A Kafkaesque move

The CBSE's latest proposal to regulate admission to certain classes is impractical



OUT OF THE BLUE

ANJULI BHARGAVA

Tmagine this: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) decides that customers who want to change banks for whatever reason have to seek clearance from them. A customer who wants to

move from one bank to the other has to provide all supporting documents and convince an official sitting behind his desk in the RBI that he deserves to change banks. If the official is convinced, he clears the file. As it happens in India quite often, he may charge a small fee under the table to allow the customer to do this.

This, in effect, appears to be what the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) is proposing for admissions in Grade 9 and Grade 11 in its affiliated schools. The board is proposing that parents who want to change schools at these stages need to explain why. When I read about this, I was surprised since I thought CBSE already had plenty on its plate, a lot of which it is

unable to do with any finesse or expertise. Why would it want to get into routine matters such as school admissions?

On further enquiry, I learnt

that the move is aimed at checking one primary malpractice. Students from non-affiliated schools seek admissions in affiliated ones in these classes to be able to take and clear the CBSE board examinations held in Class 10 and 12. The students have till Class 8 not followed the CBSE prescribed curriculum or pedagogy and this affects the results of affiliated schools. To check this, CBSE intends to regulate admissions.

The CBSE bizarrely wants parents to prove — through the results of both the admitting and

leaving schools and the quality of teachers working in them — that the move is justified. So the burden of proof that I "deserve" what I am asking for falls on me. It has further stipulated that the school that is losing the student must cooperate with the parents.

In addition, the controller of examinations for CBSE made a strange statement. He said, "There have been cases when students unnecessarily try to change the schools in class 9 and 11, citing that the other school is better."

This, to my mind, amounts to using a sledgehammer where a pair of pliers could have done the job. In CBSE's books, the solution to every problem appears to be more control, more regulation and more centralisation of power.

Why not do a few random checks on affiliated schools to ensure that the students enrolled for taking the board examinations were on the school roster all along and have not sud-

denly sprung up from nowhere? Penalise offenders and that will check the malpractice.

Moreover, the controller's statement strikes me as rather senseless. What can be a more valid reason to change a school than the fact that other school is better? What is "unnecessary" about this? If the school admission is being sought in is demonstrably better than the one the student is being withdrawn from, I see that as the best possible reason for withdrawal.

Not only is the proposal absurd, it's impractical. How and why should I prove to some indifferent CBSE official where I educate my child, that this is where I deserve and desire to be. Why should some random officer decide where I can or cannot educate my child? Am I not free to change my mind on this whenever I like? This will simply create one more avenue for the CBSE official to earn some money under the table as happens with recognition and other such

requirements that need to be met from time to time.

Further, why would a school that is losing a student cooperate to prove that it's actually performing worse than its rival that will admit the withdrawn student? Have they got nothing better to do?

What's even more worrying is this. Almost all the school principals and board members I spoke to uniformly criticised the move and gave me a host of reasons why it made no sense. Yet none of them want to go on record or be quoted directly as they fear that their schools will attract the ire of the CBSE. They argue that any form of dissent is met with the board's wrath. This is a more fundamental problem and doesn't bode well for the future. A "my way or the highway" approach ensures we lose out on the richness a variety of views can bring in.

A confident regime need not and should not resort to such strong-arm tactics.

Carmakers drive market disruption for growth

Eye subscription, leasing and shared mobility solutions to offset dwindling dealership sales

T E NARASIMHAN

armakers, struggling with one of the longest slowdowns in decades, are driving an alternative revenue stream to counter falling sales from dealerships: Subscription, leasing and shared mobility solutions.

In 2018, Maruti Suzuki, the country's largest car manufacturer, reported 71 per cent growth in leasing, and Hyundai's subscription business grew nearly six times since it launched in March 2019. Mahindra, Toyota and Skoda have also announced plans for a subscription-based ownership models. Japanese major Nissan is expected to launch Nissan Intelligent

Ownership for its new model Kicks in the next few weeks. Volkswagen India's first lot of Polo cars, of 200 vehicles, were completely subscribed within 48 hours of the announcement July 8, 2019.

These new business models have been driven by the changing dynamics of transportation and vehicle ownership. Unlike the car manufacturers, aggregators such as Ola and Uber and

self-drive rental companies such as Zoomcar, Revv and others have reported good growth on the back of shared mobility, subscriptions and rentals and similar mobility solutions. Zoomcar, for instance, plans to expand its fleet size to around 1,00,000 vehicles from 7,000 vehicles in three years. Revv operates above 3,300 cars and wants to expand to 10,000-plus over the year. Hyundai and Kia Motors jointly have invested \$300 million in Ola, and Hyundai has invested around ₹100 crore in Revv separately.

"We believe that owing to disruption in the industry, new business models are becoming more customer-centric. Products such as subscription are picking up strongly as an alternative of ownership model," says Vikas Jain, Hyundai's national head for sales.

The subscription model offers a degree of ownership flexibility that is not available through the conventional dealership route. It offers consumers one way of driving a brand new car of choice without actually having to go through the hassles of ownership, including down-payments and road tax. After a lock-in period, the consumer has the option of using it for as

long as she wants, paying a monthly fee with an any-time opt-out clause. If she wants to own the car, she can buy it at a pre-determined settlement charge (used cars are put into the shared mobility or second-hand markets).

The business is still small: Subscription accounts for one per cent of industry volume today, but is expected to rise to

10 per cent in five years. Hyundai's subscription business is already accounting for 200 vehicles a month and expects to cross 250 in the coming months.

In May 2019, the Korean auto-major also forayed into the leasing business, where Maruti has been a frontrunner. Maruti leased over 6,700 units in 2018-19, though this is still one per cent of the top-line. "As the market matures, we expect leasing to become a substantial contributor in overall vehicle demand. It is convenient for compa-



HIGH SPEED IN FIRST GEAR

- In 2018, Maruti Suzuki reported a 71% jump in its car-leasing business
- Hyundai's subscription business grew nearly six times since its March 2019 launch
- Nissan to launch Nissan Intelligent Ownership for new model Kicks in the next few weeks.

nies who wish to offer vehicles to their employees and has tax benefits," says Shashank Srivastava, Executive Director, Marketing & Sales, Maruti Suzuki India.

Shared mobility is the other highpotential business for car makers. It has grown from \$900 million in 2016 to \$1.5 billion in 2018 and expects to increase to \$2 billion by 2020. There are currently 15,000 cars under the car-sharing ecosystem, and this number is to rise to 50,000 by 2020, and 150,000 by 2022, according to Hyundai Motor.

 Volkswagen India's first lot of 200 Polo cars was completely subscribed within 48 hours of the announcement on July 8

- Hyundai and Kia Motors have jointly invested \$300 million in Ola
- Hyundai has invested around
 ₹100 crore in self-driving carrental company Revv

Hyundai's partnership will offer Ola drivers various financial services, including lease and instalment payments, vehicle maintenance and repair services. The trio of Hyundai, Kia and Ola have also agreed to coordinate efforts to develop cars and specifications that reflect the needs of the

ride-hailing market.

What's driving this new business is that that ownership as a method for accessing an asset is losing grounds across asset types (cars, homes, furniture). Urban youth today demand solutions that are high on

flexibility and pay-as-you-go. So carmakers know that this new sales channel will become meaningful soon enough. As Anupam Jain and Karan Agarwal, Co-Founders of Revv, point out, "These solutions are inducting cars into the daily lifestyle of a very large population of people who otherwise would have waited for another one or two decades to accumulate sufficient wealth to buy their first car."

How does the ownership work out compared with lifetime ownership? It is hard to compare. For example, if a customer wants to drive a Hyundai Grand i10 for 48 months, the monthly expenses under subscription i ₹15,650 per month against ₹14,835 a month under a car loan. But subscription involve no upfront expense, whereas buyers need to pay ₹28,291 upfront in the case of a car loan. Insurance and routine maintenance, which comes to about ₹3,790 a month, is also the company's responsibility.

The biggest advantage is flexibility—the customer can use the car for any period of time and return it whenever she wants. Another benefit is convenience—repairs and so on are also the company's responsibility. If the subscription is for a long period (36-48 months), the cost is roughly similar to buying a car, with the added advantages of flexibility and convenience, say Revv founders.

The consumer benefits in the leasing business are less clear-cut. Vinay Raghunath, partner, Auto Sector Performance Improvement, EY India, says in terms of leasing, most consumers choose to buy through their employers, which gives the company the higher benefit of interest write-off and depreciation, the only benefit to the non-corporate consumer is zero down-payment. But low awareness remains a challenge, which suggests that car companies need to reorient their marketing strategies too.

CHINESE WHISPERS

RJD's gen-next crisis



Yadav and Tejashwi Yadav - sons of jailed Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) President Lalu Prasad — from their home turf of Bihar could not have come at a worse time. The party's recruitment drive, launched on August 10 in Patna. was a no-show with the two brothers or their sister Misa Bharti not turning up. Not only was the response to the openings in the RJD tepid, the party was unable to fill half the 200 chairs at the venue. While Tej Pratap was in Jharkhand's Deoghar, observing Saavan festivities before his return to Patna on Sunday, Teiashwi was said to be in Delhi in connection with some court cases he and his father were facing. Party leaders were seen murmuring their displeasure at the conduct of the second generation of politicians in the Yadav family.

Focus on small industry woes The Laghu Udyog Bharati, which

represents the interests of small-scale industries and is an affiliate of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), has completed 25 years. Founded in April 1994, the outfit will have its silver jubilee celebrations in Nagpur for three days starting August 16. Its chief, Jitendra Gupta said on Monday an estimated 2,500 small businesspersons from 450 districts in the country would attend the celebrations, to be addressed by RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat: Union ministers Nitin Gadkari. Nirmala Sitharaman, Piyush Goyal, and Santosh Gangwar; and Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis. Gupta was restrained in criticising the government as he announced the programme, but said it was of concern that current policies had encouraged trade and ignored the manufacturing sector, particularly smallscale and micro industries, after the implementation of the goods and services tax. The outfit will put forward the concerns of small and micro enterprises at the three-day session.

From hope to reality Since assuming power last December, the

Kamal Nath-led government in Madhya Pradesh has repeatedly accused the Central government of not releasing its share of funds under various central schemes. These "pending" funds include a major amount under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, or MGNREGS. At the beginning of the current fiscal year, the state was to receive funds amounting to ₹700 crore under the MGNREGS from the Centre. The state government has maintained that the pendency is hurting the rural population of the state. Minister of Panchayat and Rural Development Kamleshwar Patel is planning his second visit to New Delhi to make another bid for the release of this money. During his last visit, he managed to get some assurance; he hopes the next one will yield something

ON THE JOB

Hope survives in urban India

ANALYSIS BEHIND



MAHESH VYAS

he weekly unemployment rate rose for the fourth consecutive week during the week ended August 11, 2019. As a result, the unemployment rate shot up from 7.2 per cent during the week ended July 14 to 8.9 per cent in the latest week ended August 11.

This is among the highest unemployment rate in the last three years. In the first week of June this year, the unemployment rate had touched 9 per cent. This was the highest unemployment rate in three years. The most recent week of August comes close to this peak.

After a rapid fall from the early-June peak, the unemployment rate has been rising steadily. In the last four weeks, the unemployment rate increased by a substantial 168 basis points. Given that the unemployment rate has been rising steadily over the past 24 months, such an increase is not entirely unexpected. Yet, the 168 basis point increase in the past four weeks is high given that the average monthly increase in the unemployment rate since July 2017 has been just 14 basis points. During the last four weeks the increase has been an average 42 basis points per week.

The relatively sharper increase in the past four months could be partly a seasonal phenomenon. During a similar period a year ago — between the week ended July 15 and August 12, 2018, the unem-

ployment rate had increased by 154 basis points. A year earlier in 2017, the increase was 108 basis points. Apparently, even after discounting

notionally for seasonality, the recent weekly trend suggests that the unemployment rate continues its march northwards rather aggressively.

This march of unemployment is stronger in urban India.

The unemployment rate in urban India was 10.3 per cent in the week ended August 11. The urban unemployment rate has been rising more or less steadily since the middle of June when it averaged 7.9 per cent. But, the increase during the most recent quarter to a record 10.3 per cent was steep from 9.4 per cent in the preceding week.

The 30-day moving average unemployment rate for urban India was 9.2 per cent. Weekly estimates can be a little noisy. In comparison, a 30-day moving average is more stable. It has all the characteristics of a monthly estimate and it has the advantage of often being a lot

more recent than the monthly estimates. The urban unemployment rate in July 2019 was 8.6 per cent. By August 11, the 30-day moving average unemployment rate had moved up to 9.2 per cent. This is a rather sharp increase. If August 2019 ends with such an unemployment rate it would the highest since September 2016 when it was 9.8 per cent.

The sharp increase in the unemployment rate in urban India is the result of an increase in the labour participation rate without a corresponding increase in employment opportunities.

The labour participation rate in urban India had dropped from 41 per cent in June to 40.2 per cent in July. In August, this seems to be improving. Labour participation rate improved to 40.6 per cent in the first week and then to 40.9 per cent in the second week. The 30-day moving average on August 11 was 40.5 per cent.

But, this increased labour participation was not greeted with greater availability of jobs. As a result, the employment rate fell and the unemployment rate rose.

The urban employment rate in July was 36.77 per cent. During the first week of August this dropped to 36.74 per cent and in the second week it dropped further to 36.68 per cent. The 30-day moving average was 36.74 per cent.

Urban India offers better quality jobs than rural India can. It is therefore imperative that the urban employment rate increases. The recent increase in urban labour participation rate is encouraging but, it is important that as labour throngs to the urban labour markets it is greeted with jobs rather than the disappointment of a rising unemployment rate. This is particularly important because labour throngs the urban labour markets with great expectations in spite of the adverse conditions.

tations in spite of the adverse conditions. The RBI's Consumer Confidence Survey, which is based on 5,351 respondents from 13 major cities shows that in July 2019, 32.5 per cent of the respondents believed that their employment level had improved compared to a year ago. But, a higher 45.6 per cent believed that their employment level had worsened compared to a year ago. On a net basis, 13 per cent believed that their employment conditions had worsened.

This negative experience on the urban jobs front in July was higher than it has been in the past. Yet, urban India continues to remain hopeful of the jobs condition improving over the coming year. 57 per cent of the respondents believed that the jobs situation would improve in a year and only 26 per cent believed that it would worsen.

Similar hopes in the past have been systematically belied by reality. But, hope continues to survive in a majority of respondents. They should not feel let down.

The author is the MD & CEO of CMIE

LETTERS

Questions for Rahul



This refers to the Chinese Whispers item "Spirited speech by Rahul" (August 12). The delayed arrival of the former Congress president Rahul Gandhi (*pictured*) at a meeting held recently in New Delhi to discuss the party's position on scrapping the provisions of Article 370 obviously sets some bad precedents. Was he not really serious even on this highly emotive issue which had unexpectedly created some fissures within the party with some leaders supporting the decision of the government?

It's a different matter that he later made amends by giving a spirited speech and also tried to paint a united picture for his party by asking "how many more votes the Congress could hope to get if it supported the scrapping of Article 370" which elicited "zero" as the answer. Interestingly, Jvotiraditva Scindia also thought it was wise to apologise to Gandhi (for supporting the 370 move earlier) thereafter. However, the moot question is: How many additional seats can Congress earn by vehemently opposing the latest decision on Jammu and Kashmir tooth and nail both inside and outside the Parliament?

S Kumar New Delhi

Minimise the damage

Words cannot adequately describe the suffering caused by the deluge in many

parts of the country. Floods were once occasional occurrences but they have become more regular in recent years. While rain is a necessity and a boon, it becomes a bane when it causes devastation. Visuals of vast, immeasurable tracts of land inundated with floodwater speak of the scale of the damage. The saddest thing is that the floods have led to loss of life. The stories of the victims are too harrowing. Of course, it is not within man's power to prevent the occurrence of natural disasters. But the thing is they are made worse by human factors. By identifying and tackling these factors that aggravate the impact of flood, we can manage them and prevent their intensity.

Remedial action must be taken on unscientific land use, quarrying and mining, deforestation, unsustainable agricultural practices and failure to maintain water bodies and wet lands to hold maximum water. By taking proactive steps, we can minimise flood fury. The correlation between climate change and extreme weather events like floods needs to be studied and understood to take both short-term and long-term corrective measures. It is worth pointing out that in case of a natural disaster like a deluge, the poor are especially vulnerable. Many live precariously in thatched, mud huts in flood-prone areas. Farmers bear the brunt of the floods as their standing crops are damaged. The loss of cattle puts financial strain on the people in flood-affected areas. Once the waters

recede, we will see the trail of destruction the deluge left behind it.

G David Milton Maruthancode

Cheer amid gloom?

This refers to your front page reports "SoftBank eyes stake in Airtel" and "Anil Agarwal submits EoI" for Jet Airways (both August 12). These reports indicate a growing interest in making investments in Indian businesses. Notwithstanding clearly different reasons in the two cases, it is heartening to see a sort of revival of interest on the investment front, which is bound to give a big push to growth. Indian economy hasn't seen much investment for quite some time.

Admittedly, both Airtel and Jet Airways are services sector entities and our greater need is for investment in manufacturing, still such large service enterprises inevitably generate demand for manufacturers of equipment required by them and the positive sentiment about investment in India would go a long way in influencing more people to seriously look at India.

Here's hoping for a decent growth revival in the country.

in the country. **Krishan Kalra** Gurugram

Letters can be mailed, faxed or e-mailed to: The Editor, Business Standard Nehru House, 4 Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg New Delhi 110 002 Fax: (011) 23720201 · E-mail: letters@bsmail.in

All letters must have a postal address and telephone number



MUMBAI | TUESDAY, 13 AUGUST 2019

Deleveraging RIL

Ambani has done well to reduce indebtedness

eliance Industries Ltd (RIL) has been in the spotlight in recent times due to its steadily rising indebtedness. Its multi-billion-dollar investment in mobile telephony is yet to deliver adequate incremental revenues and profits to justify the amount of investment in the venture. This has resulted in a sharp increase in the company's leverage ratio while its free cash flows have remained negative for the past few years, given that debt has gone up dramatically to \$65 billion in FY19 from \$19 billion in FY15 due to higher crude oil payables and financing of JioPhone and the East West Pipeline. In this backdrop, foreign brokerage Credit Suisse downgraded RIL, cutting its target price by a quarter just a week ago.

The concerns were justified. RIL reported a net debt-to-equity ratio of around 0.58x in FY19, one of the highest in recent years, while the interest coverage ratio declined to 5.6x in the last financial year, the lowest in at least 15 years. In its report, Credit Suisse said RIL's free cash flows had been negative since FY15 and were likely to remain so till FY21, given the margin pressure in its bread and butter fuel refining and petrochemicals business In the same period, its interest payment has grown from \$1.2 billion to around \$4 billion and is equivalent to nearly 44 per cent of its FY19 earnings before interest and taxes.

Thus, Monday's decision to rope in Saudi Aramco as a 20 per cent equity partner in the refining and petchem business would come as music to investors, who have been worried about the company's investment in the Jio venture being funded through incremental borrowings. The deal values RIL's refining and petchem business at an enterprise value of around \$75 billion. This will bring a one-time cash inflow of around \$15 billion for RIL. The company also plans to raise another \$1 billion by selling 49 per cent in its fuel-retailing business to BP. Besides access to long-term crude oil supply from the world's largest oil producer, RIL can use the sale proceeds to fund expansion or pare down its debt. It recently divested around \$16.5 billion of its tower and fibre assets into two separate infrastructure investment trusts, where it plans to bring in outside investors. Of its subsidiaries, it plans to monetise Jio and Reliance Retail and unlock value in real estate and financial investments towards becoming a zero net debt company by March 2021.

Refining and petchem bring about 79 per cent of its consolidated earnings before interest and taxes (EBIT), while Jio accounts for 13.3 per cent of the company's EBIT in the last financial year. However, both businesses have a similar share in RIL's assets. The next challenge for RIL would be to improve the return on capital employed (RoCE) at Jio, which is at 3 per cent, after accounting for additional capex. This can happen only by raising mobile tariffs or monetising its user base. Speaking at the annual general meeting on Monday, RIL Chairman Mukesh Ambani said he did not have any doubt that the company would have one of the strongest balance sheets in the world. His shareholders would hope he walked the talk.

Congress' split personality

Sonia Gandhi's reappointment will harm the party

he appointment of Sonia Gandhi as interim president of the Congress. well over two months after her son stepped down from the post, points to the stubborn inability of its governing council, the Congress Working Committee (CWC), to face an inconvenient truth. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has helpfully, if derisively, pointed out any number of times these past few years that the party's raison d'etre has been reduced to protecting the interests of the Gandhi family above all else. Over the weekend, the CWC reinforced Mr Modi's contention by ignoring the demands of the party's younger members and some shrewd older members for a radical departure in the administrative apparatus. After all, this dynastic policy forced on the only significant national party a president who, like his father, was reluctant to take on the mantle. As two consecutive Lok Sabha results have shown, he was also manifestly unfit to provide the leadership needed to position the party as a cogent national alternative to the Bharativa Janata Party juggernaut.

The serial victories against the BJP in state elections late last year only masked the party's innate weakness: It could exploit anti-incumbent sentiments at the local level but lacked a coherent counter-ideology to the BJP's majoritarian nationalism. Rahul Gandhi himself has had the nous to understand this, resigning immediately after the disastrous Lok Sabha results. More to the point, he said neither his mother nor his sister (who has never stood for an election) should hold the post, and signalled that the party veterans accept accountability for the election debacle. But the old guard, most of whom appear to be singularly unelectable themselves, appear unable to look beyond the Gandhi family.

Though it is true that Ms Gandhi is expected to preside only until elections are held, the party's internal politics suggests that the umbilical cord with the Gandhi family is far from cut. Factions are already coalescing around Ms Gandhi and her daughter, Priyanka, and the initial shortlisted persons to fill the president's post were Gandhi loyalists Mallikarjun Kharge (77) and Mukul Wasnik (59), scarcely choices to inspire confidence. Many Congress stalwarts such as Amarinder Singh, Shashi Tharoor, Jyotiraditya Scindia, Milind Deora, and Manish Tewari have been pushing for a younger president. Ms Gandhi's president-ship, however seemingly temporary, is widely seen as a means of avoiding a split. This is the same technique the old guard deployed two decades ago when the party was adrift under the leadership of Sitaram Kesri. Then, any murmurs of discontent had been suppressed. Now, a younger set of leaders has emerged, and they are unlikely to tolerate dynastic entitlement without accountability.

The fissures between these confident and (relatively) Young Turks and the old guard are much more pronounced, and a split along these lines should not be ruled out. In the long run, this may be the best thing that happens to the Congress. With the Left having reduced itself to an irrelevance, the Congress remains the only party with the wherewithal to offer the robust national opposition that is critical to the healthy functioning of a democracy. Relying on a dynastic septuagenarian to force dynamic change in this 134-year-old party with its distinguished record is hardly the way to go about it.

ILLUSTRATION BY AIAY MOHANTY



A bond bubble?

We need to worry about a bubble building in the bond market

AKASH PRAKASH

omething odd is happening in the bond markets globally. Just look at some of these data points. Unprecedented on multiple dimensions. Never seen anything like these.

1. \$15 trillion worth of bonds now trade at negative yields globally.

2. 43 per cent of bonds outside the US are negative yielding and in Germany, the entire government bond yield curve is in negative territory (up to 30vear maturity).

3. Multiple junk bond issuers in Europe are effec-

tively getting paid to borrow money. **4.** Despite nearly destroying the world economy 10 years ago, sub-prime, zero down pay-

back. 5.75 per cent of commercial real estate mortgages are interest only, the high-

ment mortgages are making a come-

est percentage since 2006. 6. The size of the US corporate bond market rated BBB (just above junk) has never been bigger.

7. We have matched the all-time low yield for 30-year bonds in the US, and currently, we have negative bond yields in Japan, Germany, France and Switzerland. The yield curve has inverted across most maturities.

8. In 2008, when the global financial system was on the verge of collapse, the G7-government bond yields were at 3 per cent. Today, these same yields are below

9. The 100-year Austrian bond price chart has gone parabolic, rising from 110 to 185 in the past 12 months; from 150 to 185 in the past two weeks. The price chart looks very similar to many of the tech stalwarts in

There are two possible explanations for this type of exaggerated price movements in the fixed income markets. One, the fixed income markets are signalling a very weak economic outlook on both growth and inflation. The inversion of the yield curve signals that a recession is imminent, and negative real yields imply that the markets expect inflation to continue to weaken. The markets seem to be implying a scenario of very weak economic growth and the rising risks of deflation. The current trade wars and weakening corporate confidence globally could take us to a global recession, not an impossible scenario, but even then price moves seem exaggerated.

Bubbles are common in the equity markets. We have seen many, across geographies and time peri-

ods. The biggest arguably being the dot-com bust of March 2000. The bond markets are seen to be far more stable. Investors look towards bonds for stable and secure incomes, not wild swings in prices. We do not typically see much media attention, identifying bond bubbles.

However, recently, we have started to see bubble-like behaviour among bond investors.

In a classic bubble, investors do not care about the intrinsic value of the asset they are purchasing. They

are convinced that they can flip the asset purchased in a short period to another buyer (greater fool theory). Today, the greater fool is assumed to be central banks, which will buy assets at any price, once they restart quantitative easing or QE (asset purchase programmes). Alternatively, pension funds and insurance companies may be forced to buy fixed-income assets at almost any price due to regulatory requirements. Surely, someone buying German 15-year bonds at negative yield has no intention to actually hold these bonds till maturity and lock in a guaranteed capital loss. They are buying these bonds to flip them at a higher price to another buyer.

In bubble-like environments, investors also extrapolate current economic conditions far into the future. We have had a 30-year bond bull market. This bull phase was built on the back of gains in fiscal consolidation, productivity and globalisation. Rates and inflation have almost continuously declined over the past 30 years. It is very unlikely these trends can continue from here. Neither rates nor inflation has much scope for further decline. Central banks are telling us, going forward, they want more inflation. Inflation being persistently below target has been cited as one of the reasons for further rate cuts. Similarly, governments are being less fiscally responsible. Spending more is winning votes. There is no Tea Party in the US, and fiscal restraint is losing favour in the UK and the EU, as well.

Globalisation has seemingly stalled. In country after country, trade and immigration barriers are rising. The deflationary shock of India and China liberalising and becoming part of global supply chains is unlikely to be repeated. No other region of the world has the scale to lower goods prices globally.

With these factors reversing, can we really expect inflation to continue declining from here, as bond pricing indicates?

In bubbles, valuations do not really matter. Such is the case today. Bonds are being priced as if growth and inflation will never return. The theory goes that this is due to the mountain of debt already dragging down the global economy. The more debt that is issued, the more these conditions of no growth/inflation get reinforced. The more these conditions are strengthened, the more debt is bought by investors as that seems to be the sensible asset to own in a world of no growth/inflation. It almost seems to be a self-reinforcing loop.

Simple common sense dictates that these yield levels are unrealistic. How can Greece have a lower cost of borrowing than the US treasury? Why will investors chase after the Austrian 100-year bond when even a 1 per cent rise in yields will deliver a 30 per cent capital loss? The price of money is the most critical signal in the entire economic system. Everything else is priced off the risk-free rate. An artificially low risk-free rate will create pricing distortions across all asset classes. Any normalisation of rates, even real rates going to zero, may cause significant asset price volatility across all asset classes There will be unintended consequences.

As an aside, without getting into the debate of whether India should issue a foreign currency sovereign bond, surely, if we are ever going to do it, there cannot be a better time. This is an issuers market. You may be able to raise money at silly yields. Take advantage. If a market or asset class is in a bubble-like environment, surely you should use it to your benefit.

The writer is with Amansa Capital. The views are personal

Will Modi magic work, this time in Kashmir?

rime Minister Narendra Modi had addressed the nation on November 8, 2016. He did so again on August 8, 2019. The first announced the demonetisation of 86 per cent of currency then in circulation, surely the defining point of Modi 1.0 administration. The latter explained the recently accomplished legislative feat of abrogating Article 370 of the Constitution and splitting of the state of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories of

Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. This will be equally certainly the defining point of Modi 2.0. These decisions were taken in utmost secrecy, with only a handful being privy to them in advance (in of the Kashmir, though, they were inklings of something being in the works). The fait accompli needed to be explained for wider acceptance, hence these crucial speeches.

So it should not be a surprise that the two orations, separated by 33 months to the day, followed the same template. The narration was

basic: Problems presently faced are cited, the root cause is identified, its removal as the primary action justified, numerous benefits arising from this act are described, and at the end, almost in passing, a few inconveniences arising out of the administration of the bitter pill are mentioned, with a request and hope for forbearance since these minor irritants are purely temporary. The delivery is faultless and you are very nearly persuaded to accept what is, in fact, a rather simplistic analysis, disregarding nuances and complications inherent in the ground reality.

Both these decisions were strategically timed. The theory that demonetisation was so scheduled as to deny the oxygen of cash to the opposition in the Uttar Pradesh election at a critical stage has never died down. But that decision undeniably

where the authors with

precision outline the six

major reformist steps

that the government

must initiate if the

be realised

took laymen, experts and politicians alike by surprise, which ensured its effective implementation. Even though abrogation of Article 370 was an integral part of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) agenda right from the inception of its predecessor the BharatiyaJan Sangh, 2019 was the opportune time for its execution, as Ashok Malik persuasively argues ("Why 370 had to go in 2019," The Economic Times, August 9, 2019). After 2016, the

so-called mainstream politicians in Kashmir and even the Hurriyat had lost all semblance of credibility. And the rest of India experienced "fatigue with ...the familiar cycle of victimhood and violence. blackmail and bluster...Perceptive to this mood, Prime Minister Modi and home minister Amit Shah saw their chance.'

Mr Modi's main point that Jammu and Kashmir trailed other states on most development parameters due mainly to Article 370 does not quite bear scrutiny.

According to The Indian Express (August 8, 2019), the state's performance on metrics such as life expectancy and education for both sexes, households with electricity, clean fuel and safe sources of drinking water, infant mortality and even the poverty ratio was better than the national average. Unemployment and women owning immovable property were the two main indicators where the state had fallen behind the national average. But that little matter of detail could well elude most of Mr Modi's audience, especially outside Jammu and Kashmir.

Popular management lore defines the best salesperson as one who sells a refrigerator to an Eskimo. Mr Modi passed that test with flying colours in case of demonetisation. The people who suffered the most, at least in the short run, by that

action - small traders, artisans, farmers, and ordinary householders who conducted virtually all their economic transactions in cash — turned out to be steadfast defenders of the notebandi. They showed their overwhelming support in March 2017 when the BJP was voted to power in Uttar Pradesh with an unprecedented majority. They did so again nationwide by returning the BJP to power with increased numbers in the last general election. But Mr Modi could find his task in the Kashmir Valley a bit more daunting. Convincing the local population that the loss of its long-cherished special constitutional status and statehood, along with restrictions on movement and communication howsoever temporary they may be is all for its good could be likened to trying to persuade people in a live volcano neighbourhood to buy thermal underwear, and not just by his critics alone.

Mr Modi has assiduously sought the enhancement of his and his party's political capital ever since he became part of the establishment in 2001. The 2019 general election increased it vastly. He has staked it all on the Jammu and Kashmir decision. He may well succeed, since fortune favours not only the brave but, at times, the reckless as well.

But the relevant question is how is the political capital to be used. While chronicling Mr Modi's last state election campaign in 2012, I had drawn a parallel between him and Huev Long, the Louisiana governor (later senator) in the Great Depression. Mr Long enjoyed absolute power in the state through his direct appeal to the people. He had emerged as a challenger to President Franklin Roosevelt for the Democratic nomination in 1936. He could well have changed American history had he not been assassinated in 1936. His relentless pursuit of political capital as an end in itself suggests that the thin line between democrats and demagogues is blurred

The writer is an economist

Behind the curve



BOOK REVIEW

A K BHATTACHARYA

s its title suggests, the book, written jointly by three economists, focuses on recovery, reforms and resilience seen in the Indian economy during the first five years of the Narendra Modi government from 2014 to 2019. Given the fact that the book has been published now when India's growth recovery is in serious doubt, reforms have all but disappeared and the economy's resilience is shaky, the claims and assessment in this book on India's economic prospects would naturally become debatable.

