

# Brands for the next 300 million Indians

As demand wanes with the top quintile consumers, marketers have to think afresh about how to cater to the next lot in the socio-economic ladder



ACROSS THE BOARD  
SHAILESH DOBHAL

With demand from the top 100 million most affluent consumers beginning to falter — evident from plummeting sales of everything from cars, bikes, air tickets to houses — the general consensus is that to sustain even a moderate 6 per cent to 7

per cent economic growth rate, consumption has to kick in in a meaningful way with the next 300 million people in the socio-economic ladder. Consumers in the top quintile, accounting for almost half of income and a third of consumption expenditure, have already been tapped and their appetite and preferences for a host of products and services has been almost satiated. According to some estimates, the next consumer group that can kick start a new consumption cycle in the country is the middle demographics — the segment you get if you leave aside the top 20 per cent and bottom 40 per cent of consumers by average household income in the country. And whilst government works on the mid-to-long-term

plans to improve incomes and prosperity down the pyramid, Indian businesses have to work harder to draw up business models that cater to this large section of population. This is where most of the action will happen given that the low-hanging fruits of middle-class India that make up the top income quintile in the country is almost over. So far, big firms have been content with tweaking their existing processes and brands to service a section of the “next 300 million consumers”. Launch a brand, or a business model, that caters to the rich and the middle-class, and over time adapt it for lower income consumers — think sachetisation, small value packs, brand extensions et al. It worked, but up to a point. Extending it any

lower resulted in consumers not seeing value in the offering or the business model breaking by the sheer weight of costs piled up to cater to an affluent audience. The need now is to think and act afresh, and fortunately, some of that may have already begun. Most city dwellers would have probably not heard of Bulbul, Simsim, Udaan, Nisha or Zed Black. Yet, each of these insurgent or emerging brands is creating waves across the hinterlands and the often “unseen” urban India. Riding on the Reliance Jio-led data deluge that has made Indians world’s biggest data consumers, video-led shopping apps like Bulbul and Simsim are redefining the shopping experience for small-town India. Though it is early days, these live video-led

shopping sites have started building scale and are being noticed by the big boys of ecommerce at Walmart-owned Flipkart and Amazon. A recent Kantar Worldpanel report on emerging brands in consumer expendables, fast moving consumer goods in industry parlance, throws up new names like Nisha hair colour and Zed Black *agarbati*. Kantar defines emerging brands as those that have a market penetration between 0.5 per cent and 5 per cent in 2014, and managed to add at least one percentage point by 2018. If you think that was easy, consider this: Of the 400-odd FMCG brands within this penetration range tracked by Kantar, just about a tenth were able to hit this delta by 2018! Strong rural and regional presence, and focus on

already deeply penetrated categories did the trick for Nisha and Zed Black besides eight others in the top 10 emerging brands list here. An often ignored section of consumers are the small traders who need to buy stuff or service for their shop or such establishment. Udaan, a Bengaluru-based online business-to-business startup catering to shopkeepers has quietly become a unicorn, essentially a new business valued at \$1 billion or more. Offering end-to-end logistics, delivery, even credit support did the trick for this two-year-old business where decades-old behemoths were just happy getting businesses listed on their platform and charging a subscription for it. It is still early days for the likes of Udaan, Bulbul and Nisha. Hundreds of thousands of such businesses and brands have to mushroom across categories, geographies to provide the bulwark for the next phase of the much-needed consumption boom in the country.

## CHINESE WHISPERS

**Bloopers, then congratulations**  
The Congress party’s new leader in the Lok Sabha, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, has not had the best of times within his party. Chowdhury is a five-time Lok Sabha member, but barely a matriculate. There were at least two to three contenders who thought they should have been elected the party’s leader in the Lok Sabha but the support of UPA Chairperson Sonia Gandhi tipped the scales in Chowdhury’s favour. On Monday, Chowdhury was the lead speaker of his party on the discussion on the motion of thanks on the President’s address. He made a couple of bloopers, including one where he seemed to have insulted the PM. The comment was later expunged. However, his speech, earthy sense of irony and humour won the day. As Chowdhury concluded the speech, Sonia Gandhi, who sits next to him in the Lok Sabha, congratulated him on a good speech and told others that was exactly why she thought she would sit through.

**Sarangi’s first pitch**  
The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Monday fielded Minister of State Pratap Chandra Sarangi (*pictured*) as its lead speaker in the Lok Sabha for the discussion on

the motion of thanks on the President’s address to the joint sitting of Parliament. Sarangi, MP from Balasore, is known as “Odisha’s Modi” and is famous for his frugal lifestyle. Sarangi, who knows five languages, had planned to speak in Hindi. However, Prime Minister Narendra Modi asked Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, who also hails from Odisha, to ask Sarangi whether he could speak in English. According to sources, the PM was keen that the world should know that Sarangi, the “rustic” politician, was fluent in English. Sarangi told Pradhan on the phone that he was indeed fluent in English and on Pradhan’s request, demonstrated his English skills to the oil minister for several minutes. Sarangi was then asked to speak in English for the initial few minutes of his speech, which he did.

**Non-aggressive policing**  
Last week’s incident where a man attacked a group of policemen with a sword before being overpowered and assaulted by them in North Delhi was captured on camera and the footage of the assault was shared multiple times. Despite the provocation, some in Delhi Police feel that the response from the policemen, some of them now suspended, dented the police’s image. The post facto analysis revealed that one reason for the aggressive police behaviour was that many young recruits in the constabulary were sent directly to the police stations as beat constables. Officers feel that dealing with the public without being well versed with police functioning and conduct can result in violent situations. They are now considering sending fresh graduates from police training college to units such as battalions — where they would deal with law and order arrangements under the watch of seniors or ferry undertrials to jail or court — before being posted at police stations.

# Fuel for thought at the pump station

Though India is moving towards reducing fuel consumption, filling stations are set to become more ubiquitous

SHINE JACOB

This July-end, the All India Petrol Dealers Association (AIPDA), which claims to represent around 50,000 of India’s 64,703 fuel outlets, is planning a massive meeting in Goa. The agenda: How to stay in business following India’s big bang fuel retail expansion.

Between them, the three oil marketing companies (OMCs) — Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation (HPCL) — are in line to allot at least 78,493 new fuel retail outlets at an investment of approximately ₹90,000 crore. Russian oil giant Rosneft-led Nayara Energy (NEL) may add 7,000 by 2020 and Reliance Industries (RIL) and its partner BP Plc are expected to come up with 2,000-odd fuel stations, in addition to a few hundred by Royal Dutch Shell.

Overall, about 85,000 new fuel outlets could be in business in the next few years, raising fears about fuel pump viability.

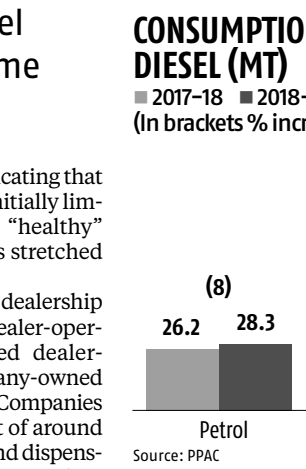
AIPDA data shows that the average throughput in petrol pumps dropped from 170 kilolitre (kl) per month in 2010 to 155 kl in 2018. For RIL and Shell, it is around 300 kl, but NEL is lower than the average. Petrol dealers say they need at least 170 kl to be profitable. “More than doubling the number of outlets means average throughput may drop to 70-80 kl,” a senior oil

industry official admits, indicating that though the expansion was initially limited to 16,000 new pumps, “healthy” competition between OMCs stretched it to 78,493. There are three types of dealership models: Company-owned dealer-operated (CODO), dealer-owned dealer-operated (DODO) and company-owned company-operated (COCO). Companies make a minimal investment of around ₹25 lakh on setting up tank and dispensing units. Dealers normally recover their investments and operating costs based on throughput and a fixed dealer margin, so lower throughput will hurt them. Competition, however, is not the only cause for concern: Growing demand for alternative fuels is also a threat. “We are looking at massive city gas network expansions and shift-



ing to electric vehicles by 2030. Also, vehicle sales are heading south, and petrol and diesel consumption is increasing minimally,” says Ajay Bansal, AIPDA President. At 70-80 kl, he adds, fuel pump profits may be wiped out, given the 10,000-odd Compressed Natural Gas (CNG), bio-CNG and Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) outlets that are also coming up, plus contemplated diesel bans in some cities. Much of this is part of a broader plan to cut import dependency on crude oil by 10 per cent by 2022 and tackle pollution.

The pressures are already evident. According to the Petroleum Planning



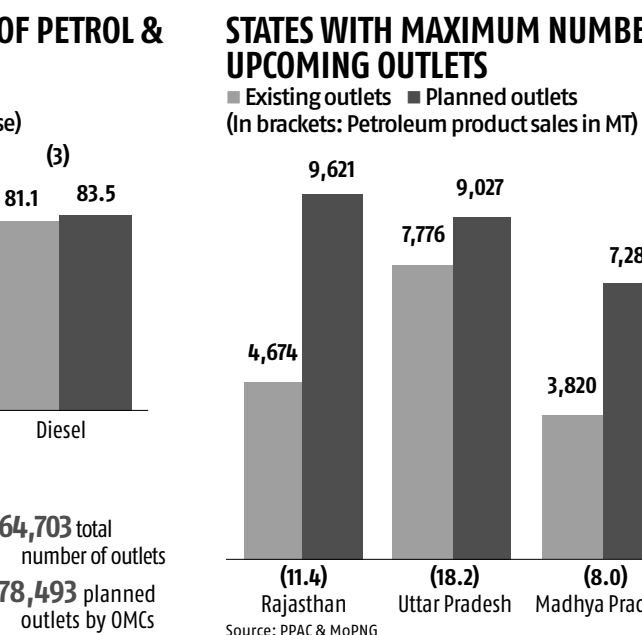
**189.6 MT**  
total sales of all petroleum products

**64,703 total**  
number of outlets

**78,493 planned**  
outlets by OMCs

and Analysis Cell, petrol and diesel sales grew only 8 and 3 per cent respectively in 2018-19 over 2017-18. By 2023, a CRISIL Research report adds, incremental fuel demand will fall to 5 per cent, and 3.8 per cent by 2030. There is room for less than half the additional fuel pumps to maintain current throughput levels, the report adds. “If only 30 per cent of the proposed petrol pumps are commissioned, that is 30,000 fuel pumps, the business will be able to meet breakeven throughput over the next 12 years; pump throughput is expected to remain at current levels of 160 kl per month, which will keep the dealer’s returns stable at 12-15 per cent,” it said.

So why are companies opting for this massive expansion? This “is more about making fuel accessible to the common man, rather than looking at economics,



and could create 10,000,000 to 15,00,000 jobs,” said an IOC official. A senior government official pointed out that almost a third of these pumps will be located in rural areas rather than high-density urban areas. Also, the record suggests that only around 30 per cent of the planned outlets will go on stream anyway, owing to myriad problems including land acquisition.

A *Business Standard* analysis, however, shows that the expansion is not really about serving underserved areas. Of the 78,493 planned outlets, 48 per cent or 37,693 outlets are lined up in five major consuming states of Rajasthan (9,621), Uttar Pradesh (9,027), Madhya Pradesh (7,285), Maharashtra (6,645) and Tamil Nadu (5,115). These states already account for 38 per cent of current petroleum product consumption and around 43.4 per cent of

existing outlets. “If the world is shifting towards alternative sources, including electric vehicles, outlet economics have to be reworked by giving prominence to non-fuel revenue. This should be a micro-market-based approach, depending on what the customer wants in an area,” said Anirban Mukherjee, partner and director, The Boston Consulting Group. Non-fuel outlets can extend from value-added products to even financial services, he pointed out. Ideas such as allowing supermarket chains like Big Bazaar and Reliance Retail to sell fuel have been doing the rounds. An OMC official said even at 60 kl, dealers can make gains if the non-fuel economics is added. For 1.7 million employees and over 60,000 dealers, such plans are too long term to address their immediate fears.

## ON THE JOB Labour migrates to its last resort



MAHESH VYAS

Estimates from the January-April 2019 Consumer Pyramids Household Survey show that there were 404.25 million people employed in India. This was 1.5 million less compared to the 405.77 million estimated to be employed during January-April 2018 and 4.7 million lower than the 408.91 million employed during January-April 2017. During January-April 2019, 36.6 per cent of the total employed persons were engaged in agricultural activities. Ninety per cent of these were into crop cultivation. The rest were engaged principally in horticulture, livestock, fishing, forestry or allied activities. Over the past one year, while the total number of persons employed in some manner or the other declined by 1.5 million, the number of persons employed in agricultural activities increased by 5.1 million — from 142.8 million to 147.9 million. This implies a rather substantial 3.6 per cent increase in employment in agriculture in the comparable rabi months of 2019 and 2018. Most of the increased employment in agriculture has come from crop cultivation. Of the aforementioned 5.1 million increase, 3 million have gone into crop cultivation. Crop cultivation has seen a 2.3 per cent increase in employment in the 2019 rabi season. Livestock saw an increase of 1.9 million in the number of

persons employed or a hefty 87 per cent. Given that farm prices have been depressed and the livestock business has not been particularly attractive because of restrictions on meat consumption and cattle trade, there is no good reason for people to throng to these sectors for employment. There are two possible explanations to this odd migration to tend to farms and livestock. First, it is likely that employment did not actually increase in agriculture, but the sector merely absorbed the excess labour as it had no other place to go to. Farmers did not actually call out for more labour. But, family labour landed up in farms when they had no other place to go to. As we shall see further below, all non-agricultural sectors have seen a fall in employment. A family farm always has scope to absorb some unpaid labour although such additions may not increase any production or profit. There is always an extra patch of the farms to tend to or the need to take the cattle to graze a little farther. Farm work can be spread thinly over available labour and keep everyone “employed” when there is no alternate work available to them. Evidently, the extra hands on the farms did not serve much purpose. Rabi sowing in 2019 was four per cent lower than it was in 2018. Foodgrain sowing was down 4.5 per cent, pulses were down nearly six per cent and oilseeds were down marginally too. The second reason could be that the PM-KISAN scheme that promises a unilateral payment of ₹6,000 per family per year could have drawn some people back to the farms. The scheme was announced on February 1, 2019 and was to be implemented immediately. Mining and manufacturing together accounted for 10 per cent of the total employment. In both these sectors, employment declined, albeit by a

whisker. So, there were no additional jobs in these sectors. The real estate and construction sector, which is usually a provider of employment to low-skilled farm labourers who try to move out of the labour surplus farmlands, shed 4.6 million jobs between January-April 2018 and January-April 2019. This failure of the construction industry to absorb farm surplus labour is, possibly, the biggest reason why there is an increase in employment under agriculture. Even the orders of magnitude of the loss of employment in construction and the addition of employment in agriculture match at around 5 million. Finally, the services sectors shed 1.7 million jobs. Here, three segments are responsible for the fall in employment in services — retail trade, hotels and restaurants and the IT industry. Retail trade employs 56 million people and it has been a big absorber of labour in recent times. But, its rate of absorption of labour has been falling. In 2017, it absorbed an additional 10.4 million persons. In 2018, this fell to 3.7 million. And, in January-April 2019, this sector absorbed only 3 million additional persons over the employment a year ago. The travel and tourism industry provided employment to an estimated 20 million persons during January-April 2019. But, this was 2 million lower than the 22 million jobs it provided a year ago. The IT industry lost an estimated 1.4 million jobs in 2018. And in early 2019, it lost another 0.2 million jobs. The fall in employment in the services sector is new and worrisome. It strengthens the view that consumption expenditure growth is slowing. And, the broad sectoral fall in employment strengthens the view that the economy’s growth has slowed down in 2019.

The author is the MD & CEO of CMIE

## LETTERS

### Triple talaq Bill



In tabling the Triple Talaq Bill on the first day of the newly constituted 17th Lok Sabha, the Modi government has made its intentions and priorities clear. It is wrong to try to give people the impression that Muslim men alone abandon or divorce their wives. Remember, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is a party opposed to women’s entry into the Sabarimala temple despite the Supreme Court’s assertion of it as women’s fundamental right. So much for its commitment to gender equality. Why a party that represents Hindu Right displays so much love and concern for Muslim women would make a rewarding study. How Muslim men are attacked by the Hindutva foot-soldiers just for wearing their skull caps and having long beards springs to mind. The government holds the view that the Bill is not about religion or politics, but about justice and equality. But the provisions of the Bill make it amply obvious that it was brought to target Muslim men and not because the BJP or the Modi government is convinced that the practice of divorce by triple talaq is repugnant to the modern world. Incidentally, all major religions hold that women should be subordinate and subservient to men. All right-thinking people would agree that the triple talaq has to go. But the BJP’s move to abolish

it is politically motivated. Invalidating triple talaq is one thing; making the pronouncement of triple talaq a criminal offence and sending the man to jail for pronouncing triple talaq, already outlawed by the Supreme Court, is an entirely different thing. It is a very flawed anomaly that the husband is sent to jail leaving the woman and children to fend for themselves even while the marriage remains valid. It is not known how any man can utter triple talaq to divorce his wife and have his way when the country’s top court has declared it unconstitutional and null and void.

**G David Milton** Marthandam  
**Doublespeak**

It’s an irony that the Modi government’s return to power with the *aam aadmi*’s overwhelming support almost coincided with the timing of the release of US State Department’s 2018 Report on International Religious Freedom which accused Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) office-bearers for hate speech. It also criticised the government for reportedly protecting cow vigilante groups. One wonders that before taking a look at other countries, why doesn’t the US ensure equal rights for the black and poor in its own country? Why the whites still consider themselves a supreme race and shoot to kill Indian and their other citizens? Naturally, the ruling BJP has termed the report as being biased against the gov-



ernment of Prime Minister Narendra Modi (*pictured*) but even its own response reeks of doublespeak. One has to agree that the BJP has a habit of cherry picking international reports. Whenever there is a favourable report from any of the country, media or world organisation, immediately electronic and print media advertise it as an achievement of Modi but when there is an adverse remark from any of such organization, it becomes “clear bias”. True, the US report on “religious freedom” is “*dada-giri*” against us and is a direct attack on our internal matters. But that is as true as PM Modi’s Kerala election speech where he passed that “where the minority is in the majority” remark.  
**Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee** Faridabad

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## Situations vacant

Justice Gogoi's suggestions will partially address the backlog

The problem of delivering timely justice in India is so gargantuan that it drove one Chief Justice, T S Thakur, to tear up at a public event attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2016 as he recounted the common man's suffering on account of the backlog of cases.

Three years on, Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi has chosen a more prosaic way to draw the prime minister's attention. In three letters, he has made three requests: Expanding the Supreme Court Bench; raising the retirement age for high court judges from 62 to 65 years; and making tenure appointments of high court and Supreme Court judges under the relevant constitutional provisions to clear the backlog. On the first issue, Justice Gogoi pointed out that the judge strength was increased from 26 in 1988 to 31 in 2009. With a pendency of more than 58,000 cases in the apex court, he has argued for another expansion. His proposal to raise the retirement age of high court judges would address the 37 per cent shortage of Bench strength in the country's 24 high courts. Between 2015 and 2019, the number of outstanding cases at this level has risen 9.7 per cent to 375,402 cases. Justice Gogoi also informed the prime minister that 26 cases have been pending for 25 years, 100 cases for 20 years, 593 cases for 15 years and 4,977 cases for 10 years.

The question is whether Justice Gogoi's suggestions, though sensible, are adequate, given the scale of the crisis. The indiscriminate admission of cases is one important element of the problem. The number of frivolous PIL (public interest litigation) petitions filed before the Supreme Court — from banning *sardar* jokes, the restitution of the Kohinoor and monitoring condom packaging (ironically, some of them were entertained by Justice Thakur) — suggests the need for a mechanism to reject non-serious cases at all levels. In lower courts, too, many cases concern hurting cultural, religious and personal sensibilities (such as a lawyer filing a case against Richard Gere kissing Shilpa Shetty at an AIDS awareness event, which went all the way to the Supreme Court). If the courts encouraged more Indians (politicians included) to be less thin-skinned and more tolerant, the judicial system would find the pipeline less clogged.

Justice Gogoi should also consider how the issues of court automation systems, digitisation and e-courts can be fast-tracked. It is time the judiciary as an institution opened itself up to the services of competent external agencies that can help them record, manage and analyse their data better, to build and sustain a healthy institution. There is also perhaps a strong case for looking at the proposal that the Supreme Court should be made a Constitutional Court that will hear and decide cases involving the interpretation of the Constitution and other cases of legal significance or national importance. A separate Court of Appeal could be set up between the high courts and the Supreme Court to hear appeals from judgments and orders of high courts. By some estimates, more than 70 per cent of cases before the Supreme Court do not involve the Constitution. If they are removed, a lot more time will be left for important cases. This of course would involve changes in the Constitution.

## The gold rush

Global central banks' purchases are pushing up prices

Gold is back in vogue once again, with purchases made by global central banks pushing up prices to a five-year high. Five years ago, the world was going through a rough patch on account of the US Federal Reserve's taper tantrum in 2013, which saw gold prices fall from \$1,500 an ounce to as low as \$1,072 in 2015, to subsequently recover some of the lost ground. In 2019, prices are already up 10 per cent in dollar terms at \$1,407 an ounce. For investors, gold is a safe haven every time there is a crisis of confidence. The current rally in gold prices has roots in the ongoing trade tussle between the US and China. US-Iran tensions too have fuelled the rally.

Central banks such as those of Russia, China, and India were heavy buyers of gold in 2018, and so far this year the central banks of Kazakhstan and Turkey too have added to their gold reserves. According to the World Gold Council (WGC), central banks' demand for gold soared to a multi-decade high of 651 tonnes in 2018, a 74 per cent rise over 2017. This is the highest since the dissolution of the Bretton Woods System in 1971. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) now holds the 10th largest gold reserves, at about 613 tonnes.

The trade war between the US and China, the two largest economies globally, have pushed the world to uncertain territory. If the two do not come to an agreeable solution, there could be bloodbath in financial markets. China held \$1.1 trillion in US government securities as of April 2019. And if it decides to offload some of it, the US dollar will likely nosedive. That won't be good for other central banks holding dollar assets. Of India's more than \$400 billion forex reserves, \$155.3 billion was held in US bonds, while the world as a whole held \$6.4 trillion. The stakes are quite high.

But why is gold, which had seen central banks exiting the precious metal in the past, back in the reckoning? The answer is simple, there is hardly any alternative. China is the second-largest economy, and will probably displace the US from number one spot by as early as 2030, according to research estimates, but the yuan is a controlled currency, unlike the dollar. There is no doubt that the biggest weapon that the US wields now is the dollar, or "petrodollar" as strategic analysts like to call it. The world runs on fossil fuel and that cannot be bought without dollars. The petrodollar served the world order well for about 50 years, and might continue doing so for another decade or two. But alternatives are emerging fast. India itself is moving to an all-electric vehicle policy by 2030, which is expected to reduce its oil imports. On the other hand, it would increase India's dependence on China for rare earth material needed to make batteries.

Besides diversification, there also seems to be an effort, for understandable reasons, to blunt the dollar's potency as an economic weapon. Russia and China have taken the lead in that by accumulating most of the gold available for sale. US President Donald Trump's haste on hiking tax on everything that hits the US shore is working subtly for countries to move away from a dollar-centric world. In such a scenario, gold is likely to trade with an upward bias in the foreseeable future.

ILLUSTRATION: AJAY MOHANTY



## Boots on the ground need bucks in the wallet

The government's failure to financially provision for the new troops it has sanctioned is hollowing out the army

The Union Budget for 2019-20 next week will trigger the predictable chorus of criticism that the capital allocation is inadequate for modernising the military's warfighting arsenal — such as tanks, artillery guns, warships and combat aircraft — that should at minimum match, or ideally outclass, what our likely enemies will pit against us in a war. This concern, while valid, misses a greater shortcoming: The government's continuing failure to financially provision for the 100,000 new troops it has sanctioned, but has still to adequately fund.

A dozen years of steady manpower growth, in which the army's payroll has risen six-fold, have seen no commensurate rise in the revenue budget. This has grown only in the mid-single digits — just enough to cover inflation, but not an expanding force. Military planners worry they are close to a financial implosion, caused by a double whammy: A growing force alongside growing pay and pension. Compounding this is the increased cost of equipment due to the Goods and Services Tax (GST), and the imposition of customs duties on defence imports, even of essential weaponry. None of these burdens are compensated for in recent Budgets.

Take the growing cost of manpower: Since 2008, the addition of almost 100,000 combat soldiers has taken the army's numbers up to 1.26 million; while the air force has grown to 155,000 and the navy to 83,500 — making up a one-and-a-half million-strong military. Starting in 2008-09, the army added two mountain divisions (some 50,000 soldiers) to boost border defences in Arunachal Pradesh. Then, in 2011-12, the United Progressive Alliance government unwisely consented to the army's plea to raise a new "mountain strike corps" (MSC), comprising two more divisions and another 70,000 soldiers. The two defensive divisions are raised and deployed, as is the first of the MSC's two divisions.



### BROADSWORD

AJAI SHUKLA

For now, the National Democratic Alliance government has placed the second division on hold. But the troops already raised, including supporting artillery, engineers and logistics units, must be paid, trained, equipped and maintained. The army has set up several new military stations where these formations are located. Where is that money coming from? Since the government has not allocated extra money, the army is forced to generate it from within.

The government sanction letters (GSLs) that green-lighted these four additional divisions, as well as two tank brigades raised along with them, committed extra funding and specified the stages at which payments would be made. That commitment remains on paper with the army still to receive any budgetary increments. Until the government makes good on what the GSL promised, the army must sustain the new units by diverting resources from existing formations. This is naturally hollowing out the army.

In previous instances of large-scale new raisings — such as after the 1962 debacle or, to a lesser extent, after the 1999 Kargil conflict — the defence revenue budget allocations showed a sharp upward rise, caused by the additional expenditure of those raisings. Since 2005, however, allocations have risen evenly by an annual 6-8 per cent, with the exception of a sharp jump in 2008 after the 6th Central Pay Commission (6thCPC) awarded a major salary boost. Even the salary raise of the 7th CPC in 2016 was not accompanied by a corresponding rise in revenue allocations. So the famously adaptive Indian army "makes do" by sharing its already meagre resources within a larger pool. Adding to the military's manpower costs is the government's implementation of One Rank One Pension (OROP) in 2015-16. However, with pensions allocated under a separate budget head, the government has no choice but to make available the amount that is disbursed.

## Mission-mode to sustainability and growth

Now that the elections are over, it is easy to forget "green" promises made in manifestos because environmental sustainability and economic development are often considered antithetical. Here are four ideas that confront environmental risks but also aim to reduce economic costs and/or drive new opportunities for investment and growth.

**Climate De-Risking Mission:** Climate risks are non-linear and will increase exponentially with temperature rise. Record heatwaves, more frequent coastal floods, droughts impacting agricultural output signal the confluence of stresses of heat, water, crop loss, and degradation of fragile ecosystems. Climate risks compound economic and national security risks. As with any critical risk, we must prepare for worst-case scenarios, rather than keep fingers crossed for less damaging outcomes. A Climate De-Risking Mission should aim to reduce India's overall climate risk by a significant margin within a decade.

First, we need to develop a climate risk atlas for India with a focus on critical vulnerabilities: coasts, urban heat stress, water stress, crop loss, and biodiversity collapse. Next, a national Climate Risk Index should be developed by mid-2020 (with annual updates and improvements in methods). Insurance companies must be involved because investments in urban and coastal infrastructure would come to nought if insurance providers did not adequately prepare for more frequent extreme weather events.

The national exercise should be complemented by state-specific indices. States must update their action plans on climate change with a deeper understanding of climate risks. To begin with, climate de-risking strategies should be drawn up at the national level and for five most vulnerable states. This would allow for the Climate Risk Index to be linked to disaster risk reduction plans under the national and state disaster management authorities.

**India Emissions Trading Scheme:** India demonstrated climate leadership by promoting the International Solar Alliance. But foreign investment into climate-

friendly programmes in emerging economies remains limited. At a time when climate action is slowing in many advanced economies, India can cement its leadership by announcing its intention to establish an Indian Emissions Trading Scheme (IETS).

The IETS would have many benefits. It would give long-term, credible policy direction to industry and trigger innovation. Moreover, it would create derivative jobs in designing, implementing and monitoring a trusted greenhouse gas emissions trading market. It would also create a new source of government revenue while meeting specific emissions reduction targets. A pilot IETS covering a few states and major urban centres could be launched by 2022 with the aim of a nationwide IETS by 2025.

The IETS could leverage the administrative structure of India's existing energy efficiency trading architecture (i.e. the perform, achieve and trade scheme). It would also subsume other shadow carbon markets, including for Renewable Energy Certificates, into one scheme to increase transparency and efficiency. Designed well, the IETS could have co-benefits for other schemes to promote renewable energy, electric mobility, energy storage, or climate-resilient agriculture. Once functional with robust monitoring and verification protocols, the IETS could potentially align with emissions trading schemes in other countries/regions to increase flows of international climate finance.

**Plastic Ghataao, Plastic Hataao:** In 2018, India announced its intention to eliminate single-use plastic by 2022. Mere bans will not suffice, however. There is an economic opportunity in promoting the development and commercialisation of alternatives, which should be a key part of a new green industrial policy.

Plastics pervade our lives. Technological alternatives will not emerge unless the people demand them. As communicator-in-chief, the Prime Minister should spearhead a #PlasticGhataaoPlasticHataao (#ReducePlasticRemovePlastic) campaign.

Then come incentives to scale production and use of sustainable alternatives to plastic, which are com-



### INFLEXION POINTS

ARUNABHA GHOSH

mercially available. Venture investment, with public co-funding to partially underwrite risks, would help lab-ready alternatives to be tested in markets to reach commercial scale. Finally, targeted support — an "UnPlastic Prize" — could support R&D for alternative packaging materials, business models for recycling, and kickstarting a circular economy for plastic reuse.

**National Airshed Management Authority:** The recently launched document for the National Clean Air Programme outlines extensive actions, with implementing agencies identified at the national or state level. But an overarching authority is missing, which could assist, coordinate and regulate NCAP implementation. The government should establish a National Airshed Management Authority (NAMA) with statutory powers by end-2019.

A focus on airsheds is necessary to cut across urban-

rural and inter-state divides and would give the NAMA the authority to coordinate with urban local bodies as well as gram panchayats. Regional interventions under the NCAP will fail without active involvement of state governments. Similarly, sectoral interventions will not succeed unless a scientific, airshed-based approach is followed. The NAMA should be given the mandate to drive action across relevant agencies and actors.

Enforcement capacity to deal with air pollution is severely lacking. The NAMA could have specific responsibility to assess and help build enforcement capacity at state level, both in numbers and in technical capability. Structured this way, the NAMA would involve government, private sector and technical/civil society representation. This would be effective only if its statutory powers were backed with real resources. Combatting air pollution could significantly lower public health costs, make our cities more liveable and attract more investment.

So long as we consider environmental action as only a cost, people, industry and government will game the system or avoid acting. Environmental externalities are no one's responsibility until public policy makes it someone's business. Incentives can be structured, markets can be created, individual and collective behaviour can be nudged in pursuit of environment sustainability and economic development.

Another crushing budgetary burden the military faces is the imposition of high rates of GST. Procurement of "stores", a high-volumes category that includes ammunition, tentage, clothing, etc, is taxed at 18 per cent, while the military pays a whopping 28 per cent GST on each vehicle it buys. Since GST was imposed on the military without provision for reimbursement, and without allocating additional funds, the finance ministry effectively takes back a large percentage of the funds it allocates to defence. This affects the military not just at apex procurement levels but down to the smallest units, which can now buy much less with their already limited training and contingency grants.

Further, the government has imposed customs duties on the import of defence equipment, which was earlier exempt from taxes. This eats into capital procurements and the purchases of spares for foreign equipment, both of which have significant import components. While the laudable aim of customs duties is to promote indigenisation, it has significantly reduced the military's buying power. Besides, with army stores and equipment taxed at 10 per cent compared to the 3 per cent rate imposed on aerospace components, there is an inverse logic at play: The items that comprise the bulk of imports and most need to be produced in India, are taxed at the lower rate.

The pernicious practice of conjuring up achievements without actually funding them is gaining currency. As a part of the officially denied Cold Start doctrine, numerous military units were moved in preceding years to new locations closer to the border, in order to allow them to be launched into combat without lengthy and give-away movements up to their launch pads. Little money was made available for this: It was left to the army to scrape and scrounge and get existing units to share accommodation. After a spate of terrorist attacks on military units the defence ministry sanctioned in 2016-17 a project for walling vulnerable cantonments and installing CCTV cameras and a central monitoring facility. Predictably, no budgetary allocation was provided. Consequently, not a brick has been laid, nor a rupee spent.

Similarly, seeking to address damaging reports that the military was so short of ammunition that it could not fight beyond a few days, the defence ministry announced with fanfare the grant of financial powers to senior military commanders to purchase ammunition for up to 10 days of intense combat — the so-called "10-1 stocks". However, with no additional funding line allocated, the procurement power was unsupported by financial resources. Any purchase of ammunition must be made from the already stressed army budget.

Given this track record, it would be unwise to expect that next week's defence allocations will be based on a holistic evaluation of national security threats, the wherewithal needed to deter or counter them and the funding that is required. Instead, successive governments have taken their cue from bodies like the Finance Commissions, which have recommended that defence expenditure be progressively reduced as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In a step forward, the 14th Finance Commission, which made recommendations on the disbursement of central government finances for 2015-2020, recommended that defence revenue expenditure be pegged to the GDP. Though the GDP figure itself remains disputed, it would be safe to anticipate that the rise in defence allocations would remain in the mid-single digits.

