

BJP: An incomplete party



MARGINAL UTILITY
TCA SRINIVASA RAGHAVAN

One of the biggest problems that the BJP has is the absence of economic thinkers, as distinct from mere economists. One consequence of this is that we have no idea of what its conception of wealth and value is, as distinct from mere money. Nor does it seem to have a sense of how wealth and value are created in modern society.

There are two reasons why this is important. The first is that the BJP has emerged as the flag bearer of a transformative majoritarian social philosophy for India. This philosophy, though narrow in conception and socially disruptive in its consequences, is likely to dominate the political landscape for the next few decades.

The second reason is that if you have a narrow view of wealth, viewing it as mere money, you tend to treat it as something to be milked, not nurtured. Ms Sitharaman's first Budget stands testimony to this. So have all Budgets since 1957.

That is, the Congress had exactly the same approach. But in its case at least we knew how its brain had been wired, first by the Harold Laski types and then, after two decades, in purely politically inspired mutation, by Indira Gandhi. There is no equivalent of a pro-wealth Laski for the BJP — and that is why it is persisting with the mutated version that Indira Gandhi imposed on us in 1970.

This is why the BJP needs to solve the following problem: Can you change the social philosophy governing the politics of a country and leave its economic philosophy untouched and indistinguishable from the old-fashioned Gandhian socialism of the 1970s?

Neither value nor wealth

As the politically dominant force, the BJP hasn't even begun to think systematically about the problem. I had hoped that Bibek Debroy, who has the intellectual wherewithal, would become its lead thinker. But he has fallen strangely silent. In any case, he is not a party man.

Nor has Rajiv Kumar, who now heads NITI Aayog with its massive convening power, shown any inclination in this direction. But NITI doesn't mean merely policy; it also means structured thought.

This inability to think appropriately about value and wealth has been the source of every one of our economic follies since independence. This is because the Congress thought of wealth as a social evil.

Many economists who served it, however, had the opposite view. I had the good fortune to learn economic policy from some of them. But they were unable to counter what the Germans call the *zeitgeist* (the spirit of the times).

After 1970, when the Congress turned a deeper shade of pink, they all fell by the wayside. Then the intellectual charlatans, fellow-travellers and groupies took over.

One such groupie even became prime minister. As finance minister earlier, he did his best to change things. But when he became prime minister he stopped trying.

So when Mr Narendra Modi constantly talks about the Congress legacy, he forgets that this is the most important part of it, namely, the way a political party thinks about the only thing that matters: wealth and how it is created.

That is why young Krishnamurthy Subramaniam can wax eloquent about behavioural economics and nudge theory. But he is targeting the wrong group. It is the BJP he needs to nudge because it is the most in need of nudging right now.

An incomplete party

It is no coincidence that the Europeans grew so rich and ruled the world for 500 years. They devoted a lot of thought to the question of wealth and value and how they are created.

Above all, they knew that wealth — even if the manner in which it is created changes — must be preserved, not destroyed. In India, after 1947, we have done the opposite.

It was the physicoocrats who started the ball rolling and since then there have been various theories. Bar the Communists, not one of these theories has come anywhere near our political parties, who have not tried to develop their own theories either.

As a result, they remain struck on religion and caste. And there lies the paradox: In order to win elections, they have to promise wealth. But when they come to power the fools destroy it. Hence my question to them: How do you deliver wealth when you don't have the slightest idea about it?

The BJP has surmounted many political and social problems but until it surmounts this particular intellectual problem, it is, I am afraid, going to remain incomplete.

The legacy of Indira Gandhi

In his book, former president Pranab Mukherjee says Ms Gandhi blamed no one but herself for the Emergency and suspension of Fundamental Rights



PLAIN POLITICS
ADITI PHADNIS

India's sixth general election was held between March 16 and 20, 1977. According to the late R K Dhawan, he was the one who broke the news to Indira Gandhi that she — and the Congress party — had lost the 1977 election.

She was then having dinner. According to Dhawan, with a look of relief on her face, she said, "now I will have time for myself and the family".

In the early morning hours after the election results had come out, she instructed the President to officially end the Emergency. She then resigned. For the first time in her life, she had no job, no income, no home.

On October 3, 1977, in a carefully orchestrated

movement, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) came to her residence to arrest her. It was 4.45 pm. The Attorney General and the Solicitor General were unaware the government had plans for the arrest. *India Today* magazine's account of the event is riveting. Prime Minister Morarji Desai gave the green signal to Home Minister Chaudhary Charan Singh, adding only one caveat: On no account was she to be handcuffed. The CBI walked up to the door of 12 Willingdon Crescent. They told Gandhi's aide that they had been ordered to take Indira Gandhi into custody and cited the various IPC laws (mostly relating to corruption) that she had violated. Little did they know that the FIR, drafted by the Home Ministry, was the wrong one. They were kept waiting for nearly two hours, time that Maneka and Sanjay Gandhi used to telephone all the foreign media available in Delhi.

At 6.00 pm Indira Gandhi came out. Her lawyer Frank Anthony demanded a copy of the FIR. He was told it was not necessary to provide him with one as the charges related to corruption, they were bailable offence and Indira Gandhi had been informed of them. Then Mrs Gandhi said: "where are the handcuffs? I will not go unless I am handcuffed". The argument about handcuffs went on for nearly one hour.

Sanjay and Rajiv walked in and out of the house (the magazine noted that for some inexplicable reason, Rajiv had a set of pliers and a wrench in his hand the entire time the arrest drama was on). In the meantime, party cadres had gathered outside the house, chanting and slogan-shouting was on. Top party leaders including Brahmananda Reddy (who had already begun a campaign about a personality cult that would later bloom as a full fledged Congress split), Kamalapati Tripathi, Mohsina Kidwai and others watched ashen-faced. Indira Gandhi finally got into a car and left, followed by Rajiv and Sanjay Gandhi in their cars.

Charan Singh's fears about the wrong FIR proved well-founded. When she was produced before the court the next morning, she was unconditionally released immediately, as there was no substance in the charges against her. Later, the same day, Indira Gandhi went to a wedding: Beautician Shahnaz Husain's daughter was getting married at the Ashok Hotel, and Gandhi had been invited but someone had called from Willingdon Crescent to let Husain know Gandhi had been arrested. Husain couldn't believe her eyes when she saw Gandhi walk into the hall, clad in a maroon silk sari with a gold border. She stayed two hours.

Ultimately, the Janata Party government had

LUNCH WITH BS ► DEREK O'BRIEN | RAJYA SABHA MP | TRINAMOOL CONGRESS

Some searching questions

The former celebrated quiz show host tells Rahul Jacob and Archis Mohan he worries that social media and media proprietors are bending to the ruling party's will

Saravana Bhawan on Saturday morning 9.15 am is a lone hive of activity in the usually frenetic Connaught Place in central Delhi. The McDonald's next door is devoid of customers. Saravana suffers from the opposite problem: queues outside its doors on a Saturday are par for the course. Knowing this, we are, literally and metaphorically, at a sprint as we coordinate our scramble for a table at the south Indian restaurant.

It is a few minutes before Derek O'Brien, Rajya Sabha MP for Trinamool Congress, arrives. As a setting for an interview, Saravana is a less than ideal choice. It teems with noisy families, celebrating Saturday as if it might be an annual holiday. The one quiet area is inexplicably cordoned off with ropes. Viewed from the perspective of a native Calcuttan — and O'Brien is the very definition of one from his witty, argumentative style to reading the Bengali press before he turns to the *Indian Express* and *Business Standard* — his selection of Saravana makes complete sense. Its idlis are delicious, the crowds flock there; for a Calcuttan, that is all that matters.

The place turns out to be O'Brien's regular Saturday morning ritual when he is in Delhi. Almost without preamble, he begins by reminiscing about helping input and proof his first quiz book more than three decades ago in the small data-type-setting office Rahul's father set up. O'Brien hasn't really met Rahul since the 1980s when Rahul was a spectator at the exciting quiz contests his father Neil, a nominated Anglo-Indian member of Parliament, was known for running as quizmaster. Archis knows Derek well as a member of the Rajya Sabha. O'Brien lets slip that he has long read *Business Standard* with a pen in hand to mark articles. His and his party's views run counter to the generally pro free market editorials of this paper, however. Putting his TMC hat on, he squarely opposes privatising Air India, for instance,

and improbably suggests Jet Airways' problems could have been solved by merging the two. "Selling Air India is not going to solve its problems. We have to find another solution," he says. He won't be drawn on specifics.

O'Brien is much more pointed in his critique of the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) self-serving rush to discuss one nation, one poll while not bothering to address many problems that came to the fore in the 2019 election. Among them is the need for laws on campaign financing; a report this week showed that the BJP raised about 90 per cent of total corporate donations. He also criticises the wide-spread use of fake news on social media as well as the ruling party circumventing Parliament by repeatedly using Ordinances in its first term.

In the ongoing Parliament session, O'Brien has tried to fill the breach left by the near demise of the Left parties and the ongoing crisis in the Congress. The huge inroads the BJP made in the recent parliamentary elections in West Bengal and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's ill-tempered responses to the doctors' strike and BJP supporters goading her with cries of *Jai Sri Ram* suggest the TMC has problems of its own. But, in New Delhi, the party is measuring up as the de facto opposition to the BJP, in contrast to the Congress, which is preoccupied with its own Bollywood remake of Hamlet — without Hamlet. Rahul Gandhi's perennial existential crisis has become Congress' as well. In recent weeks, O'Brien and parliamentary debutante Mahua Moitra have been punching well above the party's numbers.

Despite the Congress having nearly four times as many members in the Rajya Sabha as the TMC (48 to 13), O'Brien has been informally leading the coordination of Opposition parties, rallying other parties to demand a discussion on electoral reforms and to protest the government's disinvestment plans. This week, O'Brien held a press con-

ference to discuss data on electoral funding released by election watchdog Association for Democratic Reforms. The report showed that in 2016-17 and 2017-18, the BJP received ₹969 crore in corporate donations, dwarfing the ₹60 crore the Congress received and the ₹2 crore the TMC received. Money is a predictor of election success, O'Brien tells us, pointing to a US study that showed those who outspent their opponents in elections for the Congress and the Senate almost always win. When the media largely ignored the news, he tweeted: "The 'national' newspapers/TV based out of Delhi urgently need spine implant surgery. Media owners, shame on you." This is a theme O'Brien returns to repeatedly over breakfast, which he more than does justice to by eating six large idlis. He briefly turns emotional: "I appeal to all media owners: You are running institutions of national heritage. You are part owners of our democracy."

Mostly, we receive a polished debunking of the BJP's record, seasoned with an ex-adman's flair for one-liners. Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao is dismissed as a "scam scheme" with more than half of its budget being spent on advertising. He says ₹650 crore has been spent on it across India and contrasts this with the ₹7,000 crore spent on Bengal's Kanyashree scheme to keep girls in school longer and delay their marriage. The Bengal effort, which has also contributed to a drop in infant and maternal mortality rates, has received a United Nations award. An ex-colleague living in Kolkata cites the scheme as an example of the party's good development work in villages that does not get the attention of the national media. The ex-colleague also criticises the party's use of hoodlums in local politics in a manner that matches the record of the Left Front, which ruled the state with a thuggish fist between 1977 and 2011. O'Brien is soon using the breakfast as a warm-up act for his then



ILLUSTRATION BY BINAY SINHA

edly: "You gave us an advisory about the doctors' strike, but where is the advisory for Bihar when 150 children die of encephalitis?"

In an "unequal election", Facebook, he alleges, provided an "unequal playground" stacked in favour of the BJP. In a response to reports of favouritism towards the ruling party, Facebook said on Newsclick: "An important part of our mission is equipping elected officials... with the tools needed to connect and engage with their communities."

O'Brien resorts to banal clichés when questioned about Banerjee's intemperate handling of the doctors' strike in Bengal last month. After an uncharacteristic silence, he responds with "all's well that ends well". It is an odd thing to say about a strike sparked by the attack on a young doctor who was in coma for a few days. This hangs in the air between us like baffling non-sense till O'Brien regains his stride and emphasises the government's increase in funding for medical care and in seats at medical colleges over the years it has been in power. Then he recites the 10 parameters on which Bengal leads the country, ranging from e-tendering to skills development to a programme for farmers. He scribbles on the Saravana paper placemats a list of links he intends to send us.

We part ways in Kolkata style, which is to say, in long-drawn out fashion. A rugby scrum of a queue is waiting to get in. O'Brien threads his way past it and is still talking as child peddlers of pens mob him to force him to buy one. A gauntlet of shoe-shine men who claim they have been waiting for us to finish breakfast are next. O'Brien is deep in conversation with Archis as he gets into his car. His parting shot is full of confidence: "Trinamool is match-on for 2021 (when it faces state elections in Bengal)." On the evidence of the party's marshalling of an otherwise rudderless Opposition in the past few weeks, this is more than bravado.

The story of a 'part-time' grad



PEOPLE LIKE THEM
GEETANJALI KRISHNA

In the last few months, I've spent a bit of time in rural UP and have been struck by the number of young graduates I've met. Most of them have studied locally. Some plan to get a post-graduate degree as well. On the face of it, it seems promising. But the ground reality is, more often than not, different. A conversation I had with a taxi driver while driving from Kanpur to Banda last week illustrates why.

He offered me a *laddu* when I got in the car at Kanpur airport. "I just got my college exam results," he explained. "I now have a BSc degree in physics, and that is something to celebrate, isn't it?"

It must have been a tough course, I commented. His response was surprising. "I don't really know," he said. During the three-year course at Chhatrapati Shahu Ji Maharaj University, Kanpur, he said he'd attended barely a month every year. "I work as a driver in Lucknow," he explained, "and don't have time for class." A month before exams, he'd come to Kanpur, attend a few classes and study enough to scrape through the exams.

Local colleges in UP, he said, had lax attendance requirements, making it easy for students like him to get their degrees while doing, what he called, "better things". He, for instance, had earned ₹8,000-10,000 per month as a driver all through his "student" life. He couldn't have had much driving experience at the beginning of college when he'd have been barely eligible for a driving licence, I pointed out. "This is UP, madam *ji*," he laughed. "I'd been driving for years before I got my licence." There were very few students, he said, who actually attended class. "Most of them got by doing exactly what I've done," he said. "In fact, this has worked out so well that I plan to enroll for MSc as well."

The conversation raised many questions in my mind. Why was it so easy for students to get a college degree? If

students got away without attending class (or somehow subverting attendance rules) and somehow passing their examinations after a cursory 30 days of study (if at all), what was their degree worth? I asked the driver to explain why he wanted to collect all these degrees if he didn't really experience student life or learn anything. Surely he must have an interest in physics if he was planning to do MSc in the subject? His response made me realise that it was naive to assume a correlation between obtaining an education and getting a degree. "I don't really understand physics much," he said. "I just opted for the subject as there were seats available in it," he said.

A degree, he said, was the only way people like him could get ahead at a time when jobs were hard to find. His father was a farmer, while many of his friends came from weaver families. Few wanted to take up the family trade. He was lucky, he said, to have landed this driving job. Which is why his plan was to keep working in Lucknow while completing his MSc in physics in Kanpur. "Meanwhile, I'll apply for every government position that falls vacant," he said. "And of course, if nothing else comes up, I'll just become a teacher".

We're glad the week is over



PEOPLE LIKE US
KISHORE SINGH

My wife's birthday coincided with the World Cup semi-finals between India and New Zealand, and like the match that never-was, it didn't go well. She rang up her friends to ask them over, but the invitations were declined by their spouses who wanted to watch the cricket match in the comfort of their own homes. That laugh was on them at any rate because the rain washed out the match, so all they could do was watch old re-runs while eating whatever they could lay their hands on in their kitchen when they might have had party food.

Those who did agree to come were

the has-beens, low down the pecking order, whose names are forever being removed from the guest list. The result was a mixed bunch with too little in common, the kind that send 'thank you' texts the following day, implying they would like to be invited again, which was the reason my wife and I had been in a state of sulky non-communication in the first place. My wife makes one list of people we would like to invite home, but refers to another completely different one when she gets down to making the calls. She does the same thing with the menu, so we agree on one bill of fare, she gives the staff quite another list, and shops for ingredients for something else altogether. I won't go so far as to say our parties are a matter of hit and miss, but they are always a surprise—sometimes even for her.

These days she tells me to keep my nose out of all such affairs. "I have had 1,783 parties at home," she told me the last time I suggested tweaking the menu a bit to make allowance for diners with less adventurous palates. I pointed out that experience does not parallel wisdom, else she would not have chilled bottles of water thinking they were bottles of wine. What I should have done instead is remind

myself that speaking the inviolable truth can be injurious to one's health.

For two days before the party my wife did not speak to me at all (which is a mixed blessing), and for two days thereafter she has not ceased speaking at all (which is a form of torture). On the day of the party she insisted on my picking out her clothes, then chose to wear something else altogether. She asked me to select a pair of heels — so she could reject it. We repeated this with picks for her purse, jewellery and wristwatch, so by the time the guests began to arrive, my morale was at an all-time low. I spent the evening lurking behind the bar and the only person who did not endorse my services as a bartender was my wife.

So, the party. As mixed a bunch of people as should never be together. Ditto main course dishes that failed to communicate with each other. Eleven spilled drinks. Five cakes. Gravy dripped on her favourite dining table cloth (the perpetrator hasn't been identified). Seven soiled napkins (in my wife's universe, napkins are not meant to be used *ever*). Too many guests who ate and left too quickly after. Too much leftover. The cricket match the following evening didn't go well either. We're both glad the week is over.

WEEKEND RUMINATIONS

T N NINAN

Not second-class

There was a time during the prohibition era in Bombay (as it then was) when only foreigners were allowed to drink in hotel bars. A humour columnist wrote then about his fictional wife walking into the bar of an expensive hotel and ordering a drink. On being told that only foreigners would be served, she asked the unanswerable question: “Whose country is this anyway?”

That should be our question, too, every time someone writes or says that we must offer foreigners reasonable tax rates, or good business processes, or special investment windows, or investment enclaves, lest they take their dollars elsewhere. The usual arguments run like this: The new high income tax rates will make it more difficult to hire expatriates. Or, foreign portfolio investors will turn away from the Indian market. Or, we must clean up and beautify our tourist spots, to attract more international tourists. The obvious question is, why only foreigners? What about us who live and work here and pay our taxes? Don't we deserve better tax and other rules, and cleaner towns and cities in which to live and work? Or is the Indian citizen to be treated differently because s/he is a captive, without means of escape?

Well, India is no longer the economic prison that it used to be, when all that you could take out of the country was eight dollars. Later, under a liberalised foreign travel scheme, you could take out a generous \$100. We weren't as bad as the old Soviet Union, which ran the Beryozka supermarket, where only western tourists could shop (predictably, the Soviet elite, too, found a way to shop there). Or China, where for years foreigners could deal only in specially issued Foreign Exchange Certificates. But it was bad enough.

Most closed systems have opened up, including India's. No government in its right mind today would try imposing such rules, and, if it did, it wouldn't work. Not that it worked earlier. All that Indian money in Swiss banks and other tax havens didn't materialise out of thin air. Smuggling was rampant at the time, and the *hawala* trade flourished. Some of the money round-tripped back as investment from overseas. There was a period when Indians also started coming back. It helped that the domestic environment improved: New private hospitals and schools responded to the demand for better health and education services. Cars, phone connections, and air services, all got better.

And yet, recent years have seen wealthy and professionally successful Indians voting with their feet, or air tickets. One plausible figure has it that 150,000 top-strata Indians have emigrated in recent years to Dubai, Singapore, and western shores. They were initially running away from tax terrorism, a term born out of Pranab Mukherjee's 2012 Budget. Then came new rules about the place of effective business, which induced many to change their residential status. Others have followed because of the worsening air pollution in cities, the impossibilities of school admission, and now the lack of water.

It is easier to leave than before. Millions of Indians have acquired international degrees, or high-quality Indian ones, that make them globally saleable. The many millions of non-residents in the US, West Asia, and elsewhere translate into kinships that facilitate emigration. Countries like Australia target Indians as desirable immigrants, partly to neutralise the effect of a Chinese influx. In short, relatively large numbers from the class of Indians vital to taking the economy forward can leave, and have been doing so.

So we need to treat citizens like they have a choice, even if most of them don't. If foreigners need reasonable taxes, why offer citizens something else? If foreign businessmen look for assurance on the rule of law, so do citizens (including, or especially, the government's critics). “Ease of Living” is a great concept — offering, for instance, automated protection from the tax official's grasping fingers. But let's not offer special treatment to help foreigners escape the rigours of our rules and laws. That is what closed and oppressive systems do. Let's do things for all, including citizens, as an open democracy should.

Our ‘joota hai Japani’ defence

The past 20 years, under three PMs, have shown us the defence Budget is not about to go higher than its ballpark of 1.5 per cent of GDP, besides pensions. Can it buy us real defence and not mere *jugaad*?

Three things have triggered this week's thought process.

- The wide dismay in the strategic community over the stationary defence Budget;
- The statement by renowned American strategic scholar Christine Fair to *ThePrint*'s Srijan Shukla that the Lashkar-e-Taiba isn't another terror organisation but a low-cost special operations unit of the Pakistani army for waging asymmetric warfare India can't match. And that India can't defeat Pakistan in a short war;
- The interesting findings in the book authored by the late Air Commodore Jasjit Singh, talking about how the Indian Air Force (IAF) gave Israeli engineers access to its old French Mirages so they could be modified to carry the Russian R-73 air-to-air missiles. This is when their original missile, Matra-530D, had become obsolete.

It is finally the thought of Israeli experts fitting Russian missiles on French Mirages owned by the IAF that brought back the late lyricist Shailendra's immortal lines from Raj Kapoor's classic, *Shree 420: Mera joota hai Japani, yeh patloon Inglistani/sir pe laal topey Russi, Phir bhi dil hai Hindustani* (my shoes are Japanese, trousers British-made/my cap may be Russian, but my heart is still Indian). These lines were heady for a new republic in 1955. Must these continue to describe the state of its armed forces, 65 years later?

Let's examine the budget versus GDP issue first. This year's Budget, ₹4.31 trillion, including pensions, is almost exactly 2 per cent of GDP. If you exclude pensions, it will be ₹3.18 trillion, or about 1.5 per cent of GDP.

Two good questions arise: Can India defend itself with so little? And can India afford a defence allocation much higher than this? The immediate response is, no to the first, yes to the second. Confession: I might also have said so until some time ago. But I was wrong.

In the strategic debate, the distinction between GDP and the national Budget isn't always made. Only the Budget belongs to the government, not GDP. The more apt way of looking at defence spending, therefore, is as a percentage of the national Budget.

Today, at 15.5 per cent, it is the largest item in the Budget after debt repayments, at about 23 per cent. This is more than what we spend on agriculture, rural development, education, and health put together (15.1per cent). Another half a per cent of GDP, or 3.5 per cent of the Budget, is spent on central paramilitary forces. From where will any finance minister shift more to defence?

Our data journalist Abhishek Mishra has mined the defence Budget trends for me since 1986,

when it reached its peak of 4 per cent of GDP in the years of Rajiv Gandhi's heady military expansion — when, incidentally, today's Mirages started arriving. Budgets have since risen on a consistent, stable and conservative basis and averaged 2.82 per cent of GDP (World Bank figures). With the 1991 reforms, GDP growth picked up.

In the past 20 years, from Kargil onwards, the average budgetary increase has been 8.91 per cent per year. You can shout, scream, complain, but it is now evident that no government is going to be so fiscally irresponsible or politically foolhardy to massively increase defence spending by either printing more money, or taking away from the little that goes to the poor as subsidies (6.6 per cent of the Budget) or agriculture, health, education, rural development etc.

Expectations that a more muscular Narendra Modi government would do something dramatic were misplaced and unfair. Mr Modi is nobody's fool or a reckless militarist. A robust strategic posture does not mean he was about to convert India into a national security state like Pakistan, bankrupt it and keep rushing to the IMF.

The Indian strategic debate, therefore, has to reposition itself at this new realistic level. This is about what is affordable. The growth would only keep pace with GDP. So, if GDP is \$5 trillion in 2024, defence spending will be about 2 per cent of that. The debate, therefore, has to be about how much defence and what kind of defence can this money buy India.

At current force levels, India is much too strong for Pakistan in a longer (two weeks plus) war. But that is unlikely today. Remember, even our last two wars were merely 22 (1965) and 13 (1971) days. But, Christine Fair is also right to say that today India can't defeat Pakistan in a short war. The question we need to ask, in fact, is more provocative: Does India have the superiority in critical areas to deliver a deterrent punishment to Pakistan for its asymmetrical mischief (as in Pulwama) with greater certainty and evidence of outcome and minimal risk to Indian lives (unlike Balakot)?

Balakot and the skirmish the day after showed we do not have that edge at this point.

Of course, in a longer or more extensive engagement the IAF's numbers and skills would have prevailed more decisively. But why should a country with one-seventh of your defence Budget and a mere 3 per cent of your foreign exchange reserves be able to outrange, outgun and even outnumber you at a moment of its choosing? Are we

spending our defence rupees right?

India has two primary strategic needs: A defensive hedge against China, which makes its costs for any territorial push prohibitive, and a punitive deterrent to deny Pakistan the space for asymmetric mischief without fear of punishment.

A two-front war is not an impossibility but so very unlikely. China's stakes in the world are very different, India is perfectly capable of fighting in self-defence and between three nuclear powers, one thing you can presume is no one would lose a full-scale war without taking the other down with it. This is where a second breath of realism is needed: Stop psyching yourselves with the spectre of a two-front war. Don't paint the devil on the wall. Focus on what is clear, present, and realistic.

At this point, neither the Army or the IAF has that immediate, punitive deterrent power against Pakistan. Forget a three-week war; on the LoC, where the action is, Pakistan has until now fielded better infantry weapons, body armour, sniper rifles, and matching artillery. The qualitative air power mismatch and our complacency, especially under 10 UPA years that allowed it to build, was highlighted on February 26-27. The only service with a decisive and pulverising superiority over Pakistan today is the Navy. But using the Navy punitively raises the escalatory ladder, and creates a mess in waterways sensitive for the rest of the world.

Of the ₹4.31 trillion defence spending, the largest head is pensions, at ₹1.12 trillion, followed

by salaries of the three forces (excluding civilians and the DRDO) at ₹1.08468 trillion. Another ₹1 trillion plus is spent on other fixed costs, maintenance and consumables. What is left as capital Budget is a couple of hundred crores, even less than salaries. This is why each of the forces is scratching around to pay to modernise this or that, and making do with *jugaad*: A platform from here, a missile from there, radar from somewhere else. Of course, as we always know, it is the man behind the machine that matters. Because, ... “*phir bhi dil hai Hindustani*”.

An aspiring superpower deserves better. If it can't spend more, it has to spend better. You must not reduce salaries and pensions. Your soldiers deserve even more. But must you have such large manpower for full-career service? There is need to make the forces smaller, niftier, snappier, and punchier. Think of innovative ideas of shorter service and something Kline American ROTC (Reserve Officers Training Corps). Some progress in that direction is being made as this government is not as wary of change as the UPA. India needs a change of doctrine. And its strategic community should stop re-fighting wars of past.

By Special Arrangement with ThePrint

In China, censors are Hollywood's best friends



ADAM MINTER

The odds were stacked against Spiderman in China. Two weeks ago, the latest film featuring the superhero, *Spiderman: Far From Home*, was slated to open against *The Eight Hundred* a highly anticipated, big-budget war movie. But, in a plot twist that's left local filmmakers reeling, the Chinese film was cancelled just days before its release, allegedly because it'd fallen out of favour with censors. In its absence, *Spiderman* had a nearly \$100 million opening weekend — far beyond expectations. The US blockbuster is currently China's second-most popular draw, one of six foreign films in the top 10.

This isn't the Hollywood ending the Communist Party wanted.