The authors, however, make a sincere

attempt at recounting the Modi government's various economic policy initiatives in these five years. In doing so, they dwell at length on the government's strategy to manage the macroeconomy, launch initiatives to strengthen agriculture, renew industrial and trade policies, revive the health of the financial sector, tackle black money through demonetisation and unveil the goods and services tax (GST). If you are looking for a book that summarises and places in context the key economic policy initiatives of the Modi government, your search should end here. However, when it comes to assessing

the impact of the government's policies on the economy or forecasting the trajectory of economic growth as a result of those policies the book seems to suffer from a flawed analysis. Consider the following: "One can thus infer on the eve of the General Elections, the Indian economy is far more stable in terms of inflation as well as deficit levels than it was exactly five years ago. In terms of growth, there is a marginal improvement, which is likely to get further consolidated and there is definitely a turnaround in investment per

se as well as in investors' sentiments, both domestic and foreign." The authors are right in their assessment on the inflation front, but they clearly failed to read the fiscal stress that had already built up in government finances by that time.

On economic growth, the five years of the Modi regime did see an improvement over the previous comparable period. But the authors clearly failed to read the tea leaves when they projected

that growth would be The highlight of the boosted in the following book is the last chapter, months and investments were turning around with remarkable clarity and an improvement in the sentiments. A cursory look at the state of the economy at present will tell you that neither have invest- Indian economy's ments turned around, nor have the sentiments of investors improved.

Take for instance the chapter on agriculture. It notes how the Modi government brought about a shift in its approach to agriculture by focusing more on income transfers to farmers instead of focusing only on agricultural output. Indeed, the Modi government in the couple of years before the general election did increase the minimum support prices and announce an income support reliance on payroll data for assessing jobs scheme for farmers.

ET CETERA

SHREEKANT SAMBRANI

But what about the more fundamental issues of increasing basic investments in agriculture? Yes, agricultural marketing schemes have been launched, though their adoption by various states has been patchy, but the question of better technology and farming practices to improve

productivity has been left largely unaddressed. The need to draw more people away from farming by retraining them and creating job opportunities in sectors such as manufacturing and construction is as critical an input for improving the viability of Indian agriculture as other schemes like income transfer.

growth potential has to There are many sections in the book where the authors have made many sensible suggestions. For instance, while dealing with the question of jobs, they bemoan the lack or non-availability of regular surveybased data on jobs, without which no proper assessment of the economy can be

made. They rightly point out that there

can be no substitute for survey-based

employment measurement since the

growth has serious limitations.

Similar candour and forthrightness are noticeable when the authors explain how the rollout of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code helped in tackling the banks' non-performing loans problem. The authors recognise that the launch of the GST did not address many of the design issues that afflicted the new indirect taxes regime, but are hopeful that these glitches would be addressed over time.

But the chapter on demonetisation shows the authors' guarded and ambivalent approach to the Modi government's economic policies. They note that demonetisation was a well-intended move, but are of the view that it is a bit early to conclusively pass judgement on its actual impact on growth, reduced dependence on cash, increased digitisation and improved tax compliance.

The highlight of the book is the last chapter, where the authors with remarkable clarity and precision outline the six major reformist steps that the government must initiate if the Indian economy's growth potential has to be realised. Three of these steps pertain to strengthening the institutional framework. Thus, they want a statutory economic council of states to be established to drive consensus on the next generation of economic reforms.

Similarly, the authors want an independent budget analysis wing to be set up to strengthen the fiscal responsibility and budget management framework and an investment monitoring and facilitating agency to accelerate the flow of investments. The other three recommendations are for empowering the national statistics commission, prioritising administrative reforms and framing strategies on how India should deal with the global economy to improve Indian industry's competitiveness.

There can be no quarrel over the merit of these recommendations to revive the Indian economy. But many a bone could be picked with the authors over the manner in which they analysed and assessed several of the Modi government's economic policy initiatives in the last five years.

RECOVERY, REFORMS AND RESILIENCÉ IN INDIA: An Assessment of Modi Macroeconomics

S S Bhandare, C S Deshpande and Mangesh Soman **Konark Publishers** Pages: 184 +XVI; Price: ₹800



SATURDAY, AUGUST 10, 2019



ON J&K'S FUTURE Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi

J&K will not remain an UT forever. You will get the opportunity to elect your representatives soon. I want to tell the people of Jammu and Kashmir that your representatives will come from among you

Turning vegetarian could help fight global warming

IPCC research shows shows dietary changes could bring emissions down by 8 billion tonnes annually by 2050

THAS BEEN clear for sometime that the fight to lower greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and mitigate climate-change impact, rests on a drastic rethink of global land use. A large part of land use is tied to human diet, from pastures for grazing of meat animals to agriculture. A new report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) on climate and land says a plants-based diet will be kinder on the planet than a meat-based one. It recommends that governments, especially those of rich nations, where meat consumption is high, work on reducing this.

Land use and management, including agriculture and deforestation, contribute almost a quarter of the GHG emissions. Unless land is managed more sustainably, keeping global warming under 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, is impossible—countries, thus, have included land-use, land-use change and forestry in their Intended Nationally Determined Contributions announced as part of the 2015 Paris Agreement. While deforestation for pastures to graze cattle, like in Brazil and Colombia, is particularly emission-intensive, cattle, too, produce large amounts of methane, a potent GHG.Besides, the emission foot-print of manufacturing animal-feed, water- and electricity-use in raising and slaughtering of meat animals, and processing/packaging of meat is significant. The IPCC report, thus, says that balanced diets that are plant-based and feature sustainably-produced animal-sourced food "present major opportunities" for adaptation and mitigation". Indeed, by 2050, the report says, dietary changes could free up millions of square kilometres of land and reduce global carbon emissions by upto 8 billion tonnes annually (relative to business-as-usual). Though, perhaps with the politics and socio-cultural sensibilities associated with dietary habits in mind, authors of the report have refrained from telling people what to eat. Given land use across the world contributes \$75-85 trillion to the global economy annually (2011, based on the value of the dollar in 2007)—this is many times the world's combined GDP—influencing land use in favour of more sustainable practices is also a fraught economic question, with the livelihoods of hundreds of millions of people tied to it.

The risks a shifting to a largely plant-based diet also must be considered. Rice-farming, for instance, accounts for 24% of agricultural methane emissions. In a country like India, where rice is a staple and one of the largest agricultural exports, pushing a plant-based diet could result in more demand for unsustainably produced rice. Also, nitrous oxide emissions—a potent heat-trapper, with one tonne being equivalent to 265 tonnes of CO2 over 100 years—from agriculture have almost doubled since the 1960s, given fertiliser application has increased nine-fold globally. Besides, research by the Carnegie Mellon University shows that, without reducing caloric intake significantly, simply changing the diet to include the US department of agriculture (USDA) advised food mix, or reducing caloric intake while sticking to the USDA food mix recommended for a healthy weight, will increase GHG emissions and energy/water use.

The window to act on sustainable land use is narrowing fast. Human use already affects 60-85% of forests and 70-90% of other natural ecosystems. Land—the forests on it as well as the soil—plays a key role as a carbon sink. But, with manifest climate change effects, desertification and degradation of land is becoming an ever-growing threat, and humans are responding with even more unsustainable use—fertiliser use, excessive groundwater extraction, stripping down of rainforests, etc, are key examples. The IPCC report, therefore, calls for stepping up efforts to keep the land productive while enhancing its carbon-absorbing capacity—a carefully calibrated, primarily plant-based diet could be one way to do this.

Tackling lynch mobs

Rajasthan has come up with a law, other states must too

AJASTHAN HAS DONE well to, in response to a Supreme Court recommendation, come up with a special law to deal with lynch mobs. Though the Opposition protested against the "Rajasthan Protection from Lynching Bill, 2019" and argued that existing laws were good enough, this is not quite true; though, while the Opposition argued that some of the Bill's provisions—even two persons can be defined as a mob—could be misused by classifying other crimes as mob violence, this is something that needs to be kept in mind by the investigating authorities. The Bill makes lynching a cognisable, non-bailable and non-compoundable offence, punishable with up to seven years imprisonment and fines of ₹1 lakh if the victim is injured, and this goes up to life imprisonment when the violence results in the victim's death. And, in a bid to deter mob violence, the Bill treats conspiracy, aiding, abetting, and attempt at moblynching in the same way as it does perpetrators and assailants, and even recognises creation of a hostile environment, distribution of offensive materials, etc, as allied criminal offences. Moreover, the Bill is not only retributive but also rehabilitative, stipulating that victims of mob lynching be compensated by the state government under the Rajasthan Victim Compensation Scheme, and that the state take necessary measures to assist in the rehabilitation of any such victims who might suffer a displacement.

Other states need to take a cue from Rajasthan and come up with similar laws at the earliest. Ideally, as the Uttar Pradesh State Law Commission did last month, when it came up with a draft anti-lynching law, there should also be strict rules for the police and others in authority whose job is to prevent lynching. This includes punishment for not providing protection to the victim if violence was apprehended, failure to act on time, failure to record details of the crime, and so on; if there is no provision to penalise those whose jobs are to prevent such crimes, chances are all laws will come up short. This is a shortcoming in Rajasthan's Bill. Amazingly, though the state's law commission took the initiative on its own, Uttar Pradesh has yet to come up with an anti-lynching law; and this is despite the fact that Uttar Pradesh has recorded 20 distinct incidents of mob violence resulting in 11 deaths since 2015. While the number of those killed/attacked by lynch mobs is likely to be much smaller than those in conventional crimes like murder, the purpose of lynch mobs is to generate fear in certain communities/classes of people; to that extent, the punishments have to be as stringent as possible.

MoreMEDICS

Govt has done well to accept the findings of the WHO report on quacks, the one it had contested earlier

HE GOVERNMENT'S DESPERATION over clearing the air on the National Medical Council (NMC) Bill has forced it to accept and acknowledge a problem that it had, only last year, denied even exists. The NMC Bill talks of bridge course to enable Ayush practitioners to prescribe allopathic medicines—this will take care of the poor doctor-patient ratio that India has. As per a Times of India report, while the government, in January last year, had termed "erroneous" the WHO finding that nearly 57% of those practising allopathic medicine in the country didn't have any medical qualification, now, it has included the figure in its FAQs over the NMC Bill.The NMC Bill talks of Community Health Providers—healthcare professionals who can be trained with the bridge courses.

India's doctor-population ratio remains a sickly one doctor for a thousand people. Thus, it is crucial to accept the case for having community health providers. India needs more doctors, and ideas like converting district health hospitals into medical colleges make eminent sense. Until this can be achieved, the country needs to work with what it has. Besides, as Devi Shetty of Narayana Health and Srinath Reddy of Public Health Foundation of India highlight, India's problem is over-medicalisation. Reddy points to the case of mid-level health workers in Chhattisgarh who have proved better than $doctors\,at\,treating\,primary\,care\,conditions, especially\,malaria.\,He\,emphasises\,the\,need$ to train nurses to become 'nurse practitioners' and 'nurse anaesthetists'. Shetty, on the other hand, says that "even in the litigation-happy US, 67% of anaesthesia is given by nurses, not doctors". If more of community health providers can do the same, it would only help rural health care. More important, it would make more sense to impart the necessary training to a large talent pool of health professionals than let quacks thrive.

NO PROOF REQUIRED

NO ECONOMY HAS SUSTAINED GDP GROWTH WITH A REAL POLICY RATE ABOVE 1.75%. FOR THE LASTTWO AND A HALF-YEARS, THE REAL POLICY RATE HAS AVERAGED 100 BP HIGHER IN INDIA

Monetary policy: Facts, Opinion, Governance

HIS TIME, MP does not mean Member of Parliament, but Monetary Policy. What I want to discuss today is the FOG surrounding monetary policy in India. It used to be the case, around the world, that a deliberate fog was created around central bank speak. That changed post the 2008 financial crisis. Central banks around the world went for three Cs-Clarity and Consistency in Communication. All advanced country central banks go for the 3Cs; among EMEs, I don't know, but what I hear foreign investors say is that the developing world is much closer to the advanced economies than to India.

Is India as different as claimed by "experts"? My own experience, and interpretation, is that India is very different because the experts (perhaps including those at the Central Bank) look at monetary policy very differently. Most importantly, Indian experts look at the monetary policy through nominal lenses; economics is about the real world. After all, nobody talks about nominal GDP growth; when we discuss growth, it is growth adjusted for inflation. Why don't we do the same with the MP variable called the repo rate—or talk of real borrowing and lending rates?

On August 7, the MPC reduced the repo rate by 35 bps, to 5.4%. The first publication to be off to the races was Bloomberg Quint which headlined its story"35 Basis Point Cut Takes RBI Rate To 2010 Level". The story was accurate. In April 2010, the RBI raised the repo rate to 5.25%. CPI inflation at that time was 13.3%, WPI inflation was 10.5%, and the SBI lending rate was 11.8%. IIP was growing at 13%.

It certainly doesn't take a weatherman economist to figure out that the reporate of 5.4% in August 2019 is not even on the same planet as April 2010, let alone be uttered in the same line. But, Iwant to quote from some of the editorials after the RBI move. Business Standard opined that "the central bank is doing its part by *progressively reducing the cost of* money" (emphasis added). Editorial in *Mint* argued that what the RBI/MPC did



was "the best it could have done under the circumstances, grim as they are". It also quoted Governor Das as stating that the committee felt that "25 bp would have been inadequate, while 50 bp would have been excessive". And why didn't RBI undertake a larger cut? The *Mint* view: "Because it did not want to send out a panic signal by easing monetary conditions too much, too fast".

The MPC action (inaction) came against a backdrop of central banks around the world sending out panic signals by cutting lending rates. But to continue with the editorials. The Financial Express headlined its editorial "RBI is doing its bit, over to government now". There is elaboration a few lines down. "But the central bank can only do so much. Indeed, it is doing more than its best to create a conducive lending environment for banks". Economic Times editorial, "Slashing rates by 35 bp, dumping multiples of 25 bps as the quantum of rate change, signals non-routine concern over growth, as also restraint to avert any panic. It also signals RBI's capacity to go beyond convention" (emphasis added).

There is a surprising uniformity (identity?) in the editorials—in addition to the fact that they have got the simple fact of cost of money grotes quely wrong. If I were Governor Das, I would be worried. After every Budget, industry gives a strong heads-up to whatever fiscal policy package the government comes up with. Out of 10, the ranking is always good, bad and ugly budgets, the same—a robust 9. A lot of us (including the pink newspapers) have criticised this hypocrisy and this "Big Brother is watching"fear. This lack of objective analysis is worrisome. But, why have sheep newspapers not conducted objective analysis

of RBI/MPC actions?

What could the editorials have said? They could have pointed out that inflation is phenomenally low, and below the notional 4% target for the *third* successive year. While the nominal reporate is the same as 2010, the real reporate is at 2.6% compared to minus 8.1% in April 2010. Stated differently

Every monetary

statistic contradicts

the expert

assessment that

monetary policy is

reducing the cost

of money

and equivalently, the cost of capital (reporate) today is nearly 11 percentage points (ppt) higher. SBI lent money then at 11.75% today, the nominal lending rate of SBI is higher (with much lower inflation) by 2 ppt at 13.75%.

The system is broke, including the experts who report on the system. The same experts blamed the lack of liquidity for the economic slow-

down, not the high real rates. Everyone was shouting lack of liquidity as the cause for slow and declining growth in 2018. With this expertly felt lack of liquidity in 2018, industrial production growth Jan-May 2018 averaged 5.4%. With ample liquidity (and all the papers quoted above congratulated RBI for successfully introducing the much needed liquidity in 2019), IIP growth has averaged 1.9% in 2019. The first five months of 2010 IIP growth averaged 11.9%. But wait a minute—weren't we coming out of the 2008 financial crisis and that is why IIP was so high in 2010 and not because of real interest rates? There is partial truth in that.

Compare first five months of 2011 with 2019. Industrial production growth: then 6.8%; today 1.6%. Real reporate: then minus 2.8%; today plus

3.4%. Real SBI lending rate: then 3.6%; today 11%. Liquidity: then ample; liquidity today, ample.

Das took over as RBI Governor in December 2018. He has been in office for only eight months and it is unfair to assess performance over such a short time period. Nevertheless, few facts are relevant. Eight months prior to Das's arrival, inflation had averaged 3.9%, repo rate averaged 6.3% and the real repo rate averaged 2.4%. Over the last eight (Das) months, (till July 2019), inflation has averaged 110 bp lower 2.8%; the reporate has averaged 20 bp lower at 6.1%, and the real reporate 90 bp higher. Liquidity is very stressed in 2018 (according to many experts, that was the

> cause for the slowdown) and very ample in 2019.

Every monetary statistic contradicts the expert assessment that monetary policy is reducing the cost of money. It is simple math really—if inflation goes up by 10%, and my cost of borrowing goes up by 5%, the cost of money has come down. And just the opposite when inflation declines more than the

reporate. Why is this simple math seem*ingly* not understood by experts?

There are additional factors constraining growth in 2019 and beyond. Tariff wars have intensified, world growth has slowed down, and our competitors are lowering real rates and lowering tax rates. We are raising both. The expert media fully recognises (most of them do) that higher tax rates in a slowing economy will slow GDP growth even more. But, why this arrogant dismissal of the one factor the rest of 180 countries find the most potent cyclical, and structural factor, to enhance growth? More than a decade ago, Deputy Governor Rakesh Mohan opined that lazy banking was an important and unique aspect of Indian banking. But, why do experts endorse lazy banking as a solution to our growth problems?

Household savings in India

Policy environment for savings in India is sub-optimal. This is particularly true of the household sector, which has been the largest contributor to overall national savings

NIRVIKAR SINGH

Professor of Economics, University of California, Santa Cruz Views are personal

INDIA HAS TWO fundamental problems in its pursuit of higher economic growth. First, it needs to increase investment. Second, it needs to increase savings. Both investment and savings have fallen as percentages of GDP, and are below the levels needed to support GDP growth of 8-10% a year. There is a counter argument that higher growth itself will rekindle animal spirits of investors, but I think the starting point has to be with creating prospects for better investment returns. The investment slowdown is related to the collapse of the preceding investment boom, which included too much corruption and, more generally, misallocation of capital. Until the overhang of bad assets is cleaned up, so that credit flows more freely again, investment will stagnate. The government has been trying, but perhaps not hard enough. The battles with RBI on this front have also not helped. Efforts to attract foreign investors will also not achieve too much until the financial sector and corporate balance sheets are cleaned up. Even then, the policy framework for investment has to improve, in terms of taxation, infrastructure, and stability.

The savings side is trickier, but also has the potential for plucking some low hanging fruit, with the right degree of policy attention. This is because the policy environment for savings in India is sub-optimal. This is particularly true of the household sector (including smaller firms in the Indian case), which has been the largest contributor to overall national savings. The other sources of savings corporations, government and foreigners, are potentially important, but their determinants are more complicated, including whatever factors determine the investment climate, and the politics of government expenditure. Households, however, can be potentially reliable sources of savings.

There are three interrelated aspects of household saving where policies can

be changed to make a difference. First, the level of household savings has fallen in recent years, despite high real (though not nominal) interest rates. Second, Indian households tend to put a relatively smaller proportion of their savings in financial assets, versus physical assets such as gold and real estate. Third, Indian households put relatively little of their financial savings into long term savings such as pensions and insurance products, versus bank accounts. All three factors result in a paucity of funds that can be intermediated into productive investment.

Tarun Ramadorai, who headed the RBI committee on household savings that reported in 2017, has pointed out that the tax incentives for long term savings through pensions are muddled and weak. He has made detailed proposals for clarity and simplicity in the design of pension schemes and the tax incentives that accompany them. This is about more than just "nudges," and requires significant, but straightforward, policy changes. The government may be worried about possible losses of revenue through tax breaks, but this seems to be an area where the returns will justify any short term revenue hit.

Last year, Radhika Pandey, Ila Patnaik and Renuka Sane, in the India Policy Forum, provided a detailed empirical analysis of the impact of tax breaks on household financial savings, and found that such incentives must be carefully designed to avoid distortions between different types of financial saving. They also emphasised the need for more sensible regulations, giving insurance companies and pension funds more room to invest in assets other than government bonds. In brief, household savings have to be channelled efficiently to more productive investments.

The need for better channelling of household savings is driven home by a more recent analysis by Patnaik and Pandey, in an NIPFP working paper. Government policy on this front does not seem to be coherent or sufficiently evidence-based. Budget proposals often seem to be piecemeal and fragmented. Nevertheless, one can characterise this area as low-hanging fruit, because there is so much room for improvement. Despite the nuances of having different types of financial saving, with different types of institutions and regulations for collecting and channelling them, the underlying economic behaviours are not difficult to model and analyse.

A comprehensive, evidence-based policy approach to household financial savings will also help draw attention to institutional weaknesses in financial services and financial intermediation. It can be politically difficult to deal with such weaknesses without an overarching goal. Improving the level, composition and channelling of India's household saving can provide the requisite framing for political feasibility of more fundamental institutional reforms, as well as reforms in tax policy and regulation for the financial sector. Institutional reforms here could include a greater role for private sector firms, more competition, and more effective use of digital technology. Patnaik and Pandey make all these points, and they just need more detailed modelling and simulation for evaluating policy options.

None of the above makes redundant the need for continued improvements in the climate for non-financial firms to do business, or to innovate, or to export. All the real aspects of producing and selling things in India are subject to hurdles that the government has the power to reduce or remove, if it decides it wants to be growth-promoting rather than rent-seeking or populist in its policy stance. But higher growth requires higher investment, and that will need more household financial saving, channelled to productive uses. This is an area that needs better policy attention than it has received.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

PM Modi's address

PM Narendra Modi's post-Article

370 abrogation TV address to the nation has come in for fulsome praises from many people, including the media, for reaching out to Kashmiris with a slew of promises. But, the moot question is whether his promises of early polls, restoration of statehood, benefits to government employees on par with their counterparts in UTs, filling government job vacancies and investment will make up to the people of Kashmir for what they were robbed off—special status. At best they are a balm inefficacious in healing the deep wound to the Kashmiri psyche. People do not trade their identity for favours. Winning the hearts and minds of Kashmiris alone will facilitate their integration into India. The withdrawal of special status and privileges is not the way to win their vishwas (trust). As for the promise of development, human development indices in Kashmir are relatively better than in most parts of India. We are also struck by the incongruity of a leader of a party that never tires of accusing the secular parties of 'Muslim appeasement'. PM Modi did not speak a word on the deployment of more troops and the house arrest of Valley's mainstream leaders. Why leaders like Ghulam Nabi Azad and Sitaram Yechury are prevented from visiting the people of the Valley while NSA Ajit Doval is featured interacting with the local residents defies understanding. If what is going on in the name of Hindu revivalism in the rest of the country, the reading down of Article 370 may well be a move to superimpose Hindutva culture onto Kashmir's indigenous culture or Kashmiriyat. The hailing of the annulment of special status as the 'correction of a historical wrong' by Hindutvawadis says it all! — G David Milton, Maruthancode

Write to us at feletters@expressindia.com

FINANCIAL EXPRESS

JAPAN-KOREA TRADE DISPUTE

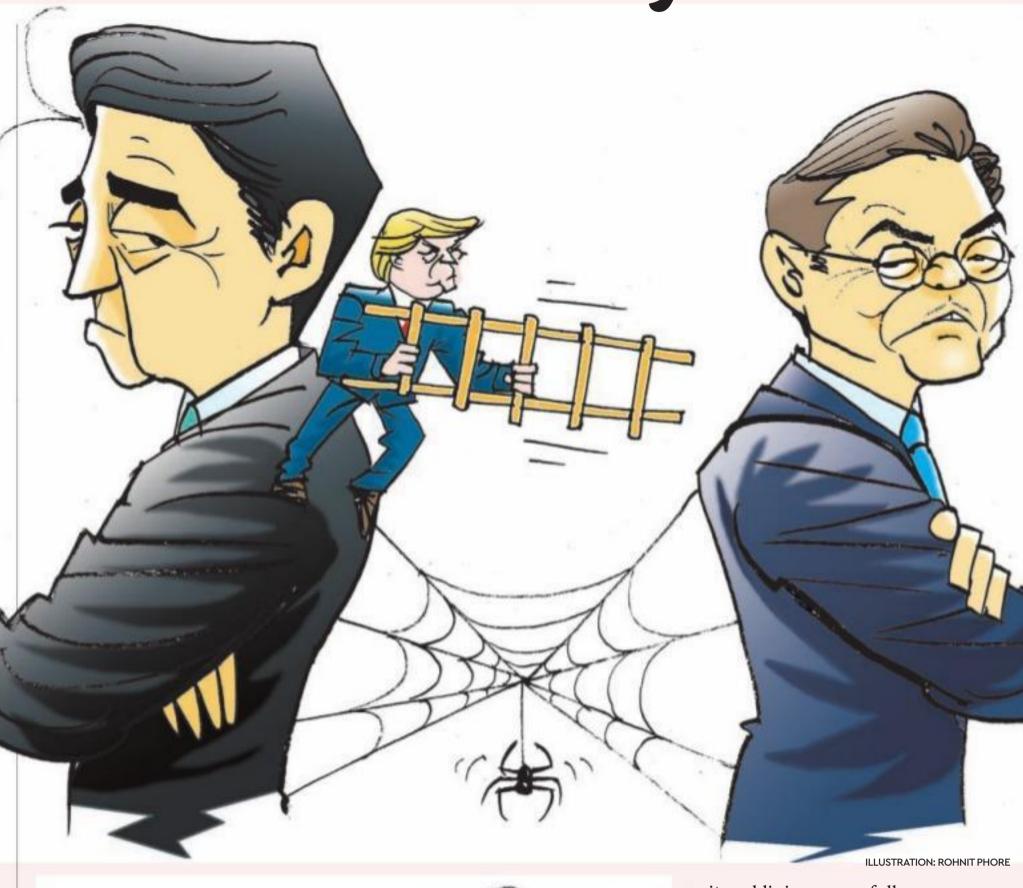
Japan seeks to emerge from the shadow of history

The biggest trade war of recent times, the US-China dispute, is tied to forced technology transfer and intellectual property rights. But the Japan-South Korea dispute appears tied to Japan's long and arduous struggle to emerge from the pages of history

APAN, THE QUIET sentinel of Asia, lives in the future and yet cannot quite extricate itself from the past—caught in the net of history whilst seeking to escape it. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's attempts to amend the Constitution and the current trade skirmish between Japan and South Korea can be traced back to history—a history that Japan seeks to put behind, but so far with little success.

In fact, Japan's new era, the Reiwa era (literally, beautiful harmony), began May 2019 with the abdication of the Chrysanthemum Throne by Emperor Akihito. The abdication marked the end of the three decades of the Heisei era (peace everywhere). With the Tokyo Olympics 2020 scheduled next year, there is much optimism in the air—an understanding that it will repeat for Japan what Tokyo Olympics 1964 did, which boosted its economic renaissance.

Japan's aspirations reflect in the winds of its domestic politics under the 64-year-old Abe, now in his seventh year of office. In fact, the years of political instability seem to have passed. If Abe stays in office until November 2019 (which is a certainty), he will surpass 2,886 days in office (tolled by PM Taro Katsura in the early 20th century) and become Japan's longest-serving PM in history. Some achievements, as Abe articulated at Davos 2019, are



ANURAG VISWANATH

The author is a Singapore-based Sinologist, and adjunct fellow at the Institute of Chinese Studies, Delhi. Views are personal

growth in Japanese GDP by 10.9% (in his six years of office), female labour participation hitting 67% and an ageing population (above 65) accessing job opportunities. But observers such as

political scientist Lully Miura say that Abe continues to be in power because of "an exceptional combination of specific conditions," including his foreign policy and the administration managing its public image carefully.

But it is Abe who has sought to turn a page in Japan's constitutional history, seeking an amendment for the first time in its 72-year history. Japan's surrender in the Second World War led to a postwar pacifist Constitution. Despite being a formidable power in its own right, Japan is dependent on the US for defence—it is bound to the US by a defence treaty (1951, revised in 1960) where the US has military bases in Japan in exchange of protecting Japan in case of an attack. Abe and his

allies have sought a revision of the Constitution, seeking the formalisation of Japan's de facto military, Self-Defense Forces (SDF), which would entail parting with the Article 9 (nowar clause) of the Constitution. Article 9 says that "land, sea and air forces, as well as other war potential will never be maintained."

The recent July elections to the upper house of Parliament (House of Councillors) impacted amendment. Of the 124 seats, Abe's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and Komeito won 71 seats (57+14), and the Constitutional Democratic Party (CDP) 53 seats in the 245member house. The parties in favour of amending the Constitution, the LDP and allies Nippon Ishin no Kai (Japan Innovation Party) and Komeito (total of 157 seats), fell short of the two-third 'super-majority' (164 seats) needed to initiate the amendment. A day after the elections, Abe sought to keep the issue alive by discussing it. He now seeks amendment in 2020. The issue of Japan remilitarisation continues to be alive. The public increasingly

believes that Japan is vulnerable, ineffectual and impotent as a balance to a rising China, which boasts considerable military prowess. History is also at play

in Japan-South Korea relations, both staunch US allies, but who cannot see eye to eye. Japan and South Korea have several common concerns, including the secu-

> rity dilemma in the Northeast peninsula (North Korea and China), but a trilateral (US-Japan-South Korea) has not been forthcoming.

Relations between the two are rocky because of 'historical animosity' that dates back to Japanese colonisation of the peninsula (1910-45). In fact, the recent move by Japan to strike South Korea off its 'white list' (of 27 preferential trade partners) effective August 28 is not because of a trade dispute per se, but because of history.

The dispute sparked when the South Korean Supreme Court ruled that Japanese companies Nippon Steel, Mitsubishi Heavy Industries and Nachi Fujikoshi compensate wartime forced labour. Japan views this as flogging the acrimonious past. As Japan views it, this was resolved in 1965 when relations were normalised, and in terms of reparations, Japan paid \$2.4 billion by way of loans and aid to Korea. But the issue of forced wartime

Korean labour in mines and factories,

Apr

2019

7.9

Jun

67,435

FY18

1,02,628

FY19 (RE)

1,25,000

Small savings rates have

not fallen much

(PPF; %)

the forced prostitution of Korean women to provide sexual services to the Japanese army-'comfort women'—and the plight of the Koreans who continue to stay in Japan (regarded as second-class citizens) has haunted bilateral ties. In 2015, President Park Geun-hye inked what Japan called a deal to "finally and irreversibly" settle the issue of 'comfort women' through a \$9-million deal, which many viewed as a pittance. In 2018, the foundation that Japan funded to support and provide funds to the 'comfort women' was dissolved.

Japan was alarmed with the decision of the South Korean court to order the seizure of Japanese assets, which it viewed as damaging Japanese trade and investment in South Korea. Citing 'national security grounds' of 'declining trust' between the two, Japan slapped exports to South Korea with restrictions. Japan has targeted three chemicals (hydrogen fluoride, fluorinated polyimide and photoresists) used by South Korean companies in smartphone dis-

Relations between

the two are rocky

because of 'historical

animosity' that

dates back to the

Japanese

colonisation of the

Korean peninsula

(1910-45)

plays and chips. This will disrupt the supply chain of South Korea's semiconductor, display (electronics) and automobile industry, and companies such as Samsung, SK Hynix and LG will be affected. Japanese exports to South Korea now need case-by-case approval. South Korea has

responded with strong

public opinion and visible nationalist outrage, and has accused Japan of 'weaponising trade'. South Korean customers are boycotting Japanese products in the supermarkets, and South Korea wants to stop militaryintelligence sharing with Japan, which

peninsula. But Japan is unrelenting. The issue shows no immediate signs of abating, with the US unable to resolve the acrimony of the past. While the US will eventually step in and resolve the posturing, for South Korea, with legislative elections in April 2020 round the corner, backing down may indicate 'loss of face'. The biggest trade dispute of recent times, the US-China dispute, is tied to forced technology transfer and intellectual property rights. But for Asia's quiet sentinel Japan—be it constitutional amendment or trade dispute with South Korea—both are tied to its long and ardu-

has implications on the security of the

ous struggle to emerge from the pages of history. The US and now Japan are cases in point of the new dynamics in international relations, where economics is a powerful instrument of political arm-

Deposits grow in small savings

(Securities issued against small savings; ₹ cr)

twisting, and so is history.

