agreed to unanimously. But sudden, aggressive support by China set the ball rolling. "The deal has been pushed hard by Jack Ma-led Chinese e-commerce conglomerate Alibaba, which has partnered with WTO and World Economic Forum to create the Electronic World Trade Platform (eWTP) — an e-commerce trade portal for small enterprises," an official said.

India fears that new rules could provide the pretext for unfair mandatory market access to foreign companies, thereby hurting the rapidly growing domestic e-commerce sector, which is still finding its niche. "Significant foreign business interests have also started looking for an official route to tap India's lucrative online markets. These businesses are major players in their domains, in many cases for more than a decade, and have often been seen to exploit regulatory loopholes," a note on the subject sent by the Commerce Department to brief the Prime Ministers Office, says.

"While India should accept technology as it comes, we need to know which segments it will hurt most. A disruptive move like this will see tech-driven commerce displacing a significant number

TRADE TALK

■ Stalemate at WTO necessitated New Delhi's second WTO mini-ministerial in as many years

■ 25 key nations, including China, Brazil, South Africa and a wide group of LDCs to reach New Delhi

■ The developing nations bloc will focus on their fight to preserve Special and Differential Treatment rights

■ But global e-commerce talks expected to remain a hot topic

of players in the traditional market," trade expert and Jawaharlal Nehru University professor Biswajit Dhar said.

Finally, the government believes the push for initiating negotiations on substantive obligations related to e-commerce will oblige India to permanently accept the current moratorium on imposing customs duties on electronic transmissions. "With increasing digitisation, more and more products such as books, music, and video games are being traded electronically. By agreeing to the permanent moratorium, countries with tariff schedules, which allow putting duties on these kinds of products, will give up these rights and lose revenues," the draft e-commerce policy says.

Fight with US

The summit is being hosted at a time when the US under the Donald Trump administration continues to question the need for a body such as the WTO. Despite condemnations from WTO headquarters in Geneva and major member nations, the US has simply stepped up imposition of unilateral tariffs on its trade partners. Earlier this week, both nations discussed a wide array of trade issues, including the impasse at WTO when US Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross met with Commerce Minister Suresh Prabhu.

Although the US is no ally to India on most issues at the WTO, repeated

ON THE JOB

Standard errors



MAHESH VYAS

A sharp rise in the unemployment rate during the third week of April and then a sharper fall in the fourth week caught the attention of the stylish and sometimes combative TV anchor, Karan Thapar.

He quizzed me on his show, *UpFront with Karan Thapar*, on April 29 on the zig-zag nature of unemployment rates being put out by CMIE recently. The rate rose during December, January and February. But, it dipped sharply in March 2019. And then, it was shooting up during the first three weeks of April but then it nose-dived in last week.

I explained that a few deviations apart, the trend was undeniably one of a rising unemployment rate.

The debate after this explanation turned out to be very engaging. I avoid participating in TV debates and Karan was kind to excuse me.

Dr. Shamika Ravi, director of research at Brookings India and member of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister, was dismissive of the CMIE data on unemployment. She stated that she does not take CMIE data seriously. That's her choice. But, I take her several remarks on Karan Thapar's show seriously.

A point she made repeatedly was that

CMIE does not release the standard error of its estimates. Well, if she was seriously looking for those estimates and did not find them, all she had to do was to ask.

Hitherto, exactly one economist, of Indian Statistical Institute, asked for the standard errors of the estimates and we provided these in March 2019.

Dr. Ravi said that she will start putting faith in CMIE estimates the day they put out standard errors systematically. We make a beginning here.

In the first week of April, the unemployment rate was estimated at 7.91 per cent with a standard error of 0.006195. During the second, third and fourth weeks of April, the unemployment rate and the corresponding standard errors were: 8.06 and 0.005309; 8.38 and 0.007408; and 6.65 and 0.005139. As is evident from these, the standard errors are so low that the estimates are likely to be correct with a probability of 95 per cent up to the first place after decimal. We therefore, mostly report the unemployment rate up to the first place after the decimal point.

The average standard error of our weekly estimates of the unemployment rate is around 0.0064. In comparison, standard error of the monthly estimates is much smaller at around 0.0032. We therefore consider the monthly estimates to be a lot more robust than the weekly estimates. This is not rocket science. It is easy for even an undergraduate statistics student to expect a low standard error if the sample is large. The sample for our weekly estimates is of the order of 30,000 respondents and that for the monthly estimates is 130,000 with minor variations every week or month.

Veteran psephologist, accomplished academic and ever-gentle politician, Yogendra Yadav patiently explained to Dr. Ravi on the show that the CMIE sam-

ple is large enough to dispel her doubts but to little avail.

The second point Dr. Ravi made was that we do not control for seasonality. There are two problems she needs to understand here. First, adjusting for seasonality requires long time-series of monthly estimates. CMIE is the only organisation that produces monthly estimates of unemployment for India and its effort is only three years and four months old so far. We require at least five years of monthly data before we start working on seasonality. Second, the available monthly series was disrupted by the shock of demonetisation.

The third criticism by Dr. Ravi was that the definitions used by CMIE are "curious". She seemed to suggest that CMIE considers people who are not employed, not looking for jobs but desirous of jobs as unemployed. She is completely wrong. CMIE's definition of an unemployed person is one who is not employed, is actively looking for job but is not able to find one. This is what she said is the ILO definition. But, this is the CMIE definition.

The fourth point was that CMIE's data is proprietary, where all kinds of puzzling things happen. With the display of her limited knowledge of the CMIE dataset on Karan's show, it is understandable that she is puzzled. But, is Dr. Ravi suggesting that datasets produced by private agencies should not be used? Will she dismiss the surveys conducted by Brookings Institution, similarly?

It would have been better for Dr. Ravi to answer Karan Thapar's question to her that has the unemployment situation gotten worse than it was during UPA or after 2017-18 rather than display her disdain and ignorance of the CMIE datasets.

The author is the MD & CEO of CMIE

LETTERS

Unfair indeed

I refer to the edit "Unfair intervention" (May 1) which holds that the term of the anti-profiteering authority should not be extended. This article is both timely and appropriate. I fully agree with the contention that the two-year sunset horizon must take place as the original intention was like that. Extending the life of the director general of anti-profiteering will be great disaster for the economy. The department of revenue and the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs will try hard to continue it saying that many cases being investigated which should be allowed to be finished. The Indian Revenue Service will also find it a source to increase the number of posts at higher level for better promotion of the senior officers who have been recruited in huge numbers, but who have hardly any work. This view is not right. The existing cases can be looked after by the other directorates which are aplenty now.

Coming to the merit of the anti-profit organisation, to begin with, the introduction of this system was a huge mistake. Studies by empirical analysis by experts such as Alan Tait in his book, *Value Added Tax: International Practice and Problems*, have shown that there is no inflationary tendency associated with introduction of VAT. And in India we converted VAT (already introduced earlier in 2005) into the GST by amalgamation of taxes. Capitalism must be allowed to thrive. Profit is not a dirty word. Market forces will play out any extra undue profit. Populist measures to impress people is not necessary as that will kill the system.

It is known that no other country in the world has this law. Not America, England, Europe, Japan, China, Russia and others. Only Malaysia has it. The empowered committee noted this.

Since when has Malaysia become the leader of thoughts in economics to our GST Council? And this provision will be a great hurdle to the government's policy of improving the ease of doing business. There is Competition Commission and so there is no need to have another watchdog on the same issue. In 1991 liberalisation took place which made the economy free from interference. This good tendency for the business to thrive must continue. It is high time the CII and the FICCI take up the issue to free the economy from this vice like grip of the anti-profit authority.

Sukumar Mukhopadhyay via email

More lessons to learn

This refers to "Standing up to Fani" (May 6). The piece illustrates the various aspects of the super cyclone and rightly gives the credit to Odisha state government, disaster management authorities, local administration, meteorological department and many more for a tough job done well.

A few more lessons are worth considering by all. First, maximum thrust on pucca houses in coastal areas needs a separate policy, as every such event has confirmed. Secondly, the care of the animal wealth of those displaced, especially automatic insurance coverage of their animals and quick settlement of claims, need policy prescriptions. Thirdly, why can't we store

HAMBONE



pre-cooked food and drinking water for a few days, at 1,000 shelters, relieving the volunteers for other, more urgent jobs. Fourthly, low mortality may dampen the national spirits to come forward to rehabilitate the people who have lost their everything.

Y P Issar Karnal

Correction

CARE Ratings has put PNB Housing Finance on 'credit watch', but has not downgraded its rating as mentioned in "The NBFC crisis" (May 6). The error is regretted.

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

Macro headwinds

Next govt will face daunting economic challenges

There are multiple indicators that India's prolonged sojourn in a macro-economic sweet spot is coming to an end. Driven by favourable global conditions and commodity prices, the past five years have been fortunate for the Indian macro-economy. Inflation has been brought under control as a partial consequence of these global factors, and the easy availability of global capital has helped finance the current account deficit. Easy inflation and low commodity prices have flattered the fiscal deficit, allowing the government to avoid painful belt-tightening. But that is in doubt now, with the government missing its tax revenue target by 11 per cent in 2018-19 because of lower-than-expected collection from the central goods and services tax, personal income tax and Union excise duties. But government spending has helped support growth rates. This virtuous circle depends crucially on external factors that are beyond India's control. Some of these factors may now be coming to an end. In particular, crude oil prices — while they are unlikely to return to the \$100-130 a barrel range that they had hit prior to 2014 — may well remain in the \$70-80 range for some time, pushing the rupee towards or past 70 to the dollar. Oil prices have been a third higher this year than the last. It is partially as a reflection of these concerns that the India VIX, which measures volatility on the National Stock Exchange, hit a three-year high recently.

Domestic headwinds are also visible. In particular, there is no sign of recovery in either corporate earnings or private investment. The pipeline for new projects continues to be subdued, in spite of an increase in capacity utilisation. Most obviously, demand remains sub-par according to many high-frequency indicators of urban and rural demand. Passenger car sales grew only 3 per cent in 2018-19. The fourth-quarter results season is now underway, and the early signals point to a slowdown in the economy. The markets have been propped up by firm inflows from abroad, but this is not an inexhaustible tap. In particular, prolonged weak earnings, a depreciating rupee or a recovery in other emerging markets might cause this flow to weaken. There are some contrary indicators, such as recovery in bank lending to the corporate sector — but the latter indicator might simply be a reflection of the collapse of the non-banking financial sector. The headwinds for finance should also be considered. The NBFC crisis is once again in the spotlight after a spate of downgrades, and the insolvency and bankruptcy process continues to under-perform. Meanwhile, other time bombs are being built in the banking sector, including state-directed lending to micro, small and medium enterprises.

The government has kept growth alive through its spending, but its fiscal space is now limited after two successive years in which it has altered the deficit reduction path. Private investment will have to recover to substitute for increasing constraints on government expenditure. The next government will have to face up to these macro headwinds as soon as it takes office. It is best if it embarks early on an ambitious reform programme that will not just boost consumer sentiment but also help create the conditions for a revival in private investment and exports.

Audit rot

There is structural problem with auditing in India

The Union secretary for corporate affairs has warned that the firms auditing group companies of troubled Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services (IL&FS) have "many questions to answer" regarding the build-up of irregularities within that group. The secretary also said while the government was not expecting an auditor to detect a needle in a haystack, they ought to find if "an elephant is in the room". IL&FS' debt is reportedly over ₹94,000 crore, but there was little suspicion of the scale of the problem prior to some group companies defaulting on repayment last year. Since then, the board has been replaced and an investigation has been started by the Serious Fraud Investigation Office. The auditors themselves are being investigated by the corporate affairs ministry's National Financial Reporting Authority, or NFRA, which was notified last year. This means that the investigation of flaws in the auditing process, if any, is now out of the hands of the accountants' own body, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India.

While entities related to three of the "big four" accounting multinationals — EY, Deloitte and KPMG — will reportedly be questioned, much attention will probably focus on Deloitte, which was most closely associated with IL&FS in the public mind. A previous investigation that may be relevant is into fraud at the erstwhile software company Satyam. When that was discovered, the board was superseded and eventually the auditors were investigated by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi). While that process took a long while to close, after nine years PriceWaterhouseCoopers received a sentence: It was required to return ₹13 crore, and was banned from auditing listed companies for two years. Opinion is divided as to whether this was a harsh enough sentence. What is probably true, however, is that given that sentence was handed down only last year, a similar sentence against one or more of the other big auditors will create a supply constraint for auditing. There should therefore be no knee-jerk reaction.

However, it is also clear that there is a systemic problem in how audits are being carried out, especially by big auditors on big companies. Some auditors are paid for "consultancy" services as well. While the audit companies insist that there is no conflict of interest, the recent history of financial services suggests that such mixed incentives should not be allowed to persist. The auditors also point out they do not conduct forensic audits of the sort undertaken by criminal investigators — they largely rely on the numbers and paperwork that they are shown by the company they are auditing. However, this explanation conceals as much as it reveals. Part of the complaint against the auditors in the IL&FS case is from a whistleblower in the IL&FS management who reportedly claims that the auditors relied excessively on "management explanations and comfort letters" when the audit results appeared relatively adverse. Auditors do not serve the companies whose books they are examining, but investors and the general market. While investigations into IL&FS' auditor should be speedy and any wrongdoing should be strictly penalised, it is important that a structural fix to all audit firms' incentives be discussed and implemented.

ILLUSTRATION: AJAY MOHANTY



Leave the renminbi out of US-China trade talks

The accusation that China is manipulating the exchange rate is completely out of touch with recent history

Will a possibly imminent US-China trade agreement exacerbate global business cycles or even plant the seeds of the next Asian financial crisis? If the eventual agreement — assuming there is one — forces China to hew indefinitely to its outmoded, overly rigid exchange-rate regime, then the answer may be yes.

Keeping the renminbi's exchange rate stable against the US dollar would require the Chinese authorities either to match changes in US interest rates, or go through capital-control contortions to try to offset exchange-rate pressures in other ways. But China is simply too big and too global to adhere to an exchange-rate policy that is better suited to a small, open economy.

Moreover, neither approach to keeping the renminbi stable — maintaining interest-rate parity or applying capital controls — makes sense for an economy with business cycles that seldom coincide precisely with those of the United States. With its declining trend economic performance, overbuilt housing sector, and overleveraged regional governments, China will inevitably confront politically sensitive growth problems. When it does, the People's Bank of China will need to be able to loosen monetary conditions without having to worry about supporting the exchange rate.

When a country comes under serious financial and macroeconomic pressures, maintaining an inflexible exchange rate is a well-known recipe for disaster. The International Monetary Fund, along with most academic economists, has been making this point for a very long time.

Such an exchange-rate deal between America and China would be out of tune with other elements of a potential bilateral trade agreement, many of which are "win-win." For example, China has pledged to enforce intellectual-property rights much more vigorously, although just how strongly remains to be seen. Greater Chinese rigour in this area may benefit American and European firms in the near term, but over the long run it will help to fuel competition and innovation in China's own manufacturing and tech sectors.



KENNETH ROGOFF

After all, back in the 1800s, the US, like China today, had little interest in protecting the intellectual-property rights of foreign (then mostly British) firms, and Americans widely copied their ideas and blueprints. However, as American innovators became more successful, they, too, needed their rights protected, and in due course the US brought its patent and intellectual-property laws up to world-leading standards.

Another win-win could result from America's insistence that the Chinese government refrain from lavishing subsidies on exporters. Most of these subsidies go to China's inefficient state-owned firms, sucking credit and other resources away from the more dynamic private sector.

More generally, a trade deal may well give fresh impetus to economic reforms in China, which seem to have stalled or gone into reverse in the past few years. On a recent trip to Beijing to attend the China Development Forum, I asked a very senior Chinese official about this slowdown. I had expected him to reel off a long list of inconsequential reforms, in keeping with the usual line that China is doing things very gradually all the time. So I was surprised when he candidly admitted that "we only do major economic

Modi: From pariah to messiah?

In the parliamentary elections concluding in two weeks, one candidate, Narendra Modi of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), is fighting against some 7,500 candidates of various political persuasions in 543 constituencies — technically there are 542 other candidates of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), but in reality it is only Mr Modi that this election is all about. Report after report from various regions, in print and electronic media, including many not BJP-friendly, confirm that people everywhere think voting for or against Mr Modi is the issue. The opposition talks of little else.

This is extraordinary. Not even in Indira Gandhi's "India is Indira, Indira is India" heydays of the mid-1970s, the general election was ever about one individual. In 2014, Mr Modi was the leader of a successful campaign, not the campaign himself.

But his impact on the BJP's electoral fortunes was not always so benign. The NDA was widely expected to win the 2004 general election hands down but narrowly lost it. Most analysts blamed the India Shining campaign for the loss. But that does not stand scrutiny. India was indeed shining then, based on most objective criteria. The economy was growing at an 8-plus per cent annual rate, inflation was mild and an optimistic view of the future prevailed. The immensely popular Atal Bihari Vajpayee was the tallest leader. So something else caused the shock defeat.

That something else was the Gujarat conflagration of 2002 under Mr Modi's watch. Officially over 750 Muslims died, out of a total of 1,000-plus. Mr Vajpayee admonished Mr Modi publicly, but the BJP did not remove him as the chief minister, appre-

hensive of upsetting the apple cart of the faction-ridden party in the state, the only major one in its basket then. Mr Modi won the state election later that year but was side-lined in the national polity.

Weather-vane allies such as Ram Vilas Paswan and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam quit the NDA in the wake of Gujarat, fearing rightly its toxic impact on their own prospects. The BJP lost 44 seats, 37 in just Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, both with sizeable Muslim populations. In these two states and Andhra Pradesh, the substantial anti-Modi Muslim vote caused the NDA to lose 80 of its 299 seats. How the worst NDA liability in 2004 became its prime asset 10 years later is an enigma of Indian electoral history.

Mr Modi's rehabilitation was long and arduous. He won the 2007 Gujarat election hand-somely as well, with little help from the BJP top brass (but considerable boost from the Congress' negative *maut ke saudagar* campaign). His stature and fame grew between 2007 and 2012 as the success of the so-called Gujarat model of development spread. Arvind Subramanian compared it to China. The 2012 state election became a virtual referendum on Mr Modi (as is the current election). Most BJP leaders visited the state but they could have saved themselves the trouble.

The Modi-as-the-BJP face for prime ministership bandwagon started rolling right after the December 2012 Gujarat verdict, but its progress was halting. In April 2013, the late Manohar Parrikar mentioned to this writer the roadblocks he faced as the prime mover of the drive to get Mr Modi anointed the head of the 2014 campaign. The deed was done in the June 2014 BJP executive meeting in Goa and the rest, as they say, is history.



ET CETERA SHREEKANT SAMBRANI

reforms when there is a crisis, and there has not been a big enough crisis of late."

In this sense, US President Donald Trump seems to be just what the doctor ordered, because he has forced the Chinese authorities to recognise that they can no longer rely on American consumer demand to keep China's growth locomotive moving. Indeed, some observers joke that Trump is the saviour of the Chinese economy, because panic at a possible trade war is helping to catalyse long-stalled structural reforms.

But American pressure on China to commit to a more stable renminbi-dollar exchange rate, and avoid competitively devaluing its currency, could undermine further economic reform. In particular, such a regime would prevent China from gradually adopting the greater exchange-rate flexibility required for a more independent monetary policy.

Trump's team seems to be under the misguided impression that China has been intervening to keep its currency weak, in order to promote exports. The view that China manipulates its currency, long overblown by some commentators, downplays the fact that the root of China's hyper-competitiveness has long been its relatively low wages.

More fundamentally, the accusation that China is manipulating the exchange rate is completely out of touch with recent history. In recent years, the pressures on the renminbi have been largely downward, and the government has responded with much tighter restrictions on capital outflows that go both over and under the table. Far from putting a ceiling on the renminbi's exchange rate, the Chinese authorities have been putting a floor beneath it, partly out of fear that overly rapid depreciation would lead to a massive exodus of capital.

An inflexible exchange rate might not be the only potential weakness in an eventual US-China trade deal. American negotiators also have not seemed to appreciate the accounting rule that a country's current account (a broad measure of its trade balance) is always equal to national savings minus national investment. If American consumption growth is strong and the US government runs a massive fiscal deficit, the country has to borrow from somewhere. And if China is forced to reduce its bilateral trade surplus with America, it will simply offshore the final stages of goods production, so that US imports will be recorded as coming from another Asian country, such as Vietnam.

True, pushing China to conform to conventional global trade practices is important for the entire world. Recent speeches by Chinese President Xi Jinping are encouraging in this regard (though one wishes that the trade talks would address environmental protection). But if a final deal prevents China from gaining greater monetary-policy autonomy, it could create major problems when the next big Asian recession hits. In that case, American negotiators will have demonstrated their bargaining power, but not their wisdom.

The writer is a former chief economist of the IMF, is Professor of Economics and Public Policy at Harvard University. ©Project Syndicate, 2019.

Similarities between the Gujarat 2012 and India 2019 campaigns abound. Mr Modi had then the undisputed command of the well-oiled state BJP machine as he does of the national party now. He had then said that the contest was between the Congress and himself; he now says it is between the entire opposition and himself. In his dozen years in Gujarat, dynamic double-digit agriculture growth contributed hugely to the Modi mythology. Similar fortune lay in his stars (to turn the Bard upside down) with mostly benign oil prices and just-in-time occurrences of Pulwama, Balakot and the Azhar Masood blacklisting, to shift the focus away from more troublesome topics. Further, those universally acknowledged oracles, taxi drivers and vegetable sellers, had then weighed in favour of Mr Modi, as they seem to be doing now. Finally, the mainstream English media and punditry had in 2012 blinkered themselves to the evident ground reality and grabbed the straw of anti-incumbency to predict a Modi defeat. Now the vociferous opposition campaign has similarly allowed many to entertain the possibility of a regime change shortly. *The Economist*, while resigned to the BJP remaining in charge, considers this outcome not just despicable but also dangerous.

Mr Modi won 115 out of the 182 Assembly seats in 2012, a nominal loss of two seats from 2007. His "referendum" netted him 48 per cent of the popular vote. Does this mean that he and the BJP will win in 2019? However much that prospect may discombobulate some of us, we must be prepared to anticipate it. I have made a guess of the BJP winning 255+ seats, but I also remember that in 1948, the venerable *New York Times* had the ignominy of wrongly headlining the Republican Thomas Dewey's victory over president Harry Truman, and so must be prepared to eat the omelette off my face come May 23.

The writer is an economist

Lost in Arabia



BOOK REVIEW

TALMIZ AHMAD

With this book, Levison Wood has rather self-consciously joined the galaxy of British travellers in West Asia — Charles Doughty, Richard Burton, Gertrude Bell, T E Lawrence and Wilfred Thesiger. His journey of 8,000 km over five months in the autumn and winter of 2017-18 takes him around the Arabian Peninsula, where many countries are experiencing conflicts — ethnic, religious or sectarian — with historic animosities driving them to wreak extraordinary destruction on their enemies. In Iraq, after witnessing a referendum at Erbil on Kurdish independence

that many locals viewed as a sham power-play, Mr Wood walked into the final stages of the fight against the Islamic State. He sees the destruction at Mosul after ISIS had been evicted and witnesses at first hand the ruthless violence of the clash against ISIS fighters at their last enclave at Hawija.

Mr Wood is appalled at the "normalisation of violence", and the motley bunch of fighters seem to him as if "the cast of *Mad Max* had met Lawrence of Arabia and were off to party". But this is the same Iraq where Wood also visits the Sumerian town of Eridu, where writing was invented, and the historic city of Babylon, contested between Persia and Alexander, that was painstakingly restored by Saddam Hussein.

After desultory visits to the Gulf Sheikdoms of Bahrain and Abu Dhabi, Mr Wood's next source of excitement is the camel ride through the Empty Quarter in Oman, largely in the footsteps of Thesiger. Thesiger had felt a unique

affinity with the desert, a constant "yearning to return", and saw in that "cruel land" a sense of purity. Sadly, Mr Wood experiences none of this allure; instead, he finds in the desert "brutality, cruelty and complexity".

In Saudi Arabia, Mr Wood links himself first with Richard Burton and later with T E Lawrence. Burton, unorthodox soldier, adventurer and polyglot who translated the *Arabian Nights* and the *Kama Sutra*, disguised himself as a Muslim and visited Mecca and Madinah. This feat Mr Wood is unable to repeat, though he does ask his Saudi guide why Christians should be considered non-believers.

Putting this disappointment behind him, Mr Wood then follows in the footsteps of Lawrence of Arabia and is overjoyed to see the remnants of the Hejaz railway destroyed by Lawrence and his Arab allies in the First World War and

an engine lying on its side. At the historic town of Al Ula, he has a rather casual chat with a local cleric on Wahhabism, Osama bin Laden and terrorism; he has misgivings about some of the cleric's remarks distancing the kingdom from extremist doctrine but remains silent. Surprisingly, at Al Ula he does not visit the historic monuments of the Nabatean civilisation.

Mr Wood then goes to Amman, sees important biblical sites in the Holy Land, visits historic spots in Lebanon, and then goes to Palmyra in Syria, which has been recently re-taken from ISIS. He expresses the average tourist's delight at seeing the ancient monuments at Petra. At Bethlehem on Christmas eve, he talks of the pickpockets, hawkers, drug-peddlers and shady money-changers.

He notes that Jerusalem is linked with the biblical prophets, Roman emperors, crusaders and Einstein, Montgomery and Churchill. He agrees it is impossible not

to be overwhelmed and then, in the next sentence, says that, in the company of family and friends "the expedition took on a more leisurely pace" and in fact even became a "real holiday". Extraordinary banality at a solemn moment!

The book ends with Mr Wood's visit to the ancient Phoenician town of Byblos in Lebanon that, in his view, made Europe the "centre of the world" and "the launchpad of civilisation itself". Does Wood really believe that Europe becoming the centre of the world marked the launch of civilisation?

Having gone through over 350 pages describing a tour through the fountain-head of human civilisation and the theatre of several visceral conflicts, ancient and modern, we cannot but wonder why the author and his publisher felt this personal account needed to be published. Though Mr Wood frequently recalls the travellers who have gone before, nowhere in this work is there the pioneering spirit of the early explorers, the profound insights and imagination of Thesiger, or the lyrical, even spiritual, prose of Colin Thubron that evocatively links the historic past of world centres with present-day circumstances.

Mr Wood says he went on his tour to learn why West Asia seems to be "the most contested and dangerous region on earth". Even though he visits some of most significant places linked with world history and contemporary politics, at no point is he able to offer an interesting observation or a profound insight or even a deep sense of the flow of history that is fuelling modern-day contentions.

Instead, what we get is a consistent petulance and churlishness through much of the journey — largely caused by recalcitrant, rude and irritating drivers and guides.

We have here a breezy travelogue but one that fails to match *Lonely Planet* for knowledge and detail.

The reviewer is a former diplomat

ARABIA: A Journey through the Heart of the Middle East

Levison Wood Hodder & Stoughton, 2018 Pages 354, ₹699

Opinion

TUESDAY, MAY 7, 2019



TALKING TO PAKISTAN

BJP leader Ram Madhav

It's (the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit) is an opportunity for Pakistan. If something credible comes out in the next one month or so... I'm sure the relationship will have some improvement. But the onus is on them (Pakistan) now

From Modi to Rahul, the campaign touches new lows

EC needed to be more pro-active and should have written to PM as Ashok Lavasa suggested; should have warned Rahul as well

EVEN IN THE context of the BJP's campaign against the Congress party's corruption—the CAG report on some instances, like A Raja's 2G telecom case, provided enough independent proof of this—prime minister Narendra Modi saying the late Rajiv Gandhi was 'bhrashtachari number one' was a new low in a campaign that, on all sides, is plumbing new depths with each passing day. One wrong cannot justify another, but it is equally appalling to see how Congress party chief Rahul Gandhi repeats his Modi-gave-₹30,000cr-to-Anil-Ambani allegation with gay abandon every other day despite having zero evidence. Indeed, even the Supreme Court's contempt notice to him was for his lawyer's disingenuous attempt to argue that Gandhi's 'regret' for having distorted the SC's ruling was really an 'apology'; it was not for Gandhi making statements about Modi's alleged complicity without proof. And, with equal aplomb, Gandhi found it easy to distort one of the BJP's proposed Bills as one that gave more powers to forest officials to "shoot Adivasis with impunity". If top leaders like the BSP's Mayawati polarised voters by asking Muslims to vote in one block against the BJP, Union minister Maneka Gandhi made it abundantly clear she wouldn't help Muslims if they didn't vote for Modi.

And, if the BJP polarised the elections by fielding someone like terror-accused Sadhvi Pragya Thakur, is it to blame more than former Madhya Pradesh chief minister Digvijay Singh who first came up with the term 'Hindu terror' as if to counter the globally recognised phenomenon of Islamic terror? Indeed, Singh had even claimed Mumbai Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) chief Hemant Karkare had told him—before Karkare was killed in the 26/11 attacks—that he feared Hindu extremists would kill him; Karkare was in charge of the investigation that eventually led to Sadhvi Pragya's arrest. Singh, in fact, made this statement at the launch of a book that claimed 26/11 was actually an RSS plot, not one hatched by Pakistani terrorists. It is obvious the prime minister has the greatest responsibility to conduct himself with a certain dignity during elections, but can it be said the responsibility is only his?

In any election that is as closely fought as this one, the campaign deteriorating into a communal one is always a possibility especially since, while the Model Code of Conduct prevents appealing to voters along religious lines, the fact is that major political parties—and this is not just the BJP—have aligned themselves with various religious/caste groupings. While that is something political parties and the country's intellectuals need to think about once the heat of the current battle is over—is asking for votes on religious grounds a bad thing if asking for them along caste lines is kosher?—in such a situation, the role of constitutional bodies is critical. While the Supreme Court did ask Rahul Gandhi to apologise for his remarks on the SC having declared that there was corruption in the Rafale deal and that Modi had given Anil Ambani a ₹30,000 crore contract, it did so only after BJP MP Meenakshi Lekhi filed a criminal complaint against Rahul Gandhi before it. The Election Commission (EC), similarly, was slow to act on incendiary speeches. It is true that, when all political parties choose to violate the rules, it is difficult to act against them all. And if the EC is to bench either a Modi or a Gandhi, it is difficult to say where this will go, but in this context, the response of Election Commissioner Ashok Lavasa—who was, sadly, outvoted by his colleagues in the EC—is commendable. While not spelling out what the EC should eventually do, going by a report in *The Economic Times*, Lavasa was of the view that the EC should write to the prime minister asking for his cooperation in implementing the Model Code of Conduct as a first response to the complaints about some of his speeches.

Jobs vs Consumption

If many jobs are being created, why is consumption sputtering?

THE CONSUMPTION ENGINE that was expected to drive the economy, in the absence of meaningful private sector investments and slowing government expenditure, seems to be sputtering. That has been evident, for some time now, from the lacklustre home sales and weak passenger vehicles sales. Moreover, the pace of growth in retail loans from banks, too, has been trending down since November, 2018. Now, the sales of consumer staples has slowed. In fact, the data on private final consumption expenditure for Q3FY19—a growth of 8.4% year-on-year (y-o-y)—was somewhat puzzling given the festive season had been a particularly dull one. But then, there has often been a lack of correlation between the macro-numbers and the high-frequency data.

While smaller spends on relatively big-ticket items such as homes is not so surprising in a slowing economy, the limited purchases of two-wheelers and cars, for nearly six months now, is worrying. Moreover, the loss of momentum has been seen in both rural and urban markets. True, there has been a fairly sharp increase in prices of cars and bikes, thanks to changes in the regulations. But, if the economy is doing so well and so many well-paying jobs are being created, as the government claims is the case, spends on these items should be more robust. Hero MotoCorp reported an 11% fall in volumes in Q4FY19 while TVS Motors reported a volume increase of just 2.1% y-o-y. That established products aren't able to push through volumes reflects how purchasing power has been limited. Economists point out this is due to incomes growing slowly or staying flat, or even, in some instances, shrinking. Household savings have fallen over the past few years. The physical plus net financial savings of households as a share of GDP was 18% in FY16, 17.1% in FY17 and 17.2% in FY18. These levels were much lower than the 20%-plus seen in earlier years—the recent peak was 23.6% in FY12. Physical savings, which were 15-16% of GDP in FY12 and FY13, dropped to sub-10% in FY16, recovering to 10.8% in FY17 and 10.6% in FY18. Again, the net financial savings of households—as a share of GDP—has come off to 6.3% in FY17 and 6.6% in FY18.

Unless incomes rise meaningfully, neither spending nor savings can pick up. The new government cannot afford to spend beyond a point since tax revenues are not particularly buoyant. An uncertain regulatory environment, tax terrorism and weak labour laws have sapped the confidence of the business community. There needs to be better regulation, whether in telecom, oil&gas or labour; else, companies will not invest. Since the government does not have the ability to kickstart the economy with a stimulus, better governance is the only way out.

RightMESSAGE

Benetton's #UnitedByVote ad campaign is a refreshing example of what companies can do in public interest

THE CLOTHING COMPANY, United Colours of Benetton, or more simply, Benetton, has never shied from explicitly political ads—political not in the sense of endorsing some party or outfit, but making a progressive statement on issues such as homosexuality/homophobia, war, capital punishment, the AIDS crisis of the 1980s-90s, organised crime. While the tone of the ads were local—the bloodied uniform of a Bosnian soldier or American prisoners in the death row or a man murdered by the mafia in Italy or an inter-racial lesbian couple with an adopted child of Asian descent—the message was global: anti-war, anti-death penalty, anti-organised crime, pro-diversity. In India, it has been uncharacteristically reticent. To be sure, it has put up ads speaking about racial harmony, but that doesn't pack the same punch as, say, hypothetically, a *januudhari* Brahmin shown with his arm on a Dalit's shoulder. It is not that companies in India have stayed clear of controversial—political—ads. Surf Excel recently became a target of relentless online abuse and threats from trolls for, ironically, using Holi as a backdrop to give a warm, sincere message on communal harmony. Tata Tea's famous *Jaago Re* campaign is another example. Yet, it was Benetton that was conspicuously silent. But no longer. The company brought out a full-page ad on the front two pages of a national news-daily on Sunday, with a rather forceful message.

Against a blurred picture of a woman in the background, the ad talks about the regressive, divisive politics of major political parties in India. The parties are not named, but you know which these are. It talks about parties that police what is acceptable as food in India, what clothes are acceptable, how they erode trust in the country's democracy with their attacks on the EVMs, how they want to dictate who should be hated. The final line in Benetton's #UnitedByVote ad, referencing universal adult franchise, is "It is time to... show them who has the power". That is as far as the company—any company—could get. If more of corporate India becomes conscience-keeper to the masses, it wouldn't be a bad thing at all.

