The theories of Gell-Mann

The physicist who died last week is best known for his contribution to the theory of quarks, and his classification, Eightfold Way

TECH-ENABLED

DEVANGSHU DATTA

The pioneering particle physicist, Murray Gell-Mann (1929-2019) died last week. Gell-Mann is best known for his contribution to the theory of quarks, and his classification, Eightfold Way. Those names indicate the wide range of Dr Gell-Mann's interests.

The "Eightfold Way" is the less obscure reference, coming straight from Buddhist philosophy and the Eightfold Path of right thought, right action, and so on. The quark's etymology is more complicated. Sometime in 1964, Gell-Mann and Richard Feynman, his rock-star colleague at Caltech, were discussing Gell-Mann's idea that an unknown fundamental particle could explain experimental results, if these existed.

Feynman referred casually to these "imagined" particles as "quacks", while Gell-Mann thought of them as "Kworks", for some reason. The sound tickled Gell-Mann's memory, and he fished out a reference to "Three quarks for Muster Mark" in James Joyce's magnum opus Finnegan's Wake. Georg Zweig, who had independently developed a similar hypothesis, referred to these particles as "aces" but the odder name, quark, stuck.

The classification of the Eightfold Way came earlier, in 1961. Gell-Mann was looking to find some way of keeping track of many different subatomic particles. H was examining the hadrons, a group of 100-odd particles that had some similarity in strong nuclear interactions. He classified them into eight different groups, hence, the octo-name.

It was in 1964 that he postulated that hadron behaviours could be explained if each was composed by the merger of two or more fundamental particles. No such particle was known to exist, but the hypothesis worked as a mathematical explanation of hadron behaviour. This unknown particle later turned out to be the "quark". Gell-Mann went further in postulating the existence of "gluons", particles that "glue" hadrons together because gluons contain the strong nuclear force in analogy to the way that electrons contain electromagnetic force.

The existence of quarks was confirmed in 1968 by data derived at the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center. That led to Gell-Mann receiving the Nobel Prize in 1969. The theory of quarks and gluons has held up ever since in thousands of experiments at high-energy particle colliders where subatomic particles are smashed together at high speed.

Physicists now say there are six different types of quark, (each has an anti-matter counterpart). Gell-Mann is considered one of the founders of the theory of quantum chromodynamics, which details the ways in which strong nuclear interactions affect particles.

Gell-Mann was born in New York in 1929. After doing his graduation at Yale, he received his Phd at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1951. He joined the California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, to give Caltech its proper name, in 1955 and taught there until 1993, as the emeritus professor holding the Robert Millikan chair. He also co-founded the Santa Fe Institute.

Thanks to Gell-Mann and his generation, we know that atomic particles are all either quarks, or leptons. Indeed, all matter is composed of quarks and leptons (with corresponding anti-matter particles). There are six quarks and six leptons. Leptons such as the electron, the muon and the neutrinos can exist in isolation and they don't experience strong nuclear interactions.

Quarks only exist in combination with other quarks. The taxonomy and nomenclature of types of quarks is also quirky, due to the influence of Gell-Mann. They exist in pairs called up/down, top/bottom and charm/strange. While leptons either have an integer charge (the electron is minus 1), or no charge at all, quarks have fractional charges. The sum of the fractional charges of several combined quarks create the integer charge of a particle like the proton. All quarks undergo strong interactions.

Quarks also have a "colour charge" as it's called and these are classified as red, green, and blue. This has nothing to do with colour as such. It is an analogy used by physicists (Feynman called them "idiot physicists") to describe strong nuclear interactions. Each colour charge is linked to the antimatter "anti-colour" charge carried by the equivalent antimatter quark.

Our understanding of how quarks interact started in the 1960s, with Gell-Mann's generation and the mathematical predictions often preceded the experimental verification by decades. The top quark was only found in the 1990s, more than 20 years after its existence had been predicted by theory.

The theories and hypotheses of Gell-Mann and the other particle physicists of 50 years ago, led directly to the Large Hadron Collider project, which discovered the Higgs Boson. There are plenty of hypothetical particles still out there, predicted in various hypotheses but not found. None of them have the exotic names that Gell-Mann and his followers coined.

Rate cut for sure: Now or in August?

The RBI would do well to frontload rate cut as growth is faltering and inflation well within target

ILLUSTRATION BY BINAY SINHA

BANKER'S TRUST

TAMAL BANDYOPADHYAY

Last Friday, hours after India got its newest Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, a ministry of statistics and programme implementation release revealed that India is no longer the world's fastest growing large economy. The economic growth in the last quarter of 2019, ending March, dropped to 5.8 per cent, the lowest in the past 20 quarters. This also pulled down the annual growth in India's gross domestic product (GDP) to 6.8 per cent, the slowest in the Modi 1.0 regime.

To add to the woes, the first periodic labour force survey of the government, released on the same day, showed the unemployment rate at a 45-year high of 6.1 per cent in 2017-18 (July-June).

What will the two-monetary policy old Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das do on June 6? Will he go for yet another rate cut?

Of course, it's no longer a governor's policy. An independent monetary policy committee (MPC) will deliberate on this but Das, who heads the six-member panel, has a critical role to play and he makes no bones about his bias for growth. In the past two MPC meetings in February and April, the policy rate was cut by 25 basis points (bps) each, to 6 per cent. One bps is a hundredth of a percentage point. Should we see it coming down to 5.75 per cent or even 5.5 per cent?

Or, say, even 5.65 per cent as Das, at the recent IMF-World Bank spring meeting, made it clear that he does not believe that the unit of 25 bps is sacrosanct — it's just a convention; it could be 10 or 35 bps, tailored to suit the dynamics of the economic situation.

There are, of course, reasons why the MPC should hold its horses and wait for its next meeting in August by when the Union Budget will be presented (it's on July 5) and we will get a clear sense of the fiscal deficit estimates of the current financial year. In 2019, the fiscal deficit was 3.39 per cent of GDP, well within the revised estimate of 3.4 per cent. Also, the trajectory of the monsoon will be clear by that time. India's weather office has predicted a normal monsoon.

Most importantly, the effect of the past two rate cuts has not been seen as yet. In other words, monetary transmission is not happening. Going by data, in the January-May 2019 period, we have seen the weakest transmission in recent times. Taking the loan rate of State Bank of India, the nation's largest lender, as benchmark, the transmission is just 20 per cent (50 bps policy rate cut versus 10 bps loan rate cut). In the April-December 2018 period, when the policy rate was hiked by 50 bps, the transmission was 70 per cent. Between December 2016 and March 2018, when the policy rate was cut by 25 bps, the transmission was 300 per cent. This is because of demonetisation which flooded the system with liquidity.

More than the policy rate, liquidity is the key to monetary transmission. And, the RBI must address this. To be fair to the central bank, it is sensitive to the liquidity conundrum. It has generated around ₹70,000 crore through a new tool of dollar-rupee swap through two $5 billion such buy/sell swap auctions in March and April. Besides, ₹25,000 crore has been pumped in through bond buying under the so-called open market operations (OMO) and another ₹12,500 crore OMO is slated after the policy meeting.

As a result of all these, the 10-year bond yield dropped to 7.03 per cent on Friday, its 18-month low. Of course, expectations of a rate cut and the drop in crude oil prices to $64.97 a barrel contributed to this. Incidentally, the 10-year US Treasury yield too declined sharply last week to its lowest level since September 2017. Since the rate cut in February, the 10-year yield of Indian bond dropped almost 50 bps. The difference between the policy rate and the bond yield is now 100 bps, close to its long-term average (from April 2001 till date) of 90 bps.

Clearly, monetary transmission is happening in the bond market but not in the loan market. The average liquidity deficit, which was little over ₹70,000 crore in April, dropped to ₹37,600 crore in May. It is expected to turn surplus in June and may continue in that mode till August, driven by OMOs and RBI dividend to be paid to the government.

But even then there is no guarantee that banks will bring down their rates and start giving loans. They have developed risk aversion because of the state of affairs in the non-banking finance industry where many companies are suffering from acute asset-liability mismatches; they are starved of liquidity.

To address this, the RBI last week tweaked the securitisation norms for the NBFCs and extended the period of "dispensation". Such companies are now permitted to securitise loans of at least five-year maturity after holding them for six months on their books. In November 2018, when RBI first permitted this, it had kept the holding period for at least a year. And, the dispensation which was to be valid till May, has been extended now to December. The relaxation in minimum holding period will particularly benefit the housing finance companies as the tenure of mortgage loans is typically more than five years. They can raise more funds through the securitisation route.

For the policy, the RBI has two choices before it.

One, holding on till August but making a clear statement that it will ensure surplus liquidity in the system through all tools available to it. This has to be accompanied by a change the stance of the policy, from neutral to accommodative.

Second, instead of waiting for the Budget, the trajectory of the monsoon and monetary transmission, the RBI could frontload both rate cut and liquidity injection. It can be done as even though the retail inflation inched up marginally to 2.9 per cent in April, the so-called core or non-food, non-oil manufacturing inflation fell sharply. The March index of industrial production was disappointing — contracting for the third successive month and falling 0.1 per cent year-on-year. There are enough indications of a broad-based slowdown. Since inflation is well within the 4 per cent (with a 2 per cent bad on either side) target of the MPC, I will not be surprised if the RBI goes for a rate cut now and not wait till August.

Will it be 35 bps, Mr Das?

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CHINESE WHISPERS

Roadblock by police?

Police personnel in Vellore, 126 km from Chennai, last week blocked a stretch of a road, ostensibly for public good. They were protesting the fact that more often than not two-wheeler riders did not wear helmets and many a time they rode vehicles that did not have insurance. A senior police official picked up the microphone installed in his vehicle and advised people on the merits of insurance and dangers of helmet-less rides. He said in the very first month of taking charge he had to dispose of nearly 15 bodies, all victims of accidents involving two-wheelers. At the end of his speech, he had a warning — henceforth, every violator will pay a ₹250 fine and "spend" half a day at his police station.

A record of sorts

Ekkadu Srinivasan Lakshmi Narasimhan, governor of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, holds a unique record. He is the only governor to have administered oath to five chief ministers in nine years — a strike rate of one every other year. After he took over as governor of Andhra Pradesh, he administrated his first oath of office to Kiran Kumar Reddy of the Congress and then to Chandrababu Naidu. Then in 2015 when Andhra Pradesh was divided and Telangana carved out, he administrated oath to its first chief minister, K Chandrasekar Rao (KCR). He re-administered oath to KCR last year too. The most recent one was for Jagan Mohan Reddy, whose party won a majority of the seats in the Andhra Pradesh assembly and became chief minister last month.

Mamata's riposte

Days after she was greeted by belligerent cries of "Jai Shri Ram" in Bhatpara and Naihati — which fall in the Barrackpore stronghold of newly elected BJP parliamentarian Arjun Singh, who had crossed over from the Trinamul Congress before the general election — West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee *(pictured)* has come up with a riposte. She has requested women and young people in the state to set up Banga Janani Vahinis and Jai Hind Vahinis to counter "outside" influence in the state. She appealed to the people of the state that henceforth they must say "Jai Hind" when they greet people and appealed to her party colleagues to say "Jai Bangla" when answering official calls.

AS I SEE IT

A verdict against PLU

For now all that we have been left with is our defiance. Is it enough?

KARAN THAPAR

I may hardly visit the place but I'm proud to be considered a member of the Khan Market Gang. I shall wear it as a badge of honour. In fact, I might even consider attaching the initials KMG to my name. In Britain that would stand for Knight of the Order of St Michael and St George! But, levity apart — yet what else have we left except humour? — I can see that this electoral result is a verdict against people like me. By the way, that includes many of you.

One of the outcomes that's most striking is this was a vote against entitlement, privilege and dynastic succession. By some estimates, of the 38 candidates with dynastic connections 25 were defeated. They come from parties such as the Congress, the Samajwadi Party, the Rashtriya Janata Dal, the Rashtriya Lok Dal, the Janata Dal (United) and the Telangana Rashtra Samithi. That geographically covers the entire country. Only dynasts with connections to Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) — or the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, for reasons I cannot fully understand — won. At least for now, Modi's shield is sufficient protection from the electoral bombardment against entitlement and dynasty. But for how long?

For the rest of us the message is clear. We grew up with the comfortable assumption that because of our birth and lineage, education or upbringing, family contacts and influence, we owned this country and could run it as we want. We were, or so we thought, the natural ruling class. Yet we didn't realise this was deeply resented. That antipathy may have been subterranean but it was seething. Narendra Modi recognised it and tapped into it. It's now given him over 300 seats in the Lok Sabha.

This is a new India even though it was always there. But it was neither recognised nor acknowledged. Now its voice and attitudes, its definition of Indian-ness, its style and behaviour, including its prejudices, have come to the fore and could become the established norm. This also means that people like us — once upon a time PLU was such a comforting short form — find ourselves relegated to a forgotten or left-behind minority. To put it hurtfully but, I suspect, truthfully, we've ended up on the wrong side of history.

Two other aspects of the electoral verdict are connected with this loud blast of the Indian trumpet against entitlement. First, this vote was a personal endorsement of Narendra Modi. With enormous faith and trust, my countrymen have voted for one man to be our Prime Minister. He brought the BJP back to power not the other way round.

What clearer proof can there be than the message from Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan? In these three states in December, the BJP was bundled out. That was a vote against the party. This time, when Lok Sabha MPs were being elected and, therefore, Narendra Modi's future lay in the balance, they voted unanimously for him. He won every seat in Rajasthan, all but one in Madhya Pradesh and just two short of a full house in Chhattisgarh.

Modi's BJP has 303 seats, his allies 50 more. That's a two-thirds majority. At the state level, he either controls or is part of 17 governments. When Indira Gandhi had similar power they called her Empress of India. Now we have a new Emperor.

The other striking aspect of the vote is the message it conveys of how our countrymen view their identity. Right across northern and western India and in large parts of the east too they seem to have accepted the Hindutva concept of India as an essentially Hindu country and turned their backs on the Nehruvian view that we're a nation of multiple religions, castes, ethnicities and cultures. It's only when you cross the Vindhyas that you find the older form of secularism flourishing. But, again, for how long? The fortress of Karnataka has been breached and there are holes in the walls of Telangana. With time, I fear, Kerala, Andhra and Tamil Nadu could submit.

So, as a proud member of the Khan Market Gang, I have to admit Modi has changed my country. For now all that we have been left with is our defiance. Is it enough? Only if this is a wave that will eventually recede. If not, like Atlantis we could be drowned forever.

Why are Indian growth rates so volatile?

ASHIMA GOYAL

Since the global financial crisis (GFC), India's GDP growth has become highly volatile. Periods of higher growth are disappointingly short. A sharp recovery following over-stimulus after the GFC collapsed in 2011 and in the over-reaction that followed macroeconomic policy became too tight. Double deficits and high inflation did require adjustment. But the focus shifted only to structural reforms, which were expected to make possible sustainable high growth. But the disappointing yo-yo pattern continues for eight years now, suggesting that structural reforms alone are inadequate — counter-cyclical macroeconomic policy also has to be enabled.

This year GDP growth has fallen to 6.8 per cent, the lowest in five years. That growth in each successive quarter is lower than the one before, reaching 5.8 per cent in Q4 FY19 (January-March 2018-19), indicates a deepening slowdown. This is not pre-election jitters, which will reverse by itself.

The disaggregated picture confirms policy neglect. After a slump in end 2016, manufacturing revived in Q2FY18 with a sharp jump from -1.7 in the previous quarter to 7.1. A rise in private investment by the end of the year, for the first time since a brief spurt in 2014 led to hopes that the turnaround could be sustainable. The output of intermediate goods such as cement and steel grew with the government's push in housing and infrastructure. But manufacturing growth crashed from 12.2 in Q1FY19 to 6.9 in Q2FY19. This was the quarter in which problems at IL&FS led to a contraction of credit from NBFCs. The growth in construction, trade and hotels all slowed down in that quarter. But policy rates were actually rising in this period, although the target CPI headline also collapsed to 2.2 in Q2FY19. Real interest rates reached 4 per cent. Recently released data from the high frequency NSSO employment survey shows unemployment increased in Q3FY19, but there was no response from macroeconomic policy. The first rate cut of 25 basis points came only in February 2019. Under this onslaught, growth in private investment reversed in Q4FY19.

The fiscal stance was also tightening. A 1 per cent fall in tax growth in 2018-19 compared to the previous year needed a 4.8 per cent fall in government expenditure to meet even the relaxed deficit target of 3.4 per cent of GDP. This fall was not compensated by the rise in private consumption growth of 0.7 and of investment by 0.7. This was the drag from fiscal consolidation. It appears government expenditure crowds in more private expenditure than a cut in taxes does.

US president Trump's trade wars had set in a global slowdown, to which also policy did not respond. Data for the current period, as well as earlier episodes, shows a clear causal sequence. First domestic demand revives, then exports and finally investment. Although world demand recovered in 2017, Indian export growth remained slack. It revived somewhat in Q2FY19 after manufacturing growth did so, only to slow again in Q4FY19 as manufacturing growth had already slowed, as had world demand. World demand alone was inadequate to revive Indian exports. It appears domestic demand that improves manufacturing growth also helps raise export growth.

Since India is dependent on oil imports, there are limits to depreciation as a strategy to increase exports. The oil bill rises. Maintaining domestic demand is essential to keep factories humming. As they achieve economies of scale, they also export. The squeeze on domestic demand since 2011 and the appreciation — as relatively higher Indian interest rates attracted more foreign capital — hurt Indian industry as well as investment and turned us into a consumption and import-led economy. Increasing imports of consumption goods have also widened the current account deficit of the balance of payments in recent years.

Although the government took immediate steps to turn around IL&FS in September 2019 RBI measures to address the spillovers to the financial sector, to other industry — to consumption, investment and growth were inadequate. No lender of last resort facility was made available to NBFCs and strangely market liquidity itself was actually allowed to tighten, so that market rates rose and NBFCs found it difficult to refinance loans, aggravating distress.

All this arose from the monetarist-market fundamentalist view that dominated macroeconomic policy-making. In this view, macroeconomic stimulus cannot affect employment, markets left largely to themselves achieve the best outcome, structural reforms only aim is to unfetter markets. Rescuing financial institutions and firms leads to moral hazard and wastes resources in zombies. Weak entities are best allowed to die. It assumes a unique full employment equilibrium without allowing for the persistent losses from continued growth below potential, and falling potential, that India has had to bear since 2011.

This view bound the government in a straightjacket FRBM that does not allow it to stimulate the economy in a slowdown. India adopted flexible inflation targeting but the MPC implemented it strictly, and did not use the space it had available to stimulate the economy, although government supply-side action reduced inflation.

Now that inflation is in the target band and growth has slowed much below potential it must act fast with rate cuts using available space. The one year ahead real rate is at 2.5 when the neutral real rate is one. Increasing the share of durable liquidity can improve transmission and reduce market rates as can special packages for NBFCs.

Else the monetary-fiscal framework must be changed to allow a better counter-cyclical balance. Imposing more unnecessary growth sacrifice can lead to a political backlash.

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Faltering growth

Challenges mount for new finance minister

New Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will have to hit the ground running because there is little doubt that the Indian economy is slowing markedly. There have now been three successive quarters of a slowdown. According to the data released by the Central Statistics Office on Friday, gross domestic product, or GDP, grew by only 5.8 per cent in the last quarter of 2018-19, between January and March. This is considerably less than was expected. After 8 per cent growth in the first quarter of 2018-19, the economy then posted growth of 7 per cent in the second quarter, between July and September of 2018, and 6.6 per cent in the third quarter, between October and December. This is clearly a broad-based slowdown. The National Statistical Office also cut its full-year growth estimate for 2018-19 from the estimated 7 per cent earlier to 6.8 per cent. The data suggested a broader slowdown cutting across sectors, confirming the fear that the current downturn is structural rather than cyclical. The last month for which the data was released, April 2019, showed that the rate of growth in the eight "core" infrastructure sectors was still slowing, down to 2.6 per cent as against 4.9 per cent.

Low growth in the last quarter of 2018-19 means the government can no longer claim that India is the fastest-growing large economy in the world — which was in any case a tag that concealed as much as it revealed, because many peer economies were in fact doing better than India. The new government thus has many challenges before it on the economic front. The official data showed last week that the unemployment rate in 2017-18 was 6.1 per cent, though officials contended that the data isn't comparable with that of past years. There were many other indicators of a slowdown. In April, the manufacturing and services PMI, at 51.6 and 51, expanded at their slowest pace since August and September 2018, respectively. The capital goods segment of the Index of Industrial Production also contracted for the third consecutive month in April. On Saturday, India's largest carmaker, Maruti Suzuki, reported a 22 per cent decline in sales in May — the lowest in seven years.

There are multiple sources of the current slowdown. One of these is the problem of overcapacity, which causes the private sector to go slow on investment, a major source of growth. Investment has also been retarded by questions about the flow of finance through the non-banking financial sector, which has not recovered from the shock to the system delivered by the default of Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services on some of its debt. The government will have to prioritise cleaning up this sector in order to restore the flow of funds, since the sector had become a crucial source of debt finance for corporate India. A more open attitude to the world will also be necessary. Without a focus on exports, India will continue to suffer from questions of overcapacity. There is insufficient demand in India to justify a sharp increase in its productive capacity. Only becoming a location for exports to the rest of the world will be able to address the overcapacity problem. Exports have largely been muted through the government's previous term. Ms Sitharaman will have to step up and renew the structural reform process if Indian competitiveness and exports growth are to salvage the growth story.

Truce in telecom

But profitability is still some way off

For the fourth quarter of financial year 2018-19, the most keenly watched metric in the results of the telecom service provider companies, was their average revenue per user (Arpu). It rose to ₹123 for Bharti Airtel and ₹104 for Vodafone Idea, but fell to ₹126 for Reliance Jio. Arpu is defined as the revenue of the operator divided by its subscriber base. A decline means each new subscriber is adding less to the revenue of the company. So while the company will keep on adding to its capital cost at the same rate to service the new subscriber, the returns from those would be lower. The Arpu numbers indicate after a bruising war between the three companies, which account for over 87 per cent of the wireless subscriber base in the country, a truce is in the offing. Not because the companies have asked for it but because the market dynamics are pushing the three towards it.

That the war began when Reliance Jio entered the market with deep pockets is now well known. The future is of importance. To improve their Arpus, both Airtel and Vodafone have shed plain vanilla customers who do not add much to their revenue. The data with the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India shows a contraction in subscriber numbers, both wireless and wireline, in March. In a worrying sign, the wireless monthly growth rate declined 1.85 per cent. The trend was visible earlier too, as subscriber additions had begun to taper off with urban markets shunning dual SIM cards and the data taking the centre stage. The outcome of all this is that both revenue market shares and Arpus of telecom service providers are gravitating closer to each other. So any move to cut prices by any telco will only bleed all. Airtel and Vodafone have already introduced variations on minimum recharge plans for their customers, confirming this trend. While Jio is yet to respond, the declining Arpu has sent out a signal as to which way the market is headed. These are early days, but the effort to drive profitability, rather than customer addition, could lead to a rise in revenue growth for the industry in the financial year 2020, reversing the current graph.

That said, profitability is still some way off for most operators. This will be a worry as their capital expenditure is still a drag on the performance of the industry. Call drops are coming in for regular criticism, while the network speed in the country is one of the lowest in Asia, both adversely impacting the ease of doing business — a focus area of the government. It may not be right to assume that spectrum for data and voice is in short supply. In fact, a study shows about a third of it lies unused and one of the reasons for this is underinvestment by telecom companies. Quite like the chicken and egg situation, the revenues of the incumbent telcos are not supporting the scale of investments required. Even the disruptor, Jio, has not really managed to change the national picture. The new government needs to think through this chain carefully instead of rushing to auction high-priced spectrum for 5G services.

ILLUSTRATION: BINAY SINHA

The strategy and the tactics

We need a conceptual framework for economic strategy, alongside the practical problems of building government organisations

SNAKES & LADDERS

AJAY SHAH

We now start on the next five years of economic policy. Building state capacity, where organisations diagnose problems and act in response, is required. Alongside this, a consistent intellectual framework of economic policy is required. This helps in long-term planning. State effectiveness is enhanced by rules rather than discretion, as has been seen so clearly with monetary policy. The presence of a framework improves the coherence of practical actions by unrelated arms of government. The framework improves coherence across time, establishes expectations, and reduces policy uncertainty.

Economic policy now has a five-year horizon. As was the case in 2014 and 2015, this will encourage long-range projects. The three biggest achievements of the previous period were the goods and services tax, inflation targeting, and the bankruptcy code, and all three began early. In similar fashion, a few transformative projects should kick off in 2019-20.

A key barrier that is faced in India is that of state capacity. An ideal government organisation is one that is able to perceive the world every day, understand the problems that are faced, identify root cause solutions, debate alternative solutions so as to find the lowest coercion option, and effectively implement the chosen solution. Whether it is tax policy, tax administration, food safety, air quality, or the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor, the basic challenge that is faced is that of establishing such organisational capability.

Building organisations that engage in such rational diagnosis and problem-solving is the need of the hour. Alongside this, one more thing is required: A conceptual framework of the strategy of economic policy. What is the role of the Indian state in a market economy? What is the institutional machinery that is sought to be constructed? What is the desired destination, of institutions and state intervention, which will come about over time? In the 1990s, there was clarity about what was being done. Conditions have changed considerably since then, which calls for a fresh search for a conceptual framework.

Such a conceptual framework matters in many ways. At the simplest, it establishes the long-run goals of economic policy. It guides policy planning in the many situations where the data is weak, and there is the risk of actions being excessively shaped by practical political compulsions. Going beyond these, there are three big aspects where the framework matters.

The first big idea is rules rather than discretion. This is the paradoxical idea that state effectiveness is actually enhanced by taking away day-to-day discretion. As an example, in the olden days, monetary policy was all discretion. Central banks could do as they liked, in response to a variety of political and economic considerations. Monetary policy has become more effective because central banks have tied their hands with inflation targets. Now, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is obliged to act in ways that deliver consumer price index (CPI) inflation of 4 per cent. Private persons know how the RBI will behave at future dates when faced with certain scenarios. The potency of monetary policy has gone up by ruling out discretionary actions.

In the field of macroeconomics and finance, the monetary policy framework is in good shape, and the task ahead lies in pouring concrete on the inflation target. In 1992-2011, there was a conceptual framework around financial markets and internationalisation. Comparable policy frameworks are now required for fiscal policy and financial policy.

The second big idea is that of coherence across a large number of government agencies. This coordination will work better when there is a shared conceptual framework.

As an example, through the 1990s, all arms of the state knew that the Indian fear of engagement with the world, of hostility to the world, was a throwback to India's post-colonial insecurities. All policy decisions, ranging from customs duty cuts to the nuclear deal, were made in a way that increased India's integration into the world economy. Actions taken by numerous elements of government were coherent because they all drew on the same conceptual framework. It would have been more complicated if each element of the state made its own tactical decisions.

The third and most valuable aspect of a consistent conceptual framework is the way it reshapes the expectations of the private sector. When private firms evaluate making the long-term commitment that is implicit in private investment, policy risk is a key concern. Establishing, and living by, a coherent conceptual framework helps reduce this risk. If state organisations have full discretion in making policy decisions in the future, then there is greater uncertainty about the future. A consistent conceptual framework brings coherence across time.

As an example, from 1991 onwards, the private sector knew that barriers to foreign direct investment and imports will only go down. There was no big bang reform, but year after year, the barriers were going to be gradually and steadily lowered, and new barriers were not going to go up. These concepts had an enormous impact upon private firms that planned for 10 years, based on the certainty that imports and foreign competitors were inexorably coming in. This was the foundation of the big productivity gains by firms from 1997 to 2004.

In similar fashion, long-term thinking in tax policy is required in order to enable the long-range investment projects of firms. If tax policy fluctuates every year, in a discretionary way, then there is greater uncertainty, and private investment is harder to plan. From this point of view, the best path for the government will be to promise, in 2019, the major contours of tax policy of the five Budgets that are coming. These commitments, about future changes in tax policy, will improve certainty for private firms and spur investment today.

To conclude, policymakers have to be pragmatic, responding to everyday problems. But alongside this, there is a need for a coherent strategy in economic policy. This requires articulating and then living by certain big ideas. This helps create coherence across space and time, and reduces policy risk.

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Environmental matters for government

DOWN TO EARTH

SUNITA NARAIN

The results of election 2019 are in and the old government is the new one. What should be its environment and development agenda?

One, most importantly, is the agrarian crisis — it is real and urgent. The fact is farming is increasingly an unremunerative business, putting millions of people at the risk of no work, real distress, and leaving them with no option but to join the ever-growing league of illegal settlers in urban areas. This business is further battered by cruel turns and twists of unseasonal weather and the fact that farmers are caught between the pincer of surpluses of produce, which drive down prices, and scarcity, which allows for imports to thrive.

In the past five years, the government has worked on two key aspects — one, to provide insurance support to farmers buffeted by crop losses and, two, to provide development assistance to meet basic needs — housing, toilets, and gas cylinders for the poorest households. But much more needs to be done to ensure that farmers' input cost is not higher than the price of their produce; that they have water-irrigation systems that allow for increased production; and that crops are not allowed to be marauded by stray cattle and wild animals. The insurance scheme must move towards real cash in the hands of farmers to withstand the vagaries of our climate-risked times.

There is the desperate need for change in policies for forestry. In the past five years, government policies on this matter have been as good as nothing. There is absolutely no clarity about how forestry must provide livelihood support to poor tribals. On the one hand, the government has issued rules to make bamboo a variety of grass and allowed for its cultivation; it has also improved price support for minor forest produce. But on the other hand, it has issued a draft forest policy that would put forestry and its business solely in the hands and control of the department; it has done nothing to implement and indeed build upon the Forest Rights Act, 2006, so that poor communities can benefit from the resources they live upon.

It is also a fact that this government, like the previous ones, have not openly disturbed the wildlife conservation mandate. It has continued to make the right noises about protection of animals even as it has done more (like all governments) to open up pristine forests for roads, mining or hydel projects. All said, forestry and its development for livelihood security and for conservation have hardly been government priority. But this is the agenda for change.

Then comes the issue of local pollution — water and air — which is toxic and has huge health impacts. There is no doubt that air pollution crisis is urgent and visible; in the past few years, the government has acted by improving the quality of fuel and has advanced vehicle technology standards and provided subsidy to equipment for farmers so that they don't burn crops. But all these actions are too little, too late. The government wants clean air but wants to get this by doing nothing terribly inconvenient. There is no mandate for transforming mobility; or restraining private cars; or for ensuring that clean fuel is available and affordable.

Most importantly, it has done nothing to make pollution-control stringent. We need effective deterrence. But in the past five years, the rot in our environmental institutions has deepened. Today, most officials of our environment departments and pollution control boards genuinely believe that it is not their job to control pollution but to protect industrial interests. They have little capacity, no oversight, and certainly no leadership. The only push they get is through court action, which is seemingly against the will and want of the government of the day. This has to change if we want our right to a clean environment because it matters to our health.

The agenda for rivers, water pollution and water scarcity has been lost at the altar of toilet building and river beautification. It is for this reason that we are witnessing droughts in large parts of the country. Just because it did not play out in the 2019 elections does not mean it is non-existent. It will continue to eat away at the innards of our country and destroy the development dividend as every drought and every flood pushes back people into more poverty and destitution.

You can argue that this is not the agenda for the Central government. People will vote with their feet on the ground and vote on these issues when the next assembly poll comes along. But I disagree. These are national issues. The government, especially one which has been voted in with such an overwhelming majority has to take the lead — it has to provide the leadership to take all of us to a more inclusive and sustainable future. People have made a deliberate choice to vote against change, not because they don't need change but because they trust that this government can deliver the change they want. Then deliver it must. Nothing less. Nothing else.

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How a dynast destroyed Syria

BOOK REVIEW

PATRICK COCKBURN

Bashar al-Assad assassinated!" shouted a man as he cycled past Manaf Tlass, an exiled Syrian general once a member of Assad's inner circle, as he sat in an outdoor cafe in Paris in 2017. A childhood friend of the Syrian president's, Tlass had fled Syria five years earlier, denouncing the government that he expected to fall at any moment. The cyclist's cry may have suggested that this outcome was finally at hand, but Tlass greeted the news with a pained smile. "That's Ali, the guy I buy my newspapers from. He tells me this every time I see him," he explained to Sam Dagher, the author of *Assad or We Burn the Country*.

Tlass, the main insider source for this account of the Assad family's half century in power, was one of many who underestimated the regime's strength after the start of the Arab Spring uprising in Syria in 2011. Foreign governments assumed that Assad was on his way out and overconfidently discussed the best place for him to go — Africa or South America — after he had stepped down. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton assured more than 100 foreign ministers assembled in Paris in the summer of 2012 that there was "a steady inexorable march toward ending the regime."

The march turned out to be in the other direction: Assad and his regime gradually reasserted their grip and today hold most of the country, aside from the scantily inhabited northeast, ruled by Kurdish-led forces backed by the US, and the large enclave around Idlib in the northwest held by Al Qaeda-type groups.

The regime was never quite as weak as it appeared to the outside world: Utterly ruthless, it was prepared to kill anybody who got in its way, had a cohesive leadership united by kinship and kept the loyalty of core units of the army and Mukhabarat (secret police), which were often led by members of the Alawite sect, approximately two million strong, who saw themselves as battling not only to keep power but for their very existence.

The means used by the regime to defeat its enemies had not changed much since Hafez al-Assad, an Alawite air force general, seized power in 1970. Dagher describes in detail the crushing of an uprising in the Sunni city of Hama in 1982 by indiscriminate bombardment and mass executions. The militarization of opposition to Bashar al-Assad's regime actually worked in the government's favour because it had superior forces, leaving Syrians with a stark choice between the Assad clan and an insurgency that came to be dominated by Sunni Arab religious extremists.

The book's subtitle is "How One Family's Lust for Power Destroyed Syria," but Dagher overemphasises the degree to which the Assads differed from other dictators in the region. Their hated rival, Saddam Hussein, ruled Iraq in much the same way as they ruled Syria, coup-proofing his regime through multiple forms of allegiance and repression, drawing on loyalties of clan, sect and party, distributing patronage and setting up competing security forces. The popular uprisings of 2011 failed in Syria, but they also failed almost everywhere else in the Middle East, leaving Syria, Libya and Yemen to be ravaged by ceaseless warfare and producing even more repressive autocracies than before in Egypt and Bahrain.

Dagher is open about his detestation of the Assad family and all their works, which he observed at close hand for two years as the only Western reporter stationed permanently in Damascus. He was briefly held by pro-regime militiamen in an underground prison and was summarily expelled by the Mukhabarat in 2014. This gives his description of events a credibility lacking in many other accounts. But there is also a tension between his tendency to blame everything on the Assads and seeing them as the consequence of religious and social hatreds.

Traditional religious animosities, exacerbated by mounting social inequality, always shaped events. The centre of Damascus filled with luxury shops and boutique hotels, but it, along with other Syrian cities, was ringed by what became known as "the misery belts," inhabited by people fleeing poverty and drought in the countryside. "Hafez ruled Syria through a pact with the impoverished Sunni countryside," Manaf Tlass said. "Sure, everyone was trampled on, but at least their basics were taken care of." This pact lapsed under Bashar al-Assad as the inner circle of the regime gained great wealth in an orgy of crony capitalism. It was to be the ignored rural and slum-dwelling Sunni who were to form the hard core of the insurgency.

Once armed action had replaced peaceful protests from about the end of 2011 and the beginning of 2012, the initiative passed to outside powers. The regime and the insurgents both needed money, weapons and, at a slightly later date, foreign fighters; these could come only from abroad. A fatal paradox for the Arab Spring in Syria (and the rest of the region) was that the main financial backers of a movement that had begun by demanding freedom and democracy should then become dependent on Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, which were resolutely antidemocratic and sectarian, and the last absolute monarchies on earth.

ASSAD OR WE BURN THE COUNTRY: How One Family's Lust for Power Destroyed Syria
Sam Dagher
Little Brown, 592 pages, ₹1,573

Opinion

MONDAY, JUNE 3, 2019

WALLS CAN FALL

German chancellor Angela Merkel

"Walls can fall. Dictatorships can disappear. We can stop global warming. We can defeat hunger. We can exterminate illnesses. ... Tear down walls of ignorance and narrow-mindedness, for nothing has to stay as it is"

SHOBHANA SUBRAMANIAN

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Big reforms a must to sustain GDP

With credit slowing and demand weak, India needs a fresh burst of investment, but that requires across-the-board reforms

THE SHARP SURGE in stock prices in the run-up to and after the election results last week suggests investors are supremely confident the government will put the economy back on its feet and that corporate earnings will rebound. Else, it is hard to understand the risk appetite for such an expensive market at a time when growth is faltering; GDP grew at just 5.8% y-o-y in the March quarter, and the FY19 growth, at 6.8%, was a five-year low. To be sure, India is a longer-term play for investors, given it will remain one of the fastest growing economies in the world. Going by the evidence on the ground, however, the situation could get worse before it gets better.

As the corporate results for Q4FY19 reveal, consumer demand is very weak, and that has put a lid on both volumes and prices, crimping profit margins. For a sample of 1,693 companies (excluding banks and financials), operating profit margins contracted 160 basis points year-on-year (y-o-y) while net profits fell 10% y-o-y, with revenue growth not making it to double-digits and coming in at 9.9% y-o-y. There doesn't seem to be enough purchasing power to allow companies to command prices that leave them with enough of a margin. Across the spectrum—from telecom to two-wheelers—companies are learning to live with limited pricing power and the inability to pass on costs fully. At Bajaj Auto, too, margins declined, led by price cuts in the home market. At HeroMotoCorp, volumes fell 11% y-o-y as the firm cleared inventories after the dull festive season. Truck sales, too, have been sluggish; at Ashok Leyland, both gross margins and ebitda margins contracted this time around.