DATA DRIVE

Poor transmission external benchmarks appears to have HILE THE RESERVE BANK of India has cut the repo rate by been taken off the table. 35 basis points—the first cut Banks have not been able to reduce their lending because of slowing

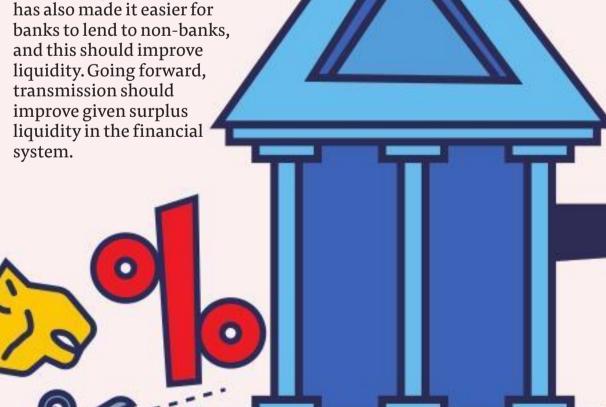
of this magnitude—to 5.4% (the repo rate is now at a nine-year low), the onus is now on banks to cut their lending rates to spur economic activity. In response to the policy, the country's largest lender, the State Bank of India, has reduced the Marginal Cost of Funds based Lending Rate (MCLR) across all tenors by 15 basis points. Banks have been very slow in

passing on the benefits of the central bank's rate cuts to their customers. To be sure, before Wednesday's rate cut, the central bank had cut the repo rate by 75 basis points this year between February and June. However, the transmission of policy rate cuts on fresh loans of banks was only 29bps. The earlier RBI announcement to benchmark new

floating rate loans to the

growth in deposits. As a result, deposit rates have remained flattish as banks have found it challenging to pass through rate-cuts, and small savings given they are still offering much higher rates than bank deposits—are cornering growing shares of the deposit pie. For example, while the fiveyear deposits rate of the SBI is 6.5%, the five-year post office term deposits fetch 7.7% and Public Provident Fund is fetching returns of 7.9%.

The central bank has injected liquidity, which means the supplyside is being taken care of, and has also made it easier for banks to lend to non-banks, and this should improve liquidity. Going forward, transmission should improve given surplus liquidity in the financial system.





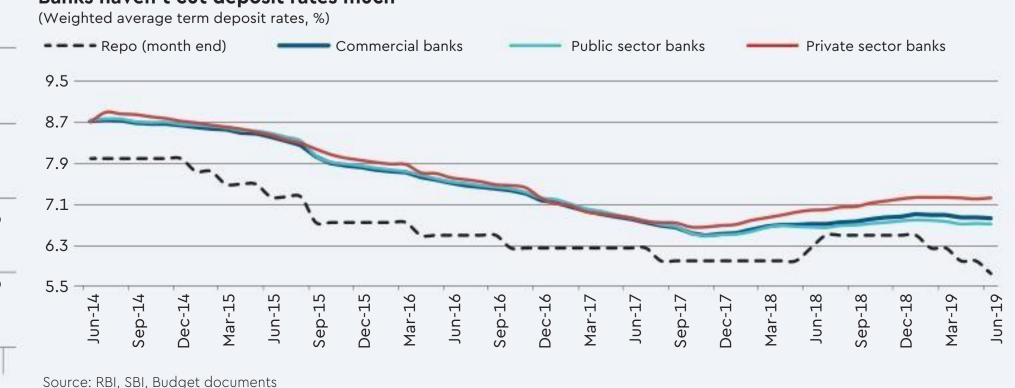
... but transmission remains weak (SBI one-year MCLR; %, 2019) 8.6 8.55 8.55 8.55 8.5 8.45 8.4 8.25 8.3 8.2 10 Feb 10 Mar 10 Apr 10 May 10 July 10 Aug

Banks haven't cut deposit rates much (Weighted average term deposit rates, %)

Deposit growth slower than credit growth (% chg, y-o-y, 2019)

press.com





Source: RBI, SBI, Budget documents

#ExpressExplained

WHAT THE DATA SHOW

If there are questions of current or contemporary relevance that you would like explained, please write to **explained@indianexpress.com**

SET 2

NOT MUCH CHANGE IN NOMINAL GROWTH RATES

2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013

GDP BASED ON PRODUCTION SHIFT APPROACH

2000 '01 '02 '03 '04 '05 '06 '07 '08 '09 '10 '11 '12 2013

GVA BASED ON PRODUCTION SHIFT APPROACH

2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013

TELLING NUMBERS

Mass shootings in the US

Back-to-back mass shootings in El Paso, Texas and Dayton, Ohio on Saturday and Sunday underlined America's problem with guns. Firearms are easy to buy, and the pro-gun lobby spends huge amounts every year to keep things from changing

WORST MASS SHOOTINGS

Year	Location	Dead
2017	Las Vegas, Nevada	58
2016	Orlando, Florida	49
2007	Virginia Tech, Virginia	32
2012	Sandy Hook, Connecticut	27
2017	Sutherland Springs, Texas	26
1991	Killeen, Texas	23
2019	El Paso, Texas	22
2018	Parkland, Florida	17
2015	San Bernardino, California	14
2009	Fort Hood, Texas	13
1999	Columbine, Colorado	13
Sources	: FBI, Las Vegas Police	

TOP CIVILIAN GUN-OWNING COUNTRIES (PER 100 PEOPLE)

COUNTRIES (PER 100 PEOPLE)			
USA	120.5		
Yemen	52.8		
Serbia	39.1		
Montenegro	39.1		
Uruguay	34.7		
Canada	34.7		
Cyprus	34.0		
Finland	32.4		
Source: Small Arms Survey 2018			

ANNUAL LOBBYING BY AMERICAN GUN RIGHTS ADVOCACY NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION

2001	1.56		
2002	1.5		
2003	1.61		
2004	1.64		
2005	1.79		
2006	1.62		
2007	1.82		
2008	1.67		
2009	2.14		
2010	2.65		
2011	2.91		
2012	2.98		
2013	3.41		
2014	3.36		
2015	3.61		
2016	3.19		
2017	5.12		
2018	5.08		
2019*	1.69		
(In \$ million), *January-July			

Source: Centre for Responsive Politics,

US Senate Office of Public Records

THIS WORD MEANS

PERSEID METEOR SHOWER

Celestial fireworks, created by comets

ON ITS journey around the Sun, the Earth passes through large swathes of cosmic debris. The debris is essentially the remnants of comets — great frigid chunks of matter that leave behind dirty trails of rocks and ice that linger long after the comets themselves have passed. As the Earth wades through this cloud of comet waste, the bits of debris create what appears from the ground to be a fireworks display in the sky — known as a meteor shower.

Several meteor showers can be seen

around the year. Among the brightest and best known of them is the Perseid Meteor Shower, which has been active from July 17 onward, and can be seen until August 26. The showers peaked on the night of Monday-Tuesday.

The Perseids occur as the Earth runs into pieces of cosmic debris left behind by the comet Swift-Tuttle. The cloud of debris is about 27 km wide — and at the peak of the display, between 160 and 200 meteors streak through the Earth's atmosphere every hour as the pieces of debris, travelling at some 2.14 lakh km per hour, burn up a little less than 100 km above the Earth's surface.

The Perseids currently visible in the night sky are not due to the debris left behind by the comet Swift-Tuttle during its most recent pass, which happened in 1992. This particular comet goes around the Sun once in 133 years, and the meteors now visible were left behind by the pass before the last one — or perhaps even earlier.

Meteors are best seen on a cloudless night, when the entire sky is visible, and when the Moon is not extremely bright. Chances of a successful viewing are



of the Perseid Meteor Shower in Bosnia-Herzegovina Monday. Reuters

A meteor in the sky during the peak

higher from locations far away from the lights of cities. Pollution and monsoon clouds make the Perseids difficult to view from India.

The showers peak when the Earth passes through the most dense part of the debris cloud. Peaks can last for a few hours or several nights. They tend to be most visible after midnight and before dawn. The showers should be seen with naked eyes; binoculars and telescopes narrow the field of vision.

According to the International Meteor Organisation, the Perseid Showers will be followed in 2019 by the Orionids (between October 2 and November 7, peaking around October 21-22), the Leonids (from November 6-30, peaking around November 16-17), the Geminids (from December 4-17, peaking around December 13-14), and the Ursids (from December 17-26, peaking around December 21-22).

NASA, THE NEW YORK TIMES

SIMPLY PUT

Two ways to look at GDP

The debate over the validity of India's new growth estimates refuses to die. Its detractors point to the disconnect between GDP and other macro indicators. But others caution against snap judgments.

SET 1

GROWTH IN MACRO-INDICATORS AND GDP

Pre-2011 Post-2011

CHANGE IN GROWTH OF MACRO-INDICATORS

6 emerging markets' avg and India (percentage points)

🍙 6-Country avg. 🍙 India

CHANGE IN GDP GROWTH

6 emerging markets' average and India (percentage points)

🛾 6-Country avg. 🙀 India

12%

8%

6%

4%

2%

-2% -4%

-6%

-8%

-10%

-12%

-14%

-18%

-0.5%

-1.0%

-1.5%

-2.0%

Credit (Industrial)

UDIT MISRANEW DELHI, AUGUST 12

IN JANUARY 2015, India's Central Statistics Office (CSO) introduced a new series of National Account Statistics. The new series made several changes. In particular, it revised the base year from 2004-05 to 2011-12. It also employed a new methodology to estimate India's gross domestic product (GDP) and used new data sets to arrive at the GDP. However, even though the CSO's changes were in line with international norms of national income accounting, some academics and researchers raised doubts about the new GDP estimates.

Revising base years, improving methodologies and opting for better databases are part of normal practice in national income accounting. But the debate intensified when, in 2018, the statistical establishment released two back-series (that is, recalibrating the GDP data for past years based on the new methodology) that contradicted each other.

The first back-series, presented by the National Statistical Commission (NSC) in July 2018, found that the average economic growth between 2005-06 and 2011-12 was 8.6% instead of the 8.3% according to the old series. The second back-series, calculated by CSO and published in November 2018, found this average to be just 7%. The statistical debate quickly acquired a political colour because of the years concerned. Former Finance Minister P Chidambaram called the CSO back-series a "hatchet job". The then Finance Minister Arun Jaitley backed the new way of GDP estimation as more reflective of the ground realities.

Earlier this year, the accusation that the new method overestimates GDP received a boost after Arvind Subramanian, India's Chief Economic Adviser between 2014 and 2018, argued that the new series overestimated GDP growth by as much as 2.5 percentage points. In other words, if last year's GDP growth was 7% then, according to Subramanian, the actual GDP growth would be only about 4.5%.

Those who say nay In his paper, presented in June,

Subramanian presented a history of how he looked at the new series since its introduction and always found its results "puzzling". For instance, as chart 1 (top left) shows, India's GDP growth rate between 2011 and 2016 appears out of sync with the fate of key macroeconomic indicators, such as investment, exports and credit etc.; this is starkly in contrast to how things were for a decade before the new series with 2011-12 as the base year. Also, as charts 2 and 3 show, this disconnect between key macroeconomic indicators post-2011 becomes even clearer when India's data are compared to the average of six

emerging economies. India's GDP declined far less than the 6-country average despite its macro-indicators being worse hit. Subramanian argued higher GDP growth

between 2011 and 2016 is neither backed by movement in key macro-indicators, nor by a surge in productivity (otherwise corporate profits would not have declined in this period), nor by a surge in consumption (otherwise consumer confidence and industrial capacity utilisation would not have dipped sharply).

Lastly, Subramanian argued that the GDP

Lastly, Subramanian argued that the GDP Deflator (level of inflation), used to subtract from nominal GDP growth in order to arrive at the "real" GDP growth rate, was considerably less than the retail inflation (as measured by Consumer Price Index) in the 2011-

16 period. This essentially resulted in an overestimation of "real" GDP growth rate.

Those who say aye

Charts: NCAER

3

NR Bhanumurthy, Professor at NIPFP and the chair of the NSC sub-committee that presented the first back-series, is among those who have countered some of Subramanian's fundamental assertions. For one, he has shown that the nominal GDP growth rate, which is the only observable variable, has not changed under the old and new series (chart 4, top right). Secondly, there was no consolidated CPI before 2011. As such, arguing that the gap between CPI and GDP deflator was low between 2002 and 2011, and wide between 2011 and 2016, is unfounded.

According to Bhanumurthy, if one applies the Production Shift approach — wherein new activities (that are added in the new series) are given progressively more weight (or less weight) as one move ahead in time (or moves back in time) — the two series do not show any discordant breaks either for GDP or for gross value added (charts 5 and 6).

In fact, given the wide differences between the two data methodologies and data sets, Bhanumurthy characterises the whole debate as an "apples to oranges" comparison. "You can predict the direction of GDP growth using leading indicators such as car sales, but you cannot 'estimate' GDP growth rate for a year gone by on the basis of such indicators," he says.

AN EXPERT EXPLAINS: N R BHANUMURTHY

Why lower fiscal deficit isn't always good news

THERE IS growing concern about the slow-down in India's economic growth. Last week, RBI, the country's central bank, cut reporates by 35 basis points — the sharpest cut in nine years. UDIT MISRA talked to N R BHANUMURTHY, Professor at National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, to understand what is causing the slowdown and what policy measures are needed.

What is the nature of India's economic slowdown? Is it cyclical or structural?

In any macro time series, there are two components. One is the structural or the permanent component, which is largely determined in the long term by factors such as institutions, productivity, human capital etc., and the second is a cyclical or the temporary component, which refers to short-term fluctuations. You have to separate the two and see how they are behaving as well as how it is ex-

pected to move in future. If you can do this, then the prescriptions required to address them would be very clear and different.

My assessment is that in India at present both the components seem to be in a slowdown phase and the projection is that it will slow down further.

Which are the key issues that bother you most on the structural and cyclical aspects in India's slowdown?

Unfortunately, the realisation that the economy is slowing down has come late. Many of us have written that the slowdown started much earlier. The second issue is, when the slowdown is real, we should've gone for a countercyclical measure, at least to address the short-term fluctuation. But by not accepting the slowdown, the fiscal policy followed was pro-cyclical, which has only accentuated the problem.

You have two major policy instruments, one is the fiscal policy, and the other is monetary (interest rate) policy. In a cyclical downturn, it is the fiscal policy that should have been ahead, followed by the monetary policy. What we have done is the opposite — to such an extent that monetary policy appears to be fighting a lonely battle. I think that sequencing, as well as the response to the slowdown by the fiscal policy, is a serious cause for concern.

What would be your policy prescription to increase economic growth?

The first thing is to increase household savings. Given the declining deposit rates, the banking system is actually recovering its losses at the cost of household savings. The government could have come up with savings instruments (such as infrastructure bonds). In sum, the present macro policies could lead to double whammy — fall in household savings and

increase in household leverage. Second, we need to correct a structural pol-

icy misstep introduced by Finance Bill of 2018 that did away with targeting revenue deficit and compromised on the public capital expenditure. This was the beginning of growth slowdown as well as deterioration of the fiscal situation. Many are happy that the fiscal deficit is coming down, but we don't understand that it squeezes the economy further when there is a cyclical slowdown. It was explained several times that the FRBM Act is not an expenditure compression mechanism; it is an expenditure switching mechanism. I hope that the 15th Finance Commission can correct this mistake.

But the low hanging fruit is to quickly recapitalisation of public sector banks (PSBs). There could be resistance for this, because PSBs are considered inefficient, but unlike private banks, public sector banks have large social obligations.

How a project to link rivers has divided BJP-ruled Maharashtra, Gujarat

SANDEEPASHAR

MUMBAI, AUGUST 12

ON JULY 31, Maharashtra walked out of two river interlinking projects with Gujarat, citing an impasse over the water-sharing arrangement. The central government had earlier identified these projects as priority links. What led to the disagreement between the two BJP-ruled states?

The river-linking projects

Among the priority river interlinking projects were the Damanganga-Pinjal (DP) and Par-Tapi-Narmada (PTN) links, involving Maharashtra and Gujarat. The other priority links were Ken-Betwa (UP and MP) and Godavari-Cauvery (Andhra and Tamil Nadu).

Maharashtra has now announced that it would develop the DP link on its own, along with four intrastate links. The DP link was planned to augment water supply to Mumbai; the other projects are expected to benefit North Maharashtra and Marathwada.

The interstate interlink project was designed to transfer water from surplus west-flowing river basins to water-stressed distributaries of Godavari in Maharashtra, and Tapi and Narmada in Gujarat. It was conceived in 1980, but took until May 3, 2010 for an MoU to be executed between the Centre and the states to examine technoeconomic viability, and prepare a detailed project plan. A separate MoU was to be signed for the execution of the project.

In September 2017, Maharashtra circulated a draft MoU, which the Centre okayed.



The area in Maharashtra, crisscrossed by many small rivers, where the riverlinking projects have been planned However, Gujarat is yet to consent to it.

The basins of the links

The DP link proposes to tunnel unutilised water from the Bhugad (in Gujarat's Valsad district) and Khargihill (in Maharashtra's Palghar district) reservoirs in the Damanganga basin to Mumbai via the Pinjal river in the Vaitarna basin. Estimated to cost Rs 2,800 crore, it involves the construction of two dams — in Valsad's Kaprada and Palghar's Jawahar

— and three gravity-based tunnel links.

The PTN link, estimated to cost Rs 10,211 crore, envisages transfer of surplus flows from the west-flowing Par, Auranga, Ambika, and Purna rivers between the Par and Tapi basins to water-scarce regions in Saurashtra and Kutch, and the Narmada, Chhota Udepur and Panchmahal districts in South Gujarat.

The PTN link involves the construction of six dams: one on the Jheri reservoir across the Par in Nashik, two in Valsad's Dharampur, and three in Dang's Ahwa.

Subsequently, on Maharashtra's request, the Centre included four intrastate links — Nar-Par-Girna, Par-Godavari, Damanganga-Godavari, and Damanganga-Vaitarna — to transfer surplus flows from these rivers into the Godavari and Girna basins to benefit drought-prone Maharashtra regions.

The Centre agreed to fund 90% of the total project cost of the two interstate links.

The questions of politics

The issue was the compensation for the water contributed from the Maharashtra catchments for the PTN link. About 15.32 thousand million cubic (TMC) feet water

WORDLY WISE

IN A BATTLE BETWEEN FORCE AND AN IDEA, THE LATTER ALWAYS PREVAILS.

— LUDWIG VON MISES

The Indian EXPRESS

∽ FOUNDED BY ∽ RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

THE EXTERNAL TEST

Delhi needs a strategy to face the challenges of increased international attention on Kashmir

HE BACKING FROM Russia for Delhi's decision to revoke special status for Jammu & Kashmir is as sure an indication as any that Pakistan's bid for a debate in the United Nations Security Council will be unsuccessful. But Islamabad's efforts to internationalise the issue will continue in other ways, including by stirring up Western allies, and Kashmiri and Pakistani diasporas in the US, Europe, Britain and other western countries, as well as international human rights organisations. Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan was both hyperbolic and hypocritical in his allegation of "ethnic cleansing" in Kashmir. After all, he has mutely watched China send its Muslims citizens in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region to "re-education camps" to de-Islamise them. But with every passing day that India keeps the people of the Valley locked up and cut off from the outside world, the possibility of the issue being raised in the UN Human Rights Council grows more real. Through the 1990s, Indian diplomacy's main preoccupation was to fend off the "K" word in multilateral statements and agreements in organisations like the UN, Commonwealth, and Organisation of Islamic Co-operation. It is well documented how hard the Narasimha Rao government had to fight at the 1993 Vienna Human Rights Conference, and later at Geneva 1994 to fight back Pakistan's accusations of human rights violations in the Valley. At that time, the world was not ready to believe in such a thing as "cross-border" militancy. It was only after the nuclear tests and Kargil, and Kashmir's own return to near normalcy in 2002 that the socalled K word began to fade from international discourse. But references to human rights violations in Kashmir started coming up again after 2016 over the security forces' use of pellet guns to crush the new round of militancy.

The Ministry of External Affairs must be ready for the challenge of international attention on Kashmir, to explain the legal nitty gritty of its Constitution changing decisions, and to argue again that this is "an internal matter". Equally challenging will be the management of the potential fallout on security, both from homegrown militancy in the Valley and cross-border jihadists. Pakistan has taken the extreme step of expelling the Indian High Commissioner in Islamabad, and suspension of the rail service from Lahore to Attari, which is an indication of the pressure the Imran Khan government is under to demonstrate that it has not abandoned Kashmir. For its own credibility, the Pakistan Army may also feel compelled to take measures. Despite the pressure from the Financial Action Task Force to dismantle support for jihadist groups, an increase in cross-border militancy is likely, with attempts to pass it off as the work of al Qaeda or ISIS. The emerging situation in Afghanistan, especially if the Taliban gain ascendency, giving Pakistan an upper hand in the region, would only further complicate matters.

The government has yet to reveal how it plans to handle and implement on the ground in J&K what it has done with the stroke of a pen. The real tests will come when the restrictions on the Valley are removed.

RUPEE MATTERS

There is a need to step up efforts to shift currency trading to onshore markets

VER THE PAST few years, there has been consternation, understandably so, over the sharp rise in offshore rupee trading volumes. Data from the Bank of International Settlements pegs daily offshore rupee trading at around \$16 billion in 2016, almost equal to onshore trading. More recent data from the Bank of England pegs offshore rupee trades at \$23 billion in 2018. These large volumes in the offshore market indicate greater investor interest in the rupee. But they also raise troubling questions over the forces that "determine the rupee's value", and the ability of the central bank to ensure "currency stability".

Typically, offshore markets allow participants to trade in a non-convertible currency. These markets have evolved for currencies where restrictions are imposed in domestic markets on foreign exchange convertibility. The constraints on foreign participation in domestic currency markets stem from cumbersome documentation and KYC requirements, restrictions on products, inconvenient trading hours. These restrictions push investors to trading in offshore markets to hedge their currency risks. But with the volumes in these markets growing, they have begun to play a critical role in "price discovery", more so during "periods of uncertainty". The Task Force on Offshore Rupee Markets has pointed to two instances — the taper tantrum in the 2013 and the 2018 emerging market crises when the offshore market was driving the onshore exchange rate. This, as the report points out, "reduced the efficacy of foreign currency intervention by the central bank".

The task force has made several recommendations to incentivise market participants to shift to onshore markets, like extending onshore market hours, examining issues of taxation. Allowing market participants to take exposure upto \$100 million, without having to establish the existence of the underlying risk, is also a step in the right direction. This will enable foreign investors to hedge their currency risk and could incentivise greater participation in rupee denominated bonds. As the economy grows, it makes sense for regulators to expand onshore currency markets, in a calibrated manner. The ability to hedge currency risks is also likely to increase the rupee's attractiveness for trade invoicing and portfolio diversification, creating conditions for a gradual internationalisation of the currency.

THE RS 100 SMILE

Vaiko is charging an impost from followers who want to be photographed with him. Great idea, but isn't price tag too low?

ARTY CADRES SEEKING to show off their proximity to MDMK chief Vaiko must now micro-invest in his brand equity — the floor price for a selfie with him is Rs 100. This imaginative initiative to monetise the leadership of the cashstrapped party acknowledges a reality that politics generally pussyfoots around that campaign funds are not donated disinterestedly, but are in the nature of investments, either towards an idea or a business opportunity.

They are much more direct about these things in the US, where lobbying is a respected profession. It is understood that when tobacco or gun lobbyists cross the ruling party's palm with silver, they are buying a share in the brand equity of POTUS, and will have a say, though via many layers, in policymaking. Over here, electoral bonds depersonalise the issue completely, leaving us with the hazy impression that they are instruments for some higher but unspecified purpose. Of course, Vaiko has taken a nobler route in not seeking

funds for instrumentality, but for brand alignment between him and his followers. But isn't Vaiko's floor price anachronistically low for our inflationary age? He might consider working in surcharges for the use of a flash, for the right to share on social media, the right to morph the image and so on — things that people assume are free, but should not be. And he could diversify the bouquet of investment instruments, charging separately to be seen smiling or waving at the camera, and extracting an arm and a leg to be shot hugging the investor. He is not the first southern politician to use his person to bolster party funds. Periyar used to charge his followers on behalf of the party to attend private functions. He was lampooned for it. But obviously, in this too, he was ahead of his time.

Ringing in the old

Sonia Gandhi as interim Congress chief represents desperation at best and abdication of politics at worst



WHAT DOES A party do when it faces an existential crisis? It certainly does not wait twoand-a-half months to resolve the leadership issue. Having waited that long, it would rarely latch on to an *interim* arrangement. And above all, it won't allow the interim solution to look like a problem in itself. But this is precisely what the Congress has done. Therefore, its latest attempt to run away from the real problem deserves an interim assessment. Interim, because we do not know if the party is going to rejuvenate, ideologically deteriorate in pursuit of power, or simply hang around. Clearly, it is difficult to dissolve it indeed it was difficult enough in 1947 itself, but much more so today. And as this writer has argued just before the second resounding defeat of the party ('Dear Yogendra, I disagree', IE, May 22), more than any other time, democratic politics requires a middle-of-road democratic platform. But then, one surely does not want a party that will trudge along aimlessly and become a transit platform for various elements awaiting rehabilitation within the current ruling dispensation. What exactly does the recourse to Sonia

Gandhi represent? True, Sonia led the party through its worst crisis until the 1990s. She weathered the storm then and presided over the party when it returned to power for a full decade. It might be tempting for Congresspersons, therefore, to imagine that she is capable of putting the party back on track. For the workers who have grown up believing that the Gandhi family alone can lead the party, this interim moment will be one of some respite as if Sonia were supposed to keep the chair warm for either Rahul or Priyanka to take over. But beyond these naïve hopes and simplistic beliefs, for an outsider, this move represents desperation at best and abdication of politics at worst.

The desperation is related to the much talked-about threat of fragmentation. With a steady stream of party leaders joining the BJP, the worst fears of unimaginative Congresspersons would be that some leaders may be tempted to form their own political outfits as a better bargaining counter to negotiate either with the parent party's leadership or purchase a handsome reward inside the BJP. It is expected that if Rahul keeps a low profile, Sonia can keep the flock together with her ability to invoke a sentimental appeal and her style of not rubbing the sois indeed possible that this interim arrangement might dissuade some ambitious leaders from forming new "Congress parties" as it happened around the mid-Nineties. Will that rejuvenate the Congress? More than its unity, what is at stake is the ability of

called party heavyweights the wrong way. It

the party to attract the voters and enthuse workers on the ground. It is possible that at least some voters may have voted for the BJP simply because of the non-availability of a strong, positive, nationalist alternative at the all-India level. They will be hardly convinced that this change makes the Congress such an alternative. It would, in fact, convince them further that they cannot expect much from the Congress. Similarly, the second coming of Sonia may only perform the basic function of keeping a semblance of unity — albeit the threat to desertion will always loom large. Young entrants to politics will hardly be encouraged into throwing their lot with the party if it is still to come out with any gameplan. The interim arrangement smacks of total cluelessness as to why things happened the way they did and how to respond to the defeat. Thus, for young party workers and for lay voters who do not have any particular emotional connect with the family or the party, the move would hardly have any political purchase.

Sonia would be remembered for three things. Symbolically, she will be remembered for converting her political limitation into a virtue when she stayed away from governmental power. Two, by stoically avoiding to craft a new party, she allowed the Congress to remain a clumsy platform of unprincipled accommodation. Three, having been an outsider to the pride and prestige of the older Congress, she ensured that the Congress did not shy away from making compromises for purposes of coalition politics. While a future historian will give her credit for these, the analyst of the contemporary cannot but point out that the virtues have run their course.

Instead, Sonia Gandhi's return as party president is likely to impede the real task of party-building that the Congress has been postponing since the 1980s. Rajiv Gandhi reminded the party of this when it was celebrating its centenary. Sonia could not do it when she took over in the late Nineties. The defeat in 2014 failed to provoke the party into reviving itself. Rahul Gandhi's resignation

gave the party a dual opportunity. It could elevate him to the moral high ground by immediately accepting his resignation for having failed in the election and thus making him a hero; it could also begin an audacious experiment of choosing a new party president This would have been crucial (it still could be) because it would be an experiment wherein the party would be run by someone outside the Gandhi family even while the family members were active in the party. The party could thus derive benefit of leadership of the Gandhis and yet be managed by a non-Gandhi. That would have signalled the ability of the party to move toward a collective leadership it has not seen for some time. It would also induce healthy factionalism characteristic of a nation-wide pluralist party. It could teach younger party workers the art of intraparty democracy along with the discipline that would be required to fight a dominant party like BJP.

The interim arrangement further indicates the inability of the party to both make sense of the current moment of Indian politics and shape a political response to it. We are currently passing through a peculiar mix of the global trend of populism and the homegrown tendency of majoritarian politics. This combination allows India to ignore the economic downturn and live in an imagined era of glory and strength. It induces replacement of people's material concerns by the dangerous search for enemies. This moment is potent with a false sense of democratisation, which in reality corrodes democracy.

The present moment requires two basic elements for a robust response: Leadership as an exemplar and an untiringly sustained engagement through local networks of party workers. Of course, these would have to be woven with ideas that the masses can relate to. Interim arrangements by their very nature are unable to encompass these considerations.

Or, is it that the Congress is aware of these challenges, the need for a cohesive political response and wants to avoid that responsibility? Is it that the interim arrangement suggests the party's own sense of being tentative — that it looks upon itself as an interim party?

The writer taught political science at Savitribai Phule Pune University, Pune, and is chief editor of Studies in Indian Politics

LESSONS BY SHAMNAD BASHEER

How an affable, erudite professor influenced everyone around him

Nandini Khaitan

THE FIRST TIME I met Shamnad Basheer was at a patent conference in Mumbai in 2007. He was wearing a light-blue linen suit (always ahead of the curve, be it law or fashion), looking more a GQ model than a professor who had helped organise a first-of-its-kind patent conference in India. There was also an exhibition moot court to demonstrate patent arguments. After realising we were up against an IP genius, we did not feel bad about the complete defeat at his hands, despite the facts of the moot favouring our team. I was two years qualified and did not expect to be a blip on his radar much less expect an email from him, explaining the ideal arguments for both sides. When asked why he had taken the trouble, his reply was — "because everyone has potential". It was this passion that ignited what I

think of as the "Law Spring" in the form of **Increasing Diversity by Increasing Access** (IDIA): A platform for making law an inclusive field and a tool for empowerment by training and funding students from underprivileged backgrounds for a career in law.

I remember a discussion with him on whether IDIA scholars should be mandated to work with the communities they came from. His view was an emphatic no. True empowerment, he said, comes from the free-

An important aspect of IDIA is working with law student volunteers to support scholars in navigating the competitive law school environment. When asked how IDIA runs without engaging workers, Basheer said, once people feel invested (meeting, befriending and working alongside scholars would usually help in this), the rest

will follow.

engineers and 300 technicians.

The present moment

for a robust response:

requires two basic elements

Leadership as an exemplar

and an untiringly sustained

engagement through local

networks of party workers.

Of course, these would have

to be woven with ideas that

the masses can relate to.

to encompass these

considerations.

