

When no one wants a promotion

The appraisal system in public sector banks needs to improve



HUMAN FACTOR
SHYAMAL MAJUMDAR

A couple of days before the interviews for internal promotion of junior officers, a general manager of a public sector bank (PSB) was told some of the candidates were keen to meet him. Sensing that they want to lobby for their promotions, the GM

was keen to avoid meeting them, but relented after he was told they have been waiting for a very long time. The meetings were an eye-opener. All of them had the same request: Please do not promote us. The bank had quite a few vacancies at the next level and was keen to fill the vacancies, and all that these guys wanted was they should not be considered suitable for promotion. In other words, they wanted the GM to exercise his influence to make sure that they fail in the interviews. The reasons for this strange request were varied: Some did not want to relocate, while others had family issues. A few others said they were near retirement and did not want additional responsibilities at the fag end of their careers. The basic theme of the discussions was the bank did not care about them when they were

willing to take up bigger responsibilities and gave them the same job year after year; so what's the point in promoting them when they don't have any career ambition left? A couple of them had an interesting take: A branch manager's job was the most thankless; they won't get any support from the seniors and would be made scapegoats if a problem arose. So why did they apply for the promotions in the first place? Almost all of them said they didn't do so voluntarily, but the bank left them with no option — either appear for the interviews or you would be transferred out of the region in the same position. The GM says the brief meetings with the junior officers sums up everything about what has gone wrong with the human resource planning in PSBs. In most cases, the promotions are an exercise in futility. What on earth will

the bank gain by promoting these reluctant junior officers to the next level if they have all been found to be inadequately skilled so far in their career? The second issue was that the bank did not initiate any development intervention to upgrade their skills. The first problem is with the appraisal system. As the A K Khandelwal-led committee on HR in PSBs says, the appraisal system is routinely administered. Much of the appraisals and ratings have upward bias, with 80–90 per cent of the appraisees getting 'excellent' rating. This inclination of the immediate supervisors not displeasing anybody does not lend to distinguishing performers from non-performers. Further, it generally has a cascading effect leading to mediocrity at all levels. This system has been going on for years for one simple reason: The immediate supervisors have no power, they can't incentivise or punish any

of their subordinates, so the general feeling is why spoil relationships by being miserly in ratings. Besides, the promotion policy, in force for several years, has built in rigidity in the matter of minimum length of service required to be put in by an officer in a particular scale for becoming eligible for promotion to the next higher scale. For example, the panel report says earlier, it used to take as many as 17 years for an officer in Scale I to become chief manager (Scale IV) and another eight years to become general manager (Scale VII). This resulted in an extremely adverse age profile of both executives and senior officers. This changed somewhat after bank managements were given managerial autonomy by the government to relax the eligibility criteria for promotions from one scale to another and frame their own promotion policies, including fast track promotions. Some banks have taken advantage of this, but the overall result hasn't improved much in the absence of a structured mechanism such as assessment centres for identifying potential

CHINESE WHISPERS

Identity politics
Trinamool Congress Rajya Sabha member Sukhendu Sekhar Roy on Thursday demanded in the House that West Bengal be renamed *Bangla* in three languages — Bengali, English, and Hindi — in deference to Bengali identity. At a time when West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has raised the issue of Bengali identity as a means to counter the Bharatiya Janata Party's increasing influence in the state, Roy said the West Bengal Assembly in July last year had passed a resolution to change the state's name and it was pending with the Centre. Roy said it seemed the Centre was "not keen" to rename the state. "The word Bangla, or the territory called *Bangla*, is believed to have been derived from *Banga*, a Dravidian tribe that settled in the region 1000 BCE," Roy said. After Roy ended his speech, to the pleasant surprise of his party's MPs, Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu responded with the slogan *Joy Bangla*, or victory to Bengal.

A quote book on swachhata
The government has ambitious plans to celebrate the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. In 2014, the prime minister launched the "Swachh Bharat" campaign on October 2, the birth anniversary of the Mahatma. Now, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has printed 20,000 copies of the prime minister's quotes on *swachhata*, or cleanliness. According to sources, the Jal Shakti Ministry, which comprises the ministries of drinking water and sanitation, water resources, and Ganga rejuvenation, is planning to distribute these booklets gratis. In his speeches in Parliament on the motion of thanks to the president's address earlier this week, the PM appealed for taking forward the water conservation and cleanliness campaigns. His "Mann ki Baat" radio broadcast this Sunday is likely to touch upon some of these issues.

A raw deal for auditors

There is a distinction between audit negligence and criminality. The government and the leaders in the auditing profession must have a clear dialogue



ASHOK MAHINDRA

The auditing "expectation gap" of what the public and other financial statement users perceive auditors' responsibilities to be and what auditors believe their responsibilities entail is getting wider and wider. This gap is further accentuated by the hard stance and attitude of the regulatory bodies. An audit cannot verify 100 per cent of all documents and balances. If the auditor were to verify 100 per cent of sales and purchase invoices, delivery challans, gate passes, production records, journal vouchers, assets, liabilities and all records of the entity and consider all management representations as unworthy, it would require an army of auditors sitting at clients endlessly, and it would not be possible to complete the audit within the timeline prescribed by law for presentation of accounts to the shareholders. Further, the cost of doing so would be prohibitive and disproportionate to the benefit that may be derived by the shareholder.

An audit cannot discover all types of fraud. The internal controls can be corrupted and circumvented through the collusive efforts of management, like in the Tri-Sure case (1985). Collusion by top management to commit fraud that usually involves sophisticated schemes, forgery, misrepresentations

will be nearly impossible to detect in an audit, unless there be information from a whistle-blower or something suspicious or alarming to rouse the suspicion of the auditor. It would be wise to focus on some of the important principles for consideration in the Tri-Sure case pointed out by Judge M L Pundse: "The auditor is required to employ reasonable skill and care, but he is not required to begin with suspicion and to proceed in the manner of trying to detect a fraud or a lie, unless some information has reached which excites suspicion or ought to excite suspicion in a professional man of reasonable competence. An auditor's duty is to see what the state of the company's affairs actually is...but he is not required to perform the functions of a detective." "In judging whether an auditor exercises reasonable care and skill, it would not be appropriate to proceed on matters which have subsequently transpired, but one must place oneself in the position of the auditor as when the accounts were audited and find out how the matters appeared or ought to have appeared to a man of reasonable care and skill." The current aggressive regulatory mindset seems to strongly suggest that an audit must be conducted like a forensic investigation and smacks of the benefit of hindsight, contrary to audit practice and ratio of the Tri-Sure decision. This mindset needs to change. The profession also needs to do its bit. Today the statutory auditors are debarred by law from providing certain identified non-audit services to their audit clients. However, the firms should go further and voluntarily restrict the provision of legally permitted non-audit services to their audit clients falling into the high-risk category. Another way to help bridge the perception gap is that audit partners should not be set any tar-



gets for internal revenues, profits and chargeable hours. **Multiple agencies probing auditors is conflicting**
In the Tri-Sure case, the auditors were probed in the Bombay High Court and by ICAI. Today, multiple agencies are in some way or the other involved in probes against auditors. In the now unfolding IL&FS fraud, we already have probes against auditors by ICAI, SFIO, NFRA, SEBI and ED and there is an overlapping of jurisdiction. The multiplicity of agencies probing auditors is confusing, conflicting and to say the least scary for auditors and is indicative of regulatory overreach. Only one regulator should be held responsible to regulate the auditors; not multiple regulators. If the newly formed NFRA (for listed companies and large unlisted companies) and ICAI (for smaller unlisted companies) are to undertake this task then the bench should comprise of those who have a clear understanding of standards. A majority of the members of NFRA should comprise of chartered accountants who are familiar with nearly 31 accounting standards, 38 standards on auditing, numerous guidelines, the leading authoritative books on auditing,

negligence, liabilities of auditors and with numerous case laws dealing with fraud and the auditor. **Regulatory agencies are blurring the distinction between audit, negligence and criminal collusion**
In 2018, SEBI passed an order against PwC alleging that the audit firm was hand in glove and colluded with the management of the scam-tainted Satyam and that there had been a total abdication by the auditors of their duty to follow the minimum standards of diligence and care expected from statutory auditors that infers malafide and involment on their part. The order, continued to state that a continuous omission to check the figures of the company with the external sources can definitely lead to complicity as an inference thereof, and that accumulated and aggregated acts of gross negligence scale up to an act of commission of fraud. According to media reports, in the IL&FS scam, SFIO has accused the auditors, DHS (Deloitte) and BSR (KPMG) of helping to conceal information and falsify accounts and alleged that they were culpable of fraud and connived and colluded with the management to conceal material information and have asked for

a ban for a period of five year. By bringing criminality into the picture, the regulatory agencies are blurring the lines between audit negligence and pushing hard for criminality arising from collusion. They appear to be laying down a new red line for levying charges of criminality against auditors based on inference and probability. This is a dangerous trend and will have serious ramifications for the auditing profession. The government and regulators need to proceed with care and caution and have good reason based on strong and conclusive evidence for levying criminal charges of collusion against auditors and not do so just by inference or probability of collusion or public pressure or media hype. There is a clear distinction between negligence and criminality. **Banning firms will be disruptive**
EY has been barred from bank audits one year. PwC has been barred for two years from any audit work of listed companies. DHS (Deloitte) and BSR (KPMG) may also be debarred for five years. According to press reports, the share of DHS (Deloitte) and BSR (KPMG) network firms on M-cap of all NSE cos was 40 per cent. If they are banned in the same manner as PwC was, listed companies in India will not be left with enough good replacements and this will seriously impact the financial markets, hiring of professional accountants by such firms and the foreign investment sentiment. Bans are too disruptive.

Conclusion
The auditing profession is getting a raw deal. Hasty premature decisions to attach all properties, including lockers, bank accounts and jointly held properties of auditors without cause just does not appear right to me. In such a high-risk environment, no chartered accountant will be ready and willing to do audits. There is an urgent need for a serious dialogue between the government and the leaders in the auditing profession.

The author is a former senior partner of A F Ferguson & Co. and assisted the defendants in the Tri-Sure case

PUBG diplomacy
News of the continuing love affair between a significant number of young, urban Indians and the hit mobile game PUBG has reached other countries. While parents and policymakers continue to raise hell about the negative impacts of the violent game, faraway Taiwan — a hub for mobile gaming — has used it as a peg to promote economic ties. On Wednesday, the country's top official in New Delhi, Representative Ambassador Tien Chung-Kwang, told a large gathering of youths that Indians were instinctively good at it. Taiwan is promoting both its gaming software and hardware in the country and a Taiwanese mobile gaming rig is set to begin its 60-day journey to small towns in India. Good hand-eye coordination and a fast-paced culture are important for national development as well as good gaming, Kwang advised youngsters. "I hope you keep on winning," he said.

INSIGHT

Can Facebook's Libra convince users?

The key to getting the consumers and merchants to use the digital currency will be incentives

PAUL VIGNA

Facebook Inc has big plans to remake the financial system with its cryptocurrency-based payments network. First, it has to get people to use it. The social-media giant's plan for Libra — the digital currency it is launching with a few dozen partners including Visa Inc, MastercardInc, PayPal Holdings Inc and Uber Technologies Inc — is the most ambitious yet to get consumers comfortable with the technology that underpins bitcoin. Facebook's ultimate goal is for consumers to use Libra to pay their bills, buy things and send money to family members abroad, among other everyday financial transactions. Facebook has a built-in advantage because of its massive reach; around one-third of the world's people visit the site monthly. But persuading them to change their habits and adopt a brand-new technology could be a tough slog. Privacy concerns also could hinder adoption of the new currency, though Facebook has said it won't mingle Libra users' social and financial data. "From a user perspective, I don't see why myself or any of us would need to switch," said R A Farokhnia, an economics professor at Columbia Business School. Bitcoin is a case in point. Its pseudonymous creator, Satoshi Nakamoto, pitched the original cryptocurrency to the world a decade ago

as a way for people to exchange value directly, without the intervention of banks or other middlemen. Yet it has failed to catch on as a payments platform. Facebook's toughest sell will be in the developed countries where established payment options such as cash and credit cards remain king, and in places like China, where mobile-payments networks dominate the market. Consumers in countries with limited access to banking services may be quicker to adopt the new currency. The key will be incentives. Fiat currencies work for a simple reason: Governments decree that their citizens must use and accept them. Digital currencies such as bitcoin and Libra without ready-made communities have to give consumers a reason to use them. The founding members of the Libra Association, the Geneva-based not-for-profit that will govern the currency, will be tasked with designing and spreading user and merchant incentives, which could include discounts. Libra's appeal, at least in the beginning, likely will depend on how many merchants and service providers sign up to accept it, said Dante Disparte, head of policy and communications for the Libra Association. It also needs to work like the established financial networks that consumers are accustomed to using, he said. Libra aims "to make the transfer of currency more efficient than the

alternatives," Disparte said. Bitcoin's development wouldn't have been possible without incentives. The miners that provide the computing power to maintain and secure the network upon which it exists get a shot at winning a competition for newly created bitcoin. "That was Satoshi's brilliance," said Dan Held, a bitcoin investor and entrepreneur. "It wasn't even the code. It's that the code aligned incentives among participants." Still, bitcoin has struggled to grow beyond its core base of users and aficionados because of technical limitations. Libra won't carry the force of law, and it will have little investment value. It is being designed as what is known as a stablecoin, pegged to the value of a basket of fiat currencies that will shield it from the big swings typical of bitcoin and its descendants. Thus stability and cost — Libra user fees are expected to be minimal — are likely to be its biggest draws, said Eswar Prasad, an economics professor at Cornell University. But trust could be a stumbling block, he said. The question of Libra's stability will be tied to Facebook's reputation, at least in its early years. Facebook still has a "reasonable amount of trust among its users," despite concerns about its privacy practices, Prasad said. But it is competing with the central banks that issue hard currency, he said, and that could be a difficult fight to win. "For all of Facebook's wealth and domination of the social-media space, it is difficult to see its currency becoming a durable and significant store of value," Prasad said.

Source: The Wall Street Journal

LETTERS

Save the NBFCs

This refers to the editorial "Repairing NBFCs" (June 27). Since the shadow banks are also playing a key role as drivers of economic growth, it is imperative to prevent and save these banks from slipping into insolvency. It is essential to recognise non-banking financial corporations (NBFCs) that need support from the regulator and the government to initiate corrective action. An asset quality review of the crisis-ridden NBFCs will divulge its real financial health and based on that the banking regulator must place the weak NBFCs under corrective action as is in vogue in the case of banks. The funding extended by the NBFCs to long-gestation projects, without matching the availability of long-term resources must be refinanced by the strong banks. The NBFCs must be restricted from resourcing short-term funding from financial institutions to roll over the resources to match asset-liabilities to ensure a healthy balance sheet. They must refrain from issuing long term loans to avoid lack of cash surplus to meet the repayments. Investors lost huge wealth because of the NBFCs imprudent business and it caused a sharp decline in the market values of the script of many NBFCs. It is paramount to reinvigorate the shadow banking sector to regain the confidence of the market. The crisis, if continues unaddressed, will negatively impact the overall growth of the economy. **VSK Pillai** Kottayam

PM's speech

In his reply to the Opposition in both Houses, Prime Minister Narendra Modi made some useful observations that the Opposition, particularly the Congress party, should note. He criticised them for finding fault in each and every decision of his government. A good Opposition must highlight some positive points in a government and then highlight the negatives. Secondly, he suggested that the

Opposition should self-analyse their failures rather than criticise the electronic voting machines. It is time for the Congress party to devise a strategy to win back its popularity by creating and sharing a vision to meet the aspirations of the young India. Lastly, while he suggested exemplary punishment for those guilty of lynching in Jharkhand, he should ensure that such incidents are not encouraged at least in the states run by his party. **Y G Chouksey** Pune

Unfair opinion on India

This refers to "India's China gap" (June 27). The opinion of the advisory mentioned in the article is governed by skepticism. His thinking is instead governed by uncertainty of post election Indian economic policy. Red tape, nepotism and corruption are easy explanations for an escape route for investors as these are not restricted to India. India is also going in for a liberalised trade policy. The current global scenario has to be considered in this regard. Presently, it has created investor uncertainty in view of a trade stand off between the US and China and the prevailing friction between the US and Iran. The possibility of intensification of the oil crisis in case of a conflict in West Asia will hit industry in India. However, this is not a permanent feature. Investors are thus temporarily hesitant in this regard as they expect quick return on capital. Coming to Vietnam, despite its strategic location on

the South China Sea, it will not have the capacity to absorb flight of capital from China, and simultaneously attract continuous long term investment from Japan and the Far East. However, India though geographically closer to China has a volatile political relationship with the latter. To state India will never be the next China in the medium term is an exaggeration and part of a wavering US commercial policy that the advisory has ignored. The Indian economy is more capitalist oriented and invites foreign investment into the same. We are however adopting a narrow minded approach towards language. Communication is an important requirement for trade and commerce and providing secondary status to English will harm both our national and international economic image. Ultimately, it is the quality, variety and talent of the workforce that should gain preference for a growing economy. There are also growing instances of self employment and hence the question of inferiority and superiority does not arise. Finally greater liberalisation in trade policy followed by superior infrastructure for global connectivity is essential to invite further investment and enhance our international image. **C Gopinath Nair** Kochi

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Better safe than sorry

Sebi's decisions will help protect mutual fund unitholders

Investor protection was a key discussion point for the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) at its board meeting on Thursday. This is evident from the slew of changes that the regulator announced in mutual fund regulations in the wake of the liquidity crisis, which has affected several schemes. In the case of Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services and Dewan Housing Finance Corporation, the downgrades in the ratings of their debt resulted in fund houses not finding an exit without a sizeable loss. Several fund houses entered into standstill agreements with promoters of Essel group and Anil Ambani group. Under the agreement, mutual funds, which had bought debt securities of privately-held firms with listed shares as collateral, would not sell the shares till a particular date. Due to the standstill in the case of Essel group papers, a few close-ended schemes were not able to pay the entire proceeds to unitholders at maturity.

Under the new rules, liquid schemes will now have to maintain at least 20 per cent in liquid assets including cash, government securities (g-secs), treasury bills, and repo on g-secs. Their sectoral investment cap has been cut from 25 per cent to 20 per cent, and the additional exposure to housing finance companies stands reduced from 15 per cent to 10 per cent. Valuation of papers can no longer be done on amortisation but on a mark-to-market basis. It has also restricted investments of a scheme in debt and money market instruments having credit enhancements of a particular group to 10 per cent and 5 per cent, respectively. In mutual funds' investments in debt securities having credit enhancements backed by equities, Sebi has raised the security cover to at least four times. It has also disallowed the use of a fund house's own trades for valuation in case of inter-scheme transfer.

On the equity side, the new rules say all fresh investments in shares by mutual fund schemes will be made only in listed or to-be-listed shares. Sebi has also tightened the screws on loan against shares, which has come to haunt lenders, including the mutual fund industry in some recent cases. It has expanded the definition of encumbrance and instructed promoters to disclose separately detailed reasons for encumbrance, when it crosses 20 per cent of the company's total share capital or 50 per cent of the promoters' holdings, which must be disclosed on the stock exchanges.

It's clear that both corporate and retail investors will see their returns from debt funds come down and promoters are likely to find it tough to raise money as refinancing will become tougher. But it's better to be safe than sorry when retail investors are involved. With some key loopholes plugged, Sebi's new proposals ensure that mutual funds do not step out of line and go a reasonable distance in protecting the investor. After all, mutual funds are not banks and their job is to invest on behalf of their unitholders. The Sebi chief is right in saying that the regulator does not recognise standstill agreements between fund houses and defaulting promoters, a practice that needed to be stopped.

Flighty decision

Reducing the ambit of AERA defies logic

The Cabinet decision earlier this week to shrink the ambit of the 11-year-old Airport Economic Regulatory Authority (AERA) by raising the passenger traffic threshold is an ill-considered move when seen against the expansion of airport privatisation. According to the Cabinet proposal, the AERA Act, 2008, will be amended so that the tariff-setting regulator will be responsible for airports with annual passenger traffic over 1.5 million; all other airports with passenger traffic below that cut-off will be administered by the civil aviation ministry. In one stroke, this takes 17 airports outside the AERA's purview, leaving it to administer 13.

The government's official explanation for this decision is to keep a lid on airport charges (parking and landing fees, ground-handling services, and so on). It is true that airlines routinely complain that the model adopted by AERA, which was set up as part of the government's airport public-private partnership plan, sets charges far too high. But it is unclear why the government should consider AERA fit to regulate one set of airports and not another. Besides, AERA has intervened to lower tariffs in the past: For instance, it scrapped the much-maligned User Development Fee for GMR-promoted Hyderabad International Airport in 2016.

It is significant perhaps that this Cabinet decision marks the third attempt to introduce this dual regulatory structure for airports — a Bill to this effect was introduced in Parliament in 2018 but failed to pass both the monsoon and winter sessions. The latest amendment, officials say, will enable the government to award bids after setting tariffs. But this is not the model that was followed by the National Democratic Alliance government in the last few months of its earlier tenure when it invited private sector bids to upgrade six smaller airports. These bids, it should be noted, marked the first major expansion of airport PPPs under the Modi government. The bidding terms, however, appeared to violate the AERA Act because they stipulated an evaluation on the basis of tariffs and passenger charges.

One business group won all the bids — for the airports in Ahmedabad, Thiruvananthapuram, Lucknow, Mangaluru, Guwahati, and Jaipur. The anomaly in the situation flows from several facts. First, these six privately-run airports will now come under the purview of the political executive rather than an independent regulator. Second, the bids were evaluated on the basis of the highest fee the bidder would pay the Airports Authority of India, the concessionaire. How, then, will the civil aviation ministry ensure lower tariff charges? Third, it is worth noting that AERA was set up to ensure fair play in tariffs because of the inherently monopolistic nature of the airports business (there is usually just one per city). Fourth, with respect to the six airports, several government departments had pointed out that a single bidder precludes the possibility of comparing competitive tariffs across operators, which in themselves would ensure optimum outcomes for users. The government needs to explain why it thinks the civil aviation ministry would be in a stronger position to deliver superior tariff decisions for smaller airports than a specialised body set up for the purpose.

ILLUSTRATION: BINAY SINHA



Pakistan, terror funds and Kashmir

Global sanctions against Pakistan for not doing enough to curb terror financing will not deliver any relief to India

On June 21, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) listed Pakistan among the "jurisdictions with strategic deficiencies" in addressing money laundering and financing of terrorism. The others were Bahamas, Botswana, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Ghana, Panama, Sri Lanka, Syria, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia and Yemen.

The FATF, headquartered in Paris, was founded three decades ago to look at money laundering, and after the 9/11 attacks also began looking at terror financing.

The strategic deficiencies observed by the FATF are mostly concerned with Pakistan's ability to implement an action plan it has itself put together. Most of this has to do with the transfer of money, a problem that is regional and cultural and not specific to Pakistan. India's government put its economy through pain in 2016-17 because the problem of black money was thought to be unaddressable through conventional means. The FATF says that Pakistan should continue "demonstrating that authorities are identifying cash couriers and enforcing controls on illicit movement of currency and understanding the risk of cash couriers being used for terror financing." The cash courier is a part of the networks that operate outside the usual channels in South Asia, including for the financing of the diamond trade. It will not be easy for Pakistan or India to eliminate such entrenched systems.

However, another deadline for Pakistan to complete its action plan has been set for October. In case it finds insufficient progress, the FATF has said it will decide next steps. India's media and

government are naturally keen that Pakistan be put by the FATF on the list of non-cooperative countries and face sanctions.

The question for us is whether Pakistan is at all acting against terrorism and if so what the indicators are to suggest that it is. Pakistan has had two major shifts in its strategy with respect to armed groups and terrorism. The first was after the death of Gen Zia ul Haq in 1988. The incoming president, a bureaucrat-hawk named Ghulam Ishaq Khan, bullied the young Benazir Bhutto (who became prime minister at the age of 35) and kept control over strategic affairs. One of the things the Pakistani army wanted was to switch its front from west to east. The Soviet occupation of Afghanistan was ending at the same time as unrest in Kashmir was beginning. For a period of around seven years, Kashmir would be under governor's rule because democracy was too dangerous for Delhi. The timing was perfect to take the jihad from Afghanistan to Kashmir.

Of the Afghan resistance groups that were funded by the Americans and Saudis through the ISI, the Pakistani favourite was Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hizb-e-Islami. Not particularly effective in battle, this was a modernist and urban organisation with thinking similar to Maududi's Jamaat-e-Islami.

The Jamaat in Kashmir, headed by Syed Ali Shah Geelani and its militant group the Hizbul Mujahideen, were therefore preferred by the ISI as their agents.



REPLY TO ALL

AAKAR PATEL

India at the G-20

This year's G-20 summit is being held at a time of grave global distress. Multiple faultlines are threatening to derail the global order and there is no leadership around the world that seems capable of rising up to the challenges of our times. Donald Trump is busy being Trump, threatening to rip up global frameworks without offering any real alternative. The European Union is coming to terms with its own dysfunctionality at a time when it is being challenged from within and without. The United Kingdom is so mired in a political mess of its own making that it is unclear if it can even think of anything beyond the next leadership contests for the post of prime minister. China is facing an economic crisis which, even with all the centralisation of power in Xi Jinping, is finding it difficult to manage. And Russia has no larger interest than challenging the US and the West at every possible platform. In more ways than one, India is well-positioned to make its presence felt.

As leaders of G-20 meet in Osaka, there is a sense of bewilderment about the real aims of this platform and if at all it has any relevance in this day and age. Today, the G-20 perhaps faces its most serious challenge since it first met in November 2008 to tackle the financial crisis with a primary

mandate of preventing future international financial crises. As trade tensions escalate among major powers and global growth decelerates, the G-20 countries will find it hard to present a common framework to tackle global challenges, something that they were able to do after the 2008 financial crisis when they not only consolidated IMF's budget but also prevented protectionist tendencies from taking root.

Today, the world looks much different. More than anything else, the international community would be watching the meeting between US President Donald Trump and Chinese leader Xi Jinping on the sidelines, and attention will be focused on whether Xi and Trump can strike a deal to end the ongoing trade war. It seems that Washington and Beijing have decided to resume their talks to resolve the trade dispute. Whatever the outcome, tensions between the US and China are unlikely to get resolved anytime soon with the structural shifts shaping the trajectory of this bilateral relationship.

For Trump, trade is going to be a key issue area as he starts his re-election campaign. And not surprisingly, ahead of his meeting with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the sidelines of the G-20 Summit, Trump decided to hit out at India, suggesting that India's tariffs on US products were



HARSH V PANT

The ineffectiveness in battle of this form of thinking led to dependence on other groups. The two main ones were Deobandi (Jaish e Muhammad, with its roots in a masjid in Karachi) and Salafi (Lashkar e Ta'iyaba, from Punjab). The active promotion of these groups and those associated with their ideologies had a fallout on Pakistan: The killing of Shias, seen as heretics. Over 600 Pakistani Shias were killed in 2003 as the state was unable to promote religious violence without setting alight sectarian hatred.

After 9/11, and particularly after the attack on the Indian Parliament, president Pervez Musharraf acted against the Deobandi and Salafi groups. This was the second major shift. The effect was immediate. In India, fatalities from terrorist and related violence collapsed in Kashmir. It peaked with 4,000 deaths in 2001, then dropped to 3,000 in 2002, then 2,000 in 2003, then 1,000 in 2004, then 500 in 2008 and 300 in 2009. Meaning less than 10 per cent of the violence seen at peaks. It had remained stable at that figure and, in fact, had fallen further under Manmohan Singh, though it is now going back up again. Last year, the 450 fatalities were the highest in 12 years.

India has fenced the LoC and the J&K authorities and police believe that exfiltration and infiltration have become very difficult. Meaning that Pakistan's role is limited and locals are unable to cross over to receive training. It is essentially those Kashmiris who are motivated enough to fight against the Indian state who are keeping the army occupied.

The fallout of this action against groups it nurtured was felt immediately in Pakistan. The violence that they had exported all these decades began showing its teeth at home. Terrorism related fatalities in all of Pakistan were 166 in 2000. When Musharraf tried to shut them down, terror exploded in Pakistan's cities. Fatalities went from 900 in 2004 to 1,400 in 2006, to 3,000 in 2007, and 6,000 in 2008. They peaked at 11,000 in 2009, a year after Musharraf left. Since then they have been in decline, falling to 7,000 in 2010, 6,000 in 2011, 5,000 in 2013, 3,000 in 2015, 1,000 in 2016 and 600 last year. This year, 2019, will be the most peaceful year in Pakistan in almost two decades.

India's governments have always told their people all terrorism is the product of Pakistani mischief. If we believe that Pakistan is responsible for violence going up, we have to accept that it is also responsible for violence going down. This we have not been willing to do. Of course, the fact is that today the violence in Kashmir is almost entirely local. It is the product of Indian policies over decades, the Indian media's recent hatred of Kashmiris and our absolute refusal to consider with sympathy their human rights.

Even if Pakistan faces sanctions after October and is punished for its many mistakes over the decades, this will not deliver any relief to India on the matter of terrorism, other than the satisfaction that the enemy has been humiliated.

"unacceptable" and they must be withdrawn. This despite the fact that US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who was in New Delhi this week, sought to play down trade tension with India by promising a renewed focus on negotiating better ties. Modi's engagement with Trump would therefore require his diplomatic skills at his best.

The last G-20 summit saw New Delhi participating in two trilaterals — one with Japan and the US on maritime cooperation and one with Russia and China on trade. It reflected a new confidence on the part of New Delhi to pursue issue based alignments. But as tensions rise between major powers and the Trump administration remains adamant on trade, India's ability to navigate this tricky terrain will be severely tested.

Modi has gone into the G-20 summit with an expansive agenda in mind to focus on "discussing the major challenges and opportunities faced by our world today with other global leaders" as "women empowerment, issues related to digitalisation and artificial intelligence, and progress in achieving SDGs and in our common efforts to address major global challenges such as terrorism and climate change form the rich agenda of the Summit." He is also vowing this G-20 summit as an important stepping stone for India to host the G-20 summit in 2022, on the 75th anniversary of India's independence. So clearly, Modi has great expectations from the G-20. Whether the G-20 in Osaka will be able to deliver still remains an open question.

But one is still left feeling that maybe something more conventional would have been just as satisfactory.

But perhaps this is essential to challenge the rigid framework of the Western realist novel. Life is often governed not by reason but by the lack of it, and significant events in our personal or global histories can often be a result of happy or unhappy coincidences. To take full advantage of possibilities created by these coincidences, one must learn to be vulnerable — like Datta, the protagonist of *Gun Island*. In doing so, one can often find new idiom for the novel, as Mr Ghosh does. His readers, like me, will remain curious about other experiments in his future work.

GUN ISLAND

Amitav Ghosh

Penguin
Pages: 289
Price: ₹699

Learning to be vulnerable



BOOK REVIEW

UTTARAN DAS GUPTA

Early in Amitav Ghosh's new novel *Gun Island*, the first-person narrator Dinanath Datta, a Brooklyn-based dealer in rare books, suffers a disappointment in love and is advised by his therapist to not be vulnerable. "Don't set yourself up to fail, yet again," he is told. A strange turn of events, however, sets him on an extraordinary journey during which he is compelled to be vulnerable again — and he rediscovers love. This process, in a way, is also a cri-

tique of western concepts of rationality and realistic narrative that Mr Ghosh seems to eschew in this book, discovering a new idiom that allows for new possibilities.

Readers of Mr Ghosh's novels will find many of the themes that have preoccupied him in his four-decade-long career, such as history and anthropology, the Sundarbans and the Gangetic dolphins, voyages and myths, climate change and the conflict between nature and men driven by profit. A few characters from his earlier novel, *The Hungry Tide*, reappear in this one: Kanak, Neelima, Piya. One narrative strain of *Gun Island* is woven around Manasa Devi, the Hindu goddess of snakes and the subject of medieval Bengali poems, *Manasa Mangal*. The cult of the goddess seems, at least to me, to hark even further back in Mr

Ghosh's oeuvre in *The Calcutta Chromosome*. But, though the themes may be familiar, they are given a fresh life in the book under review.

Another theme that reappears is climate change, which Mr Ghosh had written about in his previous non-fiction book, *The Great Derangement*, where he had claimed that this undeniable fact of our times, an existential threat was hardly ever written about in literary fiction. It was usually the subject of genre fiction. In *Gun Island*, climate change plays a significant part in the lives of all the characters, providing them with motivation for many of their actions. A quick scroll through Mr Ghosh's timeline on Twitter will reveal how closely he follows global developments about climate action, such as protests in London earlier this year by Extinction Rebellion.

Related to the theme of climate change is that of global migration, which Mr Ghosh has written about in his celebrated *Ibis* trilogy and returns to in this book, albeit in a more contemporary context. The arrival of armies of immigrants in Europe has led to cataclysmic changes in the political geography, leading to the rebirth of right-wing politics and nationalism, and even Brexit. While the focus in the mainstream media as well as in cinema and art has been on African and West Asian migrants in Europe, Mr Ghosh's novel deals with South Asians, especially Bengalis, who are one of the largest groups of political, social and climate refugees. As

in almost all his novels, Mr Ghosh opens up new areas of discussion and debate by focussing on this aspect.