For years, the Chinese government has actively promoted local movies with the goal of surpassing Hollywood's profits and global influence, both at home and abroad. Yet, increasingly, the government's efforts to control content are weakening the industry, to the benefit of US rivals.

China's film industry is one of the country's great growth stories over the last two decades. Between 2005 and 2019, box-office revenue grew from 2 billion yuan to just over 60 billion yuan (\$8.9 billion), thanks to an emerging middle class in search of entertainment. Annual growth rates of more than 30 per cent weren't unusual.

It wasn't just revenues growing, either. The technical proficiency of Chinese films also increased, culminating in *Wolf Warrior 2*, a 2017 military action-adventure drama that became China's most successful movie ever, and *The Wandering Earth*, a sci-fi thriller that's topping this year's box office. Generous subsidies, have boosted Chinese films against foreign competition more generally: In 2018, locally made films claimed 62 per cent of box-office revenue, up from 54 per cent in 2017.

Yet, at the same time, the box-office growth rate slowed to 9 per cent, down from 13.5 per cent in 2017. During the first half of 2019, revenues actually fell by 2.8 per cent despite a slight uptick in the average ticket price — the first such decline since 2011. The gross number of tickets sold declined 10.5 per cent year-on-year.

Several factors have contributed to this dropoff, including a recent tax evasion scandal that netted many Chinese film stars and stalled or killed productions, as well as increased competition from China's booming streaming video services. But the most damaging was summed up by *The Paper*, a state-funded newspaper in Shanghai: “This year audiences could clearly feel that after Chinese New Year, there were no good films to watch, especially among domestic films.”

Why? While censorship has always been a barrier to innovative and risk-taking films in China, adept and determined filmmakers could still find ways to get interesting work approved. That became much harder beginning in March 2018 when the government eliminated the agencies previously assigned to regulate film, television, and publica-

tions, assigning their responsibilities to the powerful Central Propaganda Department. What had been a difficult process mediated by bureaucrats suddenly became a much harder one overseen by Communist Party officials closely tied to China's top policymakers.

The immediate effects were understandably chaotic. Long-time relationships between studios and regulators needed to be reset or established fresh. This slowed down the already byzantine process of approvals. Worse, it injected a new degree of risk — and risk-aversion — into an industry that already had an ample share.

The results are obvious. In February, and again in April, three prominent Chinese films were abruptly withdrawn from festivals in Berlin and Cannes for “technical reasons” — a euphemism for censorship. An even more ominous sign came last month when *The Eight Hundred* was also pulled from its opening slot at the Shanghai International Film Festival for “technical reasons.” Reports on Chinese media suggest officials may have been offended by the idea that soldiers under Chiang Kai-Shek, the Chinese Nationalist rival to Mao

Zedong's Communists, had fought with valour during World War II.

Chinese filmmakers are getting the message. On the sidelines of the festival, China's biggest studios announced slates of films that seemed designed to please the censors. Tencent Pictures, the studio owned by Tencent Holdings, announced an upcoming lineup that Variety described as “a mix of Hollywood content and Chinese propaganda.” China Film Group Corporation, producer of *The Wandering Earth*, announced a similar slate while emphasising its “mission to closely revolve around the Party and the country's promotion of overall cultural work.”

The irony is that regulators know such dutiful movies aren't likely to inspire ticket buyers. Traditionally, in an unwritten blackout designed to boost the fortunes of local productions, the busy summer holiday season in July and August has been reserved for Chinese films only. This summer China has opted to open the gates to foreign films, in an effort to pump up ticket sales. The biggest beneficiary of China's clampdown on content may be Hollywood.

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Suarez reformed?

EYE CULTURE

SUHIT K SEN

The recently concluded Copa America, which was hosted by Brazil, was significant in a number of ways. Upfront, the hosts won the tournament, beating Peru 3-1, after a gap of 12 years. There were other unexpected outcomes.

First, Brazil won the tournament without the services of Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) superstar Neymar, who was not available because he was carrying an injury. This unexpectedly benefited the home side and taught fans and managers a valuable lesson: That the presence of a superstar carrying unnecessary baggage can, in fact, destabilise a team, rather than help take it over the line. The most ardent Neymar fans will acknowledge that alongside his undoubted skills, he carries baggage that neither helps him, nor his team. That is probably the reason why PSG are trying to offload the Brazilian in this transfer season.

Another lesson we learnt is that even the most perfect of players are not perfect. Argentina and Barcelona striker Lionel Messi is not only acknowledged to be one of the greatest attacking players to grace the game of football, but has so far also been idolised as a fair and sporting competitor. But Messi's failure to win trophies with his national team, in sharp distinction to the bags of trophies he has won with his club, has probably embittered him.

His bitterness brimmed over after Argentina's semi-final loss to Brazil in the Copa America. Messi embarked on an extended rant, in the course of which he excoriated the refereeing, alleging systematic bias in favour of the home team. For his pains, Messi faces a ban from participating in the Copa America for up to two years. This may not prove significant given Messi's age and the stage of his career he is in, but it is, nevertheless, disquieting to see the otherwise quiet and imperturbable Messi embark on such a harangue.

But all these wrinkles were overshadowed by a sublime moment of hilarity. It came in the course of a match between Uruguay, the most successful team in Copa history, and Chile on June 24. Uruguay and Barcelona striker Luis Suarez, one of the quintessential ‘bad boys’ of international football, had darted into the box, following a pass, rounded the goalkeeper and taken a shot at goal. The Chilean keeper recovered his poise in time to palm the ball away from goal.

Momentarily distracted, perhaps, by his failure to score, Suarez immediately appealed for a penalty. What he seemed to have forgotten in the heat of

the moment was that it is the goalkeeper's job to save goals and to do this he can use any part of his body: hands, feet, torso and head. Most usually, goalkeepers use their hands to parry, palm over or collect balls threatening their goal. Soon after, Suarez realised his mistake and stopped appealing.

There was more to come, however. Later in the course of the match, Suarez made frantic appeals to the referee, imploring him to send Chile's Gonzalo Jara off the pitch. The only problem was that all Jara had done was trip up a pitch invader, which doesn't exactly qualify as a foul.

This is, however, an improvement on Suarez's on-pitch behaviour. Five years to the day from the Uruguay-Chile match, Suarez had bitten Italy defender Giorgio Chiellini in a group-stage match during the 2014 World Cup. In all, Suarez was involved in three ‘biting’ episodes: the first time was in 2010, when he bit a PSV Eindhoven player while playing for Ajax in Holland; and in 2013, he had bitten Chelsea defender Branislav Ivanovic, while in a Liverpool jersey and was suspended for 10 games.

This incident prompted Liverpool to sell Suarez to Barcelona, where he has not only mended his ways but turned in impeccable performances season after season as part of an attacking trio, also involving Messi and another striker who has rotated over the years: Neymar, Ousmane Dembele, Philippe Coutinho. The good news for the Catalan side is that another classy striker — Antoine Griezmann — will wear the Barcelona jersey from next season. Suarez's happily changed ways perhaps owes much to his first Barcelona manager, Luis Enrique, who had always been a stickler for discipline.

Generically, the funniest incidents involve all manner of own goals — from misplaced back passes, by goalkeepers unaware of where the sticks are behind them, and, in one instance, from a hoofed clearance from the midway line of the ground.

But there are some outliers as well. Louis van Gaal, Manchester United manager for two years, was trying to convince the fourth official that a free kick awarded to Arsenal should not have been given because the Arsenal player claiming a foul had dived, i.e., simulated a fall. In the course of giving a demonstration of the dive, van Gaal, in fact, toppled to the ground. Strictly speaking, that was not on the pitch, though the incident involving an Eric Cantona look alike making it to the Manchester United line-up on the pitch was. The impostor was turfed out before the game began, however.

As of now, Suarez's appeals on the pitch against Chile can be considered the lightest of moments in top-tier football.

When advertising created celebrities



YES, BUT...

SANDEEP GOYAL

It must have been 1978, or thereabouts, when Promise toothpaste was launched. The young, dimpled, middle-class housewife in the ad would ask in mock exasperation, *Off! Ek aur naya toothpaste?* That simple question mouthed with a bemused and somewhat irritated facial expression soon made both the brand and its protagonist wildly famous. While Promise zoomed to the no. 2 position after market leader Colgate, the lady in the ad became known to the world as Maya Alagh, coincidentally herself a dentist by profession. The Promise ad launched Maya as a television actress of repute who went on to also

grab some meaty Bollywood roles over time.

Forty years ago, Surf introduced ‘Lalitaji’, the unsmiling, fussy, saree-clad housewife with a red-bindi and a distinctive hair-do, who taught India the difference between *sasti cheez aur acchi cheez*. Lalitaji became a household name in no time, but so did Kavita Chaudhary who essayed the role. Kavita was soon chosen to be the lead of *Udaan*, which became one of *Doordarshan*'s most iconic serials ever. The Liril girl, Karen Lunel, having fun under the waterfall became an overnight sensation catapulting the Air India stewardess to national stardom. In subsequent years, Pooja Batra, Preity Zinta, and Deepika Padukone also played the Liril girl and eventually carved out successful Bollywood careers, but no one was ever as much Liril as Karen.

Ankitha Jhaveri, the “I love you Rasna” girl of the 1980s became one of Indian advertising's most recalled brand mascots. It paved the way for her to become a well-known actress in Telugu films. In the 1990s, Parzaan Dastur was the little boy in the Dhara ad who runs away from home and is

enticed back by Ramu *kaka* because there are *jalebis* being cooked by his mom. He became such a prodigy that he was chosen for the role of the silent Sardarji boy in *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai*, the one who tells Shahrukh, *Tussi jaa rahe ho, tussi na jao* and then starred in *Kaho Naa Pyaar Hai*, *Mohabbatein*, *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham* besides other blockbuster Bollywood movies.

So, not very far back in time, it was advertising that created celebrities, and not the other way around. Brands today depend more and more on famous faces to entice customers and build brand preference. Ranveer Singh and Virat Kohli endorse about 25 brands each; Akshay Kumar and Deepika Padukone are brand ambassadors of at least 20 brands each; Amitabh Bachchan, Ranbir Kapoor, Alia Bhatt, and MS Dhoni also have endorsement deals in double digits. One almost gets the impression that brand advertising in India today cannot be done without using a famous face.

Yet, there are successful examples even in the current celeb-crazy environment where brands have managed to cut through the clutter

with advertising that became famous, concurrently catapulting their ordinary everyday protagonists to stardom. Amrita Raichand, a small town girl from Jamsheerpur, and an MBA from Narsee Monjee, played the housewife in Whirlpool's *Mummy ka Magic* campaign a decade ago, and became synonymous with her role as a modern, caring mom. So enduring was her personal equity, and so well-recalled was the campaign, that she today anchors a show called *Mummy ka Magic* as a chef on *FoodFood TV*.

The Airtel 4G girl Sasha Chhetri is a better known face across India than most Bollywood starlets and surely India's women cricket captain Harmanpreet Kaur. Between September 19 and November 20, 2015, Airtel beamed a mind-numbing 54,506 ad spots on national TV featuring Sasha. No wonder, the diminutive 19-years old Xavier's Mumbai student who hails from Dehradun, became one of the country's most-recognised and loved (some say hated) faces. Similar is the story of the *Kya Aapne Kabhi Online Hotel Search Kiya Hai?* Trivago India presenter who ignited an unprecedented-

d, ‘Who is the Trivago guy?’ avalanche on Twitter, Facebook and Quora a couple of years ago. The young man, Abhinav Kumar, is actually the travel portal's own business development manager based in Dusseldorf. He is today an internet darling with unbelievable metrics.

So, even today, it is possible to create memorable advertising in India sans celebrities, such that the ordinary folks in these famous campaigns gain fame and public recognition even beyond film stars and cricketers. But the essential ingredients in converting these ordinary folks into superstars are 1.) a single-minded advertising idea... like 4G in the case of Airtel 2.) limitless repetition of the ad on air... the 50K ad spots of Airtel in 60 days on TV irritated the hell out of the entire nation, but made Sasha unforgettable.

Creating brand characters who are uniquely yours and unequivocally identified with just one brand are invaluable assets. Far superior to employing mercenary celebrities. But how many brands today have the patience and the perseverance to ideate, create, nourish and celebrate ordinary folks as brand champions?

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Falling morbidity shows Swachh Bharat impact

Economic Survey shows the mission could have contributed to the falling incidence of killer diseases like malaria, diarrhoea

IT HAS BEEN clear for a while that judging the Swacch Bharat Mission’s (SBM’s) impact from the toilet coverage effected under the programme—99.43% for individual household latrines (IHHL)—alone could be flawed. Indeed, a study by the Research Institute for Compassionate Economics (RICE) shows that, while toilet coverage is significantly up, usage tells a different story. As per official SBM data, Madhya Pradesh (MP), Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Rajasthan have already achieved 100% IHHL coverage. Yet, 44% of the rural population in Bihar, UP, MP and Rajasthan, as per RICE data, still defecates in the open. The RICE study found that SBM helped drastically improve rural sanitation coverage in the four states—up from 37% in 2015-16 to 71%. But, behavioural change in favour of sanitation is, perhaps, still a concern. Against this backdrop, the Economic Survey examines an important metric of the SBM’s impact—the impact of improved sanitation on health—that may be used to nudge the behavioural change key to the programme’s vision.

Diarrhoea, whose prevalence is negatively correlated with the spread of sanitation, is a leading cause of death among children under the age of five. The Economic Survey looks at SBM’s impact on diseases like diarrhoea and malaria in children aged under five, and on incidence of still birth and low birth weight between 2015 and March 2019, in two groups of districts—one with a lower IHHL coverage than the 2014 national median of 33.5% and the other with a higher IHHL coverage than this median. Given how IHHL coverage would have shown drastically higher improvement in the first group after SBM’s implementation, the Survey notes, the impact on health was also expected to be larger for it than the second group. Diarrhoea cases fell from 6,968 and 5,262 in 2015 to 5,683 and 4,550 in 2019 in the first and the second group of districts, respectively. Malaria dropped from 761 and 273 to 222 and 113, still births from 540 and 403 to 456 and 368, and incidence of low birth weight from 3,890 and 3,230 to 3,686 and 3,198. The Survey acknowledges that other factors, like distribution of mosquito nets, increased fogging, etc, along with steps taken under the National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme, the Integrated Action Plan for Prevention of Pneumonia and Diarrhoea, and numerous state initiatives, could have played an important role in the decline of these diseases. A ministry of drinking water and sanitation study in five states shows that the prevalence of diarrhoea in non Open-Defecation-Free (non-ODF) areas was higher than that in ODF areas. Another study, by WHO, shows that while, in 2014, there were an estimated 140,000 diarrhoeal deaths attributable to lack of proper sanitation, this had declined to an estimated 50,000 in 2017-18. The positive for health from SBM should translate into economic gains for a household—a Unicef study shows, on average, every household in an ODF area saves about ₹50,000 due to lower likelihood of disease due to using toilets and adopting sanitary habits. The poorest households benefit most from the spread of sanitation—the Unicef study, comparing costs and benefits of having a toilet over a 10-year period, found, financial savings exceed costs by 1.7 times on average, and 2.4 times for the poorest households under conditions of 100% IHHL coverage. While SBM must contend with challenges on effecting behavioural change, especially in the next phase where waste management is the focus, the gains of the programme are likely to soon become evident in the form of improved morbidity indicators across the country.

Fix govt spending on schools

Govt schools lag pvt ones, despite larger per-student spends

THE FY20 BUDGET has the largest absolute outlay for school education in the past 11 years. If the sheer quantum of the outlay for a department were a metric of the importance that a government attaches to the former’s work, the ₹56,536 crore outlay in finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman signals that the Modi government is significantly recalibrating its focus on school education—NDA-II had drastically shrunk the allocation in FY16 (at ₹41,798 crore), compared to UPA-II’s FY14 outlay of ₹46,856 crore. The Modi government, in its first term, talked of reorienting the National Education Mission by focusing on school education in a holistic manner, under the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan—earlier, the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan targeted elementary education while the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan targeted secondary education. Samagra Shiksha would lay emphasis on increasing digitisation in pedagogy, proper deployment of teachers, strengthening infrastructure and, most important, improving learning outcomes. Given how, as recently as FY18, just 63.14% of government schools had electricity connections, as per data from the Unified District Information System for Education, analysed by *The Indian Express*, Samagra Shiksha’s infrastructure focus should be some succor. But, the findings of ASER studies over the years and the National Achievement Survey (NAS) 2018 show that if the government—the Centre and the states—must spend on school education, it must allocate the bulk of its spending for improving learning outcomes—via “teaching at the right level”, with computer-aided learning and other such measures. NAS—that tested learning outcomes in English, maths, science, social science and Indian languages—found that while 64% of Class III students surveyed at state board, CBSE and ICSE schools were able to correctly answer a maths question, in state-board schools, it fell to 54% in Class V, 42% in Class VIII and less than 40% in Class X (except for Andhra Pradesh). For English, the corresponding figures were 67%, 58%, 52% and <42% (except in Manipur). Fanned by bad policy like the now-scrapped “no detention rule” under the Right to Education, school education has suffered from the disparity in learning levels within classrooms—this showed in the spurt in dropout levels in the higher classes; as per the HRD ministry’s Educational Statistics 2016, secondary dropout rate was over 18% while, at the upper primary level, it was less than 5%.

The draft National Education Policy “unequivocally commits to raising investment in education substantially—including a significant increase in public financial investment” and many experts would concur, especially on increasing public spending on school education. However, according to a 2014 study by the Accountability Initiative, while the median spending per elementary level student in government schools in 2011-12—this varied widely from state to state—was ₹12,768, the private expenditure for students enrolled in private aided and unaided schools ranged from just over ₹3,100 (Uttar Pradesh) to over ₹11,120 (Himachal Pradesh). Given private schools have consistently had better educational outcomes, to realise the learning outcomes that it is eyeing in the long run, the Modi government would do better if it were to subsidise private school education for those who can’t afford it—Jan Dhan and Aadhaar can make this easy, and efficient too.

BodyBLOW

A new report finds that 75% of under-five children with disabilities do not attend any school

A RECENT REPORT by Unesco and the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, *State of the Education Report for India: Children with Disabilities*, finds 75% of five-year-olds with disabilities do not attend any schools in India—20% of children with hearing and visual impairment have never been in school—and that one in four in the 5-19-year-old cohort are not enrolled in an educational institute. The report is based on Census 2011 and takes into account 78,64,636 children with disabilities (CWDs) in India—1.7% of the total child population. Compared with children with learning disabilities, those with multiple disabilities see a much lower enrolment in schools and their dropout rate is also higher. The report also mentions that there are fewer girls with disabilities enrolled in schools than boys.

Against the backdrop of the stated inclusion goals of the government for persons with disabilities, the report shows that access to education will pose perhaps the toughest challenge. The Right to Education has provisions for enrolments of CWDs, but crucially has no clause for providing resources for them. As of now, most CWDs enrol in National Institute of Open Schooling, but, there has been a decline in enrolments from 2009 to 2015. The report makes several recommendations, one being amending the RTE to make it aligned with the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016. It also mentions the need for driving an attitudinal change amongst parents and children—without this, any effort to build inclusion will flounder.

● NO PROOF REQUIRED

TO ADVANCE PRIVATE INVESTMENT AND BECOME A \$5-TRN ECONOMY, INDIA MUST REDUCE CORPORATE TAX RATE TO 22%, AND REDUCE MISGUIDED RATES OF PERSONAL INCOME TAXATION

Tax policy: Maximise, not moralise

BUDGET 2019-20 CONTAINED major tax changes to direct taxes, both personal and corporate. It may have been the last time that we witnessed such changes. Very likely, when Budget 2020-21 is presented, the government would have accepted the direct tax code report, and direct taxes will go the way of excise taxes—out of the budget.

The Budget reduced the corporate tax rate (CTR) from 30% to 25% for all firms with a turnover of ₹400 crore. Earlier, the 25% slab was applicable for firms with a turnover of ₹250 crore. The FM stated that this move would cover 99.3% of all firms in India; however, it is unclear as to how much of the total corporate taxes is accounted for by these 99.3% of firms. Speculation abounds—is it as low as 10%? We do not know.

Tax rates are always an item of discussion and debate, and now more so than ever. President Trump lowered the CTR for USA from 35% to 21% in 2018. As shown below, the lower tax rate was well-chosen by Trump because that is close to the optimal tax rate. But, that is getting ahead of the story.

OECD has recently released a comprehensive set of data on corporate taxes, for close to a 100 economies (*bit.ly/2EmYh3t*). The data reveals what has been feared (and argued) for a long time—India has one of the highest (actually the highest) corporate tax rate in the world. And, according to OECD, it also has the highest effective corporate tax rate (ECTR), and that too by a huge margin. India’s ECTR is estimated by OECD at 44%; their definition includes all taxes paid by corporates in different countries—e.g., corporate tax, dividend tax, capital gains tax. Incidentally, the second highest ETR is for Argentina and it is 9 percentage points (ppt) lower than India, and third is France, 11 ppt lower. China’s ECTR is 20 ppt lower than India’s at 23.6%! One reason why China has got all the investments, and growth, at least relative to India?

In this age of globalisation, no country is an island. Competitiveness is affected by tax rates, interest rates, exchange rates, and labour costs. However, gone are the days when countries could devalue their way to prosperity. China accomplished this via massive undervaluation for about 20 years, from 1990-2010. Their success ensured that such undervaluation (read currency manipulation) would never

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Views are personal

again be allowed by the Western powers. It is likely that Trump’s trade war would not have occurred if China had been more responsible with the setting of its exchange rate.

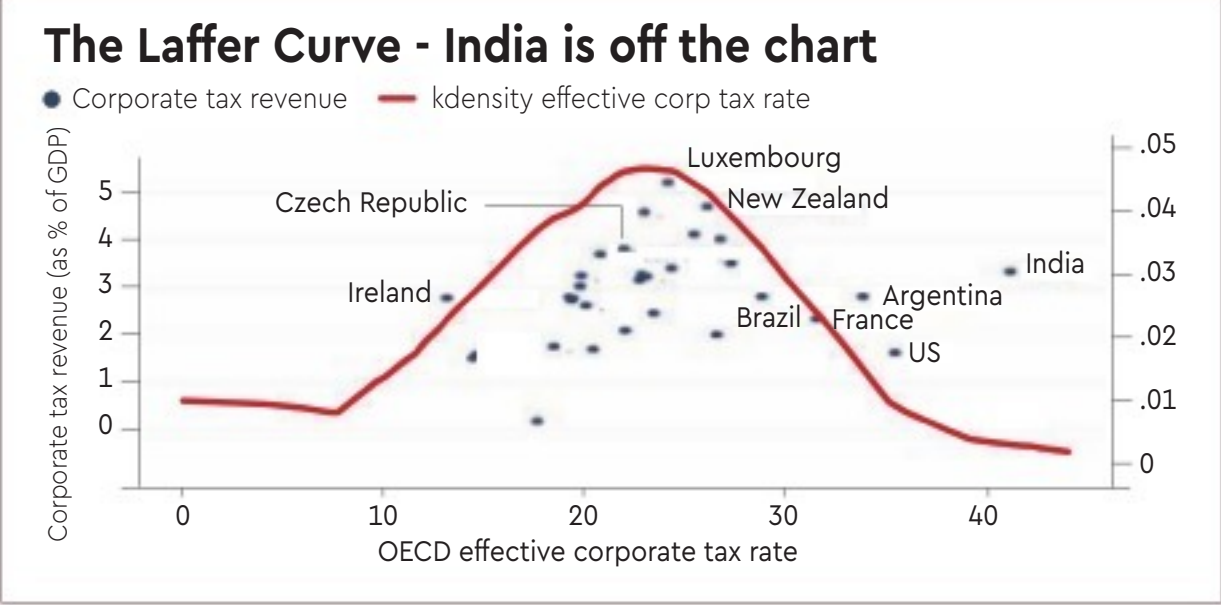
What can a country do to improve its competitiveness, given that the mercantilist route is no longer an option? It can reduce its cost of capital, make labour more competitive, make industry more competitive, and rekindle animal spirits. On the first three counts, the Budget has moved in the right direction. Sovereign bond borrowing is an idea whose time has definitely come, notwithstanding the perennial naysayers and those not comprehending the fundamental nature of change in the world. Inflation nowhere (including India) is the bogey it once was. Also, naysayers should note and answer the following question—between fiscal years 2004 and 2011 (the so-called Golden Age of Indian growth) the real repo rate averaged minus 1%. For the fiscal years 2016-2018 real repo rates averaged 2.3%. Go figure the growth implications.

Since Shaktikanta Das assumed Governorship of RBI, there has been considerable improvement in communication and a gradual lowering of policy rates, but this has also been accompanied by a more than equal lowering of inflation, i.e., the real repo rate has yet to move below 2.3%. The sovereign bond issue will help, but don’t look for a quick acceleration in GDP growth.

Exchange rate change is no longer operational, labour codes are too slow to change, and monetary policy is sluggish in its operation and impact. The only real growth option for Indian policy makers—cut tax rates to internationally competitive levels. And what that might be? Around 22% for all firms, and we obtain that result from a comparative study (see graphic).

But first, a comment on the personal income tax (PIT) rate increase in the budget. The move to increase PIT rates to developed country levels is *not* in the right direction. It seems that there was more old-fashioned morality (tax the rich) than revenue maximisation at play. At best, the government plans to raise ₹5,000 crore more by socking it to the rich (total personal income tax collection is budgeted at ₹500,000 crore). And, even that may not happen as tax arbitrage between the much lower corporate tax rate and the near highest individual income tax rate (only 10% of countries have a higher than 43% top PIT rate) will move animal spirits towards payment of corporate tax. And, if not tax arbitrage, tax evasion may lower gain in PIT collection.

Obviously, tax rates are set to maximise tax revenue—and tax revenue depends on both income and tax compliance. Tax compliance can either be considered as more firms filing taxes or more firms revealing a closer approximation to true income. Improving



Indigo shareholders deserve better

IndiGo should be rewarding its shareholders by consolidating its leadership position and filling the gap left by Jet, especially on overseas routes. Instead, the founders are busy picking fights

ANDY MUKHERJEE

Bloomberg

THE CO-FOUNDERS OF India’s No. 1 airline are engaged in a bitter feud. Their quarrel couldn’t have come at a worse time for minority shareholders of InterGlobe Aviation Ltd., the company that owns IndiGo.

Investors were just starting to enjoy the fruits of a frenetic expansion that saw the no-frills carrier, Asia’s largest, double its capacity in the three years through March. Full-cost rival Jet Airways India Ltd. tried to keep up, until it was forced to ground its last plane in April under a truckload of debt. Meanwhile, InterGlobe has put together a cash war chest—net of debt—of nearly \$2 billion.

This is the time for IndiGo to be rewarding shareholders by consolidating its leadership position and filling the gap left by Jet, especially on overseas routes. Instead, the founders are busy picking fights.

Rakesh Gangwal, a former CEO of US Airways Group Inc., has dashed off a letter to the Indian stock-market regulator alleging corporate-governance lapses. He says partner Rahul Bhatia, who owns 1 percentage point more than US-based Gangwal’s 37% stake, is dragging IndiGo into transactions with his other businesses, which are mostly housed under InterGlobe Enterprises Ltd. (IGE Group), without adequate auditing. The airline pays rent to IGE’s real-estate unit; the crew stays at hotels operated by Bhatia’s joint venture with Accor SA; pilots are trained at IGE’s flight simulator, a col-

laboration with Canada’s CAE Inc.; a Bhatia firm has also acted as a sales agent for IndiGo.

What amounted to \$22 million of related-party transactions, for a carrier that took in \$4 billion in annual revenue, doesn’t exactly smack of a governance scandal. Not at an airline that thrives on keeping its costs under control. Bhatia, for his part, wants to know why Gangwal is questioning the arrangements now when he “did not raise for 13 years a whisper”. The India-based partner says he took most of the economic risk when setting up the airline. Besides, Gangwal isn’t denying entering into a shareholders’ agreement that gives Bhatia control, including the power to nominate half of the six-member board and most of the top managers.