Interim arrangements by

their very nature are unable

dom to make one's own choices and not just funding someone's education. IDIA scholar Karthika Annamalai is a fine example of this belief. On completing law school, she got recruited by a top law firm. In her words, she has lived two lives: "One, of village girl who grew up in a world of sadness and desperation, devoid of hope, and the other, of an educated and confident woman, who was given an amazing opportunity to aspire."

Basheer remained committed to this belief, whether it was by intervening as an amicus in the Novartis case in the Supreme Court for access to medicines, or as a crusader protesting the compromise to privacy that Aadhaar posed in his view. Post the Novartis case, Basheer said he was happy with the operative part of the order (declining the patent) but sad that the order did not get the theory

of patent law quite right. Ever the professor! Basheer had so many ideas on funding and raising awareness that it was difficult to keep pace at times: He would often quip that it was his feminine multi-tasker side. One remarkable funding idea that he came up with was to request counsels to donate one appearance fee, to start with. This became an effective way for the Bar to open up to the idea of supporting IDIA. This is a good example of small beginnings going a long way as we

leader described the whole political scene

An important aspect of IDIA is working with law student volunteers to support

rarely had a refusal for this request thereafter.

scholars in navigating the competitive law school environment. When asked how IDIA runs without engaging workers, Basheer said, once people feel invested (meeting, befriending and working alongside scholars would usually help in this), the rest will follow. During my teaching stint, I saw this work first-hand with volunteers and IDIA scholars: Everyone believed in the larger cause, and that motivated them.

Last week, when Basheer did not respond to an email I sent, I assumed he was unwell again. I was also worrying about how IDIA would function without him. The worry now seems prophetic. On hearing of his passing I spoke to Justice Ruma Pal, who said, "Don't despair, the legacy will carry on." The fact that his friends (there are plenty of them) are reaching out to reaffirm their commitment while tipping a glass or two (as he would have) in his honour, is testament to how many lives he touched.

If the purpose of life is to do good, he did

The writer is a partner with Khaitan & Co LLP, Kolkata

AUGUST 13, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO



ENGINEERS DESERT IA JANATA POLL PREP ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE called upon the ALREADY UNDER SEVERE public attack for its questionable safety record and endemic flight Janata Party to prepare itself for the middelays, Indian Airlines now finds its engineers term poll, which seems inevitable. The deserting by the dozen, lured away by the Janata Party leader, addressing a media conhigher salaries of foreign airlines. Its internaference in Lucknow, said that nobody tional counterpart, Air India, faces a similar wanted the mid-term elections, yet the engineer drain. While 56 engineers of Indian events were leading to a situation in which Airlines have retired over the past two years, the poll was inescapable. The mid-term poll might be held in February, he felt. He said another 22 have resigned, mainly to take up lucrative jobs with foreign airlines. In the the Janata Party should utilise this short period for building up its organisation. same period, 76 aircraft technicians have also resigned. Some left for personal reasons but Vajpayee said that it was clear that the the majority have been snapped up by other Charan Singh government depended on Indira Gandhi and her will. The Janata airlines. This leaves the airlines short of 117

as nauseating in which the politicians had become "the laughing stocks".

FLOOD DEATHS

AT LEAST 1,000 people are feared to have died in the flash floods which engulfed Morvi, an industrial township in Rajkot district in Saurashtra, following breaches in the Macchu dam according to official sources. Reports from our Rajkot correspondent and from other nearby centres unofficially put the death toll at around 5,000. Following huge breaches in the Macchu dam due to torrential rains, the floods engulfed Morvi township, which is 65 kilometres from Rajkot, cutting it off by rail and road.

THE INDIAN EXPRESS, TUESDAY, AUGUST 13, 2019

13 THE IDEAS PAGE

The economy devil we don't know

There is a fundamental problem of demand today — something India has not encountered before. At the core of it is incomes that aren't rising enough



Harish Damodaran

INDIATRADITIONALLY NEVER had a demand problem. On the contrary, its economy was always supply-constrained.

Proof of no demand paucity is that between 2000-01 and 2015-16, domestic consumption of both finished steel and cement roughly trebled, from 26.3 million tonnes (mt) and 92 mt, to 81.5 mt and 269 mt, respectively. During the same period, annual sales of passenger vehicles quadrupled (from 6.9 lakh to 27.9 lakh), while growing 4.5 times in the case of two-wheelers (from 36.3 lakh to 164.6 lakh) and five times for commercial vehicles (from 1.4 lakh to 6.9 lakh). Also, the total air passengers flown jumped nearly 10 times (from 14 million to 135 million) and the number of telephone connections 30-fold (from 36.3 million to 1059.3 million).

Supply not keeping up with demand — recall those long waiting periods for telephones, LPG connections and Bajaj Chetak scooters was also manifested in inflation. Annual retail food inflation during the Nineties, and even the 10 years from 2006-07 to 2015-16, averaged 9.8 per cent. Not surprisingly, "supply management" measures – be it stocking limits under the Essential Commodities Act, export bans, zero-duty imports or selective credit control to restrict bank finance against cereals, pulses, sugar, oilseeds and raw cotton were par for the course.

All this has changed in the last three years or less. The certainty that producers once enjoyed — of finding buyers for their wares without doing much beyond minor price adjustments to bring supply and demand into equilibrium — has ceased to exist.

This hasn't been an overnight phenomenon. It started with agriculture from around mid-2014, when global agri-commodity prices crashed, leading to a collapse in export demand for Indian farm produce and simultaneously increasing vulnerability to imports. But the real deluge has happened in the last three years, especially after demonetisation. Consumer food inflation has, for 34 months running, from September 2016 to June 2019, ruled below general retail inflation and averaged a mere 1.3 per cent year-on-year.

While such a prolonged near-deflationary phase in farm prices is unprecedented, the other sector to have experienced a similar extended slump is real estate. According to the property consultancy firm Knight Frank, between 2013 and 2017, the number of new residential launches in India's top eight cities plunged from 4,20,105 to 1,03,570 units, with sales, too, dipping from 3,29,238 to 2,28,072 units. 2018 saw a mild recovery, but it marked the fourth year of growth in residential house prices trailing overall consumer inflation, with the gap progressively widening since mid-2016. As on June 2019, the unsold housing inventory of 4,50,263 units in these cities was still equivalent to 9.3 quarters of sale. Like agriculture, real estate transactions are significantly cash-based. Small wonder, this industry's woes have also intensified post demonetisation

But demonetisation and goods and services tax (GST) were events of late-2016 and 2017. Their effects shouldn't plausibly have lasted beyond, say, March 2018, when the total currency in circulation had reverted to predemonetisation levels. India Inc had, indeed,



welcomed demonetisation and GST, claiming that the temporary economic dislocations caused notwithstanding, these would help create a "level-playing field" vis-à-vis unorganised sector players who were avoiding taxes by doing business largely in cash.

What is interesting, though, is that the demand slowdown has spread to more industries in the last one year. Thus, sales of passenger vehicles have fallen year-on-year in every month between July 2018 and June 2019, barring October. The same goes for two-wheelers since December 2018. Hindustan Unilever, a bellweather for India's fast-moving consumer goods sector, has posted a drop in annual sales volume growth from 12 per cent in April-June 2018 to 7 per cent in January-March 2019 and 5 per cent in April-June 2019.

The reasons for such all-round demand deceleration, when the worst of demonetisation and GST are behind us, are hard to fathom. The most common explanation ascribes it to the liquidity squeeze experienced by non-banking financial companies (NBFCs), following the serial defaults on debt obligations by Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services Ltd last September. Now, it's true that NBFCs were accounting for over a third of the incremental credit in the system, with their retail loans (mainly for vehicle, consumer durables and home purchases) alone rising by 46.2 per cent during 2017-18 on top of 21.6 per cent the previous year. To the extent that their funds via bank borrowings and issuing of non-convertible debentures or commercial paper have dried up, it has had an obvious ripple effect on the economy.

The argument, however, misses the point. NBFC credit expansion from 2014-15 was primarily fuelled by non-performing assetsladen public sector banks cutting back on their lending. The big credit explosion, moreover, took place only after and because of demonetisation, which resulted in a flood of liquidity

they then lent to NFBCs, either directly or through market-based instruments that allowed Indiabulls and lesser firms to get money almost as cheaply as HDFC. The party couldn't have gone on. The NBFC credit freeze has, no doubt, affected sectors such as real estate, construction and automobiles. But how does one explain a third consecutive quarter of slowdown for even FMCG, as per the market research firm, Nielsen? And real estate's troubles, we know, preceded the current NBFC crisis. The diagnosis is clear: There is a funda-

mental problem of demand today — a devil India has never encountered before. At the core of it is incomes that aren't rising enough. Not only have household savings come down from 22.5 per cent to 17.2 per cent of GDP between 2012-12 and 2017-18, estimates Kotak Institutional Equities — but consumption is also feeling the pinch now. When jobs and incomes are under strain, how much can loan-pushing by NBFCs help? A two-wheeler loan has to ultimately be paid from one's salary or wages.

with banks and mutual funds. This excess cash

The question well worth asking is how much of this income and demand stress is actually an outcome of demonetisation and GST? The informal sector, to quote TN Ninan (Seminar, January 2018), was some kind of an "employment sink" and "shock absorber" for the Indian economy. It also provided the underlying demand support for goods and services that were bought, stocked and distributed through vast decentralised networks.

The country's formal economy may well be growing by 7-8 per cent today, which the official GDP data is, perhaps, rightly capturing. But if the informal un-measurable part has been contracting by 20-25 per cent a year, the effects on demand need no elaboration.

harish.damodaran@expressindia.com

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"Here is a semi-autonomous state (Jammu & Kashmir), part of a federal union protected by a constitution, which has seen its democratic freedoms abruptly abolished by executive decree. This was a very Indian coup, but one with a —THE GUARDIAN global context."

Exorcising Curzon's ghost

By reorganising Kashmir's political status, Modi government is addressing a colonial mess



BY C RAJA MOHAN

AS INDIA AND Pakistan lurch towards a new phase in their extended conflict over Kashmir, it is easy to miss the larger context of the Subcontinent's troubled frontiers. More than a century ago, Lord Curzon, spoke on the problem of constructing stable frontiers among the emerging European nations as well between their expanding empires in the Americas, Africa and Asia.

Curzon's 1907 Romanes Lecture at Oxford University continues to offer fresh insights into the Subcontinent's contemporary frontier problems. Curzon said managing frontiers is the most important task for any leader. For stable frontiers are a precondition for national development. "Frontiers are indeed the razor's edge on which hang suspended the modern issues of war or peace, of life or death to nations". Curzon was convinced the problem of frontiers will never disappear from world politics, but can be managed through political accommodation and scientific demarcation of boundaries.

Since Curzon, frontiers continued to change in Europe — through 1919, 1945, 1991 and most recently in 2011 between Russia and Ukraine. Britain is struggling to wrap up the Brexit negotiations with the European Union over the so-called "Irish Backstop". It is about the nature of the border between Britain and Republic of Ireland as the former walks out of the EU and the latter stays in. The biggest political issue in North America is about Trump's effort to build a Great Wall on the border with Mexico.

In Africa and Asia, there are countless territorial conflicts. The Indo-Tibetan frontier opened up by Curzon remains a contested boundary dispute between India and China. More broadly, the buffers and protectorates constructed by the Raj to limit conflict with Russia are now zones of political contestation between India and a rising China.

The Durand Line drawn between India and Afghanistan in 1893, a few years before Curzon arrived in India, remains disputed between Kabul and Islamabad. Even the Taliban, nurtured by Pakistan as an instrument to gain influence in Afghanistan, does not accept the Durand Line.

The North West Frontier Province (now called Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), that Curzon created out of the Pashtun lands in 1901, has seen endless conflict for the last four decades and hopes for a different future remain dim. Many other peripheries of the Raj, from Balochistan in the west to Xinjiang and Kashmir in the north to Tibet and the eastern Himalayan regions between India, upper Burma and China are all in turmoil of varying degrees.

Part of the problem lies in the nature of the frontiers that the Subcontinent inherited from the Raj. The land borders of India were not defined by a single line; but by

what Curzon identifies as the three-fold frontier. There was the "administrative frontier" that marked out regions that the Raj governed to the fullest extent. Beyond that was the "frontier of active defence" like the Durand Line and a third was the "strategic frontier" consisting of the outer boundaries of protectorates over which the Raj exercised a measure of control.

While the British Raj, Czarist Russia and Qing China found ways to live with ambiguities in remote corners of the empire, the new nationalist regimes that succeeded them have had much more difficulty. The Partition of the Subcontinent, based on religious considerations, added an explosive dimension to an already complex inheritance. The successor states to the empires laid formal claims to tracts of territory that had an ambivalent status, but have struggled to realise them.

India's recent decision to revoke the special status of Kashmir is about the unfinished task of extending effective territorial sovereignty over lands it has claimed Maoist China was quicker and more decisive than India in trying cleaning out the ambiguities on its frontiers. As trouble in Xinjiang, Tibet and Hong Kong shows, success has eluded one of the hardest states that the modern world has known.

Pakistan has struggled to find stability on its western border lands — where the Baloch and the Pashtun continue to challenge its claims. The Indian state, with its political hand-wringing and policy incrementalism, has been a little more effective than Pakistan. But it continues to encounter significant challenges.

China reacted furiously when Delhi in 1975 ended Sikkim's protectorate status and integrated it with India. It took nearly three decades for China to accept the new reality. Beijing continues to claim the entire state of Arunachal Pradesh. But the arguments with China are now mostly political. After instigating trouble in each other's territory for a period, Delhi and Beijing are now committed to managing the dispute peacefully, while expanding the broader relationship. There is frequent spike in military tensions, but there has been no shooting war.

India has had greater success with Bangladesh. Early on in his first term, Prime Minister Narendra Modi seized the opportunities to settle the disputes with Dhaka on the land and maritime boundary inherited from the Partition. But unlike Dhaka and Beijing, Rawalpindi is not really prepared for a peaceful resolution. Repeated efforts by Indira Gandhi (1972), Atal Bihari Vajpayee (1999), and Manmohan Singh (2005-07) ended in failure. The inherent difficulty of negotiation has been compounded by Pakistan's use of terrorism and Kashmir's ambiguous political status within the Indian Union.

In confronting Pakistan's terrorism and reorganising the political status of Kashmir, the Modi government has set a new policy template. The key to its success lies in finding early political reconciliation within Kashmir and persuading the Pakistan army that its interests are better served by stable, peaceful and a legitimate frontier with India. It could be a long haul, but the journey has begun.

The writer is director, Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore and a contributing editor on international affairs for The Indian Express

Demolishing a wall, uniting a people

The certainty that producers

without doing much beyond

minor price adjustments to

bring supply and demand

ceased to exist. This hasn't

phenomenon. It started with

mid-2014, when global agri-

commodity prices crashed,

export demand for Indian

simultaneously increasing

vulnerability to imports. But

the real deluge has happened

into equilibrium — has

agriculture from around

leading to a collapse in

in the last three years,

especially after

demonetisation.

farm produce and

been an overnight

once enjoyed — of finding

buyers for their wares

With removal of special status, Kashmir has finally become one with India

Akhilesh Mishra

SYAMA PRASAD MOOKERJEE, founder of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, gave up his life fighting against Article 370. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, then a feisty young leader, while speaking in the Lok Sabha in 1968, correctly predicted the disastrous consequences of keeping this divisive provision in the Constitution. Narendra Modi, then a young party activist, organised a series of public events in the 1990s, the most famous among them the Tiranga Yatra of 1993, each dedicated to the mission of fully integrating the region of Jammu and Kashmir. Sushma Swaraj's last public message, now etched in eternity, was one of thanking Prime Minister Modi for fulfilling a long-cherished dream in her lifetime. BJP is now, for the first time in its existence, close to a working majority in the Rajya Sabha. And the first major decision taken by PM Modi when this milestone was achieved, was to abrogate Article 370.

There is an inherent romanticism in the dedication of generations of political workers and leaders to the cause of nation building. As history has shown, it is the unwavering commitment of such romantics that changes the course of history.

To understand why Article 370 has been such a bone of contention for generations of nation builders, one has to understand the impact of this provision. The physical terri-

epaper indianexpress.com

tory of Jammu and Kashmir merged with India in 1947. But what Article 370 ensured was that the people were, almost by design, prevented from integrating with the lifeblood of the national mainstream. The state was physically located next to two Indian states, but for all practical purposes it could have been located in another continent. Nations bond and unite over time due to the unhindered flow of people, trade, ideas, customs, food, festivals, culture and attire. This melting pot of building the modern Indian Republic went exactly as per the script the founding fathers envisioned. The fissiparous tendencies that some regions in the south or the northeast experienced during the early decades of Independence have all but vanished. The only region that has stood as an exception to this unifying impulse is the one which was deliberately kept away by the machinations of Jawaharlal Nehru and Sheikh Abdullah.

For 70 years, the people in Kashmir and other parts of the country simply did not get to know each other. The consequences of this reality manifested in a rather unexpected way in the winter of 2005. The region of Kashmir had just been ravaged by a devastating earthquake. While the Indian state responded with all the resources at its com-

mand, the response from the people and civil society was rather lukewarm. This was surprising given that people from all across the country had mobilised in large numbers, only recently, to help the suffering people in the wake of tsunami of 2004. Many were bewildered at this phenomenon and indeed this question was asked in many articles. Why was it that people living in Uttar Pradesh or Punjab felt more empathetic towards people living far down to the south than to their more immediate neighbour to the north? Adding to the puzzle was another dimension —what was it about Kashmir that the same people who were willing to go to war for the land did not display the same empathy when it came to helping the people during the time of a natural disaster?

One need look no further than the generational impact of Article 370. It simply did not allow the people to people bond, to build and flourish. For the people living in other parts of the country, they had no lived experience of knowing and growing up with a Kashmiri as a neighbour or a friend or a colleague. The process of being emotionally vested in each other simply did not take place. For the people of Kashmir, their primary exposure to India was not the Indian people but the organs of the Indian state. It was natural, then,

that the gulf would only widen over the years.

Article 370 was supposed to give special status to the region of Kashmir. In reality, what it delivered was just a piece of land. The instrument conceived by Nehru was more devastating in its consequences than the Berlin Wall. The physical presence of that wall struck out in its obscenity each day. The wall of Article 370 was like the "invisible Berlin Wall", only more tyrannical and diabolical in its impact. What Narendra Modi has done by tearing down the Article 370 wall, 30 years after the fall of Berlin Wall, is that for the first time in independent India a signal has been sent that the Indian national project in Kashmir is about the people and

not just the land. The land was physically with India anyway, with or without Article 370. With the obliteration of the divisive instrument, the people have also now finally become one. Amit Shah, the man who piloted the move in Parliament and Narendra Modi will go down in history as the two who broke the shackles of 70 years of failed policy and brought about a new dawn.

> The writer is CEO, Bluekraft Digital Foundation and was earlier director (content) MyGov

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CADRE, NOT LEADER

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'The rewind' (IE, August 12). India now has highest unemployment in the last 30 years. Rural wages have been stagnant. Health and education are being privatised. Yet, Congress members are missing as an opposition force, both on the street and in legislative assemblies. The Congress raised only one matter strongly in this session of Parliament the defections of its MLAs in Karnataka, which affects the party, not people. The crisis in the Congress is about the cadre, while Congressmen keep focusing on

the leadership. Suchak D Patel, Ahmedabad

NO EXCEPTIONS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'A long night in the Valley' (IE, August 12). Not going into complicated issues such as the Constitution or Article 370, the simple fact is that for a woman in the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir marrying a "non-state" man meant losing her rights. Wasn't that legalised misogyny? Should the double standards have continued? Isha shukla, Lucknow

WE AND I

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'They is a problem' (IE, August 10). It's not just the

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

To encourage quality reader intervention, The Indian **Express offers the Letter of** the Week award. The letter adjudged the best for the week is published every Saturday. Letters may be e-mailed to editpage@expressindia.com

or sent to The Indian Express, B-1/B, Sector 10, Noida-UP 201301. Letter writers should mention their postal address and phone number.

THE WINNER RECEIVES **SELECT EXPRESS PUBLICATIONS**

powerful who amuse themselves by the use of a collective pronoun. Among Dalit-Bahujans, where the notion of "personal" is absent, human bonds are given expression in terms of "we". This is simply because individual existence has culturally been subsumed in the collective. This is reflected in language.

G Javaid Rasool, via email

Crisis as opportunity

The Nehru-Gandhi dynasty must withdraw without leaving a vacuum in the Congress

onia Gandhi's return as the Congress party president – an interim measure, apparently – ends the leadership vacuum since the party's massive defeat in the 17th Lok Sabha election, but only superficially. When Rahul Gandhi succeeded her in 2017, Ms. Gandhi had held the post for 19 years, the longest tenure for anyone in the party's 134-year history. Despite a spirited poll campaign, Mr. Gandhi could not reverse the fortunes of the party that had already been in a freefall. In what some of his party leaders thought was an impetuous decision, he resigned as the party president, after the Lok Sabha defeat, pushing the organisation into a tailspin. While the collapse of the party was on his watch, its vitals had been corroded in the years before he took over. While holding that post for nearly two decades was unwise, the cardinal failure of Ms. Gandhi's leadership was in not preparing the ground for a transition, even if it were to be within the family. Mr. Gandhi who was to take over as party president, did not join the government, undermining his credibility as a Prime Ministerial aspirant. While Ms. Gandhi allowed politics to be reduced to intrigues in her durbar, Mr. Gandhi spent his time on misjudged priorities such as revamping the student and youth wings of the party.

In her second coming as party chief, Ms. Gandhi must use her authority to not only pave the way for a smooth transition of leadership but also ensure that the role of the family in the party is reimagined. It is true that in the absence of any coherent unifying thought – as evidenced in the squabble among its leaders over the Centre's decision to unilaterally change the constitutional status of J&K – the family has been the glue that held the Congress together. However, what used to be the best solution for all crises in the Congress – the surname – is itself a crisis for the party, in the current political climate. The focused attack on the Nehru-Gandhi legacy by the advancing Hindutva troops has contributed to the diminishing influence of the family, but the fact is also that an increasing number of people abhor dynasty politics and the privileges associated with it. Ms. Gandhi has an opportunity, nay a responsibility, to proactively help the old guard and the younger generation within the Congress to reconcile their differences and devise a common purpose of existence. At the helm of the party yet again, Ms. Gandhi must now focus on ending the centrality of the family in Congress, in a thoughtful manner.

Strongman candidate

Gotabaya nomination may strengthen view that Rajapaksas are pursuing family interests

n naming his brother Gotabaya Rajapaksa as his party's presidential candidate, former Sri Lankan presi-▲ dent Mahinda Rajapaksa has apparently gone by his instinctive understanding that the people may favour a strong leader who prioritises internal security. Mr. Gotabaya, a former defence secretary credited with being the brain behind the crushing military defeat inflicted on the Liberation Tigers in 2009, is the candidate of the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP). The party was launched in 2016 by Mahinda Rajapaksa lovalists, but he has taken over its leadership only now. Sri Lanka is set to have a presidential election before the year is out, one that would be a virtual referendum on the performance of a power-sharing arrangement between political rivals from the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) and the United National Party (UNP). The alliance of Maithripala Sirisena and Ranil Wickremesinghe came to power in 2015 on the promise of 'good governance', and a democratic departure from nearly a decade of authoritarian rule, majoritarian triumphalism and denudation of democratic institutions under Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa. The Sirisena-Wickremesinghe combination does not seem to have done enough to revive the economy or introduce political and economic reforms. Their alliance collapsed last year due to persistent differences, and in October 2018, Mr. Sirisena sought to replace Mr. Wickremesinghe with Mr. Rajapaksa. The courts stalled the move and restored the UNP leader's office. Earlier this year, the Easter Sunday bomb blasts in churches and hotels, may have brought back popular apprehensions about national security and accentuated differences in the multi-ethnic country. In this backdrop, the candidature of Mr. Gotabaya Rajapaksa is no surprise.

However, Mr. Gotabaya's presence in the fray comes with its own controversies. His strongman image evokes fear among minorities. His name is linked with war crimes, murder, corruption cases as well as with the infamous 'white van abductions' that led to many disappearances. That he holds dual citizenship is another controversy, but it is now claimed he has renounced his U.S. citizenship and obtained a new Sri Lankan passport. With Mr. Mahinda likely to aim for the PM's position in a Gotabaya presidency, the candidacy may reinforce their detractors' view that the Rajapaksas are keen on securing their family's interests. His brother Basil Rajapaksa recently said in support of Mr. Gotabaya that elimination of corruption in Sri Lanka "needs a terminator", but the appellation only evoked sarcastic approbation for its deadly and destructive import. He will most likely have the support of President Sirisena's SLFP. However, the UNP is yet to decide on its candidate. It will have to choose from among its leader, Mr. Wickremesinghe, deputy leader Sajith Premadasa, and Parliament Speaker Karu Jayasuriya. A larger question now is whether Sri Lanka still believes in the platform of reform and progress that decided the 2015 elections, or would not mind a reversion to the Rajapaksa era.

An abrogation of democratic principles

The Kashmir move affects the robust nature of Indian democracy in addressing internal conflicts and alienation



The recent abrogation of Article 370 ending the special status of Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) in the Indian Constitution along with the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Bill, 2019, bifurcating the State into two Union Territories (J&K and Ladakh), have delivered a knock-out blow to the long-drawn-out peace process in Kashmir.

These moves also herald a paradigm shift in the fundamental premises and parameters of India's approach towards the Kashmir issue, with long-term implications for its political strategy of tackling such internal conflicts. There are three cardinal principles which successive political regimes have hitherto followed in addressing internal conflicts and seeking political reconciliation with alienated segments of the populace. These in turn have bolstered the robust and resilient nature of Indian democracy. The future, however, appears much more uncertain. Here

Accommodative parameters The first principle entails adhering to the letter and spirit of the Indian Constitution. Its far-sighted and malleable nature has stood the test of time. Since 1947, India has faced a wide-ranging nature of political demands ranging from secession, to the creation of a separate State for Jammu, Union Territory status for Ladakh and others seeking affirmative discrimination for the Dogri language, Scheduled Tribe

In response, the central leadership has tried finding ways and means within the overarching parameters of the Indian Constitu-

status for Gujjars and Paharis and

tion and have rarely been disappointed. In view of the difficult circumstances under which the Dogra Maharaja Hari Singh had acceded to India, Article 370 itself offered an excellent example as to how the special needs and political aspirations of the people of J&K could be politically and constitutionally accommodated by India's Constitution makers.

Decades later, when Ladakhi Buddhists launched an agitation in 1989, demanding Union Territory status, the Indian Constitution once again made space for political experimentation by introducing intermediate state structures the creation of two autonomous hill councils for Leh and Kargil.

Weakening federalism

Against this backdrop, it is for the first time in independent India's history that the Bharatiya Janata Party government has used constitutional provisions for opposite ends: to undermine and weaken India's federal character by downgrading a State and territorially dividing it into two Union Territories without the consent of the people of J&K.

The method adopted to execute this decision is of special concern because by equating or replacing the Constituent Assembly of J&K (which was dissolved in 1957) with the Legislative Assembly of J&K, and Parliament appropriating the latter's powers since the State is under President's rule, the Central government has acted unilaterally to reorganise the State of J&K.

This rests not only on legally shaky ground but also flies in the face of constitutional norms and propriety. If this passes judicial scrutiny, it can then be done to any State in India, with drastic implications for its federal character.

The second principle pertains to the maxim of 'inclusivity', that is, a political demand being made must be inclusive in terms of representing the interests of all those in whose name it is made. This supported bridge building



and coalition-making among different communities certainly helped in shaping the peace process, in turn bolstering India's deeply diverse and plural character.

In J&K's context too, it has also proven to be a critical common factor helping to explain the failures and successes of various political demands. The Kashmiri idea of self-determination in a multiethnic, multi-religious and multilingual society, for instance, was to call for a plebiscite as mandated by the UN resolutions of 1949 or seek an independent and sovereign State of J&K, but this was not the approach taken by other communities such as the Dogras, Kashmiri Pandits, Gujjars, Bakkarwals, and Ladakhi Buddhists. In the 1950s, as indeed in the 1990s, the demand by Kashmiri Muslims for a right to self-determination or azadi was politically checkmated by these communities as their political choices were very different; time and again, an exclusively Valley-focussed approach doomed the prospects of the peace process.

Demographic impact

The BJP government's move has, however, not only completely swung the pendulum but is also antithetical to the very idea of inclusivity. By turning J&K, especially the Valley, into a virtually open air prison, with a full clampdown and information blackout, the message is clear: that New Delhi alone will decide the political future of the people of J&K with no room for any consultative process and no space for dissent.

The decision to divide the State is particularly fraught with the risk of deepening regional and communal fault lines. While Ladakhi Buddhists, for instance, are now celebrating the fulfilment of their long pending demand for Union Territory's status, the voices of Kargilis who are still under a strict curfew are yet to be heard. They may not support this decision because 'a Union Territory without a legislature' not only negates the idea of decentralisation of power to the grassroots (the undergirding principle of the autonomous hill council) but could well lead to a shifting of the loci of power to Leh, resulting in losing whatever gains they have assiduously made over

The celebrations by Kashmiri Pandits are anticipated because of the gross injustice and displacement they have suffered since their forced exodus from the Valley in the early 1990s. It remains to be seen whether the abrogation of Article 370 by itself, would facilitate their return to the Valley without the support of local Kashmiri Muslims and rising violence.

Instead of making all communities equal stakeholders in the peace process, the BJP government's decision may well end up pitching one community against the other. A deepening of societal fissures and communal fault lines do not go hand in hand with the agenda of peace-making.

The third principle refers to a promise and the practices of holding a dialogue process and sharing political power with opponents of all hues. In Kashmir, successive Central governments have until now never shut the door of dialogue in the face of political opponents who have ranged from the Sheikh Abdullah-led Plebiscite Front in the 1960s to the Muslim United Front in the 1980s to the Hurriyat leadership since the 1990s. This also holds true for mil-

While the bottomline of Congress governments has been a commitment by their opponents to abjure the path of violence and abide by the Indian Constitution, the erstwhile Vajpayee-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) regime was even more generous in offering the broad framework of 'insaniyat, jamhooriyat and Kashmiriyat'.

Political fallout

In a significant point of departure, the present government is pursuing a hard, top-down approach. The Home Minister has categorically ruled out any dialogue with militants and the Hurriyat, and has even castigated the mainstream regional political leadership of the National Conference and Jammu and Kashmir Peoples Democratic Party for being corrupt, promoting family rule and fomenting separatism and violence. This move has nullified the very idea of a process of dialogue and runs the risk of discrediting the mainstream politicians and obliterating the middle ground between the militants and mainstream politicians.

The Prime Minister in his recent address to the nation, expressed hope that new leadership in Kashmir would emerge from grassroots politics. It is important to note that in 1,407 out of 2,135 halqas or village clusters, there was no voting at all in the panchayat elections that were held in 2018. This does not lend credence to youth being optimistic about joining mainstream politics especially after the abrogation of Article 370, a move which is only likely to deepen the alienation. The Modi government faces an uphill task in identifying credible local partners in ushering in peace to the Valley, which may well end up in facing yet another impasse.

Navnita Chadha Behera is the author of 'Demystifying Kashmir' and 'State, Identity and Violence: Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh

Countering the Right's hegemony

In a fightback, only a deep fostering of intra-subaltern solidarity using culture can help



AJAY GUDAVARTHY

ndia has witnessed the rise of the Hindu Right as not just a Lpolitical but also a cultural force like never before. The has been made possible by a series of tactical moves which has allowed for a consolidation of power with the traditional castes and classes.

The Right has managed to do this by exploiting and magnifying micro-level social conflicts that lie dormant in order to create a metalevel hierarchy and reinforce the hold of traditional power. It has led to a weakening of the resistance of lower end social groups by fragmenting them and allowing intra-caste, intra-religious and intra-regional differences to articulate themselves in order to de-legitimise the resistance and mobility of vulnerable social groups that have so far benefited and accrued some social power. The Right negates the power of such groups in the name of justice and power to those even weaker and further neglected.