The writer is CEO, Council on Energy, Environment and Water. Follow@GhoshArunabha @CEEWIndia

## Beyond the memsahibs



### BOOK REVIEW

RAJIV SHIRALI

Accounts of the East India Company's rule, and later of the British Raj (which technically began only in 1858, when the British government began to govern India directly) are mostly about how men built up and ran the Indian Empire. The relative paucity of accounts of the lives of British women in India co-exists with the general belief that, as Katie Hickman puts it in the Introduction to *She-merchants, Buccaneers and Gentlewomen* "if it were not for the snobbery and racial prejudice of the memsahibs there would,

somehow, have been far greater harmony between the races."

Ms Hickman writes that this stereotype persists even though in the last 30 years there have been a handful of histories that have attempted to portray a more nuanced account of women's experiences (they are listed in the bibliography). The letters, diaries and memoirs left behind by Englishwomen in India, she points out, "reveal an incredible range of experiences and responses to India." True, many were bored or frightened in a distant country vastly different from their own, others were repelled by cultures and people they never understood, "but just as many delighted in their experiences there."

There is another reason for the book. The photographic evidence dating from British times suggests that Englishwomen in India were mostly "memsahibs" or gentlewomen (wives of senior administrators or military officials) — ladies sitting about

on the verandas of their bungalows, or in shooting parties, or picnicking by rivers, or playing tennis and croquet at their clubs. Ms Hickman is at pains to point out that this record offers only a partial picture.

She emphasises that from the 17th century onwards large numbers of them also worked as independent women in their own right — as milliners, bakers, dress-makers, actors, portrait painters, maids, shopkeepers, governesses, teachers, boarding house proprietors, nurses, missionaries, doctors, plant-collectors, writers and even traders. Women also acquired shares in the Company, invested in goods and claimed their dividends. By the end of the 17th century, there were 56 female shareholders; a hundred years later, women owned more than 16 per cent of all Company stock, and took active part in shareholder meetings.

One of the first women to travel to India, a Mrs Hudson, arrived in Surat in 1617, armed with £100 (a large sum, around

£24,000 in today's money) to invest in the indigo trade. The Company allowed her to trade only in cloth instead. She was a rich woman by the time she returned to England in 1619. Another woman, active from the 1660s, was Constance Pley, who ran a highly successful business dealing in canvas sail cloth. In Bombay (now Mumbai) in the 1770s, Mary Cross traded regularly with Persia, while a wealthy Calcutta (now Kolkata) widow named Johanna Ross ran a thriving money-lending business.

The real surge in careers and business opportunities for women took place in the 18th century. By the 1780s professional actresses were beginning to be imported to take the female leads in theatrical productions (chiefly because of the appalling performances of amateur actors). There were successful portrait painters (Sarah Baxter and Catherine Reid), and miniaturists (Martha Isaacs and Diana Hill), too. In 1780, a Mrs Hodges opened the first school for girls in Calcutta, while a certain Eliza Fay managed a millinery establishment, learning double-entry book-keeping in order to do so. Englishwomen were active

as shopkeepers, and ran bakeries, confectionery shops and boarding houses. Much to my disappointment, there is no reference at all to the buccaneers mentioned in the title (publisher's hype, perhaps?). But there is much to read about "gentlewomen" from the upper-middle classes, such as Henrietta Clive — Robert Clive's daughter-in-law (a collector of plants and minerals) — and Honoria Lawrence (the wife of Brigadier Henry Lawrence, who died during the siege of Lucknow in 1857). Ms Hickman also writes about others who came from lower down the social scale — women who travelled to India as attendants, companions and maids and, increasingly, as educated governesses and music teachers.

Among the most remarkable women Ms Hickman profiles is Flora Annie Steel. Arriving in India in 1867, she married an Indian Civil Service officer, learned a few north Indian languages, set up schools for girls in Punjab, authored a collection of folk stories gathered during her travels, and was appointed an inspector of schools in the province. Her greatest claim to fame was *The Complete Indian Housekeeper and*

*Cook*, which she co-authored in 1888 with a friend. A best-seller in its day, it dispensed practical advice on how to handle almost every possible situation that an Englishwoman running a household in India might encounter.

Ms Hickman makes no pretence at presenting a social history of British women in India during the Raj. She gives us glimpses of the lives of select women who have left their own accounts through letters, diaries and memoirs. And she does so with a great deal of wit and humour, making *She-Merchants...* a delightfully entertaining read. Does she succeed in dispelling the impression that British memsahibs' view of India was coloured by assumptions of racial and cultural superiority? Not entirely.

### SHE-MERCHANTS, BUCCANEERS & GENTLEWOMEN: British Women in India, 1600 – 1900

Katie Hickman

Hachette India; pages 390, ₹699



## RationalExpectations

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# Ensuring Modi fails to reform

Over 75% of gas gets 40% market price but govt says prices freed! Scrap Soviet-era controls if investments to grow rapidly

NOTHING EXEMPLIFIES THE gap between the reforms that the government claims have been done and what the industry perceives than the case of natural gas pricing. The government claims that market pricing is allowed for both oil and gas, but industry players insist this is not correct. Indeed, the issue came up several times last week, in the meetings held by both finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman and prime minister Narendra Modi.

In 2016, it is true, the government did raise the prices of natural gas to near-market levels, but with a catch: this applied only to new gas discoveries and that too gas which is produced in deep-water or ultra-deep water or in high-pressure-high-temperature areas. While such gas is to get paid \$9.32 per mmBtu, gas from older fields—or from fields that are not in deep/ultra/high-pressure areas—is to get \$3.69. This means over three-fourths of the country's current gas production doesn't get the market price but gets a price that is just around 40% of it.

So, when politicians/bureaucrats claim they have freed up prices, they are really talking about new players who have their gas fields in tough geologies. Similarly, while the government gives higher prices for extra recoveries beyond the average—this is called Improved Oil Recovery (IOR) and Enhanced Oil Recovery (EOR)—this, too, has many caveats and it is only for projects going forward; while there are companies that pumped in chemicals etc from the day they began production so as to get EOR from day one, these companies cannot avail of this extra incentive.

But what politicians/bureaucrats miss is that if older oilcos, like ONGC, that produce the bulk of India's natural gas, don't get the market price, where will they find the money to invest to explore in new areas? Indeed, if producers get market prices, these additional incentives are not even required. And imagine the problem this causes. Firm A can be producing X units of gas that are to be sold at \$3.69 and Y units (from a new discovery but in the same field) which get \$9.32—who is going to keep records of whether Firm A is depressing X and inflating Y, and even if it isn't, who is going to believe it when the CAG or someone else makes this accusation?

It is almost as bad in the case of oil where, despite supposed pricing freedom, as a report from the Petroleum Pricing and Analysis Cell (PPAC) points out, ONGC gets around \$10 per barrel less than what it could get if it was selling to refineries that were more sophisticated than the PSUs to whom it supplies—a more sophisticated refinery extracts more value from the crude and so can afford to pay more. Indeed, Cairn India has been asking the government for permission to export its crude oil for several years only so that it can get a higher price than that paid by local refineries. In the case of oil, producers have 'pricing freedom', but not 'marketing freedom' which, though they sound the same, are really quite different. In this case, Cairn is free to get a market price from refiners it sells to, but since the government tells it which firms it can market to, and how much to each, the buyers manage to get a discount on a genuine market price.

Of course, before blaming oil sector bureaucrats for coming out with this half-hearted freeing of prices, it is important to understand their compulsions. Most of the gas that is sold at \$3.69 per unit is sold to power and fertiliser firms. So if prices are raised by 2.5 times, both power and fertiliser costs will go up significantly; the same applies to both petrol and diesel, if producers are given market prices for their crude. So, unless the Soviet-era price controls are removed—and this is a political call—there is little the bureaucrats can really do. If they are to allow oil/gas prices to go up but the political establishment is not willing to allow prices of fertiliser or electricity, or petrol and diesel, to go up, who is going to pay the difference?

It is because of this need to keep prices low for one group of people that the bureaucracy then comes up with the solutions it does. If prime minister Modi was to say that he wanted market pricing so that correct investment decisions could be taken across the board, and that he would, if need be, pay a direct subsidy to those who needed to be subsidised, then the bureaucracy could take the right decisions.

India has a lot more oil and gas than most reckon and, at a recent conference, BP's India head Sashi Mukundan said their analysis of data suggested India could produce 100 tcf of gas, or nearly double the present estimate of how much gas India can produce. And, he said, if Indian oilcos used better recovery techniques—IOR and EOR—this alone would give another 4 billion barrels of oil, a figure that is roughly the current estimate of how much oil India can extract. At this level, India's 2040 import-intensity for gas will fall to around 50% and for oil by 3–4 percentage points. All of this, however, presupposes a policy environment that is not full of caveats and subject to the interpretation of sundry bureaucrats; and that's apart from the various issues with the taxman like taxing of royalty payments to the government.

Nor is the oil and gas sector the only one where this subsidy overhang is causing a big policy problem. In order to give extra returns to so-called small savers, the government mandates high returns on PPF/EPFO type of savings; this ensures banks keep deposit rates high and results in lending rates remaining high despite RBI's repo rate cuts. Similarly, the need to subsidise households and farmers means industry/exports has to pay 2–3 times the cost of power, and that hurts their global competitiveness; as a result, imports rise and exports stagnate. You can blame the bureaucracy, but eventually it is a political call that Modi needs to make.

## FinalFRONTIER

Investors are excited about India's space start-ups; India must take this forward by enabling the latter to grow

INDIA HAS DEMONSTRATED its space prowess in many ways recently—and the sheen of the public sector achievement in space is rubbing off on the private sector. A *Mint* report says Indian space start-ups, many of them working on nanosats, are now finding their way into investors' portfolios. Bengaluru-based Bellatrix Aerospace, working on propelling satellites into orbit using non-chemical and electric thrusters, has managed to raise \$3 million funds from private investors. Another company, Mumbai-based Kawa Space, which designs and operates earth observation satellites, has just concluded seed round investment deals. While such investments are rising globally, Indian firms are landing a significant bite of the pie.

With the US already leading the private-sector space race—think SpaceX and Rocket Labs—India should make it easier for its private players to enter and then let market forces guide this nascent sector. With over 17,000 small satellites that could be launched between 2018 and 2030 globally, investors predict high returns in this sector. Moreover, growth of this sector will likely enable utilisation of space's resources; since the Outer Space Treaty forbids sovereigns from exploiting space resources and colonising space, the only way to do it is to let private coroporate citizens stake claim. According to a *Reuters* article, the Union government is working on a Space Activities Bill to clarify the role of private companies and investors in this sector. Another aspect of this growth is defence strategy. India is yet to harness space for strategic and tactical reasons. This is due to the prime motive of Indian space sector being civilian use. Becoming a space power will need India to encourage private sector in space-defence.

STRATEGIES FOR A 12% GROWTH OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS BECOMES COMPLEX, BECAUSE IT COMES AT A TIME WHEN THERE ARE RADICAL SHIFTS IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC PARADIGM

# New economic paradigm for a \$5-trillion growth

RESIDING OVER THE 5th Governing Council meeting of NITI Aayog recently, prime minister Modi set a goal of \$5 trillion for India's GDP by 2024, saying it was a difficult target but achievable. It will need India to grow annually at 12% over the next 5 years. The PM clearly wants to galvanise the nation and is setting the narrative for the new government, which challenges the current signals of economic slowdown.

Achieving such an aspirational growth target calls for pulling all the economic growth levers—investment, consumption, exports, and across all the three sectors of agriculture, manufacturing and services. There is a fair amount of consensus that we have to address our inefficient factor markets as the topmost priority for India to achieve its full potential, especially the constraints imposed by our stressed financial and power markets. Without credit flow to support private investment and cheaper, abundant and good quality electricity to power growth, this GDP target will remain an aspiration.

Formulating the strategies for 12% growth over the next five years becomes more complex because it comes at a time when we are seeing radical shifts taking place in the global economic and value creation paradigm. Let me list six of these shifts that need to be accounted for as we go forward.

First is the shift in global trade. Growth in global trade, particularly merchandise trade, with its multiplier effect has been a crucial part of growth strategies of all developing countries. The trade intensity (ratio of global trade to global GDP) grew from less than 10% at the start of 20th century to over 50% by its end, reflecting the development of global supply chains. However, since the last financial crisis in 2008, trade intensity has stagnated, in particular for merchandise trade from which developing countries have benefited for the last half century. However service trade, especially digitally enabled trade (both service and

merchandise) where developed countries are advantaged, is growing much faster, which represents a major structural shift in global trade. While there is a large short-term opportunity in attracting some of the capacity of labour intensive industries that is shifting out of China (if we can make our factor markets and incentive policies more attractive), our growth strategies need to be built in preparation for this paradigm shift taking place in global trading pattern.

The second shift is the emergence of a new 'factor market'—data—which is no longer an 'output' of value added activity to be used to measure its effectiveness (e.g. through MIS), but has become an input into the very design of the activity through growth of IoT. An expert used the analogy that in the 20th century, data was like the 'exhaust' of the car, but in the 21st, it is like the 'fuel', a critical input to make the car drive better. Creating an effective market for data (through digital infrastructure, regulatory regimes, interoperability rules, robust privacy and security laws) is becoming as important for economic growth as creating more efficient traditional factor markets, and those countries that do it better and faster will reap the benefits and build global leadership in many industries.

A consequence of the growth of digital and data is the third major shift in the economic growth paradigm—the emergence of new value pools across industries. For instance, the traditional value pools in the automotive industry (new vehicle sales, components, finance, insurance, parts/service), which is nearly 100% today, can shrink to less than 60% in 15 years as the new pools

of the relationship at arm's length, the US determination to pull security and trade interests closer for 'selecting' partners is a tough call to reciprocate.

Second, is the change in India's way of looking at the world. Pushing national economic interests is at the centre of India's current external engagement vision. Such a vision, at best, permits selective opening up after very careful assessment of the impact on domestic economic actors. The US demands for greater tariff liberalisation from India are in sectors like dairy, medical equipment and automobiles. Indian policymakers and trade negotiators believe impact of tariff cuts on these sectors would be significantly adverse. One might well differ with this view. But, Indian authorities are unlikely to buckle to US pressure on tariff cuts in these areas, unless something really significant is offered in return. A trade-off on lesser terms would be taken as compromising on national economic interests—an impression that could run counter to the narrative that has helped the current government obtain political extension and legitimacy.

Third, India-US trade talks are taking place in the context of troubled times for global trade. The trouble goes well beyond overall technological disruptions, and their impact on the character and pattern of global trade. The US-China trade war is an unavoidable context. The former is not limited to unilateral tariffs and counter-responses. It is about long-term global control over future industries that would be at the forefront of Industrial Revolution 4.0. By now, it is clear that the US is looking to curb China's technological dominance in several industries—such as electric vehicles, renew-

ARINDAM BHATTACHARYA

Senior partner and managing director, Boston Consulting Group Views are personal

driven by electrification, digitally-driven data services, ranging from preventive maintenance to restaurant location, and mobility services grow. Whether these new value pools will be captured by Indian or global companies will have an impact on India's longer term growth prospects, and this kind of radical shift is happening across industries, often faster than what regulatory bodies and/or government can react to. This has to change.

The fourth shift is equally radical. World over, formal manufacturing jobs are declining as the fourth industrial revolution powered by digital technologies accelerates. However, digital technologies are also powering the emergence of new business models, start-ups and micro-enterprises, and growth of services by driving down costs. One of the major impacts of this shift is the emergence of the rapidly growing gig-economy jobs like the Uber car drivers and last mile delivery boys/girls of e-commerce companies. This poses several policy challenges. First, the nature and types of jobs, and the skills needed are changing. These jobs are not captured in our current laws which can facilitate their regulation and growth. In their absence, these are not captured in formal jobs survey, and are often poorly paying with no social security. In fact, given the growth of such non-formal jobs, many experts maintain that India does not have a jobs problem but a low income problem. The new economic paradigm is needed to facilitate the formalisation

able energy and digital AI-based solutions—which would determine wealth generation in future global economy. Parallel talks by the US with its other trade partners cannot avoid apprehensions of the latter that the US wouldn't want them to get away with what it is denying China.

A fourth further reason, drawing from the above, is India's realisation that what the US would want most is for its data-intensive businesses to have unfettered access to India's digital economy. India realises it sits on a mine of data wealth and, arguably, the best way of harnessing that wealth in national economic interests is to make its first use at home. It is determined to pursue hard data localisation rules. In recent months, multiple critical references by the US to India's data rules have made it clear that more than tariffs, this is where the 'juice' lies for the US. Safeguarding local data for exclusive use by locals, notwithstanding the potential ramifications of such insistence, resonates with the core principles of India's current external engagement policy.

The final fifth reason coming in the way of progress in India-US trade talks is the conspicuous lack of trust between both sides. The US proclivity to resort to unilateral actions notwithstanding done deals, such as for Mexico, hasn't helped in boosting trust in its trade promises. On the other hand, India's stubbornness in refusing to back down on core US demands and the latest defiant act of following up with retaliatory tariffs on a handful of US imports clearly show that India is not in a mood to relent. Barring a strong dose of injection of trust, the India-US trade talks are likely to move to a point of almost no return.

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development of on-ground cutting-edge solutions to economic and social problems. Today, technology, connectivity, financial flows allow more agility, flexibility and 'micro-solutioning' at local levels, which become critical in developing a world where government institutions are often weak. Our economic development models are still very much geared to large scale, top-down approach. We have to find innovative ways to identify, include and scale these development efforts in our national planning in the 21st century.

Our PM has set the aspiration. It is a bold one, calling for thinking out of the box, breaking the old paradigms of economic growth and development. Our success in doing so will be the difference between it remaining an aspiration and becoming a reality.

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and growth of income generation from start-ups, micro-enterprises and of the self-employed.

The fifth shift important for longer term economic planning is the increasing role of IP and talent as a source of value creation in the 21st century, as opposed to primary role, in the 20th, of physical conversion of raw material into final products. This is clearly visible by the complete change-over of top-20 market-cap companies in the world in the last two decades from the resources and manufacturing dominated global firms to digital technology based companies driven more by IP, data, and talent. We have to give at least equal focus to growing industries which develop and leverage IP and talent, as to those that physically convert raw materials.

Lastly, and, to me, one of the most interesting shifts is in the nature of what I call 'economic problem solving'. One of my senior BCG colleagues who had headed a global non-governmental institution recently remarked to me that economic development paradigms lag the

World over, formal manufacturing jobs are declining as the fourth industrial revolution powered by digital technologies accelerates

development of on-ground cutting-edge solutions to economic and social problems. Today, technology, connectivity, financial flows allow more agility, flexibility and 'micro-solutioning' at local levels, which become critical in developing a world where government institutions are often weak. Our economic development models are still very much geared to large scale, top-down approach. We have to find innovative ways to identify, include and scale these development efforts in our national planning in the 21st century.

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## ON A NON-NUCLEAR IRAN

President of the US, Donald Trump

When they agree to that, they're going to have a wealthy country. They're going to be so happy, and I'm going to be their best friend. I hope that happens

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Triple talaq Bill

In tabling the Triple Talaq Bill on the first day of the newly constituted 17th Lok Sabha the Modi government has made its intentions and priorities clear. Why a party that represents Hindu Right displays so much love and concern for Muslim women would make a rewarding study. The government holds the view that the Bill is not about religion or politics, but about justice and equality. But the provisions of the Bill make it amply obvious that it was brought to target Muslim men and not because the BJP or the Modi government is convinced that the practice of divorce by triple talaq is repugnant to the modern world. Invalidating triple talaq is one thing; making the pronouncement of triple talaq a criminal offence and sending the man to jail for pronouncing triple talaq is entirely different. It is a very flawed anomaly that the husband is sent to jail leaving the woman and children to fend for themselves even while the marriage remains valid. It is not known how any man can utter triple talaq to divorce his wife and have his way when the country's top court has declared it unconstitutional and null and void.

— G. David Milton, Marthandam

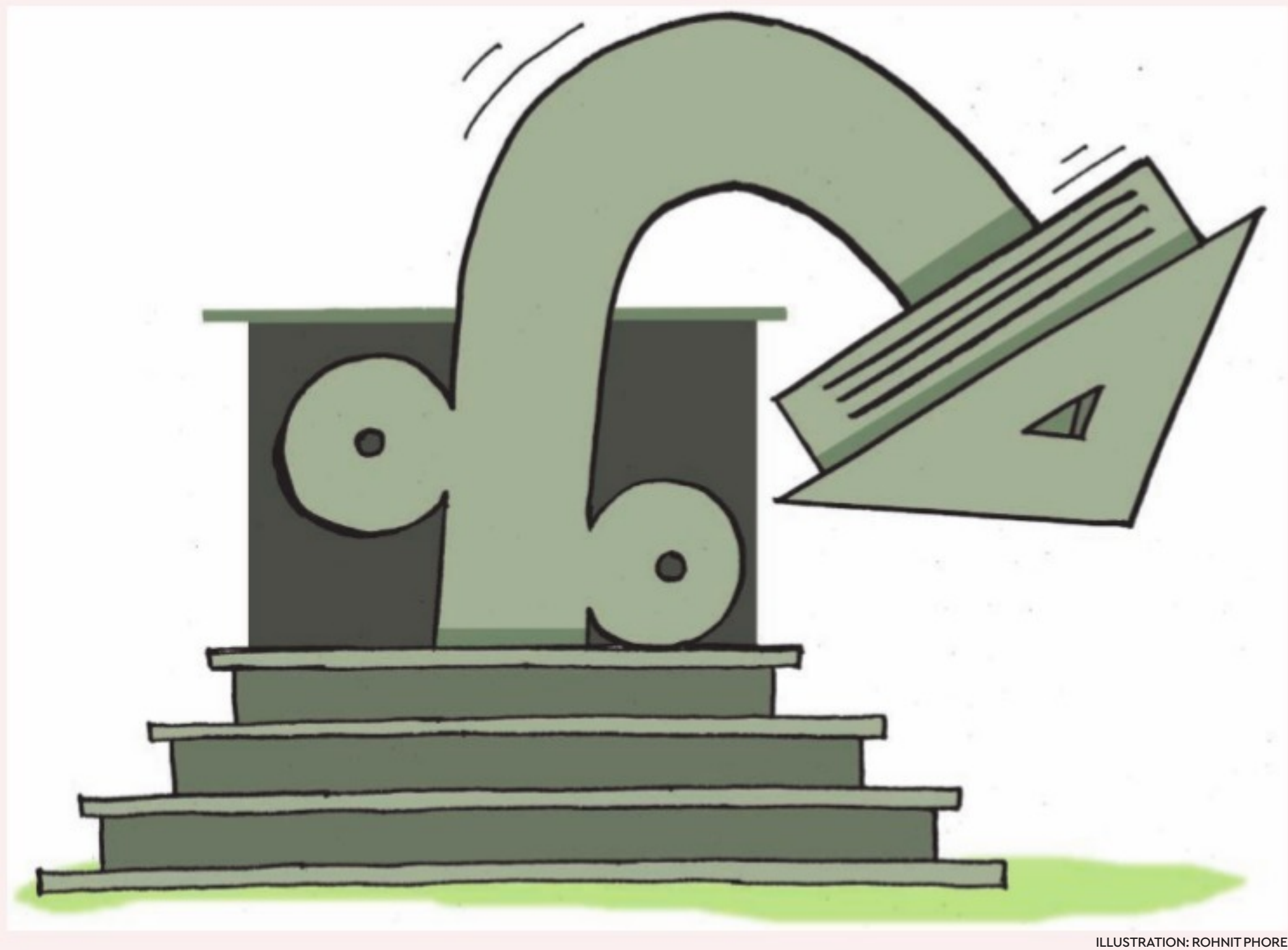
### Dynastic politics

BSP chief Mayawati anointing her brother Anand Kumar as the party's vice-president and nephew Akash Anand as the national coordinator is an indication that Mayawati is keen on making the BSP a family enterprise. With the purveyors of dynastic politics, the Congress and the JD(S), suffering humiliating reverses in the recent Lok Sabha polls one wonders whether Mayawati's play will pay off.

— Ravi Chander, Bengaluru

● Write to us at [feletters@expressindia.com](mailto:feletters@expressindia.com)



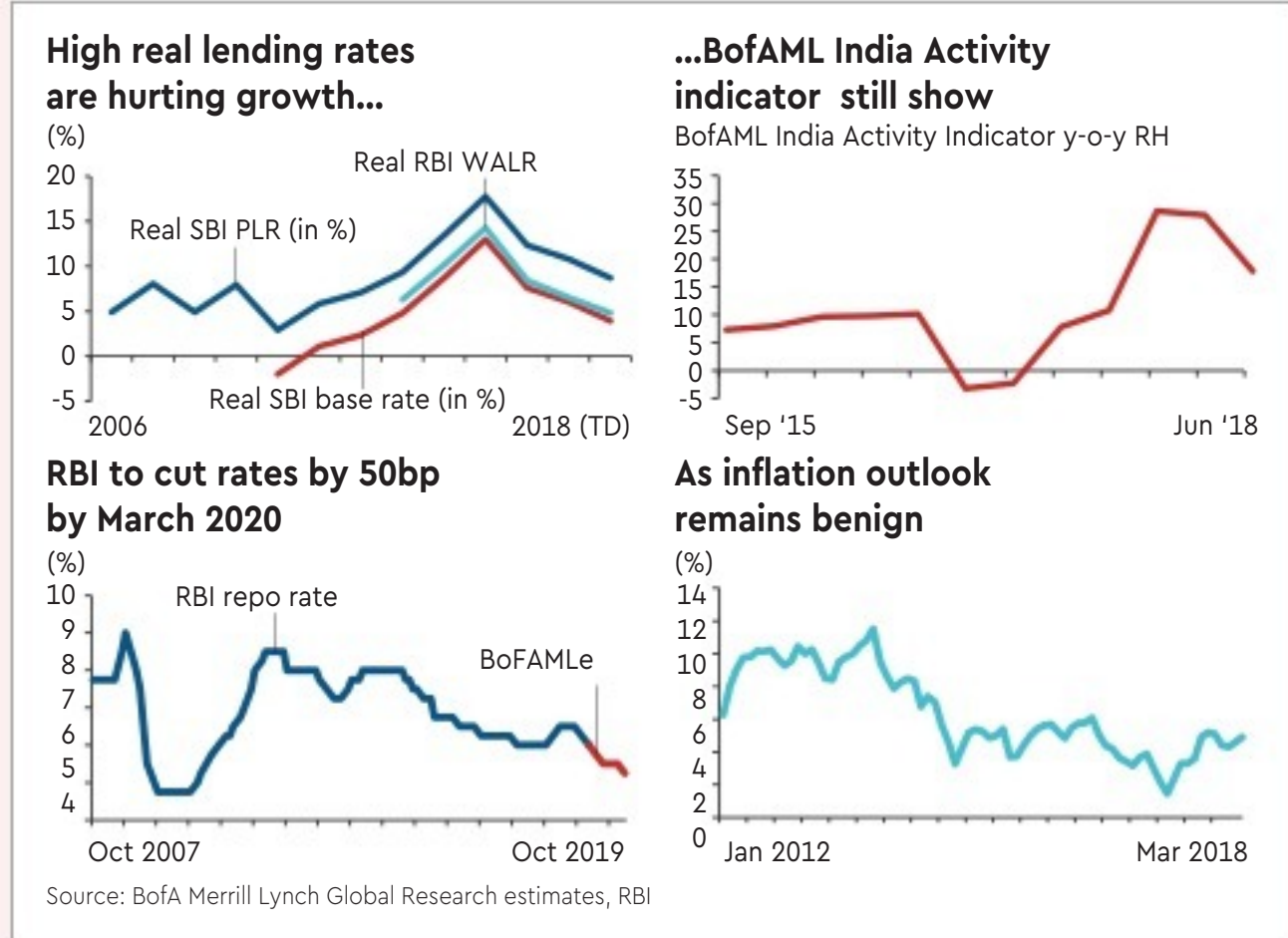


INDRANIL SEN GUPTA  
& AASTHA GUDWANI

Authors are India Economists, DSP Merrill Lynch. Views are personal

# Five reasons lending rates are set to fall 50bps

We expect lending rates to come off by 50bps cut by March 2020 in contrast to 2018's 30bps hike. Also, Budget 2019 should retain February's 3.4% of GDP fiscal deficit target



**W**E GROW MORE confident of our call that lending rates will come off by 50bps by March 2020. This is critical for recovery as our India Activity Indicator signals weakness for the next 1-2 quarters. What's changing? The RBI MPC changed its stance to accommodative supporting our 50bps rate cut-by-March call. Second, RBI is expected to infuse durable liquidity of \$2-3 billion a month. Our liquidity model estimates that this should fund 16% loan demand in FY20. Third, the reversal of poll/summer rabi harvest cash demand has pushed the money market into reverse repo mode. We expect RBI to allow this till the slack season ends in September to assure the market of sufficient funding in the October-March 'busy' season. It takes six months for ₹1 of RBI liquidity to 'multiply' into ₹5.1 of bank credit. A 0.25% CRR cut should be sufficient to fund credit worthy borrowers should the NBFC concerns worsen. Fourth, yields are coming off with RBI OMO (\$19 billion BofAMLe, \$5.7 billion done) set to clear the G-Sec market. Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman will likely retain the Interim Budget's 3.4% of GDP fiscal deficit target in her July 5 Budget. Finally, the MoF/RBI are taking measures to de-stress banks. The MoF will likely use the \$14-42 billion of excess RBI capital to be identified by the Janan report to recapitalize PSU banks. In sum, the MoF/RBI are all set to win the battle of monetary transmission.

1. 125bps of RBI rate cuts signal lower yields/lending rates: Our expected 125bps of RBI rate cuts by March (75bps done) send a powerful signal for lower yields/lending rates. We expect the RBI MPC to cut 25bps on August 7 if rains are normal, pause as inflation goes up on base effects in end-2019, and cut again by 1Q20. Our US and China economists expect the Fed/PBoC to cut 75bps by early 2020.

2. \$35 billion of durable liquidity funds 16% loan demand: We expect RBI to continue to infuse durable liquidity of \$2-3 billion a month via OMO and/or FX swaps. Our liquidity model estimates that \$35 billion of RBI liquidity (\$10.7 billion) will generate sufficient deposits to fund 16% loan growth in FY20. A ₹1 of RBI liquidity 'multiplies' 5x into credit over, say, six months. The primary reason for hardening of lending rates in the past few years was inadequate injection of RBI liquidity fuelling excess loan demand. Although loan growth is picking up, this is being driven by a shift to bank funding from NBFC/commercial paper funding.

3. Reverse repo mode assures liquidity in 'busy' season: RBI's comfort in allowing reverse repo mode in the April-September 'slack' season should assure the market of sufficient liquidity in the October-March 'busy' season. We calculate that a 0.25% CRR cut should fund, say, Rs 1,500 billion of credit-worthy borrowers in case the NBFC situation worsens further.

4. Lower risk free allows lending rate cuts: Yields are coming down with RBI OMO (\$19 billion BofAMLe, \$5.7 billion done) set to clear the G-Sec market. The Narendra Modi regime has surely demonstrated its commitment to fiscal discipline when it did not compete with the Congress's NYAY plan of 1.9% of GDP even in the heat of polls. We expect finance minister Sitharaman to retain the Interim Budget's 3.4% of GDP fiscal deficit target in the upcoming Budget.

5. De-stressing banks: Janan committee: Policy measures to de-stress banks will ease lending rates: PSU bank recapitalisation, rationalisation of Bankruptcy Code through the June 7 NPL circular, deferral of tighter-than-Basel III CRAR and IndAs norms. We expect the MoF to recapitalize PSU banks with \$14-42 billion of excess RBI capital to be identified by the Janan committee.

50bps cut positive for rate sensitivity

We expect banks to cut lending rate cuts by 50bps by March 2020 in contrast to 2018's 30bps hike. After all, real lending rates have virtually doubled since 2014. Not surprisingly, our BofAML India Activity Indicator is signalling weakness for 1-2 quarters. Governor Shaktikanta Das's proactive liquidity operations have calmed markets. The real economy, however, is still hurting from the end-2018 liquidity crunch that is pulling GVA growth down to 6.3% (along with base effects) in October 2018-September 2019. If lending rates ease in response to policy initiatives, growth will likely rebound to 7.5% by March.

What can the MoF/RBI do to defuse fears of a NBFC crisis? Provide sufficient liquidity to ensure that (1) healthy NBFCs are able to raise funds, and (2) banks are able to fund credit-worthy borrowers impacted by failing NBFCs, if any. In case, say, NBFC failures impact ₹1,500 billion of credit-worthy borrowers, RBI should inject an additional ₹300 billion/\$4 billion, given the credit multiplier of 5.1, by a 0.25% CRR cut.

RBI liquidity/reserve money drives M3/deposit growth, not deposit rates. Can banks step up deposit growth to fund higher loan demand without raising deposit rates? Deposit growth, essentially, is driven by reserve money/durable liquidity injected by RBI. Our liquidity model estimates that M3/deposit growth will pick up to about 13% from 9.7% if RBI injects \$35 billion via OMO/FX purchases/CRR cuts in FY20.

But how will RBI liquidity generate bank deposits and credit? Suppose it buys ₹100 of G-Secs from a bank. The bank will prefer to lend the ₹100 to borrower X rather than keep it idle. As X needs only ₹10 in cash, she will put the remaining ₹90 into the bank as CASA. The bank then lends this ₹90 to another borrower Y. As Y only needs ₹9 in cash, he puts ₹81 in his bank account. A ₹100 of RBI liquidity has thus already generated ₹171 of deposits and ₹190 of credit in these two rounds.