POWER SHARING

THERE IS A NEED TO WORK ON CONSTITUTIONAL CONSTRAINTS. A MAJOR ISSUE, FOR INSTANCE, IS THE ABSENCE OF CLEARLY-DEFINED REVENUE SOURCES FOR LOCAL BODIES

Why states are failing decentralisation

DESPITE THE 73RD and 74th Constitutional amendments, except in a few states, there has been little progress at decentralisation—to both rural and urban local bodies. Most state governments have been reluctant to devolve the functions, funds and functionaries for delivering public services at the local level. The functions assigned are unclear, funds uncertain and inadequate, and decision-making functionaries are mostly drawn from the state bureaucracy. Local bodies do not even have powers to determine the base and rate structure of the taxes assigned to them. The states have not cared to create institutions and systems mandated in the Constitution, including the appointment of the State Finance Commissions, and even when they are appointed, states have not found it obligatory to place their reports in the legislature. In fact, the local bodies are not clear about delivering local public goods, with the prominent agenda of implementing central schemes obscuring their functions.

Admittedly, despite the landmark amendments, the effort at decentralisation reform has essentially been top-down. Part IX was inserted into the Constitution with Article 243 (A to O) specifying matters such as the constitution of local bodies, elections and the functions to be devolved under Schedules 11, 12, and 243 (I and Y) mandating the appointment of the State Finance Commissions by the Governor every five years to balance their functions with funds. Article 280 was seeded with an additional term of reference to the Union Finance Commission to recommend measures for augmenting the consolidated funds of the states to supplement the resources of local bodies. The major 'birth defect' of the entire process is that the ownership and responsibility for local governments rests squarely with the state government ensnared in Entry 5 of the State List in the Seventh Schedule. Thus, the Constitution vests the responsibility of creating and sustaining local bodies entirely to the discretion of the state governments.

M GOVINDA RAO
Chief economic adviser, Brickwork Ratings, and councillor, Takshashila Institution Views are personal



Article 243 (G and W), relating to the powers, authority and responsibilities to rural and urban local bodies, merely specifies that the state governments, "...may, by law, endow the panchayats and municipalities with powers and authority to enable them as institutions of self-government and such law may contain provisions for the devolution of powers and responsibilities upon these bodies subject to such conditions as may be specified therein, with respect to the preparation of economic development and social justice, performance of functions and implementation of schemes entrusted to them including those specified in the 12th Schedule". Thus, it is entirely left for the states to decide, what and how much powers and functions should be devolved to the third level.

There are no easy mechanisms to ensure compliance of even the provisions prescribed in the Constitution by the states. Most states have not complied with the requirement of appointing Gram Sabhas (243 A), Ward Committees (243), District Planning Committees and Metropolitan Planning Committees. There have been several attempts to postpone elections though they are required to hold them well before the expiry of the prevailing elected body or before six months if the body is dissolved for some reason, as required under 243 K and U. Although under Article 243 (I) and (Y), the states are required to appoint State Finance Commissions and place the reports received in the legislature, their records show complete violations of the Constitutional provisions.

One of the major shortcomings in the scheme is the absence of clearly defined revenue sources for local bodies. There is no separate list of tax bases assigned to them in the Constitution, and they have

to depend on the state governments to levy the taxes that the states choose to devolve. In fact, even when the taxes like property tax is assigned to them, local bodies do not have the discretion to change the base and rate structure. Any proposal for the change has to be approved by the state government.

What is the role of Union Finance Commission in furthering the decentralisation process? While one would like to think that an organic link is provided to it by seeding an additional term of reference in Article 280, enabling it to act as a champion, a careful reading of the Article shows that the role is confined to recommend measures to augment the Consolidated funds of the states to supplement the finances of local bodies based on the recommendations of the State Finance Commissions. The Union Finance Commission cannot directly transfer funds to local bodies; its job is only to augment the consolidated funds of the States to supplement the resources of local bodies. Again, the role is supplemental and the main responsibility of financing lies at the door of the state governments based on the recommendations of the respective State Finance Commissions.

There is some speculation that the Fifteenth Finance Commission will advance the cause of decentralisation and include performance-based incentives in their recommendations. The package of performance-based grants recommended by the Thirteenth Finance Commission (TFC) was discontinued by the Fourteenth Finance

Commission (FFC) mainly because it considered that the Constitution gives discretion to the states in choosing the extent and form, and does not suggest a particular model of decentralisation. It also considered that the role of the Union Finance Commission is only supplemental, as stated above. Moreover, according to the performance grants recommended by the TFC, the local governments were to get the performance grants only when the state governments fulfilled the 13 conditions listed! Not surprisingly, states had no incentive to comply.

The FFC considered that it had a limited role in fostering decentralisation in the prevailing Constitutional scheme. It

stated, "...We note that ... the Constitutional provisions give primacy to the role of the States in this regard, by placing local government squarely in the State List... In our view neither the TOR nor the Constitution permits the Finance Commission to play any role in the devolution of powers to panchayats and municipalities or to promote a particular model of decentralization." (Para 9:63; p.111)

How can we move forward on decentralisation? In terms of a legal frame-

work, it is important to specify a separate list of functions and sources of revenue to local bodies to create clarity of functions and independent sources of finance. Second, there should be clear mechanisms to ensure that the states comply with the Constitutional provisions, particularly in the appointment and implementation of the recommendations of the SFCs. Finally, the top-down process must be supplemented with the bottom-up effort. Sustainable decentralisation comes from people's demand for decentralisation. Unfortunately, there is very little objective intellectual discussion or advocacy based on serious research on the subject which is important for a participatory democracy and responsive local public service delivery.

In terms of a legal framework, it is important to specify a separate list of functions and sources of revenue for local bodies to create clarity of functions and independent sources of finance

Boeing's Max defence a textbook mess

Quibbling over the meaning of "safety features" adds to a litany of errors the company has already committed

DAVID FICKLING

Bloomberg



FOR DECADES, BUSINESS schools have taught Johnson & Johnson's handling of its 1982 Tylenol scandal as a textbook example of good crisis management. In the future, we can expect Boeing Co.'s treatment of its two 737 Max crashes to join the syllabus—as an example of what not to do.

Engineers at the planemaker discovered problems with the aircraft's angle-of-attack sensors within months of the model's first delivery, but didn't share its findings with airlines, regulators or even senior management until much later, the company said Sunday.

That we're still getting incomplete details of the situation—almost two years after the problems were first found, and six months after the Lion Air crash last October that brought it to wider attention—is an almost perfect inversion of the Tylenol lesson.

When Johnson & Johnson found someone was lacing the pain-relief medicine with cyanide, it removed the product from shelves and followed a policy of maximum transparency to reassure customers. As a result, it remained ahead of the developing story and, eventually, regained their trust.

Boeing's response has been starkly different. For more than a month, reporters and experts have been asking questions about the angle-of-attack sensors and their relationship with Boeing's Maneuvering Characteristics Augmentation System (an automated feature designed to prevent the plane from stalling). Many stories have pointed out how customers that paid for additional func-

tions got a warning when data from the 737 Max's two such sensors disagreed—with the implication that essential safety features were available only to those who paid extra.

Boeing's response to this line of inquiry has been that the absence of the disagree alert on basic-model planes wasn't the result of company policy but an accident, and that once discovered it was deemed acceptably low-risk to wait until a software update to fix the problem. In other words, it didn't leave the alert disconnected out of venality, but out of incompetence.

Let's just go through the litany of errors here. Boeing introduced a new automated feature, MCAS, that depended on input from angle-of-attack sensors. It failed to inform pilots properly about the new feature, despite the clear ways in which it changed the plane's aerodynamics and handling. On top of that, the company accidentally removed functionality that had previously alerted pilots to faults in the sensors controlling MCAS. Through ignorance of this second problem, it again failed to inform pilots of the way their cockpit set-up had changed.

It is a mess, and made worse by the fact that Boeing's prevarication looks like denial. With 346 people dead, the company's main defense boils down to quibbling about the meaning of the term "safety feature." (In Boeing's view, because angle-of-attack data don't form a central part of a pilot's classic flight display, an alert about faulty readings can't be considered a safety feature.)

Here's an alternative reading:

Whether you call them safety features or not, indicators telling pilots that something unexpected is happening to the aircraft can make the difference between life and death.

Thanks to innovations by aerospace manufacturers including Boeing itself, aircraft are extraordinarily safe these days. They lose control in flight only in extremely unusual and unpredictable circumstances. As a result, pilots are often more like investigators than drivers—most needed when something goes wrong. When that happens, they may have just seconds to solve the problem, so need as much information as possible at their fingertips.

When Air France Flight 447 crashed off the coast of Brazil in 2009 killing 228, the initial problem was caused by a strikingly similar set of events—conflicting airspeed readings that caused the autopilot to disconnect in a way that appears to have left the crew, flying in darkness, unable to discern what was going wrong. Too much information risks overwhelming pilots in a tense situation; depriving them of information can be equally dangerous.

Why is Boeing behaving so differently to Johnson & Johnson? One advantage that the drug company had is that the Tylenol poisonings weren't its fault, so it had little to lose from being as open as possible. In the case of the Boeing 737 Max, as we are gradually learning, it is going to be hard to paint the company's actions in such blameless tones.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Low politics, PM-style

Prime Minister Narendra Modi lowered himself by saying that Rajiv Gandhi 'died as Bhrashtachari No 1'. He seemed to have forgotten that speaking ill of the dead does not go down well with the people of India steeped in tradition. He conveniently omitted to mention that the Delhi High Court cleared Rajiv Gandhi of the charge of corruption and the Vajpayee government did not file an appeal against the HC judgment. The Prime Minister must lead by example; but in Modi we have a Prime Minister who stoops so low as to speak ill of an assassinated Prime Minister. It was lamentable that Modi chose to diminish his stature by a 'negative campaign' instead of a positive one enlisting his achievements. Increasingly, Modi looks like a leader fighting a losing battle. May be, he dragged Rajiv Gandhi's name to avenge Rahul Gandhi's jibe, chowkidar chor hai. It was a crowning irony that Modi, of all people, spoke of Rajiv Gandhi's 'courtiers'. Meanwhile, it is to Rahul Gandhi's credit that he offered Modi 'love and hugs' despite his denigration of his father as 'Corrupt No 1'. Insulting remarks by the prime minister, made out of desperation, could well boomerang on him and his party's prospects in the final phases of polling.

— G David Milton, Maruthancode

ECI clean-chit to Modi

The ECI gave clean chits to Narendra Modi and Amit Shah over violations such as communally coloured speeches and invoking the Army to solicit votes, probably keeping them above the law of the land. Such action of the EC seeds doubt over its integrity.

— SK Khosla, Chandigarh

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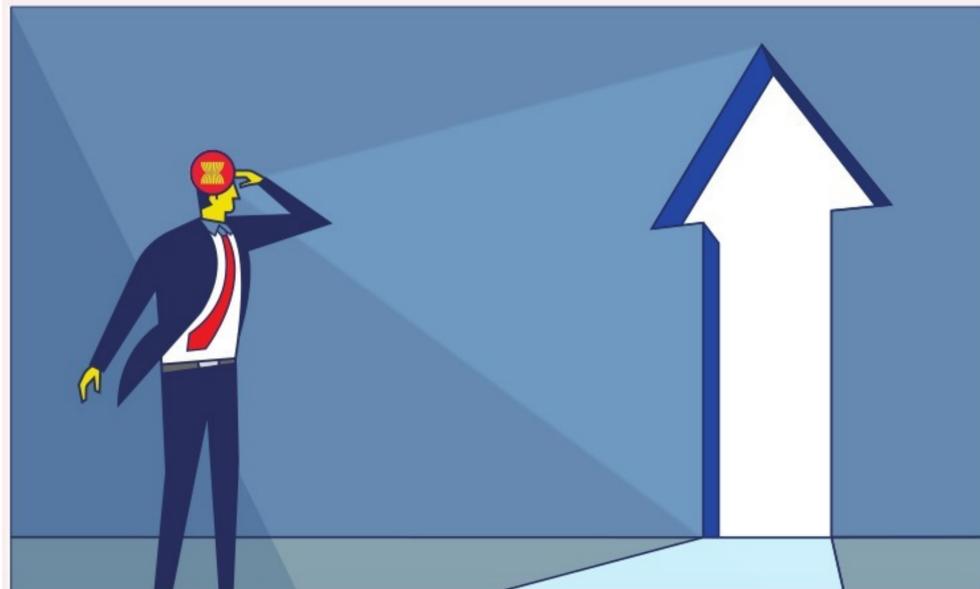


ILLUSTRATION: SHYAM KUMAR PRASAD

**PRACHI PRIYA
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The way forward for RCEP

While our negotiators bargain hard for an inclusive and balanced Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, domestically we must focus on eliminating niggles our manufacturing sector and exports are facing. The first phase of 'Make in India' was promising. We saw eagerness from foreign companies setting up plants and assembly units in India. The next phase may well focus on transforming this initiative to 'Make for India' where the needs of the external market, but more importantly the domestic market, are met through production in India

THE REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE Economic Partnership (RCEP)—the proposed free trade agreement between 10 ASEAN member states and their six FTA partners, namely India, Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea—talks have been underway for over six years now, with over 25 rounds of negotiations between all FTA partner countries. The 16 member countries have now set a deadline of end-2019 to conclude the negotiations. The trade bloc comprising the ASEAN, Australia, China, India, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand accounts for 25% of global GDP, 30% of global trade, 26% of FDI flows, and 45% of the total population. From India's point of view, RCEP is critical. RCEP countries account for almost 27% of India's total trade. Exports to RCEP

countries account for about 15% of India's total exports, and imports from RCEP countries comprise 35% of India's total imports.

The negotiations, until now, have been fraught with difficulties, with India accused of being 'conservative' in its approach towards tariff negotiations, according to media reports. A final decision on RCEP is expected to come only post-elections under a new government at the Centre.

Both Indian negotiators and the domestic industry have been vocal about their discomfort with respect to opening up of the domestic market to Chinese exports. This is understandable, given the massive Chinese overcapacity in key manufacturing industries, and major support programmes in the form of financial, non-financial and trade mea-

asures for the domestic industry, which give an edge to Chinese producers over other trade partners.

In order to do an independent assessment of the impact of RCEP on the Indian industry, the government has roped in three premier think tanks to prepare the way forward for RCEP negotiations, which is a step in the right direction. A NITI Aayog note (*A Note on Free Trade Agreements and Their Costs*, Dr Saraswat, Priya, Ghosh 2018) co-authored by the writers of this article had earlier highlighted that India's combined trade deficit with FTA partners like the ASEAN, Japan and South Korea has almost doubled in the last eight years. India's trade deficit with the RCEP bloc of over \$100 billion is almost 64% of its total trade deficit, of which China alone accounts for over 60% of the deficit. The report also highlighted that the quality of trade has deteriorated under the ASEAN-India FTA. According to the UN's Harmonised system of product classification, products can be grouped into 99 chapters and further into 21 sections like textiles, chemicals, vegetable products, base metals, gems and jewellery, etc (similar to sector classification). The analysis shows that trade balance has worsened (deficit increased or surplus reduced) for 13 out of 21 sectors. This also includes value-added sectors like chemicals and allied, plastics and rubber, minerals, leather, textiles, gems and jewellery, metals, vehicles, medical instruments and miscellaneous manufactured items. Sectors in which trade deficit has worsened account for about 75% of India's exports to the ASEAN.

Apart from this, we would like to highlight some issues that need consideration of the policy-makers and independent agencies undertaking the assessment. First, China's manufacturing surplus and dumping of goods across the world is quite well known. China is the recipient of the highest number of Anti-Dumping Duty (ADD) measures in the world, with 926 ADD measures against it (1995-2017), which amounts to almost a quarter of all ADD measures globally. Most of these measures are concentrated in sectors where China has overcapacity, with more than a quarter of investigations in base metals (272), followed by chemicals (192), machinery and electric equipment (104), and textiles (75). Concomitantly, China's penetration in the Indian market has been massive. China dominates both in terms of value-added import items as well as labour-intensive industry imports. Overall, India imports

almost 20% of its non-oil imports from China. Almost 60% of India's electric machinery imports, 36% of machinery and equipment imports, and 37% of organic chemical imports are from China. Due to its massive overcapacity and financial and non-financial government support, China is able to create a significant edge over its trading partners. A recent OECD report (2019) highlights that the Chinese aluminium industry received the highest amount of financial and non-financial support (from 2013-17), far ahead of its other global peers.

Against this backdrop, India must have a plan to deal with this massive support that China offers its industries, leading to overcapacity and price undercutting post-RCEP. Therefore, we suggest that appropriate safeguard clauses need to be put in place within RCEP in case injury to domestic industry is found. A clause on provisional safeguard measures should also be introduced. Within the FTA, provision should be made for safeguard measures to be invoked if a volume or price trigger for the concerned products is reached.

Second, given the current state of Indian industry, phased elimination of tariffs is necessary, especially with respect to some key manufacturing industries that have long gestation periods until they start running on full capacity. An example of this kind of negotiation was the India-Japan FTA where India negotiated for most of its tariff lines under sensitive track (almost 63% under sensitive track, 14% under exclusion). This was in contrast to the ASEAN-India FTA wherein 76% of the tariff lines were opened up for complete duty elimination. Therefore, at least a 15-25 years' tariff elimination schedule should be negotiated for key sectors like chemicals, metals, automobiles, machinery, food products and textiles, which individually contribute more than 5% to India's manufacturing GDP and employment, respectively. Thus, as suggested, phased elimination of few key manufacturing industries is absolutely essential with respect to China.

Third, policymakers should be cognisant of the use of non-tariff barriers (NTBs) by China. According to reports, even though China has agreed to open almost 92% of their tariff lines, expecting India to reciprocate in the same manner, India's concerns over China's NTBs merit serious attention. China's usage of NTBs like complex product certification process, labelling standards, custom clearance, pre-shipment inspection and import licensing has hindered India's access to their markets. Dealing with NTBs is costly and, therefore, we must factor in this associated barrier before we move ahead with trade pacts, RCEP in particular.

While our negotiators bargain hard for an inclusive and balanced RCEP, domestically we must fiercely focus on eliminating niggles our manufacturing sector and exports are facing. The first phase of 'Make in India' has been promising. We have seen eagerness from foreign companies setting up plants and assembly units in India, bringing in valuable foreign capital and technical know-how. The next phase may well focus on transforming this initiative to 'Make for India' where the needs of the external market, but more importantly the domestic market, are met through production in India. Not only will this produce meaningful jobs, but also add to India's heft in trade treaties. These transformational plans will require support in the form of a new industrial policy that creates the necessary incentives for MSMEs to be an active part of this process. These are necessary complements for ensuring maximum leverage out of our trade deals, especially RCEP.

Over two tonnes in space

**YOGINDER
K ALAGH**



The author is a former Union minister

Was our A-SAT experiment just that? Or was it more—civilised countries, after all, flex muscles in the pursuit of their larger objectives abroad?

We showed what we knew—that we can put over two tonnes in space, do it accurately, and manoeuvre it. In fact, we can do more. We can deliver payloads of this kind over 2,000-plus kilometres. So our enemies should watch out. We describe in this piece, how we acquired these capabilities. But before that, let's assure ourselves—and then our friends also across the world—that our destiny is greater than sabre-rattling.

Rajiv Gandhi had gone to Moscow for a discussion with Mikhail Gorbachev. Getting bored, he asked his aide Gopi Arora, "Anything new?" Arora replied both he and we are "reforming." Let's cooperate around that with new-generation projects and not just steel plants and heavy machinery. Let's also cooperate on reform strategies and share experiences.

Later, I was sent to negotiate these details. Incidentally, during that mission, I asked Sam Pitroda, who in those days was working on a modern communication strategy for India (the Centre for Development of Telematics; C-DOT), if he would be a part of my delegation? He wanted to come and that is the origin of his Soviet bloc business connection. The Soviets laid it out. My counterpart was a Soviet electronic engineer trained in the US, one of Gorbachev's technocrat young leaders. During that visit, we also met Vladimir Putin, who was the Party chief in Leningrad (now St Petersburg). I took from home a list of 'needs' we were not getting from elsewhere, in which they had the capabilities. One of them was cooperation in developing the technology of delivering payloads in space.

Rajiv was assassinated and Gorbachev removed. His successor would not bite on this cooperation and it was only with Putin that those deals were revived. But after the initial rebuff, I asked the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) chief, whom I knew from his Ahmedabad days, what will we do? These chelas of Satish Dhawan were all Nehruites to the core. He replied, "Sir, we will do it ourselves." But how? "The origin, Dr Alagh, is the technology of boiling milk: we will start with that." We allocated special resources for them, and the rest is history. In four months they had tested successfully the technology under stationary conditions, and in less than two years the descendants of the Aryabhata had ready to put the rocket in space for an Indian communication satellite to be used for 'educational' purposes. But chancelleries the world over knew that India had the power to swing it militarily very quickly, say in a period of weeks.

Civilised countries use the threat of power to achieve democratic social objectives at home and the pursuit of their larger objectives abroad. The threat of the use of power was developed as a fine art by political economy thought leaders like Chanakya, Alexander Hamilton, Benjamin Disraeli and Giuseppe Mazzini. Dictators, who actually used this power causing havoc, ended up in the dustbins of history.

Our security interests in Afghanistan, the access route to our trade with Central and West Asia through the strategically located port town of Chabahar, and in fighting those who will wreck the democratic Indian State, need the back-up of the mailed fist. But this power needs to be perceived as a threat. That too we must make an effort for it to be seen only as a hidden threat. The day-to-day work has to be done with the velvet glove. Large democracies are very confident and powerful nations. They cannot fritter away their reservoirs of power, in fits of insecurity.

Our security interests in Afghanistan, the access route to our trade with Central and West Asia, and fighting those who will wreck the democratic Indian State, need the back-up of the mailed fist

PUBLIC HEALTHCARE

Can India get it right?

India can learn from the Accountable Care Organisations (ACO) model of the US, in which a group of doctors, hospitals and other care providers together manage care of a group of patients

**SUJATA SAUNIK &
DILEEP MAVALANKAR**

Saunik, an IAS, is Takemi fellow at Harvard University; Mavalankar is director, IIPHG. Views are personal

assist in helping patients get access to integrated behavioural health and substance use services in the primary care setting. Patients requiring high-grade medical or surgical treatment are assisted with quick referrals to nearby hospitals. Often, the ACO model in a community health centre does not have in-patient services, although it works seven days a week with reduced hours during the weekends.

All Medicare (the US national health insurance programme for Americans aged 65 and over and young people with end-stage diseases, funded by a combination of payroll tax, premiums and surtaxes from beneficiaries) and Medicaid patients (low-income families, pregnant women, people with disabilities and elderly requiring nursing care) are covered by the local com-

munity health centre under the ACO model. This is the main driver of the fund flow to the centre. The integrated healthcare model also helps provide support to patients for alcohol, tobacco and substance abuse. A range of services, including lab tests, primary medical care, geriatric care, nutrition, dental and ophthalmic care with shorter waiting periods helps people to visit community healthcare centres and receive expert advice, drugs and vaccines without having to visit the nearest hospital for minor ailments. There could be lessons from the ACO model in the US for the Indian public healthcare system reform.

India's public healthcare system provides free medical consultation, basic lab tests, free drugs and vaccines and refer-



ral when needed. Hence this system should be strengthened. Free provision of medical consultation, tests and drugs and routine immunisation should form the main plank of the wellness centre programme. It should be supplemented by screening for blood pressure, diabetes and risk factors for heart diseases such as lipid levels in blood. Screening for cancer, kidney diseases and eye problems should be also added in the public healthcare system.

There should be integration of primary healthcare services under one roof, with AYUSH, as these services are non-invasive and popular with communities, along with the facility for rapid referral to hospitals when needed for high-level care. This may work very well for the pop-

ulation covered under each such centre. State-run insurance schemes can provide a gateway by helping advise people on their benefit packages, which are already being planned under NHPS.

Several sub-centres staffed by auxiliary nurse midwife (ANMs) are the primary maternal and child care service delivery centres in rural India. These ANMs can be equipped with staff, facilities such as freezers for vaccine, and a full drug dispensation pharmacy including AYUSH medicines to start running wellness centres in the ACO model. The government is already planning to put a community health officer in each health and wellness centre.

Another unique feature could be making this community centre the hub for

people to get information of all social sector welfare schemes. Community workers involved in various schemes could come together on a fixed day or two each week and provide information and paperwork support to the intended beneficiaries.

This is an unique opportunity for India to leapfrog to a new healthcare delivery model and move towards universal health coverage, provided the scheme is designed well to have an array of services under one roof, empathy and respect for the patient, a payment model for fund flow, community outreach and quality care delivery. It is unrealistic to expect doctors to be everywhere and work round the clock, and for people to pay nothing for quality healthcare. For this model to be sustainable there should be a system of enrolment based on income criteria, linked to ration/Aadhaar cards, and provided free to low income groups but with co-payments for the rest. One of the ways to link the primary care system and NHPS could be to make each sub-health centre and public health centre the registration point for NHPS. One can also make a medical examination mandatory before enrolling in NHPS so that many problems can be detected early and treated under NHPS. It will also help establish a referral system for NHPS and a link in the minds of the people that they have to go first to the public healthcare system to get benefits of NHPS. Such gatekeeping can reduce the cost by promoting prevention and reducing fraud.

TELLING NUMBERS

CBSE Class X: KV's outdo JNVs, govt schools improve by miles



In the CBSE Class X results declared Monday, the overall improvement in the proportion of successful candidates — from 86.70% in 2018 to 91.10% in 2019 — reflected in the institution-wise results. Among the key takeaways were the Kendriya Vidyalayas outperforming the Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas, and a huge improvement in the performance of government schools. The KV's, which were behind the JNVs in 2018, took top position in 2009 (99.47%) although the JNVs too improved to 98.57%. And while government institutions remained at the bottom of the list, their 72% was miles better than their 64% of 2018.

REGION BY REGION

Trivandrum	99.85%
Chennai	99.00%
Ajmer	95.89%
Panchkula	93.72%
Prayagraj	92.55%
Bhubaneswar	92.32%
Patna	91.86%
Dehradun	89.04%
Delhi	80.97%
Guwahati	74.49%

99.60% to 99.85%, Chennai from 97.37% to 99%, and Ajmer from 91.86% to 95.89%. Four of the other seven regions had pass rates over 90%.

THIS WORD MEANS

PURPLE FROG

Species being considered for Kerala state amphibian



Nasikabatrachus sahyadrensis.
Sandeeep Das

THE PURPLE frog, an odd-looking species with a pig snout, is due for consideration for a special honour in Kerala. At a meeting later this month, a committee of the state Wildlife Advisory Board will discuss a proposal to declare the species Kerala's state amphibian. Although the purple frog, or *Nasikabatrachus sahyadrensis*, was first described only in October 2003 from the forests of Idukki district, it is believed to have shared space with dinosaurs. The reason it was not described earlier is that it spends almost its entire lifespan underground. It comes out to the surface for one day in a year during the monsoon to breed and lay eggs. This has led to its description as the "Maveli frog" - the mythical king Maveli is believed to visit Kerala for a day during the festival of Onam. Tadpoles that emerge out of the eggs seven days later can be found in crevices along seasonal streams or torrents, where they feed on algae. After growing into frogs, they make their journey into the

deeper layers of the Earth. It is considered endemic to the Western Ghats, especially the southern portion in Kerala and Tamil Nadu, and its closest relatives were documented in Seychelles. Exact population sizes have been hard to come by. The species is classified as endangered on the list of the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) and faces severe habitat loss.

VISHNU VARMA

SIMPLY PUT

Where are driverless cars going?

HOW AUTONOMOUS VEHICLES SEE AND HEAR

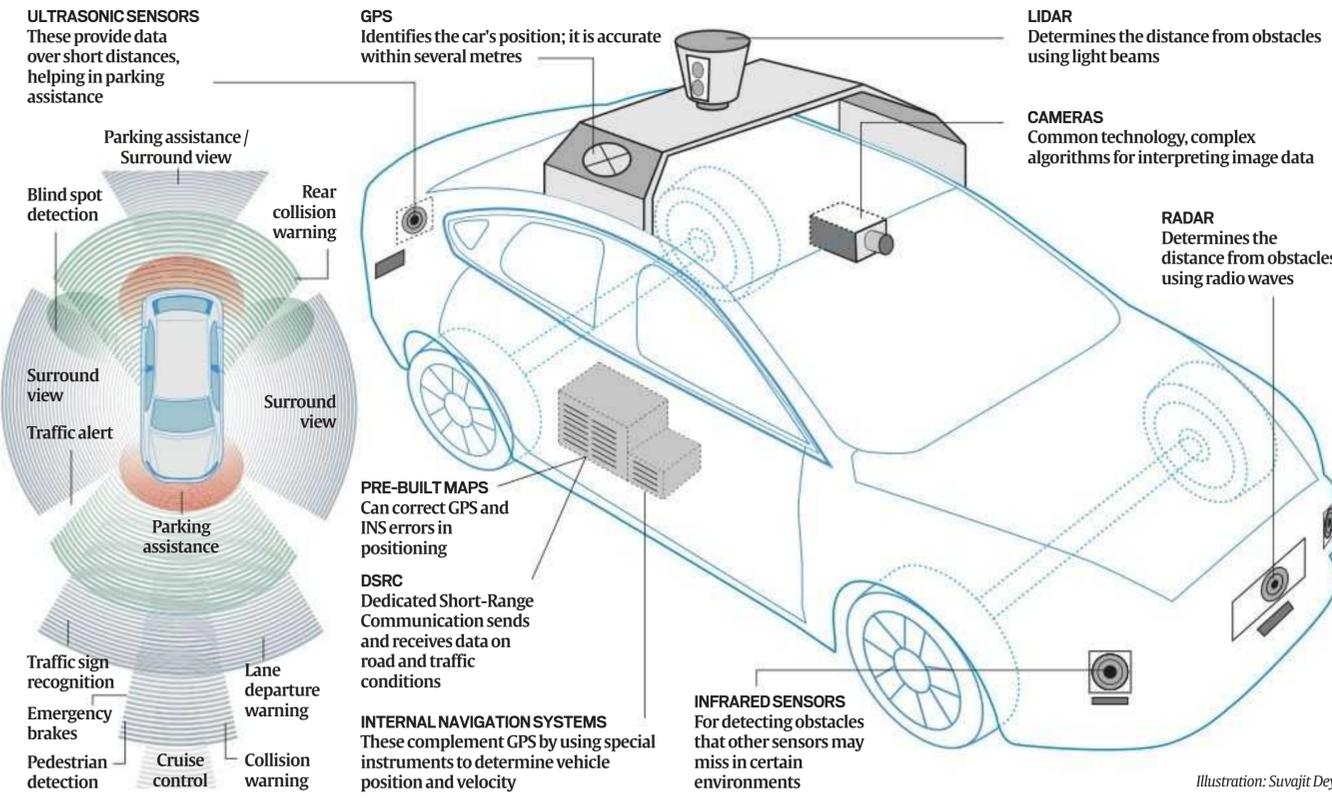


Illustration: Sujajit Dey

Elon Musk recently said Tesla robotaxis, which will run without humans, will be ready by 2020. Companies are pushing ahead with autonomous vehicles, but concerns remain — and consumer interest is not rising

ANIL SASI
NEW DELHI, MAY 6

SOME OF the greatest scientific achievements — digital photography, virtual reality, the Deep Web and the Internet — trace their origins to military research. The concept of self-driving cars too, owes a lot to the US wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Competitions organised by Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) — a research and development wing of the Pentagon — in the mid 2000s have had a direct bearing on most of today's autonomous vehicle (AV) projects.

The beginnings

The Stanford Cart, first built in 1961, could navigate around obstacles using cameras. Later, Carnegie Mellon researchers drove across the US in a NavLab 5, a Pontiac Trans Sport rigged up to drive itself using a windshield-mounted camera that looked for lane lines, while humans controlled the fuel pedal and brakes.

The first DARPA Grand Challenge of 2004 required robotic cars to travel 140 miles across the Mojave Desert. Carnegie Mellon University's entry, a Humvee named "Sandstorm", used cameras, laser scanners, radars, and a 1,000-pound box full of electronics to travel 7 miles. The final DARPA race in 2007, which was won by CMU's "Boss", followed by Stanford's "Junior" and Virginia Tech's "Odin", had a total budget of about \$30 million.

Things have moved fast since then, with the military imperative being replaced by commercial considerations. The market for AV technology is valued at \$100 billion, not including the value of the actual cars. Jefferies Research LLC recently valued Waymo, owned by Google's parent Alphabet Inc, at \$250 billion

— over 8,000 times the 2007 DARPA budget.

In 2009, Google launched its self-driving car project with a team of DARPA Challenge veterans. A few years later, Tesla announced it would build a self-driving system into its cars. In 2015, Uber got scientists from CMU, a robotics and artificial intelligence powerhouse, for its project.

Current technologies

Two broad concepts are being tested: ■ A system that uses radars, sonars, and cameras to perceive vehicles and other objects; this, according to a McKinsey report, requires less processing power, but does not assess the environment on a deeply granular level.

■ The second approach uses Lidar — a remote sensing method that uses light in the form of a pulsed laser to measure variable distances and range — in addition to the traditional sensor suite of radar and camera systems. It requires more data-processing and computational power, but is more robust, especially in tight, traffic-heavy environments.

While the radar and camera technology is easy to optimise and robust enough to incorporate into mass-market cars, the challenge lies in leveraging artificial intelligence to convert 2D visuals into 3D images that the vehicle can then successfully negotiate. Lidar, on the other hand, is still expensive.

In an earnings call in February this year, Tesla founder Elon Musk dismissed the Lidar technology as being "too expensive" and "too bulky", and defended Tesla's strategy of achieving "full autonomy" using only cameras, radar, and ultrasonic sensors.

Lidar is a fixture on self-driving cars operated by GM, Uber and Waymo, the last two of which are currently fighting in court over Waymo's allegation that Uber stole its Lidar

technology. Tesla's call to dump Lidar altogether is being seen as a new frontier.

The state of play

WAYMO launched Waymo One, a commercial self-driving car service and accompanying app for about 500 test families in suburban Phoenix, Arizona, in December 2018.

FORD Motor has set a date of 2021 for its first purpose-built driverless car. Ford plans to deploy "thousands of self-drivers" on the streets of multiple US cities in two years.

