

CHATTERBOX

Numbers gone wrong

During the elections, Congress leader and party strategist Ahmed Patel got fed up of visitors coming to him asking, “What is your prediction for the polls?”. His solution was to keep several slips of paper with a pile of notes on the table. These slips had a ready reckoner of his assessment of seats, and other useful electoral data. The party couldn’t even reach his prediction midway.

University of ‘greats’



So the subversives are now part of the government. So much was said to revile, run down and generally disrespect Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) as an institution: The place where people supposedly spend more time politicking than studying (and engage in less reputable pursuits, as well). But out of the four member cabinet committee on security, the government’s highest policy-making body, two are students of JNU. S Jaishankar did an MA, MPhil and PhD from the university before he was selected for the foreign services. Nirmala Sitharaman (pictured) was also a student there and did a masters in economics. Horror of horrors, not only was she a good student but also took an active part in politics. She was a free thinker, in opposition to the Students Federation of India that is the student wing of the CPI(M). So a university that has given the country its top ministers must be doing something right.

DID THEY REALLY SAY THAT?



**“I want to work on the basis of mutual understanding with the state government, and expect no hindrance from the Bengal government when it comes to implementing central projects in line with the rest of the country”**

Union Minister of State for Women and Child Development Debasree Chaudhuri, May 31, New Delhi



OPINION

VENKAIHAH NAIDU

The geopolitics of future lies in your hands

I welcome each and every one of you to Upa Rashtrapathi Bhawan. Let me take this opportunity to congratulate all of you for choosing the Indian Foreign Service as a profession. The Foreign Service offers you the privilege of being India’s ambassador’s to the world.

The Service offers a challenging and exciting career and a truly unique opportunity to take our country’s great civilizational and cultural ethos with its developmental aspirations to the rest of the world.

My dear young friends, You will soon be given the crucial responsibility of being all the spokespersons, interpreters and narrators of India’s story to the world.

You will construct new bridges of understanding, appreciation and collective advancement between India and the rest of the world and build new, forward looking and stable partnerships between nations.

You can play an important role in shaping the geopolitics of the future and in determining the new world order.

We are now living in a world that is more connected than ever before. The world is truly a ‘Global Village’. It is also swiftly changing in many unprecedented ways.

The changing global geo-political and geo-economic landscape requires a new agile, carefully strategized diplomatic response.

I see a number of challenges that budding diplomats such as yourself would have to deal with and overcome.

Despite the acknowledged need for an Integrated World Order, new ‘walls’ are being erected to the free flow of goods and services and people as well.

This return of the unwelcome tendency of protectionism has the potential to adversely impact the global effort for collective advancement.

Let me impress upon you the grave nature of the threat that the world community as a whole faces due to terrorism. No country in the world is immune to the consequences of terrorism now and therefore curbing this menace would require a united response from world nations.

India has consistently taken an unrelenting and uncompromising stand against terrorism, we must continue to be champions of peace.

We are now confronted by the unethical acts of financial fugitives.

The ease with which they find safe havens in other countries escaping the long arm of law is a serious global concern. Extradition Treaties and all bilateral and multilateral agreements need to be constantly updated and overhauled to defend and safeguard the integrated global economic order for collective good.

To transform this world into the world we want, in consonance with the United Nations’ transformative, ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the world needs India. The world needs India not only because we are home to nearly 1.3 billion people comprising one-sixth of humanity. The world needs India because the problems and challenges facing the planet today need a humane, holistic vision.

The world needs India because it needs a voice that speaks of peace, non-violence and peaceful coexistence. The world needs India because it needs to harness the potential of dialogue and discussion, collaboration and cooperation.

This vision and voice, this attitude and belief are what India has stood for over the last twenty millennia. This vision and voice of India is more relevant to the world than ever before.

Our core civilisational principle of viewing the world as ‘Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam’ and our prayer of ‘Sarve Jana Sukhino Bhavanthu’ gives us the moral strength and courage to influence global discourse in these testing times of great turbulence.

I am glad to note that India has taken the lead in building sustainable development solutions.

International Solar Energy Alliance, launched under India’s initiative at the COP 21 in Paris is one such example.

You must continually look for opportunities to provide similar leadership and lead the global agenda setting and implementation in as many fields as possible.

Our foreign policy formulation and implementation must be firmly tied to the domestic development agenda.

There is a constant need for a sustained dialogue and exchange of information between India’s representatives abroad and those who are implementing the development initiatives back home.

With India moving on the development path swiftly, the world is looking at India with keen interest. We must not hesitate to take advantage of this momentum by capitalizing opportunities in areas of trade, services, investments and infrastructure. Diplomats must be proactive in enabling Indian industries and business to tap into world markets and must do their best in encouraging foreign investment to flow into India.

Just recently, we have conducted the ‘largest festival of democracy’. We have conducted the elections in a peaceful and orderly manner. The people have made their choice with a resounding clarity and voted for stability.

“I hope that all people will continue to deepen the roots of our rich democratic tradition and focus our collective energies on development, reforms and enhancement of the quality of our people’s lives.”

India is strong and is gaining in strength because we are open to good ideas from all over the globe.

*Edited excerpts from a speech by Vice President Venkaiah Naidu to the Officer Trainees of 2018 Batch of Indian Foreign Service (IFS) and Bhutanese Diplomats, in New Delhi, May 28, 2019*



ILLUSTRATION BY BINAY SINHA

As clouds of uncertainty loom on the future of the Congress government in Madhya Pradesh. Many old guards of the BJP including eight time MLA and leader of Opposition in the Assembly Gopal Bhargava have said that the present government is counting its last few days. Excerpts of an interview with Sandeep Kumar:

‘Govt in MP will fall on its own’

**There are speculations that the Income Tax department may summon top officials of the Madhya Pradesh government, politicians and aides of Chief Minister Kamal Nath in future to probe into an alleged hawala racket unearthed during the Lok Sabha (LS) election. Reports allege there were money transfers to many Congress candidates during the LS election in Madhya Pradesh.**

It is quite serious and disturbing. I too came to know about the racket through the media. We cannot take this casually. The current

establishment in Madhya Pradesh is deeply entrenched in corrupt practices. There have been transfers of officers. Chief Minister Kamal Nath’s close aides and officers are said to have been involved in this. The matter should be investigated by the Central Bureau of Investigation. A grave cause of concern is they used this illicit money for election purpose. This is an insult to democracy and demands strictest action. Regardless of the position held, culprits should be punished.

**Why do you say there was corruption being practiced while making decision**

Rebuilding Odisha brick by brick

Several NGOs, along with the government and private agencies, have joined hands to help the state return to normalcy post cyclone Fani. But it could take a very long time, writes Thirumoy Banerjee

Towards the end of April, a red alert was sounded in Odisha about an approaching cyclone: Fani. The state is not alien to cyclones, and the administration started taking precautionary steps right away. As the day of the landfall approached, the alert became more serious — the cyclone was termed “extremely severe”, raising concerns of largescale damage.

Since the Super Cyclone in 1999, which left over 10,000 dead in the state, and a devastation that took years to get over, Odisha has seen multiple storms. Phailin struck in 2013, followed by Hudhud a year later. Last year in October, eight people were killed when Titli made its landfall in Odisha and coastal Andhra.

The Odisha government took a series of measures to minimise the damage, and evacuated hundreds of thousands of people. At 8.40 am on May 3, Fani made its landfall in Puri, with wind speeds up to 185 km/hour. It destroyed whatever came in its path. Even the state capital, Bhubaneswar, was battered. The level of destruction was far more than what government agencies thought. The Jagannath temple too was not spared. The government, which was appreciated for its work before the cyclone made its landfall, was now criticised for not being able to do enough to rehabilitate people.

“No one could gauge the enormity of Fani and the level of destruction it would leave behind,” said Jagadananda of Centre for Youth and Social Development (CYSD), one of the many NGOs in the state working tirelessly to help the affected people. “We have reached out to 14,000 families. The farmers are in serious need of help. Their produce can get spoilt, which may lead to distress sale. We are trying our best to stop that.”

A recent Indian Meteorological Department report stated that Fani was the

most intense pre-cyclonic storm to hit Odisha coast in the satellite era.

Given the vastness of the damage, a number of NGOs, including Oxfam, Action Age, Aide-et-Action, Christian Age, Concern, Help Age India, WaterAid, Plan India, Save the Children, CYSD, Swabhiman, Childfund, Vasundhara, Help Odisha, Red Cross Odisha, among many others, have been working in different parts of the affected districts.

“The focus in the first few days was to address the severe drinking water crisis. Most areas had no electricity. So, some NGOs and other organisations together set up RO plants in Bhubaneswar, Puri, Bir Harekrushnapur village, and Brahmagiri. The second biggest challenge was to remove the uprooted trees. The damage to the state’s green cover has been immense,” Jagadananda said.

Difficulties, though, were many. “Accessing the places that had been cut off was the first challenge. The trees had fallen, the roads had been damaged, electric poles were uprooted. The second challenge was that there was no mode of communication for close to two

weeks, and those in dire need of help couldn’t reach out to us. Third, any house that did not have a concrete ceiling was left roofless. There was not enough polythene available. Then, in the initial days, there were a few incidents of looting of relief materials by people who were in distress... The biggest challenge was to assess the extent of damage,” said Sruti Mohapatra, founder of Swabhiman, which works for differently abled children, and has been working to rehabilitate such people affected by the cyclone.

Several organisations working in the affected areas said there was political bias in providing relief. “So, there were a couple of people, who was helping only those who had voted for them in the elections,” said the head of an NGO.

As the crisis unfolded, several social vices

CHECKLIST THE STATE MINISTERS – UNSUNG HEROES

■ **Rameswar Teli, food processing industries:** From Assam, Teli has won the Dibrugarh Lok Sabha constituency twice in a row. He shot into prominence for defeating Congress leader Paban Singh Ghatowar. Teli is a bachelor. While his parents still live in the thatched house in Tipling, his uncle is a handcart puller. When in his constituency, Teli operates from his office, which is made of bamboo, like most houses in the rural Assam.

■ **Som Parkash, commerce and industry:** Elected to the Lok Sabha from Hoshiarpur in Punjab, Som Parkash is a retired IAS officer and served as the deputy commissioner of Jalandhar. He is a prominent Dalit face in Punjab’s Doaba region, and won the 2019 Lok Sabha elections with 42 per cent of the vote in the reserved constituency. He took premature retirement from the IAS to join the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). He had also contested the 2009 general elections from

Hoshiarpur but lost by a few hundred votes.

■ **Renuka Singh Saruta, Tribal Affairs:** a representative of the Gond community from Chhattisgarh and two-time MLA, Renuka Singh was women and child development minister in the Raman Singh government from 2003 to 2005. She defeated senior Congress leader Khelsai Singh by over 1.5 lakh votes. She had lost to the Congress veteran in the 2013 Assembly election. The party did not field her in the 2018 election. It is believed Singh was targeted by several factions within the state BJP.

■ **V Muraleedharan, External Affairs and Parliamentary Affairs:** A Rajya Sabha MP and chief of the BJP in Kerala, he has been in the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad who got a job as a clerk in the government but gave it up for full time service of the BJP. His dedication has been rewarded.

regarding transfers?

Official transfers have become the norm of the day since the Congress party assumed power in the state. As soon as the Model Code of Conduct was revoked on May 26 (2019?), a day after, the state government transferred more than 20 IAS officers. The Kamal Nath government has been only interested in transferring officers since day one. It is quite obvious what could be the reason behind these transfers.

**If we talk about Madhya Pradesh Assembly, the Congress party is in minority and is running a coalition government. Many Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders, including you, are saying this government will not last long. What could be the political scenario in the state in such situation?**

Let me make it very clear. We are not going to disturb the government but if it falls on its own, a number of situations may arise. We will discuss things with party high command.

**So... will you seek re-election or form the government?**

This is an important decision. We will form the government or go for elections will depend on circumstances of the day. In any case, this is not a decision that would be taken at the state level. The final decision will be by the party high command.

**Bahujan Samaj Party MLA Ramabai claims to have been offered a ministerial berth and a sum of Rs50 crore by the BJP in exchange for withdrawing support from the Congress-led state government.**

These are all baseless allegations. In my MLA career spanning 40 years, I have never heard of an MLA being offered Rs 50 crore. Further, if someone approached her, she should prove that through any tape or recording or witness. If she has proof, she should lodge a formal complaint. The matter should be enquired, and the culprit be brought to justice. Making media headlines will not serve purpose. This is not first time. She has made accusations before. If she keeps doing this, people will assume she is giving hints at joining the BJP.

**Do you think this is an effort to dent the image of the BJP?**

Indeed, it is. Either she is trying to defame the BJP, or indicate that for this sum of money, she is willing to switch her loyalty.

**The BJP has earned massive mandate in recently concluded general election. How do you see this? Just six months before the**

**LS polls, the Congress party had managed to defeat the BJP in three important states, including Madhya Pradesh.**

It is the “Modi magic”. Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s leadership and his personality is the main factor behind this massive victory. Not only in Madhya Pradesh, but across the nation, the candidates have become secondary. Wherever the BJP has contested, Modi was the candidate for whom people voted for. Even in his rallies and public meetings, the PM asked people to vote for him and not for any individual. That’s the only reason. None of the new MPs should boast about their huge victory. People incapable of becoming Sarpanch and councillor are MPs now, all because of “Modi magic”.

**You wrote a letter to Governor Anandiben Patel asking her to convene a special session of the Assembly to discuss “immediate” issues of the state. Did she revert?**

No, I did not get a reply from the Governor’s office, but I got a letter from Chief Minister Kamal Nath. He boasted about the achievements of his government and tried to deviate from the issue I raised in my letter. I told him not to see my letter in the political context. It was related to the problems of common people.

**It is being said that the party high command was not comfortable with your move. Didn’t you taken them into confidence before writing the letter regarding a floor test?**

I never challenged them for floor test. I wrote the letter to ask for a special session as many “burning issues” were pending for discussion. Like farmers’ distress, drinking water crisis etc. In the middle of all this, someone asked me about the Congress government’s future and I replied, “it will fall on its own”. Both incidents were separate. The Congress is running a thin majority government and the party has no faith in its own MLAs. That is why it made an issue out of it. I haven’t used the word “floor test in my letter. There are reports that suggest the state government is struggling to execute loan waiver scheme.

**Are you happy with the Madhya Pradesh representation in the new Modi cabinet?**

I am proud that four MPs of the state are in the cabinet. I want to congratulate them all for representing Madhya Pradesh in the cabinet. All of them are seasoned politicians and I am confident that their experience will help in the nation’s growth.



CYSD volunteers clear trees uprooted by cyclone Fani in Puri

came to the fore. “During relief, we found out the level of discomfort between the general communities and the Dalits, which was very unfortunate. We are working on this too,” Jagadananda said.

The education sector too has been hit hard, with 12,000 schools affected by the catastrophe. “Schools are supposed to reopen in mid-June, but it could get delayed. Children are psychologically disturbed. We have provided them with notebooks, pens, etc. Many of these children are very young and they are being counselled through theatres and music,” Umi Daniel of Aide-et-Action, Odisha, said. “We are keeping a watch to prevent any case of human trafficking, child marriage, or child labour, which can become common in a situation like this,” he added.

Help has poured in from various sources. Apart from the government assistance, many corporate houses in India and abroad have

contributed, or have promised relief assistance. Disney has already contributed ₹2 crore. Sources told *Business Standard* that the European Commission is considering a relief package to the state, so is the Tata Group. Other organisations, such as Human Aid International, have already provided relief. Several philanthropy groups, such as Odia Society in America, are expected to pitch in too. Business conglomerate Shapoorji Pallonji Group has also provided relief materials.

A lot has happened since Fani, which has claimed 64 lives. Narendra Modi has been re-elected as the prime minister, Naveen Patnaik has just taken oath as Odisha chief minister for a fifth straight term, but efforts to bring the state back to normalcy are far from over, with many people clueless about when they can return home. “The overall damage done will take years to be undone,” Mohapatra added.



Opinion

SUNDAY, JUNE 2, 2019

**AN OVERWHELMING MANDATE** is not always a blessing, a weakened Opposition makes governance more onerous and a successive second term deprives the rulers of any excuse. I am sure Prime Minister Narendra Modi is fully aware of the enormous expectations of the people and the huge burden placed on his Council of Ministers. Observing his first term, I am certain he will make every effort to rise to the challenge. There are two problems in the way. The first is the time-honoured way of doing things in India. The second is the competing claims of different sections of the people in which, invariably, the voices of the poorest, the weakest, the most deprived and the exploited are drowned. Our experience has been that at the end of the term (1) the time-honoured ways have only accumulated more time and honour and (2) the poorest, weakest, deprived and exploited remain poor, weak, deprived and exploited.

Time-tested & Failed

In his second term, Mr Modi must start by dismantling the time-honoured ways. Mr Arvind Panagariya, a friend of Mr Modi, and Mr Venkatesh Kumar (a professor at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences) have described those ways as follows:

*'A key element in his (Mr Modi's) governance model was the appointment of a number of groups of secretaries with each group assigned the task of preparing presentations on projects, programmes and policies to be implemented the following year in key sectors of the economy... Once finalised, these presentations became the road maps of the following year for the major sectors.'*

Then, the authors caution: *'But when it comes to radical reforms, this approach has a downside. By nature, bureaucrats are cautious and lean heavily in favour of projects and programmes. Even when they propose policy changes, they are piecemeal and rarely go beyond tinkering.'*

I agree with them entirely. However, I do not agree with their alternative method. Examined closely, it is no different. In the alternative model, the Mission Head will replace the minister, the Adviser will replace the secretary and young professionals will replace the joint secretary and her team!


Disruption is the Key

The results will be no different than the outcomes of Swachh Bharat and Ujjwala. In the case of Swachh Bharat, the bitter truth is no large state of India (except Gujarat) has been declared Open Defecation Free. What percentage of the toilets that were built are unused or unusable? In the case of Ujjwala, the proof of success or failure is the average number of replacement cylinders purchased by a beneficiary in a year: is it a disappointing 3 or an optimum 8? You know the answers as well as I do.

Radical reforms can be effected only through radical policies and disruption. In 1991-96, we made a bonfire of the Red Book and foreign trade was radically transformed. We threw away the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act and foreign exchange reserves soared. We scrapped industrial licensing and a new generation of entrepreneurs emerged. Mr Modi must try something like that

ACROSS THE AISLE

P Chidambaram



How it can be sabka vikas



Women carrying drinking water in vessels at a village in Palwal district, Haryana

BLOOMBERG

in education, healthcare, and rural roads and transport. In school education he could borrow from the Congress manifesto and transfer the subject to the State List, give money to the states and set them free to innovate and compete. The people will demand results from their state government and, in course of time, get results.

The key idea — and the one that will be most disruptive — is decentralisation. The short-term results may be unsatisfactory but in the medium to long term, better governed states will deliver better outcomes than at present and that will make the people demand better governance at the state level. Areas that will immensely benefit from decentralisation are primary and secondary healthcare, drinking water, sanitation, renewable energy, distribution of electricity, etc.

Recall Dr Subramanian

The second formidable challenge is the 'poorest of the poor'. Since they are the poorest, they are also at the bottom of the ladder in literacy, health indicators, housing, sanitation, consumption of food and water, and access to public goods and services. In a village, you will find them on the edges of the village. In poorer states, you will find whole villages populated by them. Let's admit it, under successive governments, the development process has bypassed the poorest 20% of India. Ministers and officials who visit villages, and programmes, stop — or are stopped — at the main street. The only way to reach the poorest is help them help themselves: start the fire of aspiration, let it rage in their hearts and homes, let them break out of the grip of poverty and lift themselves up. PM-KISAN will not help them because very few own a

patch of land, most are agricultural labour or other labour, and a significant number lives in towns and cities. The disruptive policy change will be a basic income through direct transfer of money. Mr Modi can attribute the idea to Dr Arvind Subramanian and recall him to head a department to design and implement the scheme.

Not much will change if we trudge along at 6-7% rate of annual growth. Nothing will change if we tweak current policies or tinker with administrative systems. More damage will be done by vesting officials with extraordinary powers or threatening people with prosecution and imprisonment. The single most effective instrument of transformative change is empowering the people and placing faith in their wisdom, industry and capacity.

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INSIDE TRACK

COOMI KAPOOR



Advani syndrome

The importance of Amit Shah, not just in party affairs but also in government, was evident even before he was formally sworn in as a minister. Ever since the poll results, Shah has continuously been by Modi's side, whether in Delhi, Varanasi or Ahmedabad. Before the swearing-in, the PM and Shah spent marathon sessions confabulating over the names for the Cabinet. Shah wanted a Cabinet post to demonstrate his administrative capabilities. He wants to be perceived as not just a wizard organisation man, but as Modi's eventual successor. This is similar to the L K Advani syndrome, where for years Advani was the backroom boy and Atal Bihari Vajpayee the face of the BJP. Finally, Advani decided he wanted to share the glory of the centrestage. Despite being home minister, Shah is expected to continue to devote considerable time to party affairs, particularly with Maharashtra and Haryana Assembly elections due shortly.

Financial asset

Nirmala Sitharaman was selected to head the Finance Ministry since, apart from some familiarity with the ministry, Modi wanted a person he considered not close to any business lobby. Earlier, Arun Jaitley, Sitharaman's mentor, was one of the few who fitted the bill. The ministry controls all the powerful economic regulatory bodies. A scholarly understanding of finance is not essential since, in the Modi regime, senior officials and technocrats, selected and vetted by the PMO, play an important role in key ministries.

Peacock colours

At the 2014 swearing-in, Smriti Irani stood out in terms of sartorial style for her bright red, yellow and black sari emblazoned with huge lotuses. This time the male ministers stole the limelight. Many wore Modi jackets featuring all the colours of the rainbow, including jaundice yellow, shocking pink, sky blue and bottle green. A few like Modi, Shah and Rajnath Singh settled for more formal greys and browns. Women ministers Nirmala Sitharaman and Harsimrat Kaur Badal wore pastel pinks. Smriti was dressed in a smart and subdued orange ikkat silk.

Mamata's retreat

For three days after the election results, Mamata Banerjee remained shut at her Kalighat residence. She spent her time reading, playing

music on a keyboard and introspecting. A string of Trinamool members close to her, including Indranil Sen, Dola Sen and Indrani Haldar, could not get an audience. Her nephew Abhishek Banerjee was one of the few permitted entry, but after 10 pm. By Monday though, Banerjee was back at office, intent to fight fiercely for her turf. Her strategy is focusing on Bengali pride and painting the BJP as outsiders. Party members are too timid to tell her that her habit of getting out of her car and screaming at bystanders shouting *Jai Shri Ram* lost her votes, since the videos went viral.