But won't deposit/lending rate cuts, driven by RBI rate cuts, dampen deposit growth? Not really, in our view, as the 1881 Negotiable Instruments Act restricts the power to issue cheques to banks. Bank deposits are actually neutral to any redistribution of household investment between fixed deposits, mutual funds and real estate/gold purchases by cheque as monies simply flow to the current account of the MF/seller.

(Excerpted from BofAML India's Economic Viewpoint report '5 reasons lending rates set to fall 50bp' dated June 14, 2019.)

## Rx: Data analytics

ARNO  
TELLMANN

Head, Novartis Global Drug Development, India. Views are personal

Pharma will benefit a great deal from analysing electronic health records, biomedical signal data, imaging data, etc

**H**AVING LIVED IN India ten years ago, I was very happy when I got the opportunity to come back albeit in a different role this time. India has come to be a second home to me and my family. Among the many things we like about this country is its culture steeped in centuries of history and legends. I find the legends part especially fascinating.

There was this one particular story that caught my attention—the churning of the ocean, when the devas and asuras got together in their quest for the nectar of immortality. Believe it or not, today's pharma companies are staring into an ocean of another kind—an ocean of data that's all around us. The big question is can we churn this ocean to extract insights that may not yield immortality but at least help us find new ways to improve and extend lives? Well, the exploration has begun.

Data in pharma industry includes electronic health records, biomedical signal data, patient statistics, imaging data, discovery related literature, experimental data, genomic data, proteomic data, and records on clinical studies. Development of drugs involves generation of lot of data such as clinical trial data, trial operational data and finally business involves competitor data, sales and other medium of business data.

However, this abundant data is of no use if we don't mine it to extract insights. The value of data can only be realised if we leverage data technologies such Artificial Intelligence (AI). AI has become the game changer, transforming many industries over the last two decades. The technology companies today completely rely on data for garnering insights and making products driven by AI for competitive advantage, improving customer experience and entering new markets. Can it work its miracle in the pharma industry as well?

Pharma companies are now looking for ways to apply AI to fasten the overall drug development process. AI can dramatically shorten clinical trials through faster enrollment, identifying right patient for right trial, better monitoring and remote monitoring, better patient experience and invention of digital biomarkers and end-points. AI can also help us discover new treatments. There are 1060 drug like molecules which need to be examined to find all possible drug targets and it seems impossible right now. AI has the potential to fasten molecular and material research to explore these molecules.

However, similar to the churning of the ocean, analysing data also poses challenges of epic proportions. To begin with, we need to bring together the huge volume of data on one platform that makes it possible to apply AI tools on the data. While it may sound simple, it's actually a Herculean task given that in the past we did not have a mechanism to sort data. Secondly, we need to train our people on data technologies so that they can make sense of the data. Thirdly, we need bring this system to such speed that it can give us real time insights just like Google Maps. If the system foresees challenge in a clinical trial it should be able to warn us much in advance so that we do not invest time, effort and resources on something that is more likely to lead to a dead-end.

Churning of data is something that definitely all pharma companies need to invest in. And as with the legend, this too would need the combined efforts of one and all—patients, employees of pharma companies, data scientists, regulatory authorities, and governments. Only together, we can make it happen!

**T**HE GENERALIZED SYSTEM of Preferences (GSP) is a US trade programme designed to promote economic growth in the developing world by providing preferential duty-free entry for up to 4,800 products from 129 designated beneficiary countries and territories. It is a unilateral and non-reciprocal agreement extended by the US to support a large number of developing countries.

Under this scheme, India was allowed duty concessions on over 3,000 imported products to the US valued at \$5.7 billion since 1976, making India the largest beneficiary of GSP. To qualify as a beneficiary developing country (BDC) or a least-developed beneficiary country (LDBDC), a country has to meet the required criteria as per 19 USC 2462(b)(2) code, a US law. It includes for a country to not be communist, to support free international trade of vital commodities, to not aid or abet anyone wanted for international terrorism, to ensure worker rights, to abolish child labour and to respect workers' rights.

In March 2019, Donald Trump announced the US's intentions to end India's BDC treatment, following a 60-day notice period. This was put on hold due to general elections in India. With effect from June 5, 2019, India no longer receives preferential treatment as a BDC under GSP. Trump put forward his concerns that as India has not assured the US that it will provide equitable and reasonable access to its markets, it would be appropriate to terminate India's designation as a BDC. In fact, 11 more countries are under review for termination from GSP.

## Time to relook India's trade policy

Modi 2.0 has its task cut out with regard to reforming trade policy

GEETHANJALI NATARAJ,  
GUNJAS SINGH & SHIVANG GUPTA

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India has been maintaining a trade surplus with the US for quite some time, but has not gone down well with the Trump administration. India's trade surplus in merchandise goods with the US stood at \$23 billion at the end of 2017. As per US regulations, a beneficiary country must meet 15 discretionary and mandatory eligibility criteria established by Congress to qualify for GSP. These include providing the US with equitable and reasonable market access, combating child labour, respecting internationally-recognised worker rights, and providing adequate and effective intellectual property rights protection. The US believes that India has failed to provide reasonable access to its markets and hence failed to meet the mandatory criteria, making India ineligible for GSP.

According to a report by the US Chamber of Commerce, India remains a challenging market for intellectual-property-intensive investments, even as the bilateral trade relationship continues to improve. The US is keen on getting reasonable access to Indian markets primarily for its three industries—pharmaceuticals, telecom and the dairy industry. It has expressed concerns over the new Draft Pharmaceutical Policy proposed by the Department of Pharmaceuticals, and India's new telecommunication security requirements. The US commerce secretary Wilbur Ross during his visit to India in May 2019 to attend the 11th Trade Winds Business Forum and Mission had listed out alleged unfair trade practices by India, including on data localisation, price control on medical devices and the higher tariff on

telecommunication equipment. So while patented medicines are excluded from price controls, the draft policy explicitly reserves the right to issue compulsory licences, which does not go very well with foreign pharma companies. On the other hand, in the telecom sector, high tariffs on imported telecom devices have been due to the new security requirements by India. This raises potential WTO-compliance concerns, which may act as a dangerous precedent for governments that may be inclined to use national security claims to undermine global trade. As far as dairy industry is concerned, India had imposed tariffs on imported dairy products from the US during the AB Vajpayee government as India required that dairy products be derived from animals that have never consumed feeds containing internal organs,

blood meal, or tissues of ruminant origin. This criterion is non-negotiable to India and had also rejected the 'labelling solution' of a red-dot sticker on grounds of protecting cultural and religious sentiments of Indians.

In 2018, India's total exports to the US were \$51.4 billion, with \$6.35 billion in exports under GSP—India gained duty concessions of only \$190 million in 2017 under GSP, which is rather a small amount relative to the value of exported goods traded with the US. Products that had GSP benefits of more than 3% are most likely to be hit due to GSP. Major sectors that will be impacted include imitation jewellery, leather industry, pharma, chemical and plastics, and processed agri-goods.

According to the ministry of commerce and industry, exclusion of India from GSP

and ending the preferential trade status would have a moderate impact on exports, as the trade concession on exports is a small fraction of the total exported volume.

At the same time, India has argued that GSP benefits are "unilateral and non-reciprocal in nature extended to developing countries" and that it is wrong for the US to use it for its own trade benefits. Despite Trump's decision to stop India's preferential treatment, India will continue building strong ties with the US, both economic and people-to-people. Before this official announcement, India was considering raising import duties on more than 20 US goods, but it wasn't done. Commerce minister Piyush Goyal has said that India accepts the decision gracefully and won't push the US for benefits further. "We will work to make exports more competitive," he said.

Irrespective of GSP, it is imperative that India needs a strong export culture and needs to be more competitive to survive and get greater access to markets across the world. India needs to focus on diversification of exports and look for new countries and innovative products to ensure that its exports do not decline and its trade deficit remains manageable. However, the government did take retaliatory action and the first response from the new government has been announced—retaliatory tariffs on 29 products. This list was drawn up after the US imposed tariffs on steel and aluminium. This is only the beginning of the multiple challenges India is likely to face on the trade policy front. Large-scale trade reforms are the need of the hour and Modi 2.0 has its task cut out with regard to reforming India's trade policy.







The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

TIME TO TALK

Centre must not ignore the overtures from a section of the separatists in Kashmir for a dialogue

MIRWAIZ UMAR FAROOQ'S call for dialogue is an olive branch that the Centre should accept. This is not the first time that Farooq has pointed to a path forward in Kashmir. Indeed, the Hurriyat leader has only reiterated what he said immediately after the BJP won a thumping victory in the general election — that Prime Minister Narendra Modi should use the massive mandate that voters have given to him to open a dialogue and restore peace in Kashmir. Farooq's has been the moderate voice among Kashmir's separatists. He was in talks with the Centre during UPA 1, though that engagement went nowhere. He has since joined hands with the hardline factions of the Hurriyat, but has continued to send out appeals for engagement. These were largely ignored by the Modi government in its first term even as violence raged in the Valley. At the time, the Centre seemed determined to pursue a policy of using force to quell both militants and protests, but it has become clear that this did not help to solve the problem. If anything, it only contributed to increasing the alienation in the Valley, which in turn, drove an increasing number of young people to militancy. The killings of four militants linked to the Ansar Ghazwat ul Hind by security forces in an encounter, and the killing earlier of a militant linked to ISIS, shows that global terrorist organisations are trying to get into the door in Kashmir.

The political vacuum that exists in the Valley can only help such dark forces. This vacuum is not just the lack of an elected state government, which is bad in itself, but also the long absence of engagement with the Kashmiri political class, which includes the separatists. Indeed, the Centre was standoffish even with the last state government, even though the ruling coalition had the BJP in alliance with the PDP, one of the two main regional parties in Jammu and Kashmir.

It is significant that Governor Satya Pal Malik — the chief executive at the moment as the state is under President's Rule — has also publicly flagged Mirwaiz Farooq's readiness for talks. Speaking in the presence of Union minister Prakash Javadekar, and minister of state Jitender Singh, who is from the state, Malik, a nominee of the BJP government, too seemed to be appealing to the Centre to grab the opportunity for a dialogue. There could be no better time. Pakistan is economically and politically weak, and under international pressure to stop its patronage of terrorists. And as the Mirwaiz has pointed out, Prime Minister Modi has won a massive mandate. The mandate is, among other things, for him to end the turmoil in the Valley, not prolong it. That demands that he works towards a constructive engagement with and in Kashmir.

POWER PLAY

Creation of national electricity distribution company could help turn around the power distribution segment

IN A WELCOME move, public sector companies NTPC and Power Grid Corporation of India have formed a joint venture to set up a national electricity distribution company. The decision paves the way for a central public sector entity to enter the power supply business, which up until now has been largely the preserve of state distribution companies. Coming at a time when state discoms are struggling to contain their losses, the move is likely to have far reaching ramifications for the distribution segment.

Over the years, successive governments have tried to address issues plaguing the power distribution segment, but in vain. The segment is the weakest link in the power chain, and its poor health affects the entire power sector. In 2015, the NDA government had launched the Ujwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana (UDAY) to turn around the fortunes of beleaguered state discoms. But almost four years later, discoms continue to struggle, plagued by a host of issues ranging from inadequate tariff hikes, to high aggregate technical and commercial losses, inadequate and untimely subsidy disbursements, among others. Their flagging fortunes have not only affected power generation companies, but have also caused stress in the banking sector. The creation of a national electricity distribution company, which also serves as a central electricity buying agency, could potentially address several of these issues. It could bring relief to power producers, bring stranded capacity back to life, ensure timely payment and address the issue of stressed assets in power generation. The new entity could also procure electricity at competitive rates, the benefits of which could then be passed on to end consumers.

The move to create such an entity also signals the possibility of another round of reforms in power distribution, especially the separation of content and carriage: Carriage refers to distribution, while content refers to electricity supply. Separating them would allow consumers to buy electricity from a power company of their choice. In a market that is currently characterised by geographical monopolies, this would help usher in competition. Such measures along with the creation of a national distribution company also raise the possibility of rationalising the power tariff structure across the country. Currently, the power market in India is highly fragmented. Different state discoms charge different tariffs to different customers. These moves could potentially bring about a rationalisation in tariffs by providing national pricing benchmark across different categories of customers. However, these moves may face resistance from state discoms, as they could lose their better-paying customers to more competitive entities.

MELTING OF THE CULT

Winning Istanbul has been key to ruling Turkey. Recep Erdogan's nominee just lost the city's mayoral election

RECEPTYAYIP ERDOGAN has often in the past, said, "Whoever wins Istanbul, wins Turkey". The Justice and Development Party or the AKP, the conservative party Erdogan co-founded in 2001, lost power in Istanbul after a re-run of the city's mayoral election last week. The opposition candidate, Ekrem Imamoglu, had a lead of 7,75,000 votes over Erdogan's nominee, Binali Yildirim. It is a massive amplification of the margin of 13,000 Imamoglu had achieved in the earlier election in March — a victory that was annulled after AKP contested the results. It also terminates 25 years of AKP rule in Istanbul, Erdogan's home city.

In its formative years, AKP had tried to veer away from any staunch Islamic identity. At the time of formation, Erdogan reportedly said, "The period of ego-centered politics is over. A team will administer the party. The leader will not overshadow it. Those who come by election will go by election." There is much irony here, given the cult Erdogan managed to build about himself. And the charges against Erdogan in recent times have included the manner in which the government has given in to orthodoxy at odds with the larger history of Turkey. Imamoglu reportedly said during the victory celebrating over the weekend, "Nobody's lifestyle and how they dress is a concern for us". The AKP has also battled corruption charges: Imamoglu and his supporters have attempted to highlight the large funds provided to AKP-affiliated foundations by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality. Some of these foundations are reportedly helmed by the relatives of Erdogan and the funds they received allegedly run into millions of dollars.

Losing Istanbul means losing the levers to finances. For Erdogan and AKP, this could mean the beginning of the end of political domination of the city, and perhaps, Turkey.



C RAJA MOHAN

AS THE EXTERNAL affairs minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar sits down for talks with the visiting US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo in Delhi this week, a sense of crisis seems to have enveloped the discourse on India-US relations. We can argue if "crisis" is the right word, but there is no denying that many dormant but difficult issues in the India-US relationship have bubbled up to the surface now.

For nearly two decades, Delhi and Washington had steadily narrowed their multiple differences inherited from the Cold War and expanded the ambit of their bilateral and multilateral cooperation. Today, differences once again dominate the public narrative. These range from trade and market access to cross border data flows and India's purchases of oil from Iran and advanced weapons from Russia. Although the intensity of the current focus on the divergence between the two nations is disconcerting, it is worth remembering four important factors.

First, India is not alone in facing sudden difficulties with Washington. Many of America's leading economic and political partners face similar challenges — most of which are flowing from the unprecedented change that is unfolding within America. America's ties with friends and foes alike are under scrutiny in the Trump Administration. Over the last couple of years, it was quite clear that Delhi's turn would come. It is now upon us.

Driving the domestic turbulence in America is none other than President Donald Trump, who has overturned many of the traditional assumptions about US foreign policy and its role in the world. This is no ordinary moment in America's post-war evolution; it is a major inflexion point.

Second, this is not the first time that Delhi is facing a crisis-like situation in its relations with Washington. Over the last quarter of a century, we have had many issues — Kashmir, South Asian security, human rights, India's rejection of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and Delhi's 1998 nuclear tests to name a few. Those who have only seen the recent good times in India-US relations may not know how hard it was in the 1990s and 2000s to get even the simplest of things done between Delhi and Washington. Political suspicion and bureaucratic resistance in both capitals were relentless. Yet many of these difficulties were overcome through engagement and sustained



R R RASHMI

ON THE MARGINS of the UN General Assembly in September, the UN Secretary General has convened a summit to discuss plans to address climate change. The summit will take place exactly a year before the implementation of the Paris Agreement begins. The UN Secretary General is concerned that the collective climate ambition is low and is keen to launch new initiatives to close the gap between the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) made under the Paris Pact and the goal of climate stabilisation.

The recent IPCC report which called for limiting the global warming to 1.5 degree Celsius has added momentum to the push. For this goal, the world will need to move towards zero carbon emission around 2050. But such a world is contingent on heavy electrification of energy, industry and transport systems in the medium term and market adoption of low or near zero carbon technologies in the longer term.

Nine tracks of discussion are planned at the summit, with the hope of nudging countries to move to an aggressive path of decarbonisation. One of them, the "industry track," focussing on industrial decarbonisation, is led by India and Sweden. One has to see if the leaders of this track will handle it with finesse or put industry under pressure.

The challenge of industrial decarbonisa-

US Secretary of State's India visit is a chance to re-animate a stagnating relationship

The problems that confronted India-US relations after the NDA government's nuclear tests gives us a good sense of what can be done with a crisis. Within a few weeks of the tests and American sanctions in May 1998, India's Jaswant Singh, then deputy chairman of the planning commission and later the external affairs minister, began a marathon conversation on the differences over nuclear proliferation with the US Deputy Secretary of State, Strobe Talbott. The dialogue between the two leaders eventually led to the historic civil nuclear deal during the tenure of UPA-1.

negotiations backed by political will on both sides to advance the partnership.

Third, there is much heartburn among the traditionalists in both Washington and Delhi that Trump has made America's foreign policy transactional. But then you don't get to choose your interlocutors. In any case, being transactional has advantages of its own — there is no mystification of the issues involved and the focus is on uninhibited bargaining based on self-interest.

Fourth, whether it is a crisis or not and whether it is new or not, the current dynamic situation between Delhi and Washington is also an opportunity for taking a fresh look at the relationship that has seen some stagnation in recent years. It is also a moment to set some ambitious targets for the future.

The problems that confronted India-US relations after the NDA government's nuclear tests gives us a good sense of what can be done with a crisis. Within a few weeks of the tests and American sanctions, in May 1998, Jaswant Singh, then deputy chairman of the planning commission, and later the external affairs minister, began a marathon conversation on the differences over nuclear proliferation with the US Deputy Secretary of State, Strobe Talbott. The dialogue between the two leaders eventually led to the historic civil nuclear deal during UPA-1 that facilitated the lifting of most technology sanctions against Delhi, the integration of India into the global nonproliferation order, the expansion of bilateral defence and security cooperation and a deeper engagement between Delhi and America's Western allies in Europe and Japan.

Finalising the agreement turned out to be incredibly hard. The disproportionate political heat the agreement generated in Delhi saw PM Manmohan Singh struggle to build a domestic consensus within his own party, coalition and Parliament. Fortunately for him, the then US President George W Bush was prepared to help move the negotiation forward at all critical junctures.

This time though, India will have to deal with a very different US president, Donald Trump, who believes that America is a piggy-bank which the rest of the world has been raiding on. He insists on fair trade and reciprocity in US partnerships. Leaving this difficult attitude, however, is Trump's fascination for the "art of the deal" premised on

out-of-the-box thinking. His outreach to North Korean leader Kim Jong-un and the more recent call for a direct dialogue with the Iranian leadership would have been considered outrageous just a couple of years ago.

India too is a very different country from what it was in 1998. It has a much bigger economy — soon to be the third largest in the world. India is interconnected with the rest of the world as never before and has big stakes in consolidating the partnership with the US. Even more important, its ability to shape regional and global outcomes is of some long-term value for Washington.

The issues at hand too are different. Unlike the nuclear negotiation, where the real internal stakeholders were few, trade talks involve many government agencies, state governments and the business community. All major trading nations find it difficult to get their domestic ducks in a row. But unlike security issues, trade offers greater room for give and take.

The key to successful engagement with the US is to keep the negotiations going and make progress wherever one can. Americans are always ready to split the difference and move on. Delhi has been notorious for its inability to bring any negotiation to a close. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's distinct contributions to India's strategic culture have been to bring an utterly unsentimental view of the world, a determination to bargain hard and intense focus on practical outcomes. This approach, so visible in relation to foreign policy during Modi's first term, now needs to be extended to other domains, especially commerce, defence modernisation and adapting to the unfolding digital revolution.

A non-ideological approach to the negotiations would focus on breaking down the contentious issues into smaller parts, expanding the boundary conditions and creating linkages across sectors. As Modi deals with a turbulent world marked by a historic power shift, massive economic dislocation and the breakdown of the post-war global order, modernising the partnership with the US is critical to securing India's interests — both in the near and long term.

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PAVING A GREEN PATH

UN climate change meet could provide industry a roadmap for low carbon growth

tion looks daunting at first glance. However, India's experience in this respect is telling. As per government data, India may be on track to achieve its NDC target of emissions intensity well ahead of time. The period between 2005 to 2014, for which emissions data is available, has seen consistently higher economic growth (around 6-7 per cent) than the rate of growth in emissions (around 3.8 per cent). Falling energy costs of renewables have made it possible for incomes and jobs to be protected while lowering the emissions.

However, over a third of the emissions is generated by the harder-to-abate sectors which will witness high growth rate in the next decade, leading to three to four times increase in energy demand. While the energy intensity of these sectors may fall because of improved energy efficiency, their emissions intensity may remain high. The fall in India's emissions intensity of GDP may not be sustainable unless attempts are initiated now to address the carbon intensity of these sectors in the long term. The trouble is that for heavy industries such as iron and steel, cement, aluminum, plastics, and long distance transport, which depend on fossil fuels, technologies to replace such fuels are either not ready for commercial-scale application or simply not available. Typically, industry is hesitant to adopt better but costly

technology because of concerns about market share. A common aspirational goal has to be established on a scientific basis to enable industry to make investment decisions on a level-playing field. In the process, cost of newer technologies may also come down over the medium term.

One can think of the summit helping to build three levels of coalitions in a push for such transformation. First, a voluntary coalition of industries having the desire to accelerate to low or zero carbon technologies could be formed. These coalitions could adopt sector-wide goals by 2023 based on the best-available technology using life-cycle methods. The second coalition could consist of countries interested in promoting decreased carbon intensity through specific schemes — for example, the perform, achieve and trade scheme for energy efficiency in India. A coalition of industries and countries could also be formed to push for international agreements aimed at promoting technology solutions in harder-to-abate sectors through working groups and partnerships.

Whichever coalition India may offer to join, it will be useful for the country to think of its sectoral actions as part of a long-term low carbon national growth strategy.

*The writer is Distinguished Fellow at TERI*

JUNE 25, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

CONGRES EXPELS URS

THE CONGRESS (I) Working Committee expelled Karnataka chief minister, Devaraj Urs, from the party for six years, holding him guilty of "the worst type of anti-party activity, indiscipline and betrayal of the faith the Congress (I) reposed in him". The decision of the working committee, which was more or less a foregone conclusion, virtually splits the party in Karnataka. The split may possibly spread to other states since Urs had started mobilising support in other states and at the national level in anticipation of the party high command's decision to expel him. The working committee, which discussed Urs's reply to the show-cause notice served on him and

passed a resolution expelling him from the party for six years, also called upon him to "resign from the position as a member of the Legislative Assembly".

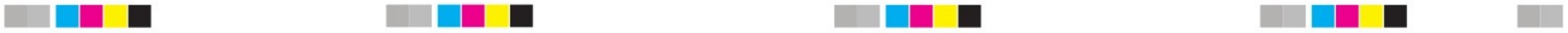
URS' OWN CONGRESS

DEVARAJ URS SAID in Bangalore that the pradesh party owing allegiance to him would function as "Karnataka Congress." Urs, who is also the chief minister, announced that he would step down from the party presidency in favour of the PCC Vice President, Siddarama Reddi, tomorrow. The 64-year-old Karnataka leader said he had taken the expulsion "in my stride". The State Congress (I), which had been dissolved by the high

command is meeting here for two days from tomorrow.

SAITUAL CURFEW

CURFEW HAS BEEN reclaimed on Saitual town in eastern Mizoram bordering Burma following an armed attack by hostile Mizos on a bank there last night. A massive combing operation has been launched to pick up the rebel Mizo National Front gang and five persons have been taken into custody. According to official sources at Aizawl, a gang of rebel Mizos was seen taking up positions around the bank at midnight. Police reinforcements have been rushed to the troubled area.





# The IDEAS PAGE

## Emergency chronicles

The party Chandra Shekhar brought to power, sent him to jail. Later, Indira Gandhi sought to build bridges and wanted him to return to the Congress



HARIVANSH AND RAVI DUTT BAJPAI

ON 25 JUNE 1975, JP addressed a massive public rally at Ramlila Ground in New Delhi. Chandra Shekhar was not present at the rally; he was spending the evening with his friends B P Koirala and Shailaja Acharya. The three of them went to watch the famous Hindi movie *Sholay* in central Delhi’s Regal Cinema and then to a restaurant for dinner. As they were preparing to call it a day, Chandra Shekhar realised that he had no money with him. Shailaja Acharya lent him Rs 100. When Chandra Shekhar reached home, D N Sahay, a friend of Chandra Shekhar, who was staying with him in Delhi, narrated the main points of JP’s address. JP had exhorted the police and armed forces to not obey orders which they considered wrong and warned that a change in government would bring about the prosecution of errant officials.

Chandra Shekhar listened intently and then remarked that it might be JP’s last public address before Indira Gandhi took some drastic actions. He predicted, “He (JP) might be imprisoned or be run over by a truck or meet with an accident.” They all went to bed around midnight; at around 3 am, Chandra Shekhar was informed that the police had reached Gandhi Peace Foundation to arrest JP. He immediately rushed to see JP; however, by the time he got there, JP was being put in the police van to be taken to the Parliament Street Police Station. He followed the police van in a taxi. At the police station, he was asked by the police officers to stay outside. Some journalists and press photographers had already gathered outside the police station. A few moments later, Chandra Shekhar was informed that there was an arrest warrant against him as well. As JP was taken to jail from the police station, he made the most memorable comment — “*Vinaash kaale vipreet buddhi* (As one’s doom approaches, their intellect works against their best interest).” He was commenting on Indira Gandhi’s decision to impose the Emergency.

Chandra Shekhar was taken to the cantonment police station where he met some leading figures from the opposition. Raj Narayan, Piloo Mody, Ramdhan, Biju Patnaik, Sikander Bakht and Ashok Mehta were already there. These leaders were shifted to the Rohtak Jail in a van. A crowd had already gathered around the police station and they were raising slogans. The largest number of slogans was raised in support of Chandra Shekhar, who was astounded by the irony of the situation. The party whom he had endeavoured to bring to power was sending him to jail, while the supporters of the parties whom he had laboured to defeat were raising slogans in his support. ...

In the middle of December 1976, when it seemed like the Emergency would continue forever, a very senior Congress leader visited Chandra Shekhar as the emissary of Indira Gandhi in Patiala Jail. The emissary told him about Indira Gandhi’s growing frustration with the communists and that she required Chandra Shekhar’s help to launch a new campaign. Chandra Shekhar made it clear that though he had political differences with them, he was not anti-communist, and added that he could not be of any help to Indira Gandhi. When the emissary asked him how long he planned to be in the prison, Chandra Shekhar replied that the last eighteen months of solitary confinement had strengthened his resolve, and he was prepared to spend the rest of

his life as a prisoner. Chandra Shekhar was one of the two leaders who were kept in solitary confinement during the Emergency; the other was George Fernandes. Indira Gandhi’s emissary returned empty-handed and Chandra Shekhar never broached this subject with the emissary after his release and, more significantly, he never revealed his identity. This initiative of rapprochement with Chandra Shekhar was also mentioned in Kuldip Nayar’s autobiography *Beyond the Lines: An Autobiography*. When he had visited Kamal Nath, a close friend of Sanjay Gandhi, Nayar had enquired about the possibility of elections. Kamal Nath had informed him that a senior Congress leader had been sent to Patiala Jail to negotiate with Chandra Shekhar and depending on his (Chandra Shekhar’s) response, the electoral process would be set in motion.

In the middle of December 1976, a fellow prisoner, Sardar Bulkar Singh, who was serving a life term, told Chandra Shekhar that he had dreamt of his immediate release. Chandra Shekhar did not attach any significance to these predictions. However, he himself mentioned a dream on 28 December 1976, in which he saw his wife telling him that he would be released in two days. Chandra Shekhar was surprised when on 30 December 1976, the Delhi police came to take him out of Patiala Jail and place him under house arrest at his home — 3, South Avenue, New Delhi. A number of his friends, acquaintances and well-wishers came to see Chandra Shekhar.

In a couple of days, Chandra Shekhar was moved out of his house to another bungalow in the same area. Eventually, Mohan Dharia was shifted from Nasik Jail to the next bungalow. On the day of their arrival, when they were allowed to spend some time with each other, Dharia mentioned that he had written a letter to Indira Gandhi. Chandra Shekhar, however, did not ask anything about the letter. After their initial meeting, Chandra Shekhar and Dharia were kept under house arrest, and they could not meet or talk to each other, despite staying in adjacent bungalows. Chandra Shekhar had a visitor one day — it was his old PSP colleague and a close friend, Jashwant Mehta, now a Congressman and the finance minister in the state of Gujarat. Mehta talked about inconsequential things, but as he was leaving, he said he would see Dharia as well. Mehta came back after meeting Dharia and asked Chandra Shekhar if he had seen Dharia’s letter to Indira Gandhi. Chandra Shekhar indicated that he was not interested in the letter or its contents. It was apparent to Chandra Shekhar that Indira Gandhi was looking for rapprochement with



CR Sasikumar

him and was ready to bring him back to the Congress fold.

The very next day, Mehta appeared again and said, “Yesterday, I was on a social call, today I am on a political mission.” Chandra Shekhar heard him out quietly. Mehta then gave him a copy of the letter written by Dharia to Indira Gandhi and left to meet Dharia. He returned in an hour and asked Chandra Shekhar, “Have you read Mohan Dharia’s letter? What is your reaction?” Chandra Shekhar replied, “The letter does not exist for me.” After three days, Mehta revisited Chandra Shekhar and informed him that Indira Gandhi wanted to meet him. Chandra Shekhar reminded him that as a prisoner, he could not move about freely. However, if Indira Gandhi wished to see him, she was welcome to visit him. On 11 January 1977, Mehta arrived to tell Chandra Shekhar of his release but by that time, the intelligence officers had already informed him about this decision.

As Chandra Shekhar walked out of his house arrest to freedom, he saw Ram Nath Goenka and Radhakrishnanji of the Gandhi Peace Foundation, waiting for him outside. Mehta was also there, waiting with his car, and he invited Chandra Shekhar to come with him to see Indira Gandhi as she was waiting to receive him. Chandra Shekhar advised Mehta not to behave so absurdly as on his release he would first go to his own home rather than Indira Gandhi’s. Again, late at night around 11 pm, Mehta returned to ask Chandra Shekhar if he was ready to meet Indira Gandhi. Chandra Shekhar assured Mehta that he would undoubtedly meet Indira Gandhi at least once to ask her about her decisions.

The efforts to bring Chandra Shekhar back into the Congress fold continued. Genda Singh, the veteran PSP stalwart and then a Congress leader, called Chandra Shekhar and advised him not to join the opposition ranks, seeking a meeting with him. Chandra Shekhar expressed his surprise that Genda Singh had remembered him all of a sudden after nineteen months. He wondered if Genda Singh expected him to publicly acknowledge that Indira Gandhi had fulfilled her national duties by imprisoning him for nineteen months and that he was indeed a traitor.

*Excerpted from Chandra Shekhar: The Last Icon of Ideological Politics, published by Rupa. HariVansh is Deputy Chairperson, Rajya Sabha and Bajpai is pursuing doctoral research on civilisational exchanges between China and India at Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia*

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SATENDRA SINGH

IN A STUDY on fatal pedestrian crashes among persons using wheelchairs in the US from 2006 to 2012, it was found that men who use wheelchairs were five times more likely than women wheelchair users to be killed in roadside collisions. Unfortunately, we do not have such detailed data in India because of the forced invisibility of commuters with disabilities. But, we do have a 2011 Chennai-based study confirming road traffic accidents to be the main cause of amputations (acquired disability). A 2017 audit by the Centre for Science and Environment placed Delhi on the top in road accident deaths and cited the capital as most unsafe for pedestrians. Delhi is certainly not “safe” for commuters with disabilities.

In a meeting in December last year, with stakeholders to make Delhi a model Accessible City, at the Union Ministry of Social Justice, Delhi’s transport department gave an assurance to explore the possibility of bringing wheelchair-accessible cab services in the capital. A slogan of the general elections was to “leave no voter behind”, and the Election Commission vouched to provide

## Life in a metro

For disabled in Delhi, metro is only accessible transport. It must be made free

free pick-up and drop facility to voters with disabilities. This, however, opened a Pandora’s box: No public transport in Delhi (barring the metro) is wheelchair accessible.

The 70-point action plan of the Aam Aadmi Party for the Delhi Assembly Election, 2015, had a four point agenda on disability in addition to Action Plan 53 stating “persons with disability will be provided concessional passes on buses and in the metro”. On February 6, too, the speaker of the Delhi legislative assembly announced that concessions for the disabled will be extended to the Delhi Metro. This promise is yet to be fulfilled. The AAP’s 38-page Delhi manifesto for the general elections, 2019, revealed zero results while searching for “disability” or “disabilities”.