GENERAL MOTORS Cruise Automation plans to test a fleet of self-driving electric Chevy Bolts shortly. It has announced plans to debut its automated ride-hailing business in an American city (possibly New York) this year.

TESLA has claimed there will be self-driving Tesla "robotaxis" on the road as early as next year. Musk has said he would demonstrate a cross-country trip without touching the steering wheel.

VOLVO has labeled its AV project 'IntelliSafe', and set a zero-fatality goal before fully rolling out the autonomous features to the public. The Sweden-based carmaker plans to offer 100 Swedish customers early access to an autonomous XC90 SUV by 2021.

Riding on upbeat predictions, Lyft has raised \$1 billion. Hundreds of smaller firms are rushing to offer better radars, cameras, Lidars, maps, and data management systems to the established players. Chipmakers such as Nvidia, Intel and Qualcomm are optimising power requirements by the cars, while Tesla has announced plans to make its own chips to meet specification requirements and cut costs.

Scepticism and concerns

After a 2018 incident in which an Uber self-driving car prototype fatally hit a pedestrian

in Arizona, carmakers had paused to reflect on safety aspects. Uber, however, resumed testing its autonomous Volvos in December 2018, just nine months after the accident.

Ragunathan Rajkumar of CMU, who serves as co-director of the General Motors-Carnegie Mellon Connected and Autonomous Driving Collaborative Research Lab, is of the view that from a purely scientific standpoint, "Musk's... proclamations would be laughed out of the room in academic circles and his submissions rejected summarily".

Matthew Johnson-Roberson of the University of Michigan, who co-directs the UM Ford Center for Autonomous Vehicles, has said that the only way forward is to isolate autonomous cars in their own lanes, walled off from unpredictable humans.

On the Lidar-versus-camera debate begun by Musk, Rajkumar told *The Indian Express* that "the Tesla vehicles only have a camera and a radar, and they have been claiming for quite some time that the hardware will be capable of being fully autonomous with a future over-the-air update. Musk's claim that Lidar companies are doomed is simply smoke and mirrors to confuse investors and consumers who are either not aware or not technology-savvy. No AV company today uses Lidars exclusively; they all have cameras too (and radars as well)".

In Rajkumar's assessment, full autonomous driving "is some years away". A Deloitte study suggests that consumer trust in AVs is stalling. In the US, 50% of respondents did not believe they would be safe, nearly the same as last year's 47%. The share of consumers in China, Japan and South Korea who believed AVs will not be safe decreased modestly; and Indian and German consumers both showed slight increase in distrust.

Lesson from Kurkheda: no 'open areas' in a Maoist-hit landscape

VIVEK DESHPANDE
NAGPUR, MAY 6

THE MAY 1 ambush of 15 Gadchiroli Police commandos near Kurkheda, close to Maharashtra's trijunction with Chhattisgarh and Telangana, was a reminder that the Maoists, though down, retain the ability to surprise and strike back with a change in strategy. What happened last Wednesday — arson by Maoists on a road works site followed by an ambush on policemen apparently headed to the spot — has happened earlier.

2009-14, five attacks

Ten years ago, the Maoists had killed 48 policemen in three deadly attacks in Gadchiroli — besides another four personnel in separate incidents — destroying the morale of the police force, and underlining the tactical superiority of the guerrillas in the area.

■ In February 2009, the Maoists set on fire some vehicles at a road construction site about 3 km from Markegaon village in Dhanora *tehsil*, not far from the site of this month's attack in Kurkheda. The police, aware of the possibility of an ambush, waited a couple of days before setting out on foot for the site of the arson. Near Markegaon village, however, they came un-

der fire from all directions, and lost 15 men.

What was remarkable about the Maoist strategy was that they had waited a full two days for their targets, and that they had impeccable intelligence on both the timing and the route of the police movement. They succeeded even though the police stuck to the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) of not going immediately to the spot.

■ In May 2009, however, the police rushed, in violation of the SOP, to Hattigota, also in Dhanora *tehsil*, where Maoists had felled trees to block the road. Instead of walking to the spot, the police chose to use a vehicle — walking and riding it intermittently, presuming the road ahead was safe. But as they reached Hattigota, guerrillas lying in wait fired on the vehicle from both sides of the road, killing the 16 personnel on board.

■ In a November 2009 attack, the Maoists demonstrated another new strategy. A police party was on patrol in the forest near Lahiri outpost in Bhamragad *tehsil*. But instead of attacking them in the jungle, the Maoists set up an ambush close to their outpost, and surprised the team returning from the operation inside their 'safe' territory. The Maoists were said to have filmed the ambush — and reportedly chased down policemen running helter-skelter for their lives, and shot them dead. Seventeen police personnel were killed.



Mangled remains of a police vehicle, carrying security personnel, that was allegedly blasted by Maoists using IED, in Gadchiroli, May 1, 2019. PTI

■ In 2012, the Maoists set off a landmine near Pushtola village, again in Dhanora, killing 13 CRPF personnel, and injuring 29. The CRPF men were travelling in a vehicle to a village which their then Director General of Police Vijay Kumar was to visit. No road-opening operation had been carried out to ensure safe passage for the vehicle, and the CRPF personnel proved sitting ducks for the Maoists.

■ In May 2014, the Maoists set off an explosion under a vehicle carrying policemen in Chamorshi *tehsil*. The men were returning to Gadchiroli from a combing operation, and had chosen to get on the vehicle on the assumption that the area was "safe". Seven personnel were killed.

In two of the five major attacks between 2009 and 2014 — Hattigota and Pushtola — police and CRPF failed to follow SOPs. In Markegaon and Lahiri, the Maoists surprised the police with new, unexpected tactics. In both these attacks, the police were also done

in by miserable intelligence failures.

The attack in Chamorshi was similar to the Kurkheda incident to the extent that it too, resulted from a misplaced sense of security.

Over the last five years

Since 2014, the police have built strong intelligence networks, and penetrated deeper into the Dandakaranya zone of the Maoists, building fortress-like outposts there. The Maoists have lost 84 cadres during this period, nearly four times the number of Gadchiroli Police casualties (22). This trend has been the reverse of that in the 2009-14 period, when police lost 77 personnel as against 59 casualties suffered by the Maoists. 2018 was the worst year for the Maoists — they lost 50 cadres, 40 of them in back-to-back police encounters on April 22 and 23.

After many years, iron ore mining has started in the Surjagad hills in the worst-affected Etapalli *tehsil*. Despite the continued opposition by Maoists, hundreds of people from the nearby villages have made a beeline for the mines, seeking work. In November 2016, the Maoists carried out their biggest ever act of arson, setting on fire 80 vehicles deployed for work at the Surjagad mines. The incident happened close to the Hedri police outpost; police, however, observed caution in not rushing to the spot, averting potential casualties.



The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

Indian woman goes to vote



BHASKAR CHAKRAVORTI

Can you hear women at polling booths, and on the Internet? The silent revolution will get noisy soon

AS THE LARGEST exercise of democracy on earth readies for a denouement, three developments have converged and it is time we paid attention. All three have to do with the state of the Indian woman.

Let me begin with some good news. Despite India's well-known biological imbalance — one of the world's worst sex ratios — it boasts a top 20 ranking (19th out of 149 countries) in terms of political empowerment of women, according to the World Economic Forum. This is translating into outcomes at the polling booths. The turnout of women has been rising faster than that of men, even in the traditionally backward states; and if recent trends persist, women will outnumber men in the 2019 elections. Brookings India's Shamika Ravi calls this a "silent revolution".

Another silent revolution is happening on the digital front. This is the second of the three developments. The past two years have been dramatic in terms of increased access to the internet across the country. Some of the most significant beneficiaries of this surge are women. More than 40 per cent of Indian women are now aware of the mobile internet, according to the GSMA. In isolation, this might seem like a glass half empty given the 60 per cent still excluded, but this is already more than double the proportion of women aware of the mobile internet from just a year before. The proportion of women who might have independent sources of information — and, unfortunately, misinformation — has jumped.

That's where the good news ends. With the third of the three developments, we get down to some sobering realities. The central issue for the current elections has been the state of employment in India. The jobs crisis has disproportionately affected women.

According to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), a large percentage of all the jobs lost last year were held by women. Out of the 11 million jobs lost in 2018, women accounted for 8.8 million. This only serves to exacerbate an already severe economic imbalance across gender lines. Indian women receive 34 per cent less wages than men for equivalent work, spend around five hours a day on unpaid care work compared to a mere half an hour for men and are primarily engaged in low-paying, informal sector work. Putting these three developments to-

gether, rising female political engagement, surging female access to information, true or false, and worsening economic opportunities for women sounds like a recipe for a revolution — and quite possibly not a silent one. In the global context, India's long-standing gender gap is already a disgrace. The country remains a perpetual bottom hugger of international league tables when it comes to metrics on the status of women.

Consider this sampling of India's rankings: 147th out of 149 countries on health and survival of women and 142nd out of 149 in terms of economic participation of women, according to the WEF's gender gap index; 163rd out of 181 countries in female labour force participation, according to the World Bank; 149th out of 193 by percentage of women representatives in parliament, notably behind Bangladesh, Pakistan, and, yes, even Saudi Arabia, according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union; most dangerous country to be a woman, according to the Thomson-Reuters Foundation, worse than Afghanistan, the DRC, Syria or Yemen. OK, I get that the last one may still be a bit controversial and you may quarrel over methodology, but let's not get too comfortable. Being a woman is no picnic in a crowded bus or in a lonely street in India — and, for far too many women, even their own home is no refuge.

If there is a single message I would have for the new government post-May, it would be this: It is high time to get out of these lowly rankings. Much needs to change.

First, look past the reductive and politically expedient ways to frame women's needs; think beyond toilets, talaq and cooking gas. Women need equal access to opportunities to gain a measure of economic independence, without which it is hard to imagine independence on other fronts. The barriers are inter-connected, and not just societal mores but those related to poor education and healthcare access as well. The solutions have to be systemic. Higher paid jobs, for example, call for schooling, but 23 million girls drop out of school each year because the families fall on hard times or because of inadequate sanitation or proper menstrual hygiene capabilities in schools. The opportunity crisis is tied to wider crises.

India's water problem, for example, im-

poses a heavier burden on women with consequences for their access to opportunities. A rural woman might walk 5-20 km a day to fetch water. Carrying water across long distances is stressful on the body and managing households with little water is stressful on the mind. With this kind of a burden, it is hard to imagine acquiring skills, remaining healthy and getting into productive employment.

Second, to be fair, there are several women-oriented government initiatives with good intentions, such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao; however, their track record has been long on publicity and short on results. Consider the Nirbhaya Fund set up in 2013, to support projects aimed at the safety of women. Till the end of 2018, only 42 per cent of that money has been used — and a modest Rs 450 crore was allocated for the Herculean task of making eight of India's largest cities safer for women. The patchwork approach must go. Leadership at the Centre and the states needs to develop a less patronising attitude and a genuine commitment to effect change. More women ought to be politically elevated to run in the next election. A ministry with real clout ought to own the problem of ensuring gender inclusion. Yes, there is a ministry already. But why is it called the Ministry of Women and Child Development? Tying women's development with child development itself is a vestige of a patriarchal mindset that must go.

Finally, to those who say that elections are won on promises of a growing economy and jobs, I have some good news. Closing the gender gap offers a big political return on investment. India could add over 18 per cent to its GDP by 2025, by giving equal opportunities to women, according to those clever fellows at McKinsey. If that doesn't wake up our politicians, the rising clamour of women at polling booths and on the internet will. The silent revolution will get noisy soon. If the #MeToo campaign teaches us anything, it is to never underestimate the power of an angry woman with a mobile phone.

The writer is the Dean of Global Business at The Fletcher School at Tufts University, founding executive director of Fletcher's Institute for Business in the Global Context and non-resident senior fellow of Brookings India

TAMING THE TEMPEST

Odisha's handling of Cyclone Fani points to the gains the state has made in dealing with natural disasters

THE ODISHA GOVERNMENT can take credit for minimising the impact of Fani, a rarest of rare summer cyclone that made landfall near Puri on Friday. It flattened several structures on the coast and disrupted essential services in the state. Every death is one too many, but the death toll, at 34, was expected to be worse. Two decades ago, the Super Cyclone, which swept the state with windspeeds similar to Fani, killed over 10,000 people. Odisha had then promised to put systems and structures in place to deal with cyclones, an unavoidable natural phenomenon on the Bay of Bengal coast. The administration's resolve was tested by Cyclone Phailin in 2013 and now, it has stood up to the onslaught of Fani.

The administration could plan the evacuation of over a million people largely because the Indian Meteorological Department had tracked the storm's path accurately since it originated as a tropical depression in the Indian Ocean, off Sumatra, on April 26. As the eye of the storm moved across the Bay of Bengal, the Odisha administration embarked on a massive communication outreach to get the vulnerable population on the coast shift to nearly 900 cyclone shelters that had been built in the aftermath of the 1999 Super Cyclone. Loud speakers to radio and TV commercials to mobile phones — 2.6 million text messages were sent out — were pressed into service to spread the message of the impending storm and fishermen warned not to go out into the sea. Thousands of volunteers, emergency workers, police officers executed the evacuation plan and by the time the cyclone crossed over to the land, most of the population had been moved to the shelters. The administration had also readied boats, helicopters and the necessary equipment to clear roads, fallen trees etc. Now that the worst has passed, it is time to start counting the losses. Electricity and water supply are to be restored in rural and urban areas. That, hopefully, will be done soon. People and the state administration will need a generous hand from all sections of society to rebuild homesteads, livelihoods and infrastructure. But the administration has passed the first test.

Cyclones have been both a boon and bane of India's eastern coasts. These tropical storms feed water systems on the eastern coast, even as they wreaked havoc on unsuspecting populations in the past. Advanced technologies now allow accurate prediction of cyclone paths and enable people to be prepared when the storm arrives. Equally important is that the administration and political leadership are now more capable and willing to put in the extra effort to contain the impact of cyclonic storms. A similar resolve would help Odisha get back on its feet soon.

HIGH INSECURITY

Attack on Kejriwal is actually a slap on face of Delhi Police. It must be held accountable for repeated failure to protect CM

DELHI CHIEF MINISTER Arvind Kejriwal has been attacked yet again, this time on the campaign trail in Moti Nagar. The Delhi Police have been notable in their failure to protect him from various assaults in the past, and are living up to their reputation. In fact, they may even have surpassed themselves by initially identifying the attacker as an AAP supporter. His family, reportedly, has described him as a scrap dealer with no party affiliations, apparently incensed about poll promises not being kept, and about Kejriwal speaking against the prime minister. The AAP has referred to the attack as "Opposition-sponsored" (its Opposition in the Assembly).

Amid the allegations, the central fact is in danger of being overlooked — the police force of Delhi has been repeatedly negligent about the personal security of the chief minister. His car was attacked recently and in November, a man threw chilli powder at him outside his office in the Delhi Secretariat. Kejriwal was unhurt, but his spectacles were broken in the ensuing commotion. The inauguration ceremony of Delhi's Signature Bridge was not without incident, either, with the AAP alleging that water bottles were thrown at him. In 2016, at a ceremony to mark the odd-even anti-pollution scheme, a woman had thrown a bottle of ink at him before she could be restrained. And a shoe was thrown at him the same year. Earlier, in 2014, Kejriwal had been slapped by a rickshaw-driver. These incidents have one thing in common: The incompetent police response, which has indicated that it may be unable to pre-empt a more serious attack.

The AAP's central election issue is full statehood for Delhi, which would make the police directly answerable to the state government. The success of the attacks on Kejriwal, and the bungling in their wake, would appear to illustrate the very argument that the party makes for full statehood. If the police cannot protect the person of the chief executive of the state, it cannot offer sufficient security to the common people. The country is in the midst of an election which, like others in the last two decades, has seen little violence. In that backdrop, the recurring failure to protect Kejriwal from being physically targeted in the nation's capital shows its police force in especially poor light. There must be urgent and visible accountability, the trust of citizens in the police force is at stake.

BEHIND THE MASK

Peter Mayhew, the man who played Chewbacca, achieved silver screen greatness from the character he played

OUTSIDE OF DEDICATED fans of the Star Wars franchise, the kind who attend conventions and are mediators of the Wikipedia page, most people wouldn't have recognised Peter Mayhew if he walked by them. They would likely have noticed him — at over 7 feet, he certainly drew your gaze — but the joyful shrieks that would have accompanied the sight of Chewbacca were unlikely to have burst eardrums. It is possible to see Mayhew's career, he died last week at 74, as somehow incomplete. But in a more important sense, his best-known performance is also a testament to the craft of cinema and what goes into making silver screen magic.

After having played the iconic Wookiee — a species that existed "a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away" — in four films, Mayhew fought back from being in a wheelchair to reprise his role in the rebooted franchise in *The Force Awakens*. For much of his career, the "gentle giant" played the witty and loyal sidekick and co-pilot to Harrison Ford's Han Solo. We know of Chewbacca's wit only thanks to Mayhew's amazing ability to speak through his body, over layers of costume and makeup: Chewie, for those who do not know, is essentially a giant wolf-bear-man and "speaks" in what sounds to human years like canine yelps and howls.

Mayhew did not receive the shallow accolades of stardom — the recognition and the celebrity — that even minor players from *Star Wars* otherwise have. He was the faceless heart of a sci-fi fairytale, one which has held sway over nearly half-a-century. He managed to weave subtleties into a character that could have easily become a caricature in the hands of a less dedicated performer. In that sense, Mayhew was more like a part of the crew, the hundreds of technicians, artists, craftspeople that make the massive enterprise, the wonder we see on screen, possible without ever being the centre of attention. And in doing so, he achieved a kind of perfection the best actors aspire to — he became Chewbacca.



RAJMOHAN GANDHI

AMETHI LOWS

PM Modi's labelling of Rajiv Gandhi as 'Bhrashtachari No. 1' sinks political discourse

AS SOMEONE WHO 30 years ago stood as the Janata Dal candidate against Rajiv Gandhi in Amethi, I may be allowed to comment on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's now infamous remark about the earlier PM.

Speaking at an election rally in Uttar Pradesh's Pratapgarh constituency, which adjoins Amethi, and directly addressing Rahul Gandhi, the Congress candidate from that seat, Modi said on May 4: "Your father was termed 'Mr Clean' by his courtiers, but his life ended as 'Bhrashtachari No 1'."

All know that the life of Rahul's father, Rajiv Gandhi, India's prime minister from 1984 to 1989, ended in 1991 from a terrorist bomb blasted in his face.

For three years or so of his premiership, Rajiv Gandhi was indeed termed "Mr Clean" by what was then an independent media, not by persons close to him. It is also true that unsuccessful attempts were made to link Rajiv Gandhi to kickbacks from Sweden's Bofors company after India's defence ministry ordered that company's field-guns in 1987.

I was one of several Indians troubled by the Bofors scandal. But when, in 1989, I stood as a Janata Dal candidate against Rajiv Gandhi in Amethi, Bofors did not figure in a large way in my campaign. Media independence was my main plank, and also the strengthening of democratic institutions. To speak in my

favour, V P Singh (who would become prime minister at the end of 1989) and Mulayam Singh Yadav came to Amethi. Neither mentioned Bofors.

After my defeat at Rajiv's hands, the UP Vidhan Sabha elected me to the Rajya Sabha. In Parliament, where the Congress, now in Opposition, was led by Rajiv, I had several warm if brief interactions with him before his assassination in the summer of 1991.

If there were some in India in 1991 who thought of Rajiv as India's most corrupt person, I did not meet them. No MP, whether in government or Opposition, seemed to think of Rajiv as personally corrupt. All were shaken by the brutal assassination of a fine human being and grieved over it.

Even if someone then believed that Rajiv had tolerated corruption, would they say to his son 28 years later that "your father ended his life as India's most corrupt man"?

His daughter, Priyanka Gandhi, reacted to Modi's remark by saying: "The prime minister, who is seeking votes in the name of martyrs, yesterday disrespected the martyrdom of a noble man. People in Amethi will give a befitting reply."

Everyone was horrified by the unbelievable remark and many have expressed themselves, but none as concisely and bitingly as Rahul, who replied to the slur thrown directly at him: "Modi ji, the battle is over. Your

Karma awaits you. Projecting your inner beliefs about yourself onto my father won't protect you. All my love and a huge hug. Rahul."

Whatever the election results be on May 23, history will record this tweet as a classic retort. In his Pratapgarh speech, Modi had also said, referring to Rahul Gandhi's persistent allegations over Rafale, "By hurling abuses, you cannot turn 50 long years of Modi's tapasya into dust."

If his other sentence was shocking, this one calls for reflection. For starters, Modi comfortably speaks of himself in the third person. He observes, acknowledges and even seems to admire his own tapasya of "50 long years".

Though self-praise is seldom an attractive quality, we need not question the claim of 50 strenuous years of dedicated effort. However, we can wonder about the goal behind the dedication, and we can ask whether or not persons from a particular category are to be excluded from the fruits of that effort.

Sadly, dedication may at times be accompanied by ill-will. Equally, frankness can be joined by goodwill. When Rahul added the word "love" to his stinging retort, it sounded genuine.

The writer is research professor at Centre for South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign

MAY 7, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO



DOWN WITH CULTS

THE KARNATAKA CHIEF minister, Devaraj Urs, advised partmen to give up their old way of running after personalities and understand the socialist ideology, policies and programmes for which the Congress (I) stood. He said this was the only way the organisation could be strengthened. Personalities were no doubt important, Urs commented, but the party's policies were more important than the personalities "howsoever high he or she may be".

RSS BAN

KARNATAKA HAS DECIDED to ban the RSS parades in public places, chief minister

Devaraj Urs announced. Speaking to newsmen in Ahmedabad, he said a bill was being worked out to this effect, and that the RSS was the greatest danger to the country. Asked whether he would seek the cooperation of others like Raj Narain in his fight, Urs said "let Raj Narain fight against it and seek the cooperation of the Prime Minister first."

NON-ALIGNED MEET

AT THE COLOMBO meeting of the coordinating bureau of non-aligned countries to be held in early June, India and Yugoslavia will attempt to postpone divisive issues. They will focus on a concerted effort to set up a new international economic order, greater coop-

eration among non-aligned nations to promote collective self-reliance and a joint struggle for the eradication of the last vestiges of imperialism, colonialism and racism. This emerged at the first round of official talks between the visiting Yugoslav foreign minister, Josip Vrhovec, and the minister for external affairs, A B Vajpayee.

BOMBING PALESTINE

ISRAELI WARPLANES RAIDED a Palestinian refugee camp in northern Lebanon killing four civilians and wounding more than 23. A communique from PLO said that four Israeli planes mounted a 15-minute air strike on the Nahr Ek Bared camp.

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“Striking a balance between China and the US is in the best interest of the West and all other countries and regions around the world rather than siding with the US to contain China.” — GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA

The Masood Azhar victory

Credit for his listing as a global terrorist goes to the Narendra Modi government. Pakistan now has a chance to act on the resolution, tackle terror



RAM MADHAV

IT WAS A significant victory for the Indian political and diplomatic establishment when the Sanctions Committee of the UN Security Council finally succeeded in declaring dreaded Pakistani terrorist, Masood Azhar, a “Global Terrorist”. With this decision, Azhar has joined notorious company. Several attempts were made in the past to get the Security Council to so designate Azhar but every time, it was our neighbour China which blocked those efforts. It did so by deceptively imposing what is called a “technical hold”.

The credit goes to the doggedness of the Narendra Modi government in pursuing the matter to its logical conclusion. Although the matter was taken to the UNSC by the UPA government in 2009, it was not pursued enough and appropriately. Once Modi became prime minister, a resolute effort was launched at the UN level and elsewhere to ensure that the resolution is passed. It was a nerve-racking effort for our diplomats because the Chinese representative at the UN would take weeks, if not months, to move even an inch forward.

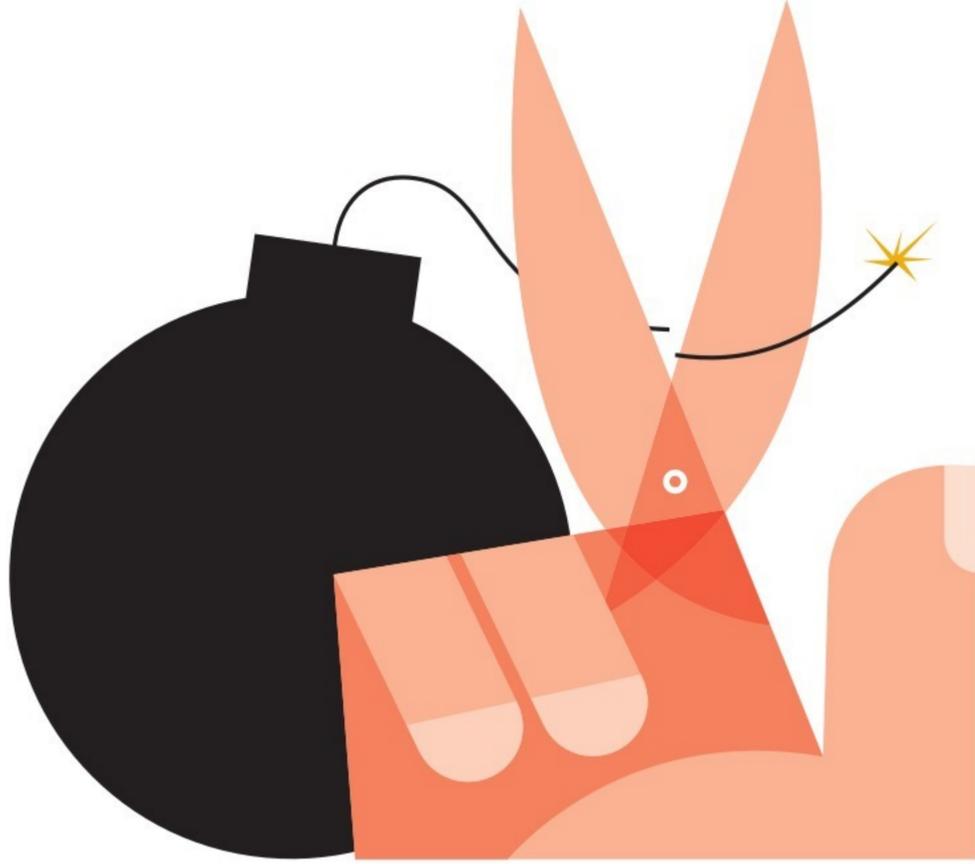
The Chinese bureaucracy is much more cumbersome than ours. Each step forward needed approval from the top — whatever the “top” meant — and the country representative is helpless in the absence of the same. It was a test of patience for Indian representatives and those of other countries. At one point, the US had to threaten to bring in another resolution demanding open voting on the subject. That would have forced China to spell out its reasons for protecting the dreaded terrorist beyond the so-called “technical hold”.

Finally, the Chinese have blinked. As the learned former Ambassador to China, Gautam Bambawale, observed, it was a situation where the costs outweighed benefits for China, compelling it to withdraw its objections.

The nation should have welcomed this decision of the UNSC. But the Doubting Thomases went overboard, raising all sorts of doubts and suspicions. There was a quid pro quo with China, some insisted, never spelling out what that quid pro quo was all about. A senior Opposition leader insinuated that all references to Kashmir were removed before the said resolution was passed at the UNSC.

The Masood Azhar matter before the Security Council was 10 years old. India had first approached the UNSC in 2009 demanding the listing of Masood Azhar in the 1267 Resolution. The matter depended entirely on the dossier India submitted to all the member countries at that time and subsequently, as and when it came up before the 1267 Sanctions Committee. It contained all the details of the activities of Jaish-e-Mohammad and Azhar, its founder. From the Parliament attack in 2001 to the Mumbai terror attack in 2008 to the Pulwama attack in 2019, Azhar's footprints were present in many a terror attack in India. All this material has been placed before all the member countries through the dossier.

India is not a member country during the



CR Sasikumar

current term of the Security Council. Hence, it was France which moved this matter at the 1267 Committee, seeking the listing of Masood Azhar as a designated global terrorist. Not only the US and UK, but even countries like Indonesia, which is the chair of the Security Council at the moment, strongly supported France. Finally, 14 out of 15 members of the UNSC were in its favour forcing the 15th member — and a permanent member at the UNSC, China — to concede.

Announcing the inclusion of Azhar's name in the notorious list of global terrorists, the Sanctions Committee cited the reasons as: “Participating in the financing, planning, facilitating, preparing, or perpetrating of acts or activities by, in conjunction with, under the name of, on behalf of, or in support of... supplying, selling or transferring arms and related material to... recruiting for... otherwise supporting acts or activities of... and... other acts or activities indicating association with... Jaish-i-Mohammed”.

It is clear from the above description that the Indian dossier was comprehensively and extensively used by the Council in arriving at the conclusion on May 1. Now to argue that Kashmir was not mentioned in the resolution is flimsy.

This action of the UNSC offers Pakistan an excellent opportunity. Thus far, it succeeded in protecting terrorists and terror organisations because of the support it got from China. Now its isolation is complete. It can convert this isolation into an opportunity by sincerely following up on the UNSC resolution with the mandated actions, which include freezing of Masood Azhar's accounts, fund flows and other assets; restricting his travel; and a total

The new leadership in Pakistan under Prime Minister Imran Khan can use the UNSC resolution to show its sincerity in the fight against terror by taking effective measures against the terror networks in his country. That would not only help Pakistan come out of its global isolation, but also create a conducive atmosphere for breaking the logjam with India. The onus squarely lies with Pakistan's leadership.

embargo on weapons' sales. It effectively means that Azhar has to be literally immobilised and all his activities, including running terror camps, stopped.

Pakistan is a sanctuary to more than a dozen terror groups that have been proscribed by the UN. But the nonchalance of the Pakistan establishment allows these organisations to carry on their activities unhindered. If Pakistan wishes to overcome this isolation and ignominy, it has to join the world community in the fight against terror.

Five weeks from now, on June 15, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Summit meeting is going to take place at Bishkek in Kyrgyzstan, where the prime ministers of India and Pakistan are going to face each other after a long gap. After the Pathankot attack in early January 2016, the Indian side had frozen bilateral engagements with Pakistan.

The new leadership in Pakistan under Prime Minister Imran Khan can use the UNSC resolution to show its sincerity in the fight against terror by taking effective measures against the terror networks in his country. That would not only help Pakistan come out of its global isolation, but also create a conducive atmosphere for breaking the logjam with India. The onus squarely lies with Pakistan's leadership.

“New Pakistan doesn't want anybody to indulge in terrorism from its soil,” Imran Khan declared recently. It is time he walked the talk.

The writer is national general secretary of the BJP and director, India Foundation

The quest for a military footprint

China and India competing for foreign military bases is a definitive moment in their political evolution



RAJA MANDALA

BY C RAJA MOHAN

IN THE ANNUAL report to the US Congress on Chinese military power released last week, the US Defence Department has pointed to China's vigorous quest for foreign military bases, including in Pakistan. This should not surprise Delhi, which closely tracks the expansion of China's military footprint in the Subcontinent and beyond in the Indian Ocean.

India's response so far has developed along three axes. One is to counter potential threats from China's military bases in its immediate neighbourhood. Second, to strengthen military partnerships with its friends and partners to balance China. The third is to emulate Beijing's quest for foreign military presence.

That China and India compete for foreign military bases is not merely an extension of their very familiar rivalry but a definitive moment in their overall political evolution as modern states. Few nations have been so vehement in their opposition to foreign military bases. Few nations, now, appear under as much compulsion as China and India to seek them. While Beijing is racing ahead in the search for foreign military presence, Delhi has some catching up to do.

Demanding that the Western powers withdraw from their military bases in Asia and the Indian Ocean was very much part of the anti-colonial and anti-imperial framework of Chinese and Indian foreign policies. Soon enough, they began to adapt to the realities of international life. They began to see the question of foreign military bases not through the lens of ideology but of security interests.

As it fought with fellow communists in the Soviet Union in the 1960s and 1970s, Mao's China turned to the US for regional balance and stopped making a big deal of American military bases in Asia. Beijing began to justify American forward military presence necessary to counter the “Soviet social imperialism” and constrain the potential for “Japanese militarism”.

India, which vigorously objected to US military alliances in Asia and Pakistan's participation in them, eventually built an alliance-like relationship with the Soviet Union. The objective was to balance the US and Chinese alliances with Pakistan. Today, China is already a great power and India is rising, slowly but certainly. One of the big changes in their strategic outlooks has been the quiet change in their attitudes towards foreign military bases.

As China's economic interests begin to span the entire globe, it was inevitable that Beijing would try and secure them eventually through its own military means. That is what all great powers do. As the world's second-largest economy (aggregate GDP of \$13 trillion) and the second-largest annual defence budget (\$250 billion), China has both the motivation and the means to

acquire foreign military bases.

China's transition follows the familiar dictum that flag follows trade. As the Pentagon's annual report put it: “China's advancement of projects such as the ‘One Belt, One Road’ Initiative (OBOR) will probably drive military overseas basing through a perceived need to provide security for OBOR projects”.

Over the last decade, Chinese media outlets associated with the People's Liberation Army have openly debated the need for foreign military bases as well as the potential challenges in seeking and sustaining them. That debate was settled with China establishing its first military base in Djibouti in 2017. There will be more.

The Pentagon report argues that “China will seek to establish additional military bases in countries with which it has a long-standing friendly relationship and similar strategic interests”. No surprise that Pakistan fits the bill perfectly. The Pentagon notes, Pakistan has the precedent of hosting foreign military bases. Pakistan is undoubtedly China's closest political and military partner. While there is no formal “base”, the integration of Pakistan into China's military strategy and operations has steadily advanced.

The Pakistan army's determination to limit India's power means there is little political opposition to hosting Chinese bases and facilities. The depth of the anti-India alliance between the two “iron brothers” means Delhi can't prevent Beijing developing bases and strategic military facilities — that perform a number of functions ranging from hosting PLA Navy warships to China's satellite tracking.

What it can't stop, Delhi must deal with. That Chinese warships and submarines might soon be based on a permanent basis in Karachi or Gwadar is surely part of India's military planning for the future. In other places where it has some political influence — say Sri Lanka and Maldives — India has indeed sought to contest and limit the nature and scope of Chinese military activities.

Unlike in the past, when India operated as a lone ranger in the Indian Ocean, Delhi is now making its armed forces interoperable with its friends and partners. After prolonged reluctance, India has signed agreements with the US and France for mutual peacetime use of military bases. It is a matter of time before it signs such agreements with other powers like Japan and Australia.

