Investing in quantum computing

Research has led to new understanding about exotic materials and the nature of quantum entanglement. But commercial viability will take time



QUANTUM LEAP

DEVANGSHU DATTA

uantum computing has promised much, and absorbed enormous resources, without delivering a great deal in practical terms vet. However, the rationale for investing in research remains impeccable.

In theory, a quantum computer could work much faster than any classical computer, enabling it to tackle currently impossible problems. In practice too, advances in quantum computing have equated to better understanding of many scientific phenomena.

The engineering problems are formidable. Superposition and entanglement are at the heart of quantum computing. At the quantum level, a particle can be in two states at the same time (or rather, it has probabilities of being in two states — this is "superposition"). Particles can be entangled, which means that a change in the state of one particle instantly causes corresponding change in the state of its entangled twin, even at a distance.

These two fundamental qualities offer the potential to make quantum computers work faster. Classical computers like your PC, or smartphone, work on binary principles with circuits switched on or off using "logic gates". A quantum can be switched on and switched off, both at the same time, due to superposition.

Hence, while one classical bit can have either the value or a quantum bit, or qubit can have both values at the same time. A 2-qubit circuit can be in four possible states of superposition at a given moment, whereas a 2-bit circuit can be

in only one of those four states. So a large qubit processor can process exponentially more information than equivalent classical circuits.

As the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) says, "Modeling the structure of penicillin, which has 41 atoms at ground state, requires a classical computer with 1086 bits, which is more transistors than there are atoms in the observable universe. Such a machine is a physical impossibility. But for quantum computers, this requires a processor with 286 logical qubits."

However, every time quantum output is measured, it breaks down ("decoheres") into a single measured state. To hold an entangled qubit circuit together requires a lot of work, since even small external disturbances causes coherence to break. Also quantum computers generate huge amounts of data, and a lot of error correction is required.

Currently, qubit chips are sealed in vacuum boxes and cooled to nearly absolute zero temperatures, which is only possible in tightly controlled lab environments. They even have to be shielded from vibrations since footsteps can destroy coherence.

Computer scientists use "logical" qubits as the basic "currency". A logical Qubit can run two superposed states. It could consist of several physical qubits, or superconducting circuits that model the state of an atom. Indeed, a classical computer may simulate a quantum machine by imposing a structure of logical qubits on top of classical circuits. This is often done to test quantum algorithms.

There have been steady advances. Google's Bristlecone is a 72-physical Qubit processor, currently the world's largest. The University of Science and Technology of China has demonstrated 18 Oubit entanglement. A research team from the University of New South Wales (Sydney) has dramatically improved processing speed in a 2 Qubit gate, by embedding phosphorus atoms in silicon.

To achieve "quantum supremacy" that is beat classical computers at solving problems, more breakthroughs are necessary. It's generally assumed that a stable 50 logical Qubit processing power is the minimum required to achieve supremacy. To calculate large molecules or run an AI Machine-learning algorithm

could take much more, perhaps a 1,000 logical qubit machine. Breaking standard RSA 2048 encryption could take a 4,000-qubit machine.

Another issue is noise. A large qubit register could, in theory, produce more data than the Large Hadron Collider and a lot of that data would consist of errors, which would need corrections. Programming quantum algorithms is also more complex than algos for conventional machines. Even loading large amounts of data onto a quantum machine is a tricky problem.

The BCG recently came up with a set of projections. It believes that productivity gains from quantum computing will surpass \$450 billion annually. But "it will be a slow build for the next few years: we anticipate value for end users to reach a relatively modest \$2 billion to \$5 billion by 2024". Value will then increase rapidly as the technology matures. The benefits will be uneven and disproportionately favour early adopters.

Quantum computing could revolutionise sectors such as drug design, network optimisation (ride hire companies, airlines, railways), supply chain management, portfolio management, weather and climate change predictions, and encryption/ decryption methods. Research has led to new understanding about various exotic materials and the nature of quantum entanglement. But commercial viability will be a while coming.