A clutch of FMCG firms has reported weak volumes—Hindustan Unilever, for instance, grew volumes at the slowest pace in six quarters. At Shoppers Stop, same-store sales grew just 3.7% y-o-y despite a very weak base of a negative 4.1%; at Asian Paints, margins contracted 230 basis points y-o-y. Indeed, a pick-up in discretionary consumption spends looks unlikely before the festive season. RC Bhargava, chairman Maruti Suzuki, said a few days ago that he wasn't seeing consumer interest picking up yet. That is not surprising since a big source of consumption is rural India, where incomes remain modest following a collapse in prices.

GDP growth is at a 5-year low and, going by the evidence on the ground, the situation is likely to get worse before it gets any better

The first half of FY20, therefore, could be a washout for sectors such as automobiles, consumer durables, retail and real estate, and companies will see profit margins under pressure as the scale of operations remains modest.

The bigger issue for corporate India is that, without fresh investments by the private sector, consumption simply cannot get the sustained big push it needs. Government expenditure and the employment opportunities that this create can just give consumption a bit of a nudge. To convince the private sector to create capacity, the government—states and the Centre—must tighten labour laws and facilitate land acquisition. Only when this happens will investments pick up adequate pace. As is known, order books of the manufacturers of capital goods haven't seen any big increase in the last few years; order inflows at BHEL fell sharply in Q4FY19. To fund the infrastructure build-out, the government must look for additional resources by privatising and selling more PSUs. Even as it does that, it must have lenient policies that pull in FDI; the FDI inflows FY19 were smaller than those in FY18. Even if the government pulls off the privatisation target of ₹80,000 crore by March 2020, it will take a while for the funds to be invested. At a time when there is little capital available for investing, given balance sheets remain leveraged and real interest rates remain elevated, it is important to attract foreign capital. Moreover, real interest rates need to be brought down. The interest bill for the sample of 1,693 companies rose a sharp 18% y-o-y in the three months to March, and it is critical that the government ensures flow of bank credit at affordable rates. With some part of the NBFC sector in trouble, the PSU banks need to be capitalised to be able to lend. Most state-owned banks are financially in poor shape; the total provisions made by 19 state-owned banks increased 58% between December 2018 and March 2019, to ₹86,841 crore. The big jump in provisions for loan losses seen in the March quarter suggests the worst of the NPA cycle may not be over. With some uncertainty on the monsoon, lenders' exposure to businesses in sectors such as MSME, real estate, agriculture, power could be in trouble. If this plays out, banks will be short of capital. The FY19 fiscal accounts show revenues have slipped and expenditure has been curtailed to meet the 3.4% deficit target. With consumption slowing, GST revenues will be under pressure in FY20 too, at least in the first half. Consequently, the FY20 budget revenue estimates will need to be modest, which, in turn, means the expenditure too will be restrained and there won't be too much room for fiscal stimulus. In such an environment, it is hard to see corporate earnings revive meaningfully.

PaperPhD

Junking the publishing requirement for PhD may seem a good idea, but risks lowering research quality

A UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION (UGC) appointed committee has recommended that doctoral candidates shouldn't be required to publish an article in a peer-reviewed journal for earning their PhDs. At present, to earn a PhD, apart from the research work, a candidate must have an article published in a peer-reviewed journal and must have presented at least two papers in seminars or conferences. India is perhaps the only country that has a national publication requirement for PhD; in most jurisdictions around the world, institutions decide what they require from their doctoral candidates. In 2018, the UGC appointed a committee to examine this publication requirement, among many others.

The publication requirement is one of the many reasons why the country has a thriving ecosystem of poor-quality and predatory journals that publish papers quickly for a fee (bypassing a rigorous peer-review), ghost reviewers and commission agents. While the government has ordered a crackdown on predatory journals, the committee is of the view that the publication requirement be scrapped and a mid-way examination be undertaken of candidates. The publication requirement has meant that there are serious delays in awarding of the doctorate degree in many cases. Given the length of time a PhD consumes, putting the students in limbo because prestigious, peer-reviewed journals take a long time to publish pieces is indefensible. The jam in science journals is just so severe that a candidate can be left hanging for well over a year. However, many academics agree that doing away with the publication requirement means that there will be very little check on poor-quality research. A tailored review committee can pass a dubious thesis. In the politicised social sciences space, this means research that otherwise wouldn't have otherwise withstood academic scrutiny will get classified as PhD-worthy research. Scientists have expressed concern that this will allow claims about things such as vimanas (interstellar spaceships) in ancient India to successful head transplants (again, in ancient India) to acquire the shade of credibility a PhD provides.

STUNTED GROWTH

GROWTH IS SLOWING, LED BY BOTH CYCLICAL AND STRUCTURAL FACTORS. AS DOMESTIC HEADWINDS FADE, GROWTH COULD RISE BACK UP TO 7% IN 2H2019

Overcoming India's 'growing pains'

PRANJUL BHANDARI

Chief economist, HSBC Securities and Capital Markets, India

Views are personal

INDIA'S ECONOMIC GROWTH is slowing. We examine these 'growing pains' and answer four frequently asked questions. Here are four questions we are often asked on India's growth:

Is growth slowing?

Yes, growth has hit a soft patch. Potential growth, by our calculations, is currently around 7%. Actual growth is likely to come in at 6% for the quarter ending March 2019. Of the 40-odd indicators of growth we track, about 70% are weaker than before. Data over the last three months suggests consumption demand has been slowing (proxied by car sales and IIP consumer goods production). This is weighing in on overall manufacturing (proxied by IIP manufacturing and PMI manufacturing). Alongside this, construction activity has been slowing too (proxied by the IIP Infrastructure and construction index and a recent sequential dip in cement production). The global environment is not helping either. Exports have been sluggish. On the other hand, it is fair to point out that capacity utilization has ticked higher. And bank credit growth has also risen. As such, not everything is in the doldrums.

Is it a credit growth problem?

While NBFCs' credit is likely to have softened, commercial banks have picked up the slack. We see a notable rise in personal loans (particularly housing), construction, and infrastructure(particularly roads). We also find that industrial credit has ticked higher than before (see accompanied graphic). On the other hand, bank lending to NBFCs and unsecured personal loan growth have softened, albeit from high levels of growth. Overall, the flow of funds to the commercial sector is higher than before. As such, system-wide credit may not be a huge problem, although NBFCs led sector-specific stress could remain. As banking sector liquidity improves over the next few months, and the cash-to deposit ratio moderates after having sprung up last year, bank credit could rise further (this will be reflected in the money multiplier rising back up).

Is the slowdown structural? Or cyclical?

It is easy to confuse a structural slowdown with a cyclical slowdown. Our analysis suggests that both factors are at play in India. Potential growth has been falling; from 8% a decade ago to 7% currently (see accompanying graphic). The global environment has been marked by low growth and increased volatility over this period. Two of the three drivers of growth—capital (K) and labour (L)—have weakened considerably. The third driver, Total Factor Productivity (TFP), had weakened, but has risen back up as some of the recent reforms have been TFP-enhancing. However, the fall in K and L have outpaced the rise in TFP, thereby lowering potential growth.

Cyclical growth has slowed too, as discussed in the earlier section. It was trending well above the 7% potential, at about 7.5%, over the four quarters before the NBFC fallout of September 2018. Unsurprisingly, this period was associated with elevated core inflation (about 6% y-o-y). Clearly, it was not sustainable and, in retrospect, we know the problems surrounding the NBFC sector were only intensifying during that period. We have the opposite problem today. Growth has been slowing since late 2018, trending well below the 7% potential. Core inflation has also slowed during this time. We see three reasons for this. One, we have econometric evidence that growth falls right before elections (held over April and May), but rises back up thereafter, as uncertainty fades. Two, the impact of the banking sector liquidity deficit over large parts of 2018 may have been a drag on growth4. Indeed, the money multiplier has been falling recently. Three, the NBFC fall-out has led to sector specific funding stress.

When will it be revived? What's the policy prescription?

We expect growth to pick up again to the 7% (potential) ballpark in 2H2019. There are three good reasons for this. One, a pick-up in activity, as election-related uncertainties fade. Two, an improvement in banking sector liquidity. We find that the liquidity situation generally improves over the months of June-August (see accompanied graphic). This could push the money multiplier up. Finally, we expect the RBI to remain supportive. We expect a 25bp rate cut in June, taking the repo rate to 5.75%. Thereafter, we expect the RBI to maintain liquidity at a slight-surplus.

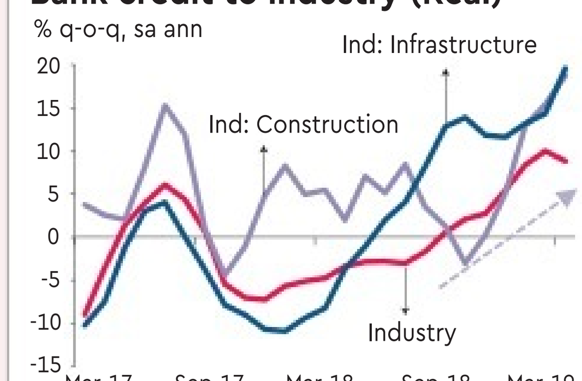
As such, we do not think any large policy stimulus is needed to revive growth to 7%. In fact, a large stimulus could do more harm than good. We find that the forward looking real repo rate is no longer too high. The RBI has been cutting rates and inflation, and is expected to tick higher over the next year. On the other hand, the real corporate bond yield is rather high. This, in our view, reflects the crowding out of private activity by elevated public borrowings.

If the intention is to raise growth higher than 7%, the country needs to embark on a new set of reforms. As discussed in an earlier section, the reforms so far have only focussed on raising one driver of growth, the TFP. Fiscal reforms, and, land and labour reforms are necessary to augment the other two drivers of growth, namely capital and labour. If India wants to raise potential growth to the 8% ballpark, where it used to be a decade ago, we believe it needs to implement a balanced set of reforms.

Edited excerpts from HSBC Global Research's India Economics Report dated May 29

Bank credit to industry (Real)

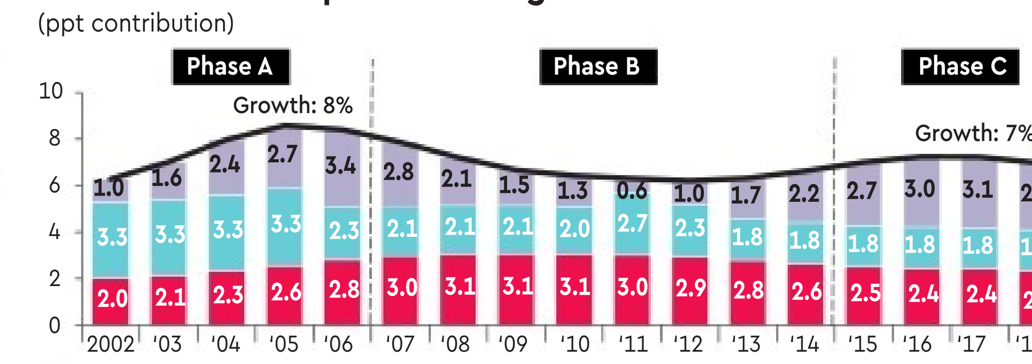
% q-o-q, sa ann



Source: CEIC, HSBC. Note: Real = Nominal – Headline WPI

Contribution of inputs to GDP growth

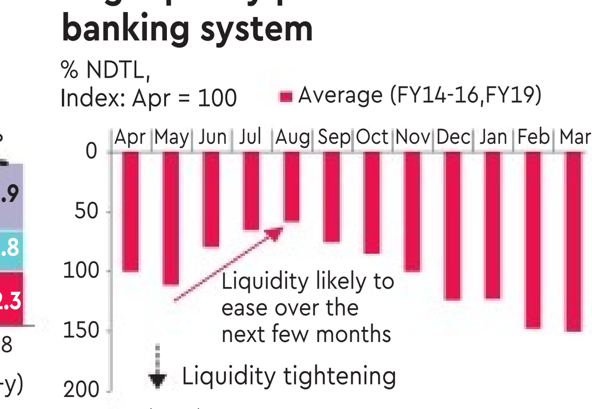
(ppt contribution)



Source: CEIC, World Bank WDI, NSSO, Barro Lee database, Wittgenstein Projections, HSBC estimates

Avg liquidity position in the banking system

% NDTL, Index: Apr = 100



Source: Bloomberg, HSBC

TRUMP'S MEXICO TARIFFS

Are the Fed and China the real targets?

Trump's sudden imposition of tariffs, just after he negotiated a free trade agreement with Mexico, makes him appear unreasonable

KARL W SMITH

Bloomberg

IT'S UNCLEAR HOW US president Donald Trump's announcement of new across-the-board tariffs on Mexico will achieve their stated goal of stopping illegal immigration. But they could help the president in his ongoing disputes with the U.S. Federal Reserve and China.

For months, Trump has engaged in an unprecedented public feud with the Fed. He has complained bitterly that its policies are not providing enough stimulus to the U.S. economy and has repeatedly called for the bank to lower interest rates. He even considered nominees for the Fed's board of governors whose main qualification was loyalty to the president rather than economic expertise.

The response? The Fed has mostly ignored the president. Unfortunately, it faces a dilemma beyond presidential meddling: The global economy is weaker than the Fed had expected, and some members have begun to question whether the interest rate increases at the end of last year were too much. Lowering interest rates, however, creates risks of its own.

First, there is a chance that the weakness in the global economy would not spill over into the U.S., and that an interest rate decrease would end up stimulating the economy more than some members think prudent. Second, cutting interest rates might spook the financial markets into thinking the Fed now is now certain that worse economic conditions are ahead. Third, cutting interest rates before the U.S. economy actually starts to weaken could make it appear as if the Fed were capitulating to the president's demands.

Trump's tariff announcement relieves all of those concerns. It's a virtual certainty that the fallout from the tariffs, which has already rattled markets and prompted a fall in both interest rates on U.S. Treasury bonds and the value of the Mexican peso, will weaken U.S. economic growth. Thus the Fed can cut interest rates without fear of either being too stimulative or sending the wrong signal to the markets.

Paradoxically, Trump's tariffs could also relieve any concern that the Fed might be giving in to his demands. In fact, by lowering rates it would be acting to contain the damage he is causing. If the only way that a president can get the Fed to cut rates is by hiking tariffs, there is little chance that the economy will be overstimulated.

Which brings us to one of the reasons Trump has been so adamant about lowering interest rates: because he thinks current interest rates put him at a disadvantage in negotiations with China. Never mind that this isn't actually true. But the imposition of tariffs on Mexico is likely to help Trump's position vis-a-vis China.

Not necessarily because the tariffs on Mexico show China that the president is willing to consider harsh measures in order to get his way, though this is probably what Trump had in mind. The more subtle reason is that Trump's actions give Chinese officials a face-saving way to come to negotiations.

The current impasse between China and the U.S. was sparked by the Chinese government's decision to withdraw some of the concessions it had previously agreed to. Officials were betting that Trump, looking to boost U.S. growth in the run-up to next year's election, would be eager to sign a deal. When he called their bluff, it created a delicate situation for the Chinese.

Chinese negotiators cannot admit to having made this miscalculation without embarrassing the Communist Party and President Xi Jinping. This has led to Chinese efforts to paint the U.S. as unreasonable. Once that happened, China could not concede to U.S. demands without appearing weak. In fact today it announced sweeping new restrictions on foreign firms.

Now Trump's sudden imposition of tariffs, just after he negotiated a free trade agreement with Mexico, makes him appear unreasonable. It also means that if Xi can just get Trump to sign an agreement and stick to it, then Xi can cast himself as a strong negotiator who tamed an international madman.

Of course, it's important to remember that Trump has positioned himself to get his way only by imposing tariffs that will damage his own country's economy.

In economic game theory, this type of behavior is known as a credible threat to be irrational. It can be a powerful strategy — if only one player adopts it. If two or more players do, the result is inevitably catastrophe. Right now Trump is benefiting from being the most irrational player. It remains to be seen whether he is setting up the global economy for catastrophe.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Left's Decline

There will be only 5 members from the Left parties in the new Parliament. It is a further dip from the last Parliament. Never before the Left number is as low as it is now. In the 1950s and 60s it was thought that India might someday get a red-hued government. Belying all hopes and expectations, what we have now got is a saffron-hued government. For all their faults and failings, the Left parties are pro-poor and are concerned about the welfare of the impoverished masses. Now the meagre, almost negligible representation of the Left in the newly-constituted Parliament will take the focus away from the bread-and-butter issues of politics. Few are now left to question the base motive of profit as the be-all-and-end-all of all economic activities, the unbridled rapacity of the super-rich, and the widening gap between the haves and the have-nots. The Left's decline goes against the conventional wisdom that the Left grows in places where there is 'dehumanising poverty'. Why the Left parties fail to take root in India and why whatever presence it had has been supplanted by the Hindu Right, as in West Bengal will make a rewarding sociological study. BJP MPs are predisposed to devote their time and energy to issues dear to the Hindutva forces. In the Indian context, people regard religion as a centre of great devotion and put it above their material requirements. This devotion for religion is tapped to the hilt by the ruling class to its benefit. It is hoped that it will organise the have-nots to take part in struggles.

— G David Milton, Maruthancode

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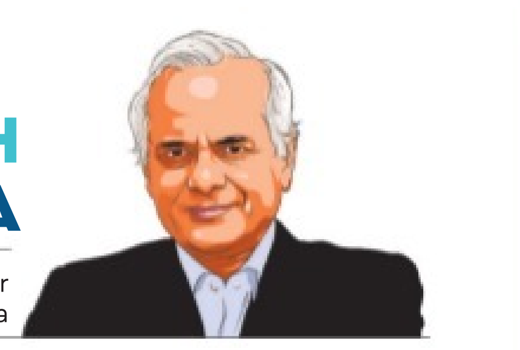
OVER THE BARREL

What can the new govt do to energise India?

Focus on integrating energy and environment policy, and intensifying exploration and enhancing recovery. Decarbonisation, demand management and efficiency should be the watchwords of the new government's energy policy

ILLUSTRATION: ROHNIT PHORE



VIKRAM SINGH MEHTA

The author is chairman & senior fellow, Brookings India

INDIA FACES A variety of challenges related to energy and the environment. Here are several initiatives that the new government could contemplate early on in its term.

Integrate energy and environment policy

The various ministries currently engaged with energy and the environment should be collapsed into one omnibus ministry of energy and environment. This will perforate the current siloed approach to energy policy and enable the new government to view the sector through an integrated and holistic lens. It could more easily track and evaluate the systemic implications of changes in any one or more component variables. Secondly, an Energy and Environment Security Act should be passed at the earliest possible opportunity. The objective of such an Act should be to bring energy and environment into the national narrative; to set out the roadmap for managing and mitigating the emergent challenge of balancing economic development and energy demands with the goal of environmental protection; and to mobilise public support for the policy and regulatory changes required to hasten the transition to a non-fossil-fuel-based energy system. Finally, energy data is scattered across various government departments. This hinders policy and investment. The new government should establish an integrated energy data centre, whose data should be regularly updated and made available to all players on commercial terms.

Decarbonise

Decarbonisation, demand management and efficiency should be the watchwords of the new government's energy policy. In this context, the focus should be on generating electricity from solar and wind, incentivising electric vehicles, curtailing diesel consumption in agriculture, enforcing standards and emission norms, redesigning buildings and factories to make them carbon-neutral, and influencing behavioural change towards energy conservation. A multipronged thrust along these lines will weaken the current unhealthy relationship between economic growth, energy demand, and the environment. Additionally, the 'clean energy fund' that is currently funded through a cess on coal production and is managed by the ministry of finance should be augmented through the issuance of 'green bonds' and a clean energy tax. This to intensify research and development in clean energy technologies (for example, battery storage, carbon capture and sequestration, hydrogen, coal gasification, modular nuclear reactors, etc) and to fund the transmission and distribution infrastructure required for absorbing the flow of clean energy. Its loci of administration should be handed over to those with domain expertise. This to safeguard the funds from sequestration into the consolidated fund, and to ensure that conditions are created for incubating innovation and forging international R&D and technology partnerships.

Energy diplomacy

The levers of energy and, in particular, oil policy are today in the hands of autocratic leaders. This 'personalisation' of energy politics would not have been an issue in the past when oil was traded mostly against long-term supply contracts. But today, against the backdrop of an integrated, liquid and fungible market characterised by short-term flexible supply deals, this is of relevance especially for import-dependent countries like India. The local actions of leaders now have global, supply-related ramifications. The new government should, therefore, look to develop a specialised cadre of 'energy diplomats'. It should contemplate lateral entrants at mid- and senior levels of government with relevant domain and international expertise. It should unshackle the energy public sector units from intrusive bureaucratic oversight to enable their management to respond with agility to unexpected market developments. And it should establish strong personal relations with the leaders of oil-exporting states. At a crunch time, the latter could be the peg on which will hang India's supply security.

Intensify exploration and enhance recovery

India's unattractive geology is the reason why the various bidding rounds for private sector investment in oil and gas exploration have not been a success. The new government should not stop this effort, but it should consider three changes to the current contract terms. One, it should replace the current revenue-sharing model with a production-sharing model for new exploration. Two, it should link investment in the marginal and smaller discovered fields with access to the domestic retail market and remove the condition that only companies that have invested Rs 2,000 crore will be eligible for a marketing licence. Three, it should contemplate bidding out Mumbai High and other major producing oil and gas fields to international players with proven enhanced oil recovery technologies. The current recovery rates of production from these fields are well below global average. Huge value-add would accrue if our rates could be increased to global levels.

Increase competition

The Coal India Limited (CIL) is a major producer of coal, but faces huge legacy issues (labour unions, mafia, politics and organisation), which constrain its ability to fully and efficiently harness the country's indigenous coal reserves. These issues cannot be addressed without first redrawing the contours of India's political economy. The new government cannot, understandably, tackle these issues early on in its tenure. It can, however, resurrect an earlier decision to allow private sector companies into commercial coal mining. The consequent pressure of competition will bear positively on the performance of the CIL.

The 'clean energy fund' that is funded through a cess on coal production and is managed by the ministry of finance should be augmented through the issuance of 'green bonds' and a clean energy tax

Natural gas has also not realised its full potential. Five early initiatives should be contemplated. First, the Gas Authority of India Limited (GAIL) should be unbundled into a monopoly gas pipeline company. It should be divested of its upstream (production/regasification of LNG) and downstream (petrochemicals) operations. These can be merged into one or more of the existing PSUs. Second, the 'common access' principle must be fairly enforced. Every player, private or public, must have equal access to gas pipelines. Third, the price of gas should be determined on the basis of market and competitive principles. This principle should apply across the gas value chain, except pipeline transport tariffs, which should be linked to return on capital. Fourth, a gas trading hub should be expeditiously established. Finally, special energy courts should be established to expedite adjudication of disputes and ensure sanctity of contracts. The latter have been major deterrents to investment in the energy sector.

An agenda for the GST Council

G GOKUL KISHORE

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Views are personal

The GST Council should consider issuance of public rulings, prevalent in other jurisdictions

THE BJP COMING back to power should provide impetus to fine-tuning the GST regime. The GST Council is likely to meet in June. Two key amendments to the CGST Act are required. To address the issue of divergent positions adopted by the Advance Rulings Authority in various states, the GST Council had recommended an amendment to provide for a centralised appellate authority for such rulings instead of state-wise appellate authorities. As these bodies determine crucial issues affecting business, it is necessary to include judicial members. Currently, both first-tier and appellate advance ruling authorities are manned by bureaucrats. Bodies vested with judicial power to determine questions of law should invariably include judicial members. The GST Council should consider provisions for issuance of public rulings as prevalent in other jurisdictions.

Absence of judicial members is also a major lacuna in the National Anti-profiteering Authority (NAA), which has saddled companies with huge liabilities on the ground that the amounts computed by it were profiteered and should be paid back. It proposes monetary penalties and cancellation of registration. Despite being conferred with such judicial powers, NAA comprises of only high-ranking officials sans any member from the bar or bench. It should be headed by former Supreme Court judges or chief justice of High Court (HC). The number of technical members should not exceed that of judicial members. Right from the start, the lack of a methodology to compute the benefits arising out of rate reduction or increased credits has been highlighted. NAA has held that reducing the sale price based on GST rate reduction is a simple mathematical exercise. Section 171 of the CGST Act on anti-profiteering and related rules needs revamp. In the absence of any remedy of appeal against NAA's orders, taxpayers are compelled to invoke writ jurisdiction of HC. Statutory right of appeal should be provided in the CGST Act against NAA's orders.

Cross-charge of expenses along with GST by head office for corporate support services provided to branches located in other states is a concern for business. Advance rulings have been in favour of the department to the extent of inclusion of even salary cost while charging GST. Such inter-company transactions where receiving branch avails input tax credit (ITC) of tax charged by head office are revenue-neutral, and add to compliance burden. Considering the legal provisions where units in different states of same company are treated as distinct persons requiring charging of tax, it is desirable to provide for appropriate exemption to such transactions. This doesn't require an amendment; a notification will do.

The Council had recommended amending the CGST Act to provide for interest liability only to the extent of cash payment of tax. If a taxpayer has sufficient balance of ITC, then interest will not be demanded in cases of inadvertent short payment of tax. The Telangana HC had noted this proposal but dismissed the petition against demand of such interest. The GST Council should recommend retrospective effect to such amendment.

Scores of petitions have been filed in various High Courts with the largest number in Kerala to obtain relief from arbitrary detention of vehicles and goods for minor infractions in e-way bills. The powers to detain conveyances and goods under GST law should be provided with appropriate checks to stop harassment of both taxpayers and transporters.

The simplified returns were to be introduced on a pilot basis from April and rolled out en masse from July. But prototype of such returns has been placed in public domain recently, seeking feedback from users. So, new returns will be implemented after this process is complete. Tweaking such forms based on stakeholders' comments will aid in resolving practical issues faced by taxpayers. The learnings from operation of summary return of GSTR-3B and outward supply return GSTR-1 should also help. The annexures to new returns 'Sahej' and 'Sugam' seek a plethora of information. The GST Council should consider further simplifying annexures and decide on a phased roll-out of new forms after providing sufficient time for taxpayers to assimilate the changes.

Cancellation of revocation of registration, processing of refund claims, execution of letter of undertaking for exports and verification of invoices on the pretext of non-matching of details reported by supplier with that of recipient are areas where one can feel the pain of industry. Overhaul of such processes based on taxpayers' feedback should top the agenda before the GST Council.

Cement attracts the highest rate of 28% GST along with sin goods. This needs correction to 18%. The recent special regime for real estate with reduced rates along with restriction of ITC has not benefited the industry. Developers who opted for the old rate with ITC for ongoing projects are under strain as new customers seek reduced rate of 5%. Further rejig to benefit the sector and homebuyers should be considered.

Shun micromanaging now!

If you're a micromanager, pull back. Instead, start trusting your team

VIDYA HATTANGADI

The author is a management thinker and blogger

IT'S A BIG 'NO-NO' TO get associated with people who micromanage things in their personal and professional lives. While it is obvious that managers and decision-makers need to know what's going on, who is doing what, why something is taking a longer time than usual, details of expenses, important projects and timelines, etc, but when managers start micromanaging, it poses more problems than it solves. It creates a vicious circle of blame game, anxiety and half-truths. Even sincere and well-wishing micromanagers unintentionally induce wrong ideas and nervousness in peers/subordinates.

Micromanagement is a common style of direction whereby a manager closely observes and controls the work of employees. If you are always micromanaging, it means you hired the wrong person or you are not clear of what you want. Even in our personal relationships, when someone is keeping a close watch on us, it is irritating. Indeed, if you have ever worked for a boss who is always hovering over you, you will start finding ways and means to evade the person. He/she can really get on your nerves.

Usually, people micromanage when they feel disconnected; when someone rises through the ranks, he/she often feels concerned that he/she has lost touch with the actual work of the organisation. Such a person tries to connect, through various means, with the employees with whom he/she has dealt with. It is true that people at the top feel isolated. One way of reducing this anxiety is to seek information in as many ways as possible. But it appears like micromanagement because the actions are unplanned and driven by eccentric anxiety, and the result is that managers at different levels and functions end up looking at the same basic data in many different ways. Many managers are unable to let go of their old ways of doing their work. Many get promotions based on their ability to achieve operational goals, manage budgets, control numbers, and solve problems. However, at higher levels, managers need to dial down operational focus and be more strategic. To do so, they must trust those managing operations and manage them as needed, rather than trying to do it for them. For many, this is a difficult change and they unconsciously continue to spend time in the more comfortable operational realm of their subordinates.

Some people, in their personal life, habitually micromanage; they probably don't even know that they are doing it. They are never quite satisfied with anything. They often feel frustrated because they want a task to be performed in a 'different' way. They have an eye for detail. A friend of mine after getting her clothes ironed from the laundry irons them once again. After the gardener waters the plants, she likes to sprinkle some more water; I see her painstakingly doing each job again and again, and she is hardly satisfied with anything. Her grownup children avoid talking about their own problems with her. Her spouse does not leave a single chance of travelling; in fact, he prefers going outstation under some or the other pretext.

It is plain truth; paying attention to detail and making sure the work is getting done is important. It is always better to chalk up the plan and steps of doing a job in advance. Once you discuss it with your team, there is no need to hover and keep watch. The problem with micromanagers is that they apply a lot of passion, scrutiny and in-your-face approach to every task, even if it's not warranted. Bottomline: If you are a micromanager, you need to stop because it is harming you, your team and everyone around you.

The best films on micromanaging in office culture are *Office Space*, *Up in the Air* and *All the President's Men*. *Office Space* is an offbeat comedy, a pinchingly funny commentary on the most ridiculous parts of corporate life, from mandatory birthday cake to TPS reports. It follows Peter Gibbons (Ron Livingston), an underwhelmed IT programmer who barely tolerates his commute, his bosses, and their endless memos and TPS reports. That is, until he's hypnotised into not caring at all. What follows is pure comedy. *Office Space* works on multiple levels. It's highly effective as a satirical look at corporate culture, because it so closely mirrors so much of what those who work there experience. It shows how obsessed bosses micromanage subordinates' work life, making them anxious and ruin their personal lives.

If you are a micromanager, it might initially be difficult to stop, but pull back slowly. Build trust in your people. Remove yourself physically from the group, express in the beginning the results you desire, and do not flit around the tasks. Try to understand your employees' strengths and weaknesses, manage them skilfully. Focus on managing the culture of the organisation. Trust your team. Turn your lens inwards; you will find you are most likely dealing with an issue of trust. Pull back; you will live peacefully and longer.

Modi wave 2.0 was always there

The voting outcome only made this measurable to the world at large

PRADEEP BHANDARI

Founder, Jan Ki Baat

IN APRIL, THE chatter in Delhi was about a hung verdict. I happened to be in Delhi for a day, traveling from Lucknow to Bangalore—a day before the release of the Jan Ki Baat opinion poll, where we were projecting 300-plus for the NDA. My travel through 15 states had given me an impression of a strong pro-Narendra Modi sentiment on the ground. Then, we had been called bhakts, and were abused for being the standalone platform predicting the return to power of a strong Narendra Modi.

Modi Wave 2.0 was not created after the Balakot airstrike, it was a relationship built with every passing day since May 26, 2014. The foundations of the relationship reflected strong personality traits, focused on welfare economics, awakened Hindu consciousness and an unapologetic national pride. If 2014 was a love affair of the people with PM Narendra Modi, 2019 was a marriage—a marriage that transcended hope, into trust. On the ground, I witnessed many instances of people recalling life-changing development experiences across caste and religious lines. Whether it was SC/ST/OBC or Muslim women, one of every three voters I interacted with was a beneficiary of Ujjawla or Awas Yojana or Swachh Bharat.

Modi ne hame bijli di, choola diya, ghar diya; ham unhe vote kyun na de? was a pan-Hindi heartland sentiment. His welfare policies helped him galvanize votes among women across caste lines, who formed the main pillar of the New Narendra Modi voter. The faith of voters helped him convert close contests into easy electoral victories. Eastern Uttar Pradesh was full of countless instances where the female spouses dissented from their male counterparts. It was Modi who brought a tangible difference in their lives, not Mayawati. The chemistry of Narendra Modi with the voters helped him break the arithmetic of the gathbandhan, especially in Eastern UP. For the aspirational young Indian, Modi represented hope for a better and stronger India. *Modi hai na* was a prevalent feeling in aspirational young voters post Pulwama. This trust was built through regular communication he had with the masses in his five-year tenure. This helped him overcome any candidate-level disenchantment.

Greenfield West Bengal and Telangana were reverberating with an awakened Hindu consciousness. Violence in panchayat polls was the inflection point in Bengal politics. The upward march of the BJP in Bengal began since then. *Jai Shri Ram* in Bengal was not a religious slogan; it was a political slogan of freedom from violent suppression, appeasement, and lack of development. On the ground, a Muma (SC community in East Bengal) in Bangon, and a Hindi-speaking Bengali in Asansol (Western part of Bengal) chanted the slogan with the same zeal and energy. The dilution of the Left vote, coupled with movement of the angry Hindu away from the TMC to the BJP made the BJP the main dominating force. It was natural for Bengal 2019 to display result trends akin to that of UP 2014. The remaining numbers left to reach 300 were consolidated by the opposition, which displayed attributes of an anti-national fringe. The fringe intellectualism drained any possible core vote the opposition were expecting to get in the Hindi heartland. This coupled with threat of the unknown in the opposition camp drifted some loyal voters away from the polling booths. Many polling booths in traditional strongholds of the opposition camp polled less. This was a catalyst over welfare economic policies. National narrative also helped BJP sweep Bihar, and the hill states. In Bihar, the BJP-JDU-LJP alliance had a strong takeoff (base) vote of 55% comprising of upper caste, EBC, and Paswans. The RJD-INC alliance had a base take-off vote of only 35%. Both Modi and Nitish Kumar drew the women in Bihar to the polling booth. The women also positively received the ban on alcohol consumption.

The 2019 contest was only in the media. An illusion created by the media was of a close contest in Maharashtra, forgetting that unlike MP, Maharashtra did not suffer from any state anti-incumbency. Modi-factor, with a popular chief minister, made a near to sweep possible. Even the Shiv Sena strike rate was maintained on account of the Modi vote. Apart from Mumbai, Thane region where Shiv Sena had some individual presence, at all other places, it was Modi uplifting Shiv Sena. Truth from the ground was that there was no other candidate competing against Modi apart from Modi himself. It was 2019 Modi challenging 2014 Modi. The 2014 Modi got 90% of the seats from 60% geography, 2019 Modi expanded his reach with more people voting in a larger geographical stretch. The seeds for 2019 were sown in 2014 when the PM touched the floor of Parliament, like he has for 2024 by bowing to the Constitution. Modi wave was always present for me, the voting outcome made it measurable for the outside world.

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TELLING NUMBERS

30% of MPs under age 40 are postgrads, including 2 doctorates


Sujay Radhakrishna Vikhe Patil *(left)*, Sukanta Majumdar are doctorates

OF THE 64 newly elected Lok Sabha MPs who are under age 40, more than three in four — 49, or 76% — are at least graduates, according to a data analysis by PRS Legislative Research. Nineteen of them, or nearly 30%, are postgraduates, including two doctorates.

Both doctorates are BJP MPs. Sujay Radhakrishna Vikhe Patil, 37, son of Congress leader Radhakrishna Vikhe Patil, was elected on a BJP ticket from Ahmednagar in Maharashtra. He holds a Master of Surgery degree in neurosurgery from Dr D Y Patil Medical College in Pune. The other doctorate is Sukanta Majumdar, elected from Balurghat in West Bengal. He got his PhD last year from North Bengal University, from where he had also done his MSc in 2005, according to the PRS analysis.

The BJP has six MPs among the 19 under-40 postgraduates, including the two doctorates. The Congress has four. The other nine are from nine different parties — Sikkim Krantikari Morcha, TDP, Shiv Sena, JD(U), Trinamool Congress, YSRCP, Apna Dal (Soneylal), NPP and AIADMK. Three of the 19 are doctors — Vikhe Patil, Heena Vijaykumar Gavit (BJP) and Shrikant Eknath Shinde (Shiv Sena). Two others — Rammohannaidu Kinjarapu (TDP) and Gaurav Gogoi (Congress) hold a B Tech in addition to their respective PG degrees.