Gangwal’s letter mentions whistleblowers. Unless those charges are serious and material, the battle looks more about monetising a business that he never wanted any part of until a persistent Bhatia talked him into it.

Today, the co-founders can be legitimately proud of IndiGo, a rare success story in global aviation, achieved in a brutally price-competitive and fast-growing market. The problem seems to be about dividing up that success fairly.

It probably rankles billionaire Gangwal, the strategy whiz, that his 37% stake is perhaps worth less than the market value of roughly \$3 billion, while his money-man (former) friend’s 38% stake is worth much more. After all, any airline or a buyout firm willing to write

that big a check would want a measure of influence over the airline’s future: That’s something only Bhatia can give. If that’s the real reason Gangwal is seeking to enlist the regulator’s help “to make necessary changes to the unusual controlling rights available to the IGE Group,” then it’s a failure of mediation.

From the shareholders’ perspective, it’s a dangerous lapse. Indians’ trust in business and business tycoons, finance and financiers, accounts and auditors has probably never been lower. Any suggestion of impropriety now can spiral out of control. No wonder the infighting dragged InterGlobe shares down nearly 11% on Wednesday, as investors braced themselves for a protracted and unpleasant legal and public-relations skirmish—much like the one that flared up at the Tata Group in 2016, after it fired then-Chairman Cyrus Mistry, who also happened to be a large shareholder.

IndiGo became No. 1 by making flights take off and land on time more often than most other large global airlines. To investors’ horror, the messiness the carrier so studiously avoided in its operations—by relying on a single type of aircraft (the narrow-bodied Airbus), deploying its fleet efficiently and growing it strategically—has finally come back to haunt it. Not at the tarmac, but in the boardroom.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Amendment to POCSO Act

The amendment to POCSO (Protection of children from Sexual offences Act) law with an intent to award death penalty to those who perpetrate heinous sexual crimes against children doesn’t qualify to be both a pragmatic and an effective measures to protect children from being ended up as a victim to sexual violence. Increasing instances of sexual abuse of children is a matter of grave concern, but death penalty cannot be an effective deterrent to sexual crimes. Poor conviction rates in sexual abuse cases aided by shoddy investigation and prosecution needs to be changed at first place. It should be noted here that it is not the severity of punishment, but certainty of punishment would act as a powerful deterrent.

— M Jeyaram, Sholavandan

Housing options

This is with reference to news report “*Housing still too costly for most*” (12 July). Against this backdrop there are innovative ways where to some extent it can be tackled and cushioned on immediate basis. There is good scope to rent out single rooms to construction workers on rent basis. Besides, students look for studio apartments in big cities. A major business waiting to be taped in big league is PG accommodation.

— NK Bakshi Vadodara

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LET'S FACE THE ELEPHANT in the room first. Skill development programmes in India have just not worked. Period. Decades of programmes, schemes, *yojanas* and *prajoyanas* to uplift the bottom-of-the-pyramid into white and blue collared jobs have just not been able to keep pace with the 12 million Indians that enter the workforce every year (versus the 5.5 million jobs created annually). Thus, India faces a unique paradox. On one hand, a majority of Indian engineers are unemployable. On the other hand, you can't find a decent plumber to fix your sink. Somewhere in this disequilibrium lies the saddest evidence of India's failed skill development policies.

India's skill development policies have been structured around the following questions:

1. How do we build more skill development centres? How do we fund them?
 2. What course duration, curriculum, language, pedagogy and practical trainings should our programmes have?
 3. Who is the 'competent authority' for teacher selection and allocation?
 4. Should we leverage MOOCs, flipped-learning models for skills training?
 5. At what frequency should we organise career fairs?
- Despite decades of intent and capital infusion, India as a nation has failed at its skill development journey. And if the NSDC data is to be believed, miserably so (less than half of those getting certified get placed into jobs).
- My hypothesis is very simple. We have been asking the wrong questions.

Demand > supply

We have been asking, how our youth would become employABLE; not employED. Let me explain.

As important as supply-side thinking is, India is missing out by ignoring the demand-side of the skills equation. Our policymakers, as well intentioned as they are, have not bothered enough about what skills the industry needs, and how an effective pipeline is built into it.

Instead of a wing-to-wing view, our policy suffers a selective definition of the problem. In some ways, it's like a restaurant kitchen churning out food that no one is ordering. And while the kitchen's dashboard looks great, we really aren't solving the hunger problem.

A personal anecdote

Back in 2015, I brought the World Toilet Summit to India. This was the first time since the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan was announced that the central government, state governments, multilateral agencies, corporates and NGOs all came together for PM Narendra Modi's mission to make India open-defecation-free.

Organised in partnership with the ministry of urban development, and

attended by Cabinet ministers, MPs and senior bureaucrats, it was a very visible statement to the government's intent to solve the sanitation crisis.

It was interesting to find stakeholders primarily discussing supply-side like construction materials, logistical capability, district-wise targets, etc. On the other hand, we had three, simple, demand-side suggestions:

1. Open Defecation Free (ODF) projects wouldn't work till toilets are aspirational; till people wanted to break habit; and choose to use them. Behavioural change is not just critical, but had to be the starting point. *(Creating demand for toilets.)*
2. Measure the success of the programme in ODF numbers (output metrics), rather than construction targets (input metrics). This avoids the reeking reality where toilets are constructed, but used as storages or chicken coops. *(Creating demand for results, not action.)*
3. If you can have training and certification for other vocations, why not have a 'certified sanitation technician'. It kills the cultural stigma associated with 'toilet staff', and feeds skills janitors to maintain these toilets. *(Creating demand for sanitation jobs.)*

The fascinating part was this. As intutional as the suggestions may have sounded, the 'system' took a while to get around it. Stakeholders debated endlessly, often taking a very condescending view towards the demand-side of the equation. A very senior delegate pulled me aside to mock my view through an old Hindi adage: "You can take a horse to the grass, but it's his job to eat it."

Bureaucratic machinery has started ads around increasing usage of toilets. The 'system' now understands unused toilets can be a bigger disaster—in terms of optics, and in terms of health hazard.

The system now understands 'supply' is meaningless without 'demand'.

Demand-based thinking

As the world moves towards demand-based economy, so should feeder industries, including India's biggest offering—its talent. India skills policies have been plagued historically, unable to channel our demographic dividend towards this demand. In the 1980s and 1990s, private players like NIIT and Aptech built the pipeline for emerging tech jobs. Around the turn of the century, mom-and-pop 'acc't coaching centres' sprouted across B&C towns to feed the BPO/ITeS engine.

SKILL INDIA'S DANGEROUS MISADVENTURE

Barking up the wrong tree

All that India needs is to identify emerging industries, engage with stakeholders there and let well-intentioned capital build capacity. Chase demand, and markets are smart enough for supply models to evolve themselves



While it is absolutely desirable that the private sector fill these gaps, the government cannot shy away from its share of the responsibility. The government may not be as agile or responsive as private players, but may want to institutionalise demand-based thinking into its skill development initiatives.

The five-point framework

Policy development in the new age should start at the end of the value chain, and reverse engineer to create supply (of skills). I suggest a five-point framework.

1. Industry outreach: In most other industries, surveys, voice-of-customer studies and focus groups define product specs and output. In our policymaking, though, economists rule the roost. That our economists are primarily (a) academicians and theorists (as compared to having real-world experience), and (b) educated outside India, albeit in world-class universities—this ensures that the ear-on-the-ground is missing. Current engagement with the industry is limited to the 3Cs: committees, conclaves and conferences. Most of these are platforms for sharing views. But unless a more tactical bridge is built, there's limited chance of truly understanding demand.

2. International outreach: The construction boom in Doha, the hospitality industry in Singapore, domestic helpers in Hong Kong, all need feeding. India is missing a huge opportunity to uplift its poor, by not engaging effectively with these receptacles. The Philippines and Indonesia, on the other hand, have grown as huge exporters of talent. Purely from a humanitarian perspective as well, many impoverished Indians are lured into lives of virtual slavery by unscrupulous touts and agents. Consolidation and disintermediation of these 'agents' will not just protect vulnerable Indian citizens, but help talent exports grow as well. Assam is exploring an ambitious project with South East Asian countries. If that works, it would provide a great template for other states to emulate.

3. PPP, without a P: Public-private partnerships have become the cornerstone for infrastructure development; the model can be extended across social-impact projects as well. However, the PPP model is premised on the congruence of objectives. In the case of skill development, though, the government is chasing social goal; the corporates a tactical goal. The answer will be different when

the question is. Time horizons, location strategies, curriculum are rarely at intersection. Instead, why not allow private players to create their own pipelines? It's not unimaginable to see the auto component industry in Chennai get together to set up a polytechnic for machine-tool operators, or for the textile industry in Tiruppur to set up their own tailoring schools. All that needs to happen is for the government to give them the authority, and probably a re-purposed out-of-use engineering college (ouch!).

4. Impact capital: The problem with public goods is everyone wants to use them, but no one wants to pay for them. This is where venture philanthropy and impact capital comes in. Even before the mandatory 2% CSR Kicker in India, businesses had ingrained social responsibility in DNA. The Tatas built hospitals and townships, family-run enterprises built *dharamshalas*, micro-enterprises set up a *piav* (free water for strangers passing by) outside their shops. However, most of this intent is currently directed towards expenses, not investment. An interesting 'demand' to fulfil might be catering to the need of a donor to build something sustainable and visible. Let venture philanthropy solve what public expenditure and private capital cannot.

5. Quality, not quantity: Clearly, India needs to solve the quantity problem (of 12 million new entrants into the job market). In parallel, we need jobs that continually move people up the value chain. Efforts like Make in India, Digital India, Startup India, etc., may create a catchment area, albeit isolated clusters of jobs. India's domestic consumption and increasing prosperity definitely creates the need for more involved skill sets. India needs to think of building capacity in the talent pool to realise these higher-level dreams. More importantly, India needs to figure out what these needs are, and stop looking at skill development solely as a poverty-alleviation tool.

6. Bonus tip—use Excel, not Power-Point: Demand is ground-up. Demand is a tactical aggregation of pockets-of-need. Most policymaking, however, is strategic—a bird's-eye-view of macro-level numbers. The scholarly pursuit of macroeconomics and public policy, as lucrative as it may be, doesn't necessarily translate to implementability. GDP numbers, unemployment rates, Forbes and World Bank ratings are great indicators, but not solution-tools. Genuine solutions to the skills challenge can emerge only from a micro, tactical approach.

In short, what India needs is to identify emerging industries, engage with stakeholders there and let well-intentioned capital build capacity. Chase demand, and markets are smart enough for supply models to evolve themselves.

All I'm suggesting is a chapter from Hospitality Management 101. It's time policymakers reached out to stakeholders and asked, "How may I help you today?"

DATA DRIVE

Little wiggle room for Centre's spending

WHILE THE GOVERNMENT stressed upon importance of higher investment to spur the economy, it has not increased the allocation for capital expenditure—₹3.4 lakh crore or 7% higher than FY19 (RE)—as it had little scope to do so, given committed revenue expenditure and high fiscal deficit. It has retained its estimates of capital expenditure made in the Interim Budget.

The overall capital expenditure of the central government and central public sector undertakings is lower than last year. Over the years, the share of government's capital expenditure has been declining, with several of the public sector undertakings funding capital expenditure through internal accruals and market borrowings or internal and extrabudgetary resources (IEBR). The off-balance sheet borrowings of the government have been growing over the years.

An analysis shows that the IEBR portion of the total capital expenditure of the ministries associated with investment in infrastructure has shot up over the past few years. However, internal accruals have not picked up, which means that several quasi-government entities such as the NHAI and the Indian Railways have to borrow money from the market. This trend, in

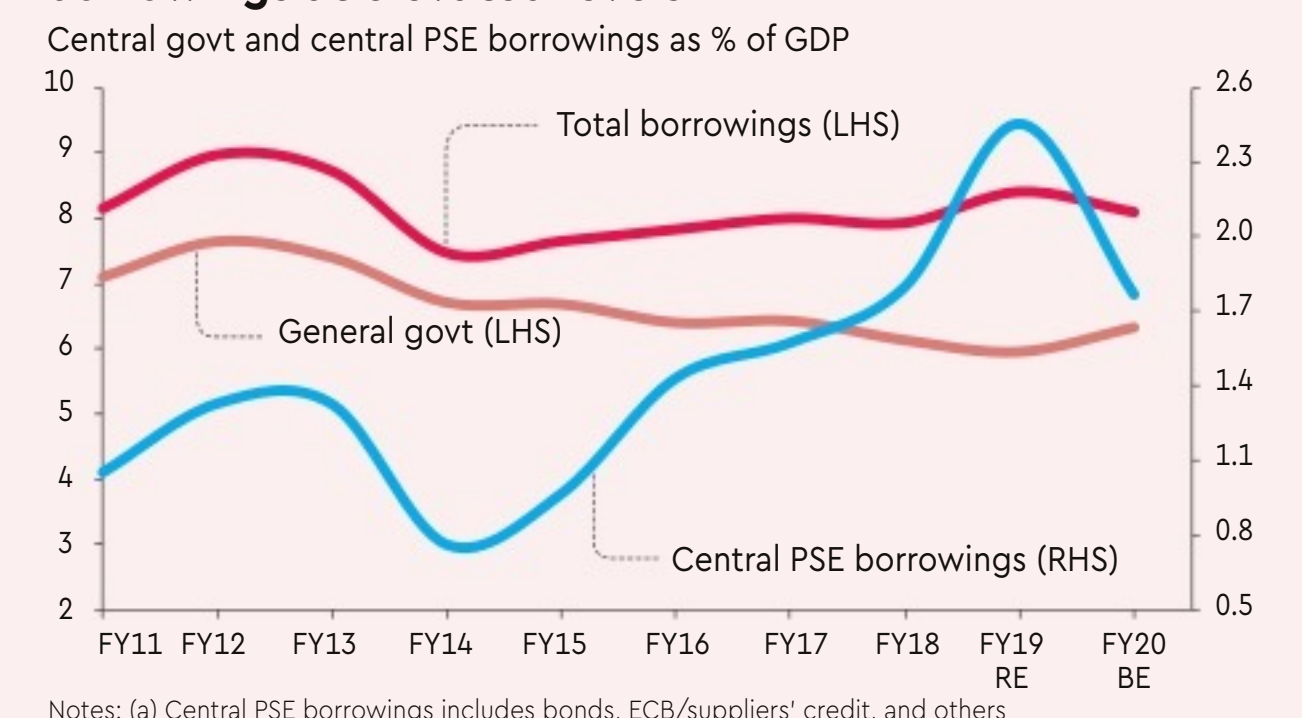
fact, has led to high levels of market borrowings of government and quasi-government entities, despite the Centre reducing its capital expenditure and fiscal deficit.

The high consolidated fiscal deficit of around 6.1% (including states) will have a limited impact on RBI's accommodative monetary policy with market interest rates staying high despite 75 basis points rate cut this calendar year. Also, high government and quasi-government market borrowing through government bonds, PSE bonds and small saving scheme funds will result in crowding out of the private sector and stymie private investment rate.

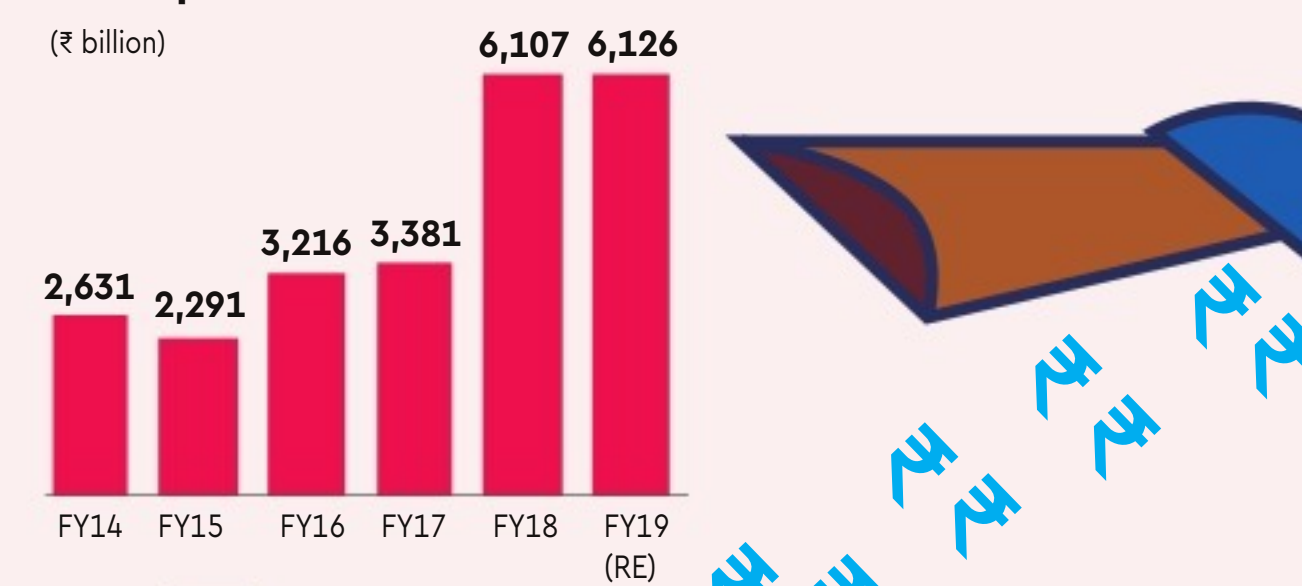
Data from CMIE show that investments in new projects plunged to a 15-year low in the three months to June this year, indicating a grim picture of an investment-starved economy. Investment in private sector projects fell 89% in the quarter as compared to last year.

Interestingly, the government has increased allocation to various social welfare schemes to ₹4.3 lakh crore, which is 22% higher than ₹3.5 lakh crore in FY2019 (RE). It kept the outlay for the PM-KISAN (farm income support) scheme at ₹75,000 crore, same as in the Interim Budget.

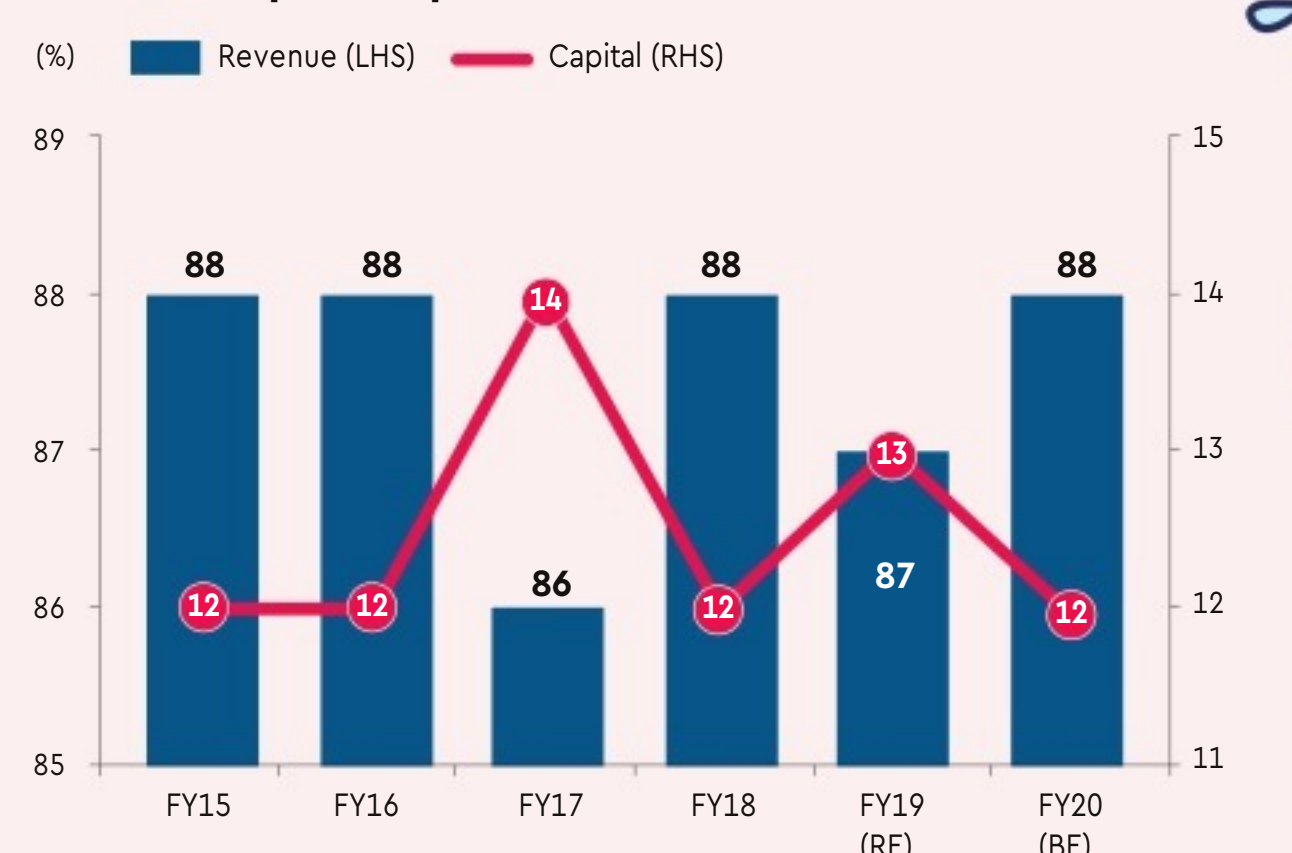
Central PSE borrowings have kept overall borrowings at elevated levels



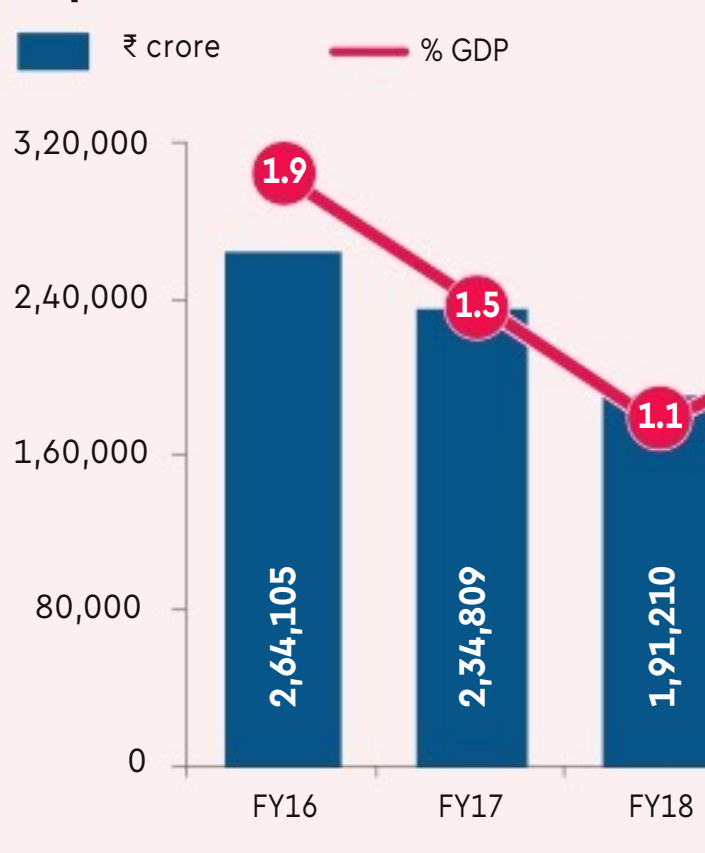
IEBR major funding source for capex



Share of capital expenditure remains low



Expenditure on subsidies remains flat



Rural spending grows





The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

LAW AND BEYOND

Draft UP law against lynching is a welcome acknowledgement by the state of the gravity of the crime. It is only a first step

IN JULY 2018, a Chief Justice of India-led bench of the Supreme Court delivered a stinging indictment of what it called “horrendous acts of mobocracy”, and warned against violent vigilantism propelled by prejudice and hatred — “lynching” — becoming “the new normal”. The Court directed the Centre to frame a law that dealt specifically with these crimes, and suggested the setting up of fast-track courts, lodging of FIRs without delay and framing of compensation schemes for victims and their families. The draft law submitted to Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath by the UP State Law Commission would appear to take cognisance of the Court’s directive. The Uttar Pradesh Combating of Mob Lynching Bill (2019) proposes imprisonment (upto 10 years for serious injuries and upto life imprisonment in case of death) and stringent fines for perpetrators, as well as those involved in planning and abetting lynchings. Significantly, it also criminalises the “dereliction of duty” by police officers and the district administration.

The draft law is welcome for the much-needed signal it sends out — there must be accountability for hate crime. Far too often, the mob lynching phenomenon, disturbingly ubiquitous since 2014, has been met by the ruling political formation by denial or, at times, with what could be described as tacit and symbolic support. A report by IndiaSpend found that of all “bovine-related deaths” between 2011-2017, 97 per cent occurred after the BJP came to power in 2014. Take the murder of Mohammad Akhlaq in UP in 2015. The case, despite being before a fast-track court, has seen little progress. As on date, the court is yet to take cognisance of the charges framed against the accused. The accused in the case, out on bail, have been celebrated — one of them was even draped in the national flag after dying of natural causes. In fact, in January 2016, then BJP MP Yogi Adityanath said that Akhlaq should be charged (posthumously) for cow slaughter and the compensation his family received should be rescinded. There are incidents, across states, of the victims being charged by the police in cases of lynching, even as the will to arrest and prosecute the perpetrators seems weak. In this context, a state government-appointed commission in BJP-ruled UP does well to propose a law that recognises, first, that mob lynchings require urgent legislative and administrative intervention and, second, that police and administration must also share the blame for the climate that permits such violence.

But a new law can only be a first step. The state must follow it through. Then, in 2018, the apex court had also said “grandstanding of the incident by the perpetrators of the crimes including in the social media aggravates the entire problem”. The political and social sanction for violence, in the name of the cow or accompanied by chants of “Jai Shri Ram”, is integral to the sense of impunity that encourages the lynch mob. These can only be addressed with the active support of the political class and civil society.

THE MIYA VOICE

FIR filed against poets voicing their fears about NRC process in Assam is an outrageous attempt to suppress a debate

THE SCARS OF the ongoing process of updating of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam are now becoming visible in cultural expressions, in poetry and music. Miya poetry is one such genre, which seeks to voice the concerns of Muslims of Bengali origin, who live in the *chars* (river islands) of the Brahmaputra in Assam. Now Assam police has filed an FIR against 10 persons whose works feature in a video of Miya poetry, *I am Miya: Reclaiming Identity Through Protest Poetry*, on the basis of a complaint filed in Guwahati. The complaint alleges that the intent of the accused is to “hinder the process of the NRC”, “create communal disturbances in the state” and “defame the Assamese people as xenophobic”. The complaint, and the FIR, are a crude attempt to suppress a community from even expressing fears about being singled out on grounds of ethnic identity.

The NRC is a process mandated by the Supreme Court to identify “foreigners” in Assam. It is a legacy of Partition-era politics that saw nationalism through the prism of religious, linguistic and ethnic faultlines. The Assam Movement in the 1970s gave it fresh impetus and it has since found backing from the judiciary. The advent of the BJP, which wants the “foreigner” tag attached only to Bengali Muslims, to office in Assam has given the NRC process a religious twist. The people left out of the NRC — 40 lakh so far — face the threat of being deported to detention camps that have been set up in Assam. Miya poetry is a defiant response to a tragedy unfolding under state supervision. It also signals assertion and resistance by a besieged community that is finally owning up an identity: Miya has been used as a slur to mean a Bangladeshi or an illegal immigrant. The Miya poem that has touched a raw nerve now is a powerful rap at a process that dehumanises people, reduces them to their mere ethnic identity and, thereafter, strips them of their rights. It is no call to arms.

The Miya poetry video is a call to understand the NRC outside a legalistic framework. It should not be suppressed, but actively seen and heard, to understand the human tragedy that underlies the NRC process.