Double trouble

The poll defeats have exacerbated trouble in both H D Deve Gowda and Lalu Prasad's families. Only Gowda's grandson Prajwal Revanna won, since he was gifted his grandfather's pocket borough of Hassan. Gowda himself and his other grandson, Nikhil Kumaraswamy, son of CM H D Kumaraswamy, lost. A Karnataka periodical claimed that a drunk Nikhil berated his 86-year-old grandfather charging that the family had let him down. The Karnataka Police registered an FIR against the periodical. Prajwal, meanwhile, offered to resign to accommodate his grandfather, but Gowda declined. In Bihar, many RJD leaders blame the feud between Lalu's sons Tej Pratap Yadav and Tejashwi Yadav for the party's disastrous showing. The RJD did not win a single seat. Even Pataliputra where Lalu's daughter Misa Bharti was the candidate and Saran, Lalu's old constituency, from where Tej Pratap's estranged father-in-law Chandrika Rai stood, were lost. Small wonder that Lalu conalescing in a Ranchi hospital refused to eat for two days after the results. Tej Pratap's post-defeat letter backing his brother for party leadership was too little too late.

Master of game

No one can doubt Amit Shah's abilities as a master campaign strategist. Shah knew exactly which disgruntled elements from opposing camps to cultivate and which to ignore. For instance, Mukul Roy was propped up since Shah was aware that Roy had intimate knowledge of the Trinamool's organisation and its money and muscle power. In UP, through intermediaries he encouraged the Samajwadi Party's key organisation man, Shivpal Yadav, to float a separate party. Shivpal damaged the SP in half a dozen seats. Similarly, the Prakash Ambedkar and Asaduddin Owaisi alliance in Maharashtra lost the Congress-NCP several seats.

Once upon a time in Ladakh

As far as bucket lists go, playing at the Fire and Fury GC is right up there

OVER THE TOP

Meraj Shah



**FOR THE LONGEST** time, it was the highest golf course in the world: The Fire and Fury GC, laid out on a sweeping tract of land that sloped down from the hills to the south of Leh town, was also as unique a golf course as has ever been built. Visitors flying in to Leh would see the course as the airplane began its descent, but probably didn't identify it as one: the Fire and Fury GC didn't really fit the bill. No verdant green spaces—the greens were made using compacted sand, and no visible hazards. And yet, stretching over 7031 yards from the tips, this obscure, unheralded, golf course had a superlative claim to fame: at 11,302 feet above sea level, it was, literally heads and shoulders above any other layout in the world.

That was before the calamitous flash floods hit Leh in 2010, and destroyed numerous settlements in proximity of the course, including the Tibetan settlement of Choglamsar. The massive relief efforts

by the military that followed faced a major challenge: setting up temporary encampments for survivors and people displaced by the catastrophe. The level fairways of Fire & Fury GC were perfect and were quickly repurposed to set up a relief camp. And so it came to pass, that 43 years after coming into existence, the course became unplayable. That year I wrote an epitaph to the course, that, for all practical purposes had ceased to exist.

Last week I got a call from a friend in Leh who happened to mention that he'd seen players pulling their golf bag trolleys on the brown fairways again and the erstwhile clubhouse, the only remnant of the course which the military had let stand for posterity's sake, appeared to have got a fresh coat of paint. It's a fair conjecture, he said, that the course has reopened for play.

I was immediately reminded of the last time I played there in 2008. For the highest GC in the world, conjuring up visions of precipitous slopes and undulating fairways, the Fire & Fury GC was surprisingly expansive and level. The 18 holes were spread in a vast basin area on the edge of Leh Town. The best view was from the airplane on the steep descent into Leh valley: it appeared as a faintly barricaded brown



The Fire and Fury golf course, laid out on a tract of land that slopes down from the hills to the south of Leh town

ST WANGDI

landscape punctuated by dark brown spots with the Stok Kangri Mountain looming in the distance; you would've missed it unless you were looking for it. One thing is certain: the Leh Golf Course was not pretty; no creeks or willows. But it was singular; high speed winds routinely lashed the basin in which the course had been built, the fairways were barren which meant your caddy had to lug a piece of Astro turf. The golfers I saw were using a

regular foot mat: pop the ball on the high tuft at the corner and sweep away. The greens, appropriately called 'browns,' were kept soft with used engine oil; there was no slope though, once you got a measure of the speed then putting was pretty much sorted out.

The board and plaque which stood in front of the clubhouse proclaimed that the course was established in 1967 as the 'Trishul Golf Course' (later rechristened

'Fire & Fury,' by the military). There were no trees or any hazards besides the odd bunker; the entire exercise of getting the ball to stop was challenge enough! The army had planted hundreds of poplar saplings; most would not make it through the harsh winter months but the few that did have added much needed foliage.

I recall playing with borrowed blades and making a complete mess of things but you wouldn't have thought that if you saw

the ball go. It rose, albeit a bit late, straight down tiger line before flying inordinate distances. The air is thin in Leh and that is most apparent when you gauge the added yardage to your clubs. It also negates sidespin which meant you could pretty much hit it straight most of the time; the check ball didn't exist here, you had to make sure you flopped it high so it landed softly on the heavily oiled browns. This was an optimist's course!

The Fire & Fury GC fit right into Leh's surreal landscape and melded in with the almost lunar topography. While it's pretty certain that this course never got golf tourists, there was a certain posterity value to playing at the highest golf course in the world. Not to mention the once in a lifetime pleasure of pasting a driver 400 yards!

If the course has indeed re-opened for play, then one would hope that the army lets people from the 'civvy street,' tee it up. The money could be used for upkeep of the course and perhaps even attract golf tourists to Leh. Pretty championship courses are a dime-a-dozen nowadays, but the bragging rights of playing at Leh's rugged layout are in a different league altogether. It may not be the highest golf course in the world anymore (that would be the Indian Army's layout at Kupup in Sikkim), but there are still no parallels to match this course against that I can think of.

A golfer, Meraj Shah also writes about the game



# Idea Exchange

SUNDAY, JUNE 2, 2019

“We travelled across Bengal, both clockwise and anti-clockwise. So we were able to take two rounds of a district in one cycle in two months. This led to large-scale mobilisation, workers gained confidence”

**LIZ MATHEW:** What were some of the challenges that you faced in Bengal?  
After three decades of Left rule, Mamata Banerjee rose to power in Bengal after a big struggle. People expected things to change, they wanted democracy to be reinstated, they wanted an end to dictatorship and violence, they wanted peace and development... Unfortunately, nothing changed. An era of atrocities and murders began. At first, Congress workers were killed, then BJP and CPM workers. In the last four-and-a-half years that I have been the BJP in-charge of the state, 103 BJP workers have been killed, including a few after the election results were announced.

There is ‘syndicate raj’ in the state. While the government runs the state, syndicates control the districts. People affiliated to the ruling party in the state are part of this syndicate. One cannot even build a house in Bengal without the involvement of the syndicate.

There was an apprehension among people about which way to go, especially since the Congress doesn’t have any presence there and the Left is almost over. When I was made in-charge, our party president Amit Shahji told me that two states, Kerala and West Bengal, were tough to win and that I should take charge of West Bengal. When I first went to Bengal, I thought it would take us at least 15 years to be in a position to challenge the ruling party. After doing a tour of the state twice, I met the party president again. He said, ‘I have sent you for five years, not 15. I am standing behind you, just tell me what you need.’ Then, I got a flat in Bengal and began to visit districts to understand the problems of the people. I, along with Suresh Pujari, a party worker from Odisha, and Shiv Prakashji, our national *sangathan* mantri, travelled across the length and breadth of the state, both clockwise and anti-clockwise. By doing so, we were able to take two rounds of a district in one cycle within two- to two-and-a-half months. This led to large-scale mobilisation and our party workers gained confidence.

Subsequently, attacks on our workers also increased. No one was spared. Even the Trinamool and the syndicate in the state have two-three different groups. They fought amongst themselves, and in the last three years of Mamataji’s tenure, 65 Trinamool workers have been murdered by fellow workers. I think West Bengal is the only state where workers of the ruling party kill each other, and then blame the Opposition. More than 150 BJP workers, who haven’t even killed a mosquito, have been booked under Section 302 (murder).

Amid all these atrocities by the ruling party, it was an uphill task to strengthen our party base in the state. I think it is because of the leadership of the Prime Minister, political strategies of our party chief, and our efforts on the ground that we have been able to build and strengthen our network in every district of Bengal. We kept a low profile, didn’t do any publicity and just worked to strengthen the organisation.

Everyone thought since we had two (Lok Sabha) seats in Bengal, we would probably get four to six seats this time. I had set a target of 25 seats. People would laugh at it. But I told everyone it will be an astonishing result. We would have won 25 seats had there not been violence during the elections, because of which many people did not step out to vote. But even then, the people helped us win 18 seats.

**LIZ MATHEW:** Why were you chosen to handle the elections in Bengal?

You should ask Amit Shahji that (*laughs*). I think I have the most amount of experience among all party general secretaries. I have been a councillor, a mayor and an MLA for six terms. Besides, I have seen violence very closely. In the ’80s and ’90s, Indore had many textile mills and trade unions. My father was a mill worker there. I lived in the *maz-door basti* (workers’ colony). I have seen fights closely... In those days firearms or explosives were not as common, it was mostly swords and sticks. Amitbhai knew all about me and so he probably thought I could work in Bengal as I have seen it all.

**RAVISH TIWARI:** Your opponents say communal politics has helped your performance in Bengal.

We are not responsible for the situation in Bengal; Mamataji is. When I went to Kolkata for the first time, I saw big hoardings of people offering *namaaz* in



## WHY KAILASH VIJAYVARGIYA

**SINCE WINNING TWO** seats in West Bengal in the 2014 Lok Sabha polls, the BJP has been working to increase its footprint in the state. Kailash Vijayvargiya was appointed the party’s state in-charge four years ago and has since been travelling across Bengal to strengthen the BJP’s organisation on the ground. In the general elections this year,

the BJP emerged as the main challenger to the Trinamool, and won 18 of the state’s 42 seats. The party’s vote share also increased to 40.25% from 16.8% in 2014. Vijayvargiya, who was appointed national general secretary in 2015, was also in charge of Haryana polls, and has served as a minister in the Madhya Pradesh government



“If there is a BJP government in Bengal, we will conduct the NRC drive. Over a crore intruders will be identified. These people are taking away the resources and jobs of Bengal’s people”

# Shattered belief that TMC can’t be defeated... When we create that mood in Kerala, BJP will win

BJP’s general secretary in charge of West Bengal, Kailash Vijayvargiya, says Bengal’s vote for the party was a ‘reaction’ to the violence in the state, claims BJP got not just Left’s, but also TMC and Congress’ votes, and talks about ‘change of demography’ in Bengal districts



BJP’s national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya with Associate Editor Liz Mathew in *The Indian Express* newsroom

ABHINAV SAHA

the Salt Lake area. When I looked closely, I realised that the hoardings had Mamataji’s face on them. I was told that she often visited the area and offered *namaaz*. I have never seen a Hindu leader offer *namaaz* like this anywhere in the country. There is always a reaction when things are stretched too far.

Durga Puja is the biggest festival in Bengal. When a Durga *visarjan* procession is stopped because of Muharram, it will evoke a reaction. People had to go to the court and get permission for the procession. This also led to more than 10,000 people assembling at Durga Puja pandals, which otherwise would not have had more than a thousand people. That reaction was not ours, it was the people’s reaction.

(In 2016), the police station in Kaliachak area of Malda district was torched. Most of the Hindu families there were thrown out of the area. None of the media houses initially reported the incident, till a senior reporter from a big television channel went to cover the incident. That story showed how AK-47 rifles were used in the violence, and how so many people had to leave.

Therefore, despite the fact that we did not have workers to assist us in the election process, people still voted for us. This shows their sentiment towards the ruling party. In villages, despite bomb blasts at night, women gathered to vote in the morning. They called police and voted under their protection. It was all a reaction. Not a single BJP worker was involved in any of it (the violence). So, when they say that we did it (communal politics)... we did not. We might have benefited from it, but we are not responsible for it. The responsibility lies with the state government.

**LIZ MATHEW:** You say that there is fear among the people in the state. In that case, why didn’t all the Hindu votes come to your party?

That is why I am saying that the allegation that there was polarisation is baseless. Had that been the case, we would have got all the Hindu votes. We did not polarise. We put forward Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s face and spoke about jobs for the youth, women empowerment, quality education and health-care services... That is why we did not get 100% of the Hindu votes.

**ABANTIKA GHOSH:** Did the Vidyasagar College incident harm the BJP in the seventh phase of the polls?

It is a matter of research for us. There were nine Lok Sabha seats (in the phase) and they were all very difficult for us. The Trinamool has more influence in the region, and above that, there was *gundagardi* (hooliganism).

**RAVISH TIWARI:** In the Lok Sabha elections, you sought votes in Narendra Modi’s name. The BJP does not have a face in Bengal. Will that affect the results in the state polls?

Before the Assembly election, there is the local body election. We might only get 10% of the votes in the local body election. It is not an election. The state election commissioner, the police, the Trinamool and its goons, together fight the local body elections. You must have seen the last panchayat elections. The situation there is very bad. The demographic of eight districts has changed entirely. When we visited some villages in these parts, it appeared that we were not in our country. To save Bengal, it is necessary to stop the entry of infiltrators and illegal operations.

**KRISHN KAUSHIK:** You claim that you don’t polarise, but then you say that certain areas in Bengal don’t look like our country. Your party didn’t give tickets to Muslims, you don’t talk about Muslim voters...

We had Muslim candidates. Our candidate came second in Murshidabad. We have also received Muslim votes. I never said that we didn’t receive Muslim votes. We have got Muslim votes, though less in numbers, but we have got them.

**ABANTIKA GHOSH:** In its campaign, the BJP spoke out against dynasts. But now you have Arjun Singh and his son, Mukul Roy and his son, in the party.



We had no other option. We had no candidate from Arjun Singh’s constituency (Barrackpore). I am not ashamed to say that Arjun Singh is very powerful there and our party didn’t have a *sangathan* in the region. We made our party’s office in his area, but his men captured it. We still had the office but with their party flag. (Arjun Singh defected from the Trinamool to the BJP in March.) In a democracy, the end result of an election is not a gold, silver or bronze medal. You either win or lose. In order to win, you need a good candidate.

**LIZ MATHEW:** Did you get all the CPM cadre votes in Bengal?

Remember the slogan Prime Minister Narendra Modi gave: ‘*Chup chap, kamal chaap*’ (Quietly vote for the lotus). It is interesting to see how intelligent the voters have become. In villages, people knew they wouldn’t be allowed to vote if they said they wanted to vote for the BJP. So they put on the Trinamool’s tag and went to vote. But, at the polling booth, they secretly pressed the lotus button (the BJP’s party symbol). The political violence and undemocratic activities are causing problems for the Trinamool in the state. We have got the Trinamool’s votes. We have also received the Congress’ and the CPM’s votes.

**RAVISH TIWARI:** On one hand you say that Muslims voted for you, on the other you claim that in certain parts of the state, which have a larger Muslim population, it doesn’t feel like your own country. These are contrary viewpoints.

When we talked to the people there, it felt like this was not a part of our country. Their behaviour, mannerisms, implied that they are not a part of this country.

No BJP worker was involved in it (violence). When they say that we did it (communal politics)... we did not. We might have benefited from it, but we are not responsible for it. The responsibility lies with the state government

**VANDITA MISHRA:** What kind of behaviour?

If you go to any part of the country, people have a welcoming attitude. In any village, if you ask people for directions, they will first ask you if you have had any food or water. This is the culture of our country, *atithi devo bhava* (the guest is god). But when we went to some of the places in Bengal, it felt like we were a burden on them. It’s a mindset. I go to a lot of Muslim areas where I get a lot of love from the people. I attend many Muslim events in Indore. I have also got Muslim votes in Indore. It’s not like we don’t go to Muslim areas, but in that particular area, we felt unwelcome.

**RAVISH TIWARI:** You have worked in Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and now West Bengal for the BJP. The political violence aside, what difference do you see in the politics of these states?

In Uttar Pradesh, there is a politician in every second house. If you talk to a Jat in UP, he will tell you the entire history of the community. A Yadav will tell you how they have been oppressed for ages. The voter in UP is very politically aware. Haryana’s voters are the most honest. I went to Haryana for an event of transporters. They gave me buttermilk and looked after me well. When I asked them whether they will vote for the BJP, they said we are Chautala’s men (*laughs*). I have never met such honest people anywhere else in the country. In West Bengal, people read a lot of newspapers. They read and they think. It is tough to talk to a Bengali because they don’t open up easily. They are very proud of their culture and language and are very emotional. Women in West Bengal are very concerned about their children’s education and how the quality of education is falling.

**RAVISH TIWARI:** Why did the BJP lose the Madhya Pradesh polls?

There are two reasons. Firstly, we were in power in the state for 15 years. In this time period, we built roads and infrastructure. We had nothing new to show this time. Someone who was four-five years old when we started in Madhya Pradesh, could now vote. He didn’t know what the BJP had done in these 15 years. Rahul Gandhi said he will waive off farm loans in eight days, but nothing happened. He said he will give pension to the unemployed. No money was given. The Lok Sabha results were an

answer to this politics of cheating.

**ABANTIKA GHOSH:** Ram Navami celebrations are now held with much more fervour in Bengal. Some Bengalis have stopped eating non-vegetarian food on Tuesdays because they worship Hanuman. People from West Bengal have always been Durga worshippers. How did this happen and how did it affect the voting?

Every action has a reaction. Ram Navami and Hanuman Jayanti were not celebrated in West Bengal till four years ago. The celebrations were curbed. Children who wore Hanuman costumes and went around with *gadas* (maces) were slapped with cases under the Arms Act. People holding Ram Navami processions without permission were thrown into jails. So there was a reaction from society. If people said *Jai Shri Ram*, they were slapped and arrested. (In these elections), a whole village voted while chanting *Jai Shri Ram*. This is Newton’s law, every action has an equal and opposite reaction.

**ANANT GOENKA:** How do you think the social fabric of Bengal will change in the next 10 years?

If there is a BJP government, we will conduct the National Register of Citizens drive. Over a crore intruders will be identified. These people are taking away the resources and jobs of Bengal’s people. Strict action will be taken against them.

**ANANT GOENKA:** And if Mamata Banerjee continues to be CM, how will the Centre-state relations play out?

The Prime Minister recently said that we are with the people who trusted us, and those who didn’t, we will strive to win their trust. We go by his motto of ‘*Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas*’. The PM called Mamataji after the cyclone, she didn’t pick up his call and then said that she doesn’t consider him the Prime Minister. That’s her prerogative. The PM did his duty.

**KRISHN KAUSHIK:** Why didn’t the BJP perform well in Kerala?

We have shattered the belief that the Trinamool cannot be defeated. Once that happens in Kerala, when people start believing that the BJP can win, we will get their votes. We haven’t been able to create that environment in the state yet. The day it is created, the BJP will win in Kerala too.







# मोदी सरकार 2.0 की चुनौतियां उठाने होंगे कई मजबूत कदम

पहले कार्यकाल के दौरान प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी के खाते में कल्याण योजनाओं से लेकर राष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा एवं संरचनागत परिवर्तन तक कई उपलब्धियाँ हैं, परंतु इस बार उनकी चुनावी जीत जितनी भारी है, दूसरे कार्यकाल में उनकी सरकार के सामने चुनौतियों का दबाव भी उतना ही बढ़ा है। कृषि संकट के निवारण और ग्रामीण आर्थिकी को गति देने की दिशा में बहुत कुछ अपेक्षित है। घरेलू और अंतरराष्ट्रीय कारणों से अर्थव्यवस्था में नमी आयी है। कच्चे तेल के दाम में उतार-चढ़ाव और व्यापार घाटे के बढ़ने से वित्तीय घाटे एवं मुद्रास्फीति की आशंका बढ़ गयी है। अमेरिका, चीन, रूस, जापान और यूरोपीय देशों से हमारे संबंध बेहतर की ओर बढ़े तो हैं, पर कुछ महत्वपूर्ण देशों से संरक्षणवादी और विस्तारवादी रवैये ने हमारे लिए गंभीर चुनौती पैदा कर दी है। आतंकवाद, अलगाववाद और उग्रवाद तथा पाकिस्तान के खतरनाक रवैये से निबटने के लिए सुदृढ़ सुरक्षा नीति बनाने की आवश्यकता भी है। बहुत बड़ी युवा आबादी के लिए शिक्षा एवं रोजगार की व्यवस्था करना और करोड़ों गरीबों व कम आमदनी वाले लोगों को स्वास्थ्य सेवा मुहैया कराने संबंधी कार्यक्रमों को बढ़ावा देना आसान नहीं हैं। मोदी सरकार के समक्ष उपस्थित कुछ महत्वपूर्ण चुनौतियों के विश्लेषण के साथ प्रस्तुत है आज का इन दिनों...