THE DOCTORATES AND THE POSTGRADS

The young MP	Party	Degree
Sujay R Vikhe Patil	BJP	MCh (Neurosurgery)
Sukanta Majumdar	BJP	MSc, PhD
Indra Hang Subba	SKM	MSc (Physics)
Heena Vijaykumar Gavit	BJP	MD (General Medicine), LLB
Rammohannaidu Kinjarapu	TDP	BTech, MBA
Shrikant Eknath Shinde	Shiv Sena	Master Of Surgery (Orthopaedics)
Kavita Singh	JD(U)	MA
Aparupa Poddar (Afrin Ali)	AITC	MA
Yeduguri Sandinti Avinash Reddy	YSRCP	MBA
Geeta Kora	Cong	MBA
Gaurav Gogoi	Cong	BTech, Master in Public Administration
Pritam Gopinathrao Munde	BJP	MD
Dean Kuriakose	Cong	MA (Politics & Human Rights)
Anupriya Singh Patel	Apna Dal (S)	MBA
Chavda Vinod Lakhamshi	BJP	LLB, BEd
Deepak Kumar Baij	Cong	MA
Agatha K Sangma	NPP	Masters Degree In Environmental Management
P Raveendranath Kumar	AIADMK	MBA
Feroze Varun Gandhi	BJP	MSc (Public Policy Management)

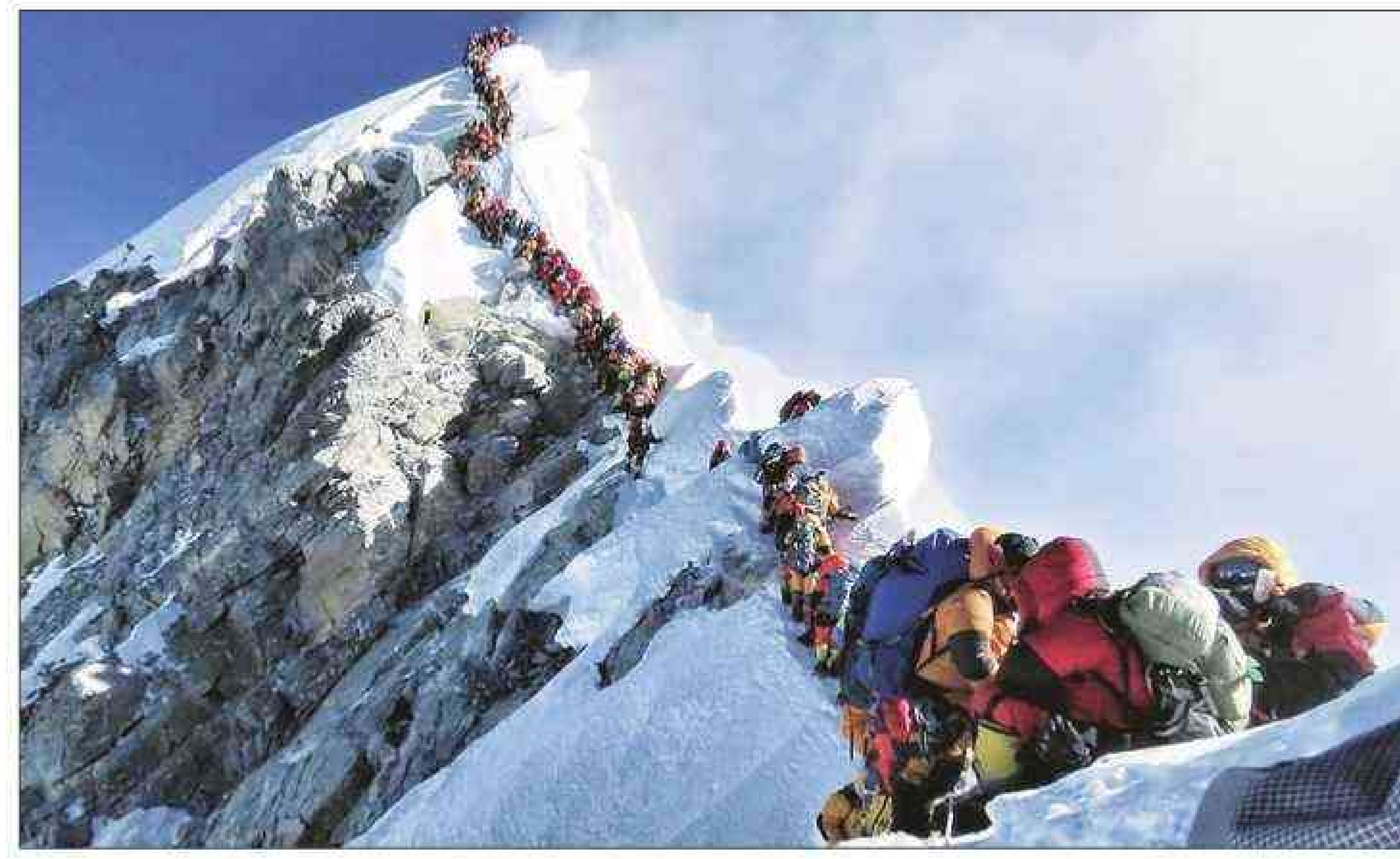
Source: PRS Legislative Research

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

Peak traffic on top of the world

The death of 11 climbers on the world's highest peak has drawn worldwide attention. What does it take to climb Mount Everest? How many get permission, and how? What are the risks involved in the ascent?

YUBARAJ GHIMIRE
& ANJALI MARAR
KATHMANDU, PUNE, JUNE 2



A dramatic photo of the rush of climbers on Mount Everest on May 21. The last sprint to the summit is critically dependent on the weather, and predictions of several hours of clear skies brought some 250 of the 381 climbers who were given permits this year, out at the same time. Nepal has been criticised for not having a policy for permits, and for allowing virtually anyone who pays on to Everest. *AP*

ELEVEN mountaineers, including four Indians, have been killed on Mount Everest this year — the largest number of deaths since at least 1996 when too, 11 climbers perished on the world's highest mountain. More recently, in 2015, 11 sherpas were killed on Everest.

Climbing the Himalayas is an extremely risky expedition (on Sunday, rescue teams were scouring Nanda Devi, the second highest peak in India, for eight climbers from UK, Australia, US and India, missing for more than 24 hours in a dangerous area), but the mountains, and especially Everest, have continued to draw large numbers of adventurers to them. In the 66 years since the first recorded conquest of Everest by Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay, more than 4,800 people have achieved the feat, and some 300 are believed to have been killed on the mountain.

The massive interest in climbing Everest has also turned the 8,848-metre peak, sacred to Buddhists, Hindus, and animists, into one of the world's dirtiest mountains — scarred by piles of garbage, from empty oxygen cylinders and stoves to human waste and even bodies of dead climbers. As part of the Everest Day celebrations — held annually to commemorate the triumph of Hillary and Tenzing on May 29, 1953 — Nepal's Army, assisted by other agencies and activists, cleared the summit route of 10,834 kg of garbage.

Who can climb Everest?

Adults over age 18, who have completed basic and advanced courses in mountaineering from recognised training institutes, are eligible. They are required to have above average physical and mental fitness. Experts say only those with four to five years' experience of Himayalan trekking, including a few peaks at heights over 7,000 metres, should attempt to climb Everest.

Applications are cleared by the Nepal Tourism Board (NTB). The climbing season is for three months, ending on May 31; however, the most favourable period, called "weather window", lasts for only about 10-12 days of May. For most of the year, a powerful westerly jet stream surrounds Everest, and the constant winds of speeds around 120 km/hr — double the maximum wind speed that climbers can usually toleate — make it almost impossible to climb the peak. During the weather window, westerly winds blow at below 2,000 metres, and speeds can drop to 40km/hr.

What happened this year?

The NTB has not given a reason for the 11 deaths this year. "We don't really know," a senior NTB official told *The Indian Express*. "It could be loss of energy, loss of courage, waiting in low-oxygen conditions, or altitude sickness."

Indeed, even the fittest humans struggle at altitudes higher than 8,000 feet — the most common symptoms being fatigue, headaches, vomiting, and dizziness. The Everest base camp on the southern side is at 17,600 feet; Everest itself soars 29,000 feet. Beyond 26,000 feet, surviving every minute is a challenge.

A lot has been written and said about overcrowding and "traffic jams" on the peak after a picture was published in the international media showing a long line of climbers, virtually holding on to each other, making their way along a ridge. While the NTB did issue permits to a record 381 climbers in 44 teams this year, Karma Tenzing, who scaled Everest on May 15, said the descriptions of "traffic jams" on the mountain were "misrepresented and exaggerated". TIME magazine quoted Mohan Krishna Sapkota, Nepal's Secretary of Tourism and Civil Aviation, as saying: " There has been concern about the number of climbers on Mount Everest but it is not because of the traffic jam that there were casualties. In the next season we will work to have double rope in the area below the summit so there is better management of the flow of climbers."

The crowding happened on May 21, when some 250 out of the 381 climbers — accompanied by a roughly equal number of sherpas — attempted to reach the summit all at once. "Sophisticated technology has contributed to a very accurate weather forecast, and climbers for that day had hours of fair weather to get to the top," said Suman Pande, Nepal's leading tourism and hospitality entrepreneur.

Is it difficult to get a permit?

On the contrary, generally, all applications received at the NTB are granted permits. "We issue permits on a first-come-first-served basis," said Meera Acharya, who coordinated on behalf of the NTB with various stakeholders of this year's expedition. Critics have said that the absence of a policy has allowed many non-serious or inadequately trained individuals to attempt the climb, putting lives at risk.

The NTB awards permits to groups of mountaineers against a payment for $11,000 (approximately Rs 7.65 lakh), plus a refundable deposit of $4,000, which is returned after verifying that the climber has adhered to all regulations. Climbers from India said expeditions are planned by a mountaineering agency or company that is recognised by Nepal's government. Individual climbers pay $35,000 (about Rs 24.3 lakh) to the agency, which covers transport, camping and lodging, food, medicine and the company of a sherpa per climber. Each sherpa is paid between Rs 3 lakh and Rs 4 lakh.

What equipment is needed?

The list of mandatory climbing gear includes 20-22 different types of equipment, including headgear, goggles, various rappelling devices like harness, carabiner and descenders, mountain boots, crampons, ropes, ice-sacks, etc. Special clothing includes a down jacket, mountain boots, windproof thermal layers, mitten gloves, thermal socks, oxygen masks and sleeping bags. The clothing can cost Rs 5 lakh, the most expensive items being the down jacket (Rs 60,000 to Rs 80,000) and the mountain boots (Rs 50,000 to Rs 60,000). Climbers also require at least five 4.5-kg oxygen cylinders, plus a spare. Each cylinder lasts 7-8 hours at normal usage rate.

"Only those with required experience of Himalayan mountaineering and good fitness levels must attempt such a feat. The mountaineers must be well aware of their own body's responses at such high altitudes and must have expertise to judge challenging situations, including taking halts at appropriate places and from time-to-time," said Umesh Zirpe, president, Akhil Maharashtra Giryarohan Mahasangha, Mumbai.

While there can be no control over weather conditions, the possibility of human-induced errors needs to be addressed, experts say. "The system we have is not perfect, but we are trying to make it foolproof and more credible," an NTB official said.

HEART-STOPPER

Year	Summiteers		Killed	
	Climbers	Sherpas	Climbers	Sherpas
1990	100	76	—	—
1991	146	78	2	—
1992	201	135	3	2
1993	186	159	4	1
1994	119	90	3	1
1995	164	109	—	1
1996	242	158	11	1
1997	209	163	5	3
1998	205	134	1	—
1999	170	119	4	—
2000	309	223	2	—
2001	278	228	3	1
2002	203	177	2	—
2003	436	344	3	1
2004	336	269	7	1
2005	450	392	6	—
2006	453	375	7	4
2007	538	493	6	1
2008	366	293	1	—
2009	402	386	3	2
2010	416	437	3	—
2011	423	473	4	—
2012	486	483	7	3
2013	471	550	4	4
2014	96	295	—	17
2015	173	435	3	11
2016	425	460	5	—
2017	518	532	5	1
2018	545	653	2	3

Source: The Himalaya by the Numbers: A Statistical Analysis of Mountaineering in the Nepal Himalaya, by Richard Salisbury and Elizabeth Hawley

EXPERTS EXPLAIN

Months after Raje ceded Assembly, how BJP swept all LS seats again

CHRISTOPHE JAFFRELOT
& JUSMEET SINGH SIHRA

DECISION 2019

STATE BY STATE
RAJASTHAN
NEXT
MADHYA PRADESH

RAJASTHAN IS one of the states where the BJP swept all 25 seats in both the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha (LS) polls. Even though many commentators believed there was no "Modi wave" in the 2019 elections, the victory in Rajasthan for the BJP is even bigger in 2019 than in 2014. The average vote share of the winning BJP candidates has increased from 54.08 per cent in 2014 to 60.35 per cent in 2019. The average winning margin of the BJP candidates has increased by almost a lakh between the two elections (from 2.5 lakh votes in 2014 to 3.4 lakh votes in 2019).

Rajasthan, however, presents a curious case. In the December 2018 Vidhan Sabha (VS) elections, the Congress made a strong comeback, and formed the government in the state with the help of the BSP's two seats. So, what happened in the last five months that the Congress could not win a single seat in Rajasthan in Lok Sabha?

One, it has to do with the way Rajasthan's voters voted in the 2018 VS elections. Voters wanted to punish Vasundhara Raje for several reasons — agrarian distress, Rajput anger, her alleged governance scams, her uneasy relationship with the RSS, an increasingly arrogant image of her as a *maharani* and a general anti-incumbency in the state where power alters alternatively between the Congress and the BJP every VS election. The slogan *Modi tujhse bair nahin, rani teri khair nahin* (We have no grudges against you, Modi, but Vasundhara will not be spared) encapsulates it all. The Congress used all this to its advantage. Moreover, it brought the Muslims and Dalits to its fold after a spate of lynchings of individuals of both communities. Vasundhara Raje was ousted, but Modi was spared.

In the 2019 LS elections, the loan waivers that Congress announced after winning in Rajasthan backfired. Only loans from cooperative and land development banks were waived and not those from commercial and rural banks. This gave an impression of a half-hearted implementation of the scheme. Farmers, anyway, were less excited about it since loan waivers would not address the deeper structural issues such as minimum support price or the water crisis. With the Model Code of Conduct kicking in on March 10, the Congress ran out of time to do anything more substantial.

There were other regional issues that weakened the Congress considerably in the state. First, sources in the Rajasthan Congress said that workers were disgruntled with the Congress faction leaders. After the 2018 victory, only those closer to Ashok Gehlot, Sachin Pilot and C P Joshi were rewarded. Further, workers were not consulted about the choice of 2019 candidates. While experienced party workers were sidelined, new faces were put in the fray in at least 10 seats. Then, the winning/losing 2018 MLAs were given charge of leading campaigns in their VS constituencies. But those who were not favoured previously by the Congress for the MLA ticket barely extended their support, and worked against the 2018 MLA candidates. The infighting thus continued at many levels.

Second, the Congress lost support within two key communities in the state — the Gujjars and the Jats. Gujjars were still unhappy about Sachin Pilot not being made Chief Minister. The Congress candidate could not come first even from Pilot's VS seat Tonk in the 2019 LS elections due to Gujjars ditching the Congress, according to sources in the Congress. Besides, the BJP received crucial Gujjar support with Kirori Singh Bainsla, the prominent leader of the Gujjar quota agitation, joining the BJP along with his son Vijay Bainsla before the LS elections.

Jat support to the Congress was severely diminished due to the way it tackled the Rashtriya Loktantrik Party (RLP) leader Hanuman Beniwal. Beniwal commands strong support amongst the Jat voters and the party won three seats in the 2018 VS elections and came second in at least two seats. His discussions with the Congress for the ticket from the Nagaur LS seat, his home turf, went in vain and Congress instead fielded Dr Jyoti Mirdha, a dynast from a very prominent Jat family (her grandfather was a six-time MP and four-time MLA). BJP quickly made the best of it and allied with Beniwal despite his acrimonious relationship with Vasundhara Raje. The Beniwal factor got huge Jat support to the BJP in the state and contributed significantly to the defeat of Ashok Gehlot's son Vaibhav Gehlot from Jodhpur. What also contributed to Vaibhav Gehlot's defeat was further resistance from the Jat community at the behest of Congress MLA Divya Maderna. Ashok Gehlot had sacked her father Mahipal Maderna in 2011 from the Cabinet due to his alleged involvement in the Bhanwari Devi murder case. It was Divya's chance to settle scores.

The Jat factor also influenced the result of the high-profile contest of Congress candidate Manvendra Singh, son of the former BJP veteran Jaswant Singh. Kailash Chaudhary, a Jat, from the BJP was pitted against Manvendra. Although Manvendra was able to amass Rajput as well as Muslim votes, Jat and upper caste votes were consolidated for Chaudhary. Moreover, Ummeda Ram, an SC who was Beniwal's RLP candidate in Baytu (an SC seat in Barmer) in the 2018 VS elections, helped

A BJP worker in Bikaner celebrates during counting on May 23. *PTI*

BJP IMPROVES FROM 2014 TO 2019

	2014	2019
Average vote share	54.08%	60.35%
Av. victory margin	2.5 lakh	3.4 lakh

THE EDITORIAL PAGE

WORDLY WISE

WHAT WE HAVE WITNESSED IN OUR OWN TIME IS THE DEATH OF UNIVERSITIES AS CENTRES OF CRITIQUE. — TERRY EAGLETON

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

THE WATER TEST

Providing piped water to all households is a long overdue project. It will have to join several dots

DURING AN election rally in Tamil Nadu last month, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had promised that if voted back to office, he would "ensure the creation of a Jal Shakti ministry that will deal with supplying clean drinking water to people and providing top-class irrigation facilities to farmers". He moved to meet this promise during the portfolio allocation of ministers, last week. A new Jal Shakti Ministry has been formed by reorganising the Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation and merging it with the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation. The idea behind the creation of the new ministry — "to approach the issue of water management holistically and ensure better coordination of efforts" — is salutary. And, the new Jal Shakti Minister, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, has begun work by announcing that the government intends to provide piped drinking water to every household. This is a long-overdue initiative given that, according to a 2018 NITI Aayog report, "600 million Indians face high to extreme water stress and about two lakh people die every year due to inadequate access to safe water".

The new ministry will, however, have its task cut out. According to a 2017 assessment by the Ministry of Water Resources, India's estimated per capita availability of water in 2025 will be 1,340 cubic metres. This is likely to fall to 1,140 cubic metres in 2050. The NITI Aayog report underlines one of the reasons for this state of affairs. Seventy per cent of the country's water aquifers are polluted. Much of this owes to the Central Groundwater Board's (CGWB) aggressive projects to tap groundwater. These endeavours, that began in the 1970s, did not pay adequate attention to the constraints placed by the country's geology: Hard rocks constitute more than 60 per cent of the surface area of underground water sources. This means that they have poor permeability, which constrains their re-charge by rainfall. The Jal Shakti ministry's endeavour to provide clean water will require a paradigm shift from the CGWB's groundwater-centred approach.

Currently, less than 20 per cent of rural households have access to piped water; hand pumps are their main source of potable water. Piped water schemes in rural areas have been dogged by problems of infrastructure maintenance: Power fluctuations often damage motors and pipes are prone to leaks. Last year, a CAG report pointed out that "poor execution" has marred the National Rural Drinking Water Programme's attempt to provide piped drinking water to 35 per cent of the country's rural households. The auditor pointed out that, in most states, the panchayats were not provided with the informational know-how to operate the expensive piped water systems. The Jal Shakti ministry's challenge will be to ensure that such mistakes are not repeated. It will have to join several dots.

REVERSING THE SLIDE

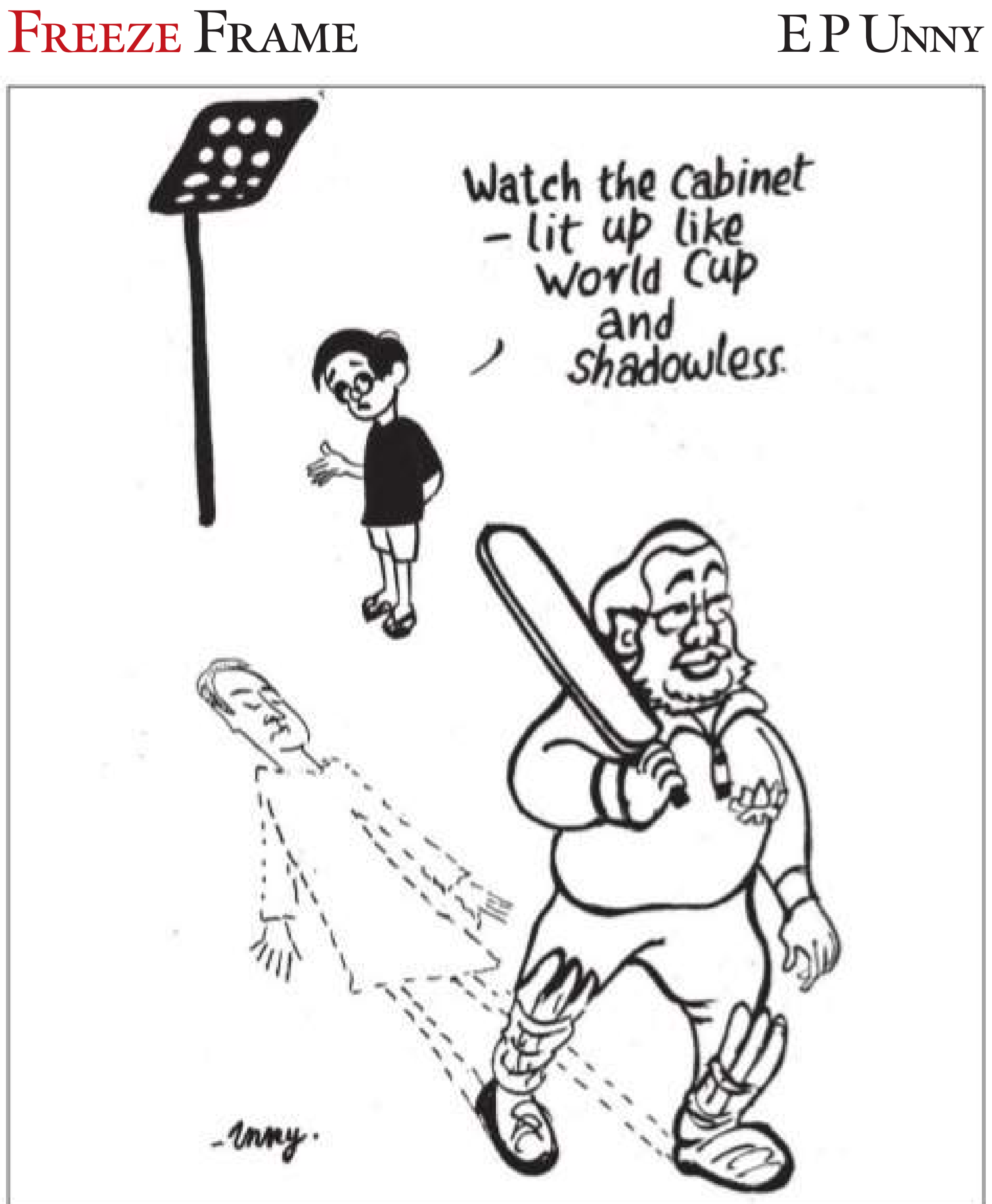
On economy, near-term focus should be on capital expenditure, and steps to boost demand in sectors with a multiplier effect

THAT THE Narendra Modi government, which returned to office with a resounding mandate, should hit the ground running was much needed, given the state of the economy. But that among its first steps should be to sign off on the proposal to expand the PM Kisan Yojana to cover 2 crore more farmers and a pension scheme to cover 3 crore retail traders and shopkeepers, is more debatable. The extra expenditure may be justified, though, by a government struggling to meet budgeted revenue targets — as a way of addressing political constituencies which supported the BJP, and also as a directional shift towards income support and building of a social safety net in a limited manner. It is also consistent with the party's commitment to follow up on these in its poll manifesto. The question is whether these government interventions can be effective or will at best provide a temporary boost at a time when the fourth quarter GDP numbers are at a five-year low and when growth for the last fiscal at under 7 per cent is below most expectations. Some economists argue that the economy may well now be at the bottom of the cycle and is on course for a gradual reversal this fiscal.

The challenge, especially when the economy is firing on one engine, and when expectations are riding high, is to ease the fiscal tap and to attempt the so-called big bang reforms. The fact is, however, that such reforms can wait for now. Rather, the near-term focus should be on capital expenditure and steps to boost demand in sectors such as housing, steel and cement, which have a multiplier effect. It should help that interest rates appear to be headed southwards.

Logically, average GST revenues should be higher, with an expansion of the base, more simplification and stricter compliance. Banks also should be on course to lend more provided the government doesn't delay stumping up capital and carrying out governance changes this time around. In the first budget after the Modi government took over in 2014-15, Arun Jaitley, who was then finance minister, said that the country was in no mood to suffer unemployment. Five years on, that still resonates.

FREEZE FRAME — E P UNNY



As demand slows down

Government should target a structural deficit as an alternative to the fiscal deficit

SOUMYA KANTI GHOSH

FRIDAY, MAY 31, was an interesting day in Indian politics and economics. On the economics front, Q4GDP numbers plunged to a 20-quarter low while annual growth came to a five-year low of 6.8 per cent. However, despite much scepticism, India could stick to its fiscal deficit of 3.4 per cent for FY19. Bank credit growth declined by Rs 1.5 lakh crore in April, but this has always been a seasonal phenomenon. On the political front, the country got its first woman finance minister (PM Indira Gandhi did hold the portfolio, but that was only as an additional charge) in 72 years.

Domestic growth was even weaker than what was expected. Manufacturing GVA, which grew by 12.1 per cent in Q1, decelerated sharply, growing by 3.1 per cent in Q4. This was expected, based on the Q4 FY19 results of 932 listed corporates — around 550 companies had reported either negative or single digit revenue growth. For FY19, manufacturing GVA grew by 6.9 per cent compared to 5.9 per cent in FY18. Core GVA, an indicator of private demand, slowed down to 6.1 per cent (the lowest since Q2FY18).

Agriculture and allied activities grew at 2.9 per cent in FY19, compared to last year's growth of 5.9 per cent. In Q4, the sector registered a negative growth of 0.1 per cent. However, the good thing was that the agricultural price deflator, an indicator of rural purchasing power, has finally recovered in Q4 after two successive quarters of degrowth. In fact, our estimates suggest that since the MSP increase in July 18, wholesale prices of 18 major crops (includes cereals, pulses and oil seeds) have recovered from lows and are now on average 10 per cent higher than the MSP. However, such rise in mandi prices has no material impact on retail food inflation, which seems to have declined even as wholesale inflation has moved up. The divergence is a matter of debate, but low inflation now seems entrenched in India's psyche.

In this context, the government decision to now extend the PM-KISAN scheme to all farmers is a positive step. We also did some rough estimates to find out the fiscal cost of such an ambitious programme over the next five years. Our calculations suggest that even if we progressively increase the income support from, say, Rs 6,000 to Rs 8,000 in the terminal year (inflation indexed) and reduce the fiscal deficit to 3 per cent in 2024 (with a nominal GDP growth of around 11.5 per cent), the additional cost for 14-crore farmers over the baseline estimates could be Rs 12,000 crore per annum, same as the revised estimates if only Rs 6,000 was provided to all 14 crore during the next five years. We need a definitive consumption push in rural areas.

> The decline in private final consumption expenditure is a matter of concern, though an increase in government final consumption expenditure has been able to offset it. After reaching a high growth of 9.8 per cent in Q2 FY19, PFCE growth declined to 7.4 per cent in Q4. The growth in gross fixed capital formation dipped to 3.6 per cent in Q4FY19, which is the lowest in last eight quarters. It seems that election uncertainties have taken a toll on investment and government spending.

The figures on the expenditure side of GDP do not foretell a promising picture. The decline in private final consumption expenditure is a matter of concern, though an increase in government final consumption expenditure has been able to offset it. After reaching a high growth of 9.8 per cent in Q2 FY19, PFCE growth declined to 7.4 per cent in Q4. The growth in gross fixed capital formation dipped to 3.6 per cent in Q4FY19, which is the lowest in the last eight quarters. It seems that election uncertainties have taken a toll on investment and government spending.

On the fiscal front, the latest data shows that the government has been able to meet the revised fiscal deficit estimate of 3.4 per cent of the GDP. However, there has been a Rs 1.45 lakh crore reduction in expenditure with a Rs 69,140 crore cut in subsidies (majorly food subsidy), covering for Rs 1.57 lakh crore reduction in total receipts. Now that FY19 estimates are revised, the FY20 BE may be on the higher side.

The problem is that global uncertainties have compounded in recent times. Tax cuts by the US did not have much impact on its growth last year and going forward there is not much room for further support. World trade growth is likely to remain weak into the second quarter of 2019. The latest World Trade Outlook Indicator (WTOI) remains well below the baseline value of 100 for the index, signaling continued falling trade growth in the first half of 2019. The outlook for trade could worsen further if heightened trade tensions are not resolved or if macroeconomic policy fails to adjust to changing circumstances. For example, the ongoing trade skirmish between USA and China is showing no signs of abating with the US increasing tariffs on Chinese products. China, in retaliation, has said that it will raise tariffs on $60 billion worth of US imports starting June 1. There are even concerns about the tariff war spilling over to financial markets in the form of China cutting its exposure to the US treasury market. Worsening economic indicators in the US, like student loan delinquency and yield curve inversion (the worst since 2007), as well as US exports getting squeezed by trade wars, are also going to pose challenges for the US economy.

Given the growth slowdown that the country is facing, the question arises whether the government should continue to focus on the path of fiscal consolidation or keep deficit numbers constant for the next two years at 3.4 per cent (or keep it marginally higher), before reducing it as growth revives. We believe that the government should target a structural deficit as an alternative to targeting the fiscal deficit, like most advanced and several emerging economies. This serves as an automatic counter-cyclical stabiliser unlike the current target that has been set from the outset as a fixed percentage of GDP and is a statistical misnomer. But, for sure, fiscal policy should be transparent and credible, and we must strive for what we can achieve through resource mobilisation, and not through expenditure compression.

We also expect monetary policy support to complement fiscal policy in the interregnum. The RBI could also advise banks for effective rate transmission (the SBI has proactively moved to external benchmarking of the repo rate to lending rates, there is no harm in replicating this).

We end on a positive note. Recently, S&P Global Ratings upgraded Indonesia's sovereign rating to BBB from BBB- just after the re-election of President Joko Widodo. Strong economic growth prospects, low debt, an infrastructure drive of more than $400 billion and prudent fiscal policy enabled the upgrade. India has also seen the re-election of the Modi government with an even larger mandate. Uncanny similarity for S&P?

The writer is group chief economic advisor, SBI. Views are personal

A MONTH TO REFLECT

Ramzan has always been the time to look inwards, build bridges

IN GOOD FAITH

SABA RAHMAN

AS THINGS STAND across the world today, religion cannot be a private experience for Muslims — even if they want it to be. Burdened, demoralised and anguished with terror attacks in the name of Islam, Muslims find themselves — and their faith — implicated in global events almost every day. More recently, the targeting of mosques in New Zealand or churches in Sri Lanka have made Muslims either helpless victims or motivated perpetrators of violent attacks. Closer home, rising Islamophobhia coupled with an almost non-existent political representation in the government, have driven India's Muslims to the edge. It is amidst such a feeling of fear and siege among Muslims that Ramzan, Islam's holiest month, began, and is set to draw to a close in a couple of days.

Ramzan is when the Muslims believe the Quran was revealed to Mohammad, the last prophet of Islam, in 610 CE in Mecca. People know the drill for the believer in these 30 days. Those who observe Ramzan go without food and water, and also abstain from sex between dawn and dusk. There is, however, much more to Ramzan than just hunger and thirst. The month is about self-restraint, discipline, charity and intense reflection. It is about the struggle to attain spiritual goals. Prophet Mohammad said that Allah has no need for his followers to abstain from food and water if they do not abstain from falsehood and other sinful practices.

> Prophet Mohammad said that Allah has no need for his followers to fast from food and water if they do not fast from falsehood and other sinful practices. In fact, Islam has a powerful Arabic word for a larger struggle to resist temptations and fight anger, malice, jealousy, vengeance and similar negative traits.

In fact, Islam has a powerful Arabic word for a larger struggle to resist temptations and fight anger, malice, jealousy, vengeance and similar negative traits. That word is jihad. Unfortunately, the most spiritual concept of Islam has become its most sullied at the hands of extremists who kill innocent people in the name of jihad. It wasn't jihad that happened on 26/11 in Mumbai or during the attacks on the churches in Sri Lanka. The Quran does not endorse such mindless acts of violence. It is also not jihad when Muslims kill other Muslims, as they are doing in Syria, Somalia and Afghanistan. The Prophet did engage in military expeditions, but those battles were more to survive than conquer. In fact, upon returning from one such expedition, the Prophet is said to have described war as "a lesser jihad" in comparison to "the greater jihad" that calls on one to look inwards for spiritual purification. Ramzan epitomises this idea.

In India, Ramzan started in the middle of the country's general elections, whose verdict left Muslims feeling further alienated. The election campaign was communal and vitriolic. However, did Muslims abstain from posting or responding to messages of hate on social media? Did they quarrel with their colleagues or neighbours because of their contrarian political stands? Did they share their iftar with them? It is not easy for many Muslims to live up to the behavioural expectations that fasting demands when anti-Muslim hatred is on the rise. But this is what Ramzan is all about: To train the self to rise above base instincts. The Prophet said: "The believer does not insult, he does not curse, he is not profane, and he is not crude."

Significantly, the Quran is replete with messages that obligate Muslims to remain committed to social justice. Zakat (charity) is one of the five pillars of Islam and it assumes greater significance during Ramzan. Zakat is mandatory on all Muslims who have a certain amount of wealth. The idea is to bridge the gap between rich and poor, and restore the dignity of the socially ignored people. In his famous last sermon, the Prophet had declared: "A white has no superiority over black, nor does a black over a white, except by piety and good action." The Prophet's closest aides were two former slaves who went on to command much respect in the first Muslim society.

The Quran puts it beautifully: "We created you from a male and a female, and we made you into nations and tribes for you to get to know each other." This verse, and Quran has many such, is central to Islam's message of peace, friendship and love among people who are different. These 1,400-year-old wise insights can help us overcome fear, hatred and discord, which have become the hallmark of modern societies. Ramzan is the perfect time to renew such pledges and build those bridges.

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JUNE 3, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO


Gujarat Govt ready for talks with policemen

AHMEDABAD AGITATION

AHMEDABAD WAS COMPARATIVELY quiet on the sixth day of the policemen's agitation today amid reports that the state government is ready to negotiate with them. The home minister, Popatlal Vyas, will meet a deputation of policemen to resolve the dispute, which had virtually led to the collapse of the city police administration and forced the government to seek help from the army and para-military forces. This virtual climbdown by the government has brightened prospects for a negotiated settlement before the chief ministers conference in Delhi on Wednesday. The government had earlier taken the stand that nothing would be discussed before the proposed Delhi meeting.

CURBING PRICE RISE

THE CABINET IS divided over measures to curb price rise. Ministers agreed to cut down expenditure, money supply and burdens on the exchequer, but differ on how to do this. The one point on which they are all agreed is credit squeeze. The Reserve Bank governor has been instructed to take necessary steps in that direction. During discussions in the last three days, the cabinet has considered many suggestions to effect the economy. They vary from banning strikes and giving the public sector undertakings the right to dismiss erring or sluggish employees to freezing wages. The basic document which the cabinet has considered emanated from the Planning Commission, which describes a four-pronged approach.

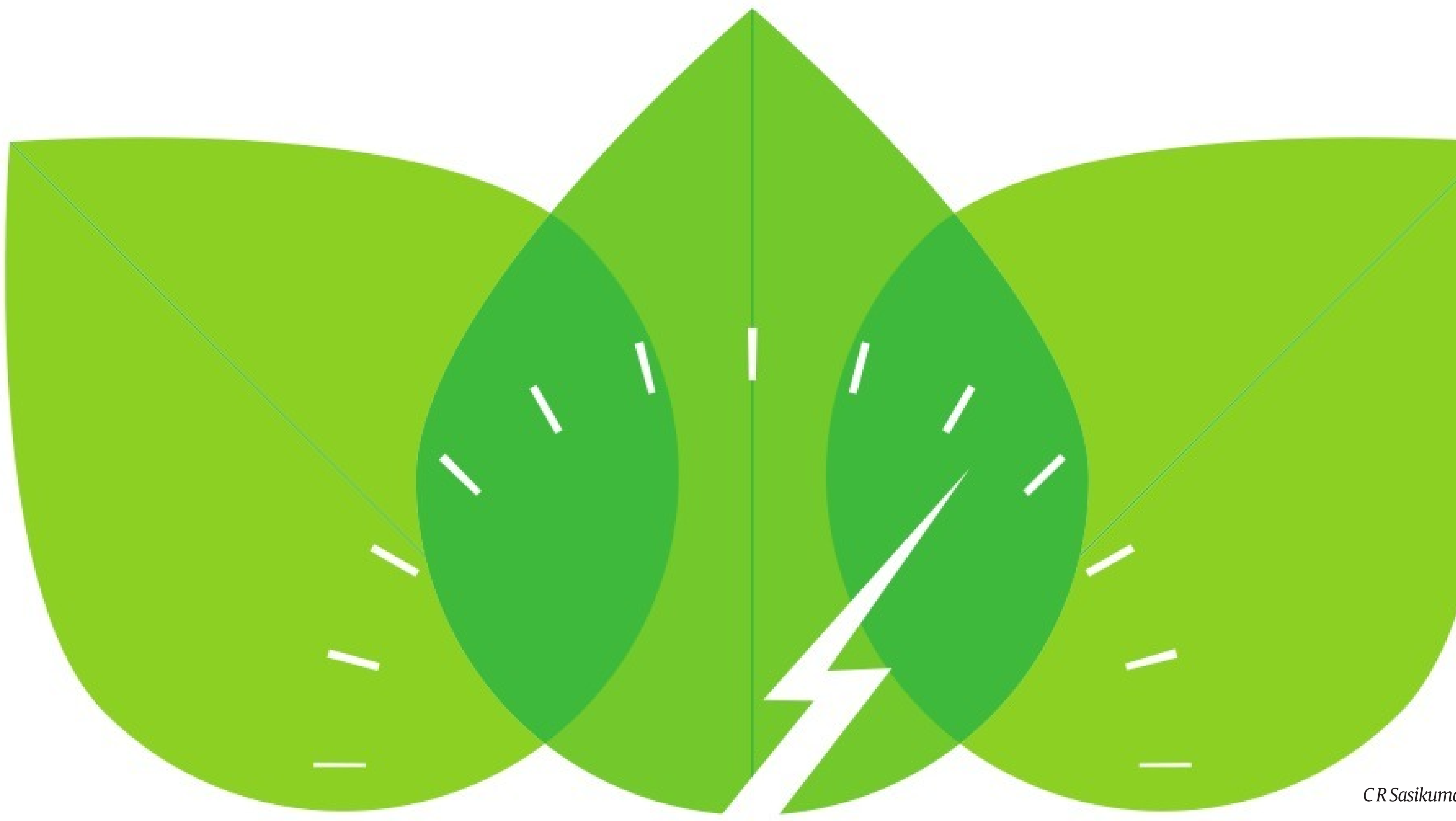
AIRLINES ON ALERT

THE GOVERNMENT HAS placed all aircraft of the German Lufthansa and US Pan American Airlines under commando guard, along with those of the Japan Air Lines at the four international airports. Stating this, official sources told UNI that this has been done following the highest rating security alert given by Interpol about the Japanese "Red Army" terrorists. Similar measures have been taken by various governments worldwide.