PAUSE, PLEASE

An AI-powered prompt to reconsider offensive language offers online abusers a shot at redemption

PICTURE MIGHT be worth a thousand words in so far as those words don’t involve abuse or intimidation. In the face of mounting criticism for its lack of intervention in countering cyber-bullying, social-media platform Instagram — home to idyllic photographs of envy-inducing lives of perfection — has now introduced features designed to iron away crinkles in the user experience. One of them — an AI-powered prompt to reconsider offensive language — has been rolled out, to what company head Adam Mosseri mentioned in a blog post has been a satisfactory start. Early runs have apparently shown a change of heart in some users. Instagram, and its parent company Facebook Inc., have promised more anti-bullying features, including one called Restrict, which allows users a degree of control over their terms of engagement with their abusers.

As the rise and rise of trolls in the last decade has established, anonymity is a powerful and pliant tool in the hands of cyber bullies. It affords them a virile audacity to wound or maim, disinform or disrupt, without running the risk of detection. In short, it offers them an unchecked playing field for their vitriol. By introducing the prompt, what Instagram has done is to offer a moment of pause to malicious intent, giving both potential abusers and their recipients a redemptive shot at a fuller, less confrontational online experience.

Will this be enough, though, to establish equity in an unequal power dynamics? It seems rather unlikely. Technology has reshaped our social consciousness in ways more startling than any other communication upgrades — including from the oral to the written — have effected. Communication in this age of social media has become manipulative, vying as much for the limelight as for authoritarianism. It’s unlikely that a mere cautionary prompt will be deterrent enough to ebb the flow of toxicity that often passes for social exchange on the web.



AMRITA DUTTA

IF YOU HAVE grown up on good, bad and awful Hindi films, you would be familiar with some basic rules of engagement. Girl meets boy. He woos, she shrinks. He sings, she stomps. He lands up at her door, follows her in college corridors, stalks her on streets with his gang of sidekicks — and finally wins her heart.

But *Kabir Singh*, a tale of intense heterosexual love well on its way to becoming a cult, struck me not just for its angry, chain-smoking self-destructive hero. It’s the pristine woman Sandeep Reddy Vanga’s film worships that is an equally troubling fantasy. Kiara Advani’s Preeti Sikka, fresh-faced to the point of being anaemic, made me nostalgic for the way Madhuri Dixit, Raveena Tandon or Juhi Chawla flounced, fumed and rolled their eyes at the serial harassment they suffered in the guise of courtship in films from the 1990s — even if the script did eventually nudge them into love.

As Kabir Singh, a final-year medical student with a violent streak, goes about “picking” Preeti from a line of freshers walking by, and then publicly owning her by declaring to the boys in her class that she “belongs” to him, choosing where she sits in class, and who she is friends with (fat chicks are best for pretty girls, says this upper-caste meritorious topper), Vanga allows not even a twinge of fear, alarm, discomfort on Preeti’s face (since she remains as silent as alabaster in most of the early scenes, it’s hard to know what she’s thinking). Not even when he kisses her in public, without so much as a prelude, a conversation, or permission, does she flinch.

This is a film which seems to say: Alpha males in true, intense, mad love never have to ask, will she mind? Is she saying yes? In 2019, when a tidal wave of conversations about consent has washed over us, this is not a film as much as a balm for bruised male entitlement.

The #MeToo wave has ebbed, leaving behind several damaged reputations and disturbing questions about how various aspects of our culture conspire to give men enormous sexual entitlement and power over women. Some of these questions have been

As the #MeToo wave ebbs, the blockbuster is not a film as much as a balm for bruised male entitlement

This is, of course, a time when all kinds of boorishness ripples with a new cultural pride. The director tore into critics who had problems with his film (they were ‘parasites, pseudos, worse than pirates’). While once filmmakers made regressive films with cynicism, and shrugged off critics as they laughed their way to the bank, Vanga insisted he has made a film about a strong woman, that his intentions were honourable because he worked with rape victims. His is the indignation of the ‘good man’, who cannot imagine why women’s experience would not square with his view of their place in the world.

brushed aside with impunity, silence and indifference of institutions. Indeed, the highest court in the land has come off poorly in appearing to do justice when one of its own was accused. From Tanushree Dutta to Sruthi Hariharan to Chinmayi Sripada, women in Indian cinema have had to pay huge costs for speaking up about sexual violence, while those accused of grievous abuse (Alok Nath, Nana Patekar, Arjun Sarja) have been reinstated. But that is not to say that Indian masculinity hasn’t been challenged by this clamour. That it doesn’t long for a time of innocence, when boys could be boys, and not be held up to scrutiny.

A film like *Kabir Singh* (or its earlier Telugu variant, *Arjun Reddy*) — a slickly-made psychologically realistic portrait of a successful man in free fall, who can threaten a woman with a knife into opening her clothes, who chases his domestic help down the road — is the fantasy that consoles, that showcases the sheer seductive power of male anger and privilege. Or, as Vanga pronounced, in his now-famous interview with film critic Anupama Chopra, “intimidation has its own charm”. He followed it with a dubious theory of attachment — “when you’re deeply in love, deeply connected with a woman and vice versa... if you don’t have the liberty of slapping each other, then I don’t see anything there.”

This is, of course, a time when all kinds of boorishness ripples with a new cultural pride. The director tore into critics who had problems with his film (they were “parasites, pseudos, worse than pirates”). While once filmmakers made regressive films with cynicism, and shrugged off critics as they laughed their way to the bank, Vanga insisted he has made a film about a strong woman, that his intentions were honourable because he worked with rape victims. His is the indignation of the “good man”, who cannot imagine why women’s experience would not square with his view of their place in the world. I was reminded of Fahadh Faasil’s excellent turn in the recent Malayalam film *Kumbalangi Nights* as a comic incarnation of toxic masculinity. “Ours is a modern family

which gives freedom to women,” he says, while stopping his wife’s sister from marrying the man of her choice. But while Faasil’s Shammy is a caricature, such doublespeak is too real to be comic.

A man’s ardour is often a fatal burden for the woman — you only have to refer to the stories of men stalking, sometimes killing, women who say no. The NFHS-4 survey revealed that “33 per cent of ever-married women have experienced physical, sexual, or emotional spousal violence” and only 14 per cent sought help. “Of the acts of physical violence committed by the current or most recent husbands, the most common type is slapping, reported by 27 per cent of ever-married women,” the survey said.

Would domestic violence cease if films such as *Kabir Singh* or *Dabangg* or *Tere Naam* were not made? Of course not. But popular cinema is a powerful way in which a society negotiates its rights and wrongs. The question to ask is this: Do films like these make it easier to disregard, to belittle violence in interpersonal relationships as the natural friction between men and women? Going by the many women who felt compelled to counter Vanga’s sophisticated patriarchal spin by baring their personal trauma on social media, the answer is yes.

Cinema reinforces and is reinforced by “real” life, including the inequalities of societies. But, like all art, it is a way to imagine and contest the possibilities of humanity. And to cinema — two recent Malayalam films in particular — we could turn to find new ways of thinking about how to be a man. *Maheshinte Prathikaaram* (Mahesh’s Revenge) beautifully upends ideas of male honour, with a reluctant avenger for a hero. To reimagine new ways in which Indian men can love and heal each other, build and rebuild their homes, turn to the stellar cast of *Kumbalangi Nights* — a story of four unsuccessful oddballs and the women in their life, who create a nurturing community of love. Not all heroes need to raise a hand in love. Some pick up a ladle and enter the kitchen.

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HAZARDS OF IDENTITY

Modern societies are rejecting globalism for exclusionary categories



KHALED AHMED

THE 21ST CENTURY has hardly begun and the great promise of globalisation and “liberal inclusion” of the last century is fading. The world’s powerful states, heretofore wedded to internationalism, are turning inward and seeking their primeval identities. Nations are seeking identities away from multiculturalism and wish to protect themselves by banning immigration. Borders are being closed, and those who had crossed them decades earlier as welcome guests are being treated with intolerance.

Anthropologist Akbar Ahmed has found the rise of identity politics in Europe interesting enough for him to undertake a journey to Europe to experimentally see if his earlier theses on the subject jibe with what is happening now. His *Journey into Europe: Islam, Immigration and Identity* is a kind of culmination to his three earlier examinations of “tribal” identity. As Ahmed surveys the identity-seeking Europe, he is reminded of the “inclusive” state of Abdur Rahman in al-Andalus (Iberia), in the 8th century AD. It was remembered for its “Convivencia”, or the idea of the living together of different identities, which Islam has forsaken today. Rahman was an Umayyad prince from a Berber mother in Syria. He was a descendant of the founder of the dynasty who had married a Christian woman — thus indicating the source of his “Convivencia” in al-Andalus between Muslims, Christians and Jews tolerant of multiple identities.

But, this Convivencia that one puts today in

Today’s European intolerance of the Muslim minorities reminds one of an early warning by a European genius in a different context. Hannah Arendt (1906-1975) in her ‘The Origins of Totalitarianism’ traced the modern state’s internal cleansing to its second project, that of conquering other territories and killing off the population there through genocide. It is the imperialism of the modern state which gets internalised when it purges its own population to eliminate those who are ‘different’.

front of a Europe forsaking the Enlightenment and seeking “identity”, did not last: Ahmed compares it to what is happening today among nations. One is reminded of Jamaludin Afghani too, who opposed Syed Ahmad Khan — an ancestor of Akbar Ahmed — in India, but proposed acceptance of Islam in Europe. Afghani possessed a lot of traditional learning that eased his entry into the Muslim societies of Turkey, India, Iran and Egypt. But he got his comeuppance in France, where orientalist Ernest Renan told him, prophetically, that his claim — that Muslims would ultimately turn to reason and modernity — will never be proved right as the Muslims will defeat his thinking just as they had rejected Ibn Rushd (Averroes) in the 12th century for having learned too much of Aristotle.

Today’s European intolerance of the Muslim minorities reminds one of an early warning by a European genius in a different context. Hannah Arendt (1906-1975) in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* traced the modern state’s internal cleansing to its second project: Of conquering other territories and killing off the population there through genocide. It is the imperialism of the modern state which gets internalised when it purges its own population to eliminate those who are “different”.

Reading Akbar Ahmed one is reminded of the motto the founding fathers fashioned for Pakistan: Unity, Faith and Discipline — putting unity first to obfuscate the clashing identities of the various communities living

in Pakistan. As the state moved away from Raj-enforced Enlightenment to an Islamist military dominance, the motto, at times, came to be rewritten as Faith, Unity, Discipline — putting faith first, and thus clearly embracing identity that divides in place of the intended “assimilation” of all identities in Pakistan. Similarly, the Urdu “grammatical rule” of writing “marhoom” (blessed) only after the name of the Muslim dead and disallowing it after the name of a non-Muslim Pakistani citizen, sought exclusion rather than inclusion. In India, a constitution put together by an untouchable leader, BR Ambedkar, charted the assimilation of all identities in secular integration. But today, the new consensus reflected in the electoral victory of the BJP seeks to follow the path traced by the state of Pakistan.

Outside Hindutva, all identities are “impure”, just as the non-Muslims of Pakistan have to live under laws that victimise them. Ahmed writes about “tribal” Europe: “Yet the aggressive promotion of German tribalism is far from finished. The emergence of Far Right political movements such as Pegida (Patriotic Europeans against the Islamisation of the West) and Alternative for Germany (AfD), the attacks on foreigners and Muslims, refugee shelters, and mosques, and the disturbing re-emergence of anti-Semitism reflect a deep-seated hostility to all that is ‘impure’.”

The writer is consulting editor, Newsweek Pakistan

JULY 13, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

CAPITAL MINUS WATER

THE CAPITAL TODAY went without water as 10,000 workers of the Delhi Water Supply and Sewage Disposal Undertaking, owing allegiance to Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, went on strike on a call given by their unions. They are demanding a pay hike and better working conditions. Despite the police alert on the impending strike following the failure of talks in the evening, the workers managed to paralyse the water supply network a little after midnight by causing considerable damage to supply lines. Additional Chief Engineer (Water), J D’cruz, said: “If there is no sabotage to my lines the supply would be fully restored by 9:30 p.m.” Municipal officials, how-

ever, said they apprehended large-scale acts of sabotage by “desperate” striking workers.

JANATA CRISIS

WITH THE EXIT of one cabinet minister, two ministers of state, and four more Lok Sabha members, the Janata crisis remains unabated. The party’s strength has come down to 249 in the 539-member Lok Sabha. More resignations, including Charan Singh’s, are expected in a day or so. However, there was optimism in Morarji Desai’s camp. The Jana Sangh members seemed confident and the Socialists appeared certain after George Fernandes’ speech in the Lok Sabha that not more than a handful would go to the other side.

COW BLINDED

A BURNING OBJECT, suspected to be part of the American spacecraft Skylab which met with a fiery end on its return to earth, fell at Elapakkam village in Chengalpattu district last night, according to multiple reports received in Madras. The black, lemon-sized object fell in an orchard around the same time Skylab reportedly re-entered the earth’s atmosphere. The reports quoted villagers as saying a cow which was nearby when the object fell was blinded. Official sources, however, said a veterinary doctor who examined the cow said there was no connection between the fall of the object and the blinding of the cow.



15 THE IDEAS PAGE

Maximise revenue, minimise tax

India has just one policy option to advance private investment and become a \$5 trillion economy — reduce corporate tax rate for all firms to 22 per cent, reduce misguided rates of personal income tax



NO PROOF REQUIRED

BY SURJIT S BHALLA AND KARAN BHASIN

BUDGET 2019-20 CONTAINED major tax changes to direct taxes, both personal and corporate. It may have been the last time that we witnessed such changes. Very likely, when Budget 2020-21 is presented, the government would have accepted the direct tax code report, and direct taxes will go the way of excise taxes — out of the budget.

The budget reduced the corporate tax rate (CTR) from 30 per cent to 25 per cent for all firms with a turnover of Rs 400 crore. Earlier, the 25 per cent slab was applicable for firms with a turnover of Rs 250 crore. The FM stated that this move would cover 99.3 per cent of all firms in India. However, it is unclear as to how much of the total corporate taxes is accounted for by these 99.3 per cent of firms. Speculation abounds - is it as low as 10 per cent? We do not know.

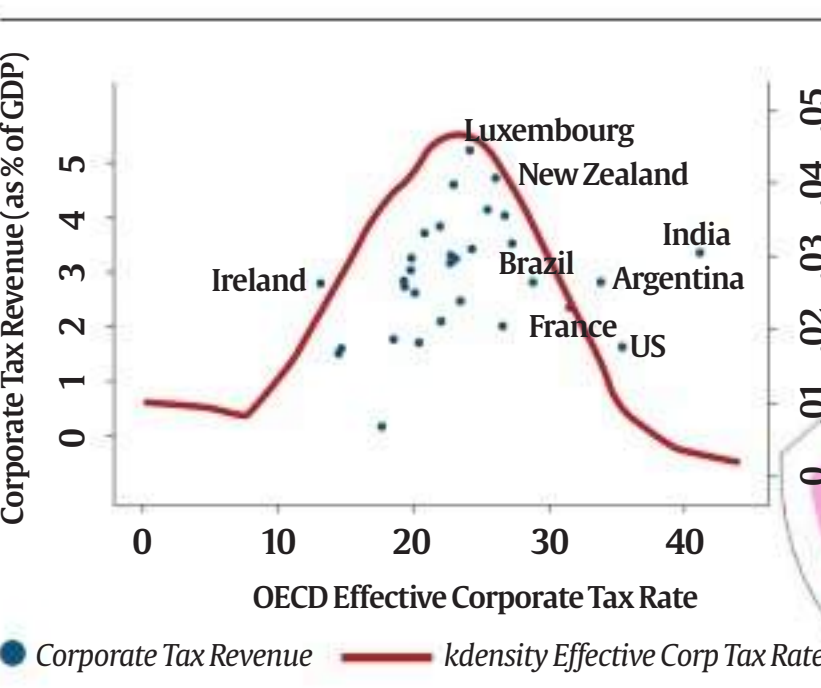
Tax rates are always an item of discussion and debate, and now more so than ever. President Donald Trump lowered the CTR for the US from 35 per cent to 21 per cent in 2018. As shown below, the lower tax rate was well chosen by Trump because that is close to the optimal tax rate. But that is getting ahead of the story.

OECD has recently released a comprehensive set of data on corporate taxes, for close to a 100 economies. [https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=RS_GBL]. The data reveals what has been feared (and argued) for a long time — India has one of the highest (actually the highest) corporate tax rate in the world. And, according to OECD, it also has the highest effective corporate tax rate (ECTR) — and that to by a huge margin. India's ECTR is estimated by OECD at 44 per cent. Their definition includes all taxes paid by corporates in different countries — for example, corporate tax, dividend tax, capital gains tax. Incidentally, the second-highest ETR is for Argentina and it is 9 ppt (percentage points) lower than India, and third is France, 11 ppt lower. China's ECTR is 20 ppt lower than India at 23.6 per cent! One reason why China has got all the investments, and growth, at least relative to India?

In this age of globalisation, no country is an island. Competitiveness is affected by tax rates, interest rates, exchange rates, and labour costs. However, gone are the days when countries could devalue their way to prosperity. China accomplished this via massive undervaluation for about 20 years, from 1990-2010. Their success ensured that such undervaluation (read currency manipulation) would never again be allowed by the Western powers. It is likely that Trump's trade war would not have occurred if China had been more responsible with the setting of its exchange rate.

What can countries do to improve their competitiveness, given that the mercantilist route is no longer an option? They can reduce its cost of capital, make labour more competitive, make industry more competitive, and rekindle animal spirits. On the first three counts, the budget has moved in the right direction. Sovereign bond borrowing is an idea whose time has definitely come, notwithstanding the perennial naysayers and those

THE LAFFER CURVE: INDIA IS OFF THE CHART



not comprehending the fundamental nature of change in the world. Inflation nowhere (including India) is the bogey it once was. Also naysayers should note, and answer the following question — between fiscal years 2004 and 2011 (the so-called Golden Age of Indian growth) the real repo rate averaged minus 1 per cent. For the fiscal years 2016-2018 real repo rates averaged 2.3 per cent. Go figure the growth implications.

Since Shaktikanta Das assumed governorship of the RBI, there has been considerable improvement in communication and a gradual lowering of policy rates, but this has also been accompanied by a more than equal lowering of inflation, that is, the real repo rate has yet to move below 2.3 per cent. The sovereign bond issue will help, but don't look for a quick acceleration in GDP growth.

Exchange rate change is no longer operational, labour codes are too slow to change, and monetary policy is sluggish in its operation, and impact. The only real growth option for Indian policymakers — cut tax rates to internationally competitive levels. And what might that be? Around 22 per cent for all firms, and we obtain that result from a comparative study (see below — and chart).

But first, a comment on the personal income tax (PIT) rate increase in the budget. The move to increase PIT rates to developed country levels is not in the right direction. It seems that there was more old-fashioned morality (tax the rich) than revenue maximisation at play. At best, the government plans to raise Rs 5,000 crore more by socking it to the rich. (Total personal income tax collection is budgeted at Rs 5,00,000 crore). And even that may not happen as tax arbitrage between the much lower corporate tax rate and the near highest individual income tax rate (only 10 per cent of countries have a higher than 43 per cent top PIT rate) will move animal spirits towards payment of corporate tax. And if not tax arbitrage, tax evasion may lower gain in PIT collection.

Obviously, tax rates are set to maximise tax revenue — and tax revenue depends on both income and tax compliance. Tax compliance can either be considered as more firms filing taxes or more firms revealing a closer approximation to true income. Improving compliance alone can ensure greater resource mobilisation through taxation — and without increasing the tax rate (and may indeed occur if the tax rate is reduced).

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The non-linear relationship between tax rate and tax revenue (as per cent of GDP) is revealed by the famous Laffer curve - with zero tax rates, you get zero tax revenue and with 100 per cent tax rate, you get zero tax revenue. In-between, logically, the share of tax revenue increases, before peaking and declining toward zero. Several "truths" become evident from even a cursory glance at the chart. First, that OECD cross-country data for 2017 conforms (fits) the inverted U-shaped curve rather well — and the inverted U is a close approximation to a normal distribution (red line in chart). Second, that the lowest bang for the tax buck is obtained in India, possibly because tax rates are set on the basis of morality rather than revenue maximisation. In India, we tax at 44 per cent to get 3.5 per cent of tax revenue (as percentage of GDP). Both Korea and Israel (and other countries) obtain this same amount of revenue with half of India's taxation levels. As the chart shows, the tax rate level at which revenue is maximised is around 23 per cent — half India's tax level.

Why is the effective tax rate in India so high? In India, firms must pay a corporate tax, which is followed by a surcharge and an additional 15 per cent dividend distribution tax (DDT). The revenue mobilisation from DDT is marginal compared to the overall tax revenue from corporate taxes. Estimates suggest that the resource mobilisation from DDT is just around 8 per cent of the total corporate tax revenue. A steep 15 per cent DDT only dissuades firms from issuing dividends to their shareholders. Forget about double taxation as there's another moral Indian tax icing — if an individual earns more than Rs 10 lakh of dividend income, she must pay an additional 10 per cent tax. So the same income is taxed thrice in India — and only in India.

Both the budget and the Economic Survey focused on revival of private investment to ensure sustained long-term growth. Thus, there is strong case for further and aggressive reduction in tax rates on the grounds of revival of investment, and helping India become a \$5 trillion economy. With another budget just six months down the line, there is hope that the government will realise its mistake and depart from misguided taxation policies.

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WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"The West's old political and economic tools can no longer solve current problems. There are disagreements on security risks and national interests. The Cold War mentality remains, but globalization demands different considerations."

— GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA

No road to the \$5 trillion economy

The entire contractual structure and regulatory framework in India needs to be revamped



PARTHA MUKHOPADHYAY

THE NDA GOVERNMENT has announced its intention to invest Rs 100 lakh crore in infrastructure over the next five years. If we grow at 12 per cent in current prices, as has been assumed in the Union Budget, the cumulative GDP over the five-year period would be about Rs 1,350 lakh crore. So, we are talking about investing 7.5 per cent of GDP in infrastructure — about the same as in the last five-year plan. And, they did not have a nine, maybe 10-rupee infrastructure cess on fuel. One can thus expect this target to be easily met.

Finance is not always the problem, as in power, where the budget promises to "work with state governments to remove barriers, for industrial and other bulk power consumers". It recognises "considerable reforms are needed in tariff policy". It's music to hear about, "retirement of old and inefficient plants, addressing low utilisation of gas plant capacity". If tariff reform is addressed — reducing industrial and commercial tariffs, and raising agricultural and residential tariffs, while redirecting the subsidy savings from discoms to directly target consumers through cash transfers to insulate them from the tariff increase — it will revive the cash generating end of the sector.

Other actions, for example addressing the carbon-intensity of our electricity, can be taken subsequently, enabling a true transformation. Despite a seven-fold growth in renewable capacity in the last 10 years, the share of thermal sources, primarily coal, remains at nearly 80 per cent — now operating at inefficient plant load factors. Renewables have stepped in to compensate for the stagnant supply from large hydro sources. Finally, can a gas plant perhaps buy spot cargo, land LNG at a convenient terminal, transport it to its plant by paying an access charge to a network operator, and sell it to an industrial consumer? Hopefully.

The good part of the story ends here. Elsewhere, finance obscures problems - such as the large commitments for Indian railways, which is organisationally and financially unprepared and unwilling to be a competitive logistics company. To add to its woes, as if highways weren't bad enough, this budget is promising (sensibly) to invest in another competing mode for bulk cargo — inland waterways. Soon, like BSNL and Air India, Indian railways, without reform, will become another black hole for investment. Instead of megabucks, it is better to begin with smaller high-return investments in signaling to enhance capacity and to make the network high-speed ready, while simultaneously re-organising it to compete in the logistics market.

This institutional story is missing in other sectors too; critically in rural roads, where the budget still seeks to invest, but where the real need is for maintenance, executed

through appropriate state-level institutions. Similarly, "har ghar jal" is unachievable if state institutions, including parastatal agencies and local government, are absent. Will institutions such as NHAI, which has delivered an extensive, if flawed, national highway system, be established in other sectors?

Perhaps the BJP, as a party, expects to exercise more oversight and discipline over its state units and governments to align them with Narendra Modi's vision, much like the Communist Party of China — a country extolled in the Economic Survey — marches to Xi Jinping's thought.

There are other critical omissions too. Waste-water finds mention only in the context of "management of household waste-water for reuse in agriculture". It is not that the capacity for sewers and sewerage treatment plants anyway lies unused in the absence of institutional reform. It is that it obviates the damage caused by the run-off of overused chemicals in agriculture (here, zero-budget farming may help) and industrial injury that continues unchecked by incapacitated pollution control boards. Some of our industrial corridors, for instance from Vatva to Vapi, rival China's worst polluted areas. This is not how we will ensure water security.

Telecom and 5G were missing too, in a two-hour long budget speech which mentioned "digital" 19 times. Emulating Sisyphus, Bharat-Net is still targeting internet connectivity in local bodies. Frankly, our telecom sector is broke, a result of "mispricing" by operators, and spectrum pricing by the government. Without serious attention to spectrum management, including making licenced service areas much smaller, and preventing anti-competitive behaviour, our digital future will not be bright, but bleak.

Port connectivity is mentioned once, but the speech is silent on the regulatory reforms needed to enable public and private ports to compete fairly. Even as Adani's Mundra remains the only serious port SEZ, talk of port-linked industrialisation sits uneasily with plans to turn Mumbai port into a real estate project. Agriculture, instead of cold chains, gets a cold shoulder, rural roads aside.

And, where is the finance that will underpin this effort? A headless IIFCL aside, other infrastructure financiers like IDBI and IDFC have long morphed into banks. Apart from the odd transaction, the bond market is moribund. Public-private partnerships are anathema to banks, and investors have been burnt many times over for reasons described in the Kelkar Committee report. Is there a solution?

The entire contractual structure and regulatory framework needs revamping. We need a wholesale change in approach — from maximising revenue extraction to minimising the cost of provision. Compared to our promise of \$1.5 trillion over five years, China invested about \$2.5 trillion on infrastructure in 2017 alone (and they are growing slower than we are). Some of their investments may be temporarily underutilised, but infrastructure is not allowed to constrain growth. We could do that cheaper and better. But that will require government to sit up and take notice. Will it?

The writer is senior fellow, Centre for Policy Research

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ON SHAKY GROUND

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'A poor show' (IE, July 12). The political drama in Karnataka is unfolding along expected lines. Although the 2018 mandate was a fractured one, the BJP was the single-largest party with 104 seats. Congress with just 80 seats, in order to keep the BJP from assuming power, scrambled to forge a post-election alliance with its political rival JD(S). This ploy did succeed, but it also led to heartburn among a section of the Congress. The current situation has not been engineered. It was destined to happen from the time the government was formed by cobbling together numbers dubiously.

Ravi Mathur, Ghaziabad

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'A poor show' (IE, July 12). All along, this marriage between the Congress and JD(S) was one more of convenience than conviction. The tussle between Congress and JD(S) leaders continued even during the recently concluded general elections. But the recent turn of events have shown all three parties — Congress, JD(S) and BJP — in poor light. There is more than mere suspicion that the BJP is behind all this drama. The kind of swiftness the Gandhis showed while forming the government in the state last year, they should have shown the same zeal to not let this crisis happen.

Bal Govind, Noida

PRICE OF FREEDOM

THIS REFERS TO the report, 'Rescued from bonded labour, Kancheepuram's

LETTER OF THE WEEK

FM'S DIKTAT

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'May we come in?' (IE, July 11). The finance ministry's decision to bar journalists from entering North Block is autocratic. In a democracy like India, where people get to know about their elected representatives actions through journalists, the Ministry cannot and should not prevent journalists from entering North Block. The Press too has the freedom to access government officials to extract relevant information from them. Moreover, finance minister's action contradicts the prime minister's slogan of "sabka vishwas".