No manufacturer in India manufactures modified vehicles for the disabled. In fact, Maruti Inc, has devised its own discriminatory policy to deny government concession to customers with right leg disability. Disabled people are forced to go to local vendors who basically apply the “jugaad system” to their two and four-wheelers. Moreover, the Central government has also, for the first

time, imposed GST on the assistive devices of “divine bodies” or “divyang” people, while keeping kajaal GST-free. This was compounded by a recent Supreme Court judgement which further marginalised the disability sector by banning the retrofitting of vehicles in India (*RTO vs K. Jayachandra*, 2019). It goes without saying that a person with disability has to incur additional expenditure due to the absence of accessible public transport. This is also true for a majority of the able-bodied who acquire disability after road traffic accidents. Therefore, commuters with disabilities will benefit from free transport rather than any partial concession.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Article 9) stipulates that, for the disabled, public transport must be accessible on an equal basis. The UN’s SDG target 11.2 calls for access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, with special attention to commuters with disabilities. Data from eight developing countries indicates that the average proportion of persons with disabilities who consider transportation not accessible

is 36 per cent (Sri Lanka 39 per cent and Nepal 33 per cent). In India, Section 41 of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, mandates accessibility in transportation.

Delhi’s deputy chief minister travelled in a local bus to ask women about the free metro and bus transport facilities. I invite the Delhi chief minister to accompany me in a wheelchair, and the transport minister to get blindfolded along with a cane as an assistive device in order to navigate the city — to feel the lived experience of a commuter with disability. It won’t be difficult to judge who needs accessible and safe transportation the most. As Gandhi once said, a nation is known by how it treats its most marginalised members. Unless the state fulfils its obligation to provide dignified and accessible transportation to commuters with disabilities, they ought to provide us free metro services, as it remains the only means of accessible transport in our country.

*The writer teaches at University College of Medical Sciences, Delhi, and is a disability rights activist*

### WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

The US is powerful, but not many people believe it can really bring down Iran. There is a profound truth behind this understanding. — **GLOBAL TIMES CHINA**

## The spectre of foreignness

Extending the concept of foreigners tribunals from Assam to rest of India will result in a upheaval that will stir memories of Partition



HARSH MANDER

A TERSELY worded order of the Union Home Ministry, less than two pages long, carries the potential to alter India forever, to crush the fundamental rights of millions of the country’s most vulnerable people, and to subvert the edifice of India’s constitutional framework and to change the founding principles of the republic. This order, published in the Gazette of June 4, authorises any state government, Union Territory or district magistrate to establish foreigners’ tribunals in any part of the country. Up to now, this power was restricted to the Union government and applied exclusively to Assam.

This momentous order, which carries the potential to foment social strife and alter India’s constitutional arrangements was passed without any public debate, let alone a discussion in Parliament. The only explanation we have for this order so far, derives from Union Home Minister Amit Shah’s incendiary pledge, repeated in his election speeches, to extend the National Register of Citizens to all parts of the country, so as to identify and deport “infiltrators” (read undocumented Muslims) who threaten India’s security — unlike undocumented Hindus and Sikhs, who are refugees escaping persecution.

At the core of the systemic injustice of the NRC process is the reversal of the burden of proof. For most crimes, a person is innocent until the state prosecution is able to prove him guilty. But the burden of proving a person is a citizen is shifted from the state to her shoulders, and it is enough for a foreigners’ tribunal to conclude that she is a foreigner if she is unable to provide documents that satisfy this agency. It is significant that this reversal of burden of proof was ordered by India’s highest court.

In Assam, the NRC has caused enormous suffering to millions of mostly poorly lettered and very impoverished people, who have squandered their meagre belongings to pay lawyers’ fees to help them negotiate the hostile and opaque maze of the NRC bureaucracy and the foreigners’ tribunals.

I have seen hundreds of cases in which a small difference in the English spelling of a Bengali name, or a small variation in age is enough for the NRC authorities and foreigners’ tribunals to sound the death-knell of “foreignness”. If you have never been to school, you may have no proof of birth or citizenship. If you own no land, you have no land records to prove your residence in India before the cut-off date. And even if you do own land, land records are notorious for their errors.

Imagine what will happen now with

the home minister’s grand plan for extending both the NRC and the foreigners’ tribunals to the entire country. I already hear of Muslims in far corners of the country anxiously checking their documents, enquiring what they can do because the English spelling of the name of their grandfather differs from one document to the next. If in the coming months or years, the NRC is extended to other parts of the country, the upheaval and travails that this will foster will stir memories of the trauma of Partition.

The Home Ministry’s order also empowers the foreigners’ tribunals, which will be established anywhere in the country, to regulate their own procedures in hearing the cases placed before them. It further empowers them to hear an appeal only if they “find merit” in it. This means that a person whose name does not figure in the NRC cannot hope for a hearing from the foreigners’ tribunal if the agency feels there is no “merit” in her appeal. The experience of these tribunals in Assam has been that they frequently function with open bias or without due process. The latest order of the Home Ministry further empowers these tribunals to function in prejudiced or arbitrary ways.

The gravest violation of constitutional justice by the NRC process in Assam, which now threatens to imperil minorities across India, is that the Union government has not clarified what will be the fate of the people who are finally declared “foreigners”. Neither the Supreme Court nor Parliament has compelled the Union government to clarify the destiny of possibly one to two million people, who practice Islam, in Assam if they are finally declared as “foreigners”?

There is no question of Bangladesh accepting those declared by the Indian government as foreigners, but who deny that they are Bangladeshi. Today more than a thousand of them are in detention centres in prisons. The Assam government has reported that it is building a detention centre for 3,000 foreigners. But what will happen to the million or more Muslim people declared by India’s judicial systems to be non-citizens in Assam? And possibly several million more if the NRC is actually extended to the rest of India? Will the Indian government detain them in massive concentration camps? If so, for how long? Will they — men, women and children — be confined there all their lives? Or, will they continue to live outside detention centres in India but stripped of all rights of citizens? Stripped of the rights to vote, to own property, to enter government service? Is this not wantonly and recklessly manufacturing a Rohingya-like situation? Will they then not become worse off than even the original imagination of the RSS to reduce minorities to second-class citizens?

They will be non-citizens, a marked people, comprehensively excluded and despised. Is this not a prescription that could once again tear apart India?

*Mander is a human rights worker and writer*

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### SEARCH FOR WATER

THIS REFERS TO your editorial, ‘Running dry’ (IE, June 24). The water crisis in Chennai is really grim. The situation is aggravated by the fact that Chennai is one of the cities that might run out of groundwater by 2020. The new Jal Shakti ministry should start working to find means to provide ways to provide these cities a substitute for groundwater.

**Sanjay Chawla, Amritsar**

### TRUMP’S WAYS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Terms of peace’ (IE, June 24). There is no doubt that US President Donald Trump is a very good poker player and this reflects in all his political moves. He keeps on raising the stakes, keeps on building the pressure and then surprises everyone by relenting. One day he was ready to press the nuclear button and exterminate entire North Korea and the next day he extended friendship to Kim Jong-un in Singapore. The US president is deploying the same tactics with Iran and in the US-China Trade War. The escalations of the conflict in the Strait of Hormuz is bound to have impacts on the entire world. So it is important that US and Iran come to the negotiation table.

**Shriya Sharma, Gurugram**

### BJP’S GAINS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Stirrings

### LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

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

THE WINNER RECEIVES SELECT EXPRESS PUBLICATIONS

in the House’ (IE, June 22). The defection of the four TDP Rajya Sabha MPs will add to the BJP’s strength in the Rajya Sabha — where the NDA has only 102 members in the 245-seat house. It will also give the BJP a toehold in a southern state, other than Karnataka. It could enable the passing of many pending laws in the Rajya Sabha and consequently, obviate the government’s need to take the ordinance route.

**Sauro Dasgupta, Kolkata**







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If there are questions of current or contemporary relevance that you would like explained, please write to [explained@indianexpress.com](mailto:explained@indianexpress.com)

TELLING NUMBERS

Are tigers killing elephants? A check-list by Corbett authorities

DIVISION	TIGERS	ELEPHANTS	LEOPARDS	TOTAL
Kalagarh	2	13	3	18
Ramnagar	7	8	3	18
Grand total	9	21	6	36

Source: Study by Corbett Tiger Reserve

A STUDY by Corbett Tiger Reserve authorities claims that tigers, elephants and leopards have been killing one another, and The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has sought a report from Uttarakhand's Chief Wildlife Warden (PTI report published online in *The Indian Express*, June 23). The study gives a count of 36 wild animals killed over a period of five-and-a-half years (January 1, 2014-May 31, 2019) and attributes these to conflict with other wild animals.

21 ELEPHANTS

Out of 21 elephant deaths, the study attributes 13 (60%) to attacks by tigers, mostly on young elephants. It suggests that this may be happening because hunting an elephant requires less energy than hunting a sambar or a cheetal, and because an elephant provides a larger quantity of food. "It was also reported that even in cases where elephants were killed in infighting, tigers were found eating their body parts," the study said.

Of the remaining elephants, most

were killed while fighting over mating, the report said.

9 TIGERS

Out of 9 tiger deaths, 7 (80%) were attributed to infighting. These were primarily due to territorial fights, the study said. The remaining tigers were killed because of fights with porcupines and wild boars, it said.

6 LEOPARDS

Out of 6 leopard deaths, 4 were attributed to attacks by other carnivores and the remaining two to infighting. Among the former 4, there was definitive evidence about 2 being killed by tigers, the report said, but the attacking species in the remaining two cases was yet to be identified, it added.

The study was commissioned by the Director of Corbett National Park following the death of a tigress last month due to infighting. It calls for further studies on tiger-elephant conflict and, in the case of tigers, the extent of average territorial area, moving patterns and adequacy of the present tiger reserve area.

THIS WORD MEANS

LUNAR EVACUATION SYSTEM ASSEMBLY

Currently being tested, a device meant to rescue an astronaut if injured on the surface of Moon



Astronauts test prototype of LESA under the sea. European Space Agency

AMONG PREPARATIONS for NASA's 2024 Moon mission, one has been to test a device called Lunar Evacuation System Assembly, or LESA. Developed by the European Space Agency (ESA), LESA is a pyramid-like structure whose purpose is to rescue an astronaut should he or she suffer an injury on the lunar surface. Astronauts will be wearing heavy extravehicular activity (EVA) suits and, as ESA head of spacewalk training Hervé Stevenin said in a statement, "There is no way an astronaut could carry their fallen crewmate over

their shoulder while wearing an EVA suit." LESA can be operated by a single astronaut to rescue a fallen colleague. It enables an astronaut to lift their crewmate onto a mobile stretcher in less than 10 minutes, before carrying them to the safety of a nearby pressurised lander, the ESA statement said. Astronauts are testing LESA under the sea. With its rocky, sandy terrain and buoyant salt water, the bottom of the ocean floor has much in common with the lunar surface, ESA said.

KARISHMA MEHROTRA  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 24

THE IT Ministry's Bill on data protection is scheduled to be introduced in Parliament during the current session. Worldwide, the data flow debate is playing out at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and G20.

Why is data valuable?

Data is any collection of information that is stored in a way so computers can easily read it. These days, most people refer to data to mean information about their messages, social media posts, online transactions, and browser searches. Big data refers to the immense amount of data that can now be collected, stored, and analysed to find patterns. This large collection of information about people's online habits has become an important source of profits. Your online activity can expose a lot about who you are, and companies find it valuable to use the information to target advertisements to you. Governments and political parties have also gained interest in these data sets for elections and policymaking.

What exactly about data laws are countries debating?

Data is stored in a physical space, like a file cabinet that can be the size of the Taj Mahal. Data is also transported across country borders physically, traveling through underwater cables that run as deep as Mount Everest and as long as four times the span of the Indian Ocean. Thirdly, just as oil is refined, data has to be processed to be useful. This means it is analysed by computers. These aspects of data flows — where it is stored, where it is sent, where it is turned into something useful — determines who has access to the data, who profits off the data, who taxes the data, and who "owns" the data. With these questions in mind, individual governments are developing their own domestic rules and negotiating with each other on a global stage, raising values of national security, economic growth, and privacy.

Where does India's domestic policy on data stand?

India's recent drafts and statements have strong signals for data localisation, which means that data of Indians (even if collected by an American company) must be stored and processed in India. Along with a Reserve Bank of India directive to payment companies to localise financial data, the Ministry of Commerce's draft e-commerce policy from February is currently in public consultation. The IT Ministry has drafted a data protection law that will be

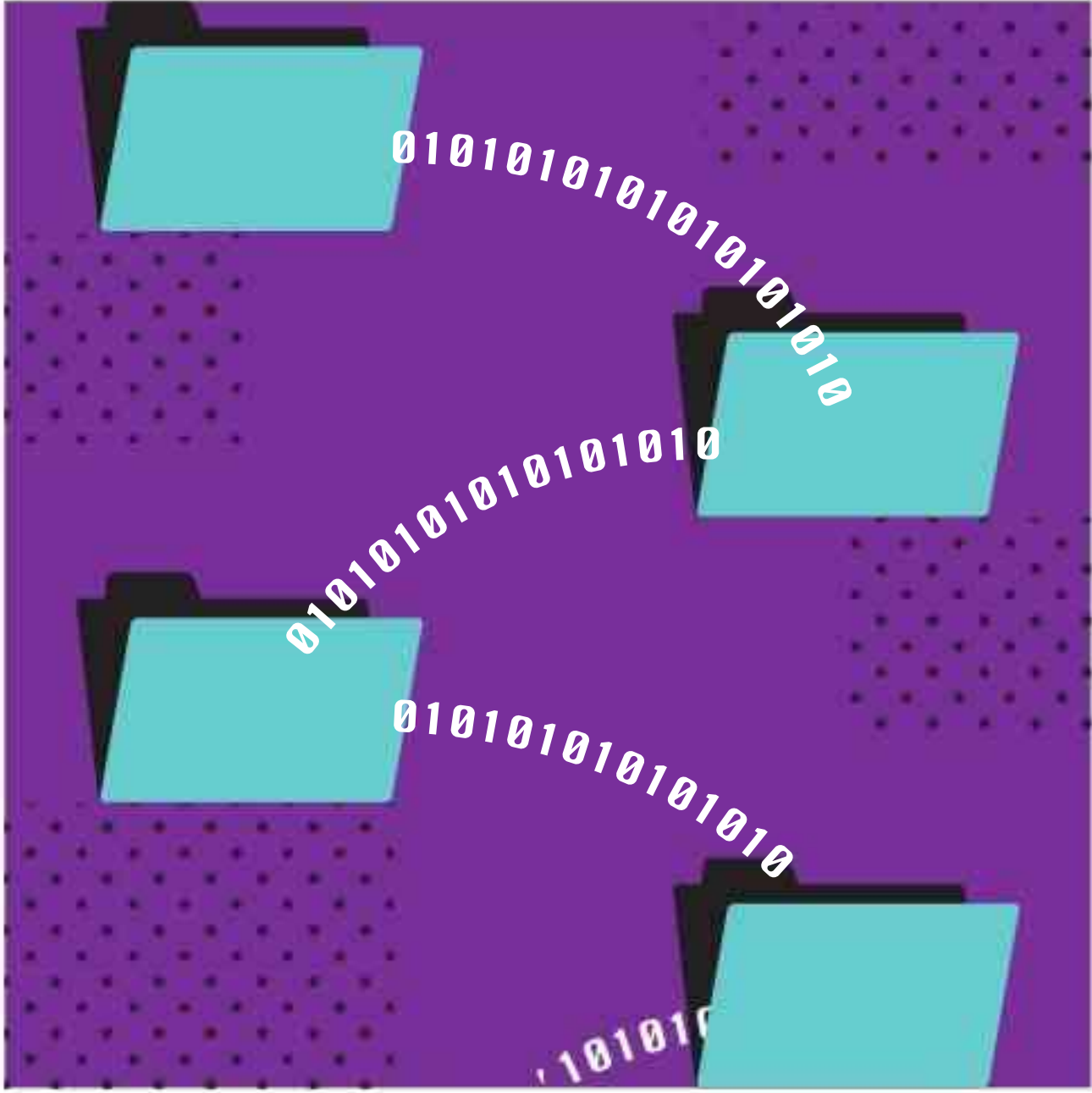


Illustration: C R Sasikumar

introduced in Parliament and has also framed draft intermediary rules that were leaked in December.

These laws, broadly speaking, could require Facebook, Google, and Amazon to store and process in India information such as an Indian's messages, searches, and purchases. In some cases, they restrict what type of data these companies can collect. In others, it requires only a copy of the data to be in the country.

China has developed similar laws, which proponents say allow for a flourishing domestic economy of data centres and data processing by blocking foreign players out. This is why Indian companies, like Reliance and PayTM, usually support data localisation.

The other argument from the Indian government is that localisation will help law enforcement access the data. Currently, India has to use "mutual legal assistance treaties" (MLAT) with the US to get the data of Indians that are controlled by American companies. By requiring a copy of the data to be stored in India (data mirroring), the government hopes to have more direct control over these companies, including the option to levy more taxes on them.

The government also argues for data localisation on the ground of national security, to prevent foreign surveillance and attacks.

What are counter-arguments against data localisation?

On the other side, the US government and companies want cross-border flow of data. It would allow companies to store the data of Indians in the most efficient place in the world. Even though India's data economy is not as large as that of others, it is one of the fastest growing, making it a market that global companies cannot afford to ignore. Proponents of free flow of data worry that if all countries begin to protect their data, it may backfire on India's own companies that seek global growth.

Others caution that these laws could bring increased state surveillance, like India's draft intermediary rules that would require WhatsApp to change its design to proactively filter messages. The company says messages are currently encrypted, meaning neither the company nor any government can see them.

What is happening at the global forums?

Trade tensions worldwide are escalating, giving the data flow debate new relevance at the WTO and G20. WTO member countries are negotiating rules about e-commerce, which is the buying and selling of goods and services online. Digital trade contributes more to global GDP

Why mayor poll result is a blow to Erdogan



Ekrem Imamoglu, Istanbul mayor. AP

SHUBHAJIT ROY  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 24

TURKEY'S PRESIDENT Recep Tayyip Erdogan has suffered a setback in the Istanbul Mayor's elections, whose results were declared on Monday. Erdogan, who has led the country since 2003, faces the first political challenge from the Opposition, as the candidate from his party — Justice and Development Party (AKP) — lost to the main opposition party's candidate. Ekrem Imamoglu defeated former Prime Minister Binali Yildirim, a close aide of Erdogan.

Why Istanbul matters

It was by winning the Istanbul mayoral election in 1994 that Erdogan first rose to political prominence as a young and dynamic politician. His rise has been steady over the last 25 years and he has been now ruling the country for the last 16 years. Erdogan himself has said in the past "whoever wins Istanbul, wins Turkey".

Istanbul, with more than 10 million voters, represents one-fifth of the entire Turkey, and it has traditionally set the political trend for the rest of the country. The poll outcome ends 25 years of AKP rule in Istanbul. Imamoglu garnered around

55% of the votes, one of the highest opposition records in recent elections. He had won the mayoral elections on March 31 itself, before the Supreme Election Council (YSK) on May 6 cancelled the results. This turned Turkish public opinion against the ruling party. Serkan Demirtas, a columnist in the English-language Turkish daily *Hurriyet*, said that this was a "big blow on the sense of justice and conscience and created an even bigger sympathy for Imamoglu as the sufferer of this controversial judicial decision". The sense of hurt led to many switching sides, and this was visible with the increased Imamoglu's victory margin. He increased his votes by nearly 530,000, while Yildirim lost about 235,000. That Imamoglu increased his votes by more than half a million in less than six weeks is an indicator of public opinion switching to the Opposition.

Challenges ahead

The opposition, which appeared tired and not ready for a fight, has been re-energised after the win. Local neighbourhoods in

Istanbul like Besiktas, which sits by the famous Bosphorus, erupted in joy, as the election results started pouring in. It is too early, however, to write an epitaph for Erdogan, who has positioned himself as the most powerful leader since Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the modern Turkish republic. Imamoglu will face a local council, which is still controlled by Erdogan's party, and he will have to navigate the politics to become an effective elected official. "I am calling on our head of state, President Erdogan. I'm ready and willing to work in harmony with you on Istanbul's urgent issues such as earthquake safety in the city, subway construction, refugees and so on," he said, mindful of the challenges ahead. While the next presidential and parliamentary elections are not due before 2023, there could be calls for early elections. After the defeat in Istanbul, Erdogan may face some dissidence within his party, including top ministers, it will be a test of his political mind as he faces an Opposition which has shown green shots of recovery.

Parliament voting: ayes vs noes, and road from manual to electronic recording

CHAKSHU ROY  
NEW DELHI, JUNE 24

ALL DECISIONS in Parliament are taken by voting by MPs, whether it relates to extending working hours or passing a Bill. Last week, Speaker Om Birla presided over the first recorded vote in the 17th Lok Sabha. MPs needed to decide whether to allow the introduction of the triple talaq Bill; Minister for Law and Justice Ravi Shankar Prasad wanted permission of the House to introduce the Bill while N K Premachandran (RSP), Shashi Tharoor (Congress) and Asaduddin Owaisi (AIMIM) were opposed to its introduction.

Voice vote & division

Voice voting is the preferred method of

decision making by Indian Parliament. MPs in favour of a decision call out "Ayes" and those opposed say "Noes". The Speaker then takes a call on which voices were louder and conveys the decision of the House. The rules of procedure of Lok Sabha do not mandate recording of votes of MPs for every decision taken. Voice voting does not reveal the individual positions taken by MPs. That is not, however, the only way voting takes place. MPs also have the right to ask for the vote of every MP to be recorded. This is called a division. MPs can vote in favour, oppose or abstain from the vote. Recording of votes is also mandated when there is a constitutional requirement for a special majority of Parliament (for example a constitutional amendment), or after a no-confidence motion. However, MPs do not exercise their

right for asking for recoding of votes very frequently. In each of the last three Lok Sabhas, there have been less than 50 occasions when votes of MPs have been recorded. Last week, Owaisi exercised his right and called for a division on the introduction of the triple talaq Bill. Lok Sabha decided to allow the introduction with 185 votes in favour and 74 opposed; 6 MPs abstained from the vote. As the seating plan for Lok Sabha was not finalised, the voting was done by paper voting slips. MPs signed their names on green paper slips to record that they were in favour, red slips to record opposition and yellow to declare that they were abstaining. The first recorded vote (division) in Lok Sabha took place on the second day of its sitting in 1952. The House had to decide on

the election of the Speaker. In the running were G V Mavalankar and S S More. Mavalankar won with 394 votes in his favour. Voting records indicate that one of the votes cast in favour of Mavalankar was that of More, who voted for his opponent upholding the best traditions of parliamentary democracy. The division took place by counting of voting slips signed by MPs and took some time. The manual process of voting was inefficient and consumed a lot of time of the legislature. The West Bengal Legislative Assembly was the first to tackle this problem, by installing an electronic vote recording machine. The Speaker held the controls to the entire process, and the results were

visible almost instantaneously on a display board. The system required 17 km of lead-covered cabling and 19,500 junction points. In 1957, at the beginning of the second Lok Sabha, Parliament adopted a similar electronic vote counting system. Because of the proximity in the seating of MPs in Parliament, the system was designed in such a way that MPs had to use both their hands while voting. The idea being that MPs should not be able to press the voting buttons of their colleagues who might not be present for the vote. In May 1957, the system was put into use for the first time. A demonstration of the new system took place after the swearing-in of MPs on the first day. Five days later, amendments were moved to the motion of thanks to the President's address (delivered

by Dr Rajendra Prasad), and a division was called on them. Before the new voting machine could be put to use, a problem was highlighted to the Speaker. One of the MPs was differently-abled and had only one hand, and the machine required use of both hands. The solution provided by the Speaker was that an officer of the House would help the MP vote. In this instance, much to Speaker's displeasure, rather than wait for the officer's assistance, fellow legislators helped the MP cast his vote. In most mature democracies, recorded voting is the preferred mechanism for decision making by Parliament. In India, the anti-defection law has led to limiting the use of recorded voting in Parliament.

The writer is with PRS Legislative Research







Devoid of principle

The defection of four TDP Rajya Sabha MPs to the BJP raises troubling questions

The recent defection of four Rajya Sabha MPs from the Telugu Desam Party to the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, merely a month after simultaneous Assembly and Lok Sabha elections in Andhra Pradesh, can only be termed as political opportunism. The fact that these MPs merged with the BJP as a group helped them stay clear of the anti-defection law, which stipulates that a breakaway group constitute at least two-thirds of a legislative party's strength and that it merge with another party. The TDP had been reduced to just 23 and two seats in the newly elected Andhra Pradesh and Telangana Assemblies, respectively. It now commands a much lower legislative profile with just two members in the Rajya Sabha and three in the Lok Sabha. There is a tendency among legislators to seek greener pastures at a time of crisis for their parties, but the nature of these defections suggests that this was not a simple case of leaving a party whose political strength had considerably diminished. The BJP is even more of a non-player in Andhra Pradesh as it does not hold a single seat in the current Assembly and its vote share dipped in comparison to the previous Assembly elections. The reasons for the defections appear to have little to do with the political equations in the parent State.

Some of the defecting legislators have a cloud of suspicion over them as they were subjected to probes by Central Bureau of Investigation, Enforcement Directorate and Income Tax officials over financial transactions. It would be in order to ask whether the defections are aimed at currying favour with the government at the Centre in regard to the investigations. The NDA government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has promised zero tolerance on corruption, and it is to be hoped that the investigations against two of the defecting MPs continue unhindered. At the same time, the fact that the BJP has chosen to accommodate legislators the party had only months ago castigated for being corrupt, and against whom one of its own MPs had sought action from the Rajya Sabha ethics committee, suggests that the benefits of accrual to its numbers outweighed even the pretence of principle. The BJP has managed to increase its strength in the Rajya Sabha to 75 with the addition of the defectors from the TDP. Fresh elections to the Rajya Sabha are due for a substantive number of seats by 2020, and defections such as these will help the ruling combine get closer to the majority mark in the 245-member Upper House. Even if it is justified as an exercise to increase numbers, it does not reflect well on the BJP, which claims to be a party with a difference. Defections that are not based on ideology or principle undermine parliamentary democracy; a vibrant opposition is equally vital to ensure an efficient government.

Down to two

The leadership battle of the U.K. Conservatives is now between contrasting candidates

The leadership race in the U.K.'s ruling Conservative party has been whittled down to two candidates with contrasting personal styles and political stances. The current Foreign Secretary, Jeremy Hunt, is a moderate and will face off against his predecessor, the flamboyant and controversial Boris Johnson. Over 100,000 overwhelmingly pro-Brexit party members will, in mid-July, choose Prime Minister Theresa May's successor via a postal ballot. One option to see through their project of a life-time is to elect Mr. Hunt, a one-time advocate of remaining in the European Union (like Ms. May), and risk not realising the end goal. The other alternative is to choose the hardliner Mr. Johnson, who famously, and erroneously, claimed during the 2016 referendum that London was sending £350 million a week to Brussels. His xenophobic remark about Turkish immigrants flooding the U.K. was said to be among the factors that tilted the 2016 outcome. The principal architect of the leave campaign assured party-men before the current contest that Britain will exit by the October 31 deadline, deal or no deal. Mr. Johnson, a two-time London Mayor, has emerged a clear favourite, polling the highest in all the elimination rounds among Conservative MPs over the past days. Mr. Hunt, on the other hand, is seen as a heavyweight whose vast experience in promoting business ventures could refresh the party's market-friendly image. As Health Secretary he had secured additional funding for the NHS. Mr. Hunt has warned of the dangers of leaving the EU without an agreement, including another general election that could damage the Conservatives' prospects.

The contest is above all else really about picking a leader who can steer the party through Britain's next general election and ensure its future relevance. That means somebody who can stop Jeremy Corbyn, the Labour leader, from entering 10 Downing Street. After a dismal showing in the May polls to the EU Parliament, the Conservatives also fear support among the rank and file haemorrhaging to Nigel Farage's Brexit Party. Delivering on the 2016 referendum result, in whatever form and at any price, is seen in Conservative strongholds as the ultimate route to resurrection. Meanwhile, there are not many who seriously believe that Britain can realistically renegotiate before the end of October the withdrawal agreement Ms. May signed with the EU last year. Brussels has repeatedly stressed its unwillingness to reopen the deal, still less the contentious Irish backstop. The Prime Minister's election in July would be followed by Parliament's summer recess, allowing MPs little time for legislative business. Short of a spectacular turnaround, the outcome of the Conservative contest looks fairly predictable. Conversely, the course of Brexit is anything but certain, irrespective of whether Mr. Johnson or Mr. Hunt wins the battle of the ballot.

Basic needs, basic rights

India must recognise the right to a minimally decent life, so that no person falls below a certain level of existence



RAJEEV BHARGAVA

Three thoughts occur to me in the aftermath of the horrific tragedy in Muzaffarpur, Bihar, where the systemic failure of health care has killed over a hundred children. First, like the constitutional principle of a basic structure, it is time to articulate an equally robust doctrine of basic rights. Second, these basic rights must be viewed primarily as positive, rights not against interference from the state (negative rights) but to the provision of something by it. Third, just as individuals are punished for legal violations, the government of the day must also be punished for the violation of these basic rights. This punishment need not await the next round of elections but must be meted out immediately, by the law itself. In short, defaulting governments must be held legally accountable. The systematic violation of basic rights must be treated on a par with the breakdown of constitutional machinery.

A solid necessity

But what are basic rights? How are they different from other fundamental rights? Basic rights flow from basic needs such as physical security or subsistence. Needs are different from wants. You may want a chocolate every morning but don't need it. Heavens won't fall if you don't get it. But basic needs are different: their non-fulfilment can cause great harm, even kill. The failure to get an antibiotic if you have a bacterial infection can hurt you very badly. Heavens will fall if you don't get it!

Moreover, wants are subjective; you cannot be mistaken that you desire that chocolate. But you may be misguided, even unaware of what you need. You may not be able to tell if you need an antibiotic because your mind can't tell the difference between bacterial and viral infections. This determination is done by a more objective criterion. Needs depend on the way human bodies are constituted. They are a solid necessity; one cannot get on without them. Nor can they be fulfilled by substitutes. For us, nothing can take the place of water, food and air.

It is true, of course, that though terribly important, basic needs are not what we live for. They don't make our life worth living. But anything really worth pursuing depends on the satisfaction of basic needs. If we are continuously thirsty, cold, hungry, ill or homeless, we will be incapable of even framing a conception of worthwhile life, let alone pursue it. Imagine the plight of those who queue up for long hours to get a bucket of water or a place to bathe, dress or defecate. People suffer if basic needs are met inadequately or with delay. They are then denied a minimally decent life.

When basic needs are not fully met, we feel vulnerable and helpless. We grieve, cry for help, seek assistance. We complain and demand elementary justice from our community, especially from the state. Elementary justice requires that before anything else, the state does everything at its disposal to satisfy all basic needs of its citizens, particularly of those who cannot fend for themselves. We feel aggrieved when the state abdicates this responsibility.

Security and subsistence

But what does the language of rights add to the idea of basic



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needs? First, a right is something that is owed to us; it is not a favour. So, rights help the recognition of anything that satisfies basic needs as an entitlement. Basic rights are claims on the state to provide us with goods and services that satisfy our basic needs. Second, when something is identified as a basic right, it puts the state under a duty to enable its exercise. The state becomes its guarantor. For example, the right to physical security, the first basic right, is socially guaranteed when the state provides its people a well-trained, professional police force. When society and its government reneges on its commitment to do so, we hold them accountable. It follows that basic rights are a shield for the defenceless against the most damaging threats to their life which include starvation, pestilence and disease. As the philosopher Henry Shue, puts it, it is 'an attempt to give to the powerless a veto over some economic, social and political forces that harm them'.

These rights are basic also because many intrinsically valuable rights can be enjoyed only once these rights are secured. Imagine that we have a right to assemble freely in public but that just as one begins to exercise this right, one is threatened with assault, rape or

murder. Most people will simply retreat. Is not a threat to physical security or bodily integrity the commonest weapon wielded by goons, political thugs and oppressive governments?

The second is the right to minimum economic security and subsistence, that includes clean air, uncontaminated water, nutritious food, clothing and shelter. By showing the devastation caused by its absence, the Muzaffarpur tragedy amply proves that the right to primary health care is also an integral part of the right to subsistence. A straightforward link exists between malnutrition and disease. As Dr. T. Jacob John explained in an article in *The Hindu* on June 19, 2019 (OpEd page, "Averting deaths in Muzaffarpur"), encephalopathy, the biochemical disease that results from eating litchi fruit pulp, occurs only in malnourished children. It is common knowledge that malnourishment lowers resistance to disease. A similar link exists between disease, unemployment and poverty.

Credible threats to these rights can be reduced by the government by establishing institutions and practices that assist the vulnerable; for example, by setting up hospitals with adequate number of doctors, nurses, beds, medical equipment, intensive care units, essential drugs and emergency treatments. For this, proper budgetary allocation is required that depends in turn on getting one's political priority and commitment right. When a government fails to provide primary health care to those who can't afford it, it violates their basic rights.

Vulnerability, accountability

To these two basic rights, I add a third – the right to free public expression of helplessness and frustration, if deprived of other basic

rights. The scope of freedom of expression is large and I don't think all of it can be deemed basic. But the relevant part of it is. The right to make one's vulnerability public, be informed about the acts of commission and omission of the government regarding anything that adversely affects the satisfaction of basic needs, to critically examine them and to hold state officials publicly accountable is a basic right on a par with right to physical security and subsistence and inseparably linked to them.

It follows that governments must make arrangements for people to demand that their basic rights be satisfied, to complain when these demands are not met, to report lapses and omissions on the part of governments, point fingers at apathetic government officials, criticise the government for its failures and to do so without fear.

These three basic rights can be summed up in a single phrase, the right to a minimally decent life. This is a threshold right. A society may soar, strive for great collective achievement. There are no limits to the longing for a better life. But the point of having a threshold of minimal decency is that our life must not fall below a certain level of existence. Anything short of a minimally decent life is simply not acceptable. It is this precisely that horrifies us about the callousness of the Bihar government in Muzaffarpur and governments in India more generally. They routinely abdicate responsibility for the suffering they directly or indirectly cause. This is why we must ask why governments are not immediately and severely penalised when they undermine the exercise of these basic rights.