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"The rise of anti-Jews actions in Germany is profoundly worrying, but Angela Merkel's fightback sets an example of moral seriousness and rigour."

— THE GUARDIAN



C R Sasikumar

How to boost the energy drive

A blueprint of initiatives the new government can consider

OVER THE BARREL
BY VIKRAM S MEHTA

INDIA FACES A VARIETY OF CHALLENGES RELATED TO ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT. HERE ARE SOME INITIATIVES THAT THE NEXT GOVERNMENT COULD CONTEMPLATE EARLY ON ITS TERM.

ONE, INTEGRATE ENERGY AND environment policy. The various ministries currently engaged with energy and the environment should be collapsed into one omnibus Ministry of Energy and Environment. This will perforate the current siloed approach to energy policy and enable the new government to view the sector through an integrated and holistic lens. It could more easily track and evaluate the systemic implications of changes in any one or more component variable. Secondly, an "Energy and Environment Security Act" should be passed at the earliest possible opportunity. The objective of such an act should be to bring energy and environment into the national narrative; to set out the road map for managing and mitigating the emergent challenge of balancing economic development and energy demands with the goal of environmental protection; and, to mobilise public support for the policy and regulatory changes required to hasten the transition to a non-fossil fuel based energy system. Finally, energy data is scattered across various government departments. This hinders policy and investment. The new government should establish an integrated energy data centre, whose data should be regularly updated and made available to all players on commercial terms.

Two, decarbonisation, demand management and efficiency should be the watchwords of the new government's energy policy. In this context, the focus should be on generating electricity from solar and wind, incentivising electric vehicles, curtailing diesel consumption in agriculture, enforcing standards and emission norms, redesigning buildings and factories to make them carbon neutral and influencing behavioural change towards energy conservation. A multi-pronged thrust along these lines will weaken the current unhealthy relationship between economic growth, energy demand and the environment. Additionally, the "clean energy fund" which is currently funded through a cess on coal production and is managed by the ministry of finance should be augmented through the issuance of "green bonds" and a clean energy tax. This is to intensify research and development on clean energy technologies (battery storage, carbon capture and sequestration, hydrogen, coal gasification, modular nuclear reactors, etc.) and to fund the transmission and distribution infrastructure required for absorbing the flow of clean energy. Its loci of administration should be handed over to those with domain expertise. This to safeguard the funds from sequestration into the consolidated fund and to ensure that the conditions are created for incubating innovation, and forging international R&D and technology partnerships.

Three, energy diplomacy. The levers of energy and, in particular, oil policy, are today in the hands of autocratic leaders. This "personalisation" of energy politics would not have been an issue in the past when oil was traded mostly against long-term supply contracts. But today, against the backdrop of an integrated, liquid and fungible market characterised by short-term flexible supply deals, this is of relevance especially for import-dependent countries like India. The local actions of leaders now have global, supply-related ramifications. The new government should, therefore, look to develop a specialised cadre of "energy diplomats." It should contemplate lateral entrants at mid- and senior levels of government with relevant domain and international expertise. It should unshackle the energy public sector units from intrusive bureaucratic oversight to enable their management to respond with agility to unexpected market developments. And it should establish strong personal relations with the leaders of oil exporting states. At a crunch time, the latter could be the peg on which will hang India's supply security.

> The local actions of leaders now have global, supply-related ramifications. The new government should, therefore, look to develop a specialised cadre of "energy diplomats." It should contemplate lateral entrants at mid- and senior levels of government with relevant domain and international expertise.

Four, intensify exploration and enhance recovery. India's unattractive geology is the reason why the various bidding rounds for private sector investment in oil and gas exploration have not been a success. The new government should not stop this effort but it should consider three changes to the current contract terms. One, it should replace the current revenue-sharing model with a production-sharing model for new exploration. Two, it should link investment in the marginal and smaller discovered fields with access to the domestic retail market and remove the condition that only companies that have invested Rs 2,000 crore will be eligible for a marketing licence. Three, it should contemplate bidding out Mumbai High and other major producing oil and gas fields to international players with proven enhanced oil recovery technologies. The current recovery rates of production from these fields are well below the global average.

Five, increase competition. Coal India Limited (CIL) is a major producer of coal but faces huge legacy issues (labour unions, mafia, politics and organisation) which constrain its ability to fully and efficiently harness the country's indigenous coal reserves. These issues cannot be addressed without first redrawing the contours of India's political economy. The new government cannot, understandably, tackle these issues early on in its tenure. It can, however, resurrect an earlier decision to allow private sector companies into commercial coal mining. The consequent pressure of competition will bear positively on the performance of CIL.

Six, natural gas. This has also not realised its full potential. Five early initiatives should be contemplated. First, Gas Authority of India Limited (GAIL) should be unbundled into a monopoly gas pipeline company. It should be divested of its upstream (production/ re-gassification of LNG) and downstream (petrochemicals) operations. These can be merged into one or more of the existing PSUs. Second, the "common access" principle must be fairly enforced. Every player, private or public, must have equal access to gas pipelines. Third, the price of gas should be determined on the basis of market and competitive principles. This principle should apply across the gas value chain, except pipeline transport tariffs which should be linked to return on capital. Fourth, a gas trading hub should be expeditiously established. Finally, special energy courts should be established to expedite adjudication of disputes and ensure sanctity of contracts. The latter have been major deterrents to investment in the energy sector.

The writer is chairman & senior fellow, Brookings India

A refugee market, an elitist outpost

The curious journey of Khan market in the national capital

NARAYANI GUPTA

A FEW YEARS ago, a student visiting Delhi from Oxford was looking for picture post-cards. These are rare items in India, but we tried our luck at a stationer's in Khan Market. The elderly gentleman at the counter listened to Nadir's question. Instead of answering, he looked at him intently and asked, "Where are you from?" When his hunch that Nadir was from Pakistan's North-West Frontier province (after 2010, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) turned out to be true, he was overjoyed. Coffee/tea and *thanda/garam* were eagerly offered, and they plunged into a conversation, where nostalgia was inseparable from a sense of community.

In the shops of Khan Market, the features and manners of many owners — Hindu relocatees of 1947 from the Frontier Province — are unmistakable. And in the name of the market, the benign faces of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his brother Khan Saheb — independence activists, who opposed the Partition — swim before us.

After 1947, Lutyens' small capital enclave of New Delhi was surrounded by an outer ring of resettlement neighbourhoods, in one of the most impressive projects of rehabilitation India has known. Livelihoods were also addressed, and "refugee markets" was one of the options — in Queensway/Janpath, in front of the Red Fort, and in the empty space at the south end of New Delhi, east of Lady Willingdon Park (later Lodhi Garden). If the place-names in New Delhi celebrated rulers from the past, the new "colonies" and markets celebrated freedom-fighters — hence Malviya, Lajpat, Patel and Rajendra nagars; Ajmal Khan Road, Lajpat Rai Market, Khan Market. These names were inspirational, and the Hindu refugees who got shops and homes in Khan Market saw the name not as that of a Muslim, but of a beloved leader.

Sharada Nayak, a longtime resident of Prithviraj Road and then of Sujan Singh Park recalls: "The construction of Khan Market started soon after Partition and was completed in 1951. We welcomed the convenience of a neighbourhood market. The first shop owners were Hindu migrants from West Pakistan, and many of them lived in small two-roomed flats above each shop. The shopkeepers were all known to us by name, and we were usually welcomed with a cup of tea and a leisurely visit. Girdhari Lal, who had his Empire Stores in Connaught Place, had a branch at the western corner of Khan Market which was run by his son Omi; next to them was Sovereign Stores. These two establishments were our favourite haunts for ice creams, and various foods. It was best avoided in the evenings, when the government liquor store next door made it difficult to negotiate our way through the crowds. The most prominent shop in the middle of the front row of shops was Bahrisons, a book store that is still the most popular, with Mr Bahri a familiar figure at his desk. His son Anuj now runs the book store."

On the eastern end next to the Bank of India were a chemist, Bata shoe-store and Mr Gupta's Vishnu Cloth store where we could buy yardage and go to the tailor next door for our clothing needs. He lived in the flat above his store, as did many of the shop owners. His son, Om Prakash, who was born in the flat above the shop, now runs the Vishnu Cloth store, along with his son, Nayak reminisces, and adds: "Some of the flats were rented by private tenants. I don't remember ever climbing the steep stairs to the second floor until the Eighties when book stores, dentists, and a small restaurant took over the rented flats".

According to Nayak, the 1980s saw a change as the younger generation, unlike Anuj Bahri and Om Prakash Gupta, decided they did not want to run the family business. "We miss Empire Stores and Sovereign Stores, and even the bank has completed its lease and has moved out, as businesses with international repute have leased out the space. The middle lane, once used as entrances for residents and parking, was commercialised in 1990," she says.

The rental value of shops in Khan Market has soared from the 1990s and, as a result, something similar has happened in Lodhi Colony and Meher Chand and Khanna Markets — after the first flush of nationalist fervour, two other refugee markets were economically named after one person, by splitting the name of Mayor Meher Chand Khanna into two. Parking is becoming a nightmare, when shops close in the evening, because a plethora of restaurants have taken over the first floor flats and the central lane. Where once residents parked their cars at the entrance to their flats, shops have taken over.

Nayak laments that "for someone who has shopped at Khan Market for 50 years, prices are now way beyond reach". "But people-watching has become much more interesting," she says. Khan Market has been ranked as one of the most expensive retail locations and shops have been taken over by many international brands.

As one of the old shopkeepers told Nayak, "Nowadays people are ready to spend Rs 16,000 on a pair of shoes but not Rs 16 on some practical household item." However, says Nayak, "most noticeable is the rapid turnover of businesses, restaurants and shops. Here today gone tomorrow, for money is also easy come easy go."

Badshah Khan, if you were to return, what will you make of the twists and turns of the fortunes of your people in this outpost? You will realise that it is a reflection of the game of dice that is Delhi.

The writer is a historian of Delhi

VIEW FROM THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

A weekly look at the public conversations shaping ideas beyond borders — in the Subcontinent. Curated by Aakash Joshi

DREADING KASHMIR

THE PAKISTAN press has continued to analyse Narendra Modi's victory and its implications for India, bilateral relations and matters of nationalism and religion in South Asia. In its June 1 editorial, *Dawn* weighs in on what Modi 2.0 could mean for Kashmir. The paper strikes an ominous tone — quite in keeping with its line and that of most media in Pakistan — on the Indian state's role in Kashmir. It says that in its first term, the Modi government put in place a "brutal approach, with a militarised response to Kashmiris' yearning for freedom and dignity. In fact, the radical Hindu BJP said it would end Kashmir's special constitutional status, and remains committed to this dubious goal."

It remarks that "the cycles of ugly violence" have become the norm in the Valley and unless New Delhi "comes up with a new approach, they will show no signs of abating". Yet, the editorial ends with questions, that hint that there is as yet time for a course correction, though such hope remains slim: "Will the Indian prime minister continue with his hard-line approach, pushing Kashmiri youth to the wall and forcing them to fight the Indian state? Or will he display statesmanship and adopt a fresh approach to the troubled region? While those wishing to see peace prevail in South Asia will be hoping that Mr Modi picks the latter option, the reality may be more of the same. However, while the BJP's suppression of the Kashmiri freedom struggle has resulted in the disillusionment of practically all Kashmiris with India, even some of Delhi's most loyal supporters in the region — the Abdullah clan, Mehbooba Mufti etc — appear dismayed at the way the Hindu nationalists have treated Kashmir."

JINNAH VINDICATED

M BILAL Lakhani, a Fulbright scholar and columnist, asks an important question in *The Express Tribune*, one which has become a common refrain in Pakistan: Is Narendra Modi India's Zia-ul Haq? Lakhani begins his article by saying "Modi's win is a loss for India." He adds that "What Zia orchestrated in the 80s to use religion for the realisation of political goals Modi is engineering in India today. With one important nuance. The Pakistani people never elected Zia into office."

This sentiment, which began to be articulated after the 2014 Indian general election, can be summarised as many in Pakistan viewing the overwhelming mandate for a Hindutva party as a vindication of Muhammad Ali Jinnah's two-nation theory. Lakhani points out two dangers of Modi's political dominance in India. One: "It took 72 years but the Quaid-e-Azam's Two-Nation theory has been decisively endorsed by the long arc of history. Forget my arguments, Narendra Modi is the only person ever to be denied a US visa based on a little-known law on religious freedom, even though he applied for a diplomatic visa as a sitting chief minister. This led to nearly a decade-long US travel ban imposed over his role in Gujarat's anti-Muslim riots, which left thousands dead (the UK and several European nations had also slapped a de facto travel ban on Modi)."

And two: "what's worse is that Modi is also the symptom of a far more dangerous problem; an Indian electorate at peace with war-mongering. The performance of the Indian economy wasn't exactly the reason behind Modi's win, it was his hardline rhetoric and warmonger-like adventurism with Pakistan that allowed him to sweep the elections. This is in striking contrast to Pakistan, where every mainstream political party runs on a platform of peace with India and if any political leader was to call for war with India to get re-elected, they would be laughed out of office."

BANGLADESH AND BRI

"BRI IS a comprehensive undertaking that can transform our development endeavours and also support us in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. We will need to have a coordinated policy approach in three policy domains: trade, finance and investment (TFI). Only then can we better streamline the efforts to a win-win outcome." This is the thrust ANM MunIruzzaman's argument in *The Daily Star*.

What should be of concern, or rather interest, to India is the degree to which Bangladesh may be integrated in China's flagship project: "Bangladesh is a signatory country of BRI. It is also a key strategic partner of the initiative. Of the six economic corridors upon which the concept of BRI is built, one corridor will pass through Bangladesh. The old Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) corridor is now to become the BRI corridor linking Kunming to Kolkata. There are only two corridors of the six corridors which are identified as maritime corridors and the old BCIM corridor is one of them. It will start at Kunming in China, pass through Myanmar and Bangladesh, and end up in Kolkata, India. Recently, a bilateral contract has been signed between China and Myanmar known as China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC)."

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

MISLEADING TITLE

THIS REFERS to the editorial, 'Race for Tel Aviv' (IE, May 31). I was surprised to see this headline. Choosing to use Tel Aviv in the article and in the title as if to name it Israel's capital is false and misleading. Tel Aviv is not Israel's capital, nor does the parliament (Knesset, for which the elections are held) sit in Tel Aviv. The seat of the parliament is in Jerusalem, and always has been. While some newspapers may choose not to mention Jerusalem as Israel's capital for political reasons, naming any other city in its place is disrespectful and unnecessary.

Avigail Spira, *spokesperson, Embassy of Israel in India*

MANDATE WOES

THIS REFERS to the article, 'Don't blame the mandate' (IE, May 31). In a rather visceral and prompt (or hasty) attack on Amartya's Sen's article, the author herself falls prey to presenting a biased view. She conveniently misses to mention that BJP spend multiple times the amount the Congress could and how that there was widespread dismay over the election commission's role as a watchdog. As important as it maybe to her, her family and people that live around them are not nearly a credible sample to represent why people voted for Narendra Modi.

Annie James, *Pune*

LUMPEN ELEMENT

THIS REFERS to the article, 'Reassurance that isn't' (IE, May 30). The author demonises the prime minister as a leader of the lumpen elements and blames him for hate crimes and majoritarian dominance. He needs to examine causes of conflict of the two communities he mentions with Hindus and almost a complete absence of communal conflict among communities professing Indian religions. The hate crimes have genesis in religious conversions and killing of cows and both are deliberate provocations. No one has issued fatwa against either of these activities.

Shiv Kumar, *via email*

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

Great expectations

The Jaganmohan Reddy government must build on Andhra Pradesh's high potential

The YSR Congress Party begins only the second government in the bifurcated successor State of Andhra Pradesh following a thumping win in the Assembly and Lok Sabha elections. The party won all-round support across classes, with significant gains among Dalits and Adivasis. A firm mandate from farmers and the youth in favour of the YSRCP catapulted it to a four-fifths majority in the Assembly. Strong mandates come with great expectations, and the new government will have to address the fiscal issues that have lingered since bifurcation. While registering high economic growth rates, Andhra Pradesh, which lost a significant portion of the undivided State's revenues, has sustained high public debt; it reached 28.79% of the State GDP, according to latest figures. The previous Telugu Desam Party government led by N. Chandrababu Naidu had gone on a populist spree in the latter part of its tenure, exacerbating the State's debt situation. The YSRCP has also promised its own set of welfare measures. While redistribution measures tend to spur consumer demand, wasteful populism could hurt the State; and Chief Minister Y.S. Jaganmohan Reddy must be more discerning on this aspect than his predecessor.

Another legacy of the TDP government was its emphasis on building a grand new capital at Amaravati. The State needs a functioning and workable capital city; the new government should scale back the pointlessly grandiose aspects of the plan and focus on the necessary brick and mortar. The government should take forward the previous regime's work towards the diversification of the State's economy by focussing further on industrialisation. New industries and capital have flowed in after bifurcation, helping spur economic growth. Much more can be done considering Andhra Pradesh's potential, including leveraging its strong diaspora. This should be among the priorities of the government. Much has been made of the need for special category status for the State, but this may have little benefit beyond its emotive value. The government can address fiscal concerns through growth, diversification and meaningful redistribution rather than expending political capital seeking a largesse from the Centre. In any case, as Mr. Reddy has noted, there is little chance of the Centre conceding the status to the State as the BJP-led government at the Centre enjoys a clear majority and does not require the YSRCP's support. Another encouraging sign for the State is the amiable relationship between Mr. Reddy and Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao, in contrast to the animus that persisted during Mr. Naidu's tenure. This should enable the States to resolve issues related to sharing water resources, and so on. Mr. Reddy should hit the ground running.

Slowdown confirmed

With the economic crisis deepening, the government will have to hasten reforms

There is now no denying that the second Modi government takes office amid a clear economic slowdown. The first macro data set released under the new Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman's watch, on Friday, showed an under-performing economy with GDP growth falling to 5.8% in the fourth quarter of 2018-19 and pulling down the overall growth for the fiscal to a five-year low of 6.8%. Growth in gross value added (GVA), which is GDP minus taxes and subsidies, fell to 6.6% in 2018-19, pointing to a serious slowdown. If further confirmation were needed, the growth in core sector output – a set of eight major industrial sectors – fell to 2.6% in April, compared to 4.7% in the same month last year. And finally, unemployment data, controversially suppressed by the Union government so far, showed that joblessness was at a 45-year high of 6.1% in 2017-18. These numbers highlight the challenges ahead for Ms. Sitharaman as she sits down to draft the Budget for 2019-20, to be presented on July 5. The economy is beset by a consumption slowdown as reflected in the falling sales of everything from automobiles to consumer durables, even fast-moving consumer goods. Private investment is not taking off, while government spending, which kept the economy afloat during the last NDA government, was cut back in the last quarter of 2018-19 to meet the fiscal deficit target of 3.4%.

The good news is that inflation is undershooting the target and oil prices are on the retreat again. But the rural economy remains in distress, as seen by the 2.9% growth in agriculture last fiscal; the sector needs a good monsoon this year to bounce back. Overall economic growth in the first quarter of this fiscal is likely to remain subdued, and any improvement is unlikely until the late second quarter or the early third. There are not too many options before the new Finance Minister. In the near term, she has to boost consumption, which means putting more money in the hands of people. That, in turn, means cutting taxes, which is not easy given the commitment to rein in the fiscal deficit. In the medium term, Ms. Sitharaman has to take measures to boost private investment even as she opens up public spending again. These call for major reforms, starting with land acquisition and labour, corporate taxes by reducing exemptions and dropping rates, and nursing banks back to health. On the table will be options such as further recapitalisation of the ailing banks, and consolidation. The question, though, is where the money will come from. With tax revenues likely to be subdued owing to the slowdown, the Centre will have to look at alternative sources such as disinvestment. There may be little choice but to go big on privatisation. A rate cut by the Reserve Bank of India, widely expected this week, would certainly help boost sentiment. But it is the Budget that will really set the tone for the economy.

Depths of field, defined and blurred

When the history of our time is written, how will the year 2019 come to be assessed?

RUCHIR JOSHI

When the forensics of the 2019 Lok Sabha election are done in the future, strange things may emerge from the examination. While some answers might be surprising, the questions themselves might be quite different from those many are asking today. Given a chunk of hindsight time and a thicker sandwich of context around this moment, some of our current assumptions and head-scratchings might look extremely droll to people conducting the review. Just as we now see historic events in their 'totality' – for instance, the toppling of different dominoes that led to the start of the First World War, or how Partition could perhaps have been avoided in 1947 – people may look back at the period leading up to these elections and the aftermath, and see both the funny and epically tragic sides of the moment.

At a frivolous level, people may chuckle at how the Sangh Parivar successfully managed to dub different liberal pockets with unifying negative labels such 'Lutyens Elite' and 'Khan Market Gang', even as the Sangh Parivar strengthened its already tight hold on the bungalows and secretariats of the actual Lutyens' Delhi, while so many people frequenting the actual Khan Market were from the demographic that either worked for the Sangh power circles or enthusiastically voted for them.

On a more serious note, the exhumation of the bones of Election 2019 might well be conducted after far more seismic historic events have occurred: a trade war between China and the U.S. that debilitated the world economy for years to come; or an armed conflict between the U.S./Israel and Iran with major knock-on effects that turn India into just another nation-state billiard ball, cannoning out of control. In such a case there might even be a recognition already in place that it was the BJP-RSS 'victors' who caught the short straw, and the Congress and other 'losers' who got lucky, because it was a very good time *not* to be in charge of this country.

Impending catastrophes

Leave aside an economic meltdown or missile-apocalypse, there could also be an understanding that no Indian political party was equipped to handle the ecological-disaster meteor hurtling towards the country, that none of them even saw it coming, and it was Modi 2.0 which was in charge when it struck. Today, we are already in the midst of a catastrophic air-pollution crisis and heading swiftly towards a major water-crisis; we could well be looking at a food crisis of almost 1943 proportions, where our harvests are adequate but our skewed distribution systems lead to quasi-famine situations. If ignored or mis-handled – and this regime has a terrific record of doing both – this could leave future historians looking at a huge renting of the fabric of the nation, a huge transformation, but not of the sort the Sangh Parivar imagines in its fevered dreams.

What could a granular political archaeology yield in the future? 2019 might be seen as the first serious beginning of a north-south division of the country, the moment where the south begins to

G. RAMAKRISHNA

understand that they want no part of the Hindutva agenda, that it is of no advantage for advanced, educated people of different religions who are confident in their own secularism, the Hindu majority of whom are confident in their own kinds of Hindu practice, to be sucked down by the horribly feudal, backward notions of nation and society being offered by the zealots in control of the central north. These recently executed elections might throw up yet another irony of abusive labelling: posterity might see the Sangh Parivar and its vassal parties and media as the *real* Tukde-Tukde gang, the ones who turned the Union of India into a brittle biscuit.

The health of the nation

There would also have to be an examination of the changing character and role of the Indian Deep State at this moment. If we define the phrase 'Deep State' to mean a covert nexus between industrial corporations and the security services, with their self-defined mission being to keep the country at a working status quo tilted conservatively, then what was this Deep State's reaction to the second victory of the Narendra Modi-Amit Shah combination? To what extent did they participate? Was there any concern that the country would be radicalised beyond their control? Was there any recognition that the attempted suppression and de-legitimisation of nearly 200 million Indians might have cataclysmic effects that were not in the Deep State's own long-term interests?

Let's imagine that our future historians have as an instrument one of those animated infographic maps of South Asia, with the countries differentiated by patterns indicating different elements that make up the 'health' of each nation: clear separation between state and religion, between state and military; operational democracy at all levels of society, democracy that is constant and not just noduled around elections; the rule of law and order; effective public health systems; unassailable human rights; freedom of expression and a free media under a diverse ownership; a properly competitive business environment with checks and balances; a cross-institutional understanding of environmental problems and robust programmes to deal with those challenges; and, most importantly, reliable indicators for food security and poverty levels. In such a map, will 2019 be the point when the patterns of our favourite failed state, Pakistan, and India begin to merge with increasing speed? Will people say that this was the tipping point where the Pakistanisation of India gathered full pace? When the moral gangrene infecting the so-called 'severed limb' was invited back into the main body?

As the years slide by on this map, do the colours indicating military conflict and, simultaneously, the shifting of massive refugee populations begin to sweep and bleed into each other? Does the Bay of Bengal rise at the same time and start biting into the Sunderbans? Does the desert start to spread across the forehead of the subcontinent?

On a longer graph

If the terms of reference are somewhat different, could the historians ask very different questions? For instance, might they be able to see a continuity of the graph of liberalisation in the 25 or 30 years following 1991 where succeeding governments ignored the immediate needs of the majority of India's population and paid the price? Instead of being the moment of great victory for the Hindutva project, could 2019 be the tipping point where the diverse, slowly simmering protest movements gathered critical mass and within a few years toppled the old order and all the old parties completely? Equally, could the period of 1991-2014 be seen as a time of a thinly maintained peace, followed by a period of extreme upheaval for the next 25 years, with 2019 being merely a minor punctuation point, a blip of no great consequence?

In photographic terms, when examining our own time and the current moment, we have no choice but to deal with a very short depth of field, a lot of the past and everything in the future is out of focus, beyond and before the 'today' which is most sharply defined. Looking back at points of history the depth of field is greater, with a lot more things rendered sharply. Perhaps this is a good analogy to remember, both for those bathing themselves in triumphant celebrations today as well as for those who are morose and disheartened and prematurely mourning the death of our precious Republic.

Ruchir Joshi is a writer, film-maker and columnist

Make up for lost time

Narendra Modi must leverage the public trust voters have placed in him to get the economy on track

PUJA MEHRA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's election campaign, staying clear of bread-and-butter issues, successfully swayed voter attention away from economic hardships. Having won a thumping mandate, his government in its second tenure must now devote itself to a well-thought-out strategy for economic reforms.

The bad news

Official estimates released on Friday, the new government's first day in office, show GDP growth slowed to a five-year low of 6.8% in 2018-19, even as the unemployment rate rose to a 45-year high of 6.1% in 2017-18. Agriculture gross value added (GVA) growth is estimated at negative 0.1% and manufacturing GVA growth at 3.1% in the January-March quarter.

The economy is struggling with an investments and a manufacturing slowdown, rural distress, unremunerative farm incomes, stagnating exports, a banking and financial mess and a jobs crisis. Sales figures from fast moving goods makers and continuing production cuts at car manufacturers confirm that consumption spending have slowed. The top economic priority for the new Modi government ought to be credible course correction in its attitude to policy – its formulation, articulation and the setting of goals.

The previous Modi government began well but soon lost direction. The announced plans for what looked like a blueprint for structural reforms – spanning an overhaul of labour and land policies and a much-needed manufacturing push, 'Make In India', for absorbing the slack from the farms – had been abandoned by the end of 2015.

The initial energy and enthusiasm gave way to misadventures such as demonetisation and the poorly designed rollout of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime. Despite repeated reminders to the Prime Minister's Office from Finance Ministry bureaucrats, the decrepit public banking system and the problems of the financial sector received little policy attention. Even the insolvency and bankruptcy reform, a sound economic reform, that got rolled out rather gradually and tentatively is already in danger of getting diluted.

The cumulative neglect of reforms over the years by Mr. Modi and his predecessors, including Manmohan Singh, has ensured that the economy is falling short of both its growth potential and the people's aspirations.

That the Constitution was hurriedly amended for rolling out reservations based on economic criteria and that fiscal giveaways for middle class Indians and farmers dominated the Interim Budget presented in February suggest Mr.

GETTY IMAGES

Modi was not wholly unaware of the magnitude of the challenge on the economic front.

But now, is he listening to sound advice on the solutions needed? The economy's structural problems cannot be resolved with the sort of political balm Mr. Modi resorted to earlier this year; they demand well-crafted economic remedies.

Sustainable livelihoods

Public provision of toilets, cooking gas connections and dwellings or Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) wage jobs and income supplement schemes are temporary sources of relief. They are not an economic growth model or strategies for reducing poverty. They can help the poor survive by providing meagre resources for subsistence. Reducing poverty needs economic growth to generate sustainable livelihoods for the poor.

This cannot be remedied by redistributive taxation policies alone. Deeply entrenched factors hinder the poor's access to income-enhancing skills, education, health and job opportunities and obstruct the trickle-down of growth to the poor. For instance, the Modi government's 'Make In India' strategy was a step in the right direction, and needs to be revived. Done right, it can absorb the slack from the farms.

Few organised sector jobs get generated in India because industries prefer capital-intensive production despite the economy's relative abundance of low-wage labour. With many seekers per job opening, labour has low bargaining power relative to employers. If production were less capital-intensive, more organised sector jobs would be created. Plus, labour's bargaining power would improve.

Successive governments in recent years have only ended up deepening this structural weakness by yielding to the constant clamour by industry lobbies for lower cost of capital. The first Modi government's record was no different. The economic strategy embedded in 'Make In India' got completely side-tracked as its plan for economic revival was reduced to a clamour for fiscal and monetary stimuli.

Mere pursuit of fiscal and monetary policy adjustments is not going to unlock India's economic growth potential, which is impossible without banking, land and labour reforms that no government so far has been able to deliver.

Will Mr. Modi persist in populism of the past, or take up the backlog of economic reforms pending since the first burst in the 1990s? Will sound economics inform his policies, or will he retain a disdain for economists, preferring instead simplistic, quick but ineffective fixes?

Take small firms. For the role they play in jobs creation, smaller firms ought to be incentivised with easy credit and taxation norms. Instead, the messy GST compliance and refunds framework imposed uneconomic compliance costs on them. These were explained away by the Bharatiya Janata Party's national executive in September 2018 as 'creative destruction', a supposedly necessary culling of informal firms so that the formal economy can thrive. The only way the GST may lead to more formalisation of the economy is by putting bigger companies at competitive advantage over smaller ones, a policy outcome that no government should want.

Data collection

Lastly, no evolution of the policy paradigm will be possible if the crisis of credibility in the collection, estimation and presentation of official statistics is not addressed appropriately. In response to the questions raised over unemployment and GDP statistics, including by well-meaning and eminent economists and statisticians, the first Modi government did little else than to suppress inconvenient data or allege political motivations. A more mature way of engagement with constructive criticism is called for.

Puja Mehra, a Delhi-based writer, is the author of 'The Lost Decade: 2008-18'

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.

Strategy in Parliament

I was shocked by the report, "Shout a little more, Rahul tells MPs-elect" (June 2), on the Congress president's word of advice to his parliamentary party colleagues. Parliament is the most hallowed and dignified forum India has that decides the fate of the nation through fruitful and purposeful debates and has produced many a stalwart like Ashok Mehta, Piloo Mody, Minoo Masani, S.A. Dange, George Fernandes, Annadurai and Ram Manohar Lohia, to mention a few tall names. A forum for democratic values cannot be made a fish market. It is odd that CPP leader Sonia Gandhi did not criticise such advice.

S. LAKSHMINARASIMHAN,
Coimbatore

■ When I was in high school, soon after Independence, we often had a mock Parliament where we debated an issue. We were encouraged to speak our mind on a wide variety of topics. The accent was on expressing our point of view and carrying the debate forcefully, but always with the utmost courtesy and decorum. The dictionary defines parliamentary language as "permissible in parliament; admissible in polite conversation; civil, courteous". I am deeply disappointed that the leader of a major political party should exhort his followers to "shout a little more than usual" and to "be a little more aggressive". Whether you like it or not, around half the people of India have elected members of the BJP-led NDA to represent them. This translates into a massive majority, given our first-past-the-post system. Not one of the other parties, including the Congress, has won the support of anywhere near this proportion. The fact is that in 2019, India has democratically elected Narendra Modi and the BJP to rule us for the next five years. Let us have civilised discussion in Parliament.

M.K. MANI,
Chennai

Politics of food

No scientific sampling or survey appears to have been done to prove that food served by the Akshaya Patra Foundation (APF) is unpalatable and was not being eaten in sufficient quantities ('Magazine' section, "The politics of food", June 2). Interviewing a few unhappy children alone is unscientific investigation. Anecdotal evidence has been used to steer the reader towards conclusions the writer or a group wishes to achieve. The fact file too appears to be misleading as the scientific and health benefits of onion and garlic are proven *in vitro*, not *in vivo*. The supply of hygienic and safe food is a far greater achievement than aiming for 100% acceptability of food, which is always subjective. A significant percentage of the Indian population does not use onion and garlic and if they suffered clinically, socially or otherwise because of non-consumption, society, scientists and others would have noticed this by now.

M.R. RAGHUNATH,
Bengaluru

■ The APF subscribes to the tenet that one's nutritional requirement can be met without garlic-onion and the National Institute of Nutrition has concurred with this.
Taste, given the diversity and plurality of our society, is a personal choice, and catering to such diverse tastes in mass feeding programmes, logistically and hygienically, is not easy. The programme meets the challenge of classroom hunger and has improved school enrolment and the nutritional status of students. One does not understand why there is needless controversy now over certain food ingredients. If the activists are troubled with the food served by the APF, they should organise, establish and run a parallel mid-day meal programme with ingredients of their choice. Why disrupt a well-established and successful programme?

H.N. RAMAKRISHNA,
Bengaluru

MORE LETTERS ONLINE:
www.hindu.com/opinion/letters/

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:

In the Sports page report headlined "West Indies speedsters bounce out Pakistan in quick time" (Early editions, June 1, 2019), a caption had erroneously said that Andre Russell had taken the wicket of Shadab Khan. The scorecard rightly said that Andre Russell took the wickets of Fakhar Zaman and Haris Sohail. The error was rectified in the city editions.

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Why minorities feel alienated in India

There is an unofficial political mechanism that has produced a sense of fear in the last five years

HILAL AHMED

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's statement that the new National Democratic Alliance government should win the trust of minorities and puncture the 'myth of fear' has been received in two different ways. A section of political observers remain unconvinced about this assurance. They argue that aggressive Hindutva politics has marginalised the minorities. If the Modi government is serious about this lack of trust, it needs to do much more. On the other hand, some have optimistically received Mr. Modi's statement. They claim that minorities, especially Muslims, must appreciate Mr. Modi's positive gesture and explore possibilities of constructive dialogue.

These definite and categorical sets of argument are partly appropriate. The increasing alienation of minorities is certainly not a myth and expecting the new government to respond to the anxieties, aspirations and imaginations of these communities is morally legitimate and politically justifiable. However, there is a serious need to ask a fundamental question: Why do minorities feel alienated in contemporary India?

This question takes us to an unofficial political mechanism that has produced a sense of fear among minorities in the last five years. This political mechanism relies heavily on a minority-majority binary to establish that Hindus and Muslims are the two core fundamental identities that represent two distinct and conflicting world views. There are four identifiable components of this unofficial political mechanism: discourse of violence, events of violence, justification of violence, and silence on violence.

Discourse and events

The media — TV, newspapers, social media such as Facebook and WhatsApp and even films — has played a significant role in creating a violent anti-Muslim Hindu victimhood discourse in the last five years. Every aspect of Muslim life has been targeted to create an impression that Muslims are the main problem of the country. For instance, we are told that the birth of a Muslim child is a threat to the Hindu population; the education of a Muslim child is a symbol of separatism; the eating habits of Muslims are anti-Hindu (as Muslims eat beef); the married life of a Muslim couple is a social evil (as Muslims practice triple talaq); and even the death of Muslims is an anti-national act (because Muslims occupy valuable land for graveyards).

"Every aspect of Muslim life has been targeted to create an impression that Muslims are the main problem of the country." Shahista (right), daughter of Mohammad Akhlaq, who was lynched in Dadri, in 2015. • SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

This aggressive anti-Muslim propaganda nurtured an equally powerful imagination of 'Hindu victimhood', at least in three possible ways. First, Hindus are presented as a homogeneous nation-state community with a unique and distinct culture. Hindu belief in multiple gods and goddesses is articulated as a distinctive feature of Hinduism to create a defining binary between Hindus and Muslims.

Second, the marginalisation of Hindus is demonstrated by producing quantifiable data/evidence. The Hindu Human Rights Report 2017 is an example of this political strategy. This report records the violation of human rights of Hindus in India. It argues that despite being a numerical majority, Hindus are treated as second-class citizens. In order to justify this claim, atrocities faced by Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are also included in the crimes-against-Hindus list.