Sanjay Chawla, Amritsar

Kasi still in fear' (IE, July 12). The report made me question the kind of world I am living in. A rich man takes crores from a bank and flees from the country freely, while this man borrowed just Rs 20,000 and, to repay it, he works for five years as labour in a place he doesn't want to work — yet, he has to beg to be free as if he has committed the world's biggest crime. One wonders how many such people are waiting for a miracle like this so that they can be free.

Merlin Thomas, Pune



DAVENDRA VERMA

AN ARTICLE ON the overestimation of GDP in India by Arvind Subramanian ('New evidence for fresh beginnings', IE, June 12) has received widespread criticism. Subramanian is a former CEA, an insider. He is not just any individual or economist. He should have been more careful before bringing out a working paper with a questionable methodology. By doing so, he has done great injustice to the Indian statistical system. He has gone to the extent of saying that he is using only statistics produced outside the central statistics office (CSO) in his analysis, though he has used the index of industrial production (IIP), which is produced by the CSO.

The compilation of GDP is a completely apolitical and complex exercise, much beyond the correlation and regression analysis undertaken by Subramanian. Further, a lot of the analysis carried out by him is based on the CSO's quarterly estimates, data for which is limited and hence no serious scientific study can be based on these estimates. These estimates are good for giving the direction of economic growth in the short term and a broad idea of the quantum of growth.

Subramanian has claimed that "GDP is overestimated by 2 percentage points post 2011-12 with base revision and new methodology". But, he was consulted when the new methodology was finalised in a meeting con-

ducted by the then National Statistical Commission chairman, where he gave no suggestion. Before releasing the new GDP series, a presentation of the new methodology and estimates was made to select officers in the finance ministry, where too he was present.

The former CEA has admitted that there was a need to use the corporate sector data for GDP compilation. He may have some reservations in the way shell companies have been accounted for. But the estimates arrived at after blowing up subscribed capital using MCA data are far superior to what was being done in the earlier series, when the estimates were obtained by blowing up the results from the RBI's study of a much smaller sample of companies. How can a series based on data pertaining to a fewer number of companies be considered to be more reliable than that based on a much larger set of companies? This data was adopted in the new GDP series after proper examination and analysis.

Subramanian has argued that the growth rate (2000-2010) in the manufacturing sector was closer to the IIP growth rate. People familiar with the compilation of GDP in India should be aware that the manufacturing sector estimates in the old series were being compiled using IIP. Prior to the base year 2005-06, data from the annual survey of industries (ASI) was being used for the computation of growth

estimates of the organised manufacturing sector. Later, as it was observed that the estimates from ASI were diverging from the IIP, and it was becoming difficult to defend the revisions of these estimates during the first revised estimates of GDP, it was consciously decided to continue to use the IIP. Thus, the estimates continued to be based on the IIP and were not revised using ASI estimates, which was the practice in the 2000 base series.

Another issue which keeps coming up: IIP is highly volatile, and does not properly capture the growth rate of the manufacturing sector. Both the IIP and ASI were not found to be useful for estimating manufacturing sector growth during 2000 to 2010. Since there was no other source of data available for estimating gross value added by the manufacturing sector, these estimates/growth rates continued to be used.

It has also been argued that high GDP growth is impossible in the absence of a rise in exports and imports. To establish such a causality, one should look at the share of exports and imports in the overall output and input of the Indian economy, especially in the manufacturing sector. If they do not have any major share, it is difficult to establish any causal relationship.

Electricity generation, airline passenger growth, commercial vehicle production, and

petroleum products consumption are closely associated with GDP growth. Any relationship using the quantum of growth in any of these indicators does not have any significant implication. Each of these indicators should be further bifurcated for further understanding their contribution to economic activity.

Subramanian's paper has assumed that the estimates from 2000 to 2011 were correct, and hence the estimates in the 2011 series are overstated. But, a number of improvements were made at the time the 2011 series was introduced. So, any evaluation of this series with not so well estimated past series is invalid.

In the 2011 series, there was a significant shift in the GDP compilation process — from establishment approach to institutional approach. So, the estimates of the manufacturing sector (or any sector) in the 2011 series were not strictly comparable with the previous series.

In conclusion, researchers must have knowledge of the GDP compilation process before undertaking any econometric exercise which only leads to more confusion. There is a serious gap in the availability of the right kind of data. Concerted efforts should be made to fill this gap.

The writer is former director general, Central Statistical Office



Aftershocks in Goa

By aiding defections, the BJP is shrinking opposition space in an unseemly fashion

The near liquidation of the Congress legislature party in Goa, close on the heels of a rebellion of Congress and Janata Dal (Secular) legislators in neighbouring Karnataka, is the latest aftershock of the national election results in May, but it is unlikely to be the last. The BJP's victory in the 17th general election was not unexpected, but its scale and depth appear to have thrown opposition politics into a tailspin. The Assembly election in 2017 had returned a hung Assembly in Goa, with the Congress as the single largest party at 17 of 40 seats. The BJP had only 13, but was quick to cobble together a coalition and form a government. As things stand, the BJP has 27 MLAs and the Congress only five, with the defectors set to escape disqualification under the anti-defection law since they constitute two-thirds of the strength of the legislature party – turning the verdict on its head. This split in the Congress was in the making since May 23 when the party lost three of the four by-elections that were held along with the Lok Sabha polls. Any hope of a bid for power in the State was dashed, and with the party's national standing continuing on a descending slope, the lawmakers did what opportunism impels. Any party is well within its rights to lure members of other parties, and after all, that is how political realignments take place. But by encouraging and welcoming defectors who had won the election on a platform that was its polar opposite, the BJP has further lowered the bar for legitimate democratic processes and expansion of the party.

Apparently learning from the cost of its indecision in Goa in 2017, the Congress had moved swiftly to offer the post of chief ministership to the JD(S) that had won 37 seats out of 224 in Karnataka in 2018. Initially hailed by many as a potential model to build an anti-Hindutva coalition nationally, the JD(S)-Congress coalition has exposed its inherent contradictions. There is little that the current spectrum of Opposition parties have to offer to build a better politics other than their tired dynasties. Opportunistic alliances, devoid of any fresh ideas or inspiration, could only augment the BJP's plank that its opponents have a dark history and a bleak future. Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi's abrupt renunciation of the post has forced a churn in the party, perhaps as was intended. It is, however, difficult to predict whether the party will emerge stronger from the churn: the withdrawal of Mr. Gandhi from the leadership is an opportunity for the Congress to rid itself of the dynasty tag, but equally it could be left rudderless for long in the absence of an obvious successor. If the party is looking for a youthful leader, there is none outside of the scions of other political dynasties. The Goa debacle is as much a harbinger of a further shrinking of the opposition space as it is of the continuing advance of the BJP into more regions and social groups. Grace in defeat is difficult to achieve; the BJP's behaviour perhaps shows that even in triumph it is not easy.

The climax

India fell at the last-four stage, and cricket will now have a new World Cup winner

The ICC World Cup awaits its Sunday climax with England taking on New Zealand in the final at Lord's. However, closer home, disappointment lingers over India's exit at the last-four stage. It is a conclusion that has shadowed the Men in Blue for a while as even in the 2015 edition when Australia and New Zealand were the co-hosts, India lost to the former. In the latest championship, it was New Zealand that stunned Virat Kohli's men at Manchester's Old Trafford in the semifinal. India was one among the title favourites and it enjoyed a red-hot streak studded with seven wins besides a loss to England and a washed-out fixture involving New Zealand. The league was topped with 15 points, and its top order led by opener Rohit Sharma, who amassed 648 runs, and a pace attack featuring Jasprit Bumrah, were in form. But there were flaws, primary among them being a flickering middle order. The top troika contributed 69% of the runs while the central core yielded a mere 30%. And once New Zealand seamers Trent Boult and Matt Henry dismissed Rohit, K.L. Rahul and Kohli to leave India hobbling at five for three in five overs, chasing 239 proved incredibly tough. The efforts of Ravindra Jadeja and M.S. Dhoni at best delayed the inevitable 18-run loss. Still, this is a squad that has the right ingredients and it will be able to cope with Dhoni's eventual retirement.

The stage is now set for England and New Zealand to correct some historical deficiencies. One thing is certain: the World Cup will have a fresh champion as neither team has ever won the title since its inception in 1975. The Old Blighty last played a World Cup summit clash at Melbourne in 1992, and at the same venue, New Zealand lost the 2015 final to Australia. Being the host, England is playing on familiar terrain and has the backing of its enthusiastic fans. Skipper Eoin Morgan, himself an attacking player, has a strong top order in openers Jason Roy and Jonny Bairstow with Joe Root stepping in at three. Ever since recovering from a sore hamstring, Roy with a strike rate of 117.03, has been sensational and he demolished Australia with a 65-ball 85. There is all-rounder Ben Stokes in the mix and speedsters Jofra Archer and Chris Woakes head-line a probing attack. From the opposition, New Zealand is expected to mount a strong counter. It has a supreme batsman and crafty leader in Kane Williamson. He and senior Ross Taylor have to shepherd the innings while a clutch of astute seam and swing bowlers helmed by Boult can test the very best. England has the edge but New Zealand, as it showed against India, can punch above its weight.

A case of confused thinking

The draft National Education Policy lacks the very abilities it emphasises – critical thinking and deeper understanding



ROHIT DHANKAR

The draft National Education Policy (NEP) 2019 recommends a restructuring of school years and the curriculum, in a wide-ranging manner. If properly implemented, many of the suggested changes may help education. These include flexibility and wider scope at the secondary level, space for moral reasoning, re-emphasis on the true spirit of the three language formula, a focus on the core concepts and key ideas in subjects, vocational courses, and also a focus of assessment on understanding. However, the draft NEP also recommends much that may have just the opposite effect. These are, for example, 15 subjects/courses at the upper primary level, three languages in early childhood education, and confusing statements on a number of curricular issues. The curriculum the draft NEP suggests at the upper primary level has started looking like a laundry list, perhaps because of a lack of a coherent vision and the curricular thinking it adopts.

India-centric aim?

The policy envisions an "India centred education system that contributes directly to transforming our nation sustainably into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society". The proclaimed "India centred-ness" of education is limited to recommendations on Indian languages and a mention of Indian knowledge systems. The operational vision is that of a "knowledge society", almost entirely contained in UNESCO-preached '21st century skills'. The democratic ideal is neither mentioned nor used in articulating the

aims of education or curricular recommendation, though democratic values are mentioned in the list of key "skills" that are to be integrated in subjects.

The vision of a knowledge society directly leads to the objectives of curricular transformation "in order to minimise rote learning and instead encourage holistic development and 21st century skills such as critical thinking, creativity, scientific temper, communication, collaboration, multilingualism, problem solving, ethics, social responsibility, and digital literacy". The most important and educationally worthwhile term is "skill" and everything has to fit in within that; even ethics and social responsibility.

Shaping an individual

"The goal", according to the draft policy, "will be to create holistic and complete individuals equipped with key 21st century skills". This makes it quite clear what the definition of "holistic and complete individuals" means. After a host of curricular recommendations which includes new subjects/courses comes another statement which may sound like an articulation of curricular objectives or aims of education. Under the heading "Curricular integration of essential subjects and skills", it says: "certain subjects and skills should be learned by all students in order to become good, successful, innovative, adaptable, and productive human beings in today's rapidly-changing world. In addition to proficiency in languages, these skills include: scientific temper; sense of aesthetics and art; languages; communication; ethical reasoning; digital literacy; knowledge of India; and knowledge of critical issues facing local communities, States, the country, and the world".

The broad goals are to send out "good, successful, innovative, adaptable, and productive human beings"; not a critical, democratic



GETTY IMAGES

citizen who may want to change the situation rather than adapting to it. The list of eight "skills" (*sic*) is supposed to "create" such individuals. And to enable such an aim, it is no wonder that everything is a "skill" which includes among others a "sense of aesthetics", "ethical reasoning", "compassion" and "curiosity". The phrase "Evidence-based and scientific thinking" is used together everywhere implying that there can be "scientific thinking" which is not evidence based. The policy assumes that "evidence-based and scientific thinking... will lead naturally to rational, ethical, and compassionate individuals". I wonder how "evidence based" this claim itself happens to be. How scientific thinking will develop "compassion" is beyond one's understanding. Further, it is interesting that "evidence-based and scientific thinking" is supposed to help create an ethical, rational, and compassionate individual but not a "logical and problem solving" individual as they are listed separately as "skills". I wonder what part of logical and problem-solving abilities remain outside evidence-based, scientific and rational thinking.

The comments made above may be seen as a case of nit-picking by some. However, a policy document is read and interpreted at many levels and influences educational discourse. A document which places much emphasis on clarity of understanding and critical thinking cannot itself afford to fail in meeting the same standards. Shoddiness of thinking at the national level does not encourage

hope of proper interpretation and implementation of the policy. This is already reflected in some policy recommendations. Here are a few such examples.

Language teaching

The draft NEP rightly criticises private pre-schools for being a downward extension of primary school and of there being formal teaching in them. But it goes on to recommend preparing children for primary by prescribing learning the alphabets of and reading in three languages (for 3-6-year olds). All this in the name of "enhanced (*sic*) language learning abilities" of young children. Further the draft policy mistakes "language acquisition when children are immersed in more than one languages" with a "language teaching" situation where immersion is impossible in three languages. It then extends it unjustifiably to a learning of three scripts. It prescribes teaching script and reading in three languages to three-year-old children, but writing is supposed to be taught to six-year-old children. It also wants to introduce "some textbooks" only at age eight. One wonders why there is a three year gap between teaching reading and writing. If script and reading are already taught, then why withhold textbooks till age eight?

Here is another example of similar and confused thinking. The draft policy stipulates that the "mandated contents in the curriculum will be reduced... to its core, focussing on key concepts and essential ideas". This is to "yield more space for discussion and nuanced understanding, analysis, and application of key concepts". But it goes on to block more than the space vacated by prescribing six new laundry-list subjects/courses in addition to the existing eight. Some of these new courses such as "critical issues" and "moral reasoning" can be taught in a much better way in a revised curriculum of social stu-

dies as the context for both is society. Social studies needs more space in the upper primary curriculum. The subject has to be taught in such a manner that it connects with society and can be a very good way of introducing critical issues and moral thinking. Abstract moral reasoning is likely to have the same fate as so-called "moral science" that is taught in many schools. Similarly, "Indian classical language" and "Indian languages" can constitute a single rich subject rather than being split into two courses.

Missing link

Identifying key concepts and essential ideas are a matter of rational curricular decision making; not listing ideas as they come to one's mind. The absence of discussion on socio-political life seems to be another casualty in the emphasis on a knowledge society and 21st century skills. Social studies seems to be missing entirely as it has been mentioned once and then left out of the entire discussion on curriculum. In the end, the vision of the draft NEP rests on UNESCO declarations and reports rather than the Indian Constitution and development of democracy in this country; this in spite of wanting to make education India-centred. Thus, in the suggested curriculum changes, socio-political life is almost invisible.

All this goes to show that the draft NEP 2019 itself lacks the very abilities it emphasises, namely critical thinking and deeper understanding. It is a badly written document which hides behind a plethora of terms that are half-understood and clubbed under the overarching master concept of "skill". In short, the policy lacks depth and loses focus of the richness of secular democratic ideals by aiming for 21st century skills.

Rohit Dhankar is Professor, Azim Premji University, Bangalore and Secretary, Digantar, Jaipur

Game of chicken that can end in disaster

The confrontation between the U.S. and Iran in West Asia could snowball with damaging economic consequences



MOHAMMED AYOOB

On July 7, Iran announced that it would begin enriching uranium above a concentration of 3.67% permitted under the nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), reached by Iran and the P5+1 (China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States) on July 14, 2015.

This followed its July 1 announcement that it had breached the limit of the 300 kg of enriched uranium stockpile that was allowed by the JCPOA. It appears Iran's patience is wearing out.

These steps come in the wake of increasing tensions between the U.S. and Iran following the shooting down of an unmanned U.S. drone over the Strait of Hormuz in June. The circumstances surrounding this event and the locale of the downing are contested. However, it led to the U.S. President, Donald Trump, first ordering a retaliatory strike on Iran and then rescinding it at the last minute. It is possible that had this strike taken place it would have become the first act in a major military confrontation between the U.S. and Iran.

The mayhem could have spread to the entire West Asian region with Iran attacking strategic American, Saudi and Emirati targets around the Gulf and attempting to block the Strait of Hormuz in an effort to choke off the supply of Gulf oil to the international market.

Further, Iranian allies in Lebanon, Iraq and Syria might have launched attacks against American troop concentrations as well as against U.S. ally Israel, thus inviting further American and Israeli counter-retaliation and dragging the U.S. into its third major war in the region.

The downward spiral in U.S.-Iran relations started with Mr. Trump's decision (announced in May 2018) to withdraw from the JCPOA against the advice of the U.S.'s European allies France, Germany, and the U.K. that are parties to the deal. The Trump administration followed it up with the reimposition of stringent economic sanctions against Iran that were being gradually dismantled following the 2015 nuclear deal. These included sanctions against foreign companies doing business with Iran and against countries buying Iranian oil.

List of demands

Finally, the U.S. announced in April this year that it would not ex-



GETTY IMAGES/STOCKPHOTO

tend waivers granted earlier to eight countries (China, India, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Turkey, Italy and Greece) which had been the largest importers of Iranian oil. This decision was aimed at totally choking off the export of Iranian oil – the primary foreign exchange earner for Tehran – in order to bring Iran to its knees and force it to accept American demands spelt out by U.S. Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo. These included further curbs on Iran's nuclear programme including total stoppage of uranium enrichment even at low levels permitted by the JCPOA and monitored by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Further, Mr. Pompeo demanded that Iran stop all support to Hezbollah and Hamas which the U.S. considers to be "terrorist" groups, permit the disarming of Shia militias in Iraq, and stop aiding Houthi in Yemen fighting Saudi and Emirati forces in that country. Above all, Mr. Pompeo demanded that Iran end building

of ballistic missiles and halt further launching or development of nuclear-capable missile systems.

All these demands went far beyond the limits placed on Iran by the JCPOA and most were unrelated to Iran's nuclear programme. Iran's government rejected these demands while still keeping the door open for negotiations, hoping against hope to draw the U.S. back into the nuclear deal. However, persisting and escalating moves by the U.S. during the past year now seem to have made it impossible for Tehran to simultaneously maintain the contradictory position of resisting American demands while continuing to comply with restrictions imposed on its nuclear programme by the JCPOA.

The stance of Iran's Hassan Rouhani government became increasingly untenable in the light of recent American actions. The latter provided the hardline opposition in Iran, composed of right-wing factions and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the opportunity to attack the government for conforming to an agreement that had been rejected by the U.S. and that had provided no economic relief to the Iranian people, the primary selling point in favour of the JCPOA. Moreover, the Iranian Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, whose support for the JCPOA was crucial, has for all practical purposes withdrawn his en-

dorsement of the agreement in turn leaving the duo of President Rouhani and Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif without any protective political cover.

Tit-for-tat measures

Therefore, the Iranian government, in order to maintain its standing with the populace, has been left with no option but to undertake tit-for-tat measures, further heightening the political temperature in the Persian Gulf. This has turned the U.S.-Iran standoff into a game of chicken in which either one of the parties to the game blinks and concedes victory to the other or a "crash" becomes inevitable. The American-Iranian confrontation seems to be inexorably heading towards the latter outcome. If taken to its logical conclusion this scenario can turn out to be catastrophic for the entire West Asian region as well as for the international economy. Oil supplies from the Persian Gulf are likely to be greatly reduced if not totally eliminated sending oil prices skyrocketing, especially threatening the vulnerable economies of the global South.

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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.

Data on jobs

The article, "Jobless growth becomes systemic" (Editorial page, July 12), raises an issue being overlooked. The fact that the female workforce is the one to suffer the most is expected in a country which is predominantly patriarchal. Women do face a doublewhammy: of exclusion from the workforce and, once in the system, discrimination of various forms. More importantly, as far as the agriculture sector is concerned and a major contributor to the GDP, the fall in farmer numbers is distressing. We must not forget that this sector is also a key employment sector for rural women.

PINNENTY MRUDULA, Bengaluru

■ The article needs to be read along with the Editorial, "Tread with caution" (July 12). The cold facts and figures of unemployment and the ills of diluting labour laws, euphemistically in the name of ease of doing business, do not augur well for the Indian working class. It will not be out of place to mention here a report, "State of Working India", which shows that 92% women and 82% men in the unorganised sector earn less than ₹10,000 per month. The Global Wealth Report of the Credit Suisse Research Institute (2018) shows that the top 1% Indians hold 51.5% of the country's wealth, the top 10% own 77.4% while 60% Indians fade away holding 4.7%. In the Budget speech, the Finance Minister described India Inc. as a creator of wealth, ignoring

agriculturists and the rest – proof on whose side the government is. These disparities and income inequalities are bound to widen with the present government toeing the line of the affluent. Combined with a dilution of labour laws, one is sure to have a labour force facing a perennial threat of exploitation and retrenchment.

G.B. SIVANANDAM, Coimbatore

■ The government appears to be a one-man led army, with a Utopian view of our country's future. The biggest issue now is a shrinking of the labour force and growing unemployment. Unemployment is a problem in urban and rural India regardless of gender. Though

education levels may be improving, job opportunities are scarce. Finally, does the labour force have the skills/awareness of opportunities in various job fields?

KEZIAH MARIAM JAYAN, Bengaluru

Tackling plastic

There is no doubt that plastic waste management is faulty (Editorial, Picking out plastic", July 12). Until such time as multinational companies take the lead in investing in plastic recycling systems, there is every reason to believe that plastic waste will be a major threat. There also a dire need of recycling cooperatives.

CHANDRASEKHAR V., Chennai

■ Some plastic packaging in this country comes with an

instruction in a corner that it is recyclable and would fetch around ₹5 a kg. It also has the address of the manufacturer. However, this labelling is not as visible as it should be. As far as plastic recycling is concerned, the Hyderabad municipality has taken the lead. Some public parks use recycled waste plastic-based tiles.

LAKSHMI SWATHI G., Hyderabad

True picture

The Men in Blue are a blow hot, blow cold national cricket team who some pander to with a bout of hazy hurrahs. Potent threat, but for how long? Five years, a decade or till the cows come home? India has won league games against weak sides that the so-called batting juggernaut loves to

annihilate, but with insipid bowling, right? India scraped through against Bangladesh and almost made a meal of it against Afghanistan. And if the Pakistan eleven had got it right, all the chest thumping nationalism could have turned into torturous self-flagellation. Except for a Jasprit Bumrah, Virat Kohli and a Rohit Sharma, the team disintegrates into bits and pieces against top quality sides. Propped up by a media frenzy and goals of personal aggrandisement, sample Ravindra Jadeja's cocky swagger on reaching his 50 when the team is yet to cross the hurdle. The team has a shallow and brittle character.

ANAND MATHEW, New Delhi

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

Death by digital exclusion?

Many in Jharkhand have been denied food under the public distribution system as their ration cards have been cancelled in the mad rush for putting in place a digital system. While activists claim that some have died from starvation, the government denies this. **Shiv Sahay Singh** reports on the problems created by Aadhaar

A few weeks before Kaleshwar Soren, 45, died, he sold the last of his belongings, a Palash tree, for one and a half kg of rice. His ration card was cancelled in 2016 for reasons that are still not clear. As a result, the tribal had not received any foodgrain under the public distribution system (PDS) since then. Human rights activists claim that Soren, from Mahuadanr village in Dumka district of Jharkhand, died of starvation on November 11, 2018. The government denies this.

Jian Kisku and his wife Rasodi Hembram live in similar conditions next door. The couple has no ration card and has not received any foodgrain under the PDS. A few days ago, they sold a chicken that was bred in their backyard to buy 5 kg of rice, which they ate with the paste of a wild fruit. There is no telling where the next meal will come from.

Soren, Kisku and Hembram had ‘priority household’ cards that were later cancelled. Under the National Food Security Act, 2013, the PDS ensures 5 kg of foodgrain per person per month to those who hold these cards. Antyodaya families, or the poorest of the poor, are entitled to 35 kg of foodgrain per family per month under the Act.

These people are not exceptions. There are dozens in the village who claim that they are not receiving foodgrain under the PDS. Others who do receive foodgrain don’t have a ration card; they have a ration card number scribbled on a piece of paper. It is on the basis of this that they get their foodgrain.

A cruel joke

Mahuadanr is a remote tribal village about 300 km from Ranchi, Jharkhand’s capital. The market closest to the village is a few km away in Lakadchowk, where the centre of attraction on a rain-swept afternoon is a giant LED screen mounted on a truck. The screen runs small video clips in the local language as well as in Hindi on how the “double engine growth” of the Narendra Modi government at the Centre and the Raghuram Das government in the State has taken Jharkhand to new heights.

Two days before Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s visit here to participate in International Yoga Day celebrations, hundreds of people gather in front of the screen to listen to how the Centre’s Ayush and Yoga programmes can cure ailments. While people enjoy the spectacle, they don’t appear to be interested in the message. Men drink hadia, the local liquor made of rice sold by over a dozen women who have brought the drink in plastic containers. While there are video clips on several schemes of the State government, including one to set up a tribal museum dedicated to tribal freedom fighter Birsa Munda, there is no video on the PDS, a lifeline for the tribals who comprise 26% of the population in the State. It seems like a cruel joke to them.

Right to Food activists in Jharkhand have listed in detail 20 deaths between September 2017 and June 2019 due to hunger and malnutrition because of alleged irregularities in the PDS and a few due to denial of social security pensions. The irregularities are manifold. From the deletion of ration cards to the problems in linking ration cards to Aadhaar, the system seems to create more problems than it solves, excluding many families rather than including them. Many activists also point out that the Socio-Economic and Caste Census of 2011, which helps identify PDS beneficiaries, is faulty and outdated.

The last in the series of deaths compiled by the activists was from Latehar district, where Ramcharan Munda, 65, died on June 6, 2019. While the administration is still investigating how Munda died, everyone including the ration dealer admits that ration was not delivered to Munda’s village for several months. The curious case of non-delivery of foodgrain is what ails the PDS in one of the poorest States of the country.

Problems without Internet

For obtaining foodgrain and other essentials through the PDS in Jharkhand, a beneficiary has to meet several criteria. First, the family needs a ration card. Then they need to have Aadhaar cards. Next, the ration cards and Aadhaar numbers have to be linked. But it doesn’t end there. In a majority of the ration shops of the State, delivery is through an electronic point of sale (EPOS) machine. It is through this machine that the biometrics of a beneficiary, mostly thumb impressions, have to be entered and verified from the server database. The EPOS machine works only if it is connected to the Internet. If the beneficiaries face no hiccups in any of these stages, they get their quota of foodgrain.

Something or the other can go wrong in any of these stages. In Lurgumikala village, for instance, the Internet failed. Due to irregular connectivity, the ration dealers of Mahuadanr block of Latehar began distributing ration offline – they made entries in a notebook or register after the ration was handed over to the



Kunti Nagasia and her son Rinku Nagasia live in abject poverty in Mahuadanr block of Latehar district, Jharkhand. The family has no ration card and is surviving with the help of neighbours. (Below) Family members of Santoshi Kumar, 11, who died of starvation after her family ration card was deleted for not being linked to Aadhaar. The family members show ration cards given to them under the Antyodaya Anna Yojana. ■ MANOJ CHOWDHURY/ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



To prevent deaths caused by irregularities in the PDS, some steps have been taken. Every ration dealer has been provided with an ‘exception register’ through which he can provide foodgrain to those whose names are not in the system. A protocol has been put in place to investigate the hunger deaths. This requires the district surgeon, the district supplies officer and any representative appointed by the District Collector to determine the cause of death.