Some of the incidents in the novel are as coincidental as freak weather. For instance, a call from an Italian mentor makes Datta embark on a journey; someone gets bitten by a snake causing him to hallucinate; there spiders jumping out and trying to communicate something, or not; a block of concrete falling off a building leading to a fortuitous meeting. Some of these coincidences are necessary for every narrative, but *Gun Island* seems to have too many of them. One would not have minded a plot where coincidence was not the primary mover. The envelope is, in fact, pushed so far that a climatic crisis is averted by a "miracle". To be fair, it is not a miracle such as in Graham Greene's *The End of the Affair* (1951); Mr Ghosh provides scientific reasons for everything that occurs,

Parched Chennai wasted conservation potential

It didn’t move on rainwater harvesting, reclaiming wastewater; other cities must learn from the crisis

CHENNAI'S WATER CRISIS perhaps signals the start of a new normal—abject water-deprivation in parts of India. Indeed, a 2018 report by NITI Aayog speaks of 21 Indian cities, including Bengaluru, Delhi, and Hyderabad, running out of groundwater by 2020; Chennai is the worst-affected among 400 cities across the world studied for water scarcity—four Indian cities are in the top-20 most affected—using data gathered by The Nature Conservancy and the World Wide Fund for Nature. India's water-crisis—600 million people already face high-to-extreme water stress every year—is rooted in the fact that it has just 4% of the world's freshwater resources while supporting 16% of its population. Scarcity is compounded by poor quality—with nearly 70% of water contaminated, 200,000 die every year due to inadequate access to safe water. A business-as-usual scenario means, by 2050, India's GDP could see a 6% loss.

Inadequate storage—annual precipitation is 15 times, and the volume eventually available for utilisation four times the country's reservoir capacity—and abuse of scant resources, thanks to poor agricultural policy among other reasons, are not the only problem. For a country looking at high-levels of water-stress in the future—clashes over water are happening not just between states, but also within—India doesn't really focus on recycle and reuse or better household/building level harvesting. About 80% of the water that reaches households is lost as wastewater that is never reclaimed. Contrast this with Singapore, which imported 55% of its water requirement from Malaysia in 1965 and yet, has managed to provide 100% access to clean water over the last three decades. Key to its success is its reclamation of wastewater. The Singapore Public Utilities Board, since 2000, has been treating wastewater using microfiltration, reverse osmosis and UV treatment, in addition to the usual water treatment processes, and has delivered potable water that is purer than even the WHO standards. Today, NEWater, the reclaimed water, meets 40% of Singapore's water needs while desalination plants, started in 2005, meet another 10%. To be sure, Delhi has announced plans to emulate the NEWater model, but the fact is, cities are failing at even simpler solutions. In Bengaluru, the tanker mafia is flourishing as the government has failed to meet demand—with the tankers extracting groundwater from areas adjacent to the city, water deficiency is spreading. The city draws 1,350 million litres externally per day, and yet it squanders 3,000 million litres of the daily average rainfall it receives. The Mumbai Metropolitan region has been battling for a linking of the Daman-ganga and Pinjal rivers—at significant environmental costs, experts say—but it fails to harvest the 2,400 mm of rainfall it receives, and won't reclaim wastewater. Tamil Nadu, in 2003, promulgated a landmark ordinance on compulsory rainwater harvesting by all buildings. Chennai has 12.5 lakh buildings, including government ones, and a 2015 government-mandated audit by Rain Centre, an NGO, found that government buildings in the greater Chennai region were the worst violators of the harvesting rule. Now, when Tamil Nadu rainfall deficit has reached 41%, the city is virtually shutting down in distress.

The complete neglect of wetlands, lakes, waterbodies and flood-plains and the concretisation/metalling march in cities has come at the cost of water percolation and silting of rivers. Once water-surplus, Chennai sacrificed nearly 75% of its waterbodies from a little over three decades ago to urban development. A study by Anna University shows Chennai lost 33% of its wetlands between 2006 and 2016 and 24% of its agricultural land (crucial for groundwater replenishment). Concurrently, barren land and area under settlement increased by 15% and 13%, respectively. Unsustainable urbanisation, and apathy for water reclamation and harvest brought Chennai to its knees. Other cities must learn from the crisis—given the climate crisis's impact on monsoon, time for action is running out.

The grey in the black

Estimates of black economy vary from 7-120% of official GDP!

THOUGH THE GOVERNMENT, and the BJP, has spent an inordinate amount of time obsessing about the size of the black economy—the demonetisation exercise in 2016 was meant to be a direct assault on this—the reality is that there is no clarity on just how big the black economy is. The latest report of the Standing Committee on Finance collates the studies done by three leading research institutes—NIPFP, NCAER and NIFM—and comes up with numbers that vary widely and, in many cases, are not even that large in relative terms. In terms of the total black money, the revenue secretary told the committee that the estimates varied from 7% to 120% of the reported GDP. And, as for the money held overseas, NIPFP put it at 0.2% to 7.4% of GDP between 1997-2009, NCAER at \$384-490bn between 1980-2010 (that's around 3% of GDP in that period) and NIFM even lower at \$216bn.

While that still seems a lot of money in absolute terms, the fact is that amnesty schemes haven't really worked in the past and, in any case, given the way GDP is growing, the government would do well to concentrate on closing loopholes for present tax evasion. While VDIS netted ₹9,700 crore in 1997, the IDS netted ₹28,000 crore in 2016—the latter, however, is less than 0.2% of that year's GDP. Given that tax-to-GDP was 8.7% in FY01 and rose to 12.1% in FY08, it is clear that there is a lot more to be made from tightening the tax noose on current income. This 12.1% number fell to 10.1% in FY14, the year before the BJP came to power, and then rose to 11.2% in FY18, before falling to 10.9% in FY19; what is important is to stop tax compliance from falling, and to try to keep raising it.

The first step, of course, would be to plug all loopholes in the tax framework so as to minimise the leakage; too many exemptions and rebates will ultimately allow assesses to fudge their accounts. As the economy gets more formalised, and the GST system becomes more effective with invoices being matched regularly, it should become harder for businesses to evade taxes. The authorities must, at the same time, mine all the information they are able to access on incomes, revenues, most important, expenditures. Operation Insight, for instance, which is a linking of several databases on purchases of jewellery, automobiles, property, credit card payments, airline tickets, etc, can be a big source of data, with which to track down evaders. Moreover, with every bank account now mandatorily linked to PAN numbers, banks can be asked to furnish lists of cash withdrawals by individuals above a certain threshold. To make this work, though, banks must quickly weed out fake PANs by matching them with the customers' Aadhaar numbers. Given much of the unaccounted wealth in the country is in the form of property, the amendments to the Benami Property Act and the crack-down on lakhs of shell companies—used to avoid taxes—will also help.

Offroading Education

Doing away with the minimum-education criterion for drivers is a bad idea

LAST WEEK, THE ministry of road transport and highways decided to do away with the requirement of a minimum educational qualification for driving a commercial vehicle. An amendment Bill aims at removing Rule 8 of the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989, which states that a driver needs to be educated up till class 8th for driving a transport vehicle. The reason given by the ministry for this amendment is that many people from backward regions of India depend on low-income livelihoods, such as driving—but the rule on the minimum educational level becomes a hurdle since many don't meet it. In such a scenario, the ministry felt that the mandatory rule for being able to drive transport vehicles should not depend on one's education level, but on the skill-set associated with driving. Also, the ministry feels that this decision will help tackle the shortage of 22 lakh drivers in the transport sector. It proposes to substitute the education criterion with strict skill testing of drivers. While that may seem alright in the short-term, doing away with basic education as a requirement for any job, especially when the government is providing elementary education for free, is a bad step in the long run.

Future jobs, including driving, will need basic education for skill deployment. With the digitisation of the transport sector unfolding at its current pace—from GPS-based navigation to text/picture-based interface with transport apps—acquiring the necessary skills will require basic education. In any case, automated vehicles may even make drivers redundant—basic education can prove a redeemer if it opens up opportunities for a second career. India may plunge further in the Human Development Index if it disincentivises the pursuit of education. Educational attainment of children shows a high correlation with that of parents—the move may lead to low education attainment for generations to come.

CHLOROPHILE

GOVERNMENT'S LACK OF ACCOUNTABILITY ON GM CROPS IS DRIVING FARMERS TO COMMIT ILLEGALITY, AND RISK MONETARY FINES & PRISON SENTENCES

Satyagraha for GM technology

ON SATURDAY, JUNE 23, Laxmikant Kauthakar, 35, called to say that he would plant illegal genetically-modified (GM) herbicide-tolerant (HT) cottonseed stacked with the bollworm-killing Bt trait the next day. He had stopped growing cotton in 2014, unable to afford manual weeding and pesticides, and switched to sugarcane and pigeon pea (tur) instead.

When reminded of the stiff penal provisions of the Environment Protection Act, 1986, Kauthakar said, "It is not about me. There are no jobs. Business is competitive. Our children don't want to do agriculture. They are rushing to the cities." He said there was a shortage of labour and costs of manual weeding were high. "Whatever technology is there in the world should be available to us. This is our right."

On Sunday, Kauthakar planted HTBt cottonseed at his farm in Adgaon Buzurg village, in Akola district's Telhara tehsil. He and 10 others, including Lalit Patil Bahale, were booked under the Seed Act, the Environment Protection Act and sections 143 (unlawful assembly), 180 (refusal to sign statement), 188 (disobedience of public servant's order) and 420 (cheating) of the Indian Penal Code. Akola District Collector, Jitendra Papalkar, said the government had no issues with HTBt cotton, if approved. The seeds sown had no labels. A sample had been sent for testing to the Central Institute of Cotton Research, Nagpur. "Who will bear responsibility if farmers suffer losses?" he asked.

Wilful planting of illegal HTBt cotton began on a 3-acre slice of Bahale's 38-acre farm at Akoli Jahangir village, in Akola district's Akot tehsil on June 10. The Shetkari Sanghatana, which believes in free markets and free access to agricultural biotechnology, is organising the protest planting. Bahale is a microbiologist. He had stopped growing cotton about two decades ago, after persistently losing the cotton crop to bollworms. That was before the GM Bt cotton trait was approved for cultivation in 2002. Bahale has switched to high-value horticulture.

The movement has gained traction. As of Monday, June 24, 19 farmers had lent their farms for the protest planting, including Mahadeo Khamkar of Anandwadi village in Ahmednagar's Shrigonda tehsil, Madhusudan Hame of Shegaon (Kund) in Wardha's Hinganghat tehsil, Nilesh Nemade of Adgaon in Akot tehsil, Baburao Appaji Golde of Revgaon in Jalna

VIVIAN FERNANDES
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Views are personal

district, Akshay Mahajan of Bori village in Ralegaon tehsil of Yavatmal district, and Radheyshyam Wable of Umbra village in Hingoli.

The slogans explain why: *Chor Bt nahin, halkache Bt* (Not by stealth, Bt by right) *Tantragyan swatantra amchya hakkachi, nahin kunyacha bapache* (Technology freedom is our right, not anybody's patrimony). *Chor Bt nahin, Imandaar Bt* (Honest Bt, not stolen Bt).

"Why do we have to go by hook or crook?" asks Anil Ghanvat, President of the Sanghatana. An agricultural science graduate, he practices farming in Ahmednagar. "This government has compelled us to be smugglers." The Field Inspection and Scientific Evaluation Committee, set by the Department of Biotechnology in 2017 to ascertain the spread of illegal HT cotton, estimated the area covered by illegal HT cotton at 15-17% of the total. It advised that the crop be destroyed. Not wishing to risk farmers' anger, states like Andhra Pradesh banned the sale of the herbicide Glyphosate, which spares HT cotton, but kills weeds, when sprayed.

Illegality cannot be condoned. But, what is driving farmers in droves to commit illegality, and risk monetary fines and prison sentences? The nub of the issue is the government's lack of accountability on GM crops. If a developer has spent time and money complying with a procedure established by law, can ministers deny or stall approval merely because they do not agree with the science or it doesn't suit their political interests? Who is responsible for losses caused to research companies, which acted in good faith, when their GM seeds are not approved for cultivation despite passing bio-safety trials and being approved by regulatory committees? Who will compensate farmers for losses or extra costs arising from being denied such technology? Shouldn't there be a time-frame for granting of approvals? And, if public sensitivity is the issue, shouldn't it be addressed with devices like labelling?

In February 2010, environment minister Jairam Ramesh arbitrarily imposed an indefinite moratorium on the release of Bt brinjal for cultivation. He invented a procedure not prescribed by law till then—public hearings in various cities, where shrill activists opposed to GM technology fanned fears about Bt brinjal, providing the minister an excuse to act in the "public interest." He converted the apex Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) into an appraisal committee. In fairness, the changes should have had prospective effect, but were applied retroactively.

In doing so, Ramesh ignored the vote of 16 members of GEAC and heeded the veto of just two of them, one of whom, the late Pushpa Bhargava, was a known GM crop technology baiter and the other was a scientist in his institute. He dismissed the view of a high-level GEAC committee that had studied the objections of anti-GM activists and found them to be without merit. He ignored the long history of safe use of Bt protein in various countries. He ignored the GEAC committee's view that stomach acids degrade the Bt protein in 30 seconds, that it breaks down upon cooking and was not detectable even in short-term digestibility studies.

Yet a series of environment ministers after him—Jayanti Natarajan, Veerappa Moily, Prakash Javadekar, Anil Madhav Dave and Harsh Vardhan—allowed the moratorium to continue. The brinjal fruit and plant spiked with Bt protein is deadly to the fruit and shoot borer; instead, farmers have been forced to douse brinjal with pesticides, which are ineffective once the borer prevents contact with them by lodging itself inside the brinjal fruit and stem. Bt technology has been used in Bangladesh for the past three years on the basis of bio-safety trials conducted in India. The number of Bangladeshi farmers growing it has risen from 20 to 27,000 and there have been no reports of any harm. Yet, Indian

farmers are denied the technology and Indian consumers have to eat pesticide-laced brinjal.

Another example is the GM mustard hybrid, DMH-11, developed by a team of Delhi University scientists with (public) funding from the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) and the Department of Biotechnology. The GM technology deployed in it, to first induce male sterility and restore fertility after cross pollination, allows the efficient development of high-yielding hybrids in mustard, which is self-pollinating.

The research was first published in an international journal in 2001. Field trials began in 2002. After 15 years, in May 2017, the GEAC recommended release for cultivation. Environment minister Anil Madhav Dave passed away before he could approve it, within days of the recommendation. His replacement, Harsh Vardhan, sat on the file, reportedly, because the Swadeshi Jagran Manch, one of 36 organisations affiliated to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) is opposed to GM technology.

In the case of HT cotton, pollen-flow studies began in 2006. Between 2008 and 2012, two levels of bio-safety research studies were conducted and the dossier was presented to GEAC in 2013. But in August 2016, the developer, Mahyco, withdrew the application for commercial release of the cottonseed because agriculture minister Radha Mohan Singh had upended India's intellectual property rights regime with curbs on retail prices and royalty payments that favoured seed companies more than farmers. Mahyco reckoned that even if HT cottonseed, combined with the insect-resistant Bt trait, were released, it would not profit from it.

"We don't want price controls or limits on royalty," says Ajit Narde, who heads Shetkari Sanghatana's technology cell. Ghanvat says farmers don't mind paying royalty for proprietary traits and market prices for seed so long as they get more than proportionate returns.

The Shetkari Sanghatana does not agree with Gandhi's vision of self-contained villages or his disapproval of modern technology, but like him, it wants farmers to be self-reliant. It draws inspiration from his Satyagraha technique. "We see Gandhiji's spectacles everywhere but not his vision," said Pradnya Bapat, the Sanghatana's leader tartly.

Who will compensate farmers for losses or extra costs arising from being denied such technology?

The conservative case for a carbon tax

If economic conservatives want to stay relevant, they need to provide market-based solutions to one of the biggest challenges of the 21st century—climate change

REPUBLICANS HAVE LONG been nearly united in their opposition to any comprehensive effort to reduce climate change. Part of the opposition is political: They may be making the calculation that, although voters are worried about the issue, actual carbon-pricing programs have not always fared so well at the polls.

But a significant part of Republican opposition is philosophical: They are worried about opening the door to a centrally planned economy. For the sake of the planet—and their party—they need to let this go. This isn't to say that Republican fears are irrational. Consider the case of Washington State's ill-fated carbon-tax proposal.

In 2016, centrists in the state introduced an initiative that would impose a \$25 carbon tax and use the revenue to cut other taxes in the state. It is the kind of proposal that Republican economists such as Greg Mankiw have long supported, and in fact he supported this tax. Opposing the tax, however, was a coalition of left-wing groups known as the Alliance for Jobs and Clean Energy, which said the bill didn't do enough to tackle issues of poverty, race and social injustice. The state Democratic Party eventually lined up behind the alliance, and the measure was defeated.

Fast forward three years to the drafting of the Green New Deal resolution in the US Congress. This time, the national Democratic Party enlisted the support of organisations like the Sunrise Movement to ensure that the plan would be compatible with the so-called climate-

justice movement. The final product includes language "guaranteeing a job with a family-sustaining wage, adequate family and medical leave, paid vacations, and retirement security" to all Americans as well as a vow to repair the "historic oppression of indigenous peoples, communities of colour, migrant communities, deindustrialised communities, depopulated rural communities, the poor, low-income workers, women, the elderly, the unhoused, [and] people with disabilities."

No matter how one feels about this list of priorities, it goes far beyond reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Nonetheless, the Green New Deal resolution has been endorsed by the major Democratic presidential candidates.

So conservatives are correct that powerful groups on the left are seeking to use climate-change legislation to fulfil much more expansive objectives. That just makes it all the more important for them to advocate more strongly for a pro-market approach to climate change. If they don't, then the debate will devolve into a choice between the extreme vision favoured by climate-justice advocates and the bloated, something-for-every-interest-group version favoured by the Democratic establishment.

As an alternative, conservatives should offer the same type of pro-growth tax exchange that the climate-justice movement defeated in Washington State three years ago. That proposal might not have been progressive enough for Washington, but it

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Bloomberg

would probably sell nationally.

There are small-government conservatives, typified by Grover Norquist, who fear that even a modest carbon tax would grow over time and be used to fund additional spending rather than tax cuts. Here Republicans should rely on an old mantra they usually invoke: Trust the voters.

Energy taxes, which affect the prices of things people buy every day, are more transparent than income taxes. (Many voters don't even realise they got an income tax cut in 2017.) Gas taxes are so salient, in fact, that after the California legislature passed a 12 cents per gallon increase in 2017, voters almost repealed it by referendum the next year.

There is also a concern in some parts of the country that a carbon tax would be the death knell to a coal industry already in decline due to larger economic forces. Pairing a carbon tax with relief for coal miners would at least provide some recompense for job losses that are all but inevitable.

There are obvious reasons why Republicans have been hesitant to embrace carbon taxes. But American politics are shifting rapidly. Failure to articulate a climate change policy has hurt Republicans with younger voters. If economic conservatives want to stay relevant, they need to provide market-based solutions to one of the biggest challenges of the 21st century.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

PM Modi's speech
Prime Minister Narendra Modi's no-holds-barred vituperative attack on the Gandhis is nothing new. However, it is not clear why he considered them central to his articulations in the Parliament. While Modi never tires of reminding us of the Congress party's dependence on the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty, he deems it unnecessary to acknowledge the umbilical cord existing between RSS and BJP. Evidently, BJP is the political arm of RSS. That Modi is larger than life does not mean that RSS does not pull the strings. Conveniently Modi, an erstwhile RSS *pracharak* omitted to mention that RSS extended support to the Emergency. What is more, he forgot to refer to blots on India's democracy other than the Emergency. Hate crimes have increased manifold during his rule. As for Modi's call for fulfilling the dream of an inclusive nation, it is doubtful that a leader who refused to wear a skull cap and compared victims of communal violence to puppies possesses the moral authority to act as a unifier. One wishes that Prime Minister Narendra Modi shows the strength of personality to repudiate his description of himself as a Hindu nationalist (which he did in a BBC interview in the run-up to 2014 general election) and re-christen himself as an Indian nationalist to do justice to the Constitution and the exalted office that he holds.

— G. David Milton, Maruthancode

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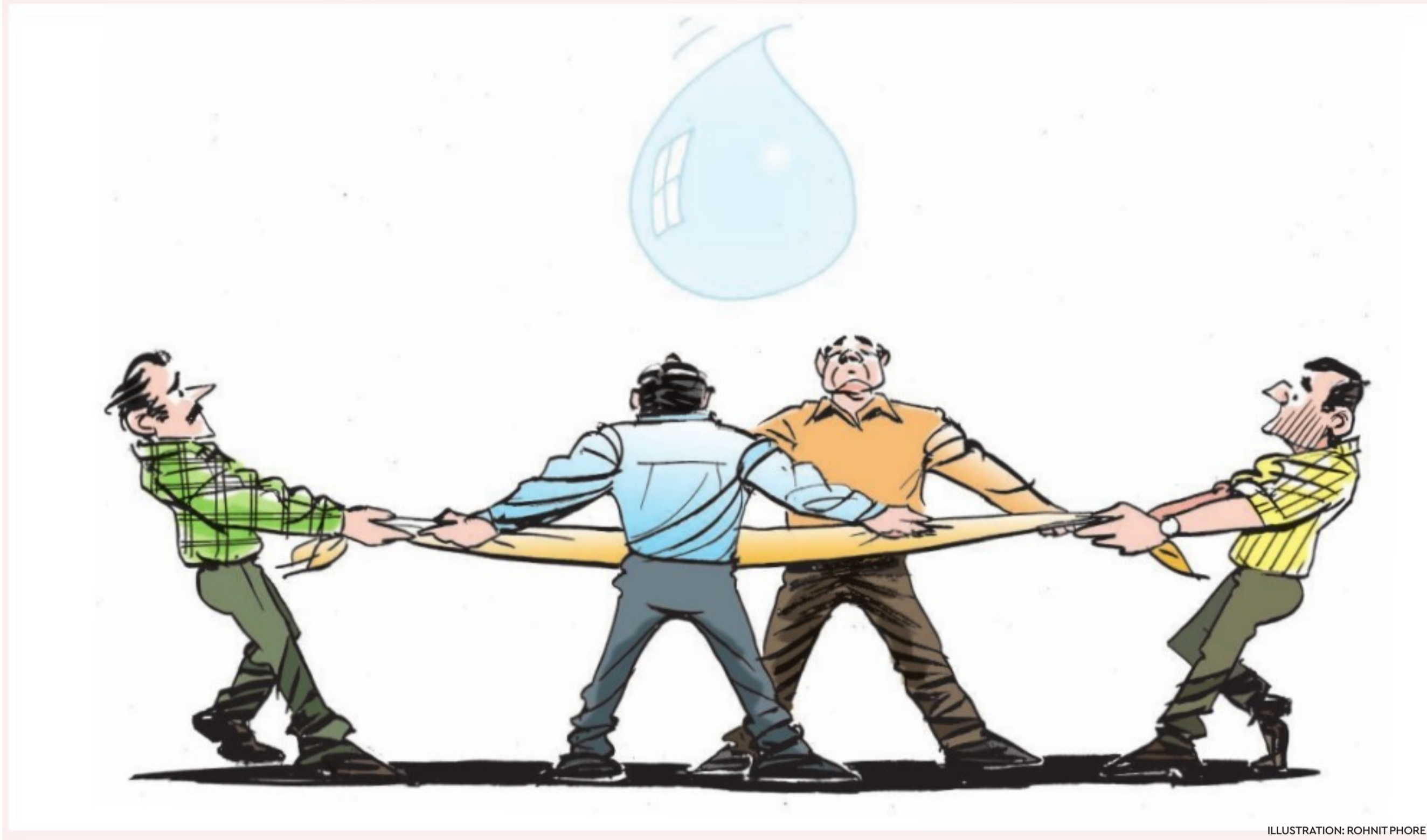


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CITIES AT CROSSROADS

Saving India's water

What is needed is a political compact between the Centre and the states to jointly address the challenges of saving India's water, while actively involving local governments and engaging with the communities of water users. It is a tall order, but there is no alternative than to begin

CHENNAI HAS BEEN MUCH in the news recently for its water crisis. Scuffles and suffering have been reported from different parts of the city. Water crimes in Ranchi have also hit the headlines. Cities in Madhya Pradesh have seen stabbings and killings over water, and the police have been called upon to guard water tankers and water sources. Cape Town in South Africa was the first major city in the modern era to face the threat of running out of drinking water, as reported by the BBC in February 2018. The BBC listed another 11 cities most likely to run out of water. This list included Bengaluru.

The 2030 Water Resources Group on *Charting Our Water Future*, set up by the erstwhile Planning Commission in 2009, had projected that if the current demand pattern for water continues, by 2030 the available water will meet only about half of India's demand for water. Ten years later, in 2019, the water crisis is here and it is taking its toll on rural as well as urban areas of India. We are staring at a train wreck in slow motion and we need to act fast and act boldly to avoid the crash.

Water scarcity in India has come about not so much from insufficient supply of water as from the way in which we manage the water we have. Agriculture

uses 78% of India's water, and uses it very inefficiently (agricultural water-use efficiency is 30% for surface water and 55% for groundwater in India, compared with 77% in Israel). Notwithstanding the large investments in irrigation networks, about two-thirds of water used for irrigation comes from groundwater. Two factors—the huge electricity subsidies for farmers to pump groundwater and the fact that groundwater is largely unregulated—have led to a steady explosion in its use through tube wells for irrigation over the past several decades. About 80% of rural demand for drinking water is also met by groundwater.

Urban India's inefficiency in water use arises from inadequate, old and dilapidated distribution networks, inefficient operations, inadequate metering, incomplete billing and collection, and a general state of poor governance. Another source of inefficiency comes from not treating wastewater and using the recycled water for specialised uses such as horticulture and also for flushing toilets. Underpricing of urban water also contributes to wasteful use of water. If something is underpriced, users will use more of it.

Most of us living in cities expect to have access to drinking water from taps in our homes. This requires a distribution network of pipes that can bring water

from the basic source of bulk supply to our homes. However, access to treated tap water is available to only 62% of urban households (Census 2011). Those who are unconnected to the piped network, and include mostly but not only the poor, have to rely on buying water from tankers at exorbitant rates. This leads to increasing but unaccounted use of groundwater by extensive digging of borewells to meet the demand deficit of water.

There is clearly a need to expand coverage to the "unconnected" population. This will call for expansion and renovation of the infrastructure of the distribution network. It will also call for additional supplies of water, especially because the groundwater that is currently being used to supply this population is expected to dry up. The NITI Aayog has projected that ground water for 21 cities will run out by 2020 (i.e. next year), and the cities include Bengaluru, Delhi, Chennai and Hyderabad.

Financing the expansion in urban water supply will be a problem. Even if the capital cost of the infrastructure is made available either through national missions or public-private partnership, the operation and maintenance cost of running the system (and in the case of PPP, a large part of the capital cost) will have to be recovered through user charges. Pricing water is important both for demand management and for economic viability of water-delivery systems.

We also need to mobilise more supply of water from basic natural sources. Only then can greater connectivity result in piped water delivery to all in urban areas. The mobilisation of additional supplies of water poses a major challenge, since the natural recharge zones are increasingly eroded because of unplanned urbanisation.

In addition, we need to deal with the supply constraints arising from the neglect of rivers, lakes, ponds and other waterbodies in and around our cities, which feed the reservoirs that are the bulk sources of water. These waterbodies need to be protected from encroachment so that our catchment area for water storage and rainwater harvesting is not reduced. This requires strict vigilance on land-use planning and building permissions in our cities. It may even warrant removal of existing encroachments. An important role has to be played by the concerned state governments including ensuring compliance with environmental guidelines laid

down by the ministry of environment, forest and climate change, and also the National Green Tribunal. Above all, increased water-use efficiency in agriculture is critical to release water supply from agriculture for other uses.

The quality of water issue is also very significant for public health. Only about 30% of the municipal wastewater or sewage is treated, and the rest is released untreated into rivers and/or the ground. Because of density and concentration in urban areas, contamination from wastewater happens much faster. It is also important to ensure that untreated sewage is not dumped into open storm

water drains through which it is carried and discharged into waterbodies. Surveys of groundwater in recent years show higher and higher levels of microbiological contamination. It is essential to ensure that the wastewater is treated before it finds its way back into our basic source of water and contaminates it.

Water is even more important than food for survival. No wonder, water governance is intimately linked to politics. It reminds me of the Pakistani play *Kala Mainda Bhes* (Black is My Attire), which I saw in Delhi some 20 years ago. In the play, the owner of the only well in the village, *Khoaoq Shah* (literally meaning the Lord of the Well), reigned supreme and his rule was called "*Khoaoq Shah di Sarkar*" which was subordinate only to what was called *Vaddi Sarkar*, i.e. the Almighty. Cities in Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh certainly have no *Khoaoq Shah* yet, but the crisis of water supply seems just as acute.

It is clear that management of water requires a holistic approach taking account of the multiple aspects that have been spelt out above. In a way, setting up of the ministry of jal shakti is recognition of this, except that jal shakti deals with rural water needs only. We cannot split urban water from rural. Water will flow from rural to urban and vice versa, and has always done so. Besides, reshaping water governance will require state governments and local governments to take coordinated action in a federal system. What is needed is a political compact between the Centre and the states to jointly address the challenges of saving India's water, while actively involving local governments and engaging with the communities of water users. It is a tall order, but there is no alternative than to begin.

We need to deal with the supply constraints arising from the neglect of rivers, lakes, ponds in and around our cities, which feed the reservoirs that are the bulk sources of water

There could be efforts towards pushing consumer spending by leaving more disposal income in the hands of the middle class and mobilising private investment

UNION BUDGET

Bringing the economy back on track

FRANK
D'SOUZA

Partner and Leader, Corporate & International Tax, PwC India



Sluggish economic growth, addressing collection targets are areas to target

THE UNION BUDGET 2019 is scheduled at a time where reviving a relatively—by recent standards—sluggish economic growth and addressing collection targets are the most important areas for the government as it starts the journey into its second term. Therefore, in an effort towards pushing consumer spending by leaving more disposal income in the hands of the middle class and mobilising private investment without compromising on tax revenue collections, which fund public spending, the Union Budget 2019 could be walking a tightrope for the government.

On the personal tax front, increasing the basic exemption limit may not align with the government's objective of widening the tax base and, thus, reduction in slab rates could be an alternate that may be considered to reduce the tax burden on the middle class. Although given the sops provided in the Interim Budget in February 2019, this appears unlikely. Also, to channelise individual savings into infrastructure spending of the government, reintroduction of infrastructure bonds with tax incentives may be on the cards.

At the beginning of the first term of the NDA government, corporate tax rate was proposed to be gradually reduced to 25% by the end of the five-year term, from the 30% rate applicable to the corporates. But in the Union Budget 2018, which was the last full Budget of the government, the corporate tax rate was reduced to 25% only for MSMEs with turnover/gross receipts less than ₹250 crore. With other major economies like the US bringing in tax rate cuts to attract investments, India would not want to be seen as an outlier with higher tax rates amongst major economies. Conversely, fiscal prudence may not permit the government to provide a corporate tax rate cut. However, coverage of corporates within this lower tax bracket may be broadened by increasing the threshold of turnover of ₹250 crore.

Employment data has been an area of concern in the recent times. To further promote the start-up initiative and MSME growth, tax incentives like exemptions on income from funding activities for the first few years may be provided to the investor community/angel investors. This could help mobilise private investment, generate employment, increase consumer spending, and revive the growth rate.

From the perspective of incentivising sustainable growth through large-scale manufacturing and adoption of electric vehicles, it would not be surprising to see some incentives and tax holidays for manufacturers of electric vehicles and batteries or providers of charging infrastructure being introduced in the Union Budget 2019. The incentives may also be extended to the consumers of electric vehicles to take care of the additional cost burden due to higher costs of these vehicles—more importantly, with subsidies that existed in FAME being withdrawn under FAME-II.

Towards addressing the challenges around generation of black money, the government may consider imposition of taxes in the range of 3–5% on cash withdrawal of more than ₹10 lakh in a year. It is believed that paying ₹30,000–50,000 on value of ₹10 lakh can be perceived as a loss by the common man, and this will push the economy towards complete digitisation and keep a tab on the generation of black money.

For the international community, the draft rules released for public comments last month, dealing with allocation of appropriate profits of MNCs doing business in India for taxation in India, may be introduced either in the Union Budget 2019 or around that time. This will have significant implications on many of the MNCs doing business in India, physically or through digital medium.

One will also wait to see how the new finance minister deals with the introduction of the new direct taxes code and what announcements are made in this regard.

DEAR PRIME MINISTER, YOU have been voted back to power at the Centre for a second innings of five years with a thumping majority. It happened because you connected meaningfully with the masses, and especially with the urban and rural poor (includes small/marginal farmers, landless labourers), by announcing and executing (to some extent) a plethora of schemes (Jan-Dhan, life insurance at ₹1 per day, Ujjwala, Swachh Bharat, Saubhagya, Ayushman Bharat, Mudra loans, PM Fasal Bima Yojana, PM-Kisan, etc), benefiting them in one way or the other. These schemes resonated so well with the masses that even important issues—such as a slowing economy, high unemployment rate, demonetisation, implementation of GST, farmers' distress and the Rafale controversy—did not matter to the poor voter as much as 'Pulwama' and 'Balakot', which demonstrated your strong, decisive and stable leadership to the people in the absence of any easily-acceptable alternative.