## बढ़ते श्रमबल के लिए रोजगार सृजन

भा रत की 136 करोड़ की अनुमानित आबादी में 67 प्रतिशत लोग 15 से 64 वर्ष के हैं, इस लिहाज से तकरीबन 91 करोड़ लोगों को नौकरी/रोजगार चाहिए। इतने लोगों के लिए रोजगार की व्यवस्था करना कोई खेल नहीं है, दो करोड़ प्रतिवर्ष रोजगार सृजन के वादे के साथ 2014 में मोदी सरकार आयी थी, लेकिन ऐसा हुआ नहीं। बीते जनवरी, सेंटर फॉर मॉनिटरिंग इंडियन इकोनॉमी (सीएमआईई) की जारी रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक, नोटबंदी और जीएसटी के कारण वर्ष 2018 में 1.1 करोड़ लोगों को अपनी नौकरी से हाथ धोना पड़ा था। वहीं, एपीएफओ के अनुसार, अक्टूबर 2018 से अप्रैल अंत तक औसत मासिक नौकरी सृजन में 26 फीसदी की गिरावट दर्ज हुई थी। इतना ही नहीं, नौकरियों के सृजन की गति भी काफी धीमी है। हाल में मीडिया में लोक एनएसएसओ की पीरियॉडिक लेबर फोर्स सर्वे (पीएलएफएस) रिपोर्ट में कहा गया था कि वर्ष 2017-18 में औसत बेरोजगारी दर 6.1 फीसदी तक पहुंच गयी, जो 45 साल में सबसे ज्यादा है। हालांकि, अब सरकार ने भी इस आंकड़े के सही होने की पुष्टि कर दी है। सीएमआईई के आंकड़ों की मानें, तो इस वर्ष फरवरी में देश में बेरोजगारी दर 7.2 प्रतिशत थी, जबकि एक वर्ष पहले यह 5.9 प्रतिशत थी। सीएमआईई के अनुसार, इस वर्ष फरवरी में हमारे देश में करीब 3.12 लोग रोजगार की तलाश कर रहे थे, जबकि 2018 जुलाई में इनकी संख्या 1.4 करोड़ थी। वहीं, कई रिपोर्ट में भी बता रहे हैं कि बीते कई महीनों



से साप्ताहिक और मासिक बेरोजगारी दर सात प्रतिशत के आसपास बनी हुई है, जबकि इंडियासमेंड का विश्लेषण कहता है कि प्रतिवर्ष 1.2 करोड़ लोग नौकरी के बाजार में प्रवेश कर रहे हैं, जिनमें से केवल 47.5 प्रतिशत लोग ही श्रमबल का हिस्सा बन पाते हैं। बाकी बचे लोग या तो बेरोजगार रहते हैं या फिर बेहद कम पैसों पर काम करने को मजबूर होते हैं। विश्व बैंक के अनुसार, भारत में प्रतिवर्ष 81 लाख नयी नौकरियों की जरूरत है, इतने बड़े पैमाने पर नयी नौकरियों का सृजन नयी सरकार के लिए अप्रतिबन्ध नहीं होगा।

## स्वास्थ्य क्षेत्र को दुरुस्त करने की दरकार

भारत की विशाल आबादी को बीमारियों की दोहरे मार से गुजरना पड़ रहा है। हमारे देश में संक्रामक और गैर-संक्रामक (जीवनशैली के कारण होनेवाली बीमारियाँ) रोगों में वृद्धि हो रही है। वर्ष 2015 में होनेवाली पचास प्रतिशत मौतों की वजह संक्रामक और गैर-संक्रामक रोग थे, जबकि वर्ष 2001-03 के बीच इन रोगों से 42 प्रतिशत लोगों की मृत्यु हुई थी। विश्व के कुल टीबी रोगी का 26 प्रतिशत भारत में है, जो वैश्विक स्तर पर सर्वाधिक संख्या है। हालांकि टीबी उन्मूलन के लिए हमारे न सावर्भौमिक टीकाकारक कार्यक्रम में नये टीके लगाने की शुरुआत भी की है। वैश्विक टीबी उन्मूलन की समय सीमा 2030 रखी गयी है, लेकिन मोदी सरकार ने इसे 2025 ही रखा है। भारत उष्णकटिबंधीय बीमारियों (मलेरिया, हैजा, डेंगू) का भी घर है। हर वर्ष हजारों लोगों की जान इन्हीं रोगों के कारण जाती है। मोदी सरकार द्वारा जोर-शोर से चलाये गये स्वच्छता अभियान के बावजूद इन रोगों में खास काम नहीं आया है। मलेरिया हमारे यहां आज भी जलवायु बना हुआ है, लेकिन ओईडिआ में इस मामले में कमी आने से वैश्विक स्तर पर भारत की स्थिति सुधरी है। विश्व स्वास्थ्य संगठन ने इसके लिए भारत की प्रशंसा की है। वायु



प्रदूषण में हमारे कई शहर वैश्विक स्तर पर शांति पर  
हैं। अक्टूबर, 2018 में आयी विश्व स्वास्थ्य संगठन  
को रिपोर्ट के अनुसार, पांच वर्ष से कम उम्र के  
कम-से-कम 60,987 भारतीय बच्चों को मौत का  
कारण पीएम 2.5 था, जल प्रदूषण के कारण भी  
सैकड़ों लोग हर वर्ष अपंगता के शिकार हो रहे हैं।  
वर्षों, 130 मरु दुर्घ (एमएमआर) 22 प्रतिशत घट  
कर 130 (प्रति एक लाख जीवित शिशु पर) हो  
गयी है। सतत विकास लक्ष्य का उद्देश्य 2030 तक  
इस संख्या को घटा कर 70 करना है, जबकि भारत  
इसे 2022 तक ही प्राप्त करना चाहता है। स्वास्थ्य  
के कई मानकों पर भारत बेहद पिछड़ा है। इस स्थिति

में सुधार के लिए सरकार द्वारा स्वास्थ्य के क्षेत्र में कुछ महत्वपूर्ण कदम उठाये गये हैं। आयुष्मान भारत योजना के तहत सरकार 10 करोड़ गरीब परिवारों को सालाना पांच लाख रुपये का बीमा कवर दे रही है। अनुमान है कि इससे तकरीबन 50 करोड़ लोग स्वास्थ्य सुविधाओं का लाभ ले पायेंगे। अपनी एक योजना के तहत सरकार ने 1.5 लाख हेक्टेयर और वेलेनस स्टैट परियोजना के घोषणा भी की थीं। वहीं, मोदी सरकार की योजना नये स्वास्थ्य केंद्र और देश भर के 5,000 जन औषधि केंद्रों में स्थैलांजी लैब खोलने की है। हालांकि, इसके लिए पैसे कहाँ से आयेंगे, यह एक बड़ी चुनौती है। वर्तमान में हमारे देश में बजट का केवल 2.2 प्रतिशत व जीडीपी का महज 1.5 प्रतिशत ही स्वास्थ्य पर खर्च किया जाता है। सरकार ने स्वास्थ्य बजट बढ़ाने का बात कही है। एक और बड़ी चुनौती सरकारी नीतियों के सही कार्यान्वयन और प्रबंधन की भी है। इस और ध्यान देने की बहुत ज्यादा जरूरत है।

वर्ष 2004-05 में जीडीपी में कृषि (कृषि, वानिकी और मत्स्य पालन) का हिस्सा 21 प्रतिशत था, जो बीते पंद्रह वर्षों में गिर कर 13 प्रतिशत पर आ गया है, जबकि इसकी तुलना में इस क्षेत्र में कार्यबल की संख्या में कोई कमी नहीं आयी है. देश में लगभग 55 प्रतिशत श्रमबल कृषि क्षेत्र में कार्यरत हैं. अनुमानतः 26 करोड़ लोग इस क्षेत्र में काम कर रहे हैं. इस कारण देश की तत्कालीन 55 से 57 प्रतिशत आबादी कृषि पर निर्भर है, लेकिन सरकारी उपेक्षा के कारण इनकी स्थिति दयनीय बनी हुई है. वर्तमान में इनकी पेशानी का कारण खाद कीमतों में गिरावट है, जिससे उत्पादन का लागत नहीं निकल पाता और किसान कर्ज में डूबते चले जाते हैं. अंततः वे खेती से पलायन करने या आत्महत्या करने की विवश हो जाते हैं. मोदी सरकार द्वारा नया समर्थन मूल्य लागू करने के बावजूद किसानों को फायदा नहीं मिल पा रहा है. इसी वर्ष सरकार ने किसान सम्मान निधि योजना लागू की है, जिसके तहत किसानों को प्रतिवर्ष 6,000 रुपये तीन किश्तों में देने का प्रावधान है, अब हर किसान को यह राशि मिलेगी. इतना ही नहीं, मोदी सरकार की नयी नीति के अनुसार, 60 वर्ष के बाद अब हर महीने किसानों को यह 3,000



भी कम जिम्मेदार नहीं है। इसी वर्ष मार्च से मई के दौरान प्री-मॉन्सून बारिश में 22 प्रतिशत की कमी आयी है। इस कमी से गन्ना, सब्जी, फल कागज जैसे फसलों के उत्पादन पर बुरा प्रभाव पड़ सकता है। आइए आइए गोंधीनगर के अल्टीमेटम सिस्टम द्वारा जारी चेतावनी के अनुसार, देश के 40 प्रतिशत से ज्यादा हिस्से में इस वर्ष सूखा पड़ने की आशंका है और करीब इस्सट के आधे हिस्से में गंभीर या असाधारण सूखा पड़ सकता है। मॉन्सून के सामान्य से बहुत कम रहने की संभावना भी जतायी जा रही है। नतीजा, फसलों की खेती अथवा की लागत बढ़ जायेगी, साथ ही उनका उत्पादन भी कम होगा। ऐसी स्थिति में किसानों की आर्थिक स्थिति तो प्रभावित होगी ही अनाज, सब्जी की आपूर्ति कम होने और महंगा बढ़ने से मुद्रा स्मृति भी बदेगी। यानी महंगाई का बढ़ना यावत।

## शिक्षा तंत्र में बदलाव की जरूरत

अगले साल भारतीय जनसंख्या की औसत आयु 25 साल होने का अनुमान है। ऐसे में रोजगार के समुचित अवसर पैदा करने के लिए सरकार के सामने शिक्षा के क्षेत्र में ठोस पहल करने की चुनौती है। शिक्षा का सीधा संबंध 25 फीसदी आबादी और अर्थव्यवस्था से है। विभिन्न रिपोर्टों ने रेखांकित किया है कि बड़ी संख्या में पेशेवर और उच्च शिक्षा पाये लोग वास्तव में रोजगार के लायक ही नहीं हैं तथा उनकी उत्पादकता असंतोषजनक है। इस स्थिति को बेहतर के लिए प्राथमिक स्तर से ही शिक्षा प्रणाली में आमूल-चूल बदलाव की दरकार है। जाणकारों की मानें, तो इसके लिए सार्वजनिक निवेश को बढ़ाना होगा। भारत अभी अपने सकल घरेलू उत्पादन का मात्र 2.7 फीसदी शिक्षा के मद में खर्च करता है। इसे छह फीसदी करने की मांग लंबे समय से उठती रही है। सरकारों स्कूलों में प्राथमिक और माध्यमिक स्तर पर दशकों से चली आ रही शिक्षा की बदहाली अब बेहद चिंताजनक स्तर पर पहुंच चुकी है। इस क्षेत्र में निजी क्षेत्र की आमद मददगार हो सकती है, पर सरकारी स्कूलों को दुरुस्त किये बिना ठोस समाधान की स्मृद नहीं है। देशभर में 25 करोड़ से अधिक छात्र लगभग 14 लाख स्कूलों में शिक्षा प्राप्त कर रहे हैं। इनमें से 75 फीसदी सरकार द्वारा संचालित हैं। शिक्षक-प्रशिक्षण का स्तरहीन होना और आवश्यक संसाधनों का अभाव हमारी शिक्षा व्यवस्था की बड़ी खामियों में से है। नियमित रूप से संशोधित नहीं होने के कारण पाठ्यक्रम बदलते समय के लिए उपयोगी नहीं रह जाते हैं। उन्हें अद्यतन करने के साथ



के अनुपूरक, को भी जोड़ना चाहिए। शोध, परिणाम एवं देश-विदेश की संस्थाओं से जुड़ाव जैसे पहलुओं के हिसाब से उच्च शिक्षा संस्थानों की समीक्षा करने की आवश्यकता है। उच्च एवं पेशेवर शिक्षा की संस्थाओं के नियमन का प्रश्न भी मानव संसाधन मंत्रालय के समक्ष होगा। राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा नीति के प्रारूप पर संसद और संसद के बाहर उचित चर्चा व सहमति से इसे लागू कराना भी सरकार के लिए आसान नहीं होगा।

# सुरक्षा पर समुचित ध्यान

सरकार को मिले घेघड जनादेश का एक प्रमुख आधार राष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा का प्रश्न था . पहले चरण में इस मसले पर मोदी सरकार की उपलब्धियाँ उल्लेखनीय रही हैं, पर उसे घेरेलू अतिवाद और आतंकवाद, सेना के आधुनिकीकरण तथा चीन एवं पाकिस्तान से संभावित खतरों से निबटने जैसे मामलों से लगातार जुझना पड़ा था. हालांकि अवसरालयों पर अंकुश लगाने में बहुत कामयाबी मिली है, पर कश्मीर में आतंकवाद और अवसरालयवाद



की चुनौती बेहद गंभीर है। पिछली सरकार के कार्यकाल के पूरा होते रक्षा बजट सकल घरेलू उत्पाद का सिर्फ 1.5 फीसदी रह गया है। इससे सेना के आधुनिकीकरण और जरूरी साजो-सामान की खरीद पर अवरण पड़ा है। इस कमी को पूरा करने के लिए जुलाई में पेश होनेवाले बजट में रक्षा मंत्रि ने खर्च को बढ़ाने की जरूरत है। सेना के तीनों अंगों में प्रशासनिक और पेशेवर सुधारों के साथ सरकार के सामने ठोस व संतुलित राष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा रणनीति को तैयार करने की चुनौती भी है।

आंतरिक और बाह्य सुरक्षा को सुदृढ़ करने के लिए हथियारों और अन्य जरूरी उपकरणों की खरीद हमें सुरक्षा देशों से करनी पड़ती है, इस मामले में भारत दुनिया का सबसे बड़ा आयातक है, इससे भारी धन तो कंपनी ही है, सामानों को पाने और सेना को सीपे जिन से भी बेमतलब देश ही होती है, इस समस्या से कुछ राहत पाने के लिए बहुत अरसे से रक्षा अनुसंधान और उत्पादन बढ़ाने पर ध्यान देने की मांग उठती रही है, पर इस दिशा में हमारी प्रगति निराशाजनक रही है, वैश्वक जूनोअति और रणनीतियों के क्षेत्र में उलट-पुलट के माहौल में हथियारों के आयात पर पूरी तरह निर्भर सेना परेशानी का कारण बन सकता है, घरेलू रक्षा उत्पादन से न सिर्फ सैन्य शक्ति को समृद्ध करने में बड़ी मदद मिलेगी, बल्कि इससे अर्थव्यवस्था में भी मजबूत हासिल होगी।

## अंतरराष्ट्रीय राजनीति के पेच

विदेश मंत्री एस जयशंकर को पहले दिन से ही अमेरिका-चीन व्यापार युद्ध और ईरान पर अमेरिकी प्रतिबंध के माहौल में भारत के आर्थिक और रणनीतिक हितों को साधने की चुनौती है। चीन के साथ संबंधों को बेहतर करना भी एजेंडे में ऊपर है। अनुभवी कूटनीतिज्ञ होने तथा मोदी सरकार के पहले कार्यकाल की उपलब्धियों के कारण विदेश नीति के मोर्चे पर जयशंकर को कुछ आसानी रहेगी, परंतु अंतरराष्ट्रीय राजनीति और आर्थिक का वर्तमान अनिश्चितताओं से भरा है। महत्वपूर्ण देशों की ओर से दबाव का सामना करना पड़ सकता है, जैसा कि ईरानी तेल के आयात के मामले में देखा गया है। ऐसे में एक सुचितिनीति का निर्धारण आवश्यक है। अमेरिका, जापान, रूस, फ्रांस, और यूरोपीय संघ के साथ वाणिज्यिक और सुरक्षा संबंधों को बढ़ाना तथा पड़ोसी देशों के साथ बहुआयामी सहयोग की दिशा में अग्रसर होना सरकार की प्राथमिकताएं होंगी। संयुक्त राष्ट्र और विश्व व्यापार संगठन में सुधार, सुरक्षा परिषद में स्थायी सदस्यता तथा न्यूक्लियर सलाइज ग्रुप में शामिल होने जैसे विषय भी सरकार के सामने होंगे। पाकिस्तान के साथ क्या रhetoric रहेगा, यह भी एक महत्वपूर्ण प्रश्न है। पाकिस्तान के कारण दक्षिणी एशियाई देशों के समूह सार्क फिलहाल निष्क्रिय है। सरकार को इस्लामाबाद में प्रस्तावित बैक में हिस्सेदारी पर भी राय बनाना है। सार्क का क्या भविष्य होगा, यह भी कुछ दिनों में स्पष्ट हो सकता है। अफगानिस्तान में शांति प्रक्रिया तथा तालिबान के साथ चल रही वार्ता के बारे में भारत को स्पष्ट समझ भी बनाना है। चूंकि बहुपक्षीय व्यापारों की अब विदेश नीति का ही हिस्सा बन चुका है, ऐसे में वित्त, वाणिज्य और विदेश मंत्रालयों के बीच सहभागिता स्थापित करना भी जरूरी है।



## अर्थव्यवस्था की सुस्ती

भारत विश्व की तेजी से विकसित होती अर्थव्यवस्था है. विश्व मुद्रा कोष के मुताबिक, वर्ष 2018 में भारत के अर्थव्यवस्था की अनुमानित वृद्धि दर 7.1 प्रतिशत थी, लेकिन बीते कुछ महीनों से इससे गति देने वाले संकेतक गंभीर समस्या से गुजर रहे हैं, जिससे वृद्धि दर घटने का खतरा हो गया है. इस कारण वित्त वर्ष 2018-19 में जीडीपी वृद्धि दर सिर्फ 6.98 प्रतिशत रहने का अनुमान लगाया गया था, जबकि इसके पिछले वित्त वर्ष में जीडीपी



वृद्धि दर 7.2 प्रतिशत थी. वहीं, बीते मार्च में समाप्त चौथी तिमाही में जीडीपी वृद्धि दर गिर कर 5.8 प्रतिशत पर आ गयी. अध्ययनस्था की इस सुस्ती का एक प्रमुख कारण औद्योगिक उत्पादन में गिरावट है. विनिर्माण क्षेत्र में सुस्त बने रहने से इस वर्ष मार्च में देश के औद्योगिक उत्पादन (आइआइपी) में पिछले वर्ष इसी अवधि की तुलना में 0.1 प्रतिशत की गिरावट आयी है. सरकारी आंकड़ों के मुताबिक 21 मार्च में औद्योगिक उत्पादन का यह सबसे

कमजोर प्रदर्शन है. वित्त वर्ष 2018-19 की पूरी अवधि में औद्योगिक वृद्धि दर 3.6 प्रतिशत रही रही, जो पिछले 3 वर्षों में सबसे कम रही है. औद्योगिक उत्पादन में गिरावट का मतलब उत्पादक के लिए मांग में कमी है. उद्योग अर्थव्यवस्था का सबसे मजबूत पहलू माना जाता है. क्योंकि यह बड़ी मात्रा में रोजगार सृजन का कारक होता है, इसमें कमी का मतलब रोजगार का घटना. आंकड़े बताते हैं कि कार की बिक्री वित्त वर्ष 2017 के सालाना 9.2 प्रतिशत और 2018 के 7.9 की तुलना में 2019 में महज 6.3 प्रतिशत रही रही है. मांग में कमी की वजह से ही अटल में कारों की बिक्री में करीब 17 फीसदी की कमी आती है, जो आठ साल की सबसे बड़ी कमी है. कार के अलावा, दोपहिया वाहन और ट्रैक्टर की बिक्री भी घटी है. इन्डिया ही नहीं, गैर-महल, गैर-समा, गैर-चांदी और कम कीमती व अह्स कीमती पथरों के निर्यात में भी बीते बार गिरने में कमी दर्ज हुई है. जीडीपी की निर्यात में हिस्सेदारी भी वित्त वर्ष 2014 के 25.4 की तुलना में 2019 में 19.7 पर पहुंच गयी है. वहीं, वित्त वर्ष 2019 में राशिकोषीय घाट 1.04 लाख करोड़ रुपये रहने का अनुमान है, जो जीडीपी का 3.4 प्रतिशत है. अर्थव्यवस्था की सुसुरी को दूर करने के लिए सरकार को न सिर्फ रोजगार का सृजन करना होगा, बल्कि लोगों की क्रय शक्ति बढ़ाने के उपाय भी करने होंगे।

## तलाशना होगा बैंकिंग संकट का समाधान

नयी सरकार के सामने एक बड़ी चुनौती बैंड लोन से निबटने व वित्तीय सेक्टर में बने नकदी संकट को दूर करने की होगी। दिवालिया कानून (आइबीसी) के जरिये एनडीए प्रथम सरकार ने इससे निबटने का कदम उठाया था। इसका लक्ष्य 10 लाख करोड़ रुपये से ज्यादा के बैंड लोन का समाधान निकालना था। हालांकि, अब भी बैंकों पर बैंड लोन का बोझ बढ़ता जा रहा है। वहीं, दिसंबर 2018 तक सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र के बैंकों की गैर-निष्पादित परिसंपत्तियां आठ ट्रिलियन रुपये से अधिक थीं।

लैंकॉम अब वित्तीय क्षेत्र में नकदी का संकट खड़ा हो गया है, जिसका समाधान निकालना होगा।

पिछले साल सितंबर में आइएल एंड एफएस के कर्ज डिफॉल्ट शुरू करने के बाद यह संकट बना है। उसके ऊपर करीब 90 हजार करोड़ रुपये का कर्ज है। इसकी वजह से बहुत-सी गैर बैंकिंग वित्तीय कंपनियां कर्ज देने में आनाकानी करने लगी हैं। व्यापार घाटा भी बढ़ता जा रहा है। अप्रैल 2019 तक भारत का व्यापार घाटा रिकॉर्ड 15.3 बिलियन डॉलर पर पहुंच गया, जबकि माघ में यह 10.9 बिलियन डॉलर था। वहीं, प्रत्यक्ष विदेशी निवेश भी थमी आ रही है। वाणिज्य और उद्योग मंत्रालय के आंकड़े के अनुसार, वित्त वर्ष 2019 के अप्रैल-दिसंबर माह के बीच व्यापार घाटा सात प्रतिशत की गिरावट के साथ 33.49 बिलियन डॉलर पर पहुंच गया, जबकि 2017-18 के इसी अवधि में यह 35.94 बिलियन डॉलर था। बीते कुछ समय से एफडीआई में भी कमी आयी है। इस कमी के कारण देश के भुगतान संतुलन पर दबाव पड़ सकता है। नतीजा रुपये के मूल्य में गिरावट आ सकती है। ये वजहों में से एक है जो वर्तमान में सरकार को परेशान कर रही है। नयी वित्त मंत्री के लिए वित्त क्षेत्र का इन समस्याओं से निबटना आसान नहीं होगा।





# 10 IDEA EXCHANGE

NEWSMAKERS IN THE NEWSROOM

We travelled across Bengal, both clockwise and anti-clockwise. So we were able to take two rounds of a district in one cycle in two months. This led to large-scale mobilisation, workers gained confidence”



## WHY KAILASH VIJAYVARGIYA

Since winning two seats in West Bengal in the 2014 Lok Sabha polls, the BJP has been working to increase its footprint in the state. Kailash Vijayvargiya was appointed the party’s state in-charge four years ago and has since been travelling across Bengal to strengthen the BJP’s organisation on the ground. In the general elections this year,

the BJP emerged as the main challenger to the Trinamool, and won 18 of the state’s 42 seats. The party’s vote share also increased to 40.25 per cent from 16.8 per cent in 2014. Vijayvargiya, who was appointed national general secretary in 2015, was also in charge of Haryana polls, and has served as a minister in the Madhya Pradesh government



“If there is a BJP government in Bengal, we will conduct the NRC drive. Over a crore intruders will be identified. These people are taking away the resources and jobs of Bengal’s people”

## LIZ MATHEW: What were some of the challenges that you faced in Bengal?

After three decades of Left rule, Mamata Banerjee rose to power in Bengal after a big struggle. People expected things to change, they wanted democracy to be reinstated, they wanted an end to dictatorship and violence, they wanted peace and development... Unfortunately, nothing changed. An era of atrocities and murders began. At first, Congress workers were killed, then BJP and CPM workers. In the last four-and-a-half years that I have been the BJP in-charge of the state, 103 BJP workers have been killed, including a few after the election results were announced.

There is ‘syndicate raj’ in the state. While the government runs the state, syndicates control the districts. People affiliated to the ruling party in the state are part of this syndicate. One cannot even build a house in Bengal without the involvement of the syndicate.

There was an apprehension among people about which way to go, especially since the Congress doesn’t have any presence there and the Left is almost over. When I was made in-charge, our party president Amit Shahji told me that two states, Kerala and West Bengal, were tough to win and that I should take charge of West Bengal. When I first went to Bengal, I thought it would take us at least 15 years to be in a position to challenge the ruling party. After doing a tour of the state twice, I met the party president again. He said, ‘I have sent you for five years, not 15. I am standing behind you, just tell me what you need.’ Then, I got a flat in Bengal and began to visit districts to understand the problems of the people. I, along with Suresh Pujari, a party worker from Odisha, and Shiv Prakashji, our national sangathan mantri, travelled across the length and breadth of the state, both clockwise and anti-clockwise. By doing so, we were able to take two rounds of a district in one cycle within two-to-two-and-a-half months. This led to large-scale mobilisation and our party workers gained confidence.