A lab for experiments

At his residence in Ranchi, the Minister blames the overenthusiasm of bureaucrats for the “slippages” and “glitches” in PDS distribution. Roy refers to an order passed by a Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO) of Chatrapur earlier in the day. The SDO had said that families not using the toilets built under the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan programme would not get foodgrain under the PDS. Things took a turn for the worse, he says, when former Chief Secretary of Jharkhand, Rajbala Verma, in a video conference on March 27, 2017, directed that ration cards that were not linked to Aadhaar be cancelled.

Roy does not directly answer why Jharkhand has turned into a lab for all these digital experiments. He goes on to talk about another pilot project, Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), in which money was being transferred directly to the bank accounts of PDS beneficiaries to enable them to buy ration. The project has been stopped, because that too came with many problems. The DBT scheme was tried at Nagri in Ranchi where about 12,000 people across 13 Panchayats received money to buy rations. Other than connectivity issues

and money not landing in accounts on time, the DBT made things more complicated. Roy says: “While it took one day for a beneficiary to get foodgrain earlier, under the DBT the PDS beneficiary had to go to the bank, collect money, and then buy rations from the PDS dealer.” After nearly a year of protests by people and Right to Food activists, the Jharkhand government finally decided to roll back the DBT scheme in October 2018.

A government in denial

While the government remains in denial about the deaths highlighted by Right to Food activists, the Minister admits that Santoshi Kumar, 11, died because her family ration card was deleted for not being linked to Aadhaar. Taramani Sahu, a foot soldier of the Right to Food Campaign, says she had raised this issue with the district authorities months before Santoshi died. The administration assured intervention, but that came only after the child’s death. Twenty months after Santoshi died in Karimati village, her family has ration cards under the Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) scheme, which means that they are entitled to 35 kg of foodgrain a month.

Again, it was only because activists intervened that Koyli Devi got a shed built for rearing goats. Despite having a MGNREGA card, Koyli Devi has not got any work under the scheme. She works at a construction site at a nearby market. A Panchayat functionary says she has not applied for work under MGNREGA. The distress emerging out of patchy PDS distribution in the State is further compounded by poor implementation of 100 days of work guaranteed under MGNREGA.

A report sent by the Jharkhand government to the Director of MGNREGA at the Centre looks at 18 cases of alleged hunger deaths between 2017 and 2018. While there is no mention of whether the families got jobs under the rural job guarantee scheme, the document dated December 26, 2018, has one concluding sentence at the end of each of the 18 cases: “In this case the death does not appear to be linked with MGNREGA”. The same report rejects hunger deaths in all 18 cases. While in the case of Santoshi the report points out that her death was due to an illness, in case of Soren it refers to a knee injury that occurred due to a fall he had almost two years before his death.

While in Santoshi’s case the administration has ensured ration cards to the family, in several cases where similar allegations have surfaced, the families are yet to be enrolled in the PDS. For instance, Budhni Birajia of Amaotoli village in Mahuadanr block of Latehar district died on January 1, 2019. The family, which belongs to a particularly vulnerable tribal group and maintains that there was no food when she died, still does not have a ration card. Sanchi Birajia, Budhni’s daughter-in-law who has to feed a family of five, says that the local ration dealer has spared a few kg of rice for her. In cases where the local dealers feel that denial of ration can lead to starvation, they spare a few kg of foodgrain to those who are not enlisted as PDS beneficiaries.

Siraj Dutta, a prominent face of the Right to Food campaign in Jharkhand, says that of the 20 who died, 11 were Adivasis and four were Dalits. Eleven of the deceased were women. In 13 cases, the inability to link Aadhaar to ration

cards led to the denial of entitlements. Dutta says all the experimentation with the PDS in Jharkhand is aimed at doing away with “identity fraud”, but studies from 2016 have shown that most of the leakages are “quantity fraud”. Dutta and other activists claim that over 10 lakh ration cards were cancelled in the State when ration cards were linked to Aadhaar.

Abject poverty

Balram, a Right to Food activist, says, “Even if the digitisation is perfect and all the ration cards are linked with Aadhaar and all the EPOS machines are connected to the Internet, there will be many exclusions as the baseline data on which the ration cards have been issued are not correct.” Given the debate around whether or not these deaths were linked to starvation, he points to the fact that a large number of people live in chronic hunger.

Balram’s words ring true in different parts of State where people living in distress claim they do not have ration cards and are not getting foodgrain under the PDS. The argument of district collectors and officials is that the National Food Security Act only permits 80% of the population to be covered under the Act, 86% in rural areas and 62% in urban areas, and unless bogus ration cards are removed from the system, no new cards can be issued.

Not far from Budhni Birajia’s house lives Kunti Nagasia with her son Rinku Nagasia. Rinku, who is about 10 years old, is the only earning member of the family. He gets ₹20 a day from doing odd jobs in the village. The family has no ration card. For years, they have not been getting any foodgrain under the PDS. Afsana Khatun, a volunteer with the Right to Food campaign, has raised the plight of the family with authorities and has also arranged for some medical help. Kunti has recently returned from a State-run hospital where she was undergoing treatment for tuberculosis. Rinku has also been diagnosed with the same disease. A peek into the single room hut reveals that the family is battling abject poverty. Two or three utensils and a few rags are all they own.

Kunti hurriedly points at a plastic gunny bag kept hidden under the rags. The bag contains rice. As in the case of Budhni’s family, the ration dealer has been kind to spare a few kg of rice to Kunti’s family as well. The neighbours have also been kind and given her four raw mangoes and half a kg of rice.

“Who will give us anything after this ends? We will eat it slowly,” Kunti says. Kunti and Rinku cannot recall the last time they had eaten dal. They turn silent when asked about vegetables. For as long as they can remember, their meal has consisted of rice and salt. “If they die tomorrow, will you say that they died of TB or hunger,” Afsana asks.



बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड

वर्ष 12 अंक 126

दोयम दर्जा सही नहीं

तत्कालीन बंबई में शराबबंदी का एक दौर ऐसा भी था जब केवल विदेशियों को होटल के बार में बैठकर पीने की अनुमति थी। उस दौरान एक हास्य स्तंभकार ने अपनी काल्पनिक पत्नी के बारे में लिखा कि वह एक महंगे होटल के बार में गई और उसने वहां एक ड्रिंक मंगाई। जब उससे कहा गया कि केवल विदेशियों को ही ड्रिंक पेश की जाएगी तो उसने एक ऐसा सवाल किया जिसका कोई जवाब नहीं था। उसने पूछा, आखिर यह देश है किसका ?

हर बार जब कोई यह कहता या लिखता

है कि विदेशियों को कर दर में रियायत मिलनी चाहिए या उनके लिए कारोबारी प्रक्रिया बेहतर होनी चाहिए, निवेश के लिए विशेष अवसर या इन्वेस्टमेंट एन्क्लेव होने चाहिए, वरना वे अपने डॉलर कहीं और निवेश कर देंगे तो हमें भी यही सवाल उठाना चाहिए। आम दलील इस प्रकार रहती है: नई ऊंची आयकर दर के कारण विदेशियों को रोजगार देना मुश्किल होगा। या विदेशी पोर्टफोलियो निवेशक भारतीय बाजार से दूरी बना लेंगे। या हमें अपने पर्यटन स्थलों को साफ-सुथरा और सुंदर रखना चाहिए

ताकि हम अधिक से अधिक अंतरराष्ट्रीय पर्यटक जुटा सकें। सवाल है कि केवल विदेशी ही क्यों ? हम लोगों का क्या जो यहीं रहते हैं और कर चुकाते हैं ? क्या हमें बेहतर कर नियम, स्वच्छ शहर और कस्बे पाने का अधिकार नहीं, जहां हम रहते हैं और काम करते हैं ? या फिर भारतीय नागरिकों से केवल इसलिए अलग व्यवहार किया जाए क्योंकि उसके पास कहीं और जाने का विकल्प नहीं है ?

भारत अब पहले जैसा आर्थिक बंदीगृह नहीं रह गया है। एक दौर था जब आप देश से आठ डॉलर से अधिक की राशि बाहर नहीं ले जा सकते थे। बाद में उदार विदेश यात्रा योजना के तहत 100 डॉलर की राशि ले जाने की अनुमति दी गई। हमारी हालत पुराने सोवियत संघ जितनी भी बुरी नहीं थी क्योंकि वहां एक सुपर बाजार में केवल पश्चिमी पर्यटक ही खरीदारी कर सकते थे। या फिर चीन, जहां वर्षों तक विदेशी केवल विशेष तौर पर जारी

विदेशी विनियम प्रमाणपत्रों में ही लेनदेन कर सकते थे। भारत समेत तमाम जगहों पर अब खुलापन आ चुका है। आज सही मनोदशा वाली कोई भी सरकार ऐसे नियम थोपने की नहीं सोच सकती। अगर वह ऐसा करती भी है तो ये काम नहीं करेंगे। यह पहले भी कभी कारगर नहीं रहा।

स्विस बैंकों तथा अन्य टैक्स हैवन वाले देशों में भारतीयों द्वारा जमा किया गया

पैसा, हवा में नहीं आया था।

उस वक्त तस्कारी आम थी और हवाला कारोबार फल-फूल रहा था। इसमें से कुछ पैसा विदेशों से निवेश के रूप में वापस आता था। एक वक्त ऐसा भी था जब भारतीयों ने भी देश में वापस आना शुरू किया था। इससे घरेलू माहौल में सुधार हुआ। नए निजी अस्पताल और स्कूल बने और स्वास्थ्य और शिक्षा सेवाओं में सुधार हुआ। कार, फोन सुविधा और हवाई सेवा आदि सभी बेहतर हुईं।

इसके बावजूद हाल के वर्षों में अमीर और पेशेवर रूप से सफल भारतीयों ने बाहर का रुख किया है। एक दिलचस्प आंकड़ा यह है कि करीब 1.50 लाख से अधिक भारतीयों ने हाल के वर्षों में दुबई, सिंगापुर और पश्चिमी देशों का रुख किया है। शुरुआत में वे कर के आतंक से भाग रहे थे।

बाद में कारोबार की प्रभावी जगह के बारे में नए नियम आ गए जिन्होंने

कई लोगों को उनके निवास के पते में बदलाव के लिए प्रेरित किया। अन्य लोगों ने शहरों में बढ़ते वायु प्रदूषण, स्कूल में दाखिले की मुश्किल और पानी की कमी आदि के कारण अपने रहने की जगह बदल ली। लाखों की तादाद में भारतीयों ने विदेशी डिग्रियां हासिल कीं या भारत में ही उच्च स्तरीय डिग्री हासिल कीं। इससे उन्हें वैश्विक स्तर पर रोजगार मिलना आसान हुआ। लाखों की तादाद में

प्रवासी भारतीय अमेरिका, पश्चिम एशिया और अन्य जगहों पर रहते हैं। इससे अन्य लोगों का वहां जाना आसान होता है। ऑस्ट्रेलिया जैसे देश भारतीयों को वॉिशंट आंत्रजक मानते हैं। ऐसा चीन के आंत्रजकों को संतुलित करने के लिए भी किया जाता है। संक्षेप में कहें तो अर्थव्यवस्था को आगे ले जाने में सक्षम तमाम भारतीयों में से कई भारत छोड़ सकते हैं, और छोड़ भी रहे हैं।

हमें नागरिकों के साथ ऐसा व्यवहार करने की जरूरत है जैसे कि उनके पास विकल्प है, भले ही उनमें से अधिकांश के विकल्प न हो। अगर विदेशी कारोबारी कानूनी आश्वस्त चाहते हैं तो देश के नागरिकों को भी यह चाहिए। कर अधिकारियों से संरक्षण का विचार अच्छा है लेकिन विदेशियों को नियम कायदों से बचने के लिए विशेष दर्जा देना सही नहीं। जो भी किया जाए वह सबके लिए हो। एक लोकतांत्रिक देश में ऐसा ही होना चाहिए।



दूर करें दिक्कतें संपूर्ण विफलता के पहले

इससे पहले कि संपर्क और संचार क्षेत्र में हम पूरी तरह नाकाम हो जाएं, हमें समस्याओं के जमीनी हल तलाश करने की आवश्यकता है। इस विषय में विस्तार से जानकारी दे रहे हैं **श्याम पोनप्पा**

देश की व्यापक तस्वीर में सुधार करने के बारे में काफी बातें होती हैं। हमें वास्तव में कुछ जमीनी सफलताओं की आवश्यकता है। भविष्य की सफलताओं की इमारत खड़ी करने के लिए हमें कुछ जमीनी समस्याओं को हल करना होगा। इसके दो उदाहरणों पर हम यहां चर्चा कर रहे हैं।

पहला है कारोबारी विफलताओं की पहली: जेट एयरवेज धीमी गति से ठप होने लगी। वह पहले ही दिवालिया हो चुकी है लेकिन आने वाले दिनों में ऐसी अन्य घटनाएं देखने को मिल सकती हैं। एक समय देश की सबसे रखरखाव विमानन कंपनियों में से एक रही जेट एयरवेज अकारण ही बैठ गई और ऐसा होने दिया गया। इससे 16,000 से अधिक कर्मचारी प्रभावित हुए हैं। कंपनी पर करीब 26,000 करोड़ रुपये की देनदारी है। देनदारों और सरकारी एजेंसियों ने कंपनी को चालू रखने के लिए कार्याकारी कदम क्यों नहीं उठाए, उन्होंने न्यायिक प्रक्रिया को सहायता भी नहीं ली और न ही फाइनैंसिंग का सहारा लिया। क्या वाकई न्यायिक प्रक्रिया निस्तारण को बाधित करती है ? कर्जदाता ढुलमुल रह गए, या वे फंसे हुए कर्ज को लेकर मोचे हो हल्ले के बीच घबरा गए या फिर अत्यधिक आश्वस्ति से सपतन का कारण बनी ? अगर इन सवालों के जवाब तलाशे गए और उचित कदम उठाए गए तो अन्य भारी भरकम फंसे हुए

कर्ज के मामलों से निपटने में सहायता मिल सकती है।

दूसरा मामला है दूरसंचार क्षेत्र में बीएसएनएल और एमटीएनएल की गड़बड़ियों का। सन 1990 से एक के बाद एक सरकारों ने बार-बार यह प्रयास किया है कि इन दूरसंचार कंपनियों को गति प्रदान की जाए। इस दौरान उन्हें वास्तव में सफल बनाने वाला कोई काम नहीं किया गया। मिसाल के तौर पर उन्हें स्वतंत्र और हस्तक्षेप मुक्त तथा शक्तिशाली नेतृत्व की आवश्यकता थी जो उन्हें नहीं मिल सका। यही कारण है कि बीएसएनएल का समेकित घाटा करीब 100,000 करोड़ रुपये हो चुका है। यह जेट एयरवेज के घाटे का पांच गुना और एयर इंडिया के मार्च 2018 तक के घाटे का दो गुना है। बुनियादी सेवा क्षेत्र की इन दिक्कतों को दूर करना अहम है क्योंकि इनका रिश्ता सुरक्षा, शिक्षा और स्वास्थ्य, मनोरंजन तथा हमारे काम आदि सभी क्षेत्रों से है। अगर बीएसएनएल और एमटीएनएल चीजों में रचनात्मक बदलाव ला सके तो इन्हें बचाया जा सकता है।

अगर इस हालात से निपटा जा सका तो हमारी क्षमता से जुड़े गहन गतिरोध दूर होंगे और उत्पादकता में सुधार होगा। संचार और संपर्क सामाजिक और आर्थिक क्षमताओं के लिए अत्यंत महत्वपूर्ण है। इत क्षेत्रों को लेकर दशकों से हमारा रुख बहुत गलत रहा है।

हमने कभी इसमें जरूरी बदलाव नहीं किए जिसकी परिणति इस प्रकार सामने आई। अब सरकार इस क्षेत्र में करोड़ों की पूंजी डालने जा रही है। इसके अतिरिक्त जमीन और परिसंपत्तियों से भी धन जुटाया जाएगा।

जनहित में क्या है ?

बीएसएनएल और एमटीएनएल के लिए उचित लक्ष्य तय किए जाने चाहिए। उन्हें आम जनता के किन हितों का ध्यान रखना है ? संचार मंत्री ने गृह और रक्षा के साथ बाढ़ या चक्रवात के दौरान आपदा प्रबंधन जैसे नीतिगत क्षेत्रों का जिक्र किया है। इसके अलावा जिन दो क्षेत्रों का इस्तेमाल किया गया उनके पीछे कोई तर्क नहीं है। कहा गया कि वे राष्ट्रीय परिसंपत्ति और मुफ्त सेवाओं के प्रमुख सेवा प्रदाता हैं। वाणिज्यिक संस्थान के बारे में ऐसा नहीं कहा जा सकता। स्पेक्ट्रम साझेदारी संबंधी नीतिगत वक्तव्य आने के बाद नियमन इतने सख्त कर दिए गए कि उसका कोई उपयोग ही नहीं रहा। इसके बजाय नीति निर्माताओं को ऐसे लक्ष्य तय करने चाहिए जो वाकई जनहित में हों।

अब तक हमें भ्रामक और परस्पर विरोधाभासी लक्ष्य देखने को मिले हैं। नीलामी शुल्क और अन्य शुल्क के रूप में सरकार ने काफी धन जुटाया, इस बीच उम्मीद

■ तीसरा, मुफ्त सेवा और अस्थायित्व भरी कीमतों से बाजार को अस्थिर नहीं किया जाना चाहिए। सरकार ने दूरसंचार, विमानन और बिजली क्षेत्र में बार-बार ऐसा किया है। लोगों को बेहतर गुणवत्ता वाली सेवा चाहिए, जो जाहिर है सस्ता दर पर नहीं मिलेगी।

■ चौथा, यह सुनिश्चित किया जाना चाहिए कि सेवाओं में क्षमता और गुणवत्ता की कमी न हो ताकि सार्वजनिक संसाधन बरबाद न हों। ऐसा करने से ही खराब सेवाओं से बचा जा सकता है।

■ अंत में, हमें बुनियादी ढांचे और स्पेक्ट्रम साझेदारी को अपनाना चाहिए। स्वीडन का मॉडल यूरोपीय संघ के साथ भारत के लिए भी अनुकरणीय है। सिंगापुर में कुछ वर्ष पहले तक निजी- सार्वजनिक भागीदारी का मॉडल था जो सिंगटेल द्वारा आपनने के अधिग्रहण के बाद समाप्त हुआ। हमें अनिवार्य सक्रिय नेटवर्क साझेदारी की आवश्यकता है जो निजी क्षेत्र के सेवा प्रदाता समूहों द्वारा संचालित हो।

बीएसएनएल और एमटीएनएल इसमें संरक्षक प्रतिभागी हो सकते हैं। स्टॉकहोम की बुनियादी क्षेत्र की आईटी कंपनी स्टोर्कैब की एक रिपोर्ट सेवाप्रदाता निरपेक्ष फाइबर और मोबाइल बुनियादी ढांचे के बारे में जानकारी मुहैया कराती है।

संपर्क की समस्या को हल करना फंसे हुए कर्ज या कृषि क्षेत्र की दिक्कतों को दूर करने की तुलना में कहीं अधिक सरल हो सकती है।

इंदिरा के पास लंदन में रहने का विकल्प था और प्रधानमंत्री बनने के पहले वह ऐसा चाहती भी थीं। लेकिन उन्हें यह अहसास भी हो चुका था कि वह भारत छोड़कर नहीं रह सकती हैं। एक पारिवारिक दोस्त ने उनके लिए अपना बंगला खाली कर दिया और वह अपने परिवार के साथ उसमें रहने लगीं।

सोची-समझी रणनीति के तहत केंद्रीय जांच ब्यूरो (सीबीआई) के अधिकारी 3 अक्टूबर, 1977 को इंदिरा की गिरफ्तारी के लिए उनके आवास के बाहर जा पहुंचे। यह शाम 4.45 बजे का वक्त था। अर्दोर्नी जनरल और सोलिसिटर जनरल को सरकार के इस कदम के बारे में

कोई जानकारी नहीं थी। इंडिया टुडे पत्रिका ने उस घटना से संबंधित दिलचस्प विवरण दिए गए हैं। प्रधानमंत्री मोरारजी देसाई ने गृह मंत्री चौधरी चरण सिंह को इस गिरफ्तारी के लिए हरी झंडी देने के साथ एक हद्दायत भी दी थी। उन्होंने कहा था कि किसी भी कीमत पर इंदिरा गांधी को हथकड़ी नहीं लगानी है।

शाम छह बजे इंदिरा गांधी बाहर निकलीं। उनके वफाल फ्रैंक एंथनी ने सीबीआई अफसरों से एफआईआर की प्रति की मांग की तो कहा गया कि उन्हें यह प्रति देना जरूरी नहीं है और इंदिरा गांधी को इन आरोपों के बारे में पढ़कर बताया जा चुका है। इंदिरा ने जब खुद पर लगाए गए आरोपों के बारे में सुना तो उन्होंने कहा, ‘हथकड़ी कहाँ है ? मैं तब तक नहीं जाऊंगी जब तक मुझे हथकड़ी नहीं लगाई जाती है।’ हथकड़ी को लेकर करीब एक घंटे तक वाद-व्यवाद होता रहा।

इस दौरान घर के आसपास कांग्रेस कार्यकर्ताओं का जमावड़ा लग चुका था और वे लगातार नारे लगा रहे थे। ब्रह्मानंद रेड्डी, कमलापति त्रिपाठी और मोहसिना किदवाई जैसे शीर्ष पार्टी नेताओं के चेहरे पीले पड़ चुके थे। आखिरकार इंदिरा एक कार में बैठीं और वह कार उन्हें लेकर चली गई। उसके पीछे राजीव गांधी और संजय गांधी भी अपनी कारों में रवाना हो गए।

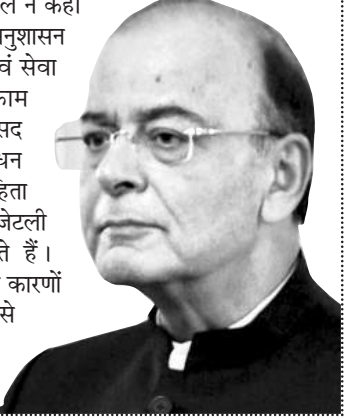
सुबह होते ही एफआईआर में खामी को लेकर चरण सिंह की चिंता सही साबित हो गई। गिरफ्तारी के अगले दिन अदालत

कानाफूसी

मुंबई की मोनोरेल महाराष्ट्र सरकार ने मुंबई में करीब 3,000 करोड़ रुपये की लागत से मोनोरेल परियोजना शुरू की थी लेकिन यह अब सफेद हाथी नजर आ रही है। परियोजना को शुरू हुए आठ वर्ष बीत चुके हैं और इसके चलते शहर के मध्य भाग में जाम और सड़क बंद होने का सिलसिला लगातार चल रहा है। अब यह परियोजना बंद होने जैसी ही है। फिलहाल इसका केवल एक रैक चलन में है लेकिन भारी बारिश के कारण उस मार्ग पर भी परिचालन लगातार बाधित हो रहा है। वेतन भत्तों में देरी के चलते कर्मचारी भी सेवा के परिचालन में बहुत अधिक रुचि नहीं ले रहे हैं। यही कारण है कि स्टेशन खाली नजर आते हैं। ऐसे में सवाल यह उठता है कि चेन्नू से महालक्ष्मी के बीच चलने वाली इस मोनोरेल का इस्तेमाल कौन करता है: जवाब है मुंबई भ्रमण पर आने वाले पर्यटक।

जेटली की तारीफ

गुरवार को राज्य सभा में बजट पर चर्चा दोबारा शुरू हुई। इस दौरान करीब 40 से अधिक सांसदों ने अपनी बात रखी। इनमें सत्ताधारी भाजपा के कुछ सांसद भी शामिल थे। परंतु शिरोमणि अकाली दल के नरेश गुजराल को छोड़कर किसी ने भी वित्त मंत्री अरुण जेटली का जिक्र नहीं किया। गुजराल और जेटली दोनों अच्छे मित्र हैं। गुजराल ने कहा कि वह जेटली का योगदान याद करना चाहेंगे जिन्होंने पांच साल पहले अर्थव्यवस्था को बहुत बुरी स्थिति से उबारा था। गुजराल ने कहा कि जेटली ने राजकीषीय अनुशासन कायम किया और वस्तु एवं सेवा कर को लागू करने का काम किया। अकाली दल के सांसद ने कहा कि वह ऋणशोधन अक्षमता एवं दिवालिया संहिता के क्रियान्वयन के लिए भी जेटली को पूरे अंक देना चाहते हैं। गौरतलब है कि स्वास्थ्यत कारणों से जेटली सक्रिय राजनीति से दूर हैं



आपका पक्ष

सब्सिडी नहीं खाद पर प्रतिबंध लगाया जाए

किसानों को अब खाद सब्सिडी उनके बैंक खाते में सीधे मिलेगी। केंद्र सरकार ने इसकी पहल शुरू कर दी है। इसके लिए तीन पहल राष्ट्रीय, राज्य और जिला स्तर पर खाद आपूर्ति, सूचना पट, पीओएस तथा डेस्कटॉप पीओएस संस्करण की शुरुआत की गई है। सरकार के मुताबिक खाद डीबीटी का पहला चरण अक्टूबर 2017 में शुरू किया गया था। इसके तहत पीओएस मशीनों से प्राप्त खुदरा बिक्री आंकड़ों की जांच के बाद सब्सिडी सीधे कंपनियों को दी जाती थी। सरकार जैविक खेती पर अधिक ध्यान दे रही है जिससे खेतों में रासायनिक खाद का इस्तेमाल कम किया जा सके। जैविक खेती में गाय के गोबर तथा गोमूत्र को अधिक से अधिक इस्तेमाल करने पर जोर दिया



जाएगा। गाय के गोबर से बने खाद जमीन की उर्वरक क्षमता बढ़ाने में मदद करेगा। दूसरी ओर खाद सब्सिडी किसानों के बैंक खाते में डाले जाने से भ्रष्टाचार कम हो आएगी। जरूरतमंद किसानों को खाद का पैसा सीधे उनके खाते में मिलेगा। लेकिन चोरी करने वालों

सरकार ने किसानों को खाद सब्सिडी सीधे उनके बैंक खाते में भेजने की शुरुआत की है

को कोई रोक नहीं सकता है।

सरकार रसोई गैस की सब्सिडी

सीधे खाते में भेजती है लेकिन



बाजार में ब्लैक में सिलिंडर बिना सब्सिडी के दाम पर मिलती है और उसकी सब्सिडी जिसके नाम पर गैस कनेक्शन है उसके खाते में चली जाती है। ठीक उसी प्रकार किसान भी खाद खरीद कर अन्य को बेच सकते हैं तथा वह सरकारी सब्सिडी का लाभ ले सकते हैं। बहरहाल देश में जैविक खेती को बढ़ावा दिया जा रहा है। ऐसे में सरकार को खाद पर सब्सिडी देने के बजाय खाद उत्पादन तथा बिक्री पर प्रतिबंध लगाना चाहिए। इससे किसान जैविक खाद इस्तेमाल करने को मजबूर होंगे। इससे पहले वर्ष फसल की उत्पादन कम हो सकती है लेकिन अगले वर्ष फसल उत्पादन ठीक हो सकता है।

आनंद शर्मा, नई दिल्ली

तपती दिल्ली को मॉनसून का इंतजार

इस साल मॉनसून केरल तट पर चार दिन विलंब के साथ 8 जून को दस्तक दे चुका था। मॉनसून को राजधानी दिल्ली पहुँचने में करीब एक माह का समय लगाता है। लेकिन दिल्ली में अब तक मॉनसून नहीं पहुँच पाया है। मौसम विभाग द्वारा जारी आंकड़ों के अनुसार दिल्ली के पड़ोसी राज्यों जैसे राजस्थान, हरियाणा, उत्तर प्रदेश में मॉनसून पहुँच चुका है लेकिन दिल्ली अभी भी गर्मी से बेहाल है। दिल्ली के चारों ओर मॉनसूनी बारिश हो रही है लेकिन दिल्ली पानी के लिए तरस रही है। यह बिल्कुल उल्टी तरह से है जैसे सरकारी कागजों में तालाब तो दिखता है लेकिन जमीन पर नहीं। राजधानी अभी भी तप रही है, पानी का संकट बरकरार है।