Having said that, my purpose here is not to analyse the reasons of your victory in the parliamentary elections, but to emphasise that now is the time for introspection and pondering as to what is to be done in the next five years. I say this because the poor of the country are still poor and facing untold miseries, and we should not forget that they voted for

Need anti-drought measures, Mr PM

Droughts occur in India at frequent intervals and a permanent solution needs to be found

PP
SANGAL

The author is a former ISS and UN consultant



Modi with some good hopes in the near future. It needs to be stressed here that achievements under various programmes of the government during the last five years (2014–19) can only be said to have small but without any significant impact on the quality of social and economic aspects of life. Added to all this, now we are facing the big challenge of impending drought this year, and my objective here is to focus on the various issues concerning drought and, sir, what your government needs to do about it. To my mind, there are four main factors that appear to be contributing to drought. These are as under:

First, according to India Meteorological Department (IMD), the pre-monsoon

rain (March–June, 2019) have fallen short by 25%—the second-driest pre-monsoon season in the last 65 years (it fell short by 31% in 2012). Here, it would be interesting to note that one of India's wettest places, Agumbe in Karnataka's Western Ghats, received 158% less pre-monsoon rains this year. Now, due to the occurrence of weak El Nino weather phenomenon over the Equatorial Pacific Ocean region, monsoon rains (June–September, 2019) are expected to be less than normal (which is 96–104% of long period average)—and even though IMD is somewhat changing its predictions recently, only time will tell and we should not be caught unawares.

Second, only about 35% of the culti-



vated area has proper irrigation facilities (which are also being adversely impacted by melting glaciers due to global warming) and the rest 65% is rain-dependent. Further, groundwater is getting scarce by the day due to overexploitation in some regions/states due to wrong choice of crops being grown. Punjab stares at a parched future because 96% of the 35.78 billion cubic metres (bcm) of groundwater extracted is used by paddy growers, and it is estimated that the state would empty all its subsoil water within 22 years if the current rate of fall of 51 cm per year in its level continues, thus turning the country's food bowl into a desert. A similar glaring example is that of Maharashtra, where growing of sugarcane is consuming 60–65% of irrigation water. What a grim scenario and a great environmental concern, too.

Third, water scarcity leading to drought is being created, as out of a total annual precipitation of 4,000 bcm, only 1,100 bcm of water is eventually used either because of losses (2,900 bcm) due to evaporation or due to constraints like water harvesting and lack of storage capacity, which is barely 270 bcm today.

The situation is being worsened by the fact that a large number of anti-drought projects (7.9 lakh, costing ₹417 crore) related to water harvesting and micro-irrigation taken up in many states under MGNREGA are incomplete or have been abandoned due to inadequate fund allocation, and only 27,000 works have been completed so far. Karnataka, Maharashtra (Vidarbha region) and Andhra Pradesh (Amaravati) are some cases in point where a large number of drought-proofing works are incomplete.

Fourth, water availability in the reservoirs of 91 dams in the country was about 31.65 bcm as on May 30, 2019, which is about 20% of the total storage capacity of these reservoirs, according to the Central Water Commission (CWC). The states worst affected and having storage much less than last year in the corresponding period are Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Kerala and Tamil Nadu (of a total live storage capacity of 51.59 bcm, reservoirs have live storage availability of

5.19 bcm) in the south, and Maharashtra and Gujarat (total live storage capacity is 31.26 bcm and availability is only 3.53 bcm) in the west. Other affected states are Jharkhand, Odisha and West Bengal and in the east, and Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh in central India.

It must be mentioned that of the 634 districts, 393 are not drought-ready and only 241 districts (40%) are drought-resilient. Thus, the situation is very grave and farmers' distress is going to increase manifold. This would adversely impact India's GDP growth and lower the achievements under UN Sustainable Development Goals, in which we are already lagging behind targets. Droughts occur in India at frequent short intervals and a permanent solution needs to be found out by taking correct policy decisions, which have been eluding us so far.

To conclude, although many state governments like Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Odisha and Rajasthan have declared many districts as drought-hit, the central government is yet to declare drought formally. I hope the meeting of the Governing Council of the NITI Aayog under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister, held on June 15, would have taken a serious note of threatening drought and water management in drought-hit areas with the same urgency as shown in the appointment of the two PM-led panels on struggling growth and job creation.



The IndianEXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

OSAKA OPPORTUNITY

How PM Modi approaches the trade question is not only central to India’s engagement with US, but also with all major economies

AT THEIR MEETING in Delhi on Wednesday, External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar and US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo had earned their pay by finessing the articulation of the many differences that have cast a shadow over their partnership. They also sought to develop a framework to address the divergence, build on the convergence and identify ambitious new targets for cooperation. But the real work begins on Friday, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi sits down with US President Donald Trump on the margins of the G-20 summit in Osaka. The Osaka encounter is likely to set the direction and orientation for a strategic partnership, arguably India’s most important. If Jaishankar and Pompeo presented the opportunities and challenges before India and the US in a constructive way, Modi’s conversation with Trump is likely to be very different — “free and frank”, as diplomats tend to characterise a direct and difficult conversation. Ahead of their meeting in Osaka, Trump tweeted, demanding that India withdraw the recent tariffs it has imposed on US goods in response to US duties on steel and aluminium imports announced nearly a year ago.

At the joint press conference with Pompeo, Jaishankar conceded that the ability to resolve differences on trade is the biggest immediate test for the bilateral relationship. It is not going to be easy. Over the last two years, India has seen Trump launch trade wars against friends like Canada and adversaries like China. Delhi is not used to the kind of public badgering that Trump employs against his interlocutors. It must now deal with it. Modi must be prepared to hold his nerve amidst the prospects for reckless escalation by Trump. He must focus on negotiating the differences calmly. That is what China’s Xi Jinping and Japan’s Shinzo Abe and other economic partners of the US are trying to do.

How the PM approaches the trade question is not only central to India’s engagement with the United States, but also with all the major economies. Delhi’s failure to advance trade liberalisation in the last few years has frustrated all its major economic partners, including the US, European Union, China, ASEAN and Japan. Some of them, like the ASEAN, would like to simply bypass India. Delhi’s recent protectionist temptations are indeed tied to the lack of domestic reforms to make Indian industry and agriculture globally competitive. Coupled with the headlong rush to “data nationalism”, the PM finds India at odds with much of the G-20. Flush with a massive political mandate, Modi has an opportunity at Osaka to assure the world that India is ready for practical give and take on trade issues and on global data flows. An India that can’t reinvent itself at home, however, will find it hard to deal with the profound external challenges arising from the breakdown of the old trading order as well as the rise of a new digital economy.

VALERIA AND GURUPREET

Their deaths are a reminder that a more humane politics around immigration is needed

WHEN THEIR BODIES were found on the bank of the Rio Grande, the river that forms a border between the US and Mexico, Valeria (23 months old) had her arm draped around her father, Alberto Martinez Ramirez. In her last moments, she was likely clinging to Alberto, as they were swept away, attempting to cross over to the US. The Martinez family walked from Ecuador to try to get to America through Mexico. A week earlier, seven-year-old Gurupreet Kaur died while crossing the Arizona desert. From Punjab, she had entered the US via Mexico. The image of Alberto and Valeria, the death of Gurupreet, must become a catalyst for a new way of thinking about immigrants and refugees.

US President Donald Trump kicked off his campaign by calling Hispanic immigrants “rapists and criminals”. Across Europe, the far-right has been gaining ground by claiming that the refugees from Syria, convulsed by a civil war and theatre for Great Power rivalries, will dilute local culture and pose threats to national security. In India, Muslim migrants, often from Bangladesh, have been referred to as “infiltrators”, while those from the majority community are treated as refugees — now, this duality may well be enshrined in law with the proposed amendment to the Citizenship Act. There is enough evidence to show that immigrants benefit their adopted economy. Germany, which left its borders open to Syrian refugees, is finding that with some training, the new residents are bridging the labour gap in the country, especially in terms of vocational jobs. The US, which is largely a country of migrants, has also benefited from Hispanic immigrants: Multiple studies have established their contribution to economic growth, both as job creators as well as in jobs that many native-born Americans no longer want.

The rationale behind the politics that seeks to prop up the bogey of the migrant is based on a limited and impoverished understanding of citizenship. Capital — wealth — now moves with comparative ease across free markets while labour is mostly not allowed to. The fact remains that there is a genuine tension between the idea and benefits of national citizenship on the one hand, and the inequalities, shaped by history, that exist between nation-states. This requires a reimagining of the social contract between people’s rights and economic sovereigns on a larger scale. But the starting point for such a project has to be informed by the image of Valeria in her father’s arms, not a brutal politics that seeks to label their community “rapists and criminals”.

PAST AND PRESENT

In Pakistan, a memorial to Ranjit Singh is a refreshing change for a country used to looking at all history as Islamic

THE PAST, HISTORIANS often say, is never dead. It lives in the present. This adage of historiography is not always about what societies and polities choose to talk about or debate, it’s also about their silences and erasures. Pakistan, for example, has had a long standing discomfort with its non-Islamic past. However, a refreshingly different imagination was on show in the country on Thursday, when a life-sized statue of the 19th century Punjab ruler, Ranjit Singh, was inaugurated in Lahore. The Walled City of Lahore Authority has said that the memorial is in keeping with the Pakistan government’s recent focus on “religious tourism, particularly Sikh religious tourism”. The monument to the Sikh monarch could also signal a tentative attempt by the country to look beyond its tortuous origins in the politics of exclusion.

When Pakistan came into being, a modicum of the non-Islamic history that the country shared with India found a place in textbooks. Students learnt about the Kushana rulers, the country’s Buddhist’s legacy and its Hindu and Sikh pasts. There were also critiques of the excesses of medieval rulers like Aurangzeb. However, less than 20 years after its birth, the historical imagination of Pakistan was overtaken by the anxiety to emphasise an identity different from its neighbour’s. Hagiographies proliferated while textbooks paid short shrift to its shared history with India and chose to efface examples of syncretism.

It might be too much to expect one memorial to undo more than five decades of distorted history writing. But as historians often say, memorials give us clues of the world-view of the societies and polities that commission them. These structures often suggest how people engage with the past. Seen that way, it is interesting that Pakistan is commemorating Ranjit Singh while a debate on whether the Mughals were looters and plunderers threatens to overwhelm the historiography of neighbouring India.



MANISH SABHARWAL

THE UNFORGETTABLE LINE, “We are not asking you to change the country — that has already happened without any court’s permission — but we are asking you to protect the rights of the country to change”, is not the only reason that India’s judiciary, currently ruling on bankruptcy and the bad loan regime, should watch the spectacular new movie on the early life of US Supreme Court justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. *On the Basis of Sex* not only chronicles using a tax case involving a man to create precedence and attack 178 laws that discriminated against women, but it is also a wonderful meditation on how courts can react to societies that are changing despite precedence, personal preference, and vested interests.

I’d like to make the case that courts must reflect deeply on how their interventions are enabling frequent violations of the 270-day bankruptcy IBC deadline. These delays are raising the ambition of defaulters, and converting possible restructurings like Jet Airways into probable liquidations. This matters because India’s government, regulators and citizens have already changed their minds and broken with the past in letter and spirit in handling loan defaulters. As Ginsburg’s professor tells her in the movie “a court should not be affected by the weather of the day but ought to be by the climate of the era”.

Bankruptcy is like ice cream; the more you wait, the more it melts. Starting today, Jet Airways will no longer be freely traded on stock exchanges. Shareholders aside, it’s often forgotten that the consequences for lenders are the same whether a bankruptcy arises from fraud, competition, unrealistic ambition, poor execution, flawed strategy, sectoral issues, or government policy. The concept of willful defaulter is a distinction without a difference, liquidation is the worst possible bankruptcy outcome, and flexible deadlines guarantee poor outcomes. I hope I am wrong, but Jet Airways may be India’s first liquidation that should have been a bankruptcy.

This is sad because Jet was a textbook IBC case; an operationally viable entity that was

India’s policy choices around bankruptcy represent a rupture with the past. But there is work yet to be done

Bankruptcy is like ice cream; the more you wait, the more it melts. Starting today, Jet Airways will no longer be freely traded on stock exchanges. Shareholders aside, it’s often forgotten that the consequences for lenders are the same whether a bankruptcy arises from fraud, competition, unrealistic ambition, poor execution, flawed strategy, sectoral issues, or government policy. The concept of willful defaulter is a distinction without a difference, liquidation is the worst possible bankruptcy outcome, and flexible deadlines guarantee poor outcomes. I hope I am wrong, but Jet Airways may be India’s first liquidation that should have been a bankruptcy.

financially unviable whose operations should have been unaffected as restructuring distributed the financial pain unevenly across lenders (Rs 9,000+ crore), operational creditors (Rs 4,000+ crore), customers (500+ flights a day), shareholders (11 crore+ shares outstanding) and employees (16,000+). Banks should have acted earlier but they will confidently embrace the immediate and automatic consequences under the IBC for management, shareholders and board members only if the litigation fog is lifted, time value of money recognised, and there is certainty after due process for legitimate buyers.

India’s policy choices around bankruptcy over the last four years — remarkable teamwork between the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Company Affairs, Department of Financial Services and the RBI — represent a rupture with the past. The IBC went live in 12 months and was subsequently amended to make the RBI’s role explicit (Section 35A) and ban promoters from re-bidding (Section 29A). The RBI evolved transparent criteria for bank IBC referral of two defaulter batches (12 and 28 accounts) and their February 12 circular atoned for 20 years of sins in bad loan recognition. A new Fugitive Bill diluted the attractive economics of emigration. And the courts upheld IBC constitutionality.

Collectively, they create a regime for loan defaults where what happens before the IBC because of the IBC (equity infusion, strategic sales, higher collateral, board reconstitution, etc) is more important than what happens in the IBC (bank haircuts or liquidation). Obviously, there is room for improvement everywhere. Banks should stop lobbying for accounting solutions (deferring Ind AS accounting standards, amortising losses, etc) because their bad loans would have stopped at Rs 4 lakh crore instead of Rs 14 lakh crore if the RBI’s now dead February 12 circular had existed since 2008. They must also institutionalise the wisdom of Kenny Rogers from his song “Gambler”: “You’ve got to know when to walk away and know when to run”, with a bias towards running. The government must avoid taking sides like in the power sector; this only encourages the orig-

inal sin of “show me the person and I will show you the rule”. It must also consider sustainable solutions for nationalised bank governance, human capital and equity capital like an independent holding company, mergers, or sales. And the RBI must continue to raise its structural, human capital, and technological game in supervision, regulation and enforcement.

Any new law is fine-tuned by litigation. But should courts decide when lenders should make bad loan provisions? Should courts influence the relative ranks of unsecured and secured creditors? What is the cost of banks not being able to accept thousands of crores from selected stressed company buyers 700+ days after the IBC filing because of operational creditor quibbles? Has justice really been served by replacing the blind and rules-based February 12 RBI circular with a “specific”, case-by-case dispensation? Shouldn’t aligning the RBI’s and IBC’s definition of default be a policy objective? Is the law really not clear about the RBI’s mandate in the Banking Regulation Act (Sections 35A, 35AA, 35AB) and the RBI Act (Sections 17, 18, 19, 42 and 45I)? Couldn’t “one pill for all ills” and a “180 day guillotine” that applies to defaults of above Rs 2,000 crore also be called a rule?

India changed its mind about socialism because it didn’t generate the resources to fund public goods and because it became capitalism without competition and bankruptcy. India won’t reach its new tryst with destiny — a \$5 trillion dollar economy — without raising our credit to GDP ratio from 50 per cent to 100 per cent. This can’t happen without the ability of lenders to deal with their mistakes swiftly via the IBC. Courts are supreme but the IBC will only be viewed as climate change rather than a passing shower if we restore the sanctity of the 270-day deadline. As Ginsberg requests the court in *On the Basis of Sex*, “Please fix the law in line with the legislative intent”.

The writer is with Teamlease Services and serves as a director on the RBI board. Views are personal

PUBLISH AND PERISH

Targeting of a Kerala publishing house expands the ambit of censorship



MINI CHANDRAN

SUPPRESSION OF FREE speech by the state is not new in India. There is enough governmental machinery, like the Constitution and laws, to arm-twist writers into silence. But the Kerala government has gone one step further in what can be seen as an attempt to perfect the process, which is to target the staff of the publishing company that published the work.

In the first week of June, Kerala state police raided the office of Current Books, a leading publishing house in Malayalam, for the “crime” of having published an autobiography titled *Sravukalkoppam Neenthumbol* (Swimming with Sharks) written by Jacob Thomas, the most senior IPS officer in the state. Thomas, who came into limelight for his anti-corruption drive, has been under suspension for the past 18 months. His “crime” is that he violated service rules by not seeking permission from the department before publishing his autobiography, and for allegedly revealing official secrets that he had access to in his official capacity. A criminal case has been registered against him for this.

The state police action against Current Books, led by a Superintendent of Police, was claimed to be part of the investigation regarding this violation of service rules by Jacob Thomas. They spent about four hours taking statements from the staff who were involved in composing, proof-reading, and editing the text. They also asked for all the correspondence that had taken place between the publisher and the writer.

The police action has come two years after

It is clear that the government sees writing not just as the outcome of the individual creative imagination of the writer but as a material product that has undergone multiple mediatory levels like composing, proofreading and editing. Theoretically speaking, the work can be ‘censored’ at these levels.

the book was first published in May 2017. As Peppin Thomas, the managing director of Current Books and the publication manager, K J Johny, pointed out, the book has not been accused of any controversial material that could cause a law and order problem. The publisher has been dragged into a fight involving the state and the writer/officer.

Censorship is usually a coercive or suppressive process mainly involving the writer and the state, and other stakeholders are largely left alone. It is true that publishers have been at the receiving end before — Oxford University Press being forced to withdraw their A K Ramanujan anthology and Penguin having to pulp Wendy Doniger’s book are recent examples. But there was no police action against them. The publishing houses undertook these measures in the face of public anger and vandalism. These were publishing giants who could hold their own, if needed, in the face of state persecution. But what the Kerala state has now done is to tighten its tentacles of power on composers and proofreaders, those faceless and nameless workers behind literary publications. In a bizarre way, the state has recognised the value of these sweat-shop workers.

It is clear that the government sees writing not just as the outcome of the individual creative imagination of the writer but as a material product that has undergone multiple mediatory levels like composing, proof-reading and editing. Theoretically speaking, the work can be “censored” at these levels. The composer of a text, if she is mindful about

the job, can point out potentially problematic elements of a text before it goes to print. So can the proof reader or the editor whose job of editing can very often include censoring. Thus the government seems to have made a censor out of each mediator of the publishing process, by ensuring that it is vetted at multiple levels. Intolerance of dissent becomes serious when restrictions get internalised by the writer, and she begins to exercise self-censorship. It is far worse if every player in the game turns a referee, who has to watch out for potentially foul moves.

D H Lawrence’s *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* in its unexpurgated version was first published privately in Italy in 1928. It is said that it was an advantage for the book that the typesetters were Italian; the publishers feared that the typesetters might object if they understood what they were composing. Will writers in India face a similar situation where they will be forced to look for people who will compose without knowing what they are composing?

It is sheer coincidence that this move to persecute the publisher occurred in June when the anniversary of the Emergency falls, when even type-setters were closely watched for possible transgressions. But it is bitter irony that this tragedy of state persecution has repeated itself as a farce when politicians who were at the receiving end of the Emergency are ruling the state.

Chandran, the author of *The Writer, the Reader and the State: Literary Censorship in India*, teaches at IIT-Kanpur

JUNE 28, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

BAHUGUNA’S BARB

MUCH TO THE chagrin of Prime Minister Morarji Desai, the Union Minister for Petroleum and Chemicals, H N Bahuguna, characterised the police unrest in the country as the failure of the government at the special meeting of the Union Cabinet in New Delhi. Bahuguna is believed to have said that the administration had loosened at every level and the public was rightly indignant over it. PM Desai did not like some of Bahuguna’s remarks and he made it quite obvious to the petroleum minister. The deputy prime minister and finance minister, Charan Singh, who spoke on the basis of his past experience in the home ministry, dwelt

on the steps which should have been taken to ward off the police agitations. He had at his command facts and figures to support his thesis that police complaints could have been attended to earlier.

FERNADES PLAN

UNION INDUSTRIES MINISTER George Fernandes has strongly pleaded for the realignment of forces based on a clear time-bound programmes. The realignment should be not only within the Janata Party but should have linkages with the like-minded elements outside. Disenchanted with the Janata regime’s “poor performance” and its failure to implement the party manifesto,

Fernandes has come out heavily on the warring power-crazy leadership. In a seven-page letter to his colleagues in the erstwhile Socialist Party, he has spelt out his ideas on realignment of forces as well as economic, social and political programmes which should get top priority.

DIPLOMATS BEATEN

A SENIOR FRENCH diplomat were attacked and beaten up by some unknown assailants near Rawalpindi, the BBC radio reported, The radio said that the two diplomats were on their way back from a uranium enrichment facility Pakistan has been secretly building south-west of Rawalpindi.



Two and twenty at Osaka

G-20 meets in the midst of a crisis in world trade. It must not let US-China bilateral overshadow the summit



SANJAYA BARU

ELEVEN YEARS AFTER its creation, the Group of 20 (G-20) has emerged as an important forum of most of the world's systemically important economies. Iran is among the very few important countries left out. India made its mark within the G-20 from its very inception with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh being one of the important voices at the first three summit meetings in 2008-09. As the host of the 2022 summit, India has a stake in ensuring the continued relevance of G-20 for global policy.

The G-20 came into being in the midst of a financial crisis. It meets over the next two days in Osaka, Japan, in the midst of a crisis in world trade. In its early years, the G-20 shied away from talking trade. While it has focused on trade policy issues since 2013, the G-20 has not been able to revive the Doha Development Round of multilateral trade negotiations at the World Trade Organisation. Nor has it succeeded in arresting the drift towards mercantilism on the part of both the US and China — the world's biggest trading nations. Host Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has done well to focus on trade policy as one of the three key issues to be discussed at the Osaka Summit, along with environment and the digital economy.

As of today, the G-20 owes its reputation mainly to its ability to restore stability to the global financial system following the trans-Atlantic financial crisis in 2008-09. As stock market indices from New York through London to Tokyo began to fall to new lows, the price of gold and oil declined sharply and the euro slumped against the dollar, then President of France, Nicolas Sarkozy, flew into Camp David for a hurriedly set up meeting with US President George W Bush and suggested that heads of government of major economies should get together to manage the enveloping crisis. That was October 2008, a month after the collapse of Lehmann Brothers, one of America's biggest financial corporations. The two leaders came out of their huddle and announced the convening of the first summit level meeting of a group of finance ministers called the G-20.

A decade before that, in 1999, the G-8, a club of developed economies, created a group of finance ministers of 19 major economies and the EU to form the G-20 finance ministers' forum. Bush and Sarkozy elevated this finance ministers' group into a leaders' summit. The US and the European Union (EU) knew that the one country they wanted across the table, in October 2008, to help deal with the fallout of the financial crisis was China. Should G-8 be expanded into G-9? Japan was certainly not comfortable with the idea. The US and the EU too were not ready yet to invite China to the high table of a rich man's club. Two years after inviting Russia into G-7, some of the original G-7 members were already a bit uncomfortable with Russia's elevation into a rich economies club when it was nowhere as prosperous an economy as the G-7.

But China had to be brought to the discussion table because China had the dollars and the means to save the Euro and stabilise Wall



Suvajit Dey

Street. That's the dilemma Sarkozy solved for the West by converting an existing G-20 finance minister's forum that included developing countries like Brazil and India into a leaders' summit. It may be easier getting China to help the West in a group that would include other developing countries. Voila! The G-20 was born.

Since the immediate challenge was a financial crisis, the group focused on global financial issues. Once the global financial system stabilised, the G-20 summits lost steam and focus. Everything from climate change to women's empowerment is now discussed at G-20 summits while the really important business gets done in bilaterals on the sidelines. This year, President Trump and China's President Xi Jinping are expected to discuss bilateral trade issues on the sidelines of the G-20 summit. Their meeting threatens to overshadow the summit.

The summits have invited this fate with their diffused focus. In the run-up to the Osaka summit, there have been several ministerial meetings covering subjects ranging from environment and agriculture to women's empowerment and the digital economy. Along with the summit, an entire circus comes to town. There is a B-20 for business leaders, Y-20 for youth, an L-20 for labour, S-20 for science and so on. Even a T-20 for think-tanks!

Since G-20 summits are annual gatherings of the world's most important leaders,

Everything from climate change to women's empowerment is now discussed at G-20 summits while really important business gets done in bilaterals on the sidelines. This year, President Trump and China's President Xi Jinping are expected to discuss bilateral trade issues on the sidelines of the G-20 summit. Their meeting threatens to overshadow the summit.

they should have an agenda that focuses on the here and now and a means of monitoring progress. At the end of each year, the host country should present a report to the next summit on progress made on agenda points. There are many other plurilateral and multi-lateral forums to discuss the myriad other challenges facing humanity. The B-20, Y-20, T-20 and other such parallel gatherings have become either farcical talk-shops of pretentious busybodies or networking opportunities for business leaders. Just as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and WTO ministerial meetings have been trivialised and turned populist by parallel gatherings of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the G-20 too runs the risk of becoming a ritual event with no concrete outcomes.

Osaka should bring sharper focus to G-20 proceedings by concentrating minds on today's threats rather than tomorrow's challenges. The US-China trade war, American unilateralism in trade policy and China's opaque trade and other economic policies have emerged as major threats to global economic growth and stability. The G-20 must discuss these issues because all G-20 economies have a stake in the outcome of the US-China bilateral talks. The G-20 cannot be reduced to a G-2.

The writer is Distinguished Fellow, Institute for Defence Studies & Analysis, New Delhi

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Having a secretary of state (Pompeo) of this caliber is a tragedy of US politics and the sorrow of international politics. The world needs to be exposed to the damage Pompeo has brought to humankind's peaceful existence."

— GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA

The right convergence

Bringing agriculture, rural development and panchayati raj under one minister was overdue. Greater rationalisation is needed



RITA SHARMA

THE GOVERNMENT HAS taken a long overdue measure by combining the Ministries of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj under the same minister. This will enhance convergence between programmes related to food, nutrition and livelihoods security of millions of rural households. It is a step in the right direction. But, it is not enough.

The large-scale of operations and degree of commonality between the agriculture and rural development ministries is evident from their 2019-20 interim budget estimates, and the fact that agriculture and allied activities consume some 70 per cent of resources under MGNREGA, the flagship programme of the rural development ministry. MGNREGA accounts for nearly half of the ministry's budget. Convergence of labour-intensive MGNREGA activities with productivity-oriented schemes of other ministries and states transforms MGNREGA from an essentially wage-labour safety-net programme to an instrument for rejuvenating land, water, agriculture and biodiversity.

Convergence were initiated in 2008-09 with the ministries of agriculture, water resources, land resources, environment and forests. This was to enhance the durability and productivity of the assets created under MGNREGA. Over the years, linkages have been forged with central programmes on food security, horticulture, agro-forestry, rural livelihoods, animal husbandry, fisheries, and state schemes such as Kapildhara, Sahastradhara, Bhumi Shilp and Vanya in Madhya Pradesh.

If the challenge of doubling farmers' incomes by 2022-23 has to be met, it needs to be emphasised that agriculture is a multi-dimensional enterprise. The sector is rapidly undergoing structural transformation, influenced by several factors. No longer limited to a commodity production system, the agriculture sector now embraces post-production activities like markets and value-chains in a holistic agri-food system. Simultaneously, farmer welfare, building resilience of vulnerable communities, rejuvenating natural resources, addressing climate change must be kept centrestage.

The complexities of handling an agri-food system can be gauged by the processes involved: Sustainable management of soil, water, biodiversity, climate change; input supplies such as seeds, fertilisers, plant protection, farm-machinery, irrigation, credit, insurance, extension; conservation production and agronomic practices such as soil-testing, zero-tillage, water and nutrient use efficiency; post-harvest activities in drying, sorting, grading, warehousing, cold-storages; marketing, related to village markets, mandis, contract farming, cooperatives, farmer associations, e-NAM, private markets, supermarkets; agro-processing linked

to milling, preservation of perishables, transportation, supply-chain management; retailing, branding, labeling, certification of organics, bio-fortification; services for farmers' welfare such as pensions, insurance, health coverage; rural infrastructure; and rural non-farm income generation.

This requires convergence between not just two or three ministries but across at least 15 ministries bearing on agriculture and farmers. Presently the linkages between agriculture and agriculture-related non-production activities are weak. The missing links limit efficiencies accruing from coordination between agriculture, development and sustainability. There is a disconnection between agriculture and the sectors dealing with agro-processing, environmental services, natural resources, rural non-farm livelihoods and urban and peri-urban activities.

The implementing agencies while spending their annual budgets and individually achieving their limited goals, are unable to make the desired impact on the collective outcome. Bringing agriculture and rural development under one minister is an important step but not enough. On the other hand, it is not feasible to place multiple ministries under a single minister. Overarching mechanisms and capacities need to be built that catalyse convergence between various agencies at all levels.

At the state level, the institution of agriculture production commissioner (APC) was created to coordinate between relevant departments. In the context of the holistic agri-food systems approach, going beyond commodity production, the APC needs to be reviewed so as to be aligned with the emerging realities. The district level agriculture technology management agency also requires restructuring that factors in markets and supply chains. Coordination is required between different implementing agencies, notably the district rural development agencies, krishi vigyan kendras, fish farmers development agencies, farmer producer organisations and private sector agri-service providers. The capacities of the panchayati raj institutions need to be re-oriented.

The NDA 2 government may consider constituting a cabinet committee on agriculture and rural rejuvenation. The target of doubling farmer incomes by 2022-23 is more likely to be achieved if a significant proportion of that income accrues from rural non-farm activities. There is much potential for employment generation in the holistic agri-food system. A separate agriculture budget taking into account the complementarities of agriculture-related components in various schemes will be a robust framework for an integrated approach.

The Niti Aayog's task force for structural agricultural reforms will know that while the central government can propel the nature and scope of agricultural transformation through its policy and programmes, the primary responsibility for agriculture development rests with the state governments. Partial remedies will not suffice. Comprehensive long-term measures are needed.

The writer is former secretary, Ministry of Rural Development and joint secretary, Ministry of Agriculture



SANDIP SOMANY

THE CLEAR MANDATE to the NDA government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the second consecutive term allows for stability and continuity in the reform process. Today, the government stands empowered to undertake long-term structural reforms. In his first address after the election results, Modi underlined the importance of inclusivity in the development agenda of the nation and reiterated the mantra of "sabka saath, sabka vikas" — with additional emphasis on "sabka vishwas".

All eyes are now fixed on the Union Budget 2019-20. This will be the first big opportunity for the government to showcase its ability to deliver, and just like every other aspect of society, we from the industry also have significant expectations from this Budget.

Macro headwinds remain due to a host of domestic and global risk factors. GDP growth is slowing down, the unemployment rate is high, the financial sector is seeing a fresh crisis and both investment and consumption demand are muted. Globally, trade tensions are showing no signs of a respite and geopolitical tensions continue to spook markets. So, what should the government focus on, in the upcoming Budget?

While there is room for the RBI to cut the repo rate by another 100 basis points and ensure transmission of the interest rate reductions to the actual borrowers by banks, to boost investments, the government can usher in a new taxation framework linking

A budget wish-list

Among other things, a new tax framework to link investment to job creation

new investment to job creation, which will act as a catalyst. Under this scheme, companies making investments which generate employment for 250 to 499 workers, should be allowed to avail a rebate of 2 per cent in corporate tax for the next five years, beginning from the date of the commissioning of the plant. Entities generating 500 to 749 jobs may be allowed a rebate of 3 per cent in corporate tax, while those creating 750-999 jobs, should be allowed a 4 per cent reduction. Companies generating 1,000 or more jobs can be allowed to avail 5 per cent rebate in tax payment — and pay corporate tax at the rate of 25 per cent. This will rejuvenate the investment scenario by rewarding employment-generating companies and help the government in achieving both its immediate objectives — reviving investment and creating jobs.

Revitalising the agriculture sector should also be a priority. To enhance yields and mitigate risks arising from an adverse monsoon, we must step up investments in irrigation (including in micro irrigation). There is also the need to strengthen the agriculture supply chains to reduce wastage and ensure better prices for farmers. Farmgate and near-farmgate storage (of more than 1,000 MT) should be developed on priority under the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) to enable small producers to hold on the produce till market prices are remunerative enough to sell. A plan for a national warehouse grid along highways should also be launched.

Additionally, we need to plan for major improvements in the agro-processing industry.

Providing a fillip to the infrastructure sector is another important step. The government must announce major projects in sectors such as roads and highways, sub-urban metros and airports. The multiplier effects on the economy through generation of demand and new jobs from large-scale infrastructure projects will be huge. As the infrastructure sector gets going, demand for steel, cement, power, commercial vehicles, capital goods will all go up.

Re-energising our exports and supporting them is also vital. The country needs an institutional mechanism for global market intelligence to regularly conduct market studies, sector specific studies to understand the dynamics of global trade, barriers to trade, market-entry opportunities, etc. This may also include mapping specific markets to specific MSME clusters. Detailed information should be made available to exporters through an export information portal. Suitable allocation in the Union Budget may be made for this market intelligence cell. The government must also support marketing campaigns in foreign markets for building "Brand India" and promoting made-in-India products.