Subsequently, attacks on our workers also increased. No one was spared. Even the Trinamool and the syndicate in the state have two-three different groups. They fought amongst themselves, and in the last three years of Mamataji’s tenure, 65 Trinamool workers have been murdered by fellow workers. I think West Bengal is the only state where workers of the ruling party kill each other, and then blame the Opposition. More than 150 BJP workers, who haven’t even killed a mosquito, have been booked under Section 302 (murder).

Amid all these atrocities by the ruling party, it was an uphill task to strengthen our party base in the state. I think it is because of the leadership of the Prime Minister, political strategies of our party chief, and our efforts on the ground that we have been able to build and strengthen our network in every district of Bengal. We kept a low profile, didn’t do any publicity and just worked to strengthen the organisation.

Everyone thought since we had two (Lok Sabha) seats in Bengal, we would probably get four to six seats this time. I had set a target of 25 seats. People would laugh at it. But I told everyone it will be an astonishing result. We would have won 25 seats had there not been violence during the elections, because of which many people did not step out to vote. But even then, the people helped us win 18 seats.

## LIZ MATHEW: Why were you chosen to handle the elections in Bengal?

You should ask Amit Shahji that (*laughs*). I think I have the most amount of experience among all party general secretaries. I have been a councillor, a mayor and an MLA for six terms. Besides, I have seen violence very closely. In the ‘80s and ‘90s, Indore had many textile mills and trade unions. My father was a mill worker there. I lived in the *mazdoor basti* (workers’ colony). I have seen fights closely... In those days firearms or explosives were not as common, it was mostly swords and sticks. Amitbhai knew all about me and so he probably thought I could work in Bengal as I have seen it all.

## RAVISH TIWARI: Your opponents say communal politics has helped your performance in Bengal.

We are not responsible for the situation in Bengal; Mamataji is. When I went to Kolkata for the first time, I saw big hoardings of people offering namaaz in the Salt Lake area. When I looked closely, I realised that the hoardings had Mamataji’s face on them. I was told that she often visited the area and offered namaaz. I have never seen a Hindu leader offer namaaz like this anywhere in the country. There is always a reaction when things are stretched too far.

Durga Puja is the biggest festival in Bengal. When a Durga *visarjan* procession

# ‘Shattered belief that TMC can’t be defeated... When we create that mood in Kerala, BJP will win’

BJP’s general secretary in charge of West Bengal, Kailash Vijayvargiya, says Bengal’s vote for the party was a “reaction” to the violence in the state, claims BJP got not just Left’s, but also TMC and Congress votes, and talks about “change of demography” in Bengal districts



BJP’s national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya with Associate Editor Liz Mathew in *The Indian Express* newsroom. Abhinav Saha

is stopped because of Muharram, it will evoke a reaction. People had to go to the court and get permission for the procession. This also led to more than 10,000 people assembling at Durga Puja pandals, which otherwise would not have had more than a thousand people. That reaction was not ours, it was the people’s reaction.

(In 2016), the police station in Kaliachak area of Malda district was torched. Most of the Hindu families there were thrown out of the area. None of the media houses initially reported the incident, till a senior reporter from a big television channel went to cover the incident. That story showed how AK-47 rifles were used in the violence, and how so many people had to leave.

Therefore, despite the fact that we did not have workers to assist us in the election process, people still voted for us. This shows their sentiment towards the ruling party. In villages, despite bomb blasts at night, women gathered to vote in the morning. They called police and voted under their protection. It was all a reaction. Not a single BJP worker was involved in any of it (the violence). So, when they say that we did it (communal politics)... we did not. We might have benefited from it, but we are not responsible for it. The responsibility lies with the state government.

## LIZ MATHEW: You say that there is fear among the people in the state. In that case, why didn’t all the Hindu votes come to your party?

That is why I am saying that the allegation that there was polarisation is baseless. Had that been the case, we would have got all the Hindu votes. We did not polarise. We put forward Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s face and spoke about jobs for the youth, women empowerment, quality education and healthcare services... That is why we did not get 100 per cent of the Hindu votes.

## ABANTIKA GHOSH: Did the Vidyasagar College incident harm the BJP in the seventh phase of the polls?

It is a matter of research for us. There were nine Lok Sabha seats (in the phase) and they were all very difficult for us. The Trinamool has more influence in the region, and above that, there was *gundagardi* (hooliganism).

## RAVISH TIWARI: In the Lok Sabha elections, you sought votes in Narendra Modi’s name. The BJP does

## not have a face in Bengal. Will that affect the results in the state polls?

Before the Assembly election, there is the local body election. We might only get 10 per cent of the votes in the local body election. It is not an election. The state election commissioner, the police, the Trinamool and its goons, together fight the local body elections. You must have seen the last panchayat elections. The situation there is very bad. The demographic of eight districts has changed entirely. When we visited some villages in these parts, it appeared that we were not in our country. To save Bengal, it is necessary to stop the entry of infiltrators and illegal operations.

## KRISHN KAUSHIK: You claim that you don’t polarise, but then you say that certain areas in Bengal don’t look like our country. Your party didn’t give tickets to Muslims, you don’t talk about Muslim voters...

We had Muslim candidates. Our candidate came second in Murshidabad. We have also received Muslim votes. I never said that we didn’t receive Muslim votes. We have got Muslim votes, though less in numbers, but we have got them.

## ABANTIKA GHOSH: In its campaign, the BJP spoke out against dynasts. But now you have Arjun Singh and his son, Mukul Roy and his son, in the party.

We had no other option. We had no candidate from Arjun Singh’s constituency (Barrackpore). I am not ashamed to say that Arjun Singh is very powerful there and our

party didn’t have a *sangathan* in the region. We made our party’s office in his area, but his men captured it. We still had the office but with their party flag. (Arjun Singh defected from the Trinamool to the BJP in March.) In a democracy, the end result of an election is not a gold, silver or bronze medal. You either win or lose. In order to win, you need a good candidate.

## LIZ MATHEW: Did you get all the CPM cadre votes in Bengal?

Remember the slogan Prime Minister Narendra Modi gave: ‘*Chup chap, kamal chaap*’ (Quietly vote for the lotus). It is interesting to see how intelligent the voters have become. In villages, people knew they wouldn’t be allowed to vote if they said they wanted to vote for the BJP. So they put on the Trinamool’s tag and went to vote. But, at the polling booth, they secretly pressed the lotus button (the BJP’s party symbol). The political violence and undemocratic activities are causing problems for the Trinamool in the state. We have got the Trinamool’s votes. We have also received the Congress’s and the CPM’s votes.

## RAVISH TIWARI: On one hand you say that Muslims voted for you, on the other you claim that in certain parts of the state, which have a larger Muslim population, it doesn’t feel like your own country. These are contrary viewpoints.

When we talked to the people there, it felt like this was not a part of our country. Their behaviour, mannerisms, implied that

they are not a part of this country.

## VANDITA MISHRA: What kind of behaviour?

If you go to any part of the country, people have a welcoming attitude. In any village, if you ask people for directions, they will first ask you if you have had any food or water. This is the culture of our country, *atithi devo bhava* (the guest is god). But when we went to some of the places in Bengal, it felt like we were a burden on them. It’s a mindset. I go to a lot of Muslim areas where I get a lot of love from the people. I attend many Muslim events in Indore. I have also got Muslim votes in Indore. It’s not like we don’t go to Muslim areas, but in that particular area, we felt unwelcome.

## RAVISH TIWARI: You have worked in Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and now West Bengal for the BJP. The political violence aside, what difference do you see in the politics of these states?

In Uttar Pradesh, there is a politician in every second house. If you talk to a Jat in UP, he will tell you the entire history of the community. A Yadav will tell you how they have been oppressed for ages. The voter in UP is very politically aware. Haryana’s voters are the most honest. I went to Haryana for an event of transporters. They gave me buttermilk and looked after me well. When I asked them whether they will vote for the BJP, they said we are Chautala’s men (*laughs*). I have never met such honest people anywhere else in the country. In West Bengal, people read a lot of newspapers. They read and they think. It is tough to talk to a Bengali because they don’t open up easily. They are very proud of their culture and language and are very emotional. Women in West Bengal are very concerned about their children’s education and how the quality of education is falling.

## RAVISH TIWARI: Why did the BJP lose the Madhya Pradesh polls?

There are two reasons. Firstly, we were in power in the state for 15 years. In this time period, we built roads and infrastructure. We had nothing new to show this time. Someone who was four-five years old when we started in Madhya Pradesh, could now vote. He didn’t know what the BJP had done in these 15 years. Rahul Gandhi said he will waive off farm loans in eight days, but nothing happened. He said he will give pension to the unemployed. No money

was given. The Lok Sabha results were an answer to this politics of cheating.

## ABANTIKA GHOSH: Ram Navami celebrations are now held with much more fervour in Bengal. Some Bengalis have stopped eating non-vegetarian food on Tuesdays because they worship Hanuman. People from West Bengal have always been Durga worshippers. How did this happen and how did it affect the voting?

Every action has a reaction. Ram Navami and Hanuman Jayanti were not celebrated in West Bengal till four years ago. The celebrations were curbed. Children who wore Hanuman costumes and went around with *gadas* (maces) were slapped with cases under the Arms Act. People holding Ram Navami processions without permission were thrown into jails. So there was a reaction from society. If people said *Jai Shri Ram*, they were slapped and arrested. (In these elections), a whole village voted while chanting *Jai Shri Ram*. This is Newton’s law, every action has an equal and opposite reaction.

## ANANT GOENKA: How do you think the social fabric of Bengal will change in the next 10 years?

If there is a BJP government, we will conduct the National Register of Citizens drive. Over a crore intruders will be identified. These people are taking away the resources and jobs of Bengal’s people. Strict action will be taken against them.

## ANANT GOENKA: And if Mamata Banerjee continues to be CM, how will the Centre-state relations play out?

The Prime Minister recently said that we are with the people who trusted us, and those who didn’t, we will strive to win their trust. We go by his motto of ‘*Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas*’. The PM called Mamataji after the cyclone, she didn’t pick up his call and then said that she doesn’t consider him the Prime Minister. That’s her prerogative. The PM did his duty.


## KRISHN KAUSHIK: Why didn’t the BJP perform well in Kerala?

We have shattered the belief that the Trinamool cannot be defeated. Once that happens in Kerala, when people start believing that the BJP can win, we will get their votes. We haven’t been able to create that environment in the state yet. The day it is created, the BJP will win in Kerala too.





ACROSS THE AISLE



P CHIDAMBARAM

The key idea — and the one that will be most disruptive — is decentralisation. The short-term results may be unsatisfactory but in the medium to long term, better governed states will deliver better outcomes than at present and that will make the people demand better governance at the state level. Areas that will immensely benefit from decentralisation are primary and secondary healthcare, drinking water, sanitation, renewable energy, distribution of electricity, etc

How it can be sabka vikas

AN OVERwhelming mandate is not always a blessing, a weakened Opposition makes governance more onerous and a successive second term deprives the rulers of any excuse. I am sure Prime Minister Narendra Modi is fully aware of the enormous expectations of the people and the huge burden placed on his Council of Ministers. Observing his first term, I am certain he will make every effort to rise to the challenge. There are two problems in the way. The first is the time-honoured way of doing things in India. The second is the competing claims of different sections of the people in which, invariably, the voices of the poorest, the weakest, the most deprived and the exploited are drowned. Our experience has been that at the end of the term (1) the time-honoured ways have only accumulated more time and honour and (2) the poorest, weakest, deprived and exploited remain poor, weak, deprived and exploited.

TIME-TESTED & FAILED

In his second term, Mr Modi must start by dismantling the time-honoured ways. Mr Arvind Panagariya, a friend of Mr Modi, and Mr Venkatesh Kumar (a professor at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences) have described those ways as follows:

*'A key element in his (Mr Modi's) governance model was the appointment of a number of groups of secretaries with each group assigned the task of preparing presentations on projects, programmes and*

*policies to be implemented the following year in key sectors of the economy... Once finalized, these presentations became the road maps of the following year for the major sectors.'*

Then, the authors caution:

*'But when it comes to radical reforms, this approach has a downside. By nature, bureaucrats are cautious and lean heavily in favour of projects and programmes. Even when they propose policy changes, they are piecemeal and rarely go beyond tinkering.'*

I agree with them entirely. However, I do not agree with their alternative method. Examined closely, it is no different. In the alternative model, the Mission Head will replace the minister, the Adviser will replace the secretary and young professionals will replace the joint secretary and her team!

DISRUPTION IS THE KEY

The results will be no different than the outcomes of Swachh Bharat and Ujjwala. In the case of Swachh Bharat, the bitter truth is no large state of India (except Gujarat) has been declared Open Defecation Free. What percentage of the toilets that were built are unused or unusable? In the case of Ujjwala, the proof of success or failure is the average number of replacement cylinders purchased by a beneficiary in a year: is it a disappointing 3 or an optimum 8? You know the answers as well as I do.

Radical reforms can be effected only through radical policies and disruption.

In 1991-96, we made a bonfire of the Red Book and foreign trade was radically transformed. We threw away the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act and foreign exchange reserves soared. We scrapped industrial licensing and a new generation of entrepreneurs emerged. Mr Modi must try something like that in education, healthcare, and rural roads and transport. In school education he could borrow from the Congress manifesto and transfer the subject to the State List, give money to the states and set them free to innovate and compete. The people will demand results from their state government and, in course of time, get results.

The key idea — and the one that will be most disruptive — is decentralisation. The short-term results may be unsatisfactory but in the medium to long term, better governed states will deliver better outcomes than at present and that will make the people demand better governance at the state level. Areas that will immensely benefit from decentralisation are primary and secondary healthcare, drinking water, sanitation, renewable energy, distribution of electricity, etc.

RECALL DR SUBRAMANIAN


The second formidable challenge is the 'poorest of the poor'. Since they are the poorest, they are also at the bottom of the ladder in literacy, health indicators, housing, sanitation, consumption of food and water, and access to public

goods and services. In a village, you will find them on the edges of the village. In poorer states, you will find whole villages populated by them. Let's admit it, under successive governments, the development process has by-passed the poorest 20 per cent of India. Ministers and officials who visit villages, and programmes, stop — or are stopped — at the main street. The only way to reach the poorest is help them help themselves: start the fire of aspiration, let it rage in their hearts and homes, let them break out of the grip of poverty and lift themselves up. PM-KISAN will not help them because very few own a patch of land, most are agricultural labour or other labour, and a significant number lives in towns and cities. The disruptive policy change will be a basic income through direct transfer of money. Mr Modi can attribute the idea to Dr Arvind Subramanian and recall him to head a department to design and implement the scheme.

Not much will change if we trudge along at 6-7 per cent rate of annual growth. Nothing will change if we tweak current policies or tinker with administrative systems. More damage will be done by vesting officials with extraordinary powers or threatening people with prosecution and imprisonment. The single most effective instrument of transformative change is empowering the people and placing faith in their wisdom, industry and capacity.

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## INSIDE TRACK



COOMI KAPOOR

ADVANI SYNDROME

THE IMPORTANCE of Amit Shah, not just in party affairs but also in government, was evident even before he was formally sworn in as a minister. Ever since the poll results, Shah has been continuously by Narendra Modi's side, whether in Delhi, Varanasi or Ahmedabad. Before the swearing-in, the Prime Minister and Shah spent marathon sessions confabulating over the names for the Cabinet. Shah wanted a Cabinet post to demonstrate his administrative capabilities. He wants to be perceived as not just a wizard organisation man, but as Modi's eventual successor. This is similar to the LK Advani syndrome, where for years Advani was the backroom boy and Atal Bihari Vajpayee the face of the BJP. Finally, Advani decided he wanted to share the glory of the centrestage. Despite being Home Minister, Shah is expected to continue to devote considerable time to party affairs, particularly with Maharashtra and Haryana Assembly elections due shortly.

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FINANCIAL ASSET

Nirmala Sitharaman was selected to head the Finance Ministry since, apart from some familiarity with the ministry, Modi wanted a person he considered not close to any business lobby. Earlier, Arun Jaitley, Sitharaman's mentor, was one of the few who fitted the bill. The ministry controls all the powerful economic regulatory bodies. A scholarly understanding of finance is not essential since, in the Modi regime, senior officials and technocrats, selected and vetted by the PMO, play an important role in key ministries.

PEACOCK COLOURS

At the 2014 swearing-in, Smriti Irani stood out in terms of sartorial style for her bright red, yellow and black sari emblazoned with huge lotuses. This time the male ministers stole the limelight. Many wore Modi jackets featuring all the colours of the rainbow, including jaundice yellow, shocking pink, sky blue and bottle green. A few like Modi, Shah and Rajnath Singh settled for more formal greys and browns. Women ministers Nirmala Sitharaman and Harsimrat Kaur Badal wore pastel pinks. Smriti was dressed in a smart and subdued orange ikkat silk.

## OUT OF MY MIND



MEGHNAD DESAI

Dear Rahul Gandhi,

You may not recall but I wrote you an open letter in this column some months ago. I requested you then to give up your presidency. I said that would be your greatest sacrifice for the nation and a credit for the family known for many such sacrifices since the days of your great great grandfather Motilal Nehru.

Many will tell you to desist. They will cry

## MAMATA'S RETREAT

For three days after the election results, Mamata Banerjee remained shut at her Kalighat residence. She spent her time reading, playing music on a keyboard and introspecting. A string of Trinamool members close to her, including Indranil Sen, Dola Sen and Indrani Halder, could not get an audience. Her nephew Abhishek Banerjee was one of the few permitted entry, but after 10 pm. By Monday though, Banerjee was back at office, intent to fight fiercely for her turf. Her strategy is focusing on Bengali pride and painting the BJP as outsiders. Party members are too timid to tell her that her habit of getting out of her car and screaming at bystanders shouting *Jai Shri Ram* lost her votes, since the videos went viral.

DOUBLE TROUBLE

The poll defeats have exacerbated trouble in both H D Deve Gowda and Lalu Prasad's families. Only Gowda's grandson Prajwal Revanna won, since he was gifted his grandfather's pocketborough of Hassan. Gowda himself and his other grandson, Nikhil Kumaraswamy, son of Chief Minister H D Kumaraswamy, lost. A Karnataka periodical claimed that a drunk Nikhil berated his 86-year-old grandfather charging that the family had let him down. The Karnataka Police registered an FIR against the periodical. Prajwal, meanwhile, offered to resign to accommodate his grandfather, but Gowda declined.


In Bihar, many RJD leaders blame the feud between Lalu's sons Tej Pratap Yadav and Tejashwi Yadav for the party's disastrous showing. The RJD did not win a single seat. Even Patliputra where Lalu's daughter Misa Bharti was the candidate and Saran, Lalu's old constituency, from where Tej Pratap's estranged father-in-law Chandrika Rai stood, were lost. Small wonder that Lalu convalescing in a Ranchi hospital refused to eat for two days after the results. Tej Pratap's post-defeat letter backing his brother for party leadership was too little too late.

MASTER OF GAME

No one can doubt Amit Shah's abilities as a master campaign strategist. Shah knew exactly which disgruntled elements from opposing camps to cultivate and which to ignore. For instance, Mukul Roy was propped up since Shah was aware that Roy had intimate knowledge of the Trinamool's organisation and its money and muscle power. In UP, through intermediaries he encouraged the Samajwadi Party's key organisation man, Shivalpal Yadav, to float a separate party. Shivalpal damaged the SP in half a dozen seats. Similarly, the Prakash Ambedkar and Asaduddin Owaisi alliance in Maharashtra lost the Congress-NCP several seats.

## Why Left lost

GAINED IN TRANSLATION



J DEVIKA

ജെ ദേവിക

THE CPM leadership's assessment of the UDF victory in the general elections has been largely dismissive. They claim that it is temporary though unexpected; they believe that the position they took on the entry of menstruating women into Sabarimala resulted in a backlash that cost them votes. They point out that even their supporters chose to vote for the UDF in the hope that a resurgent Congress may take on the BJP more forcefully at the Centre.

I cannot help but think that the CPM leadership is capable of seeing only conservative Malayali Hindus when they think of 'people' misled by them. This is, of course, not the case. Almost every other substantial issue raised against them in the name of the 'people' was raised not by the conservative Hindus but by sections of the critical public who, despite all their criticism, do not wish the end of the mainstream Left. That the Left cannot see them even in these trying times is saddening. If the *savarna* party apparatchiks continue to believe that these voices can all be ignored because there is no alternative, they are mistaken.

I wish to make four observations about the CPM leadership's inability to see this.

First, did the minorities vote for the UDF because it offered them a semblance of protection, or created such an impression? The latter was surely not evident during the campaign. But then, was the mainstream Left any better? 2017 is not distant — and the echoes of the Hadiya case have not yet died down. In this atrocious violation of an Indian citizen's fundamental rights, Hadiya Ashokan was stripped of her rights by the judiciary and placed in confinement by her father, aided and abetted by Hindutva elements. Hadiya lived in a panchayat ruled by the LDF; the MLA and MP of the district were from the LDF. All this was to no avail, as the mainstream Left indulged in the most shocking Islamophobic indifference to her plight. The matter dragged on, allowing the most vicious and venomous diatribes to poison public debate.

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Congress victory in the polls. But why is it that they did not feel the presence of the CPM at the Centre was vital to making the Congress stick to a secular line? It is important to recognise that you can't be Islamophobic in 2017 and then hope to make up for it by trying to hold off ritual-obsessed conservative Hindus in 2018.

Secondly, in those seats in which the Hindutva candidates seemed to have a chance, and in others where the CPM's candidates were complete disappointments, CPM supporters openly voted for the UDF — there was anger about the CPM candidate selection which the leadership ignored. What most supporters desired was an alliance between all forces that value the Constitution, which could take on the Hindutva assault. Since this was impossible because of pig-headedness on both sides, supporters chose the next best option. Instead of blaming voters, the CPM ought to be less combative and be more open to convivial exchanges between different faiths, and the revival of a strong anti-caste imagination of the Hindu community through Sreenarayana's thought.

Thirdly, the failings of the CPM leadership's handling of the Sabarimala controversy have to be acknowledged. There are whispers that the CM's folly was to listen to the feminists. Now, that is an exaggeration — leave alone the present, there is little in the past that indicates that women are taken seriously by the CPM leadership! At the start of the Hindutva madness over Sabarimala, many feminists had indicated that this was not an issue prioritised by them in Kerala, and that the wise thing would be to cool the growing frenzy by ori-

Illustration: C R Sasikumar

enting people's attention to the reality of the devastation left by the August floods, in Sabarimala and in the homes of the most ardent *aacharaavadi*s. We argued, actually, for restoring the ecology of Sabarimala and pushing the confrontation till the sentiments built up were diffused. However, we were ignored; the feminists who the CPM leadership listened to told them exactly what they wanted to hear. In the end, they lost both the conservatives and the 'activists'. If only you were ready to acknowledge the limits of your strategy in Hindutva-hegemonised India, you would have created better tactics. This is not to bend to the Hindutva elements; but to defuse the charge they were building up. To see the difference, however, you had to be less macho.