Third, Hindutva groups construct what political theorist Partha Chatterjee calls the two imaginary domains of politics. The inner domain is defined as a realm of Hindu faith and culture where the state is not allowed to intervene. The Hindutva positions on Babri Masjid and Sabarimala stem from this inner domain of politics. However, this is not the case with the outer political domain, where Hindutva unequivocally invokes legal-constitutional discourse. The demand to recognise Hindus as a minority in eight States is an example of this selective use of the Constitution and law.

Despite establishing this discourse of hatred and violence, Hindutva forces failed to provoke Muslims to create a large-scale riot-like situation in the last five years. Issues like 'love jihad', 'ghar wapsi', Ram temple, and even the ban on triple talaq could not generate riots. In this hostile communal atmosphere, a new style of violence was invented, however — the lynching of Muslims. A few Muslim individuals were killed to create a powerful impact. It was very easy to mobilise a mob of unemployed youth in the name of Hindu pride, especially in the cow-belt region.

Justification and silence

Interestingly, the government did not condemn this new form of anti-Muslim violence. On the contrary, Bharatiya Janata Party leaders not merely justified such events but also offered legal and political support to the accused. It began in September 2015 when Mohammad Akhlaq was lynched in Dadri, and his son Danish was brutally beaten up for allegedly eating and storing beef on Eid. Union Minister Mahesh Sharma, who was also the MP from Gautam Buddha Nagar, did not condemn this incident. He described the Dadri killing as an "accident", visited the house of the main accused and avoided any contact with the family of victim.

Former Minister of State for Civil Aviation Jayant Sinha evoked this line of argument differently in 2018. Mr. Sinha provided legal aid to the main accused involved in a lynching case in Jharkhand. When a fast-track court accepted the bail of the eight accused, he welcomed them at a public function. Justifying his move Mr. Sinha argued that the court had granted bail to the accused upholding the fairness of justice and, therefore, as an elected representative of people as well as a Union Minister, he was entitled to honour the "due process of law".

The Prime Minister maintained a strange silence on all this for a long time. In June 2017, he finally said "no person has the right to take the law into his own hands". Although he denounced cow vigilantism, Mr. Modi did not recognise the lynching of Muslims as a specific form of anti-Muslim violence. He reduced it to a law and order problem.

These political reflections, it seems, created the impression that lynching Muslims is a natural social phenomenon and the ruling establishment subscribes to the discourse of Hindu victimhood.

If the new BJP government is concerned about the myth of fear among minorities, it should systematically dismantle the mechanism that has actually created an atmosphere in which violence on religious lines has become normal and acceptable.

Of course, killing innocent Muslims is certainly a law and order problem. We do have a few laws to deal with such incidences of violence. But we certainly do not have an order.

Hilal Ahmed, an Associate Professor at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi, is the author of 'Siyasi Muslims: A story of Political Islams in India'

FROM THE READERS' EDITOR

Noise too is a form of censorship

Sometimes when journalists cannot talk of certain issues, they talk a lot about other innocuous stories

A.S. PANNEERSELVAN

I am overwhelmed by the support extended by readers to my last column, "Electoral outcomes don't alter the purpose of journalism" (May 27). But this section may not be aware of the cynicism that is pervading our public sphere. For instance, Gopal Vaidya, a reader, observed online: "There are many forms of bias that exist in this paper: selection of what to highlight, what to hide, articles that avoid other perspectives, selective use of readers' comments... Indian papers have a long way to go in this regard." How can a news ombudsman handle general criticism? "Indian papers" covers the whole of print journalism but it does not reflect the wide range of publications within this sector. From serious broadsheets to sensationalist tabloids, the Indian print media encompasses all forms of reportage. My focus is restricted to serious broadsheet newspapers alone.

The media landscape is not pluralistic

Readers may appreciate the role of a newspaper like *The Hindu* if they are aware of the important findings of the Media Ownership Monitor, a research project carried out in India by Reporters Without Borders and the Delhi-based digital media company, DataLEADS. Though India has some 1.2 lakh print publications, over 550 FM radio stations and nearly 880 satellite TV channels, including more than 380 claiming to be news channels, the study says the Indian media landscape is hardly pluralistic. The research found the media space to be "tight", with state monopoly in radio news, and regional newspaper markets being "controlled by a small number of powerful owners, some of whom have strong political affiliations". It notes that the production and distribution of content are getting concentrated in the hands of a few. The research attributes the high level of ownership concentration to "considerable gaps in the regulatory framework".

As Readers' Editor, I take specific complaints seriously and I rely on the core values and cardinal principles of journalism to evaluate the merits of those complaints. But is it possible to examine vague, sweeping statements that cast aspersions on journalists and writers? A decade ago, novelist and philosopher Umberto Eco identified two forms of censorship: censorship through silence and censorship through noise. While all of us are aware of censorship through silence, wherein the state disapproves of certain ideas, we are not conscious enough of the censorship that flows from noise. In his lecture at the conference of the Italian Association for Semiotic Studies in 2009, Eco paraphrased the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein to explain a trend that is engulfing us today: "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must talk a great deal." The lecture is a part of an anthology of essays, "Inventing the Enemy" – again, a malady that is afflicting us.

Creating suspicion

In "Censorship and silence", Eco eloquently explained how innocuous stories are given disproportionate space so that readers do not notice the silence in covering important stories that the media ought to have covered. He used the example of how the press controlled by Silvio Berlusconi undermined the authority of the magistrate who criticised the Prime Minister by reporting that he wore turquoise socks. According to Eco, to make noise you don't have to invent stories;"all you have to do is report a story that is real but irrelevant, yet creates a hint of suspicion by the simple fact that it has been reported. It is true and irrelevant that the magistrate wears turquoise socks, but the fact it has been reported creates a suggestion of something not quite confessed, leaving a mark, an impression. Nothing is more difficult to dispose of than an irrelevant but true story." All of us watching prime-time news channels in India can relate to this.

As a news ombudsman, I make a crucial distinction between multiple voices and noise that is meant to drown out voices. I am aware of the fact that with regards to censorship, noise can be more powerful than silence because those who deploy this tactic are aware of the impact of this noise: "An accusation that is not an accusation cannot be challenged."

Journalism is neither silence nor noise but a credible voice.

readerseditor@thehindu.co.in

SINGLE FILE

Realising grand objectives

Many regional policy challenges can be addressed with three major fixes

DHRUVA JAISHANKAR

AFP

It is common to assess a country's foreign policy by examining individual bilateral relationships or specific outcomes. But this risks missing the forest for the trees. While the broad directions of India's foreign relations — with the neighbourhood, Afghanistan, the U.S., China, Indo-Pacific, Russia, and Europe — have been set over the past several years, the main factors inhibiting India's performance are ultimately domestic in nature. Three stand out.

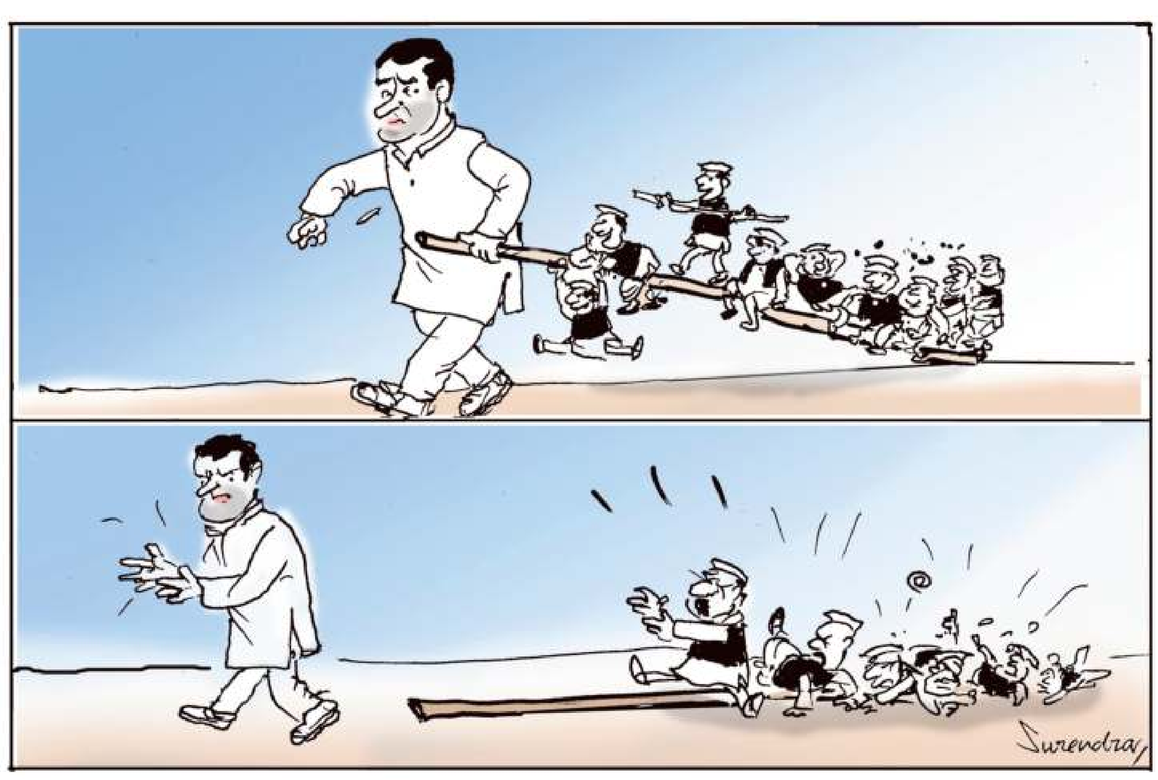
The first is trade. It often surprises people that India's trade-to-GDP ratio is higher than China's or the U.S.'s. India's market, and access to it, remains a valuable lever with other countries. But much of India's commerce involves raw materials and low value-added goods, and is still insufficiently integrated into global supply chains. With global trade stagnant and the World Trade Organization at a standstill, the only way for India to seize a larger share of exports is through well-negotiated preferential trade agreements. India's past record in this department has been poor, leaving some sectors exposed to dumping and others unnecessarily cloistered. A smarter trade agenda will not only create jobs and drive reforms at home, it could become a potent strategic tool in international affairs.

The second concerns defence. India has the world's fifth largest defence budget but is also the world's second largest arms importer. Not only does this compromise national security, it means that India cannot offer an alternative as a defence supplier to countries in its region. Defence indigenisation will require financing for defence capital expenditure; assessments of costs, technology transfer capabilities, and export potential early in the procurement process; and fair competition between the Indian private and public sectors.

The third concerns overseas project implementation. India's outgoing aid budget has been relatively flat, reflecting a scepticism of grant aid from India's own experience as a recipient. Instead, it has now started to explore other financing options. Indian overseas credit has increased significantly, with over $24 billion extended primarily to South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Africa. But building on several recent steps will significantly increase the country's delivery and regional credibility. These include better project planning, more attractive and competitive financing terms, more reliable disbursal of funds, and enhanced coordination and communication with the private sector for implementation.

Many regional policy challenges would be addressed with these three major fixes. None will be easy as they will require tackling vested interests. While the first Modi government made its strategic objectives known and set out a clear direction, key policy interventions in these three areas will now be necessary for India to realise its grander objectives.

The writer is a Foreign Policy Fellow at the Brookings Institution's India Center



DATA POINT

How health workers are unevenly distributed

By Vignesh Radhakrishnan

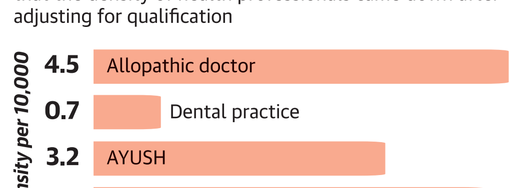
Two sources, two figures

A research paper* released recently relied on the 68th round of the NSSO and various medical bodies where doctors must get registered in order to obtain data on the concentration of health workers in India. The table shows how health professionals are split across sectors and their density per 10,000 people in India

Health worker	According to the registry	According to the NSSO
Allopathic doctor	7.1	5.9
Dental practice	1.2	0.7
AYUSH	5.7	4
Physiotherapy, diagnostic practice, and others	0.5	0.7
The above + non-medical staff	38.2	29.1
Doctor + nurse + midwife	26.7	20.6

Removing quacks

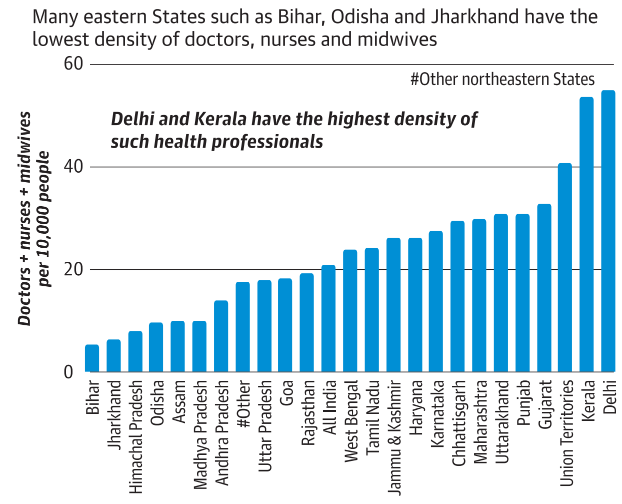
The paper found that many of the NSSO respondents who claimed to be health workers lacked the necessary qualifications/ medical training. The graph below shows that the density of health professionals came down after adjusting for qualification



* Size, composition and distribution of human resource for health in India: New estimates using NSSO and Registry data, BMJ Open

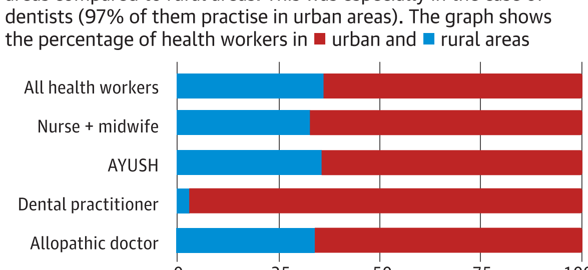
East is worst

Many eastern States such as Bihar, Odisha and Jharkhand have the lowest density of doctors, nurses and midwives



Urban skew

The density of health workers was significantly higher in urban areas compared to rural areas. This was especially in the case of dentists (97% of them practise in urban areas). The graph shows the percentage of health workers in urban and rural areas



FROM The Hindu. ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JUNE 3, 1969

Soviet plans to land man on moon

A Soviet cosmonaut has said the Soviet Union plans to land a man or men on the moon by the end of this year or early next year, if all goes well, according to reports from Japanese correspondents in Moscow. A group of nine Japanese science reporters now visiting Moscow reported to-day [June 2] that the remark was made by Soviet cosmonaut Alexei Leonov, the first man in the world to walk in space in 1965, in an interview with them on Sunday night [June 1]. Cosmonaut Leonov indicated that, unlike the U.S. Apollo project which sends spaceships directly from the earth to the moon, the Soviet moon project would launch a lunar probe from a space station assembled while in orbit around the earth.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JUNE 3, 1919

Mr. Tilak's Service. Mr. Gandhi's Speech.

A public meeting was held on Saturday [May 31] evening [in Bombay] under the presidency of Mr. Gandhi for expressing appreciation of the services rendered by Mr. Tilak to India and calling upon his countrymen to contribute to the Tilak Purse Fund started with the object of defraying the expenses incurred by him in the case against Sir Valentine Chirol. Mr. Gandhi in his opening remarks said that the goal of every Indian patriot was the same although each one might follow a different path. Mr. Tilak had one way of achieving his aim which differed from his (Mr. Gandhi's) but Mr. Tilak had displayed the courage of his conviction in going to an English court of law and fighting an Englishman and this fact had evoked his special admiration. It would, however, have been a splendid thing if Mr. Tilak had been a Satyagrahi as then he would not have troubled about going to a court of law at all and would have been saved the disappointment of defeat and consequent pecuniary loss.

CONCEPTUAL

Loss leader

BUSINESS

This refers to a common pricing strategy that is used by businesses wherein certain products are sold at a minimal profit or even at a price that is well below their cost price in order to boost the sale of other products that are more profitable. A supermarket chain, for instance, might decide to sell certain common household goods at a low profit so that more customers feel attracted to its store. It may believe that customers coming to the store to buy these commonly used items may in turn decide to purchase other goods in the store which can add to profits. If a store chooses not to sell these loss leader items, customers may simply decide not to shop at the store.

MORE ON THE WEB

17th Lok Sabha: first-time women MPs to watch out for

bit.ly/FirstTimeWomenMPs

शिक्षा से ही मानव मस्तिष्क का सदुपयोग किया जा सकता है। अतः विश्व को एक ही इकाई मानकर शिक्षा का प्रबंधन करना चाहिए।
-डॉ. राधाकृष्णन

शिक्षाशास्त्री व पूर्व राष्ट्रपति

डोनाल्ड ट्रंप न केवल एक-एक कर पुरानी व्यवस्थाओं को एकतरफा ढंग से पलटते जा रहे हैं, बल्कि चीन के साथ व्यापार युद्ध में वह बेवजह ही भारत को परेशानी में डाल रहे हैं।

अमेरिका से झटका

बेशक

डोनाल्ड ट्रंप ने इसकी सूचना पहले ही दे दी थी, इसके बावजूद भारत को अमेरिका से मिलने वाले जनरलाइज्ड सिस्टम ऑफ प्रिफरेंसेज (जीएसपी) यानी सामान्य तरजीही व्यवस्था का खत्म हो जाना भारत के लिए एक बड़ा झटका है। अभी अमेरिकी दबाव में ईरान से कच्चे तेल का आयात बंद हुए ज्यादा दिन नहीं हुए हैं कि ट्रंप की सनक का यह एक और उदाहरण है, जिसका हमारे कारोबार पर असर पड़ेगा। भारत इस तरजीही व्यापार का बड़ा लाभार्थी रहा है, और अमेरिका को किए जाने वाले कुल निर्यातों का 25 प्रतिशत हिस्सा शुल्क मुक्त उत्पादों का रहा है। सरसरी तौर पर यह हिस्सा बेशक बड़ा न लगता हो, लेकिन जिन उत्पादों को यह छूट मिलती रही है, उनके लिए इस नुकसान की भरपाई कर पाना कठिन है। ट्रंप ने यह फैसला अपने मेडिकल और डेयरी उद्योगों की शिकायत के बाद लिया है, जिसमें कहा गया था कि भारत उनके लिए अपने बाजार नहीं खोलता। अव्वल तो 1974 के जिस अमेरिकी कानून के तहत भारत समेत 120 विकासशील देशों को दो हजार से अधिक उत्पादों को अमेरिका में बिना शुल्क भेजने की सहूलियत दी गई थी, उसके कुछ तय मानक होने के बावजूद बदले में अमेरिका को लाभ पहुंचाने का कोई प्रावधान नहीं था। तिस पर ट्रंप शायद भूलते हैं कि हाल के वर्षों में कैलिफोर्निया के बादाम और वाशिंगटन के सेब जैसे अनेक उत्पादों के लिए भारत ने अपने बाजार खोले ही हैं। अब तरजीही व्यवस्था के लाभ के बदले में कोई देश अपने हितों से समझौता तो नहीं कर सकता। सिर्फ यही नहीं कि ट्रंप एक-एक कर तमाम समझौतों और व्यवस्थाओं को एकतरफा ढंग से खत्म कर रहे हैं, बल्कि ज्यादा क्षुब्ध करने वाला तथ्य यह है कि जिस भारत को अमेरिका उसकी सशक्त लोकतांत्रिक ताकत और विराट बाजार के कारण चीन के समानांतर रखता है, वह अब चीन के साथ अपने व्यापार युद्ध में भारत को भी लपेट रहा है। हालांकि यह भी सच है कि हार्ले डेविडसन मोटरसाइकल पर भारत में लगने वाले ऊंचे शुल्क की तीखी आलोचना कर ट्रंप ने अपने इरादे की झलक पहले ही दिखा दी थी। जाहिर है, दोबारा सत्ता में लौटी केंद्र की नरेंद्र मोदी सरकार के लिए यह एक बड़ी परीक्षा है, जिसमें अमेरिका के साथ अपने सौहार्दपूर्ण रिश्ते को बरकरार रखते हुए इस समस्या का हल निकालने की उम्मीद जताई है।

जनसांख्यिकी में बदलाव के मायने

चौथे राष्ट्रीय परिवार सर्वेक्षण के मुताबिक, देश में पहली बार बच्चों की आबादी कम और वृद्धों की ज्यादा हो गई है। यह चौंकाने वाला आंकड़ा सरकारी नीतियों में बदलाव की मांग करता है।

टी वी मोहनदास पई

चौथे राष्ट्रीय परिवार स्वास्थ्य सर्वेक्षण (एनएफएचएस-4), 2015-16 के आंकड़ों ने आधुनिक भारतीय जनसांख्यिकी में एक महत्वपूर्ण बदलाव का संकेत दिया है। इतिहास में पहली बार भारत की कुल प्रजनन दर घटकर (टीएफआर) 2.18 रह गई है, जो वैश्विक प्रतिस्थापन दर (2.30) से कम है।

विकसित देशों में, जहां उच्च स्वास्थ्य मानक के चलते बाल मृत्यु दर कम है, संयुक्त राष्ट्र के मुताबिक, प्रतिस्थापन दर 2.1 निर्धारित है। चूंकि एनएफएचएस-4 के लिए सर्वेक्षण वर्ष 2013-15 में किया गया था, हमने यह निर्धारित करने के लिए टीएफआर की प्रवृत्ति का अनुसरण किया कि मार्च 2019 तक भारत का टीएफआर लगभग 2.0 तक गिर गया होगा, जो विकसित देश की प्रतिस्थापन दर से और भी पीछे होगा। यह चौंकाने वाला है और आने वाले वर्षों में एनएफएचएस-5 द्वारा इसकी पुष्टि होनी चाहिए, जिसके लिए इन दिनों सर्वेक्षण चल रहे हैं।

बड़ी आबादी वाला भारत ऐसे देश के रूप में माना जाता रहा है, जिसे बड़ी जनसांख्यिकी का लाभ मिलेगा। पहले जैसे जनसंख्या वृद्धि चरम पर पहुंच चुकी थी, वैसे ही आज हमें यह जानने की जरूरत है कि हमारे युवाओं की जनसंख्या में आज गिरावट आ रही है। जनसंख्या वृद्धि का चरम दौर बीत चुका है। वर्तमान आबादी को बदलने के लिए भारत में पर्याप्त बच्चों का जन्म नहीं होने वाला। एनएफएचएस-4 के जनसंख्या पिरामिड को देखें, तो पता चलता है कि पिछले दस वर्षों में बहुत कम बच्चे जन्मे हैं। भारतीय इतिहास में पहली बार जनसंख्या पिरामिड उलट गया है। गिरावट की यह दर आने वाले वर्षों में और तेज होने की ही आशंका है। इसका मतलब यह नहीं कि देश की जनसंख्या तेजी से घटेगी, क्योंकि स्वास्थ्य संकेतकों में सुधार से दीर्घायु में सुधार हुआ, जो कि 60 वर्ष से अधिक आयु के नागरिकों की बढ़ती आबादी से दिख रहा है।

पंद्रह वर्ष से कम उम्र के बच्चों का प्रतिशत एनएफएचएस-3 के 35 फीसदी से घटकर एनएफएचएस-4 में 29 फीसदी रह गया है। इसके विपरीत साठ वर्ष और उससे ज्यादा उम्र के लोगों की आबादी एनएफएचएस-3 के 8 फीसदी से बढ़कर एनएफएचएस-4 में 10 फीसदी तक पहुंच गई है। भारत अब बुजुर्ग लोगों का देश होने के कगार पर है, जहां हम अगले कुछ दशकों में देश की औसत आयु बढ़ने की उम्मीद कर सकते हैं।

यहां एक महत्वपूर्ण सवाल पैदा होता है कि क्या भारत समृद्ध होने से पहले ही बूढ़ा हो जाएगा। यह जनसांख्यिकीय बदलाव एक महत्वपूर्ण घटना है, जो आने वाले दशकों में राष्ट्रीय नीतियों को महत्वपूर्ण रूप से आकार देगी, जिससे सरकार को कुछ कठिन निर्णय लेने होंगे।

क्या देश का कामकाजी वर्ग लंबी उम्र के वरिष्ठ नागरिकों के बढ़ते वर्ग के भरण-पोषण के लायक पर्याप्त धन का अर्जन कर सकेगा, जो तेजी से पेंशन पर निर्भर रहेगा? चीन पिछले कुछ दशकों में अपने शानदार आर्थिक प्रदर्शन के कारण कुछ हद तक ऐसा करने में सक्षम था। हालांकि भारत की जनसंख्या में गिरावट उस तेजी से नहीं होगी, जिस तेजी से चीन में हुई। भारत को भी जनसंख्या नियंत्रण के लिए नीतियों से परे और तेज गति से धन बनाने की दिशा में आगे बढ़ना होगा। कुछ उपाय हो सकते हैं, जिसे सरकार को प्राथमिकता देने की जरूरत है-

सबसे पहले तो कार्यबल में महिलाओं की हिस्सेदारी बढ़ानी होगी। देश के श्रमिक वर्ग द्वारा धन सृजन की क्षमता बढ़ाने के लिए भारत को अधिक से अधिक महिलाओं को कार्यबल में शामिल करना होगा। विश्व बैंक की 2018 की एक रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक, वर्ष 2018 में भारत में कार्यबल में महिलाओं की हिस्सेदारी 27 फीसदी थी, जबकि वैश्विक औसत 48.5 का है। आईएमएफ रिसर्च के मुताबिक, कार्यबल में महिलाओं की भागीदारी पुरुषों के स्तर तक बढ़ाने से भारत की जीडीपी 27 फीसदी बढ़ सकती है और वे हर वर्ष भारत की जीडीपी वृद्धि में योगदान कर सकती हैं। ऐसे ही, बदलती जनसांख्यिकी को देखते हुए सामाजिक सुरक्षा बढ़ाने की जरूरत है। पेंशन योजनाओं में निवेश को प्रोत्साहन देना भारत के लिए सर्वोपरि है। हर दस भारतीय श्रमिक में से आठ अनियोजित क्षेत्र में काम करते हैं, जिनकी सेवानिवृत्ति बचत खातों तक सीमित पहुंच है। इसके अलावा, एक बढ़ता हुआ मध्यवर्ग बढ़ती मजदूरी दर और जीवन की गुणवत्ता में सुधार देख रहा है, जिसके परिणामस्वरूप सेवानिवृत्ति आय में वृद्धि की उम्मीद होगी। यह गतिशीलता का वही परिणाम होगा, जिसकी भविष्यवाणी विश्व आर्थिक मंच ने की थी कि सभी बड़ी आबादी वाले देशों में सेवानिवृत्ति बचत अंतराल में उच्चतम वृद्धि (10 फीसदी संयुक्त वार्षिक विकास दर-सीएजीआर) होगी।

भविष्य की शिक्षा की तैयारी भी जरूरी है। आज का रोजगार बाजार काफी हद तक एक दशक पहले से अलग है। इसके अलावा, आज प्राइमरी स्कूल में दाखिला लेने वाले 65 फीसदी बच्चे अंततः एक ऐसी नौकरी में काम करेंगे, जो अभी नहीं है। इस कौशल-अंतराल को पूरा करने के लिए छात्रों के पाठ्यक्रम में महत्वपूर्ण सुधार की आवश्यकता होती है। इसके अलावा आबादी के एक बड़े हिस्से को फिर से हुनरमंद बनाने की जरूरत है, जो पैतृक काम-धंधों में फंसे हैं। सरकार को औद्योगिक कार्यबल को फिर से प्रशिक्षित करने की जरूरत है, जहां भारत की जनसांख्यिकी में बदलाव के कारण नौकरी की आवश्यकताओं में भारी बदलाव की उम्मीद है।

प्रौद्योगिकी सक्षम स्वास्थ्य सेवा लागू करना भी सही कदम होगा। देश में बुजुर्गों की बढ़ती आबादी की स्वास्थ्य देखभाल में प्रौद्योगिकी के उपयोग की आवश्यकता होगी। हमारे देश में 1,700 मरीजों पर एक डॉक्टर का अनुपात है। देश में गुणवत्तापूर्ण चिकित्सा प्रतिभाओं की कमी ऐसी समस्या नहीं है, जिसका शीघ्र समाधान हो जाएगा। भारत में गुणवत्तापूर्ण स्वास्थ्य सेवा प्रदान करने, निदान और देखभाल की दक्षता बढ़ाने और स्वास्थ्य सेवा वितरण और बीमा की लागत को कम करने में प्रौद्योगिकी सहायक हो सकती है।

-लेखक आरिन कैपिटल पार्टनर्स के चेयरमैन हैं।

अंतर्ध्वनि

>> नोम चोम्स्की

नायकों की नहीं, अच्छे विचारों की खोज करनी चाहिए

मुझे लगता है कि जीवन के हर आयाम में सत्ता, अनुक्रमों और राज करने की कोशिश में लगे केंद्रों को पहचानने की कोशिश करनी चाहिए और उनको चुनौती देनी चाहिए। जब तक उनके होने का कोई जायज हवाला न दिया जा सके, वे गैरकानूनी हैं और उन्हें नष्ट कर देना चाहिए। मनुष्य की आजादी की उम्मीद इससे ही बढ़ेगी।

प्रोपेगैंडा आमतौर पर अभिजात हितों से बहुत नजदीक से जुड़े रहते हैं। इस तंत्र (जो प्रोपेगैंडा को फैलाने में मदद करता है) की खूबसूरती ही यही है कि वह असहमतियों और असुविधाजनक जानकारियों को नियंत्रण में और हाशिये पर रखता है। ताकि उनका होना यह तो तय कर ही दे कि तंत्र अखंड नहीं है, लेकिन ये असहमतियां इतनी बड़ी भी न हों कि आधिकारिक एजेंडे में कोई मानीखेज हस्तक्षेप कर सकें।

टेलीविजन पर बड़े कॉरपोरेट विज्ञापनदाता शायद ही कभी ऐसे कार्यक्रमों को प्रायोजित करते हैं, जो कॉरपोरेट गतिविधियों की गंभीर आलोचनाओं में संलग्न होते हैं, फिर चाहे वह पर्यावरण के स्तर में गिरावट की समस्या हो, चाहे सेना या औद्योगिक क्षेत्र के कामकाज के तरीके पर कोई बात कर रहा हो या कोई, तीसरी दुनिया में होने वाले तानाशाही रवैये के कॉरपोरेट समर्थन और उनके द्वारा उठाए जाने वाले लाभ पर बात करे। किसी भी प्रोपेगैंडा मॉडल में खुले बाजार की मान्यताओं में एक प्रारंभिक विश्वसनीयता होती है। शिक्षा थोपी हुई अज्ञानता का एक तंत्र है। यह बुद्धिजीवियों की जिम्मेदारी है कि वे सच बोलें और झूठ उजागर करें। हमें नायकों की खोज में नहीं रहना चाहिए। हमें अच्छे विचारों की खोज में रहना चाहिए।

-सुविख्यात भाषा-विज्ञानी, दार्शनिक

मंजिलें और भी हैं

>> प्रकाश सिंह रघुवंशी

बीजदान कर दे रहा देसी, उन्नत खेती को बढ़ावा

वह 1964-65 का दौर था, जब देश में गेहूं के बीजों की नई-नई किस्में आ रही थीं। मेरे पिताजी ने किसानों की मदद के लिए इन बीजों के प्रचार-प्रसार का जिम्मा उठाया। वह एक प्राथमिक विद्यालय में शिक्षक थे और कृषि मेलों में जाकर किसानों को बीज बांटते और उन्हें अच्छी फसल उगाने के लिए प्रोत्साहित करते। प्राकृतिक रूप से बीज विकसित करने का हुनर मैंने अपने पिताजी से सीखा। मैं उत्तर प्रदेश में वाराणसी जिले के तड़िया गांव का रहने वाला हूं। एक दुर्घटना के चलते मुझे पेनिसिलिन के इंजेक्शन का रिएक्शन हो गया और लगभग छह महीने तक अस्पताल में रहना पड़ा। इस रिएक्शन के चलते मेरी आंखों की रोशनी लगभग जा चुकी है। इस घटना से पहले मेरी शादी हो चुकी थी, जिसके बाद परिवार की भी जिम्मेदारी मेरे कंधे पर आ गई। लेकिन मैं खराब तबीयत और आंखों की रोशनी कम होने के चलते मात्र ढाई एकड़ जमीन की खेती पर ही निर्भर था। बावजूद इसके मैं कुछ ऐसा करना चाहता था, जिससे कि मेरे बच्चों को बेहतर भविष्य मिले और समाज को नई दिशा। पर कोई रास्ता नजर नहीं आ रहा था। मेरे परिचित और रिश्तेदार भी मुझसे दूरी बनाकर रखते थे। जब कहीं कोई रास्ता नहीं मिला, तो बचपन से अपने पिता से सीखा हुआ पौधों को परखने का हुनर मेरे काम आया। एक बार मैं अपने खेतों में गेहूं की फसल देखते हुए टहल रहा था। तभी मैंने एक पौधा देखा, जो बाकी पौधों से अलग था। इस बारे में मैंने तुरंत अपने पिताजी को बताया। उन्होंने कहा कि इस पौधे के बीज की किस्म बाकी फसल से अलग होगी। मैंने उस पौधे की देख-रेख की। फसल तैयार होने के बाद काट ली गई, पर उस पौधे को तैयार होने में थोड़ा वक्त लगा। इस पूरे समय के दौरान मैंने हर रोज़ उस पौधे की देखभाल की, ताकि कोई जानवर उसे खराब न कर दे। जब वह बिल्कुल पक गया, तो मैंने पत्नी के साथ मिलकर इसके बीज निकाले। इन बीजों को हमने बहुत ही सहेजकर रखा। फिर गेहूं का अगला मौसम आने पर हमने उन बीजों को लगाया और उन थोड़े-से बीजों से ही हमें बहुत उपज मिली। इस बीच मैं कई कृषि वैज्ञानिकों से मिला और जानना चाहा कि आखिर कैसे एक किस्म की फसल में एक-दो अलग किस्म के पौधे उग आते हैं। वैज्ञानिकों ने बताया कि ऐसा नैचुरल क्रॉस पोलिनेशन से संभव है। वर्ष 2000 तक मैंने गेहूं, धान और कुछ दालों की कई तरह की किस्में इकट्ठा कर ली। इसके बाद इन सभी का डाटा रिकॉर्ड किया। मुझे जो कुछ भी मिला था, प्रकृति से मिला था। आंखों की रोशनी कम होने के बावजूद खेत में खड़ी फसल में भी मैं अलग किस्म के पौधे को पहचान लेता था। यह कुदरत का दिया हुनर नहीं था तो क्या था? मैं प्रकृति के इस उपहार को सबसे बांटना चाहता था, ताकि लोग देसी बीजों का इस्तेमाल करें। इसलिए मैंने बीजदान अभियान शुरू किया। इस अभियान के अंतर्गत बिना पैसे लिए उन्नत किस्म के स्वदेशी बीज किसानों को बांटे हैं। आज कोई भी मेरे गांव आकर स्वदेशी बीज बैंक से मुफ्त में बीज ले सकता है। इस अभियान के लिए मुझे नेशनल इनोवेशन अवार्ड दिया गया। कुछ समय पहले मुझे खेती के क्षेत्र में लाइफटाइम अचीवमेंट अवॉर्ड भी मिला। साथ ही इटली की चर्चित संस्था 'स्लोफूड' ने मुझे अपना स्थायी सदस्य भी बनाया। हमारे देश में आज भी अच्छे लोगों की कमी नहीं है। पूर्वजों से मिला हुआ परंपरागत ज्ञान हमारे भविष्य की कुंजी है। इसे आगे बढ़ाना होगा। यदि किसी भी किसान को देसी बीज उपजाने में परेशानी आती है, तो वह ट्रेनिंग के लिए मुझसे संपर्क कर सकता है।

पूर्वजों से मिला हुआ परंपरागत ज्ञान ही हमारे भविष्य की कुंजी है। हमें इसे आगे बढ़ाना होगा।

-विभिन्न साक्षात्कारों पर आधारित।

मोदी के विरोधी

नरेंद्र मोदी की दूसरी पारी में भी उनके विरोधी उतने ही सक्रिय हैं, जितना उनकी पहली पारी में थे। बल्कि विरोधियों ने तो शपथ ग्रहण से पहले ही गुरुग्राम और बेगूसराय में मुस्लिमों पर हमले के लिए मोदी को जिम्मेदार ठहरा दिया।

पिछले सप्ताह नरेंद्र मोदी के शपथ ग्रहण के बाद नई सरकार का नया दौर शुरू हुआ है। लेकिन मोदी के पुराने विरोधियों ने अभी तक इस नए दौर को स्वीकारा नहीं है। मोदी से वे उतना ही वैर रखे हुए हैं, जितना उनके पिछले दौर में रखे हुए थे। सो शपथ ग्रहण से पहले ही मोदी पर हमले शुरू हो गए थे। वह प्रधानमंत्री बने भी नहीं थे कि उनके सिर पर चुनाव परिणाम आने के बाद मुसलमानों पर हुए हमलों की दो घटनाएं थोप दी गईं। इनमें से एक घटना गुरुग्राम की थी, जहां एक मुस्लिम लड़के की टोपी किसी हिंदू लड़के ने जबर्दस्ती उतार दी थी और उसको पाकिस्तान जाने के लिए कहा था। दूसरी घटना बेगुसराय की थी, जहां किसी ने एक व्यक्ति पर सिर्फ इसलिए गोली चलाई, क्योंकि वह मुसलमान था।