CHINESE WHISPERS

Some cheer on I-Day

At the Red Fort in Delhi, hundreds of school children made a coordinated formation in front of the 17th century monument with the legend "Nava Bharat" on Independence Day. Early morning rain left the ground soggy with puddles of water all around. It also drizzled mid-way during the Prime Minister's speech. After his address, Prime Minister Narendra Modi sidestepped the security cordon to enter an enclosure to shake hands with the children. In another part of Delhi, Chief Minister and Aam Aadmi Party Convener Arvind Kejriwal, in his Independence Day speech at the Chhatrasal Stadium, announced that rides on DTC, or Delhi government-run buses and cluster buses, would be free for women from October 29.

Nitish's silence

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar is yet to break his silence on the move by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government at the Centre to abrogate Article 370 and 35A. But the move has split opinion within his party, the Janata Dal (United) - BJP's ally in Bihar - right down the middle. While one section of its members appear to be backing the Centre's move, there's another that is firmly opposed to it. "We were opposing it, but once it became law there was no point opposing it," said RCP Singh, considered close to Kumar. A few ministers continue to protest the move. "Some BJP leaders promised that they wouldn't disturb the status quo in Kashmir. If they go back on their promise we must protest," said a senior minister.

BJP's recruitment drive in MP



Within a few months of the formation of the Congress government in the state. the Madhya Pradesh unit of the Bharativa Janata Party has started drawing up its strategy for the 2024 elections. An ambitious membership drive is part of this plan. Party MPs and MLAs are being grilled on the steps they have taken to this end. They have been asked to provide a list of events organised to woo new members and submit photographs as proof. They will also have to present a list of programmes proposed for the future. The party says it has added 4 million members in the state in the last couple of months and is hoping to add another 1 million over the next few weeks. Former chief minister. Shivraj Singh Chouhan, who is spearheading the recruitment drive, claims the BJP has added 30 million new members across the country.

Gas connectivity: Poised for take-off

City Gas Distribution now complements the massive utilities delivery networking infrastructure sweeping across India



VINAYAK CHATTERJEE

harat Net project, launched in 2011, is the National Optical Fibre Network to provide connectivity to all 250,000 gram panchayats. The Saubhagya project seeks to provide electricity connections to all households. As of mid-2019, Nal Se Jal (water from pipes), rechristened Har Ghar Jal (water for every household) commits to provide water connections to all households in the country by 2024.

Less talked about, but equally impactful, the City Gas Distribution (CGD) initiative joins the massive utilities delivery networking infrastructure now sweeping rural and urban landscapes, and transforming the lives of millions of Indians.

CGD is the great infrastructure story of the last decade that did not quite happen the way it was supposed to. Whether in the form of piped supply to households, or compressed natural gas (CNG) refuelling stations, it remained restricted to a few large cities. Even in such cities,

such as Delhi, it has not been able to make a decisive mark. It has always played second fiddle to the more politically relevant liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), with much attention on the government's Pradhan Mantri Ujiwala Yojana (PMUY) flagship scheme to distribute subsidised LPG cylinders to economically weaker households.

But the CGD initiative, using CNG, is now poised for take-off. After years of lacklustre movement, the last two rounds of bidding for geographical areas or GAs (similar to telecom circles) saw markedly better response, following a series of changes to the way the CNG auctions were designed. As of February this year, the regulator, the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) has bid out a total of 228 GAs around the country covering around 70 per cent of the population.

It is the overall commitments made by winners of the various GAs that is revealing. Starting from April 2020, and up to 2029, winners have promised to deliver over 2 million piped gas connections per year, a total of 3,500 CNG stations across the country, and 58,000 km of pipelines. The overall aim is to raise the share of natural gas in the overall energy mix from 6 per cent to 15 per cent by 2030 (the global average is currently 24 per cent). India imports around 45 per cent of its requirement — a big plus for CDG is that it has first claim on supplies.

It has not come a moment too soon. The PNGRB was set up in 2007. Since its inception, it had been locked in legal



tussles with different stakeholders in the sector. Then came a whole slew of problems around the bidding out of GAs. The first couple of rounds of bidding drew muted response from the private sector. Then, in rounds 4-6, the pendulum swung the other way, toward a problem that has been all too common in Indian infrastructure — aggressive bidding. Bidders started bidding tariffs that were irrationally low. When this happens, it only results in bidders returning later to renegotiate the terms of their contracts, further litigation and NPAs. Then came a prolonged period where PNGRB Board slots remained unfilled, putting a further dampener on any expansion in the sector.