Along with these steps, other supporting measures are also required. For stimulating household consumption and savings, a major direct tax announcement in the Interim Budget 2019-20 related to exemp-

tion of income tax for assesseees with an annual income of up to Rs 5 lakh. This was a positive step and should be continued. The income tax slabs for individuals needs to be revised upwards. The highest tax rate of 30 per cent should be applicable only to those whose incomes are above Rs 20 lakh. At the same time, the investment limits under Sec 80C, Sec 80D and deduction for interest paid on housing loan under Sec 24, etc. should be enhanced. These measures would leave more disposable income with households and thus boost overall consumption.

In the interim Budget 2019-20, the target set for disinvestment was Rs 90,000 crore. This must be raised in the full budget to at least Rs 1.5 lakh crore. A slowing economy may not yield revenues at the rate expected on the tax side, but we can look at raising the bar on disinvestment. There is already a list of CPSEs and their idle assets — land, industrial units — that must be monetised quickly.

Last but not least, incentivising employment-intensive sectors will also help in creating more jobs. Special export zones for sectors like textiles, leather, gems and jewellery, footwear, toys must be announced with benefits like subsidised land, duty free imports and tax holidays. The government may also create plug and play units for sectors like garments where all the facilities are provided on minimal rent basis to young entrepreneurs for an initial three to five years.

The writer is President, FICCI

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

LISTEN TO PM

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'No mobocracy' (IE, June 27). PM Narendra Modi's message on mob lynching is a welcome one and must be enforced. However, this should be accompanied by political action. Instigators of mob lynching are reportedly connected to influential political or religious outfits. The leadership of these outfits distance themselves from such goons.

RK Vijay, Jaipur

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'No mobocracy' (IE, June 27). Prime Minister Narendra Modi has expressed his anguish over the Jharkhand lynching. Now, the law enforcing agencies should ensure that such incidents are not repeated. Peace committees should be activated to help stop such crimes. Those honouring such culprits are actually abetting the offence and are equally guilty.

Subhash Vaid, Noida

END THE STRIFE

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Time to talk' (IE, July 25). Kashmir has been overtaken by militancy for more than two decades. Neither the militants have achieved anything nor has the state government been able to control the situation. This is because of the harsh fact that a section of the youth in Kashmir is supporting militancy. Precious lives of soldiers and police officers have been lost. So, the call for talks

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

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

THE WINNER RECEIVES SELECT EXPRESS PUBLICATIONS

by the separatists should be welcomed. Sanjay Chawla, Amritsar

LACK OF TEACHERS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Speaking in many tongues', (IE, June 27) According to the UDISE, 2016-17 figures, there are 92,275 single-teacher run government schools in India. Today's youth do not aspire to become teachers.

Sudip Kumar Dey, 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

TELLING NUMBERS

Unemployment rates vary among religious groups, govt lists plans for employability of minorities

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE(%)FOR 2017-18

Religious group	Rural male	Rural female	Urban male	Urban female
Hinduism	5.7	3.5	6.9	10.0
Islam	6.7	5.7	7.5	14.5
Christianity	6.9	8.8	8.9	15.6
Sikhism	6.4	5.7	7.2	16.9
All India	5.8	3.8	7.1	10.8

Source: Annual Report, PLFS 2017-18, via Minority Affairs Ministry (religion-specific data) and Labour & Employment Ministry (all-India data).

ACROSS THE urban-rural and gender divides, unemployment rates vary among religious groups. This emerges out of data in the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) for 2017-18, presented in Lok Sabha on Thursday by the Ministry for Minority Affairs in reply to a question. The ministry tabled religion-wise figures for four major religious groups — Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and Sikhism — for both genders and in rural and urban India. Earlier during the ongoing budget session, the Ministry for Labour and Employment had presented the all-India unemployment rates from the 2017-18 PLFS — 5.8% for rural male, 3.8% for rural female, 7.1% for urban male, and 10.8% for urban female.

In his question Thursday, MP Prasun Banerjee also asked whether the government has any plans for minority employment. Minority Affairs Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi replied that most of the Centre's socio-economic and educational empowerment programmes are meant for the poor and downtrodden sections, and the minorities are getting equally benefited. Naqvi added that his ministry has adopted a strategy to enhance the employability of notified minorities (Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists, Parsis, Jains) through various schemes aimed at educational empowerment, employment-oriented skill development etc. His reply listed a number of these schemes.

THIS WORD MEANS

L 98-59B

A new planet discovered by NASA mission, between Earth and Mars in size. What secrets does it store?



The three planets discovered in the L98-59 system by NASA's TESS mission so far, as compared to Mars and Earth in terms of size. NASA

NASA's Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS) has discovered a new planet, the tiniest of its finds so far. It is between the sizes of Mars and Earth and orbits a bright, cool, nearby star. It has been named L 98-59b.

The TESS mission feeds our desire to understand where we came from and whether we are alone in the universe, NASA said in a statement on its website. One of TESS's goals is to build a catalogue of small, rocky planets on short orbits around very bright, nearby stars for atmospheric study.

Apart from L 98-59b, two other worlds orbit the same star. While all three planets' sizes are known, further study with other telescopes will be needed to determine if they have atmospheres and, if so, which gases are present, NASA said.

"The discovery is a great engineering and scientific accomplishment for TESS.

For atmospheric studies of small planets, you need short orbits around bright stars, but such planets are difficult to detect. This system has the potential for fascinating future studies," Veselin Kostov, an astrophysicist at the Goddard Space Flight Center and the SETI Institute, said in the NASA statement. A paper on the findings, led by Kostov, was published in the June 27 issue of *The Astronomical Journal*.

L 98-59b is around 80% Earth's size. The two other worlds in the system, L 98-59c and L 98-59d, are respectively around 1.4 and 1.6 times Earth's size. Their host star, L 98-59, is about one-third the mass of the Sun and lies about 35 light-years away. While L 98-59b is a record for TESS, even smaller planets have been discovered in data collected by NASA's Kepler satellite, including Kepler-37b, which is only 20% larger than the Moon.

Source: NASA

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

NRC: add, delete & what next

A fresh exclusion list has added 1 lakh to the 40 lakh omitted from last year's final NRC draft in Assam. The count could change again in July. Those left out will have option of appeal, but it's a long road ahead

ABHISHEK SAHA
GUWAHATI, JUNE 27

ON WEDNESDAY, authorities updating the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam published an "additional draft exclusion list" that dropped 1 lakh names after having including them in the final NRC draft on July 30, 2018. The final draft had excluded 40 lakh, and Wednesday's exclusions are over and above these. A look at what the numbers mean, and where all this could lead to:

Why have one lakh been removed?

Although included in the final draft published in 2018, these 1,02,462 were found ineligible during reverification later. The preparation of the draft exclusion list was approved by the Supreme Court under Clause 5 of the Schedule of the Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and Issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003. Section 4(3) provides for *suo motu* verification. It has not been announced how many names were rechecked.

Some individuals were also found ineligible while appearing as witnesses in NRC-related hearings for other applicants. The names of some were deleted after they, or their descendants, were found to be "declared foreigners" or "doubtful voters" (or "persons with cases pending at Foreigners Tribunals". "Doubtful voter", or "D-voter", is a concept exclusive to Assam, as are the 100 Foreigners Tribunals, which are quasi-judicial bodies.

How long will these exclusions and inclusions continue?

The final NRC will be published on July 31 this year. The latest exclusion list came as a result of continuous quality checks and verification, NRC officials said. Additions and deletions have taken place earlier, too. The first draft published on December 31, 2017, had included 1.90 crore names, but the final draft in July 2018 dropped 1.5 lakh of these 1.90 crore. The deletion was approved by the Supreme Court.

Overall, the final draft left out 40 lakh applicants and over 36 lakh of them filed "claims", which have been heard. Among the 40 lakh are 2.48 lakh a decision on whom is "on hold".

The 1 lakh newly excluded individuals, too, can file claims, and hearings will begin on July 5. They will be informed individually by letters of information, which will mention the reason for exclusion and details of the venue for claim submission-cum-hearing.

The final NRC will exclude those unable to prove their citizenship during the hearing of



Residents check the NRC final draft, released in July 28. Dasarath Deka/Archive

3.29 CRORE
TOTAL APPLICANTS

2.89 CRORE
Included in final draft (July 2018)

1 LAKH
Out of above 2.89 crore, freshly removed

40 LAKH
Excluded in final draft

HOW IT CAN CHANGE

36 LAKH out of the 40 lakh originally excluded (final draft) have filed claims for inclusion. The 1 lakh newly removed, too, can file claims. Depending on how many of these claimants can establish their citizenship, the number of exclusions can fall in the final NRC due on July 31.

21 LAKH out of the originally included 2.89 crore have faced objections against them. Hearings have been held. If any of these objections are found valid, the number of exclusions can rise.

claims. Theoretically, there could be further exclusions. These would be from among 2 lakh individuals who had been included among the 2.89 crore names in the 2018 final draft, but against whom "objections" were filed by citizens later. If they cannot re-establish their citizenship in the wake of the objections to their inclusion in the final draft, they face possible exclusion from the final NRC.

How does one prove citizenship?

The criteria has been laid down. The NRC was first prepared in 1951, and the current exercise is an update. The final NRC will include the names of people already in the 1951 NRC, and their descendants. It will also include those in any of the electoral rolls up to March 24, 1971, or in any one of other admissible documents issued up to that date, as well as the descendants of such people.

Will the excluded individuals get further opportunities to prove their citizenship?

They can approach a Foreigners Tribunal with a certified copy of the rejection order from the NRC, along with the grounds for appeal. The Tribunal has to give its final order

within 120 days from the date of production of records, the Home Ministry stated in an order dated May 30 this year. In addition to the 100 Foreigners Tribunals, 200 more will be functional by September 1, state government officials said. If the applicant lose their case before such a Tribunal, he or she can appeal in the High Court, and then the Supreme Court if necessary. Someone who is not only excluded from the final NRC but also loses his or her case in a Foreigners Tribunal, however, faces possible arrest, and the prospect of being sent to a detention centre.

What are detention centres?

These are for persons declared "illegal foreigners". As of now, there are six detention camps in Assam, housed in existing jails. State government officials said there are plans to build 10 more detention centres and a detailed project report is being sent to the Centre.

The six existing centres together hold around 1,000 persons. Declared "illegal foreigners" by the Foreigners Tribunals, many of them claim to be Indians. India has no treaty with Bangladesh that would have facilitated their deportation. Since 2013, Assam

has deported 166 persons (162 "convicted" and four "declared") including 147 to Bangladesh, according to government data until February 2019. In case of those declared foreigners in Assam, the question widely being asked is whether deportation can be possible unless Bangladesh accepts them as migrants from there.

Public and political opinion is divided on detaining them indefinitely in detention centres. In an interaction earlier this year, Assam minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had told *The Indian Express* about detention centres: "As a political leader, I don't support it... I feel their identity should be digitally recorded and they should not be allowed to claim Indian citizenship in other states. Once that is done, they should be given basic human rights."

Last month, the Supreme Court allowed conditional release of those who have completed three years in detention, against a bond.

Is there any estimate for how many stare at this uncertainty?

Political leaders have made various estimates. It will depend on the fate of the claims for inclusion, and objections against inclusion. If any of the claims are accepted as valid, this would bring the number down from 41 lakh. If any of the objections are accepted, it would add to the number of exclusions. The fate of the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, too, can potentially impact the numbers.

How does the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill fit into all this?

While the NRC defines all illegal immigrants, irrespective of religion, on the basis of a cutoff date, the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019 proposed to differentiate among immigrants on the basis of religion. It provided for granting citizenship to immigrants of six non-Muslim faiths from three countries, including Bangladesh. The Bill lapsed without being introduced in Rajya Sabha earlier this year, but the ruling BJP has repeatedly said that it would reintroduce it during its current tenure, once it has the numbers in Rajya Sabha.

If the Bill passes Parliament this time, the implication is that Hindus from Bangladesh would be eligible for citizenship, even if detected as illegal immigrants, while Muslims who illegally entered from Bangladesh would be treated as illegal immigrants. The Bill has faced protests in Assam on the ground that it runs contrary to the NRC's objective, which is to detect all illegal immigrants.

Whatever the fate of the Bill, a very long battle awaits those who are excluded from the NRC but claim to be Indian citizens.

The enduring legacy of Maharaja of Punjab

MANRAJ GREWAL SHARMA
CHANDIGARH, JUNE 27

ON THURSDAY, a statue of Ranjit Singh, who ruled Punjab for almost four decades (1801-39), was inaugurated in Lahore. June 27 is his death anniversary. His legacy endures for Punjabis around the world:

Life and times

Ranjit Singh was born on November 13, 1780 in Gujranwala, now in Pakistan. At that time, Punjab was ruled by powerful chieftains who had divided the territory into Misls. Ranjit Singh overthrew the warring Misls and established a unified Sikh empire after he conquered Lahore in 1799.

He was given the title Lion of Punjab (Sher-e-Punjab) because he stemmed the tide of Afghan invaders in Lahore, which remained his capital until his death. His general Hari Singh Nalwa built the Fort of Jammu

at the mouth of the Khyber Pass, the route the foreign rulers took to invade India.

At the time of his death, he was the only sovereign leader left in India, all others having come under the control of the East India Company in some way or the other.

Wide, powerful reign

He combined the strong points of the traditional Khalsa army with western advances in warfare to raise Asia's most powerful indigenous army of that time. He also employed a large number of European officers, especially French, to train his troops. He appointed French General Jean Franquiss Allard to modernise his army. In 2016, the town of St Tropez unveiled the maharaja's bronze statue as a mark of respect.

Dr Indu Banga, professor emerita of his-

tory at Panjab University, said Ranjit Singh's army was a match for the one raised by the East India Company. During the Battle of Chillianwala, the second of the Anglo-Sikh

Wars that followed Ranjit Singh's death, the British suffered the maximum casualties of officers in their entire history in India, says Banga.

Ranjit Singh's trans-regional empire spread over several states. His empire included the former Mughal provinces of Lahore and Multan besides part of Kabul and the entire Peshawar. The boundaries of his state went up to Ladakh — Zorawar Singh, a general from Jammu, had conquered Ladakh in Ranjit Singh's name — in the northeast, Khyber pass in the northwest, and up to Panjnad in the south where the five rivers of Punjab fell into the Indus. During his regime, Punjab was



Ranjit Singh ruled for 4 decades. Wikipedia

a land of six rivers, the sixth being the Indus.

His legacy

The maharaja was known for his just and secular rule; both Hindus and Muslims were given powerful positions in his darbar. The Sikhs take pride in him for he turned Harimandir Sahib at Amritsar into the Golden Temple by covering it with gold. Right at the doorstep of the sanctum sanctorum of the temple is a plaque that details how in 1830 AD, the maharaja did sewa over 10 years.

He is also credited with funding Hazoor Sahib gurudwara at the final resting place of Guru Gobind Singh in Nanded, Maharashtra.

Today, his throne is displayed prominently at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. Exhibitions on his rule are frequent in western countries home to the Punjabi diaspora. Last year, London hosted an exhibition that focused on the history of the Sikh Empire and the international relations forged by the maharaja.

Why diphtheria is a concern: long-time vaccine, yet rising recent numbers

ABANTIKA GHOSH
NEW DELHI, JULY 27

THE DIPHTHERIA vaccine is among the oldest vaccines in India's Universal Immunisation Programme, yet cases in the country have been going up over the last few years after showing a remarkable reduction in 2015. That is why the season's first death due to diphtheria in Delhi has caused an alarm, with doctors assessing their preparedness.

A look at diphtheria, the vaccination programme and the concerns:

The disease

Diphtheria is an infectious disease caused by *Corynebacterium diphtheria*, a bacterium. The primary infection is in the throat and upper airways.

According to the National Health Portal, one type of diphtheria affects the throat and sometimes the tonsils. Another type causes ulcers on the skin; these are more

common in the tropics (places where all 12 months have mean temperatures of at least 18 °C). Diphtheria particularly affects children aged 1 to 5 years. In temperate climates diphtheria tends to occur during the colder months.

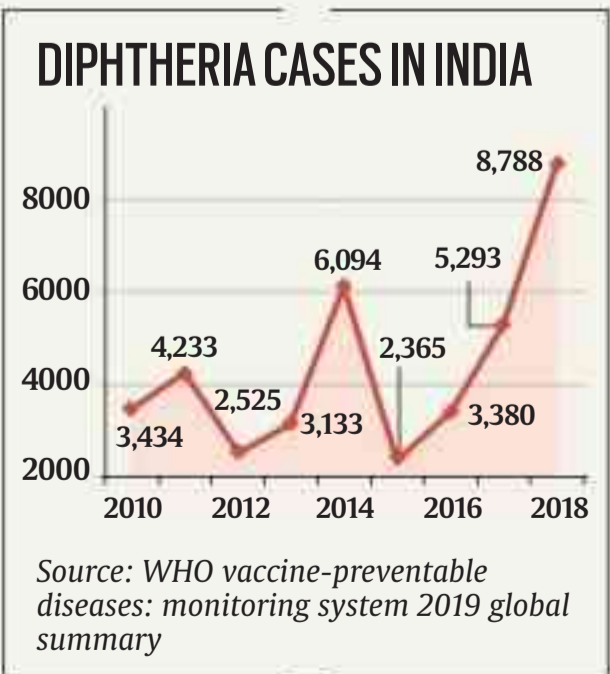
Diphtheria is fatal in only 5-10% cases. That is why as the monsoon approaches and temperatures start to come down, the season's first death in Delhi is being seen as a warning sign.

In 2018, Delhi witnessed a diphtheria outbreak. A total of 25 children died in September, followed by 22 in October and 12 in November.

Periodic outbreaks of the disease have been reported in India. Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP), National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), Delhi, reported as many as 7 outbreaks of diphtheria in India during 2014.

The vaccine

In 1978, India launched the Expanded Programme on Immunisation. The first



three vaccines in the programme were BCG (against TB), DPT (diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus) and cholera. In 1985, the programme was converted to the Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP). DPT continues to be a part of UIP, which now includes 12 vaccines. It is now incorporated

as a pentavalent vaccine, (containing vaccine against diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus [DPT], Hepatitis B and Haemophilus influenzae type B). UIP aims at giving all children born in India all these 12 vaccines free. As per data from the National Family Health Survey 4, the coverage of diphtheria vaccine is 78.4%.

The vintage and coverage of the diphtheria vaccine is also why the government, after the last outbreak in Delhi, decided to commission a study on vaccine hesitancy and ways to deal with it. The study is being done by the Immunisation Technical Support Unit under the ministry of health and family welfare will conduct the study in association with GAVI — an international organisation supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation working on ensuring vaccine access.

Vaccine hesitancy is a growing problem the world over. The US too has been grappling with it as cases of a polio like illness some time back created panic. States like Minnesota have seen rising vaccine

hesitancy, especially among immigrant populations, after Andrew Wakefield, a British doctor who was stripped of his licence to practice and became one of the leading voices against vaccines, personally paid a visit to the state.

The rising trend

Cases have been going up in the last few years. In 2015, as per World Health Organization data, India reported 2,365 cases. This was a steep drop from the 6,094 cases reported the previous year. However, in 2016, 2017 and 2018, the numbers rose successively to 3,380, 5,293 and 8,788.

As per data from the Central Bureau of Health Intelligence, during 2005-2014, India reported 41,672 cases of diphtheria (average 4,167 per year) with 897 deaths (case fatality ratio 2.2%). Ten of the states (Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Delhi, Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Nagaland, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, and West Bengal) accounted for 84% of the cases reported across the country.



At the high table

India must think big as it takes a step towards a non-permanent seat on the UNSC

By winning the unanimous endorsement of the 55-nation Asia-Pacific Group at the United Nations Security Council, India has cleared an important hurdle in its quest for a non-permanent seat for 2021-22. The decision of the grouping this week was taken as India was the sole candidate for the post. In the next step, all 193 members of the UN General Assembly will vote for five non-permanent seats in June 2020, when India will need to show the support of at least 129 countries to go through to the UNSC. It will then occupy the seat at the UNSC for a two-year period, as it has previously on seven occasions since 1950-51. There are several reasons why India decided to pursue its candidature for 2021-22. The government at the time had felt it was necessary to have India's voice at the high table as many times as possible, and therefore began the process for another seat shortly after it had ended its previous tenure in 2011-2012. By rotation, that seat would have reached India only in the 2030s, and India had to reach out to Afghanistan, which had put in its bid already for the 2021-22 slot, to request it to withdraw. Afghanistan did so because of the special relationship between the two countries. India has a unique role to play at the UNSC, given the near-complete polarisation among the permanent members (P-5 nations), with the U.S., the U.K. and France on one side, and Russia and China on the other. India's ability to work with both sides is well known. The year 2022 also has a sentimental value attached to it, as it marks the 75th year of India's Independence, and a place at the UNSC would no doubt add to the planned celebrations that year. Since 2013, when it first announced the bid, the government has run a quiet but consistent campaign towards this goal.

It is significant that despite the poor state of bilateral relations with Pakistan, and the many challenges India has faced from China at the UN, both the countries graciously agreed to the nomination. From this point on, it is necessary for the government to think beyond the campaign for the UNSC, and work out a comprehensive strategy for what it plans to do with the seat. In the past, India has earned a reputation for 'fence-sitting' by abstaining on votes when it was required to take a considered stand on principle, and the seat will be a chance to undo that image. Given the twin challenges of a rising China, and the U.S. receding from its UN responsibilities, India must consider how it will strengthen the multilateral world order amid frequent unilateral moves by both the world powers. An even bigger challenge will be to nudge all five permanent members on the one issue they have unitedly resisted: towards the reform and expansion of the UNSC, which would include India's claim to a permanent seat at the high table.

Prudent prescription

An RBI panel's suggestions on the MSME sector cut to the heart of crucial issues

The micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) sector in India is not only a key engine of growth, contributing more than 28% of the GDP and about 45% to manufacturing output. It is also a true reflection of economics where people really matter. Providing employment to about 111 million people, the sector's health is crucial to the economy's vitality and society's well being. An expert committee constituted by the Reserve Bank of India has in this context submitted a substantially germane study on the issues bedevilling MSMEs and made a fairly exhaustive set of recommendations to redress them. The panel is emphatic that the policy environment needs to be urgently reformed. To that end, it is imperative that the thrust of the enabling legislation – a 13-year-old law, the MSME Development Act, 2006 – be changed to prioritise market facilitation and ease of doing business. Observing that many Indian start-ups that are at the forefront of innovation are drawn to look overseas, given the conducive business environment and the availability of infrastructure and exit policies, the experts suggest that a new law ought to address the sector's biggest bottlenecks, including access to credit and risk capital. A substantial part of the study is justifiably devoted to reimagining solutions to improve credit flow to MSMEs. For instance, the experts recommend repurposing the Small Industries Development Bank of India. In its expanded role, it is envisaged that the SIDBI could not only deepen credit markets for MSMEs in under-served regions by being a provider of comfort to lenders including NBFCs and micro-finance institutions, but also become a market-maker for SME debt.

With technology, especially digital platforms, having become so ubiquitous, the panel has made a case for greater adoption of technology-facilitated solutions to a plethora of problems encountered by the sector. To address the bugbear of delayed payments, the mandatory uploading of invoices above a specified amount to an information utility is a novel approach. The aim is to name and shame buyers of goods and services from MSMEs to expedite settlements to suppliers. While it does sound simplistic, and banks a lot on the power of moral suasion, it is a task worth trying. Another suggestion entails expediting the integration of information on the Government e-Marketplace, or GeM, platform with the Trade Receivables Discounting System. The goal here too is to boost liquidity at MSMEs. A noteworthy recommendation urges banks to switch to cash flow-based lending, especially once account aggregators are operational and able to provide granular data on borrowings. The RBI and the Centre clearly have their work cut out in acting on this prudent prescription to help actualise the sector's true economic potential.

A democratic requirement

India's brooding parliamentary Opposition needs to study its historical legacy to chart the road ahead



VALERIAN RODRIGUES

Today the parliamentary Opposition in India is not merely fragmented but also in disarray. There seems to be hardly any Opposition party with a vision or strategy for its institutional working or for the Opposition as a whole. Such a state of affairs is probably worse than the defeat most of the Opposition parties have suffered in the elections to the 17th Lok Sabha. Given this impasse, some of them may seek an alternative in strengthening their State-level bases either to ward off poaching by the ruling dispensation or to work to better their prospects in the elections in the offing. There would also be much show-casing of Opposition unity particularly during a Lok Sabha session. While such exercises could be defended as modes of survival in hard times, or even as inevitable tactics, should the Opposition limit itself merely to them? Should not the Opposition reinvent a distinct and broader role for itself? Is the despondency the parliamentary Opposition is caught in conducive to the pivotal role it is called upon to play in a post-colonial democracy such as India?

An early assertion

At the time of India's first elections, there was little doubt regarding the potential ruling party of the country. The matter of concern, however, was the state of the parliamentary Opposition. There was little doubt in anyone's mind, unlike probably today, that without a viable and effective Opposition, parliamentary democracy would largely be a sham. Without it there would not be an effective oversight on representative con-

cerns, in eliciting responsiveness from wielders of power and enforcing accountability. While there could be other organs of the state for specific purposes, it was the parliamentary Opposition, it was believed, that held the popular trust to its safe-keeping. In other words, India's claim to be a working democracy rested not in posing an electoral majority, but in engendering a parliamentary Opposition that would be the conscience of the nation.

Jawaharlal Nehru was acutely conscious of the absence of an effective Opposition in the House, and once wrote provocatively, under the pseudonym Chanakya, saying, "a little twist and Jawaharlal might turn into a dictator sweeping aside the paraphernalia of a slow-moving democracy". He repeatedly cajoled Jayaprakash Narayan, who had opted for public service outside the electoral arena, to enter Parliament and lead the Opposition. It is a different matter, though, that when such an Opposition came to crystallise, it was not much to his liking! This Opposition was made of disgruntled leaders moving out of the ruling party and the existing parliamentary Opposition largely made of socialists and communists. The Bharatiya Jan Sangh and the Swatantra Party were to soon foist their distinctive markers on the Opposition. The development produced dozens of truly outstanding parliamentarians – Hriday Nath Kunzru, J.B. Kripalani, A.K.Gopalan, H.V.Kamath, Ram Manohar Lohia and M.R. Masani, just to name a few. India's parliamentary Opposition was an invention of its own and a development of momentous significance with certain distinct characteristics.

Bound to social movements

From the early 1960s powerful movements broke out all over India on issues such as land reforms, rights of the industrial working



class, unemployment, foodgrains and their distribution, ethnic demands and language rights. While the strength of the parliamentary Opposition continued to be puny and divided till 1967, it was enormously bolstered by linking itself to these social movements, and vice-versa. Such a bonding, however, went alongside a reflective commitment to constitutional and parliamentary democracy. It encompassed the broadest spectrum of the Opposition, including the communists, a section of whom had initially entertained doubt regarding the prospects of social revolution under the aegis of constitutional democracy. While the government proceeded against some of the leaders for their role in the social movements, there was obviously a limit to which it could go.

In the early 1970s, the parliamentary Opposition became the site that reflected a comprehensive critique of the direction charted by India's democracy. The parliamentary communists, with all their internal ideological and political squabbles, continued to employ the frame of class struggle – imperialism, big capital and landlordism on the one hand, and working class, peasantry and middle classes on the other. But it was the socialists who made the terrain of democracy in place as their anchor, developed a critique of the path of industrialisation, cen-

tralisation and concentration of power, deployment of institutions of constitutional democracy as instrumentalities of the ruling regime as well as the resultant outcomes of agrarian crisis, devastation of traditional crafts and small-scale industry, assault on citizenship rights, intolerance of dissent, aversion to federalism and decentralisation of power, rise in bureaucratic stranglehold and security apparatuses, muzzling of the media and disregard to languages and local cultures.

It was this Opposition that issued the call for civil disobedience as foundational to democracy when the parliamentary Opposition came to be subdued. Jayaprakash Narayan became the rallying symbol for this Opposition, bringing down the authoritarian regime of the Emergency (1975-77), and enabling it to ride to power with huge popular support in the elections.

It is a different matter that the internal squabbles within the ruling Janata Party, its inability to order its priorities, and its susceptibility to the insinuations of the Opposition in place gave this expedition a short shrift. The Congress party in Opposition (1977-1979) too experimented with an oppositional stance which was largely to discredit the party in power, and seek a restoration of the post-colonial regime. The strategy of merely discrediting the ruling regime as an oppositional stance does not hold much prospect today, given the unity of the ruling regime and its hold over media and communication networks. Besides, it does not reflect the creativity and ingenuity that the Opposition has imparted to parliamentary democracy in India.

Conceptions of nationalism

From the 1980s parliamentary Opposition came to make a place for itself by advancing one or the other conception of nationalism.

There are clearly three significant conceptions in contention. The first is a majoritarian conception which argues against any special consideration to minorities and disparages pluralism. The second is a secular conception that upholds equal citizenship while extending special considerations to distinct concerns and ways of life. The third argues that Indian nationalism and the post-colonial polity have largely been in the service of a privileged strata and measures should be taken to tilt this balance in favour of the disadvantaged as well as reflect India's deep diversity. It is important to bear in mind that while each one of these conceptions has tried to outwit the others, they have selectively reached out to some elements of the rest with the aim of securing electoral majorities.

A majoritarian conception of the polity, avowing a strong state that has an overriding say with regard to rights and freedoms, but with a pronounced tilt to the market, has been triumphal today. But it can hardly be said that other perspectives in contention have lost their salience and the legacy of the parliamentary Opposition in India has lost its mettle.

In this context, the parliamentary Opposition in India has much to learn from its own legacy. It can draw from it lessons to position itself as the representative voice of democratic and egalitarian urges that is at the same time critical of the idea of the nation that has left behind a significant section of its population from any meaningful sense of belonging to it. But it also may be the opportune context to think of new ways by which dissent and opposition can be sustained in a new media-induced public culture that invariably breeds docility and compliance.

Valerian Rodrigues had taught political Science at Mangalore University and Jawaharlal Nehru University

A policy to regulate coaching centres

Coaching institutions undermine mainstream education and impose a huge cost on students



YUGANK GOYAL

In May, a deadly fire at a coaching centre in Surat snuffed out 22 young lives. The rate of suicides in Kota, where many students converge to prepare for entrance exams, remains high. And yet, the coaching industry is rapidly growing. Data from the National Sample Survey Office's 71st round reveal that more than a quarter of Indian students (a stupendous 7.1 crore) take private coaching. Around 12% of a family's expenses go towards private coaching, across rich and poor families alike.

What purpose do coaching institutions serve in society? Do they enhance human capital? If they do, they serve the same purpose as schools and colleges. But if they don't, then they are imposing a huge emotional cost to society. They crush creativity. In most cases, they only help a student to swiftly secure marks in some entrance exam, which is widely understood to be a sign of merit. This is a questionable connection. To signal merit, exams are only one

criterion, and not necessarily the best one. So, coaching institutions exist to help people achieve only one idea of merit. This is a small benefit. They do not enhance human capital. Confining students in classrooms and making them study subjects they often hate destroys their natural talent. Hence, the social cost of these institutions outweighs their benefit by far. The industry needs a re-look.

Unregulated spaces

First, why must anything be regulated? Economic theories suggest that when markets fail, governments need to be brought in. Market failure may occur because of the presence of externalities or asymmetry in information. Governments are also important because they act to coordinate moral norms. On all these counts, coaching institutions emerge as the proverbial villains. Hidden behind legislations meant for tiny shops (Shops and Establishment Act) as 'other' business, they run an empire of evening incarcerations that arrest creative freedom. The big ones draw an entire generation of young minds and systematically erode their imagination. They ignite psychological disorders in students, undermine mainstream education, impose huge opportunity costs to students, charge an



exorbitant fee which is often untaxed, and yet remain unaccountable (several court cases on breach of promise of refund are underway). This paints a picture of coaching centres as market bulies. The social costs are exacerbated by the absolute disregard for the well being of students, who are shoved into tiny rooms with little ventilation, let alone a fire exit. Society bears the burden – only for the sake of finding out who is marginally better than the other in cramming for some exam.

The building in Surat had an illegally constructed terrace. It had a wooden staircase that got burnt, thus disabling any possibility of escape. It had no fire safety equipment, nor any compliance or inspection certificate. The response of the State government was to shut down all coaching institutions in Gujarat until fire inspections were completed. This was a typical knee-jerk reaction.

The building which caught fire was located in a premise that was supposed to be a residential space, according to the approved plan of 2001. In 2007, a two-floor commercial complex was illegally built. It was legalised in 2013 under Gujarat's regularisation laws. The other floors where the fire broke out were constructed illegally later. With such patterns of violating the laws, these inspections will only serve a tick-mark purpose. But here is the point. Although government measures are more emotional than rational, they have achieved the purpose of drawing our attention to coaching centres. In the last six months, three fire incidents have involved coaching institutions in Gujarat.