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A war of masks between Iran and the U.S.

Both governments are trying to avoid a war and yet win a game of appearances



RAMIN JAHANBEGLOO

On June 20, Iran and the United States came dangerously close to a direct armed conflict, with U.S. President Donald Trump reportedly ordering and then cancelling air strikes against Iran, after it shot down a high-tech U.S. drone over the Strait of Hormuz. A closer look at tensions between the two countries would make it seem as if the Iranian authorities were the ones attempting to escalate a regional crisis while avoiding a full-blown war with the U.S. For the Trump administration, it has been about being careful not to be drawn into a West Asian conflict and having the loss of any U.S. service personnel on its conscience.

Many layers

Yet things are more complicated than what is appearing on news channels. On one side, the Ayatollahs and the Islamic Revolutionary

Guard Corps (IRGC) want to save their necks by convincing the U.S.'s allies in Europe, West Asia and Asia to pressure Washington into easing the devastating economic and financial sanctions that have affected the Iranian economy. On the other side, the hawks in Washington, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and National Security Adviser John Bolton, have an ardent desire to restore U.S. deterrence by striking Iranian military infrastructure and nuclear installations. In the middle of this there are a number of state and non-state actors such as Israel, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, which would be the prime targets for Iranian attacks, or which would get militarily engaged on the side of Iran and go after U.S. targets.

Once in war with the Islamic Republic of Iran, the U.S. would have to contend with proxies backed by Tehran spreading across the region, armed with missiles, drones and as suicide bombers. There is virtually no way for Saudi Arabia and the UAE to protect themselves from Iranian proxy attacks. Let us take the example of Iranian-backed Houthi rebels, who have fought a coalition led by Saudi Ara-



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bia to a stalemate on the battlefield since 2015 and have succeeded in launching missiles and rockets into Saudi territory. In Lebanon and Iraq, the Iranian regime's proxies have killed hundreds of American soldiers since the early 1980s. In 1983, a group linked to the Iranian-backed Shiite militia, Hezbollah, claimed responsibility for lethal bombings of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut and a U.S. Marine barracks.

Nearly a month ago, in a meeting with Iran-linked Iraqi militias in Baghdad, Major General Qassim Suleimani, the chief of Iran's Quds Force, which is a unit of the IRGC, asked them to prepare for a proxy war with the U.S. Strangely, Iran's campaign of proxy war and sabotage will be designed to inflict some suffering on regional and interna-

tional actors that have chosen to be with America in this conflict, while dissuading Mr. Trump and his advisers from taking military action against Iranian interests.

Giving peace a chance

Given that "maximum pressure" sanctions have achieved their goal and the Iranian authorities are desperate to find a way out of this crisis, the role of potential mediators will be crucial. The government of President Hassan Rouhani is quietly trying out all possibilities to find a diplomatic pathway out of the crisis. But a dialogue between Arab leaders and the Iran could begin with more concrete help from Oman and Kuwait in order to de-escalate the war in Yemen and ensure maritime security in the Strait of Hormuz.

Therefore, while Iran and the U.S. are on the edge of the abyss, global diplomacy behind closed doors has been working to find a way out. The removal of Russian missiles from Cuba was former U.S. President J.F. Kennedy grandest success. However, during the Cuban missile crisis, he had two dangerous situations to deal with simultaneously – missile emplacements and impeachment. In the

same way, Mr. Trump is trying to find a way out of the tensions while trying not to damage his chances of a second term in the White House. America's military and technological resources to break down the Islamic regime of Iran are limitless. The only matter to decide is whether it is intellectually wise and politically pragmatic to use all that might.

Both Iran and the U.S. are trying to avoid this war while winning a game of appearances. This game reminds us of the theatrical concept of persona, which gives both Iran and the U.S. a source of political agency and a stable public role to present themselves as being intransigent, inflexible and uncompromising. Consequently, both countries are trying to keep their masks on in order to inscribe themselves on the hearts of humanity. But as Nathaniel Hawthorne writes in *The Scarlet Letter*: "No man, for any considerable period, can wear one face to himself and another to the multitude, without finally getting bewildered as to which may be the true."

Ramin Jahanbegloo is Director, Mahatma Gandhi Centre for Peace, Jindal Global University, Sonapat

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

Religious freedom

The self-righteousness and snobbery of successive American governments and their presumed right to pontificate about the religious freedom in foreign societies remain unchanged (Page 1, "MEA rejects U.S. report on state of religious freedom in India", June 24). That the Indian government's critics have latched on to the U.S. State Department's misconceived indictment of India regarding denial of religious freedom to the minorities with a sense of schadenfreude reflects the nation's divisive political culture where passions tend to overwhelm reason and fairness. Media narratives shape foreign perceptions about Indian society and politics. When sections of the media blur the line between objective reporting and sensationalism, the foreign media and governments pick up the noise instead of the right signals. V.N. MUKUNDARAJAN, Thiruvananthapuram

■ The U.S. State Department has exceeded its limits and the MEA's reaction is in line with what a self-respecting nation is expected to do. But for stray incidents by fringe elements, the minorities live in peace and harmony. In a globalised world, India is well aware that it cannot alienate any religion. The U.S. report appears to be based on biased reports and political speeches rather than an in-depth study. The U.S. should also realise that India is in a volatile neighbourhood. V. SUBRAMANIAN, Chennai

■ The MEA's rejection of the report is no surprise as any kind of criticism from within or outside has always been anathema for the present government. Religious freedom or the lack of it has always been a contentious issue and the views of the government and spokespersons of the minority communities have been diametrically opposite. A more recent example would be the oath-taking

ceremony in the 17th Lok Sabha, where frenzied cries of a religious nature were heard from the treasury benches; majoritarianism continues to flourish under the benign gaze of the powers that be. C.V. ARAVIND, Bengaluru

■ There is religious freedom in India, guaranteed under Articles 25 to 28 of the Constitution of India, but it exists only on paper. Fear is thrust upon the minds of the minorities using selective and periodical harassment, targeting and lynching them based on rumours or falsely blaming them. The government should have taken stern action against the perpetrators of the crimes. Instances of lynching, though isolated, underscore that the minorities, especially Muslims, are not secure. Whether it likes it or not, the Central government must know that India is being closely watched by the rest of the world. M.Y. SHARIF, Chennai

Numbers and the future

That India is likely to overtake China as the most populous country by 2027 and be home to 1.64 billion people by 2050 is not heartening news at all (Editorial, "A stable planet", June 22). A reduction in fertility rates in our most populous States is a must. Together with this, education of girl children and the empowerment of women will help arrest population growth. There must be a holistic approach in addressing the issues. It is also time to raise the minimum age of marriage. C.G. KURIAKOSE, Kothamangalam, Kerala

■ The cold reality of an increasing world population, with India set to become the world's most populous nation, is a warning sign. State machinery, policies and social welfare schemes are bound to suffer adversely if there are inadequate resources to feed such a large population. More aggressive population control campaigns need to be put in

place to boost greater awareness about the need for family planning. Realistic development goals need to be set keeping in mind the estimated population figures and the resources needed. OJAL JAIN, Sri City, Andhra Pradesh

Water management

We talk about water management but appear to be doing precious little despite credible scientific data that show growing water poverty. We have ample means to harness nature's bounty. Water bodies are used as dump yards, river banks are encroached upon and lakebeds become sites for real estate. The water crisis, especially in Chennai, has to be taken as a forewarning. Proper water conservation techniques, recycling and reuse of water, mandatory installations for water

harvesting, water collection in lakes and identifying water bodies can help avoid scarcity to an extent. Governments have to work out a plan. M. PRADEY, Kannur, Kerala

■ It is fine to be talking about water conservation techniques that governments must carry out but scant attention is being paid to water use habits at home. It is surprising how much water can be saved by making adjustments in one's habits and ways in the kitchen and washroom. The media should highlight these crucial water saving tips which are as simple as not running the faucet endlessly, fixing water leaks and placing a brick in the cistern. GEETA S., Chennai

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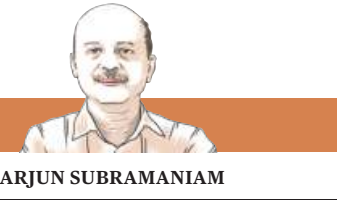
CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS: Wild yak was erroneously described as an *endangered* species in a Science & Technology page story titled "Why did woolly rhino, mammoth go extinct?" (June 23, 2019). It is a *vulnerable* species.

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# Upgraded planes in tough skies

The Indian Air Force must lay down clear red lines for continued operational effectiveness



ARJUN SUBRAMANIAM

The recent crash of an AN-32, which was on an air maintenance sortie to the Mechuka Advanced Landing Ground in Arunachal Pradesh, has raised questions on flight safety in the Indian Air Force despite accident rates having declined exponentially over the past few decades.

Air crashes today are subjected to the full glare of the media, exposing vulnerable families of the crash victims to needless trauma and also seriously hampering the remedial measures and outcomes that would flow from professionally conducted accident inquiries. In this milieu, it is important to explore some of the less-dissected issues that continue to plague aviation safety in the IAF.

The IAF flies 38 different types of aircraft and has the most varied fleet among modern air forces. Its fleet comprises aircraft like the MiG-21 and the Avro that hardly fly anywhere else. Seven of these have not had a major accident in the last five years. The long-serving IL-76 has had an accident-free innings in the IAF, a fact that is missed by most.

The U.K.'s Royal Air Force flew the Jaguar for 34 years (1973 to 2007) during which it had 67 accidents. In comparison, the IAF has lost 52 Jaguars over four decades. The U.S. Air Force flew slightly over two million flying hours in 2017 and suffered 83 'Category A' mishaps. During the same period, the IAF flew 2,51,405 hours and had an accident rate of 0.24 for every 10,000 hours of flying. This translates to 8-9 'Category A' mishaps – a comparable ratio. It would be unfair to make literal comparisons as the U.S. Air Force was and continues to be a dispersed force engaged in multiple locations like Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria.

### Comparing the mishap rates

While there was a rise of 17% when we consider the 'Category A' mishaps in the U.S. Air Force between 2013 and 2017, there was a decline in the IAF's accident rate from 0.29 (2013-14) to 0.24 (2017-18). Similarly, when



An Indian Air Force AN-32 plane undergoing maintenance and equipment upgrade • GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

one compares the mishap rates between the F-16 fleet in the U.S. Air Force and the Mirage-2000 fleet in the IAF over the last five years, there is a positive story that emerges.

There is constant criticism as regards the slow phasing-out of the older variants of the MiG-21 and the MiG-27 fleets, which merits reflection. That these aircraft have no business continuing to fly is a proposition upheld even by senior IAF leadership. However, further investigation reveals a complex web of operational necessities that have forced the IAF to stretch their life and manage the ensuing risks.

For the IAF to remain combat ready for full-spectrum operations, it needs a continuously trained cockpit-to-crew ratio of between 1:1.75 to 1:2 that can undertake operations and seamlessly manage the switch to more advanced platforms as they get inducted into service. Currently, the ratios can barely sustain a limited conflict, leave alone extended ones.

The MiG-21s and MiG-27s were supposed to have been replaced by Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) and Medium Multi-Role Combat Aircraft (MMRCA), a process that is unfolding at a snail's pace.

Hypothetically, had all the MiG-21s and MiG-27s been phased out without replacement, there was no scope to increase the flying of other fleets to feed the residual pilots, due to maintenance and budgetary constraints. The IAF would then have

been down to 25 squadrons and saddled with large numbers of fighter pilots without operational continuity. It would then have been tough to induct advanced platforms like the LCA and Rafale, which need pilots who are current and proficient.

The IAF had very little choice in the matter and the bottom line is that the risks are rising and must be addressed with greater urgency. The way out is simple – an accelerated LCA production, no hiccups in the ongoing Rafale induction and a fast-tracking of the new deal for 114 fighter jets.

### Shortage of training aircraft

As far as other flying accidents are concerned, human error is responsible for around 50% of them while issues revolving around technical, environmental and miscellaneous factors are responsible for the rest. One of the major reasons for human error is training deficiencies due to a shortage of training aircraft.

The non-availability of the HTT-40 to complement the reliable Pilatus, a delayed induction of the Intermediate Jet Trainer and a lack of clarity within the Ministry of Defence about the IAF's proposal to buy additional Pilatus aircraft means that the IAF has keep the 40-year-old Kiran fly-worthy and compromise on training quality and future operational proficiency. The IAF flies air maintenance sorties to support the Indian Army and conducts humanitarian assis-

tance and disaster relief missions in the most inclement of weather conditions and highly varied and inhospitable terrain.

Several weather- and terrain-related accidents on helicopter and transport aircraft like the MiG-17 and AN-32 are caused due to the non-availability of on-board equipment like Ground Proximity Warning Systems and Terrain Following Radar that allow such missions to be conducted in near-blind conditions. The recent accident may never have happened had there been a fleet of medium-lift aircraft with such systems.

### Navigating crest tops

An AN-32 can fly well above the crest tops but in case of a single-engine failure, it has to descend below 8,000 ft, which is below the crest tops in the region; hence the ground below has to be in contact at all times. Therefore, in sorties such as this, the route has to planned through known valleys – informed sources point out that the crashed aircraft may have been impacted by a visually obscured mountain located at some distance below the crest top.

Replacing the Avro aircraft with a modern platform that can share the workload of the AN-32, particularly in high-altitude areas, is another key suggestion that can be considered. The Tata-Airbus C-295 with all modern systems has been clearly the IAF's first choice and can maintain 19,000 ft on a single engine that would keep it above mountain tops in all areas serviced by the AN-32.

Accidents will continue to happen and the IAF will have to balance risks with operational necessity. Speedy replacements for MiG-21s and MiG-27s, Jaguars, Avros, Kiran trainers and Cheetah/Chetak helicopters; fast-track modifications and upgrades that are required for operations in remote and hostile terrain; and upgrading of simulators as force enablers and not merely as training aids are among the necessary measures to improve flight safety. Finally, the IAF leadership must lay down clear red lines for continued operational effectiveness – a 'we will fight and train with what we have' attitude has ominous signals.

*Air Vice-Marshal Arjun Subramaniam is a retired fighter pilot from the IAF and a visiting professor at Ashoka University*

# A sound foundation

The draft National Policy on Education has an important reform on the first stage of education



VENITA KAUL

The draft National Policy on Education is in the public domain for comments till June 30, 2019. A commendable reform suggested in the policy is creating a foundational stage as the first stage of school education. This reform proposes to bring the three years of pre-primary and the two years of Grades 1 and 2 into a composite unit with "a single curricular and pedagogical phase of play and discovery-based learning" between the ages of 3 and 8 years.

This proposal suggests a significant departure from the present structure of school education, in which the pre-school stage of 3-6 years is delinked from Grades 1 and 2 and even kept out of the ambit of the Right To Education Act. It is currently under the Ministry of Women and Child Development.

### 'Best investment'

The proposal's implications need to be understood from two perspectives. One, this implies that Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) for 3- to 6-year-olds will become an integral part of the organised school structure, and thus become the responsibility of the education department. It should also make ECCE a justiciable right of all 3- to 6-year-olds. The committee considers ECCE to be "among the very best investments" that India could make in education since neuroscience evidence indicates that "over 85% of a child's cumulative brain development occurs prior to the age of 6".

Secondly, the curriculum for Grades 1 and 2 will be developed in upward continuity with the pre-school curriculum, in terms of both content and pedagogy. If implemented well, this can have a positive impact on children's learning as it would ensure a play-based, developmentally appropriate curriculum for children up to not just 6 but 8 years, which would give them a stronger foundation. This upward extension will further smoothen the transition from pre-school to the primary stage and consolidate the foundation for future learning.

However, two significant concerns identified from collaborative research by Ambedkar University and ASER Centre need to be addressed in implementation. The pre-school curriculum was observed to be primarily a downward extension of the primary curriculum. Children were engaged for most

of the time in copying or rote learning of alphabet and numbers, a practice which is developmentally inappropriate and can be counterproductive from the perspective of a sound foundation.

### Play-based learning

Children at this stage require a curriculum which emphasises play-based learning opportunities that promote engagement with play materials, picture books, building blocks, puzzles, etc. and include teacher-led storytelling, conversations, rhymes, emergent literacy and numeracy activities, outdoor and indoor play. These opportunities will enable children to acquire not only the right foundation for development of skills prioritised for the 21st century, i.e. creativity, critical thinking, communication, collaboration and self-confidence, but also an abiding interest in lifelong learning.

The second issue is the rigid structure of the primary grades' curriculum, which changes annually with every grade, thus providing little or no opportunity for children to revisit the previous year's curriculum. This rigidity comes possibly from a mistaken assumption made by curriculum framers that all children enter pre-school or a school grade at the prescribed age and move annually into the next grade, so that each grade is age-wise homogeneous; the reality is very different. Children tend to follow multiple pathways in these early years and it is difficult to predict at what age a child will be in which grade. Participation trends tend to stabilise only by the time children are around eight years old, when most come into the primary stage, often still in different grades. This leads to multi-age, multi-level composition at each level. Since age is a significant factor in learning, this diversity creates incompatibility with the given grade-wise curriculum and creates learning gaps for many children. This rigidity of the grade structure leads to cumulative learning deficits in children over time.

The foundational stage can address this rigidity, but for this the requirement would be to develop a progressive curriculum upward from pre-school to primary stage. Further, it has to be in a spiral, not linear, mode with adequate flexibility to enable children to revisit concepts and learn at their own pace. Most importantly, basing the curriculum on play-based, developmentally appropriate content and pedagogy will help children to develop holistically and enjoy the learning process, an imperative for not only school learning but learning for life.

*Venita Kaul is professor emerita, education, Ambedkar University, Delhi*

## SINGLE FILE

# A leader in his labyrinth

The road ahead seems to be a bumpy one for Nara Chandrababu Naidu

SATYA NAAGESH AYYAGARY



REUTERS

This is not a political epitaph or obituary of Nara Chandrababu Naidu or his Telugu Desam Party (TDP). Not yet.

After a four-decade autobahn-like cruise – albeit with a few potholes that he has deftly navigated – the road ahead seems to be a bumpy one for this shrewd politician who has seen more crests than troughs. But this time, the trough appears to be a deep gorge.

Here's why. First, with just 23 seats, "Team Naidu" is too small to offer even a semblance of opposition to the new Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Y.S. Jaganmohan Reddy, leader of the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP).

Second, Mr. Naidu's TDP – a party he recast and remodelled, from the original version founded by his father-in-law and iconic Telugu film hero Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao, after a revolt – has no 'No. 2' by design. What was a tactical move taken almost a quarter century ago became a rule, and has now turned into the proverbial albatross around Mr. Naidu's neck.

However, Mr. Naidu is known to bounce back. The self-styled CEO in the undivided Andhra Pradesh had a nine-year reign in the zenith of his career – he was even a king-maker during the coalition politics-era of the 1990s at the national level. Defeated in 2004 by his friend-turned-foe Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy (YSR) of the Congress, Mr. Naidu had to be content being the Leader of the Opposition. Nonetheless, he rode back to power in the residual Andhra Pradesh after a decade's wait, aided by a mix of political factors – anger among anti-Congress Andhra Pradesh voters peeved at the State's bifurcation; an almost non-existent BJP; and a YSRCP still in its fledgling state.

Almost five years later, Mr. Jaganmohan Reddy has the State's reins. His campaign promise of the return of *Rajanna Rajyam* (YSR's rule, marked by hugely popular welfare policies) with his *Navaratnalu* (nine jewels) covering all sections of the society is what voters bought into. Within days of assuming office, he announced 'Rythu Bharosa', a direct payment scheme covering both landed and tenant farmers and more than tripled the honorarium for thousands of Aasha health workers from ₹3, 000 per month to ₹10,000 per month. Further, he has hiked old-age pensions and provided employment to 1.6 lakh village volunteers to oversee corruption-free delivery of welfare schemes. All these constitute the elements of a welfare state.

In this difficult-to-emulate scenario, a resurgence of Mr. Naidu appears distant. The reason? Though in sound health, he is 69. His heir apparent – son Nara Lokesh – turned out to be a huge disappointment. Further, there's no other acceptable leader in the TDP to take the party forward as he never let anyone grow, a factor endemic in many one-man driven parties. So, Mr. Naidu and TDP have little chance of a third innings in the near future.

*The writer is Editorial Consultant, The Hindu, based in Hyderabad*



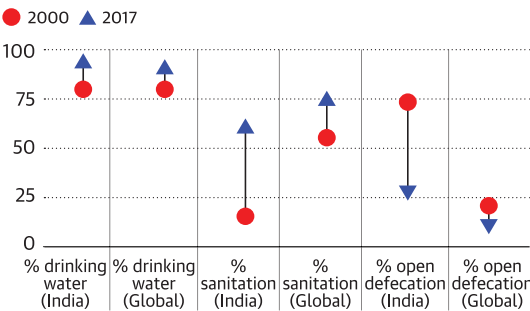
## DATA POINT

# Down to the basics

Between 2000 and 2017, India, like many other nations, has been able to provide access to drinking water and better sanitation facilities to a larger percentage of the population. With a push from Swachh Bharat, open defecation has dropped drastically. However, demographic inequalities persist. By **Varun B. Krishnan**

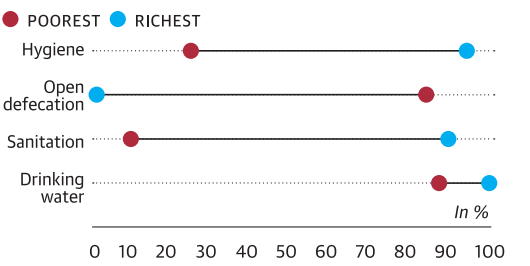
### Better over time

About 60% of India's population had access to basic sanitation in 2017 compared to just 16% in 2000. However, the number was lower compared to the overall global %.



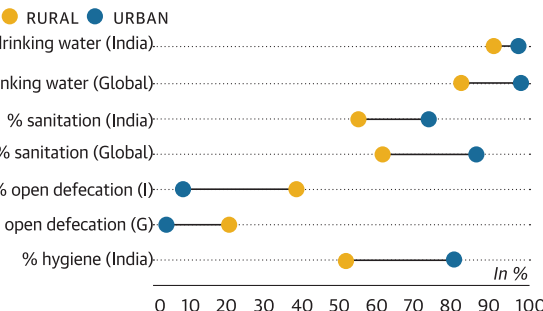
### Poorer people are worse off

Gaps between the rich and poor are stark in India, with 82% in the poorest quintile still defecating in the open. The gap was narrowest in access to drinking water



### Demographic divide

India's rural-urban disparity is less compared to the global average; but in India's case, percentage differences translate to a higher absolute number of people due to the large population



### Regional differences

A much smaller percentage of people in Sub-Saharan Africa have access to basic drinking water and basic sanitation facilities. India is part of Central & Southern Asia

Region	% with access to basic drinking water	% with access to basic sanitation
Sub-Saharan Africa	61	31
N. Africa and W. Asia	92	88
Latin America & Caribbean	97	87
East and South-East Asia	93	84
Central & Southern Asia	99	61

Source: Progress on household drinking water, sanitation and hygiene (UNICEF & WHO)

## FROM The Hindu. ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JUNE 25, 1969

### Riot, arson in Hyderabad

Army Units were called out here [Hyderabad] to-day [June 24] to help the police disperse violent Telengana agitators who attacked a hotel and a police station near the Abids circle. When the crowd became unruly the police made a lathi-charge and fired tear-gas shells. Over a dozen persons were injured, two of them seriously in the lathi-charge. The agitation for a separate Telengana reached a crescendo to-day [June 24] when thousands of demonstrators courted arrest in the twin cities and in Telengana districts. In the twin cities alone 3,221 people including 237 women were arrested to-day [June 24]. Wherever one went in Hyderabad city, one could see lorries jam-packed with slogan-shouting Telengana agitators. The Telengana Praja Samiti in a Press note claimed that 50,000 people including 12,000 women and 17,000 students offered satyagraha in 236 places in the nine Telengana districts.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JUNE 25, 1919

### Serious Railway Collision. Very Heavy Casualties.

The 'Leader' [in Allahabad] understands that in Ferozabad accident the names of drivers killed are Mr. Whitting of passenger train and Ramzan of goods train. The guard of the goods train injured is Mr. Pritchard. Other company servants killed and injured were Indians. The 10 passengers injured included Guard D'Silva and four members of his family, one other member, a child having just escaped. Guard D'Silva was on leave at the time. They have been removed to Tundla railway hospital. Other injured passengers are detained at Ferozabad civil hospital. At 2-30 p.m. on Saturday through running was resumed on this section of line as a result of completion of diversion. The accident occurred owing to an error in the handing of tokens at Ferozabad station.

## CONCEPTUAL

# Medical students' syndrome

### PSYCHOLOGY

Also known as the intern's syndrome or the medical school syndrome, this refers to a phenomenon wherein students of medicine who learn about a new disease may begin to think that they suffer from its symptoms. They may even feel that they are at increased risk of contracting it. Some have argued that while medical students may not be predisposed to this syndrome, they may be more prone to its effects simply because they have much easier access to study about different medical conditions than others. Studies, however, have shown mixed results as to the prevalence of the syndrome among medical students.

## MORE ON THE WEB



How the Indian cricket team's jersey has changed over the years

<http://bit.ly/IndiaCricketKit>





अंतर्ध्वनि

>> फैज अहमद फैज

## बचपन में मैं शायर नहीं, बल्कि क्रिकेटर बनना चाहता था

हमारे घर में औरतों का एक हजूम था। हम जो तीन भाई थे, उनमें हमारे छोटे भाई और बड़े भाई घर की औरतों से बागी होकर खेलकूद में जुटे रहते थे। हम अकेले उन खवातीन के हाथ आ गए। उसका फायदा यह हुआ कि उन महिलाओं ने हमको शरीफाना जिंदगी बसर करने पर मजबूर किया। नुकसान यह हुआ कि बचपन के खिलाड़पन से हम कटे रहे। हमारे घर से मिली हुई एक दुकान थी, जहां किलाबें किराये पर मिलती थीं। वहीं से लेकर दाग का कलाम पढ़ा। मॉर का कलाम पढ़ा। गालिब तो उस वक़्त हमको ज्यादा समझ में नहीं आया। लेकिन उनका दिल पर कुछ अलग किस्म का असर होता था। यों, शेर से लगाव पैदा हुआ और साहित्य में दिलचस्पी होने लगी। जब दसवीं जमात में पहुंचे, तो हमने भी तुकबंदी शुरू कर दी। शुरू-शुरू में हमें कोई खयाल ही न गुजरा कि हम शायर बनेंगे। शुरू में खयाल हुआ कि हम कोई बड़े क्रिकेटर बन जाएं, क्योंकि लड़कपन से क्रिकेट का शौक था। फिर जी चाहता कि उस्ताद बनना चाहिए। हम क्रिकेटर बने, न आलोचक। अलबत्ता उस्ताद (प्राध्यापक) होकर अमृतसर चले गए। हमारी जिंदगी का शायद सबसे खुशगवार जमाना अमृतसर का ही था। जब हमें पहली दफा पढ़ाने का मौका मिला, तो बहुत लुत्फ आया। उस जमाने में कुछ संजीवनी से शेर लिखना शुरू किया। अमृतसर में ही पहली बार सियासत में थोड़ी-बहुत सूझ-बूझ पैदा हुई। मजदूरों में काम शुरू किया। प्रलेस में काम किया। इन सबसे मानसिक-बौद्धिक संतोष का एक बिल्कुल नया मैदान हाथ आया। हम देहली जाने लगे, तो वहां नए-नए लोगों से मुलाकात हुई। मजाज, सरदार जाफरी, जानिआर अख्तर, जब्बी और मख्दूम मरहूम से रंडियों के जरिये संपर्क हुआ, जिससे दोस्ती के अलावा समझ और सूझ-बूझ में तरह-तरह के इजाफे हुए।

-भारतीय उपमहाद्वीप के चर्चित शायर।

सपा से किनारा करते हुए मायावती ने विचारधारा पर आधारित कोई प्रभावी कार्यक्रम पेश करने के बजाय अपने भाई और भतीजे को बड़ी जिम्मेदारियां देकर साफ कर दिया है कि उनकी पार्टी भी उन क्षेत्रीय पार्टियों से अलग नहीं हैं, जहां एक परिवार का वर्चस्व है।

## महागठबंधन का हश्र

### लोकसभा

चुनावों के नतीजों के बाद हुई बसपा की समीक्षा बैठक में ही मायावती ने सपा के साथ अपनी पार्टी के महागठबंधन के खत्म होने के स्पष्ट संकेत दे दिए थे, जिसकी घोषणा उन्होंने अब कर दी है। उनका यह कदम न तो अप्रत्याशित है और न ही इससे किसी को हैरत हुई होगी। मार्च, 2018 में गोरखपुर और फुलपूर लोकसभा सीटों पर हुए उपचुनाव में बसपा के समर्थन से सपा को मिली जीत के बाद इन दोनों पार्टियों ने राष्ट्रीय लोकदल के साथ मिलकर लोकसभा चुनाव से ऐन पहले महागठबंधन बनाया था, लेकिन यह प्रयोग बुरी तरह से नाकाम साबित हुआ। बिना किसी वैकल्पिक कार्यक्रम और वैचारिक एका के यह गठबंधन

दरअसल भाजपा के बरक्स अपना अस्तित्व बचाए रखने की कवायद ही अधिक था। दरअसल नतीजों के बाद यह साफ हो गया है कि सपा और बसपा में आपस में मतों का स्थानांतरण नहीं हुआ, दूसरी ओर उत्तर प्रदेश में भाजपा का मत पचास फीसदी के करीब पहुंच चुका है। मायावती अब कह रही हैं कि अखिलेश ने उन्हें ध्रुवीकरण से बचने के लिए अधिक मुस्लिम उम्मीदवार न खड़ा करने की सलाह दी थी। मगर उनसे पूछा जा सकता है कि यह सवाल उन्होंने तब क्यों नहीं उठाया? मुश्किल यह भी है कि महागठबंधन से किनारा करते हुए बसपा सुप्रीमो ने मुद्दों और विचारधारा पर आधारित कोई प्रभावी कार्यक्रम पेश करने के बजाय अपने भाई आनंद और भतीजे आकाश को राष्ट्रीय उपाध्यक्ष तथा राष्ट्रीय समन्वयक जैसी जिम्मेदारियां देकर साफ

कर दिया है कि उनकी पार्टी भी ऐसी तमाम क्षेत्रीय पार्टियों से अलग नहीं हैं, जो एक परिवार की पार्टी बनकर रह गई हैं। खुद सपा आज जिस स्थिति में पहुंच गई है, उसके पीछे भी पार्टी में परिवार का नियंत्रण एक बड़ी वजह बन गया। वास्तव में देखा जाए तो तीन दशक पहले मंडल आयोग की सिफारिशों के लागू होने के बाद सामाजिक न्याय के वैचारिक धरातल से उभरी पार्टियों ने सत्ता के लिए तमाम तरह के गठजोड़ तो बनाए, लेकिन वे जमीनी स्तर पर कोई ठोस बदलाव लाने में नाकाम रहें। और फिर चुनाव सिर्फ अंक गणित का खेल नहीं है। सपा-बसपा-रालोद के महागठबंधन के प्रयोग ने यह भी दिखाया है कि दिल्ली और लखनऊ में बंद कमरों में शीर्ष नेता जो गठबंधन बनाते हैं, उसे जमीनी स्तर पर कार्यकर्ता स्वीकार करें यह जरूरी नहीं।

# आर्थिक गैरबराबरी दूर करने का अवसर

न

ई सरकार को मिला भारी जनादेश इस बात का संकेत है कि भारत के लोगों को उससे काफी उम्मीदें हैं। बावजूद इसके कि उन्हें नोटबंदी, नई जीएसटी व्यवस्था के लागू होने और पेट्रोल तथा डीजल के दामों में बढ़ोतरी से काफी परेशानी का सामना करना पड़ा और लागत से कम वसूली के कारण ग्रामीण क्षेत्र में व्यापक रूप से हताशा व्याप्त है। सरकार द्वारा हाल ही में जारी रोजगार से संबंधित सर्वेक्षण दिखाता है कि चार दशक में आज बेरोजगारी की दर सर्वाधिक है। इनमें से कई मुद्दों से सब वाकिफ हैं और इन पर चर्चा भी होती है, जबकि बढ़ती आर्थिक गैरबराबरी को लेकर तो कोई बात भी नहीं होती। इन चुनौतियों से निपटने में आर्थिक विकास दर में बढ़ोतरी महत्वपूर्ण हो सकती है।

उत्तर प्रदेश, बिहार, राजस्थान, मध्य प्रदेश और झारखंड जैसे अनेक उत्तरी राज्यों में प्रति व्यक्ति आय राष्ट्रीय औसत से कम है। यदि उत्तर प्रदेश विकास पर ध्यान दे और उसे केंद्र की मदद मिलती है, तो उसे देश में आय के राष्ट्रीय स्तर तक पहुंचने में तीन दशक लगेंगे। वर्ष 1982 में राष्ट्रीय आय में शीर्ष एक फीसदी आबादी की हिस्सेदारी 6.1 फीसदी थी और 2015 में यह बढ़कर 21.3 फीसदी या तीन गुना हो गई। उस समय नीचे से पचास फीसदी लोगों की हिस्सेदारी 23.6 फीसदी थी, जो तीन दशक के विकास के बाद गिरकर सिर्फ 14.7 फीसदी रह गई। पूरे देश में आर्थिक गैरबराबरी तेजी से बढ़ रही है। आगामी बजट में सरकार का एजेंडा इन मुद्दों के साथ ही अन्य संरचनागत मुद्दों का समाधान होना चाहिए और उसे आने वाले वर्षों का रोडमैप प्रस्तुत करना चाहिए।