In the third leg of India's strategy, Delhi is seeking access to military facilities in a number of countries. The logic of Delhi's quest for foreign military bases is very similar to that of China. India's growing and globalised economy is now close to \$3 trillion and Delhi's political ambition is to raise it to \$5 trillion in the next five years. Delhi's security imperatives are no longer limited to its borders and it needs to secure its widely dispersed interests with forward military presence in the Indo-Pacific. Where Delhi lags behind Beijing is in the structuring of a purposeful policy on foreign military bases and the creation of organisational structures to implement it.

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Hindutva's new lab

Sadhvi Pragya's candidature reveals BJP's political project in Bhopal



N K SINGH

THE BJP HAS made Bhopal the epicentre of its Hindutva ideology by fielding terror-accused Pragya Singh Thakur as its candidate for the Bhopal Lok Sabha seat. A BJP bastion for the past 30 years, Bhopal has suddenly become the site of one of the most interesting electoral and ideological battles in the country.

Thakur's candidature took many by surprise. The BJP has no dearth of tall leaders in Madhya Pradesh to challenge Digvijaya Singh, the Congress candidate from Bhopal who was the state's chief minister for a decade. They have the hugely popular Shivraj Singh Chouhan, who ruled MP for a record 13 years. Charismatic Uma Bharti, who trounced Singh 15 years ago, is still around. So is former CM Babulal Gaur, who holds the enviable record of representing Bhopal in the state assembly for 10 terms, winning the seat every time with an increased margin.

Yet, the BJP chose Thakur, facing trial in a case of terrorism: The 2008 Malegaon blasts killed six persons and injured 101 others. Apparently, it has discovered a new Hindutva mascot in Thakur. The BJP, though, alleges that its predecessor, the Congress government, implicated Thakur and other radical Hindu activists in fake cases. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has described Thakur's candidacy as a symbolic answer to those who falsely labelled Hindus as terror-

ists. BJP general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya says bluntly: “The Congress tried to prove a Hindu is a terrorist. Now Hindus should give a reply through votes.”

While the RSS prides itself on “nation building”, opponents like Singh have accused it of violence and communal politics. His candidature from Bhopal was an open challenge to the BJP that had been winning the seat since 1989. Along with its earlier avatar, the Jana Sangh, it ruled the state for more than 20 years. Although it lost power in the state five months ago, it actually polled more votes than the Congress.

As the Congress flexed its muscles, the BJP bared its fangs. It knows that fielding Thakur against Singh would lead to polarisation. That seems to be its ideological agenda. The 49-year-old Thakur started her political career as an ABVP activist in her home district of Bhind, in Chambal valley.

Maharashtra's ATS arrested her in 2008 as one of the “principal conspirators” in the Malegaon blasts and she spent nine years in jail. In 2015, a year after the BJP came to power, the NIA sought to drop the charges against her. However, the court refused to go along with the NIA's decision, and, framed charges against her for terror activ-

ities, criminal conspiracy and murder. The public prosecutor in the case quit four years ago, alleging government pressure.

Thakur was also arrested, along with seven others, in the sensational 2007 murder of Sunil Joshi, her colleague and a former RSS activist. The court, however, acquitted all eight accused two years ago as the prosecution failed to prove its case. The murder remains unsolved.

During her campaign, Thakur portrays herself as a “victim” of the plot to malign Hindutva, often breaking down while narrating vivid stories of how she was stripped naked, hung upside down and tortured in police custody until she “lost consciousness”. She alleges that as a result of “inhuman treatment”, she developed cancer. However, now she is supposedly cured, thanks to the cow urine therapy she undertook.

The BJP soon discovered that it has found not only a mascot but also a loose cannon in Thakur. At a meeting she vilified Maharashtra ATS officer Hemant Karkare, winner of the Ashoka Chakra, India's highest peacetime gallantry award, after he was shot dead in the 2008 Mumbai terror attack. Karkare, she pronounced, died after she had “cursed” him for torturing her in custody. Her offensive remarks shocked most people. Even as a political firestorm broke out, Thakur boasted that she had climbed atop

the Babri Masjid and demolished it, saying, “we removed a blot on the nation.”

The Election Commission may slap notices on her, but there is little doubt about the direction of this campaign. Faced with Hindutva's onslaught, Singh is weaving his campaign around the development plank. This is ironic because as chief minister he believed that elections are won not by development but by political management and social engineering.

Singh has tried to reinvent himself as a born-again Hindu. He started his campaign by visiting temples. Last heard, his supporters were distributing bottles of holy Narmada water to woo voters! Singh had undertaken a 3,300-km arduous pilgrimage along the Narmada last year. He hoped that the 192-day march on foot would help him shed the anti-Hindu image that his detractors have imposed on him.

Ironically, Singh is a devout Hindu in his personal life. In fact, once as chief minister he took his entire cabinet to Mathura for a 24-km foot march around a hill that Hindus consider holy. A senior BJP leader commented that the Bhopal election has become a litmus test for RSS's Hindutva: “We have taken a big risk. If we lose, it will mean voters have rejected Hindutva”. And, if it wins?

The writer is a Bhopal-based journalist

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

JUDICIARY SUSPECT

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Listen to your own’ (IE, May 6). The procedure adopted by the judiciary and the committee — pre-judging the serious matter of sexual harassment allegations against the chief justice — is gross violation of due process. The manner in which the apex court has acted is only increasing suspicion. The truth of the allegations is for the investigators and adjudicators to determine. What is needed is a transparent and impartial inquiry.

Divya Singla, Patiala

PRIVATE VICES

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Boardroom rot’ (IE, May 4). Poor corporate governance in India's premium private sector companies must draw the immediate attention of the government, since huge amounts of public money is invested in these companies. Until the ICICI bank scam came to light, only public sector enterprises faced blistering criticism for corporate misconduct. Undoubtedly, top private firms feature professional managers. But apart from managerial and business skills, good corporate governance requires moral standards and the right intention to keep ethics and values intact.

COURT'S BURDEN

THIS REFERS TO the report, ‘Don't probe

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

To encourage quality reader intervention, The Indian Express offers the Letter of the Week award. The letter adjudged the best for the week is published every Saturday. Letters may be e-mailed to editpage@expressindia.com or sent to The Indian Express, B-1/B, Sector 10, Noida-UP 201301. Letter writers should mention their postal address and phone number.

THE WINNER RECEIVES SELECT EXPRESS PUBLICATIONS

in woman's absence, hurts SC name: Justice Chandrachud to panel’ (IE, May 5). The complainant's withdrawal from the proceedings in the matter of the chief justice being accused of sexual harassment is justified. She was denied a lawyer and the proceedings were not being recorded. The Supreme Court must give justice to the woman.

SS Paul, Nadia



Posers on the code

In clearing PM Modi's speeches, the EC risks its reputation for even-handedness

In an election that lasts seven weeks, it is not only the task of conducting the polls that is humongous; policing the conduct of political parties and candidates can be equally demanding. The Opposition has been complaining frequently about what it believes is the Election Commission's leniency towards the ruling BJP, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The focus is now on the manner in which the EC is dealing with complaints against Mr. Modi for some of his controversial campaign speeches. While complaints against other leaders were promptly dealt with, there was an obvious delay in taking up those against Mr. Modi. Few would have failed to notice that he has been running an abrasive campaign. He has stoked fears over India's security, claimed credit for the performance of the armed forces and implicitly underscored that his party stands for the religious majority. It was only after the matter reached the Supreme Court that the three-member EC began to dispose of the complaints. It has found nothing wrong in most of the remarks about which complaints were made for possible violation of the Model Code of Conduct. What is disconcerting is the EC's finding that none of his remarks touching on the role of the armed forces under his rule violates the directive against the use of the armed forces for political propaganda. That some of these decisions were not unanimous, but marked by dissent from one of the Election Commissioners, points to the seriousness of the credibility crisis the institution is facing.

For instance, a remark Mr. Modi made in Wardha on April 1 — that Congress president Rahul Gandhi was contesting from a constituency "where the majority community is in a minority" — was deemed innocuous, and it took four weeks for the EC to give this clean chit. The second one, for a speech at Latur on April 9, was even more astounding. There, the Prime Minister made a direct appeal to first-time voters that they should dedicate their votes to the Air Force team that struck at Balakot, and the martyrs of Pulwama. The technicality the EC used to absolve Mr. Modi was that he did not directly appeal for votes in the name of the armed forces. So far the EC has rejected six complaints. The prohibition against the use of the armed forces in election propaganda is to underscore their apolitical nature and to deny ruling parties the opportunity to project their performance as their own achievements. Yet, the EC has decided that none of the references to air strikes, the nuclear option and dealing with Pakistan attracted the bar under the MCC. It is difficult not to speculate that had the same remarks been made by other candidates, they may have attracted a ban on campaigning for a period. The EC has so far retained its well-founded reputation, although there have been occasional complaints in the past that questioned its impartiality. It is unfortunate that this reputation for independence and even-handedness is starkly under question in this election.

Deserved penalty

SEBI's order on the National Stock Exchange is a welcome regulatory action

A four-year-long investigation into a possible scam in an Indian securities exchange has finally come to an end. The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) last week ordered the National Stock Exchange of India (NSE) to pay a fine of about Rs.1,000 crore within 45 days for its supervisory laxity that led to some of its broker-clients gaining preferential access to certain market data. Two former NSE chiefs have been ordered to pay back a part of their past salaries as punishment for their failure to ensure that the exchange was fully compliant with all provisions of the norms governing securities exchanges. In its order, SEBI noted that the NSE's use of the tick-by-tick server protocol had allowed certain high-frequency trading firms using the exchange's secondary server to receive important market data before other market participants, who were thus put at a disadvantage. While it has not yet been proven decisively that the firms with preferential access to data from the exchange managed to profit from such data, the episode raised serious questions about market fairness. After all, millions of retail investors believe that stock exchanges provide a level playing field to all the players. SEBI ruled that it did not find sufficient evidence to conclude that the NSE committed a fraudulent act, but was unequivocal in ruling that the Exchange had failed to exercise the necessary due diligence to ensure that it served as a fair marketplace. The fact that the NSE had opted to switch to a new data transmission system, which relays data to all market participants at the same time, prior to a whistle-blower's complaint in 2015 may have worked in the NSE's favour.

Despite the sizeable fine that it imposes on the NSE, the SEBI verdict must surely come as a relief to the erring stock exchange for at least two reasons. First, the fact that it has not been found to have intentionally favoured certain market players over others should help it retain investor confidence. Also, the exchange, which had been barred from proceeding with its initial public offering during the pendency of the SEBI probe, will now finally be able to tap the capital markets to fund its growth, after a six-month moratorium. While there is bound to be debate about the magnitude of the fine, overall the financial penalty is a welcome regulatory action. Millions of investors choose to do their trading on market platforms like the NSE every year in the belief that the marketplace offers an equitable environment to carry out their trades. As the markets regulator, SEBI must deal with breaches of their supervisory brief by exchanges in an exemplary manner to ensure that small investors retain confidence in the fairness and soundness of key institutions that enable a market economy.

A miscarriage of justice

Will the honourable Justices stand up as the collective conscience of the Supreme Court?



DUSHYANT DAVE

Finally, the in-house committee has spoken: "No substance in the allegations contained in the Complaint dated 19th April, 2019 of a former Employee of the Supreme Court." In the absence of any known procedure, the non-observance of the principles of natural justice and the absence of effective representation of the victim, the report, even though not for the public, is *non est* and *void ab initio*.

The story so far

The complaint made by the victim of sexual harassment to the judges of the Supreme Court had two equally serious facets. One related to sexual harassment, a very serious charge. The other related to the victimisation of the complainant and her family "at the hands of the Chief Justice of India [CJI]", as claimed by her. It is this latter charge to which the nation needs to pay equal, if not greater, attention. The charge on this count, as per her affidavit, involves the following: after the alleged incident on October 11, 2018, her transfer to the Centre for Research and Planning on October 22, change of position to "Admin, Material Section" on November 16, issuance of a memorandum on November 19 by Deepak Jain, Registrar, accusing the victim of violating conduct rules and seeking an explanation, her third transfer to the Library Division on November 22, the issuance of a memorandum on November 26 rejecting her explanation and proposing further action, her suspension on November 27, and the communication of December 18 from the Registrar that the charges against her stood proved. On December 21, she was

dismissed from service.

Meanwhile, according to her affidavit, on November 27, her husband, a head constable with the Delhi Police, Crime Branch Division, was transferred to the Third Battalion. On December 8, her husband, and the latter's brother, also a constable with the Delhi Police, were suspended over telephone, and the orders followed the next day. On January 2, 2019, an inquiry was initiated by a Deputy Commissioner of Police against her husband on the ground that "unsolicited calls were made to the Office of the Hon'ble Chief Justice amounting to official misconduct". On January 11, the victim and her husband were summoned to Delhi's Tilak Marg police station by Station House Officer (SHO) Nareish Solanki. In their presence, the SHO called the Registrar, Mr. Jain, to discuss ways to reach the residence of CJI Ranjan Gogoi. The SHO, the victim and the husband went there, and in the presence of Mr. Jain, the victim was forced to fall at the feet of the CJI's wife.

Upon their return to the police station, the SHO had a long conversation with the victim and her husband. On January 14, the disabled brother-in-law of the victim, who had been appointed temporary Junior Court Attendant under the orders of the CJI himself on October 9, 2018, was removed from service. On March 3, an FIR was registered on a complaint by a person named Naveen Kumar at the Tilak Marg police station in respect of an alleged demand made by the victim in June 2017 for a bribe of ₹10 lakh for getting him a job in the Supreme Court and his payment of ₹50,000 as advance. Based on this FIR, the victim and her husband were arrested from their village in Rajasthan, handcuffed and subjected to cruel and inhuman treatment. The victim was remanded for a day on March 10. She was released on bail on March 12.

The affidavit in support of the complaint appears truthful and



SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

honest. The details are heart-rending and extremely troubling, and reflect a deep malaise that appears to have set in in high offices. These incidents are all corroborated by official records. Collectively, they establish beyond doubt the victimisation of the woman, her husband and other family members at the hands of the state machinery, including the Registry of the Supreme Court.

Violations of rights

Each of these actions is either unconstitutional or illegal or criminal in nature. Clearly, they establish a well-designed conspiracy to victimise the victim beyond redemption so as to ensure that neither she nor her husband and her family members could raise their heads again to seek justice in respect of the complaint made against the CJI. Together, they constitute gross violations of the constitutional and fundamental rights of the victim and her family members, including those guaranteed under Articles 14 and 21. Clearly, the motive behind ensuring grossly inhuman, illegal, unconstitutional and disproportionate punishment to the victim and her family members seems to be to suppress her will and spirit so that she does not raise any charge about the incident of October 11, 2018.

One thing is clear: complainant Naveen Kumar, who alleged that the victim demanded a bribe and willingly offered, according to his own case, ₹50,000, has made himself an accomplice to the alleged

bribery to secure public employment. He must therefore face the rigour of the law. The case on its own showing appears to be concocted and its timing raises serious questions about its authenticity. If the bribe was demanded in June 2017, it is a curious coincidence that the complainant from Jhajjar, Haryana surfaces in March 2019 and that too in Tilak Marg police station to make the complaint. It activates the entire police machinery against the victim and her family.

This was the final nail in the coffin, as the proverb goes, pushing the victim and her family to the wall and igniting in them the courage to stand up against the CJI and make the complaint on April 19. Those who have doubts about the so-called delay in the complaint must be prepared to put themselves in the shoes of the victim, a Class III employee pitted against the Chief Justice of India, one of the highest and the most powerful constitutional functionaries. Her approaching lawyers who are widely respected as human rights activists was natural and cannot be viewed with suspicion under any circumstances.

The Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court in *Olga Tellis v. Bombay Municipal Corporation* recognised procedural safeguards as necessary and said they have "historical origins in the notion that conditions of personal freedom can be preserved only when there is some institutional check on arbitrary action on the part of public authorities". In *Uma Shankar Sistani v. Commissioner of Police, Delhi* (1996), the Supreme Court ordered the Central Bureau of Investigation to investigate the circumstances under which a false complaint was registered against the petitioner, leading to his arrest. The FIR against the victim in this case needs the same treatment. Equally, the punishment of dismissal imposed on her is grossly disproportionate, even assuming that the charges against her

were proved. The Supreme Court has consistently frowned upon such punishments. In *Ranjit Thakur v. UOI* (1987), the court interpreted the doctrine of proportionality "as part of the concept of judicial review" to ensure that if the sentence is an outrageous defiance of logic, then it can be corrected.

Grounds for judicial review

Irrationality and perversity are recognised grounds of judicial review. The court has held that if the punishment is outrageously disproportionate and the court considers it arbitrary in that it is wholly irrational or "a punishment is so excessive or disproportionate to the offence as to shock the conscience of the Court the same can be interfered with". On each one of these counts the punishment of dismissal imposed upon the victim is completely arbitrary and perverse. It must go.

Where can she and her family members get justice if the police at the highest level is pitted against them? Will they ever get a fair investigation and fair reports in the criminal cases? It is doubtful. Can she and her family get justice at all at the hands of the judiciary, considering the respondents would be the CJI and the Supreme Court? Only time will tell. But certainly for the present, the picture is dark for them.

All these raise extremely troubling and disconcerting thoughts in the minds of many. Is it the Supreme Court as an institution that is responsible for what has happened, or is it the CJI? The dichotomy will emerge only when other Justices act independently, uphold the majesty of the law and steer the institution out of troubled waters. If they fail, the institution is doomed to serious loss of face and credibility. It is time the collective conscience of the Justices prevails.

Dushyant Dave is a senior advocate and the former President of the Supreme Court Bar Association

Conservation minus the people?

Unlike the rest of the world, India is stridently moving away from community-involved conservation models



MRIDULA MARY PAUL

In February this year, one of the world's 17 megadiverse countries issued a court order which stood to evict more than a million forest-dwelling people from their homes. More dammingly, India, a state that supports about 8% of global species diversity and over 100 million forest-dwellers, did not even put up a legal defence before its top court. Although this order was subsequently stayed, though temporarily, it provides valuable insights into India's conservation objectives and approaches. Given the country's size and biodiversity-richness, a decision of this nature has consequences for global natural heritage.

Involving communities living in and around natural resource-rich areas in the management and use of these resources is an effective tool of conservation that has been recognised across the world. This was affirmed by the 1980 World Conservation Strategy of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and the Earth Summit's 1992 Statement of Forest Principles and the Convention on

Biological Diversity. Further fillip came from the IUCN's Policy Statement on Sustainable Use of Wild Living Resources in 2000, and the Convention on Biological Diversity's 2004 Addis Ababa Principles and Guidelines for the Sustainable Use of Biodiversity.

Poles apart

India has been a vocal member of these conventions. But at home, things operate rather differently. India's conservation legislation is separated into those that protect forests and its produce, and those that target wildlife conservation. Both the Indian Forest Act, 1927 and the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 create different types and grades of protected areas, and contain provisions to restrict or outlaw local use of natural resources and landscapes. From the 1980s, there were a number of policies that mirrored the global shift towards inclusive conservation, such as the 1988 National Forest Policy, the 1992 National Conservation Strategy, the National Environment Policy of 2006 and the 2007 Biosphere Reserves Guidelines.

While these people-friendly policy statements made their way into India's conservation docket, its earlier exclusionary conservation legislation continued to stay in place. Potentially, in an attempt to bridge this divide, the 1990 Joint



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Forest Management Guidelines (JFM) created community institutions for co-management, in collaboration with the forest bureaucracy. Although it initially registered some success stories in certain parts of the country, JFM committees are widely critiqued as being bureaucracy-heavy, with little real devolution of powers to local communities.

A dramatic shift in the Indian conservation paradigm came in 2006 through the Forest Rights Act that went beyond sanctioning local usage, to conferring rights to local communities over forest land and produce. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs was mandated with operationalising the Act, while conservation remained under the domain of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. Given a hostile bureaucratic environment, the legislation faltered, except in certain pockets. Despite its limited realisation, the Forest Rights Act succeeded in raising the

hackles of those within the forest bureaucracy and wildlife organisations, who challenged its constitutionality before the Supreme Court.

India's conservation policies and legislation over the years reveal a dichotomy of intent and action. Certain progressive policy documents are put in place checking off India's international commitments. However, a wholly different picture emerges during the course of its operation on the ground. If there was any uncertainty regarding India's stand on inclusive conservation, the past three years reveal that even the pretence of community involvement has largely been done away with.

Under the bureaucracy

The Third National Wildlife Action Plan, introduced in 2017, with the stated intent of complying with international commitments, is categorically of the view that locals hinder conservation. Where communities are to be involved, it distinctly avoids the attribution of rights and instead frames usage within a bureaucracy-controlled format. In 2018, there was a Draft National Forest Policy that emphasised the protected area model of conservation that leaves little room for communities. The Supreme Court's order in early 2019, currently held in abeyance, man-

dated the eviction of those forest-dwellers whose claims under the Forest Rights Act have been rejected, in disregard of the bureaucratic violations, lapses and technical constraints that have played a part in such rejections.

In March 2019, a comprehensive overhaul of the Indian Forest Act was proposed. This amendment introduces provisions for extinguishing rights granted under the Forest Rights Act. Further, it grants the forest bureaucracy unprecedented powers to enter and search the premises of forest-dwellers on suspicion, arrest without warrant and use firearms to meet conservation goals. State authority that is usually reserved to tackle terrorism, insurgency and organised crime is now to be deployed to safeguard biodiversity. An amendment to the Wildlife Protection Act is reportedly in the offing. India's conservation policies in recent years leave no doubt as to the model of conservation the country is intent on pursuing. While other countries are recognising the value of community-involved conservation models, India is stridently and steadfastly moving in the opposite direction.

Mridula Mary Paul, an environmental lawyer, is a Senior Policy Analyst with the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE), Bengaluru. The views expressed are personal

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

On the campaign trail

There seems to be no respite for the common man from the hate speeches of politicians. The Election Commission of India is ineffective as a moderator as the offenders are high-profile representatives such as the Prime Minister and key Opposition leaders (Page 1, "Battle is over, karma awaits you, Rahul tells PM", May 6). The only way out may be to have shorter rallies with tougher controls. People should be made to vote based on the performance of parties.

KSHIRASAGARA BALAJI RAO, Hyderabad

■ It is the established practice that when it comes to the departed, it is *nil nisi*

bonum (which means that of the dead nothing but good should be said). The Prime Minister could have been dignified as far as examples in his political speeches are concerned, the reference to Rajiv Gandhi being a case in point. Does he think that people are so ignorant not to understand his words?

N.A. MURAHARI, Vellore, Tamil Nadu

Job and work

The article, "The difference between a job and work" (Editorial page, May 6), draws attention to one of the most pressing issues of modern society — the creeping de-personalisation of employment. The job-work dichotomy, however, is not a peculiar aberration of the 21st century. It entered

public and academic discourses during the Industrial Revolution when the squalid conditions of factories used to be highlighted by writers and political thinkers alike. The wretchedness of factory jobs as a symbol of human degradation has now been replaced by the metaphor of the cog-in-the-machine monotony of automated office work. It is debatable, however, whether the state can be construed as a moral creature that is obliged to infuse employment with meaning and purpose. The modern political economy is not an ethical construct. It is an economic edifice that rests on the foundation of economic security by providing jobs to those who need it. The health of an

economy is measured by the number of jobs it provides to citizens, whether full time or part-time, whether life-long or contractual, and not by the subjective satisfaction that people find in their jobs. The point is that finding dignity in the jobs is a task that belongs to the realm of individual enterprise.

V.N. MUKUNDARAJAN, Thiruvananthapuram

Growing up years

The article, "Mothering across generations" ("Open Page", May 5), took me down memory lane. When I was a schoolboy two decades ago, my grandmother doted on me as I was under her care until my working mother returned late in the evening. My grandmother would permit me to play with my

friends and caution me to run back home before my mother's return. In turn, my mother was sharp enough to realise what was happening and would often scold my grandmother for being too liberal. During my boyhood, I was more under the guidance and care of my grandmother than my parents. It was Shakespeare who said, "A grandma's name is little less in love, than is the dotting title of a mother."

S. ARJUN PRASANNA, Bengaluru

Mentor

S. Krishnan was a gentleman to the core ("Sport" page, "Former Sports Editor Krishnan passes away", May 5). Soft-spoken and unassuming, he always had a

kind word for everyone and preferred to look at the positive side of things and the positive nature of the person he was interacting with. It was his far-sighted approach which opened the doors for numerous sports reporters of *The Hindu* by sending them for important international assignments, as so many have acknowledged. Thoughtful and meticulous, as sports editor he was also instrumental in the many welcome policy changes in the sports pages. Playing under his captaincy in the annual J.K. Bose trophy tournament for journalists was a lesson in practical cricketing knowledge.

PARTAB RAMCHAND, Chennai

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The Election Commission must act tough

It is sad that the debate now is about the Commission rather than the appalling conduct of our leaders



S.Y. QURAISHI

The 2019 general election will long be remembered not just for the transgressions of the top political leadership, but also for the Election Commission (EC) itself being put in the dock. The EC has repeatedly found itself at the receiving end of scathing attacks from the Opposition, the public, the media and the judiciary. This is unprecedented for what was until now the most trusted institution in the country.

Trust deficit

Indeed, the trust deficit between the EC and the Opposition parties and the voters started with the EVM/VVPAT saga. The EC was accused of being on the defensive rather than being communicative. On April 8, in a letter to the President, a group of retired bureaucrats and diplomats expressed concern over the EC's "weak-kneed conduct" and said that the institution is "suffering from a crisis of credibility today".

The last two months have been a trying time for me as well. Ever since I demitted office in 2012, I have been a self-appointed spokesperson for the EC, defending every action of the body that needed to be defended. I must have refused at least a hundred requests by the media to comment on recent happenings. On the few occasions I was drawn into the debate, it was a painful struggle to find suitable words that would not sound like an indictment of the body of which I was proud to be a part. I noticed the same predicament on the faces of two former Chief Election Commissioners (CECs) who appeared on television recently. Then I remembered the words of Martin Luther King, Jr.: "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter." And Plato, "I will put down your silence as consent."

It took repeated raps on its knuckles by the Supreme Court for the EC to crack the whip. It is a pity that we needed the Supreme Court to remind the EC of powers that it always had. Article 329 of the Constitution



"The Election Commission has got away with many mistakes largely because of its credibility and people's trust in the institution." The Election Commission office in New Delhi. •SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

has barred courts from interfering in electoral matters after the election process has been set in motion. In a long chain of judgments, the Supreme Court has reiterated that provision and restrained all courts from intervening. It is therefore significant that in the last couple of months, the apex court itself had to jump in for course correction. This is more serious than is realised at present.

On April 15, a Supreme Court Bench headed by the Chief Justice of India pulled up the EC for not acting against hate speeches and statements on religious lines. It was reported that the EC told the apex court, "We are toothless, we are powerless, we issue notices, then advisory and on repeated violation, we file complaint." The Supreme Court was furious with this stand.

The Supreme Court had observed in 1977 that "where these [the existing laws] are absent, and yet a situation has to be tackled, the Chief Election Commissioner has not to fold his hands and pray to God for divine inspiration to enable him to exercise his functions and to perform his duties or to look to any external authority for the grant of powers to deal with the situation. He must lawfully exercise his power independently, in all matters relating to the conduct of elections, and see that the election process is completed properly, in a free and fair manner." This has been the EC's bible.

After the EC had not acted on complaints against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP president

Amit Shah for almost a month, the Supreme Court ordered it to do so before May 6. The EC promptly disposed of several complaints, giving the two leaders a clean chit in each case. Just as the EC was being written off, we got the good news that at least one Election Commissioner had dissented on five decisions taken by the EC — one giving a clean chit to Mr. Shah and four to Mr. Modi. He thought that the Prime Minister had, in fact, invoked the armed forces in an election campaign in violation of the EC's guidelines instructing politicians to refrain from the same. His minority vote may not have changed the result, but dissent is a healthy sign of objective deliberation, and thus presents a ray of hope.

I can say from experience that the EC has got away with many mistakes largely because of its credibility and people's trust in the institution. But this trust cannot be taken for granted. The moment there is a deficit of credibility, problems begin.

Appointments and removal

The root of the problem lies in the flawed system of appointment of Election Commissioners. They are appointed unilaterally by the government of the day. There has been a demand for de-politicising appointments through a broad-based consultation, as is done in other countries. The uncertainty of elevation by seniority makes them vulnerable to government pressure. The government can control a defiant CEC through the majority voting power of

the two Election Commissioners.

In its 255th Report, the Law Commission of India recommended a collegium system for appointing Election Commissioners. Political stalwarts such as L.K. Advani and former CECs B.B. Tandon, N. Gopalaswami and I supported the idea even when in office. But successive ruling dispensations have ducked the issue, not wanting to let go of their power. It is obvious that political and electoral interests take precedence over national interest.

A public interest litigation was also filed in the Supreme Court in 2018. This has been referred to a Constitution Bench. I feel that on issues of such vital importance, even the Supreme Court, which I have always described as the guardian angel of democracy, has to act urgently. If democracy is derailed, its future too would be in jeopardy.

Apart from the manner of appointment, the provision for the removal of Election Commissioners also needs correction. At present, only the CEC is protected from being removed (except through impeachment). One has to remember that the Constitution enabled protection to the CEC as it was a one-man Commission initially. This must now be extended to other Commissioners, who were added in 1993, as they collectively represent the EC.

In the rich history of democratic India, all institutions of the state have come under pressure at one point or another. But the strength and credibility of an institution is tested when it buckles under political influence.

It is unfortunate that the topic of debate now is the EC rather than the appalling and unconstitutional conduct of our leaders. Over 40 electoral reforms remain pending for two decades. While it seems futile to have any hope from the political leadership, it is imperative that the EC asserts the ample authority that it already possesses constitutionally. It has the full support of the Supreme Court. It must act tough. This is not a mere question of its discretion, but a constitutional duty. Governments come and go, but the reputation of the EC stays for good.

S.Y. Quraishi is a former Chief Election Commissioner and the author of 'An Undocumented Wonder: The Making of the Great Indian Election'

The Supreme Court belongs to everyone

The independence of the judiciary rests on public trust, and public trust is not maintained by one-sided inquiries



SANJAY HEGDE

I had been quietly watching the Supreme Court's latest crisis play out despite young lawyers and law students asking me to speak up. Watching because I did not want any premature adjudication to hurt the prestige of the court that I so dearly love. Each time I climb its massive stairs, I am reminded of a client who used to bend down and touch the top stair, as an act of worship and devotion, whenever he had a hearing due.

I have seen people go away happy from here, I have seen them go shattered, but I never had reason to doubt the institution as a fair arbiter. I never doubted the institution's fairness, because proceedings were always conducted in courts open to all parties, where trained lawyers presented their sides of the cause. Despite aberrations, most judgments here are determined to fully hear whatever relevant submissions parties to the cause have to offer. All these requirements of procedural fairness seem to have been suspended in l'affaire Chief Justice of India (CJI).

An open and fair inquiry

I am agnostic on the question of whether there was an act or two on the part of the CJI or by the woman who complained against him. It may boil down to a 'he said, she said' situation, where the standard of proof beyond reasonable doubt cannot be met. An impartial arbiter might rightly conclude that the presumption of innocence requires the benefit of the doubt to be given to the accused. But he or she must arrive at this conclusion only after an open and fair inquiry. The inquiry in this case, which has now concluded, did not meet the open and fair standard. And so I feel compelled to speak.

The complainant had walked out of the inquiry saying that she "found the atmosphere of the committee very frightening". She said, "I was very nervous because of being confronted and questioned by three Supreme Court Judges and without even the presence of my lawyer/support person. Also because of my impaired hearing I was at times unable to follow what was being dictated as my statement. I was also not shown what was being recorded and no copy of my statement recorded on 26th and 29th April has been gi-

ven to me till date."

The complainant walked out and the inquiry proceeded ex parte. The inquiry committee could not have compelled her to participate. Yet, by proceeding further and rendering an ex-parte finding, its report, while legally defensible, will still remain wanting in public perception. The inquiry could well have paused to consider whether the complainant's concerns could be addressed. It could have also broad-based itself to bring on board an independent amicus curiae to stand for the complainant's interest. The independence of the judiciary rests on public trust, and public trust is not maintained by one-sided inquiries.

Justice needs to be seen as done

It matters not that the respondent is the head of the judiciary. He or she must be held to the same standard that is used in all other such cases. The independence of the judiciary and constitutional protections given to judges do not transform into an immunity shield. If the accusation was not of sexual harassment, but of any other grave charge like violence, would a confidential, in-house inquiry have been resorted to? Such an inquiry, if it had proceeded ex parte after the complainant's withdrawal, would not have been deemed sufficiently fair. Justice needs not only to be done, but needs to be seen as manifestly done.

The inquiry committee was headed by a person who in all probability will be the next CJI. Two of his immediate predecessors have come under public scrutiny in an unwelcome kind. The court has now chosen a status quoist denial over a serious exploration of the truth, regardless of risk. How will its actions be seen?

I ask this because of a little incident in my chamber. A one-time junior of mine was arguing before a consumer tribunal. The presiding member was a former senior bureaucrat. At some point in the hearing, the member lost his temper and shouted at the lawyer, "Get out of my court!" It is a matter of pride for me that my pupil responded, "It is my court too." That is the only message that I have for the Supreme Court judges — those involved in the inquiry and those away from it. Members of the Bar, the staff of the court registry and the general public have enough of a stake in an independent judicial system to say, "It is my court too."

Sanjay Hegde is a senior advocate of the Supreme Court

SINGLE FILE

A missile dispute

Why Turkey is reluctant to abandon the Russian S-400 deal despite U.S. opposition

GARIMELLA SUBRAMANIAM



Turkey's defiance of the U.S. over its Russian defence deal is an instance of the strains in strategic ties between the two NATO allies. It is equally a reflection of the proximate relations between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan since their entanglement in the Syrian conflict.

In 2017, Ankara and Moscow reached an agreement on Turkey's installation of the S-400 defence system, the anti-aircraft weapon that launches surface-to-air missiles. The sophisticated radars it relies on are believed to compromise the secrecy of the U.S.'s F-35 stealth fighter jet programme that many NATO member states, including Turkey, have signed on to acquire. Ankara's move has thus prompted a multi-pronged response from Washington to wean away NATO's eastern ally, which is critical in the counter-terrorism efforts in Syria and to stem the flow of refugees into Europe.