Valueless idea

Why do people start coaching institutions? Barring a few exceptions, coaching institutions sell a valueless but costly idea. Only those enterprises which have no value themselves play with the law. To blame the systemic flaws in the implementation of safety laws and to blame corruption in the government is to normalise the lack of integrity in the entrepreneur who decided to violate the law. To harp on lapses by the government is to turn a blind eye towards what kind of ethics we are drawing out

of our enterprises, particularly those which purport to provide 'education'. Coaching institutions, of course, are not necessarily ethical entities. Most of them do not add to the value of education.

While the reason for the growth of coaching institutions is the entrance exam culture of India, what is urgently required is a policy on regulating them. Some States have already passed laws to regulate the coaching industry – centres have to register with the government and meet certain basic criteria – for instance, they cannot employ teachers of government-recognised schools. Existing State laws, however, do not evince a consistent rationale that could aid in framing national regulations. There is also the Private Coaching Centres Regulatory Board Bill, 2016 in discussion. A PIL was recently filed in the Supreme Court on regulating coaching institutions. But we must recognise that a bad law is worse than no law. While the discourse being triggered is a welcome step, it is now important to ensure regulations that emerge are agile, forward-looking and empowering.

Yugank Goyal is an Associate Professor at OP Jindal Global University. He also sits on the Governing Council of the Indian School of Public Policy

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.

Lawless land

The Prime Minister finally broke his silence on the incident, but his responsibility seems to end with offering lip service ("Modi says he is pained by Jharkhand lynching", June 27). Was it right on his part to defend Jharkhand? The Supreme Court urged Parliament to enact a law to curb mob lynching, but the Central and State governments continue to do nothing about this. Simply saying that the law will take its own course is meaningless when there are no sincere efforts taken to enforce the rule of law.

D. SETHURAMAN,
Chennai

In search of a home

The photograph of the

migrant and his daughter in Mexico was deeply distressing ("Drowned dream", June 27). It reminded me of the photograph of the Syrian toddler, Aylan Kurdi, who had drowned in the Mediterranean Sea while attempting to escape to Europe in 2015. Photos like these highlight the perils faced by migrants fleeing their countries due to war and poverty. It's shocking and sad that so many people are losing their lives in search of a home. How many more photos do we need to shake our conscience before we find a lasting solution? Nothing, not even borders, is more valuable than lives.

TALA B. RAGUNATH,
Thanjavur

State of health

While it is heartening that Kerala ranks first among States in the NITI Aayog's Health Index, the State cannot afford to be too happy as it continues to have the highest incidence of diabetes and cancer in the country ("Kerala tops list for best performing State in health", June 27). Even the dreaded Nipah virus first came to Kerala. Changes in lifestyle, new food habits and other reasons are responsible for this. Prevention is more important than cure.

S. JAGATHSIMHAN NAIR,
Thiruvananthapuram

It saddens me that Uttar Pradesh is unable to improve its position even after so many years. There

are too many loopholes in the healthcare system. While these cannot be corrected quickly, the State can use its large population to its advantage. It can deploy this manpower in hospitals and ensure that there are a higher number of well-trained doctors and researchers, and better infrastructure.

KHUSHAL TRIVEDI,
Kannur

Mamata in a bubble

Now, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee wants to join hands with the CPI(M) and the Congress just to oust Prime Minister Narendra Modi ("Left, Congress and Trinamool should unite, says Mamata", June 27). Does she think that Mr.

Modi can be ousted by a mere alliance of three parties? She is yet to understand that people prefer a stable government over unholy alliances. People want a strong leader and voted for one. Ms. Banerjee seems to have learnt nothing from the alliance experiments in U.P. and Karnataka where the

parties are now blaming one another for their debacle. People are not swayed so easily by promises. They know fully well when parties come together only to fulfil their own interests.

V.S. GANESHAN,
Bengaluru

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CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:

>>Instagram post, not a tweet: The Titanic hero, Leonardo DiCaprio, actually took to Instagram to alert his followers on Chennai's drought. A front-page headline (June 27, 2019) and text had erroneously called it a tweet.

>>Wrong photograph: One of the photographs carried along with the report, "Balakot air strike planner named by government as RAW chief" (June 27, 2019), was not that of Arvind Kumar as the caption said.

It is the policy of The Hindu to correct significant errors as soon as possible. Please specify the edition (place of publication), date and page. The Readers' Editor's office can be contacted by Telephone: +91-44-28418297/28576300 (11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday); Fax: +91-44-28552963; E-mail:readerseditor@thehindu.co.in; Mail: Readers' Editor, The Hindu, Kasturji Buildings, 859 & 860 Anna Salai, Chennai 600 002, India. All communication must carry the full postal address and telephone number. No personal visits. The Terms of Reference for the Readers' Editor are on www.thehindu.com

Will the idea of ‘one nation, one poll’ work in India?

PARLEY

The proposal will undermine the federal structure by pushing the regional parties out

Last week, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi convened an all-party meeting to discuss the idea of ‘one nation, one poll’, several parties stayed away, calling the idea “anti-democratic” and “anti-federal”. In a discussion moderated by Anuradha Raman, Tiruchi Siva and Jagdeep S. Chokkar speak of the implications of the proposed move. Edited excerpts:

When Prime Minister Modi floated the idea of ‘one nation, one poll’ yet again and invited the Opposition for a discussion last week, many prominent parties, including the DMK, stayed away from the meeting. What are your concerns?

Tiruchi Siva: One of the reasons the ruling party puts forth [to hold simultaneous elections] is the huge expenditure involved in the election process. In a democratic country, it the right of the people to exercise their franchise. It is the discretion of the people to elect or unseat a government. Citing expenses incurred in elections is not such a big issue in a country as vast as ours.

Our main contention is that as long as we have Article 356 in the Constitution, which allows any State government to be removed by the Central government, how can you be sure that the Centre will not unseat a State government for its own personal reasons by using Article 356 if simultaneous elections are held? What will happen to the remaining tenure of that elected Assembly? As long as Article 356 is in the Constitution, no State government is assured its full term of five years. Will somebody give us an assurance that Article 356 will be removed from the Constitution?

Some argue that simultaneous elections will be long-drawn, drain manpower, that the role of money is questionable, and that the Model Code of Conduct will stall government activities. How valid are these reasons?

Jagdeep S. Chokkar: Well, are we trying to get the cheapest possible democracy or are we trying to get the most effective and representa-

tive democracy? I think it is wrong to put a monetary value on democracy and elections.

The point on the issue of expenses is, who spends this money? The money that the Government of India and the Election Commission spend, which is public money, is minuscule compared to the money that political parties and candidates spend. If political parties and candidates want to reduce expenditure, they can do that. Nobody is asking them to spend that money. They spend this money because no political party is internally democratic.

The Model Code of Conduct only says that if the government wants to introduce a programme or a policy which may have a bearing on the result of the elections, it has to seek clearance from the Election Commission. There are a number of cases where the Election Commission has given such permission. The Model Code does not say that all existing schemes should be stopped. So, to say that development stops because of the Model Code is strange. The reason is that parties which are in power think of development programmes in the last six months or three months before the elections.

Then there’s the point about the government machinery getting caught in the election process. Every State has two elections every five years – one for the Assembly and one for Parliament. Today, elections to a small and remote State Assembly are considered to be a referendum on the national government, so much so that the national government and the political establishment gets into that election. A State election should be fought by the people of the State. Why should Ministers of the Central government and the Prime Minister go to every State to campaign? As a matter of fact, a case can be made that the Minister who takes an oath to fulfil his ministerial duties to the best of his ability for five years and then goes on electoral campaigns violates the oath of office which requires him to do his work as a Minister. If there are people required to campaign everywhere in the country, let them not be made Ministers. If elections are held in one or two States, why should the administra-



S.R. RAGHUNATHAN

tion in the remaining States stop functioning?

The Law Commission, a Parliamentary Standing Committee, and the Election Commission have supported this idea in principle.

TS: Adding to what Mr. Chokkar said, till 1967, simultaneous elections were in vogue. The situation changed after that. All the reasons Mr. Chokkar gave are valid. You see, in a democratic country, an election is the core thread through which people can express their views about the government. At other times, the government has the upper hand. Saying that a few crores being spent on elections is a waste is not a valid argument.

Then I come to the Lok Sabha. In 1977, the Lok Sabha’s term lasted only for three years. In 1989 it lasted only for two years. In 1996, the 11th Lok Sabha lasted for 18 months, and the 12th Lok Sabha lasted 13 months. Even the Lok Sabha cannot be assured of a full term. And if the Lok Sabha is dissolved and the State governments are stable, what is the solution to that?

Does the proposal display a contempt for the parliamentary system and the federal arrangement?

TS: Yes, there is an apprehension that it is so. What is the urgency when there are so many issues to debate? There are serious concerns about the federal structure and its

Are we trying to get the cheapest possible democracy or are we trying to get the most effective and representative democracy?

future against the backdrop of this proposal.

JSC: Part VI of the Constitution concerns the States. The States have an independent constitutional entity and existence. They have their own rhythm of elections. To forcibly change a constitutional entity’s natural progression is unconstitutional. And as has been said by Siva, it is a violation of the federal structure. So, one, there is independent constitutional existence, and two, there is the famous *Kesavananda Bharati* judgment in which a 13-judge Bench said, yes, Parliament does have the power to amend the Constitution, but that power does not extend to the point where the basic structure can be changed. The basic structure has been defined variously by several Supreme Court judgments. And in all those descriptions the federal character of the Constitution is a permanent component and prevents Parliament from amending the basic structure of the Constitution. Therefore, I maintain that even if all parties agree that simultaneous elections should be held, it is unconstitutional and it will not stand the test of judicial scrutiny. It is against the spirit of democracy and it should not be done.

If the party in power wants to

have absolute control over all the States, it should move a formal proposal to have a presidential form of government. I have no problem with that, but that should be discussed in that form and not through this devious and circuitous way.

How unfair is this proposal to smaller parties and particularly regional parties?

TS: Importance to States was accorded only after the emergence of regional parties. Till then, the national party dominated. After the emergence of regional parties, importance was given to local issues, and regional importance, of course, gained momentum. That cannot be sought to be undermined or underestimated in the future. If a simultaneous election comes through, the national party may take that as a sign for a simultaneous verdict. There are chances that the prevailing situation will help a party to remain in power at the Centre and in the States. This proposal will undermine the federal structure by pushing the regional parties out.

JSC: Absolutely. I feel that this is perhaps one of the unstated intentions. To get rid of all the minor parties, so to say, is to get rid of the Opposition. Regional parties will lose out because it will be argued that we are also voting for Parliament and for national issues. So, should the voter be voting on national issues in the State elections or on regional issues?

I had written a piece with Sanjay Kumar for your newspaper [in 2016] where I had said that [from the 1989 general election onwards], out of 31 instances where elections for State Assemblies and Parliament were held simultaneously, in 24 cases the same party was voted for the State Assembly and Parliament. So, the chances of voters voting together for the same party for the State and the Centre are high.

Even when the Congress was in power, and during Indira Gandhi’s time, there was a proposal for a presidential form of government, though the slogan of ‘one nation, one election’ was not used. So, it is a fact that any party which finds itself in a rather strong position feels itself perpetuating its rule. But that does not mean that it is democratic.

The third issue is that in the last

three years, there have been a number of discussions on simultaneous elections. And this government, even before Parliament meets, calls a meeting of the political parties on this issue. This makes me wonder whether it is a diversionary tactic of the government so that people don’t think about other issues.

What do you have to say about electoral bonds brought in by the NDA government to ensure transparency?

JSC: It is ironic that there is a limit on the expenditure that a candidate can incur during elections but there is no limit on the expenditure that a party can incur. What is the source of income of political parties? Nearly 70-80% of the income of parties on an average is from unknown sources. And now, on top of that, we have this new scheme called electoral bonds. This is a blatant way of converting black money into white. Data show that in 2017-18, 95% of the bonds were received by the party in power. Now, this is a way of choking the funding to all Opposition parties, big or small. And if funding to all Opposition parties is choked, obviously other parties will be unable to function. That’s why we are in the Supreme Court and the matter is under the consideration of the Court. Our contention is that it is against all the apex court’s judgments on transparency. I mean, the whole exercise of making electoral bonds a Money Bill, which it is not, is questionable. There are many things wrong with electoral bonds and they will make the election expense issue even more opaque.

I repeat, election expenses are not an issue. If political parties are going to be truly democratic in their internal functioning, they have to stop choosing candidates on their winnability quotient, the exact definition of which is not known to anybody, but we do know that money and muscle power form two very important parts. Till that is corrected, the election expenditure issue is not going to be sorted out.

TS: I would like to know how much money can be saved by holding simultaneous elections. We will oppose the move and continue to do so. The government cannot paralyse the best practices which have been followed so far.



Tiruchi Siva
is a DMK member in the Rajya Sabha from Tamil Nadu



Jagdeep S. Chokkar
is one of the founding members of the Association for Democratic Reforms



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SINGLE FILE

BIMSTEC, a viable option

Unlike SAARC, it provides an opportunity for economic, cultural and social cooperation in the region

RADHIKA CHHABRA



PTI

S. Jaishankar’s first foreign visit as External Affairs Minister to Bhutan might be indicative of the government’s attempt to rekindle India’s ‘Neighbourhood First’ policy that started with Prime Minister Narendra Modi inviting SAARC leaders to his swearing-in ceremony in 2014.

The shift of focus from other regional initiatives such as SAARC to BIMSTEC in the past five years can be attributed to the inability of SAARC to foster regional cooperation and make progress. Regional cooperation under SAARC saw no progress, as indicated by the fact that the group has not met since 2014. Further, the summit stood cancelled in 2016 because it was boycotted by India, along with three other member states, owing to terror attacks in India allegedly sponsored by Pakistan-linked operatives. This prompted the Indian government to shift its focus to BIMSTEC to enhance regional cooperation, as manifested by the BIMSTEC state heads being invited to the oath-taking ceremony of the incumbent Modi government.

The Indian government, however, needs to be cautious in its approach toward BIMSTEC, otherwise it may meet a fate akin to previous attempts at cooperation in the region. Indeed, the trajectory of regional cooperation is driven by the nature and success of previous attempts at regional cooperation because there tends to be an acquiescence to the way states interact in a region. This is not to say that states will interact only in that manner. As seen in Europe, the relationship dynamic has changed time and again over the decades.

Regional initiatives in Asia, like SAARC, have been defined along the tangents of strategy and security more than they have been along economic, cultural and social lines. This can be attributed to contemporary geopolitical concerns and the mistrust that exists among the countries that are party to these organisations. Nevertheless, it is likely that looking towards BIMSTEC for regional economic, cultural and social cooperation may prove fruitful. This is because it does not include Pakistan, which has been an impediment to SAARC’s success and has kept the group’s relational dynamic focused on security and strategy. Further, China’s absence in BIMSTEC could mean that there may be fewer obstacles hindering the achievement of the organisation’s mandate. This is because bilateral and contentious issues will be excluded from the group’s deliberations, especially given that India and China have conflicting world views and sometimes clash on regional goals. As the renegotiation of SAARC remains unattainable, BIMSTEC might be a viable option for India to maintain its foreign policy discourse. However, New Delhi will have to take into account the fact that in Asia, economics and politics have historically been deeply integrated, and not fall into the acquiescence trap.

The writer is a researcher with Observer Research Foundation



NOTEBOOK

Drought teaches people the value of water

Tamil Nadu has become receptive to the idea of water conservation only now

T. RAMAKRISHNAN

Twelve years ago, I asked the then Agriculture Secretary of Tamil Nadu whether his department was undertaking any programme to promote the concept of water conservation without compromising on yield. I had just returned from the U.S. where I had seen people conserve water in different ways. I told the officer that in Minnesota, the place of origin of the Mississippi river, farmers were taking to sprinkler irrigation in a big way.

The officer clearly did not like my question, nor did he like the U.S. example. He curtly replied that his department was doing everything it could. The implication was that he did not need a lecture on water conservation.

The officer’s attitude was not an isolated case. Around the same time, I went to Mayiladuthurai in Nagapattinam district in

Tamil Nadu and asked a relative whether he would be receptive to the idea of water conservation, even while maintaining the same level of yield. The relative, a post-graduate and a resourceful farmer, shrugged off the question. “We are used to utilising water in a particular way, whether there is enough water in the Cauvery or not. This is how society has been treating water for thousands of years,” he replied. Would people be willing to change their ways even after experiencing droughts and trying times, I wondered.

Thankfully, changes do happen. Over the last couple of weeks, I have been in touch with farmers from different regions in Tamil Nadu. The State is now facing a severe water crisis. I broached the subject of water conservation with them, just like I did with the State Agriculture Secretary and my relative more

than a decade ago.

I was in for a pleasant surprise with the relative. The tables had turned. This time he gave me a lecture on how to save water while raising paddy. He is an avid practitioner of the System of Rice Intensification (SRI), a method of cultivation involving less water and seeds. The spell of drought that the Cauvery delta had faced seven years ago had convinced him of the idea of using water efficiently. He realised that he could no longer rely on the “traditional” practice of using more water than what was required.

R. Muthukumar, a young farmer of Tiruvannamalai district, which is not known to be a water surplus area, said he could not spot anyone who was interested in concepts such as SRI six or seven years ago, despite the groundwater in their lands going down steeply. But this has changed, he said. Now the

people in his village are interested in knowing about the various ways in which water can be conserved. Drought teaches people the value of water.

Micro-irrigation is gaining currency in several parts of Tamil Nadu due to a host of factors including the support from the State government. Sugarcane, banana, coconut, and vegetables like brinjal and tomato are being raised through this method. Drip irrigation for sugarcane is becoming popular in many parts of the State.

This is not to say that the problem has been solved. There continues to be enormous scope for efficient utilisation of water. But in a moment of crisis such as this, the silver lining is that no one now, whether a farmer or an officer, scoffs at the idea of water conservation.

People are waking up to reality now, and hopefully it’s not too late.

FROM The Hindu. ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JUNE 28, 1969

Forward trading in scripts

The Union Government has banned with immediate effect forward trading in shares at all stock exchanges. A notification has been issued to this effect today [June 27, New Delhi] in the Gazette of India Extraordinary. The existing contracts entered into upto the date of the notification and remaining to be performed are permitted to be liquidated in accordance with the rules, bye-laws and regulations of the stock exchanges concerned. It is explained that this step has been taken to curb the unhealthy trends that have lately developed into the shares and securities business. If they are allowed to continue unabated, there is a danger to the health of the stock market and to the investment climate, particularly at a time when there is a revival of public investment interest in the capital market. The Central Government has, therefore, banned forward trading in shares to prevent undesirable speculation.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JUNE 28, 1919.

Cholera in Calcutta.

In reply to a question on Cholera among the Rangoon passengers, the chairman of the Calcutta Corporation said [in Calcutta]: On the afternoon of the 13th June [Friday] the Port Health Officer reported to me through telephone that there was a large congregation of passengers for Rangoon by the B.I.S.N. Company’s Steamer at Nos 7 and 8 jetties and that a number of cases of cholera had occurred. These cases were removed to the hospital. He considered this as a serious menace to the health of the city and suggested that the segregation station at Surinam should be at once utilised for the accommodation of these passengers. This was arranged by the Health Officer working in concert with the Port Health Officer and the next day arrangements were completed for accommodating these passengers.

CONCEPTUAL Futarchy

POLITICS

This refers to a form of government where voters get to vote on the values that need to be upheld by their government, but the best policies that need to be adopted in order to achieve these popular values is decided through the means of prediction markets. It is believed that prediction markets, where investors bet money on the future outcomes of various policies, can offer better policy ideas than regular democracies where politicians decide the policies of the government. Futarchy was first proposed by American economist Robert Hanson who summarised the idea as “vote on value, but bet on beliefs” in a manifesto released in 2000.

MORE ON THE WEB

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आकाश विजयवर्गीय को यदि नगर निगम के अमले से किसी तरह की शिकायत थी, तो वह कानूनी रास्ते से कार्रवाई कर सकते थे, लेकिन जब कानून के रखवाले ही कानून अपने हाथ में लेने लगेंगे तो फिर व्यवस्था कैसे काम करेगी।

कानून के रखवाले

मैं एक जर्जर मकान को ढहाने गए नगर निगम के अधिकारियों पर भाजपा के युवा विधायक आकाश विजयवर्गीय और उनके समर्थकों द्वारा किया गया हमला राजनीतिक रसूख और दबंगई दिखाने का ही एक और मामला है। हेरानी इस बात की है कि बल्ले से एक अधिकारी को पीटते नजर आए आकाश यह मानने को तैयार ही नहीं हैं कि उन्होंने कुछ भी गलत किया। उन्हें गिरफ्तार कर जेल भेज दिया गया है और स्थानीय अदालत ने उन्हें यह कहते हुए जमानत नहीं दी है कि एक विधायक होने के नाते उनसे यह अपेक्षा नहीं की जाती कि वह कानून को अपने हाथ में लें। वास्तव में इंदौर में सौ से अधिक पुरानी और जर्जर हो चुकी इमारतों की शिनाख्त कर उन्हें ढहाने का आदेश

मध्य प्रदेश की पिछली शिवराज सिंह की अगुआई वाली भाजपा सरकार ने दिया था और जिस इमारत को ढहाने के लिए नगर निगम का अमला गया था, उसे खाली करवाने के लिए तीन नोटिस पहले दिए जा चुके थे। ध्यान रहे, पिछले वर्ष ही इंदौर में एक चार मंजिला होटल के ढह जाने से दस लोगों की मौत हो गई थी। यदि इस खास इमारत में किसी काग्रेसी नेता या अधिकारियों को कोई दिलचस्पी रही भी होगी, तो इस पर कानूनी रास्ते से शिकायत और कार्रवाई की जा सकती थी। मगर जैसा कि आकाश ने खुद कहा है कि उन्होंने, 'आवेदन, निवेदन और फिर दे दना दन' का रास्ता अख्तियार किया। इसे किसी भी तरह से जायज नहीं ठहराया जा सकता। गौर करने लायक बात यह भी है कि आकाश कोई आम विधायक नहीं हैं, बल्कि वह

भाजपा के वरिष्ठ नेता और पश्चिम बंगाल के प्रभारी कैलाश विजयवर्गीय के पुत्र हैं, जिन्हें सात महीने पहले हुए विधानसभा चुनाव में स्थानीय विधायक ऊषा ठाकुर का टिकट काटकर भारी विरोध के बीच उम्मीदवार बनाया गया था। यही नहीं, भाजपा एक ओर तो वंशवाद को लेकर कांग्रेस को कोसते नहीं थकती, लेकिन मध्य प्रदेश से ही चुने गए उनके एक केंद्रीय मंत्री प्रहलाद पटेल का पुत्र प्रबल एक व्यक्ति की हत्या के मामले में जेल में है और इसी मामले में एक भाजपा विधायक का पुत्र फरार है। आकाश विजयवर्गीय भले ही अपने कृत्यों को जायज ठहराने की कोशिश कर रहे हों, लेकिन इससे उनकी पार्टी के साथ ही उनके पिता की छवि पर भी प्रतिकूल असर पड़ रहा है, जो भले ही उनका बचाव करते नजर आ रहे हैं।

जड़ों से जुड़ाव की जरूरत



राहुल सांकृत्यायन की भाषा, बोली, बौद्धज्ञान संबंधी दृष्टि एवं ज्ञान से भी हमारे ज्यादातर हिंदी क्षेत्र के समाज वैज्ञानिक या तो अनभिज्ञ हैं, या बचते हैं।

बद्री नारायण



हम आत्मविश्वास महसूस करते हैं। पश्चिम हमारी अस्मिता में बहुत गहरे घुसा हुआ है। प्रसिद्ध समाज वैज्ञानिक आशीष नंदी हमारी अस्मिता में पश्चिम के गहन प्रवेश की समीक्षा करते हुए इसे 'इन्टीमेट एनिमी'; कहते हैं। एक आत्मीय से लगने वाले शत्रु के रूप में पश्चिमी ज्ञान हमारी अस्मिता में मौजूद है। इसी के कारण हम अपने समाज के बौद्धिकों को अपनी ज्ञान परंपरा को, अपने सामाजिक शोषों में संदर्भ देने,

विमर्श में लाने से बचते हैं। हमें जब पश्चिम सराहता है, तभी हम अपने समाज के लिए महत्वपूर्ण होते हैं। जब महत्वपूर्ण उत्तर आधुनिक विचारक देरिदा ने बौद्ध विमर्श को अपने चिंतन में महत्व दिया, तो बौद्ध विद्वान नागार्जुन के महत्व का भान हमें हुआ। सामाजिक ज्ञान रचने के क्रम में शंकराचार्य के दर्शन को पश्चिम में ज्यादा जगह एवं संदर्भ दिया जाता है। भारत में कम। भारत में हम उन्हें ज्ञानी,

दार्शनिक के रूप में नहीं देखते वरन् उन्हें धार्मिक विमर्शकार एवं धर्म प्रचारक के रूप में देखते हैं। अनेक पौराणिक विमर्श आज की आधुनिकता से संकटग्रस्त समाज को समझने एवं उससे बचाने में हमारी मदद कर सकते हैं। हम इस पर सोचना भी नहीं चाहते, बल्कि ऐसा सोचने को गलत भी मानते हैं। हम विज्ञान एवं आधुनिकता पर गौरवान्वित तो होते हैं, परंतु भूल जाते हैं कि देशज आधुनिकताएं भी होती हैं एवं देशज ज्ञान-विज्ञान भी। मानव संसाधन मंत्री निशंक द्वारा ज्योतिष ज्ञान का महत्व देने पर चिंतित मीडिया आज बाजार द्वारा उत्कृष्ट ढंग से पैक किए जा रहे आयुर्वेद के ज्ञान का महत्व अंग्रेजी चिकित्सा पद्धति की तुलना में स्वीकार करने लगा है। 'योग' का ज्ञान भारतीय ज्ञान परंपरा से उपजा है। आज पूरी दुनिया योग करती दिख रही है, क्योंकि प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी के नेतृत्व में भारतीय राज्य ने अपनी आलोचनाओं का परवाह न करते हुए इसे विश्व स्तर पर प्रचारित किया। भारतीय ज्ञान परंपरा के अनेक आलोचक भी आज 'योग' की महत्ता को मानने लगे हैं।

सामाजिक विज्ञान में हिंदी क्षेत्र ने अनेक चिंतक पैदा किए, किंतु उन्हें हम अपने सामाजिक शोषों में संदर्भित भी नहीं करते और देरिदा, फूको और हेबरमॉस में फंसे रहते हैं। अगर हिंदी क्षेत्र को बात करें, तो बनारस में रहने वाले संस्कृत के महान ज्ञानी गोपीनाथ कविराज का चिंतन एवं दृष्टि हमारे पूरे विमर्श से गायब है। राहुल सांकृत्यायन की भाषा, बोली, बौद्धज्ञान संबंधी दृष्टि एवं ज्ञान से भी हमारे ज्यादातर हिंदी क्षेत्र के समाज वैज्ञानिक या तो अनभिज्ञ हैं, या बचते हैं। हजारी प्रसाद द्विवेदी को हम मात्र हिंदी का साहित्यकार बनाकर छोड़ देते हैं, परंतु उनका गोंगा पीर के मेले का अदभुत नृतत्व

शास्त्रीय अध्ययन हमारे सामाज विज्ञान एवं नृतत्व शास्त्र के विमर्श में कहीं जगह नहीं पाता। उत्तर प्रदेश के समाज के अध्ययन में प्रेमचंद के निबंधों से निःसृत अंतर्दृष्टि का हम कोई उपयोग नहीं कर पाते। वासुदेव शरण अग्रवाल हिंदी क्षेत्र के चिंतक हैं। गंवई समाज के अध्ययन की जो अंतर्दृष्टि उनके पास है, वैसी न तो किसी भारतीय समाजशास्त्री में हमने पाई है और न ही पश्चिमी समाज शास्त्रियों में। परंतु भारतीय गांव पर हुए अध्ययनों में समाज वैज्ञानिकों ने अभी तक वासुदेव शरण अग्रवाल को कोई जगह नहीं दी है।

भारतीय ज्ञान परंपरा की ओवरसीडिंग अगर गलत है, तो उपनिवेशवाद द्वारा सुचित हीनभावना के कारण उसका 'आलोचनात्मक मूल्यांकन' न करना, उसका पूर्ण अस्वीकार शायद उससे भी ज्यादा गलत है। आधुनिकता भारतीय समाज में गहरे सर्वग्रासी संकट पैदा कर रही है, जिससे मुक्ति के लिए हमारा पारंपरिक ज्ञान हमारी मदद कर सकता है। पश्चिम प्रभावित आधुनिकता के बरक्स देशज आधुनिकता शायद भारतीय समाज के लिए ज्यादा मुफीद होगी। जरूरत है अपनी ज्ञान परंपरा में जो भी प्रासांगिक शक्ति तत्व है, उनका अवगाहन कर उन्हें हमारे सामाजिक विमर्शों का हिस्सा बनाना। ज्ञान के देशज एवं स्थानीय स्रोतों की तलाश ही हमारी एक बड़ी जरूरत है। अकादमिक संस्थानों, शोध केंद्रों एवं विश्वविद्यालयों में आज जरूरी है कि हम उपनिवेशवाद उत्पादित हीनता बोध से मुक्त हो अपने देशज बौद्धिक संश्लोत, अपने ज्ञान एवं स्थानीय ज्ञान परंपराओं को आज के विमर्श में महत्व दें।

- निदेशक, गोविंद बल्लभ पंत सामाजिक विज्ञान संस्थान

हिंदी पट्टी की सुंदरता

हाल ही में फेमिना मिस इंडिया चुनी गईं तीन शीर्ष लड़कियां हिंदी पट्टी के उन पिछड़े राज्यों से ताल्लुक रखती हैं, जहां ऐसी कामयाबी के मायने बाजार से ज्यादा लड़कियों के अंदर सपनों का पीछा करने की ललक के संदर्भ में ज्यादा हैं।



मनीषा सिंह

उसके दो पक्ष हैं। एक पक्ष वह है, जिसमें स्त्री मर्दों के हाथ का खिलौना और अरबों डॉलर वाले सुंदरता के वैश्विक बाजार का उपयोगी माध्यम है। दूसरा पक्ष वह है, जिसमें यही स्त्री अपने कोशल के बल पर नित नए क्षेत्रों में सफलता के कीर्तिमान स्थापित कर रही है, हालांकि ऐसा करते हुए भी सुंदर दिखने की उसकी शाश्वत इच्छा में कोई कमी नहीं आई है। ज्यादातर सौंदर्य प्रतियोगिताएं इसलिा बेमानी ठहराई जाती हैं, क्योंकि उनमें प्रतिभागी लड़कियों से सिर्फ सुंदर दिखने की अपेक्षा की जाती है और ज्ञान का स्तर नापने के लिए बेहद साधारण सवाल पूछे जाते हैं। इन आधारों पर साबित करने की कोशिश होती है कि महिलाओं के तर्क का स्तर

टी. वी. फिल्मों या सौंदर्य प्रतियोगिताओं में विजयी रहने वाली लड़कियों की कामयाबी को लेकर हमारे समाज में एक ग्रंथि कायम रही है। माना जाता है कि ऐसे ज्यादातर क्षेत्रों में स्त्रियां अपनी योग्यता के कारण नहीं, सिर्फ शारीरिक सुंदरता के बल पर जीतती हैं। पर जब हम हाल में फेमिना मिस इंडिया चुनी गईं शीर्ष तीन लड़कियों पर नजर डालते हैं, तो वहां हमें एक खास संदेश देखने को मिलता है। इस बार प्रतियोगिता में पहले के तीन स्थानों और रनर अप के लिए महानगरीय स्टीरियोटाइप लड़कियों के बजाय राजस्थान, छत्तीसगढ़, बिहार जैसे राज्यों की और सीए, इंजीनियरिंग और मैनेजमेंट जैसे आला विषयों की पढ़ाई कर रही लड़कियों ने कब्जा जमाया है। मुमकिन है कि इस किस्म का चुनाव करते हुए आयोजकों का खास उद्देश्य रहा हो। बाजार की जो ताकतें अब महानगरों से नीचे उतरते हुए पिछड़े राज्यों के उपेक्षित इलाकों में अपने बिजनेस के अवसर खोज रही हैं, उनका कोई दबाव इस चयन के पीछे काम कर रहा हो। पर प्रतियोगिता में सफल रही राजस्थान की सुमन राव, छत्तीसगढ़ की शिवानी जाधव और बिहार की श्रेया शंकर हिंदी पट्टी के जिन पिछड़े राज्यों से ताल्लुक रखती हैं, वहां ऐसी कामयाबी के मायने बाजार से ज्यादा लड़कियों के अंदर सपनों का पीछा करने की ललक जगने के संदर्भ में ज्यादा हैं। सौंदर्य प्रतियोगिता में मिली सफलता को अब सुंदरता के आधार पर मिली कामयाबी भर नहीं माना जाता। हालांकि इसके पीछे जो आशंकाएं हैं,



खुली खिड़की

फिल्मों की वैश्विक कमाई

फिल्में मनोरंजन का प्रमुख साधन हैं। आज के समय में ज्यादातर फिल्मों को एनिमेशन विधियों का प्रयोग कर विशेष प्रभावी बनाया जा रहा है। हाल के कुछ वर्षों में एनीमेशन से सजी हुई फिल्मों ने रिकॉर्ड कमाई की है।