In terms of caste, it is now well known that the Right has made significant advances in terms of breaking up Dalit sub-castes and fully exploiting intra-sub caste tensions and mutual prejudices.

Everyday prejudices

Similarly, it is making advances in mobilising lesser mobilised Other Backward Classes (OBC) groups against dominant OBC groups such as Yadavs and Kurmis. It is further sharpening the conflict between OBCs and Dalits. Added to all this is allowing the dominant Rajput caste to vent its angst against the mobility Dalits have accrued so far: by allowing street violence and mob lynching of Dalits. It is reinforcing social power of dominant castes at one end and fragmenting this through a mobilisation of lesser mobilised sub-castes of subaltern castes. It is sharpening dormant prejudices that have existed for a long time between subaltern castes, caste and religion, and religion and region.

Similarly, the relation between Dalits and OBCs has been fraught with mutual suspicion and dislike, in spite of four decades of 'Bahujan' identity having been mobilised, mostly in the north. In fact, B.R. Ambedkar himself identified the OBCs as 'savarnas' and sometimes equates them with Aryans. This again collates in complex ways with regional dynamics between the north and the south. What the location of the OBCs is in this complex matrix is not very



clear historically; politically the kind of mobility they have got after the implementation of the Mandal Commission has only sharpened the differences. Violent attacks against Dalits by the OBCs are a continuous, if less discussed aspect of Indian politics. The Khairlanii incident was the most recent attack against Dalits by the Kunbis who are listed as OBCs in Maharashtra.

Within the minority religion too, which includes Muslims, there are castes, sects and other differentiations. For instance, in Kashmir, there are differences between Sunnis and Shias, between Sunnis of the Valley and those in the border areas of Poonch and Rajouri, and those living in Ladakh. They neither inter-marry nor do they enjoy amicable relations. Class and regional prejudices overlap with that of sect and caste.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh-led hegemony is not a top-

down machination even if there is fear, intimidation, control of media and destabilisation of institutions. The current dispensation is bringing into the open all the cultural contradictions that existed historically. While the Congress's inclusive nationalism attempted to accommodate social groups politically without overcoming social prejudices, the BJP's muscular nationalism lies in including them politically but dividing them socially. The divisions existed; the Right is only widening them.

A new multitude

The fight against the Right is only focusing on critiquing its strategies and exposing it without offering a positive fight to construct an intrasubaltern solidarity. There needs to be a robust cultural programme of fighting prejudices, encouraging inter-dining and inter-marriages. Not mere tolerance but positive celebration of cultural differences is required. Whether or not the Right can be made to retreat depends on this deep cultural programme. We are not clear how one should go about it. This may have to happen as more of a cultural than a political fight. It has to be about humanity, not power; it has to be more about everyday realities than about a programmatic

Every move towards solidarity Ajay Gudavarthy is Associate Professor, is also perceived as lowering the Centre for Political Studies, JNU

status of groups that are higher-up in the ladder-like structure even if they are simultaneously victimised by dominant groups. Subdivision of Dalits is viewed as a pulling down of the relatively wellto-do castes within Dalits; a sub-division of OBCs is seen as a mode of allowing for the domination of traditional caste Hindus. Gandhi at tempted 'change without conflict': he failed to usher in faster change but offered a semblance of burying conflict. Today, we are witnessing conflict and change itself is suspended between mobility and reinforcing traditional hierarchies. Mere critiquing and electoral defeat of the Right is not going to

Castes, religious groups and regional identities should fight it upfront by overcoming the prejudice within. To truly fight the Right, relatively dominant social groups must be prepared to lose a bit of social power they wield, however small it may be. It would also mean being critical of one's own social location, however oppressed it may be. Is this realistic at the current historical juncture? The Right compulsively requires fear, anxiety and insecurity to block the process. What are the cultural resources on the other side of the political divide?

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.

Putting back the hood

The situation in Kashmir is not normal (Page 1. "Restrictions return to Valley", August 12). The whole of Kashmir is under arrest. If things were fine, why are the communications systems still blocked? If the people of Kashmir really appreciate the "bold decisions" made by the Central government, there should have been widespread jubilation with the tricolour hoisted on all buildings. You cannot force someone to tag your line, at gunpoint. India and Pakistan cannot redraw the map of Kashmir using ink or bloodshed. Kashmiris have to express a oneness in their hearts and minds.

One is also in agreement with Jeremy Corbyn, the Leader of the U.K.'s Opposition Labour Party, that the Kashmir issue should be resolved through UN resolutions. T. ANAND RAJ,

■ The abrogation of Article 370 was hailed as a masterstroke by the Central government especially as it was seen to be the longcoveted weapon to combat terrorism. But the possibility that prayers may not be permitted at Jamia Masjid, one of the largest mosques, may hurt religious sentiments. It is one thing to say that law and order will be maintained and quite another to deny citizens the basic right to offer prayers,

especially on an auspicious occasion. Extra deployment of paramilitary forces in places of congregation would have been a better option than imposing a blanket ban. At some stage or the other, the security arrangements will need to be relaxed. V. LAKSHMANAN, Tirupur, Tamil Nadu

■ Gagging the fourth estate is akin to derailing democracy. How long is the Central government planning to gag the media and correspondingly the voices of Kashmiris? One can redraw land boundaries but hearts have to be won. There is clearly a fear of mass gatherings and processions, which is the only way to explain why restrictions of all kinds are being

reimposed. The words attributed to Abraham Lincoln come to mind: "You can fool all the people some of the time, and some of the people all the time, but you cannot fool all the people all TILAK SUBRAMANIAN V.,

Kunjibettu, Udupi, Karnataka

Water revolution The sudden burst in monsoon activity has exposed the deep faultlines in India's water management policies. While Chennai remains parched, large parts of east and south India are reeling under floods. The erratic nature of the monsoon rains, overexploitation of groundwater and cropping patterns of agriculture should lead to a radical

change in India's water management methods. There has to be a water revolution which lays stress on reuse of waste water, setting up farmponds and making scientifically done rainwater harvesting mandatory. Adapting water

conservation techniques such as drip irrigation technology from Israel can also help make India water secure.

V.S. SINDHURI, Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh

MORE LETTERS ONLINE:

CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:

In the "From the Archives" column (OpEd page, Aug. 12, 2019), the entry corresponding to a hundred years ago should have said August 12, 1919.

In "The forms of federalism in India" (FAQ page, Aug. 11, 2019), a sentence that read "Despite being a single administrative unit, the Union Territory is 'non-contiguous'. That is, its territory is limited to one extent of land" should be amended to say not limited to one extent of land.

In the Sunday Magazine piece "Nemat Sadat: Gay, Muslim, Afghan, immigrant" (In conversation, Literary Review, Aug. 4, 2019) the reference to Nemat Sadat's growing up in South Carolina should be corrected to read as *southern California*. Elsewhere in the same piece, a quote attributed to him as saying that he had to prove himself as a Muslim should be corrected to read as an

The Readers' Editor's office can be contacted by Telephone: +91-44-28418297/28576300;

The perilous state of academic freedom

The present wave of anti-intellectualism, where informed opinions are ridiculed, poses a serious threat



RAJEEV BHARGAVA

To express opinions is the fundamental right of every Indian; so also to claim that her opinions are true. But whether in fact they are true isn't in the hands of the person who expresses them. Their truth, validity and even plausibility are determined through contestation and scrutiny by

More importantly, some types of scrutiny are more scrupulous, thorough and rigorous than others. They uncover indefensible, baseless or unsustainable opinions. They demonstrate that other opinions are less-biased, withstand the test of time, and have a greater openness in accepting their fallibility. In doing so, these inquiries produce a better, clearer understanding of the world, providing a deeper insight into the complexities of the human condition. Therefore, they are of a different qualitative worth than others, more deserving of being called 'knowledge'. Knowledge-production begins with opinions but does not end with them.

Academic freedom protects such spaces of contestation and scrutiny through which knowledge is produced. It refers to the freedom of scholars to conduct critical enquiry, and the freedom of teachers and students to collectively deliberate on any idea without fear of sanction, censure or illegitimate interference. To sift knowledge from mere opinion requires a sound training in research and an awareness of professional standards of scholarship, norms of peer engagement and time-tested, disciplined ways of knowing (methodologies). This is true of all practices involving standards of excellence. For instance, it is not my subjective opinion that Viv Richards was a great batsman. This fact is established by the collective judgment of the greats of international cricket.

Patiently acquired skills

In short, academic freedom protects the patiently acquired skills and practices of all such knowledge-producing and knowledge-transmitting



agents (teachers, researchers and students). Since academic practices are sustained within institutions, academic freedom includes the autonomy of institutions where teaching and scholarly research is conducted.

My intellectual interest in academic freedom was provoked when, in 1999, I was asked to contribute a short essay on the state of academic freedom in India to Academe, a journal of the American Association of University Professors. In that article, I claimed that the freedom of scholars and autonomy of academic institutions is usually threatened by internal as well as external factors.

Internal threats appear when academic institutions are weakened from within, as when academics themselves lose sight of the standards of excellence internal to the practice of research and teaching. External threats develop, on the other hand, when academic institutions are undermined by oppressive communities, the coercive apparatus of the state or unbridled market forces. I had then argued that Indian academia was severely threatened by oppressive communities and self-imposed impediments by academics, but less so by the market or the state.

I took my own community to task for having succumbed to what I called the over-ideologisation of the mind. Many academics, in a hurry to bridge the gap between theory and practice, seemed to me to have replaced patient, open-ended deliberation with dogma and prefabricated, lazy solutions. Other internal threats to academic freedom flowed from wider societal malaise. For instance, merit-based institutions were being converted to little fiefdoms run by academic tin gods doling out petty patronage to loyal supporters and creating suffocating tyrannies for others. In such contexts, ideas were applauded or condemned not for their intrinsic worth but with an eye on who articulated them – one of 'us' or one of 'them', A person's caste, creed or political proclivity mattered more than the evidence or argument provided. Such habits of the mind were hardly conducive to the growth

of a tradition of scholarly work. A more serious danger to academic freedom in India came. I believed. from illiberal communities. I illustrated my point by pointing to the fate of the late historian Mushirul Hasan, who was victimised by extremist fellow-Muslims for a rather innocuous remark on the ban on Rushdie's Satanic Verses.

Interestingly, barring the brief period of Emergency, academic freedom in post-Independence India, I claimed, was not throttled by the state. I did not remember instances of seminars being monitored, academic books being banned, or the imprisonment of academics for their views. However, covert and overt pressures on academic institutions by democratically elected governments were commonplace. As it began to lose its dominance, an edgy and insecure Congress Party had started becoming increasingly unprincipled and randomly interventionist. In West Bengal and Kerela, the Communists could never resist illegitimately interfering in college and university appointments.

The Bharatiya Janata Party-led coalition, in power at the Centre then, had harmed the institutional integrity of the prestigious Institute of Advanced Study, Simla. Its governing body was packed with handpicked supporters.

What is the state of academic freedom today, twenty years after that article was written? I fear that more and more academics in positions of power appear to be not just over-ideologised but politically indoctrinated. A deepening societal intolerance has only intensified attacks on academic freedom. The exclusion of several important books from university syllabi, entirely on non-academic grounds, exemplifies this. State interference has increased, sacrificing critical pedagogical practices in the name of the government's idea of national interest. The continuing victimisation of the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), one of the premier academic institutions of the country by the current government's own reckoning, illustrates this.

Knowledge a 'commodity'

Alarmingly, new threats to academic freedom have emerged. One comes from the corporatisation of academia, by which I mean the modelling of universities on business corporations. This has naturalised the viewing of administration as management, faculty as paid personnel, and students as consumers who have a right to demand what should be taught, as if knowledge can be purchased as a commodity according to one's taste! When corporate power exercises control over faculty and curricula, vice chancellors and college principals can hire, fire, and change faculty assignments with as

much whim as any corporate CEO. But the most serious threat to the world of knowledge comes from 'anti-intellectualism' that finds the very idea of thought reprehensible. Thinking, reasoning, questioning and critique are deemed dangerous, to be treated with utter disdain. The distinction between knowledge and opinion is entirely blurred; ideas of informed authority, professional academic standards and academic expertise are ridiculed. The very idea that the task of education is to transform students into critical agents, who actively question the common sense of a society, is severely undermined.

If these trends continue, the university as a site of autonomous scholarship, independent thought, and uncorrupted inquiry will be disassembled. Our best young minds will emigrate and the very future of our country imperilled by another 'brain drain'. India may not easily recover from this blow.

Rajeev Bhargava is a political theorist with the Centre for the Study of Developing

Rooting AI in ethics

A technology should be evaluated both on the basis of its utility and the intention of its creator



N. DAYASINDHU

We can intuitively recognise whether an action is ethical or not. Let us look at the theoretical basis of understanding ethics with an example. A cigarette company wants to decide on launching a new product, whose primary feature is reduced tar. It plans to tell customers that the lower tar content is a 'healthier' option. This is only half true. In reality, a smoker may have to inhale more frequently from a cigarette with lower tar to get the flavour of a regular cigarette.

Let us analyse this from three dominant ethical perspectives:

First, the egoistic perspective states that we take actions that result in the greatest good for oneself. The cigarette company is likely to sell more cigarettes, assuming that the new product wins over more new customers. From an egoistic perspective, hence, the company should launch the new cigarette. Second, the utilitarian perspective states that we take actions that result in the greatest good for all. Launching the new cigarette is good for the company. The new brand of cigarette also provides a 'healthier' choice for smokers. And more choice is good for customers. Hence, the company should launch the product.

The egoistic and utilitarian perspectives together form the 'teleological perspective', where the focus is on the results that achieve the greatest good.

Third, the 'deontological perspective', on the other hand, focusses more on the intention of the maker than the results. The company deceives the customer when it says that the new cigarette is 'healthier'. Knowingly endangering the health of humans is not an ethical intention. So, the company should not launch this cigarette.

The flawed facial recognition system

In the context of Artificial Intelligence (AI), my hypothesis is that most commercially available AI systems are optimised using the teleological perspectives and not the deontological perspective. Let us analyse a facial recognition system, a showcase for AI's success. An AI system introduced in 2015 with much fanfare in the U.S. failed to recognise faces of African Americans with the same accuracy as those of Caucasian Americans. Google, the creator of this AI system, quickly took remedial action. However, from a teleological perspective, this flawed AI system

gets a go ahead. According to the 2010 census, Caucasian Americans constitute 72.4% of the country's population. So an AI system that identifies Caucasian American faces better is useful for a majority of Internet users in the U.S., and to Google.

Going by intention

However, from a deontological perspective, the system should have been rejected as its intention probably was not to identify people from all races, which would have been the most ethical aim to have. In fact, the question that comes to mind is – shouldn't digital platform companies, whose markets span many countries, aim to identify faces of all races with an equal accuracy?

Social media is not the only context where AI facial recognition systems are used today. These systems are increasingly being used for law enforcement. Imagine the implications of being labelled a threat to public safety just because limited data based on one's skin colour was used to train the AI system. Americans are taking note. Recent news reports suggest that San Francisco has banned use of facial recognition by law enforcement.

The ethical basis of AI, for the most part, rests outside the algorithm. The bias is in the data used to train the algorithm. It stems from our own flawed historical and cultural perspectives - sometimes unconscious that contaminate the data. It is also in the way we frame the social and economic problems that the AI algorithm tries to solve.

With the proliferation of AI, it is important for us to know the ethical basis of every AI system that we use or is used on us. An ethical basis resting on both teleological and deontological perspectives gives us more faith in a system. Sometimes, even an inclusive intention may need careful scrutiny. For instance, Polaroid's ID-2 camera, introduced in the 1960s, provided quality photographs of people with darker skin. However, later, reports emerged that the company developed this for use in dompas, an identification document black South Africans were forced to carry during apartheid.

Understanding and discussing the ethical basis of AI is important for India. Reports suggest that the NITI Aayog is ready with a ₹7,500 crore plan to invest in building a national capability and infrastructure. The transformative capability of AI in India is huge, and must be rooted in an egalitarian ethical basis. Any institutional framework for AI should have a multidisciplinary and multi-stakeholder approach, and have an explicit focus on the ethical basis.

N. Dayasindhu is the co-founder and CEO of Itihaasa Research and Digital. Views are personal

The Man Kindu.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO AUGUST 13, 1969

T.N. Chief Minister's demand

The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Mr. M. Karu-

nanidhi, has addressed a letter to the Prime

Minister pleading for representation to the

State Government on the boards of manage-

ment of the nationalised banks of a regional

character and on the regional advisory boards of all-India banks. In his letter, Mr.

Karunanidhi has also urged that the States

should have representation on the National

Credit Council. Mrs. Gandhi's decision to na-

tionalise 14 scheduled banks, Mr. Karunanid-

hi said, was a "bold and timely step - per-

haps the most significant in the last 20 years of the history of independent India." He

hoped it would mark the "real beginning of a

new era" in which the Government, on be-

half of society, would take command of the

resources and use them for the uplift of the common man. He offered to Mrs. Gandhi, on

behalf of the Government and the people of

Tamil Nadu, "our solid and unflinching sup-

port" in implementing this measure and any

further socialist steps she might undertake

to bring light into the life of the common

man. In the course of his letter, Mr. Karuna-

nidhi referred to the fear in some political

circles that there might not be much advan-

tage to the interests of this State as a result of

bank nationalisation.

A mixed bag at film awards

The recently announced National Awards ignored some of the best Malayalam and Tamil films

The recent announcement of the National Film Awards (NFA) produced mixed reactions, as indeed it has in every previous year. One wonders whether these awards are still reflective of the various quality benchmarks, and the public's expectations from them too seem to have consistently nosedived.

On the positive side, it is gratifying that recognition was bestowed upon a film such as Badhaai Ho, which, though made in the format of a mainstream Hindi film, touched upon issues that are usually never discussed. Most often, mother and father characters in Hindi films barely play supporting roles, as if they are nothing beyond their parent identities. They are either benevolent or the opposite, obsessing about their child's private life and matrimony.

But who are these parents as people? Hindi cinema doesn't concern it-

self with characters beyond a certain age but Badhaai Ho is different in its exploration of love and desire in the life of a couple whose eldest son is making his own marriage plans. The father charac-

ter still recites love poems to his wife, they have an active sex life and the mother is soon pregnant. Have we seen this in Hindi cinema before?

A versatile actor

The film also underscores the versatility and talent of Ayushmann Khurrana, a leading mainstream film actor who has experimented with an array of unconventional characters. From his debut in Vicky Donor to his last outing as an honest cop in Article 15, here is an actor who has defied Hindi cinema leading norms. Very few of his contemporaries have risked the choices that he has made.

But having praised these films for having got what they deserve, were these really the finest produced in

Beyond the ambit of the NFA, some of the most daring Indian films of 2018 were made in Tamil and Malayalam. Zakariya Mohammed's Sudani from Nigeria, a film centred on Kerala's love for football, including the whirlwind of events that engulf a

footballer from Nigeria who arrives in a small hamlet in Kerala, was awarded the best Malayalam film. But it deserved a wider recognition.

Devoid of nationalism

Sports films in India are prone to overtones of nationalism. Every rendition soon descends into a rags to riches story or transforms into a tale of survival of the fittest. Sudani from Nigeria (in picture) departs from convention in every way imaginable by locating the game amongst its people and eschewing all winner-loser narratives. It also breaks stereotypes in the representation of Muslim characters. Besides that film, there were many others like Lijo Jose Pellissery's quirky Ee. Ma. Yau; Amal Neerad's Varathan and B. Ajith Kumar's Eeda, an adaptation of Romeo and Juliet set in conflict-prone Kannur. These films were replete with new stories, captivating performances and fresh possi-

bilities for film language; their exclusion was rather unfortunate.

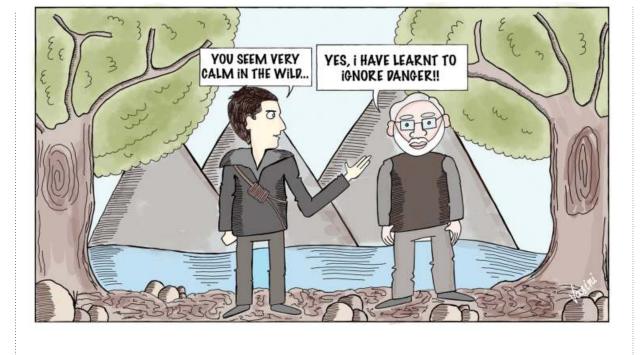
From Tamil cinema, Mari Selvaraj's Pariverum Perumal and Vetrimaaran's Vada Chennai

found no mention in the awards. Pa. Ranjith's Kaala and Lenin Bharathi's Merku Thodarchi Ma*lai*, a film that deals with the lives of landless labours, were also ignored.

Overall, there appears to be a trend in terms of films that have been omitted by major industry awards they have all been movies whose narratives diverge from the mainstream political view. Uri and Padmavat were rewarded for their hyper-nationalism, and perhaps that is not surprising.

But should directors make films only for awards? Films are not remembered for awards but the stories they tell. Some of the films mentioned here will be remembered and seen across time purely for reasons of cinematic merit and the conviction of their craft. Award or no award, our films ought to chronicle different stories and voices because in diversity lie our deepest strength.

The writer teaches literary and cultural studies at FLAME University, Pune



DATA POINT

On the dot

India has received an average rainfall of 558 mm in the 2019 monsoon season till Monday. This is neither below nor above the Long Period Average (LPA); in other words, the deviation from normal rainfall is exactly 0%. Considering that the rainfall was 33% deficient at the end of June, the monsoon has intensified rapidly. But, inter-State variations exist. By Vignesh Radhakrishnan

Inter-district variations Table shows the % of districts in each State across rainfall categories. For instance, 10% districts in Puniab had "large excess" (LE) rainfall while 40% had "deficient" (D) rainfall LD: Largely deficient (-60% to -99% of Long Period Average

D: Deficient (-20% to -59% of LPA) N: Normal rainfall (-19% to +19%

E: Excess (+20% +59% of LPA) LE: Large excess (>59% of LPA)

Maharashtra Inter-State **A** 30 Gujarat variations Sikkim Scatterplot 20 Karnataka charts actual Rajasthar rainfall against % M.P. deviation from **LPA** across States Kerala as of Monday. -10 · Arunachal States above the Meghalaya horizontal zero -20 line received more Despite floods in rainfall than usual many parts of the -30 State. Kerala has still - the higher they Jharkhand received deficient are the more the deviation from Delhi LPA and 86% of its **iation** -50 normal (LPA). The districts has recorded States below the line received lesser rainfall than usual

Actual rainfall from June 1 to August 12 (mm)

LE E

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO AUGUST 13, 1919 The Madras Council. The first meeting of the Madras Legislative Council during Lord Willingdon's regime as

also after its reconstitution under the recent elections and nominations of members, was held yesterday [August 12]. It must be admitted that the proceedings of the Legislative Council have of late lost much of their interest in the public mind, both on account of the futility of the popular voice in the discussions under its present constitution, and of the short period that divides the existence of the present Council from what is going to take its place under the Reform Bill, which is engrossing so much of the public attention at the present time. In the course of his opening speech His Excellency said that by a deliberate decision of the Government, the number of nominated officials has been reduced, and that of non-officials has been increased. The public must feel grateful for the adoption of this principle, which is a sound constitutional measure. It must be said, however, that in the opinion of the public, the nominations of non-official members have been, with notable exceptions, of a character such as not to diminish the support to the Government side, nor to increase the weight of the popular vote.

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड वर्ष १२ अंक १५२

कर्जमुक्त होती आरआईएल

रिलायंस इंडस्ट्रीज (आरआईएल) पिछले कुछ समय के दौरान अपने बढते कर्ज के कारण चर्चा में रही। कंपनी ने मोबाइल टेलीफोन में है उसका प्रतिफल अभी उसे मिलना शेष है। इस कारोबार से अब तक इतना निवेश नहीं आ

कारण कंपनी के ऋण अनुपात में काफी इजाफा हुआ है जबकि बीते कुछ वर्षों के दौरान कंपनी का मुक्त नकदी प्रवाह नकारात्मक रहा है। वित्त अरबों डॉलर का जो भारी भरकम निवेश किया वर्ष 2015 में जहां कंपनी की देनदारी 19 अरब डॉलर थी, वहीं 2019 में यह बढ़कर 65 अरब डॉलर हो चुकी है। इस परिदुश्य में विदेशी सका है जो इस उद्यम में लगने वाले भारी ब्रोकरेज कंपनी क्रेडिट सुइस ने आरआईएल भरकम निवेश को उचित ठहरा सके। इसके की रेटिंग कम कर दी थी और एक सप्ताह पहले

इसके लक्षित मूल्य में एक तिहाई की कटौती कर दी विंताएं वाजिब थीं। आरआईएल ने वित्त वर्ष 2019 में शुद्ध ऋण और इक्विटी अनुपात 0.58 गुना दर्शाया था जो हाल के वर्षों के उच्चतम स्तर में से एक था। इस बीच गत वित्त वर्ष में ब्याज कवरेज अनुपात गिरकर 5.6 गुना रह गया। यह बीते 15 वर्षीं में सबसे कम है। अपनी रिपोर्ट में क्रेडिट सुइस ने कहा कि आरआईएल का मुक्त नकदी प्रवाह वित्त वर्ष 2015 से नकारात्मक रहा है और वित्त वर्ष 2021 तक इसके ऐसा ही रहने की आशंका है क्योंकि उसके मूल कारोबार ईंधन रिफाइनिंग और पेट्रोकेमिकल में मार्जिन का दबाव है। कंपनी की कुल देनदारी बढकर 65 अरब डॉलर हो चुकी है क्योंकि कच्चे तेल, जियो फोन फाइनैंसिंग और ईस्ट वेस्ट पाइपलाइन में कंपनी

का काफी बकाया है। समान अवधि में कंपनी का कुल ब्याज भुगतान 1.2 अरब डॉलर से बढ़कर 4 अरब डॉलर हो गया। यह 2019 में कंपनी की ब्याज और कर पश्चात आय के करीब 44 फीसदी के बराबर है।

ऐसे में सोमवार को सऊदी अरामको को रिफाइनिंग और पेट्रोकेमिकल कारोबार में 20 फीसदी का इक्विटी साझेदार बनाने का निर्णय कंपनी के निवेशकों के लिए सुखद है। निवेशक इस बात को लेकर चिंतित थे कि कंपनी अपने जियो उपक्रम में चरणबद्ध उधारी के माध्यम से निवेश कर रही थी। कंपनी के रिफाइनिंग और पेट्रोकेमिकल कारोबार का सौदा मुल्य करीब 75 अरब डॉलर है। यानी आरआईएल को एकबारगी करीब 15 अरब डॉलर की राशि मिलेगी। कंपनी अपने ईंधन रिटेल कारोबार की 49 फीसदी हिस्सेदारी ब्रिटिश पेट्रोलियम को बेचकर करीब एक अरब डॉलर की राशि जटाने जा रही है। दुनिया की सबसे बड़ी तेल उत्पादक कंपनी से दीर्घावधि की कच्चे तेल की आपूर्ति सुनिश्चित करने के अलावा आरआईएल निवेश का इस्तेमाल कर्ज कम करने या विस्तार में कर सकती है। कंपनी ने हाल ही में अपनी टावर और फाइबर परिसंपत्तियों में से 16.5 अरब डॉलर मुल्य की परिसंपत्ति को दो अलग-अलग निवेश न्यासों में बांट दिया। कंपनी का इरादा वहां बाहरी निवेशक जटाने का है। अनुषंगियों की बात करें तो कंपनी की योजना जियो और रिलायंस रिटेल का मुद्रीकरण करने तथा अचल संपत्ति और वित्तीय निवेश का मल्य हासिल कर मार्च 2021 तक कर्ज मक्त हो जाने की है। रिफाइनिंग और पेट्रोकेमिकल कंपनी

की कुल कर और ब्याज पूर्व आय का 79 फीसदी है। गत वित्त वर्ष में जियो की कर और ब्याज पर्व हिस्सेदारी 13.3 फीसदी थी।

बहरहाल आरआईएल की कुल परिसंपत्तियों में दोनों कारोबारों की समान हिस्सेदारी है। कंपनी को आगे जियो के पंजी पर प्रतिफल में सुधार करना होगा जो अभी 3 फीसदी है। यह तभी होगा जब कंपनी मोबाइल शुल्क दर बढाएगी या अपने उपभोक्ता आधार से पैसे जुटाएगी। सोमवार को कंपनी की वार्षिक आम बैठक में आरआईएल के चेयरमैन मुकेश अंबानी ने कहा कि उन्हें इस बात में संदेह नहीं कि कंपनी दुनिया की सबसे मजबूत बैलेंस शीट वाली कंपनियों में शामिल होगी। अंशधारक भी चाहेंगे कि वे अपनी बात पर



संरचनात्मक बदलावों की सरकार से उम्मीद बेमानी

आर्थिक सुस्ती करीब आने के साथ ही सरकार के कदमों को लेकर सवाल खड़े होने लगे हैं। देवाशिष बसु का कहना है कि संरचनात्मक सुधारों के बगैर कोई भी कदम असरदार नहीं हो पाएगा

रहा। कैफे कॉफी डे के संस्थापक वी जी सिद्धार्थ ने आत्महत्या कर ली और अपने पीछे एक चिट्ठी छोड़ गए जिसमें बड़े पैमाने पर हुई गड़बड़ियों को स्वीकार करने के साथ ही वह कर अधिकारियों के हाथों उत्पीड़न के संकेत भी दे गए। इस सुसाइड नोट के सामने आने के बाद आई प्रतिक्रियाएं राजनीति, उद्यमशीलता, जोखिम उठाने से जुड़ी मुश्किलों और अत्यधिक कर्ज से जुड़े तमाम पहलुओं को रेखांकित करती हैं। अधिकांश प्रतिक्रियाओं में भावनाओं की अधिकता थी. लिहाजा वे असली मुद्दे से भटक भी गईं। अधिक तर्कसंगत समझ के लिए हमें ध्यान रखना चाहिए कि खुदकुशी का ताल्लुक किसी व्यक्ति की भौतिक स्थिति से नहीं बल्कि उसकी मानसिक स्थिति से होता है। आखिर, कई लोग अपने करीबियों समेत सब-कछ गंवा देने के बावजूद ख़ुदकुशी का रास्ता नहीं अपनाते हैं।

सिद्धार्थ की मौत मौजूदा आर्थिक सुस्ती की फिर से परीक्षा करने का एक मौका देती है। भारत में करीब 50 फीसदी घरेलू यात्री वाहनों की निर्माता मारुति सुजुकी को जुलाई 2019 में बिक्री में 33.5 फीसदी गिरावट का सामना करना पडा है और उसने अपने अस्थायी कर्मचारियों में छह फीसदी की कटौती कर दी है। जनवरी-मार्च तिमाही में

छला माह काफी घटना-प्रधान भारत से आने-जाने वाले हवाई यात्रियों की संख्या 3.8 फीसदी की दर से ही बढी है जो गत चार वर्षों की सबसे धीमी रफ्तार है। इस तरह के निराशाजनक आंकडों की मीडिया में भरमार है।

> आर्थिक सुस्ती इतनी गंभीर है कि मौजूदा सरकार के इरादों और क्रियाकलाप को लेकर आशंकित कारोबारियों ने अब खुलकर अपनी हताशा जतानी शुरू कर दी है। हाल-फिलहाल तक इस सरकार के हरेक कदम की तारीफ करते रहे टी वी मोहनदास पई ने अब उस पर निशाना साधना शुरू कर दिया है। पई कहते हैं, 'कर आतंक काफी बढ़ गया है। अनुपालन का बोझ भी बहुत अधिक हो चुका है। हर तरफ डर का माहौल है। सरकारी अधिकारियों के बीच ऐसी भावना है कि सभी कारोबारी धूर्त हैं और हमें उन पर नकेल कसनी चाहिए। मैंने कभी भी मुंबई में इस तरह का माहौल एवं मनोदशा नहीं देखी है। कारोबारियों ने उम्मीद करना ही छोड दिया है।'

> बजाज ऑटो के चेयरमैन राहुल बजाज भी ऐसी ही चिंताएं जता चुके हैं। बजाज के शब्दों में. 'न तो मांग है और न ही निजी निवेश हो रहा है। ऐसे में वृद्धि कहां से होगी? आसमान से तो टपकेगी नहीं।' लार्सन ऐंड टुब्रो के प्रमुख ए एम नायक ने भी कहा है कि अगर भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था इस साल 6.5 फीसदी की दर से भी बढती

है तो हमें खुशिकस्मत समझना चाहिए। इसके साथ ही उन्होंने सरकार की तरफ से जारी आंकडों पर यकीन न रह जाने ('आंकडों की विश्वसनीयता पर चुनौतीपूर्ण स्थिति') की बात करते हुए कहा है कि वास्तविक वृद्धि का अंदाजा लगाने के लिए आपको अपने निजी निर्णय का इस्तेमाल करना होगा। जनवरी-मार्च तिमाही में आर्थिक वृद्धि घटकर पांच वर्षों के न्युनतम स्तर 5.8 फीसदी पर दर्ज की गई।

महज कुछ महीने पहले पई उन 131 चार्टर्ड अकाउंटेंट में शामिल थे जिन्होंने भारत के आर्थिक आंकडों पर सवाल उठाने वाले और शीर्ष सांख्यिकी निकाय में राजनीतिक दखल का आरोप लगाने वाले 100 विद्वानों की चिंताओं को नकारा था। निराशा के स्वर इतने तेज होते जा रहे हैं कि कुछ अंग्रेजी चैनलों ने अचानक ही पलटी खा ली है। इस सरकार के एजेंडा का खलकर प्रचार में लगे रहने वाले समाचार चैनल आम तौर पर लुप्तप्राय विपक्ष को ही लताडने में लगे रहते हैं लेकिन अब वे प्रभावित कारोबारियों को भी जगह देने लगे हैं।

कांग्रेस की अगुआई वाली संप्रग सरकार के 10 वर्षों के शासनकाल में दो बातों-नीतिगत पंगता और दोस्ताना पंजीवाद का काफी शोर था। लेकिन आज कोई भी इनका जिक्र नहीं करता है। आप इस सरकार की कई बातों के लिए आलोचना कर सकते हैं

लेकिन भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था को दशकों से आक्रांत कर रखी इन बुराइयों की इस सरकार में कोई जगह नहीं है। किसी तरह की नीतिगत पंगुता से दूर यह सरकार काफी अधिक सक्रिय है और सैकड़ों कानूनों में बदलाव एवं नई योजनाएं लेकर आई है। फिर भला हमें इतने खराब नतीजे क्यों देखने को मिल रहे हैं?