लोगों द्वारा दिया गया जनादेश वाकई सरकार के लिए एक अवसर है। वह इसका लाभ आम लोगों के जीवन की गुणवत्ता बढ़ाने में ले सकती है। आगामी बजट से हमें पता चलेंगा कि क्या हम उस दिशा में आगे बढ़ रहे हैं।

बी के चतुर्वेदी



प्रधानमंत्री ने आने वाले वर्षों में देश की अर्थ व्यवस्था को पचास खरब डॉलर तक पहुंचाने की बात की है। पिछले पांच वर्षों के दौरान जीडीपी की औसत विकास दर सात से साढ़े सात फीसदी रही, जो कि पर्याप्त नहीं है। हाल ही में इस दर पर सरकार के एक पूर्व मुख्य आर्थिक सलाहकार ने सवाल उठाए हैं। अगर लोगों की आय को उच्च मध्य आय वाले देशों के स्तर तक ले जाना है, तो हमें अगले दो दशकों के दौरान जीडीपी की विकास

दर को नौ से दस फीसदी करने की योजना बनानी होगी। बचत दर में गिरावट आई है और निवेश और उच्च विकास के स्तर तक पहुंचने और उसे उस स्तर पर बनाए रखने के लिए बचत दर को बढ़ाकर 37 से 40 फीसदी करना होगा। व्यापार और आर्थिक गतिविधियों के विस्तार के साथ ही निर्यात पर ध्यान देना होगा। विकास प्रक्रिया को फिर से परिभाषित करना होगा। इसे इस तरह का होना चाहिए, जिससे गरीबी में तेजी से गिरावट आए और

उत्तर तथा दक्षिण के राज्यों में और विभिन्न आय समूहों में आय की असमानता घटे। आगामी बजट में नीतिगत घोषणा के साथ यह प्रक्रिया शुरू होनी चाहिए।

समावेशी विकास के लिए अच्छी गुणवत्तायुक्त शिक्षा और स्वास्थ्य सेवा मुहैया कराना अहम है। जब तक लोग स्वस्थ न हों और विकास प्रक्रिया में भागीदार न बनें, हम उच्च विकास स्तर और व्यापक रूप से आय में समानता के स्तर को हासिल नहीं कर सकते।

कुछ समय पूर्व भारत को ग्लोबल हंगर इंडेक्स (जीएचआई) में 109 देशों में 103 स्थान मिला था। हमारे देश में 19.6 करोड़ अल्पपोषित हैं और जीएचआई अंकमान 31.1 चीन से बदतर स्थिति में हैं, जहां जीएचआई अंकमान 7.6 है। नाटपेन और अल्पपोषण का शिकार होने वाले बच्चों की संख्या उच्च बनी हुई है। शिक्षा की स्थिति भी ऐसी ही गंभीर बनी हुई है। स्कूल में पंजीयन तो बढ़ा है, लेकिन सीखने का खराब स्तर और कौशल के अभाव में हमारे बहुत से युवा रोजगार हासिल करने लायक नहीं रह जाते। हाल ही में प्रस्तुत किए गए शिक्षा नीति के मसौदे में कई उत्कृष्ट विचार हैं। हमें इसे आगे ले जाने की जरूरत है। आयुष्मान भारत एक शानदार पहल है, लेकिन चिकित्सा ढांचे का विस्तार अत्यंत महत्वपूर्ण है।

अस्पताल के बुनियादी ढांचे और मेडिकल कॉलेजों का विस्तार और स्वास्थ्य सेवाओं तक पहुंच बेहतर स्वास्थ्य सूचकांक, दीर्घायु, कम शिशु मृत्यु दर और तेजी से कम होने वाली मातृ मृत्यु दर प्रदान करने के लिए महत्वपूर्ण होगी। सारी अर्थव्यवस्थाओं के विकास में आधारभूत संरचना महत्वपूर्ण होती है और हमें इस क्षेत्र में अगले दशक में बीस से तीस खरब डॉलर निवेश करने की जरूरत होगी। संचार को बेहतर करने के लिए दूरसंचार, रेलवे और मेट्रो नेटवर्क का विस्तार

करने, आधुनिकीकरण करने और इसमें भारी निवेश करने की जरूरत है। ऊर्जा की बढ़ती जरूरतों को देखते हुए हमें कार्बन उत्सर्जन को नियंत्रित करने की हमारी अंतरराष्ट्रीय प्रतिबद्धता को पूरा करने के लिए ऊर्जा क्षमता को बढ़ाना होगा।

अगले तीन दशकों में शहरीकरण का स्तर तेजी से बढ़ेगा और अंदाजा है कि यह आज के स्तर से दोगुना हो जाएगा। ऐसे में हमें नई शहरों के समूहों के बारे में विचार करना चाहिए, जो हमारी अगले पांच दशकों की जरूरतों को पूरा कर सकें। इन नए शहरों में सड़क, सीवर, पीने के पानी की लाइन और बिजली वितरण प्रणाली को ध्यान में रखना होगा। इसमें तुरंत निवेश की जरूरत होगी।

भारत तब तक आधुनिक लोकतंत्र नहीं बन सकता, जब तक कि शासन की गुणवत्ता में उल्लेखनीय सुधार न हो। इससे भ्रष्टाचार को कम करने में और विकास को गति देने में मदद मिलेगी। इससे नागरिकों का जीवन बेहतर होगा। यह हमें शीर्ष वैश्विक लोकतंत्र की हमारी नीयति की ओर ले जाएगा। इसके लिए हमें केंद्र और राज्यों में रिफॉर्म ग्रुप बनाने की जरूरत है, जो कि जन हिस्तेगी कानून और प्रक्रिया बनाएं। दो ऐसे क्षेत्र हैं जहां ध्यान देने की जरूरत है जहां लंबे समय से सुधारों की आवाजें आ रही हैं और ये हैं पुलिस और न्यायपालिका। लोगों द्वारा दिया गया भारी जनादेश वाकई सरकार के लिए एक अवसर है। वह इसका लाभ आम लोगों के जीवन की गुणवत्ता बढ़ाने और संपत्ति की असमानता को दूर करने और शासन से जुड़े कुछ बुनियादी मुद्दों को सुलझाने में कर सकती है। आगामी बजट से हमें पता चलेंगा कि क्या हम उस दिशा में आगे बढ़ रहे हैं।

-पूर्व कैबिनेट सचिव, और पूर्व सदस्य योजना आयोग।

## नौसेना को और पनडुब्बियां चाहिए

रक्षा कर्णधारों ने 1999 में तय किया था कि 2030 तक नौसेना के पास 24

पनडुब्बियां होनी चाहिए। पर अगले दशक के अंत तक उसके पास करीब एक दर्जन

पनडुब्बियां ही रहेंगी, जो हिंद और प्रशांत महासागरों की रक्षा के लिए नाकाफी होंगी।



रंजीत कुमार

में हैं। हमारे रक्षा कर्णधारों ने 1999 में तय किया था कि 2030 तक नौसेना के पास 24 पनडुब्बियां होनी चाहिए। फिलहाल नौसेना के पास रूसी किलो वर्ग की जो नौ पनडुब्बियां हैं, वे दो दशक से अधिक पुरानी हो चुकी हैं। जर्मन टाइप-209 वर्ग की चार पनडुब्बियां भी दो दशक से अधिक पुरानी हो चुकी हैं। अगले दशक के अंत तक जब इन दोनों वर्गों की पनडुब्बियों को रिटायर करना होगा, तब तक नौसेना के पास केवल स्कारपीन वर्ग की छह पनडुब्बियां ही बचेगी और रूस से लीज पर ली गई एक परमाणु पनडुब्बी को रूस को लौटाना होगा। नौसेना की एकमात्र अरिहत परमाणु पनडुब्बी के अलावा दो और परमाणु पनडुब्बी 2030 तक नौसेना में शामिल हो

सकेंगी। यानी अगले दशक के अंत तक करीब एक दर्जन पनडुब्बियां ही बचेगी।

सवाल यह उठता है कि 2030 तक हिंद महासागर से प्रशांत महासागर तक के इलाके में निरंतर चौकसी की बढ़ी जिम्मेदारी सीमित पनडुब्बियों से कैसे पूरी होगी। नौसेना को ऑस्ट्रेलिया से लेकर अफ्रीकी तट और फारस की खाड़ी से मलक्का तक अपने विशाल समुद्री इलाके में पनडुब्बियों की क्षमता निरंतर बढ़ाते रहने की जरूरत है, क्योंकि अगले कुछ साल में हिंद महासागर के इलाके के बड़ी ताकतों का अखाड़ा बन जाने की पूरी आशंका है।

चूंकि फिलहाल नई पनडुब्बियां हासिल करने की हमारी कोई और योजना नहीं है, ऐसे में, हमारी नौसेना हिंद महासागर में टोह लेने की अपनी वांछित क्षमता से कहीं पीछे रहेंगी। जबकि हमें पनडुब्बी क्षमता का विकास अपने मुख्य प्रतिद्वंद्वी देशों चीन और पाकिस्तान की पनडुब्बी क्षमता के मद्देनजर करना होगा। चीन के पास परमाणु और डीजल पनडुब्बियां सहित 68 और पाकिस्तान के पास दस डीजल पनडुब्बियां हैं, जो हिंद महासागर के इलाके में भारत के लिए चुनौती बन सकती हैं। इनसे मुकाबला के लिए हमारी नौसेना की पनडुब्बी क्षमता में तत्काल समुचित बढ़ोतरी की जरूरत है।



हरियाली और रास्ता

## रिकी, वेंटर और वडा पाव

यह कहानी उस लड़के की है, जिसने एक बड़े वेंटर को इनाम देकर उसके महत्व का एहसास कराया।



रिकी बीस मिनट से मेनु कार्ड पलटते जा रहा था। काउंटर पर लोगों की लाइन लंबी हो रही थी। वेंटर रिकी को गुस्से से देख रहा था। पहले भी दो बार वह उससे ऑर्डर लेने जा चुका था। पर रिकी ने चीजों के दाम पृथकर उसे वापस भेज दिया था। उसकी वजह से बाकी शाहक लौट सकते थे। वेंटर फिर रिकी का ऑर्डर लेने आया। रिकी ने पूछा, प्लेन पिज्जा के कितने रुपये बताए थे? वेंटर बोला, 120 रुपये। रिकी ने पूछा, और यदि उसके साथ कोल्ड ड्रिंक लें, तो? वेंटर बोला, कोल्ड ड्रिंक 40 रुपये की है। रिकी ने पूछा, और यदि पनीर पिज्जा लें, तो? वेंटर बोला, वह 170 का होगा। रिकी बोला, अगर एक बगर लें, तो? वेंटर बोला, बगर 60 रुपये का है। रिकी बोला, तो 60 रुपये में कोल्ड ड्रिंक और बगर, दोनों आ जायेंगे? वेंटर बोला, नहीं, सिर्फ बगर। रिकी काफी देर तक सोचता रहा। फिर बोला, आप एक वडा पाव ले आइए। वह कितने का है? वेंटर बोला, 30 रुपये का। थोड़ी देर में रिकी का वडा पाव आया। बाहर इंतजार करते लोगों की लाइन लंबी होती जा रही थी।

वेंटर रिकी को कोस रहा था। जल्दी ही रिकी बिल जमा कर निकल गया। बाद में जब वेंटर टेबल साफ करने पहुंचा, तो उसने देखा कि वहां एक चिट्ठी और सौ का नोट पड़ा है। चिट्ठी में लिखा था, आज मेरी परीक्षा का रिजल्ट आया था। मैं फस्ट आया हूं। पिता जी ने दोस्तों के साथ जश्न मनाने के लिए मुझे 200 रुपये दिए थे। 50 रुपये की मैंने दोस्तों को मिठाई खिला दी। 20 रुपये गुल्लक के लिए जमा कर लिया। 30 का वडा पाव आपके हाथ से खाया। और बाकी बचे 100 रुपये मैं आपके लिए छोड़ जा रहा हूं। मेरी मेहनत का तो इनाम मिल गया। पर आप जो इतने वर्षों से कर रहे हैं, उसे शायद कोई नहीं देख पाता।

हर किसी को एक ही सांचे में रखकर नहीं देखना चाहिए।



मंजिलें और भी हैं

>> धनंजय चौहान

## लड़कर हासिल किया ट्रांसजेंडर का अधिकार

बचपन से ही अलग सेक्सुअल पहचान की वजह से मुझे लोगों की प्रताड़नाओं का शिकार होना पड़ा। मैं शरीर से भले लड़का थी, लेकिन मन से लड़की। स्कूल, कॉलेज, घर, तकरीबन हर जगह मैं घुंटी-घुंटी-सी रहती थी। पढ़ाई छूटने के बाद मैंने नौकरी भी की, लेकिन वहां भी प्रताड़ना झेलनी पड़ी। सिर्फ दो जेडर्स (लिंग) होने की अवधारणा समाज में इस तरह जड़ जमा चुकी है कि लोग यह समझ ही नहीं पाते कि तीसरा जेंडर होना भी सामान्य बात है और ऐसे लोगों को वे समाज में बिल्कुल जगह नहीं देना चाहते। वे हमें कुछ देते हैं तो बस गंदी गालियां और अपेक्षक तनाव। तब मैं चंडीगढ़ की पंजाब विश्वविद्यालय में परास्नातक की पढ़ाई कर रही थी। शुरू के कुछ दिन तो ठीक रहे लेकिन जल्द ही मेरी कक्षा के छात्र मेरी सेक्सुअलिटी को लेकर मेरा मजाक उड़ाने लगे। तनाव जब बर्दाश्त से बाहर हो गया तो मजबूरन मैंने पढ़ाई छोड़ दी। लेकिन पढ़ने की ललक बनी रही। मैंने सोचा कि दूरस्थ शिक्षा से पढ़ाई जारी रखी जाए। मैंने रूसी और फ्रेंच भाषाओं के साथ कम्प्यूटर साइंस में डिप्लोमा किया। इसके बाद इंग्लैंड से सामाजिक कार्य विषय में परास्नातक किया। लगातार प्रताड़ना के बाद पढ़ाई व नौकरी छोड़ने के कारण मेरा मन ऊब गया। मैं अकेलापन महसूस करने लगी, तब किताबें मेरा सहारा बनीं। किताबों से ही पता चला कि अपने अधिकारों के लिए मुझे ही लड़ाई लड़नी होगी और इसे कमरे में बंद रहकर नहीं लड़ा जा सकता। इसके लिए बाहर निकलना होगा और अपने जैसे लोगों से जुड़कर समाज में अपनी जगह बनाने के लिए संघर्ष करना होगा। उस समय मेरी मुलाकात कई ट्रांसजेंडर एक्टिविस्ट से हुई। उनसे मिलने के बाद मैंने चंडीगढ़ और आसपास के इलाकों में ट्रांसजेंडर्स के अधिकारों के लिए काम शुरू कर दिया। उस समय देश-विदेश में ट्रांसजेंडर 'प्राइड वॉक' नाम से सड़कों पर उतरते थे। मैंने भी



वर्ष 2014 में 'नाल्सा जजमेंट' को लागू करवाने के लिए हुए आंदोलन में सक्रियता से भाग लिया।

चंडीगढ़ में 'प्राइड वॉक' का आयोजन करवाया। इस आयोजन ने मेरे संघर्ष को नई ऊंचाई दी। वर्ष 2014 में 'नाल्सा जजमेंट' को लागू करवाने के लिए हुए आंदोलन में मैंने सक्रियता से भाग लिया। इस आंदोलन में हमारी जीत हुई और अब जेंडर वाले कॉलम में दो की जगह तीन कॉलम हो गए। तीसरा कॉलम ट्रांसजेंडर्स का था। इस जीत के बाद वह दिन आया जिसके लिए मैंने यह संघर्ष किया। मैंने मानवाधिकार और कर्तव्य विषय से परास्नातक करने के लिए पंजाब विश्वविद्यालय में दोबारा एडमिशन लिया। पर इस बार पहचान छिपाकर नहीं, बल्कि अपनी अलग पहचान के दम पर। इस तरह मैं पंजाब विवि से परास्नातक करने वाली पहली ट्रांसजेंडर बनी। इसके बाद ट्रांसजेंडर्स को पढ़ाई के लिए प्रेरित करने का लक्ष्य बनाते हुए मैंने विश्वविद्यालय में ट्रांसजेंडर के लिए सुविधाओं और फीस माफी का अनुरोध करते हुए कई पत्र लिखे, जिसे प्रशासन ने मान लिया। इसके बाद कई ट्रांसजेंडर्स ने पंजाब विवि में दाखिला लिया है। जब मुझे जरूरत थी, तब मेरे परिवार ने मेरा सहयोग नहीं किया, जिसकी वजह से मुझे हिजाज बाड़े में रहना पड़ा। अब वह मेरे साथ आना चाहते हैं क्योंकि मैं प्रसिद्ध हो गई हूं। लोग मुझे जानने लगे हैं। मैं जानती हूं कि रास्ता कठिन है, पर मुझे लगता है कि शिक्षा ही एक ऐसा माध्यम है, जो ट्रांसजेंडर्स को मुख्यधारा से जोड़ने का काम कर सकता है। यही वजह है कि मैंने अपने हाथों में विद्या का दंड थाम लिया है और निकल पड़ी हूं अपने ही समान दूसरे लोगों को शिक्षा दिलवाने के लिए।

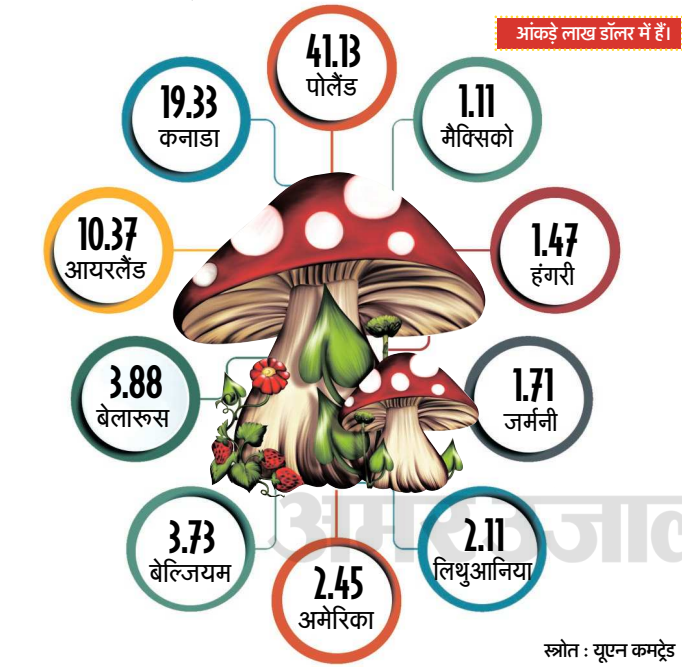
-विभिन्न साक्षात्कारों पर आधारित।



खुली खिड़की

## मशरूम का निर्यात

पिछले कुछ वर्षों में वैश्विक बाजार में मशरूम की मांग तेजी से बढ़ी है। मांग के अनुरूप अभी भी इसके उत्पादन की क्षमता में कमी है। 2018 में आई रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक मशरूम का बड़ा निर्यातक पोलैंड है।



आकड़े लाख डॉलर में हैं।



सत्संग

यूनान के प्रसिद्ध दार्शनिक सुकरात अपने शिष्यों के साथ किसी महत्वपूर्ण विषय पर चर्चा में व्यस्त थे। तभी एक ज्योतिषी घूमता हुआ वहां आ पहुंचा। उसका दावा था कि वह चेहरा देखकर व्यक्ति के बारे में बता देता है। सुकरात थोड़े बदनसूर थे, पर लोग उनके अच्छे विचारों के कारण उन्हें बहुत पसंद करते थे। ज्योतिषी सुकरात के चेहरे को देखकर कहने लगा, आपके नथुनों की बनावट बता रही है कि आपमें क्रोध की भावना प्रबल है। यह सुन सुकरात के शिष्य नाशज हो गए, पर सुकरात ने शिष्यों को न अपने शिष्यों को रोक कर ज्योतिषी को अपनी बात कहने का पूरा मौका दिया। ज्योतिषी ने आगे कहा, आपके माथे और सिर की आकृति को देखकर लगता है कि आप बहुत लालची हैं। आपकी ठोड़ी की रचना कहती है कि आप सनकी हैं। जबकि होठों और दांतों की बनावट के मुताबिक, आप सदैव देशद्रोह के लिए लोगों को प्रेरित करते हैं। यह सुनकर सुकरात ने ज्योतिषी को धन्यवाद दिया और वापस भेज दिया। सुकरात के शिष्य भौचक्के रह गए। सुकरात ने शिष्यों की जिज्ञासा शांत करते हुए कहा कि सच को दबाना ठीक नहीं। ज्योतिषी ने जो कुछ बताया, वे सभी दुर्गुण मुझमें हैं। पर ज्योतिषी से यह भूल हुई है कि उसने मेरी विवेक शक्ति पर जरा भी ध्यान नहीं दिया। मैं अपनी विवेक शक्ति से इन सभी दुर्गुणों पर अंकुश लगाए रखता हूं। ज्योतिषी शायद यह बताना भूल गए।

-संकलित



## बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड

वर्ष 12 अंक 110

## स्वर्ण खरीद की होड़

**सोना** एक बार फिर चर्चा में है। दुनियाभर में केंद्रीय बैंकों द्वारा की जा रही खरीद के कारण इसकी कीमतें पांच वर्ष के उच्चतम स्तर पर पहुंच गई हैं। पांच वर्ष पहले सन 2013 में अमेरिकी केंद्रीय बैंक फेडरल रिजर्व द्वारा की जा रही कटीती के चलते सोने की कीमतें 1,500 डॉलर प्रति औंस से घटकर 2015 में 1,072 डॉलर प्रति औंस रह गई

थीं। हालांकि बाद में स्थिति में कुछ सुधार हुआ था। सन 2019 में कीमतें डॉलर के हिसाब से 10 फीसदी बढ़ीं और यह 1,407 डॉलर प्रति औंस हो गई। जब भी भरोसे का संकट हो, निवेशक सोने में निवेश करना उचित समझते हैं। सोने की कीमतों में हालिया तेजी की जड़ें अमेरिका और चीन के बीच छिड़े व्यापार युद्ध में हैं। अमेरिका–ईरान के

बीच के तनाव ने भी इसे बल दिया है।

रूस, चीन और भारत के केंद्रीय बैंकों ने 2018 में भी और इस वर्ष भी काफी सोना खरीदा। कजाकस्तान और तुर्की के केंद्रीय बैंकों ने भी अपना स्वर्ण भंडार बढ़ाया। वेस्ट गोल्ड कार्टिसिल के मुताबिक 2018 में केंद्रीय बैंकों की सोने की मांग 651 टन के साथ कई दशकों के उच्चतम स्तर पर पहुंच गई। यह 2017 के मुकाबले 74 फीसदी अधिक थी। सन 1971 में ब्रेटन वुड व्यवस्था के भंग होने के बाद यह उच्चतम स्तर था। 613 टन के स्वर्ण भंडार के साथ आरबीआई इस मामले में 10वां सबसे बड़ा भंडार वाला केंद्रीय बैंक है।

अमेरिका और चीन के बीच की कारोबारी जंग ने दुनिया भर में अनिश्चितता पैदा की

है। अगर ये दोनों किसी समझौते पर नहीं पहुंचते तो वित्तीय बाजार में बहुत बुरी हलचल मच सकती है। अप्रैल 2019 तक चीन के पास अमेरिकी सरकार की 1.1 लाख करोड़ डॉलर मूल्य की प्रतिभूति थी। अगर यह इसका कुछ हिस्सा बेचना चाहे तो अमेरिकी डॉलर औंधे मुंह गिर सकता है। डॉलर में परिसंपत्ति रखने वाले किसी भी केंद्रीय बैंक के लिए यह अच्छी खबर नहीं होगी। भारत के 400 अरब डॉलर से अधिक के भंडार में 155.3 अरब डॉलर अमेरिकी बॉन्ड में है जबकि पूरी दुनिया में यह 6.4 लाख करोड़ डॉलर है। जाहिर है काफी कुछ दांव पर लगा है।

सवाल यह भी है पिछले वर्षों में सोने से दूरी बनाए रखने वाले केंद्रीय बैंकों के लिए

सोना दोबारा महत्वपूर्ण क्यों हो गया? इसका उत्तर आसान है। दरअसल कोई अन्य विकल्प नजर नहीं आ रहा। चीन दुनिया की दूसरी सबसे बड़ी अर्थव्यवस्था है और बहुत संभव है कि 2030 के आरंभ में वह अमेरिका को बेदखल कर सबसे बड़ी अर्थव्यवस्था बन जाए। परंतु डॉलर के उलट युआन एक नियंत्रित मुद्रा है। इसमें दो राय नहीं कि अमेरिका के पास फिलहाल सबसे बड़ा हथियार डॉलर या कहें पेट्रो डॉलर है। दुनिया जीवाश्म ईंधन पर चल रही है और उसे खरीदने के लिए डॉलर आवश्यक है। पेट्रो डॉलर ने करीब 50 वर्ष तक वैश्विक व्यवस्था को संभाला। संभव है कि वह एक दो दशक तक और ऐसा करता रहे लेकिन विकल्प बहुत तेजी से उभर रहे हैं। भारत स्वयं 2030

तक पूरी तरह इलेक्ट्रिक वाहनों की नीति अपना रहा है। इससे तेल आयात घटेगा। दूसरी ओर, बैटरी बनाने के लिए संसाधन की जरूरतों के चलते उसकी निर्भरता चीन पर बढ़ेगी।

विविधता लाने के अलावा भी इसके ऐसे कारण हैं जिन्हें समझा जा सकता है। आर्थिक हथियार के रूप में डॉलर की धार भोथरी करना भी एक वजह हो सकती है। रूस और चीन ने बिज्नी के लिए उपलब्ध सोने में से सबसे अधिक मात्रा में सोने की खरीद की है। डॉनल्ड ट्रंप अमेरिका आने वाली हर बाहरी वस्तु पर जिस तरह कर लगा रहे हैं उसने दुनिया के देशों को डॉलर केंद्रित व्यवस्था से दूरी बनाने पर मजबूर किया है। ऐसे परिदृश्य में निकट भविष्य में सोना मजबूत बना रह सकता है।

# गलती करने वालों के साथ अच्छे लोग दंडित न हों



बाअदब

सोमशेखर सुंदरेशन

पर भी लागू होती है। सूचना और बाजार के समक्ष उपलब्ध सूचना की सत्यनिष्ठा अहम निर्णय लेने के लिए निर्णायक है। फिर चाहे मामला निवेश का हो, ऋण के

निर्णय का, बुनियादी कारोबार या कारोबारी निर्णयों का अथवा नीतिगत निर्णयों का। ऐसे में इन एजेंसियों के खिलाफ लगाने वाले आरोपों को लेकर अतिरिक्त सावधानी और संवेदना बरतनी होगी। अगर इन आरोपों के समर्थन में ज्यादा कुछ नहीं है और ये आरोप हल्के फुल्के ढंग से लगाए जा रहे हैं तो न केवल उनको नुकसान पहुंचता है बल्कि हर उस व्यक्ति को नुकसान पहुंचता है जिसकी निर्णय प्रक्रिया उनकी सेवाओं से प्रभावित होती है।

अगर उद्योग जगत में उनके द्वारा किया गया काम अच्छी गुणवत्ता वाला नहीं है तो निर्णय प्रक्रिया की गुणवत्ता पर भी बुरा असर होगा और इसका व्यापक सामाजिक असर होगा। यही कारण है कि इस उद्योग की भूमिका अत्यंत महत्वपूर्ण और संवेदनशील हो चुकी है। शायद यही वजह है कि ऐसी गतिविधियों के लिए लाइसेंस प्रदान करने और पंजीयन को काम अत्यंत सख्त निगरानी के बाद किया जाता है। बाजार नियामक के लिए ब्रोकिंग लाइसेंस जारी करना आसान है लेकिन क्रेडिट रेटिंग एजेंसी का लाइसेंस हासिल करना काफी मुश्किल है। अगर ऐसी एजेंसियों पर किसी तरह की गड़बड़ी करने का शक हो तो भी उन पर हमले करते समय जुवान फिसलने और नाटकीयता बरतने से बचना चाहिए।

अगर सरकार के प्रति नफरत इसी प्रकार बढ़ती गई तो सड़कों पर उतरने वाली भीड़ सरकार नहीं बल्कि समाज के शेष तबके

को ही उखाड़ फेंकना चाहेगी।

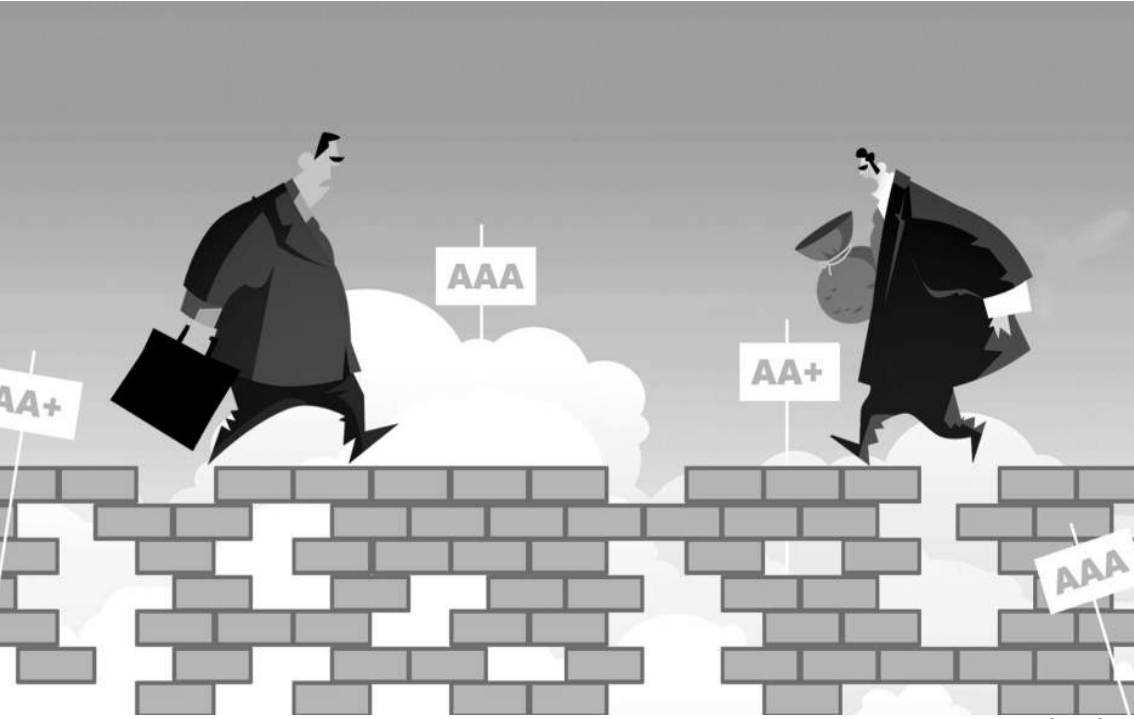
यह रूमानि प्रतीत हो सकता है या कम से कम उचित तो प्रतीत हो ही सकता है। परंतु इस प्रक्रिया में भी अराजकता का सामना करना पड़ सकता है। इसी प्रकार अगर अश्रुरंस क्षेत्र के लोगों के प्रति असंतोष बहुत ज्यादा हो तो इससे अफरातफरी का माहौल बन सकता है।

ऐसी नियामकीय परिस्थितियों में नियामक की भूमिका को लेकर एक विवाद उत्पन्न हो सकता है कि वह अपने लक्ष्यों तक समझदारी से कैसे पहुंचे और गलत आचरण करने वालों के खिलाफ उसकी भूमिका क्या हो? दोनों लक्ष्यों के बीच द्वंद्व उचित है और वह अहम भी है। उदाहरण के लिए अगर किसी बैंक के खिलाफ बहुत सख्त कदम उड़ाए जाते हैं तो बैंक में आम जनता का भरोसा समाप्त हो जाएगा। दूसरी ओर अगर किसी गलती करने वाले बैंक को आसानी से छोड़ दिया जाएगा तो ऐसा गलत आचरण करने वालों को बढ़ावा मिलेगा। इससे ऐसी आश्वस्ति पैदा होगी कि बैंक इतने बड़े हैं कि वे कभी नाकाम नहीं हो सकते।

इन दोनों लक्ष्यों के बीच का अंतर और द्वंद्व इतना तीक्ष्ण है कि बिदेन ने बाकायदा एक नियामकीय डिजाइन के माध्यम से इस नियामकीय ढांचे को आचरण प्राधिकार और विवेक प्राधिकार के रूप में दो हिस्सों में बांट दिया है।

हमारे देश में अश्रुरंस उद्योग का नियमन इतने विशिष्ट तरीके से नहीं किया जाता है। हालांकि हकीकत में ऐसा किया जाना चाहिए। किसी गलत काम को संस्थागत या संगठनात्मक संबद्धता के बावजूद नियम ऐसे होने चाहिए कि बिना व्यक्तिगत रूप से गलती के जिम्मेदार लोगों को बचाए, संस्थान को बचाया जा सके। गलती करने वालों को कारोबार से बाहर करने से सुर्खियां तो मिलेंगी लेकिन इसका असर उतना ही तात्कालिक होगा जितना कि सुर्खियों का।

*(लेखक अधिवक्ता और स्वतंत्र सलाहकार हैं। वह पेशेवर रूप से अश्रुरंस उद्योग का प्रतिनिधित्व करते हैं।)*



विनय सिन्हा

# एनबीएफसी संकट भरोसे का प्रश्न

अगर निवेशकों को एनबीएफसी की ओर वापस लाना है तो वित्तीय

तंत्र और उसकी मजबूती को लेकर भरोसा बहाल करना होगा। इस

संबंध में विस्तार से जानकारी दे रहे हैं आकाश प्रकाश

गैर बैंकिंग वित्तीय कंपनियों (एनबीएफसी) का संकट बरकरार रहने और हालात के बद से बदतर होते जाने को लेकर पर्यवेक्षक काफी हद तक चकित हैं। एनबीएफसी और एचएफसी (हाउसिंग फाइनेंस कंपनी) के शेयर आईएलएंडएफएस डिफॉल्ट के पहले बाजार के प्रिय थे। इन शेयरों के दाम में बहुत तेजी से इजाफा हुआ, ये मुनाफे में रहे और ऋण बाजार में गहराई का भी इन्हें लाभ मिला। एक वक्त तंत्र में होने वाली ऋण वृद्धि के 25 फीसदी के लिए ये उत्तरदायी थे। इन शेयरों को खूब लाभ पहुंचा और ये निजी बैंकों के तर्ज पर मूल्यवर्धन करते हुए आगे बढ़े।

अगर सितंबर 2018 के पहले ये शेयर इतनी बेहतर स्थिति में थे तो अब कोई उन्हें खरीदना क्यों नहीं चाहता? जबकि अधिकांश शेयरों की कीमत 50 से 75 फीसदी तक गिर चुकी है। ऐसा इसलिए हुआ क्योंकि निवेशकों का भरोसा पूरी तरह हिल चुका है। सार्वजनिक बाजार में निवेश करने वालों की पहुंच इन वित्तीय कंपनियों के बहीखातों तक नहीं है। चूंकि वे स्वयं ऋणपुस्तिका नहीं देख सकते इसलिए उन्हें परिसंपत्ति गुणवत्ता, संचालन आदि की जानकारी के लिए बाहरी एजेंसियों पर भरोसा करना पड़ता है।

विश्वसनीयता का संकट यहीं आरंभ हुआ।

आईएलएंडएफएस संकट के बाद रेटिंग एजेंसियों की विश्वसनीयता समाप्त हो चुकी है। इतने अधिक कर्जवाली और जटिल ढांचे की कंपनी को लंबे समय तक एएए या एए प्लस रेटिंग कैसे दी जाती रही? देनदारी में चूक के बाद ही उसकी रेटिंग कम की गई। ऐसी रेटिंग किस आधार पर दी गई? इन रेटिंग की निगरानी का क्या? बाद में अन्य बड़ी और बेहतर रेटिंग वाली एनबीएफसी को निवेश लायक न होने या डिफॉल्ट रेटिंग मिलने से विश्वसनीयता को और क्षति पहुंची। जिन संस्थानों की ग्रेडिंग कम की गई उनमें से कई के पास भारी भरकम खुदरा जमा है और खुदरा बकाया भी।

सार्वजनिक बाजार में निवेश करने वाले फिलहाल इन एजेंसियों की रेटिंग को गंभीरता से नहीं ले रहे क्योंकि इनमें कभी भी गिरावट आ सकती है। कई संस्थान बेहतर रेटिंग के बावजूद अल्पावधि में नकदी संकट का सामना कर रहे हैं। वे भी भरोसा गंवा चुके हैं। सामान्य माहौल में उनकी पहुंच नकदी तक होनी थी। हां, परिसंपत्ति जवाबदेही में विसंगति है लेकिन हर किसी के साथ समस्या नहीं है। रेटिंग में भरोसा न होने के कारण नकदी की तंगी हो रही है।

देश के शीर्ष अंकेक्षकों के साथ भी ऐसा ही मसला है। ये चारों किसी न किसी विवाद में पड़ते रहते हैं। अगर मैं गलत नहीं हूं तो संभव है आने वाले वर्षों में इनमें से किसी को किसी वाणिज्यिक बैंक के अंकेक्षण का काम न करने दिया जाए। आईएलएंडएफएस के अंकेक्षण में भी गंभीर अनियमितता नजर आ रही है। अगर आप इन अंकेक्षकों की क्षमता पर यकीन नहीं कर सकते तो आप उनके दिए नतीजों पर कैसे यकीन करेंगे? अगर आप लेखा पर यकीन नहीं करते तो आप वास्तविक परिसंपत्ति गुणवत्ता या मुनाफे पर कैसे यकीन करेंगे? उन अंकेक्षण कंपनियों को लेकर भी सावधान रहना होगा जो वर्षों के बाद आचानक किसी कंपनी के अंकेक्षण का काम छोड़ देती हैं। वे एक दिन में काम छोड़ सकती हैं लेकिन कंपनी के अंशधारकों का क्या?