The U.S. has threatened to eject Turkey from the F-35 aircraft programme and impose more sanctions. Last year, the State Department approved the supply of the Patriot air defence system to discourage Turkey from the S-400 acquisition. The Patriots are separate from similar NATO installations in the southeast of Turkey earlier in the decade, during the onset of the Syrian civil war. At that time, NATO was at pains to emphasise that the Patriot missiles were meant to defend Turkey, rather than be used to target Syria. That clarification was meant to assuage Russian concerns that the U.S. was escalating the Syrian conflict.

But this year, the U.S. and Turkey, and NATO by implication, are divided over the Syrian Kurdish militia — the People's Protection Units (YPG). A key U.S. ally in the fight against the Islamic state, the YPG is seen by Turkey as an extension of the country's decades-old insurgent Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Moreover, Ankara's invasion of the Kurdish enclave of Afrin last year and its overall intervention in Syria enjoys broad Russian backing.

Further, the West's persistent attacks on the Turkish regime's human rights record has hardened Mr. Erdogan's authoritarian stand. U.S. President Donald Trump's erratic foreign policy approach has helped Mr. Erdogan expand his regional influence.

It thus stands to reason that Turkey should be reluctant to abandon the Russian S-400 deal, and see no grounds to reject the latest Patriot missile offer. If anything, government officials in Turkey sound optimistic that President Trump will intervene to secure the waiver of sanctions arising from the Russian deal. Turkey's Foreign Minister asserted before NATO's 70th anniversary gathering in April that his country valued the security it enjoyed remaining within the military umbrella. Yet, he was equally categorical on the importance of Russian cooperation.

Garimella Subramaniam is Deputy Editor, The Hindu



DATA POINT

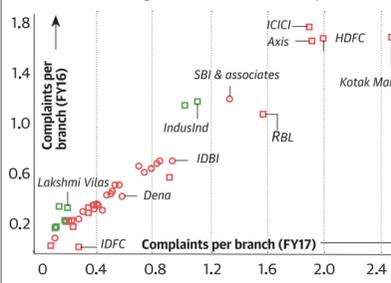
Banking peeves

The Offices of the Banking Ombudsman (OBO) — a cost-free grievance redressal platform for bank customers — received more than 1.3 lakh complaints in financial year 2017, a 28% increase from FY16. Most of the complaints were registered in New Delhi. Private banks received more complaints compared to public sector banks. Complaints about foreign banks were more. The grievances related mostly to "failure to meet commitments/non-observance of Fair Practice Code" (33.9%), "ATM/debit cards/credit cards" (21.2%) among others.

By Vignesh Radhakrishnan

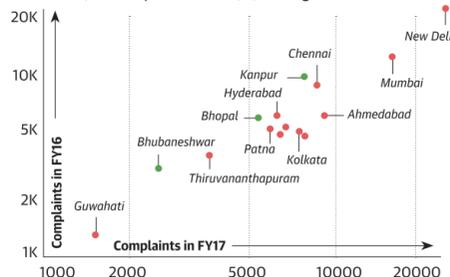
Public vs private

Graph shows complaints per branch received across private (■) and public (●) sector banks. Red indicates that more complaints per branch were recorded in FY17 than in FY16 and green indicates fewer complaints



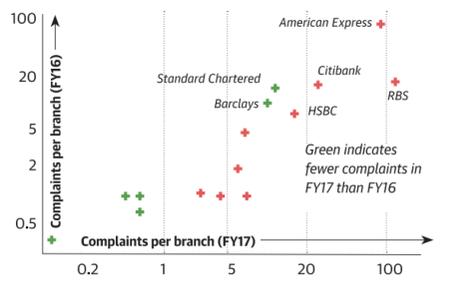
City splits

Graph shows complaints received across various OBOs in FY17 and FY16. Circles marked in red indicate more complaints were recorded in FY17 than in FY16, while green indicates fewer. New Delhi received 24,837 complaints in FY17, 2,000 higher than in FY16



Foreign banks

Complaints per branch peaked for foreign banks. The American Express Banking Corporation received more than 100 complaints per branch in FY16. Complaints against the Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) crossed the 100 mark in FY17



FROM The Hindu ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO MAY 7, 1969

Kosygin meets Mrs Gandhi

Mr. Alexei Kosygin, Soviet Prime Minister, after a 100-minute discussion with Mrs. Indira Gandhi here [New Delhi] this afternoon [May 6], told Pressmen: "I wish no one encroaches upon Indian interests. We want India to be strong economically, politically, and militarily." It is understood that the entire gamut of Indo-Soviet relations figured in the talks between the two Prime Ministers. No advisers were present during the discussions which were held in Parliament House. Originally, it was thought that the talks would last just an hour, but they went on for 100 minutes. Asked how the talks proceeded, Mr. Kosygin, whose replies were translated into English by an interpreter, said: "We had very good talks indeed, especially because we have not met for a long time, and we had so much to talk about."

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MAY 7, 1919.

A Sensational Railway Theft.

A most sensational Railway theft that occurred nearly 6 months ago in the Olavakkot junction of the South Indian Railway Co., has just been detected. Two of the Railway Police constables doing duty at the above junction were placed under arrest by Inspector Mr. Shaik Abdul Quader on Monday last, and one of the Police constables suspected of the crime has since committed suicide by placing his neck over the rails when a Goods train passed over him during the night. The details of the case are as follows: Early in November last a cloth bundle containing 37 Brahmin Ladies' Saries were consigned by railway parcel by one N.T. Govindasamy Chetty, Cloth Merchant at Lalapat to the address of a Palghat Merchant named Ramakrishna Ayyar. In the ordinary course, the said parcel should have reached its destination, Palghat via Olavakkot on the following day. It was reported as missing and then the Railway authorities at Olavakkot took no prompt steps in tracing the bundle and no complaint was made to the Police.

POLL CALL

Returning officer

A Returning Officer is responsible for overseeing the election in a constituency, or sometimes in two constituencies, as directed by the Election Commission (EC). The EC appoints the Returning Officer and Assistant Returning Officer for a constituency in consultation with the governments of the State or Union Territory as the case may be. The Returning Officer's duties include accepting and scrutinising nomination forms, publishing the affidavits of candidates, allotting symbols to the contesting candidates, preparing the list of contesting candidates, preparing the EVMs and VVPATs, training polling personnel, designating counting centres, and counting the votes and declaring the result.

MORE ON THE WEB

Watch: Tamil Nadu's Biryani binge

<http://bit.ly/biryaningibe>



गुलमोहर की तरफ ताकने के बजाय जरा गुलमोहर बनकर देखें

बहुत तपन है। सारे पेड़ झुलस रहे हैं, पतियां मुरझा गईं, हरे-भरे तने टूट में बदल गए लेकिन गुलमोहर चटख लाल रंग में खिल रहा है। खिले गुलमोहर को देखकर लगता है कि हां, अभी जीवन-शक्ति जीवित है, सर्पर्ष की तपन में खिलने की क्षमता जीवित है। गुलमोहर गर्मी में खिलता है। गर्म लू के थपड़े, सूरज का आक्रोश और इस आक्रोश से भयभीत अन्य फूलों की भीरुता उसकी जिजीविषा को नहीं डिंगा पाती। वह अकेला खिलता है, उसका कोई साथ नहीं देता, मगर वह अपने संकल्प से डिगता नहीं। वह सूरजमुखी के फूल की तरह अवसरवादी भी नहीं कि सूरज के साथ-साथ अपनी दिशा भी बदलता रहे।



उसकी दिशाएं उसके खुद अपने मन की होती हैं। गर्मी ज्यों-ज्यों बढ़ती है उसकी सुखी भी बढ़ती जाती है। जिन्हें हम लू के थपड़े कहते हैं वे उसके लिए और प्यार करने लगते हैं। जिसे हम झुलसना समझते हैं वह उसके लिए मुकुराना है। गर्मी ने गुलमोहर की गंध छीन ली, उसकी पांखुरियों की नमी छीन ली, मगर उसकी दमकती काँति को नहीं छीन सकी। गर्मी के आरंभ होते ही कोई पहाड़ पर जाता है, कोई कर्मर, जो जा नहीं पाते वे कूलर, एयरकंडीशनर और तेज ठंडी हवा फेंकने वाले पंखों की तलाश करने लगते हैं। दोषी हम खुद हैं जो गर्मी के भय से दुबक जाते हैं, और पर्यावरण के असंतुलन का विरोध करते हुए सूरज को दोषी ठहराने लगते हैं। हमने वन काट दिए और पर्यावरण के विभागीय खोल लिए, सूरज को खुद उकसा दिया और अपने लिए डीलक्स एसी रूम की व्यवस्था कर ली। वैशाख या जेट की तपती दोपहर में खेत जोतते किसान को सूरज से कोई शिकायत नहीं, पर एसी रूम में बैठकर सूरज को कोसना हमारी आदत हो गई। जरा गुलमोहर की तरफ ताकने के बजाय गुलमोहर बनकर तो देखें।

-हिंदी लेखक और ललित निबंधकार

फैनी तूफान को लेकर प्रधानमंत्री मोदी के फोन का जवाब न देने पर ममता की सफाई में छिपी सियासत साफ देखी जा सकती है, जबकि सांविधानिक मूल्यों का तकाजा है कि प्राकृतिक आपदा के समय सियासी हितों को आड़े नहीं आना चाहिए।

तूफान पर राजनीति

ओडिशा

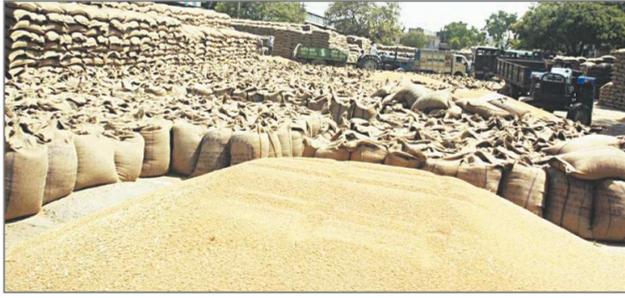
के तटीय इलाकों में काफी नुकसान पहुंचाने वाला चक्रवाती तूफान फैनी शम गया है, मगर पड़ोसी राज्य पश्चिम बंगाल की सियासत में इसने हलचल पैदा कर दी है, जहां अभी दो चरणों के चुनाव बाकी हैं।

असल में प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने सोमवार को राज्य में एक चुनावी रैली में कहा कि उन्होंने तूफान से उपजे जमीनी हालात का जायजा लेने के लिए राज्य की मुख्यमंत्री ममता बनर्जी को दो बार फोन किया था, मगर उनकी ओर से कोई जवाब नहीं आया। दूसरी ओर ममता बनर्जी ने भी एक चुनावी रैली में सफाई दी कि वह तूफान के हालात का जायजा लेने के लिए खड़गपुर में थीं, इसलिए प्रधानमंत्री से फोन पर बात नहीं कर सकीं। मगर बात

इतनी सरल है नहीं, इससे पहले तृणमूल कांग्रेस की ओर से यहां तक कह दिया गया था कि प्रधानमंत्री कार्यालय से मुख्यमंत्री के दफ्तर में कोई फोन ही नहीं आया था। दरअसल फैनी से संभावित नुकसान को बचाने में ओडिशा काफी हद तक कामयाब रहा है, इसके बावजूद वहां तीस से अधिक लोगों की मौत हो गई और सरकारी तथा निजी संपत्ति को काफी नुकसान पहुंचा। प्रधानमंत्री मोदी ने मुख्यमंत्री नवीन पटनायक के साथ न केवल प्रभावित क्षेत्रों का हवाई जहाज से मुआयना किया, बल्कि एक हजार करोड़ रुपये की केंद्रीय मदद के अलावा मृतकों के परिजनों के लिए अलग से मदद दिए जाने का एलान भी किया है। यही नहीं, उन्होंने मुख्यमंत्री नवीन पटनायक को लाखों लोगों को समय रहते सुरक्षित स्थानों पर पहुंचाने की तारीफ भी की। हालांकि यह भी

सच है कि ओडिशा में चुनाव हो चुके हैं, और अभी पश्चिम बंगाल में चक्रवाती तूफान को अपनी सफाई से हितों की खिंता हो सकती है, क्योंकि पिछले कुछ वर्षों में भाजपा ने पश्चिम बंगाल में न केवल अपना आधार बढ़ाया है, इस चुनाव में उस इशारे से काफी उम्मीदें हैं। लिहाजा ममता प्रधानमंत्री मोदी के साथ मंच साझा करने से बचती है। इससे पहले उन्होंने आधुनिक भारत को लेकर भी ऐसा ही रवैया दिखाया था और वह यहां तक कह चुकी हैं कि केंद्र सरकार से कोई फंड नहीं लेंगी। जबकि सांविधानिक और लोकतांत्रिक मूल्यों का तकाजा है कि केंद्र और राज्य में सत्तारूढ़ दलों के सियासी हितों को खासतौर से प्राकृतिक या मानवीय आपदा के समय आड़े नहीं आना चाहिए।

खुले में बर्बाद होते अन्न की कहानी



पंजाब-हरियाणा में गेहूं की बंपर पैदावार का अनुमान है, लेकिन हर साल की तरह इस बार भी इनका संग्रहण एक बड़ी चुनौती है। हर बीतते साल में अन्न संग्रहण का संकट बदतर होता जा रहा है।



देविंदर शर्मा, कृषि नीति विशेषज्ञ

गेहूं 143 लाख टन चावल और गेहूं रखे हुए हैं। इसके अलावा इसके पास कैप स्टोरेज के रूप में 75 लाख टन संग्रहण की अतिरिक्त क्षमता है, जिनमें पिछली बार का 12 लाख टन गेहूं की खरीद का अनुमान है और खरीदा गया अधिकांश गेहूं खुले में पड़ा रहना।

दूसरे शब्दों में कहें तो गोदामों में रखे जाने के लिए चावल को हमेशा पहली प्राथमिकता मिलती है। साल दर साल वही कहानी दोहराई जा रही है। ओडिशा, आंध्र प्रदेश और पश्चिम बंगाल में इसका कमोबेश असर दिखा है। तूफान से बचाव के लिए खुद प्रधानमंत्री दिल्ली में अधिकारियों के साथ आपातकालीन बैठक कर चुके हैं। बचाव के सभी पुख्ता इंतजाम किए गए हैं और सुरक्षा एजेंसियों को बैठकें लगातार जारी हैं।

पंजाब के पास 158.5 लाख टन क्वर्ड स्टोरेज क्षमता है, जिनमें पिछले मौसम में खरीदे

पिछले साल भी जब मंडियों में नए गेहूं की आवक शुरू हुई थी, तब पहले के स्टॉक का 20 लाख टन गेहूं खुले में पड़ा हुआ था। मुझे याद है

कि खरीद के मौसम के चरम पर 70 लाख टन ताजा आवक को कैप स्टोरेज के तहत खुले में रखना पड़ा था। प्राथमिक तौर पर ऐसा पिछले साल खरीदे गए चावल और गेहूं की निकासी न कर पाने की अक्षमता के कारण हुआ। तकरीबन 90 लाख टन गेहूं को पिछले साल खुले में रखना पड़ा था, जिसमें से 12 लाख टन गेहूं अब भी खुले में पड़ा हुआ है।

स्थिति में कुछ सुधार हो सकता है, बशर्ते कि संग्रहीत अन्न को जितनी जल्द हो सके राज्य से बाहर भेजा जाए। पंजाब के खाद्य एवं नागरिक आपूर्ति सचिव के ए पी सिन्हा ने कहा है कि हम खरीद मौसम के अंत तक संग्रहण की जगह खाली करावा लेंगे। मैं समझ सकता हूँ कि हर साल राज्य प्रशासन को नौकरशाही से जुड़ी परेशानियों का सामना करना पड़ता है, वह भी दो बार। एक बार तब जब गेहूं की आवक होती है और कुछ महीने बाद दूसरी बार तब जब धान की खरीद का मौसम आता है। तथ्य यह है कि हर बीतते साल में अन्न संग्रहण का संकट बदतर होता जा रहा है। करीब तीस वर्षों से तो मैं देख रहा हूँ कि अन्न संग्रहण की कैसी बर्बादतजाती है। वार्षिक खाद्य उत्पादन का लक्ष्य तय करना तो नीतिगत एजेंडा होता है, लेकिन गेहूं और चावल के खरीदे गए एक-एक दाने का प्रबंधन करना राजनीतिक प्राथमिकताओं में सबसे निचले क्रम में है। भरपूर- बंपर पैदावार और बढ़ते खाद्य अपव्यय का यह विचित्र विरोधाभास खाद्य प्रबंधन के सभी कानूनों को धुंधला करता है। मैं नहीं समझ पाता कि कैसे नीति नियंता इसकी वजह से होने वाली खाद्यान्न की बर्बादी की ओर से आंखें मूंद रहे हैं।

मुझे हमेशा यह लगता है कि खाद्यान्न की बर्बादी रोकने की अपेक्षा सिर्फ किसान से ही की जा सकती है; मानो खरीदे गए कीमती खाद्यान्न

को बर्बाद करना सरकार का अधिकार हो। निरंकुशता के साथ संग्रहीत खाद्यान्न की गुणवत्ता को खराब होने दिया जाता है, जिससे यह अवसर मनुष्यों के दिने लायक नहीं रह जाता। यह एक राष्ट्रीय शर्म की बात है। आखिर खाद्यान्न के संग्रहण के लिए गोदामों के निर्माण के लिए रॉकेट साइंस की जरूरत नहीं है। हर बार जब भी मैं यह सुनता हूँ कि सरकार बुनियादी ढांचे में निवेश करने जा रही है, तो बाद में पता चलता है कि इससे सुपर हाइवे का निर्माण किया गया। मैं हाइवे के फैलते नेटवर्क के खिलाफ नहीं हूँ, लेकिन इसके अलावा ऐसे कई क्षेत्र हैं, जहां सार्वजनिक धन का निवेश करने की जरूरत है। 2017 में वित्त मंत्री अरुण जेटली ने 2022 तक 83,677 किलोमीटर लंबी सड़कों के निर्माण के लिए 6.92 लाख करोड़ रुपये के पैकेज की घोषणा की थी। यदि उन्होंने इसमें से सिर्फ एक लाख करोड़ रुपये खाद्यान्न स्टोरेज क्षमता बढ़ाने के लिए खर्च दिए होते, तो खाद्यान्न के बर्बाद होने की समस्या से निजात मिल जाती।

इससे पहले यूपीए सरकार ने देश भर में ढाई लाख पंचायतों में पंचायत घर का निर्माण करवाया था। उस समय भी मैंने देशभर में खाद्यान्न गोदाम के निर्माण के लिए निवेश करने का सुझाव दिया था। वाकई टेलीविजन पर आने वाली गोदामों में बर्बाद होते खाद्यान्न या मंडियों में बारिश से भीगते खाद्यान्न के बोरां की तस्वीरें कभी भुलाई नहीं जा सकती। खासकर तब और जब 119 देशों के ग्लोबल हॉर इंडेक्स में भारत 103 वें स्थान पर हो। दुनिया की एक चौथाई भूख से पीड़ित आबादी भारत में रहती है, एक ऐसे देश में जहां रब खराब के अभाव में भारी मात्रा में खाद्यान्न को बर्बाद होने दिया जाता है। मैं अब भी नहीं समझ पा रहा हूँ कि यह मुद्दा राजनीतिक प्राथमिकता क्यों नहीं बन पा रहा है।

लो

कतंत्र के सबसे बड़े ल्योहार आम चुनावों के बीच गेहूं कटाई का मौसम शवाब पर है। 'अन्न का कटोरा' यानी पंजाब और हरियाणा में गेहूं की कुल कितनी पैदावार होगी इसका आधिकारिक आंकड़ा आने में वक्त लगेगा, लेकिन आरंभिक अनुमानों के मुताबिक इन दोनों राज्यों में रिकॉर्ड 310 लाख टन की पैदावार हो सकती है।

पंजाब में 180 लाख टन गेहूं की पैदावार होने की उम्मीद है, जबकि पड़ोसी राज्य हरियाणा 130 लाख टन की बंपर पैदावार की अपेक्षा कर रहा है। इस बार सर्दियों के मौसम के लंबा खिंचने के कारण गेहूं की कटाई में देरी हुई है, लेकिन इसने उत्पादकता बढ़ाने में मदद की है। इस साल पंजाब में प्रति हेक्टेयर 52 क्विंटल गेहूं होने की उम्मीद है। लेकिन संग्रहण की पर्याप्त और उचित व्यवस्था के अभाव ने गेहूं की इस जबरदस्त पैदावार से पैदा हुए उत्साह को ठंडा कर दिया है। इन दोनों राज्यों से गुजरते हुए देख सकते हैं कि किस तरह से राष्ट्रीय राजमार्गों के किनारे मंडियों के बाहर गेहूं के ढेर पड़े हुए हैं। गेहूं कटाई के मौसम के चरम पर पंजाब में गेहूं की नई आवक के रख-रखाव के लिए शायद ही कोई ऐसी जगह हो, जहां गेहूं को ढक कर रखा जा सके। पिछले साल का 12 लाख टन गेहूं का स्टॉक पहले ही खुले में पड़ा हुआ है, जिसे तकनीकी रूप से क्वर्ड एंड फिंश (कैप) स्टोरेज कहा जाता है और इसका मतलब है कि अन्न से भरे गेहूं के बोरे खुले आसमान के नीचे पड़े हुए हैं, जिन्हें काले तिरपालों से ढक दिया गया है।

पंजाब के पास 158.5 लाख टन क्वर्ड स्टोरेज क्षमता है, जिनमें पिछले मौसम में खरीदे

मंजिलें और भी हैं

>> शुभम चौरसिया

कभी भूखा सोता था, आज इंजीनियर बनने के करीब हूँ

मैं बिहार के गया शहर का रहने वाला हूँ। बचपन से ही मैं पढ़ने में तेज था और खासकर विज्ञान में मेरी ज्यादा रुचि थी। मैं इलेक्ट्रिकल इंजीनियर बनना चाहता था। मेरे पिता की पान की दुकान थी, जिससे ज्यादा आय नहीं होती थी। कई बार रात को हम सबको भूखे ही सो जाना पड़ता था। पिता मुझसे पढ़ाई छोड़कर कोई काम कर लेने की सलाह देते थे, पर मैं पढ़ना चाहता था। मुझे याद है कि जब मैं दसवीं में पढ़ रहा था, तभी एक रात घर लौटकर पिता ने मुझे बताया था कि दसवीं के बाद वह मेरी पढ़ाई का खर्च नहीं दे पाएंगे, क्योंकि दुकान से आमदनी बहुत ही कम रह गई थी। मेरे पैरों तले जमीन खिसक गई थी। बहुत दिनों तक पढ़ने में मेरा मन नहीं लगा। स्कूल में मैंने जब अपने कुछ साथियों को यह बात बताई, तो वे बहुत दुखी हुए, क्योंकि मैं क्लास का सबसे होनहार छात्र था और हर परीक्षा में अक्ल आता था। उन्हीं साथियों में से कुछ ने यह बात शिक्षकों को बताई, तो उनमें से एक शिक्षक ने, जो मेरे क्लास टीचर थे, मुझे भरोसा दिलाया कि वह मेरी हरसंभव मदद करेंगे।



मेरा लक्ष्य आईआईटी, दिल्ली में दाखिला लेकर इलेक्ट्रॉनिक इंजीनियरिंग की पढ़ाई करना है।

उन्होंने शहर के ही मगध-30 के संचालक अभयानंद जी को मेरे बारे में बताया, तो एक दिन वहां से मुझे बुलावा आया। यह वही अभयानंद जी थे, जो पहले आनंद कुमार जी के साथ सुपर-30 चलाते थे। दो इंटींस टेस्ट और इंटरव्यू के बाद मगध-30 में मेरा चयन हो गया। अब मुझे यहां दो साल रहना था। इस संस्था में सिर्फ होनहार गरीब बच्चों को इंजीनियरिंग और मेडिकल की कोचिंग दी जाती है। कोचिंग के साथ-साथ यहां रहना-खाना भी मुफ्त है। अभयानंद जी और पंकज कुमार जी के दिशा-निर्देश में मैं वहां कड़ी मेहनत करने लगा। बीच-बीच में मगध-30 के पुराने छात्र भी, जो अब अच्छी नौकरियों में थे, हमें पढ़ाने के लिए आते थे।

अंततः जेईई-मेन में मुझे 99.56 प्रतिशत अंक मिले। मैंने बहुत मेहनत की थी। फिर भी मुझे उम्मीद नहीं थी कि मेरा प्रदर्शन इतना शानदार रहेगा। मैं इसका श्रेय अभयानंद सर को देता हूँ, जिनके दिशा-निर्देश के बगैर मैं यहां तक नहीं पहुंच सकता था। मेरी इस सफलता ने मेरे पिता को अभिभूत कर दिया है। दो साल पहले तक वह बेहद निराश थे, क्योंकि दुकान का काम अच्छा नहीं चल रहा था। आज मेरी सफलता से वह इतने खुश और उत्साहित हैं कि छोटे भाई की पढ़ाई जारी रखने का फैसला किया है, जबकि थोड़े ही समय पहले तक वह उसे पढ़ाई बंद कर दुकान में उनका हाथ बंटाने की बात कह चुके थे। मेरा छोटा भाई भी बहुत मेधावी है और गणित व विज्ञान में उसकी रुचि है। पिता का कहना है कि अगर उसका रिजल्ट अच्छा रहा, तो उसे भी मगध-30 में दाखिला करवाने के बारे में सोचा जाएगा, ताकि वह भी जिंदगी में कुछ बन जाए।

मैं इन दिनों जेईई-एडवांस्ड की तैयारी कर रहा हूँ, जिसकी परीक्षा अगामी 27 मई को है। मेरा लक्ष्य आईआईटी, दिल्ली में दाखिला लेकर इलेक्ट्रॉनिक इंजीनियरिंग की पढ़ाई करना है। आज जब मैं अपनी उपलब्धि की ओर नजर देता हूँ, तो पाता हूँ कि मेरी मेहनत के अलावा इसमें मेरे माता-पिता के त्याग और मगध-30 में मिले दिशा-निर्देश का बड़ा योगदान है। जब भी मैं घर आता हूँ, तो पिता को बहुत खुश और उत्साहित पाता हूँ। आसपास के अनेक लड़के, जो कुछ समय पहले तक आचारगार्दी या फिर छोटा-मोटा काम करते थे, आज पढ़ाई के प्रति गंभीर हैं।

-विभिन्न साक्षात्कारों पर आधारित।

टला नहीं है फैनी का खतरा

नासा ने शनिवार को फैनी प्रभावित देशों को जानकारी दी कि तूफान का प्रकोप आगे भी जारी रहेगा। पर चौतरफा तैयारी और सतर्कता को देखते हुए उम्मीद करनी चाहिए कि फैनी अगर दोबारा मजबूत होता है, तब भी ज्यादा नुकसान नहीं हो पाएगा।



रमेश ठाकुर

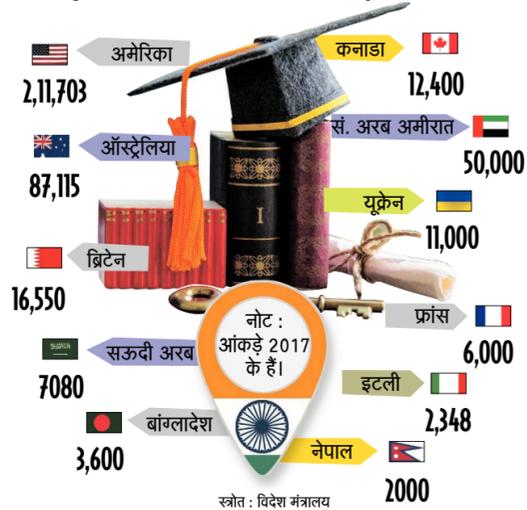
नवीनतम जानकारी प्रभावित देशों से साझा कीं और बताया कि तूफान का प्रकोप आगे भी जारी रहेगा। नासा के मुताबिक फैनी एक उष्णकटिबंधीय तूफान है, जो मानवीय हिमाकत के बाद उत्पन्न हुआ है। किसी भी चक्रवाती तूफान का नामकरण उस स्थिति में किया जाता है, जब उसकी रफ्तार 60 से 70 किलोमीटर प्रति घंटा हो। जब इसकी रफ्तार सी या उससे ज्यादा हो, तो वह तूफान गंभीर चक्रवाती तूफान कहा जाता है। वहीं, अगर अन्य तूफान की रफ्तार 200 किमी प्रति घंटे से ज्यादा होती है, तो उसे सुपर साइक्लोन की संज्ञा दी जाती है। फैनी को इसी श्रेणी में माना गया है। तूफान का नामकरण वही देश करता है, जिसके क्षेत्र में यह जन्म लेता है।



खुली खिड़की

भारत में पढ़ने वाले विदेशी छात्र

विश्व के विभिन्न देशों के छात्र उच्च शिक्षा के लिए बड़ी संख्या में भारत आते हैं। रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक इन देशों में अमेरिका पहले व कनाडा दूसरे स्थान पर काबिज है।



ग्लानि ज्ञान का मूल

आलंदी गांव के ब्राह्मणों में विसोबा चारी अत्यंत दृष्ट था। वह ज्ञानदेव, सोपानदेव एवं मुक्ताई जैसे बच्चों से प्रेरित करता था। एक बार मुक्ता को मांडा (पतली रोटी) खाने की इच्छा हुई। मांडा बनाने के लिए विशिष्ट बर्तन की जरूरत होती है। ज्ञानदेव बर्तन लाने के लिए कुम्हार के पास जाने लगे, तो विसोबा भी उनके पीछे जाने लगे। ज्ञानदेव ने कुम्हारों से बर्तन मांगा, तो विसोबा ने उन्हें देने से मना कर दिया। ज्ञानदेव को खाली हाथ लौटना पड़ा। घर आकर ज्ञानदेव ने मुक्ता से कहा, आटा गुंथो। मगर बर्तन कहाँ है, मुक्ता ने पूछा। ज्ञानदेव बोले, मेरी पीठ है। और उन्होंने अपनी पीठ सामने कर दी। मुक्ता ने भाई की पीठ पर ही मांडे संकना शुरू कर दिया। विसोबा ने बच्चों का मजाक उड़ाने के लिए यह प्रपंच रचा था और अब उन सबके पीछे छिपकर खाड़ा हो गया था।

लेकिन उसने जब ज्ञानदेव की पीठ पर मांडे सिंकने का चमत्कार देखा, तो उसका घमंड चूर-चूर हो गया। उसे पश्चाताप हुआ कि कथं ही वह इन अनाथ बालकों के प्रति ईर्ष्या भाव रखता था। उसने ज्ञानदेव के चरण पकड़े और माफ़ी मांगी। यही ज्ञानदेव आगे चलकर संत ज्ञानेश्वर के रूप में जाने गए। विसोबा प्रभु की लीला से प्रभावित हो गया था। उसके स्वभाव में परिवर्तन आ गया। अब वह भी संत विसोबा के नाम से जाना जाने लगा था।

-संकलित

हरियाली और रास्ता

राजू, पार्क और तितली

यह कहानी एक तितली की है, जो राजू को रोकने के लिए बार-बार उससे टकरा रही थी।



उस दिन राजू दफ्तर से जल्दी निकल गया था। कुछ देर पहले बारिश हुई थी। ठंडी हवा मन को बहुत सुहा रही थी। पास में ही एक नया पार्क, गुलाब वाटिका बना था। राजू का जाने कब से इस पार्क में जाने का मन था। उस दिन उसके कदम खुद ही पार्क की तरफ बढ़ चुके। पार्क में पैदल चलने वालों के लिए बड़िया मार्ग, आराम करने के लिए कुर्सियां, बच्चों के खेलने के लिए झूले, सुंदर-सुंदर फूल और वृक्ष लगाए गए थे। तभी उसने देखा, सामने मिट्टी का एक ढेर पड़ा था, जो बारिश की वजह से कीचड़ में तब्दील हो गया था। राजू कीचड़ से बचते-बचाते निकल ही रहा था, तभी अचानक उस पर हमला हो गया। लगातार कई बार उस पर हमला होता रहा। हमले में राजू को चोट नहीं लग रही थी, न ही उसके कपड़े गंदे हो रहे थे। एक तितली उसके ऊपर बार-बार पूरी ताकत से आकर टकरा रही थी। ऐसा लगता था कि वह जान-बूझकर उस पर हमला कर उसे आगे जाने से रोक रही थी। राजू जैसे ही तीन-चार कदम पीछे हट गया, तितली शांत हो गई। पर जैसे ही राजू ने आगे बढ़ने का प्रयास किया, वह तितली फिर उस पर हमला करने लगी। राजू दूसरी तरफ से निकला, तो वह तितली पीछे हट गई। वहीं, एक और तितली पड़ी थी, जो घायल थी और अंतिम सांसों गिन रही थी। शायद इसीलिए दूसरी तितली उस पर बार-बार हमला कर रही थी कि वह आगे न जाए और उसके पैर चलती से भी उस जख्मी तितली पर न पड़ जाए। इतनी नहीं-सी तितली अपने से हजार गुना बड़े शरीर वाले इंसान से भी सिर्फ इसलिए टकरा गई कि शायद उसे उस जख्मी तितली के साथ कुछ पल और बिताने के लिए मिल जाए। तितली ने राजू को सिखा दिया कि चुनौती चाहे कितनी भी बड़ी हो उससे धरना नहीं चाहिए, बल्कि डटकर लड़ना चाहिए।

जरूरत पड़ने पर ताकतवर व्यक्ति से भी टकराने में डरना नहीं चाहिए।

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड

वर्ष 12 अंक 68

कड़ी चुनौती

तमाम ऐसे संकेतक हैं जो यह बताते हैं कि वृहद आर्थिक क्षेत्र में भारत की लंबे समय से चली आ रही बेहतर स्थिति अब समाप्त होने को है। बीते पांच वर्ष के दौरान अनुकूल वैश्विक परिस्थितियों और जिस कीमतों के कारण भारत की वृहद आर्थिक स्थिति काफी भाग्यशाली रही। इन वैश्विक कारकों ने मुद्रास्फीति को नियंत्रित रखने में भी आंशिक

रूप से अपनी भूमिका का निर्वाह किया। वैश्विक पूंजी की आसान उपलब्धता ने चालू खाते के घाटे की भरपाई करने में सहायता की। कमतर मुद्रास्फीति और कमजोर जिस कीमतों ने राजकोषीय घाटे को कम करने में मदद की है। इससे सरकार को यह अवसर मिला कि वह मौद्रिक मोर्चे पर सख्ती न बरते। परंतु अब इस बात पर संदेह उत्पन्न