Fourthly, why did the CPM do poorly even in seats where their votes were largely secure? The CPM should learn some hard lessons from this defeat. Indeed, this is the time to look at the fact that the activity of organising is more than getting women to come and stand in a line for the Women's Wall. It has to do with working with people at the grassroots, and offering them a vision of the future that promises justice and democracy. Not just an anticipation of burgeoning capitalism that promises to save the poor, but no one really knows how.

I do want the CPM to survive in Kerala through these times, I really do. I fully acknowledge its significance in the fight against Hindutva. But unless the CPM leadership stops pretending to be blind, one can only watch it cut down the very branch on which it sits.

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The writer is a historian and social critic.  
Translated from Malayalam

troded democracy in the party. I recall you were keen to select parliamentary candidates by a primary system. It was a revolutionary idea for India and would have spread had the Congress adopted it. But you were thwarted at first attempt and then you lost interest.

I had lot of hopes when you entered politics in 2004. You had youth, energy and you came in from the outside. But you were never focused. You dropped primaries quickly. You began to run a closed office, difficult to access, even for high-ranking Congress leaders from outside Delhi.

Politics is a 24x7 business. You have to be relentlessly at it, organising the cadres, going around checking their performance, motivating them, managing the relations

with other parties, performing in Parliament day in, and day out.

Your parliamentary efforts did improve by the third Parliament. Before that you were too self-indulgent. Your attendance was erratic. The few times you were active your army of *chamchas* leapt up and said you had made a game-changing intervention. You wrecked the Lokpal Bill by insisting it be a Constitutional amendment. That wink and hug was undignified for a Parliamentarian. Your tearing up of the ordinance on live TV humiliated Manmohan Singh, one of the nicest people forced into politics.

Just go. You are young enough to have a good life. Get away, abroad preferably. Enjoy.

## FIFTH COLUMN



TAVLEEN SINGH

Advice for the Congress

## Advice for the Congress

NEVER DID I think that a day would come when I would hope the Congress party regains some of its former glory. There are reasons why I do not like the Congress. I got my first job as a reporter a month before Mrs Gandhi declared the Emergency and enforced the most brutal press censorship. I was witness to how she used the suspension of democracy to hand the Congress party and the Government of India to her younger son. He had never even contested an election. In my view Mrs Gandhi's 'socialist', statist economic policies were an unmitigated disaster. I believe that her son and daughter-in-law's adherence to these policies is the reason why millions of Indians continue to live in extreme poverty.

The Congress party's ruling family has an arrogance and sense of entitlement that I despise. Last year, when Sonia Gandhi was the star speaker at the India Today conclave in Mumbai, I saw her exhibit this in full measure. She said two things that remain imprinted in my brain. She said she would not 'allow' Narendra Modi to become prime minister again. What made her believe that she had the power to allow or disallow Modi from becoming prime minister mystifies me. When asked the reasons for the humiliating defeat in 2014 of the party she led for two decades, she said it was only because Modi was better at 'marketing' himself.

This is now being repeated by senior Congress leaders as the reason for the drubbing the party got this time. If they really believe this then what I have to say will mean nothing. But, if there is anyone left in the party of our freedom movement who wants to see it return to its days of glory, then here is some free advice from a detractor.

I offer it only because I believe that democracy without a strong opposition party causes more harm than good. Narendra Modi may truly have a spiritual strength that will prevent absolute power from going to his head, but it is too risky to bet on this. There is not one regional party that is showing the smallest signs of becoming a national party, so it is in India's interest for the Congress party to go back to being a real political party again.

Under the leadership of Sonia Gandhi it became a private limited company with sycophants and family members as the only directors on its board. Since there was nobody to challenge her decisions there was nobody to point out that the party was slowly dying. As a veteran hack I remember a time when you could find Congress party volunteers in almost every village. I remember that these volunteers were usually from the Seva Dal and wore their white Gandhi caps with pride. In times of need it was always these volunteers who came to the help of the needy. They were decent, selfless people with a real desire for public service and with no greed for high office. They liked telling you that they had fought for India's freedom and taught their children that there was nothing better they could do in life than serve India to their last breath.

In recent election campaigns I have gone looking for this genre of Congress volunteer and can report that they have totally disappeared. They have often been replaced by RSS volunteers who are motivated by Hindutva and an aggressive, nasty kind of nationalism. Had the old kind of Congress volunteer still been around, they would have risked their lives to prevent Muslims and Dalits from being attacked and lynched by vigilantes. So where did they disappear? Why did they disappear?

If the Congress party does some serious analysis of why they have now lost two general elections to a man they believe will destroy the 'soul of India', they may find that it is because the Congress party changed its character. This started to happen when the practice of dynastic democracy began. The kind of person who got a ticket to the Lok Sabha changed. Those motivated by private gain got precedence. Ninety per cent of the Congress MPs now fall into this category. Rahul Gandhi was right when he pointed out that two of the party's chief ministers had shown more interest in getting tickets for their sons than in winning the elections in their states.

He did not notice that he was in no position to criticise since his Mummy had done the same for him. Nor did he notice that when the going seemed to get tough during this campaign the only solution he came up with was to bring his sister into politics. It is not going to be easy to change the Congress into a real political party again, but someone must try doing it. India needs a strong opposition party today more than ever.

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@tavleen\_singh





GETTY IMAGES

## In a fog of war

How did an Indian Air Force Mi-17 helicopter get shot down by the IAF? What are the protocols in place to distinguish enemy from friendly aircraft?

DINAKAR PERI

**The story so far:** On the morning of February 27 this year, as jets of the Indian Air Force (IAF) and Pakistan Air Force were engaged in a dog fight over the Naushera sector in Jammu and Kashmir, an IAF Mi-17 helicopter with two pilots and four personnel took off from Srinagar air base. It crashed within 10 minutes at Budgam killing all the personnel and a civilian on the ground. As the fog settled, it was suspected that the Mi-17 may have been shot down by friendly fire. A Court of Inquiry (CoI) was ordered to ascertain the facts of the incident.

### How are aircraft identified?

There are a range of methods used to identify friendly aircraft. These include visual sightings, radio transmission, designated entry and exit points for friendly aircraft and a transponder-based Identification Friend or Foe (IFF) system. With supersonic aircraft and long range radars, the IFF system is the predominant

In a directive last year, the IAF mandated that all aircraft coming in to land should have the Identification Friend or Foe system switched on. It was switched off in the Mi-17

method used in both civil and military aviation to identify aircraft. The IFF is a transponder-based identification device that communicates with ground radars and exchanges encrypted codes to indicate that the aircraft is a friendly one. Some modes of transponders also indicate the speed and specific coordinates of the aircraft

which are used by civil air traffic controllers to identify commercial aircraft. In addition, there are designated air corridors marked safe for friendly aircraft to fly. This is because during a combat situation, air defences in sensitive areas are free to fire at any violator.

### What went wrong with the helicopter?

The Mi-17 had crashed in an inhabited area and the Flight Data Recorder (FDR), commonly referred to as the black box and the most crucial thing in case of any air accident, was lost. It could not be traced and officials said it may have been taken away by civilians who thronged to the helicopter. The absence of the FDR has delayed the inquiry process. In the absence of the black box which would have provided straight answers to most questions, the CoI had to pursue circumstantial evidence and rule out options to draw likely conclusions. Preliminary indications are that the Mi-17 was shot down by the IAF's Israeli-origin SPYDER surface-to-air missile system.

The CoI has found several procedural violations. The biggest of them is that the IFF system was switched off, especially when there was a high alert, and an aerial engagement was under way close by. Due to this, in the midst of the air battle over the skies close by, the Mi-17 was mistakenly identified as belonging to the adversary. In fact, last year, the IAF had issued a directive that all aircraft coming in to land should have the IFF system switched on. But contrary orders seem to have been issued at the Srinagar air base which the CoI would confirm in its report. In addition, it is not clear why the Mi-17 was called back after taking off and not diverted to a safe corridor instead.

As the investigation was under way, the Air Officer Commanding (AOC) of the Srinagar air base under whose watch the incident occurred was posted out in early May. However, the IAF has not said if it was related to the incident or other reasons.

### What happens next?

The CoI is expected to submit its report soon. However, a CoI is a fact-finding body ordered by the assembling authority. Ascertaining blame is only the first step in a long process. Also, a CoI has no legal standing. After completion of the CoI, the court based on its findings makes several recommendations. Recommending action against personnel found guilty on certain counts is one of them.

Based on the facts of the case and recommendations, the authorities may go for administrative action or disciplinary action. If disciplinary action is intended, a charge sheet is framed and a summary of evidence may then be ordered. Based on it, authorities may again take a call on a court martial or other action. For instance, an error of judgement can be awarded administrative action, but a gross violation will be given a court martial. A legal branch gives its final recommendation on the punishment and the file is then sent to the Air Headquarters for final decision. A punishment under the Indian Penal Code can also be awarded. IPC is read under Section 71 of the Air Force Act.

However, with clear indications of serious procedural violations leading to loss of life, senior IAF officials have said that criminal proceedings are likely to be initiated against those responsible as soon the report comes in.

# Why is China laying down gene editing rules?

After twin experiments with genetic engineering technology, the country agrees with the worldwide scientific community that it needs to be used with care

R. PRASAD

**The story so far:** In a bid to make babies immune to infection by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), He Jiankui, a researcher from the Southern University of Science and Technology in Shenzhen, China, used a clinically untested gene editing tool (CRISPR-Cas9) to modify a particular gene. The tool has also been used on another woman to make a gene-edited embryo; the pregnant woman is expected to deliver in August. The announcement of the birth of gene-edited twin girls late last year set off an international furor.

### How does it work?

Unusual but repeated DNA structures that scientists had been observing for some time were given a name – Clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats or CRISPR. In 2012, scientists discovered that CRISPR is a key part of the “immune system”. For instance, when a virus enters a bacterium, it fights back by cutting up the virus's DNA. This kills the virus but the bacterium store some of the DNA. The next time there is an invasion, the bacterium produce an enzyme called Cas9 which matches the stored fingerprints with that of the invader's. If it matches, Cas9 can snip the invading DNA. The CRISPR-Cas9 gene editing tool thus has two components – a short RNA sequence that can bind to a specific target of the DNA and the Cas9 enzyme which acts like a molecular scissor to cut the DNA. To edit a gene of interest, the short RNA sequence that perfectly matches with the DNA sequence that has to be edited is introduced. Once it binds to the DNA, the Cas9 enzyme cuts the DNA at the targeted location where the RNA sequence is bound. Once the DNA is cut, the natural DNA repair mechanism is utilised to add or remove genetic material or make changes to the DNA.

### Was it wrong to use the gene tool?

Dr. He used the CRISPR-Cas9 gene editing technique in the twin girls to disable a gene called CCR5, which encodes a protein that allows HIV to enter and infect cells. Though no guidelines have been drawn up so far, there is a general consensus in the scientific and ethics communities that the CRISPR-Cas9 gene-editing technique should not be used clinically in embryos. There is also consensus that gene editing can be potentially used only to prevent serious genetic disorders that have no alternative treatment. While HIV cannot be cured, medicines can keep the virus under check.

Importantly, human clinical trials have not been carried out anywhere in the world to test whether disabling the gene completely prevents HIV infection and what the side-effects of doing so would be. In the absence of any clinical trial data as well as consensus to use this tool to prevent HIV infection, performing it on babies as a form of medical intervention is unethical.

According to *Nature*, the hospital that had supposedly given Dr. He ethical approval to use the technique on pregnant women issued a press statement denying this. The hospital also “questioned the signatures on the approval form” and said no committee meeting had been held related to his research work.

Apparently, information on the consent form suggests that the parents who had participated in the experiment were never told about the problems of disabling the gene.

### Can disabling the CCR5 gene prevent HIV?

While it is generally believed that babies without a

## Snip and change

A DNA editing technique, called CRISPR/Cas9, works like a biological version of a word-processing programme's "find and replace" function

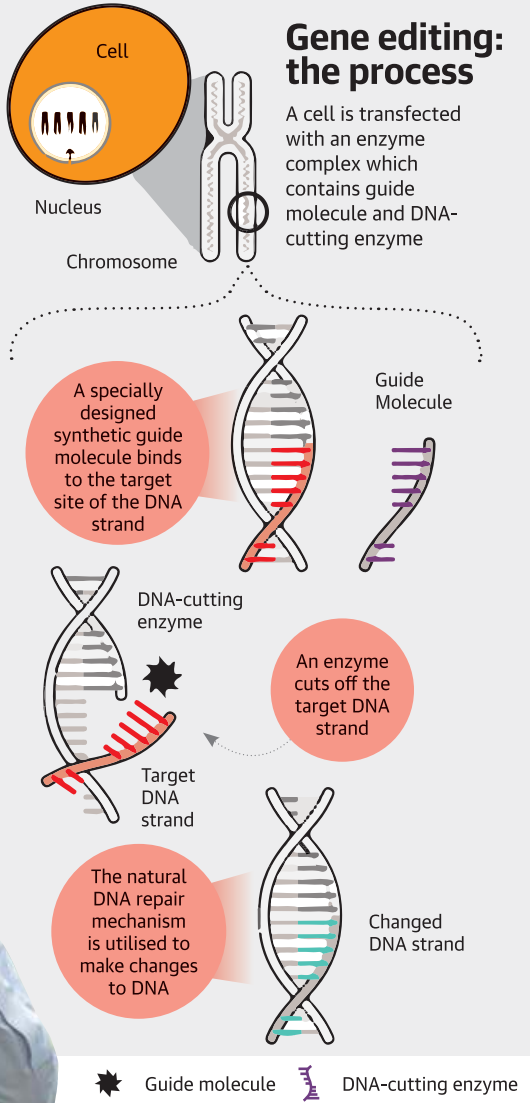
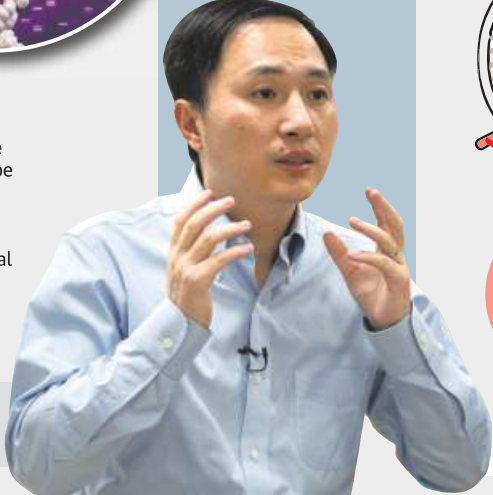


On January 21 this year, Dr. He was fired from the university where he worked after a probe by the Guangdong health commission found that he had violated the national regulations against using gene-editing for reproductive purposes

Chinese scientist He Jiankui • AP

Source: Reuters, Nature

- It is generally believed that babies without a functional CCR5 gene will become resistant to HIV infection
- On the other hand, the CCR5 gene is known to protect the lungs, the liver and the brain during certain serious infections and chronic diseases. The gene is known to prompt the immune system to fight the influenza virus in the lungs
- Human clinical trials have not been carried out anywhere in the world to test whether disabling the gene completely prevents HIV infection and what the side-effects of doing so would be



functional CCR5 gene will become resistant to HIV infection, certain other strains of HIV use another protein (CXCR4) to infect cells. Hence, even people who are born with two copies of the non-functional CCR5 gene are not completely protected or resistant against HIV infection.

According to the draft regulation, those found violating the rules will be punished and this includes a lifetime ban on research

There is also the possibility that the gene editing tool could have caused unintended mutations in other parts of the genome, which may lead to unpredictable health consequences.

Most importantly, medicines and delivery through caesarean section and avoiding breast feeding can prevent vertical viral transmission from mother to foetus. While women with HIV have greater chances of passing the virus to the foetus, in this case, the mother was HIV-free; the father was HIV positive.

### Does the CCR5 gene have any protective role?

The CCR5 gene's protective role against the West Nile virus is well established. According to *Nature*, the CCR5 gene also helps to protect the lungs, the liver and the brain during certain serious infections and chronic diseases. The gene is known to prompt the immune system to fight the influenza virus in the lungs. Without this gene the defence system would fail. In the case of people with multiple sclerosis, absence of this gene

makes them twice as likely to die early.

### Was the gene removed in both babies?

There are two copies of the gene in every person. In the case of one baby girl both the copies of the gene were disabled but in the other baby, only one copy was disabled. So the baby with one functional copy of the gene might still be susceptible to HIV infection. The decision to implant the embryo with only one disabled copy makes the work all the more unethical. Though Dr. He claimed the babies were born in early November last year, *The New York Times* reported that the babies were born premature in October.

### What steps has China taken to prevent misuse?

The day Associated Press broke the story, the Chinese national health commission asked the Guangdong health commission to start an investigation. On January 21 this year, Dr. He was fired from the university where he worked after a probe by the Guangdong health commission found that he had violated the national regulations against using gene-editing for reproductive purposes.

According to *The Scientist*, Dr. He's experiment violates the 2003 guidelines that prohibits the use of gene-manipulated embryos for reproductive purposes. On February 26, China posted the draft regulation requiring researchers to obtain prior approval from the government before undertaking clinical trials. Those found violating the rules will be punished and this includes a lifetime ban on research. China is now all set to introduce gene-editing regulation.

# What does the merger of NSSO and CSO entail?

Will the move undermine the NSSO's autonomy which has been dogged by controversies over data reporting?

PRASHANTH PERUMAL J.

**The story so far:** On May 23, the government announced that the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) will be merged with the Central Statistics Office to form the National Statistical Office (NSO). Many believe that this move will undermine the autonomy of the NSSO which has been at the centre of various public controversies over data on economic growth and unemployment. The NSO will be headed by the secretary of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MOSPI). This is in contrast to the original plan proposed by experts to merge various statistical bodies such as the NSSO and others to create a unified statistics body that is accountable to Parliament, rather than the government.

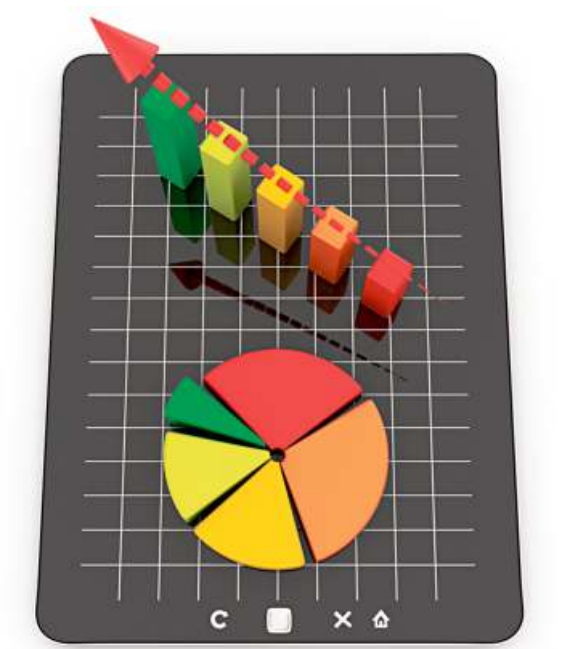
### What is the issue?

In May, the NSSO came out with a report which cast serious doubt on the reliability of raw data that is used to calculate India's gross domestic product (GDP). The NSSO stated that it could not either trace or classify 38.7% of the companies included in the MCA-21, a database of private companies that is maintained by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, whose financial numbers the government currently uses to calculate GDP figures. The NSSO found that data from the Economic Census and the Business Register were far less affected by these issues that plagued the MCA-21 database.

Many believe that the poor quality of raw company data could heavily skew the measurement of private sector business growth, which is a part of the overall GDP of the economy. When data gathered from the MCA-21 database was first used to revise earlier growth figures, sectors such as manufacturing showed significant growth in size in 2013-14. This was in stark contrast to the earlier estimates that showed an actual contraction in the size of manufacturing.

### What is the government stand?

MOSPI, however, has defended the use of the MCA-21 database to calculate GDP numbers stating that appropriate adjustments are made to make sure there is no overestimation of GDP. In a clarification issued on May 10, the government stated that companies classified as “out-of-coverage” by the NSSO still contributed to the economy even though they may not fall strictly under the services sector. It further stated that the weightage given to companies that report their financial numbers is far greater and that, in reality, only about 16.4% of companies in the MCA-21 are either closed or non-traceable. The NSSO's apprehension over the MCA-21



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

database still adds to concerns that already exist about the reliability of GDP data that is put out by the government due to recent changes in methodology.

### How is MCA-21 important to GDP?

Experts feel that the financial accounts of several shell companies that are included in the MCA-21 database could be fictitious, and thus cannot be considered as a good proxy for real economic activity. For instance, under the revised GDP series that was introduced in 2015, financial data from companies that filed their accounts with the government even just once in three years were considered sufficient to help make GDP growth estimations. Supporters of the new methodology believe that, in reality, the accounts of most shell companies reflect the financial activities of actual businesses which remain camouflaged behind these fictitious entities. So, they believe, the non-inclusion of shell companies will actually lead to a significant underestimation of the true size of the economy.

Government statisticians have for long used small surveys to gather the raw data that are required to make “blown up” estimations about the growth of the wider economy. This, however, changed in 2015 when the government introduced a new GDP series with 2011-12 as the base year (from the previous base year of 2004-05)

and introduced the MCA-21 database as the mainstay for calculating GDP figures. The fact that even data for the organised sector of the economy were unreliable has

The lack of transparency in the production of economic data can over time cause the users of such data to discount its value

raised doubts about the reliability of other data. Data on the large unorganised sector, for instance, are even cruder and can be extremely unreliable. It is worth noting that policymakers within the government depend heavily on official GDP figures to frame their policies.

### Is the data collected reliable?

The field of economic statistics largely involves the estimation of trends in the economy based on sample data that is collected through surveys and other means. This usually gives rise to disagreements even among experts within the field who could have a genuine difference in opinion about how raw economic data should be collected, and about the various assumptions that should go into the calculation of GDP and other economic estimations. What has caused a rise in concerns about the reliability of India's GDP figures in the last few years, however, is the belief that the government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi may be increasing its interference in the process of the production of economic data. Further, the divergence between official GDP figures which show that growth has fallen below 6% in the fourth quarter and high-frequency economic data which reveal how various sectors are facing a serious slowdown has cast further doubt on the reliability of government data. In January, two non-government members of the National Statistical Commission resigned over, among other reasons, the government's reluctance to release jobs data collected by the NSSO. The NSSO's periodic labour force survey, which was leaked in January, had reported that the unemployment rate was at a 45-year high of 6.1% in 2017-18.

### Will the merger impact the credibility of government data?

The move will give the government greater leverage over production of key data. The lack of transparency in the production of economic data can over time cause the users of such data to discount its value. This has been the case in countries such as China where the constant tinkering with official economic data has caused analysts to lose trust in them.





ILLUSTRATION: DEEPAK HARICHANDAN

# To Siri, with love

When a household pet turns out to be more than just a pet over a period

RANOO HARICHANDAN

Dear Siri, you turned one today. Happy Birthday Gelhu, Dholu (as bhai, my son, calls you), Mama (as mummy, or I, call you) and Sira (as papa, my husband, calls you).

I remember the day the two of them brought you home. While on their way home, papa sent me a picture of you sitting in the lap. You were a tiny white cushion. But at that time, honestly speaking, I was scared and my mind was confused. “Why did they bring him home, how will I manage when they leave for office and college respectively?”