इन घटनाओं के बाद मोदी के विरोधियों ने ऊंची आवाजों में कहना शुरू कर दिया कि मोदी के दोबारा प्रधानमंत्री बनने के कारण देश में फिर से नफरत फैलने लग गई है।

दिल्ली में मोदी के विरोधियों की एक बड़ी टोली है। इस टोली में बुद्धिजीवी हैं, जाने-माने लेखक और पत्रकार हैं, वामपंथी हैं और कुछ ऐसे लोग भी हैं, जो कभी भाजपा में थे, लेकिन मोदी से वैर रखते हैं, क्योंकि मोदी ने उनको वह अहमियत नहीं दी है, जिसे वह अपना अधिकार समझते हैं।

इस टोली के कुछ सदस्य पिछले कुछ महीनों से राहुल गांधी के सलाहकार बने रहे। उनको पूरा विश्वास था कि इस बार मोदी सरकार नहीं बनेगी। उनका मानना था कि मोदी इस बार 180 सीटों से ज़्यादा नहीं ला पाएंगे, सो क्षेत्रीय दलों को समर्थन देकर दिल्ली में ऐसी सरकार बनेगी, जो कांग्रेस के समर्थन पर निर्भर रहेगी। इनको पूरा विश्वास था कि राहुल गांधी का 'टाइम' आने वाला है।

तवलीन सिंह

जब ऐसा नहीं हुआ, तो ये लोग खुलकर मोदी से वैर जताने में लग गए हैं। इनमें से कुछ टीवी चर्चाओं में भाग लेने, कुछ अखबारों में लेख लिखने और कुछ दिल्ली में अफवाहें फैलाने का काम कर रहे हैं। इन अफवाहों को सोशल मीडिया द्वारा फैलाया जा रहा है और इनका मुख्य संदेश यही है कि अब देश में लोकतंत्र का अंतिम काल शुरू हो गया है। यही बात ये लोग मोदी के पहले कार्यकाल में भी कहते आए थे, लेकिन अब अपनी डूबती नाव को देखकर और भी ज्यादा जोश से कहने लग गए हैं। इनकी बातों का असर इतना है कि अमर्त्य सेन जैसे विदेशों में रहने वाले भारतीय भी लिखने लग गए हैं कि भारत में अब लोकतंत्र के बचने की संभावनाएं कम हैं। यानी जो कहानी मोदी के पहले दौर में हमको सुनने को मिली थी, वह फिर से शुरू हो गई है।

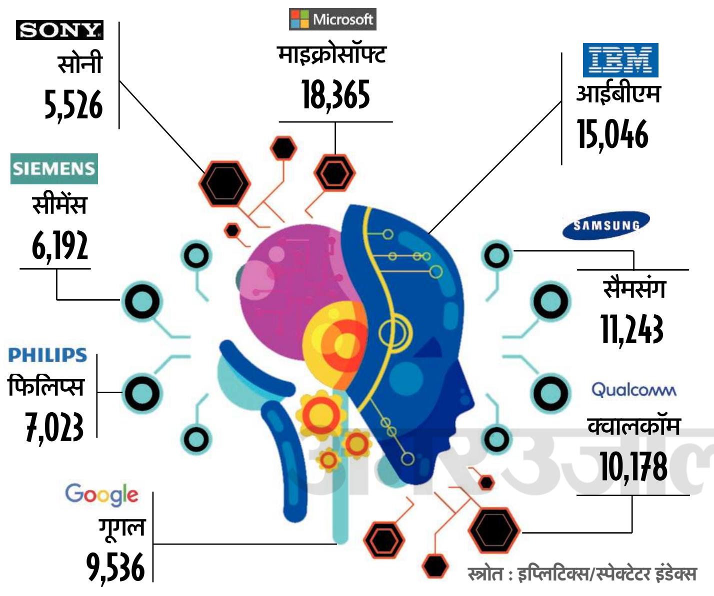
पिछली बार यह कहानी तब शुरू हुई थी, जब दिल्ली में कुछ गिरजाघरों पर हमले हुए थे। तब तक मोदी पर इसका दोष लगाया गया, जब तक यह जानकारी नहीं मिली कि इन हमलों के पीछे चोर थे, संघ परिवार के समर्थक नहीं। इस कहानी को नया मोड़ तब दिया गया, जब मुसलमानों और दलितों पर गोरक्षकों ने हमले करने शुरू किए।

हर लिंचिंग का दोष मोदी के सिर थोपा गया और कुछ हद तक दुनिया की नजरों में मोदी की छवि कलंकित हुई भी, क्योंकि मोदी ने मौन रहने का निर्णय लिया। इस बार चुनाव जीतने के बाद मोदी ने अपने पहले भाषण में स्पष्ट शब्दों में कहा कि उनका पूरा इरादा है 'सबका विश्वास' जीतने का है, लेकिन उनके विरोधी अभी से उन पर हमले करने के लिए तैयार बैठे हुए हैं। नया दौर बेशक आया है, लेकिन इस नए दौर में भी मोदी के पुराने विरोधी वही हैं, जो उनके पिछले दौर में थे।

खुली खिड़की

आर्टिफिशियल इंटेलिजेंस पेटेंट

तकनीकी विकास के साथ विश्व के कई देशों में विभिन्न क्षेत्रों में आर्टिफिशियल इंटेलिजेंस (कृत्रिम बुद्धिमत्ता) का उपयोग तेजी से बढ़ा है। परिणामस्वरूप तकनीकी क्षेत्र की कई कंपनियों ने इसे बनाया और इसका पेटेंट कराया है।



स्रोत : इफ्लिटिक्स/स्पेक्टेटर इंडेक्स

ईमानदारी सच्ची पूजा

सत्संग

ऋषिकेश के गीता भवन में एक माह व्यापी सत्संग चल रहा था। असंख्य श्रद्धालु इस आयोजन में शामिल हो संत-महात्माओं के प्रवचनों से लाभान्वित हो रहे थे। उस बार सत्संग में परम विरक्त संत स्वामी रामसुखदास तथा आध्यात्मिक विभूति हनुमान प्रसाद पोद्दार के प्रवचनों का आयोजन था। एक दिन कुछ व्यापारी हनुमान प्रसाद पोद्दार की कुटिया में पहुंचे। उन्होंने उनसे विनम्रतापूर्वक कहा, हाल ही में हमने नया-नया व्यापार शुरू किया है। अत्यधिक व्यस्तता के कारण पूजा, उपासना के लिए समय नहीं मिल पाता। इससे यह संशय बना रहता है कि हमारा जीवन सार्थक कैसे होगा। हनुमान प्रसाद जी ने कहा, प्रत्येक कार्य या अपने दायित्व को ईमानदारी से पूरा करोगे, तो समझ लो कि भगवान की आराधना स्वतः हो रही है। यदि व्यापार करने वाला अधिक लाभ कमाने की आकांक्षा छोड़ ईमानदारी से सीमित लाभ अर्जित करने लगे, तो वह अपने व्यापारी धर्म का ही पालन कर रहा है। जो व्यक्ति ज्यादा लाभ कमाने के लोभ में खाद्य पदार्थों में मिलावट करते हैं, नकली वस्तुएं बेचते हैं, वे घोर अधर्म कर अपना मानव जीवन निरर्थक कर रहे हैं। कर्म के प्रवाह को और अपने मन को भगवान की ओर मोड़ लो, पूरी निष्ठा से कर्म करो, सवेरे-शाम भगवान का पावन स्मरण करो और समझो कि पूजा-उपासना हो गई। व्यापारियों की जिज्ञासा का समाधान हो गया।

-संकलित

हरियाली और रास्ता

गुंजन, पिता और विफलता

एक पिता की कहानी, जिसने बेटी को जीवन की बहुमूल्य शिक्षा दी।

गुंजन पांचवीं क्लास में थी। दो दिन से वह कुछ खा-पी नहीं रही थी। उसने सपना देखा था कि वह क्लास में फेल हो गई है और बच्चे उसका मजाक उड़ा रहे हैं। मां ने उसे समझाने की बहुत कोशिश की, पर नहीं मना पाई। फिर उन्होंने गुंजन के पापा से सारी बात बताई। वह गुंजन से बोले, बेटा, पास या फेल होना हमारे दिमाग की एक धारणा भर है। इससे हमारे हुनर, हमारी अच्छाई या बुराई पर कोई फर्क नहीं पड़ता। तो तुम्हें भला किस बात का डर है? गुंजन सिसकते हुए बोली, पर पापा, फेल होने पर लोग मजाक उड़ाते हैं। उसके पापा कहने लगे, बेटा, जब मैं तुम्हारी उम्र का था, तो मुझे अंग्रेजी की स्पेलिंग कभी याद नहीं हो पाती थी। साथी ही नहीं, टीचर भी मुझ पर हंसते थे। पर मैंने उसे विफलता की तरह लिया ही नहीं। मैं समझ रहा था कि जो मैंने किया, वह गलत है।

एक बार मेरे स्कूल में एक अंतरराष्ट्रीय प्रतियोगिता हुई। उसमें केवल यही बताना था कि कौन-सी स्पेलिंग गलत है। मैं तो गलत स्पेलिंग का महारथी था। मुझे प्रथम पुरस्कार मिला। शिक्षकों ने मेरी तारीफ की। जब मैं बड़ा हुआ, तो किसी खेल में रुचि नहीं दिखा पाया। क्लास में मैं इकलौता ऐसा लड़का था, जो हर खेल में पीछे रह जाता था। पर उसके अलग फायदे थे। मैं हर खेल की गलतियों को अच्छी तरह समझ पाता था, क्योंकि मुझे यह पता ही था कि क्या करना चाहिए और क्या नहीं। इसी खासियत के कारण आज मैं क्रिकेट के अंतरराष्ट्रीय मैचों की अंपायरिंग करता हूं। बेटी, एक बात बहुत अच्छी तरह से समझ लो कि गलती करना गलत कभी नहीं होता। लेकिन गलती करके भी न समझना सबसे बड़ी गलती है। तुम यह मत सोचो कि तुम परीक्षा में विफल हो जाओगी। यह सोचो कि अब तुम्हारे पास विफल न होने की एक और वजह है।

जीवन की हर विफलता सफलता की ओर बढ़ने की प्रेरणा देती है।

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड
वर्ष 12 अंक 91

वित्त मंत्री की चुनौतियां

देश की नई वित्त मंत्री निर्मला सीतारमण को कड़ी चुनौतियों का सामना करना पड़ेगा क्योंकि देश की अर्थव्यवस्था में धीमापन आ रहा है। मंदी का सिलसिला लगातार तीन तिमाहियों तक पहुंच गया है। शुक्रवार को जारी आधिकारिक आंकड़ों के मुताबिक वर्ष 2018-19 की अंतिम तिमाही में यानी जनवरी से मार्च के बीच देश का सकल घरेलू उत्पाद (जीडीपी) केवल 5.8 फीसदी की दर से बढ़ा। यह अनुमान से कम है। वर्ष की पहली तिमाही में 8 फीसदी की वृद्धि के बाद जुलाई-सितंबर के दौरान दूसरी तिमाही में अर्थव्यवस्था 7 फीसदी की दर से और अक्टूबर-दिसंबर की तीसरी तिमाही में 6.6 फीसदी की दर से विकसित हुई। यह मंदी का स्पष्ट संकेत है। राष्ट्रीय सांख्यिकी कार्यालय ने भी पूरे वर्ष के अपने वृद्धि अनुमान को 7 फीसदी से घटाकर 6.8 फीसदी कर दिया। आंकड़े तमाम क्षेत्रों में मंदी का संकेत दे रहे हैं। इससे इस आशंका की पुष्टि होती है कि मौजूदा मंदी चक्रीय न होकर ढांचागत है। अप्रैल 2019 के अंतिम उपलब्ध आंकड़ों के मुताबिक आठ प्रमुख बुनियादी क्षेत्रों में मंदी जारी है और इनकी वृद्धि 4.9 फीसदी से घटकर 2.6 फीसदी हो गई।

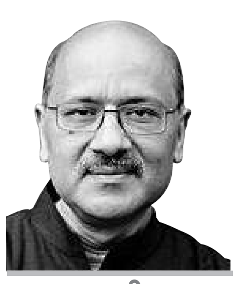
अंतिम तिमाही में धीमी वृद्धि का अर्थ यह भी है कि सरकार अब भारत के दुनिया की सबसे तेज विकसित होती बड़ी अर्थव्यवस्था होने का दावा नहीं कर सकती। हालांकि यह तमगा भी कोई मायने नहीं रखता क्योंकि तमाम समान अर्थव्यवस्थाओं का प्रदर्शन भारत से बेहतर है। आर्थिक मोर्चे पर नई सरकार के समक्ष कई चुनौतियां हैं। आधिकारिक आंकड़े बताते हैं कि वर्ष 2017-18 में बेरोजगारी दर 6.1 फीसदी थी हालांकि अधिकारियों का यह भी कहना है कि इन आंकड़ों की पिछले वर्षों से तुलना नहीं की जा सकती। मंदी के कई अन्य संकेतक भी हैं। अप्रैल में विनिर्माण एवं सेवा क्षेत्र का पर्चेजिंग मैनेजर्स इंडेक्स 51.6 और 51 रहा। अगस्त और सितंबर 2018 के बाद यह सबसे धीमी वृद्धि थी। औद्योगिक उत्पादन सूचकांक का पूंजीगत वस्तु क्षेत्र भी अप्रैल में लगातार तीसरे महीने कमजोर हुआ। शनिवार को देश की सबसे बड़ी कार निर्माता कंपनी मारुति सुजुकी ने मई में अपनी बिक्री 22 फीसदी गिरने की बात कही। यह सात वर्षों का न्यूनतम स्तर है।

मौजूदा मंदी के कई कारक हैं। इनमें से एक कारक है अत्यधिक क्षमता की समस्या जिसके चलते निजी क्षेत्र का निवेश कमजोर पड़ता है। जबकि यह वृद्धि का एक बड़ा कारक है। निवेश में इसलिए भी कमी आई है क्योंकि गैर बैंकिंग वित्तीय क्षेत्र की फाइनैंसिंग पर सवाल उठे हैं। यह क्षेत्र आईएलऐंडएफएस के कुछ कर्ज के डिफॉल्ट होने के बाद लगे झटके से उबरने में नाकामयाब रहा है। सरकार को इस क्षेत्र में सुधार के लिए अपनी प्राथमिकता तय करनी होगी ताकि धन का प्रवाह बरकरार रखा जा सके। यह इसलिए भी आवश्यक है क्योंकि यह क्षेत्र कॉर्पोरेट जगत के ऋण की फाइनैंसिंग की दृष्टि से बहुत अहम होकर उभरा है। दुनिया को लेकर भी हमें कहीं अधिक खुला नजरिया अपनाना होगा। अगर हम निर्यात पर ध्यान नहीं देते हैं तो हमारी अतिरिक्त क्षमता की समस्या बरकरार रहेगी। देश में इतनी अधिक मांग नहीं है जितनी कि हमारी उत्पादन क्षमता हो चुकी है। अगर हम शेष विश्व को निर्यात का केंद्र बन जाएं तो इतने भर से हमारी अतिरिक्त क्षमता की समस्या दूर हो जाएगी। सरकार के पिछले कार्यकाल में अधिकांश वक्त निर्यात के मोर्चे पर प्रगति देखने को नहीं मिली। सीतारमण को आगे बढ़कर ढांचागत सुधार की प्रक्रिया को आगे बढ़ाना होगा। ऐसा करने पर ही प्रतिस्पर्धा बहाल की जा सकती है और निर्यात वृद्धि की सहायता से अर्थव्यवस्था को उबारा जा सकता है।

दीपक शर्मा

पितृ सत्तात्मक दल की स्वनिर्मित नेत्री

गरिमामय अंदाज में विदा लेने वाली सुषमा स्वराज भाजपा की आम नेत्रियों जैसी नहीं रहीं। भाजपा को इस काबिल नेत्री की कमी खलेगी।



राष्ट्र की बात

शेखर गुप्ता

राष्ट्रपति भवन में जब सुषमा स्वराज नए मंत्रियों के लिए नियत स्थान के बजाय अग्रिम पंक्ति में अन्य गण्यमान्य अतिथियों के साथ बैठीं तो वहां एक किस्म की खामोशी के साथ-साथ फुसफुसाहट भी चल रही थी। उनके प्रशंसकों को अब भी लग रहा था कि नरेंद्र मोदी अपना दूसरा कार्यकाल अपनी इस सर्वाधिक लोकप्रिय मंत्री के बिना शुरू नहीं कर सकते।

उनकी स्वास्थ्यगत चुनौतियां किसी से छिपी नहीं हैं। अपने गुर्दा प्रत्यारोपण की खबर ट्विटर पर जारी करके उन्होंने भारतीय सार्वजनिक जीवन की एक वर्जना को ही तोड़ा। शल्य चिकित्सा के बाद उन्होंने अच्छी तरह स्वास्थ्यलाभ भी लिया। उनका प्रतिरक्षा तंत्र अभी नए गुर्दे को अपना ही रहा था और इसी बीच उन्होंने संयुक्त राष्ट्र में पाकिस्तान को जवाब दिया, दुनिया भर के समकक्ष विदेश मंत्रियों के साथ चर्चा की और असाधारण शालीनता का परिचय दिया। उन्होंने एक बार भी जुबानी कमजोरी का परिचय नहीं दिया, न ही किसी पर क्रोध करती हुई दिखीं।

इसे अपना हथियार बनाकर उन्होंने एकदम नए किस्म की कूटनीति तैयार की और दुनिया भर के नेताओं तक पहुंच बनाई। उनके प्रतिद्वंद्वियों और शंकालु स्वभाव के लोगों ने कहा कि पूरी विदेश नीति तो मोदी चला रहे हैं, ऐसे में उनके पास ट्विटर पर पासपोर्ट-वीजा-आव्रजन के मामले निपटाने के अलावा कोई विकल्प ही नहीं रहा। कई बार उन्हें केवल विदेशों में रह रहे भारतीयों का मददगार बनाकर पेश किया गया लेकिन उन्होंने इसका भी बुरा नहीं माना।

मोदी मंत्रिमंडल में किसी भी मंत्री के लिए कुछ खास करने को नहीं था। सुषमा के लिए मामला वाकई कठिन था क्योंकि वैश्विक स्तर पर प्रधानमंत्री के ही चर्चे अधिक थे। सुषमा ने उनका मार्ग प्रशस्त किया। परंतु उनके आकर्षण और मीडिया में उनकी प्रशंसा कतई कम नहीं हुई। उनके पास वह नजर है जो दीवार पर लिखी इबारत पढ़ लेती है। उन्होंने खुद को एक दायरे में रखा और मोदी के बारे में तारीफ के सिवा कभी एक शब्द नहीं कहा।

हम दोनों ने अपने-अपने करियर की शुरुआत सन 1977 में चंडीगढ़ से की। वह 25 वर्ष की उम्र में देवी लाल की जनता पार्टी सरकार में सबसे कम उम्र की मंत्री बनीं और मैं इंडियन एक्सप्रेस में सिटी रिपोर्टर बना। मुझे पता है कि उनमें धैर्य और आत्मसम्मान अन्य नेताओं से अधिक है। मैं अब भी समझ नहीं पा रहा हूं कि 42 वर्ष की अपनी राजनीति में उन्होंने इस नई भूमिका को कैसे अंगीकार किया होगा जहां अपनी पार्टी की सरकार के तीसरे शपथग्रहण में वह एक आगंतुक के रूप में पहुंचीं। खासतौर पर तब जबकि उनके उत्तराधिकारी एस जयशंकर बने। जयशंकर उनके कार्यकाल में 2015 से 2018 तक विदेश सचिव और उसके पहले अमेरिका में राजदूत थे। उन्होंने इसे दार्शनिक अंदाज में लिया होगा। वह यह भी जानती हैं कि यह उनके राजनीतिक सफर का मोड़ नहीं बल्कि उपसंहार है।

वह अंबाला के एक आरएसएस से जुड़े परिवार में पैदा हुईं। उनके पिता आरएसएस के प्रमुख पदाधिकारी थे लेकिन उनकी पहचान बनी जॉर्ज फर्नांडिस की युवा और तेजतर्रार वकील के रूप में। उन्होंने आपातकाल के दौरान बड़ौदा डायनामाइट कांड में जॉर्ज का मुकदमा लड़ा।

फर्नांडिस की तरह सुषमा के साथी अधिवक्ता स्वराज कौशल भी समाजवादी थे। आपातकाल के विरोध के दौर में ही दोनों ने विवाह कर लिया। कुछ समय वह अपने जीवनसाथी के वैचारिक प्रभाव में भी रहीं लेकिन उनकी मूलभूत मान्यताएं तो आरएसएस की ही थीं। उनके समाजवादियों के साथ मेलजोल से एक भ्रम सा बना। सन 1977 में आपातकाल समाप्त हुआ और इंदिरा गांधी की कांग्रेस का पतन हुआ। तब वह 25 वर्ष की उम्र में हरियाणा की श्रम और रोजगार मंत्री बनीं। उन्हें जनता पार्टी का उभरता हुआ सितारा और फर्नांडिस का सहयोगी माना जा रहा था, न कि आरएसएस या जनसंघ का।

सन 1970 के दशक में एक महिला का महज 27 की उम्र में हरियाणा में जनता पार्टी का अध्यक्ष बन जाना मामूली बात नहीं थी। परंतु सन 1979 में जनता पार्टी के विभाजन के बाद वह जनसंघ की ओर मुड़ गईं। उसके बाद उनका अद्भुत विकास हुआ।

उन्होंने हमें यह यकीन दिलाने का प्रयास किया कि वह भाजपा की पारंपरिकता में यकीन करती हैं। उन्होंने अजंता की नृत्यरत अप्सरा को राष्ट्रीय कैलेंडर से बाहर कराने से लेकर एफटीवी पर प्रतिबंध लगाया, कंडोम के विज्ञापनों पर अश्लीलता के आरोप के चलते प्रतिबंध लगाया, स्टूडेंट ऑफ द इयर फिल्म में सेक्सी राधा गाने का विरोध किया और दीपा मेहता की फिल्म फायर में राधा और सीता नामक समलैंगिक किरदार निभाने वाली शबाना आजमी और नंदिता दास के प्रणय दृश्यों पर एतराज किया। हाल ही में सरोगेसी को लेकर अपने विचार और बलात्कार पीड़िता को जिंदा लाश कहकर उन्होंने अपना नजरिया पेश किया। परंतु ये बातें उन्हें रूढ़िवादी भाजपाई नहीं बनातीं।

उनके जीवन के अनेक ऐसे पहलू हैं जो बताते हैं कि वह अलग हैं। उन्होंने एक मध्यवर्गीय जीवन जिया और अपनी जिंदगी के फैसले लिए। उस वक्त ऐसा ज्यादा लोग नहीं करते थे। उन्होंने अपनी पार्टी की उन सीमाओं को भी तोड़ा जो पितृसत्ता से पीढ़ियों से थोपी थी। इसमें पार्टी की पुरुष प्रधान पितृ संस्था का भी योगदान रहा।

मंगलूर में जब हिंदुत्व का रूढ़िवादी चेहरा समाने आया और अनैतिकता का आरोप लगाते हुए युवतियों को बार से घसीट बाहर किया गया तब उन्होंने चयन की आजादी की बात की और बतौर एक युवती की मां होने के आधुनिक स्वतंत्र स्त्रियों की सुरक्षा की बात कही। उनकी पार्टी में कुछ लोग नाराज हुए लेकिन उन्होंने अपने लगातार बढ़ते प्रशंसकों को जता दिया था कि वह अलग हैं। उन्होंने इस वर्ष लोकसभा चुनाव न लड़ने की घोषणा करके ही यह बता दिया था कि वह सत्ता से अलग रहना चाहती हैं। वह कुल 11 बार विधानसभा और संसद के चुनाव लड़ चुकी हैं और उनकी उम्र महज 66 वर्ष है। परंतु बहुत कम उम्र में मधुमेह होने के चलते स्वास्थ्य उनके सामने चुनौती बन गया है। उनकी यह विदाई सुनियोजित और गरिमापूर्ण है। मेरा मानना केवल यह है कि उन्हें थोड़ा और पहले एक वक्तव्य जारी करके इसकी औपचारिक सूचना देनी थी कि वह नए मंत्रिमंडल में शामिल नहीं होंगी।

उनके विरोधी भी मानेंगे कि उनका करियर एक विजेता का रहा है और वह हमेशा अपने दल की वफादार रही हैं। वह आडवाणी की समर्थक थीं लेकिन 2009 के बाद जब वह नई पीढ़ी के लिए रास्ता खाली करने को तैयार नहीं थे तब वह वेंकैया नायडू, अनंत कुमार और अरुण जेटली के साथ उन चार प्रमुख नेताओं में थीं जिन्होंने आरएसएस प्रमुख मोहन भागवत से हस्तक्षेप कर युवा पार्टी अध्यक्ष चुनने को कहा। तब नितिन गडकरी अध्यक्ष बने।

जेटली के साथ उनकी प्रतिद्वंद्विता जाहिर है लेकिन पार्टी के लिए वे साथ आए। बीते पांच वर्ष के दौरान भी ऐसे अवसर आए जब उन्हें लगा कि उनकी अनदेखी हुई या पीएमओ ने उनको दरकिनार किया लेकिन उनकी महत्ता तो इसी बात से जाहिर होती है कि जब मोदी विदेश यात्रा पर थे और उनके नंबर दो राजनाथ सिंह चीन की यात्रा पर, तब मोदी ने जेटली पर सुषमा स्वराज को तरजीह दी और कहा कि वह दुबई की यात्रा रद्द कर दिल्ली में बनी रहें। यह उनकी वफादारी और उनकी निर्णय क्षमता पर मोदी के भरोसे की स्वीकारोक्ति थी। यह उनके राजनीतिक जीवन का शिखर भी था। आप इस बात पर बहस कर सकते हैं कि अगर भाजपा या आरएसएस ने आडवाणी के पश्चात उन्हें भाजपा का युवा नेतृत्वकर्ता चुना होता तो क्या होता? आखिरकार वह मोदी से युवा हैं। तब भाजपा कैसी होती? शायद तब पार्टी वैचारिक तौर पर इतनी रूढ़िवादी नहीं होती जितनी कि वह अभी है लेकिन वह शायद इतनी एकजुट भी नहीं होती।

यह अकादमिक लेकिन बेहतर चर्चा है। क्रिकेट की तरह राजनीति में भी हर सितारे का करियर कपिल देव सचिन तेंडुलकर जैसा नहीं हो सकता। किसी न किसी को राहुल द्रविड़ की भूमिका भी निभानी पड़ती है। जो भरोसेमंद तो होता है लेकिन उसे वह प्रसिद्धि और ताकत नहीं मिलती। सुषमा स्वराज को इसी प्रकार परिभाषित किया जा सकता है।

मोदीजी, अबकी बार सूटबूट की सरकार

सम सामयिक

टीसीए श्रीनिवास-राघवन

जुलाई 2014 में राहुल गांधी के एक बेतुके से वाक्य ने प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी को पूरी तरह हिलाकर रख दिया था। गांधी ने कहा था कि मोदी सरकार सूटबूट की सरकार है और वह अमीरों की सरकार है जो केवल अमीरों के हित में काम करती है। अगले पांच वर्ष तक प्रधानमंत्री यह सुनिश्चित करने में लगे रहे कि उनकी सरकार, अमीरों की सरकार न नजर आए।

परंतु अब मोदी ने भारतीय जनता पार्टी को एक शानदार जीत दिलाई है और वह देश के निर्विवाद नेता के रूप में उभरे हैं। परंतु एक चुनौती अब भी उनके सामने है: उन्हें अपने मस्तिष्क से वाम रुझान का दबाव निकालना होगा।

यह दुखद है और जिस प्रकार उन्होंने कांग्रेस की छद्म धर्मनिरपेक्षता को उजागर किया वैसे ही अब उन्हें उसके छद्म समाजवाद को उघारना चाहिए, जिसने उन्हें भी प्रभावित किया है। उन्हें खुद को इस धारणा से मुक्त करना होगा कि सरकार को पूंजी का समर्थन करते हुए नहीं नजर आना चाहिए।

हर कोई जानता है कि भारत को गरीबी हटाने के लिए बहुत बड़े पैमाने पर निवेश की आवश्यकता है। अब तक तो हम यह भी जान गए हैं कि निजी निवेश के माध्यम से ही ऐसा करना संभव है क्योंकि पूंजी की कमी से जूझ रहे देश में चंद धोखेबाजों को छोड़ दें तो आज भी निजी क्षेत्र पूंजी का कहीं अधिक किफायती इस्तेमाल करता है।

यह भी एक बड़ी वजह है कि अगर वह गरीबों की मदद करना चाहते हैं और उसका श्रेय भी चाहते हैं तो उन्हें चीन की तरह खुलकर पूंजी समर्थक नीतियों को अपनाना होगा। उन्हें यह भी याद रखना होगा कि पूंजी समर्थक होने का मतलब पूंजीवाद समर्थक होना नहीं है। वह कांग्रेस का तरीका था जहां सरकारी निवेश के पक्ष में निजी पूंजी को नकारा गया और सरकारी क्षेत्र पर तरजीह देकर मनोनुकूल निजी पूंजीपतियों को बढ़ावा दिया गया।

क्या किया जाना चाहिए

विश्व का आर्थिक इतिहास बताता है कि जिन सरकारों ने निजी पूंजी का सहयोग किया उनकी वृद्धि दर बेहतर रही। इस तरह देखें तो ऐसे कानूनों की आवश्यकता है जो पूंजी में भेद नहीं करते, उन्हें व्यापक और गहरा बनाने की दृष्टि से भी यह अनिवार्य हैं। चीन ने ऐसा ही किया है।

सन 1970 से ही भारत इस दिशा में विफल रहा है। उसके पहले हमें इसमें काफी सफलता मिलती रही है। सन 1970 के बाद नीतिगत ध्यान राजनीति प्रेरित और वाम प्रेरित पुनर्वितरण नीतियों की ओर हो गया। इसकी कीमत निवेश और वृद्धि के मोर्चे पर चुकानी पड़ी। ईशर आहलूवालिया की सन 1983 में आई किताब इसे सही तरीके से परिभाषित करती है।

मोदी ने अपने पहले कार्यकाल में इसे नहीं समाप्त किया क्योंकि वह दोबारा चुनाव जीतना चाहते थे। वह नहीं चाहते थे कि उनके साथ वह दोहराया जाए जो अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी के साथ हुआ।

अब जबकि दोबारा उनकी सरकार बन चुकी है, उन्हें देश को दोबारा नेहरू की तरह निवेश बढ़ाने पर जोर देना चाहिए। नेहरू को सरकारी नेतृत्व वाले निवेश का रुख इसलिए करना पड़ा क्योंकि निजी क्षेत्र ने अपने हाथ खड़े कर दिए थे। परंतु अब वैसी कोई बात नहीं है और मोदी को इस दिशा में आगे बढ़ना चाहिए।

यह नेहरूवादी मॉडल से उचित प्रस्थान होगा। तमाम नीतियां, कर, आयात, ब्याज दर और विनिमय दर आदि को निजी क्षेत्र के अनुकूल बनाया जाना चाहिए। सरकारी क्षेत्र की भूमिका सीमित होनी चाहिए। यह एक अभिशाप की तरह है। ऐसा नहीं है कि सार्वजनिक निवेश नहीं होना चाहिए। होना चाहिए लेकिन उसे परिवहन और सामाजिक बुनियादी क्षमताएं विकसित करने तक सीमित रखा जाना चाहिए, चीन की तरह। यहां तक कि बिजली क्षेत्र, जिसे कांग्रेस अधोसंरचना क्षेत्र मानती रही है, उसका भी निजीकरण किए जाने की आवश्यकता है। यह राज्य सरकारों के राजकोष पर बोझ बन चुका है।

एक बार फिर ठीक चीन के तर्ज पर हमें सरकारी जमीन को बड़े निजी कारोबारियों को बेचना चाहिए ताकि वे वहां कार्यालय और आवास बना सकें। यह ऐसा क्षेत्र है जिसकी मांग हमेशा बनी रहती है। यह निवेश में कई गुना इजाफा करने वाली बात होगी।

साहब, दाएं मुड़िए

लब्बोलुआब यह कि मोदी को अब कांग्रेस का अनुकरण करना बंद कर देना चाहिए। अब बहुत हो गया। उन्हें उस मॉडल से निजात पाकर निजी पूंजी का समर्थन करना चाहिए।

वह भारी बहुमत से जीतकर पहले ही यह स्पष्ट कर चुके हैं कि आरएसएस के साथ रिश्ते में वह भारी रहेंगे। आरएसएस भी उतना ही यथास्थितिवादी है जितने कि कांग्रेस और माकपा। अब उन्हें भारत को सही मायने में निजी उद्यमों के नेतृत्व वाली अर्थव्यवस्था बनाना चाहिए।

वर्ष 2014 में उन्होंने विकास को अपने प्रचार का केंद्र बनाया था लेकिन वह समाजवादी विचार से बाहर नहीं निकल पाए। उन्होंने पूंजी का निहायत गैर किफायती इस्तेमाल किया। 2019 के आम चुनाव में उन्होंने राष्ट्रवाद को मुद्दा बनाया।

अगर इस बार भी वह रोजगार और काम के मोर्चे पर अच्छा प्रदर्शन करने में नाकाम रहे तो 2024 का चुनाव किस मुद्दे पर लड़ेंगे। वह मतदाताओं को दोबार बेवकूफ नहीं बना सकते। ऐसे में उन्हें निजी क्षेत्र का समुचित इस्तेमाल करना होगा। उनके पास यह कौशल है कि वे अपने विचारों का क्रियान्वयन करवा पाएं।

एक बार अगर उन्होंने ऐसा करने का मन बना लिया तो बाकी सब हो जाएगा। मुझे यकीन है कि सैम पित्रोदा यह कहते हुए उनकी सहायता करके प्रसन्न होंगे, किया तो किया।

कानाफूसी

विभूतियों का विश्वविद्यालय

नई सरकार में चंद चेहरे ऐसे हैं जिनके बारे में जानकर कोई भी आश्चर्य कर सकता है कि क्रांतिकारी सरकार का हिस्सा बन रहे हैं। बतौर एक शैक्षणिक संस्थान पिछले कुछ सालों में जवाहर लाल नेहरू विश्वविद्यालय के बारे में काफी कुछ अनापशनाप कहा गया। कहा गया कि यह ऐसी जगह है जहां छात्र पढ़ाई कम करते हैं और राजनीतिक चर्चा अधिक करते हैं। इसी जेएनयू के दो छात्र एस जयशंकर और निर्मला सीतारमण सरकार में मंत्री बनाए गए हैं। विदेश मंत्री जयशंकर ने भारतीय विदेश सेवा में शामिल होने से पहले जेएनयू से एम ए, एम फिल और पीएचडी की डिग्री ली। वहीं निर्मला सीतारमण ने यहां से अर्थशास्त्र में डिग्री ली है। सीतारमण न केवल अच्छी छात्रा थीं बल्कि उन्होंने वहां छात्र राजनीति में भी अच्छा खासा दखल रखा। उनकी वहां माकपा की छात्र इकाई एसएफआई के खिलाफ एक मुक्त विचारक की छवि थीं। ऐसे में अब कहा जा सकता है कि जिस विश्वविद्यालय ने देश को कुछ शीर्ष मंत्री दिए हैं, वहां कुछ तो बेहतर भी हो रहा होगा।

आपका पक्ष

घरेलू विमानन कंपनियों पर नजर

केवल परिचालन लाभ पर विमानन कंपनियां नहीं चल सकती हैं। उन्हें मजबूत होने के लिए सरकार का पूरा सहयोग चाहिए। अन्य उद्योगों की तरह इसे लाभप्रद होना चाहिए। ये कंपनियां घरेलू निर्माण और घरेलू उड़ान पर अधिक ध्यान देंगी तो अधिक संख्या में भारतीय नागरिकों की उन तक पहुंच भी होगी। निर्माण एवं उड़ान घरेलू हों इस पर भरपूर सरकारी प्रोत्साहन मिले। बेतहाशा ऋण लेने एवं वित्तीय संस्थाओं द्वारा देने से ही विमानन कंपनियां कठिनाइयों से घिर गई हैं। लगता है कंपनियों की रुचि अंतरराष्ट्रीय उड़ानों में अधिक है। विदेशी विमान खरीदने में भी उनकी रुचि ज्यादा है। कहीं यह उनके संकट का न्यौता तो नहीं है। विदेशी विमानों तथा विदेशी विमानन कंपनियों से समझौता कहीं निजी भारतीय विमानन कंपनियों की मजबूरी तो नहीं है। क्या इसका एक कारण सरकार की मजबूरी तो नहीं है। हवाई जहाजों, ड्रोन आदि पर सरकार अरबों रुपये लगा सकती है क्या इसमें से आधी रकम घरेलू विनिर्माण एवं अनुसंधान पर नहीं लगा सकती है। क्या लंबी दूरी की उड़ानें जिनके अधिकांश यात्री गैर भारतीय हों भारतीय कंपनियों को मुनाफा दिलाती रही हैं। सरकार को इस क्षेत्र में उचित कदम उठाने की जरूरत है जिससे कि घाटे में चल रही विमानन कंपनियां उबर सकें।

हिम्मत जोशी, नागपुर

विमानन कंपनियों को घाटे से उबारने के लिए सरकार को कदम उठाने चाहिए

जंगल की आग से उठते सवाल

हाल ही में उत्तराखंड के कई जंगलों में आग लगने की घटनाएं हुई हैं। राज्य के वनाच्छादित जिले पिथौरागढ़, अल्मोड़ा, नैनीताल, बागेश्वर, टिहरी, उत्तरकाशी, रुद्रप्रयाग और देहरादून जिलों में जंगल की आग से काफी नुकसान हो रहा है। इसमें से कुछ जंगलों में लगी आग पर काबू पा लिया गया है, लेकिन अभी भी कई जगह जंगल में आग लगी हुई है। इस भीषण गर्मी में जंगलों में आग लगने से न सिर्फ वनस्पतियां नष्ट होती हैं, बल्कि वन्य जीवों के भी अस्तित्व पर खतरा रहता है। सरकारी आंकड़ों के मुताबिक अब तक कुल मिलाकर जंगल में आग लगने की 1,600 से अधिक घटनाएं हुई हैं। बहरहाल, विज्ञान कितना भी तरक्की कर ले, लेकिन मनुष्य प्रकृति के आगे सदैव बौना साबित हुआ है। उत्तराखंड में प्रतिवर्ष फरवरी के बाद जंगलों में आग लगने की घटनाएं शुरू हो जाती हैं। प्रशासन आग बुझाने की कोशिस करता है लेकिन दावानल के सामने नतीजा सिफर रहता है। जून आते-आते हजारों हेक्टेयर क्षेत्र में आग लग जाती है। इस दौरान भीषण गर्मी में आग बुझाना प्रशासन के बस में नहीं रहता है। लिहाजा, प्रशासन खानापूर्ति कर जुलाई में बारिश के साथ हो लेता है। अब सवाल यह उठता है कि जंगलों में लगी आग को बुझाने के लिए तकनीकी तरक्की, पर्यावरणीय राज्य, जैविक संतुलन और पर्यटन की अपार संभावना सहेजे राज्य के प्रति इस तरह की लापरवाही क्यों? पहले से ही हम साफ पानी, स्वच्छ हवा और सदाबहार मौसम के लिए कई चुनौतियों का सामना कर रहे हैं। इसके अलावा हमें पर्यावरण से संबंधित कई सवाल के जवाब का इंतजार है।

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

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दैनिक जागरण

आसान से आसान काम भी शुरुआत में मुश्किल लगता है

हिंदी को लेकर हल्ला

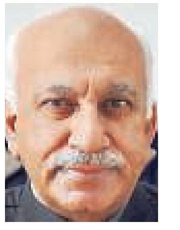
नई शिक्षा नीति का मसौदा सामने आते ही तमिलनाडु में जिस तरह हिंदी का विरोध शुरू हो गया उससे यही साबित होता है कि हमारे देश में कुछ नेता किस तरह विरोध के नाम पर विरोध की राजनीति करने के लिए तैयार बैठे रहते हैं। निःसंदेह नई शिक्षा नीति के मसौदे में त्रिभाषा फार्मूले की चर्चा की गई है, लेकिन इसका यह मतलब नहीं कि गैर हिंदी भाषी राज्यों में हिंदी लागू करने का फैसला ले लिया गया है। कम से कम नेताओं को तो यह अच्छी तरह पता होना चाहिए कि प्रस्ताव और फैसले में अंतर होता है। शिक्षा नीति के संदर्भ में तो यह न जाने कब से स्पष्ट है कि पहले उसका मसौदा आता है और फिर उस पर व्यापक चर्चा के बाद आम सहमति से उसे लागू किया जाता है। समझना कठिन है कि तमिलनाडु के कुछ नेताओं ने यह निष्कर्ष कैसे निकाल लिया कि नई शिक्षा नीति में जो कुछ कहा गया है वह अंतिम फैसले के रूप में है? यह आश्चर्यजनक है कि इस तरह का निष्कर्ष निकालने वालों में पूर्व केंद्रीय मंत्री और कांग्रेस के वरिष्ठ नेता पी चिदंबरम भी शामिल हैं। स्पष्ट है कि तमिलनाडु के नेता लोगों की भावनाओं को भड़काकर अपना राजनीतिक स्वार्थ सिद्ध करना चाह रहे हैं। उनके इस रवैये के चलते तमिलनाडु में कुछ अन्य संगठन भी हिंदी के विरोध में आगे आ जाएं तो हैरत नहीं। वैसे भी यह एक तथ्य है कि तमिलनाडु में रह-रहकर हिंदी के खिलाफ आवाज उठती रहती है। यह आवाज उठाने के लिए तरह-तरह के बहाने इसलिए खोज लिए जाते हैं, क्योंकि कुछ लोगों ने हिंदी विरोध को अपनी राजनीति का जरिया बना लिया है। यह बात और है कि यही लोग जब चुनाव आते हैं तो तमिलनाडु के हिंदी भाषी लोगों को लुभाने के लिए अपने पोस्टर-बैनर हिंदी में लगवाते हैं!