हो गया है क्योंकि सरकार वर्ष 2018-19 के 11 फीसदी के राजस्व लक्ष्य को हासिल करने से चूक गई है। ऐसा इसलिए कि वस्तु एवं सेवा कर, आय कर और केंद्रीय उत्पाद शुल्क का संग्रह कम रहा है। परंतु सरकारी व्यय ने वृद्धि दर को बरकरार रखने में मदद की है। यह चक्र काफी हद तक उन बाहरी कारकों पर निर्भर करता है जो भारत के नियंत्रण से बाहर हैं। इन कारकों में से कई अब समाप्त हो रहे हैं। उदाहरण के लिए कच्चे तेल की कीमतें। ऐसा लगता नहीं कि ये कीमतें 2014 के पहले की तरह 100-130 डॉलर प्रति बैरल के दायरे में वापस जाएंगी। ये कीमतें कुछ समय तक 70-80 डॉलर प्रति बैरल के स्तर पर बनी रहेंगी। रुपया भी 70 प्रति डॉलर के आसपास पहुंच

जाएगा। तेल कीमतें इस वर्ष पिछले साल की तुलना में एक तिहाई तक बढ़ी हैं। इन्होंने चिंताओं की बदीलत इंडिया वीआईएक्स, जो नैशनल स्टॉक एक्सचेंज में होने वाले उतार-चढ़ाव का आकलन करता है, हाल में तीन वर्ष के ऊपरी स्तर पर पहुंच गया। घरेलू स्तर पर भी कठिनाइयां दिख रही हैं। खासतौर पर कारोबारी आय अथवा निजी निवेश में सुधार का भी कोई संकेत नहीं दिख रहा। क्षमता के इस्तेमाल में सुधार के बावजूद नए परियोजनाओं में इजाफा नजर नहीं आ रहा। जाहिर सी बात है कि शहरी और ग्रामीण मांग के तमाम प्रमुख संकेतकों पर मांग कमजोर बनी हुई है। वर्ष 2018-19 में यात्री कार की बिक्री केवल 3 फीसदी बढ़ी। चौथी तिमाही के नतीजों की बात करें

तो शुरुआती संकेत अर्थव्यवस्था में धीमेपन के हैं। विदेशों से हो रही डॉलर आवक ने बाजार को संभाल रखा है। परंतु यह स्थायी सिलसिला नहीं है। खासतौर पर लंबे समय से कमजोर बनी हुई आय, अवमूल्यित होता रुपया और अन्य उभरते बाजारों में सुधार के कारण यह आवक कमजोर हो सकती है। कुछ विरोधाभासी संकेतक भी हैं। मिसाल के तौर पर कॉर्पोरेट क्षेत्र को बैंक ऋण में सुधार। हालांकि ऐसा गैर बैंकिंग वित्तीय क्षेत्र में गिरावट के कारण भी हो सकता है। वित्तीय क्षेत्र की दिक्कतों पर भी विचार किया जाना चाहिए। रेंटिंग में गिरावट के बाद एनबीएफसी संकट एक बार फिर सुर्खियों में है। दिवालिया एवं ऋणशोधन प्रक्रिया का प्रदर्शन कमजोर बना हुआ है।

इस बीच सरकार की ओर से सूक्ष्म, लघु और मझोले उपक्रमों को ऋण समेत बैंकिंग क्षेत्र में संकट बरकरार है। सरकार ने अपने व्यय की मदद से वृद्धि दर को बरकरार रखा है लेकिन लगातार दो वर्ष तक घाटे में कमी के बाद अब उसके पास सीमित राजकोषीय गुंजाइश है। सरकारी व्यय पर बढ़ते दबाव के चलते निजी निवेश में इजाफा आवश्यक है। नई सरकार को कार्य भार संभालने के तत्काल बाद इन कठिनाइयों का सामना करना होगा। अगर नई सरकार महत्वाकांक्षी सुधार योजनाओं पर जल्द अमल करे तो बेहतर होगा। इससे न केवल उपभोक्ताओं का उत्साह बढ़ेगा बल्कि निजी निवेश और निर्यात में सुधार का माहौल भी तैयार होगा।

लोकतंत्र, डिजिटल इंडिया और नेटवर्क

डिजिटलीकरण और लोकतांत्रिक व्यवस्था अनिवार्य तौर पर नेटवर्क के माध्यम से संचालित होते हैं। इस संबंध में विस्तार से जानकारी दे रहे हैं श्याम पोनप्पा

देश में डिजिटलीकरण से जो भी लाभ या नुकसान हुए हैं, उनको नकारा नहीं जा सकता है। इनका प्रत्यक्ष संबंध लोकतंत्र के समक्ष आई चुनौतियों और उससे जुड़े लाभों से भी है। डिजिटलीकृत नेटवर्क को लेकर जो अनिर्णित हड़बड़ी देखने को मिल रही है, उससे अलग-अलग तरह से ही सही लेकिन पहुंच और किफायत के मामले में जबरदस्त लाभ सामने आए हैं। ये लाभ व्यक्तिगत स्तर पर भी हैं और सामूहिक स्तर पर भी।

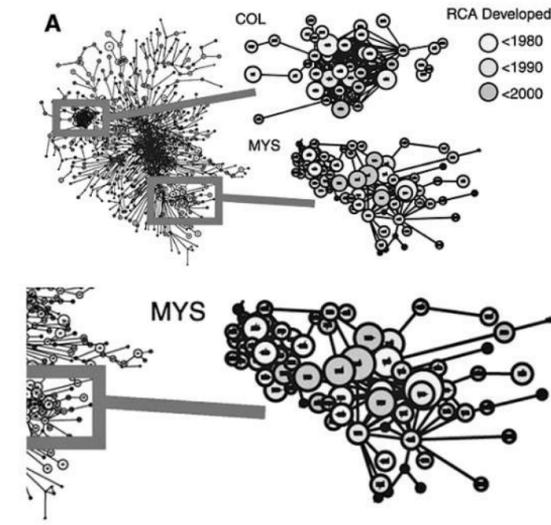
उदाहरण के लिए परिवार के स्तर पर, मित्रों के स्तर पर, समुदाय के स्तर पर, राष्ट्र स्तर पर, राजनीति में, कार्यस्थल में आदि। हालांकि इसका एक अंधेरा पक्ष भी है। यानी सामाजिक, धार्मिक अथवा राजनीतिक स्तर पर उपद्रव, कट्टरता, निरंकुशता, फासीवाद, अराजकता और सामाजिक निष्क्रियता आदि इसके कुछ उदाहरण हैं। बावजूद इस बात से इनकार नहीं किया जा सकता है कि अपनी तमाम जरूरतों, प्रतिभाओं और विरोधाभास के बीच डिजिटलीकरण ने हमें बहुत सक्षम बनाया है।

लोकतंत्र की बात करें तो इससे जुड़ी रूमाणियत विशुद्ध रूप से सतही बात है। वास्तव में इसकी हकीकत कहीं अधिक कठोर रही है और अब भी है। यह वास्तव में वरीयता वाले बुजुर्ग आ वर्ग के व्यवहार की चीज रही है।

अगर देश में लोकतांत्रिक व्यवस्था की बात करें तो हमारी राजनीतिक तैयारी अथवा है और इसलिए यह स्थान उन राजनेताओं ने कब्जा लिया है जिनमें से अधिकांश अक्सरवादी हैं। यह प्रशासन के लिए आवश्यक जटिल विश्लेषण और निर्णय क्षमता के लिए पूरी तरह तैयार नहीं हैं। अधिकांश नागरिकों को भ्रम है कि उन्हें चयन की स्वतंत्रता है जबकि उनकी यह स्वतंत्रता सत्ताधारी दल को चुनने या नकारने अथवा एक जैसे नेताओं में से किसी का चयन करने तक सीमित है। यहां डिजिटलीकरण की प्रत्यक्ष भूमिका है। मीडिया के तमाम स्वरूपों की बदीलत इसका प्रभाव भी व्यापक है। कैंब्रिज एनालिटिका मामले में हम देख चुके हैं कि कैसे और राजनीति का गठजोड़ किस प्रकार काम कर रहा है।

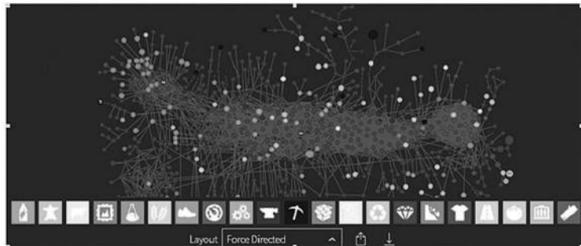
मैक्रीजी की डिजिटल इंडिया रिपोर्ट 2019 के मुताबिक देश के डिजिटलीकरण के तमाम लाभ हैं लेकिन केवल 40 फीसदी आबादी को पहुंच ही इंटरनेट तक है और सुधार की बहुत अधिक गुंजाइश है। इसके

तालिका - 1 कोलंबिया और मलेशिया तुलनात्मक रूप से फायदे में



स्रोत- हिडाल्गो एट ऑल, <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/317/5837/482>

तालिका - 1 भारत के लिए निर्यात करने की संभावनाएं (2017)



स्रोत- हिडाल्गो, <https://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/visualize/network/hs92/export/ind/all/show/2017/>

बावजूद नए डिजिटलीकृत हुए क्षेत्रों को जबरदस्त लाभ हासिल हुए हैं। उदाहरण के लिए लॉजिस्टिक्स के क्षेत्र में बेड़ों के पलटाव में लगने वाला समय 50 से 70 फीसदी कम हुआ है। डिजिटलीकृत आपूर्ति शृंखला ने कंपनियों की इन्वेंटरी में 20 फीसदी तक कमी की है। सवाल यह है कि इसका कैसे प्रबंधन किया जाए कि लाभ अधिक हों और नुकसान कम हों तथा निजता बची रह सके।

सचेत नियमन के निहितार्थ

नेटवर्क विज्ञान हमें बताता है कि वास्तविक दुनिया के नेटवर्क में दो गुणधर्म होते हैं। पहला समय के साथ वृद्धि और दूसरा, नए नोड अक्सर अधिक जुड़े हुए नोड या हब के साथ जुड़ जाते हैं। वृद्धि और प्राथमिकता आधारित संबद्धता के चलते कुछ उच्च संपर्क वाले हब लगभग सभी नेटवर्क में तैयार हो जाते हैं। फिर चाहे वह हमारे शरीर में

कोशिकाओं का नेटवर्क हो, कंप्यूटर चिप का, परिवहन से जुड़े लोगों का या इंटरनेट का। सभी नेटवर्क में ऐसे गुणधर्म समान होते हैं।

फेसबुक, एमेज़ॉन, नेटफ्लिक्स और गूगल जैसी कंपनियों ने जो दबदबा दिखाया है, वह बताता है कि नेटवर्क में नियमन और ढांचे की कितनी अहमियत है और यह उनके विकास और नतीजे सामने लाने में कितना योगदान दे सकता है। यही बात लोकतंत्र पर भी लागू होती है। हमारे देश में हाल के दिनों चुनावी फंडिंग को लेकर कई बदलाव किए गए हैं। इससे अस्पष्टता बढ़ी है और लोकतांत्रिक प्रक्रिया को नुकसान पहुंचाए जाने की आशंका में भी इजाफा हुआ है।

अब राजनीतिक दल अबाध ढंग से विदेशी या घरेलू फंडिंग हासिल कर सकते हैं। चुनावी बॉन्ड के जरिए फंड को गोपनीय रखा जा सकता है। राज और कांग्रेस दोनों ने पुरानी तिथि से लागू इस नई व्यवस्था का लाभ उठाया है। ऐसे में समाचार और सोशल मीडिया में नियमन और समुचित नियंत्रण की आवश्यकता भी सामने आई है।

प्रमाण आधारित नीतियां

डिजिटलीकरण का एक सकारात्मक पहलू नेटवर्क विज्ञान के प्रयोग से संबंधित है। इसका इस्तेमाल विभिन्न कारकों और कारवाई योग्य नीतियों के बीच संबंध को आंकने में किया जाता है। मिसाल के तौर पर प्रभावी उपचार के लिए जीन और बीमारियों के बीच का रिश्ता समझना या विभिन्न देशों को निर्यात के लिए किसी उत्पाद को उन्नत करना। अगर गौर किया जाए तो यह पता चलता है कि अधिकांश उन्नत उत्पाद गहन संबद्धता वाले नेटवर्क से आते हैं जबकि कमजोर गुणवत्ता के उत्पाद कम घनत्व वाले क्षेत्र से। विभिन्न देश उन उत्पादों को वरीयता देने की प्रवृत्ति रखते हैं जो उनके विशिष्ट कोशल के अनुरूप हों। दरअसल हमें बेहतर नियोजन और क्रियान्वयन वाले एक उपयुक्त नियमन की आवश्यकता है। इस नियमन में शासन, स्वास्थ्य सुविधाओं और औद्योगिक नीति आदि को लेकर गहन अंतर्दृष्टि होनी जरूरी है। वास्तविक राजनीति और रूढ़िवादिता, धार्मिकता, जातीयता आदि को लेकर अन्वयस्कता के चलते आवश्यकता यह है कि राजनीति और फंडिंग के गठजोड़ में बदलाव लाया जाए और एक पारदर्शी, सरकारी फंडिंग वाली व्यवस्था लागू की जाए। क्या ऐसा बदलाव संभव है? हाल के दिनों में कुछ प्रयास किए गए हैं जो अतीत में गोस्वामी समिति (1990) और वोहरा समिति (1993) द्वारा किए गए चुनावी सुधार के प्रयासों से आगे के हैं, वे तात्कालिक आवश्यकता जाहिर करते हैं। परंतु क्या सार्वजनिक विचार और अक्सरवादी विपक्ष के हित, राजनीतिक फंडिंग में उचित और प्रभावी बदलाव ला सकते हैं?

प्रश्न यह भी है कि स्वास्थ्य, विनिर्माण, कृषि, वित्त निर्माण और निर्यात आदि क्षेत्रों से संबंधित नीतियों को लेकर सरकार व्यवस्थित पेशकशी कर सकती है? यह उम्मीद कुछ ज्यादा ही है। अधिक से अधिक यह उम्मीद की जानी चाहिए कि ब्रेक्सिट जैसी अवधारणाएं अधिक समान व्यवहार की जमीन तैयार करती हैं।

मलेरिया के खिलाफ लड़ाई की दिशा में बढ़ते सबके हाथ

मलेरिया से बचाव के लिए पहली बार आए टीके के चौथे चरण का पिछले दिनों प्रायोगिक परीक्षण हुआ। घाना, केन्या और मलावी के करीब 360,000 बच्चों को आरटीएस,एस टीका लगाया जाएगा। दवा कंपनी जीएसके ने मांसक्यूरिक्स नाम से यह टीका तैयार किया है। विश्व स्वास्थ्य संगठन ने इसे 'कंप्लीमेंटरी मलेरिया कंट्रोल टूल' (मलेरिया के रोकथाम का पूरक उपाय) के रूप में परिभाषित किया है।

वर्ष 2017 में मलेरिया से जुड़ी 435,000 मौतें हुई थीं और खास तौर पर युवा बच्चे इस बीमारी के निशाने पर थे। इस बीमारी ने सबसे अधिक कहर अफ्रीका के युवा बच्चों पर ढाया है। मलेरिया से हर साल 5 वर्ष से कम उम्र के 250,000 बच्चे काल कवलिंत हो जाते हैं। इस तरह, 2017 में मलेरिया के शिकार हुए 266,000 बच्चों की तादाद खासी अधिक कही जा सकती है। उस वर्ष 100 देशों में इस बीमारी के 2.19 करोड़ मामले सामने आए थे। यह टीका तैयार होने में 30 वर्षों से भी अधिक का समय लगा और करीब 50 करोड़ डॉलर रकम खर्च हुई है। हालांकि यह टीका मलेरिया से लड़ने में आंशिक रूप से ही असरदार है और यह केवल प्लाज्मोमिडियम फाल्सिपेरम परजीवी के खिलाफ काम करता है और दूसरा बड़ा मलेरिया परजीवी प्लाज्मोडियम विवेक्स इसकी जद में नहीं आता है। इस तरह, यह टीका केवल 40 प्रतिशत तक ही कारगर साबित होता है, लेकिन यह आंशिक सुरक्षा भी असुरक्षा से बेहतर तो जरूर कही जा सकती है।

मलेरिया निरोधक टीका तैयार करने में आने वाली कठिनाइयों का जिक्र बिल गेट्स ने बखूबी किया है (बिल गेट्स मेलिंडा गेट्स फाउंडेशन ने यह टीका विकसित करने और मलेरिया के खिलाफ अन्य उपाय करने में वित्तीय मदद मुहैया कराई है)। गेट्स ने मलेरिया परजीवी को ऐसा खतरनाक वायरस करार दिया है जो आकार बदलता रहता है। मलेरिया के कई परजीवी हैं, जो संक्रमित व्यक्ति के शरीर में कई बार रूप बदलते रहते हैं। प्रत्येक परजीवी कम से कम 60 तरह के प्रोटीन का स्त्राव करता है और ये बारी बारी से सामने आते रहते हैं। हमारी प्रतिरोधी क्षमता किसी एक खास प्रोटीन की पहचान कर बीमारी से लड़ती है। टीके भी कुछ इसी तरह



तकनीकी तंत्र देवांशु दत्ता

काम करते हैं। श्रेष्ठ 'मल्टी-प्रोटीन' टीके (निमोनिया निरोधी) एक दर्जन विभिन्न प्रोटीनों से लड़ सकते हैं। मलेरिया शरीर की प्रतिरोधी क्षमता को चकमा देने में सफल रहता है और ज्यादातर सुरक्षा परतों को पार कर जाता है। इसके अलावा बच्चों को ध्यान में रखकर बनाई गई किसी भी कोई भी दवा के दुष्प्रभावों की पड़ताल भी जरूर होती है।

वर्ष 2009 से 2014 के बीच आरटीएस,एस का परीक्षण तीन चरणों में हुआ और बर्किना फासो, गैबन, घाना, केन्या, मलावी, मोजांबिक और यूनाइटेड रिपब्लिक ऑफ तंजानिया के करीब 15,000 बच्चों एवं नवजात शिशुओं को इस प्रक्रिया में शामिल किया गया। इस टीके की चार खुराक दी जाती हैं। पहली खुराक शिशु के पांच महीने का होने के बाद और दूसरी और तीसरी खुराक एक महीने के अंतर पर और अंतिम खुराक दूसरे जन्मदिन के आस-पास दी जाती है। डब्ल्यूएचओ का दावा है कि 5 से 17 साल के जिन बच्चों को आरटीएस,एस की चार खुराक दी गई, उनमें चार बच्चों को खीराने मलेरिया के 10 में करीब 4 (39 प्रतिशत) मामलों की रोकथाम हो गई। मलेरिया के गंभीर मामलों में 10 में से करीब तीन को रोकथाम संभव हुई और रक्त चढ़ाने की जरूरत 29 प्रतिशत तक कम हो गई। मलेरिया के उन मामलों को गंभीर माना गया है, जिनमें शुरुआती संक्रमण जान लेवा साबित हो सकता है।

यूरोपीय संघ की यूरोपीय मेडिसिन एजेंसी ने तीनों चरणों की समीक्षा के बाद टीके के सामान्य इस्तेमाल की अनुमति दे दी। इस टीके से जनित कुछ दिक्कतें भी हैं, जैसे शरीर के जिस हिस्से में टीका लगा है, उसके इर्द-गिर्द दर्द सूजन होना और कुछ मामलों में बुखार और दौर पड़ना शामिल हैं। हालांकि ये

दुष्प्रभाव अल्प अवधि के लिए होते हैं और दीर्घ अवधि में इनका असर खत्म हो जाता है। हालांकि दो चिंताएं अब भी बरकरार हैं। जिन बच्चों को टीके लगाए गए थे, उनमें दिमागी बुराई के मामले अधिक दिखे थे और मलेरिया के गंभीर मामले जरूर 29 प्रतिशत तक कम हुए थे, लेकिन जिन मामलों में ऐसा हुआ, उनमें दिमागी मलेरिया के अधिक मामले दिखे। हालांकि टीके और इसके दुष्प्रभावों में कोई संबंध नहीं दिखा। चौथा चरण 2022 तक चलेगा और नियमित इस्तेमाल के लिए टीका बाजार में उतारने से पहले सावधानी से नतीजों की समीक्षा की जाएगी।

वास्तव में जीएसके ने आरटीएस,एस का विकास 1987 में ही किया था। 2001 में इसने सिएटल स्थित गैर-लाभकारी पैथ के साथ काम करना शुरू किया था। पैथ ने मलेरिया के टीके के लिए पहल की जिससे जीएसके को आरटीएस,एस का विकास जारी रखने में मदद मिली। तीसरे चरण में हुए परीक्षण को सात देशों के 11 अफ्रीकी शोध संस्थानों का समर्थन मिला था और इसमें इन्हें गेट्स फाउंडेशन का पूरा सहयोग प्राप्त था। डब्ल्यूएचओ का कहना है कि चौथे चरण को भी वैक्सिन अलायंस गावी (गैल फाउंडेशन से संबंधित स्टार्टअप) और यूनिटाइड से वित्तीय सहयोग मिल रहा है। डब्ल्यूएचओ ने मलेरिया के कहर से निपटने के लिए जो रणनीति तैयार की है, उसके महत कीटनाशक तकनीक से लैसे मच्छरदानी और घरों के भीतर छिड़काव के साथ लावां मारने वाली दवाओं और खीराने कपड़े जैसे व्यक्तिगत सुरक्षा के उपाय आदि शामिल हैं। मलेरिया के खिलाफ लड़ाई को कई सफलताएं मिली हैं।

2000 से 2015 के बीच दुनियाभर में मलेरिया के मामलों में 41 प्रतिशत तक कमी आई और इससे होने वाली मौतों भी 62 प्रतिशत तक कम हो गईं। हालांकि 2015 की तुलना में 2017 में मलेरिया के अधिक मामले देखे गए। 2017 में दुनिया में मलेरिया के जितने मामले देखे गए, उनमें भारत में दर्ज ऐसे 4 प्रतिशत मामले भी शामिल हैं। हालांकि यह ऐसे मामलों के 2016 के बाद से 24 प्रतिशत तक घटने में सफल रहा है। मलेरिया रोधी टीका इस बीमारी से लड़ने में एक अतिरिक्त हथियार साबित हो सकता है।

कानाफूसी

राहुल की रणनीति

कांग्रेस अध्यक्ष राहुल गांधी ने गत शनिवार को एक संवाददाता सम्मेलन का आयोजन किया। यह निर्णय शुक्रवार देर शाम लिया गया। गांधी ने शनिवार की सुबह संवाददाता सम्मेलन का आयोजन इसलिए किया क्योंकि सोशल मीडिया पर ऐसी चर्चा चल रही थी कि वह पूर्व निर्धारित तरीके से साक्षात्कार देते हैं जहां सवाल-जवाब तय रहते हैं। कांग्रेस की सोशल मीडिया टीम ने इस विचार को खारिज करने की कोशिश की, वहीं पार्टी नेतृत्व को लगा कि इस कुप्रचार को खत्म करने का सबसे अच्छा तरीका यह है कि एक संवाददाता सम्मेलन आयोजित किया जाए जहां प्रश्नकार कांग्रेस प्रमुख से तमाम तरह के सवाल कर सकें। हालांकि पहले राहुल गांधी ने जोर देकर कहा कि वह संवाददाता सम्मेलन में केवल राफेल लड़ाकू विमान से जुड़े सवालों के ही जवाब देंगे लेकिन संवाददाता सम्मेलन में उन्होंने तमाम मुद्दों पर खुलकर बात की।

में वापस आऊंगी

केंद्रीय मंत्री और भारतीय जनता पार्टी की राष्ट्रीय उपाध्यक्ष उमा भारती मौजूदा लोकसभा चुनाव में हिस्सा नहीं ले रही हैं, लेकिन उन्होंने स्पष्ट कर दिया है कि उनका निकट भविष्य में सक्रिय राजनीति से संन्यास लेने का कोई इरादा नहीं है। पिछले दिनों भोपाल से भाजपा की प्रत्याशी प्रज्ञा सिंह ठाकुर का प्रचार करने भोपाल पहुंची भारती ने कहा था कि अगर नरेंद्र मोदी मंत्रिमंडल में मंत्रियों को शामिल करने के लिए बने 75 वर्ष की उम्र के मानक को ध्यान में रखा जाए तो भी वह सन 2024, 2029 और यहां तक कि 2034 के चुनाव लड़ने के लिए योग्य रहेंगी। उन्होंने साफ जाहिर किया कि वह भविष्य में चुनाव लड़ने का इच्छुक हैं। उन्होंने जोर देकर कहा कि यह अल्पकालिक विराम है, उनकी अभी राजनीति से दूरी बनाने की कोई इच्छा नहीं है।



आपका पक्ष

अन्न की बरबादी रोकना जरूरी

वर्ष 2018 के ग्लोबल हंगर इंडेक्स की रिपोर्ट के अनुसार भारत 119 देशों की सूची में 103वें स्थान पर आता है। यह रिपोर्ट वेल्थ हंगर लाइफ और कंसर्न वर्ल्डवाइड द्वारा बनाई जाती है। रिपोर्ट के अनुसार भारत उन 45 देशों की गिनती में आता है जहां भुखमरी का गंभीर स्तर है। रिपोर्ट के अनुसार भारत के 12.4 करोड़ लोग भूख से जूझ रहे हैं। दुनिया के 15.1 करोड़ बच्चे अविकसित और उम्र के लिहाज से छोटे कद के हैं। वहीं 5.1 करोड़ बच्चे कमजोर हैं। वर्ष 2016 में 5 वर्षों से कम आयु से बच्चों की बाल मृत्यु दर 4.2 प्रतिशत थी। वर्ष 2018 में 8.1 प्रतिशत थी। वर्ष 2018 में भारत का स्कोर 31.1 रहा जो देश में अब भी गंभीर भूख की समस्या दर्शाता है। सरकार ने अत्योदय जैसी योजना चलाकर गरीब से गरीब व्यक्ति को सस्ते दाम पर गेहूं और चावल मुहैया कराने की कोशिश की है। लेकिन फिर भी



देश के गरीब नागरिकों की भुखमरी से मौत होना दुखद घटना है। भुखमरी से निपटने का दायित्व केवल सरकार का नहीं बल्कि देश की जनता का भी है। संयुक्त राष्ट्र के कृषि और खाद्य संगठन के मुताबिक पेशकशी कर सकता है एक तिहाई हिस्सा फसल कटाई, माल ढुलाई, पैकेजिंग और प्रोसेसिंग के दौरान बरबाद हो जाता

देश में अन्न की बरबादी को रोकने के लिए जागरूकता अभियान की जरूरत है

है। भारत में 40 प्रतिशत कृषि उत्पादन का अपव्यय होता है जिससे देश को हर साल एक लाख करोड़ रुपये का नुकसान हो जाता है। इसे रोकने के लिए उचित

प्रबंधन की जरूरत है। देश में रेस्टोरेंट, शादी, होटल और घरों में भारी मात्रा में पके हुए अन्न का लोगों द्वारा अपव्यय किया जाता है। इसे रोकने के लिए लोगों को पहल करना चाहिए। अन्न को बरबाद करने के बजाय वही बचा हुआ अन्न किसी जरूरतमंद संस्था को पूर्व सूचना देकर पहुंचाना चाहिए। जूटे अन्न को फेंकने के बजाय किसी चरवाहे के मवेशी को देना एक बेहतर विकल्प है। शादियों और रेस्टोरेंट में पके अनाज के अपव्यय को रोकने के लिए सरकार को कानून बनाना चाहिए। सरकार को विज्ञापनों के जरिये अन्न के प्रति लोगों को संवेदनशील बनाना चाहिए। अन्न का अपमान इश्वर का अपमान होता है। इसलिए उचित कदम उठाकर अन्न के अपव्यय को रोक कर भुखमरी की स्थिति से निपटना चाहिए।

निशांत महेश त्रिपाठी, नागपुर

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

विचार



दैनिक जागरण

जिससे मन को शांति मिले, वही सच्चा अध्यात्म है

झूठ के प्रयोग

इससे हास्यास्पद और कुछ नहीं कि कांग्रेस अध्यक्ष रहलु गांधी प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी पर तो यह आरोप लगा रहे हैं कि वह बिना सोचे-समझे कुछ भी बोल रहे हैं, लेकिन वह खुद भी यही काम करने में लगे हुए हैं और इस क्रम में सच-झूठ की भी परवाह नहीं कर रहे हैं। वह न केवल नए-नए झूठ गढ़ रहे हैं, बल्कि अपने पुराने झूठ पर भी टिके हुए हैं। ऐसा लगता है कि वह इससे अवगत नहीं कि झूठ के पैर नहीं होते और इसीलिए अब वह वहां तक कहने लगे हैं कि प्रधानमंत्री मोदी ने सेना में काम करने वाले लोगों के पैसे खुद चोरी करके अनिल अंबानी के खाते में 30 हजार करोड़ रुपये डाल दिए। पहले वह अनिल अंबानी की जेब का हवाला देते थे। अब वह उनके बैंक खाते का जिक्र कर रहे हैं। क्या यह उचित नहीं होगा कि वह इसके सुबूत दे दें कि मोदी ने अनिल अंबानी के किस खाते में कब 30 हजार करोड़ रुपये डाल दिए? चूंकि वह अपने अटपटे आरोपों को लेकर गंभीर नहीं इसलिए अपनी सुविधा से इस रकम को घटाते-बढ़ाते भी रहते हैं। वह कभी 30 हजार करोड़ रुपये का जिक्र करते हैं और कभी 45 हजार करोड़ रुपये का। एक समय वह इस राशि को एक लाख तीस हजार करोड़ बताया करते थे। हाल की एक रैली में तो उन्होंने अनिल अंबानी को चोर भी कह दिया। यह कितना उचित है?