■ नोट : आंकड़े अरब डॉलर में हैं।

■ स्रोत : बॉक्स ऑफिस मोजो



मंजिलें और भी हैं

>>> देव कुमार वर्मा

कोल बेल्ट के बच्चे शिक्षा के सपने को कर रहे साकार

झारखंड के धनबाद को देश की कोल राजधानी कहा जाता है। इसी जिले के कतरास गांव में मेरा जन्म हुआ। मेरे पिता पान की छोटी सी दुकान चलाते थे, साथ ही कोयला मजदूरी भी करते थे। गांव में ज्यादातर लोग कोयला मजदूर होने के साथ शराब की लत के शिकार थे। बहुत सारे ऐसे लोग भी थे, जो रात के अंधेरे में कोयला चोरी कर लाते और दिन में उसे साइकिल पर लादकर बेचने जाते थे। शिक्षा पर किसी का कोई ध्यान नहीं था। मेरे मन में इनके लिए कुछ करने के विचार चलते रहते थे। कॉलेज तक की पढ़ाई करने के बाद मैंने राष्ट्रीय प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान, दुर्गापुर से स्नातक और फिर भारतीय प्रबंधन संस्थान, लखनऊ से एमडीपी किया। इसके बाद मुझे कोलकाता स्थित कोल इंडिया लिमिटेड में नौकरी मिल गई।

धनबाद के आसपास लाखों की संख्या में लोग रहते हैं, बावजूद इसके कुछ ही ऐसे स्कूल हैं जहां अच्छी शिक्षा दी जाती है। ज्यादातर बच्चे जो कि गरीब परिवार से आते हैं, या तो सरकारी स्कूलों में जाते हैं या फिर पढ़ते ही नहीं हैं। चार साल तक कोलकाता में काम करने के बाद, मेरा तबादला झारखंड में हुआ। वर्ष 2014 के लोकसभा चुनाव में मेरी नियुक्ति जिले के चुनाव अधिकारी के रूप में हुई। कर्मचारियों को प्रशिक्षित करने के लिए मैं एक स्कूल के दौरे पर गया। वहां मुझे यह देखकर हैरानी हुई कि 9वीं और 10वीं कक्षा के छात्र 'शिक्षक' जैसे आसान हिंदी शब्द भी ठीक से नहीं लिख सकते थे।

मुझे यहां के स्कूलों में शिक्षा की दयनीय स्थिति की झलक मिल गई। मैंने इस स्थिति को सुधारने के लिए झारखंड के मुख्यमंत्री व शिक्षा मंत्री को पत्र लिखे। जवाब में उनके आश्वासन और मेरी सराहना के पत्र तो आए, पर चार महीने बाद भी जमीनी स्तर पर कोई बदलाव नहीं दिखा। फिर बच्चों की शिक्षा को मैंने सुधारने का निर्णय लिया। मैंने अपने पैतृक घर को गांव के बच्चों के लिए मुफ्त ट्यूशन केंद्र में तब्दील कर दिया। शुरू में केवल पांच बच्चे आए पर धीरे-धीरे उनकी संख्या बढ़ने लगी। जब बच्चों की संख्या बढ़कर 100 हो गई, तो हमने इस स्कूल को पंजीकृत करवाने का निर्णय लिया, और इस तरह, 'पाठशाला' का जन्म हुआ। इस अभियान को मुकाम तक पहुंचाने में मुझे कई चुनौतियों का सामना करना पड़ा। बहुत सारे बच्चे ऐसे थे जो नियमित कक्षा में नहीं आते थे, उनके परिजन उन्हें रोक लेते थे, ताकि वे उनके रोजमर्रा के कार्यों में मदद कर सकें। मैं उन बच्चों के घर जाता, उनकी अनुपस्थिति का कारण पूछता और उनके माता-पिता से बच्चों को देबारा स्कूल भेजने को कहता। धीरे-धीरे ये बच्चे स्कूल आने लगे। पाठशाला में हम झारखंड के कोल बेल्ट के बच्चों को पांचवीं कक्षा तक अंग्रेजी माध्यम में बिना किसी शुल्क के शिक्षा देते हैं। करीब 40 किलोमीटर के इस इलाके में हमारी तीन शाखाओं में 500 से अधिक बच्चे पढ़ाई करते हैं। इन स्कूलों में प्रोजेक्टर, लैपटॉप, बायोमैट्रिक हाजिरी, एक्वागार्ड कूलर, खेल मैदान, लड़के-लड़कियों के लिए अलग- अलग शौचालय जैसी सुविधाएं मौजूद हैं। इस पहल में मेरी पत्नी और दोस्त आर्थिक सहयोग करते हैं, बाकी रूपएं मैं अपने वेतन से खर्च करता हूं।

बच्चों को पढ़ाई के प्रति नियमित और सजग रहने के लिए प्रोत्साहित करते रहना चुनौती भरा काम है। हमारी मेहनत अब रंग लाने लगी है। बच्चों को आगे बढ़ते देख इनके मां-बाप के चेहरे पर जो खुशी होती है, वह दिल को छूने वाली है। हम अपने वाले सालों में पाठशाला का विस्तार करना चाहते हैं, ताकि अधिक से अधिक बच्चों को बड़ी कक्षाओं की पढ़ाई में भी मदद मिल सके।



अंतर्ध्वनि

>>> उपमन्यु चटर्जी

कूर और भद्दे यथार्थ को सामने लाना एक लेखक का कर्तव्य है

मैं पटना में पैदा हुआ, जबकि मेरी पढ़ाई दिल्ली में हुई। मैं घर और घर से बाहर ऐसे माहौल में रहा, जहां करियर को ज्यादा महत्व दिया जाता था। इसके बावजूद साहित्य पढ़ते हुए मेरे भीतर सोच और संवेदनाएं आकार ले रही थीं। भारतीय प्रशासनिक सेवा यानी आईएएस में चुना जाना मेरे लिए बड़ी उपलब्धि था। लेकिन सच कहूं, तो इस नौकरी में आने के बाद मैंने जीवन को ज्यादा व्यापकता और गहराई में समझा। यह जीवन ज्यादा जटिल, ज्यादा क्रूर और उतना ही पतनशील था। उस कीभत्स यथार्थ को स्वर देने के लिए मैंने अपना पहला उपन्यास इंग्लिश अगस्ट लिखा। उसका नायक आगस्त्य सेन नैतिक रूप से

पतित हो चुके समाज का एक पतित व्यक्ति था। चाहे जिस भी वजह से हो, लोगों को आज भी उसकी याद है। लेकिन कम ही लोग जानते होंगे कि मेरे उस उपन्यास को आठ प्रकाशकों ने खारिज कर दिया था, जिसके बाद मैं निराश हो गया था। उसी समय संयोग से अमिताव घोष के जरिये फावर से मेरा परिचय हुआ, और उपन्यास छपकर बाहर आया, हालांकि उसमें भी एक साल से ज्यादा लग गया था। लोग मुझे अहंकारी और आक्रामक कहते हैं। यह आईएएस के उस सिस्टम का भी असर हो सकता है, जिसका मैं हिस्सा रहा। मैं दोटुक बोलने वाला व्यक्ति भी हूं। जैसे, मैं यह नहीं कहूंगा कि पूर्णकालिक लेखक होने पर मैं बेहतर लिख सकता था। नौकरी में रहते हुए भी ऑफिस के लिए निकलने से पहले मैं एक पंक्ति ही सही, लेकिन लिखता था। ऐसे ही घर लौटने के बाद भी मैं नियमित लिखता था। मैं यह नहीं मान सकता कि लेखक को हमेशा सुखद और सुसुचिपूर्ण चीजों पर ही लिखना चाहिए। कुरूप और बदसूरत चीजों को सामने लाना भी लेखक का कर्तव्य है। -साहित्य अकादेमी पुरस्कार से सम्मानित लेखक।

हरियाली और रास्ता

रोहन, पिता और लड़ाई

यह कहानी रोहन की है, जिसे अपने पिता से रिश्ते की गर्मजोशी की सीख मिली।



अपने माता-पिता को फिर से लड़ते देख रोहन दुखी हो गया। लड़ाई खत्म हो जाने के बाद पिता के पास जाकर वह बोला, पापा, आप लोग इतना लड़ते रहते हैं। इसके बाद भी साथ रहते हैं, अलग होने के बारे में नहीं सोचते। जबकि अलग हो जाने से आप दोनों खुश तो रह पाएंगे। यह सुनकर रोहन के पिता हंसते हुए बोले, बेटा, तुमने कभी साही देखा है? रोहन बोला, नहीं, पापा। पर मेरी इस बात में साही कहाँ से टपक पड़ा? पिता बोले, जब उंड बढ़ जाती है, तो कई जानवर मरने लगते हैं। तब सारे साही एक दूसरे से चिपक कर बैठ जाते हैं। एक दूसरे के शरीर से इन्हें गर्मी मिलती है। हालांकि चिपकने के कारण उन्हें एक दूसरे के कांटे भी खूब चुभते हैं। पर कंपकंपाती उंड में उनके पास दूसरा विकल्प भी नहीं होता। या तो वे कांटे की चुभन सह ले या उंड में जम जाएं। रोहन ने अपना पुराना सवाल फिर से दोहराया, पर मेरी बात में आप साही का जिक्र कहाँ से ले आए? रोहन के पिता बोले, बेटा, हमारा हर रिश्ता ऐसा ही होता है। किन्हीं दो लोगों को ले लो, फिर वह तुम और मैं ही क्यों न हों। क्या हमारी सोच एकदम एक जैसी हो सकती है? नहीं। हम एक दूसरे की अलग-अलग सोच से ही सीखकर आगे बढ़ते हैं। कई बार हमें एक दूसरे से कुछ सीखनें भी तो करती हैं। कई बार हम सिर्फ इसका एक ही पहलू देख पाते हैं। लेकिन यही वाद-विवाद हमें दूसरे पहलू का भी एहसास कराता है। अगर किसी घर में वाद-विवाद न हो, तो लोग एक दूसरे से कुछ सीखनें ही नहीं। तुम्हारी मम्मी और मैं चाहे कितना भी लड़ लें, हम एक दूसरे का बहुत सम्मान करते हैं। समझे? रोहन मुस्कतते हुए बोला, तो ठीक है, आप लोग इसी तरह लड़ते हुए एक दूसरे से सीखते रहिए।

वाद-विवाद रिश्ते की कमजोरी नहीं, बल्कि ताकत है।

-संकलित

विचार

आदर्श मनुष्य वही है जो संकट के समय धैर्य और साहस से काम ले

कश्मीर में केंद्रीय गृहमंत्री

बतौर केंद्रीय गृहमंत्री पहली बार जम्मू-कश्मीर के दौर पर गए अमित शाह ने यह कहकर अपने इशदे जाहिर कर दिए कि आतंकियों की फंडिंग रोकने और घुसपैठारोधी तंत्र को मजबूत बनाने के साथ ही आतंकवाद के खिलाफ सख्ती बरतने की नीति पर जोर दिया जाएगा। इसके साथ ही उन्होंने अलगाववादी नेताओं से जिस तरह वार्ता की संभावनाओं को खिन्न किया उससे यह साफ हुआ कि मोदी सरकार जल्दबाजी में कोई कदम उठाने से बचना चाह रही है और उसकी पहली प्राथमिकता घाटी के हालात सुधारने और उन्हें स्थायित्व देने पर है। वास्तव में यही समय की मांग है। ऐसा कुछ प्रकट करने से बचा ही जाना चाहिए कि मोदी सरकार अलगाववादी नेताओं से बात करने के लिए व्यग्र है। इन नेताओं से बात करने में हर्ज नहीं, लेकिन पहले यह सुनिश्चित करना जरूरी है कि उनकी ओर से पाकिस्तानपस्ती का परिचय न दिया जाए और वे भारतीय संविधान के दायरे में रहकर ही बातचीत करने के लिए राजी हों। वास्तव में उन्हें उत्तनी ही अहमियत दी जानी चाहिए जितने के वे हकदार हैं। यह ठीक नहीं कि कश्मीर घाटी में असर रखने वाले राजनीतिक दल रह-रहकर केंद्र सरकार और अलगाववादी नेताओं में वार्ता की जरूरत जताते रहते हैं। ऐसा करके वे खुद अपनी अहमियत को ही कम करने का काम करते हैं। इससे भी खराब बात यह है कि वे कई बार अलगाववादियों की भाषा बोलने लगते हैं।

मोदी सरकार को इस पर भी ध्यान देना आवश्यक है कि यदि पीडीपी और नेशनल कांफ्रेंस जैसे दल हालात सुधारने में मददगार न बनें तो वे हालात बिगाड़ने का भी काम न करने पाएं। आज भले ही ये दोनों दल विधानसभा चुनाव जल्द करने पर जोर दे रहे हों, लेकिन इसकी अनदेखी नहीं की जा सकती कि कुछ समय पहले इन दोनों दलों ने पंचायत चुनावों का बहिष्कार करना पसंद किया था। कश्मीर के हालात सुधारने पर इसलिए भी जोर दिया जाना चाहिए, क्योंकि राज्य में विधानसभा चुनाव भी होने हैं और अमरनाथ यात्रा का आयोजन भी। अमित शाह के रुख-रूचैये से यह स्पष्ट है कि विश्वास बहाली के नाम पर वह ऐसा कुछ करने नहीं जा रहे हैं जिससे समस्याएं पैदा करने वाले तत्वों को बल मिले। यह अच्छा हुआ कि ऐसे तत्वों के प्रति किसी तरह की नरमी का संकेत देने के बजाय उन्होंने आतंकवाद के खिलाफ लड़ाई लड़ रहे सुझा बलों की पीठ थपथपाई और यह निर्देश दिया कि लोग राज्य पुलिस के बलिदान को जानें-समझें, इसके लिए सार्वजनिक स्थलों का नाभकरण उनके नाम पर किया जाए और साथ ही उनके सम्मान में समारोह आयोजित किए जाएं। इस तरह के कदमों की जरूरत भी है और उनका महत्व भी है। कश्मीर में अलगाववाद और आतंकवाद के धंधा बन जाने के कारण वहां एक ऐसा वर्ग तैयार हो गया है जो कश्मीरियत को ही भूल बैठा है। निःसंदेह यह उल्लेखनीय है कि गृहमंत्री के दौर के समय घाटी में हड़ताल या बंद का आयोजन नहीं किया गया, लेकिन यह भी ठीक ही रहा कि उन्होंने मौजूदा हालात को एक शुरुआत के तौर पर ही देखा और यह साफ किया कि यह मंजिल नहीं है।

नीति और नीयत का फर्क

बिहार जैसे राज्य में शासन के स्तर पर बनाई गई नीतियां कितनी कारगर होंगी यह बहुत हद तक इसके क्रियान्वयन में लगे लोगों की नीयत पर निर्भर करता है। वर्तमान में शपथ और संकल्प तो जैसे फैसला बन गए हैं। वाक्या नवगछिया का है। सुबह पूरे पुलिस महकमे ने शराब न पीने और न पीने देने की शपथ ली। शाम को एक थानेदार को शराब सेवन के आरोप में गिरफ्तार किया गया। शपथ, संकल्प, नीति और नीयत का यही फर्क विकास और विकास विरोधी माहौल की जमीन तैयार करता है। अनुमान लगाना कठिन नहीं कि उस थानेदार के संपर्क अनेध शराब के कारोबारियों से रहे होंगे। डीजीपी ने इस घटना को गंभीरता से लिया। उन्होंने एसपी को सख्त कार्रवाई के निर्देश दिए और थानेदार को जेल की हवा खानी पड़ी। मंगलवार को विधि व्यवस्था और शराबबंदी से जुड़े मामले की समीक्षा बैठक में मुख्यमंत्री नीतीश कुमार शराब के धंधेबाजों से मिलीभगत रखने वाले पुलिस अफसरों पर कार्रवाई की बात कर रहे थे। जाहिर है, मुख्यालय को भी इस बात का इनपुट है कि कुछ पुलिस अफसर राज्य में पूर्ण शराबबंदी अभियान को पलीता लगा रहे हैं। ऐसे लोगों के खिलाफ उदाहरण योग्य कार्रवाई करने की जरूरत है। इन दिनों नीति और नीयत के फर्क का बड़ा उदाहरण बना है बिजली विभाग। भीषण गर्मी में राज्य के प्रायः जिलों में बिजली के लिए लड़ाक़ार मचा है। शासन इस बात पर गर्व करता है कि राज्य में अब बिजली की कमी नहीं रही। जमीनी हकीकत यह है कि कई शहरों के अधिकांश मोहल्ले घंटों बिजली गुल रहने का खामियाजा भुगत रहे। जब बिजली लोगों को मिले ही नहीं तो इसके पर्याप्त या अपर्याप्त होने के क्या मायने हैं? स्थानीय प्रशासन भी सिर्फ चेतावनी तक सीमित है। उपभोक्ताओं की दुर्दशा यथावत है। स्वास्थ्य सेवा के मामले में भी राज्य की क्या दशा है यह नीति आयोग की रिपोर्ट बता रही है। देश के 21 बड़े राज्यों में हम सबसे नीचे हैं। सुप्रिम कोर्ट के सवाल भी कई सवालों की रह खोलते हैं। नीतियां जमीन पर तभी उतरेंगी जब संसाधन बढ़ाए जाएं और क्रियान्वयन की सघन निगरानी हो। यह भी सही है कि हमने कुछ मामलों में देश के साथ कदमताल कर मिसाल कायम की है।

वर्षा जल संचयन की जरूरत

देवेंद्रराज सुथार

हाल ही प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में पानी के संकट को देखते हुए ग्राम प्रथाओं को निजी तौर पर पत्र लिखकर उनसे मानसून के दौरान वर्षा के जल का संरक्षण करने का अनुरोध किया है। प्रधानमंत्री ने कहा है, ‘प्रिय सरपंचजी, नमस्कार। मुझे उम्मीद है कि आप और पंचायत के मेरे सभी भाई और बहनें पूरी तरह स्वस्थ होंगे। बारिश का मौसम शुरू होने वाला है। हम ईश्वर के आभारी हैं कि हमें पर्याप्त वर्षा जल का आशीर्वाद मिला है। हमें इस आशीर्वाद (जल) के संरक्षण के लिए सभी प्रयास और व्यवस्था करनी चाहिए।’

निःसंदेह वर्षा जल संचयन कई मायनों में महत्वपूर्ण है। वर्षा जल का उपयोग घरेलू काम मसलन घर की सफाई, कपड़े धोने और खाना पकाने के लिए किया जा सकता है। वहीं औद्योगिक उपयोग की कुछ प्रक्रियाओं में भी इसका उपयोग किया जा सकता है। गर्मियों में पानी की किल्लत को पूरक जल स्रोत के द्वारा कम किया जा सकता है। जिससे बोलतबंद पानी की कीमतें भी स्थिर रखी जा सकेंगी। यदि एक टैंक में पानी का व्यापक रूप से संचयन करें तो साल

राजस्थान के कुछ इलाकों में

जल संग्रह करने का प्रचलन है।

इसे अन्य राज्यों में भी लागू कर

वर्षा जल को बचाया जा सकता है

भर पानी की पूर्ति के लिए हमें जलदाय विभाग के बिलों के भुगतान से निजात मिल सकती है। वहीं वर्षा जल को छोटे-छोटे माध्यमों में एकत्रित करके हम बाढ़ जैसा समस्या से भी बच सकते हैं। इसके अतिरिक्त वर्षा जल का उपयोग भवन निर्माण, जल प्रदूषण को रोकने, सिंचाई करने, शौचालयों आदि कार्यों में बेहतर एवं सुलभ ढंग से किया जा सकता है। जो हमारे लिए लाभकारी सिद्ध हो सकता है।

गौरतलब है कि दुनिया के सर्वाधिक बारिश होने वाले क्षेत्रों में भारत भी है। यहां हर वर्ष बर्फ पिघलने और वर्षा जल के रूप में औसतन 4000 अरब घन मीटर पानी प्राप्त होता है, जबकि यह देश वर्षा जल का 1869 अरब घनमीटर (मतलब सिर्फ 46 प्रतिशत) हिस्सा ही उपयोग कर पाता है, बाकी 54 प्रतिशत पानी व्यर्थ में बहकर नदी-नालों द्वारा समुद्र में चला



हर्ष वी पंत

अमेरिकी विदेश मंत्री पॉपियो का दौरा भारत–

अमेरिका वार्ता में जान फूंकने में तो सफल रहा, पर

अभी यह देखना है कि मोदी–ट्रंप जी–20 सम्मेलन

में द्विपक्षीय रिश्तों को कितना आगे बढ़ा पाते हैं ?

तमाम ऊहापोह और बयानबाजियों के बाद आखिर में यही लगा कि भारत और अमेरिका के बीच काफी कुछ सहज है। अमेरिकी विदेश मंत्री माइक पॉपियो द्विपक्षीय रिश्तों में तमाम अनिश्चितताओं के बीच भारत आए। उनके दौरें में दोनों देशों के बीच रिश्तों की मौजूदा तस्वीर को लेकर बहुत उत्पुकता रही, क्योंकि तमाम लोग मानते हैं कि वे रिश्ते मुश्किल भंवर में फंस गए हैं। बहरहाल विदेश मंत्री एस जयशंकर के साथ संयुक्त संवाददाता सम्मेलन में पॉपियो दोनों देशों की एक बार फिर से साझेदारी के रणनीतिक महत्व को रेखांकित करते रहे। हालांकि दोनों नेताओं ने यह माना कि व्यापार के मोर्चे पर कुछ मतभेद अवश्य हैं, लेकिन उन्हें पूरा विश्वास है कि इन विवादों को सफलतापूर्वक सुलझा लिया जाएगा। जयशंकर ने कहा कि चूंकि अमेरिका भारत का सबसे बड़ा व्यापारिक साझेदार है तो दोनों देशों के बीच समय-समय पर कुछ मतभेद स्वाभाविक हैं। पॉपियो ने कहा कि दोनों देश एक दूसरे के द्विपक्षीय साझेदार से कहीं बढ़कर समझते हैं और दोनों किसी भी मोर्चे पर एक दूसरे की मदद कर सकते हैं। उन्होंने स्पष्ट रूप से कहा कि ‘अमेरिका-भारत साझेदारी पहले ही नई ऊंचाई छूने की शुरुआत कर चुकी है।’

वास्तव में इससे इन्कार नहीं किया जा सकता है कि ट्रंप प्रशासन ने कुछ मुद्दों पर अजीब स्थितियां पैदा कर दी हैं, जिनकी सुगबुगाहट पिछले काफी समय से हो रही थी। वाशिंगटन चाहता है कि नई दिल्ली अमेरिकी उत्पादों पर

आयात शुल्क घटाए। वहीं इस महीने की शुरुआत में शटपुटित डोनाल्ड ट्रंप ने जनरलाइज्ड सिस्टम ऑफ प्रफरेंस यानी जीएसपी के तहत भारत को मिले एक लाभार्थी विकासशील देश का दर्जा खत्म कर दिया। यह खासा अहम माना जाता है। भारत को मिला यह दर्जा समाप्त करते हुए ट्रंप ने आरोप लगाया कि इसमें अमेरिका को बराबर फायदा नहीं मिल रहा है और भारत उसे बाजार में अपेक्षित पहुंच नहीं दे रहा है। ऐसे में भारत-अमेरिका में जब भी वार्ता होगी तब व्यापार का मुद्दा ही मुख्य रूप से केंद्र में रहेगा, क्योंकि दोनों देश अपनी आर्थिक सक्रियता को नए सिरे से तय करने का प्रयास कर रहे हैं।

पश्चिमी एशिया में उबाल पूरे उफान पर है जहां भारत के हित अमेरिका और ईरान दोनों के साथ जुड़े हैं। ईरान से तेल खरीदने को लेकर भारत को अमेरिका से मिली छूट की मियाद अब समाप्त हो चुकी है। भारत ने पहले ही इस वास्तविकता से तालमेल बैठाना भी शुरू कर दिया है। इसी का नतीजा है कि अमेरिका से भारत का तेल आयात बढ़ा है। फिलहाल अमेरिका से होने वाले तेल आयात ने भारत के परंपरागत तेल आपूर्तिकर्ता पश्चिमी एशियाई देशों को भी पीछे छोड़ दिया है, मगर भारत यहाँ क्षेत्रीय स्थायित्व एवं स्थिरता भी चाहता है और पॉपियो को इससे अवगत करा दिया गया है। यह बात जयशंकर के बयान से और स्पष्ट हो जाती है। उन्होंने कहा कि खाड़ी के हालात में ऊर्जा सुरक्षा एक पहलू है, लेकिन इसके साथ ही वहां रहने वाले भारतीयों, क्षेत्रीय सुरक्षा एवं व्यापार जैसे अन्य कारक भी उठने

तत्काल तीन तलाक पर फिर वही बहाने

तत्काल तीन तलाक की बुराई को रोकने के लिए लोकसभा में पिछले दिनों मुस्लिम महिला विवाह अधिकार संरक्षण विधेयक गूँथ किया गया। उसके बाद से यह मुद्दा एक बार फिर से चर्चा में है। कुछ लोग कह रहे हैं कि जो भी पुरुष अपनी पत्नी को छोड़ता है उसे सजा मिलनी ही चाहिए। कुछ लोग इस प्रावधान का विरोध भी कर रहे हैं। सवाल है कि वे लोग जो औरतों के हितों के लिए दुबले हुए जाते हैं, उन्हें मुसलमान पुरुषों को तत्काल तीन तलाक के मामले में फँसलने के प्रावधान पर इतनी आसक्ति क्यों है? देखा जाए तो ये लोग मूल मुद्दे से भागने का ही प्रयास कर रहे हैं। लोकसभा में अपने संबोधन में प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने कहा कि 35 साल पहले शाहबानो के मुद्दे पर कांग्रेस एक मौका गंवा चुकी है। अब फिर से एक मौका उसके सामने है, लेकिन कांग्रेस ने अपना पुराना रवैया जारी रखा है। अधिकांश दल जो भाजपा का इस मुद्दे पर समर्थन नहीं करना चाहते, वे कह रहे हैं कि अगर पति जेल चला जाएगा तो परिवार कैसे चलेगा? क्या इस संदर्भ में इन दलों में मुसलमान औरतों से बात की है? सहृदय हमीद ने बहुत पहले मुसलमान स्त्रियों से बात करके राष्ट्रीय महिला आयोग के लिए वायस ऑफ द वायसलेस नामक रिपोर्ट तैयार की थी। यदि इन दलों ने उन्हीं से बात कर ली होती या उस रिपोर्ट को ही पढ़ लिया होता तो वे हकीकत से परिचित हो गए होते। इस रिपोर्ट में लिखा है कि तीन तलाक को गरीब, भबड़ुर मुसलमान औरतें बहुत अधिक झेलती हैं। पति एक बार में तीन तलाक बोलकर निकल लेते हैं और दूसरा ब्याह कर लेते हैं। बाल-बच्चों को छोड़ी हुई पत्नी के जिम्मे छोड़ जाते हैं।

शाहबानो ने अपने पति से गुजारा भत्ता ही मांगा था, लेकिन अफसोस है कि उस समय की राजीव गांधी सरकार कट्टरपंथियों के आगे इतना झुक गई कि उसने महिला हितों को एकदम दरकिनार कर दिया। आज भी यही स्थिति देखने में आ रही है। शबाना आजमी एक बार कह चुकी है कि सरकारों को हम जैसे उदारवादी मुसलमानों के मुकाबले कट्टरपंथी मुसलमान अधिक पसंद आते हैं। देश के अधिकांश राजनीतिक दल आज भी इस विचार से मुक्त नहीं हो सके हैं कि मुसलमान अपने-अपने धर्मगुरुओं की बातें मानते हैं और उन्हीं के कहने पर वोट देते हैं। क्या महिला-महिला में फर्क होता है? जो लोग पति के बेल चले जाने पर दुख मना रहे हैं वे उन पुरुषों के बारे में क्या सोचते हैं जिन्हें दहेज के मामलों में नाम आने भर से जेल भेज दिया जाता है? कानून तो आखिर सबके लिए एक जैसे होने चाहिए। महिलाओं के लिए काम करने वालों



की चुप्पी देखकर भी हैरत होती है। क्या मुसलमान औरतें औरतें नहीं हैं? क्या उन्हें परिवार के नाम पर तरह-तरह की यंत्रणा से नहीं गुजरना पड़ता? महिला हितों की बात भी क्या धर्म और जाति देखकर तय की जानी चाहिए? आखिर मुसलमान महिलाएं स्त्री विमर्श की तमाम बहसों से गायब क्यों हैं? कहीं महिलाओं के लिए काम करने वाले संगठन भी राजनीतिक दलों की तरह ही वोट की परवाह तो नहीं कर रहे हैं?

सच तो यह है कि तत्काल तीन तलाक के मसले पर दाएं-बाएँ होने वाले दल मुस्लिम वोट खोने के डर से ये कवायदें कर रहे हैं। ये राजनीतिक दल भूल जाते हैं कि मतदाता सिर्फ पुरुष ही नहीं होते। औरतें भी मतदाता हैं और अगर हालिया लोकसभा चुनाव से अगर कोई सबक लिया जा सके तो यह ध्यान रखना चाहिए कि बड़ी संख्या में मुसलमान औरतों ने मोदी को वोट दिया है। जब पहली बार तत्काल तीन तलाक का मुद्दा आया था तो बहुत सी मुसलमान औरतें खुशी मनाते दिखी थीं। उनमें से बहुतों ने कहा था कि पहली बार किसी सरकार ने इस मुद्दे पर बोलने की हिम्मत दिखाई है।

आखिर मुसलमान लड़की के सिर पर तीन तलाक की तलवार क्यों लटक रही चाहिए? पाकिस्तान में हाल ही

में एक अदालत ने फैसला दिया है कि मुसलमान पुरुषों को दूसरी शादी के लिए मध्यस्थता परिषद से अनुमति लेनी होगी। वह ऐसा तभी कर सकता है जब इसके लिए उसे पहली पत्नी से अनुमति मिल गई हो। अगर बिना अनुमति के दूसरा विवाह किया तो जेल की सजा होगी और आर्थिक दंड भी भुगतान होगा। क्या हमारे देश में किसी ने इस तरह के नियम-कानून बनाने के बारे में सोचा है? ध्यान रहे कि अब सऊदी अरब में महिलाएं अपने निकाहनामे में कार चलाने और नौकरी करने के अधिकार को भी लिखवा रही हैं। आखिर मुस्लिम महिलाओं के संदर्भ में भारत ही बदलाव से क्यों इन्कार कर रहा है?