तमिलनाडु अथवा देश के अन्य राज्यों के लोग हिंदी के विरोध में कुछ भी क्यों न कहें, इस तथ्य की अनदेखी नहीं की जा सकती कि राष्ट्रभाषा का दर्जा न हासिल करने के बावजूद हिंदी देश की सबसे प्रभावशाली संपर्क भाषा बन गई है। आज यदि देश में कोई भाषा संपर्क भाषा का स्थान लेने की योग्यता रखती है तो वह हिंदी ही है। वास्तव में इसी कारण देश के गैर हिंदी भाषी इलाकों में हिंदी का तेजी से विस्तार हुआ है। इस विस्तार का एक बड़ा कारण हिंदी की उपयोगिता है। यदि हिंदी की उपयोगिता को देखते हुए उसके प्रचार-प्रसार की कोई पहल की जाती है तो आखिर इससे किसी को आपत्ति क्यों होनी चाहिए? आपत्ति करने वालों को इस सच्चाई से परिचित होना चाहिए कि दक्षिण और पूर्वोत्तर भारत के लोगों के लिए हिंदी एक आवश्यकता बन गई है। आज जब नौकरी, व्यापार आदि के कारण हर प्रांत के लोगों की देश के दूसरे हिस्सों में आवाजाही और साथ ही बसाहट बढ़ती जा रही है तब फिर यह समय की मांग है कि संपर्क भाषा का पर्याय बन गई हिंदी को सहर्ष अपनाया जाए। कई राज्यों ने ऐसा ही किया है और इनमें अरुणाचल सबसे बढ़िया उदाहरण है। इस उदाहरण की अनदेखी करना सच से मुंह मोड़ना ही है।

सावधानी ही सुरक्षा

वज्रपात झारखंड की बड़ी आपदाओं में से एक बनता जा रहा है। हर साल औसतन 200 लोगों की मौत वज्रपात की विभिन्न घटनाओं में हो रही है। इनमें से अकेले 95 फीसद मौतें ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में होती हैं। राज्य के 24 में से 15 जिले वज्रपात के लेवल-वन जोन में शामिल किए गए हैं। भारतीय मौसम विज्ञान के ताजे आंकड़ों पर गौर करें तो झारखंड के स्तर पर वज्रपात की तीव्रता में पिछले पांच वर्षों में तीन गुनी वृद्धि हुई है। ये आंकड़े बरसात के मौसम में जान-माल की व्यापक क्षति की ओर इशारा करते हैं। ऐसे में विशेष एहतियात ही सुरक्षा का मूलमंत्र है। झारखंड में वज्रपात से होने वाली मौतों पर गौर करें तो 95 फीसद मौतें ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में होती हैं। इनमें से 60 फीसद जानें किसानों की जा रही हैं, जबकि 35 फीसद बच्चे हताहत हो रहे हैं। ऐसी स्थिति में वज्रपात से बचने के वैज्ञानिक उपायों को ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में अधिक प्रचारित और प्रसारित करने की आवश्यकता है। इससे इतर सरकार न तो वज्रपात की पूर्व सूचना तंत्र को मजबूत करने की दिशा में असरदार नजर आती है और न ही ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में तड़ित चालक लगाने की दिशा में ही हाल के वर्षों में विशेष प्रयास हुए हैं। बहरहाल देर से ही सही सरकार इस मामले में गंभीर हुई है। अगले तीन वर्षों में वज्रपात से होने वाली मौतों में 80 फीसद कमी लाने का लक्ष्य केंद्र सरकार ने निर्धारित किया है। क्लाइमेट रेजीलिएंट ऑब्जर्विंग सिस्टम प्रमोशन काउंसिल (करोपसी) के सौजन्य से इस बाबत झारखंड में वज्रपात सुरक्षित अभियान चलाने की तैयारी है। करोपसी की योजना इस अभियान को तीन चरणों में मूर्त रूप देने की है। अभियान के पहले चरण में विशेष जोर वज्रपात के पूर्वानुमान की जानकारी एक-एक व्यक्ति तक पहुंचाने पर होगा। दूसरा चरण वज्रपात से बचने के उपायों को रेखांकित करने वाला होगा। तीसरे और अंतिम चरण में वज्रपात प्रभावित क्षेत्रों में अवस्थित घरों पर तड़ित चालक लगाने की कार्यवाही होगी। यह सर्वविदित है कि सावधानी में ही सुरक्षा है। ऐसे में जरूरी है कि सरकार विभिन्न स्टेक होल्डरों के सहयोग से इस अभियान को जनांदोलन का रूप दे, क्योंकि सबसे महत्वपूर्ण सवाल लोगों की जान माल की सुरक्षा का है।

मुस्लिम महिलाओं ने भी मुमकिन बनाई जीत



एमजे अकबर

आखिर तमाम मुस्लिम महिलाओं ने भाजपा को वोट क्यों दिया? इसका जवाब बिल्कुल भी जटिल नहीं है। उन्हें लगा कि प्रधानमंत्री मोदी की नीतियां उनके और उनके परिवार के लिए अच्छी हैं

वर्ष 1952 में हुए पहले आम चुनाव के साथ ही हर एक चुनाव के साथ कुछ आम धारणाएं लगातार ध्वस्त होती आई हैं। हालांकि इसका कोई एक निश्चित प्रारूप नहीं रहा है। कुछ दौर ऐसे भी रहे जब बदलाव की बयार उतनी तेज नहीं थी और दुविधाग्रस्त मतदाताओं ने खंडित जनादेश ही दिया। 1980 से 2014 के बीच साढ़े तीन दशकों तक मतदाता निरंतर रूप से परिवर्तन के आभास वाले जाल में फंसते रहे जबकि प्रगति की प्रकृति वैसी नहीं थी। हालांकि ऐसी दलील दी जाती है कि 1984 का जनादेश ऐतिहासिक था, लेकिन तब लोगों ने अर्थव्यवस्था या सुशासन के बजाय श्रीमती इंदिरा गांधी की निर्मम हत्या से उपजी सहानुभूति के आधार पर मतदान किया था।

वर्ष 2004 से 2014 के बीच संप्रग के एक दशक का शासनकाल विरोधाभासों की पराकाष्ठा था। व्यवस्था से खिन्न मतदाता जहां सुशासन की मांग कर रहा था, वहीं जिन लोगों के हाथ में सत्ता की कमान थी उनका असल व्यवहार वास्तव में बद से बदतर होता जा रहा था। किसी भी कीमत पर सत्ता हासिल करने के लिए बेचैन कांग्रेस ने अवसरों की भरमार और बाजार के द्वार उसी तबके के लिए खोल दिए जो देश के संसाधन लूटने के बदले में कांग्रेस को सत्ता में बनाए रखने में मददगार बने हुए थे। भ्रष्टाचार बहुत ही संक्रामक बीमारी है। कांग्रेस पार्टी के मामले में यह संक्रमण शीर्ष से फैला। शीर्ष परिवार और उसके संगी-साथियों के खिलाफ मामलों को देखकर यही लगता है कि कांग्रेस पर काबिज शीर्ष परिवार के दोनों हाथ खजाने पर लगे हुए थे। इसमें हर किसी की चांदी हुई। ऐसी लूटपाट केवल राजनीतिक वर्ग तक सीमित नहीं रही। कारोबारी और मीडिया के दिग्गजों ने भी हरसंभव तरीके से इसका फायदा उठाया। इस तरह जनता का आक्रोश 2014 में चरम पर पहुंच गया।

उस पुरानी और जीर्ण-शीर्ण होती व्यवस्था से मुक्ति और नए बदलाव के लिए ही 2014 में नरेंद्र मोदी चुने गए। वह जो बदलाव लेकर आए उसे निरंतरता देने के लिए ही 2019 में उन्हें भारतीयों ने दोबारा जनादेश दिया ताकि वह यह सुनिश्चित कर सकें कि परिवर्तन की यह प्रक्रिया अपनी तार्किक परिणति तक पहुंचे।

यहां तक कि सोशल मीडिया पर फैले प्रधानमंत्री के कट्टर आलोचक और दिल्ली के विदेशी मीडिया क्लब भी अब न चाहते हुए यह स्वीकार कर रहे हैं कि चुनाव में जहां राहुल गांधी घिसे-पिटे जुमलों के साथ संघर्ष करते रहे वहीं नरेंद्र मोदी का एक अलग क्षितिज की दिशा में नए सिरे से उभार हुआ है। मगर ये अभी भी यह स्वीकार करने से इन्कार कर रहे हैं कि 2019 के चुनाव ने चुनावी गणित के केंद्र को बदल दिया है। चलिए मैं इस बहुआयामी परिवर्तन के केवल एक पहलू की ही परतें खोलता हूं।

मुस्लिम महिलाओं ने भारी तादाद में प्रधानमंत्री मोदी के लिए अपना वोट दिया। अगर आपको मेरी बात पर यकीन नहीं तो मैं जाने-माने मुस्लिम नेता मौलाना बदरुद्दीन अजमल के एक टेलीविजन साक्षात्कार का हवाला देना चाहूंगा। असम से ताल्लुक रखने वाले अजमल भाजपा के धुर विरोधी हैं। उस साक्षात्कार में मौलाना ने बिना किसी हिचक के कहा कि मुस्लिम महिलाओं के एक वर्ग का झुकाव प्रधानमंत्री मोदी की ओर रहा। यह साक्षात्कार यूट्यूब पर उपलब्ध है तो इसे लेकर किसी संदेह की गुंजाइश ही नहीं। इसमें उन्होंने विस्तार से बताया कि कांग्रेस ने कैसे अपने छल-कपट से लगातार मुसलमानों के साथ धोखा किया। इससे यह पुष्टि होती है कि राजनीतिक दलों ने भले ही धीरे-धीरे और संभवतः बहुत हिचक के साथ जनसांख्यिकीय गणित में बड़े बदलाव के रुझान को स्वीकार करना शुरू कर दिया है।

असल में दो कारकों से समीकरण बदल रहे हैं। पहली बार ऐसा हुआ है कि मुस्लिम वर्ग के एक बड़े हिस्से का वोट किसी भाजपा नेता को मिला है। दूसरा यही कि मुस्लिम महिलाओं ने अपने खुद के हितों को देखते हुए वोट देने का फैसला किया और इसमें पुरुषों द्वारा आम तौर पर दी जाने वाली दलीलों को कहीं नहीं टिकतीं। मुस्लिम महिलाओं ने बड़ी शांति से परिवर्तन को मूर्त रूप दिया। यह आसानी से समझा जा सकता था, मगर खामोशी के साथ किए गए उनके विद्रोह ने एक बड़ा अंतर पैदा किया। अब आंकड़े भी आ गए हैं तो चलिए उनकी एक झलक पर भी नजर डाल लेते हैं। भाजपा ने मुस्लिम बहुल आबादी वाली 50 प्रतिशत से अधिक सीटें जीतीं। वर्ष 2008 में कांग्रेसनीत संप्रग सरकार में इन सीटों को चिन्हित किया गया था। भाजपा की तुलना में कांग्रेस ने 2014 में इनमें से 12 सीटों पर जीत हासिल की थी और इस बार वह ऐसी केवल छह सीटों पर ही जीत पाई है। अगर आपको एकबारगी यह लगे कि यह 'गैर-मुस्लिम वोटों' की बड़ी लामबंदी का परिणाम है तो फिर हमें बंगाल के दो उदाहरणों पर भी गौर करना चाहिए। पश्चिम बंगाल में 2019 से पहले भाजपा का मामूली प्रभाव था। वहां की रायगंज और मालदा उत्तर सीट पर तकरीबन आधी आबादी मुस्लिम है। रायगंज में 49 प्रतिशत तो मालदा में 50 प्रतिशत मुस्लिम मतदाता हैं। भाजपा ने रायगंज सीट जहां 60,674 वोटों से जीती वहीं मालदा में उसे 84,288 वोटों से जीत हासिल हुई। ऐसे में कोई संदेह नहीं कि अगर भाजपा को मुस्लिमों के बड़ी संख्या में मत नहीं मिले होते तो वह इनमें से किसी भी सीट पर नहीं जीत पाती। ये वोट मुस्लिम महिलाओं के ही थे।

आखिर तमाम मुस्लिम महिलाओं का मानस कैसे बदला? इसका जवाब बिल्कुल भी जटिल नहीं है। उन्हें लगा कि प्रधानमंत्री मोदी की नीतियां उनके और उनके परिवार के लिए अच्छी हैं। तीन तलाक की समाप्ति के वादे ने भी कुछ असर दिखाया। मगर इससे भी ज्यादा महत्वपूर्ण मिशन-मोड वाले ऐसे कार्यक्रम रहे जिन्होंने सभी तबके की महिलाओं को प्रभावित किया। विशेषकर शौचालय, गैस सिलेंडर, बैंक खाते और पक्के मकान का वादा। मुस्लिम महिलाओं की आंखें पुरुषों की तुलना में कहीं अधिक खुली रहीं। उन्होंने देखा कि सरकारी योजनाओं के फायदे पहुंचाने में कोई भेदभाव नहीं किया गया। उन्होंने दुष्प्रचार पर वास्तविकता को तरजीह दी। उन्होंने खुली आंखों और खुले दिमाग के साथ मोदी को वोट दिया।

यह 2019 के आम चुनाव का यह एक अहम पहलू है। मुसलमानों को मोदी के खिलाफ भड़काने में कुछ ताकतों ने कोई कोर-कसर नहीं छोड़ी। इस जनादेश ने उनके मोदी विरोधी विमर्श और आक्रामक प्रचार की हवा निकाल दी। 2019 एक नई शुरुआत का प्रस्थान बिंदु है। इसके साथ ही एक नई प्रक्रिया शुरू हुई है। अगर यह शुरुआत माहौल कायम रहता है तो यह राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर भारतीय चुनावों को नए सिरे से परिभाषित करेगा।

(लेखक पूर्व केंद्रीय मंत्री एवं वरिष्ठ स्तंभकार हैं)

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यथार्थ के धरातल पर भारत की पाक नीति

दिव्य कुमार सोती

मोदी ने साफ कर दिया है कि यदि पाक संबंध सुधारना चाहता है तो पहले उसे अपने आतंकी संगठनों पर कार्रवाई करनी होगी

प्रचंड बहुमत के साथ सत्ता में वापसी पर प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी को तमाम राष्ट्राध्यक्षों से बधाई संदेश मिले। ऐसे में पाक प्रधानमंत्री इमरान खान ने भी ट्वीट कर बधाई दी, जिसका प्रधानमंत्री मोदी ने औपचारिक जवाब भी दिया। इसके साथ ही मोदी सरकार की आगे की पाकिस्तान नीति को लेकर कयास लगने शुरू हो गए थे, पर तमाम कयासों के उलट इमरान खान को मोदी के शपथ ग्रहण समारोह का न्योता नहीं मिला। पिछली बार नरेंद्र मोदी ने अपने शपथग्रहण समारोह में सार्क देशों के नेताओं को आमंत्रित किया था। तब नवाज शरीफ भारत पहुंचे थे। इमरान खान तब विपक्ष में थे और उन्होंने शरीफ को इस कदम के लिए जमकर कोसा था। इस बार न्योता न मिलने से पाकिस्तान सरकार खिसियाई हुई है। प्रधानमंत्री मोदी ने अपने शपथ ग्रहण समारोह में सार्क देशों की जगह बिम्सटेक देशों को बुलाकर दो स्पष्ट संदेश दिए हैं। पहला संदेश विश्व के लिए है कि भारत अब दक्षिण एशिया तक सीमित शक्ति नहीं रहा है। दूसरा संदेश पाकिस्तान के लिए है कि वह सार्क के मंच का दुरुपयोग करके दक्षिण एशियाई देशों की सामूहिक प्रगति को रोके नहीं रख सकता। मोदी ने एक झटके में दक्षिण एशियाई कूटनीतिक जगत की दृष्टि पाकिस्तान से हटाकर दक्षिण-पूर्व एशिया की ओर कर दी है जो भारत की 'पूरब की ओर देखो' नीति के भी अनुरूप है।

पुलवामा हमले और बालाकोट में आतंकी शिविरों पर भारत द्वारा जवाबी कार्रवाई के बाद बहुत बड़े जनादेश के साथ प्रधानमंत्री मोदी की सत्ता में वापसी ने उन्हें ऐसी मजबूत स्थिति में लाकर खड़ा कर दिया है जैसी शायद किसी और प्रधानमंत्री की नहीं रही है। इसके ठीक उलट उतनी ही कमजोर स्थिति इस समय इमरान खान और पाकिस्तान की है। यह सही है कि 1971 में भारत के हाथों युद्ध में मुंह की खाने और दो टुकड़े होने पर पाकिस्तान की दुर्गति हुई थी, पर उस समय अमेरिका का हाथ उसके सिर पर बना रहा था और शिमला समझौते के तहत इंदिरा गांधी द्वारा 93,000 युद्धबंदी सैनिकों को रिहा किए जाने से पाकिस्तान को संजीवनी भी मिल गई थी। आज के हालात पाकिस्तान के लिए कई मायनों में कहीं अधिक बदतर हैं। पाकिस्तान में महंगाई अब बेतहाशा बढ़ चुकी है। पाकिस्तानी मुद्रा का घोर अवमूल्यन हो रहा है। आतंकवाद के समर्थन के चलते अंतरराष्ट्रीय आर्थिक प्रतिबंधों का सामना करना पड़ रहा है और अमेरिका ने पाकिस्तान की ढाल बनना बंद कर दिया है। जिस चीन-पाक आर्थिक गलियारे के बल पर पाकिस्तान समृद्धि के सपने देख रहा था उसकी सुरक्षा को लेकर खतरे बढ़ते ही जा रहे हैं। हाल ही में बलूच विद्रोहियों ने इस गलियारे के हिस्से के तौर पर चीन द्वारा विकसित किए गए ग्वादर बंदरगाह के पास एक नामी पांच सितारा होटल को निशाना बनाया जिसमें बड़ी तादाद में चीनी निवेशक और व्यापारी ठहरते हैं। इस बीच मोदी सरकार बार-बार दोहरा रही है कि पाकिस्तान के इशारे पर भारत पर कोई भी आतंकी हमला हुआ तो भारत एक बार फिर जवाबी कार्रवाई करेगा। ऐसी स्थिति में पाकिस्तान का भारत से बातचीत के लिए लालायित होना स्वाभाविक है।

वैसे नरेंद्र मोदी ने अपने पिछले कार्यकाल में ही भारत की पाकिस्तान नीति को अमन की आशा और मोमबत्ती गैंग की रूमानियत से मुक्त कर दिया है। मोदी पहले दिन से ही पाकिस्तान के साथ सावधानी बरतते रहे हैं, जिसके कारण पाकिस्तान को कूटनीतिक शरारत का मौका नहीं मिल पाया है। नरेंद्र मोदी और अजीत डोभाल की जोड़ी ने भारत की पाक नीति को यथार्थवाद से लैस किया है। प्रधानमंत्री मोदी ने अपने भाषणों में बार-बार दोहराया भी है कि भारत महानता और वैभवशीलता की ओर अग्रसर है और हमारी विदेश नीति को पाकिस्तान केंद्रित होने की कोई जरूरत नहीं है।

अब शंघाई सहयोग संगठन (एससीओ) की बैठक में मोदी और इमरान खान आमने-सामने होंगे। अभी तक इस समूह की बैठक से अलग दोनों नेताओं में औपचारिक मुलाकात तय नहीं है। हालांकि इसको लेकर तरह तरह के कयास लगाए जा रहे हैं। अगर बातचीत होती भी है तो पाकिस्तान अब मोदी से ज्यादा रियायत की उम्मीद नहीं कर सकता। फोन पर बातचीत के दौरान मोदी ने इमरान को यह स्पष्ट कर दिया है कि क्षेत्र की शांति के लिए आतंक मुक्त माहौल जरूरी है। इसके साथ ही मोदी ने पाकिस्तान के लिए लकीर खींच दी है कि वह दोनों देशों के संबंधों में जरा भी प्रगति करना चाहता है तो पहले उसे अपने यहां पल रहे आतंकी संगठनों पर कार्रवाई करनी ही होगी। मतलब अगर बातचीत होती भी है तो उफा की तर्ज पर होगी और पूरी तरह पाकिस्तान द्वारा फैलाए जा रहे सीमापार आतंकवाद पर ही केंद्रित होगी। यह भी ध्यान देने की बात है कि पाकिस्तान बार-बार भारत से बातचीत की इच्छा तो जताता है, पर बातचीत सुचारू रूप से हो सके उसके लिए हुर्रियत नेताओं तक से संपर्क तोड़ने को तैयार नहीं है तो खुद के पाले-पोसे लश्कर और जैश जैसे आतंकी संगठनों पर क्या ठोस कार्रवाई करेगा? जाहिर है कि विश्व स्तर पर अलग-थलग पड़े पाकिस्तान द्वारा भारत से बातचीत की पेशकश फाइनेंशियल एक्शन टास्क फोर्स यानी एफएटीएफ जैसी अंतरराष्ट्रीय संस्थाओं की ओर से बढ़ते आर्थिक प्रतिबंधों से बचने के लिए की जाती है।

अगर शुद्ध कूटनीतिक लेन-देन की दृष्टि से भी देखा जाए तो भारत-पाक के बीच क्या लेन-देन हो सकता है। पाकिस्तान भारत को अपनी जमीन का इस्तेमाल अफगानिस्तान को आर्थिक मदद पहुंचाने के लिए नहीं करने देता है। इसके बावजूद चीन और पाकिस्तान यह उम्मीद करते हैं कि भारत की संप्रभुता का उल्लंघन कर बनाए गए चीन-पाक आर्थिक गलियारे जैसी परियोजना पर भारत हामी भर दे। ऐसा कैसे संभव है? किसी भी सकारात्मक बातचीत के लिए पाकिस्तान को अपनी सोच में आमूलचूल परिवर्तन लाना होगा और वह जमीनी स्तर पर दिखना भी चाहिए। कश्मीर पर सौदेबाजी की तो अब कोई गुंजाइश ही नहीं बची है, क्योंकि एक तो भाजपा अनुच्छेद 370 और 35ए जैसे मुद्दों पर कार्रवाई का संकल्प बार-बार दोहरा रही है और दूसरे प्रधानमंत्री मोदी ने अपने पिछले कार्यकाल में सर्जिकल स्ट्राइक और बालाकोट में हवाई हमले का आदेश देकर इस बात की गुंजाइश ही खत्म कर दी है कि पाकिस्तान भारत को किसी भी प्रकार के दबाव में लेकर कुछ भी हासिल कर सकता है। ऐसे में पाकिस्तान के पास विकल्प बहुत कम बचे हैं।

(लेखक काउंसिल फॉर स्ट्रेटेजिक अफेयर्स से संबद्ध सामरिक विश्लेषक हैं)

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ऊर्जा

उपकार

हमारे जीवन में तीन लोगों का महान उपकार होता है-माता-पिता और गुरु का। इनके उपकार को हमें कभी नहीं भूलना चाहिए, क्योंकि इनके कारण ही हमारा अस्तित्व है। ये तीनों हमारे लिए सदैव आदरणीय होते हैं। माता-पिता ने हमें जन्म दिया और हमारा पालन-पोषण किया है। इस तरह हमारे माता-पिता ने हम पर अनगिनत उपकार किए हैं। उनके उपकारों को हम अपनी पूरी जिंदगी में भी नहीं उतार सकते हैं। ईश्वर से पहले माता-पिता की पूजा की जाती है। ईश्वर ने हमारे पालन-पोषण और रक्षा के लिए माता-पिता को भेजा है। कहा गया है कि भगवान न दिखाई देने वाले माता-पिता हैं और माता-पिता दिखाई देने वाले भगवान हैं। हमने ईश्वर को नहीं देखा है, लेकिन अपने माता-पिता को देखा है, इसलिए हमारे माता-पिता हमारे लिए भगवान का ही रूप हैं। माता-पिता की सेवा ईश्वर की ही सेवा है। जब हम माता-पिता की सेवा करते हैं तो ईश्वर हमसे काफी प्रसन्न होते हैं। माता-पिता के आशीर्वाद से हमें हर मुसीबत से छुटकारा मिलता है और हमें हर क्षेत्र में सफलता मिलती है। उनका आदर करना ही हमारा धर्म है।

हमारे लिए जिन कष्टों का सामना हमारे माता-पिता करते हैं, उसका वर्णन करना मुमकिन नहीं, इसलिए माता-पिता की सेवा से कभी भागना नहीं चाहिए, यह पाप है। माता-पिता ने हमारे लिए जो कुछ भी किया है, इसके लिए हमें उनका सदैव ऋणी रहना चाहिए। माता-पिता की सेवा कभी व्यर्थ नहीं जाती है। जिस व्यक्ति को माता-पिता की सेवा का अवसर मिलता है, उससे भाग्यशाली कोई दूसरा नहीं। जो लोग माता-पिता की सेवा नहीं करते हैं, उनके बच्चे उनके साथ वैसा ही व्यवहार करते हैं। हमें माता-पिता का सम्मान करना चाहिए, इससे हमारी आने वाली पीढ़ी वैसा ही सीखती है। जो बच्चे माता-पिता की सेवा नहीं करते, उन्हें समझना चाहिए कि कल जब वे बुजुर्ग होंगे, तब उन्हें भी इसका सामना करना पड़ सकता है। यदि आज वे अपने माता-पिता की सेवा करेंगे तो कल उनके बच्चे भी उनकी सेवा करेंगे। कई बार माता-पिता ऐसे पेश आते हैं कि बच्चे उन्हें अपना दुश्मन मानने लगते हैं और वे उनका आदर नहीं करते, लेकिन हमें हमेशा माता-पिता का आदर करना चाहिए, क्योंकि वे जो कुछ भी कहते या करते हैं, वह हमारी भलाई के लिए ही होता है।

आचार्य अनिल वत्स

बुजुर्गों की बढ़ती उपेक्षा चिंताजनक

रामकृष्ण जायसवाल

यदि हम अपने वरिष्ठ जनों के साथ समुचित व्यवहार करेंगे, तभी हमारा समाज एक सभ्य समाज बन सकेगा

समाज के बदलते परिदृश्य का सबसे बड़ा सबसे गहरा प्रभाव संबंधों पर पड़ा है, जिसका परिणाम यह हुआ है कि माता-पिता और संतानों के बीच संबंध भी दबाव में आ गए हैं। 1992 में जहां अकेले या अपने जीवन साथी के साथ रहने वाले बुजुर्गों का प्रतिशत नौ था, वहीं 2006 में बढ़कर 19 प्रतिशत हो गया! दिल्ली के एक गैर सरकारी संगठन एजवेल फाउंडेशन ने हाल ही में एक सर्वेक्षण किया है। उसके मुताबिक देश में करीब हर चौथा बुजुर्ग (23.44 फीसद) अकेला रह रहा है। इसमें आधुनिकीकरण और व्यक्तिवादी संस्कृति का बड़ा हाथ है।

हालांकि बुजुर्गों की बढ़ती संख्या और उनकी सामाजिक, पारिवारिक एवं आर्थिक समस्याओं को देखते हुए सरकार ने 2007 में माता-पिता और वरिष्ठ नागरिकों का भरण-पोषण करने के लिए मासिक भत्ता देना अनिवार्य कर दिया था। 2018 में इस कानून का और विस्तार करके गैर-जिम्मेदार संतानों को जेल भेजने का भी प्रावधान कर दिया गया, लेकिन देखा जाय तो बुजुर्गों को सरकार की नीतियों से ज्यादा मानवीय मूल्यों की दरकार है। यह व्यक्ति को स्वयं आभास कराएगी कि वरिष्ठ नागरिकों की देखभाल तथा उनकी सुरक्षा का दायित्व सरकार का नहीं, बल्कि उस प्रत्येक व्यक्ति का है जो समाज का अंग है। दरअसल समाज के मूल्यों के निरंतर क्षरण से ही आज वृद्ध आश्रमों की संख्या लगातार बढ़ रही है। आंकड़ों के अनुसार 2011-15 के बीच केरल में वृद्धाश्रमों में रहने वालों की संख्या 69 प्रतिशत बढ़ गई। हालांकि यह सामान्य सी बात है कि प्रगति के बढ़ते अवसरों के चलते परिवार को उसी परंपरागत रूप में चला पाना संभव नहीं प्रतीत होता, किंतु अपने परंपरागत मूल्यों और नैतिक मूल्यों के बीच संतुलन स्थापित करना भी समाज का दायित्व है।

महत्वपूर्ण बात यह है कि आर्थिक सुरक्षा के अलावा पारिवारिक मधुरता के मामले में कानून कुछ नहीं कर सकता। इससे बुजुर्गों के एकाकीपन की समस्या बढ़ती जा रही है। बुजुर्गों में एक बहुत बड़ी आबादी उपेक्षा और उदासी का जीवन व्यतीत कर रही है।

हालांकि सरकारों ने बुजुर्गों के लिए कई योजनाएं बनाई जरूर हैं, किंतु उनका क्रियान्वयन ठीक से न होने के कारण वे मात्र हाथी दांत के समान ही प्रतीत हो रही हैं। आज देश के 50 प्रतिशत से भी अधिक वृद्ध आर्थिक रूप से दूसरों पर निर्भर हैं। आने वाले समय में स्वास्थ्य सेवाएं और सामाजिक कुव्यवस्था की वजह से वृद्धों की समस्याएं और बढ़ने के आसार हैं। आज युवाओं की सोच बदलने की आवश्यकता है। साथ वरिष्ठ नागरिकों को आधिकारिक तौर पर स्वास्थ्य, आवास और गरिमा प्रदान करने की जरूरत है। अनेक व्यवसाय भी ऐसे हैं जहां सेवानिवृत्त नागरिकों के अनुभव एवं कौशल का उपयोग किया जा सकता है। उनके लिए उनकी क्षमता के अनुसार काम के घंटे भी दिए जा सकते हैं, जिससे वृद्धों में आर्थिक स्वतंत्रता की भावना बनी रहे। इसके अलाव समाज में उन मानवीय मूल्यों की स्थापना करने की जरूरत है, जिनका क्षरण होता जा रहा है। यदि हम अपने वरिष्ठ जनों के साथ समुचित व्यवहार करेंगे, तभी हमारा समाज एक सभ्य समाज बन सकेगा।

(लेखक स्वतंत्र टिप्पणीकार हैं)

मेलबाक्स

भाजपा के चाणक्य शाह

चुनावी रणनीति के शहंशाह शीर्षक से लिखे अपने लेख में प्रदीप सिंह ने भाजपा को इस बार के लोकसभा चुनाव में प्रचंड जीत के लिए प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी के साथ अध्यक्ष अमित शाह के भी भरपूर योगदान का वर्णन किया है। पार्टी की जीत में अपनी महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाने के कारण ही अमित शाह भाजपा के 'चाणक्य' के रूप में जाने जाते है। प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने इस बार के लोकसभा चुनाव में जीत दिलाने के लिए सबका साथ, सबका विकास मंत्र का अनुपालन किया तो अमित शाह ने पार्टी को एकजुट और जहां इन्हें लगा पार्टी थोड़ी कमजोर है, वहां उस कमजोरी को दूर करने के उपाय किए। मोदी और शाह की जोड़ी की बदौलत आज देश में भगवा रंग चढ़ गया। किसी भी राजनीतिक पार्टी को जीत के शिखर तक पहुंचाने के लिए उचित नेतृत्व की बहुत जरूरत होती है। उचित नेतृत्व ही पार्टी में अनुशासन बना और गुटबंदी रोक सकता है। नरेंद्र मोदी और अमित शाह ने भी भाजपा का उचित नेतृत्व कर इसको इस बार के लोकसभा चुनाव में 300 के पार पहुंचा दिया। हालांकि इन सबके बावजूद अमित शाह पंजाब में अपना कमाल नहीं दिखा पाए। भाजपा के अब जो नए अध्यक्ष बनेंगे उन्हें इस पर गौर जरूर करना चाहिए कि भाजपा और इसकी समर्थित पार्टी अकाली दल हर लोकसभा चुनाव में पंजाब में क्यों सिमट जाती है?