विगत दिवस ही रहलु गांधी और कांग्रेस के अन्य नेता तब तिलमिला उठे थे जब प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने राजीव गांधी को भ्रष्टाचारी कह दिया था। आखिर जब रहलु गांधी बिना किसी प्रमाण जिस-तिस को चोर कह सकते हैं तो इस सच का जिक्र क्यों नहीं किया जा सकता कि बोफोर्स तोप सौदे में दलाली के आरोपों से राजीव गांधी की छवि तार-तार हो गई थी? क्या कांग्रेस यह नहीं जानती कि बोफोर्स सौदे में दलाली के लेन-देन के सुबूत भी सामने आए थे और इसके कि कि दलाली की रकम किसके खाते में पहुंची? अगर रहलु गांधी यह कहना चाहते हैं कि खूद उन्हें तो हर तरह का झूठ बोलने का अधिकार है, लेकिन अन्य कोई तथ्यों के हवाले से भी कुछ नहीं कह सकता तो एक तरह की सामंतशाही ही है। रहलु गांधी अब यह भी दावा कर रहे हैं कि मोदी ने जनता का पैसा चोरी करके नीरव मोदी और मेहुल चोकसी के खातों में भी डाला। उनकी मांनें तो मोदी ने विजय माल्या को भी दस हजार करोड़ रुपये दिए। क्या वह उनकी और उनके साथियों की जिम्मेदारी नहीं कि लोगों को बताएँ कि यह काम कब और कैसे हुआ, क्योंकि तथ्य तो यही है कि विजय माल्या को जो अनाप-शनाप कर्ज मिला वह मनमोहन सरकार के समय मिला था। रहलु गांधी अपने इस पुराने दावे को भी जब-तब देहराते रहते हैं कि मोदी ने अपने चंद मित्र उद्योगपतियों के इतने लाख करोड़ रुपये का कर्ज माफ कर दिया। यह निप झूठ है, लेकिन समस्या यह है कि रहलु इस तरह का झूठ बोलने में माहिर हो गए हैं। वह यह समझें तो बेहतर कि यह महारत उनका भला नहीं करने वाली।

अच्छी पहल

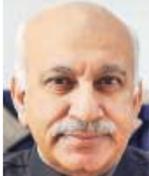
झारखंड सरकार ग्रीष्मवकाश में भी कमजोर बच्चों को पढ़ाएगी। इस अवधि में ऐसे बच्चों की शिक्षण क्षमता बढ़ाने तथा उन्हें उनके पाठ्यक्रमों में अपडेट करने पर फोकस किया जाएगा। बच्चे इस अवधि में खेलकूद की विविध गतिविधियों में भी शामिल होंगे। सरकार की योजना चिह्नित स्कूलों में इस बाबत समर कैंप लगाने की है, जहां ज्ञानसेतु कार्यक्रम के तहत बच्चों को विशेष मार्गदर्शन मिलेगा। सरकार के इस प्रयास की सराहना की जानी चाहिए। सराहना इसलिए, क्योंकि सामान्य तौर पर गर्मी की छुट्टियों में ऐसी विशेष गतिविधियों का आयोजन अब तक गैर सरकारी स्तरों पर ही होता आया है। इससे इतर शिक्षकों के कुछ संगठन सोशल मीडिया के माध्यम से सरकार के इस आयोजन के विरुद्ध अपनी आवाज बुलंद कर रहे हैं। उनका तर्क है कि ग्रीष्मवकाश के समय अधिसंख्य बच्चे बाहर चले जाते हैं, जबकि एक सर्वे के मुताबिक सरकारी स्कूलों में पढ़ने वाले महज 25 से 27 फीसद सरकारी बच्चे ही इस अवधि में बाहर जाते हैं। ऐसे में शिक्षक संगठनों की इस दलील को कतई सराहा नहीं जा सकता। संगठनों को चाहिए कि वे सरकार के इस आयोजन में न सिर्फ बहचदकर हिस्सा लें, बल्कि वे अभिभावकों को भी इसके लिए प्रेरित करें। जिलों ने इसकी तैयारियां शुरू कर दी हैं। ज्ञानसेतु का आयोजन दो स्तरों पर होगा। गैर आवासीय कैंप के तहत संकुल स्तर के एक-एक विद्यालय में यह आयोजन 12 दिनों का होगा। इनमें संबंधित क्षेत्र के स्कूलों के अधिकतम 100 विद्यार्थी हिस्सा लेंगे। इसी तरह राज्य के 203 कस्बुरवा गांधी में आवासीय कैंप लगाए जाएंगे। इन कैंपों में भी 100-100 छात्राई हिस्सा लेंगे। कैंप पांच दिनों का होगा। दोनों ही स्तर के इन कैंपों में साढ़े तीन घंटे की गतिविधियां संचालित होंगी। इनमें शैक्षणिक कार्यक्रमों के अलावा योग, इनडोर, खेल आदि शामिल हैं। बच्चे सुबह सात बजे से आठ बजे तक खेल गतिविधियों में शामिल होंगे, जबकि आठ से 10 बजे तक ज्ञानसेतु कार्यक्रम का हिस्सा बनेंगे। उम्मीद की जानी चाहिए कि इस आयोजन से सरकारी स्कूलों की प्रतिभा पहचान में आए और यह उन्हें आगे बढ़ने में सहायक होगा। आयोजन की जिम्मेदारी जिन लोगों पर है उन्हें भी इस काम को पूरी सजीदगी से करना चाहिए ताकि एक अच्छी योजना को अंजाम दिया जा सके।

बाल विवाह का दंश

देवेंद्रराज सुथार

हाल ही में संयुक्त राष्ट्र बाल निधि ने एक रिपोर्ट ‘फैक्टशीट चाइल्ड मैरिजेज 2019’ जारी की है, जिसके अंतर्गत मंत्रणा है कि भारत के कई क्षेत्रों में अब भी बाल विवाह हो रहा है। रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है कि बालिका शिक्षा की दर में सुधार, किशोरियों के कल्याण के लिए सरकार द्वारा किए गए निवेश एवं कल्याणकारी कार्यक्रम और इस कुप्रथा के खिलाफ सार्वजनिक रूप से प्रभावी संदेश देने जैसे कदमों के चलते बाल विवाह की दर में कमी देखने को मिली है, लेकिन अब भी पूर्णरूप से कामयाबी नहीं मिली है। बिहार, बंगाल और राजस्थान में यह प्रथा अब भी जारी है। यूनिसेफ की रिपोर्ट के अनुसार यह कुप्रथा आदिवासी समुदायों और अनुसूचित जातियों सहित कुछ विशेष जातियों के बीच प्रचलित है। रिपोर्ट के अनुसार 2005-2006 में जहां 47 फीसद लड़कियों की शवादी 18 साल की उम्र से पहले हो गई थी, वहीं 2015-2016 में यह आंकड़ा 27 फीसद था।

यह रिपोर्ट हमारे सामाजिक जीवन के उस स्याह पहलू की ओर इशारा करती है, जिसे अक्सर हम रीति-रिवाज एवं परंपरा के नाम पर



एमजे अकवर

इन चुनावों से उभरता एक महत्वपूर्ण तथ्य यह है कि वंशवादी राजनीति श्रीहीन हो रही है। जनता पर उसकी पकड़ ढीली हुई है। मतदाता अब किसी मुगालते में रहने को तैयार नहीं

आम चुनाव की कवायद अपनी गति से आगे बढ़ रही है। आधे से ज्यादा सफर बीत चुका है।

नतीजे अभी भी दूर हैं, लेकिन कुछ लोग शायद दीवार पर लिखी इबात को भांपने के बाद अपने बचाव के तरीके तलाशने में जुट भी गए हैं। इसमें इलेक्ट्रॉनिक वोटिंग मशीन यानी ईवीएम को बलि का बकरा बनाया जा रहा है। हालांकि ईवीएम को लेकर इन चुनावों में ही नहीं, बल्कि बीते कुछ समय से दुष्प्रचार किया जा रहा है। प्रमुख क्षेत्रीय क्षत्रपों में से एक लगभग ‘अजेय’ माने जाने वाले शायद पवार जब तक अपने राजनीतिक गढ़ बारामती में जीतते रहे तब तक उन्होंने ईवीएम को लेकर कभी शिकायत नहीं की। आम चुनाव के बीच उन्होंने यकायक बयान दिया कि उनके परिवार का अभेद्य किला मामी जाने वाली सीट से अगर उनकी बेटी सुप्रिया सुले हार जाती हैं तो इसके लिए सिर्फ और सिर्फ ईवीएम जिम्मेदार होगा। उन्होंने यहां तक कहा कि अगर ईवीएम उनकी उम्मीदों के अनुरूप तस्वीर पेश नहीं करेगी तो इससे हिंसा भी भड़क सकती है। ऐसा न तो पहली बार हो रहा है और न ही आखिरी बार कि कोई नती किसी संभावित बुरी खबर को लेकर ऐसा बहना बना रहा हो। ऐसा प्रतीत होता है कि पवार शायद हवा का रुख भांपने में नाकाम रहे हैं। वह उस दिशा की थाह नहीं ले पा रहे हैं जिधर यह चुनाव जा रहा है। आम चुनावों से उभरता एक महत्वपूर्ण तथ्य यही है कि वंशवादी राजनीति श्रीहीन हो रही है। मतदाताओं पर उसकी पकड़ कमजोर पड़ रही है। यह प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी

के चुनाव अभियान का प्रत्यक्ष परिणाम है जिसमें उन्होंने इसे केवल सत्तासीन रहे सोनिया-रहलु गांधी राजवंश तक सीमित न रखकर, एक व्यापक अवधारणा के रूप में सामने रखा। पवार इसकी चपेट में आकर होने वाले नुकसान को लेकर आशंकित नजर आते हैं।

हास-परिहास हमेशा से चुनावी बयानबाजी का अहम हिस्सा रहा है। इन दिनों चल रहे चुनावी चुटकुलों में सबसे दिलचस्प कर्नाटक में चुनावी जा रहा है। जनता दल-सेक्युलर के प्रणेता एचडी देवेगौड़ा पर विरोधी चुटकी ले रहे हैं। देवेगौड़ा तुमकुुर से चुनावी रण में उतरे हैं जबकि दो सीटों पर उनके पाते चुनाव लड़ रहे हैं। कांग्रेस के साथ गठबंधन के कोटें से उनके हिस्से आई सीटों में लगभग आधी सीटों पर उनके परिवार के लोग मैदान में उतरे हैं। अगर आप इसमें यह तथ्य भी जोड़ लें कि उनके बेटे राज्य के मुख्यमंत्री भी हैं तो यह उपमा अपने चरम पर पहुंच जाएगी। चुटकुला इस तरह है- ‘भगवान का शुक्र है कि देवेगौड़ा के 28 पोते नहीं हैं, वरना वह राज्य की सभी 28 सीटों पर उन्हें अपनी पार्टी का प्रत्याशी बन देते।’

बंगाल में ममता बनर्जी ने अपनी विभाजनकारी राजनीति से मतदाताओं के एक बड़े वर्ग को विमुक्त कर दिया है। बंगाल की 70 प्रतिशत आबादी गांवों में बसी है, जहां आर्थिक संकट बुरी तरह से हावी है। ऐसी स्थिति में भी उनकी पार्टी के कार्यकर्ता वहां उग्राही में लगे हैं। ममता के खिलाफ बन रहे नकारात्मक माहौल में उनके भतीजे अभिषेक बनर्जी का उभार भी एक

शतरंज के प्यादे न बनें सांसद

आधुनिक लोकतंत्र का वैचारिक आधार जिन जैक्सिस रूसो नामक विचारक ने सत्रहवीं सदी में दिया था। उन्होंने कहा था कि चुनिंदा लोग जनता पर तब तक शासन करें जब तक सुनिश्चित किया जा सके कि वे जनहित में शासन करें। इस विचारधारा के अंतर्गत हमने लोकतंत्र की व्यवस्था ढाल ली जिसमें जनता अपने सांसद का चयन करती है और अपेक्षा करती है कि सांसद जनहित में कार्य करेंगे। यह व्यवस्था हमने मूल रूप से इंग्लैंड से ली है। इंग्लैंड के लोकतंत्र में व्हिप की व्यवस्था है। प्रमुख पार्टियों द्वारा किसी विशेष सांसद को व्हिप प्रमुख यानी सचेतक के रूप में नियुक्त किया जाता है। उसकी जिम्मेदारी होती है कि जब सांसद में विषय चर्चा या मतदान हो तब वह अपनी पार्टी के सांसदों को एकजुट कर सांसद में पहुंचाए। ‘व्हिप’ शब्द का अर्थ शिकार से लिया गया है। शिकार के दौरान शिकारी कुत्तों को इशर-उशर भागने से रोकने के लिए कुछ घुड़सवार चाबुक लेकर उन्हें एक साथ रखते थे। इसी प्रकार सांसदों को एकजुट रखने के लिए इंग्लैंड की संसद में व्हिप की व्यवस्था है, लेकिन इंग्लैंड और भारत में एक मौलिक अंतर है। इंग्लैंड में सांसद अपने विवेक से वोट करने को स्वतंत्र हैं। व्हिप प्रमुख की भूमिका मात्र इतनी होती है कि वह मतदान के समय सांसद की उपस्थिति सुनिश्चित करें।

किसी प्रस्ताव पर सांसद किस दिशा में अपने मत का प्रयोग करेगा, इस निर्णय पर सचेतक का कोई अधिकार नहीं होता। इसलिए इंग्लैंड का लोकतंत्र रूसो के विचार के अनुरूप है। सांसद अपने विवेक के अनुसार विषय विशेष पर मत कर सकते हैं। हाल में इंग्लैंड की संसद में यूरोपीय संघ को छोड़ने के संबंध में प्रस्ताव लाया गया तो सत्तारूढ़ कंजर्वेंट पार्टी के नेतृत्व में सांसदों ने सरकार के प्रस्ताव के विरोध में मत दिया और वह प्रस्ताव गिर गया। इसी प्रकार अमेरिका में बराक ओबामा द्वारा लागू की गई स्वास्थ्य योजना को हटाने पर मतदान के दौरान कई रिपब्लिकन सांसदों ने अपनी पार्टी के खिलाफ मतदान किया था। तात्पर्य यह है कि लोकतंत्र के मूल चरित्र को बनाए रखने के लिए जरूरी है कि सांसद अपने विवेक के अनुसार मतदान करें। इंग्लैंड और अमेरिका में यह व्यवस्था लागू है।

भारत में 1985 तक पार्टी के सचेतक की भूमिका मात्र सांसदों की संसद में उपस्थिति सुनिश्चित करने की थी। 1985 में दलबदल विरोधी कानून लागू किया गया। कारण था कि तमाम सांसद और विधायक अपायाम-गणधर की तर्ज पर पार्टियां बदल रहे थे। इसके चलते कोई भी पार्टी स्थिर नहीं रह पा रही थी। शासन की स्थिरता के लिए नियम बनाया गया कि यदि कोई भी सांसद अपनी पार्टी के आदेशों



के विपरीत वोट करेगा तो उसकी संसद सदस्यता निरस्त हो जाएगी। यह व्यवस्था भी की गई कि यदि एक तिहाई से कम सदस्यों ने पार्टी छोड़ी तो उनकी सदस्यता समाप्त हो जाएगी। यह व्यवस्था उस सीमा तक ठीक थी जब तक सरकार की स्थिरता का प्रश्न था, लेकिन इस व्यवस्था में एक और नियम जोड़ दिया गया कि पार्टी के किसी भी आदेश के विरुद्ध सदस्य मत नहीं डाल सकते हैं। एक तरह से अपने देश में यह व्यवस्था लागू की गई जो इंग्लैंड में नहीं थी। इसका परिणाम यह हुआ कि सांसदों के विवेक को समाप्त कर दिया गया।

बतौर उदाहरण यदि कोई सांसद भूमि अधिग्रहण कानून को नरम बनाने के विरुद्ध मत बोलना चाहता है, लेकिन यदि उसकी पार्टी ऐसा नहीं चाहती तब पार्टी के आदेश के विपरीत मत डालने से सांसद की सदस्यता ही समाप्त हो जाएगी। अर्थात किसी विधेयक पर सांसद अपने विवेकानुसार मत नहीं डाल सकते, बल्कि उन्हें पार्टी के आदेशों के अनुसार वोट डालना होगा। जैसा कि रूसो ने कहा था कि चर्चित व्यक्तियों को जनहित में कार्य करना चाहिए, गांधी जी भी इसी दिशा में सोचते थे, परंतु दलबदल विरोधी कानून ने सांसदों के विवेक को पूरी तरह समाप्त कर दिया। नतीजा यह है कि आज जब हम अपने सांसद का चयन कर रहे हैं तो यह समझें कि वे शतरंज के प्यादे के समान हैं। उसका कार्य

यह जरूरी है कि सांसद संसद में अपने विवेक के अनुसार किसी बिल का समर्थन या विरोध कर सकें

मात्र इतना है कि संसद में किसी भी मतदान के समय पार्टी के आदेशों के अनुसार वह मत डाले। उसे न सोचने की जरूरत है और न अपने विवेक का उपयोग करने का अधिकार है। यही कारण है कि संसद में आजकल चर्चा का स्तर बहुत गिर गया है। सभी सदस्यों को मालूम है कि चर्चा निरर्थक है। किसी भी प्रस्ताव पर निर्णय पार्टी के मुखिया द्वारा लिया जाता है। यही कारण है कि अपने देश में तमाम जन विरोधी नीतियां लागू की जा रही हैं। जैसे भूमि अधिग्रहण कानून को कमजोर करना अथवा खुदरा बिक्री में विदेशी निवेश की अनुमति देना अथवा गंगा पर पनबिजली परियोजनाओं को स्थापित करना। अपने देश में राष्ट्रपति के चुनाव में व्हिप लागू नहीं होता। इसमें वोट गुप्त रूप में डाले जाते हैं और विधायक एवं सांसद अपने विवेक का पूरा उपयोग करने को स्वतंत्र होते हैं। राज्यसभा के सदस्यों के चुनाव में भी व्हिप लागू नहीं होता है, परंतु वोट सार्वजनिक रूप से डाले जाते हैं जिससे पार्टी के मुखियाओं को पता लगता है कि सदस्य ने वोट पार्टी के प्रत्याशी को दिया या उसके विरोध में। अतः राज्यसभा के सांसदों के चयन में भी सदस्य अपने पूर्ण विवेक का उपयोग नहीं कर पाते हैं। इस समस्या का निदान यह हो सकता है कि व्हिप की व्यवस्था को केवल अविश्वास प्रस्ताव तक सीमित कर दिया जाए। अविश्वास प्रस्ताव उस समय लाया जाता है जब विपक्ष सरकार को गिराने को उद्यत होता है। ऐसी परिस्थिति में यह उचित दिखता है कि सदस्य पर बहिंश हो कि वह पार्टी के हित में अपना मत दे, क्योंकि वह पार्टी के टिकट पर चर्चाने हुआ है। ऐसा करने से सदस्यों द्वारा सुबह-शाम पार्टी बदलने से उत्पन्न होने वाला संकट समाप्त हो जाएगा, क्योंकि अविश्वास प्रस्ताव में उन पर बहिंश रहेगी कि वे पार्टी के समर्थन में ही वोट डालें।

इसके साथ ही अन्य सभी विषयों पर व्हिप की व्यवस्था को समाप्त कर देना चाहिए जिससे सांसद विभिन्न विषयों पर अपने विवेक के अनुसार अपने मत का प्रयोग कर सकें। ऐसे मुद्दों पर सांसदों द्वारा अपने विवेकानुसार वोट देने से अस्थिरता की स्थिति उत्पन्न नहीं होगी। हम देख रहे हैं कि अमेरिका और इंग्लैंड में इस प्रकार की स्वतंत्रता सांसदों को उपलब्ध है, लेकिन फिर भी वे देश चल ही रहे हैं। हमें भी दलबदल विरोधी कानून में परिवर्तन कर व्हिप को अविश्वास प्रस्ताव तक सीमित कर देना चाहिए। इससे लोकतंत्र की भूमिका और सार्थक होगी।

(लेखक वरिष्ठ अर्थशास्त्री एवं आइआइएम बेंगलूर के पूर्व प्रोफेसर हैं)

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अबधेश राजपूत

प्रमुख कारक है जो उनके पारिवारिक-राजनीतिक वारिस के रूप में सामने आए हैं। प्रधानमंत्री बनने की उनकी हसरत ने उन्हें भी वंशवाद के जाल में फंसा दिया है। ऐसी स्थिति में कोलकाता की गद्दी के लिए वह अपने किसी करीबी रिश्तेदार पर ही एतबार कर सकती है। अभिषेक ने शहर के बीचोंबीच एक महलनुमा आलीशान बंगला बनाया है जो मतदाताओं की नजर में भ्रष्टाचार का प्रतीक बन चुका है। मतदाता इस भवन की तुलना ममता बनर्जी की हवाई चपलों से कर रहे हैं जिनसे जुड़ी सादगी पर सवार होकर उन्होंने क्रांतिकारी बदलाव के वादे के साथ सत्ता हासिल की थी।

अगर भारतीय राजनीति की सबसे बड़ी और पुरानी राजनीतिक जागीरों की बात करें तो जेहन में निश्चित रूप से अमेठी और रायबरेली जैसी जुड़वां सीटों का नाम आता है जहां से रहलु गांधी और सोनिया गांधी चुनाव लड़ रहे हैं। 1967 के

आम चुनाव के पश्चात स्वतंत्र निर्वाचन क्षेत्र के रूप में अस्तित्व में आने के बाद से अमेठी का यह 15वां लोकसभा चुनाव है। यह किसी से छिपा नहीं रहा कि केवल एक चुनाव को छोड़कर कुछ बुनियादी पहलुओं की अनदेखी करने जैसा अमेठी और रायबरेली ने अमूमन एक जैसा ही जनादेश दिया है। इसमें केवल 1996 का चुनाव अपवाद रहा। जब अमेठी से कांग्रेस के टिकट पर सतीश शर्मा और रायबरेली से भाजपा के चुनाव चिन्ह पर अशोक सिंह संसद पहुंचे थे।

इसका अर्थ यह नहीं कि हमेशा कांग्रेस ही इन दोनों सीटों पर काबिज रही। अक्खड़ समाजवादी नेताओं में गिने जाने वाले राजनारायण ने 1977 के चुनाव में आपातकाल विरोधी सुनामी में इस संसदीय क्षेत्र से श्रीमती इंदिरा गांधी को हरया था। अमेठी सीट से भी गुमनाम से रॉड्र प्रताप सिंह ने जीत हासिल की थी। तब दोनों सीटें जनता पार्टी के खाते में गई थीं। इसी तरह 1998 के चुनाव में भी कांग्रेस ने इन दोनों सीटों को गंवा दिया था।



ऊर्जा

लब्धोलुआब यह है कि अगल-बगल की ये दोनों सीटें जुड़वां जैसा बर्ताव करती हैं। अहम सवाल यही है कि 2019 में क्या होगा ?

अमेठी में दमखम के साथ चुनाव लड़ रही स्मृति इंगनी के सामने हार के मंडंगते संकट को देखकर रहलु गांधी पहले से ही घबरा गए हैं। यह इसी बात से जाहिर हो गया कि उन्होंने मतदाताओं के साथ पत्र के माध्यम से ही संपर्क साधने की कोशिश की और इस इलाके में गहरी जड़ें जमाए गरीबी का जवाब नहीं दिया और अपने लिए केरल में वायनाड के रूप में एक सुरक्षित वैकल्पिक पनाहगाह भी ढूँढ ली। रहलु गांधी के हबभाव को देखते हुए हम अनुमान लगा सकते हैं कि वह अमेठी में हार जाएंगे। इस पर किसी को हैरानी नहीं होनी चाहिए, मगर क्या बगल की रायबरेली सीट पर कोई आश्चर्य संभव है ?

कागजों पर तो श्रीमती सोनिया गांधी का पलड़ा ही भारी है। मायावती और अखिलेश यादव ने उनके खिलाफ प्रत्याशी भी नहीं उतारा है। वहीं भाजपा उम्मीदवार भी स्मृति इंगनी जैसा कद्दावर नहीं है। में आश्चर्य ढूँ कि कांग्रेस समर्थक इसे बहुत बड़ी लड़ाई नहीं मानेंगे। उनके मुताबिक रायबरेली में सोनिया गांधी के लिए शायद कोई मुकाबला ही न हो, मगर ऐसा मानना कुछ बुनियादी पहलुओं की अनदेखी करने जैसा होगा। अमेठी में कांग्रेस के खिलाफ बनते माहौल एक बड़े वजह वहां विकास का भारी अभाव है। अमेठी के मतदाताओं को लंबे समय तक भ्रमजाल में रखा गया। वे अब इसके लिए तैयार नहीं कि उनकी ताकत से केवल एक परिवार का भला होता रहे और उनके हालात उत्तर प्रदेश के बाकी हिस्सों से भी बदतर बने रहें। उनकी तुलना में शरद पवार और मुलायम सिंह यादव जैसे वंशवादी नेताओं ने कम से कम अपने निर्वाचन क्षेत्रों का विकास तो किया है, मगर गांधी परिवार के मामले में यह यह एक्करफा ही रह गई है।

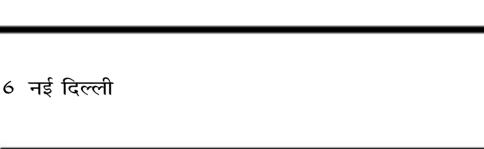
(लेखक पूर्व केंद्रीय मंत्री एवं वरिष्ठ स्तंभकार हैं)

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ऊर्जा

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जाति का दंश

जब भी समाज में जातिगत भेदभाव की वजह से कमजोर जातियों के लोगों पर जुल्म ढहाने की लेकर सवाल उठाया जाता है तो ऐसी घटनाओं को इक्का-दुक्का बता कर उनकी अनदेखी करने की कोशिश की जाती है। लेकिन आज भी अगर सिर्फ उच्च कही जाने वाली जातियों के बराबर बैठ कर खाना खाने की वजह से किसी दलित युवक को पीट-पीट कर मार डाला जाता है तब समझ में आता है कि हमारा समाज व्यवहार में अभी भी किन सामंती और पिछड़े मूल्यों की ढो रहा है। गौरतलब है कि उत्तराखंड में टिहरी जिले की नैनबाग तहसील में आयोजित एक विवाह समारोह में आमंत्रित लोग खाना खा रहे थे। वहीं एक दलित युवक जितेंद्र दास ने भी खाना लिया और कुर्सी पर बैठ कर खाने लगा। उसी भोज में खाना खा रहे उच्च कही जाने वाली जातियों के कुछ लोगों ने सिर्फ इसलिए जितेंद्र को बेरहमी से मारा-पीटा कि उसने उनके सामने कुर्सी पर बैठ कर खाने की हिम्मत कैसे की! जिस दौर में देश में आधुनिकता और विकास के नए कीर्तिमान कायम करने का दावा किया जा रहा है, उसमें ऐसी घटना पर कई बार यकीन करना मुश्किल हो जाता है। मगर आज भी दलितों के खिलाफ जातिगत हिंसा का सच बेहद तकलीफदेह और शर्मनाक है।

सवाल है कि आखिर किस वजह से कुछ लोगों को इस बात से परेशानी हो गई कि एक दलित युवक उनके सामने कुर्सी पर बैठ कर खाना खा रहा है? क्या यहां कारण सिर्फ यह नहीं है कि समाज में मौजूद जाति-व्यवस्था में कुछ लोगों को उच्च और कुछ को निम्न दर्जे का माना जाता है और इसी मुताबिक सामाजिक व्यवहार भी निर्धारित किए गए हैं? इस सच को स्वीकार करना कुछ लोगों के लिए क्यों नहीं संभव हो पा रहा है कि मनुष्य के रूप में जन्म लेने वाले सभी की हैसियत हर स्तर पर बराबर है? महज किसी जाति में पैदा होने के आधार पर खुद को श्रेष्ठ और किसी को निम्न मानना क्या एक तरह की मानसिक बीमारी नहीं है, जिसके शिकार लोग अपने से कम दर्जे पर माने जाने वालों के साथ अक्सर अमानवीयता की हद भी पार कर जाते हैं? कायदे से किसी कमजोर जातिगत पृष्ठभूमि से आने वाले व्यक्ति को बराबरी के स्तर पर लाने की कोशिश समर्थ तबकों को अपनी ओर से करनी चाहिए। मगर इसके उलट दलित-वंचित जातियों के लोगों के आगे बढ़ने, सक्षम होने या बराबरी के स्तर पर दिखने पर उच्च कही जाने वाली जातियों के लोगों के भीतर श्रेष्ठता की कुंठा क्यों हावी हो जाती है? इस कुंठा से उपजी हिंसा व्यक्ति को सिर्फ अमानवीय बना सकती है। खुद को सभ्य और संवेदनशील मानने वाला कोई भी ईंसान इस पहचान से शर्मिंदा होगा।

विर्दबना यह है कि हमारे देश में विकास की चकाचौंध में सारा जोर भौतिक निर्माण पर रहा है और सामाजिक विकास नीतियों पर गौर करने की जरूरत कभी नहीं समझी गई। जब तक जाति-व्यवस्था और इससे संचालित सामाजिक मनोविज्ञान को केंद्र में रख कर इससे छुटकारे का रास्ता नहीं निकाला जाएगा, तब तक समाज में जाति-आधारित हिंसा की बीमारी की जड़ों को कमजोर करना मुश्किल होगा। भारत की आजादी और जनतंत्र की घोषणा के बाद उम्मीद थी कि देश की इस सबसे बड़ी सामाजिक समस्या के बंधन ढीले होंगे, इसके जरिए कायम भेदभाव कम होकर खत्म भी होंगे। लेकिन आज भी अगर दलितों या कमजोर जातियों के लोगों को भेदभाव से भी आगे अत्याचार और जातिगत अपराधों के चलते जान गंवानी पड़ रही है तो यह सोचने का वकत है कि सामाजिक विकास के इतने लंबे सफर में हमारा हासिल इतना अफसोसनाक क्यों है !

नशे का दलदल

दिल्ली और आसपास के इलाकों में अक्सर चलने वाली रेव पार्टियों से यही लगता है कि हमारे किशोर और नौजवान किस तरह नशे के सौदागरों के जाल में फंस चुके हैं। दिल्ली के बाहरी इलाकों में स्थित ज्यादातर फार्म हाउस, होटल, रेस्टोरेंट रात भर चलने वाली ऐसी पार्टियों के टिकाने बने हुए हैं। सबसे ज्यादा चिंताजनक संकेत तो यह है कि रेव पार्टियों के इस कारोबार को पुलिस की परेक्षण हासिल होता है। पहले तो पुणे, मुंबई जैसे महानगर और गोवा जैसे तटीय पर्यटन स्थल ही इन पार्टियों के लिए बदनाम थे, लेकिन पिछले कुछ सालों के भीतर दिल्ली और एनसीआर में ऐसी पार्टियों का चलन तेजी से बढ़ा है। तीन दिन पहले ही नोएडा के एक इलाके में रेव पार्टी पर छापा मार कर पुलिस ने एक सौ बानवे लोगों को पकड़ा। इनमें एक सौ इकसठ नौजवान और इकतीस युवतियां शामिल थीं। नौजवानों का मनोरंजन करने के लिए फिराए पर अन्य एजेंसियों से युवतियों को बुलाया गया था। इस पार्टी में शराब के अलावा हुक्के, तंबाकू, स्मोकर कोल व अन्य नशीली चीजें भी मिलीं। दिल्ली में आए दिन तस्करी करके लाए गए मादक पदार्थों की खेपों का पकड़ा जाना बताता है कि एनसीआर नशीली दवाओं के कारोबार के केंद्र में तब्दील हो चुका है।

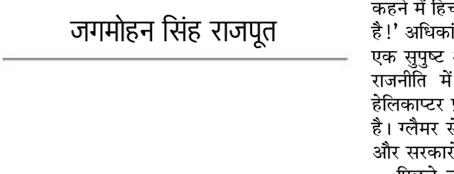
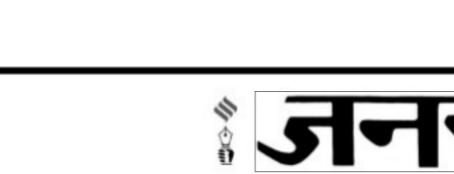
यह वाकई चिंताजनक है कि रेव पार्टियों एक बड़े संरक्षित कारोबार का रूप ले चुकी हैं। इनके पीछे मादक पदार्थों का धंधा करने वालों का एक बड़ा नेटवर्क काम करता है, यह किसी से छिपा नहीं है। बिना पुलिस की मिलीभगत से ऐसे धंधे नहीं चल नहीं सकते। तो फिर रेव पार्टियों के धंधे को फलने-फूलने से कौन रोक पाएगा? ऐसी पार्टियों के लिए सोशल मीडिया और खास एजेंटों के जरिए ग्राहकों को फंसाया जाता है। इनमें सबसे बड़ा वर्ग नौजवानों और खासतौर से उन छात्रों का होता है जो अमीर घरों से आते हैं और अपने शौक, मौजमस्ती पर भारी रकम खर्च करने से कोई परहेज नहीं करते। रेव पार्टी में शामिल होने लिए खासी मोटी रकम, जो दस हजार से लेकर पचास हजार और इससे भी ज्यादा होती है, वसूली जाती है। बाजार से कई गुना ज्यादा कीमत पर नशीले पदार्थ बेचे जाते हैं। कारोबारी और रसूखदार लोग भी ऐसी पार्टियों के ग्राहक होते हैं। ऐसे में रेव पार्टियों पर कार्रवाई करना मुश्किल हो जाता है। कभी-कभार पुलिस छापों की ऐसी कार्रवाई का दिखावा करती है तो इसका मकसद यही होता है कि वह सतर्क है। लेकिन हकीकत तो कुछ और कहती है।

दरअसल, रेव पार्टियों को लेकर सबसे ज्यादा कठभरे में तो पुलिस ही है, जिसके पास शक्तियों की कोई कमी नहीं है। लेकिन पूरे एनसीआर में जिस तरह ऐसी खास मनोरंजक पार्टियों का बेखौफ धंधा चल रहा है, वह पुलिस की मेहरबानी से ही चल रहा है। सवाल है कि क्या पुलिस को मादक पदार्थों का धंधा करने वालों के बारे में पता नहीं होता? क्या पुलिस इस बात से अनजान रहती है कि कहां पार्टी चल रही है? अगर ऐसा है तो यह पुलिस की कार्यप्रणाली पर ही सबसे बड़ा सवालिया निशान है। आमतौर पर यह धारणा है और काफी हद तक सच्चाई भी कि अवैध कारोबार बिना पुलिस की मर्जी के नहीं चल पाते। सारे अवैध कारोबारों में, चाहे वे रेव पार्टी चलाने वाले हों या नशीली दवाओं की आपूर्ति करने वाले या फिर अन्य गैरकानूनी काम करने वाले, सब पुलिस को हिस्सा देते हैं। ऐसे में न सिर्फ वे धंधे फनफेंगे, बल्कि नौजवानों को भी तबाह करेंगे। सोचने की जरूरत यह है कि ऐसी रेव पार्टियों के असर की अनदेखी के समांतर हमारी एक समूची पीढ़ी कहां जाएगी!

कल्पमेधा

हमारी कुछ दुर्बलताएं जन्म से होती हैं और कुछ शिक्षा का नतीजा हैं। प्रश्न है कि इनमें से कौन हमें अधिक कष्ट देती हैं।

—गोटे



पीटर मारित्ज्बुर्ग का प्रकरण और उसके बाद का गांधी का जीवन मार्टिन लूथर किंग और नेल्सन मंडेला जैसें को प्रभावित कर गया तो क्या यह अपेक्षा नहीं की जा सकती है कि भारत के कुछ नए सांसद, जन प्रतिनिधि और नेता व्यक्ति मात्र बने रहने से ऊंचा उठ कर अपने को व्यक्तित्व में परिवर्तित करने का प्रयास सफलतापूर्वक करेंगे?



भारत का जनतंत्र आगे बढ़ रहा है। सत्रहवीं बार देश नई लोकसभा चुन रहा है। सन 1947 के बाद जन्मे लोग अब देश चला रहे हैं। लगभग सभी का अनुभव है कि स्वतंत्रता प्राप्ति के पहले की राजनीति, आंदोलन और नेतृत्व जिन मूल्यों से ओत-प्रोत थे, वे अब नेपथ्य में चले गए हैं। स्वतंत्रता संग्राम के जाने-माने नेता अपने त्याग, तपस्या, सेवा और समर्पण भाव के आधार पर ही लोगों के दिलों में अपना स्थान बना सके थे। गांधी के एक आह्वान पर देश रुक जाता था, या चल पड़ता था! नेताजी के एक वाक्य से हजारों लोग आजाद हिंद फौज में आए और बलिदान की नई कहानियां लिख कर शहीद हो गए। अब समय बदल गया है। अपवादों को छोड़ दें, तो नेता अब लोगों की सेवा करके अपना राजनीतिक जीवन प्रारंभ नहीं करते हैं। अधिकांश अपने पिता या माता की राजनीतिक विरासत को संभालाने का जिम्मा ले लेते हैं! वे यह

पीटर मारित्ज्बुर्ग, जो 1990 में भारत के राष्ट्रपति के रूप में चुने गए, ने 2004 में लोकसभा के सदस्य के रूप में चुनाव लड़े।

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संतोष उत्सुक

तीन दशक पहले मकान का निर्माण चल रहा था। एक लिंटर डल चुका था, दूसरे की तैयारी हो रही थी। छत के ऊपर से देखा कि नीचे एक व्यक्ति खड़ा होकर जांच रहा है कि कहीं मकान की छत का बढ़ाव अनधिकृत तो नहीं है! वे सज्जन नगर निगम समिति में कार्यरत निरीक्षक थे, जो अपनी कर्मठता, ईमानदारी और अनुशासन के लिए जाने जाते थे। कुछ भी हो जाए, वे कानून लागू करा कर ही छोड़ते थे। ऐसी प्रवृत्ति के कर्मचारी समाज से लाभग विदा हो चुके हैं। कुछ बचे हैं तो खामोश रहने को विवश हैं क्योंकि स्वार्थ, सत्ता, ताकत और धन के बढ़िया तालमेल ने अवैध अधिकार का तंत्र खूब विकसित कर लिया है। नौकरी के दौरान मेरा पदस्थान एक शहर में हुआ। परिवार सहित शहर के बीच एक अच्छे मकान में रहने का मौका मिला। उस दौरान परिचित और शहर के नामी वकील कहा करते थे कि अगर आप यह मकान खाली न करें तो आपके मकान मालिक आपको कानूनन निकाल नहीं सकते। मैंने कारण पूछा तो उन्होंने बताया कि जमीन उनके नाम नहीं है... हां, ईंट-पत्थर, रोड़े, टाइलें, सीमेंट और दरवाजे-खिड़कियां उनकी हैं।

पीटर मारित्ज्बुर्ग, जो 1990 में भारत के राष्ट्रपति के रूप में चुने गए, ने 2004 में लोकसभा के सदस्य के रूप में चुनाव लड़े।

प्रकृति के साथ

इन दिनों गर्मी के साथ चुनावी पारा भी खूब चढ़ा हुआ है जिसने आम जनमानस को तपा दिया है। जल, वन और जीवन का सहसंबंध चुनाव में कुछ इस कदर स्थापित होता है कि यदि जनता खुश तो जनप्रतिनिधियों के सूखते गले में मत रूपी जल डाल कर उनके राजनीतिक जीवन की रक्षा कर देती है, नहीं तो उनका 'अपना टाइम आएगा कह कर' वनवास तो बनता है !