इसका जवाब बड़ा सरल है। दरअसल इस सरकार की नीतियां एवं क्रियाकलाप बुनियादी सिद्धांतों पर आधारित नहीं हैं। वृद्धि एवं न्याय का पहला सिद्धांत राज्य का हस्तक्षेप एवं प्रभुत्व को कम करना है। सरकार से कारोबारियों एवं नागरिकों के लिए समानुभूति रखने की उम्मीद करना काफी अधिक है, भले ही नौकरियों एवं करों में होने वाली सारी वृद्धि इन्हीं लोगों से आती है। यह सरकार कम-से-कम इतना तो कर ही सकती है कि वह हरेक कारोबारी को धुर्त बताकर एवं बेवकुफी भरे बाध्यकारी कदमों से मायसी एवं गुस्सा बढाने का काम न करे। आखिरकार हम सबको पता है कि नेताओं, बाबुओं एवं आम आदमी में से असली चालबाज कौन है? इस पहले सिद्धांत को अमल में लाए बगैर हमें चक्रीय रूप से उतार-चढाव का सामना करना होगा लेकिन कोई मूलभूत एवं त्वरित बदलाव नहीं होगा। इसके लिए पूंजी एवं श्रम की उच्च उत्पादकता की जरूरत होती है।

मुझे इस बात पर काफी चर्चा देखने को मिलती है कि सरकार को क्या कदम उठाने चाहिए? सात अंधों की कहानी की तरह हरेक विशेषज्ञ समस्या के अलग-अलग हिस्सों को देखता है और फिर यह सोचकर समाधान भी सुझाता है कि वह पूरी समस्या दुर कर देगा। किसी को लगता है कि ब्याज दरों में अधिक कटौती करने से सभी समस्याएं दूर हो जाएंगी जबिक दूसरा विशेषज्ञ व्यक्तिगत आयकर को खत्म करने का सुझाव देता है। नीति आयोग के मुख्य कार्याधिकारी (सीईओ) अमिताभ कांत ने मौजुदा सुस्ती के लिए आर्थिक सुधारों को जिम्मेदार बताया है। लेकिन समस्या इससे कहीं ज्यादा गंभीर है। भले ही प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी खुद को प्रधान सेवक कहते हों लेकिन अमूमन सारे नेता पिछली सरकार के नेताओं की ही तरह दंभी एवं जिद्दी नजर आते हैं। हाल ही में एक मंत्री से मिलने वाले प्रतिनिधिमंडल में शामिल रहे एक कारोबारी ने उस मंत्री को 'लडाई पर उतारू, सुस्ती को लेकर असंवेदनशील और सुनने के लिए तैयार नहीं ' करार दिया।

इसकी उम्मीद कम ही है कि जनता को प्रभावित करने वाले मुद्दों की गूंज शासकों के कानों तक पहुंच पाएगी। साफ तौर पर व्यावहारिक लोगों को सरकार से थोड़ी-बहुत मरम्मत से अधिक की उम्मीद भी नहीं करनी चाहिए। यह चर्चा ही निरर्थक है कि सरकार क्या कुछ कर सकती है ? रोडमैप का पता नहीं है, वृद्धि का पहला सिद्धांत नदारद है और नीति-निर्माताओं के आंख-कान बंद पड़े हैं। अर्थव्यवस्था की गिरावट का मौजूदा दौर अगले कुछ वर्षों में खुद ही खत्म हो जाएगा लेकिन संरचनात्मक मुद्दे फिर भी कायम रहेंगे। इन संरचनात्मक मुद्दों ने ही पिरामिड के निचले हिस्से में मौजूद लोगों के जीवन की गुणवत्ता में जल्द सुधार और तीव्र आर्थिक वृद्धि को रोका हुआ है।

जलवायु परिवर्तन से जुड़ी प्रवासन की बढ़ती समस्या

मैं एक ऐसी तस्वीर साझा कर रही हूं जो मेरे जेहन से निकल ही नहीं रही है। हम एक कमरे में कैद हैं और वहां मौजूद छोटी सी खिडकी से देख पा रहे हैं कि बाहर का मौसम बेहद खराब हो चुका है। जंगलों में आग लगी हुई है, गर्म हवाएं चल रही हैं, तेज बारिश हो रही है और तूफान आया हुआ है। यह सबकुछ पहले जताई आशंकाओं के अनुरूप है लेकिन हमारी चीखें नहीं सुनी जा रही हैं। ऐसा लग रहा है मानो यह सब कहीं और चल रहा है, मानो यह हकीकत न हो।

मुझे पता है कि यह बहुत नाटकीय प्रतीत होता है लेकिन यह तथ्य है। तेजी से बदलते मौसमी रुझानों और पृथ्वी पर बढती गर्मी का असर हमारे सामने है। लेकिन हमारा ध्यान व्यापार युद्ध, ब्रेक्सिट, आव्रजन, अर्थव्यवस्था, राष्ट्रवाद, युद्ध जैसी बातों में लगा हुआ है। मानव इतिहास में जलवायु परिवर्तन शायद इससे बुरे वक्त में नहीं हो सकता था। हम इससे निपटने में असमर्थ नजर आ रहे हैं।

यही वह वक्त है जब यह स्पष्ट हो चला है कि चीजें हमारे नियंत्रण से बाहर हैं। हर वर्ष हमें कहा जाता है कि यह सबसे गर्म वर्ष है। अगले वर्ष यही कहानी दोहराई जाती है। इसके बाद एक नया रिकॉर्ड टूटता है। हालात निरंतर बिगडते जा रहे हैं। हम सबको यह पता है, हम इसे महसूस कर सकते हैं।

हमें यह समझने की आवश्यकता है कि अपने अस्तित्व की चुनौती से जूझ रहे लोगों के लिए इसका क्या मतलब है ? बात चाहे सुखे की हो या बाढ की. लोगों को इनकी वजह से मजबूरन काम की तलाश में एक जगह से दूसरी जगह जाना होता है। ये लोगों को घर से बाहर निकलने पर मजबूर करते हैं। कई बार यह अस्थायी होता है और कई बार उनका यह प्रवास स्थायी हो जाता है। लेकिन अब जलवायु परिवर्तन का खतरा मुंह बाये हमारे सामने खड़ा है।

अमिताभ घोष अपने नए उपन्यास गन आइलैंड में हमें प्रवासियों की पीढियों से मिलाते हैं। जहां अतीत और वर्तमान में लोगों को नई आजीविका की तलाश में अपना घर बार छोड़कर निकलना पड़ा। प्रवासी हमेशा



जमीनी हकीकत

सुनीता नारायण

से बदलाव का मानवीय चेहरा रहे हैं, चाहे वह अच्छा हो या बुरा। यह भी सच है कि प्रवास केवल मजबूरन नहीं किया जाता बल्कि कई बार लोग दूसरी जगह बेहतर भविष्य की उम्मीद में भी अपना घरबार छोडते हैं।

पूरी दुनिया आपस में इस कदर जुड़ी हुई है कि इसके कई तरह के असर हमारे सामने हैं। एक तो यह कि एक देश का कार्बन डाई ऑक्साइड पूरी दुनिया के वातावरण को प्रभावित करता है। दूसरा दुनिया भर के समाचार मोबाइल टेलीफोनी की गति से एक जगह से दूसरी जगह जाते हैं। इस संदर्भ में देखें तो लोगों का एक जगह से दूसरी जगह आना जाना भी बढ़ेगा।

सवाल यह है कि इस तेज

गति से हो रहे प्रवासन को लेकर हमारी प्रतिक्रिया क्या होगी। प्रवासन पहले ही कई देशों की राजनीति को प्रभावित कर रहा है। भारत में हम इस बात पर चर्चा करते हैं 'बाहरी लोगों' की गणना कैसे की जाए। हमें यह भी पता नहीं कि एक बार उनकी गिनती हो जाने के बाद क्या होगा? यूरोप में जनता का मिजाज उन तस्वीरों से निर्धारित सवार लोग बड़ी तादाद में अवैध तरीके से देश पहुंच रहे हैं। अमेरिका में दीवार खडी की जा रही है और लाखों लोग अमेरिका प्रवेश की आकांक्षा लिए खड़े हैं। सोशल मीडिया से लेकर तमाम सार्वजनिक जगहों पर यह सब चर्चा का विषय है। प्रवासियों को लेकर चल रही बहस वास्तविक है और इससे निपटने की हमारी प्रतिक्रिया काफी हद तक नाकाफी है। हमारे कदम और शब्द इसके लिए नाकाफी हैं। यही वजह है कि समाज में पहले ही इसे लेकर असुरक्षा और भय का माहौल

बन गया है। इससे समुदायों के बीच कड़वाहट बढ़ रही है और ध्रुवीकरण हो रहा है। इसका फायदा राष्ट्रवादी दल उठा रहे हैं।

याद कीजिए कि अमेरिका के टैक्सस शहर के अल पासो में जब एक श्वेत व्यक्ति ने लोगों पर गोलीबारी की तो उसने कहा कि वह यह काम दुनिया को जलवायु संकट से बचाने के लिए कर रहा है। उसने अपने ब्लॉग पर दलील दी थी कि अमेरिकी कभी अपनी जीवनशैली नहीं त्यागेंगे, हालांकि वह मानता है कि यह पूरी पृथ्वी को नष्ट कर रही है। उसका जवाब है कि ज्यादा से ज्यादा लोगों को समाप्त करने से अमेरिकी जीवन शैली को निभाना संभव होगा। वह लोगों को मारकर अमेरिका में प्रवेश करने से रोकना चाहता था।

अतीत में मैंने ऐसी हरकतों को पागलपन कहकर खारिज किया था। परंतु अब हम ऐसी जगह पहुंच रहे हैं जहां संकट के दो कोण मिलेंगे और स्थितियां विस्फोटक होंगी। अभी भी हमारे पास प्रवासन को लेकर समुचित आंकडे नहीं हैं। हम जलवायु कारणों से बने शरणार्थियों के बारे में सहजता से इसलिए बात करते हैं क्योंकि इस समस्या की प्रकृति और गंभीरता को समझना आसान नहीं।

कहने का अर्थ यह नहीं है कि प्रवासन बुरा है। सच तो यह है कि तमाम शहर और देश बने ही इसलिए क्योंकि लोग एक जगह से दूसरी जगह जाकर बसे। हमारे देश में आंतरिक प्रवासन की समस्या रोजगार से जुड़ी है। हर क्षेत्र में बड़ी संख्या ऐसे लोगों की है जो बाढ या सूखाग्रस्त क्षेत्रों से वहां आए हैं। कई लोग रोजगार की तलाश में आते हैं।

हमारे देश में ऐसे लोगों से जुडा कोई आंकडा नहीं है क्योंकि पिछली जनगणना दशक भर पहले हुई थी। परंतु शहरों के आसपास अवैध बस्तियों को देखकर यह तय है कि बड़ी तादाद में लोग एक जगह से दसरी जगह जा रहे हैं। इसका राजनीति पर प्रत्यक्ष प्रभाव नजर आता है। हालात आगे और खराब होंगे।

मैं इस लेख का समापन नहीं कर रही हूं क्योंकि मेरे पास कोई निष्कर्ष नहीं है। परंतु मैं मानती हं कि अब वक्त आ गया है कि हम जलवायु परिवर्तन की प्रकृति पर मानवीय ढंग से चर्चा करें।

कानाफूसी

नायडू की उपलब्धियां

देश के उपराष्ट्रपति और राज्य सभा के सभापित एम वेंकैया नायडू ने गत रिववार को बतौर उपराष्ट्रपति दो वर्ष का कार्यकाल पूरा कर लिया। इस मौके पर चेन्नई में आयोजित एक कार्यक्रम में गृहमंत्री अमित शाह ने नायडू की पुस्तक लिसनिंग, लर्निंग, लीडिंग का लोकार्पण करते हुए उनके दो वर्ष के कार्यकाल को ऊर्जा से भरा हुआ और भारी व्यस्तता वाला बताया।

पुस्तक में नायड़ कहते हैं कि वह हमेशा देश को बदलने में अपनी भूमिका के बारे में सोचते रहे। उनके कार्यालय के अनुसार नायडू ने इस अवधि में 330 बार बड़े सार्वजनिक आयोजनों में शिरकत की। राज्य सभा की बैठकों का 123 बार संचालन किया और 19 देशों की यात्रा की। कुल 257 पृष्ठों की इस पुस्तक में नायडू की 232 तस्वीरें हैं और एक अध्याय राज्य सभा के कामकाज में आए बदलाव पर है। पुस्तक में नायडू द्वारा राज्य सभा में की गई ई-नोटिस की पहल की सफलता का विस्तार से ब्योरा दिया गया है। हाल में समाप्त हुए राज्य सभा के सत्र में सांसदों ने ऑनलाइन तरीके से 9,000 नोटिस दिए। कुल नोटिस में इनकी हिस्सेदारी 60 फीसदी थी।



आपका पक्ष

पश्चिमी तटीय राज्यों में बाढ़ से तबाही

भारी बारिश से आई बाढ़ ने तबाही मचा रखी है। केरल में बाढ़ और भुस्खलन से 59 लोगों की मौत हो चुकी है। वहां 14 जिलों में बाढ़ से बचाव के लिए 1,318 राहत शिविर बनाए गए हैं। कर्नाटक में 17 जिले बाढ़ से प्रभावित हैं। वहां बाढ़ के कारण 40 लोगों की मौत हो चुकी है। राज्य में 1,168 राहत शिविर बनाए गए हैं। महाराष्ट्र के 10 जिले बाढ से प्रभावित हैं। वहां 369 राहत शिविर बनाए गए हैं। देश के पश्चिमी तटीय राज्यों में बारिश का कहर जारी है। ऐसे में लोगों को उनकी मदद के आगे आना चाहिए। रेलवे ने बाढ प्रभावित क्षेत्रों में माल ढुलाई नि:शुल्क करने का फैसला लिया है। देश के अन्य राज्यों से इन राज्यों में मदद की दरकार है। अगर लोग प्रकृति की मार झेल रहे इन लोगों की मदद करने के लिए अपने हाथ बढ़ाएंगे तो देश में एकता की भावना मजबूत होगी।



कई स्वयंसेवी संगठन अपने-अपने क्षेत्रों में सामान जमा कर बाढ प्रभावित क्षेत्रों में भेजते हैं। इससे बाढ प्रभावित लोगों को काफी मदद मिल जाती है। देश के कई राज्य समय-समय पर प्राकृतिक आपदा के शिकार होते रहते हैं। सरकार राहत अभियान चलाती है लेकिन पुनर्वास पर अधिक ध्यान नहीं देती है। ऐसे

एनडीआरएफ के जवानों ने कर्नाटक के बाढ़ग्रस्त क्षेत्र से लोगों को निकाला -पीटीआई

लोग जिनका घर प्राकृतिक आपदा में तबाह हो जाता है उन्हें सरकार की ओर से घर बनाने में मदद मिलनी चाहिए।

अनुराधा कुमारी, नई दिल्ली

पाठक अपनी राय हमें इस पते पर भेज सकते हैं : संपादक, बिजनेस स्टैंडर्ड लिमिटेड, 4, बहादुर

शाह जफर मार्ग, नई दिल्ली - 110002. आप हमें ईमेल भी कर सकते हैं : lettershindi@bsmail.in

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

अधिक से अधिक बीमारियों से ग्रसित होंगे। विश्व स्वास्थ्य संगठन प्रति 1,000 व्यक्ति पर एक चिकित्सक होने की बात

बाजार के चंगुल से

बचाने की कोशिश

देश भर में राज्य और केंद्र सरकार

तक के स्वास्थ्य विभाग की

मौजुदा स्थिति गंभीर है। इससे

आने वाले दिनों में भी स्वास्थ्य

सुविधा के विपरीत व्यक्ति

करता है, जबकि हमारे यहां 11,000 लोगों पर एक चिकित्सक है। चिकित्सा सेवाओं के लिए जब उपभोक्ता भारी भरकम भुगतान करते हैं, ऐसे में आवश्यक हो जाता है कि चिकित्सा सेवाओं को भी उपभोक्ता के नजरिये से जांचा परखा जाए। देश में स्वास्थ्य सेवाओं को परोपकार के नजरिये 🗄 से देखा जाता था। आज स्वास्थ्य

सेवाएं पूरी तरह बाजार आधारित हो गई। ऐसे में इन सेवाओं को कानून के दायरे में लाना जरूरी है। दीप कुमार, महाराजगंज

बीमार स्वास्थ्य सेवाओं को दवा

आंकडों की मानें तो उत्तर प्रदेश और बिहार में विगत वर्षों में स्वास्थ्य सेवाओं में सबसे अधिक गिरावट दर्ज की गई। इसमें बिहार गरीब बच्चों की मौतों को लेकर सुर्खियों में रहा है। वर्ष 2017 में बनी एक स्वास्थ्य नीति की संसद में घोषणा करते हुए कहा गया था कि जीडीपी का दोगुना इस मद में व्यय किया जाएगा। जबकि बजट घोषणा करते हुए व्यय को कम कर दिया गया। इसे क्या कहा जाए? वास्तविक स्थिति यह है कि नए कानून बनाने, योजनाएं व उनके मद में बजट आवंटित करने की प्रक्रिया नाकाफी है। योजनाओं को क्रियान्वित करने वाले तंत्र के स्वास्थ्य को भी सुदृढ़ करने से स्वास्थ्य सेवाओं में बदलाव दिखाई देगा।



दौड़ने से पहले हमें चलना सीखना चाहिए

नए कश्मीर की झलक

अनुच्छेद 370 हटाए जाने के बाद जम्मू-कश्मीर में बकरीद का त्योहार जिस तरह लगभग शांतिपूर्ण तरीके से मनाया गया वह उल्लेखनीय भी है और हालात सुधरने का भरोसा बढ़ाने वाला भी। यह सही है कि जम्मू-कश्मीर को विशेष दर्जा देने वाले अनुच्छेद 370 की वापसी के बाद इस राज्य में शांति बनाए रखने के लिए सुरक्षा के अतिरिक्त इंतजाम किए गए हैं और यह स्वाभाविक भी है, लेकिन महत्वपूर्ण यह है कि राज्य के लोग बदली हकीकत को स्वीकार करते नजर आ रहे हैं और इस तथ्य के प्रति भी उनकी समझ बढ़ती जा रही है कि जो कुछ किया गया है वह इस राज्य और वहां के लोगों के हित में है। अनुच्छेद 370 की समाप्ति न केवल जम्मू-कश्मीर के शेष देश के साथ एकीकरण के लिए आवश्यक थी, बल्कि उसके तेज विकास के लिए भी ऐसा करना अनिवार्य था। यह हालात में आ रहे बदलाव का ही प्रमाण है कि पिछले तीस साल में कश्मीर में पहली बार बकरीद के मौके पर हिंसा की कोई

कश्मीर की नई हकीकत पाकिस्तान को भी स्वीकार करनी होगी और अंतरराष्ट्रीय मीडिया को भी। यह विचित्र है कि अंतरराष्ट्रीय मीडिया का एक वर्ग दशकों से कश्मीर के मामले में पाकिस्तानी प्रभाव से ग्रस्त है। उसे कश्मीर के सही इतिहास को भी समझना होगा और वर्तमान को भी। अंतरराष्ट्रीय मीडिया का जो वर्ग कश्मीर को पाकिस्तान के नजरिये से देख रहा है वह एक मुगालते में ही है। कश्मीर हमेशा से भारत का अभिन्न अंग रहा है-अनुच्छेद 370 के साथ भी और उसके बिना भी। अनुच्छेद 370 कश्मीर के भारत में एकीकरण को एक संवैधानिक-कानूनी रूप देने की कोशिश से अधिक नहीं था। इससे भी अधिक यह संवैधानिक प्रावधान कश्मीर के तत्कालीन नेताओं को तुष्ट करने के लिए लाया गया था। आश्चर्य नहीं कि इस प्रावधान से सबसे अधिक लाभ उन स्थानीय नेताओं और उनके परिवारों को ही हुआ जिन्होंने कश्मीर को हमेशा अपनी निजी जागीर की तरह देखा। कश्मीर के संदर्भ में अंतरराष्ट्रीय मीडिया की आधी-अधरी जानकारी का कारण यह है कि वह वास्तविक रिपोर्टिंग से दूर है। राज्य में अशांति की दो-चार घटनाओं को बढ़ा-चढ़ाकर पेश कर जिस तरह की तस्वीर प्रस्तुत करने की कोशिश की जाती है वह जमीनी हकीकत से कोसों दूर होती है। अंतरराष्ट्रीय मीडिया को यह सच्चाई भी स्वीकार करनी होगी कि कश्मीर के एक बड़े हिस्से पर पाकिस्तान ने गलत तरीके से कब्जा कर रखा है। यह उचित है कि केंद्र सरकार के स्तर पर यह संकेत दिए जा रहे हैं कि अब पाकिस्तान के अवैध कब्जे वाले कश्मीर को वापस लेने के लिए प्रयास किए जाएंगे।

सोशल मीडिया पर नजर

बिहार सरकार ने सोशल मीडिया पर चलने वाले आपत्तिजनक वीडियो और अन्य सामग्रियों पर नजर रखने का निर्देश दिया है। मुख्यमंत्री की यह पहल निश्चित रूप से राहत देने वाली साबित होगी। दरअसल सोशल मीडिया पर मैसेज बेहद तेजी से फैलते हैं और इनका तुरंत असर होता है। जब तक पुलिस-प्रशासन कोई कदम उठाता है तब तक खासा नुकसान हो चुका होता है। सोशल मीडिया पर नियंत्रण के लिए कानून बनाए गए हैं, लेकिन इनका पालन कराना खासा मुश्किल है। अभी तक सरकारी मशीनरी के पास न तो पर्याप्त उपकरण हैं और न ही तकनीकी विशेषज्ञ। ऐसे में प्रशासन के सामने स्थिति पर नियंत्रण के विकल्प बहुत सीमित हैं। ईद, रक्षा बंधन और स्वतंत्रता दिवस इसी हफ्ते पड़ रहे हैं। सरकार के सामने विधि व्यवस्था बनाए रखने की गंभीर चुनौती है। इस चुनौती में सोशल मीडिया पर फैलने वाले आपत्तिजनक संदेश भी शामिल हैं। अभी हाल में मुख्यमंत्री नीतीश कुमार ने बकरीद के दौरान विधि-व्यवस्था चुस्त दुरुस्त रखने के लिए मुख्य सचिव, गृह विभाग के प्रधान सचिव एवं डीजीपी सहित पुलिस के आला अधिकारियों के साथ बैठक की। बैठक में सोशल मीडिया पर आपत्तिजनक वीडियो वायरल किए जाने का मसला विमर्श के केंद्र में रहा। मख्यमंत्री ने इस बात को लेकर चिंता जताई कि कहीं त्योहारों के दौरान शरारती तत्व सोशल मीडिया का दुरुपयोग न करें। मुख्यमंत्री के निर्देश पर इस बार त्योहार के पहले ही ऐसी व्यवस्था सुनिश्चित करनी है जिससे सोशल मीडिया के इस प्लेटफॉर्म का दुरुपयोग न किया जा सके। इसके लिए सभी जिलों में विशेष सेल बनाए जा रहे हैं। इसमें आइटी विशेषज्ञों को भी शामिल किया जा रहा है। एसटीएफ भी इसमें सहयोग देगी। यदि मामला ज्यादा गंभीर हो गया तो इलाके की इंटरनेट सेवा बंद करने का तत्काल निर्णय भी लिया जा सकेगा। इन सारी कवायद से यह उम्मीद की जा सकती है कि शरारती तत्व अपने मकसद में कामयाब नहीं हो सकेंगे, लेकिन आपत्तिजनक कंटेंट पर नजर रखने की यह व्यवस्था स्थायी होनी चाहिए। ऐसा न हो कि त्योहारों के दौरान प्रशासन की सतर्कता से शरारती तत्व अपने मकसद में कामयाब न हों, लेकिन सामान्य दिनों में वे खुराफात कर गुजरें। ऐसे मामलों में आम जन को भी सचेत रहने की जरूरत है। किसी भी वीडियो पर चाहे वह कितना भी भरोसेमंद क्यों न लग रहा हो, आंख मूंद कर विश्वास नहीं करना चाहिए।

दरें घटाने से ही नहीं बढ़ेगी अर्थत्यवस्था

भी कोई खास सुधार नहीं हुआ है। ऐसी स्थिति

में विकास का स्नोत कहां है? रोजगार कहां

से बढ़ रहे हैं? इसके पीछ कहानी यह है कि

अमेरिकी उपभोक्ताओं द्वारा टैक्सी, और मसाज

पार्लर जैसी तमाम सेवाओं की अधिकाधिक

खपत की जा रही है। इन सेवाओं में रोजगार

ज्यादा बनते हैं। इसलिए अमेरिका में उत्पादन

स्थिर रहने और उसकी प्रतिस्पर्धा क्षमता भी

सीमित रहने के बावजूद रोजगार बन रहे हैं।

दरअसल अमेरिका में जो आर्थिक प्रगति हो रही

है और रोजगार बन रहे हैं उसका आधार ब्याज

दरों में कटौती नहीं, बल्कि राष्ट्रपति ट्रंप द्वारा

अमेरिकी सरकार की स्थिति भी कुछ ऐसी

ही है। राष्ट्रपति टंप ने बड़ी कंपनियों पर और

अमीरों पर आयकर में भारी कटौती की थी।

इससे अमेरिकी सरकार के राजस्व में वृद्धि

नहीं हो रही है। वर्ष 2017 में राष्ट्रपति ट्रंप के

सत्तारूढ होने के समय अमेरिकी सरकार का

राजस्व 3320 अरब डॉलर था जो वर्ष 2019

में 3440 अरब डॉलर होने का अनुमान है।

इसमें बहुत ही मामूली वृद्धि हुई है, लेकिन

जनता में आत्मविश्वास पैदा करना है।



डॉ. भरत झुनझुनवाला

कर्ज को बढ़ावा देकर आर्थिक विकास वाली रणनीति की एक सीमा है।यह तभी उपयोगी होती है जब उपभोक्ता एवं निवेशक को भविष्य पर भरोसा हो

लहाल दुनिया भर में ब्याज दरें घटाने की होड़ चल रही है। अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति डोनाल्ड ट्रंप ने अपने केंद्रीय बैंक फेडरल रिजर्व पर दबाव बना रखा है कि हाल में की गई कटौती को जारी रखते हुए आगे भी ब्याज दरें घटाने पर काम करें। न्यूजीलैंड, थाईलैंड और भारत के केंद्रीय बैंकों ने भी पिछले महीने ब्याज दरों में कटौती की है। चीन ने आधिकारिक रूप से घोषणा नहीं की, परंतु माना जा रहा है कि वहां भी अंदरखाने ब्याज दरों में कटौती की गई है। ब्याज दरों में कटौती के पीछे सोच है कि ब्याज दर कम होंगी तो उपभोक्ता कर्ज लेकर बाइक अथवा टीवी खरीदेंगे जिससे बाजार क्यों कर रहे हैं? में मांग बढ़ेगी। इसके साथ ही ब्याज दर न्यून होने से निवेशकों के लिए कर्ज लेकर फैक्ट्री लगाना आसान हो जाएगा और वे बाइक एवं टीवी बनाने के कारखाने लगाएंगे। इस प्रकार उपभोक्ता की मांग और निवेशक की आपूर्ति के बीच एक सही चक्र स्थापित हो जाएगा, लेकिन प्रश्न है कि क्या वास्तव में ऐसा होगा? इसकी

अमेरिकन बैंक एसोसिएशन के अनुसार अमेरिका में श्रमिकों के वेतन दबाव में हैं और वे कर्ज के बोझ तले दबते जा रहे हैं। हालांकि रोजगार के अवसर भी बढे हैं। इसका अर्थ है

पडताल के लिए हम अमेरिकी अर्थव्यवस्था का

विश्लेषण कर सकते हैं। ऐसा इसलिए, क्योंकि

अमेरिका द्वारा अपनाई गई नीतियों को ही दुनिया

के तमाम देश अपनाते दिख रहे हैं।

कि जो लोग अब तक बेरोजगार थे उन्हें अब रोजगार मिल गया है, लेकिन रोजगार पाए हुए लोगों की तुलना में बेरोजगार लोगों की संख्या बहुत कम है। बाजार में मांग की गति जानने के लिए, जो श्रमिक काम कर रहे हैं उनकी खपत पर विचार करना होगा। वे दोहरा झटका झेल रहे हैं। एक तो उनके वेतन पर दबाव है और दूसरा वे कर्ज के बोझ तले दबे हैं। फिर भी वे भारी मात्रा में खपत कर रहे हैं। इससे अमेरिकी अर्थव्यवस्था की विकास दर तीन प्रतिशत के मजबूत स्तर पर टिकी हुई है। इस बीच अहम प्रश्न यही है कि वेतन पर दबाव की स्थिति में भी वे कर्ज लेकर खपत