समाधान की दिशा

इस साल मार्च में सर्वोच्च न्यायालय ने राम जन्मभूमि मामले को मध्यस्थता से सुलझाने का जो कदम बढ़ाया था, उससे उम्मीद बंधी थी कि बरसों पुरानी इस समस्या का अब कोई समाधान निकल पाएगा। लेकिन जिस तरह के संकेत आ रहे हैं, उससे यह नहीं लग रहा कि मामला बातचीत से सुलझ पाएगा। इसीलिए मामले की सुनवाई करने वाले संविधान पीठ को गुरुवार को कहना पड़ा कि अगर मध्यस्थता से बात नहीं बनी तो अदालत 25 जुलाई से इस मुकदमे की रोजना सुनवाई शुरू कर देगी। अदालत ने इस मामले में मध्यस्थता पैनल से 18 जुलाई तक प्रगति रिपोर्ट पेश करने को कहा है, ताकि इसका आकलन किया जा सके कि मामला कहां तक पहुंचा और मध्यस्थता के जरिए इसके समाधान की गुंजाइश कितनी बन पा रही है। इसके बाद ही संविधान पीठ मामले की सुनवाई में आगे बढ़ेगा। अदालत ने यह बात तब कही जब इस मामले के एक पक्षकार गोपाल सिंह विशारद की ओर से पेश वकील ने कहा कि मध्यस्थता के जरिए मामला सुलझ पाना मुश्किल है, इसलिए अदालत को ही इस मामले की सुनवाई शुरू कर देनी चाहिए।

सवाल यह है कि मध्यस्थता पैनल का काम अभी पूरा भी नहीं हुआ है और उसने इस काम के लिए पंद्रह अगस्त तक का वक्त मांगा है। तब संबंधित पक्षकारों की ओर से अदालत के समक्ष इस समय ऐसे तर्क क्यों पेश किए जा रहे हैं जो मामले की जल्द सुनवाई के लिए दबाव बनाने वाले हों? बेहतर होता कि मध्यस्थता पैनल की रिपोर्ट आने तक इंतजार कर लिया जाता। राम जन्मभूमि-बाबरी मस्जिद विवाद का मामला सुलझाने के लिए सर्वोच्च न्यायालय ने इस साल मार्च में न्यायमूर्ति एफएमआइ कलीफुल्ला की अध्यक्षता में तीन सदस्यों के पैनल का गठन किया था। लेकिन अब मामले के पक्षकारों ने जिस तरह की दलीलें संविधान पीठ के सामने रखी हैं, वे एक तरह से मध्यस्थता पैनल के प्रयासों को लेकर सवाल उठाने जैसा है। विशारद के वकील ने अदालत से कहा कि याचिकाकर्ता के पिता ने जनवरी 1950 में यह मामला दायर किया था और अब याचिकाकर्ता खुद अस्सी साल के हो चुके हैं। ऐसे में इस मामले को जल्द सुलझाया जाना चाहिए और इसका समाधान मध्यस्थता से संभव नहीं लग रहा।

इसी बीच एक और पक्षकार रामलला विराजमान के वकील ने भी जल्द सुनवाई का अनुरोध किया। निर्मोही अखाड़े के वकील ने कहा कि पक्षकारों के बीच सीधी बातचीत होनी चाहिए, लेकिन इस मामले में अभी तक पक्षकारों के बीच सीधे ऐसी कोई बातचीत नहीं हुई है, जिससे मामले का हल निकलता नजर आए। मुसलिम पक्ष के वकील ने इन सबका विरोध किया और अदालत से अनुरोध किया कि इस तरह के तर्कों, दलीलों और सुझावों पर विचार नहीं किया जाए। तब संविधान पीठ को कहना पड़ा कि वह मध्यस्थता पैनल की अब तक की प्रगति का जायजा लेगा और लोगो कि पैनल को कोई सफलता नहीं मिल रही है तो वह 25 जुलाई से सुनवाई शुरू कर देगा। मध्यस्थता पैनल के सदस्य तेरह मार्च से 16 जून के बीच चार बार अयोध्या जा चुके हैं और संबंधित पक्षों तथा महत्त्वपूर्ण व्यक्तियों से बात भी की है। जब तक पैनल अपनी अंतिम रिपोर्ट अदालत के समक्ष दाखिल नहीं कर देता तब तक इस मामले पर अंतिम रूप से कुछ भी कह पाना उचित नहीं है। अयोध्या का मसला हिंदू और मुसलमानों की आस्था से जुड़ा है, इसलिए पैनल के सदस्यों के लिए भी सर्वमान्य समाधान सुझाना और संबंधित पक्षों को इसके लिए तैयार करना कोई आसान काम नहीं है। फिर भी उम्मीद यही की जानी चाहिए कि पैनल के सदस्य कोई रास्ता निकालेंगे।

भीड़तंत्र के विरुद्ध

पिछले कुछ सालों से भीड़ की अराजकता के जिस तरह के मामले सामने आ रहे हैं, उन्हें हिंसा की आम घटनाओं की तरह नहीं देखा जा सकता है। ये ऐसी घटनाएं हैं जो हमारे लोकतंत्र और कानून के शासन पर सवालिया निशान लगाते हैं। स्वाभाविक ही इस मसले पर तीखे सवाल उठे कि क्या सरकारें इसकी गंभीरता की अनदेखी कर ऐसी प्रवृत्ति को बढ़ावा दे रही हैं। सही है कि भीड़ की हिंसा के बाद मौजूदा कानूनों के तहत कार्रवाई हुई, लेकिन उन ऐसी प्रवृत्ति पर लगाम लगाने से लेकर आरोपियों को सजा दिलाने तक के मामले में अपर्याप्त माना गया। इसलिए इस मसले पर अलग से कानून बनाने की मांग उठी। इसके अलावा, सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने साल भर पहले ही साफ लहजे में कहा था कि भीड़ की हिंसा को एक अलग अपराध की श्रेणी में रखा जाना चाहिए और सरकार इसकी रोकथाम के लिए एक नया कानून बनाए। शायद इसी के मद्देनजर उत्तर प्रदेश विधि आयोग ने सलाह दी है कि ऐसी घटनाओं को रोकने के लिए मौजूदा कानून प्रभावी नहीं हैं, इसलिए अलग से एक विशेष और सख्त कानून बनाया जाए।

आयोग के सुझाव के मुताबिक इस कानून का नाम उत्तर प्रदेश कॉम्बेटिंग ऑफ़ मॉब लिलिचिंग एक्ट रखा जा सकता है। प्रस्तावित कानून के मसविदे में ड्यूटी में लापरवाही बरतने पर पुलिस अफसरों से लेकर जिलाधिकारी तक की जिम्मेदारी तय करने और दोषी पाए जाने पर सजा का प्रावधान करने का भी सुझाव दिया गया है। इसके अलावा, इसमें भीड़ के चेहरे में हिंसा करने वालों को सात साल से लेकर आजीवन कैद तक की सजा की व्यवस्था करने की बात शामिल की गई है। लेकिन इस तरह की हिंसा के मामलों में आमतौर पर पीड़ित और उसके परिवार के सामने पैदा हालात पर गौर नहीं किया जाता है। इस लिहाज से देखें तो उत्तर प्रदेश विधि आयोग ने प्रस्तावित कानून में भीड़ की हिंसा के शिकार व्यक्ति के परिवार और गंभीर रूप से घायलों के साथ ही संपत्ति नुकसान के लिए भी मुआवजे की व्यवस्था करने का सुझाव दिया है। ऐसी घटनाएं फिर नहीं हों, इसके लिए भी पीड़ित व्यक्ति और उसके परिवार के पुनर्वास और पूरी सुरक्षा के इंतजाम किए जाने का भी प्रावधान करने की बात कही गई है।

गौरतलब है कि गोरक्षकों और भीड़ की हिंसा और किसी की हत्या कर देने के मसले पर सुप्रीम कोर्ट कह चुका है कि कोई भी नागरिक अपने हाथ में कानून नहीं ले सकता। यह राज्य सरकारों का कर्तव्य है कि वे कानून-व्यवस्था बनाए रखें। अदालत ने साफतौर पर कहा था कि लोकतंत्र में भीड़तंत्र की इजाजत नहीं दी जा सकती। हालांकि यह खुद सरकारों के लिए अपनी साख का सवाल है कि वे अपने दायरे में इस तरह की अराजकता और हिंसा पर पूरी तरह लगाम लगाएं, जिससे कानून-व्यवस्था की उपरिथिति साफ दिखे। यों भी किसी राजनीतिक पक्ष के नफा-नुकसान का मामला मान कर भी लंबे समय तक इनकी अनदेखी नहीं की जा सकती थी। लेकिन अफसोस की बात यह है कि कुछ राजनीतिकों की ओर से की गई बयानबाजियों की वजह से स्थानीय स्तर पर कुछ अराजक तत्त्वों को शह मिली और देश के अलग-अलग हिस्सों से गोरक्षा या फिर कोई ख़ास नारा लगाने के नाम पर भीड़ की हिंसा और किसी हत्या के अनेक मामले सामने आए। इससे देश की छवि भी बुरी तरह प्रभावित हुई। इसलिए भीड़ की हिंसा पर रोक लगाने और इसके दोषियों के खिलाफ सख्त कार्रवाई की कानूनी व्यवस्था की जरूरत तत्काल महसूस की जा रही थी। इस लिहाज से देखें तो उत्तर प्रदेश विधि आयोग की पहल स्वागतयोग्य है।

कल्पमेधा

लोक निंदा का भय इसलिए है कि वह हमें बुरे कामों से बचाती है। अगर वह कर्तव्य मार्ग में बाधक हो तो उससे डरना कायरता है।
—प्रेमचंद

जनसत्ता

विवेक ओझा

खाड़ी देशों में काम करने वाले भारतीय मजदूरों के साथ एक बड़ी समस्या यह रही है कि अनधिकृत एजेंटों द्वारा मोटी रकम लेकर उनका जाली पंजीकरण करा कर खाड़ी देशों में भेजने का मार्ग प्रशस्त कर दिया जाता है। उसके बाद जाली दस्तावेज के साथ पकड़े जाने पर उनका कामकाजी परमिट रद्द कर दिया जाता है, उनका वेतन भी रोक दिया जाता है। ऐसे में मेजबान देश कानून के हिसाब से काम कर रहा होता है तो भारत के सामने समस्या होती है कि उसे भारतीय श्रमिकों के हित में काम करने के लिए कैसे कहे।

भारत के विदेश मंत्रालय ने हाल में प्रवासी भारतीय मजदूरों से संबंधित कुछ आंकड़े जारी किए हैं। इनमें बताया गया है कि विदेशों, खासकर खाड़ी देशों में काम करने वाले भारतीय मजदूरों, कामगारों की असामयिक मौत की घटनाएं सामने आ रही हैं। रिपोर्ट में बताया गया है कि खाड़ी देशों में हर दो दिन में तीन भारतीय मजदूरों की मौत आत्महत्या, बीमारी और सड़क दुर्घटनाओं में हो रही है। इनमें ज्यादातर मामले आंध्र प्रदेश से जुड़े कामगारों के हैं। यह तथ्य इस बात को भी दर्शाता है कि प्रवासी भारतीय श्रमिक विदेशों में किन विपरीत परिस्थितियों में काम कर रहे हैं। पिछले तीन वर्षों में खाड़ी देशों में काम करने वाले आंध्र प्रदेश के एक हजार छह ही छप्पन श्रमिकों की मौत हो चुकी है। ये श्रमिक मुख्य रूप से सफाई कर्मचारी और घरेलू नौकर के रूप में अपनी सेवाएं दे रहे थे। इन श्रमिकों की सर्वाधिक मौतें कुवैत (488), सऊदी अरब (478), यूएई (351),

भारत के विदेश मंत्रालय ने हाल में प्रवासी भारतीय मजदूरों से संबंधित कुछ आंकड़े जारी किए हैं। इनमें बताया गया है कि विदेशों, खासकर खाड़ी देशों में काम करने वाले भारतीय मजदूरों, कामगारों की असामयिक मौत की घटनाएं सामने आ रही हैं। रिपोर्ट में बताया गया है कि खाड़ी देशों में हर दो दिन में तीन भारतीय मजदूरों की मौत आत्महत्या, बीमारी और सड़क दुर्घटनाओं में हो रही है। इनमें ज्यादातर मामले आंध्र प्रदेश से जुड़े कामगारों के हैं। यह तथ्य इस बात को भी दर्शाता है कि प्रवासी भारतीय श्रमिक विदेशों में किन विपरीत परिस्थितियों में काम कर रहे हैं। पिछले तीन वर्षों में खाड़ी देशों में काम करने वाले आंध्र प्रदेश के एक हजार छह ही छप्पन श्रमिकों की मौत हो चुकी है। ये श्रमिक मुख्य रूप से सफाई कर्मचारी और घरेलू नौकर के रूप में अपनी सेवाएं दे रहे थे। इन श्रमिकों की सर्वाधिक मौतें कुवैत (488), सऊदी अरब (478), यूएई (351),

सोशल मीडिया पर हाल में एक वीडियो वायरल हुआ था, जिसमें एक बहू अपनी बुजुर्ग सास को पीटती दिख रही थी। यह घटना हमारे जेहन में कई सवाल पैदा करती है कि क्या हमारे समाज का युवा अपने बुजुर्गों को लेकर इतना संवेदनहीन होता जा रहा है कि उनकी पिटाई भी करने में नहीं हिचकता है ! इस तरह की खबरें अक्सर सामने आती रहती हैं। हाल ही में एक और खबर सामने आई थी, जिसमें लखनऊ के एक बुजुर्ग दंपति ने अपनी बहू के अत्याचार से परेशान होकर आशा ज्योति केंद्र में न्याय की गुहार लगाई थी। दंपति ने बहू पर चप्पल से मारने का आरोप लगाया था। ऐसी घटनाओं को देखने और सुनने के बाद रूह कांप जाती है।

गाह-बागाहे मीडिया और सोशल मीडिया के बहाने सामने आने वाली ये खबरें लोगों के लिए अब सामान्य-सी घटना बन गई हैं। हालांकि ये घटनाएं सामान्य नहीं हैं, बल्कि चिंता का विषय हैं। ये दर्शाती हैं कि हमारा समाज किस तरह से बुजुर्गों के प्रति इतना असंतुष्ट और असहिष्णु होता जा रहा है

बर्बादी के बीज

बचपन से सुनते चले आ रहे हैं कि भारत एक कृषि प्रधान देश है और कृषि ही हमारा अर्थव्यवस्था की धुरी है। किसान को देश का अन्नादाता कहा जाता है। लेकिन यह तथ्य बहुत ही दुखद है कि भारत में सबसे ज्यादा आत्महत्या किसान करते हैं। 2000 के बाद से देश में हर साल 12000 किसान अपनी जान दे देते रहे हैं और इसके पीछे अहम कारण खेती की लगातार बढ़ती लागत और घाटा है। कृषि लागत में सबसे ज्यादा हिस्सेदारी बीजों और कीटनाशकों की है। 1996 में जब जीएम यानी जीन संसाधित बीजों को मंजूरी मिली तो इन्हें बेचने वाली कंपनियां दावा करती थीं कि इनसे उत्पादकता बढ़ती है और कीड़े-मकोड़ों से फसलों को कोई नुकसान नहीं होता। लेकिन जीएम बीज महंगे होते हैं। इसके अलावा इनके इस्तेमाल का सबसे बड़ा नुकसान यह है कि इनका दोबारा उपयोग करना संभव नहीं है। यानी हर बार नया बीज खरीदिए। जाहिर है, इससे खेती की लागत बढ़ती है।

उधर पर्यावरणविद जीएम फसलों को लेकर आशंकित रहे हैं। उनके अनुसार ये फसलें भविष्य में पर्यावरण और जैव विविधता को हानि पहुंचाएंगी। जीएम फसलों के जीन आसपास की फसलों में स्थानांतरित होकर कहीं जीन प्रदूषण का रूप तो नहीं ले लेंगे, इस बारे में ही पर्यावरणविदों ने अपनी चिंता जताई है। इन फसलों में कीट नियंत्रण के लिए जो जैविक विष डाला जाता है कीटों में उसके विरुद्ध प्रतिरोधकता विकसित होने की भी आशंका है। यदि ऐसा हुआ तो उच्च प्रतिरोधक क्षमता वाले कीटों के विकसित होने से कृषि की दशा अत्यंत चिंताजनक हो जाएगी। जीएम बीजों के बाबत दावा किया गया कि ये देश में कृषि की सूरत बदल देंगे। कहा गया कि इनसे न सिर्फ उपज, बल्कि किसानों का मुनाफा भी

असुरक्षा में घिरे प्रवासी कामगार

ओमान (153), कतर (108) और बहरीन (78) में हुई हैं। भारत के विदेश मंत्रालय ने स्पष्ट किया है कि खाड़ी देशों में काम करने वाले कामगारों को बचाने के लिए शिविरों के जरिए मिशन के तहत जागरूकता अभियान चलाए जा रहे हैं। यहां काम करने वाले भारतीयों को लंबी और अत्यधिक कार्यवाधि, स्वास्थ्य सुविधाओं का अभाव, सामाजिक सुरक्षा का अभाव जैसी चुनौतियों का सामना करना पड़ रहा है।

यह तो रही आंकड़ों की बात। इससे आगे हमें एक बड़े परिदृश्य की तरफ ध्यान देना होगा। संयुक्त राष्ट्र जनसंख्या प्रभाग और इंडिया स्पेंड की रिपोर्ट को देखें तो पूरी दुनिया में सबसे बड़ा कामगार समुदाय भारतीय प्रवासियों का है। इनके अनुसार कामगार भारतीयों की संख्या करीब पौने दो करोड़ है। संयुक्त राष्ट्र की विश्व प्रवास रिपोर्ट, 2018 में बताया गया है कि प्रवासी भारतीय कामगारों की संख्या एक करोड़ छप्पन लाख है। संयुक्त अरब अमीरात में अकेले लगभग पैंतीस लाख भारतीय कार्यरत हैं, वहीं सऊदी अरब में पच्चीस लाख, ओमान और कुवैत दोनों में बारह लाख प्रवासी भारतीय कार्यरत हैं। ऐसे में इनको मिलने वाली सुविधाएं और इनकी सुरक्षा का प्रश्न बहुत महत्वपूर्ण हो जाता है।

दक्षिण भारतीय राज्यों— केरल, तेलंगाना, आंध्र प्रदेश के साथ ही महाराष्ट्र से खाड़ी देशों में सस्ते श्रमिक के रूप में काम करने के लिए जाने वाले भारतीयों को कई समस्याओं का सामना करना पड़ता है, जैसे— वीजा, पासपोर्ट की औपचारिकताएं, विदेश में इसकी जव्ती, नस्लीय भेदभाव, जासूसी के आरोप, ट्रान्सनेशनल इस्लामिक टेरर नेटवर्क में संलग्नता के आरोप, मालिकों द्वारा उचित मजदूरी न देना, आवश्यकता से अधिक काम लेना, स्वदेश वापसी में अड़चनें पैदा करना आदि। प्राकृतिक आपदा, मानव तस्करी जैसी चुनौतियों का भी इन्हें सामना करना होता है। केवल एक अकेले कुलभूषण जाधव का मामला प्रवासी भारतीयों की सुरक्षा से जुड़े गंभीर सवाल खड़े करता है।

प्रवासी भारतीय कामगारों को विदेश ले जाकर काम करने की परिपटी ब्रिटेन ने अपने औपनिवेशिक शासन काल के दौरान डाली थी। भारतीयों को दक्षिण अफ्रीका, श्रीलंका, फीजी, मॉरीशस जैसे कई देशों में साथ-बागानों में श्रमिक के रूप में अंग्रेज जबर्दस्ती ले गए थे। इसके बाद भारतीय मजदूरों को रंगभेद, नस्लभेद और सांस्कृतिक संघर्षों का सामना करना पड़ा। श्रीलंका ने ‘सिंहलीज ओनली’ बिल 1956 में पास कर तमिलों को उनके अधिकार से वंचित किया

भारत सरकार के विदेश मंत्रालय के एक अधिकारी, जो भारतीय मजदूरों को सुरक्षा के लिए जांच करते हैं, तमिलनाडु के एक शहर में भारतीय मजदूरों के साथ बातचीत करते हैं।

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कि अपने माता-पिता तक को बर्दाश्त करने के लिए तैयार नहीं है और उसे प्रताड़ित करने के अलावा कई बार पिटाई भी करने से संकोच नहीं करता। सवाल है कि इस तरह की संवेदनहीनता आज के बच्चों के भीतर कहां से आई? जबकि यह जगजाहिर है कि सभी माता-पिता अपने बच्चों को बहुत प्यार करते हैं, उनका हमेशा खयाल रखते हैं। वर्तमान के साथ-साथ भविष्य में उनके समक्ष आने वाली चुनौतियों और परेशानियों से बचाने के लिए हमेशा

प्रयत्नशील रहते हैं। लेकिन अगर कोई बच्चा बड़ा होकर अपने मां-बाप के साथ अमानवीय व्यवहार करे तो यह हमारे समूचे सामाजिक विकास पर एक सवालिया निशान है।

ग्रामीण इलाकों के समाज में हमने अक्सर देखा है कि माता-पिता आम, कटहल, लीची, जामुन और अमरूद जैसे फलदार पेड़ अपनी भागी पीढ़ी, यानी बच्चों को ध्यान में रख कर ही लगाते हैं। उन्हें लगता है कि जब हमारे बच्चे बड़े होंगे, तब तक ये पेड़ भी बड़े हो जाएंगे और फल देने लगेंगे। यों शहरों में रहने वाले माता-पिता भी अपने बच्चों का उतना ही खयाल रखते हैं। उन्हें अच्छी शिक्षा देने से लेकर आमतौर पर उनकी हर मांग को पूरा करने की

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कई गुना बढ़ जाएगा। इस बात को 20 साल से ज्यादा गुजर गए हैं मगर इस दौरान किसानों की बदहाली सिर्फ बढ़ी है। उधर जीएम बीज मुहैया कराने वाली कंपनी का मुनाफा कई गुना बढ़ गया है।

जीएम बीजों का फायदा भी बताया जाता है कि इनसे खाद्य सुरक्षा बढ़ेगी। बीटी कपास से किसकी खाद्य सुरक्षा बढ़ती है? दूसरी बात यह है कि खाद्य सुरक्षा बढ़ाने के लिए पैदावार भी बढ़ानी होगी और इसके लिए जमीन में उपजाऊपन और सिंचाई के लिए पर्याप्त पानी होना चाहिए। देशी किस्म की बीज प्रजातियों के तकरीबन खाल्ते के बाद बीज कारोबार पर एकाधिकार जमा चुकी विदेशी कंपनियों का लालच अभी थम नहीं

रहा है। 2002 में अमेरिकी बहुराष्ट्रीय कंपनी मॉनसैंटो और महाराष्ट्र हाइब्रिड सीड की साझेदारी में जीएम बीजों का उत्पादन और वितरण शुरू किया गया। तब दावा किया गया था कि इनमें अधिक कीटनाशकों की जरूरत नहीं होती; साथ ही ये सूखा रोधी और बाढ़ रोधी भी हैं। कुछ ही साल बाद बीटी कपास की फसलों में कीड़े लगने शुरू हो गए। महंगे बीज और कीटनाशकों की बढ़ती लागत किसानों पर भारी पड़ गई।

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जनसंख्या नीति

जनसंख्या वृद्धि पर देश की चिंताओं के बाद भी हमारी सरकारें क्यों नहीं चेततीं? पिछली सरकारों से कोई अपेक्षा नहीं थी, पर राजग सरकार के पांच वर्ष ऐसे ही चले गए और अब उसकी नई पारी भी जनसंख्या वृद्धि पर देश की चिंताओं के बाद भी हमारी सरकारें क्यों नहीं चेततीं? पिछली सरकारों से कोई अपेक्षा नहीं थी, पर राजग सरकार के पांच वर्ष ऐसे ही चले गए और अब उसकी नई पारी भी

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था। इसके बाद 1972 में भी बने श्रीलंकाई संविधान में तमिलों के भाषाई, धार्मिक सांस्कृतिक अधिकारों की उपेक्षा की गई। इसी प्रकार फीजी में 1987 में तख्ता पलट कर भारतीयों को दोहरे दर्जे की नागरिकता से संतुष्ट करने का प्रयास किया गया। ऐसे कई देशों में अनेक उदाहरण मिल जाएंगे जहां प्रवासी भारतीय कामगारों को नागरिकता, भाषा, संस्कृति, बुनियादी सुविधाओं के नाम पर उपेक्षा का सामना करना पड़ा। भारत सरकार ने 1990 के पूर्व कुछ अवसरों पर विदेशों में कुछ अभियानों के जरिए भारतीयों के हितों की सुरक्षा की कोशिश की शुरू की थी। श्रीलंका में भारत सरकार ने ऑपरेशन पवन के माध्यम से शांतिवाहिनी सेना भेज कर तमिलों के हितों की सुरक्षा का प्रयास किया। इसी प्रकार भारत सरकार ने पूर्वी पाकिस्तान यानी बांग्लादेश के नागरिकों से पश्चिम बंगाल के नागरिकों के सांस्कृतिक संबंधों के मद्देनजर ऑपरेशन सर्च लाइट के जरिए बांग्लादेश के निर्माण में

भूमिका अदा की। मालदीव में ऑपरेशन कैक्टस के जरिए भारत सरकार ने वहां के लोगों की मदद की। मालदीव में आज प्रवासी भारतीय कामगारों की अच्छी-खासी आबादी निवास करती है। 1990 के दशक में उदारीकरण, निजीकरण और वैश्वीकरण की शुरुआत ने वैश्विक प्रवास को आसान बना दिया। वस्तु, सेवा, पूंजी, श्रम सभी का मुक्त प्रवाह इस सीमारहित विश्व में होने लगा। ऐसे में पूंजी निर्माण, निवेश, समृद्धि के एक तरफ जहां नए अवसर सृजित हुए, वहीं भारतीय श्रमिकों के सामने मुश्किलें भी आनी शुरू हुईं। खाड़ी देशों में ऐसी घटनाएं ज्यादा होने लगीं। प्रवासी कामगारों के हितों की सुरक्षा के लिए भारत सरकार ने 1980 के दशक में ही कतर और जॉर्डन के साथ श्रम समझौते पर हस्ताक्षर किए थे। 2004 में अप्रवासी भारतीय मामलों के मंत्रालय के गठन के बाद

है कि अठारह देशों में जाने के लिए प्रवासी भारतीयों के साथ एक बड़ी समस्या यह रही है कि अनधिकृत एजेंटों द्वारा मोटी रकम लेकर उनका जाली पंजीकरण करवा कर खाड़ी देशों में भेजने का मार्ग प्रशस्त कर दिया जाता है। उसके बाद जाली दस्तावेज के साथ पकड़े जाने पर उनका कामकाजी परमिट रद्द कर दिया जाता है, उनका वेतन भी रोक दिया जाता है। ऐसे में मेजबान देश कानून के हिसाब से काम कर रहा होता है तो भारत के सामने समस्या होती है कि उसे भारतीय श्रमिकों के हित में काम करने के लिए कैसे कहे। भारत सरकार के उत्प्रवास अधिनियम, 1983 के मुताबिक भारतीय पासपोर्ट धारकों की ईसीआर (एमिग्रेशन चेक रिक्वायर्ड) श्रेणी का प्रावधान

है कि अठारह देशों में जाने के लिए प्रवासी भारतीयों

मामलों के मंत्रालय के प्रोटेक्टर ऑफ़ एमिग्रेंट्स ऑफ़िस से उत्प्रवासन मंजूरी लेना जरूरी है। ऐसे देशों में सभी खाड़ी देश शामिल हैं। उत्प्रवासन मंजूरी मिलने की एक आवश्यक शर्त यह है कि खाड़ी या अन्य देशों में जाने वाला श्रमिक अपने समझौते अथवा रोजगार संविदा का विवरण उपलब्ध कर आए जिसमें यह भी स्पष्ट हो कि जिस देश में वह काम करने जा रहा है वहां उसे कितना भुगतान किया जाएगा। इस समझौते पर विदेशी नियोक्ता और इच्छुक कामगार पर विदेशी निश्चित रूप से

उत्प्रवासन मंजूरी के लिए इस संविदा या हस्ताक्षर का रिकॉर्ड सक्षम प्राधिकारी के सामने पेश किया जाए, तब जाकर फर्जी एजेंटों द्वारा अवैध पंजीकरण और मंजूरी की समस्या का समाधान हो सकेगा।

जिनमें अभिभावक अपने बच्चों को अपनी पूरी पेंशन दे देते हैं, लेकिन संतान उन्हें दो वक्त की खुराक तक के लिए तरसती है। हमें नहीं भूलना चाहिए कि माता-पिता बटवृक्ष की तरह होते हैं, जिनकी छाया में बच्चे फलते-फूलते हैं और उनके पास आकर सुकून का अनुभव करते हैं। इन बातों को भूल कर अगर कोई अपने माता-पिता के प्रति ही दुर्व्यवहार करने लगे तो ऐसी संतान निश्चित रूप से इंसानियत के लिए बोझ हैं। जवानी के नशे में संतान को यह नहीं भूलना चाहिए कि हर चीज का हिसाब होता है। कभी वे भी वृद्धावस्था में पहुंचेंगे और उनसे ही सीखा हुआ व्यवहार अगर उनके बच्चे भी करने लगें तो पता नहीं उन पर गुजरेगी!