बहुत से लोग कहते हैं कि मुसलमानों में बहुविवाह प्रथा या तलाक के मामले बहुत कम हैं। हालांकि सहृदय हमीद की रिपोर्ट इस बात की गवाही नहीं देती, लेकिन अगर यह मान भी लें कि ऐसा बहुत कम है तो भी जो लोग ऐसा करते हैं उनके लिए कानून में कौन-सी सजा है? ऑल इंडिया शिया पर्सनल लॉ बोर्ड के प्रवक्ता मौलाना यासूब अब्बास ने तत्काल तीन तलाक बिल का समर्थन करते हुए कहा है कि जो मुसलमान पुरुष ऐसा करते हैं, उन्हें तीन साल की नहीं, दस साल की सजा मिलनी चाहिए।

कायदे से तो तीन तलाक बिल का विरोध करने से पहले इन दलों को मुसलमान औरतों से बात करनी चाहिए, तब कोई निर्णय लेना चाहिए। तत्काल तीन तलाक का शिकार महिलाएं जिन परिवारों से आती हैं, जरा उनसे भी बात करके देखिए। उनके माता-पिता, भाई अन्य नाते-रिश्तेदार तीन तलाक को झेल रही अपने-अपने घर की महिलाओं को मददकर खून के आंसू रोते हैं। कानून अगर इन महिलाओं को देखकर को आगे भी आता है तो फैसलों को पलटवा दिया जाता है और बहाना बनाया जाता है कि यह हमारे धर्म में हस्तक्षेप है या कि हमारा धर्म खतरे में है। अरे भाई, जिस धर्म को तुम्हारी औरतें मानती हैं, अगर उन औरतों को न्याय मिले तो तुम्हारा ही धर्म मजबूत होगा। तुम्हारे ही समुदाय की औरतें फलेंगी-फूलेंगी। वे तत्काल तीन तलाक जैसी औरत विरोधी व्यवस्था से निजात पाकर परिवार और देश की तरक्की के लिए अधिक अच्छा काम करेंगी। चूंकि भारतीय जनता पार्टी औरतों की इस मसले पर मदद करना चाहती है और वे उसके विरोधी हैं, इसलिए विरोध कर रहे हैं तो उनका यह विरोध कम से कम औरतों के हित में तो नहीं ही है। इस पर सभी को नए सिरे से विचार करना चाहिए ताकि किसी महिला के साथ नाइसाफी न हो। (लेखिका साहित्यकारा एवं स्तंभकारा है)

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अवधेश राजातु

ही महत्वपूर्ण हैं।

भारत द्वारा रूस से खरीदे जा रहे एस-400 ट्रायंग एयर डिफेंस सिस्टम का मसला भी एजेंड में शामिल रहा, क्योंकि अमेरिका ने रूस पर प्रतिबंध लगा रखे हैं। मॉस्को के साथ नई दिल्ली के ऐतिहासिक सामरिक रिश्तों की अनदेखी नहीं की जा सकती। इसीलिए भारत ने दलील दी कि उसे रूस पर लगे अमेरिकी प्रतिबंधों से जुड़े कानून से छूट दी जानी चाहिए। भारत ने अमेरिका के सामने तर्क रखा कि वह अमेरिका के साथ 10 अरब डॉलर से अधिक के रक्षा अनुबंध करने की दिशा में आगे बढ़ रहा है। यह दर्शाता है कि भारत के सामरिक ढांचे में अमेरिका की भूमिका लगातार बढ़ती जा रही है। भारत ने यह भी स्पष्ट किया कि वह इंस्टिट्यूल सिक्काट्री ही एनेक्स (आइएसए) की दिशा में आगे बढ़ रहा है जिससे अमेरिका के साथ रक्षा उद्योग में सहयोग एवं जुड़ाव को बढ़ावा मिलेगा। रूस से जुड़े

सवाल को जयशंकर ने रणनीतिक रूप देते हुए कहा, ‘भारत के तमाम देशों के साथ भिन्न-भिन्न किस्म के रिश्ते हैं, उनमें से कुछ रिश्ते स्थाई हैं। उनका इतिहास रहा है। हम वहीं करेंगे जो शटपुटित में होगा। रणनीतिक साझेदारी का एक पहलू उस क्षमता में भी निहित होता है जिसमें प्रत्येक देश दूसरे देश के राष्ट्रीय हितों को समझते हुए उनका सम्मान करे।’

यह पॉपियो का तीसरा भारत दौरा है। उनका यह दौरा अगले सप्ताह जी-20 सम्मेलन में मोदी-ट्रंप वार्ता की जमीन तैयार करने का काम करेगा। भारत-अमेरिका द्विपक्षीय रिश्तों में ट्रंप द्वारा कुछ अनिश्चितता पैदा करने के बावजूद पॉपियो का रुख भारत के लिए सहज ही रहा है। भारत में इस बात को लेकर चिंता जताई जा रही है कि अमेरिका एच-1बी वीजा में और कटौती करने की योजना बना रहा है। हालांकि वाशिंगटन द्वारा पहले ही इसका खंडन किया जा चुका है।

इस वार्ता में जयशंकर ने अपनी ओर से कुछ ब्यावहारिकता का पुट भी जोड़ा। उन्होंने कहा, ‘दोनों देशों के अपने-अपने हित हैं। इसके कारण कुछ टकराव होना स्वाभाविक है। कूटनीति के जरिये हम उनका कोई साझा समाधान तलाशेंगे। हम अमेरिका के साथ सकारात्मक दृष्टिकोण के साथ चर्चा करेंगे।’

भारत के साथ रिश्तों को और बेहतर बनाना खुद अमेरिका के हित में है, मगर उसमें भारतीी विदेश नीति की अनदेखी करना वैश्विक राजनीति में भारत के बढ़ते प्रभाव को नुकसा पहुंचाता है। नई दिल्ली में तमाम लोगों को भले ही यह कुछ अजीब लगे, लेकिन भारत अमेरिका के साथ अपने सामरिक रिश्ते और मजबूत बनावर मुख्य रूप से अपनी सामरिक स्वायत्तता बढ़ाना चाहता है। मौजूद दौर में भारत के लिए सबसे बड़ी सामरिक चुनौती चीन की ओर से खड़ी हो रही है और उसमें भारत को कोई बढ़त भी नहीं मिली हुई है। हाल-फिलहाल अमेरिका के साथ नजदीकी रिश्ते ही चीन की सबसे बढ़िया काट साबित हो सकती है। वहीं दीर्घ अवधि में ये रिश्ते भारत को अपनी व्यापक राष्ट्रीय शक्ति विकसित करने यानी अपने दम पर बड़ी ताकत बनने में मददगार साबित होंगे। तमाम बातों के बावजूद माइक पॉपियो का भारत दौरा भारत-अमेरिका वार्ता में नई जान फूंकने में सफल रहा है। जयशंकर के रूप में उन्हें एक ऐसा साझेदार भी मिल गया है जो ब्यावहारिक नतीजे देने के लिए उतने ही प्रतिबद्ध हैं। अब यह जिम्मा मोदी और ट्रंप पर है कि वे जी-20 सम्मेलन के दौरान द्विपक्षीय रिश्तों को रणनीतिक संकल्प प्रदान करें। हालांकि मोदी से मुलाकात के पहले ट्रंप ने यह कहा है कि वह अमेरिकी पर्सनल पर भारत द्वारा आयात शुल्क बढ़ाए जाने को मंजूर नहीं करते, लेकिन माना जा रहा है कि भारत रद्दाव की इस रणनीति के आगे आसानी से झुकने वाला नहीं।

(लेखक लंदन स्थित किंग्स कॉलेज में इंटरनेशनल रिलेशंस के प्रोफेसर हैं) response@jagran.com



गुणों की महत्ता

संसार एक राजमार्ग है और जीवन एक यात्रा। हम सभी यात्री हैं और सबका लक्ष्य भी एक है। इस लक्ष्य की प्राप्ति के लिए हम सभी गतिशील हैं। इस गतिशीलता में परस्पर मैत्रीभाव होना आवश्यक है। सामाजिक संबंध विकसित होते हैं। मानवीय चेतना में अच्छे-बुरे विचारों की धारा प्रवाहित होती है। विश्व में पदार्थ अनंत है और कोई भी गुणों से हीन नहीं है, परंतु हम उनके गुणों को तभी देख सकते हैं जब हमारी दृष्टि दोष-दर्शन से रहित हो। प्रत्येक पदार्थ की विशेषता उसे प्रसिद्धि दिलाती है। उदाहरणार्थ-केवड़े पर फल, कटहल पर फूल और पान की बेल पर फल-फूल नहीं आते, फिर भी ये अपने गुणों से प्रसिद्ध हैं। जो व्यक्ति गुणशुभ के प्रणेता होता है तो वह दूसरों के दोषों को ही देखता है। ऐसा व्यक्ति धर्म की आराधना नहीं कर सकता। जिसमें स्वयं गुण नहीं हैं और गुणों को हथण करने की आकांक्षा भी नहीं है, वह आकृति से सुंदर होते हुए भी बिना खुशबू के पुष्प के समान हैं। जीवन में तत्काल के लिए गुणों की प्रशंसा करना और गुण-ग्राहकता बहुत आवश्यक है। इसीलिए भगवान महावीर ने कहा है कि जब तक शरीर मृत्यु को प्राप्त न हो जाय तब तक गुणों की आराधना कर गुणज बनो। गुण-ग्राहकता की दृष्टि है, वहीं आत्मविकास होता है और समस्त विकारों से मुक्ति प्राप्त होती है। गुणी व्यक्ति की संगत करने से शिष्टता एवं सभ्यता का ज्ञान होता है।

जो स्वयं गुणी होता है वह गुणों का अनुगामी होता है। गुणी तो संसार में बहुत मिल जाते हैं, किंतु गुणदृष्ट्य विरले ही होते हैं। गुणों का पारखी भवति ही गुणीजनों का सम्मान करता है। उदाहरणार्थ-ध्वनि वन से चलकर सरोवर में स्थित कमलों के पास आकर मकरंदपान करता है, किंतु उसी सरोवर में रहने वाले मेढक को कमल की सुगंध का कोई महत्व नहीं होता। गुणज व्यक्ति प्रत्येक गुणी व्यक्ति के गुणों का चिंतन मनन करके उसके प्रति कुतज्ञता व्यक्त करता है। आज लोक जीवन में यदि गुणज दृष्टि आ जाए तो संसार की समस्याएं स्वतः सुलझ सकती हैं। किसी के गुणों की प्रशंसा करना चापलूसी नहीं है, इसको व्यक्त करने के लिए शब्दों की अपेक्षा नहीं होती है, तो सहज रूप में निकल पड़ते हैं। हम गुणों के उपासक बनें। वेदों की भाषा में कहें तो-हम सब एक दूसरे के प्रशंसक बनें।

बीना जैन

लोकतंत्र पर काला धब्बा था आपातकाल

पार्थसारथी थपलियाल का लेख ‘ आपातकाल की वह भयानक भूल’ पढ़ा। मेरा मानना है कि न्यायाधीश भी अंततः मनुष्य होते हैं। और भयभीत होना मनुष्यों सहित सभी प्राणियों की सामान्य प्रवृति होती है। इंदिरा गांधी ने आपातकाल की घोषणा एवं मूलभूत अधिकारों के स्थगन द्वारा पूरे राष्ट्र को डरा दिया था। उनके अर्टानी जनरल निरेन डे ने जिस अंदाज में बंदी प्रत्यक्षीकरण केस में सर्वोच्च न्यायालय में तर्क रखे, वे बेहद मजबूत दिल को भी दहलाने वाले थे। उन्होंने कहा कि सरकार जिसे चाहे उसे बिना कोई कारण बताए कहीं भी बंदी बनाकर रख सकती है। वह यह चाहें तो किसी को जान भी ले सकती है, क्योंकि उसे तमाम आपातकालीन शक्तियां प्राप्त हैं। उस समय ऐसा लगा था कि हिल्लर जैसे किसी ताताशाह की आत्मा निरेन डे में अवतरित हो गई हो। उनकी बहस के बाद कोर्टरूम में मौजूद हरेक व्यक्ति-वकील, जज और आम जनता अत्यधिक भयभीत दिख रही थी। इसलिए 4-1 के बहुमत से इंदिरा गांधी के पक्ष में निर्णय आना स्वाभाविक ही था। इस प्रकार से पूरे देश की न्यायपालिका की रीढ़ तोड़ने वाला फैसला इतिहास में दर्ज हो गया।

अजय मित्तल, मेरठ

दबाव उचित नहीं

किसी भी व्यक्ति पर किसी भी तरीके का दबाव बनाना उचित नहीं होता। हाल ही में संपन्न हुए लोकसभा के चुनावों में बड़ी हार मिलने के बाद कांग्रेस अध्यक्ष राहुल गांधी अपने पद से त्यागपत्र देने पर अड़ हुए हैं। लेकिन परिवार और पार्टी के कुछ वफादार नेता जिस तरह भयाना-प्रदर्शन और अनसन आदि के जरिये उप पर इस्तीफा न देने का दबाव बनाए हुए हैं, वह उचित

मेलबारस

नहीं है। इससे तो यही लगता है कि पार्टी में अच्छे नेताओं की कमी है। जबकि ऐसा है नहीं। पार्टी में अरविंद सिंह लवली और शर्मिष्ठा मुखर्जी जैसे नेताओं की कोई कमी नहीं है। यदि राहुल चाहें तो सोनिया गांधी, प्रियंका गांधी तथा पार्टी के बड़े नेताओं से मिलकर किसी को भी यह दायित्व सौंप सकते हैं। कोई इंसान और परिवार कभी बुरा नहीं होता। कुर्बानी, त्याग और अच्छे कार्यों से ही आगे बढ़ा जा सकता है। इसलिए अब पार्टी को खुलकर और सकारात्मक सोच से ही आगे बढ़ना होगा। सही कार्यों में सहयोग और समर्थन से ही अच्छी छवि बनती है। पार्टी के लिए अब सभलने का वक़्त आ गया है।

वेद माम्पूर, नरैला

प्रकृति के लिए कुछ करने का वक़्त

पर्यावरण की रक्षा कर ही जीव जगत को बचाया जा सकता है। जल की बर्बादी से कल का अंत निश्चित है। एक जुलाई से केंद्र सरकार सभी राज्यों में ‘जल शक्ति अभियान’ शुरू कर रही है। इसके तहत जमीनी स्तर पर अधिकारियों की नियुक्ति करके पानी की कमी से जूझ रहे जिलों की मदद की जाएगी। क्या जल संरक्षण केवल सरकार की ही जिम्मेदारी है, हम सबकी नहीं है? आज लगभग पूरा देश पानी की कमी से जूझ रहा है। दिल्ली, राजस्थान अथवा चेन्नई जैसे ज्यों में पानी की कमी बहुत बड़ी समस्या है। वृषाों के लिए पर्याप्त स्थान नहीं है। लोगों ने तालाबों पर अवैध कब्जा कर मकान बना लिए हैं। पानी माफियाओं का कारोबार फल-फूल रहा है। इन सब के लिए हम स्वयं जिम्मेदार हैं। अधिक से अधिक वृक्षारोपण तथा जल संचयन करके हम इस भयंकर आपदा से बच सकते हैं। यदि हम इसी तरह जल की बर्बादी करते रहे तो वह दिन दूर

नहीं जब पानी की एक बूंद भी नसीब नहीं होगी और शुद्ध हवा तथा जल के बिना प्राणियों का जीना दूभर हो जाएगा।

आचार्य राम कुमार बघेल, पलवल

मानसिक दिवालियापन

उन्मादी भीड़ जंगली मानसिकता के साथ समाजिक बुराई भी है, लेकिन इसका निवारण केवल कानून और न्याय-व्यवस्था में ही निहित है। निश्चित रूप से झारखंड की घटना अमानवीय है, लेकिन ऐसी घटनाओं को देशहित में ना तो धार्मिक रंग देना चाहिए और ना ही वोट बैंक की खातिर राजनीतिक चरमे से देखा जाना चाहिए। क्योंकि सभ्य समाज ऐसी हृदयविदारक हरकतों की इजाजत कर्दाई नहीं देता। कुछ साल पहले उत्तर प्रदेश के दादरी में घटित इकलाकत की हत्या को धार्मिक रंग देकर असहिष्णुता की जबरदस्त राजनीति खेली गई। जबकि उसी साल दिल्ली में धुव त्यागी की सरेआम हत्या पर राजनीतिक धारा, अर्थाई वापसी गैंग और मानवाधिकार वादियों ने चुप्पी साध ली। मानवीय हत्याओं पर दोहरी राजनीति हमारे बिकाऊ मानसिकता को बल देता है।

दीपक गौतम, सोनीपत

इस स्तंभ में किसी भी विषय पर राय व्यक्त करने अथवा दैनिक जागरण, राष्ट्रीय संस्करण पर प्रतिक्रिया व्यक्त करने के लिए पाठकगण सादर आमंत्रित हैं। आप हमें पत्र भेजने के साथ ई-मेल भी कर सकते हैं।

अपने पत्र इस पते पर भेजें :
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भीड़तंत्र की चुनौती

प्रधानमंत्री ने बुधवार को संसद में जिस तरह साफ लहजे में झारखंड में भीड़ के हाथों एक युवक की हत्या पर दुख जताया, उसका साफ संदेश यही होना चाहिए कि देश के किसी भी हिस्से में ऐसी घटनाएं बर्दाश्त नहीं की जाएंगी। पर विडंबना यह है कि उनके सख्त रवैये के बावजूद कुछ असामाजिक तत्त्वों को यह समझना जरूरी नहीं लगा कि ऐसी अराजकता देश को किस दिशा में लेकर जाएगी। गौरतलब है कि बीते हफ्ते झारखंड के सरायकेला जिले में तबरेज अंसारी नामक युवक को लोगों ने चुरी तरह मारा-पीटा। बाद में गंभीर चोट की वजह से उसकी मौत हो गई। जाहिर है, यह भीड़तंत्र के हावी होते जाने का ही एक और उदाहरण है, जिसमें किसी भी वजह से जमा हुए लोग इस बात पर सोचना जरूरी नहीं समझते कि उन्होंने जिस व्यक्ति को पकड़ा है अगर उस पर उन्हें किसी बात का शक है तो उस पर कानून के मुताबिक कार्रवाई होनी चाहिए। लेकिन इस बारे में सोचे बिना लोग जिस तरह आरोपी व्यक्ति पर हमला कर-के उसे पीट-पीट कर मार डालते हैं, उसका किसी भी लिहाज से समर्थन नहीं किया जा सकता। यह न केवल घोर अलोकतांत्रिक और अमानवीय बर्ताव है, बल्कि कानून के खिलाफ भी है।

अफसोस की बात है कि कई बार सरकारें ऐसे लोगों के खिलाफ तत्काल कार्रवाई करने में हीला-हवाली करती हैं और दूसरी ओर कुछ लोग भी ऐसी घटनाओं को सही ठहराने की दलील खोजने लगते हैं। इससे न केवल कानून का शासन कमजोर होता है, बल्कि समाज में अराजकता की प्रवृति बढ़ती है। इसलिए प्रधानमंत्री ने साफ तौर पर ऐसे तत्वों के खिलाफ सख्त कार्रवाई करने और दोषियों को कड़ी सजा दिलाने की बात कही है, तो झारखंड सहित सभी राज्य सरकारों को उनके बयान की गंभीरता को समझना चाहिए। विडंबना यह भी है कि कुछ नेताओं के बयान और उनकी हरकतें भी ऐसे तत्वों को बढ़ावा देती हैं। राजनेताओं से जहां यह अपेक्षा की जाती है कि वे भीड़ की हिंसा पर काबू पाने में अपनी भूमिका निभाएं, वहीं ऐसी खबरें दुखद हैं कि कोई राजनेता ऐसी घटनाओं के सजायापता लोगों का स्वागत करे। हालांकि प्रधानमंत्री ने पहले भी गोरक्षा के नाम पर हुई हिंसा को लेकर गंभीर चिंता जाहिर की थी और ऐसे कामों में लगे लोगों के खिलाफ नाराजगी जाहिर की थी। मगर उसके बाद भी भीड़ द्वारा कानून हाथ में लेकर किसी को पीट-पीट कर मार डालने या किसी से जबरन कोई खास नारा लगवाने की कई घटनाएं सामने आई थीं।

यह कानून-व्यवस्था के साथ-साथ देश की उस परंपरा के भी खिलाफ है, जिसमें अलग-अलग धर्मो-मतों में विश्वास रखने वाले तमाम लोग खुद को एक सूत्र में बंधा पाते हैं। लेकिन पिछले कुछ समय से किसी अफवाह की वजह से अचानक इकट्ठा हुई अराजक भीड़ के बीच जिस तरह कानून को हाथ में लेने की प्रवृति बढ़ी है, उससे सबसे बड़ा नुकसान हमारे लोकतंत्र को ही पहुंचेगा। कानून का शासन किसी भी व्यवस्था को सुचारु रूप से संचालित करने के लिए एक सबसे अहम कारक है और इसे ताक पर रख कर अगर कुछ लोग अराजक हो जाते हैं, तो यह एक चिंताजनक स्थिति है। इस मामले पर सुप्रीम कोर्ट की सख्त रुख अख्तियार करते हुए कह चुका है कि कोई भी नागरिक अपने आप में कानून नहीं बन सकता है; लोकतंत्र में भीड़तंत्र की इजाजत नहीं दी जा सकती, इसलिए राज्य सरकारें संविधान के मुताबिक काम करें।

महाबली पर मुकदमा

अमेरिका की एक संघीय अदालत का फैसला दुनिया की तमाम अदालतों के लिए एक नजीर है। उस अदालत ने अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति डोनाल्ड ट्रंप के खिलाफ मुकदमा चलाने की डेमोक्रेटिक पार्टी की अपील को मंजूरी दे दी है। यानी अब ट्रंप के खिलाफ मुकदमा चलाया जा सकेगा। वहां के सांसद सुचनाएं एकत्र करने के लिए समन भेज सकते हैं। डेमोक्रेटिक पार्टी के दो सौ सांसदों ने आरोप लगाया है कि ट्रंप राष्ट्रपति रहते हुए संघीय सरकारों और विदेशों से उपहार लेते रहे हैं, जबकि अमेरिकी संविधान के मुताबिक बिना संसद की मंजूरी के राष्ट्रपति पद का निर्वाह कर रहा व्यक्ति इस तरह का कोई भी उपहार स्वीकार नहीं कर सकता। फिर उन्होंने आज तक अपने कारोबारी रिश्ते समाप्त नहीं किए हैं। अमेरिकी संविधान के मुताबिक राष्ट्रपति पद पर रहते हुए कोई भी व्यक्ति अपने कारोबार में संलिप्त नहीं रह सकता। मगर ट्रंप संविधान की परवाह न करते हुए अपने कारोबार भी चलाते रहे। यह एक तरह से सांसदों को उनके कामकाज में बाधा पहुंचाने जैसा है। इस पर संविधान के नियमों की अनदेखी करने के आरोप में वहां की संघीय अदालत ने ट्रंप के खिलाफ मुकदमा चलाने की मंजूरी दे दी है। अमेरिकी सदन की अध्यक्ष नैन्सी पोलोसी ने भी इस फैसले का स्वागत किया है। उन्होंने कहा कि कोई भी व्यक्ति संविधान से ऊपर नहीं हो सकता, चाहे वह राष्ट्रपति ही क्यों न हो।

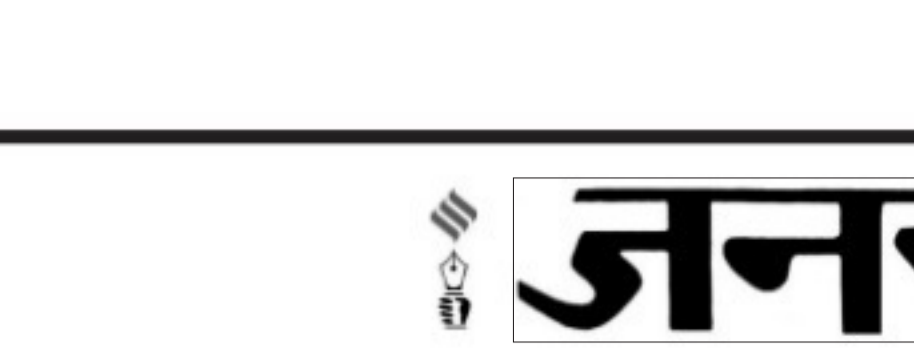
डोनाल्ड ट्रंप जब राष्ट्रपति पद के लिए चुनाव मैदान में उतरे तभी से उनके बयानों, उनके जीवन से जुड़ी अनेक गतिविधियों, कारोबारी अनियमितताओं, चुनावों में धांधली आदि को लेकर तरह-तरह के आरोप लगते रहे हैं। राष्ट्रपति बनने के बाद उनके अनेक फैसले विवादों के घेरे में रहे। शुरुआती दिनों में ही उनके फैसलों को चुनौती मिलने लगी थी। उनके दूसरे देशों से आने वाले शरणार्थियों पर रोक लगाने संबंधी फैसले पर भी एक संघीय अदालत ने रोक लगा दी थी। तब ट्रंप को दुनिया भर में काफी किरकिरी झेलनी पड़ी थी। अपने कार्यकाल में ट्रंप के कामकाज के तरीके को लेकर गहरा असंतोष व्यक्त किया जाता रहा है। वे अनेक मामलों में संसद को विश्वास में लिए बगैर खुद मनमाने तरीके से फैसले करते रहे हैं। उनका यह रवैया न सिर्फ विपक्ष के संसद सदस्यों, बल्कि उनकी पार्टी के लोगों और आम लोगों को खटकती रही है। यही वजह है कि जब संघीय अदालत में उन पर मुकदमा चलाने की अपील की गई और उसे खारिज करने की तमाम कोशिशों के बावजूद अदालत ने उसे स्वीकार कर लिया, तो बहुत सारे लोगों ने उसका स्वागत किया है।

अमेरिकी में राष्ट्रपति को बहुत ताकतवर माना जाता है। उसकी तरफ दुनिया भर की नजर रहती है। उसके आचरण से न सिर्फ अमेरिकी लोगों, बल्कि दुनिया के बहुत सारे मामलों पर असर पड़ता है। इसलिए जब इस सर्वोच्च पद का निर्वाह कर रहे व्यक्ति पर संविधान के खिलाफ आचरण करने का आरोप लगता है, तो स्वाभाविक ही अमेरिका की छवि धूमिल होती है। मगर वहां की जिस अदालत ने ट्रंप के खिलाफ मुकदमे को मंजूरी दी, उस न्यायाधीश के साहस और अपने संविधान के प्रति निष्ठा भी एक मिसाल है। ट्रंप को शायद लगता रहा होगा कि वे जिस तरह राष्ट्रपति चुनाव को प्रभावित कर सत्ता तक पहुंच गए, उसी तरह अपने फैसलों और अपनी मनमानियों पर भी लोगों को चुप्पी साधे रखने को विवश कर सकेंगे। पर खुद को संविधान और कानून से ऊपर मान बैठना उनके लिए खतरे की घंटी साबित हुआ।

कल्पमेधा

नसीहत बर्फ की तरह है। जितना धीरे-धीरे गिरती है, उतनी ही ज्यादा स्थायी होती है और गहराई से मन में प्रवेश करती है।

— कॉलरिज



ऋषभ कुमार मिश्रा

सवाल यह है कि वह भारतीय जिसकी बोली, भाषा, गणित, विज्ञान, अध्यात्म में ‘भारतीयता’ है लेकिन उसकी आवाज राज्य के प्रतिष्ठानों जैसे स्कूलों, अदालतों, दफ्तरों तक नहीं पहुंच पा रही है, उसे क्या यह शिक्षा नीति कुछ दे पाएगी? क्या ‘दक्षता’ को परिभाषित करने का सांस्कृतिक नजरिया, बाजारवादी नजरिए के बीच अपना रास्ता तलाश पाएगा? क्या शोध के रास्ते उच्च शिक्षा मौलिक चिंतन, विश्लेषणात्मक दृष्टि और सृजनधर्मिता द्वारा ज्ञान के भारतीय संस्करण की नींव डल पाएगी?

— कौशल

नई शिक्षा नीति का प्रस्तावित मसौदा आम जनता की राय के लिए आ चुका है। इस मसौदे को पढ़ते हुए ऐसा लगता है कि एक आदर्श भारतीय समाज और इसकी शिक्षा व्यवस्था के लिए सुंदरतम शब्दों, मुहावरों और तरीकों के साथ एक नई व्यवस्था आकार लेने जा रही है। यह नीति वर्तमान और भविष्य के बीच राज्य के रुख को स्पष्ट करती है। इस नीति में एक सकारात्मक सोच निहित है जो शिक्षा के द्वारा प्रत्येक व्यक्ति के निजी और नागरिक जीवन को समृद्ध करना चाहती है। प्रस्तावित मसौदे के आरंभ में ही स्पष्ट किया गया है कि इसका लक्ष्य शिक्षा द्वारा भारत के प्रत्येक व्यक्ति का सर्वांगीण विकास है। जहां-जहां सर्वांगीण विकास का उल्लेख है, वहां प्रत्यक्षतः या अप्रत्यक्षतः इस विकास को ज्ञान आधारित समाज, इक्कीसवीं सदी की दुनिया की दक्षताओं- आलोचनात्मक और सृजनात्मक चिंतन, निर्णय लेना आदि, चौथी औद्योगिक क्रांति की तैयारी और संवैधानिक मूल्यों, खासकर समानता, के सापेक्ष परिभाषित किया गया है। इस वैश्विक दृष्टि के साथ इतिहास बोध और सांस्कृतिक अस्मिता के पक्ष को पूरा स्थान देकर यह प्रयास किया

— कौशल

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कितनी बेचारी से भरा दृश्य है! फलों से लदा हुआ पेड़ और अपने-अपने मोबाइल में सिर घुसाए बेखबर युवा। शहर के हरे-भरे इलाके में आंखें पहचानती हैं। फलों से लदे बहुत सुंदर पेड़, एकाकी, अनछुए, उदास और परेशान खड़े हैं। न चिड़िया की चहचहाहटें हैं और न ही तोतों का शोर सुनाई देता है। ऐसा नहीं है कि वे आते नहीं, लेकिन चोंच भर कर खाने वाले भला कितना कौर काटेंगे? खदबदाते वातावरण से भला वे कैसे अछूते रह पाएं? जहां पानी होता होगा, वहीं से चुगमा भी चुन लेते होंगे। दूसरे शहर की हवा और तारों के जंजाल उनकी प्रवेश निषिद्धि के प्रमाण हैं। यहां आम, अमरूद और पास ही बेरों से लदे पेड़ राहगीरों की तकते हैं, अपने लहराते झाँकों से पास बुलाते हैं। लेकिन प्रगति का जहर सब कुछ नष्ट करता जा रहा है। गगनचुंबी इमारतें पेड़ों के सौंदर्य को निरखना क्या जानें, जो कुओं, तालाबों की जगह को हथिया कर खड़ी हों। रेड-मुंड से पाकों के चारों ओर चक्कर लगाने वाले तथाकथित आधुनिक मनुष्य नपे-तुले समय में अपने शरीर को साधने की नाकाम-सी कोशिश करते रहते हैं। पेड़ों की जरूरत को दरकिनार

जल से ही कल

हम शुरू से ही ‘जल ही जीवन है’ सुनते आ रहे हैं। इसे आज भी सुनना बेहद जरूरी है। लेकिन कई बार ऐसा होता है कि हम सच जानने के बावजूद उसकी गहराई में उतर कर उसकी स्थिति जानने की कोशिश नहीं करते हैं। आज भारत ही नहीं, संपूर्ण विश्व जल के संकट से जूझ रहा है। यह भी कहा जाने लगा है कि तृतीय विश्वयुद्ध जल के कारण होगा। लेकिन इतनी भयावह स्थिति के बावजूद जल को लेकर हम, हमारा समाज और हमारी सरकार न तो सतर्क दिखाई देती है और न ही किसी प्रकार के कोई बोर कदम उठाए जाते हैं। जो कुछ किया भी जाता है, वह इस समस्या के विकराल रूप के सामने बहुत ही बौना मालूम पड़ता है। जल संरक्षण किसी सरकार मात्र की जिम्मेदारी नहीं है, इस बात को नकारा नहीं जा सकता है। जल संरक्षण के लिए हरेक व्यक्ति को जागरूक होना पड़ेगा।

आज भारत का सत्तर प्रतिशत वर्ग ऐसा है, जिसे स्वच्छ पानी मुहैया नहीं हो पाता है। पचास फीसद भारत का भूभाग जल की भयंकर कमी से जूझ रहा है। हफ्ते या कहीं-कहीं तो महीने में एक बार पानी का टैंकर आता है और पानी ऐसे बांटा जाता है जैसे कोई प्रसाद बांटा जा रहा हो। लोगों को आपस में इसके लिए लड़ना पड़ता है। जिनको पानी मिला पा रहा है, उनके लिए यह विषय विश्वयुद्ध नहीं है। ऐसा उन्हें लगता है, क्योंकि जिसकी थाली में रोटी होती है, उसे पूरी दुनिया का पेट भरा हुआ ही लगता है।

हम जो कुछ पर्यावरण और प्रकृति के साथ कर रहे हैं, उसके परिणाम भी अब धीरे-धीरे हमें देखने को मिल रहे हैं। फिर भी हमारी चेतना न जाने कहां सो गई है। हमें ‘विकास’ न जाने कहां लेकर आ गया है, जहां न कटते पेड़ दिखाई देते हैं, न हमें तालाबों और झीलों



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गया है कि परंपराओं, इतिहास, संस्कृतियों और मूल्यों के साथ इक्कीसवीं सदी की जरूरतों को पूरा किया जाए। इन दोनों आयामों का संतुलन ही इक्कीसवीं सदी का भारत बनाएगा, ऐसी मान्यता इस नीति में निहित है। यह मान्यता दुधारी तलवार के समान है। यदि नीति के क्रियान्वयन में किसी एक के पक्ष में झुकाव हुआ तो वह भारतीयता के सामासिक अर्थ का विग्रह कर देगा। यह भी ध्यान देना आवश्यक है भारतीयता का असल अर्थ उसके बहुवचन में है। देखना है कि यह नीति इस बहुवचन को कैसे क्रियान्वित करती है?