आरंभिक मानव के अस्तित्ववाद की अवधारणा प्रकृति से ही जन्मी है, और मानव सभ्यता का विकास नदियों के तटों पर ही हुआ है। यही कारण है कि आदिकाल में मानव ने खुद का प्रकृतिकरण किया था जो प्रकृति के प्रति मानव की कृतज्ञता का परिचायक था। विश्व की किसी भी संस्कृति में प्रकृति का इतना आदर नहीं हुआ होगा जितना कि भारतीय संस्कृति में। यहां प्रकृति को मां की संज्ञा दी गई है। हमने धरती मां को प्रणाम करके सुबह की शुरुआत की है, तदोपरांत सूर्य नमस्कार, गोसेवा, जल प्रणाम और स्नान-ध्यान, पीपल-बरगद-तुलसी आदि में भगवान का वास मान कर सूर्य के सम्पूज जल दिया है। हमने भोजन को प्रणाम कर भोजन मंत्र, यहां तक कि पूर्वजों ने पुस्तक और पाठशाला प्रांगण तक में भगवान का वास बता कर जिस वैज्ञानिक सोच को व्यावहारिक रूप में स्थापित किया है उसे कोई भी पर्यावरण प्रेमी सामान्यत: महसूस कर सकता है।

हमने प्रकृति के सभी सहसंबंधियों को आदर एवं सहअस्तित्व की भावना से देखा है। जल और वन हमारे पर्यावरण की जीवन रेखा हैं और पर्यावरण के बलबूते बचा है हमारा अस्तित्व। लेकिन आज पर्यावरण पर हर तरफ मंडराते खतरों से निपटने की अपेक्षित तैयारियों का सर्वथा अभाव हर तरफ नजर

व्यक्तित्व परिवर्तन का मार्ग

पीटर मारित्ज्बुर्ग, जो 1990 में भारत के राष्ट्रपति के रूप में चुने गए, ने 2004 में लोकसभा के सदस्य के रूप में चुनाव लड़े।

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कहने में हिचकते नहीं हैं ‘क्योंकि जनता ऐसा चाहती है!’ अधिकांश परिवार द्वारा पहले से तैयार किए गए एक सुपुष्ट आर्थिक आधार पर गाजे-बाजे के साथ राजनीति में प्रवेश करते हैं। इधर राजनीति में हेलिकाप्टर प्रवेश का मिलसिला तेजी से आगे बढ़ा है। ग्लैमर से वोट मिलते हैं, लोग चुनाव जीतते हैं और सरकारों में शामिल हो जाते हैं।

पिछले कई चुनावों से एक नई परंपरा बनी है जिसमें खेल जगत और फिल्मों से जुड़े लोगों को अपने साथ शामिल कर राजनीतिक दल धन्य हो जाते हैं। इन भाग्यशाली नामी-गिरामी लोगों को राजनीतिक दल प्रात: पार्टी प्रवेश का जलसा कर शाम को लोकसभा चुनाव लड़ने का टिकट दे देते हैं! नया-तازी पार्टी सदस्य अपने जनसेवक अवतार में अगले दिन प्रात:काल से सिखाए-पढ़ाए वायदे करने लगता है। आज की राजनीति और राजनीतिक नेतृत्व 1950-60 जैसा न है, न हो सकता है। परिवर्तन तो

अवश्यंभावी है ही, संभवत: मानवीय मूल्यों का पतन भी उसी का भाग बन गया है। वैसे देश में अभी भी एक छोटा वर्ग हर स्तर पर बचा हुआ है जो गांधी, सुभाष बोस, सरदार पटेल, नेहरू, डॉ राजेंद्र प्रसाद, डॉ आंबेडकर जैसें को भूला नहीं है। पटेल और राजेंद्र प्रसाद ने अपनी भारी वकालत छोड़ी, सुभाष बोस ने आइसीएस में सफल होकर भी अंग्रेजों की गुलामी करने से इनकार कर दिया। नेहरू ने वैभवशाली जीवन को छोड़ कर जेल जाने की राह चुनी। इनमें और इन जैसे अनेक के जीवन में वे क्षण कितने महत्वपूर्ण रहे होंगे जिन्होंने इनका जीवन दर्शन ही बदल दिया होगा, जब ‘व्यक्ति’ का ‘व्यक्तित्व’ में परिवर्तन हुआ होगा। सबसे पहले तो उस युवा मोहनदास गांधी के प्रकरण को याद करना समीचीन होगा जिन्होंने राजनीति, राजनेता और नेतृत्व की परिभाषा और समझ ही बदल दी। वे लोग कैसे इरानी ऊंचाइयों प्राप्त कर सके, यह रहस्य नई पीढ़ी के लोगों के समक्ष उद्घाटित होना ही चाहिए।

पहली बार दक्षिण अफ्रीका पहुंचने पर जब अब्दुल्ला सेठ युवा वकील मोहनदास गांधी को डरबन की अदालत दिखाने ले गए तो मजिस्ट्रेट ने उन्हें पगड़ी उतारने को कहा। गांधी ने पगड़ी नहीं उतारी और कक्ष से बाहर निकल गए। उन्होंने बाद में यह समाधान सोचा कि अगर पगड़ी के स्थान पर अंग्रेजी टॉप पहन लें तो समस्या सुलझ जाएगी। मगर अब्दुल्ला सेठ ने उसे उचित नहीं ठहराया। संवेदनशील युवक मोहनदास ने उनका मंतव्य

पीटर मारित्ज्बुर्ग, जो 1990 में भारत के राष्ट्रपति के रूप में चुने गए, ने 2004 में लोकसभा के सदस्य के रूप में चुनाव लड़े।

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अवैध के रास्ते

पीटर मारित्ज्बुर्ग, जो 1990 में भारत के राष्ट्रपति के रूप में चुने गए, ने 2004 में लोकसभा के सदस्य के रूप में चुनाव लड़े।

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हर सरकार अवैध निर्माण को ‘वैध’ में तब्दील करने का जुगाड़ करती रहती है। इस संबंध में विपक्ष भी उसके साथ होता है। सरकार अवैध निर्माण को नियमित करवाने का कानून बनाती है। अवैध निर्माण का मुद्दा उठता है। अनेक मामले उच्च न्यायालय में पहुंचते हैं, जहां हमारे कानूनविद नया पेंच फंसा देते हैं। हाइकोर्ट अवैध निर्माण को तोड़ने का हुक्म सुनाता है तो प्रशासन गुरां कर हरकत में आता है। ऊंचे ओहदे वाले सरकारी कार्रदों को

अवैध निर्माण तुड़वाने का काम करवाने जाना पड़ता है।

लेकिन कौन सरकार नहीं

चाहती कि अवैध निर्माण को नियमित करा कर अपना वोट बैंक सलामत रखे। चुनाव के मौसम में रातों-रात अवैध विमारतें खड़ी कर दी जाती हैं। जनता द्वारा चुने हुए सभी स्तर के नुमाइंदे, अवैध निर्माण में दिल खोल कर साथ देते देखे गए हैं। संघन और प्रभावशाली तबके ने बांहें पसार कर उनका स्वागत किया है और उपहारस्वरूप अवैध निर्माण उगता रहता है। पार्किंग बनवाने की अनुमति लेकर रिहाइश के लिए कमरे या व्यावसायिक भवन बना दिए जाते हैं। कहीं ये मामले प्रकाश में आते हैं तो सरकारी नोटिस धीरे-धीरे तैयार होकर अवैध निर्माण की ओर आराम से चलना शुरू करता है, लेकिन असली मालिक कई दिन तक नहीं ‘मिलते’। कुछ

पीटर मारित्ज्बुर्ग, जो 1990 में भारत के राष्ट्रपति के रूप में चुने गए, ने 2004 में लोकसभा के सदस्य के रूप में चुनाव लड़े।

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आ रहा है। हमें अपनी पर्यावरण रूपी जीवन रेखा की हर हाल में हिफाजत करनी ही होगी।

- रविसुता पुत्र ऋषभ, रीवा, मध्यप्रदेश*

इनकी जिम्मेदारी
हमारे नेता भले ही अपने फायदे के लिए चुनावी वादे करके भूल जाते हों लेकिन मतदाता पांच साल में कभी नहीं भूलते कि अपने मताधिकार का प्रयोग कब करना है। इसीलिए आम चुनाव के महात्योहार में मतदाता बड़े हर्ष से अपनी जिम्मेदारी निभाता नजर आता है। इसका एक उदाहरण यह है कि 40 डिग्री सेल्सियस की भीषण गर्मी में भी मतदाता लंबी लाइन में

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किसी भी मुद्दे या लेख पर अपनी राय हमें भेजें। हमारा पता है : ए-8, सेक्टर-7, नोएडा 201301, जिला : गौतमबुद्धनगर, उत्तर प्रदेश

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

लग कर अपने मताधिकार का प्रयोग करता है। इसके विपरीत नेता चुनाव जीतने के बाद अपने वादों को पांच साल में एक भी दिन याद नहीं करते और अपनी जिम्मेदारी को भूल जाते हैं। इसलिए मतदाता की तरह नेताओं को भी अपनी जिम्मेदारी याद रखनी चाहिए।

- शिवेंद्र सिंह, नोएडा*

सुरक्षा का तक्का
केरल की मुसलिम एजुकेशनल सोसायटी (एमइएस) ने अपने सभी शिक्षण संस्थानों में बुर्के, नकाब समेत चेहरे को ढकने वाले सभी पहनावों पर प्रतिबंध लगा दिया है। विश्व के कई देशों में आतंकवादियों द्वारा बुर्के का इस्तेमाल बना विस्फोटों को अंजाम देने के लिए किया जाता है। यह भारत जैसे देश में सुरक्षा से जुड़ा एक बहुत बड़ा मामला है। श्रीलंका में

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तूफान से मुस्तैद मुकाबला

जिस मेहनत और हैसिले से ओड़िशा ने चक्रवात 'फोनी' का सामना किया है, उसकी पुरजोर सहायना आज संयुक्त राष्ट्र से लेकर सोशल मीडिया तक हो रही है। बीस वर्ष पहले ऐसे ही तूफान से करीब 10 हजार मौतें हुई थीं। तब तबाही का आकलन 4.44 अरब डॉलर लगाया गया था, पर इस बार मौसम विभाग की सटीक सूचना और पूर्वानुमान तथा केंद्र व राज्य सरकारों की मुस्तैदी के कारण न सिर्फ बड़ी तादाद में लोगों को बचाया जा सका, बल्कि संपत्ति को बचाने में भी बहुत हद तक कामयाबी मिली है। अब तक मरनेवालों की संख्या 16 बतायी जा रही है। जेनेवा में 13 मई से होनेवाली आपदा प्रबंधन से संबंधित संयुक्त राष्ट्र की बैठक में इस प्रकार पर विशेष चर्चा का प्रस्ताव है। तूफान से निबटने की ठोस तैयारी का ही नतीजा है कि इसके गुजरने के साथ ही इससे प्रभावित 10 हजार गांवों और 52 शहरी इलाकों में रहत और पुनर्वास का काम शुरू कर दिया गया है। ओड़िशा की यह उपलब्धि बहुत महत्वपूर्ण है। हमारा देश दुनिया के उन हिस्सों में से है, जहां प्राकृतिक आपदाओं का सिलसिला बना रहता है। ऐसे में ओड़िशा के अनुभव पूरे देश के लिए आदर्श होने चाहिए। सेंटलाइट, रिमोट सेंसिंग, सामुद्रिक विज्ञान, मौसम, सूचना आदि के क्षेत्र में हमारे पास विकसित अत्याधुनिक तकनीक हैं, जिनके सहारे आपदाओं का अनुमान लगाना आसान हुआ है। इन अनुमानों के आधार पर समुचित संसाधन और सक्षम प्रबंधन के सहारे जान-माल को बचाया जा सकता है। सोशल मीडिया पर चल रही तस्वीरों से अंदाजा लगाया जा सकता है कि किस लगन और मेहनत से राज्य पुलिस और प्रशासनिक महकमों ने 12 लाख लोगों को 24 से 36 घंटे में सुरक्षित स्थानों पर पहुंचाया। ओड़िशा के मुख्यमंत्री नवीन पटनायक ने सही ही इसे इतिहास की सबसे बड़ी कार्रवाई बताया है। उल्लेखनीय है कि 1999 के तूफान के समय मुख्यमंत्री आनसूय में एक सेंटलाइट फोन हुआ करता था और खराब मौसम के कारण सामान्य टेलीफोन सेवा बाधित थी, लेकिन इस बार लाखों मोबाइल संदेश भेजे गये, मधुआरों को वायरलेस से आगाह किया गया तथा लाइडमीटरों के साथ रेडियो व टेलीविजन से लगातार सूचनाएं दी गयीं। तूफान जाते ही दूरसंचार और यातायात सेवाओं को एक हद तक बहाल भी कर लिया गया। तकनीकी विकास, मानवीय सक्रियता और साजो-सामान के इंजाम ने इस आपदा की चुनौती का कामयाब मुकाबला किया है। ओड़िशा ने 1999 की तबाही से सबक लिया और आज नतीजा सामने है। अब पूरे देश को ओड़िशा से सीखने की जरूरत है। मुंबई, चेन्नई और केरल की बाढ़ की विभीषिका को बहुत दिन नहीं हुए हैं। ये इलाके हर मायने में ओड़िशा से विकसित हैं, पर वे बर्बादी को कमतर नहीं कर सके। केंद्रीय और राज्यस्तरीय आपदा प्रबंधन के विभागों और प्रशिक्षण संस्थानों को चुस्त-दुरुस्त बनाने के साथ इनके अन्य विभागों से बेहतर तालमेल पर भी ध्यान दिया जाना चाहिए। सूचना, संसाधन, प्रबंधन और प्रशासन की सहभागिता से ओड़िशा की तरह आपदाओं का मुकाबला संभव है।

सुरक्षित स्थानों पर पहुंचाया। ओड़िशा के मुख्यमंत्री नवीन पटनायक ने सही ही इसे इतिहास की सबसे बड़ी कार्रवाई बताया है। उल्लेखनीय है कि 1999 के तूफान के समय मुख्यमंत्री आनसूय में एक सेंटलाइट फोन हुआ करता था और खराब मौसम के कारण सामान्य टेलीफोन सेवा बाधित थी, लेकिन इस बार लाखों मोबाइल संदेश भेजे गये, मधुआरों को वायरलेस से आगाह किया गया तथा लाइडमीटरों के साथ रेडियो व टेलीविजन से लगातार सूचनाएं दी गयीं। तूफान जाते ही दूरसंचार और यातायात सेवाओं को एक हद तक बहाल भी कर लिया गया। तकनीकी विकास, मानवीय सक्रियता और साजो-सामान के इंजाम ने इस आपदा की चुनौती का कामयाब मुकाबला किया है। ओड़िशा ने 1999 की तबाही से सबक लिया और आज नतीजा सामने है। अब पूरे देश को ओड़िशा से सीखने की जरूरत है। मुंबई, चेन्नई और केरल की बाढ़ की विभीषिका को बहुत दिन नहीं हुए हैं। ये इलाके हर मायने में ओड़िशा से विकसित हैं, पर वे बर्बादी को कमतर नहीं कर सके। केंद्रीय और राज्यस्तरीय आपदा प्रबंधन के विभागों और प्रशिक्षण संस्थानों को चुस्त-दुरुस्त बनाने के साथ इनके अन्य विभागों से बेहतर तालमेल पर भी ध्यान दिया जाना चाहिए। सूचना, संसाधन, प्रबंधन और प्रशासन की सहभागिता से ओड़िशा की तरह आपदाओं का मुकाबला संभव है।



बोधि वृक्ष

मानवीय परत

मानवीय विकास का वास्तविक स्वरूप निर्धारित करना हो, तो यह मान कर नहीं चला जा सकता कि मनुष्य शरीर पाने तक ही उसकी अंतिम परिधि है। उसे विकासोन्मुख होने के लिए शरीरगत जीवनयापन को भी सब कुछ न मान कर अपनी सत्ता चेतना के साथ जोड़नी पड़ेगी, जो इस ब्रह्मांड पर अनुशासन करती और अंतराल को सुविकसित, स्वच्छ बना लेनेवालों पर अपनी उच्च स्तरीय अनुकंपा बरसाती है। साथ ही, मनुष्य को इस प्रकार का चिंतन अपनावने के लिए भी प्रोत्साहित करती है कि उसके अंतराल में अति महत्वपूर्ण क्षमताओं का भी भंडार भरा पड़ा है, जिन्हें थोड़ा विकसित कर लेने पर वह काया की दृष्टि से यथावत रहते हुए भी व्यक्तिव की दृष्टि से महानतम बन सकता है। मनुष्य अपने भाग्य का निर्माता आप है। वह प्रकृति की कठपुतली मात्र नहीं। अन्य प्राणियों की तरह मात्र निर्वाह ही उसकी एकमात्र आवश्यकता नहीं है, वरन् व्यक्तिव का स्तर उठाकर जीवन सजा को अनेक उपलब्धियों-विभूतियों से अलंकृत करना भी एक विशिष्ट उद्देश्य है। जब तक यह विचारणा नहीं उठती, तब तक वस्तुतः मनुष्य नर-पशु ही रहता है, इंद्रिय लिप्ताओं व मानसिक तृष्णाओं तक ही उसकी गतिविधियां सीमित रहती हैं, न वह जीवन का महत्व समझ पाता है, और न उसे चेतना की पथकता, विशिष्टता संबंधी कुछ ज्ञान होता है। इस अथाव्य विकास के उत्कटान के अनुरूप चेतना को विकसित, परिष्कृत, समर्थ, विलक्षण बनाने का द्वार मनुष्य शरीर मिलने के उपरान्त खुलता है। इससे पूर्व तो वह मात्र जीवधारी ही बनकर रहता है। साथ ही, प्रकृति का अनुशासन मानने के लिए बाधित रहता है। उसे प्रकृति पर अनुशासन करने, उसे अपने अनुकूल बनाने की विद्या का ज्ञान तक नहीं होता। विकास की मानवीय परत में उभरते ही उसे आत्मबोध की एक नयी उपलब्धि हस्तगत होती है, वह अनुभव करता है कि काय-कलेवर उसका समग्र स्वरूप नहीं, वरन् एक वाहन उपकरण आच्छादन मात्र है।

पंडित श्रीराम शर्मा आचार्य

कुछ अलग

इत्ते प्रतिशत, उत्ते प्रतिशत

उस परीक्षा में वह लड़की 99 प्रतिशत नंबर ले आयी, पर वह 100 प्रतिशत खुश न थी। एक प्रतिशत नंबर कम क्यों आये, यह दुख था। जिस तरह से परीक्षाओं में नंबर-वितरण हो रहा है, उसे देखते हुए अंतरराष्ट्रीय गणित परिषद् यह भी फैसला कर सकती है कि अब सौ में से 110 नंबर देना या 150 नंबर देना भी गणितीय तौर पर वैध माना जायेगा। नंबर फट रहे हैं, सौ प्रतिशत के दायरे में ना समा रहे। इस कदर प्रतिशतबाजी हो रही है कि उस टीवी चैनल पर एंकर कह रहा था कि केजरीवालजी और कांग्रेस का गठबंधन दिल्ली में 99 परसेंट था, पचास परसेंट हो भी सकता था, 49 परसेंट नहीं भी हो सकता था, कुछ मिलकर 99 परसेंट था। मामला पेचीदा है, पॉलिटिक्स में कुछ भी काम शत-प्रतिशत ना होता। जो नेता अभी राष्ट्रवाद के नाम पर शत-प्रतिशत झूलता दिख रहा है, वह कल ही एकदम घनघोर सेकुलरत्व की ओर कूच कर सकता है, तब भी वह शत-प्रतिशत सेकुलर नहीं होगा। इसलिए नेता का कुछ भी शत-प्रतिशत कभी न होता। शत-प्रतिशत तो सिर्फ नेता की कुर्सी-आकांक्षा होती है, ऐसे-वैसे या चाहे जैसे भी मिल जाये कुर्सी। शरद पवार क्या शत-प्रतिशत कांग्रेस के राहुल गांधी के साथ है, इस सवाल का जवाब शत-प्रतिशत देना मुश्किल है, शरद पवार लगभग कांग्रेसी ही रहे हैं, पर अगर वह गुंताड़ा लग गया कि तमाम दलों के समर्थन से उनके खुद के पीएम बनने का स्कोप हो जाये, तो वह कांग्रेस के विरोधी हो सकते हैं। केजरीवाल

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शत-प्रतिशत कांग्रेस विरोधी थे, फिर शत-प्रतिशत कांग्रेस समर्थक बनने को तैयार हो गये। अब वह लगभग कांग्रेस समर्थक भी हो सकते हैं, मौका और मुकाम देख कर। आंध्र के चंद्रबाबू नायडू के बारे में कोई भी कभी भी नहीं कह सकता है कि वह शत-प्रतिशत किधर के हैं। आंध्र के नेता जगन रेड्डी के पिता कांग्रेस के बड़े नेता थे, जगन कांग्रेस के विरोधी हैं, पर क्या वह मोदी के साथ है? जी, इस सवाल का शत-प्रतिशत पक्का जवाब नहीं दिया जा सकता। जैसा कि पहले बताया जा चुका है कि शत-प्रतिशत तो नेता कुर्सी को लेकर ही होता है कि मिलनी चाहिए। बहुत पहले महाराष्ट्र के नेता राज ठाकरे मोदी के साथ थे शत-प्रतिशत। अब वह मोदी के खिलाफ हैं शत-प्रतिशत। राज ठाकरे शत-प्रतिशत किसके साथ हैं, यह अभी नहीं पता। किसी भी मसले पर नेता लगभग होने के बिंदु पर हो, तब ही नेता सा दिखता है। किसी भी बिंदु पर एकदम पक्की राय तो वैज्ञानिक होने का भ्रम दे देती है। पक्का हो जाये नेता, तो उसका पतन सुनिश्चित है, लगभग रहे, तो इधर से उधर भाग सकता है। उधर से फिर इधर भाग सकता है। कहीं लग और फिर यहां से भाग, राजनीतिक तौर पर लगभग होने में ही मजे हैं। पक्का नेता वैज्ञानिक के स्तर पर पतित हो जाता है। वैज्ञानिक चेतना वाला बंदा किसी कोने की किसी प्रयोगशाला में तो काम कर सकता है, पर नेतागिरी नहीं कर सकता। लगभग होने में ही नेता का विकास है, विकास ही क्या, नेता का अस्तित्व ही लगभग होने में है।



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सत्तर वर्ष के आजाद भारत में पीने का पानी, अच्छे कपड़े, भोजन, घर, सबके लिए शिक्षा और स्वास्थ्य, महिलाओं की सुरक्षा और निर्भीक वातावरण क्यों नहीं हैं? ये सब चुनाव के जरूरी मुद्दे हैं। चुनाव का जरूरी मुद्दा आतंकवाद और राष्ट्रवाद नहीं है।

देश दुनिया से

जापान के नये सम्राट हुए जनता से मुख्यातिव

बीते शनिवार को जापान की राजधानी टोक्यो में जापान के नये सम्राट नारुहितो और उनकी पत्नी महारानी मसानो ने पहली बार अपने महल की बालकोनी से हाथ हिला कर बाहर बधाई देने के लिए खड़ी जनता की भीड़ का अभिवादन किया। अपने नये सम्राट को देखने के लिए घंटों पहले से ही जनता महल के बाहर इकट्ठा होने लगी थी। ऐसा माना जाता है कि प्रायः ऐसा तभी होता है, जब जापान में नये साल के जर्जन का मौका होता है या फिर सम्राट के जन्मदिन का दिव्य अवसर होता है, तब जापानी लोग महल के बाहर खड़े होकर अपने सम्राट को बधाइयां देते हैं। सम्राट नारुहितो ने अपनी जनता को संबोधित करते हुए कहा कि मैं दुःखा करता हूँ कि आप हमेशा स्वस्थ और खुश रहें। उन्होंने आगे कहा कि मैं भविष्य में अपने देश की तरक्की देखना चाहता हूँ और बाकी देशों के साथ मिल कर चलने के साथ ही वैश्विक शांति चाहता हूँ, गौरतलब है कि नारुहितो के पहले उनके पिता अकीहितो जापान के सम्राट थे और जापान में परंपरा है कि पहले सम्राट अपने जीवनपर्यंत रहते हैं। लेकिन यह पहली बार है, जब अकीहितो ने 85 साल की उम्र में सम्राट का पद त्याग दिया। इसी के बाद नारुहितो की ताजपोशी तय हुई।



आशुतोष चतुर्वेदी

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अखबार अपनी छपी खबर से पीछे नहीं हट सकता है। अखबार की खबरें काफी जांच पड़ताल के बाद प्रकाशित की जाती हैं। लिहाजा, प्रभात खबर ही नहीं अन्य अनेक अखबारों के पाठकों की संख्या लगातार बढ़ रही है।

कितनी कठिन परिस्थितियों में अपने काम को अंजाम देते हैं। कुछ समय पहले श्रीनगर में राज्जिंग कश्मीर के संपादक शुजात बुखारी की आतंकवादियों ने गोली मार कर हत्या कर दी। त्रिपुरा में पिछले साल वो पत्रकारों की हत्या कर

में तनाव फैला दिया है। दरअसल, भारत सोशल मीडिया कंपनियों के लिए एक बड़ा बाजार है। विभिन्न स्रोतों से मिले आंकड़ों के अनुसार दुनियाभर में व्हाट्सएप के एक अरब से अधिक सक्रिय यूजर हैं। इनमें से 16 करोड़ भारत में ही हैं। फेसबुक इस्तेमाल करने वाले भारतीयों की संख्या लगभग 15 करोड़ है और ट्विटर अकाउंट्स की संख्या 2 करोड़ से ऊपर है, लगभग 40 करोड़ भारतीय आज इंटरनेट सेवाओं का लाभ उठा रहे हैं। हमें करना यह चाहिए कि कोई भी सनसनीखेज खबर की एक बार जांच अवश्य करें। मैं जानता हूँ कि यह करना आसान नहीं है। इससे कैसे निबटा जाए, यह अपने आप में बड़ी चुनौती है।

दूसरी ओर अखबारों की ओर नजर दौड़ाएँ। आज भी ये सूचनाओं के सबसे विश्वसनीय स्रोत हैं। अखबार अपनी छपी खबर से पीछे नहीं हट सकता है। अखबार की खबरें काफी जांच पड़ताल के बाद प्रकाशित की जाती हैं। अखबारों के खिलाफ एक्टरफा फैसला सुनाने वाले आपको बहुत-से लोग मिल जायेंगे, लेकिन यह भी जानना जरूरी है कि पत्रकार कितनी कठिन परिस्थितियों में अपने काम को अंजाम देते हैं। कुछ समय पहले श्रीनगर में राज्जिंग कश्मीर के संपादक शुजात बुखारी की आतंकवादियों ने गोली मार कर हत्या कर दी। त्रिपुरा में पिछले साल वो पत्रकारों की हत्या कर

दी गयी थी। बेंगलुरु में गोरी लंकेश की हत्या तो चर्चित रही ही है, मग के भिंड इलाके में रेत माफिया और पुलिस का गठजोड़ उजागर करने पर एक पत्रकार को ट्रक से कुचल कर मार दिया गया था। यह कोई दबा-छुपा तथ्य नहीं है कि मीडियाकर्मियों को कई तरह के दबावों का सामना करना पड़ता है। इसमें राजनीतिक और सामाजिक, दोनों दबाव शामिल हैं। इतने दबावों के बीच आप अंदाज लगा सकते हैं कि खबरों में संतुलन बनाये रखना कितना कठिन कार्य होता है। प्रभात खबर की बात करें, तो हमने सबसे अधिक घपले-घोटाले उजागर किये हैं, जिसके कारण कई पूर्व मुख्यमंत्रियों और मंत्रियों तक को जेल तक जाना पड़ा है। यही वजह है कि हाल में मीडिया रिसर्च यूजर्स काउंसिल द्वारा आयोजित इंडियन रीडरशिप सर्वे, 2019 की पहली तिमाही का परिणाम आया है, जिसमें टोटल रीडरशिप में प्रभात खबर 1 करोड़ 41 लाख पाठकों के साथ हिंदी अखबारों में देश का 5वां सबसे अधिक पढ़ा जाने वाला अखबार बन गया है। सभी भाषाओं के अखबारों में प्रभात खबर 10वें स्थान पर है। झारखंड में करीब 48 लाख पाठकों के साथ प्रभात खबर अन्य अखबारों की तुलना में राज्य का सबसे बड़ा अखबार बना हुआ है। ऑडिट ब्यूरो ऑफ सर्कुलेशन की जुलाई-दिसंबर, 2018 की रिपोर्ट के आधार पर भी प्रभात खबर झारखंड का नंबर वन अखबार है। बिहार में प्रभात खबर 88 लाख 20 हजार पाठकों के साथ राज्य का दूसरा सबसे पढ़ा जाने वाला अखबार है। पिछले सर्वेक्षण की तुलना में वर्ष 2019 की पहली तिमाही के सर्वेक्षण के आधार पर बिहार में 6 लाख 10 हजार नये पाठक जुड़े हैं। एवेज इश्यू रीडरशिप, 2019 की पहली तिमाही के अनुसार पश्चिम बंगाल के हिंदी अखबारों में प्रभात खबर 1 लाख 65 हजार पाठकों के साथ दूसरे स्थान पर है। प्रभात खबर ही नहीं अन्य अनेक अखबारों के पाठकों की संख्या लगातार बढ़ रही है। यह दिखाता है कि अखबार आज भी खबरों के सबसे विश्वसनीय स्रोत हैं।



आपके पत्र

आतंक पर चोट

एक लंबे अंतराल के बाद संयुक्त राष्ट्र में भारत ने अंततः सुरक्षा परिषद में मसूद अजहर को वैश्विक आतंकवादी घोषित कराने में कामयाबी पा ही लिया। यह एक बड़ी कूटनीतिक जीत है, क्योंकि दिसंबर 1999 में भारत सरकार द्वारा अपहृत विमान के बदले रिहा होने के बाद से ही यह आतंकी अपने संघटन जैश-ए-मोहम्मद के माध्यम से कश्मीर समेत भारत के विभिन्न हिस्सों में आतंकी हमलों को अंजाम देता रहा और पिछले दिनों सेना पर हुए पुलवामा हमले की भी जिम्मेदारी ली। इस लिहाज से अजहर को वैश्विक आतंकवादी घोषित कराना आतंक के विरुद्ध हमारी लड़ाई का एक अहम कदम है। इस कामयाबी में चीन के अपने अडिगल रवैये से इतर सहयोगी की भी तारीफ करनी होगी, जो अक्सर वोटोंबाना से प्रसिप्त हो इस प्रस्ताव पर अपना वोटों पावर लगा दिया करता था। अरर और चीन का यह समर्थन दोनों देशों के मध्य आर्थिक, सामाजिक या सुरक्षा के मधुर संबंधों में तासीर का काम करें तो शायद कोई आश्चर्य न हो।

मनोज पांडेय बाबा, चंदनक्यारी, चोकोरी

बलात्कार की बढ़ती घटनाएं

पिछले कुछ दिनों में हुए बलात्कार की घटनाओं ने एक बार फिर हमें सोचने पर मजबूर कर दिया है। राजधानी रांची में हुए सामूहिक बलात्कार की घटना ने सचमुच प्रश्न चिह्न खड़ा कर दिया है। अये दिने हो रही ऐसी घटनाओं के लिए जिम्मेदार आखिर कौन है? गुडगांव में एक बुजुर्ग महिला द्वारा छोटे कपड़े पहनने पर की गयी टिप्पणी का सभी ने पुरजोर विरोध किया। यह सच है कि ऐसी घटनाओं के लिए सिर्फ छोटे कपड़े ही जिम्मेदार नहीं होते। अगर होते, तो पांच वर्ष की बच्ची हो या 70 वर्ष की महिला के साथ दुष्कर्म न हुआ होता। इसके लिए जिम्मेदार हमारी सोच, हमारी मानसिकता है। हम आधुनिकता के इस दौर में पाश्चात्य संस्कृति को तो अपनाते लगे पर उसके अनुरूप अपने सोच को विकसित नहीं कर पाये। यदि पुरुष जिस प्रकार अपनी मां, बीवी व बहन का सम्मान करता है, उसी तरह सभी महिलाओं का सम्मान करे तो समस्या ही खत्म हो जायेगी।

कन्हई लाल, रांची

जल संरक्षण बेहद जरूरी

वर्तमान समय में विश्व के अन्य देशों की तरह भारत में भी जल संकट की समस्या ज्वलंत है। जिस भारत में 70 प्रतिशत हिस्सा पानी से घिरा हो, वहां आज स्वच्छ जल उपलब्ध न हो पाना, एक विकट समस्या है। तीव्र शहरीकरण से तालाब और झीलें जैसे परंपरागत जलस्रोत सूख गये हैं। उत्तर प्रदेश के 36 जिलों में भूजल स्तर में हर साल 20 सेंटीमीटर से अधिक की गिरावट आ रही है। भारत में वर्तमान में प्रति व्यक्ति जल की उपलब्धता 2,000 घनमीटर है, लेकिन यदि परिस्थितियां इसी प्रकार रहें, तो अगले 20-25 वर्षों में जल की यह उपलब्धता घटकर 1500 घनमीटर रह जायेगी। इसका मतलब पीने के पानी से लेकर अन्य दैनिक उपयोग तक के लिए जल की कमी हो जायेगी। बढ़ती आबादी, प्राकृतिक संसाधनों को बहाने और उपलब्ध संसाधनों के प्रति लापरवाही ने मनुष्य के सामने जल का संकट खड़ा कर दिया है।

अमन सिंह, बरेली, उत्तर प्रदेश

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