आखिर हम कैसे समाज में जी रहे हैं, किस तरह के समाज का निर्माण कर रहे हैं! हमारे देश में बुजुर्गों का हमेशा से सम्मान रहा है। हमें नहीं भूलना चाहिए कि ऐसी घटनाओं का प्रभाव तेजी से फैलता है। ऐसे में अगर समाज में कोई अपने बुजुर्ग अभिभावकों के साथ कोई दुर्व्यवहार करता है तो निश्चित रूप से उसे रोक जाना चाहिए। अपने माता-पिता के खिलाफ बेबात ऐसा व्यवहार करने वाले लोगों का सामाजिक बहिष्कार होना चाहिए, ताकि वे रिश्तों की गरिमा और अहमियत को समझ सकें।

प्रावधान किया गया है। हम सबको भी बच्चियों को बर्बरता से बचाने के लिए सतर्कता बरतनी होगी।

- रायव जैन, जालंधर***

रोजगार की खातिर

श्रम मंत्रालय द्वारा जारी रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक 2017-18 के दौरान भारत में बेरोजगारी दर 6.1 फीसद रही, जो 45 वर्षों (1972-73 के बाद) में सबसे अधिक है। राष्ट्रीय नमूना सर्वेक्षण की रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है कि 2017-18 में बेरोजगारी दर ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में 5.3 फीसद और शहरी क्षेत्र में सबसे ज्यादा 7.8 फीसद रही। पुरुषों की बेरोजगारी दर 6.2 फीसद जबकि महिलाओं की 5.7 फीसद रही। इनमें नौजवान बेरोजगार सबसे ज्यादा थे, जिनकी संख्या 13 फीसद से 27 फीसद थी। बेरोजगारी दर को कुल कार्यबल के बीच बेरोजगार व्यक्तियों के प्रतिशत के रूप में परिभाषित किया गया है। देश के कार्यबल में हर साल लगभग एक करोड़ युवा शामिल होते हैं। 2018-19 की चौथी तिमाही में सकल घरेलू उत्पाद (जीडीपी) की वृद्धि दर पिछले पांच वर्षों में सबसे कम 5.8 प्रतिशत पर पहुंच गई है। विनिर्माण क्षेत्र, जो देश में बड़ी संख्या में रोजगार प्रदान करता है, वह भी काफी हद तक सुस्त रहा है। ऐसे में बेरोजगारी के ये आंकड़े सरकार के लिए किसी चुनौती से कम नहीं हैं।

जनसंख्या विस्फोट और नौकरी के घटते अवसरों ने शिक्षित, अशिक्षित, प्रशिक्षित बेरोजगारों की फौज खड़ी कर दी है। हालािया युवाओं में लोगों ने कांग्रेस की न्याय योजना के साथ ही मुफ्तखोरी की भी नकारा है और यह साफ संदेश दिया है कि वे काम चाहते हैं, खैरात नहीं। बेरोजगारी को दूर करना सरकार की प्राथमिकता में शामिल है, मगर इसके लिए उसे शीघ्र और सख्त कदम उठाने होंगे। उम्मीद है, नई केंद्र सरकार इस विश्वास पर खरा उतरेगी।

- मोहित सोनी, कुश्नी, धार, मध्यप्रदेश***

नई दिल्ली

सावन का हर दिन पावन

यों तो सभी महीनों की कोई-न-कोई विशेषता है. तभी तो उन्हें महत्व देने के लिए ‘मासानाम् उत्तम मास’का प्रयोग किया जाता है. फिर भी कार्तिक, माघ, वैशाख एवं सावन की धार्मिक-पौराणिक महिमा अधिक है. इन चारों में श्रावण शिव को सर्वाधिक प्रिय है. संभव है, कृषि वर्ष का प्रारंभिक मास होने से वर्षमंगल की परिणति हो.

वर्षा हमारे लिए आज भी बड़ा महत्व रखती है, इसलिए कहावत है- ‘देश सुखी जब बरसे पानी’. हम भले आधुनिक उपकरणों से खेती को आसान बनाने में लगे हों, पर बरसात की ताक में रहते हैं, भगवान भरोसे रहते ही हैं. आज भी जब बारिश नहीं होती तो त्राहि-त्राहि मच ही जाता है. चूंकि शिव पृथ्वी तत्व के प्रधान देवता हैं, जलप्रिय भी हैं और कल्याण के प्रतीक भी हैं, इसलिए सावन को शिवमय होना ही है. सर्वत्र ईश्वर की सत्ता स्वीकारनेवाले श्रावण के शिवत्व से दूर कैसे रह सकते हैं ! यही कारण है कि इसे सभी तरह के व्रतों का केंद्र तथा समस्त धार्मिक अनुष्ठानों का आधार माना गया है- ‘सर्वव्रतमयश्चैव सर्वधर्ममयस्तथा’.

यहां तक कि यह पूरा मास हमारे जीवन को सदाचार से लाभान्वित करनेवाला है.

जब शिव में निष्कल, निरंजन, निर्विकार ब्रह्म का साक्षात्कार करते हैं, तब समस्त जड़-चेतन में बस वही दिखने लगते हैं. ऐसे में जब कालवाचक महाकाल नामक उनका रौद्र रूप सावन बनकर सौम्य हो जाये तो अचरज क्या ! वैसे भी भगवान शिव अपने भक्तों को सुख-शान्ति प्रदान करते हैं एवं उनके दुःख-दरिद्रता को हर लेते हैं. यही कारण कि इनके अनेक नामों में शिव और हर सर्वाधिक ख्यात हैं- ‘शिवत्वं शुभरूपत्वात् अघोष-हरणात् हरः’.

शिव सर्वमय हैं. वह स्वयं रूप विशेष से सातों वारों के भी स्वामी हैं, इसलिए वह ग्रहरूप भी हैं. विविध अनुष्ठानों के अतिरिक्त ग्रहों की बाधा दूर करने के लिए इस मास में वारव्रत को भी स्थान दिया गया है. कुछ अति महत्ववाले व्रतोंकावस हैं -

सभी प्रमुख धार्मिक परंपराएं मूल रूप से एक ही संदेश देती हैं- **पेम, दया और क्षमा. महत्वपूर्ण बात यह है कि ये हमारे दैनिक जीवन का अहम हिस्सा होना चाहिए.**

- **दलाई लामा**

॥ **वास्तु टिप्स** ॥

कैसा हो घर का मंदिर

किसी भी घर में भगवान के मंदिर की अपनी एक विशेष जगह होती है. वास्तु के अनुसार घर के मंदिर को स्थापित करने व सजाने में कुछ बातों का विशेष ध्यान रखना चाहिए. वास्तु कहता है कि घर में मंदिर स्थापित करने के लिए सबसे शुभ स्थान ईशान कोण यानी उत्तर पूर्व दिशा होती है. यह दिशा भगवान के मंदिर के लिए उत्तम है. साथ ही पूजा करते वक्त हमारा मुंह भी पूर्व की दिशा में होना चाहिए. अगर पूर्व दिशा में मुंह नहीं करसकते, तो पश्चिम दिशा भी शुभ है. इन दोनों दिशा की ओर मुंह करके पूजा-पाठ करना चाहिए. कई घरों में मंदिर जमीन पर बनाया जाता है, जबकि वास्तु के अनुसार मंदिर की ऊंचाई इतनी हो कि भगवान के पैर और हृदय का स्तर बराबर तक आवे. ऐसा इसलिए, क्योंकि ईश्वर सबसे सर्वोच्च हैं और हम उनका मंदिर या स्थान अपने से नीचे नहीं दे सकते. मंदिर लकड़ी या संगमरमर का होना उत्तम माना गया है. इससे घर में सुख-शान्ति आती है.

सावन की सोमवारी : सोम का अर्थ है उमा के साथ (उमया सह सोमः). इसलिए यह दिन शिव-पार्वती की पूजा के लिए विशेष महत्व रखता है. इस बार सावन में चार सोमवार हैं, इसलिए यदि भक्त सालोभर सोमवार व्रत करने में समर्थ न हों, तो इन चार सोमवारी से ही वर्ष पर्यंत व्रत करने का फल पा सकते हैं. इस दिन सामर्थ्य के अनुसार पार्वती-सहित शिव की विविध उपवारों से पूजा करनी चाहिए. विशेषकर मालती, मल्लिका व सफेद फूल अर्पित करें. यत्रि-जागरण, भजन-कीर्तन आदि का भी विधान है. ऐसा कहा गया है कि हरे व्रत सर्वप्रथम श्रीकृष्ण ने किया था.

रोटक व्रत : यह व्रत श्रावण के शुक्लपक्ष के प्रथम सोमवार से साढ़े तीन महीने तक प्रत्येक सोमवार तक चलता है और कार्तिक कृष्ण चतुर्दशी को पूर्ण होता है. इसमें रोटक (गुड़ मिली, घी में पकी गेहूँ की मीठी रोटी, जौ लोहे या मिट्टी की कड़ाही व तवे पर पकायी जाती है.) विशिष्ट नैवेद्य के रूप में भगवान शिव को अर्पित किया जाता है. विधान के अनुसार पांच रोटक बनाना है . पुष्प-पत्र आदि विविध सामग्री से प्रभु की पूजा कर एक रोट उन्हें अर्पित करें. दो ब्राह्मण को दो तथा दो स्वयं आहार करें. यह लक्ष्मी की वृद्धि के लिए विशिष्ट है .

मंगलागौरी व्रत : यह नवविवाहिताओं के लिए विशेष विहित व्रत है, जो विवाह के प्रथम वर्ष श्रावण शुक्ल के प्रथम मंगलवार से सौभाग्य, संतान एवं सुख-समृद्धि के लिए किया जानेवाला है. इसमें मंगलकारिणी मां गौरी पूजी जाती है. भगवती को सोलह बतियों का संयुक्त घी का दीपक, सोलह तरह के फूल, सोलह दूध, विचिड़ी के सोलह पत्ते आदि अर्पित किये जाते हैं . पुनः यथाशक्ति वायन तथा सोलह सुहागिनो को भोजन कराने का भी विधान है. मान्यता के अनुसार पांच वर्षों तक चलनेवाले इस व्रत को नववधू पहली बार मायके में शुरू करती है. उपरंतु शेष चार वर्ष ससुराल में पूर्ण करती है .



नागपंचमी : यों तो कृष्ण और शुक्ल दोनों पंचमियों में सर्पशान्ति के लिए पंचमी व्रत विहित है, परंतु शुक्लपक्षीय पंचमी को ही विशेषतः नागपंचमी के रूप में अधिक महत्ता प्राप्त है. कालसर्प दोष व सर्पशाप के कारण संतान-बाधा अथवा सर्पदंश से रक्षा के लिए नागों को प्रिय इस तिथि को व्रत-पूजन का विधान है. कृष्ण पंचमी को शूहर (सेंहुडु) की गांघ पर मनसा देवी की आराधना भी समान उद्देश्य से बतायी गयी है. **श्रावणी (रक्षाबंधन)** : सदा रक्षित-सुरक्षित रहने के लिए सावन की पूर्णिमा को हम हर साल बहन से कलाई में राखी बंधाते हैं. पहले इस दिन वैदिक जन स्नान आदि नित्य-कृत्य

से निवृत्त होकर नया जनेऊ धारण कर ऋषि-मुनि पूजन तथा तर्पण कर इस दिन से इस वर्ष किन्ता वेदाभ्यास करेंगे, यह निर्धारित करते थे व संकल्पित होते थे. पुरोहित लोग रेशमी या सूती लाल अथवा रंग-बिरंगे नये कपड़े के छोटे-से टुकड़े में अक्षत तथा पीली सरसों रखकर पोटली बनाकर लाल धागे से बांध कर विधिवत पूजा कर यजमानों को बांधते थे और आशीर्वाद देते थे. इस दिन श्रावण कुमार की पूजा भी बतायी गयी है. इस माह में शुक्ल पक्ष की चतुर्थी को श्रीगणेश की प्रसन्नाह के लिए दूर्वा-गणपति व्रत, सप्तमी को शीतला व्रत, द्वादशी को श्रीहरि की प्रीति के लिए दधिव्रत आदि भी बताये गये हैं.

॥ **सुवचन** ॥

अगर आपका मन और हृदय पवित्र है, तो साक्षात् ईश्वर आपके हृदय में निवास करते हैं. सिर्फ जन्म लेने से कोई छोटा या बड़ा नहीं बन जाता. इसान के कर्म ही उसे छोटा या बड़ा बनाते हैं.

- संत रविदास

हमेशा सावधान रहें. अपने अंतःकरण में झाँकें. पायेंगे कि आप नकारात्मक विचारों से जुड़े हैं और ये नकारात्मक विचार आपका अहंकार ही हैं.

- ओशो

॥ **ज्योतिष** ॥

कब बनते हैं भूमि एवं भवन के योग

पीएन चौबे, ज्योतिषाचार्य

उत्तम भवन प्राप्त करना हर व्यक्ति के पहचान का पर्याय है. आज भी आधी से अधिक आबादी किराये के मकान में ही रहती है. कुछ लोग पैसा रख कर भी मकान नहीं बना पाते, तो कुछ लोगों का पैसा जमीन एवं मकान में फंस जाता है. महान ज्योतिष के ग्रंथ इनका पूर्ण विश्लेषण करते हैं एवं सार्थक उपायों की विवेचना करते हैं. कुंडली के बारह भागों में चौथा भाव, चौथा से चौथा अर्थात् सप्तम भाव, इनके कारक चंद्रमा तथा शुक्र से गृह सुख का आकलन किया जाता है.

उत्तम मकान योग : बृहतपराशर होय में इसका स्पष्ट वर्णन मिलता है. स्वर्गोहे स्वोऽसके स्वोऽसुखस्थानाधिपो। भूमि-यान-गृहदीनम सुखं वादृष्टभवं। अर्थात् यदि चौथे भाव के स्वामी स्वगृही उच्च आदि का हो, केंद्र या त्रिकोण में बैठे हो, तो निश्चित ही उसे गृह सुख प्राप्त होगा. बस उपरोक्त गृह नीच एवं पाप के भवाम में न हो. इसी प्रकार दूसरे श्लोक के अनुसार यदि चौथे भाव के स्वामी दशम भाव के साथ केंद्र या त्रिकोण में बैठे, तो जातक को उत्तम श्रीणी का मकान होगा ही. एक अन्य ग्रंथ के अनुसार यदि लग्न का स्वामी चतुर्थ हो एवं चतुर्थ भाव का स्वामी लग्न में हो तो जातक स्वयं से बहुत ही बड़ा मकान बनायेगा. यदि चौथे भाव में चंद्रमा या शुक्र हो और उसके उच्च के हो, तो भी

उसे बड़ा घर होगा. यदि चौथे एवं दशम भाव के स्वामी शनि एवं मंगल के साथ हो, तो इस चतुर्ग्रही योग में जातक को कई मकान होंगे. चौथे एवं दशवं भाव के स्वामी चंद्रमा एवं शनि से युक्त हो, वह बहुत ही सुंदर साज-सज्जा युक्त घर बनायेगा. यदि चौथे भाव के स्वामी अपने घर में लग्न के स्वामी के साथ हो, तो उसे अचानक दूसरे के द्वारा बना हुआ मकान प्राप्त होगा. लग्न एवं सप्तम का स्वामी लग्न में ही एवं चौथे भाव पर शुभ ग्रह का प्रभाव हो, तो ऐसे जातक

राशिफल **डॉ एनके बेरा**

मेष परिवार में शुभ मांगलिक कार्य के प्रयास सफल होंगे. आत्मीयजन का सहयोग मिलेगा. आवश्यक खर्च होगा. रोग और ऋण-शत्रुबाधा से छुटकारा मिलेगा.

वृष किसी प्रभावशाली व्यक्ति के सहयोग से महत्वपूर्ण काम बनेगा. विवादास्पद मामलों में विजय होगी. संतान पक्ष की ओर से आपको हर्षदायक समाचारों की प्राप्ति होगी.

मिथुन आजीविका की स्थिति में सुधार होगा. व्यावसायिक उद्देश्य से की जाने वाली यात्राएं लाभकारी साबित होंगी. वस्त्र-आभूषण, धन-द्रव्य आदि की प्राप्ति होगी. परिवार में हर्ष रहेगा.

कर्क धार्मिक-सामाजिक क्षेत्र में प्रशंसनीय कार्य करने का अवसर मिलेगा. पुरानी महत्वाकांक्षा पूरी होगी. नौकरी में अच्छे बदलाव होने की संभावना है.

सिंह क्रोध-जोश-उतावलेपन में वृद्धि होगी. चोट-चपेट लगने की आशंका है. सतर्क रहें. रोजी-रोजगार के क्षेत्र में अप्रत्याशित अवरोध-विरोध होने से मानसिक उद्विग्नता बढ़ेगी.

कन्या नौकरी में स्थानांतरण-पदोन्नति की संभावना है. महत्वपूर्ण कार्य पूरा होगा. परिवार में सुख-शान्ति का वातावरण रहेगा. उद्योग व्यापार के गतिरोध दूर होंगे.

तुला संतान के विवाहादि मांगलिक कार्य संपन्न होंगे. नौकरी में स्थानांतरण-पदोन्नति की संभावना. बेरोजगारों को जीविकोपार्जन के साधन उपलब्ध होंगे.

वृश्चिक कर्मक्षेत्र से सुखद समाचार की प्राप्ति होगी. व्यवसाय की स्थिति में सुधार होगा. उच्च शिक्षा से संबद्ध युवाओं को उत्साह और उमंग की वृद्धि होगी.

धनु महत्वपूर्ण समाचारों की प्राप्ति होगी. विरोधियों पर विजय. परीक्षा-प्रतियोगिता, उच्च शिक्षा से संबद्ध युवाओं को अनुकूल परिणाम मिलेंगे.

मकर आर्थिक स्थिति में सुधार होगा. रोग-ऋण-शत्रुबाधा का शमन. घर-गृहस्थी में सुख-शान्ति का वातावरण बनेगा. स्वजन-मित्रों के सहयोग से लाभ का अवसर मिलेगा.

कुंभ व्यावहारिक कुशलता व बौद्धिक चतुराई से अनेक समस्याओं का समाधान निकलेगा. स्वास्थ्य बाधा, दिमागी तनाव, इष्ट-मित्रों-स्वजनों से मार्मिक पीड़ा होगी.

मीन आयु-आरोग्य की रक्षा होगी. वकाये रकम की प्राप्ति. श्रेष्ठजनों के सहयोग से रोजी-रोजगार में उन्नति होगी. छात्रों के लिए समय उत्साहवर्धक रहेगा.

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वार्ड से वार्ड

4. मस्त और लापरवाह, नशे में चूर (4)

5. याचक, भिखारी (3)

6. सुरीली आवाज, गीत (3)

7. असल बात मालूम करना (2,2)

9. हीन होने का भाव (3)

11. गाने में तान लेना (4)

13. जो सहने वाला नहीं हो (4)

16. भय, डर, खौफ (3)

18. गंभीरता, गहनता (4)

20. छोटा राजा या सामंत को यह कहा जाता है (3)

21. मनुष्य (3)

17. चिकना, बिल्कुल साफ और स्वच्छ (4)

19. सच्चाई, नीयत (3)

शब्दपहेली उत्तर

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॥ **श्रावण विशेष** ॥

व्रतों का खास महीना चतुर्मास

श्रीपति त्रिपाठी

श्रावण शब्द श्रवण से बना है, जिसका अर्थ है सुनना, अर्थात् सुन कर धर्म को समझना. वेदों को श्रुति कहा जाता है, अर्थात् उस ज्ञान को ईश्वर से सुन कर ऋषियों ने लोगों को सुनाया था. यह महीना भक्तिभाव और सत्संग के लिए होता है. जिस भी भगवान को आप मानते हैं, आप उसकी पूरे मन से आराधना कर सकते हैं, लेकिन सावन के माह में, विशेषकर भगवान शिव, मां पार्वती और श्रीकृष्णजी की पूजा का काफी महत्व है.

हिंदू धर्म में व्रत तो बहुत हैं, लेकिन चतुर्मास को ही व्रतों का खास महीना कहा गया है. चतुर्मास चार महीने की अवधि है, जो आषाढ़ शुक्ल एकादशी से प्रारंभ होकर कार्तिक शुक्ल एकादशी तक चलती है. ये चार माह हैं- श्रावण, भाद्रपद, आश्विन और कार्तिक. चतुर्मास के प्रारंभ को 'देवशयनी एकादशी' कहते हैं और अंत को 'देवोत्थान एकादशी'. चतुर्मास का प्रथम महीना है- श्रावण मास.

किसने शुरू किया श्रावण सोमवार व्रत : इस संबंध में पौराणिक कथा है कि जब सनत कुमारों ने महादेव से उन्हें सावन महीना प्रिय होने का कारण पूछा, तो भगवान शिव ने बताया कि जब देवी सती ने पिता दक्ष के घर में यौगशक्ति से शरीर त्याग किया था, उससे पहले देवी सती ने महादेव को हर जन्म में पति के रूप में पाने का प्रण किया. दूसरे जन्म में देवी सती ने पार्वती के नाम से हिमाचल और रानी मैना के घर में पुत्री रूप में जन्म लिया. पार्वती ने युवावस्था के सावन महीने में निराहार रह कर कठोर व्रत किया और उन्हें प्रसन्न कर विवाह किया. तब से महादेव को यह माह प्रिय हो गया.

क्या सोमवार को ही व्रत रखना चाहिए : श्रावण माह को कालांतर में 'श्रावण सोमवार' कहने लगे, इससे समझा जाने लगा कि श्रावण माह में सिर्फ सोमवार को ही व्रत रखना चाहिए. जबकि इस माह से व्रत रखने के दिन शुरू होते हैं, जो चार माह (चतुर्मास) तक चलते हैं. आमजन सोमवार को ही व्रत रखते हैं. शिवपुराण के अनुसार जिस कामना से कोई इस मास के सोमवारों का व्रत करता है, उसका वह कामना अवश्य एवं अश्रींग्रही पूरी होती है. जिन्हें 16 सोमवार व्रत करने हैं, वे भी सावन के पहले सोमवार से व्रत करने की शुरुआत कर सकते हैं. इस मास में भगवान शिव की बेलपत्र से पूजा करना श्रेष्ठ एवं शुभ फलदायक है. **क्रमशः**

॥ **व्रत-त्योहार** ॥

गुरु के ज्ञान व आशीर्वाद से जीवन में आती है श्रेष्ठता

पौराणिक काल के महान व्यक्तित्व, ब्रह्मसूत्र, महाभारत, श्रीमद्भगवत् और अठारह पुराण जैसे अद्भुत साहित्यों की रचना करने वाले महर्षि वेदव्यास जी का जन्म आषाढ़ पूर्णिमा को हुआ था, ऐसी मान्यता है. वे हमारे आदिगुरु माने जाते हैं. गुरु पूर्णिमा का यह प्रसिद्ध त्योहार व्यास जी की जयंती के रूप में मनाते हैं परंपरा है. इसलिए इस पर्व को व्यास पूर्णिमा भी कहते हैं. इस बार यह तिथि मंगलवार, 16 जुलाई को है. इस दिन प्रातःकाल स्नान पूजा आदि नित्यकर्मों को करके उत्तम और शुद्ध वस्त्र धारण करना चाहिए. फिर व्यास जी के चित्र को सुगंधित फूल-माला चढ़ा कर अपने गुरु या घर के बड़ों को गुरु तुल्य मान कर उनका आशीर्वाद प्राप्त करना चाहिए.

महर्षि व्यास ने वेद को चार भागों में बांट दिया, ताकि अल्प बुद्धि रखनेवाले लोग भी वेदों का अध्ययन करके लाभ उठा सकें. व्यास जी ने वेदों को अलग-अलग खंडों में बांटने के बाद उनका नाम- ऋग्वेद, यजुर्वेद, सामवेद और अथर्ववेद रखा और इनका ज्ञान अपने प्रिय शिष्यों-वैशम्पायन, सुमन्तुमुनि, पैल और जैमिन को दिया. हिंदू धर्म में गुरु को ईश्वर से भी श्रेष्ठ माना जाता है, क्योंकि गुरु ही हैं, जो इस संसार रूपी भव सागर को पार करने में सहायता करते हैं. गुरु के ज्ञान और दिखाये गये मार्ग पर चल कर जीवन में श्रेष्ठता को प्राप्त कर सकते हैं. गुरु पूर्णिमा खास तौर पर वर्षा ऋतु में मनाने का एक कारण यह भी बताया जाता है कि इन चार माह में न अधिक गर्मी और न अधिक सर्दी होती है. यह समय अध्ययन और अध्यापन के लिए अनुकूल व सर्वश्रेष्ठ है.

गुरु पूर्णिमा मुहूर्त : **गुरु पूर्णिमा तिथि प्रारंभ** - 01:48 बजे (16 जुलाई, 2019) से. **गुरु पूर्णिमा तिथि समाप्त** - 03:07 बजे (17 जुलाई, 2019) तक.

सुडोकू नवताल

पहेली नंबर 4223

	8	1				2	5	
2								9
5			1		7	4		
9	5			4			2	
		3	9		6	7		
7				8			1	5
6	7	2		5			1	
	1	5			6	9		

22. वस्तु के गुण-दोष और स्वा

सुडोकू नवताल - 4222 का हल

उपपर से नीचे

5	9	4	2	3	1	6	8	7
8	7	3	1	2	9	5	4	6
6	1	2	8	7	9	3	5	4
1	6	7	9	8	2	3	5	4
3	8	5	4	1	2	9	6	7
2	4	9	6	5	1	8	7	3
7	5	6	3	2	4	1	9	8
4	2	1	5	8	7	3	6	9
9	3	8	7	2	4	6	5	1

अनेकी की शक्ति (4)

नीचे आनेवाली, व्रत वृक्ष (4)

नानादी, वेवक्री (4)

गुण, धर्म (4)

एक राशि (3)

इस मिट्टी से फूल लग

सुंदर, निर्मल (3)

अधिकतर लगने वाली, वरण

वैश्वशब्द का संबंध-कार

जिससे डर लगें (4)

पूर्व (4)