Then you came home. Bhai was holding you, and he told me, “Mummy, please hold him and feel how soft he is, he won’t do

started melting overnight, again hardened and I started scolding bhai.

This went on for three days. Then bhai left for his hostel and papa, as usual, went to office. So it was only you and me at home. Before leaving, papa had tied you with a leash near the balcony.

But that day you fell sick. You didn’t have any food and were asleep. By evening I felt bad. I don’t know what happened but something made me come near you. I sat next to you. I gathered courage and gently lifted you up (you were indeed so soft) and placed you on my lap. You were half-awake. When I put you on my lap, you looked at me and went back to sleep. I held you, stroking you.

And today, a year later, you have become one of us, from a nuclear family of three we have become four. All this happened with time. You started going with us on long drives, started sleeping on our bed, going with us to the bazaar.

Slowly, you became familiar with friends, neighbours and relatives, something of a crowd-puller. Everyone started accepting you as part of our family. You are no more a puppy; you’ve become a young, smart retriever. A happy, joyful, energetic and playful dog. Our morning kick-starts with you, and the day ends with you too. Every night the way you wait for papa at the door for him to come back from work is worth watching.

You are a blessing, and more. Thanks for coming in to our life and making it more joyful. You taught us many things, including how to live without any conditions attached. Now, a life without you is just unimaginable.

On your birthday, I pray to god to keep you healthy and make you smart and happy.

It’s not only your birthday, it’s a birthday for all of us too. You have given us a happier new life. Thank you very much, Siri.

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# Where art thou, SHAKESPEARE?

The Bard’s name is invoked left, right and centre

VIKRAM SINGH THAKUR

The Polish theatre scholar Jan Kott, in his influential work *Shakespeare: Our Contemporary* (1965) wrote, “Shakespeare is like the world, or life itself. Every historical period finds in him what it is looking for.”

Kott seems to be most appropriate in twenty-first century India. It’s natural for a race of people who have been fed on Shakespeare for long to go back to the wise man for his sage words. Even the Bard is always willing to help his Indian *bhakt*s. His continuing popularity cannot be judged only in terms of his works being adapted across theatre, films and fiction but also in the way he has discreetly entered our lives to become virtually a part of our psyche.

Look at India’s Who’s Who and you will realise that Shakespeare is very much a part of our socio-cultural and political-legal consciousness. Even the Supreme Court of India has referred to Shakespeare on more than one occasion in judgments. Justice A.K. Ganguly of the Supreme Court in 2012 quoted from *Henry IV* while describing the position of then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in the 2G spectrum sale case. He noted, “The position of the Prime Minister in our democratic polity seems to have been summed up in the words of Shakespeare – uneasy lies the head that wears a crown.” He was referring to the delay caused by the Prime Minister’s Office in

taking a decision that caused further delay in prosecuting Telecom Minister A. Raja. More recently, the Supreme Court, while giving its verdict on Section 377 of IPC on September 6, 2018, quoted from *Romeo and Juliet*, “What’s in a name? That which we call a rose/ By any other name would smell as sweet.”

Dipak Misra, as Chief Justice of India, describing the importance of identity, wrote in a judgment, “The said phrase [‘What’s in a name? That which we call a rose/By any other name would smell as sweet’], in its basic sense, conveys that what really matters is the essential qualities of the substance and the fundamental characteristics of an entity but not the name by which it or a person is called.”

Poor Shakespeare, in whose Elizabethan England homosexuality was considered a crime on a par with murder, would be turning in his grave to know he is being invoked today in India to criminalise homosexuality.

Not only members of the judiciary but also sportsmen and actors have taken to Shakespeare to express themselves. Sachin Tendulkar’s crisis as the captain of the Indian cricket team has been described by the same quote that Justice Ganguly had used, in his biography, *Sachin Tendulkar: A Definitive Biography*. Deepika Padukone recently posted her picture on Instagram with a quote from *Henry IV*, “All things are ready, if our mind be so – William Shakespeare”, in the

context of her upcoming film *Chhapaak*.

Why should the Indian politician lag behind in this “Quote the Bard Contest”? After all, who can beat the Bard at rhetoric? And what is Indian politics today but rhetoric?

Pranab Mukherjee, while presenting Union Budget 2012 as Finance Minister, leaned on *Hamlet*, “I must be cruel only to be kind,” only to justify the “cruel” budget and “kind” intentions of the government.

Smriti Irani, then Minister of Human Resource Development, quoted the witches of *Macbeth*, ‘Fair is foul, foul is fair’, accusing the Opposition of twisting facts while replying in the Rajya Sabha in February 2016 on Rohith Vemula’s suicide.

During the 2017 Kolkata Book Fair, Mamata Banerjee, in her enthusiasm to boast West Bengal’s resonance with Shakespeare, made a startling claim that Tagore was a great friend of Shakespeare and Keats.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his radio show ‘Mann Ki Baat’, on August 27, 2017 displayed his eclectic knowledge when he referred to the *shastras*, Mahatma Gandhi and Shakespeare in the same breath (a potential research project for researchers if they don’t want

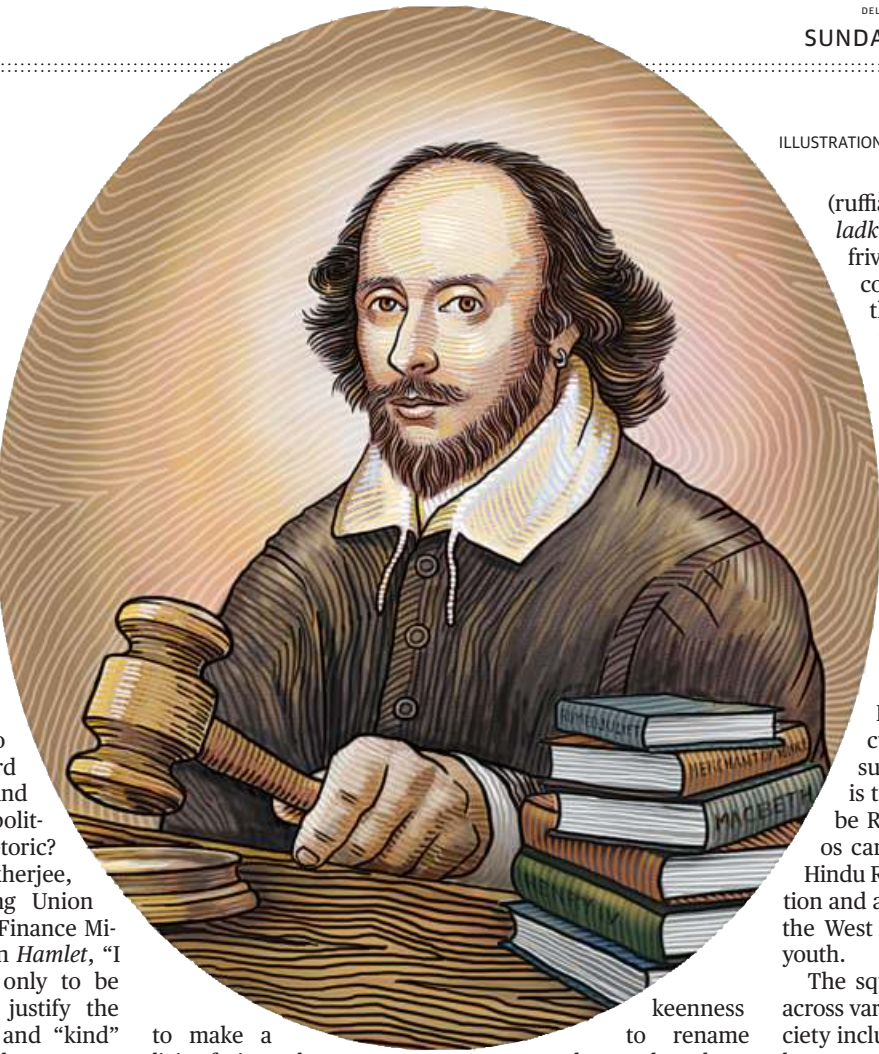


ILLUSTRATION: J.A. PREMKUMAR

(ruffian), *chichore-type ladke* (young man of a frivolous kind). In this context, Romeo, *aka* the potential molester, needs to be located in the political compulsion to borrow the villain from the other community/culture/religion who needs to be brought to book. Naming the squad after Romeo also suggests the absence of its equivalent in Hindu religion and culture. The assumption, it seems, is that Hindus cannot be Romeos and Romeos cannot be Hindus. A Hindu Romeo is an aberration and another instance of the West corrupting Indian youth.

The squad was criticised across various sections of society including intellectuals, lawyers and social activists who alleged that in the name of protecting women they were harassing young men and making women more dependent in an already patriarchal society. The criticism from various quarters has led to the changing of the squad’s name from ‘Anti-Romeo Squad’ to ‘Nari Suraksha Bal’. However, as Juliet said, ‘What’s in a name? That which we call a rose/ By any other name would smell as sweet.’ (How can I desist from quoting the Bard?)

The changing of the name doesn’t suggest any change in the squad’s work. One thing, however, that it definitely has achieved is to supplant the negative *frangi* name with a more positive Hindu term that goes well with the party’s ideology. Jai Shakespeare!

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It’s not only your birthday, it’s a birthday for all of us too

anything to you.” I wasn’t expecting this. I ran to the bedroom and climbed atop the bed. Bhai came in and placed you on the floor below the bed. I had decided that after a few days I would ask them to get rid of him.

We didn’t know what we should feed you with, and so you mostly had a branded cereal and curd rice. While both papa and bhai used to play with and cuddle you, I maintained my distance.

I told bhai that at night you won’t be allowed to stay inside the home and would need to be in the balcony. He reluctantly agreed. But that night you didn’t sleep. You were sitting near the balcony door and looking into the bedroom, waiting to see if someone would take you inside.

I also couldn’t sleep. I was looking at you from my bed. Something inside me told me it’s not fair to treat a tiny animal in such a manner. He has just come away from his mother and I have left him alone in the balcony? What harm had he done?

The next morning the ordeal started. You had messed up the whole balcony. My heart, which had

# Those favourite toys that never grow old or die

A life lesson learnt: in choosing to do the right thing over demands made by friendships, it is wiser to choose the former

HEMA NAIR

In the mid-1990s, my husband and I were struggling young doctors, still in our training jobs. The stipend amounts barely stretched till the end of the month for our meagre household expenses. It was around that time one day that I found Paul and many others like him, in a discount box in a bookstore. He was a walrus that belonged to a tribe called Beanie Babies.

These were horribly expensive stuffed toys that fit in the palm of your hand, and but for their surplus numbers and possibly age accumulated dust, would never have fit into my budget. Although we rarely ever splurged on luxuries, I thought our four-year-old, who generally favoured cars, and robots with movable joints, deserved this treat. Krish eagerly adopted Paul when we took him home.

Krish was a self-sufficient little boy who could spend hours minding his own business and playing by himself with his toys. So there one would find him, sitting on the floor with remarkable flexibility, on his bent back leg, assembling the parts of his plastic rocket made up of virtually a million pieces, being watched quietly by Paul while the two discussed the suitability of the different pieces available.

Krish grew up and Paul remained the same. Nestled in his cupboard, lying around on his table, scrunched up on his bed – he was always around somewhere. Paul made it through not less than six moves, including two years spent in storage while we were out of the country. By the time Paul made it out of the box after his hibernation, quite a few changes had occurred in the world outside. For one, Krish had acquired a little brother. After



ILLUSTRATION: SREEJITH R. KUMAR

10 years of solitude and calm, he now had to accommodate in his life a long-cherished sibling, but a tornado nevertheless. Although Krish had first rights to Paul, he was not averse to sharing, and Paul sometimes found himself in the company of his little brother.

The little one was at an age

gested that they flush Paul down the toilet and record the deed, the little one just went along. He probably has no first-hand memory of it now, but the regret prompted by the retelling of the story is always intense.

His first lesson in life that when it comes to choosing to do the right thing over demands made by friendships, it is wiser to choose the former. Paul was now gone forever, and it was a very sad day for the whole family, notwithstanding the fact that he was just a stuffed toy.

Krish never spoke much about that episode, but I know my boy, and I knew his hurt. The wound was probably hurting a great deal, because he even told his close friend about it. She later moved to England to complete her education, but they kept in touch.

I don’t know if she actively went on a Beanie Baby hunt or if she came across one and

was reminded of Krish’s loss. But a few years later on his birthday, she sent him a picture of an identical Paul that she had bought for him as his gift. It was a few months more before Paul made the long-haul flight from Heathrow to Bengaluru with someone from her family, and the last-mile journey in a courier box to our home.

I am sure Krish was very aware that it was not his Paul, but the thoughtfulness of the gesture and the utter beauty of this remarkable experience is sure to have touched his soul.

The rest of us are just even more than happy to have Paul back – nestled in his desk drawer, lying around on his back or scrunched up on his bed.

As for the little one, he is now grown older and wiser, and still plays, albeit more responsibly with Paul.

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# How close we really are to the edge of the precipice

There’s no gainsaying what the next hour or second may bring; it will take just a moment for the bottom to fall out

THOMAS PAUL

November 23, 1956. My date of birth was eventful, not just because I was born on the day the Tuticorin Express derailed near Ariyalur in Tamil Nadu killing over a hundred and forty passengers, but because my dad had booked to travel on the train that day. But since I was born that day – a couple of days prematurely – he had cancelled his ticket and stayed back in Madras, now Chennai. And, in the event, escaped death.

From here it is conjecture which raises goosebumps whenever I think about it – the ‘what if’ kind. We were a hair’s breadth away from disaster, and had it struck, had my dad taken that train, I can imagine how life would have turned out for our family: mom turning single parent overnight; juggling job and

household. And how the level playing field we had had till then would have turned rough, the environment would have turned hostile, and so on. We would have inhabited a parallel universe of struggle for decades.

That gets me thinking sometimes. We never know how close we are to the edge. Accidents ranging from getting hit while just crossing a road, to a bewildering array of natural and unnatural causes, can change lives in an instant. Currently our lives might be relatively incident-free – relative, that is, to what one sees daily in the newspapers. Heart-rending stories reside there.

Besides what befalls us accidentally, there is also the very station in life we are born into, which places some of us at a serious disadvantage from which it is difficult to emerge. What many



ILLUSTRATION: SATWIK GADE

of us take for granted – family security, financial security, knowing that the next meal is certain, the social status, access to opportunities – are not available to a huge percentage of the population.

Whenever I feel that life could have been better, I tell myself it could actually have been worse, too – unimaginably worse. Just a casual browsing on the Net for ‘Hu-

man Diseases’ throws up tens of thousands of them. The human body is so vulnerable, causing us to doubt whether the divinity that designed us had any clue, throwing in so many diseases ranging from the debilitating to those that are just needless nuisances. If we are afflicted with only one or two from the 30,000-strong list, we should still feel thankful

we are left to tell the tale.

There’s no gainsaying what the next hour or second may bring. Sant Kabir’s ‘*Pal mein pralay*’ comes to mind. It takes just a moment for the bottom to fall out of our world, with some sudden flood, a tsunami or an earthquake, a fire in the building that catches us off-guard, some falling masonry, or a road accident, in their thousands per second, all over the world. What we take for granted today might simply not exist the next day. Apart from natural disasters, social or financial disasters can arrive from nowhere.

Kindness is needed, one to another. We don’t know other people’s struggles, the brave face they are putting on despite their problems, the mountains they are climbing, against odds. Every time we cause hurt, especially by means of our bril-

liant ability to communicate in harsh words – our ability to surgically strike in fancy English or whatever language we are clever at. It gets passed on to others as the chain of pain. Communication skills may just be hyped.

Let us not take offence at slights, real or imagined. A grim-faced person could be dealing with serious personal problems, or it could be that the expression is but a manufacturing defect. He may not be upset with us at all. Half our ‘easily offended’ attitude will disappear if we realise that people have their own issues and may not be thinking of us at all.

We exhaust our lives proving points, and ‘showing’ others who we are, forgetting that we too are standing on the cliff’s edge, just a step away from oblivion.

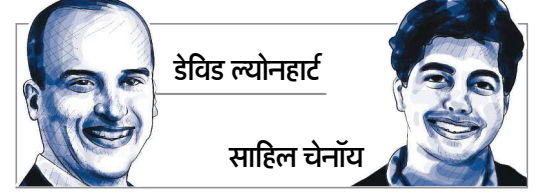
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**नई दिल्ली**  
रविवार, 2 जून, 2019

## बीच में ही कॉलेज क्यों छोड़ते हैं छात्र?



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**अमेरिका में कॉलेजों में दाखिला लेने वाले हर तीन छात्रों में से एक डिग्री हासिल नहीं कर पाता। कॉलेज ड्रॉपआउट की इस समस्या को उच्च शिक्षा संस्थानों और शिक्षाशास्त्रियों ने गंभीरता से लिया है। छात्रों को भी अब उन कॉलेजों में दाखिला लेने के लिए प्रोत्साहित किया जा रहा है, जिनकी ग्रेजुएशन दर अधिक है।**



## तीन दशक में कितना बदल गया आरएसएस

**भारत का सबसे प्रभावशाली एनजीओ राष्ट्रीय स्वयं सेवक संघ (आरएसएस) तेजी से आगे बढ़ा है, जैसा कि मैंने अपनी हाल ही में आई किताब, *द आरएसएस : ए व्यू टू द इनसाइड* (सह लेखक श्रीधर दामले) में चर्चा की है। यह किताब तीन दशक पहले आई मेरी एक अन्य किताब *द ब्रदरहुड इन सेंट्रॉन* की अगली कड़ि है, जिसमें मैंने उसके बाद भारत में हुए सामाजिक आर्थिक बदलावों के साथ ही आरएसएस में आए परिवर्नों का विश्लेषण किया है।**

अखिर आरएसएस में तीस साल में क्या बदलाव आया और ये बदलाव क्यों महत्वपूर्ण हैं? सबसे स्वाभाविक बदलाव तो यही है कि आरएसएस और उससे संबद्ध संगठन उस समय हाशिये पर थे और भारत से बाहर उनके बारे में बहुत कम पता था और भारत के भीतर भी उनके बारे में कम जानकारियां थीं। इसमें नाटकीय बदलाव आया है। खासतौर से 1990 के दशक के मध्य में आरएसएस और उसके पारिवारिक संगठनों ने तेजी से विस्तार किया है, यह वही दौर था जब सुधारों के बाद भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था का विस्तार हुआ।

इसका सबसे दिलचस्प पहलू है तकरीबन सौ आनुषांगिक संगठनों का गठन और उनके विस्तार जिन्होंने परोक्ष रूप से देश के सभी हिस्सों में पैठ बनाई और खासतौर से पूर्व और पूर्वोत्तर में तेजी से विस्तार किया, जहां पहले उनकी स्थिति कमजोर थी। इन संगठनों में भारत का सत्तारूढ़ दल भारतीय जनता पार्टी (भाजपा), सबसे बड़ा ब्रम संगठन भारतीय मजदूर संघ (बीएमएस), इसका विशाल छात्र संगठन विद्यार्थी परिषद और गैरसरकारी स्कूलों की सबसे बड़ी शृंखला। हमने जो नौ केस स्टडी की उसका एक निष्कर्ष यह निकला कि इन संबद्ध संगठनों ने उनसे जुड़े मुद्दों को लेकर आरएसएस के दृष्टिकोण को आकार दिया।

**खासतौर से 1990 के दशक के मध्य में आरएसएस और उसके पारिवारिक संगठनों ने तेजी से विस्तार किया है, यह वही दौर था जब सुधारों के बाद भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था का विस्तार हुआ।**

नहीं रहा ताकि वे देश को आगे बढ़ाने के लिए खुद से देशभक्ति के काम में जुट जाएं। अब खुद संगठन विशेष नीतिगत पदों के लिए लॉबी करने लगा। एक संगठन जो राजनीति और प्रचार से दूर रहता था और अक्सर सांस्कृतिक संगठन होने का दावा करता था, भागवत ने उसपर ढका पर्दा हटा दिया। इसके बाद आरएसएस के पूर्व प्रचार प्रमुख और अब भाजपा के महासचिव राम माधव ने एक आलेख लिखकर बताया कि सितंबर, 2018 में भागवत ने दिल्ली में जो तीन दिन का सेमिनार आयोजित किया था उसका संक्षिप्त भारत के बुद्धिजीवियों से यह अपील करना था कि वह जानें कि आरएसएस क्या है और वह भारत के लिए अच्छा क्यों है। उन्होंने आगे लिखा कि अतीत में आरएसएस के नेताओं ने प्रचार से खुद को दूर रखा और उनके इस पहले के दृष्टिकोण के कारण आरएसएस के बारे में अफवाहों को बल मिला। उन्होंने भागवत के प्रयासों को सविद्यत संघ की 'ग्लानसोस्ट' जैसी पहल की तरह बताया और कहा कि यह आरएसएस के लिए अच्छा है।

तीसरा बदलाव है आरएसएस और उसके संबद्ध संगठनों में व्यापक पारदर्शिता, हम यह मानते हैं कि यह भारतीय मंच पर उनकी बढ़ती भूमिका को प्रतिबिंबित करता है। उदाहरण के लिए, उन तीनों आयोजनों में आम लोगों को भी आमंत्रित किया गया था और ऐसा करते हुए भागवत ने अपने प्रतिबद्ध लोगों को संबोधित करने की परिपाटी को तोड़ा। इसके बाद अक्टूबर में हरिद्वार में एक दिन का सम्मेलन हुआ था और फिर नागपुर में दशहर पर वार्षिक कार्यक्रम। भागवत ने इसमें अयोध्या में प्रस्तावित राम मंदिर, राष्ट्रीय संसंध्या नीति की व्यावहारिकता, कृषि उत्पादों का समर्थन मूल्य, ईसाइयों और मुस्लिमों के प्रति समान भारतीय नागरिकों जैसा व्यवहार करने की बात की और आने वाले विधानसभा चुनावों तथा लोकसभा चुनाव में भाजपा के पक्ष में वोट डालने की अपील भी की। उन्होंने लोगों से यह भी कहा था कि वे नोटा का विकल्प न चुनें ताकि भाजपा की जीत की संभावनाएं बढ़ें।

चौथा बदलाव है विशाल संघ परिवार के विभिन्न हित्तों के बीच समन्वय में आरएसएस की बढ़ती भूमिका। हमारा निष्कर्ष है कि संघ परिवार में एकता का संबंध तीन चीजों से है। पहली बात, दर्जनों सहयोगी संगठनों यहां तक कि संघ के पट्टधिकारी भी पूर्ण कालिक कार्यक्रमों यानी प्रचारक होते हैं। दूसरी बात है देश भर में फैले 70 हजार शाखाओं में होने वाला प्रशिक्षण जिसमें 20 लाख नियमित प्रतिभागी होते हैं। तीसरी चीज है, संबद्ध संगठनों को दी गई स्वायत्तता।

ग्रामीण और शहरी भारत में आर्थिक और सांस्कृतिक विभाजन उस हिंदू एकता की राह में सबसे बड़ा रोड़ा है, जिसकी बात आरएसएस करता है।