राजेश कुमार चौहान, जालंधर

सरकार से अपेक्षाएं

जनता केंद्र में स्थायी, दृढ़ और विश्वसनीय सरकार के पक्ष में है, जो राष्ट्र हित में कठोर निर्णय ले सके। यही कारण है कि लोकसभा चुनाव में जनता ने वंशवाद, जातिवाद और भ्रष्टाचार के विरोध में अपना मत दिया। जनता को इस सरकार से बहुत उम्मीदें हैं जिस पर सरकार को खरा उतरना होगा। खासकर शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य, कृषि, विदेश नीति और देश की आंतरिक तथा बाहरी सुरक्षा पर सरकार को दूरगामी तथा त्वरित निर्णय लेने होंगे। आर्थिक मोर्चे पर भारत की साख और दबदबा दुनिया में कायम रखना होगा। भारत के समस्त राज्यों के बीच आपसी समन्वय और सद्भाव बनाए रखने की भी महती जिम्मेदारी सरकार पर होगी। विपक्षी पार्टियों द्वारा शासित राज्यों से बेहतर तालमेल बनाए रखना आवश्यक होगा। बिना किसी भेदभाव के केंद्र सरकार को आर्थिक मदद और अन्य सुविधाएं समस्त राज्यों को उपलब्ध करवानी होंगी।

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गरीबी चिंता का विषय

भारत में 37 प्रतिशत लोग गरीबी रेखा के नीचे जीवन यापन कर रहे हैं, दूसरी तरफ विश्व बैंक की एक रिपोर्ट के अनुसार भारत के पास गरीबी से निपटने के लिए पर्याप्त साधन नहीं हैं। देश में गरीबी का मुख्य कारण भ्रष्टाचार, शोषण, शिक्षा का अभाव आदि कारण हैं। सरकार का कर्तव्य है कि वह देश के नागरिकों को गरीबी रेखा से ऊपर लाए ताकि देश के विकाश में वे भी बराबरी का सहयोग कर सकें।

अभिनव तिवारी, दिल्ली विवि

बेरोजगारी को रोकें

केंद्रीय सांख्यिकी आंकड़ों के अनुसार देश की आर्थिक वृद्धि दर 2018-19 की जनवरी-मार्च तिमाही के दौरान 5.8 प्रतिशत रही, जो पांच साल में न्यूनतम दर है। वहीं बेरोजगारी दर 6.1 फीसद जो 45 वर्षों में सबसे सर्वाधिक है, जो कि चिंताजनक है। इसके अलावा कृषि क्षेत्र भी भयानक मार झेल रहा है, जहां 2017-18 में कृषि रफ्तार पांच फीसद थी और इस समय 2.9 पर टिक गई है। ऐसे में नई सरकार को दोगुनी मेहनत करने की जरूरत है। नौकरियों के लिए सालाना लाखों-करोड़ों युवा तैयार हो रहे हैं, पहले वालों को नौकरी नहीं मिली तो आने वाले युवा की फितरत हम देख सकते हैं। सरकार को इन आंकड़ों को गंभीर रूप से लेना होगा।

आशीष, राम लाल आनंद कॉलेज, दिल्ली विवि

बच्चे भूल रहे संस्कार

आधुनिक तकनीक के आने से बच्चों पर मानसिक दबाव बढ़ा है। अब बच्चे खुले मैदान में खेलने के बजाए बंद कमरे में मोबाइल पर लगे रहते हैं। उन पर अधिक अंक लाने का भी दबाव रहता है। शहरीकरण में माता-पिता के सामाजिक संबंध भी प्रभावित हो रहे हैं। इससे बच्चे भी अछूते नहीं हैं। लोगों से मिलना-जुलना कम हो रहा है। इससे बच्चे अपने संस्कार भूलते जा रहे हैं। यह भारतीय संस्कृति लिए ठीक नहीं है।

संध्या, आंबेडकर कॉलेज, डीयू

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

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दूरभाष : नई दिल्ली कार्यालय : 23359961-62, नोएडा कार्यालय : 0120-3915800, E-mail: delhi@nda.jagran.com, R.N.I. No. DELHIN/2017/74721 * इस अंक में प्रकाशित समस्त समाचारों के चयन एवं संपादन हेतु पी.आर.बी. एक्ट के अंतर्गत उत्तरदायी। समस्त विवाद दिल्ली न्यायालय के अधीन ही होंगे। हवाई शुल्क अतिरिक्त।

रिश्ता और कारोबार

भारत और अमेरिका के बीच पिछले पांच सालों में रिश्ते काफी प्रगाढ़ हुए हैं। अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति डोनाल्ड ट्रंप ने कई मौकों पर इस प्रगाढ़ता का इजहार भी किया है। इसकी एक वजह यह भी है कि भारत की अर्थव्यवस्था लगातार मजबूत हुई है। भारत एक बड़ा बाजार है। मगर पिछले कुछ महीनों में ट्रंप सरकार ने जो कदम उठाए हैं, उसका भारत पर नकारात्मक असर पड़ने की आशंका जाहिर की जा रही है। पहले अमेरिका ने ईरान से कच्चे तेल की खरीद पर प्रतिबंध लगाया। यह फैसला ऐसे वक्त में किया गया, जब अंतरराष्ट्रीय बाजार में कच्चे तेल की कीमत काफी बढ़ चुकी है। भारत के लिए तेल की कीमतें नीचे लाना बड़ा चुनौती है। ईरान से तेल की खरीद बंद होने से यह चुनौती और बढ़ गई है। अब अमेरिका ने व्यापार में सामान्य तरजीही व्यवस्था यानी जीएसपी खत्म कर दी है। जीएसपी के तहत अमेरिका में विकासशील देशों की करीब दो हजार वस्तुएं शुल्क मुक्त भेजी और बेची जा रही थीं। अब कोई भी देश ऐसा नहीं कर पाएगा। स्वाभाविक ही इससे भारत के व्यापार पर नकारात्मक असर पड़ने की आशंका जताई जा रही है। हालांकि भारतीय वाणिज्य मंत्रालय ने कहा है कि दो देशों के रिश्तों में उतार-चढ़ाव आते रहते हैं, अमेरिकी फैसले में भी बेहतरी के रास्ते खुल सकते हैं।

अमेरिका इस वक्त आर्थिक मंदी के दौर से गुजर रहा है। डोनाल्ड ट्रंप अर्थव्यवस्था सुधारने और अमेरिकी युवाओं को रोजगार उपलब्ध कराने के वादे के साथ सत्ता में आए थे। इन पक्षों पर वे लगातार काम कर रहे हैं। इसी क्रम में उन्होंने जीएसपी खत्म करने का फैसला किया है। उन्हें लगता है कि इससे अमेरिकी वस्तुओं को घरेलू बाजार मिलेगा और जो पैसा विदेशी कंपनियां कमा रही हैं, वह अमेरिकी कंपनियों के पास रहेगा। फिर जीएसपी खत्म होने के बाद विदेशी वस्तुओं पर जो शुल्क लगेगा, उससे भी राजस्व की कमाई बढ़ेगी। अमेरिका का यह फैसला कोई हैरान करने वाला नहीं है। अर्थव्यवस्था की मंदी के दौर में सरकारें ऐसे फैसले करती हैं। मगर अमेरिका ने जिस वक्त और जिस ढंग से यह फैसला किया है, वह स्वाभाविक ही सबकी नजरों में खटक रहा है। अमेरिका की व्यापारिक और वाणिज्यिक नीतियां विश्व बाजार में अपना वर्चस्व बढ़ाने के इरादे से बदलती रही हैं। वह अक्सर अपने हितों को ऊपर रख कर ये नीतियां बनाता और समाप्त करता रहा है। इस क्रम में वह अनेक देशों को मोहरे के रूप में भी इस्तेमाल करता रहा है। इसलिए जीएसपी संबंधी उसके फैसले के पीछे के उसके इरादे को ठीक नहीं माना जा रहा।

अमेरिका के सामने चीन की अर्थव्यवस्था हमेशा प्रतिस्पर्धा खड़ी करती रही है। उससे पार पाने के वह अलग-अलग देशों के साथ व्यापारिक रिश्तों में प्रयोग करता आया है। जीएसपी संबंधी फैसला भी उसने इसी मंशा से किया है। इस फैसले का असर हालांकि कई देशों पर पड़ेगा, पर भारत में इसे लेकर इसलिए चिंता जताई जा रही है कि इस वक्त भारत खुद अर्थव्यवस्था मजबूत करने की चुनौतियों से गुजर रहा है। उसमें एक चुनौती निर्यात दर बढ़ाना भी है। इसलिए जीएसपी खत्म होने से अमेरिकी बाजार में भारतीय उत्पाद कड़ी प्रतिस्पर्धा में आएंगे। चिंता की बात इसलिए नहीं होनी चाहिए कि भारत सरकार इस बात को लेकर आश्वस्त है कि अमेरिका के साथ रिश्ते प्रगाढ़ होने की वजह से वह इस बाधा से पार पाने के रास्ते निकाल लेगी।

गरमी का सवाल

उत्तर भारत के ज्यादातर राज्य इन दिनों लू की चपेट में हैं। जैसी गरमी पड़ रही है और गरम हवा की लपटें झुलसा रही हैं, वह कोई नई बात नहीं है। शायद ही कोई साल ऐसा गुजरता हो जब गरमी के रेकार्ड टूटने की खबरें पढ़ने-देखने को न मिलती हों। मौसम विभाग की भविष्यवाणी और मीडिया की खबरों से जब पता चलता है कि इस बार ये रेकार्ड टूटा, या ये इलाका ज्यादा झुलस रहा है, तब गरमी का अहसास और बढ़ जाता है। यों तो जम्मू-कश्मीर और हिमाचल प्रदेश जैसे पहाड़ी राज्यों से लेकर राजस्थान, हरियाणा, उत्तर प्रदेश, मध्य प्रदेश, गुजरात, आंध्र प्रदेश, तेलंगाना आदि सभी राज्य प्रकृति की इस मार को झेल रहे हैं। लेकिन इस बार जिस खबर ने गरमी और बढ़ाई वह यह कि राजस्थान के श्रीगंगानगर जिले में गरमी का पचहत्तर साल का रेकार्ड टूटा और पारा उनचास डिग्री सेल्सियस तक पहुंच गया। हालांकि राजस्थान के धौलपुर जिले में पारा पचास डिग्री पहुंचने का रेकार्ड पहले से दर्ज है। दिल्ली के लिए मौसम विभाग ने रेड अलर्ट जारी किया। देश के ज्यादातर इलाकों में तापमान चवालीस से अड़तालीस डिग्री के बीच बना हुआ है। आने वाले दिनों में इससे राहत की कोई उम्मीद नहीं है, यही बात गरमी से कहीं ज्यादा परेशान करने वाली है।

ऐसा नहीं है कि रेकार्ड तोड़ गरमी आज ही पड़ रही है। लेकिन देखने में आ रहा है कि मौसम की मार से निपटने में हम पहले के मुकाबले कहीं न कहीं कमजोर पड़ते जा रहे हैं। आधुनिक जीवनशैली, खानपान, रहन-सहन के बदलते तौर-तरीकों ने हमें मौसम की मार का सामना करने के मामले में कमजोर कर दिया है। एअर कंडीशनर का ही उदाहरण लें। घर-दफ्तर यहां तक कि सार्वजनिक परिवहन के साधन जैसे बसें, टैक्सी तक एसी से युक्त हैं। कारें तो अब बिना एसी वाली आती ही नहीं हैं। गरमी से निजात पाने के लिए कस्बों, शहरों और महानगरों में मध्यवर्गीय परिवार तक दो-दो, तीन-तीन एसी लगवा लेते हैं। जो ज्यादा संपन्न हैं वे पूरे घर के लिए छोटे एसी प्लांट तक लगवाते हैं। लेकिन यही एसी अपनी गरम हवा से वातावरण की गर्मी को और बढ़ाता है, यह कोई नहीं सोचता। देश का बड़ा हिस्सा और तबका ऐसा भी है जो बिना कूलर या एसी के गरमी का सामना करता है। गरमी की तीव्रता तो उतनी ही है जितनी पचास-सौ साल पहले थी। बस फर्क इतना ही है कि अब हम उसका सामना करने के मामले में कमजोर पड़ते जा रहे हैं।

लेकिन गरमी का दूसरा भयावह पहलू भी है जो हमें यह सोचने पर विवश करता है कि क्यों नहीं हम मौसम की मार से लोगों को बचा पाते। पिछले बाईस दिनों में गरमी के प्रकोप से आंध्र प्रदेश में पैंतालीस और तेलंगाना में सत्रह लोगों की मौत हो गई। देश के कई राज्यों में बड़ी संख्या में लोग गरमी का शिकार बनते हैं, जिनकी खबर तक नहीं बनती। गरीब तबके के पास गरमी से निपटने के पर्याप्त बुनियादी इंतजाम नहीं होते। करोड़ों परिवार ऐसे हैं जिनके पास पंखे-कूलर जैसी सुविधा भी नहीं है। पीने का साफ पानी नहीं है। लू लगने पर पर्याप्त चिकित्सा सुविधा तक नहीं मिल पाती। ऐसे में गरमी गरीब को निगल जाती है। यह स्थिति एक लाचार और लापरवाह शासन तंत्र की हकीकत को बयां करती है। गरमी के मौसम में पहाड़ी क्षेत्रों में जंगल धधक उठते हैं। पिछले कई दिनों से उत्तराखंड के जंगल जल रहे हैं। सवाल है जब ऐसी घटनाओं से हम हर साल दो-चार होते हैं तो भविष्य के लिए कोई सबक क्यों नहीं लेते!

कल्पमेधा

जो व्यक्ति निश्चय कर लेता है, उसके लिए कुछ असंभव नहीं है।
-इमर्सन

सिमटती खेती, उजड़ता किसान

पंकज चतुर्वेदी

दिल्ली से सटे जिलों- गाजियाबाद, बागपत, गौतम बुद्ध नगर जिले से बीते तीन दशकों से खेत उजड़ने का जो सिलसिला शुरू हुआ, उससे भले ही कुछ लोगों के पास पैसा आ गया हो, लेकिन वह अपने साथ कई ऐसी बुराइयां व अपराध लाया कि गांवों की संस्कृति, संस्कार और सभ्यता सभी कुछ नष्ट होते चले गए। जिनके खेत थे, उन्हें तो कार, मकान और मौज-मस्ती के लिए पैसे मिल गए, लेकिन उनके खेतों में काम करने वाले बेरोजगार हो गए।

जलवायु परिवर्तन के चलते मौसम का गड़बड़ाता मिजाज खेती के लिए बड़ा संकट बन गया है। इससे केवल देश को अन्न उपलब्ध कराने की क्षमता ही नहीं, कृषि पर लोगों की निर्भरता भी घटी है। इस कारण खेती के काम में लगे लोग रोजगार की तलाश में पलायन कर रहे हैं। कहीं विकास के नाम पर तो कहीं शहरीकरण की चपेट में खेत सिमट रहे हैं। खेती में फायदा न देख कर उससे विमुख हो रहे लोगों की संख्या साल-दर-साल तेजी से बढ़ रही है। राज्यों के हिसाब से देखें तो सबसे बुरा हाल उत्तर प्रदेश का है। यह दुखद है कि राज्य का किसान दिल्ली या ऐसे ही अन्य महानगरों में दूसरों की चाकरी करे, गांव की खुली हवा-पानी छोड़ कर महानगर की झुग्गियों में बसे और यह मानने को मजबूर हो जाए कि उसका श्रम किसी पूंजीपति के पास गिरवी रख दिया गया है।

हालांकि पूरे देश में ही खेतों के बंटवारे से, खेती की बढ़ती लागत, फसल के वाजिब दाम के सुनिश्चित न होने, सिंचाई की माकूल व्यवस्था के अभाव जैसी समस्याओं के कारण खेती पिछड़ रही है। परिवारों के बंटवारे से जैसे ही जोत छोटी होती है तो खेती में मशीन व तकनीक के उपयोग की लागत बढ़ जाती है। इसी के चलते किसान खेती से बाहर निकल कर वैकल्पिक रोजगार की तलाश में खेत बेच कर बड़े शहरों की राह पकड़ता है। देश में किसानों की कुल संख्या लगभग पंद्रह करोड़ है। पांच साल पहले यह संख्या करीब चौदह करोड़ थी। लेकिन इसमें लघु और सीमांत किसानों की संख्या छियासी फीसद है। वहीं उत्तर प्रदेश में लघु और सीमांत किसान तिरानबे फीसद हैं जिन्हें खेती के बदौलत दो जून की रोटी मिलना मुश्किल हो रहा है। बुंदेलखंड जैसे इलाकों में हर तीन-चार साल में अल्प वर्षा तो खेती की दुश्मन है ही, आवारा पशु एक नई समस्या के रूप में उभरे हैं। एक तो छोटा-सा खेत, वह भी प्रकृति की कृपा पर आश्रित और उसमें भी गायों का रेवड़ घुस गया तो किसान बर्बादी अपनी ही आंखों के सामने देखता रह जाता है। यदि मवेशी को भगाएं और वह दूसरे के खेत में चले गए तो उससे फौजदारी तय है। ऐसे में बुंदेलखंड से दिल्ली आने वाली ट्रेन व बसें हर समय गारा-गुम्मा का मजूरी करने वालों से अटी रहती हैं।

सरकारी आंकड़े बताते हैं कि उत्तर प्रदेश में करीब ढाई करोड़ हेक्टेयर भूमि है जिसमें से शुद्ध बुआई वाला (यानी जहां खेती होती है) रकबा एक करोड़ अड़सठ लाख बारह हजार हेक्टेयर है जो कुल जमीन का करीब सत्तर फीसद बैठता है। जाहिर है, राज्य के निवासियों की रोजी-रोटी का सबसे बड़ा जरिया खेती ही है। राज्य में कोई ढाई फीसद जमीन उसर या खेती के अयोग्य भी है। प्रदेश के तिरपन प्रतिशत लोग किसान हैं और कोई बीस फीसद खेतिहर मजदूर। यानी लगभग तीन-चौथाई आबादी इसी जमीन से अपना अन्न जुटाती है। एक बात और गौर करने लायक है कि 1970-1990 के दो दशकों के दौरान राज्य में कुल बोया गया क्षेत्रफल एक सौ तिहत्तर लाख हेक्टेयर स्थिर रहने के बाद अब लगातार कम हो रहा है। ऐसोचेम का कहना है कि हाल के वर्षों में कृषि के मामले में उत्तर प्रदेश की सालाना विकास दर (सीएजीआर) महज 2.9 फीसद है, जो राष्ट्रीय फीसद 3.7 से बेहद कम व निराशाजनक है।

विकास के नाम पर सोना उगलने वाली जमीन की दुर्दशा इस आंकड़े से आंसू बहाती दिखती है कि उत्तर प्रदेश में सालाना अड़तालीस हजार हेक्टेयर खेती की जमीन कंक्रीट द्वारा निगली जा रही है। सन 2013 की कृषि नीति में राज्य शासन ने खेती की विकास दर 5.3 फीसद तक ले जाने का लक्ष्य तय किया था। इसके लिए अनुबंध खेती, बीटी बीज जैसे प्रयोग भी शुरू किए गए, लेकिन जमीन पर कुछ दिखा नहीं, क्योंकि यह सब तभी संभव है जब खेती लायक जमीन को सड़क, शहर जैसे निर्माण कार्यों से बचाया जा सके।

उत्तर प्रदेश की सालाना राज्य आय का 31.8 फीसद खेती से आता है। हालांकि यह प्रतिशत सन 1971 में सत्तावन, सन 1981 में पचास और 1991 में इकतालीस था। इससे साफ है कि लोगों से खेती दूर हो रही है। खेती ज्यादा फायदे का पेशा नहीं रहा

या फिर दीगर कारणों से लोगों का इससे मोहभंग हो रहा है। दिल्ली से सटे जिलों- गाजियाबाद, बागपत, गौतम बुद्ध नगर जिले से बीते तीन दशकों से खेत उजड़ने का जो सिलसिला शुरू हुआ, उससे भले ही कुछ लोगों के पास पैसा आ गया हो, लेकिन वह अपने साथ कई ऐसी बुराइयां और अपराध लाया कि गांवों की संस्कृति, संस्कार और सभ्यता सभी कुछ नष्ट होते चले गए। जिनके खेत थे, उन्हें तो कार, मकान और मौज-मस्ती के लिए पैसे मिल गए, लेकिन उनके खेतों में काम करने वाले बेरोजगार हो चले गए। उनके लिए करीबी महानगर दिल्ली में आ कर रिक्शा चलाने या छोटी-मोटी नौकरी करने के अलावा कोई विकल्प नहीं बचा। जो गांव में आधा पेट रह कर भी खुश थे, वे आज दिल्ली में न तो खुद खुश हैं और न ही दूसरों की खुशी के लिए कुछ कर पा रहे हैं।

राज्य में बड़े या मझौले उद्योगों को स्थापित करने में कई समस्याएं हैं। बिजली व पानी की कमी, कानून-व्यवस्था की जर्जर स्थिति, राजनीतिक इच्छा-शक्ति का अभाव। ऐसे में खेती पर जीवकोपार्जन व रोजगार का जोर बढ़ जाता है। इस कटु सत्य से बेखबर सरकार पक्के निर्माण, सड़कों में अपना भविष्य तलाश रही है। यदि हाल ऐसा ही रहा तो आने वाले पांच सालों में राज्य की कोई तीन लाख हेक्टेयर जमीन से खेतों का नामोनिशान मिट जाएगा। किसान को भले ही डर से सही, यह समझ में आ रहा है कि शहर व आधुनिक सुख-सुविधाओं की बातें मृग-मरीचिका हैं और एक बार जमीन हाथ से जाने के बाद मिट्टी भी मुट्ठी में नहीं रह जाती है।

प्रदेश के चहुंमुखी विकास के लिए कारखाने, बिजली परियोजनाएं और सड़कें सभी कुछ जरूरी हैं। लेकिन यह भी तो देखा जाए कि अन्नपूर्णा धरती को उजाड़ कर इन्हें पाना कहां तक व्यावहारिक व फायदेमंद है। सनद रहे, राज्य की कोई ग्यारह फीसद भूमि या तो ऊसर है या फिर खेती में काम नहीं आती है। यह बात जरूर है कि ऐसे इलाकों में मूलभूत सुविधाएं जुटाने में जेब कुछ ज्यादा ढीली करनी होगी। काश ऐसे इलाकों में नई परियोजना, कारखानों आदि को लगाने के बारे में सोचा जाए। इससे एक तो नए इलाके विकसित होंगे, दूसरा खेत बचे रहेंगे, तीसरा विकास 'बहुजन हिताय-बहुजन सुखाय' वाला होगा। वैसे सरकार विश्व बैंक से बंजर जमीन के सुधार के नाम पर 1332 करोड़ का कर्ज भी ले चुकी है। ऐसे में यह विडंबना ही है कि एक तरफ से तो अरबों का कर्ज लेकर सवा लाख हेक्टेयर जमीन को खेती के लायक बनाने के कागजी घोड़े दौड़ रही है, दूसरी ओर निर्माण गतिविधियों को बढ़ावा देकर अच्छे-खासे खेतों को ऊसर बनाया जा रहा है। किसानों के लिए नकली बीज व खाद की भी समस्या भी काफी गंभीर है। सिंचाई के लिए बिजली का टोटा है। कृषि मंडियां दलालों का अड्डा बनी हैं और गन्ना, आलू जैसी फसलों के वाजिब दाम मिलना या सही समय पर कीमत मिलना लगभग असंभव जैसा हो गया है। जाहिर है कि ऐसी घिसी-पिटी व्यवस्था में नई पीढ़ी खेती नहीं छोड़ेगी तो करेगी क्या।

शोर में शांति

रमाशंकर श्रीवास्तव

दुनिया मेरे आगे

भारत एक बड़ा देश है। विदेशी देख कर चकित हैं कि यहां इतने मुद्दों पर बहसें होती हैं तब भी कोई फर्क नहीं पड़ता। तरबूज की तरह यह साबुत बचा रहा। चाकू बहुत चले, पर तनिक न कटा। राजनीति, जाति, धर्म, पार्टी और सिद्धांतों पर बहसें होती रहीं, इतिहास और वर्तमान का मुलम्मा चढ़ता रहा, फिर भी न कोई खरोंच, न बदलाव। लोग लड़ते-भिड़ते रहे, मगर दिल का दरिया बड़ा रहा। नाराजगी में भी प्यार-मोहब्बत बनी रही। पानी नहीं बरसा, खेत में फसल नहीं उगी, अनाज महंगे हो गए, थाली खाली हुई। मगर देश को बहसें परोसी जाती रहीं। टीवी चैनल और मीडिया में गूंजता रहा- 'त्वमेव माता च पिता त्वमेव...!' सुनिए और मगन रहिए। नतीजे की खोज करेंगे तो अपना माथा पीटना होगा।

सब्जी-बाजार में ग्राहक अपना-अपना थैला लिए घूम रहे हैं। घंटे भर का समय लग गया, फिर भी विश्वास नहीं होता कि लूटे गए कि लूटा। दाल अंधेरे में छिपी मुस्कुराती रही और बाहर बहस चलती रही। संतोषी देश ने सोचा कि आज बिना दाल की खा लो, कल दाल आ जाएगी। विदेशियों को हंसी आती है, देश दाल की बहस में लगा है। तभी किसी ने गाया 'काहे री नलिनी, तू कुम्हलानी, तेरे ही नाल सरोवर पानी।' कभी-कभी वाकयुद्ध का तापमान चढ़ते-चढ़ते लात-जूते तक पहुंच जाता है। जूते नहीं चलते, मगर बात की लात दिल में उतर जाती है। अपने-अपने क्षेत्र की हस्तियां अपना अनुभव लिए कुर्सियों पर बैठी हैं। जोर-जोर से तर्क-कुतर्क रखे जा रहे हैं। एंकर अपनी बात उठा कर खुद ही फंस जाता है। उठे हाथ मांग कर रहे हैं, पहले मैं, पहले मैं। अहं की फांस उन्हें शांत नहीं बैठने देती।

टीवी चैनल बहस का निष्कर्ष देश तक पहुंचाने की जल्दी में हैं। इधर बहस की तहस-नहस हो रही है। वह बहुरूपिया बन गई। आटा गूंदा हो और आग जल रही हो तो रोटी सेंकना कौन नहीं चाहेगा। मगर यह है कौन, जो जेब भर कर बोलने के लिए भेज देता है। बातों के संघर्ष में लोग पिस रहे हैं। सभी को मालूम है कि कोल्हू में केवल सरसों की घानी डाल देने से तेल नहीं निकल जाता। सूखी सरसों में तेल कहां से आएगा। तेल निर्गुण ब्रह्म है। गोपियों के आगे उद्धव की बहस की दुर्दशा होती जा रही है। रक्षा-सौदा हो, विदेशी व्यापार हो, सीमा समझौता या अपराधियों की धर-पकड़ हो, बिना बहस के कोई फैसला नहीं हो पाता। बहस सक्रियता से हर मामले को उठाती है। ठोंकी पीठ जब उछल-उछल कर बोलती है, तब लगता है कि अपना पक्ष मजबूत रखना कितना जरूरी है। मरी-दबी समस्या में बहस 'कोरामिन' का काम करती है।

आजादी के सत्तर साल होने को आए। मतदाताओं ने अनुभव खूब बटोरे। लोगों को मालूम है कि नाटक में सरल और सुरक्षित भूमिका ज्यादा प्रियकर होती है। इसलिए बात वही करो जिसमें बचने की गुंजाइश हो। आज का समय विडंबनाओं से भरा है। बहस वाली टेबल फुटबॉल का मैदान बनती जा रही है। वाकयुद्ध पूरे देश में गूंजता रहता है। कोई न कोई सवाल रोज उठ खड़े होते हैं। किसकी हिम्मत है जो इनको बैठा सके। इतिहास उठा कर देखिए, पानी से निकाली मछली की तरह तड़फड़ाते रहे सवाल और मछली हाथ से फिसल कर पानी में वापस। कुछ दिन पहले नगर और गांव पर बहस गरमाई थी। प्रस्ताव आया था नगर खाली कर गांव लौटो। बहस का मुद्दा फिर उठा। मगर देहात रोजी-रोटी की खोज में शहरों में आ बसे। नगर में मिश्रित संस्कृति आ बैठी। किसकी हिम्मत है जो उन्हें हटाए। पर्व-त्योहार भाषा और रस्म-रिवाज ने घुसपैठिए का काम किया।

ग्रामीण विकास के लिए जारी पैसों का कुछ हिस्सा भी देहातों में पहुंचा तो सीधे सच्चे लोग खुश हुए। कुछ उबड़-खाबड़ सड़कें ठीक हुईं। मिट्टी का तेल चार आने सस्ता हुआ। सस्ता कितना होना चाहिए, इस पर भी बहस छिड़ी। धीरे-धीरे शब्दों की नोंक हमारे व्यवहार में घुल मिल गई। छल वेश बदल कर आने लगा। सड़कें फोर लेन बनीं जरूर, पर दिल की धमनियां चौड़ी नहीं हुईं। तभी किस्मत की मारी असहिष्णुता धीरे से बहस में आ मिली। दिल का सिंहासन नहीं भाया तो टेबुल पर आ बैठी। उसकी भी छीछालेदर हो गई। जिस विषय का छीछालेदर करवाना हो उसको बहस की टेबुल पर बैठा दिया जाए। गंभीर सहिष्णुता नाटक का जोकर बन गई। जिसे देखिए वही सहनशीलता की परिभाषा और सीमा निर्धारित कर रहा है। दो वाहनों की टक्कर में गलती का फैसला करने सहिष्णुता आ खड़ी होती है। फैसले के लिए सड़क पर बहस। लोग कहते हैं कि बहस कभी बासी नहीं होती। चतुराई से अपनी दिशा बदलती रहती है। निष्ठा भौंचक देखती रह जाती है। आजकल वाकयुद्ध के लिए नए-नए चेहरे कुर्सियों पर आ बैठते हैं। विचार कीजिए तो लगता है कि राष्ट्रीय-अंतरराष्ट्रीय विषयों पर बहस जरूर होनी चाहिए। उनसे कई नई बातें उभर कर आती हैं। मगर बहस जब अहं की लड़ाई बन जाती है तब एंकरों पर भी सवाल उठने लगते हैं।

हकीकत के आंकड़े

जिस आंकड़ों का पूरे देश को इंतजार था, वो नई सरकार बनते ही सामने आ गए। ये आंकड़े मन को निराश और कुंठित करने वाले हैं। केंद्रीय सांख्यिकी दफ्तर के आंकड़ों के अनुसार देश की आर्थिक वृद्धि दर 2018-19 की जनवरी-मार्च तिमाही के दौरान 5.8 प्रतिशत रही, जो पांच साल में न्यूनतम दर है। जबकि बेरोजगारी दर 6.1 फीसद रही जो पिछले पैंतालीस वर्षों में सबसे ज्यादा है। इसके अलावा कृषि क्षेत्र भी भयानक मार झेल रहा है। जहां 2017-18 में कृषि विकास दर पांच फीसद थी और वह अब 2.9 फीसद पर टिक गई है। अगर ये आंकड़ें चुनाव से पहले आ जाते तो शायद नतीजे कुछ और हो सकते थे। जो सरकार बेरोजगारी को पिछली सरकार का कारण बताती है उसके कार्यकाल में सबसे कम रोजगार सृजित हुए हैं। ऐसे में नई सरकार को दोगुनी मेहनत करने की जरूरत है। नौकरियों के लिए हर साल लाखों नौजवान तैयार हो रहे हैं। पहले वालों को नौकरी नहीं मिली तो आने वाले युवा की फितरत हम देख सकते हैं। सरकार को इन आंकड़ों पर गौर करना होगा और गंभीरता से लेना होगा। राष्ट्रीय सुरक्षा भी अहम मुद्दा है, लेकिन देश के विकास और बेरोजगारी जैसे मुद्दों को भी हल्के में नहीं लिया जा सकता।

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गर्मी का कहर

दिल्ली सहित पूरे पश्चिमोत्तर भारत में भीषण गर्मी को देखते हुए मौसम विभाग ने गर्मी के लिहाज से खतरे की चेतावनी जारी की है। रेड कलर यानी तापमान का सबसे भयानक रूप। इसलिए लोगों को कुछ खास एहतियात बरतने की जरूरत है। इसके साथ ही देश के कई हिस्सों का तापमान ने पिछले पांच साल का रिकॉर्ड तोड़ दिया है, जिनमें सबसे ज्यादा तापमान राजस्थान के श्रीगंगानगर जिले का रहा, जहां पचहत्तर साल पुराना रिकॉर्ड टूट गया। इस तरह गर्मी के भयानक रूप को देखते हुए स्वास्थ्य विशेषज्ञों ने तेज धूप में बाहर निकलने से बचने और एहतियात बरतने के तौर पर पानी व दूसरे तरल पदार्थों के ज्यादा सेवन की सलाह दी है।

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सूखा और संकट

बुंदेलखंड का टीकमगढ़ इलाका सदी का सबसे भयानक सूखा झेल रहा है। गांव के गांव खाली हैं। करीब पचास फीसद आबादी यहां से पलायन कर चुकी है। हालांकि यहां जल संकट दशकों से रहा है और बरसात दगा देती रही है। लेकिन पानी की कमी के कारण इतने बड़े पैमाने पर पलायन की शुरुआत दो-तीन दशक पहले से ही हुई। जिले के सौ से अधिक गांवों में तो एक भी आदमी नहीं बचा है। गांव के गांव वीरान पड़े हैं। निर्बल बूढ़े मवेशी अपने हाल पर छोड़ दिए गए हैं। विडंबना तो यह है कि पानी के कारण पलायन की यह तस्वीर उस क्षेत्र की है जहां तालाबों की एक पुरानी परंपरा रही है। क्षेत्र की तीन चौथाई आबादी के जीविकोपार्जन का जरिया खेती-किसानी है। लेकिन अब अधिकतर खेत सूखे पड़े हैं। इतने तालाब होने के बावजूद यहां जल संकट रहता है। जब कहीं से पानी की मांग होती है तो सरकार वहां जमीन खोद कर ट्यूबवेल लगाती है। जबकि इस क्षेत्र में भूगर्भ उत्खनन को सही नहीं माना जाता। यह वह इलाका है जहां अट्ठारह हजार करोड़ की लागत से केन बेतवा नदी को जोड़ कर सूखा दूर करने का सपना दिखाया जा रहा है। जबकि टीकमगढ़ जिले में जामनी नदी को तालाबों से जोड़ कर सैकड़ों एकड़ की सिंचाई का प्रयोग सफल रहा है। यह भी बगैर किसी विस्थापन व पर्यावरणीय संकट के। नदी जोड़ने के कुल बजट का एक फीसद खर्च करके यहां के हर खेत को पानी व हर कंठ को जल का सपना सहजता से साकार हो सकता है, वह भी छह महीने से कम समय में।

● *अजीत कुमार गौतम, गोरखपुर*

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

आप चाहें तो अपनी बात ईमेल के जरिए भी हम तक पहुंचा सकते हैं। आइडी है :
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भ्रष्ट आयोग और भविष्य

आज प्रयागराज के हजारों छात्र अपने सपनों के खातिर सड़कों पर उतरने को मजबूर हुए हैं। चंद पैसों की लालच में न जाने कितनी रातों की मेहनत और न जाने कितनी आंखों के सपने बिक रहे हैं। उत्तर प्रदेश में पिछले एक दशक से एक भी परीक्षा का आयोजन नियत समय पर और बिना दाग लगे नहीं हुआ है। अगर सिर्फ इस सरकार की बात करें तो अब तक तीन बार शिक्षकों की भर्ती का विज्ञापन निकाला गया, लेकिन तीनों ही भर्तियां दागदार रही हैं। इनमें सिर्फ 2016 वाली शिक्षक भर्ती ही पूरी हो पाई। उसमें भी कॉपी बदलने और नंबरों के हेरफेर की धांधली हुई। 2016 की एलटी ग्रेड शिक्षक की भर्ती आयोग के भ्रष्ट रूप का सबसे बड़ा उदाहरण बन कर सामने आई, जिसमें छात्रों की मेहनत और सपनों को दस और पच्चीस लाख में बेच दिया गया। प्रांतीय लोक सेवा आयोग की सबसे बड़ी परीक्षा की मुख्य परीक्षा का प्रश्नपत्र आयोग के सचिव और परीक्षा नियंत्रक के सहयोग से प्रश्नपत्र छापने वाले प्रिंटिंग प्रेस के मालिक द्वारा पच्चीस लाख में बेच दिया जाता है। ऐसे में अन्य छोटी भर्तियां जो पहले पूरी चुकी उनको कैसे मान लिया जाए कि उनमें पूरी ईमानदारी बरती गई है। कहने को तो सीबीआइ जांच पिछले तीन साल से चल रही है, लेकिन छात्रों का भविष्य तो चौपट होता जा रहा है, जिसकी कोई सुध नहीं ले रहा।

● *शिवम चतुर्वेदी, प्रयागराज*

जल नहीं तो कल नहीं

आज दुनिया जल संकट का सामना कर रही है। पिछले साल केरल बाढ़ की भयानक आपदा झेल चुका है, लेकिन आज पानी की एक-एक बूंद के लिए वह तरस रहा है। बुंदेलखंड में तो सैकड़ों गांव वीरान हो गए हैं। देश के लगभग सभी हिस्सों में बड़े जल संचयन स्थलों में पिछले साल की तुलना में बहुत कम पानी रह गया है। जहां पर कुछ लोग पानी की कमी के कारण पलायन करते हैं तो वहीं राजस्थान के रेगिस्तानी इलाके के लोग कम पानी में भी अपने प्रत्येक कार्य को सुनियोजित तरीके से करते हैं। गुजरात के कच्छ जिले जैसे जूनागढ़, अमरेली और राजकोट के सौ गांव ने पानी की आत्मनिर्भरता का गुर खुद ही सीखा। बिछियावाड़ा गांव से डेढ़ लाख लोग व कुछ दिन की मेहनत के साथ बारह बांध बनाए और एक ही बारिश में तीन सौ एकड़ जमीन सींचने के लिए पर्याप्त पानी जुटा लिया। ऐसे हमारे जीवन में कई तरीके हैं जिसे अपनाकर पानी की बचत कर सकते हैं।

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