प्रस्तावित नीति को दो दृष्टियों से समझने की आवश्यकता है। पहली तो यह कि इस नीति की कौनसी संस्तुतियां ‘नए भारत’ के लिए नई शिक्षा प्रणाली हेतु हैं? दूसरा यह कि ये संस्तुतियां वर्तमान भारत के एक नए भविष्य की कल्पना किस रूप में करती है? आखिरी शिक्षा नीति वर्ष 1986 में आई थी। तब से अब तक का भारत बदल चुका है। जन शिक्षा का प्रसार, स्कूली शिक्षा का मौलिक अधिकार, उच्च शिक्षा का व्यावसायिक ढांचा, निजी क्षेत्र का पर्याप्त प्रसार, शैक्षिक प्रशासन और वित्त में सुधार व बड़ोत्तरी के प्रयास आदि के आंकड़े इसके प्रमाण हैं। इसके साथ ही वर्तमान में नई संभावनाएं और चुनौतियां भी हमारे सामने खड़ी हैं। जैसे, शहरीकरण लगातार बढ़ रहा है, पर्यावरणीय संकट गंभीर है, क्षेत्रीय विषमताएं बढ़ी हैं, बेरोजगारी के आंकड़े भी चिंताजनक स्तर पर हैं। अंतरराष्ट्रीय राजनीति-आर्थिक हालात ऐसे हैं कि हम वैश्विक स्तर पर सुदृढ़ स्थिति के बिना आर्थिक अवसरों का लाभ नहीं उठा सकते। सामाजिक और वैचारिक स्तर पर अस्मिता की राजनीति ने नई चुनौतियां खड़ी की हैं। आज हम डिजिटल क्रांति को स्वीकार कर चुके हैं, लेकिन इसकी लागत अभी भी अधिक है। शिक्षार्जित ज्ञान और कुशलता के आधार पर एक नया वर्ग पैदा हो चुका है। इसके लिए शिक्षा एक ‘लोकवस्तु’ है, इसे स्वीकार करते हुए प्रस्तावित नीति इसकी उपलब्धता, गुण और व्यवस्था का दायित्व राज्य को सौंपती है। इसके साथ ही यह नीति इतिहास, भाषाओं, लोक विद्याओं और देशज विज्ञान की उपेक्षित धाराओं को पुनर्संजित करने पर भी बल देती है। इसे स्कूलों से लेकर उच्च शिक्षा तक के पाठ्यक्रम का अंग बनाने पर सुझाव देती है।

प्रस्तावित नीति ‘नए भारत’ शिक्षा के स्थायी संकट-परीक्षा केंद्रित रटंत प्रणाली से मुक्त करना चाहती है। नए भारत में विकास के लिए आवश्यक सांस्कृतिक पूंजी के प्रसार को मध्यमवर्ग तक सीमित न रख कर वहां तक पहुंचाना चाहती है जहां इसे खरीदने की क्रयशक्ति नहीं है,

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किए अपने छज्जे पर लटकाए गए गमलों से सराबोर उसी में एक आनंद की पूर्ति करते रहते हैं। पानी के लिए चीख-पुकार अभी दूर से सुनाई दे रही है। कुछ समय पहले बच्चों के लिए कहानी की एक कार्यशाला थी। उसमें जब उनसे पूछा गया कि उन्हें कौन-सी कहानियां अच्छी लगती हैं- पक्षियों, जानवरों की या फिर किसी अन्य विषय की, तो साठ बच्चों में से अधिकतर बच्चों ने कहा कि उन्हें जासूसी कहानियां अच्छी लगती हैं। उनसे पूछा गया कि दूध कहां से आता है तो जवाब मिला- ‘मदर डेयरी से’। इसमें हैरानी की बात नहीं थी, क्योंकि बच्चों के सामने जो दिखाया जाता है या जो उपलब्ध होता है, वे उतना ही जान पाते हैं। वास्तविक या बाहरी दुनिया से उनका वास्ता कम पड़ता है। पिछली पीढ़ी में फिर भी बाग-बगीचे वाले घर होते थे। तब चिड़िया, कौवा, तोता, हाथी, भालू की तरह ही पेड़-पौधों के बारे में वे भली-भांति जानते थे। लेकिन आज छोटे-छोटे फ्लैटों में रहने के कारण गमले के पौधों का ज्ञान लेने वाली पीढ़ी भला पेड़ों के नाम क्या जानेगी। किसी पेड़ के पास थोड़ी देर रुक कर वे देखते होंगे, इसमें संदेह है। कब कौन-से पेड़ पर फूल खिलते हैं या किन पेड़ों पर कब फल लगते हैं, इसकी जानकारी हमारे आज के बच्चों को नहीं है।

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का पाटा जाना जाना दिखता है। हम विकास की सबसे ऊंची मंजिल पर खड़े होना चाहते हैं, जहां से हमें धरातल नहीं दिखता। प्यास से तड़प कर मरते पशु-पक्षी नहीं दिखते, कला गंदा पानी पीते इंसान नहीं दिखते, कोसों दूर किसी कुएं से पानी लाती महिलाएं नहीं दिखतीं। आज सभी लोगों को ‘हम सुधरेंगे जग सुधरेगा’ सिद्धांत को अपने आचरण में शामिल करने की आवश्यकता है। किसी शायर ने कहा है- ‘अब नहीं सुधरे तो आलम इससे बदतर आएगा/ आने वाला कल लिए हाथों में खंजर आएगा!’

● *मुकुल सिंह चौहान, जािमिया मिल्लिया, दिल्ली*

— कौशल

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बच्चों को मां का ‘कुलनाम’ दिया जाना चाहिए। पुरुष ने प्रारंभ से ही अपने लिए सुविधाजनक नियम बनाए और वह उन्हें महिलाओं पर थोपता गया। ये तीन तलाक से बड़े मुद्दे हैं और इन पर गौर करना जरूरी है। इस व्यवस्था के लागू होने पर ‘बेटी बचाओ, बेटी पढ़ाओ’ जैसे खोखले नारों की जरूरत स्वरः समाप्त हो जाएगी, क्योंकि तब यह अपने आप होने लगेगा।

● *सुभाष चंद्र लखड़ा, द्वारका, दिल्ली*

गरीब की जान

क्या गरीबों की जिंदगी का कोई मूल्य नहीं रहा? कब तक वाहन चालकों द्वारा अमानवीय लापरवाही बरती जाएगी? कोई उपाय नहीं होने पर सड़क किनारे और फुटपाथ पर सोने पर मजबूर लोगों की जिंदगी पर

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शिक्षा नीति और सवाल

गया है कि परंपराओं, इतिहास, संस्कृतियों और मूल्यों के साथ इक्कीसवीं सदी की जरूरतों को पूरा किया जाए। इन दोनों आयामों का संतुलन ही इक्कीसवीं सदी का भारत बनाएगा, ऐसी मान्यता इस नीति में निहित है। यह मान्यता दुधारी तलवार के समान है। यदि नीति के क्रियान्वयन में किसी एक के पक्ष में झुकाव हुआ तो वह भारतीयता के सामासिक अर्थ का विग्रह कर देगा। यह भी ध्यान देना आवश्यक है भारतीयता का असल अर्थ उसके बहुवचन में है। देखना है कि यह नीति इस बहुवचन को कैसे क्रियान्वित करती है?

प्रस्तावित नीति को दो दृष्टियों से समझने की आवश्यकता है। पहली तो यह कि इस नीति की कौनसी संस्तुतियां ‘नए भारत’ के लिए नई शिक्षा प्रणाली हेतु हैं? दूसरा यह कि ये संस्तुतियां वर्तमान भारत के एक नए भविष्य की कल्पना किस रूप में करती है? आखिरी शिक्षा नीति वर्ष 1986 में आई थी। तब से अब तक का भारत बदल चुका है। जन शिक्षा का प्रसार, स्कूली शिक्षा का मौलिक अधिकार, उच्च शिक्षा का व्यावसायिक ढांचा, निजी क्षेत्र का पर्याप्त प्रसार, शैक्षिक प्रशासन और वित्त में सुधार व बड़ोत्तरी के प्रयास आदि के आंकड़े इसके प्रमाण हैं। इसके साथ ही वर्तमान में नई संभावनाएं और चुनौतियां भी हमारे सामने खड़ी हैं। जैसे, शहरीकरण लगातार बढ़ रहा है, पर्यावरणीय संकट गंभीर है, क्षेत्रीय विषमताएं बढ़ी हैं, बेरोजगारी के आंकड़े भी चिंताजनक स्तर पर हैं। अंतरराष्ट्रीय राजनीति-आर्थिक हालात ऐसे हैं कि हम वैश्विक स्तर पर सुदृढ़ स्थिति के बिना आर्थिक अवसरों का लाभ नहीं उठा सकते। सामाजिक और वैचारिक स्तर पर अस्मिता की राजनीति ने नई चुनौतियां खड़ी की हैं। आज हम डिजिटल क्रांति को स्वीकार कर चुके हैं, लेकिन इसकी लागत अभी भी अधिक है। शिक्षार्जित ज्ञान और कुशलता के आधार पर एक नया वर्ग पैदा हो चुका है। इसके लिए शिक्षा एक ‘लोकवस्तु’ है, इसे स्वीकार करते हुए प्रस्तावित नीति इसकी उपलब्धता, गुण और व्यवस्था का दायित्व राज्य को सौंपती है। इसके साथ ही यह नीति इतिहास, भाषाओं, लोक विद्याओं और देशज विज्ञान की उपेक्षित धाराओं को पुनर्संजित करने पर भी बल देती है। इसे स्कूलों से लेकर उच्च शिक्षा तक के पाठ्यक्रम का अंग बनाने पर सुझाव देती है।

प्रस्तावित नीति ‘नए भारत’ शिक्षा के स्थायी संकट-परीक्षा केंद्रित रटंत प्रणाली से मुक्त करना चाहती है। नए भारत में विकास के लिए आवश्यक सांस्कृतिक पूंजी के प्रसार को मध्यमवर्ग तक सीमित न रख कर वहां तक पहुंचाना चाहती है जहां इसे खरीदने की क्रयशक्ति नहीं है,

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कश्मीर में उम्मीद

केंद्र सरकार और सुरक्षा बलों की लगातार कोशिशों के बावजूद कश्मीर में हिंसा रोकने की चुनौती बनी हुई है. ऐसे में गुह मंत्री अमित शाह के दौर से यह इंगित होता है कि उनके एजेंडे में कश्मीर ऊपर है. इस दौर से उम्मीदें इस वजह से भी बढ़ गयी हैं कि अलगाववादियों ने किसी तरह के बंद या विरोध का आयोजन नहीं किया. तीन दशकों से अशंत घाटी में ऐसा पहली बार हुआ है. आतंकियों के हाथों मारे गये लोगों के परिजनों तथा विभिन्न समुदायों और संगठनों के प्रतिनिधियों से गुह मंत्री की मुलाकात से भी भरोसे बनाने में मदद मिलेगी. साल 2014 से ही कश्मीर घाटी में विकास की गति तेज करने तथा लोकतांत्रिक भागीदारी बढ़ाने के प्रयास जारी हैं. फिर भी, 2018 में दस सालों में सबसे अधिक मौतें हुई थीं और यह सिलसिला इस साल भी जारी है. इस महीने की 17 तारीख तक दो सौ से ज्यादा लोग मारे जा चुके हैं. हालांकि, इन आंकड़ों में आतंकियों की तादाद बहुत है, फिर भी सुरक्षाकर्मियों और नागरिकों की जानें भी जा रही हैं. यह भी सच है कि पाकिस्तान द्वारा घाले-पोसे और बरसों से चल रहे आतंकवाद से निजात पाने में अभी वक्त लेगेगा.

एक तरफ गुह मंत्री ने जहां विकास कार्यों की समीक्षा की है, वहीं उन्होंने आतंक के खिलाफ सख्त रवैया बरकरार रखने का भी निर्देश दिया है. कश्मीर समस्या का समाधान निकलने की दिशा में प्रगति की आशा बंधने का एक आधार जम्मू-कश्मीर के राज्यपाल का बयान है कि अलगाववादी समूह हुरियत बातचीत के लिए तैयार है. हुरियत के रुख में बदलाव के अनेक कारण हैं. भारत के कूटनीतिक प्रयासों

से पाकिस्तान पर अंतरराष्ट्रीय दबाव लगातार बढ़ता जा रहा है. पाकिस्तान को आर्थिक तबाही से बचाने में मदद दे रही संस्थाएं भी कह रही हैं कि वह अपनी धरती पर सक्रिय चरमपंथी और हिंसक गिरोहों पर लगाम लगाये. अलगाववाद और आतंकवाद के विरुद्ध केंद्र की कठोर नीतियों ने भी हुरियत को यह अहसास दिला दिया है कि उनके पास बातचीत के अलावा विकल्प नहीं बचा है. इस साल सौ से अधिक आतंकियों का सफाया तथा अलगाववादी नेताओं पर जांच का कसता शिकंजा कर के रवये के साथ संकेत हैं. सुरक्षा कारणों से लोकसभा चुनाव के साथ राज्य विधानसभा के चुनाव नहीं हो सके थे. अब चुनाव आयोग इसके लिए तैयार है. हुरियत को यह भी आस है कि राज्य में निर्वाचित सरकार स्थापित होने के बाद बातचीत का हिस्सा बदल जायेगा तथा कश्मीरियों का प्रतिनिधित्व करने का उसका दावा और भी कमजोर पड़ जायेगा. पाकिस्तानी आतंकियों के खिलाफ घाटी के लोगों में असंतोष बढ़ता जा रहा है और आम कश्मीरी अपने युवाओं को हिंसा की राह में भटककर मौत के मुंह में जाते नहीं देखना चाहता है. नौजवानों के बड़े हिस्से को भी विकास में भविष्य नजर आ रहा है. बदलते हालात में कश्मीर में बदलाव की बयार बह सकती है और गुह मंत्री शाह के दौर को इसकी शुरुआत माना जा सकता है.



बोधि वृक्ष

द्वंद्व और प्रतिरोध

बातों, तर्क-वितर्क और व्याख्याओं का कोई अंत नहीं होता. लेकिन व्याख्याएं, तर्क-वितर्क और बातें, हमें किसी सीधी कार्यवाही तक नहीं ले जाते, क्योंकि सीधी कार्यवाही, सीधे तुरंत कर्म एक पहुंचने के लिए हमें मौलिक और आधारभूत रूप से बदलने की आवश्यकता होती है. यदि शब्दों की गहराई से सोचें, तो इसके लिए किसी भी तर्क-वितर्क, लफ्फाजी, ना बहलाने-फुसलाने, ना किसी सूत्र, ना किसी से प्रभावित होने की आवश्यकता होती है कि हम मूलभूत रूप से बदल सकें. हममें बदलाव की आवश्यकता तो है, लेकिन किसी विशेष संकल्पना या सिद्धांत के अनुसार नहीं, क्योंकि जब हमारे पास किसी कर्म के बारे में कोई विचार या धारणा होती है, तो कर्म चुक जाता है. कर्म और विचार या धारणा के बीच एक समय अंतराल होता है. एक स्थगन/देरी होती है और इस समय अंतराल में उस विचार/धारणा के प्रति या तो प्रतिक्रिया होता है, या सुनिश्चितता या किसी विचार या धारणा की नकल और उसे कर्म में बदलने की कोशिश. यही सब हम में से अधिकतर लोग, हमेशा करते रहते हैं. हम जानते हैं कि हमें बदलना है, न केवल बाहरी तौर पर बल्कि गहरे तक- मनोवैज्ञानिक रूप से. बाहरी बदलाव तो बहुत से हैं. वे हमें किसी कार्य प्रणाली/किसी तौर तरीके के अनुसार सुनिश्चित होने के लिए या कहे कि एक ढर्रे पर चलने के लिए बाध्य करते हैं, लेकिन रोजमर्रा की ज़िंदगी की चुनौतियों का सामना करने के लिए हममें गहन क्रांति की आवश्यकता होती है. हममें से अधिकतर के पास पर्सन न कोई पूर्वनिर्धारित विचार या धारणा होती है कि हमें क्या होना चाहिए, परंतु हम कभी बुनियादी तौर से नहीं बदल पाते. हमें क्या होना चाहिए- इस संबंध में विचार और मनोभाव हममें कोई परिवर्तन नहीं ला पाते. हम तभी बदलते हैं, जब यह नितांत आवश्यक हो जाता है, क्योंकि हम परिवर्तन की आवश्यकता को कभी सीधे-सीधे अपने सामने, साक्षात् नहीं देख पाते. हम कभी बदलना भी चाहते हैं, तो हममें भारी द्वंद्व और प्रतिरोध खड़ा हो जाता है और हम प्रतिरोध करने में.

जे कृष्णमूर्ति

कुछ अलग

पानी जब कर दे पानी-पानी !

पानी की बढ़ती कमी के कारण मानवता पानी-पानी हो रही है. 'नानी याद आना' मुहावरा जगह-जगह बह रहा है. स्वार्थ की जुगाड़-जंग जारी है, जिसे आराम से पानी मिल जाता है, चुप रहता है. व्यवस्था को नहीं कोसता, पड़ोसी को भी नहीं बताता. डरता है, आता-जाता कहीं मिल गया. तो आधी बाल्टी पानी मांग ही लेगा. पानी के लिए लाइनें लगी हैं, साफ पानी किसे मिलेगा, के लिए अमेरिकी वीजा की तरह लॉटरी सिस्टम फैसला कर रहा है. तालाबों को दफन करने के बाद अब यज्ञ किये जा रहे हैं. ईश्वर मुस्कुरा रहे हैं. विधायक विधेयक लाने के प्रयास कर रहे हैं, काश वे जादूगर होते, लोगों को हिप्नोटाइज करते और उन्हें लगता हमारे पास बहुत पानी है. लेकिन असलियत का सांप सिहरन पैदा कर देता है.

जनता को हो रही पानी की किलकत को खबर बनाते हुए बचे-खुचे प्रखर पत्रकार ने प्रशासनिक कुब्यवस्था पर उबलता पानी उड़ेला. लिखा कि पानी की कमी वीआईपी व गणमान्य लोगों को पानी-पानी नहीं कर सकती है. उनकी कारें, लान व कुत्ते रोज नहाते हैं और कई बस्तियों में कई दिन के बाद भी पानी नहीं आता. एक बाल्टी पानी से पहले परिवार का एक आदमी नहाता है, फिर दूसरा और तीसरा. इसी पानी से कपड़े धोये जा रहे, बर्तन धुए रहे हैं. मंत्रीजी यह समझा रहे हैं कि इस बार ज्यादा से ज्यादा वृक्ष लायेंगे, ताकि पर्सों को दफन आकर बारिश कर दें. पत्रकार रात को घर जा रहे थे. आईपीएच विभाग के छोटे अफसर थकावट के कारण, कड़वा पानी पिये मिल

संपादकीय प्रभात

भारत-अमेरिकी संबंध की दिशा

अमेरिकी विदेश मंत्री माइक पॉम्पियो का भारत दौरा उस वक्त संपन्न हो रहा है, जब भारत और अमेरिका के संबंध काफी असहज हैं. छोटे-बड़े अनेक मतभेद अंतरराष्ट्रीय सामरिक परिप्रेक्ष्य और उभयपक्षीय राष्ट्रहितों के टकराव के कारण प्रकट हो रहे हैं. पिछले लगभग तीन दशक से भारत और अमेरिका के संबंध क्रमशः प्रगाढ़ और गुटनिरपेक्षता के युग वाला परस्पर अविश्वास पूरी तरह मिट चुका था. जब से भारत ने आर्थिक सुधारों का सूत्रपात किया है, अमेरिका के साथ पूंजीवाद बनाम समाजवाद जैसी सैद्धांतिक बहस बेमानी हो गयी है. खासकर जब यूपीए के कार्यकाल में पूर्व प्रधानमंत्री मनमोहन सिंह ने परमाण्विक ऊर्जा के शान्तिपूर्ण करार पर हस्ताक्षर करने के लिए अपनी सरकार दांव पर लगा दी थी, तब से आम भारतीय सोचता आ रहा है कि भारत अमेरिका के बहुत करीब है. गूगल, माइक्रोसॉफ्ट, मास्टर कार्ड जैसी बड़ी कंपनियों के मुख्य कार्यकारी भारतवंशी ही हैं. पहले कार्यकाल में मोदी की अमेरिका यात्रा और तत्कालीन राष्ट्रपति ओबामा के साथ उनकी आत्मीय दोस्ती ने इस मान्यता को पुष्ट किया कि दोनों देशों के बीच मनमुटाव नहीं है. फिर क्या कारण है कि पॉम्पियो की यात्रा को लेकर गंभीर आशंकाएं मुखर हो रही हैं ?

भारतीय विदेश मंत्री जयशंकर के साथ पॉम्पियो ने जो संयुक्त बयान जारी किया है, उसमें राजनयिक शब्दाडंबर के बावजूद इस बात को छुपाया नहीं जा सका कि दोनों देशों के बीच अनेक महत्वपूर्ण विषयों पर गंभीर मतभेद बरकरार हैं. पॉम्पियो ने कहा कि दुनिया में कोई भी देश चाहे कितने भी करीबी दोस्त क्यों ना हों, उनके बीच कुछ ना कुछ मतभेद बचे रहते हैं और यह स्वाभाविक ही है. संवाद से इनका समाधान निकाला जाता है. यही जनतांत्रिक राजनयी की खूबी है. जयशंकर ने इसी सच को दूसरे शब्दों में व्यक्त किया और इस बात के लिए अमेरिका का आभार प्रकट किया कि वह हिंद प्रशांत

क्षेत्र में आवागमन को आबाद रखने में भारत के साथ सहयोग कर रहा है और अंतरराष्ट्रीय आतंकवाद के विरुद्ध उसकी सहायता के लिए तत्पर रहा है. पर जब प्रेस सम्मेलन में यह प्रश्न पूछा गया कि क्या ईरान के चाहहार बंदरगाह के विषय में कोई बातचीत हुई, तो उन्होंने जवाब दिया नहीं, इसकी कोई जरूरत भी नहीं थी, क्योंकि फिलहाल इस बारे में कोई टकराव नहीं है. फिलहाल भले ही ट्रंप का अमेरिका चाबहार को भारत के साथ विवाद का मुद्दा नहीं बनाना चाहता, भविष्य में वह ऐसा कर सकता है. यह बात रेखांकित करना जरूरी है कि पॉम्पियो ने ईरान को दुनियाभर में आतंकवाद का सबसे बड़ा प्रायोजक घोषित किया है. अमेरिका की नजर में ईरान आतंकवादी हो सकता है, पर भारत इस राय से सहमत हो, यह जरूरी नहीं. भारत जिस कट्टरपंथी जेहादी आतंकवाद का शिकार है उसका प्रायोजक ईरान नहीं, बल्कि अमेरिका का मित्र सऊदी अरब है. सऊदी से ही पाकिस्तान को संरक्षण, सहायता और प्रोत्साहन मिलता रहा है.

पश्चिम एशिया की रणभूमि में अमेरिका जिन तत्वों के साथ है, उनके खिलाफ रूस, ईरान और लेबनान तथा कुर्द खड़े हैं. यहां बुनियादी टकराव यमन से लेकर सुडान तक सुन्नी सऊदी अरब और शिया ईरान के बीच है. ऊर्जा सुरक्षा अर्थात तेल की



पुष्पेश पंत

अंतरराष्ट्रीय मामलों के जानकार

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भारत-अमेरिकी संबंध

अंततः विदेश मंत्री स्तर के संवाद से तय होनेवाले नहीं . जी-20 सम्मेलन के अवसर पर शी, आवे और पुतिन के साथ मोदी की मुलाकात ही यह फैसला करेगी कि ट्रंप भारतीय प्रधानमंत्री पर कितना दबाव बना सकते हैं ?

चाहता है, वहीं भारत ईरान में चाबहार तक अपनी पहुंच बढ़ा रूस के साथ उस उत्तर-दक्षिण गलियारों को वन बेल्ट वन रोड के मुकामले खड़ा करना चाहता है, जिसकी चर्चा यूपीए के पहले कार्यकाल में मनमोहन सिंह के पलटी

सोने में तूफानी तेजी का परिदृश्य



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एक बार फिर भारत के अधिकांश वतकर्ता सोने की तरफ आकर्षित हो रहे हैं . लेकिन, भारत जैसे विकासशील देश के लिए सोने में निवेश उत्पादक नहीं है . ऐसे में सोने की मांग घटाने के सार्थक प्रयास किये जाने जरूरी हैं .

कुछ अलग

पानी जब कर दे पानी-पानी !

पानी की बढ़ती कमी के कारण मानवता पानी-पानी हो रही है. 'नानी याद आना' मुहावरा जगह-जगह बह रहा है. स्वार्थ की जुगाड़-जंग जारी है, जिसे आराम से पानी मिल जाता है, चुप रहता है. व्यवस्था को नहीं कोसता, पड़ोसी को भी नहीं बताता. डरता है, आता-जाता कहीं मिल गया. तो आधी बाल्टी पानी मांग ही लेगा. पानी के लिए लाइनें लगी हैं, साफ पानी किसे मिलेगा, के लिए अमेरिकी वीजा की तरह लॉटरी सिस्टम फैसला कर रहा है. तालाबों को दफन करने के बाद अब यज्ञ किये जा रहे हैं. ईश्वर मुस्कुरा रहे हैं. विधायक विधेयक लाने के प्रयास कर रहे हैं, काश वे जादूगर होते, लोगों को हिप्नोटाइज करते और उन्हें लगता हमारे पास बहुत पानी है. लेकिन असलियत का सांप सिहरन पैदा कर देता है.

जनता को हो रही पानी की किलकत को खबर बनाते हुए बचे-खुचे प्रखर पत्रकार ने प्रशासनिक कुब्यवस्था पर उबलता पानी उड़ेला. लिखा कि पानी की कमी वीआईपी व गणमान्य लोगों को पानी-पानी नहीं कर सकती है. उनकी कारें, लान व कुत्ते रोज नहाते हैं और कई बस्तियों में कई दिन के बाद भी पानी नहीं आता. एक बाल्टी पानी से पहले परिवार का एक आदमी नहाता है, फिर दूसरा और तीसरा. इसी पानी से कपड़े धोये जा रहे, बर्तन धुए रहे हैं. मंत्रीजी यह समझा रहे हैं कि इस बार ज्यादा से ज्यादा वृक्ष लायेंगे, ताकि पर्सों को दफन आकर बारिश कर दें. पत्रकार रात को घर जा रहे थे. आईपीएच विभाग के छोटे अफसर थकावट के कारण, कड़वा पानी पिये मिल



देश दुनिया से

जापान के ओसाका में जी20 शिखर सम्मेलन

जापान के ओसाका में हो रहा जी20 शिखर सम्मेलन सबसे ज्यादा विखंडित दुनिया के विरोधाभासों को एक साथ एक मंच पर ला रहा है. मध्य-पूर्व या पश्चिम एशिया में थथल-पुथल मची हुई है और अंतरराष्ट्रीय आतंकवाद दुनिया के अनेक क्षेत्रों में एक विघटनकारी मुद्दा बना हुआ है. इसी बीच चीन पर अमेरिकी हमले हो रहे हैं और उसे अंतरराष्ट्रीय समुदाय का समर्थन मिल रहा है. जी20 विश्व स्तर पर सबसे ज्यादा प्रतिनिधिक राजनीतिक समूह है. इसी वर्ष सितंबर में यह 10 वर्ष का हो जायेगा. यह समूह वैश्विक जीडोपी के 80 प्रतिशत का प्रतिनिधित्व करता है. साल 1990 में हुए वित्तीय संकट की प्रतिक्रिया में स्थापित यह समूह मौजूदा सांस्थानिक संरचना के भीतर सर्वाधिक जनसंख्या वाले विकासशील देशों को विस्तृत प्रतिनिधित्व देता है. सम्मेलन को कार्यसूची व्यापक है, जिसमें वैश्विक अर्थव्यवस्था से लेकर व्यापार, रोजगार, स्वास्थ्य, नवाचार, विकास व पर्यावरण तक के मुद्दे शामिल हैं. जापानी प्रधानमंत्री शिंजो आवे आगामी चुनाव के मनेजरन इस शिखर सम्मेलन का लाभ लेने के लिए 'ओसाका ट्रैक' को आगे बढ़ाने की कोशिश करेगे. उनका ध्यान सोसाइटी 5.0 (पोस्ट-इंडस्ट्रियल) बनाने के लिए नवाचार पर होगा.

फैबियो मारियोसो डेरेटी

कार्टून कोना



सामार : कार्टूनमूवमेंटडॉटकॉम

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

खाने के पहले काफी गर्म थी. तब अजरबैजान से भारत तक लायी जानेवाली तापी गैस पाइपलाइन लाने का शोर मचा. पता नहीं क्यों आज रूस के साइबेरिया क्षेत्र में उस सखालिन तेल-गैस निवेश को हम एकदम भूल गये हैं, जिसमें भारत ने कई अरब डॉलर लगाये थे.

अमेरिका को आज उस सैनिक साज-सामान की खरीदारी को लेकर भी सिरदर्द है, जो भारत रूस से कर रहा है. पश्चिम एशिया में पुतिन की दुस्साहसिक नीतियों को देखते हुए और उक्रेन में सैनिक हस्तक्षेप के बाद अमेरिका ने रूस पर प्रतिबंध लगाये हैं. पर ट्रंप के लिए यह समझना परमावश्यक है कि आधी सदी से भी अधिक समय से भारत सैनिक साज-सामान की खरीदारी रूस से करता रहा है. मोदी कार्यकाल में भारत ने रूस से इतर विकल्प तलाशने शुरू किये हैं. जिनमें फ्रांस से रफेल और इस्राइल से परिष्कृत टेक्नोलॉजी का आयात शामिल है.

कुछ छोटे-छोटे मुद्दे हैं, जिन पर अमेरिकी रियायत कर भारत को बड़ी रियायत के लिए मजबूर करने का प्रयास कर रहे हैं. एच1-बी वीजा की संख्या बढ़ाने से कुछ ख़ास हासिल होनेवाला नहीं. जब तक अमेरिकी बाजार में भारतीय उत्पाद निर्बाध रूप से नहीं पहुंचते, तब तक अमेरिकी उत्पादों और सेवाओं के लिए अपना बाजार खोलने की भारत की मजबूरी नहीं होनी चाहिए. ट्रंप विश्व व्यापार संगठन को नष्ट करने की धौंस-धमकी दे अमेरिकी बाजार को संरक्षित रखना चाहते हैं. पर चीन के साथ वाणिज्य युद्ध की घोषणा कर उन्होंने अपने लिए विकट चुनौती पैदा की है. भारत-अमेरिकी संबंध अंततः विदेश मंत्री स्तर के संवाद से तय होनेवाले नहीं. जी-20 सम्मेलन के अवसर पर शी, आवे और पुतिन के साथ मोदी की मुलाकात ही इस बात का फैसला करेगी कि ट्रंप भारतीय प्रधानमंत्री पर कितना दबाव बना सकते हैं ? अंत में याद रखें- शक्तियों के संबंध व्यक्तिगत दोस्ती पर नहीं, राष्ट्रहितों के अनुसार ही समायोजित होते हैं.



आपके पत्र

स्वास्थ्य ढांचे को बनाएं मजबूत

कई बार किसी बीमारी के मूल कारणों का पता लगाना मुश्किल होता है, किंतु यदि उससे बचाव और उपचार के बेहतर उपाय किये जा सकें तो हालात काबू करने में मदद मिलती है. बिहार और केंद्र सरकार सुप्रीम कोर्ट के सवालों का चाहे जो जवाब दें, यह सचचाई है कि मुजफ्फरपुर का श्रीकृष्ण मेडिकल कॉलेज अस्पताल पर्याप्त संसाधनों से लैस नहीं दिखा. ऐसा तब हुआ, जब यह उत्तरी बिहार का प्रमुख मेडिकल कॉलेज है और कई वर्षों से एक्यूट इंसेफलाइटिस सिंड्रोम के मरीजों का गवाह बनता रहा है. संसाधनों के अभाव का सामना कर रहा यह अस्पताल देश में सरकारी स्वास्थ्य ढांचे की खराब स्थिति को ही बयान करता है. आवश्यक केवल यही नहीं है कि बिहार में बच्चों की मौत का सिलसिला थमे, बल्कि यह भी है कि केंद्र और राज्य सरकारी स्वास्थ्य ढांचे को दुरुस्त करने के लिए कमर कसें.

डॉ हेमंत कुमार, गोराही, भागलपुर

धार्मिक विद्वेष खत्म हो

अभी पांच दिन पहले ही अमेरिकी विदेश विभाग ने भारत में धार्मिक भेदभाव का चलन बढ़ने का आरोप लगाया. हमारे विदेश विभाग के प्रवक्ता ने तत्काल इन आरोपों को खारिज कर दिया. मगर कल वहां के विदेश मंत्री भारत आकर, हमारे विदेश मंत्री के सामने भारत को धार्मिक अधिकारों का पालन करने को कह दिया. क्या सिर्फ नकार देने से यह आरोप गलत साबित हो जायेगा ? भीड़ द्वारा तुरंत उसी स्थान पर मौत की सजा देने की प्रथा जिरों से चल पड़ी है. जब प्रणव मुखर्जी राष्ट्रपति थे तब उन्होंने दो बार सरकार को आगाह किया था. उसके बाद प्रधानमंत्री ने पहले भी और कल भी, संसद में झारखंड में हुई तबरेज अंसारी की हत्या की निंदा की. सिर्फ झारखंड में ही पिछले तीन वर्षों में 11 लोगों की भीड़ द्वारा हत्या की गयी है. अगर सबसे बड़ा लोकतंत्र वाले देश का यह हाल रहेगा, तो अमेरिका क्या कोई भी भारत पर उंगली उठा सकता है. किस-किस के आरोपों को हम खारिज करते रहेंगे ?

जंग बहादुर सिंह, गोलकुहड़ी, जमशेदपुर

दबाव उचित नहीं !

ताजा लोकसभा चुनाव में बड़ी हार के बाद कांग्रेस अध्यक्ष राहुल गांधी शायद अपनी गलतियों को देखते हुए त्यागपत्र पर अड़े हैं, मगर परिवार और पार्टी के कुछ वफादार और प्रिय जन इसके खिलाफ धरने, प्रदर्शन और अनशन आदि से दबाव बनाये हुए हैं जो उचित नहीं है. क्या पार्टी में और अच्छे नेताओं की कोई कमी है, शायद नहीं. यदि राहुल चाहें तो प्रियंका और सोनिया गांधी आदि बड़े नेताओं से मिलकर किसी को भी यह दायित्व सौंप सकते हैं. कोई ईसान और परिवार कभी बुरा नहीं होता. कुर्बानी, त्याग भावना और अच्छे कार्यों से ही आगे बढ़ा जा सकता है. इसलिए अब पार्टी को खुलकर और सकारात्मक सोच से ही आगे बढ़ना होगा. अब संपलने और सुधरने का वक़्त है. आशा है पार्टी कुछ सही सोचकर ही अब आगे बढ़ेगी.

वेद मामूरपुर, नरैला