# नई जमीन

अमेरिका की उच्च शिक्षा व्यवस्था में कॉलेज ड्रॉप आउट की समस्या गहराती जा रही है। यहां कॉलेज में दाखिला लेने वाले हर तीन छात्रों में एक छात्र डिग्री हासिल नहीं कर पाता। दरअसल जिन स्कूलों में ज्यादातर एक ही जैसे छात्र पढ़ते हैं, उन छात्रों के ग्रेजुएशन की दर में भिन्नता पाई जाती है। इसका अर्थ यह है कि समस्या छात्रों में नहीं, स्कूलों में है। हमने कुल 368 कॉलेजों के स्नातक दर की तुलना की, तो नतीजे चौंकाने वाले आए। वेस्टर्न केंट्रुकी और द यूनिवर्सिटी ऑफ वेस्टर्न केंट्रुकी और द यूनिवर्सिटी ऑफ वेस्टर्न केंट्रुकी से 19 प्रतिशत कम है। इसे ज्यादा समझाकर कहें, तो अर्थ यह निकलेगा कि यूएनएलवी से हर साल 500 ड्रॉप आउट अधिक निकलते हैं। अगर खराब प्रदर्शन करने वाले स्कूल अच्छे अंक लाने वाले छात्रों से सीखें, तो हर साल अतिरिक्त हजारों छात्र स्नातक हो सकते हैं।

द न्यूयॉर्क टाइम्स और द अर्बन इंस्टीट्यूट'स सेंटर ऑन एजुकेशन डाटा ऐंड पॉलिसी ने

इस परियोजना को अपने हाथ में लिया, क्योंकि ड्रॉपआउट संकट ही अंततः असमानता को बढ़ावा देता है। कम और मध्य आय वाले अनेक छात्र स्कूलों में शानदार प्रदर्शन करते हैं, लेकिन कॉलेजों में फिसड़ड़ी साबित होते हैं। शोध अध्ययन यह भी बताते हैं कि डिग्री हासिल न करने वाले अमेरिकी कम कमाते हैं और स्वास्थ्य तथा खुशहाली के मानक पर खरे नहीं उतरते। लंबे समय तक हाई स्कूल के छात्र, अभिभावक और छात्रों को दिशा-निर्देश देने वाले कार्सिल्टर कॉलेज चुनते वकत उसकी ग्रेजुएशन दर पर ध्यान नहीं देते थे। लेकिन अब लोग इसका महत्व समझने लगे हैं। लास एंजेलिस स्थित चार्टर स्कूलों का एक नेटवर्क एलायंस विभिन्न कॉलेजों की ग्रेजुएशन दर के आधार पर उनकी रैंकिंग बनाता है। फिर वह छात्रों को उन कॉलेजों में प्रवेश लेने के लिए प्रोत्साहित करता है, जिनकी ग्रेजुएशन दर अधिक है। एलायंस की चीफ एडवांसमेंट ऑफिसर कैथरीन सूटर कहती हैं, 'गरीबी के चक्र को खत्म करने और बेहतर बदलाव के लिए स्नातक की डिग्री से प्रभावी हथियार और कुछ नहीं है।'



स्नातकों की दर का गहराई से आकलन करने के लिए हमने छात्रों की आय, नस्ल, लिंग, उम्र और टेस्ट स्कोर का विश्लेषण किया। हमने यह पाया कि जो कॉलेज निम्न आय वाले, अश्वेत और लैटिनो, पुरुष, अधिक उम्र वाले और कम स्कोरिंग वाले छात्रों को अधिक दाखिला देते हैं, उन कॉलेजों की स्नातक दर कम रहती है। दूसरी ओर, उन कॉलेजों की स्नातक दर अधिक होती है, जो दाखिले में विविधता को वरीयता देते हैं। सदर्न कैलिफोर्निया स्थित यूनिवर्सिटी ऑफ ला वर्नी, बहुचर्चित अश्वेत कॉलेज

# गोडसे का महिमामंडन

**स्वतंत्रता संघर्ष में गांधी की भूमिका को कमतर करते हुए आरएसएस ने सावधानीपूर्वक गोडसे से भी दूरी बनाई। लेकिन अब ऐसा नहीं हो सकता। इस बार चुनाव में मिली भारी जीत से उपजे अहंकार में उनकी वास्तविक भावनाएं ऐसा लगता है कि स्वयं प्रकट हो रही हैं।**

**उ**न्नीस सौ नब्बे के दशक की शुरुआत में बुजुर्ग गांधीवादी डॉ सुशीला नायर सांप्रदायिक सोहार्द बढ़ाने के अभियान में मंदिरों के शहर अयोध्या में थीं। उसी दौरान एक सर्व धर्म प्रार्थना सभा में उनकी अगुआई में महात्मा गांधी के प्रिय भजन 'रघुपति राघव राजा राम' का गायन हुआ। जैसे ही उन्होंने भजन की अगली पंक्ति 'ईश्वर अल्ला तेरो नाम' को दोहराया, प्रदर्शनकारियों का एक समूह मंच पर चढ़ गया और उसने गायन रुकवा दिया। डॉ नायर ने उन्हें समझाने की कोशिश करते हुए कहा, 'हम गांधीजी की तरफ से आए हैं।' प्रदर्शनकारियों ने जवाब दिया, 'और हम गोडसे की तरफ से।'

उसके बाद और आने वाले कई वर्षों तक टिप्पणीकार मानते रहे कि नाथूराम गोडसे की पूजा करने वाले लोगों की संख्या काफी कम है और वे अप्रासंगिक हैं। लेकिन लगता है कि हालात बदल गए हैं। पिछली लोकसभा के सदस्य साक्षी महाराज ने गोडसे की प्रशंसा की थी और इस बार वह फिर भाजपा उम्मीदवार के रूप में निर्वाचित हुए हैं। इस चुनाव में भोपाल से भाजपा उम्मीदवार प्रज्ञा ठाकुर ने गोडसे की प्रशंसा की। हालांकि प्रधानमंत्री ने उनके बयान से दूरी बनाई, लेकिन पूरे भारत भर में अनेक भाजपा उम्मीदवारों ने तुरंत उनके बयानों का समर्थन किया। उल्लेखनीय है कि सारे गोडसे भक्तों ने चुनाव जीता है और वह भी भारी अंतर से।

नाथूराम गोडसे का मत अब हाशिये पर नहीं है, बल्कि सुसुधधारा में है। इसके सदस्यों में न केवल भाजपा सांसद हैं, बल्कि अनेक प्रमुख संघ विचारक भी हैं। हाल ही में एक टेलीविजन बहस के दौरान जाने-माने गुजराती लेखक विष्णु पांड्या ने प्रज्ञा ठाकुर को एक संत बताया और कहा कि वह उससे कम नहीं हैं। महात्मा के हत्यारे की उनके द्वारा की गई प्रशंसा के बारे में पांड्या ने कहा, 'गोडसे एक देशभक्त थे और जैसा कि गांधी भी थे।' उल्लेखनीय है कि पांड्या कोई आरएसएस के साधारण कार्यकर्ता नहीं हैं; वह पद्मश्री से सम्मानित हैं और गुजरात साहित्य अकादमी के मौजूदा अध्यक्ष हैं।

महात्मा के जीवनकाल में, उनके प्रति हिंदुत्व की घृणा के दो पक्ष थे; उन्होंने उनकी अहिंसा को कमजोर और पुरुषार्थहीन माना और उन्होंने मुसलमानों के लिए समान आचार्य मांगने का विधिथ किया। हाल ही में इस वैमनस्य में एक पहलू और जुड़ गया; यह है उनके द्वारा वल्लभभाई पटेल के बजाय जवाहरलाल नेहरू को अपना राजनीतिक उत्तराधिकारी घोषित किया जाना। जब तक नेहरू जीवित थे दक्षिणपंथी हिंदू खासतौर से उन्हें इसलिए नापसंद करते थे, क्योंकि गांधी की तरह उन्होंने



रामचंद्र गुहा

जाने-माने इतिहासकार

भी भारत को पाकिस्तान के ठीक उलट हिंदू राज्य बनाए जाने की कोशिशों का दृढ़ता से विरोध किया; उनकी मौत के बाद वे नेहरू को वंशवाद के कारण नापसंद करते हैं, जो (अवैध तरीके से) उनकी विरासत पर दावा करता है।

विभाजन के लिए कोई एक व्यक्ति जिम्मेदार नहीं था; विभाजन के जख्मों को गांधी से अधिक किसी और ने भरने का प्रयास नहीं किया; पटेल और नेहरू साथी थे, प्रतिद्वंद्वी नहीं; कोई सभ्य समाज धर्म के आधार पर भेदभाव नहीं करता — इन सारे तथ्यों को हिंदू दक्षिण पंथ की इतिहास की विकृत और मनोविकार से ग्रस्त समझ ने या तो दबा दिया या फिर उसे खारिज कर दिया।

आरएसएस ने महात्मा के जीवन के अंतिम वर्ष में विशेष रूप से सार्वजनिक तौर पर उनके खिलाफ घृणा फैलाई। (इस बारे में गांधी की जीवनी में मैंने विस्तार से लिखा है)। आरएसएस के एक पूर्व कार्यकर्ता द्वारा उनकी हत्या किए जाने के बाद वे शांत हो गए। 1950 और 1960 के दशक में उन्होंने यदा-कदा ही उनका जिक्र किया। 1970 के दशक के बाद उन्होंने उनकी प्रशंसा करनी शुरू कर दी, हालांकि धीमे स्वरों में। उनके लिए वह अब एक देशभक्त थे, हालांकि अनेक देशभक्तों में से एक। लेकिन वह खुद को उन्हें उस यादगार संबोधन के लिए तैयार नहीं कर पाए जैसा कि सुभाष चंद्र बोस ने उन्हें कहा था : राष्ट्रपिता।

स्वतंत्रता संग्राम में गांधी की भूमिका को कमतर करते हुए आरएसएस ने सावधानीपूर्वक गोडसे से भी दूरी बनाई। लेकिन अब ऐसा नहीं हो सकता। इस बार चुनाव में मिली भारी जीत से उपजे अहंकार में उनकी वास्तविक भावनाएं ऐसा लगता है कि स्वयं प्रकट हो रही हैं।

इसीलिए विष्णु पांड्या टिप्पणी करते हैं, 'गोडसे एक देशभक्त था और जैसा कि गांधी भी थे।' यहां महात्मा गांधी को उनके हत्यारे के बराबर कर दिया गया जिसमें हत्यारे की देशभक्ति का जिक्र पहले किया गया। यह आरएसएस का दृष्टिकोण है। गांधी एक देशद्रोही थे, और गोडसे एक देशभक्त था, वास्तव में महान

देशभक्त, क्योंकि उसने एक देशद्रोही को खत्म किया। व्हाट्सअप के जरिये बड़ी संख्या में फॉरवर्ड हो रहे संदेशों में यह दृष्टिकोण अंतर्निहित है और खासतौर से उत्तर भारत में चर्चाओं में यह दृष्टिकोण व्यापक रूप से फैल चुका है कि गोडसे ने न केवल गांधी की हत्या कर ठीक किया था, बल्कि उसे उनकी हत्या पहले कर देनी चाहिए थी, महात्मा के आखिरी उपवास से पहले जब उन्होंने भारतीयों से उन मुस्लिमों को समान अधिकार देने की अपील की थी, जिन्होंने इस देश में, जो कि उनका अपना देश था, रहकर अपनी देशभक्ति प्रकट की थी। आरएसएस शायद स्पष्ट तौर पर स्वीकार न करे, लेकिन कट्टरपंथी हिंदुत्ववादी नजिरिया स्पष्ट है : गांधी असली 'राष्ट्र विरोधी' थे, क्योंकि उन्होंने विभाजन नहीं रोका, क्योंकि उन्होंने भारत से पाकिस्तान को धन लौटाने के लिए कहा, जो कि भारत पर बकाया था, क्योंकि वह मुस्लिमों (और ईसाइयों) से वैसा ही प्रेम करते थे जैसा कि हिंदुओं से। जिस व्यक्ति ने ऐसे राष्ट्र विरोधी को खत्म किया उसे सच्चा देशभक्त होना चाहिए।

जो लोग गांधी का विरोध करते हुए गोडसे की वंदना करते हैं, वे अब उनके में बैठेंगे, उन्हें ऐसे भारतीयों ने भेजा है जो उनके विचारों को अपने अनुकूल पाते हैं। यह सब गांधी के 150 वें जन्म वर्ष में हो रहा है और इस भयावहता, क्रूरता और विरडबना के साथ हमें रहना है।

मैंने इस लेख की शुरुआत 1990 के दशक में अयोध्या में गोडसे के कुछ उपासकों से की थी। जिस सामाजिक कार्यकर्ता ने मुझे यह कहानी बताई थी उन्होंने यह भविष्यवाणी भी जोड़ी थी। भारतीयों ने एक बार बुद्धों को बाहर फेंका और हम गांधी के साथ भी ऐसी ही करेंगे। इसके पच्चीस साल बाद गोडसे के उपासकों की संख्या हजारों में नहीं लाखों में हो चुकी है। उनके प्रतिनिधि संसद में बैठ रहे हैं और शायद मंत्रिपरिषद में भी हों।

भारत ने बुद्ध को बेदखल किया, क्योंकि हमने उनके सामाजिक बराबरी के विचार को सामाजिक पदानुक्रम के हमारे प्रेम के उलट पाया। अब अनेक भारतीय गांधी को बेदखल करना चाहते हैं, क्योंकि वे उनके विभिन्न आस्थाओं के बीच सद्भाव के विचार को अपने बहुलतावादी कट्टरता के उलट पाते हैं। शायद यह हमें बाकी दुनिया के लिए छोड़ देना चाहिए कि वह गांधी को स्वीकार करें जैसा कि उन्होंने बुद्ध को स्वीकार किया।

अच्छा नहीं रहा। मीडिया कमेटी के पदाधिकारी मैदान में कहीं नजर नहीं आए। मध्य प्रदेश में तो विधानसभा चुनाव के बाद ही प्रादेशिक टीवी चैनलों और अखबारों के विज्ञापन बंद कर दिए गए थे। यहां तक कि स्वतंत्र पत्रकारों की अधिमान्यता तक आचार संहिता का बहाना बनाकर रोक दी गई। अनेक राज्यों में मीडिया के साथ कांग्रेस नेताओं ने दूरी बनाकर रखी थी। मीडिया के साथ बने फास्ले ने पत्रकारों के एक वर्ग को स्वाभाविक रूप से भाजपा की तरफ मोड़ दिया। यह सब जानते हैं कि मीडिया के साथ समन्वय कांग्रेस की खासियत रहा है। लेकिन इस बार यह सब नदारद था।

जंग के मैदान में ऑटोमैटिक राइफल का मुकाबला तत्तवारों से नहीं किया जा सकता। इस बार की कांग्रेस कुछ ऐसी ही थी। उम्मीदवारों का चुनाव तथा अंदरूनी कलह की पुरानी बीमारी से पार्टी का न उबर पाना भी पराजय का एक कारण था। नए चेहरों को मैदान में उतारने का जोखिम भी था। लेकिन इन चेहरों ने अपने को 10, जनमथ का प्रवक्ता समझना शुरू कर दिया। उनके पूरे व्यवहार में एक किस्म का सामंती भाव था,जो यह प्रदर्शित कर रहा था कि इस बार उन्हें जिताना मतदाताओं का कर्तव्य है। उनके व्यवहार में बुनियादी शिष्टाचार भी नहीं था। इससे कांग्रेस के निष्ठावान कार्यकर्ता और बुजुर्ग कांग्रेसी आहत थे। वरिष्ठ कांग्रेसी अपनी नई पौष से त्रस्त नजर आए। लगातार दो शर्मनाक पराजयों से कांग्रेस क्या कोई सबक लेगी या फिर अपना राजसी आलस ओढ़े इस बात का इंतजार करेंगी कि कब चक्रवर्ती रॉस्ट्र मोदी के खिलाफ यह देश बगावत करे और वह सत्तासीन हो!

मीडिया से खिंचाव भरा रिरता भी कांग्रेस के लिए

# दीवार पर लिखा पढ़ नहीं पाई कांग्रेस

**कांग्रेस कार्य समिति से अनेक कद्दावर नेताओं को बाहर करना पार्टी के लिए भारी पड़ गया। जिन राज्यों में कांग्रेस कमजोर हुई, वहीं के शिखर राजनेताओं को निकाले जाने से वे चुनाव के प्रति उदासीन हो गए।**

**कांग्रेस** और उसके सहयोगी भले सदमे में हों, लेकिन उनकी पराजय की वजहें किसी अलीगढ़ी ताले में बंद नहीं हैं। मीडिया का एक वर्ग काफी हद तक इन परिणामों से वाकिफ था। हां, इस विराट एकपक्षीय जीत का अंदाज उसे नहीं था। लेकिन राजनीति की समृद्ध विरासत लिए एक खांटी परिवार को हकीकत का पूर्वानुमान नहीं रहा हो, यह हैरत की बात है।

कांग्रेस अध्यक्ष राहुल गांधी ने चुनाव प्रचार अभियान के दौरान चौकीदार चोर है का नारा बुलंद किया। इस नारे ने फायदे के बजाय पार्टी को नुकसान ही अधिक पहुंचाया। राजनीतिक अभियानों में निजी और कमर से नीचे के हमले कांग्रेस के प्रचार का हिस्सा कभी नहीं रहे। इस तरह के आक्रमण अधिकतर प्रतिपक्ष ने किए हैं और इनका लाभ कांग्रेस को ही मिला है। वर्ष 1979-80 के चुनाव में इंदिरा गांधी के खिलाफ चरित्र हनन के सारे भोंडे तरीके इस्तेमाल किए गए थे। पर इंदिरा गांधी की सत्ता में शानदार वापसी हुई। 1990-91 के आम चुनाव में राजीव गांधी के विरुद्ध घटिया नारा उछाला गया। लेकिन कांग्रेस की वापसी हुई। वर्ष 2004 के चुनाव में सोनिया गांधी पर निजी हमले किए गए। नतीजतन अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी जैसे शिखर राजनेता की सत्ता चली गई। ये तीन उदाहरण राहुल गांधी के सामने थे। इसके बाद भी चौकीदार

चोर है का नारा लगता रहा।

जून, 2018 में कांग्रेस कार्य समिति से अनेक कद्दावर और जनाधार वाले नेताओं को बाहर का दरवाजा दिखाना पार्टी के लिए भारी पड़ गया। जिन राज्यों में कांग्रेस हालिया दौर में कमजोर हुई, उन्हीं प्रदेशों के शिखर राजनेताओं को कार्य समिति से निकाले जाने से वे लोकसभा चुनाव में एक तरह से

उदासीन थे। हिमाचल प्रदेश से वीरभद्र सिंह, कश्मीर से कर्ण सिंह, राजस्थान से सी पी जोशी, मोहन प्रकाश, मध्य प्रदेश से दिग्विजय सिंह, कर्नाटक से ऑस्कर फर्नांडिस, बी के हरिप्रसाद, महाराष्ट्र से सुशील कुमार शिंदे, पंजाब से आर के धवन ( तब उनका निधन नहीं हुआ था), उत्तर प्रदेश से जनार्दन द्विवेदी और मोहसिना किदवाई को बाहर किया गया। फिर सिर पर लोकसभा चुनाव हों, तब अपने दल के क्षेत्रीय सितारों को बाहर करना दूरदर्शिता नहीं। पार्टी के इन तपे-तपाए नेताओं की पूंजी उनका अनुभव ही था। उन्हें पार्टी राज्यपाल, केंद्रीय मंत्री और मुख्यमंत्री तो नहीं बना सकती थी, लेकिन कार्यसमिति में बनाए रखकर चुनाव में उनका सक्रिय सहयोग ले सकती थी।

अनेक साल से कांग्रेस के सदस्यता अभियान और जिला इकाइयों की साल भर चलने वाली गतिविधियों



राजेश बादल



पर जैसे रोक लगी हुई है। सालाना सदस्यता शुल्क अधिक नहीं होता, लेकिन उसके बहाने स्थानीय स्तर पर समाज की सोच का फीडबैक जरूर मिलता था। कितने जिलों में कांग्रेस कार्यालय बचे हैं, वहां नियमित गतिविधियों को संगठन किस तरह मॉनिटर करता है, कोई नहीं जानता। जिला, तहसील और पंचायत स्तर पर जुड़े कांग्रेस कार्यकर्ता के रोजगार का जरिया क्या है, संगठन ने कभी जानने का प्रयास नहीं किया। कांग्रेस सेवा दल अब क्या करता है, किसी को खबर नहीं। युवा कांग्रेस तथा भारतीय राष्ट्रीय छात्र संगठन की गतिविधियां जैसे थम गई हैं। आजादी के आंदोलन में जन-जन के दिल में धड़कने वाली कांग्रेस अब मैदान में मुर्दा-सी पड़ी है। उसमें सांस फूंकने का काम अकेले राहुल गांधी का नहीं, पार्टी के उन लाखों-करोड़ों लोगों का भी है, जो वैचारिक आधार पर इस दल से जुड़ाव महसूस करते हैं।

मीडिया से खिंचाव भरा रिरता भी कांग्रेस के लिए









# मोदी सरकार 2.0 की चुनौतियां उठाने होंगे कई मजबूत कदम

पहले कार्यकाल के दौरान प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी के खाते में कल्याण योजनाओं से लेकर राष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा एवं संरचनागत परिवर्तन तक कई उपलब्धियाँ हैं, परंतु इस बार उनकी चुनावी जीत जितनी भारी है, दूसरे कार्यकाल में उनकी सरकार के सामने चुनौतियों का दबाव भी उतना ही बढ़ा है। कृषि संकट के निवारण और ग्रामीण आर्थिकी को गति देने की दिशा में बहुत कुछ अपेक्षित है। घरेलू और अंतरराष्ट्रीय कारणों से अर्थव्यवस्था में नमी आयी है। कच्चे तेल के दाम में उतार-चढ़ाव और व्यापार घाटे के बढ़ने से वित्तीय घाटे एवं मुद्रास्फीति की आशंका बढ़ गयी है। अमेरिका, चीन, रूस, जापान और यूरोपीय देशों से हमारे संबंध बेहतरी की ओर बढ़े तो हैं, पर कुछ महत्वपूर्ण देशों के संरक्षणवादी और विस्तारवादी रवये ने हमारे लिए गंभीर चुनौती पैदा कर दी है। आतंकवाद, अलगाववाद और उग्रवाद तथा पाकिस्तान के खतरनाक रवये से निबटने के लिए सुदृढ़ सुरक्षा नीति बनाने की आवश्यकता भी है। बहुत बड़ी युवा आबादी के लिए शिक्षा एवं रोजगार की व्यवस्था करना और करोड़ों गरीबों व कम आमदनी वाले लोगों को स्वास्थ्य सेवा मुहैया कराने संबंधी कार्यक्रमों को बढ़ावा देना आसान नहीं हैं। मोदी सरकार के समक्ष उपस्थित कुछ महत्वपूर्ण चुनौतियों के विश्लेषण के साथ प्रस्तुत है आज का इन दिनों ...