Once the new board was reconstituted, the PNGRB got its act together. New norms set a minimum tariff to discourage unviable bids and assessed bids on the promise to create greater levels of infrastructure. The rules also capped the amount of performance bank guarantee that could be offered — companies in earlier rounds competed to offer ever higher levels of bank guarantee in an effort to win the bid, regardless of the actual bid quality. To sweeten the deal, the PNGRB also extended the marketing exclusivity period from five to eight years for winning bidders in their respective GAs. Thereafter, 2018 was, in many ways.

a breakthrough year. In May 2018, the biggest CGD licensing round (round 9) offering 86 GAs in 174 districts was announced. This round received a good response from both domestic and global players. Over 400 bids were received for all the 86 GAs. On November 22, 2018, the foundation stones were laid for CGD projects in 65 GAs covering 129 districts. Bidding for the tenth round was announced for 50 GAs in 124 new districts, which subsequently closed in February 2019 with substantial investor interest.

The 10th round itself expects investments of about ₹50,000 crore. Overall, investments of over ₹1.5-₹2 trillion are envisaged in the next decade with over 40 private and state-owned companies vying for a share of the action.

Roll-out of CGD operations have commenced in Daman & Diu, Bhubaneswar, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Kutch (West), Amroli, Dahod, Dahej-Vagra and Jalandhar cities. A slew of fresh authorisations have also been granted to new GAs.

For much of the CGD promise to be fulfilled, implementation is key. Coordination between central and state governments, city municipalities, the regulator and private sector stakeholders is critical. In spite of the renewed rush of adrenalin, concerns remain. They relate to high execution challenges in rolling-out the mother-pipeline network, the huge capital expenditures required, high cost of providing the ultimate last-mile connectivity, and finally at the customer end, penetration and cost-effective and sustainable O&M frameworks. Urban conglomerations in hilly terrain and in the north-east will require special attention.

All done and dusted, the build-out of a giant city gas distribution network will have as important an impact on the economy as the Golden Quadrilateral roads project did, and will transform the way Indians will live, just as electricity and water connections have sought to do.

The author is chairman, Feedback Infra

INSIGHT

The structure of asset sale



JYOTI MUKUL

ne of the explicit message from this year's Budget has been that the government would depend on private sector investment in more ways than one to support its growth agenda. Apart from expecting private investment in infrastructure and manufacturing, the government, for its own revenue. expects institutions and retail investors to pitch in with as much as ₹1.05 trillion by buying stake in public sector undertakings (PSUs). These will be outright sale of equity either in the stock market or through strategic sale.

This is just one side of the disinvestment programme, the other being letting go some of the assets that have been created by the PSUs. This forms part of the larger privatisation programme where money is realised through sale of pipelines, manufacturing units, transmission lines, land and other tangible assets of government-owned companies. Proceeds thus realised are proposed to be used for further investment by PSUs. This in true sense will be a monetisation programme.

Apart from outright sale, the other way of monetisation is to house the assets in infrastructure investment trust (InvIT) which ensures that costs, including debt, incurred on their creation moved from the balancesheet of a company to that of InvIT. Equity in the InvITs thus created could be offered to other investors. The PSU earns a return from the cash flows of these InvITs. An alternative scenario is where

the proceeds from sale flows to the government though it is not clear how it will be counted as government revenue, unless PSUs are asked to transfer as much through special dividends, in which case the company itself will not retain the cash. In such a case, the entire exercise cannot be called monetisation. It will be an outright sale for the benefit of government revenue. PSUs have nothing to gain from such an

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exercise but run the risk of losing revenue if the assets indeed are profitable and not a liability.