वित्तीय तंत्र की रखवाली करने वाली रेटिंग एजेंसियां और अंकेक्षक दोनों संदेह के घेरे में हैं। अगर इनमें भरोसा नहीं जन्मा तो निवेशकों को एनबीएफसी और एचएफसी की परिसंपत्ति के बहीखाते देखने होंगे और खुद ही निष्कर्ष निकालना होगा। सार्वजनिक निवेशकों की पहुंच इन तक नहीं होती। हमें सार्वजनिक तौर पर उपलब्ध सूचनाओं के सहारे रहना होगा।

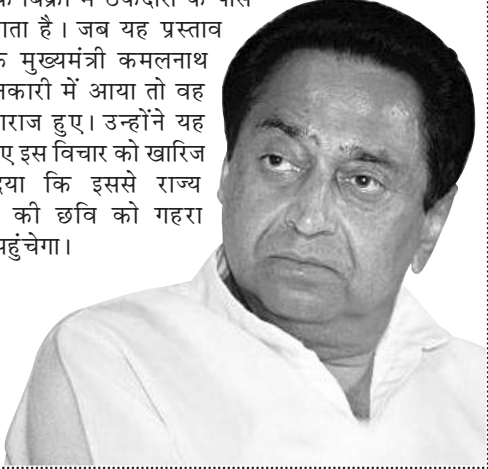
### कानाफूसी

#### भगवान भरोसे

तमिलनाडु सरकार को राज्य के इतिहास के सबसे भीषण जल संकट का भलीभांति सामना न कर पाने के कारण काफी आलोचना झेलनी पड़ रही है। ऐसे में सत्ताधारी ऑल इंडिया अन्ना द्रविड़ मुन्नेत्र कणमम ने ईश्वर की शरण में जाने का निर्णय लिया। स्थानीय प्रशासन मंत्री एस पी वेलुमणि जिन्होंने पहले कहा था कि पानी की कमी की खबर बनावटी है, वह पिछले दिनों राज्य सरकार के धर्म संबंधी विभाग द्वारा आयोजित विधायक पूजा में बैठे नजर आए। यहां पूजा वर्षों के देवता को प्रसन्न करने के लिए आयोजित की गई थी। मुख्यमंत्री एडप्पी के पलनिस्वामी भी इन दिनों परेशानी का सामना कर रहे पलनिस्वामी ने यहां तक कह दिया कि वह दिन में चार लीटर पानी पीते हैं और पूरे दिन में केवल दो बाल्टी पानी का इस्तेमाल करते हैं।

#### छवि बनाम राजस्व

प्रदेश में राजस्व संग्रह बढ़ाने के लिए मध्य प्रदेश का आबकारी विभाग एक विचित्र प्रस्ताव सामने लाया। प्रस्तावित आबकारी नीति में सुझाव दिया गया कि प्रदेश में शराब की ऑनलाइन आपूर्ति की जाए। यानी पिज्जा या खानेपीने की चीजों को लोगों के घर तक पहुंचाने वाली वेबसाइटों की तरह शराब को लोगों के घर तक पहुंचाने का सुझाव। जानकारी के मुताबिक अधिकारियों ने इसके लिए दो कंपनियों को चिह्नित भी कर लिया था। इसके पीछे दलील यह दी जा रही थी कि इस बिज्नी से उस मार्जिन की बचत होगी जो पारंपरिक बिज्नी में ठेकेदारों के पास चला जाता है। जब यह प्रस्ताव राज्य के मुख्यमंत्री कमलनाथ की जानकारी में आया तो वह बेहद नाराज हुए। उन्होंने यह कहते हुए इस विचार को खारिज कर दिया कि इससे राज्य सरकार की छवि को गहरा धक्का पहुंचेगा।



#### गंभीर बीमारियों के लिए हो तत्काल राहत

बिहार में चमकी बुखार का कहर लगातार जारी है। भीषण गर्मी के बीच पारा चढ़ने के साथ ही मरीजों के मरने की भी संख्या लगातार बढ़ रही है। मुजफ्फरपुर मेडिकल कॉलेज और केजरीवाल अस्पताल में इस बीमारी से मरने वाले बच्चों की संख्या 100 से ज्यादा हो चुकी है और करीब 300 अब भी गंभीर रूप से बीमार हैं। वहीं, दूसरे छोटे अस्पतालों में या बिना इलाज के मरे बच्चों का आंकड़ा अभी उपलब्ध नहीं है। चिंताजनक बात यह है कि मरने वाले या गंभीर रूप से बीमार बच्चों में 80 फीसदी बच्चियां हैं। इस दिमागी बुखार के फैलने के लिए लीची फल को जिम्मेदार ठहराया जा रहा है। लेकिन विशेषज्ञों का मानना है कि सिर्फ लीची की वजह से यह बीमारी नहीं फैली है। इसका मुख्य कारण कुपोषण है। यह फल कुपोषित बच्चों में बीमारी के लक्षणों को बढ़ा सकता है। सरकार को लीची से ध्यान हटाकर हटकर कुपोषण से



निपटने की कोशिश करनी चाहिए।

साल 2014 में पूरे देश में इस बीमारी से प्रभावित 60 जिलों की पहचान की गई और यहां सघन अभियान चलाने की बात कही गई थी। इसमें पांच मंत्रालयों की एक समिति बनाई गई थी जिसमें स्वास्थ्य मंत्रालय के अलावा स्वच्छता और पेयजल मंत्रालय, सामाजिक कल्याण मंत्रालय, महिला और बाल

**देश में कई स्थानों पर स्वास्थ्य व्यवस्था काफी बदहाल है जिसे तत्काल दुरुस्त करना होगा**

विकास और शहरी विकास मंत्रालय भी शामिल हैं। खबरों के अनुसार समिति के गठन के बाद एक भी बैठक नहीं हुई। अब एक बार फिर स्वास्थ्य मंत्रालय ने पुराने प्रस्ताव

**पाठक अपनी राय हमें इस पते पर भेज सकते हैं : संपादक, बिजनेस स्टैंडर्ड लिमिटेड, 4, बहादुर शाह जफर मार्ग, नई दिल्ली - 110002. आप हमें ईमेल भी कर सकते हैं : lettershindi@bsmail.in**

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







## सहिष्णुता का पैमाना

सामाजिक विविधता की कसौटी पर देखें तो भारत दुनिया के उन गिने-चुने देशों में है जहां अलग-अलग धर्मों और मतों को मानने वाले समूहों या समुदायों को पूरी आजादी है। देश का संविधान यहां के सभी नागरिकों को अपनी आस्था के निर्वाह का अधिकार और गारंटी देता है। इसके बावजूद अगर अमेरिका के विदेश विभाग की ओर से जारी अंतरराष्ट्रीय धार्मिक स्वतंत्रता रिपोर्ट में भारत के कुछ खास समुदायों की धार्मिक स्वतंत्रता के बाधित होने का दावा किया गया है तो उस पर सवाल उठने लाजिमी हैं। हालांकि यह एक कड़वी सच्चाई है कि देश के अलग-अलग हिस्सों से अराजकता और हिंसा की कुछ ऐसी घटनाएं सामने आती रहती हैं, जिनसे ऐसा लगता है कि धर्म के आधार पर कुछ चुनौतियां खड़ी हो रही हैं। मगर यह भी सच है कि इस तरह की किसी भी घटना के बाद कानून अपना काम करता है, दोषियों के खिलाफ कानूनी कार्रवाई की जाती है। लेकिन कुछ असामाजिक और अराजक तत्वों की गैरकानूनी हरकतों को देश में मौजूद धार्मिक स्वतंत्रता के पूरी तरह बाधित होने के रूप में नहीं देखा जा सकता। स्वाभाविक ही भारत ने अमेरिका की ओर से जारी इस रिपोर्ट को खारिज किया है। विदेश मंत्रालय के प्रवक्ता ने कहा है कि भारत दुनिया का सबसे बड़ा लोकतांत्रिक और बहुलतावादी समाज वाला देश है जो लंबे समय से सहिष्णुता और समावेश के लिए प्रतिबद्ध है; भारत का संविधान सभी नागरिकों को उनके मौलिक अधिकारों की गारंटी देता है, जिनमें अल्पसंख्यक भी शामिल हैं। जाहिर है, एक ओर संविधान में अल्पसंख्यक समुदायों के अधिकारों की रक्षा के लिए पूरी व्यवस्था की गई है तो दूसरी ओर सरकार की ओर से आधिकारिक रूप से उन अधिकारों की रक्षा के लिए हर संभव कदम उठाए जाते हैं। सही है कि भारत भौगोलिक रूप से एक बड़ा विविध पहचानों वाला देश है और कई बार यहां कुछ ऐसी अफसोसजनक घटनाएं होती रहती हैं, जिनके पीछे धार्मिक कट्टरता से जुड़ी सोच या व्यवहार मुख्य रूप से जवाबदेह होते हैं। लेकिन इनके आधार पर समूचे देश को एक ही नजर से देख लेना और इसे भारत में धार्मिक स्वतंत्रता पर खतरे के रूप में पेश करना अतिरेक ही माना जाना चाहिए। फिर भी, ऐसी रिपोर्ट आगाह करती हैं कि अगर कुछ घटनाएं ऐसी हो रही हैं जिनसे देश की नकारात्मक छवि बनती है तो उन पर भी पूरी तरह काबू पाया जाए।

हालांकि यह भी सच है कि पिछले कुछ सालों के दौरान असामाजिक तत्वों ने एक भीड़ के रूप में गाय की रक्षा के नाम पर एक धर्म-विशेष की पहचान से जुड़े लोगों पर हमले किए, कइयों को पीट-पीट कर मार डाला। ऐसे मामले अब भी सामने आते हैं, जिनमें भीड़ ने किसी अल्पसंख्यक को उसके धर्म से इतर कुछ खास धार्मिक नारे लगाने को मजबूर किया और उसे सार्वजनिक रूप से बुरी तरह मारा-पीटा। इसमें कोई शक नहीं कि पुलिस और प्रशासन ने ऐसे मौकों पर कानूनी कार्रवाई की, लेकिन अब भी ऐसी घटनाएं पूरी तरह रोकी नहीं जा सकी हैं। यह कोई छिपी बात नहीं है कि कई नेता अक्सर बेवजह भड़काऊ भाषण देते हैं। जरूरत इस बात की है कि राजनीतिक स्तर पर देश में बने उन्माद के माहौल को काबू में किया जाए। किसी भी स्थिति में भीड़ को कानून हाथ में लेने की इजाजत नहीं दी जा सकती। अगर इस प्रवृत्ति पर सख्ती से रोक नहीं लगाई गई तो संविधान में दर्ज अधिकार और सरकार की ओर से सभी धर्मों के लोगों के साथ समान व्यवहार के दावों का कोई अर्थ नहीं रह जाएगा।

## अपराध और सवाल

राजधानी दिल्ली में पिछले चार दिन में जिस तरह हत्या की ताबड़तोड़ तीन बड़ी वारदातें हुई हैं, वे दहलाने वाली हैं। इन वारदातों ने लोगों, खासतौर से बुजुर्गों की सुरक्षा को लेकर कई सवाल खड़े कर दिए हैं। लगता है, दिल्ली में कानून-व्यवस्था नाम की कोई चीज नहीं रह गई है और अपराधी बेखोज होकर अपना काम कर रहे हैं। सड़क पर सरेआम गोलियां चलाने से लेकर रोडरेंज जैसी घटनाओं हों या छोटी-छोटी बातों पर जान ले लेनी की घटनाएं, आपराधिक तत्वों के भीतर पुलिस और कानून का कोई भय खत्म हो गया है। ऐसे में यह सवाल उठना स्वाभाविक है कि लोग कैसे सुरक्षित रहेंगे? खासतौर से बुजुर्गों की सुरक्षा कैसे सुनिश्चित होगी? हाल में वसंत विहार इलाके में एक बुजुर्ग दंपति और उनके यहां काम करने वाली सहायिका की गला रेत कर हत्या कर दी गई। इससे पहले एक शिक्षक और उनकी पत्नी को चाकुओं से गोद कर मार दिया गया था। एक व्यक्ति ने अपने तीन बच्चों और पत्नी को बेरहमी से मौत के घाट उतार दिया और फिर खुद ने भी जान देने की कोशिश की, लेकिन बच गया। इस तरह की घटनाएं दिल्ली जैसे महानगर का वीभत्स चेहरा है। यह सरकार, पुलिस और समाज तीनों के लिए गंभीर चुनौती है।

दिल्ली में ऐसे बुजुर्गों की संख्या काफी है जो अकेले रह रहे हैं। इनकी देखभाल की सबसे पहली जिम्मेदारी स्थानीय पुलिस की होती है। बुजुर्गों की सुरक्षा के लिए पुलिस ने बाकायदा अपना एक तंत्र भी बनाया हुआ है। लेकिन ऐसा तंत्र किस काम का जो सुरक्षा न दे पाए और जब कत्ल हो जाए तो इधर-उधर की खाक छानता रहे! जाहिर है, अपराधी ज्यादा शांतिर साबित हो रहे हैं और पुलिस के प्रयास उनके सामने बौने पड़ रहे हैं। हालांकि इसमें कोई दो राय नहीं कि पहले के मुकाबले बुजुर्गों की सुरक्षा की दिशा में पुलिस ने कुछ प्रयास तो शुरू किए हैं। बीट कांस्टेबल, थानाध्यक्ष, सहायक पुलिस आयुक्त जैसे अधिकारियों की जिम्मेदारियां भी तय की गई हैं, अकेले रह रहे बुजुर्गों का पंजीकरण कर बड़ा डाटाबेस तैयार किया गया है, बुजुर्गों की मदद के लिए ऐप भी बनाया गया है, हेल्पलाइन नंबर भी है। लेकिन अगर हम बुजुर्गों को सुरक्षा दे ही नहीं पा रहे तो फिर ये सारी कवायदें बेकार हैं। हकीकत तो यह है कि पुलिस को जिस तरह इस संवेदनशील मसले पर ध्यान देना चाहिए, वह नहीं देती। काम के दबाव का बहाना बना दिया जाता है। समस्या यह है जब अपराधी वारदात को अंजाम दे जाते हैं उसके बाद ही सारा तंत्र हरकत में आता है।

दूसरी बड़ी बात यह है कि ज्यादातर रिहायशी इलाकों और हाउसिंग सोसायटियों में सुरक्षा के बंदोबस्त पुख्ता नहीं है। जिस वसंत अपार्टमेंट में बुजुर्ग दंपति को हत्या हुई, उसकी सुरक्षा संबंधी खामियां अब सामने आ रही हैं। यह हाल ज्यादातर सोसायटियों का है। आपराधिक तत्व इसका भरपूर फायदा उठाते हैं। हालांकि अब कई जगह सीसीटीवी कैमरे लगने से अपराधियों तक पहुंचना पुलिस के लिए आसान तो गया है और कई हत्याओं के मामले सुलझे भी हैं। दिल्ली में ज्यादातर परिवार ऐसे हैं जिनमें बुजुर्ग अलग रह रहे हैं और उनके बच्चे अपने परिवारों के साथ अलग। कइयों के बच्चे विदेश में रहते हैं। ऐसे में बुजुर्गों की सुरक्षा सोसायटी के गांड़ें, स्थानीय पुलिस आदि पर ही निर्भर है। समस्या यह है कि जैसा मजबूत निगरानी तंत्र होना चाहिए, वह है नहीं। इसीलिए अपराधी बेलगाम हैं!

## कल्पमेधा

बातचीत प्रिय हो, पर ओछी न हो। चुहल हो, बनावट हो, मुक्त हो, पर अश्लील न हो। विद्वतापूर्ण हो, पर धमंड्युक्त न हो। अनोखी हो, पर झूठ न हो।

— श्वेसपियर

# सुविज्ञा जैन

# सुविज्ञा जैन

# प्राकृतिक रूप से मानसून 19 जून तक देश के दो तिहाई हिस्से तक पहुंच जाता था। इस बार उस समय तक यह सिर्फ बारह फीसद क्षेत्र को ही कवर कर पाया। बारह फीसद का यह इलाका इतना छोटा है कि मानसून आने के दरवाजे यानी केरल और उसके नजदीकी इलाकों तक ही सिमत जाता है। जाहिर है, कृषि प्रधान देश में किसानों के लिए एक भयावह स्थिति है।

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### किसान का संकट

किसान सम्मान निधि योजना के तहत अब सभी किसानों को सालाना छह हजार रुपए मिलेंगे। साथ ही, किसानों के लिए पेंशन योजना का एलान भी किया गया है। लेकिन क्या इससे किसानों की हालत सुधर पाएगी? कृषि संकट का समाधान, किसानों की पैदावार और उनके आर्थिक स्थिति को बेहतर बनाना सरकार के लिए बड़ी चुनौतियां हैं। यह संकट इतना विकराल रूप धारण कर चुका है कि उसमें सुधार के लिए सरकार को तुरंत उपाय सोचने होंगे। नीति आयोग के अनुसार पिछले दो साल में किसानों की आय में वास्तविक बढ़ोतरी लगभग शून्य हुई है और उसके पिछले पांच सालों में हर साल आधा प्रतिशत से भी कम बढ़ोतरी हुई। यानी, सात सालों से किसानों की आय में वृद्धि न के बराबर हुई है।

ऑर्गनाइजेशन ऑफ इकोनॉमिक कोऑपरेशन एंड डेवलपमेंट की रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक 2000-2017 के बीच में किसानों को फसलों का समुचित मूल्य नहीं मिलने से पैंतालीस लाख करोड़ रुपए का नुकसान हुआ। 2016 के आर्थिक सर्वे में किसान परिवार की सत्रह राज्यों में आय बीस हजार रुपए सालाना से कम है, यानी 1700 रुपए मासिक या लगभग पचास रुपए रोजाना। सवाल है कि इस आय में कोई परिवार कैसे पलता होगा? खेती में पैसा नहीं है, उसके मजदूरों के पास काम नहीं है। इसके अलावा, मंडी हो, उत्पादन हो या पीएम फसल योजना में मुआवजा ही लेना हो, किसानों को हर कदम पर दिक्कतें आती हैं। किसानों की ये समस्याएं खत्म हो जाएंगी तो वे काफी हद तक आर्थिक संकट से उबर सकते हैं। कुल मिला कर कृषि में सुधार का रास्ता गांव के रास्ते ही जाएगा।

● *संजीव कुमार, सहारनपुर*

है कि इस चक्रवात ने वातावरण की नमी सोख ली। इसी तरह मानसून को आगे बढ़ने में दिक्कत आने के भी नए कारण दूढ़े जा रहे हैं। विज्ञान और प्रौद्योगिकी के इस युग में कम से कम छोटी अवधि के पूर्वानुमान तो इतने नहीं गड़बड़ाने चाहिए।

बहरहाल नई सूचना यह है कि मानसून कछुए की चाल से बढ़ रहा है, सो इस बार पूरे देश में मानसून फैलने में तीन से चार हफ्ते का समय और लग सकता है। इस देरी के क्या-क्या असर होंगे? और अनागत की जो आशंकाएं हैं, उनसे निपटने के लिए क्या तैयारियां सोची जा रही हैं? इक्का-दुक्का मीडिया रिपोर्ट के अलावा ये सारी बातें विशेषज्ञ चेतावनियों और खबरों से लगभग गायब हैं। यह बात दो महीने पहले कही गई थी कि इस बार अल निनो सक्रिय है। अल निनो यानी समुद्र में एक निश्चित क्षेत्र का पानी गर्म होना। इसके बारे में वैज्ञानिक तथ्य यह है कि अन निनो के सक्रिय होने वाले साल में भारत में बारिश कम होती है। लेकिन इस साल यह पता होने के बाद भी हाल के इस पूर्वानुमान को भी खारिज कर दिया गया था और कहा गया था कि जून में अगर अल निनो का असर हुआ भी तो वह जुलाई या आगे के दो महीनों में खत्म हो जाएगा। जून के बाईस दिन गुजरने के बाद भी मानसून फैलने का जो कुदरती अंदाज है, वह बता रहा है कि आफत बड़ी भी आ सकती है। गौरतलब है कि सरकारी मौसम विभाग इस समय जो आंकड़े पेश कर रहा है, वे एक बड़े अंदेशे का इशारा कर रहे हैं।

प्राकृतिक रूप से मानसून 19 जून तक देश के दो तिहाई हिस्से तक पहुंच जाता था। इस बार उस समय तक यह सिर्फ बारह फीसद क्षेत्र को ही कवर कर पाया। बारह फीसद का यह इलाका इतना छोटा है कि मानसून आने के दरवाजे यानी केरल और उसके नजदीकी इलाकों तक ही सिमत जाता है। जाहिर है, कृषि प्रधान देश में किसानों के लिए एक भयावह स्थिति है। खासतौर पर उस देश में जहां आधी से ज्यादा खेती बारिश के सहारे ही होती है। वैसे जहां सिंचाई की व्यवस्था भी है, वहां भी हालत कम बुरी नहीं है। उत्तर भारत के कुछ इलाके छोड़ कर देश के लगभग सभी बांधों में पानी लगभग खत्म ही है। यानी मानसून की और ज्यादा गड़बड़ी कुछ ज्यादा ही बड़ी आफत पैदा कर सकती है। लेकिन सरकारी विभागों की तरफ से अभी भी बारिश का

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समय भी अवसर के मुताबिक ही रखा जाता है। यानी इधमें हिस्सा लेने वालों के कामकाज और सुविधा को ध्यान में रख कर ही वक्त तय किया जाता है। कीर्तन का आयोजन करवाने के कई कारण हो सकते हैं। मसलन, मन्नत पूरी होने या नौकरी लगने की दलील पर या फिर जन्मदिन या घर पर होने वाली किसी शादी से पहले भी लोग कीर्तन कराते हैं। कीर्तनों में कुछ भजन देवी-देवताओं की स्तुति के होते हैं तो कुछ अवसर के मुताबिक बना लिए जाते हैं। कुछ गंभीर किस्म

के भजन होते हैं तो कुछ चुहल भरे भी। जैसे ‘चले आना ऊंची अटारी मेरे बांके बिहारी’। फिल्मी तर्जों के साथ-साथ कुछ परंपरागत तो कुछ स्वरचित लयों पर ये भजन गाए जाते हैं। सुर सही होने की परवाह किसी को नहीं होती। जैसे मन करता है, उसी अंदाज में गाए जाते हैं, जिन्हें देख कर अब्दुल रहमान के ‘संदेश रासक’ का वह कथन याद आ जाता है- ‘कोयल यदि मधुर स्वर में गाती है तो क्या कौवे न करकराएं, राजदरबार में नर्तकी शास्त्रीय नृत्य करती है तो क्या ग्राम्य युवती न नाचे’!

यह परंपरा कब से चली आ रही है, इसका पता नहीं। समुण भक्ति से लेकर निर्गुनिया संत, सभी की आराधना का प्रमुख माध्यम कीर्तन रहा है। गुरबानी

# तीन तलाक और विपक्ष

सरकार ने तीन तलाक की प्रथा खत्म करने के लिए जो पहल की है, वह बहुत ही सोच-समझ कर महिलाओं और बच्चों के हित में उठाया गया कदम है। इसका विरोध करने वालों को सोचना चाहिए कि आखिर क्यों नहीं वे इस दक्कियानूसी परंपरा को खत्म नहीं करना चाहते? क्यों वे अपने राजनीतिक और स्वयं के स्वार्थ के लिए एक बेहतर पहल का विरोध कर रहे हैं? देखा जाए तो तीन तलाक बहुत-सी सामाजिक बुराइयों को ही दूर करेगा, जिसमें घर की बर्बादी, महिलाओं की परेशानी, बच्चों की तकलीफें और इससे

उपजी अन्य अनैतिक बुराइयां खत्म होंगी। मात्र विरोध करना ही नहीं, बल्कि गहरी सोच भी होनी चाहिए विरोध करने वालों की कि हम शासन-प्रशासन में रह कर किस तरह सामाजिक बुराइयों को दूर करने में और लोगों के हित के लिए कितना और क्या कर सकते हैं। तभी हम बेहतर समाज सुधारक बन सकते हैं। विवेकहीन राजनीति करने से न तो खुद, न पार्टी, न ही समाज और देश का भला होने वाला है।

● *शकुंतला महेश नेनावा, इंदौर*

# जल संकट और सबक

चेन्नई आजकल गंभीर जल संकट से जूझ रहा है। इस जल संकट ने लोगों को भारी मुश्किल में डाल दिया है। यहां बारिश न होने के कारण जल के प्राकृतिक

नया पूर्वानुमान जारी नहीं हुआ है।

यह भी एक तथ्य है कि मानसून का तय समय शुरू हुए अभी बाईस दिन ही गुजरे हैं। हो सकता है कि बाकी सवा तीन महीने में अच्छी बारिश हो जाए और देश में इस साल बारिश का आंकड़ा सामान्य बारिश के आसपास पहुंच जाए। लेकिन यह स्थिति पानी की भारी कमी यानी सूखे से भी ज्यादा विकट स्थिति पैदा कर सकती है। अगर सरकारी भविष्यवाणियों के मुताबिक चार महीने में गिरने वाला कुल पानी तीन महीने में गिर गया तो देश में कई जगह बाढ़ की विभीषिका तय मानिए।

वैसे देश को पिछले कुछ साल से नया अनुभव होने लगा है कि देश में सामान्य बारिश होने के बाद भी आधा देश सूखे की चपेट में आ जाता है। पिछले साल यही हुआ था। इतना ही नहीं, कम बारिश होने के बाद भी कई जगह बाढ़ से तबाही

हम नहीं रोक पा रहे हैं। हो सकता है कि मौसम वैज्ञानिकों और सामान्य प्रशासकों के लिए यह उतनी बड़ी बात न हो, लेकिन प्रबंधन प्रौद्योगिकी के विशेषज्ञों और नीतिकारों के लिए इससे ज्यादा शर्म की क्या बात होगी? बहरहाल, इस समय आसार ये हैं कि यह साल पृथ्वी विज्ञान के विद्वानों, खासतौर पर मौसम वैज्ञानिकों और देश के जल वैज्ञानिकों के सामने कई सवाल खड़े कर सकता है। वैसे उनके पास एक ही जवाब होगा कि क्या करें, प्रकृति के खेल में हम दर्शकभर हैं।

फिलहाल सवाल पूर्वानुमानों की गड़बड़ी का भी उतना महत्वपूर्ण नहीं है। अगर सही और सटीक भविष्यवाणियां हो भी जाएं तो चिंता जताने

# मानसून की गड़बड़ी इतना छोटा संकट नहीं है। चाहे मौसम विज्ञान के वैज्ञानिक हों, चाहे मीडिया, किसी की भी तरफ से उतनी चिंता जताई जाती नहीं दिख रही। आसन्न संकट के अंदेशे न जाता ए जाने का एक मतलब यह है कि किसी आपदा से निपटने की तैयारी शुरू न होना। बरिश को लेकर अब तक की भविष्यवाणियों की बड़ी फजीहत हो चुकी है। मौसम वैज्ञानिक बता रहे थे कि इस बार मानसून समय पर आएगा। लेकिन मानसून ने एक-दो दिन नहीं, बल्कि पूरे सात दिन देर से दस्तक दी। देर से दस्तक के बाद एक और अड़चन आ गई। मानसून जिस रफ्तार से पूरे देश तक पहुंचता था, वह रफ्तार इस बार एकदम रूक-सी गई है। इसी तरह पहले बताया जा रहा था कि वायु नाम का चक्रवात मानसून की प्रणाली को गड़बड़ा सकता है। लेकिन चक्रवात तट को छुए बगैर ही गुजर गया। लेकिन अब कहा जा रहा

के पाठ से लेकर बौद्ध धर्म के सामूहिक ‘ओं मणि पद्मे हूं’ का पाठ इसी का एक रूप रहा है। एक अलग अंदाज और संदर्भ के साथ नात और कव्याली तथा मुहर्रमों की मजलिस को भी देखा जा सकता है। हालांकि उसका संदर्भ बिल्कुल अलग हो जाता है, पर महिलाओं के इस तरह के खुलेपन के साथ चुहलबाजी और मन के रंजन का भाव इन्हीं साप्ताहिक कीर्तनों में रहता है।

इतिहास गवाह है कि अंग्रेजों द्वारा डेढ़ सौ साल पहले जिन गिरमिटिया मजदूरों को रीति का आयोजन करवाने के कई कारण हो सकते हैं। मसलन, मन्नत पूरी होने या नौकरी लगने की दलील पर या फिर जन्मदिन या घर पर होने वाली किसी शादी से पहले भी लोग कीर्तन कराते हैं। कीर्तनों में कुछ भजन देवी-देवताओं की स्तुति के होते हैं तो कुछ अवसर के मुताबिक बना लिए जाते हैं। कुछ गंभीर किस्म के भजन होते हैं तो कुछ चुहल भरे भी। जैसे ‘चले आना ऊंची अटारी मेरे बांके बिहारी’। फिल्मी तर्जों के साथ-साथ कुछ परंपरागत तो कुछ स्वरचित लयों पर ये भजन गाए जाते हैं। सुर सही होने की परवाह किसी को नहीं होती। जैसे मन करता है, उसी अंदाज में गाए जाते हैं, जिन्हें देख कर अब्दुल रहमान के ‘संदेश रासक’ का वह कथन याद आ जाता है- ‘कोयल यदि मधुर स्वर में गाती है तो क्या कौवे न करकराएं, राजदरबार में नर्तकी शास्त्रीय नृत्य करती है तो क्या ग्राम्य युवती न नाचे’!