प्रतीत होता है कि राष्ट्रपति ट्रंप के आक्रामक स्वभाव और आत्मविश्वास से वह अमेरिकी जनता को भविष्य पर भरोसा दिला रहे हैं। उसी भविष्य पर भरोसे के चलते अमेरिकी नागरिक वेतन में गिरावट के बावजूद कर्ज लेकर खपत कर रहे हैं। इस खपत के कारण अमेरिकी अर्थव्यवस्था सुदृढ़ है। जैसे मौसम विभाग भविष्यवाणी करे कि वर्षा अच्छी होगी तो किसान चारों तरफ सूखा दिखने के बावजूद खेत में बोआई करने लगते हैं। वैसे ही अमेरिकी उपभोक्ता खपत में जुटे हैं।

दूसरा प्रश्न है कि अमेरिका की विकास दर इतनी मजबूत क्यों है? खासतौर से तब जब चीन के साथ उसका ट्रेड वार जारी है। अमेरिकी निर्यात दबाव में हैं। उसकी प्रतिस्पर्धा क्षमता में



अवधेश राजपूत

अमेरिकी सरकार के खर्च तेजी से बढ़ रहे हैं। इसी अवधि में अमेरिकी सरकार के खर्च 3900 अरब डॉलर से बढ़कर 4500 अरब डॉलर होने का अनुमान है। राजस्व में 120 अरब डॉलर की वृद्धि के मुकाबले खर्चों में 600 अरब डॉलर की वृद्धि हुई है। इन खर्चों की पूर्ति के लिए अमेरिकी सरकार अंतरराष्ट्रीय बाजार से भारी कर्ज ले रही है। ऐसे में अमेरिका के मौजूदा तीव्र विकास का असली स्नोत यही है। कि राष्ट्रपति ट्रंप ने जनता में भविष्य को लेकर आशा का संचार किया जिसके चलते अमेरिकी जनता वेतन के दबाव में होने के बावजूद कर्ज लेकर खपत कर रही है।

दूसरी तरफ अमेरिकी सरकार ने टैक्स कटौती की है। इसके चलते अपने बढ़े हुए खर्चों की भरपाई के लिए भारी मात्रा में कर्ज लेना पड़ रहा है। यानी अमेरिकी उपभोक्ता और अमेरिकी सरकार दोनों कर्ज के बोझ तले दबे जा रहे हैं और इसके दम पर ही अमेरिकी आर्थिक विकास में तेजी कायम है। इस आर्थिक विकास की कुंजी ब्याज दरों की कटौती में नहीं, बल्कि आत्मविश्वास के कारण

विकास हासिल करने की रणनीति की अपनी एक सीमा है और यह ज्यादा दिनों तक कारगर नहीं रहती। एक समय निवेशक भी समझ जाते हैं कि कर्ज लेने वाले की स्थिति डांवाडोल है और वे या तो कर्ज देना बंद कर देते हैं या फिर ऊंचा ब्याज मांगते हैं। इस संदर्भ में अंतरराष्ट्रीय मुद्रा कोष की अर्थशास्त्री गीता गोपीनाथ ने कहा है कि वर्तमान में हो रहा आर्थिक विकास जोखिम भरा है और विश्लेषकों की राय है कि ब्याज दरें घटाकर हम देशों को आर्थिक संकट अब यदि भारत में रिजर्व बैंक ब्याज

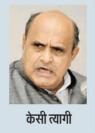
दरें घटा भी दे आत्मविश्वास के अभाव में उपभोक्ता एवं निवेशक दोनों ही कर्ज लेने में कतराएंगे। ध्यान करें कि बीते समय में रिजर्व बैंक ने कई बार ब्याज दरों में कटौती की है लेकिन हमारी अर्थव्यवस्था में सुधार के संकेत नहीं दिख रहे हैं। इसका स्पष्ट अर्थ है कि भविष्य में आत्मविश्वास बढ़ने पर ही उपभोक्त एवं निवेशक कर्ज लेते हैं। यानी सस्ता कर्ज स्वयं में अर्थव्यवस्था को आगे बढ़ाने का मंत्र नहीं है। सस्ता कर्ज केवल उस समय उपयोगी होता है जब उपभोक्ता एवं निवेशक को भविष्य पर भरोसा होता है। बीते समय में तमाम उद्यमियों ने कहा है कि सरकारी अधिकारी उन्हें चोर की दृष्टि से देखते हैं। हाल में कैफे कॉफी डे के संस्थापक द्वारा आत्महत्या किए जाने के पीछे भी यही कारण बताया जा रहा है ऐसे में सरकार को चाहिए कि वह जनता और निवेशकों से वार्ता करे। निवेशकों को सम्मान दे और उनके मन में भविष्य के प्रति जो आशंका दिख रही है उसका निवारण करे जिससे कर्ज लेकर खपत एवं निवेश का आदर्श चक्र

> (लेखक वरिष्ठ अर्थशास्त्री एवं आइआइएम बेंगलूर के पूर्व प्रोफेसर हैं) response@jagran.com

खेती को लाभकारी बनाने का समय

पंजाब एवं हरियाणा उच्च न्यायालय द्वारा केंद्र और पंजाब सरकार को न्यूनतम समर्थन मूल्य यानी एमएसपी को कानूनी दर्जा प्रदान करने पर विचार करने को कहा गया है। अदालत की इस टिप्पणी से एमएसपी का मुद्दा एक बार फिर चर्चा में है। न्यायालय ने वेयरहाउसिंग डेवलपमेंट एंड रेगुलेशन एक्ट को सख्ती से लागू करने संबंधी निर्देश भी राज्य सरकार को दिया है, ताकि किसान अपने अनाज को औने-पौने दाम पर बेचने को मजबूर न रहें। भंडारण क्षमता के अभाव में करीब 20 फीसद खाद्यान्न सड़-गल जाते हैं। हालांकि यह पहला अवसर नहीं जब एमएसपी न मिलने तथा इनसे जुड़ी अनियमितताओं को लेकर न्यायालय ने टिप्पणी को हो। समय-समय पर सर्वोच्च एवं उच्च न्यायालयों द्वारा कृषि और ग्रामीण दुर्दशा की ओर सरकारों का ध्यान आकर्षित किया जाता रहा है। दुर्भाग्यवश समस्या जस की तस बनी हुई है। सरकारें बदल जाती हैं, लेकिन किसानों के हालात नहीं बदलते।

विभिन्न राज्यों से निरंतर आती रही खबरों से स्पष्ट है कि किसानों को उनकी फसल का न्यूनतम समर्थन मूल्य नसीब नहीं हो रहा है। कृषि मंत्रालय तथा नीति आयोग भी स्वीकार चुके हैं कि अधिकांश किसान घोषित एमएसपी तक से वंचित रह जाते हैं। कृषि उत्पादों के दाम तय करने वाले कृषि लागत एवं मूल्य आयोग यानी सीएसीपी द्वारा लागत मल्य तय करने वाली प्रक्रिया लंबे समय से सवालों के घेरे में रही है। इसकी मुख्य वजह है लागत मुल्य निर्धारण प्रक्रिया। पिछले बजट में केंद्र सरकार द्वारा फसलों के दाम डेढ़ गुना किए जाने का वादा जरूर निभाया गया है, लेकिन एमएस स्वामीनाथन आयोग की सिफारिश, जिसमें सी-2 फॉर्मूले के तहत लागत मूल्य निर्धारित किए जाने की संस्तुति की गई थी, अब तक पूरी नहीं हो पाई है। मौजूदा लागत मूल्य निर्धारण प्रक्रिया में ए2-एफएल को आधार बनाकर फसलों की लागत मूल्य के अनुपात में एमएसपी बढ़ाया गया है, जबकि सी-2 प्रणाली को आधार मानकर लागत के अतिरिक्त 50 फीसद का न्यूनतम समर्थन मूल्य किसान संगठनों की मांग रही है। प्रक्रिया ए2-एफएल के तहत खेती में प्रयुक्त बीज, उर्वरक, कीटनाशक, मजदूरी, मशीनों का किराया तथा पारिवारिक श्रम शामिल होते हैं, जबकि 'व्यापक लागत' यानी सी-2 व्यवस्था के तहत अन्य लागतों के साथ स्वयं की भूमि का किराया भी शामिल किया जाता है जो ए2-एफएल से अधिक व्यापक होता है। इस प्रक्रिया के तहत लागत मूल्य निर्धारण करने से किसानों को मिलने



सरकार को एमएसपी नीति में बदलाव करने की जरूरत है, क्योंकि इससे सीमित मात्रा में ही किसान लाभान्वित हो पाते हैं



वाले दाम और मौजूदा व्यवस्था के तहत मिलने वाले दाम में बड़ा अंतर है। यही कारण है कि किसान लगातार इसकी मांग करते आ रहे हैं।

चूंकि किसानों से फसल खरीदने के लिए एक मूल्य नीति की आवश्यकता थी, इस दिशा में कृषि मूल्य आयोग की स्थापना की गई जो आज सीएसीपी के रूप में मौजूद है और मुख्य रूप से कृषि उत्पादों का दाम निर्धारित करता है। मूल्य समर्थन नीति के बाद ही किसानों को उनके उत्पादों के लिए न्यूनतम समर्थन मूल्य की सरकारी गारंटी मिल पाई, लेकिन लागत मूल्य के सही आकलन और सबको एमएसपी मिले, इसे सुनिश्चित करने की प्रक्रिया के दोषपूर्ण होने के कारण इसकी सार्थकता हमेशा से सवालों के घेरे में रही है। शांता कुमार की रिपोर्ट में वर्षों पहले यह बात कही जा चुकी है कि सरकार को अपनी एमएसपी नीति में बदलाव करने की जरूरत है। इसी रिपोर्ट में यह तथ्य सामने आ चुका है कि देश के मात्र छह फीसद किसान ही किसी खरीद एजेंसी को अपना धान एवं गेहं बेचकर एमएसपी से लाभान्वित हो पाते हैं। मौजूदा स्थिति में एमएसपी को लेकर इतना शोरगुल इसीलिए है, क्योंकि किसानों को एमएसपी के आसपास की कीमत भी नहीं मिल पा रही। इस दिशा में जरूरत है कि सरकार भंडारण एवं वेयरहाउसिंग की सुविधा को दुरुस्त करने के साथ

एफसीआइ के कामकाज के तरीके को भी सुदृढ़ करने पर जोर दे।

समझना होगा कि कृषि सामग्री समेत उपभोग की अन्य वस्तुओं की कीमतों में बेतहाशा बढ़ोतरी हुई है, परंतु उसके समानुपातिक कृषि उत्पादों की कीमतों में वृद्धि नहीं हो पाई है। वर्ष 1994 से 2014 के आंकड़ों के अनुसार कर्मचारियों के वेतन में 300 प्रतिशत की वृद्धि हुई है। स्टील, सीमेंट, कपड़े, आवासीय व्यय, खाद्य पदार्थीं, शिक्षा, चिकित्सा आदि मूलभूत आवश्यक वस्तुओं की कीमतों में भी लगभग 300 प्रतिशत तक का इजाफा देखा गया है। रासायनिक खादों के दाम 300 रुपये से बढ़कर 1100 रुपये तक हो गए हैं, कीटनाशकों की कीमत में भी लगभग चार से पांच गुना तक की बढ़ोतरी हुई है, लेकिन कृषि उत्पादों की कीमतों में औसतन 75 से 80 फीसद तक की ही बढ़ोतरी हो पाई है। यह बढ़ती महंगाई के समानांतर नाकाफी है। इस सुरत में ग्रामीण संरचना कमजोर होती जा रही है। प्रतिवर्ष लगभग 30 हजार हेक्टेयर कृषि भूमि खेती के दायरे से घटती जा रही है। किसान बहुत तेजी से मजदूर बनते जा रहे हैं। एक अध्ययन के मुताबिक 86 प्रतिशत भू-मालिक किसान और लगभग 80 फीसद मजदूर किसान कर्ज में डूबे हैं। आत्महत्याओं पर काबू नहीं पाया जा सका है। ऐसे में कृषि उद्योग की लाभकारी परिकल्पना के तहत खेतिहरों को संपूर्ण सुरक्षा की गारंटी

प्रधानमंत्री किसान सम्मान निधि योजना के तहत दो हेक्टेयर भूमि वाले किसानों को प्रतिवर्ष छह हजार की सहायता राशि उत्साहवर्धक है। सीधे कृषकों के खाते में जाने से किसान लाभान्वित हुए हैं। ऐसा ही कुछ बीमा योजना के संबंध में भी किए जाने की जरूरत है। सख्त निगरानी में फसलों की क्षति का सही मूल्यांकन न हो पाने से बीमा किसानों के लिए घाटे का सौदा बन रहा है।

राहत की बात है कि बीते पांच वर्षों में किसानों से जुड़े मुद्दे चर्चा के केंद्र में रहे हैं। इस दौरान कई कल्याणकारी योजनाओं का सफल क्रियान्वयन हुआ, लेकिन लंबे समय से कृषि जगत के प्रति बरती गई उदासीनता पर विराम लगाने के लिए खेती-किसानी में उत्साह भरने की इस समय सख्त जरूरत है। पूर्ववर्ती सरकारों की मनोवृत्ति और रवैया इस सरकार में नहीं दिखना चाहिए, ऐसी किसानों की अपेक्षाएं हैं।

> (लेखक जदयू के राष्ट्रीय प्रवक्ता हैं) response@jagran.com



समय

मानव जीवन परमात्मा प्रदत्त अमूल्य उपहार है। यह परमात्मा की अद्भुत, सर्वोत्कृष्ट रचना है। जीवन की महत्ता समझना मनुष्य के लिए अति आवश्यक है तात्विक रूप में जीवन का अर्थ है समय। अगर कोई समय का महत्व समझ ले तो उसका जीवन जग मे वंदनीय बन जाता है। व्यक्ति समय की बर्बादी एवं दुरुपयोग पर ध्यान नहीं देते। समय नुकसान करने का अर्थ-जीवन को नष्ट करना है। मनुष्य अपने जीवन के अमूल्य क्षणों को फिजूल आलस्य-प्रमाद-उन्माद में खो देते हैं। वह बीता समय पुनः वापस लौटकर नहीं आता

समय पर ही सब सुंदर लगता है। समय बीतने पर वह महत्वहीन हो जाता है। इसी प्रकार जीवन घट से अमूल्य क्षणों के जितने बूंद गिर जाते हैं, घड़ा उतन ही खाली हो जाता है। घड़े की वह रिक्तता कभी भी किसी प्रकार से पुनः पूर्ण नहीं की जा सकती। मनुष्य जो अमूल्य क्षण आलस्य, प्रमाद, व्यसन में बर्बाद करता है, उतने ही समय में वह कोई सार्थक कार्य कर सकता है। मनुष्य के जीवन का पल-पल एक उच्ज्वल भविष्य की संभावना को अपने साथ लेकर इस धरती पर आता है। जीवन का हर पल मनुष्य के उत्थान के लिए महान मोड़ साबित हो सकता है। व्यक्ति जब समय गंवाता है तो उसे पश्चाताप की अग्नि में जलना पडता है। जो जीवन में कुछ करने की तमन्ना, सपना मन में संजोए हैं, उन्हें चाहिए कि वे कभी भी अपने कर्म-कर्तव्य को भूल कर भी कल पर न छोड़ें। जो कार्य आज करना है, उसे कल पर नहीं छोड़कर आज ही करना चाहिए और कल के काम के लिए कल का दिन निर्धारित करना जरूरी है इसे नजरअंदाज करना स्वयं के पैरों पर कुल्हाड़ी मारना है। यह अपने भविष्य को पतन के गर्त में गिराने जैसा है।

परमात्मा ने जीवन का यह अमृल्य समय मनुष्य को महानता का इतिहास रचने के लिए प्रदान किया है, पर वह समय की पहचान नहीं करने के कारण दर-दर ठोकर खाते नारकीय जीवन जीता है। विवेकानंद 32 वर्ष की आयु में देवसंस्कृति के पुरोधा बने। विश्व के क्षितिज पर सुनहरे अक्षरों में नाम अंकित करने में समर्थ हुए।

मुकेश ऋषि

संघ लोक सेवा आयोग और उसकी हिंदी

यूपीएससी यानी संघ लोक सेवा आयोग इन दिनों में चर्चा में है। चर्चा का कारण है इस साल सिविल सेवा परीक्षा में पूछे गए कुछ प्रश्नों की हिंदी। उदाहरण के लिए एक प्रश्न कुछ इस प्रकार है-'भारत में संविधान के संदर्भ में, सामान्य विधियों में अंतर्विस्ट प्रतिषेध अथवा निर्बंधन अथवा उपबंध, अनुच्छेद 142 के अधीन सांविधानिक शक्तियों पर प्रतिरोध अथवा निर्बंधन की तरह कार्य नहीं कर सकते। निम्नलिखित में से कौन-सा एक इसका अर्थ हो सकता है?' यह सवाल किसी हिंदी माध्यम के विद्यार्थी में डर का भाव पैदा कर सकता है। प्रश्न उठता है कि क्या आयोग नहीं चाहता

कि हमारे देश की प्रशासनिक मशीनरी में अंग्रेजी माध्यम के अतिरिक्त हिंदी, गुजराती, तमिल इत्यादि भाषा के लोग प्रवेश करें? अगर आप इस निष्कर्ष पर पहुंच रहे हैं तो थोड़ा रुकिए। अगर संघ लोक सेवा आयोग चाहता कि हिंदी माध्यम के लोग सेवा में नहीं आने चाहिए तो 2013 में निशांत जैन की 13वीं रैंक कैसे आई? 2017 के परिणाम अनुसार साक्षात्कार में हिंदी माध्यम के एक परीक्षार्थी को

यूपीएससी हिंदी माध्यम के छात्रों के साथ कोई भेदभाव करता ही नहीं है तो फिर वह क्यों सर्जिकल स्ट्राइक को 'शल्य प्रहार' लिखता है ?

275 में से 198 नंबर कैसे दिए गए? इसका निर्णय लेने के लिए आप स्वतंत्र हैं। अब दूसरा महत्वपूर्ण सवाल यह है कि अगर संघ लोक सेवा आयोग किसी प्रकार का कोई भेदभाव करता ही नहीं है तो फिर वह क्यों सर्जिकल स्ट्राइक को 'शल्य प्रहार' के रूप में लिखता है? दरअसल यही वह बिंदु है जिस पर संघ लोक सेवा आयोग और हमारे जनप्रतिनिधयों को विचार करने की आवश्यकता है।

ध्यान रहे कि जब हम जनसांख्यिकीय लाभांश की बात करते हैं तो उसमें केवल अंग्रेजी माध्यम के लोग ही नहीं, बल्कि हिंदी के साथ-साथ अन्य क्षेत्रीय भाषाओं के युवा भी शामिल होते हैं जो हमारे देश को नई ऊंचाइयों पर ले जाने का जज्बा रखते हैं। विडंबना देखिए एक ओर तो हम पांच ट्रिलियन डॉलर की अर्थव्यवस्था का लक्ष्य लिए हुए हैं और

दूसरी ओर हमारे देश की मानव पूंजी अनुवाद के आगे घुटने टेक रही है!

आखिर इस समस्या का समाधान कैसे हो? दरअसल इस समस्या के निदान के लिए द्वि-आयामी नीति अपनाने की आवश्यकता है। पहला संघ लोक सेवा आयोग से जुड़ा हुआ है और दूसरा उसकी तैयारी में जुटे विद्यार्थियों से। संघ लोक सेवा आयोग को चाहिए कि वह उन्हीं अनुवादकों का प्रयोग करे जो 2011 से पहले उससे जुड़े थे, क्योंकि पहले वाली उसकी हिंदी बेहतर थी। दूसरा आयाम विद्यार्थियों से है जिस पर मैं सर्वाधिक जोर देना चाहता हूं। सोचिए, आप इतने सारे विषय पढ़ते हैं। लगभग हर वह विषय जो समाज और देश को समझने के लिए आवश्यक हैं, लेकिन अंग्रेजी जो देश-दुनिया को समझने के लिए वर्तमान समय की एक महत्वपूर्ण आवश्यकता बनती जा रही है उसके आगे इतनी लाचारी क्यों? अगर आयोग और विद्यार्थी उपरोक्त आयामों पर गंभीरता से विचार करें तो इससे न सिर्फ क्षेत्रीय भाषा के विद्यार्थियों की क्षमता सुधरेगी, बल्कि अनुवाद की समस्या से निजात पाकर संघ लोक सेवा आयोग भी अपनी विश्वसनीयता को बनाए रख सकता है। (लेखक एमडीयू विवि में शोधार्थी हैं)

अब खत्म होगा घाटी से आतंकवाद

देर से उठाया गया दुरुस्त कदम शीर्षक से लिखे अपने लेख में प्रकाश सिंह एवं प्रतिभा नैथानी ने अनुच्छेद 370 हटाने के सरकार के फैसले की सराहना की है। यह कहना बिल्कुल सही है कि जम्मू-कश्मीर में पूर्व से लागू अनुच्छेद 370 अस्थायी था, इसलिए बहुत पहले ही हट जाना चाहिए था। खैर कोई बात नहीं, अब जबिक सरकार ने यह साहसिक निर्णय लिया ही है तो चुनौतियां भी कम नहीं हैं। सबसे पहली चुनौती यही है कि जम्मू-कश्मीर में आम जनमानस में विश्वास बहाली की जाए और यह तभी होगा जब वहां कई दशकों से चली आ रही आतंकवाद की विषबेल को नष्ट कर दिया जाए। बेहतर शिक्षा और रोजगार के अवसर तेजी से उपलब्ध कराए जाएं। विकास की ओर प्रदेश को उन्मुख किया जाए। इन कदमों से प्रभावित प्रदेश का आम जनमानस अनुच्छेद 370 खात्मे से पहले और बाद के कश्मीर की तुलना कर जब बाद का प्रदेश बेहतर पाएगा तो सच मानिए विश्वास बहाली में यह कदम मील का पत्थर साबित होगा। अतः सरकार अब केंद्रशासित प्रदेश जम्मू-कश्मीर और लद्दाख में विकास की गंगा बहाने की दिशा में कदम बढ़ाए और पाक अधिकृत कश्मीर को भी वापस लाने के लिए अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तर पर कूटनीतिक कदम उठाए, ताकि अलग-थलग पड़े उस क्षेत्र को विकास के मार्ग पर लाया जा सके।

सर्वजीत आर्या, प्रधानाचार्य, कन्नौज

श्रीराम के वंशज होने के सुबूत

सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने पूछा था कि भगवान श्रीराम का कोई वंशज अयोध्या या दुनिया में है? इस पर जयपुर की राजकुमारी ने अपनी दिवंगत मां पद्मिनी देवी के निर्देश पर जयपुर

मेलबाक्स

स्थित सिटी पैलेस में रखे रामजन्म भूमि और अयोध्या के अति प्राचीन नक्शे को सुबूत के तौर पर पेश किया है और यह दावा किया है कि जयपुर का राजघराना ही मर्यादा पुरुषोत्तम श्रीराम के वंशज हैं। वे श्रीराम के पुत्र कुश के 309वीं पीढ़ी के राजा हैं। कुश के वंशज होने से वे कछवाहा वंश, संभवतः कुश का अपभ्रंश होकर यह शब्द हो गया है, कहलाते हैं। राज कुमारी के अनुसार उनका परिवार प्रभु श्रीराम की 309वीं पीढ़ी है। 25 वर्ष में प्रायः राजकुमारों की शादी के बाद उनका उत्तराधिकारी पैदा हो जाते हैं। इस तरह 25 गुणा 309 बराबर 7725 वर्ष हुआ। जबकि पुराणों और स्मृतियों की गणना के अनुसार प्रभु श्रीराम का जन्म आज से लगभग तैतालिस लाख, बीस हजार साल पूर्व इस धरती पर हुआ था, न कि मात्र 7725 वर्ष पूर्व। जैसा कि राज कुमारी दावा कर रही हैं, इसलिए उनका यह दावा पूर्णतः भ्रामक और गलत धारणाओं पर आधारित है और पूर्णतया मिथ्याचार है।

निर्मल कुमार शर्मा, गाजियाबाद

गुलाम कश्मीर में दमन

यह सही है कि जब राजा हरि सिंह कश्मीर के शासक थे, तब पाकिस्तानी कबायलियों ने अचानक हमला करके कश्मीर का कुछ हिस्सा कब्जा कर लिया था। तभी से पाकिस्तान उसे अपना बताता आ रहा है। यह अच्छी बात है कि नरेंद्र मोदी के नेतृत्व वाली केंद्र सरकार ने पीओके के संबंध में संसद में अपना पक्ष स्पष्ट कर दिया है। पाक अधिकृत कश्मीर न केवल भारत का है, बल्कि वहां के लोग गुलाम कश्मीर को भारत में शामिल करने के पक्ष में भी

आ रहे हैं। पाक अधिकृत कश्मीर में पाकिस्तान सरकार के खिलाफ विरोध प्रदर्शन लगातार होते रहते हैं। इसकी वजह वहां हो रहे नागरिकों का शोषण और दमन है। पाकिस्तान ने 1947 में सेना के बूते गिलगित और बलूचिस्तान पर अवैध कब्जा कर लिया था। तभी से यहां लोकतंत्र का दमन किया जा रहा है।

ritesh01upadhyay@gmail.com

इंदिरा गांधी की भूल

वर्ष 1971 में भारत-पाक युद्ध में भारत ने एक तरफा विजय हासिल की थी। पाकिस्तान के लगभग 15 हजार किमी जमीन पर कब्जा एवं 90 हजार सैनिकों को हमने बंदी बना लिया था। भारत ने युद्ध में जो जमीन कब्जाई थी उसमें पाक अधिकृत कश्मीर का भी हिस्सा था और लाहौर का भी कुछ क्षेत्र था, लेकिन भारत सरकार ने वापस कर दिया। अगर उस समय भारत ने पाकिस्तान पर दबाव बनाया होता तो आज कश्मीर कोई मुद्दा नहीं होता और पाकिस्तान के एक बड़े क्षेत्र पर हमारा नियंत्रण होता।

विजय किशोर तिवारी, नई दिल्ली

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

दैनिक जागरण, राष्ट्रीय संस्करण, डी-210-211, सेक्टर-63, नोएडा ई-मेल: mailbox@jagran.com

* जनसता

उम्मीद और चुनौती

त मंत्री ने रियल एस्टेट कारोबार को मंदी से उबारने की दिशा में जो पहल शुरू की है उससे यह उम्मीद बंधती है कि सरकार आने वाले दिनों में ऐसे बड़े कदम उठाएगी, जिनसे इस क्षेत्र में पिछले चार-पांच साल से चला आ रहा संकट खत्म हो और बिल्डरों के साथ-साथ ग्राहकों का भी भला हो। अभी रियल एस्टेट क्षेत्र एक तरह से दम तोड़े हुए है। जायदाद खरीदने-बेचने का कारोबार करने वाले सड़क पर हैं और सिर्फ बड़े कारोबारी थोड़ी-बहुत हिम्मत से डटे हैं। रियल एस्टेट में लंबे समय से खरीदार नहीं हैं। नोटबंदी के बाद यह संकट और गहराता चला गया। ये उसी का असर है कि आज लाखों फ्लैट बन कर तैयार हैं, लेकिन खरीदार नहीं हैं। जमीन-जायदाद का कारोबार दरअसल लंबे समय से नगदी संकट की मार झेल रहा है। इसकी एक वजह यह भी है कि बैंक और गैरबैंकिंग वित्तीय कंपनियां (एनबीएफर्सी) पहले तो इस क्षेत्र के लिए पैसे दे रही थीं, लेकिन अब इन्होंने हाथ खींच लिए हैं। एनबीएफसी तो खुद नगदी संकट में फंसी हैं और ऐसी आशंका भी बनी हुई है कि कहीं इन्हें भी एनपीए की बीमारी न लग जाए।

रियल एस्टेट क्षेत्र में जान फूंकने के लिए सरकार को एक साथ कई मोर्चों पर जूझना होगा। इनमें सबसे जटिल काम इस क्षेत्र को पूंजी मुहैया कराने का है, ताकि बिल्डर अटकी हुई परियोजनाएं पूरी कर सकें। दूसरी बड़ी समस्या मकान खरीदारों को लेकर है। आम्रपाली, जेपी जैसे कुछ बड़े समूहों की परियोजनाओं में बयालीस हजार से ज्यादा लोगों के पैसे फंसे हुए हैं और सर्वोच्च अदालत ने अब इनका काम पूरा करने और लोगों को मकान दिलाने की जिम्मेदारी केंद्र सरकार पर डाली है। इसलिए ऐसे संकेत मिल रहे हैं कि सरकार अटकी परियोजनाओं को पूरा करने और खरीदारों को संकट से निकालने के लिए अलग से कोष बना सकती है। हाल में रिजर्व बैंक ने भी अपनी मौद्रिक नीति में चौथी बार नीतिगत दरों में कटौती है और साथ ही बैंकों पर कर्ज सस्ता करने के लिए दबाव बनाया है। आने वाले दो-तीन महीने त्योहारों के हैं और इनमें जमीन-जायदाद की खरीदारी खासतौर से होती है। अगर बैंक कर्ज सस्ता करते हैं तो इससे भी रियल एस्टेट क्षेत्र को पटरी पर लाने में मदद मिलेगी।

इसमें कोई दो राय नहीं कि भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था इस वक्त फिर से मंदी जैसे हालात का सामना कर रही है। ऐसे में रियल एस्टेट उद्योग को फिर से खड़ा कर पाना कोई आसान काम नहीं हैं। उसे हर स्तर पर भारी रियायतों की जरूरत है। इसीलिए बिल्डरों और क्रेडाई (कनफेडरेशन ऑफ रियल एस्टेट डेवलपर्स एसोसिएशन ऑफ इंडिया) और नारेडको (नेशनल रियल एस्टेट डवलपमट काउासल) ने सबसे ज्यादा जोर इस बात पर दिया है कि सरकार बैंकों और गैर-बैंकिंग वित्तीय कंपनियों पर इस क्षेत्र में पैसा डालने के लिए दबाव बनाए। लेकिन हकीकत यह है कि ज्यादातर बैंक पहले ही एनपीए की गंभीर समस्या से जूझ रहे हैं। ऐसे में वे कोई जोखिम नहीं ले सकते। सीमेंट और इस्पात जैसे क्षेत्र रियल एस्टेट कारोबार पर टिके होते हैं। इसमें मंदी का मतलब है सीमेंट और इस्पात जैसे उद्योगों पर खतरा मंडराना। इसलिए सरकार को अब ऐसी रणनीति बनानी होगी, जिसमें बैंकों के जोखिम का खयाल रखते हुए रियल एस्टेट उद्योग में पैसा डलवाया जाए, ताकि इससे जुड़े दूसरे प्रमुख क्षेत्रों में भी मंदी के हालात दूर हों। मंदी की वजह से बड़ी संख्या में लोगों का रोजगार जा रहा है, यह भी कम गंभीर चिंता का विषय नहीं है। ऐसे में सरकार के प्रयास कहां तक सफल हो पाते हैं, यह आने वक्त ही बताएगा!

द्रीय माध्यमिक शिक्षा बोर्ड (सीबीएसई) की ओर से दसवीं और बारहवीं कक्षा के परीक्षा शुल्क में भारी बढ़ोतरी की घोषणा के बाद स्वाभाविक ही यह सवाल उठा है कि खासतौर पर सरकारी स्कूलों में पढ़ने वाले कमजोर तबके के विद्यार्थियों के भविष्य पर इसका क्या असर पड़ेगा। सीबीएसई की ताजा घोषणा ने इसलिए भी लोगों को सोचने पर मजबूर किया है कि इसमें सामान्य तबके से आने वाले विद्यार्थियों के लिए निर्धारित फीस में जहां दुगनी राशि की बढ़ोतरी की गई है, वहीं अनुसूचित जाति-अनुसूचित जनजाति के बच्चों को अब पुराने शुल्क के मुकाबले चौबीस गुनी ज्यादा रकम देनी होगी। यानी सामान्य वर्ग के बच्चों को पहले के साढ़े सात सौ के बजाय अब जहां पंद्रह सौ रुपए चुकाने होंगे, वहीं अनुसूचित जाति-जनजाति के बच्चों को पचास रुपए की जगह बारह सौ रुपए देने होंगे। यों सवाल उठने पर सीबीएसई ने यह सफाई पेश की है कि फीस में वृद्धि पांच साल बाद की गई है। लेकिन सवाल यह भी है कि पांच साल तक कोई वृद्धि नहीं करने के बाद अचानक इतनी बड़ी बढ़ोतरी की जरूरत क्यों पड़ गई! क्या ताजा वृद्धि के सहारे पिछले पांच सालों के घाटे को पूरा करने की कोशिश की जा रही है?