A vital question for the government, however, is whether it wants to pursue both equity disinvestment in PSUs and asset sale, simultaneously, and

whether one company can figure in both these programmes. In one of the post-Budget interactions, instance, Atanu Chakraborty, then disinvestment secretary, said ONGC was on the list of disinvestment ministry where the government would want to give up control by reducing its holding to less than 51 per cent. At the same time, a monetisation process is underway for ONGC wherein its 64 oil and gas producing fields with total in-place reserves of about 300 MMTOE have been put up for bidding. Though this monetisation is based on a revenue-sharing model, to some extent putting these fields in a different basket, while divesting equity in the company, will translate

to value erosion for shareholders. In other words, if the very company that is sought to be divested undertakes monetisation of assets alongside, that company will certainly be valued lower. Besides, future earnings for that company would be subject to the impact of such monetisation.

It has been reported that the government expects ₹3 trillion to come in through the monetisation programme. The private sector parallel is already available with even groups, like Reliance Industries Ltd and GMR, either looking to divest or getting in financial investors into their specific assets like pipelines and roads. Private sector companies, in fact,

have been pursuing monetisation for the past few years though their reasons are more to do with debt reduction than fresh investment.

The NITI Aayog is believed to have carved out a list of such assets while the department of investment and public management (DIPAM) has issued expression of interest for

appointing consultants for transaction advisory services for monetisation of land assets. On their part, some action by PSUs

has already been taken. Companies, like Steel Authority of India, have gone ahead and sought expression of interest for some of its units even after running the risk of employee resistance. Even loss-making PSUs, like BSNL and MTNL, have leased out 13,051 and 392 mobile tower sites to private telecom companies.

Whatever be the structure of asset sale, it is important that instead of Dipam and NITI Aayog driving the monetisation programme to fulfil the government intention of getting more private money, PSUs themselves draw out company specific strategy where their corporate vision is the sole determinant.

LETTERS

Industry needs a push



Apropos your front page report. "Passenger vehicle sales plunge 31%, steepest in two decades" by Arindam Majumder (August 14); the 31 per cent drop in car sales is a harsh wake-up call for both the government and the industry. The fortune of the auto industry is usually a good indicator of the overall health of the economy because it has a deep connect with several other sectors, both in manufacturing and services. The auto industry, being a big job creator, has added to the woes and has spread the sentiment of gloom all around.

The accompanying "Accelerating decline", shows a major slide during FY19 in the sales of commercial vehicles as well as two- and three-wheelers. This makes the situation much worse. The Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (Siam) is right in raising an alarm. The **Automotive Component Manufacturers** Association of India has already raised the issue on several occasions and, I am sure, it will have to say far more in its forthcoming annual session.

Some companies expect a turnaround in the next fiscal but Siam Director General Vishnu Mathur sounds more realistic when he says "you can never say this is the worst". I doubt that festival sales this year will really perk up despite the big discounts most auto manufacturers are bound to announce. Only holistic measures to give a push to

industry as a whole — badly needed at this stage — will change the fortunes of the crucial auto industry.

Krishan Kalra Gurugram

All for a cause

This refers to "CSR panel wants noncompliance a civil offence" (August 14). The purpose behind the introduction of corporate social responsibility (CSR) is to blend corporate functioning with social development. If corporations compel themselves to adhere to section 135 of the Companies Act to fulfill a compulsory legal requirement to avoid punitive measures arising out of non-compliance, they will only squander their finances. They might not consider the wider social implications of the expenditure. The in-built fear creates psychological hurdles in carrying forward social development measures leading to unplanned devel-

opment activity. The emphasis under CSR is as much on social development as on allocation of funds. When the fear of penalty is not there, corporates will be able to play a more active and planned role to fulfill their moral obligation of social development. Their sense of responsibility to ensure proper use of their financial contribution towards social development coupled with third party assessment of performance will reinforce the objective behind CSR — of ensuring progressive social development.

Innovative suggestions for the execution of socially beneficial projects will ensure policy level implementation of CSR. Investment in social benefit bonds

in addition to obtaining support from specialist institutions identifying areas for social development will ensure efficiency in the enforcement of CSR. Replacing criminal responsibility with civil ones will ensure there is greater willingness from corporates to achieve a social objective.