यह परंपरा कब से चली आ रही है, इसका पता नहीं। समुण भक्ति से लेकर निर्गुनिया संत, सभी की आराधना का प्रमुख माध्यम कीर्तन रहा है। गुरबानी

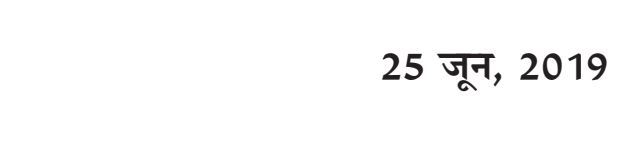
स्रोत भी सूख गए हैं, इस कारण यहां जल संकट और गहराता जा रहा है। वहीं दूसरी तरफ नीति आयोग की रिपोर्ट ने जो यह रिपोर्ट जारी की है कि हमारे देश में 2030 तक चालीस फीसद आबादी के पास पीने का साफ पानी उपलब्ध नहीं होगा, काफी चिंताजनक है। चेन्नई में बेशक आजकल जल संकट चल रहा है, लेकिन देश के बहुत से और राज्य भी ऐसे संकट का सामना कर रहे हैं। इन राज्यों का भूजल स्तर गिरता जा रहा है। मोदी सरकार ने 2024 तक देश के हर घर तक नल से जल की योजना का लक्ष्य निर्धारित किया है।

अगर बारिश के कम होने के कारणों पर ध्यान नहीं दिया, पानी को संभालने, नदियों को गंदा करने से बाज नहीं आए और भूजल के गिरते स्तर को रोकने के लिए सरकारों और आमजन ने गंभीरता नहीं दिखाई तो वह दिन दूर नहीं जब देश का हर शहर और हर गांव पीने वाले साफ पानी की एक-एक बूंद को तरसने लगेगा। ऐसे में देश के हर घर में नल तो सरकार पहुंचा भी देगी, लेकिन नल में जल नहीं होगा। यहां यह भी कहना उचित होगा कि जब देश में सूखे की स्थिति पैदा होती है तब पानी को बचाने के उपाय और तौर तरीकों की बात सरकार, प्रशासन और लोग करने लगते हैं। लेकिन जब गर्मी का मौसम चला जाता है तो सभी अगली गर्मी के मौसम और सूखा पड़ने तक लंबी तान के सो जाते हैं। अगर आने वाली पीढ़ी के लिए साफ

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के अलावा क्या कर लेंगे? लेकिन नहीं। ये चिंताएं बड़े काम की होती हैं। ये चिंताएं ही हमें चिंताशील बनाती हैं। अपनी वर्तमान और अनागत समस्याओं के समाधान खोजने के लिए मौका बनाती हैं। इसीलिए वैज्ञानिकों और विद्वानों की जिम्मेदारी है कि वे हमें चिंता बताते चलें। किसी आसन्न संकट को हल्का करके न बताएं। मसलन, इस



## बजट से उम्मीदें

प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी के नेतृत्व की दूसरी पारी के पहले बजट पर देशभर की निगाहें टिकी हुई हैं. इस बजट में आगामी पांच सालों की नीतिगत दिशा और प्राथमिकताओं के निर्धारण की अपेक्षा की जा रही है. उद्योग जगत से लेकर उद्यमियों, कामगारों और किसानों की उम्मीदों को पूरा करने की चुनौती वित्त मंत्री निर्मला सीतारमण के सामने है. मौजूदा ठहराव से अर्थव्यवस्था को निकालकर फिर से गतिशील करने के लिए आर्थिक सुधारों पर ध्यान देकर निवेश और उपभोग बढ़ाने के साथ सामाजिक क्षेत्र में सार्वजनिक खर्च में बढ़ोतरी करने पर बजट का जोर हो सकता है. इससे बेरोजगारी की मुश्किल से निपटने में बड़ी मदद मिल सकती है, जो सरकार की चिंताओं में प्रमुख है. नीति आयोग की बैठक में प्रधानमंत्री के संबोधन तथा वित्त मंत्री के बयान से यह संकेत साफ है कि सरकार कृषि में बेहतरी के लिए ठोस पहल करेगी. किसान संगठनों और इस क्षेत्र के विशेषज्ञों के सुझावों तथा बीते पांच सालों में उठये गये कदमों के अनुभव के आधार पर कृषि संकट के समाधान के समुचित उपायों की गुंजाइश है.

**घरेलू बाजार में मांग और उपभोग बढ़ाने तथा बड़ी युवा आबादी को उत्पादकता से जोड़ने के फौरी उपायों की दरकार है.**

निवेश, कराधान प्रणाली को सरल बनाना, विदेशी निवेश को प्रोत्साहित करना जैसे मुद्दों पर सरकार को निर्णायक रवैया अपनाना चाहिए. छोटे एवं मझोले उद्योगों, इ-कॉमर्स, कौशल-विकास, शिक्षा तथा स्वास्थ्य सेवा जैसे क्षेत्रों की असीम संभावनाओं को वास्तविकता में बदलने के लिए भी बजटीय पहलकदमी की जरूरत है. उपभोग और बचत में लगातार कमी अर्थव्यवस्था के लिए चिंताजनक है. इस कारण वृद्धि दर में कमी आ गयी है. अंतरराष्ट्रीय बाजार की स्थिति भी बहुत उत्साहवर्द्धक नहीं है. अमेरिका द्वारा अनेक भारतीय वस्तुओं पर आयात शुल्क लगाने, व्यापार युद्ध तथा बड़ी अर्थव्यवस्थाओं की आपसी रार से निवेश और निर्यात प्रभावित हो रहे हैं. हमारा व्यापार घाटा भी बढ़ रहा है. विश्व व्यापार संगठन में कृषि उत्पादों तथा इ-कॉमर्स पर विकसित देशों के अडिग्रल रवये से हमारे आर्थिक हित प्रभावित हो सकते हैं. मध्य-पूर्व में तनाव तेल की कीमतों पर असर डाल सकता है. हालांकि, प्रधानमंत्री और नीति आयोग निर्यात बढ़ाने का आह्वान करते रहे हैं और इस दिशा में सरकार सक्रिय भी है, पर इसके परिणाम देर से ही सामने आयेंगे. ऐसे में घरेलू बाजार में मांग और उपभोग बढ़ाने तथा बड़ी युवा आबादी को उत्पादकता से जोड़ने के फौरी उपायों की दरकार है.



# साधना मार्ग

ध्रुव ने जब साधना शुरू की थी, तब वह मात्र पांच वर्ष का था. पांच वर्ष का बालक तपस्या कर रहा था- कठोर तपस्या. देवता लोग नारद के निकट जाकर बोले- ‘नारद जी! यह तो महासंकट है. इतना सा छोटा बालक और इतनी तीव्र साधना कर रहा है ? हम लोगों का नाम-प्रतिष्ठा सब समाप्त हो जायेगा. अब तो कोई हमें देखकर प्रणाम भी नहीं करेगा. सत्कार-मान भी नहीं देगा और न भोजन के लिए निमंत्रण देगा. बड़ी विपत्ति होगी.’ नारद ने तब नारायण से परामर्श ली. नारायण ने कहा, ‘तुम उसे अगर साधना से बिरत कर सको, तो बहुत अच्छा होगा, देवताओं का भी सम्मान बचेगा. जो बन सके! करो.’ तब नारद ने ध्रुव के निकट जाकर अनेक प्रलोभन दिया. यह दूंगा, वह दूंगा, खिलौना दूंगा. न जाने कितना कुछ. ध्रुव तो टलनेवाला नहीं. तब नारद ने कहा कि अभी तुम बालक हो, जब बड़े होना, बूढ़े होना तो साधना करना. तब ध्रुव ने कहा- बुद्धिमान व्यक्ति कम उम्र से ही साधना में लीन हो जाते हैं; क्योंकि मनुष्य जन्म अत्यंत दुर्लभ है. पृथ्वी में कोटि-कोटि प्रकार के जीव हैं. मनुष्य की संख्या से कोटि गुणा अधिक है; किंतु मनुष्य की भांति वे भाग्यवान नहीं हैं. कारण, उनको मनुष्य शरीर नहीं मिला, न तो उनको उन्नत मन मिला. साधना करने का प्रयोजन वे नहीं समझते, क्योंकि उनकी बुद्धि बहुत पिछड़ी है. मनुष्य का शरीर पाने पर वे अनुभव करते हैं कि मानव जीवन का प्रवाण और प्रेम कार्य है ईश्वर को पाने की साधना में लीन होना, बाकी समस्त कार्य गौण कार्य हैं. इसलिए जिसको मनुष्य का शरीर मिला है, वे सचमुच भाग्यवान हैं. मनुष्य का शरीर पाया है ईश्वर को पाने की साधना करने के लिए. जो ऐसा नहीं करते वे दूसरी बार मनुष्य का शरीर नहीं पायेंगे. साधना द्वारा जिन्होंने इस जन्म को सार्थक बना डाला है, ऐसे मनुष्यों की संख्या बहुत ही कम है. हे नारद ! तुम ज्ञान-युद्ध हो, तुम मुझे क्यों परामर्श देते आये हो ? मुझे मनुष्य का शरीर मिला है; अतः शिशुकाल से ही जितना संभव हो, मैं साधना में लीन रहूँगा और दीर्घकाल तक साधना करने का सुयोग पाऊँगा.

**श्रीश्री आनंदमूर्ति**

## कुछ अलग

# शब्दों में बड़ी ताकत होती है

**शब्दों** में गजब की ताकत होती है. गहन रिसर्च के बाद दुनियाभर के मनोविश्लेषक इस निष्कर्ष पर पहुंचे हैं कि शब्द महज अभिव्यक्ति के माध्यम की एक बेसिक यूनिट नहीं हैं, बल्कि ये हमारी मनोदशा को भी महती रूप

से प्रभावित करते हैं. कदाचित यही कारण है कि शब्द-प्रयोग के औचित्य और अनौचित्य पर हमारे जीवन की खुशी और खामोशी निर्भर करती है. यदि हम शब्दों को उनके अर्थ की उपयुक्तता और संदर्भ की गंभीरता को बिना तोले हुए जीवन में प्रयोग करते हैं, तो हम खुद के लिए अनचाहे मुसीबतों का जाल बुनते हैं, जिससे निजात का रास्ता सहज नहीं होता है.

आज जब हॉटस्एप, फेसबुक, इन्स्टाग्राम, ट्विटर इत्यादि ने हमारे जीवन में घुसपैठ कर लिया है, तो हमारी मानस शैली, सोच के ढंग और चारित्रिक और नैतिक मूल्यों के मानकों में भी बड़ी तब्दीलियां आयी हैं. इन परिवर्तनों के साथ शब्दों के प्रयोग के संस्कार के एक अजीब संस्करण का भी आगाज हुआ है. सोशल मीडिया पर अभिव्यक्ति की स्वतंत्रता की दुहाई के नाम पर जिस कदर बिना लगाम के अपने कुत्सित विचारों और झूठे समाचारों को पोस्ट किया जाता है, उन पर कमेंट किया जाता है और जितनी शोषत्रता से उन्हें शेयर किया जाता है, यह हमारे लिए गंभीर चिंता का विषय है. युव-पत्रिकाओं में छपे कार्टूनों और लेखों के माध्यम से चुत्किता अक्षेयों के साथ-साथ उच्च पदों पर सार्वजनिक हस्तियों और सेलिब्रिटीज की निजता और शालीनता को तार-तार करने की घातक प्रवृत्तियों



# संपादकीय प्रभात

# भारतीय उदारवादियों का दोहरा रवैया

उदारवादी धर्मनिरपेक्षवादियों के स्वप्निल संसार में अल्पसंख्यकों के सरोकार ही सर्वप्रमुख होते हैं. पर अब यह समुदाय सामाजिक, सियासी एवं आर्थिक रंगभेद का शिकार बन जाने की जोखिम में है. एक नये मध्य वर्ग और एक नव-महत्वाकांक्षी सहस्राब्दी के उदय के साथ उदारवाद एक विचार और आदर्श के रूप में अपनी वास्तविकता तथा प्रासंगिकता खो चुका है. वर्ष 2019 का जनादेश इसकी ताबूत में अंतिम कील की तरह ही था. अब वे अपनी हताशापूर्ण कोशिश के अंतर्गत पिछले कुछ सप्ताहों में हर वैसे अवसर का उपयोग करते हुए मोदीवाद और नया भारत के उनके ब्रांड को मिले जनादेश को मलिन करने में लगे हैं.

भारत-पाक क्रिकेट मैच के सैद्धांतिक पिच पर उनके ‘नो बॉल’ भारतीय ‘कवर ड्राइव’ के सामने विचलित हो गये. उदारवाद की मुहाबरेदार कमेंटरी ने इस मैच को सिर्फ एक और आयोजन के रूप में लिया- ‘क्रिकेटप्रेमी बेहतर टीम की हौसलाअफजाई करें.’ उन्होंने यह मान लिया कि पाकिस्तान की टीम विराट कोहली की खूंखार टीम जितनी ही बेहतर है. उधर विश्व के विभिन्न हिस्सों से दस हजार भारतीय प्रशंसकों का विशाल दर्शक वर्ग कीमती हवाई टिकटों पर दिल खोलकर खर्च करते हुए यह मानकर मैच देखने लंदन पहुंच गया कि भारतीय टीम विश्व की सर्वश्रेष्ठ टीम से भी बेहतर है. पर बहुतेरे उदारवादी नेता और स्तंभकार-सह-तथाकथित क्रिकेट विशेषज्ञों ने पाकिस्तानी टीम की तरीफ के कसीदे गाने लगे. इसमें कोई संशय नहीं कि यह सिर्फ एक खेल ही था, मगर उदारवादियों ने एक शैतान देश के साथ शांति तथा संवाद के अपने आत्यंतिक लगाव की वजह से इसे अपने सैद्धांतिक एजेंडे को आगे बढ़ाने का बहाना बना लिया. मेनचेस्टर में जो कुछ हुआ, अब वह इतिहास का हिस्सा है. अमित शाह के शब्दों में यह एक घातक 22 गजी ‘देश’ थी, जिसने पाकिस्तान के दंभ को चूर कर दिया.

मुस्लिमों पर नकारात्मक असर डालनेवाली घटनाओं के लिए ‘बैटिंग’ करते हुए बहुसंख्यक-बहुल संस्थाओं की निंदा करना उदारवादियों का एकमात्र खेल रह गया है. उदाहरण के लिए कोलकाता के डॉक्टरों पर हमले के सांप्रदायिक रंग की अनेदेखी कर दी गयी. भीड़ द्वारा किसी पर हिंसक हमले की रिपोर्ट सुनकर उदारवादी क्षोभ से भर जाते हैं. ऐसे कुछ विरोध तो उचित होते हुए भी इसलिए पक्षपाती ही होते हैं कि जब ऐसी किसी घटना का शिकार कोई हिंदू होता है, तो उनका गुस्सा गायब हो जाता है. जब कट्टरवादी मुस्लिम दलों के साथ अमानवीय व्यवहार करते हैं, तो इनकी उदारवादी चेतना नींद लेने लगती है.

भारतीय उदारवादियों ने उदारवाद की परिभाषा को पुनर्भाषित किया है. वे राज्य अथवा सैद्धांतिक नियंत्रण के विचार का विरोध करते हैं. मगर यदि उनके विचार भारतीय संदर्भ में विकसित किये जायें, बहुमतवाद के प्रति उनकी आपत्ति का सरोकार अंततः संघ परिवार से संबद्ध किसी भी एवं सभी चीजों पर ही जा टिकता है. वे आर्थिक मामलों में कम से कम

सरकारी हस्तक्षेप की वकालत करते हैं. फिर भी वे गरीबों को सब्सिडी का विरोध करते हुए अमीरों के लिए बड़े प्रोत्साहनों की सलाह देते हैं.

वे सार्वजनिक शिक्षा के लिए तो भारी सहायता सुलभ



**प्रभु चावला**

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**नया भारत नेहरू के उदारवादी ढांचे के अस्पष्ट भारत से रंग और शिल्प में बहुत भिन्न है . इस नयी पारिस्थितिकी से अपना तालमेल बिढाने हेतु भारतीय उदारवादियों को अपने अत्यधिक अहंकार के डीएनए की फिर से तलाश करनी होगी .**

नियंत्रित कई संस्थाओं द्वारा मुद्देया सुविधाओं पर पलते रहे. उनकी संतानें सर्वोत्तम स्कूलों में दाखिल हुईं, उन्हें विदेशी छात्रवृत्तियां मिलीं और वे कमाऊ तथा प्रभावशाली पदों तक पहुंच गये. उन्होंने शैक्षिक संस्थानों, मीडिया तथा

# नुकसानदेह है अमेरिका-ईरान संघर्ष

पिछले सप्ताह अमेरिका ने ईरान पर हमले की घोषणा की और फिर उसे वापस ले लिया. अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति डोनाल्ड ट्रंप ने कहा कि जब मुझे यह बताया गया कि इन हमलों के नतीजे में लगभग 150 ईरानियों की मृत्यु हो सकती है, तो मैंने ये हमले स्थगित कर दिये. उन्होंने इन हमलों के आदेश इसलिए दिये थे कि ईरान ने अपनी सीमा के निकट एक अमेरिकी सैन्य ड्रोन मार गिराया था.

अमेरिकी राष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा सलाहकार जॉन बोल्टन जैसे अपने प्रशासन के कुछ अधिक उग्र सदस्यों के साथ ही डोनाल्ड ट्रंप ईरान के साथ युद्ध के लिए उतावले-से रहे हैं. इस अमेरिकी रुख की वजह से पिछले सप्ताह कच्चे तेल की कीमतों में 10 प्रतिशत तक की वृद्धि भी हो गयी, जिसने भारत और उस जैसे वैश्व राष्ट्रों के लिए मुश्किलें खड़ी कर दीं. प्रश्न यह है कि अमेरिका क्यों ईरान के साथ युद्ध के लिए उत्सुक है ? इसका उत्तर पाना अथवा समझना आसान नहीं है. सभ्यताओं के संदर्भ में देखा जाये, तो ईरान पश्चिम का सबसे पुराना शत्रु रहा है. स्वयं यूनानियों के ही अनुसार, लगभग 2400 वर्ष पूर्व, पहले डेरिअस और फिर जेरजेस के नेतृत्व में ईरानी सेना ने यूनान पर हमला कर एथेंस को नष्ट कर दिया था. हेरोडोटस द्वारा लिखित इतिहास में इसका वर्णन है कि ईरानी सेना में बड़ी संख्या में भाड़े के भारतीय सैनिक शामिल थे.

प्राचीन कालीन इतिहास में अपने ऊपर ईरानी सम्राटों के प्रभाव के कारण यूनानी उनका जिक्र ‘महाराजा’ के नाम से करते रहे. सिकंदर या अलेक्जेंडर के नाम के साथ महान की उपाधि उसके द्वारा मिश्र, ईरान, अफगानिस्तान और पंजाब की विजय की वजह से नहीं लगी थी, बल्कि वह इसलिए थी कि उसने स्वयं डेरियस तृतीय महान से इसे हासिल किया था. पंजाब से लेकर ईरान समेत तुर्की तक के सबसे बड़े हिस्से पर सेल्यूकस नाइकेटर ( नाइकेटर का अर्थ विजेता है और जूतों के पाथिया के शासक आर्ससीज के नेतृत्व में अपने देश को आजाद करा लिया, जो वर्तमान भारतीय पारसियों के ही धर्मासलंबी थे.

तीन शताब्दियों तक पार्थियन शासक पश्चिम की दूसरी सबसे बड़ी शक्ति रोम से युद्ध करते रहे. ईरानी विजेताओं का अगला वर्ग सेसानियों का था, जो सातवीं सदी में अरबों द्वारा ईरान की विजय तक ईरान पर शासन करते रहे. लगभग चार सौ वर्ष पूर्व ईरान सफावियों के अंतर्गत शिया बन गया. भारत के लिए सबसे मशहूर ईरानी शासक नादिर शाह खुद सुन्नी था, जिसने मुगल साम्राज्य को समाप्त कर दिया.

आधुनिक काल में ईरानी सियासत में अमेरिका हस्तक्षेप करता रहा है. वर्ष 1953 में ईरान के निर्वाचित प्रधानमंत्री मुहम्मद मोसादिक को

अमेरिकी खुफिया संगठन ‘सीआइए’ द्वारा निर्देशित तख्तापलट में हटा दिया गया, क्योंकि उन्होंने तेल कंपनियों का राष्ट्रीयकरण कर दिया था. अमेरिका ने ईरान-इराक युद्ध को सक्रिय रूप से प्रोत्साहित करते हुए इराकी नेता सद्दाम हुसैन का समर्थन किया. बाद में, सद्दाम से उसके संबंधों में खटास आ गयी. वर्ष 1979 में, अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति जिमी कार्टर के समय तेहरान में अमेरिकी दूतावास पर ईरानी क्रांतिकारियों ने कब्जा कर लिया और उन्होंने कई सप्ताहों तक दूतावास के कमियों को बंधक बनाये रखा. इसके बाद से अमेरिका ने ईरान के साथ कूटनीतिक संबंध बहाल नहीं किये. अमेरिका में रह रहे ईरानी नागरिकों के मामले पाकिस्तानी दूतावास द्वारा देखे जाते हैं. ईरान ने अपने परमाण्विक कार्यक्रमों को लेकर ओबामा प्रशासन के साथ एक समझौता संपन्न किया था और उम्मीदें जगी थी कि अंततः ये दोनों देश मित्र बन जायेंगे. किंतु ट्रंप के मनमाने नेतृत्व में ये उम्मीदें परवान नहीं चढ़ सकीं.

ईरान का राष्ट्रीय धर्म शिया इस्लाम है. शियावाद अपनी प्रकृति से ही निवृत्तिवादी है. उनका यकीन है कि 12वें इमाम मुहम्मद अल महदी, जो वर्ष 869 में पैदा हुए थे, मृत नहीं हैं, बल्कि उन्हें ईश्वर ने छिपा लिया है और एक खास वक्त वे पुनः प्रकट होंगे. वे उनकी वापसी का इंतजार कर रहे हैं. वर्तमान में जितने पाकिस्तानी अथवा कश्मीरी समूह भारत या भारतीय सेना के विरोध में खड़े हैं, उनमें से कोई भी शिया नहीं है. आज जिसे जिहादी आतंकवाद कहा जाता है, उसमें शियावाद का कोई भी अवयव शामिल नहीं है. फिर भी, ईरान सुन्नी समूहों समेत विभिन्न फिलिस्तीनी समूहों का समर्थक रहा है, जो सब इस्राइल का विरोध कर रहे हैं. इरानियों का अमेरिका से कोई झगड़ा नहीं है, उसके साथ उनकी कोई सीमा रेखा नहीं मिलती और अमेरिका के लिए एनसे नफरत की इसके सिवाय कोई और वजह नहीं है कि इस्राइल चाहता है कि अमेरिका ईरान के साथ कड़ा रुख अपनाये, क्योंकि वह इस्राइली कब्जे से फिलीस्तीनी को आजादी का समर्थन करता है.

शिया कुछ और भी समूहों में विभाजित हैं, पर उमेंमें सबसे बड़ा टूवेल्वर शिया या इमामिया शिया है, जिनके इमाम क्रमशः ईरान और इराक के गेम तथा करबला शहरों में रहते हैं. भारत का ईरान के साथ सभ्यतामूलक संबंध है. ईरान भारत की वर्तमान सरकार के मुस्लिम विरोधी रुख के बावजूद भारत का मित्र रहा है. यों तो वैश्विक स्तर पर भारत एक द्वितीय श्रेणी का देश ही ठहरता है, पर हमें अपनी शक्तिभर यह कोशिश करनी चाहिए कि अमेरिका और ईरान के रूप में हमारे दो मित्र देश आपस में एक अर्थहीन एवं अंततः भारत समेत सबके लिए हानिकारक संघर्ष की विभीषिका में न पड़ें.

(**अनुवाद: विजय चंदन**)

## देश दुनिया से

### ऐतिहासिक महत्व की हैं चीन की उपलब्धियां

**बीते** सत्तर साल में चीन के लोगों ने ऐतिहासिक उपलब्धियां रची हैं, जिनसे दुनिया लाभान्वित हुई है. यह बात वियतनाम के एक विशेषज्ञ ने चीन की सरकारी समाचार एजेंसी सिन्हुआ के साथ एक साक्षात्कार में कही है. वियतनाम के विशेषज्ञ गुएन विन्ह क्वांग ‘वियतनाम-चीन फ्रेंडशिप एसोसिएशन’ के अध्यक्ष भी हैं और चीन में वियतनामी राजनयिक होने के नाते वह चीन के दर्जनों राज्यों का दौरा कर चुके हैं, और चीन एवं चीन के लोगों की मेहनत को और तेजी से बदलते चीन को बेहद करीब से देखा है. वियतनाम के थिंक टैंक माने जानेवाले क्वांग व्हतमन में सेंटर फॉर स्ट्रेटजिक स्टडीज एंड इंटरनेशनल डेवलपमेंट के वरिष्ठ सलाहकार भी हैं. उन्होंने बताया कि चीन में सबसे शानदार विकास किसी क्षेत्र में है, तो वह इन्फ्रास्ट्रक्चर के क्षेत्र में है. चीन की एक कहावत है- ‘अमीर बनना है, तो पहले सड़कें बनाओ’. इस कहावत की बात करते हुए क्वांग ने कहा कि चीन में जब भी कहीं सड़कों का निर्माण हुआ, एक नया नगर या फिर एक नया क्षेत्र उभर आया. इस तरह के विकास ने चीन के लोगों की जिनगी को शानदार बना दिया है. दुनिया के बाकी देशों के लिए भी यह एक मिसाल की तरह है, जिससे दुनिया को सीखना चाहिए.



सामार : कार्टूनमूकबैटवॉटकॉम

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

सांस्कृतिक संस्थानों के नियंत्रण थाम लिये और उनसे अपने आनुवांशिक उदारवादी एजेंडे के हित साधने लगे.

जो लोग एक कश्मीरी दशशतगर्द को गोली लगने पर तो चीख उठते थे, मगर कश्मीरी पंडितों को कश्मीर से हिंसक रूप से निकाले जाने पर उनके समर्थन से बाज रहे, वे ही अब निशाने पर हैं. जब पृथ्वी पर स्वर्ग सरीखी कश्मीर की वनाच्छादित घाटियां सीमापार के परजौंवियों द्वारा अपनी शिकारस्थली बनायी जा रही थी, तो यहां तक कि नेहरूवादी भी चुपभी साधे बैठे रहे. एक पक्षपातरहित मानवीयता का सवाल आज बहुत मौजू बन गया है.

उनका खून तब क्यों नहीं खोला, जब 32-वर्षीया महिला पुलिस अधिकारी सौम्या पुफ्करन को उसके ही एक सहकर्मी एजाज ने आम की लपटों के हवाले कर दिया ? क्यों उन्होंने निधन हिंदुओं का बलात धर्मपरिवर्तन कर उन्हें मुस्लिम बनाने की रिपोर्टों को नजरअंदाज कर दिया ? जब वे विजय माल्या और नीरव मोदी जैसों के खून के प्यासे बने बैठे हैं, तो क्यों बेंगलुरु के उदारवादी उन 26 हजार मुस्लिमों की तकलीफ से खूबते नजर आते हैं, जिनके पैसे एक छब्र बैंकर मुहम्मद मंसूर खान लगाते हुए अपने संकीर्ण प्रतिस्पर्धी के श्रोताओं को आनंदित करने के उपाय और साधन तलाशने से नहीं रोकता. भारत के उच्चवर्गीय मुस्लिम नेतृत्व के उत्तरोत्तर बढ़ते सामाजिक-आर्थिक पराभव ने विदेशों में शिक्षित उच्चवर्गीय हिंदुओं के लिए जगह खाली कर दी, जो राज्य एवं उसके द्वारा प्रत्यक्ष अथवा परोक्ष रूप से

नियंत्रित कई संस्थाओं द्वारा मुद्देया सुविधाओं पर पलते रहे. उनकी संतानें सर्वोत्तम स्कूलों में दाखिल हुईं, उन्हें विदेशी छात्रवृत्तियां मिलीं और वे कमाऊ तथा प्रभावशाली पदों तक पहुंच गये. उन्होंने शैक्षिक संस्थानों, मीडिया तथा

मैं अभी तक भी मोदी प्रभाव को नहीं समझ सका हूँ. नया भारत नेहरू के उदारवादी ढांचे के अस्पष्ट भारत से रंग और शिल्प में बहुत भिन्न है. इस नयी पारिस्थितिकी से अपना तालमेल बिढाने हेतु भारतीय उदारवादियों को अपने अत्यधिक अहंकार के डीएनए की फिर से तलाश करनी होगी. बहुमत की लोकतांत्रिक आवाज को अपनी उच्च वर्गीयता तथा संकीर्ण संपर्कीयता से डराकर चुप कर देने का समय अब गुजर गया.



### आपके पत्र

#### मौत के जिम्मेवार कौन

बिहार में चमकी बुखार से असमय काल कवलि्त होने वाले बच्चों की संख्या में लगातार इजाफा हो रहा है. सरकार का हर कदम अब तक नाकाफी साबित हुआ है. मौत के आंकड़े के सौ पार कर जाने और मीडिया के हो हल्ला के बाद सरकार हरकत में आयी. आज जब हम चांद और मंगल पर बसने की बात कर रहे हैं, वहां इस समस्या का स्थायी निदान नहीं निकल पाना बड़ी विडंबना कही जायेगी. इस परिस्थिति ने हमारी स्वास्थ्य व्यवस्था के आधारभूत ढांचे के विकसित नहीं हो पाने के यथार्थ को परिलक्षित किया है. स्वास्थ्य और शिक्षा जैसी मूलभूत समस्याओं को दरकिनार कर हम विकसित होने का सपना छोड़ दें, तो बेहतर होगा. बराहल इस मौत की जिम्मेवारी किसकी है ? दम तोड़ती स्वास्थ्य व्यवस्था या फिर संवैधानिक दायित्व के प्रति उदासीनता बरत रही सरकार ?

**अमित अनुपम**, केरतपुर, कोलकाता .

#### देश भी ताकतवर बने

खुशी की बात है कि ब्रिटिश हेराल्ड के रीडर्स पोल, 2019 ने प्रधानमंत्री मोदी को 'डोनाल्ड ट्रंप, व्लादिमीर पुतिन और शी जिनपिंग' को पछाड़ते हुए दुनिया का सबसे ताकतवर नेता माना है. यह हम सभी के लिए बड़े गौरव की बात है. वास्तव में मोदी एक बड़े गरीब परिवार से उठे जर्मनी और अनुभवी नेता हैं, जिन्हें प्रार: हर चीज के बारे में अच्छे से मालूम है. अब लोकसभा में भी उनके प्रचंड बहुमत से उनकी सरकार भी ताकतवर है. अब इस नयी ऊर्जा के बाद तो उन्हें देश को भी और ताकतवर बनाने की जरूरत है, जिसके लिए उन्हें रोजगार, जनसंख्या नियंत्रण, सुगुंयेोजित शानदार विकास और पर्यावरण संरक्षण आदि पर युद्ध स्तर पर विशेष ऐतिहासिक कार्य करना होगा. देश में संसाधनों और जनशक्ति की कोई कमी नहीं है. देश की जनता को उनसे बड़ी आशा है.

**वेद मामूरपुर**, नरेला

#### निराशा की ओर दक्षिण अफ्रीका

दक्षिण अफ्रीका में हुए गत चुनाव में वहां की नेशनल कांग्रेस को 58 प्रतिशत मतों के साथ जीत मिली. तब लगा था देश में सब कुछ ठीकठाक होगा. लोग खुशहाल होंगे. अर्थव्यवस्था ठीक होगी. जीडीपी में बढ़ोतरी हो रही होगी. बेरोजगारी कम हो रही होगी, मगर यह क्या ? वहां के राष्ट्रपति सिरिल रामाफोसा इकबालिया का अचानक बयान आ गया कि देश की माली हालत ठीक नहीं है. जीडीपी पिछले एक साल में 3.2 फीसदी गिर गया है. देश के ऊपर अंतरराष्ट्रीय देशों एवं प्रतिष्ठानों का ऋण बढ़ता जा रहा है. बेरोजगारी आंकड़ों में तो 27 फीसदी, पर वास्तव में यह प्रतिशत 50 के ऊपर चला गया है. इसका मतलब देश इस समय डूबने की कगार पर है. जब संसलभेद से लड़ाई जीत कर नेल्सन मंडेला ने सच्चे लोकतंत्र की स्थापना की थी, तब विश्व ने बड़ी उम्मीद पाली थी, मगर आज उसी देश को यह हालत देख कर मंडेला की आत्मा भी रो रही होगी. रंगभेद से तो मुक्ति मिल गयी, मगर गुरबत से देश को अब भी राहत मिलती नहीं दिख रही है.

**जंग बहादुर सिंह**, गोलघाढ़ी, जमशेदपुर