## बढ़ते श्रमबल के लिए रोजगार सृजन

भा रत की 136 करोड़ की अनुमानित आबादी में 67 प्रतिशत लोग 15 से 64 वर्ष के हैं. इस लिहाज से तकरीबन 91 करोड़ लोगों को नौकरी/रोजगार चाहिए. इतने लोगों के लिए रोजगार की व्यवस्था करना कोई खेल नहीं है. दो करोड़ प्रतिवर्ष रोजगार सृजन के वादे के साथ 2014 में मोदी सरकार आयी थी, लेकिन ऐसा हुआ नहीं. बीते जनवरी, सेंटर फॉर मॉनिटरिंग इंडियन इकोनॉमी (सीएमआईई) की जारी रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक, नोटबंदी और जीएसटी के कारण वर्ष 2018 में 1.1 करोड़ लोगों को अपनी नौकरी से हाथ धोना पड़ा था. वहीं, एपीएफओ के अनुसार, अक्टूबर 2018 से अप्रैल अंत तक औसत मासिक नौकरी सृजन में 26 फीसदी की गिरावट दर्ज हुई थी. इतना ही नहीं, नौकरियों के सृजन की गति भी काफी धीमी है. हाल में मीडिया में लोक एनएसएसओ की पीरियॉडिक लेबर फोर्स सर्वे (पीएलएफएस) रिपोर्ट में कहा गया था कि वर्ष 2017-18 में औसत बेरोजगारी दर 6.1 फीसदी तक पहुंच गयी, जो 45 साल में सबसे ज्यादा है. हालांकि, अब सरकार ने भी इस आंकड़े के सही होने की पुष्टि कर दी है. सीएमआईई के आंकड़ों की माफें, तो इस वर्ष फरवरी में देश में बेरोजगारी दर 7.2 प्रतिशत थी, जबकि एक वर्ष पहले यह 5.9 प्रतिशत थी. सीएमआईई के अनुसार, इस वर्ष फरवरी में हमारे देश में करीब 3.12 लोग रोजगार की तलाश कर रहे थे, जबकि 2018 जुलाई में इनकी संख्या 1.4 करोड़ थी. वहीं, कई रिपोर्ट में भी बता रहे हैं कि बीते कई महीनों



से साप्ताहिक और मासिक बेरोजगारी दर सात प्रतिशत के आसपास बनी हुई है, जबकि इंडियास्पेड का विश्लेषण कहता है कि प्रतिवर्ष 1.2 करोड़ लोग नौकरी के बाजार में प्रवेश कर रहे हैं, जिनमें से केवल 47.5 प्रतिशत लोग ही श्रमबल का हिस्सा बन पाते हैं। बाकी बचे लोग या तो बेरोजगार रहते हैं या फिर बेहद कम पैसों पर काम करने को मजबूर होते हैं। विश्व बैंक के अनुसार, भारत में प्रतिवर्ष 81 लाख नयी नौकरियों की जरूरत है। इतने बड़े पैमाने पर नयी नौकरियों का सृजन नयी सरकार के लिए आसान नहीं होगा।

## स्वास्थ्य क्षेत्र को दुरुस्त करने की दरकार

**भारत की विशाल आबादी को बीमारियों की दोहरे मार से गुजरना पड़ रहा है। हमारे देश में संक्रामक और गैर-संक्रामक (जीवनशैली के कारण होनेवाली बीमारियाँ) रोगों में वृद्धि हो रही है। वर्ष 2015 में होनेवाली पचास प्रतिशत मौतों की वजह संक्रामक और गैर-संक्रामक रोग थे, जबकि वर्ष 2001-03 के बीच इन रोगों से 42 प्रतिशत लोगों की मृत्यु हुई थी। विश्व के कुल टीबी रोगी का 26 प्रतिशत भारत में है, जो वैश्विक स्तर पर सर्वाधिक संख्या है। हालाँकि टीबी उन्मूलन के लिए सरकार ने सावर्भौमिक टीकाकरण कार्यक्रम में नये टीके लगाने की शुरुआत भी की है। वैश्विक टीबी उन्मूलन की समय सीमा 2030 रखी गयी है, लेकिन मोदी सरकार ने इसे 2025 ही रखा है। भारत उष्णकटिबंधीय बीमारियों (मलेरिया, हैजा, डेंगू) का भी घर है। हर वर्ष हजारों लोग टीके जात इन्हीं रोगों के कारण जाती हैं। मोदी सरकार द्वारा जोर-शोर से चलाये गये स्वच्छता अभियान के बावजूद इन रोगों में खास कमी नहीं आयी है। मलेरिया हमारे यहां आज भी ज़िलेवार बना हुआ है, लेकिन ओडिशा में इसे मामले में कमी आने से वैश्विक स्तर पर भारत की स्थिति सुधरी है। विश्व स्वास्थ्य संगठन ने इसके लिए भारत की प्रशंसा की है। वायु प्रदूषण में हमारे कई शहर वैश्विक स्तर पर शीर्ष पर हैं। अक्तूबर, 2018 में आयी विश्व स्वास्थ्य संगठन की रिपोर्ट के अनुसार, पाँच वर्ष से कम उम्र के कम-से-कम 60,987 भारतीय बच्चों की मौत का कारण पीएम 2.5 था। जल प्रदूषण के कारण भी सैकड़ों लोग हर वर्ष अपंगता के शिकार हो रहे हैं। वहाँ, मातृ मृत्यु दर (एमएमआर) 22 प्रतिशत घटा कर 130 (प्रति एक लाख जीवित शिशु पर) हो गयी है। सतत विकास लक्ष्य का उद्देश्य 2030 तक इस संख्या को घटा कर 70 करना है, जबकि भारत इसे 2022 तक ही प्राप्त करना चाहता है। स्वास्थ्य के कई मानकों पर भारत बेहद पिछड़ा है। इस स्थिति**



में सुधार के लिए सरकार द्वारा स्वास्थ्य के क्षेत्र में कुछ महत्वपूर्ण कदम उठाये गये हैं। आयुष्मान भारत योजना के तहत सरकार 10 करोड़ लोग परिवारों को सालाना पांच लाख रुपये का बीमा कवर दे रही है। अनुमान है कि इससे तकरबन 50 करोड़ लोग स्वास्थ्य सुविधाओं का लाभ ले पायेंगे। एक योजना के तहत सरकार ने 1.5 लाख हेल्थ और वेलनेस सेंटर स्थापित करने की घोषणा भी की थी। वहीं, मोदी सरकार की योजना नये स्वास्थ्य केंद्रों के देशभर के 5,000 जन औषधि केंद्रों में पैथोलॉजी लैब खोलने की है। हालांकि, इसके लिए पैसे कहाँ से आयेंगे, यह एक बड़ी चुनौती है। वर्तमान में हमारे देश में बजट का केवल 2.2 प्रतिशत व जीडीपी का महज 1.5 प्रतिशत ही स्वास्थ्य पर खर्च किया जाता है। सरकार ने स्वास्थ्य बजट बढ़ाने की बात कही है। एक और बड़ी चुनौती सरकारी नीतियों के सही कार्यान्वयन और प्रबंधन की भी है। इस और ध्यान देने की बहुत ज़रूरत है।

## कृषि संकट से निबटना होगा

वर्ष 2004-05 में जीडीपी में कृषि (कृषि, वानिकी और मत्स्य पालन) का हिस्सा 21 प्रतिशत था, जो बीते पंद्रह वर्षों में गिर कर 13 प्रतिशत पर आ गया है, जबकि इसकी तुलना में इस क्षेत्र में कार्यबल की संख्या में कोई काम नहीं आया है। देश में लगभग 55 प्रतिशत श्रमबल कृषि क्षेत्र में कार्यरत है। अनुमानतः 26 करोड़ लोग इस क्षेत्र में काम कर रहे हैं। इस कारण देश की तकरीबन 55 से 57 प्रतिशत आबादी कृषि पर निर्भर है, लेकिन सरकारी उपेक्षा के कारण इनकी स्थिति दयनीय बनी हुई है। वर्तमान में इनकी परेशानी का कारण खाद्य कीमतों में गिरावट है, जिससे उत्पादन का लाभ नहीं निकल पाता और किसान कर्ज में डूबते चले जाते हैं। अंततः वे खेती से पलायन करने या आत्महत्या करने को विवश हो जाते हैं। मोदी सरकार के बावजूद किसानों को फायदा नहीं मिल पा रहा है। इसी वर्ष संसदे ने किसानों के हितों की रक्षा के लिए कृषि कानून 2020 पारित किए, जिसके तहत किसानों को फायदा बढ़ाकर 6,000 रुपये तीन किन्नरों में देकर प्राव मिलेगी। इतना ही नहीं, मोदी सरकार को नयी नीति के अनुसार, 60 वर्ष के बा



भी कम जिम्मेदार नहीं है। इस वर्ष मार्च से मई के दौरान ग्री-मॉनसून बारिश में 22 प्रतिशत की कमी आयी है। इस कमी से गन्ना, सब्जी, फल कागज जैसे फसलों के उत्पादन पर बुरा प्रभाव पड़ सकता है। आइए आइए ग्रीनोपनर के अलावा सिस्टम द्वारा जारी चेतावनी के अनुसार, देश के 40 प्रतिशत से ज्यादा हिस्से में इस वर्ष सूखा पड़ने की आशंका है और करीब इसके आधे हिस्से में गंभीर या असाधारण सूखा पड़ सकता है। मॉनसून के सामान्य से बहुत कम रहने की संभावना भी जातीय जा रही है। नतीजा, फसलों की कुआँवाँ की लागत बढ़ जायेगी, राय हो उनका उत्पादन भी कम होगा। ऐसी स्थिति में किसानों की आर्थिक स्थिति तो प्रभावित होगी ही अनाज, सब्जी की आपूर्ति कम होने और मंग बहेने से मुद्रा स्थिती भी बड़ेगी। यानी महंगाई का बढ़ना तार है।

## शिक्षा तंत्र में बदलाव की जरूरत

**अ**गले साल भारतीय जनसंख्या की औसत आयु 25 साल होने का अनुमान है. ऐसे में रोजगार के समुचित अवसर देना करने के लिए सरकार के सामने शिक्षा के क्षेत्र में ठोस पहल करने की चुनौती है. शिक्षा की सीधा संबंध 25 फीसदी आबादी और अर्थव्यवस्था से है. विभिन्न रिपोर्टों में रेखांकित किया है कि बड़ी संख्या में पेशेवर और उच्च शिक्षा पाये लोग वास्तव में रोजगार के लायक ही नहीं हैं तथा उनकी उत्पादकता असंतोषजनक है. इस स्थिति की बेहतरी के लिए प्राथमिक स्तर से ही शिक्षा प्रणाली में आमूल-चूल बदलाव की दरकार है. जानकारों की मानें, तो इसीके लिए सार्वजनिक निवेश को बढ़ाना होगा. भारत अभी अपने सकल घरेलू उत्पादन का मात्र 2.7 फीसदी शिक्षा के मद्द में खर्च करता है. इसे छह फीसदी करने की मांग लंबे समय से उठती रही है. सरकारी स्कूलों में प्राथमिक और माध्यमिक स्तर पर दशकों से चली आ रही शिक्षा की बदहाली अब बेहद चिंताजनक स्तर पर पहुँच चुकी है. इस क्षेत्र में निजी क्षेत्र की आमद मददगार हो सकती है, पर सरकारी स्कूलों को दुरुस्त किये बिना ठोस समाधान की उम्मीद नहीं है. देशभर में 25 करोड़ से अधिक छात्र लगभग 14 लाख स्कूलों में शिक्षा प्राप्त कर रहे हैं. इनमें से 75 फीसदी सरकार द्वारा संचालित हैं. शिक्षक-प्रशिक्षण का स्तरहीन होना और आवश्यक संसाधनों का अभाव हमारी शिक्षा व्यवस्था की बड़ी खामियों में से है. नियमित रूप से संशोधित नहीं होने के कारण पाठ्यक्रम बदलते समय के लिए उपयोगी नहीं रह जाते हैं. इन्हें अद्यतन करने के साथ



के अनुसूच, को भी जोड़ना चाहिए. शोध, परिणाम एवं देश-विदेश की संस्थाओं से जुड़ाव जैसे पहलुओं के हिसाब से उच्च शिक्षा संस्थानों की समीक्षा करने की आवश्यकता है. उच्च एवं पेशेवर शिक्षा की संस्थाओं के नियमन का प्रश्न भी मानव संसाधन मंत्रालय के समक्ष होगा. राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा नीति के प्रारूप पर संसद और संसद के बाहर उचित चर्चा व सहमति से इसे लागू करना भी सरकार के लिए आसान नहीं होगा.

# सुरक्षा पर समुचित ध्यान

सरकार को मिले प्रवृद्ध जनशिक्षण का एक प्रमुख आधार राष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा का प्रश्न था। पहले चरण में इस मामले पर मोदी सरकार की उपलब्धियाँ उल्लेखनीय रही हैं, पर उसे धरेलू अतिवाद और आतंकवाद, सेना के आधुनिकीकरण तथा चीन एवं पाकिस्तान से संभावित खतरों से निबटने जैसे मामलों से लगातार जुझना पड़ा था। हालाँकि नक्सलियों पर अंकुश लगाने में बहुत कामयाबी मिली है, पर कश्मीर में आतंकवाद और अलगाववाद की चुनौती बेहद गंभीर है। पिछली सरकार के कार्यकाल के पूरा होते रक्षा बजट सकल घरेलू उत्पाद का सिर्फ 1.5 फीसदी रह गया है। इससे सेना के आधुनिकीकरण और जरूरी सज्जा-सामान की खरीद पर असर पड़ा है। इस कमी को पूरा करने के लिए जुलाई में पेश हो रहे बजट में रक्षा मंत्रि ने खर्च को बढ़ाने की जरूरत है। सेना के तीनों अंगों में प्रशासनिक और पेशेवर सुधारों के साथ सरकार के समाने दोस व संतुलित राष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा रणनीति को तैयार करने की चुनौती भी है।



आंतरिक और बाह्य सुरक्षा को सुदृढ़ करने के लिए हथियारों और अन्य जरूरी उपकरणों की खरीद हमें दूसरे देशों से करनी पड़ती है। इस मामले में भारत दुनिया का सबसे बड़ा आयातक है। इससे भारी धन तो खर्च होता ही है, सामानों का भार और सैनिकों की रीढ़ी जानें में भी बेमलतब बरी होती है। इस समस्या को कुछ राहत देने के लिए बहुत अरसे से रक्षा अनुसंधान और उत्पादन बढ़ाने पर ध्यान देने की मांग उठती रही है, पर इस दिशा में हमारी प्रगति निराशाजनक रही है। वैश्विक रक्षा-नीति और रणनीति के क्षेत्र में उपलब्ध के माहौल में हथियारों के आयात पर पूरी तरह निर्भर रहना परेशानी का कारण बन सकता है। घरेलू रक्षा उत्पादन से न सिर्फ सैन्य शक्ति को समृद्ध करने में बड़ी मदद मिलेगी, बल्कि इससे अर्थव्यवस्था को भी मजबूती हासिल होगी।

## अंतरराष्ट्रीय राजनीति के पेच

विदेश मंत्री एस जयशंकर को पहले दिन से ही अमेरिका-चीन व्यापार युद्ध और ईरान पर अमेरिका की प्रतिबंध के माहौल में भारत के आर्थिक और रणनीतिक हितों को साधने की चुनौती है. चीन के साथ संबंधों को बेहतर करना भी एजेंडे में ऊपर है. अनुभवी कूटनीतिज्ञ तथा मोदी सरकार के पहले कार्यकाल की उपलब्धियों के कारण विदेश नीति के मोर्चे पर जयशंकर को कुछ आसानी रहेगी, परंतु अंतरराष्ट्रीय राजनीति और आर्थिकों का वर्तमान अनिश्चितताओं से भरा है. महत्वपूर्ण देशों की ओर से कबाब का समरान करना पड़ सकता है, जैसा कि ईरानी तेल के आयात के मामले में देखा गया है. ऐसे में एक सुचिंतित नीति का निर्धारण आवश्यक है. अमेरिका, जापान, रूस, फ्रांस, और यूरोपीय संघ के साथ वाणिज्यिक और सुरक्षा संबंधों को बढ़ाना तथा पड़ोसी देशों के साथ बहुआयामी सहयोग की दिशा में अग्रसर होना सरकार की प्राथमिकताएँ होंगी. संयुक्त राष्ट्र और विश्व व्यापार संगठन में सुधार, सुरक्षा परिषद में स्थायी सदस्यता तथा न्यूक्लियर सप्लाई ग्रुप में शामिल होने जैसे विषय भी सरकार के सामने होंगे. पाकिस्तान के साथ वायु रवेया रहेगा, यह भी एक महत्वपूर्ण प्रश्न है. पाकिस्तान के कारण दक्षिणी एशियाई देशों के समूह साक फिलहाल निष्क्रिय है. सरकार को इस्लामाबाद में प्रस्तावित बैठक में हिस्सेदारी पर भी चर्चा बाना है. साक का वया भविष्य होगा, यह भी कुछ दिनों में स्पष्ट हो सकता है. अफगानिस्तान में शांति प्रक्रिया तथा तालिबान के साथ चल रही वार्ता के बारे में भारत को स्पष्ट सप्लाई भी बाना है. चूँकि बहुपक्षीय व्यापार भी अब विदेश नीति का ही हिस्सा बन चुका है, ऐसे में वित्त, वाणिज्य और विदेश मंत्रालयों के बीच सहजगति स्थापित करना भी जरूरी है.



## अर्थव्यवस्था की सुस्ती

**भा**रत विश्व की तेजी से विकसित होती अर्थव्यवस्था है। विश्व मुद्रा कोष के मुताबिक, वर्ष 2018 में भारत के अर्थव्यवस्था की अनुमानित वृद्धि दर 7.1 प्रतिशत थी, लेकिन बीते कुछ महीनों से इसे गति देने वाले संकेतक गंभीर समस्या से गुजर रहे हैं, जिससे इसकी वृद्धि दर सुस्त हो गयी है। इस कारण वित्त वर्ष 2018-19 में जीडीपी वृद्धि दर सिर्फ 6.98 प्रतिशत रहने का अनुमान लगाया गया था, जबकि इसके पिछले वित्त वर्ष में जीडीपी वृद्धि दर 7.2 प्रतिशत थी। वहीं, बीते मार्च में समाप्त चौथी तिमाही में जीडीपी वृद्धि दर फिर 5.8 प्रतिशत पर आ गयी। अर्थव्यवस्था की इस सुस्ती का एक प्रमुख कारण औद्योगिक उत्पादन में गिरावट है। विनिर्माण क्षेत्र में सुस्ती बने रहने से इस वर्ष मार्च में देश के औद्योगिक उत्पादन (आइआइपी) में पिछले वर्ष इसी अवधि की तुलना में 0.1 प्रतिशत की गिरावट आयी है। सरकार्री आंकड़ों के मुताबिक, 21 माह में औद्योगिक उत्पादन का यह सबसे कमजोर प्रदर्शन है। वित्त वर्ष 2018-19 की पूरी अवधि में औद्योगिक वृद्धि दर 3.6 प्रतिशत ही रही, जो पिछले 3 वर्ष में सबसे कम है। औद्योगिक उत्पादन में गिरावट का मतलब उत्पाद के लिए मांग में कमी है। उद्योग अर्थव्यवस्था का सबसे मजबूत पहिया माना जाता है, क्योंकि यह बड़ी मात्रा में रोजगार सृजन का कारक होता है, इसमें कमी का मतलब रोजगार का घटना। अबकैसे बताते हैं कि कार की बिक्री वित्त वर्ष 2017 में सालाना 9.2 प्रतिशत और 2018 के 7.9 की तुलना में 2019 में महज 6.3 प्रतिशत ही रही है। मांग में कमी की वजह से ही अप्रैल में कारों की बिक्री में करीब 17 फीसदी की कमी आयी है, जो आठ सालों की सबसे बड़ी कमी है। कार के अलावा, दोपहिया वाहनों और ट्रेक्टर की बिक्री भी गरी है। इतना ही नहीं, गैर-तेल, गैर-सोना, गैर-चांदी और कम कीमती व अर्द्ध कीमती पथरों के निर्यात में भी बीते चार महीने में कमी दर्ज हुई है। जीडीपी की निर्यात में हिस्सेदारी भी वित्त वर्ष 2014 के 25.4 की तुलना में 2019 में 19.7 पर पहुंच गयी है। वहीं, वित्त वर्ष 2019 में राजकोषीय घाटा 7.04 लाख करोड़ रुपये रहने का अनुमान है, जो जीडीपी का 3.4 प्रतिशत है। अर्थव्यवस्था की सुस्ती को दूर करने के लिए सरकार्री को न सिर्फ रोजगार का सृजन करना होगा, बल्कि लोगों की क़यश्त बढ़ाने के उपाय भी करने होंगे।



## तलाशना होगा बैंकिंग संकट का समाधान

नयी सरकार के सामने एक बड़ी चुनौती बैंड लोन से निबटने व वित्तीय सेक्टर में बने नकदी संकट को दूर करने की होगी। दिवालिया कानून (आइबीसी) के जरिये एनडीए प्रथम सरकार ने इससे निबटने का कदम उठाया था। इसका लक्ष्य 10 लाख करोड़ रुपये से ज्यादा के बैंड लोन का समाधान निकालना था। हालांकि, अब भी बैंको पर बैंड लोन का बोझ बहुत ज्यादा है। वहीं, दिसंबर 2018 तक सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र के बैंको की गैर-निष्पादित परिसंपत्तियां आठ ट्रिलियन रुपये से अधिक थीं।

लोकन अब वित्तीय क्षेत्र में नकदी का संकट खड़ा हो गया है, जिसका समाधान निकालना होगा। पिछले साल सितंबर में आइएल एंड एफएस के कर्ज डिफॉल्ट शुरू करने के बाद यह संकट बना है। उससे करण रुपी-90 हजार करोड़ रुपये का कर्ज है। इसकी वजह से बहुत-सी गैर बैंकों वित्तीय कंपनियां कर्ज देने में आनाकानी करने लगी हैं। व्यापार घाटा भी बढ़ता जा रहा है। अप्रैल 2019 तक भारत का व्यापार घाटा रिकॉर्ड 15.3 बिलियन डॉलर पर पहुंच गया, जबकि मार्च में यह 10.9 बिलियन डॉलर था। वहीं, प्रत्यक्ष विदेशी निवेश भी भी कम आ रही है। वाणिज्य और उद्योग मंत्रालय के आंकड़े के अनुसार, वित्त वर्ष 2019 के अप्रैल-दिसंबर के बीच व्यापार घाटा साढ़ प्रतिशत की गिरावट के साथ 33.49 बिलियन डॉलर पर पहुंच गया, जबकि 2017-18 के इसी अवधि में यह 35.94 बिलियन डॉलर था। बीते कुछ समय से एफडीआई में भी कमी आयी है। इस कमी के कारण देश के भुगतान संतुलन पर दबाव पड़ सकता है। नतीजा रुपये के मूल्य में गिरावट आ सकती है। ये वजहें महंगाई बढ़ने में सहायक होती हैं। नयी वित्त मंत्री के लिए वित्त क्षेत्र की इन समस्याओं से निबटना आसान नहीं होगा।