C Gopinath Nair Kochi

A fitting tribute

This refers to "The Jagannath road" by Bibek Debroy (August 14). It just goes to show the genius of the workers, engineers, thinkers and the thoughtful and generous people who created the miracle of a 261-mile road with, hold your breath, 816 bridges. It took seven years for the road to be completed. How many vagaries of weather those workers must have braved! It would be ideal if the Films Division of India makes a film on this important link — Jagannath road. We have made great progress in recent years in terms of construction of roads and highways and it will be difficult to find any traveller who wouldn't give a thumbs up to our achievements in this regard. The Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, for instance, is a great step. Those who have travelled to villages on these roads will know what a relief it is.

NK Bakshi Vadodara

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HAMBONE



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Minimum government

Govt needs to walk the PM's talk

rime Minister Narendra Modi's Independence Day speeches from the ramparts of the Red Fort have typically been ones where he elucidates his government's policy directions, and also defends the measures it has taken. The 2019 speech was no different, although there were not many announcements on policies — apart from the long-delayed creation of a chief of defence staff. Some aspects of Mr Modi's speech stood out, however, and deserve greater attention than others. In one such section, the prime minister said: "I often ask my officers: Why cannot the government reduce its interference in the lives of the common man?" This is a throwback, perhaps, to his long-ago promise — before his first election in 2014 — of "minimum government, maximum governance". The prime minister's question to his officers needs to be seen in the context of the other measures he discussed in his speech and his government's broad welfarist strategy. It is correct that the role of the government needs to be reduced in India, but it also needs to be available where and when needed. Typically, it has tried to do too much, but has failed to perform its core tasks with competence.

The basic role of any government is to provide law and order and to create and support a structure that permits individual aspirations. This can be seen as the provision of market-supporting institutions and promoting the ease of doing business. Every step beyond that basic role is one that should be closely justified by examining whether the government is capable of carrying it off effectively and whether it would lead to undue interference in "the lives of the common man". The intent of the prime minister is clear from the fact that he also mentioned in his speech how the government had scrapped many antiquated laws. As a broad guideline for policy action, the prime minister's question cannot be bettered. However, it is also true that many recent measures have not fitted this vision. India's improved ranking in terms of the ease of doing business notwithstanding, recent tax and other policy actions have, in fact, made the business environment more difficult. The prime minister is perhaps putting his questions to a wrong audience — his officers will always have a bias towards increasing their power at the expense of the common man or ordinary business.

In his first Independence Day speech in 2014, Mr Modi had spoken of the need to promote manufacturing, which became his signature "Make in India" initiative. In this speech, too, he made many right noises about support for wealth creators, and the need to promote exports and domestic manufacturing. "Make in India" and exports growth, however, have seen only lacklustre success at best. In fact, exports are in some ways worse off than in 2014. This is linked to the government's failure to properly implement the "reduction in interference" that the prime minister spoke of. Success in manufacturing and exports will need solid and sustainable improvements in competitiveness — essentially a real focus on the ease of doing business, rather than increasing state power in the economy and over entrepreneurs. The government will need to fundamentally alter course if Mr Modi's stated vision is to be a real road map for the future.

Responding to floods

India needs a holistic approach

t the beginning of his Independence Day speech, Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed grief on the loss of lives because of floods in various parts of the country and acknowledged the hardship being faced by people in those regions. He also highlighted that all efforts were being made by government agencies to bring normalcy. So far at least 225 people have died in states such as Karnataka, Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Kerala, and millions have been displaced. Floods have affected over 8.8 million people in Bihar. About 300,000 people are reported to have been taken to relief camps in Kerala. The state had suffered substantial damage even last year in what was termed as once in a century calamity.

While the intensity of floods may differ in various regions in different years, the broader story is repeated almost every year. First, parts of the country struggle for survival with a severe shortage of water in the summer months. For instance, Chennai made headlines this year because of water shortages and it could be just a matter of time before other cities face a similar fate. But, as the calendar shifts to monsoon months, large parts of the country are exposed to floods. The government does its bit before moving on to some other pressing issue. The same story is repeated every year with unfailing regularity. In fact, things could get worse in coming years if corrective measures are not taken straightaway.