यह समझना मुश्किल है कि फीस में अचानक इतनी ज्यादा वृद्धि का क्या औचित्य है और क्या यह फैसला लेते हुए सरकारी स्कूलों में पढ़ने वाले बच्चों की सामाजिक-आर्थिक पृष्ठभूमि को ध्यान में रखा गया! गौरतलब है कि सीबीएसई के पाठ्यक्रमों के तहत एक ओर निजी स्कूल हैं तो दूसरी ओर सरकारी स्कूलों की संख्या भी बड़ी है। इस संदर्भ में देखें तो हो सकता है कि शुल्क में ताजा बढ़ोतरी से निजी स्कूलों में पढ़ने वाले बच्चों पर कोई बड़ा फर्क नहीं पड़े, लेकिन सरकारी स्कूलों में जिस आर्थिक और सामाजिक तबके के बच्चे आते हैं, उनके बारे में यही बात शायद दावे के साथ नहीं कही जा सकती। सरकारी स्कूलों में पढ़ने वाले ऐसे तमाम बच्चे होते हैं जिनके परिवारों की आर्थिक हैसियत संतोषजनक भी नहीं होती है। खासतौर पर अनुसूचित जाति-जनजाति वर्ग के बच्चों के माता-पिता कई बार न्यूनतम खर्च से अपना काम चलाते हैं और सरकारी स्कूल में कम खर्च के भरोसे ही अपने बच्चों को पढ़ने भेज पाते हैं। ऐसे में उनकी फीस में सीधे चौबीस गुनी बढ़ोतरी का असर इन तबकों के बच्चों के भविष्य की पढ़ाई पर पड़ सकता है।

सवाल है कि अगर इस वजह से किसी बच्चे की पढ़ाई बाधित होती है तो इसकी जिम्मेदारी किस पर आएगी और क्या यह शिक्षा का अधिकार कानून के खिलाफ नहीं होगा? यह बेवजह नहीं है कि सीबीएसई की फीस बढोतरी की ताजा पहलकदमी पर अभिभावकों ने भारी असंतोष जताया है। अखिल भारतीय अभिभावक संघ ने इस फैसले को असंवैधानिक बताते हुए अदालत में चुनौती देने की बात कही है। दरअसल, अच्छी शिक्षा के नाम पर निजी स्कूलों में जो फीस वसूली जाती है और उसे चुकाने में जो लोग सक्षम नहीं होते हैं, आमतौर पर वही अपने बच्चों को सरकारी स्कूलों में भेजते हैं। लेकिन अगर यहां भी सरकारी जिम्मेदारियों में जनता के कल्याण की अवधारणा को अहम मानने के बजाय फीस की रकम को प्राथमिक माना जाएगा तो गरीब तबकों के बीच शिक्षा के प्रसार पर इसका क्या असर पड़ेगा? साक्षरता दर के मामले में अभी हमारे देश को बहुत कुछ करना बाकी है। इस मकसद से सरकार अनेक तरह की योजनाओं पर काम कर रही है। इसके मद्देनजर यह ध्यान रखने की जरूरत होगी कि किसी स्थिति में स्कूली बच्चों पर पड़ने वाले आर्थिक बोझ की वजह से शिक्षा का अधिकार कानून बाधित न हो।

कल्पमधा

विश्वास का मतलब है असंभव पर भरोसा करना और भरोसा करने के बाद यह समझना कि असंभव भी संभव है। -पाओलो कोएल्हो

सिमटती पुस्तकालय संस्कृति

चंद्रशेखर तिवारी

कई पुस्तकालय ऐसे भी हैं जहां पाठकों की संख्या तो पर्याप्त दिखाई देती है पर वे वित्तीय व अन्य संसाधनों की समस्या का सामना कर रहे हैं। इनमें प्रशिक्षित और व्यावसायिक पुस्तकालय कर्मियों का अभाव दिखाई देता है और पुस्तके अलमारियों अथवा बंद बोरों में सिमटी पड़ी हैं। निस्सदेह इस तरह की परिस्थितियों ने पुस्तकालय और आम पाठक वर्ग के बीच की दूरी को बढ़ाने का ही काम किया है।

मार्वजनिक पुस्तकालय ऐसी सामाजिक संस्था है जिसके माध्यम से व्यक्ति का सतत बौद्धिक और सांस्कृतिक विकास होता है। पुस्तकालयों में उपलब्ध साहित्य, दर्शन, इतिहास, धर्म, विज्ञान, राजनीति के साथ-साथ सामाजिक, आर्थिक और कला, संस्कृति जैसे विविध विषयों की पुस्तकों से मानव अपने ज्ञान में अभिवृद्धि करने का प्रयास करता है। स्थानीय समुदाय के सदस्यों को पुस्तकालय पोढ़ा–दर पोढ़ा शिक्षा, मनोरजन व विकास के लिए सुचना और सेवा देने का काम करते आ रहे हैं। कुल मिला कर कहा जा सकता है कि एक सामाजिक मिशन के तहत सार्वजनिक पुस्तकालय ज्ञान संसाधन केंद्र के रूप में अपनी महत्त्वपूर्ण भूमिका अदा करते हैं।

पुस्तकालय के पुराने इतिहास पर अगर नजर डालें तो माना जा सकता है कि भारतीय पुस्तकालयों का प्रारंभिक स्वरूप पुरातन काल में भी रहा था। वस्तुतः प्रागैतिहासिक काल की शिलाओं, गुफाओं और अन्य माध्यमों में उत्कीर्ण चित्र-लिपि व लेखों में हम एक तरह से पुस्तकालय की आरंभिक छवि पा सकते हैं। तत्कालीन मानव समुदाय के मध्य विचारों को पहुंचाने में इन शिलालेखों की महत्त्वपूर्ण

भूमिका थी। वैदिक काल में समय-समय पर धर्म व दर्शन संबंधी साहित्य ताड और भोज पत्र, वस्त्र विशेष और हस्त निर्मित कागज पर लिखने की परंपरा विकसित होती रही। इस काल में वेद, इतिहास, पुराण और व्याकरण संबंधी कई ग्रंथों की रचना तत्कालीन ऋषि-मुनियों ने की। हाथ से लिखे गए इन ग्रंथों की पांडुलिपियां स्थान-विशेष यथा मठ-मंदिरों और गुरुकुलों में सुरक्षित रखी जाती थीं। बौद्ध काल में तक्षशिला व नालंदा जैसे महत्त्वपूर्ण शैक्षिक केंद्रों में भी आयुर्वेद, ज्योतिष कला, राज-व्यवस्था. विज्ञान आदि के ग्रंथ संग्रहित रहते थे। मुगलकाल में कई बादशाह अपने दरबार में विद्वानों द्वारा रचित संस्कृत और फारसी के विविध ग्रंथों का संकलन किया करते थे। सम्राट अकबर के पुस्तकालय में भी विविध विषयों के तकरीबन पच्चीस हजार ग्रंथ थे।

हालांकि आधुनिक भारत में पुस्तकालय का विकास उस गित से नहीं हुआ जितनी कि अपेक्षा की जा रही थी। देश गुलामी की जंजीरों में जकड़ा हुआ था। इस वजह से शैक्षिक पुस्तकालयों की ओर अधिक ध्यान नहीं गया

और पुस्तकालयों को राष्ट्रीय स्तर का स्वरूप नहीं मिल पाया। सन 1882 में मुंबई राज्य, 1890 में कर्नाटक और 1910 के आसपास बड़ौदा राज्य में पुस्तकालयों की तरफ ध्यान देने का प्रयास किया गया। इसी तरह पुस्तकालयों के विकास के संदर्भ में 1924 में बेलगांव, 1927 में मद्रास राज्य व 1929 में कर्नाटक के धारवाड़ में पुस्तकालय संघों की बैठकें भी हुईं। सन 1933 में भारत में पुस्तकालय विज्ञान के जनक कहे जाने वाले डॉ एसआर रंगनाथन के प्रयासों से मद्रास विधानसभा में पुस्तकालय अधिनियम पारित किया गया। इसी दौर में पुस्तकालय विज्ञान के बीस ग्रंथ भी प्रकाशित किए गए।

एक समृद्ध और बहुआयामी सामाजिक संस्था के रूप में सार्वजनिक पुस्तकालयों की भूमिका देश और समाज के विकास के लिए बहुत महत्त्वपूर्ण है। किसी भी समाज में ज्ञान को सवस्रेलभ बनाने में पुस्तकालय से बेहतर दूसरा विकल्प संभवतः नहीं हो सकता है। वर्ष 2005 में गठित भारतीय ज्ञान आयोग ने इसी बात को ध्यान में रख कर भारत में एक स्वायत्त राष्ट्रीय पुस्तकालय आयोग की स्थापना करने की शानदार पहल की है। वर्तमान में इस आयोग की देखरेख में देशभर में मौजुद पुस्तकालयों के विकास, संरक्षण और संवर्धन की दिशा में कार्य करने का प्रयास किया जा रहा है।

भारत में आज जिस गति से पुस्तक प्रकाशन व्यवसाय में वृद्धि हो रही है और दिल्ली, जयपुर, कोलकाता, पटना सहित अनेक शहरों में आयोजित छोटे-बड़े साहित्यिक उत्सवों और पुस्तक मेलों में कला व

साहित्य प्रेमियों की जबरदस्त भागीदारी दिखाई दे रही है उसके सापेक्ष यदि हम सार्वजनिक पुस्तकालयों की ओर नजर दौड़ाएं तो स्थिति कदाचित इसके उलट है। ज्यादातर पुस्तकालय दयनीय हाल में हैं। इन पुस्तकालयों में पाठकों की वह आमद नहीं दिखाई देती जो दरअसल एक पुस्तकालय के लिए पर्याप्त मानी जाती है। इस तरह के सार्वजनिक पुस्तकालयों में इमारतों की खस्ताहाल स्थिति, अल्मारियों में धूल फांकती पुस्तकें, टूटे-फूटे फर्नीचर, अप्रशिक्षित पुस्तकालय कर्मचारी, अन्य मूलभूत स्विधाएं न होने और वाचनालय के वीरान माहौल को देख कर पाठकों में निराशा होना स्वाभाविक है। देश में प्रत्येक राज्य ने अपने यहां सार्वजनिक

पुस्तकालयों के रखरखाव और उनके संचालन के लिए किसी न किसी तरह की व्यवस्था का प्रावधान तो कर रखा है लेकिन बावजूद इसके सार्वजनिक पुस्तकालयों की स्थिति निराशाजनक ही है। आंध्र प्रदेश, महाराष्ट, तमिलनाडु, कर्नाटक, पश्चिम बंगाल, गोवा, उत्तर प्रदेश, गुजरात, बिहार, राजस्थान, हरियाणा, अरुणाचल प्रदेश,



मणिपुर, केरल, मिजोरम, छत्तीसगढ़, उत्तराखंड, लक्षद्वीप और ओड़िशा की राज्य सरकारों ने अपने यहां सार्वजनिक पुस्तकालय अधिनियम भी पारित किया हुआ है। फिर भी ये पुस्तकालय पाठकों के बीच पैठ नहीं बना पा रहे हैं। कई पुस्तकालय ऐसे भी हैं जहां पाठकों की संख्या तो पर्याप्त दिखाई देती है पर वे वित्तीय व अन्य संसाधनों की समस्या का सामना कर रहे हैं। इनमें प्रशिक्षित और व्यावसायिक पुस्तकालय कर्मियों का अभाव दिखाई देता है और पुस्तकें अलमारियों अथवा बंद बोरों में सिमटी पड़ी हैं। निस्संदेह इस तरह की परिस्थितियों ने पुस्तकालय और आम पाठक वर्ग के बीच की दूरी को बढ़ाने का ही काम किया है।

सार्वजनिक पुस्तकालयों का एक दूसरा स्वरूप यह भी है कि वे ज्ञान, शिक्षा और सचना के भंडार होने के साथ ही स्थानीय समाज, इतिहास और संस्कृति के

प्रबल संवाहक भी होते हैं। इस दुष्टि से इन्हें निकटवर्ती गांव क्षेत्र से लेकर जनपद और राज्य स्तर तक सांस्कृतिक व बौद्धिक गतिविधियों का मुख्य केंद्र बनाने की पहल की जानी चाहिए। इसके तहत सार्वजनिक पुस्तकालयों को आमजन से जोड़ते हुए संस्कृति, कला, साहित्य, समाज, इतिहास, पर्यावरण और समसामयिक विषयों से जुड़े कार्यक्रमों के आयोजन कारगर साबित हो सकते हैं। समय-समय पर व्याख्यान, वार्ताएं, साहित्यिक गोष्ठियां, प्रदर्शनी और फिल्म प्रदर्शन जैसे आयोजन किए जा सकते हैं। सामाजिक, आर्थिक और शैक्षिक तौर पर कमजोर लोगों के लिए भी इस तरह के आयोजनों को उपयोगी बनाया जा सकता है। स्थानीय समाज व संस्कृति पर केंद्रित शोधपरक आलेखों को पुस्तिकाओं अथवा मोनोग्राफ के रूप में प्रकाशित कर पाठकों के सामने लाने की पहल भी सार्वजनिक पुस्तकालयों के माध्यम से की जा सकती है।

वर्तमान दौर संचार और सूचना तकनीक का है। ऐसे में सार्वजनिक पुस्तकालयों को कंप्यूटर, इंटरनेट सुविधा,

लाइब्रेरी नेटवर्किंग, डिजिटल लाइब्रेरी सर्विस, ऑनलाइन सेवा जैसी अन्य महत्त्वपूर्ण सुविधाओं से जोड़ने की भी जरूतत है। हालांकि भारी-भरकम आर्थिक बजट के चलते ई-लाईब्रेरी और डिजिटलीकरण की योजना महंगी तो है पर फिर भी राज्य स्तरीय सार्वजनिक पुस्तकालयों को इस तरह की आधुनिक सुविधा से जोड़ने के प्रयास जरूरी हैं।

समाज में सार्वजनिक पुस्तकालयों को प्रभावी बनाने के लिए अंतःपुस्तकालय आदान-प्रदान सेवाएं, संदर्भ सेवाएं व परामर्शी सेवाएं जैसी सुविधाएं प्रदान की जानी चाहिए। पुस्तकालय को समृद्ध करने के लिए बाल-खंड की स्थापना और वरिष्ठ नागरिकों तथा शारीरिक तौर पर अक्षम

पाठकों के लिए सचल पुस्तकालय जैसी व्यवस्थाओं पर भी सोचा जाना जरूरी है। इस दिशा में पेशेवर पुस्तकालयकर्मियों की पर्याप्त उपलब्धता, पाठकों के प्रति सहज व तत्पर सेवाएं भी पुस्तकालयों को संपन्न बनाने में मददगार साबित होंगी। भारत सरकार के मानव संसाधन मंत्रालय से उम्मीद की जानी चाहिए कि निश्चित रूप से वह सार्वजनिक पुस्तकालयों की बदहाल व्यवस्था को दुरुस्त करने और उन्हें समाजोन्मुख बनाने की दिशा में और आगे आएगा। पुस्तकालयों की आर्थिक स्थिति मजबूत करने के लिए गैरसरकारी और कॉरपरेट जगत की संस्थाओं से भी सहयोग लिया जा सकता है। इसके लिए समाज के हर प्रबुद्ध व्यक्ति से उम्मीद की जानी चाहिए कि वह पुस्तकालयों को संवाराने में अपना योगदान सुनिश्चित करे ताकि देश के वीरान पड़े सार्वजनिक पुस्तकालय पाठकों से गुलजार बने रहें।

झगड़े की खुशबू

रमाशंकर श्रीवास्तव

चुप थे। मैंने पूछा कि क्या बात है... आज आप इतने उदास क्यों हैं! आप तो हमेशा खुशदिल रहते हैं तो उन्होंने कहा कि इस जिंदगी से ऊब गया हं। जहां देखिए वहीं कोई न कोई झगड़ा-फसाद। न दफ्तर में राहत और न बाहर मुक्ति। घर आया तो मेरी पत्नी मायके जाने की तैयारी में थीं। पता चला कि उनके पिता जमीन-जायदाद के झगड़े में फंस गए हैं और उनकी तबीयत खराब है। उनके यह दुख जाहिर करने के बाद मैंने उन्हें समझाने की कोशिश की, मगर उनकी मनःस्थिति नहीं बदली। मैंने अपने बारे में सोचा और याद किया कि कल शाम अगर मैं। संयम नहीं बरतता तो मेरा झगड़ा बढ़ जाता। उनका कृता सुबह-सुबह मेरे ही दरवाजे के सामने आकर अपने नित्यकर्म से मुक्ति पाता है। मैंने विरोध किया तो वे बोले कि वह पशु है, उसके मन का हाल मैं क्या बताऊं! यह सब चल रहा था कि आसपास के दो-चार लोग हमारी बातचीत सुनने आ गए। उन्हें शायद यह उम्मीद थी कि बात आगे बढ़ेगी। मगर मैंने प्रयास किया तो बात वहीं दब गई। सूनने की उम्मीद में आए लोग निराश होकर लौट गए।

जीवन में किन बातों पर लड़ाई-झगड़े खड़े हो जाएं. पता नहीं चलता। हम अपने बच्चों को समझाते हैं कि झगड़े मत किया करो, मगर जब स्वार्थ पर चोट पहुंचती है तो लड़ ही पड़ते हैं। ज्यादातर झगड़े का कारण स्वार्थ पर चोट ही है। इसमें अहं की भावना प्रबल होती है। कोई क्यों हमारी भावना को ठेस पहुंचाता है, बात बढ़ती है और झगड़ा हो जाता है? लड़ाई-झगड़ा दो पक्षों के बीच होता है और दर्शक

पचासों आ खड़े होते हैं। दर्शकों में शायद ही ऐसे दो-चार मिलें जो चाहते हों कि झगड़ा किसी तरह खत्म हो और शांति कायम हो जाए।

वाद-विवाद होने पर सबसे पहले अशांति पैदा होती है। शांति की कामना करने वाले थोड़े होते हैं और वहां खड़ा होने वाले तमाशे का मजा लेने वाले अधिक होते हैं। हम कल्पना करने लगते हैं कि अमुक तो अमुक को परास्त कर देगा। उसकी क्या औकात, वह तो पहलवान है। गर्दन पर बस एक मुक्का मारा कि दूसरे सज्जन चित्त। इसी उठा-पटक में दुनिया के धंधे चल रहे हैं। भुखे शिशु के रुदन से लेकर छोटे-बड़े देशों की भूमि सीमा पर झगड़े-विवाद हमेशा रहते हैं। सीमाओं के विवाद सौ-सौ साल भी पुराने हो जाते हैं। पूरे राष्ट्र की बौद्धिक, राजनीतिक और आर्थिक ऊर्जा-संपदा

खर्च होती चलती है और झगड़े खत्म नहीं होते।

आप टीवी के सामने समाचार जानने के लिए बैठे हैं, लेकिन देखते हैं कि उनमें क्षेत्र और दल विशेष के प्रतिनिधि योद्धा की तरह मुस्तैद हैं। तर्कों से लड़ाई-झगड़े इस कदर बढ़ते जाते हैं कि मुख्य मुद्दा पीछे छूट जाता है और आपके कान झनझनाने लगते हैं। दलीलों की उठा-पटक में जो सफल होता है उसकी कद्र अपनी पार्टी में बढ़ जाती है। दुनिया मेरे आगे

ये झगड़े फूलों की खुशबू की तरह हमारे जीवन में गमकते रहते हैं। जहाज, ट्रेन, बस, बाजार, दफ्तर, स्कूल जहां जाइए आपको

इसकी खुशबू लुभाएगी। यह खुशबू जिज्ञासा पैदा करती है कि झगड़े की जड़ में क्या है। क्या जायज है और क्या नाजायज। इन्हीं के बीच कानून की धज्जियां उड़ाई जा रही हैं। झगड़े नहीं होते तो ये कोर्ट-कचहरी कैसे फूलते-फलते! जमीन-जायदाद, रुपए-पैसे, मकान, अपराध तरह-तरह के दावे सभी इन लड़ाई-झगड़ों के मूल में हैं। और कभी-कभी मुहल्ले की गलियों में नाली के लिए ताने-बाने। दृश्मनी सिर उठा लेती है। ऐसे मोर्चे सफलतापूर्वक संभालने वाले सैकड़ों मिल जाएंगे। कुछ का पेशा है, झगड़ा पैदा करना और उसके फैसले में टांग

अड़ाना। दूसरों की बेचैनी से वे अपनी वंशी चैन से बजाते हैं। हर गली-मुहल्ले में कुछ औरतें और मर्द ऐसी भूमिकाओं के लिए प्रसिद्ध होते हैं। उनकी दुर्भावनाओं, ईर्ष्या द्वेष-छल कपट का असर दूसरों पर पड़ता है। कुछ पेचीदा झगड़ों को सुलझाने के लिए दूर-दूर से सुलझे हुए लोग बुलाए जाते हैं। साधु-संत, महंथ, प्रवचनकर्ता सुबह-शाम इसी प्रयास में लगे रहते हैं कि मनुष्य का जीवन शांति से बीते। दूसरी ओर, शांति पर प्रवचन के दौरान ही कुछ लोग उसी जनता-जनार्दन में बैठे अशांति की योजनाएं बनाते रहते हैं।

जंगल, जल, खेल-मैदान और मनुष्य समाज में झगड़े की खुशबू फैली होती है। वास्तव में लड़ाई-झगड़ों से मुक्त समाज के निर्माण के लिए युगों से चिंतक-दार्शनिक प्रयास में लगे हैं। बड़े ग्रंथों के विचार उद्धृत किए जाते हैं। तब भी अपेक्षित सफलता नहीं मिल पाती। हमें पुष्प गंध चाहिए जो जीवन-धारा बदल दे। जीने का सुख और आनंद प्रदान करे। जीवन बोझिल न बने और उस सुगंध के लिए लोग लालायित रहें। झगड़े हमारा कल्याण नहीं कर सकते। उस आदर्श स्थिति में जीने के लिए निरंतर प्रयत्नशील रहें, तो लक्ष्य पाना कठिन नहीं है। हमें वह ख़ुशबू चाहिए जो हमारी अपनी वास्तविकता की पहचान करा सके।

मिलावट पर नकेल

🔳 ध्यप्रदेश में मिलावटखोरी के खिलाफ बड़ा और सख्त ^{न्न} कदम उठाते <u>ह</u>ुए नकली घी बनाने के आरोप में उज्जैन के एक फैक्ट्री संचालक को रासुका में गिरफ्तार कर जेल भेजा गया है। आरोपी पेशे से डॉक्टर है और उज्जैन में क्लीनिक चलाता है। पिछले दिनों छापा मार कर उसकी फैक्टी से 800 किलो नकली घी और घी बनाने का सामान बरामद किया था। घी बनाने के लिए सोया तेल, वनस्पति घी और एसेंस (सृगंध) का इस्तेमाल किया जा रहा था। यह घी आसपास के ग्रामीण इलाकों और खासतौर से शादी-ब्याह में सप्लाई किया जाता था। मिलावट के इस खेल में खाद्य विभाग के कर्मचारियों की मिलीभगत से इंकार नहीं किया जा सकता। यह पहला मौका है जब नकली दूध और उससे बने अन्य उत्पाद बनाने वालों के विरुद्ध सिलसिलेवार, प्रदेशव्यापी, सख्त और एकजुट कार्रवाई की जा रही है। मिलावट मुक्त मध्यप्रदेश के संकल्प के साथ उन्नीस जुलाई से शुरू किए गए इस अभियान के तहत प्रदेश में नकली खाद्य सामग्री बनाने वालों के खिलाफ सख्त कार्रवाई की जा रही है।

प्रदेश के स्वास्थ्य मंत्री का साफ कहना है कि अभी दुध से बने पदार्थों में मिलावट के खिलाफ कार्रवाई हो रही है। इसके बाद सब्जियों को रासायनिक पदार्थों से पकाए जाने के गोरखधंधे का पर्दाफाश होगा। एक अनुमान के अनुसार बाजार में मिलने वाला 30 से 40 प्रतिशत सामान मिलावटी होता है। यह मिलावट इतनी चतुराई से की जाती है कि कोई इनके नकलीपन को आसानी से पकड़ नहीं पाता। मिलावटी मिठाई, आटा, दाल, पाम ऑइल की त्योहारी सीजन में ही नहीं सामान्य दिनों में भी बिक्री आम बात है।

अपने देश में मिलावटखोरी के खिलाफ आवाज उठाते हुए इसके आरोपी को मृत्युदंड देने की बात कही जाती रही है। लेकिन व्यवहार की वास्तविकता यह है कि

मिलावटखोरी की जांच नमुना भर कर मामला दर्ज होने के बाद फाइलों में दब कर रह जाती है। आवश्यकता मिलावटखोरी पर पूरी तरह नकेल कसने की है। सख्त कानून बना कर जांच करने वाले अधिकारी व विभाग की भी जिम्मेदारी तय की जानी चाहिए। त्वरित न्यायालय में मुकदमे चला कर तय समय सीमा में दोषी को कठोर दंड दिया जाए। आम आदमी को मिलावटी सामान बेचना भी किसी हत्या से कम नहीं है। इसलिए उसकी सजा कठोर से कठोर होनी चाहिए। इसके लिए कानून की सख्ती के साथ ही सरकार की तीव्र राजनीतिक इच्छा शक्ति जरूरी है। मिलावटखोरी राष्ट्रव्यापी समस्या है लेकिन इसे लेकर

घटित होने पर तो बहुत जोश दिखाया जाता है पर जब में जो भी गलत हुआ वह कांग्रेस के कारण हुआ और वास्तव में दोषी को सजा देने का मौका आता है तब सबके हाथ-पैर फूलने लगते हैं। उम्मीद की जानी इससे देश अब न सिर्फ कांग्रेस मुक्त बल्कि विपक्ष चाहिए कि मिलावट मुक्त मध्यप्रदेश के संकल्प के साथ मुक्त होने की तरफ भी तेजी से बढ़ रहा है। मिलावटखोरी के खिलाफ शुरू किए गई मध्यप्रदेश सरकार की कार्रवाई इसका अपवाद साबित होगी।

🏿 देवेंद्र जोशी, महेशनगर, उज्जैन ऐसी बेचारगी कांग्रेस कार्यसमिति की बैठक के बाद

जिस तरह से पार्टी ने सोनिया गांधी को

किसी भी मुद्दे या लेख पर अपनी राय हमें भेजें। हमारा पता है : ए-८, सेक्टर-7, नोएडा २०१३०१, जिला : गौतमबुद्धनगर, उत्तर प्रदेश

आप चाहें तो अपनी बात ईमेल के जरिए भी हम तक पहुंचा सकते हैं। आइडी है : chaupal.jansatta@expressindia.com

पुरे देश में एक जैसा कानून आज भी नहीं है। अभी हालत यह है कि ओड़िशा, पश्चिम बंगाल और उत्तर प्रदेश में दुध में मिलावट के अपराध पर उम्र कैद की सजा दिए जाने का प्रावधान है। जबकि अन्य राज्यों में ऐसा कानून नहीं होने पर सुप्रीम कोर्ट भी चिंता जता चुका है।

सख्त कानुन बनाए जाने का जहां तक सवाल है, इन दिनों यह रिवाज-सा चल पड़ा है कि अगर कोई अपराध बढ़ रहा है तो उसकी सजा बढ़ाने की मांग उठने लगती है। जबिक नए कानून बनाने या सजा बढाने से ज्यादा जरूरी है पहले से मौजूद कानूनों का सही करह से क्रियान्वयन। मिलावटखोरी के लिए कानून में सजा बढ़ाने से कानून के दुरुपयोग की आशंका बढ़ने का खतरा है। ऐसे में कोई भी कदम पर्याप्त विचार-विमर्श के बाद ही उठाया जाना चाहिए। इसे विडंबना ही कहा

अंतरिम अध्यक्ष चुना क्या उससे यह नहीं समझा जाना चाहिए कि वह आगे बढ़ने के लिए दो कदम पीछे चली गई है! 134 साल पुरानी पार्टी में ऐसा बेचारगी का आलम कभी नहीं था। जब यह अपने घर के अंदर बिखरा पड़ा सामान ही सहेज नहीं पाई है तो ऐसे में तुफान का रूप धारण कर चुके भाजपा के राष्ट्रवाद से कैसे मुकाबला करेगी?

हरियाणा, झारखंड और महाराष्ट्र का चुनाव दरवाजे पर दस्तक दे चुका है। सोनिया गांधी अभी दो साल पहले ही अध्यक्ष पद से हटी थीं। कहने को उन्हें अंतरिम अध्यक्ष कहा जा रहा है मगर यह पद स्थायी भी हो सकता है। विडंबना है कि 1984 में जिस दल ने 414 लोकसभा सीटें जीती थीं आज वह इतना बिखर गया है कि उसके सदस्य सदन में और उसके बाहर पार्टी पर लगने वाले आरोपों का जवाब नहीं दे पा रहे

जाना चाहिए कि कानून बनाते समय या किसी घटना के 🔠 हैं। लगता है, अब युवा पीढ़ी यह मान चुकी है कि देश जो भी अच्छा हो रहा है वह 2014 के बाद हो रहा है।

जंग बहादुर सिंह, गोलपहाड़ी, जमशेदपुर

उपेक्षा का खेल

भारत का राष्ट्रीय खेल हॉकी है लेकिन लोगों को शायद ही पता होगा कि अपनी हॉकी टीम का कप्तान कौन है। हॉकी का विश्व कप भारत जीता या हारा इससे किसी को कोई फर्क नहीं पड़ता। लेकिन इस बार भारत क्रिकेट विश्व कप हारा तो हर तरफ निराशा का माहौल था। हॉकी की तरह ही अन्य खेलों की भी उपेक्षा हो रही है। जहां एक तरफ क्रिकेटर करोड़ों कमा रहे हैं तो दूसरी तरफ अन्य खेलों के खिलाड़ी अपना घर भी मुश्किल से चला रहे हैं। वे सब देश के लिए स्वर्ण पदक लाकर भी पीतल के भाव हो जाते हैं। क्रिकेट कप हाथ से गया, इसका तो सबको बहुत सदमा लगा पर हिमा दास ने भारत को पांच स्वर्ण पदक दिलाए उस पर खुशी की कोई लहर नहीं!

आखिर भारत सरकार अन्य खेलों को प्रोत्साहित क्यों नहीं कर रही है ? क्यों इनके खिलाड़ियों की हालत इतनी खराब है कि वे अपना गुजारा भी बड़ी मुश्किल से कर रहे हैं। देश के लिए जीत कर भी वे खुद क्यों हार रहे हैं ? सरकार को अन्य खेलों को प्रोत्साहित करने के लिए बड़े स्तर पर खेल स्पर्धाएं आयोजित करनी चाहिए। मीडिया को अन्य खेलों के बारे में भी लोगों को अवगत कराना चाहिए। अन्य खेलों के खिलाड़ियों को अच्छी नौकरियों के साथ-साथ आर्थिक प्रोत्साहन की व्यवस्था करनी होगी। मीडिया का इसमें बडा योगदान हो सकता है। वह मैच जीतने पर केवल क्रिकेट खिलाड़ियों के इंटरव्यू न ले बल्कि हिमा दास जैसे देश को गौरवान्वित करने वालों को भी आगे लाए।

🌘 राघव जैन. जालंधर

epaper.jansatta.com