There are two broad reasons for the recurrence of natural disasters such as floods. First, the changing weather pattern is affecting the quantity and distribution of rain. Even this year, the rainfall was in deficit the initial period before recovering significantly in recent weeks. Second, unplanned development is putting enormous stress on the ecosystem. The encroachment on water bodies and deforestation for de velopment not only affect the natural carrying capacity of the system but also reduce the possibility of groundwater recharge. India needs to work on improving the system of water management, so that the excess in some period and deficit in others can be addressed. Mr Modi in his speech rightly highlighted the need for grassroots level involvement in the conservation of water. Better management of water will reduce instances of floods to a large extent and help accomplish the mission of providing water to all households.

At a broader level, India will need to work with a holistic approach to minimise the impact of extreme weather conditions. Among other things, agriculture would be severely affected because of changing weather patterns. Therefore, it is important to revisit the nature of development in both urban and rural areas and find ways to protect the environment. Since this will take a long time to yield results, in the short run, it is important to improve the state capacity to fight extreme weather challenges like floods. The silting of riverbeds and the reduction in the carrying capacity of river channels need focused policy attention. The forecasting system has improved significantly in recent years and should be used more effectively to save human lives. Naturally, this will require better coordination between the Centre and state governments along with adequate allocation of resources.

ILLUSTRATION BY BINAY SINHA



The CDS is now a reality

Integral to the Chief of Defence Staff concept is the placement of operational theatre commands under his charge

n a *Business Standard* column less than a month ago on weaknesses in our defence, I concluded by saying that in about two decades of discussing and debating, previous governments had not been able to decide on the need to have a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS). I had gone on to mention that only the present prime minister had the chutzpah and ability to take such a decision by overriding

opposition as he had done for demonetisation. This belief has now turned out to be justified. From the ramparts of the Red Fort, no less, Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared on Thursday that India would have the CDS. He further said this would help in integrating the armed forces consistent with the needs of the time.

It is now well known that following the Kargil War, a committee (KRC) headed by the late K Subrahmanyam was constituted by

the Vajpayee government to review the entire security apparatus. The KRC made several recommendations, of which an important one concerning higher defence management was to create the CDS. Following this, a group of ministers (GoM) headed by the deputy prime minister was appointed. The group, in turn, constituted four task forces covering different aspects of national security. One of these was on higher defence management, chaired by

former minister of state for defence Arun Singh. This writer was the only retired member of this group, the other eight being serving civil and military officers.

The Arun Singh committee, as it became known, conferred with a wide spectrum of senior civil and military persons, serving and retired. These included six defence secretaries and as many

as 17 former chiefs of the three services as also those who had occupied high positions in defence research and development and production. There was considerable interaction with service head-quarters and the ministry of defence, as also with the other three task forces dealing with intelligence, border management, and internal security; all these three comprised only retired officials who had held high decision-making positions in government.

Taking just four months, these groups presented their proposals to the GoM at a meeting at which I was present and, as I recall, all of those made by the Arun Singh task force in regard to higher defence management were accepted by the GoM and became part of its recommendations. The most important of these was the creation of the chief of defence staff.

At this stage, it may be pointed out that all the air

force chiefs with whom we interacted objected vehemently to the CDS concept, saying that this would adversely affect the ethos and fighting efficiency of the services. In the bureaucracy of the ministry of defence, there was negativity because there was a sense that it would act to the detriment of their own role in decision making. Treading these turbulent waters, Arun Singh had to make calibrated recommendations. Our group, therefore, proposed that the CDS should handle all planning, doctrine, and force development functions, and also oversee Intelligence, leaving the individual service chiefs with control of operations. It was felt that with the passage of time the spectrum of his control would be readjusted. This was a major compromise which still did not succeed in getting past the then prime minister, who, as quoted in a recent book by then naval chief admiral Sushil Kumar, ended the meeting by saying "iske baare mein aur sochna parega". This is where the matter has been for the past 18 years. Mr Modi has caught this bull by the horns and all kudos to him for doing so.

But this is not the end, only a beginning. The prime minister mentioned that all major armed forces — he specifically referred to the US — have the CDS. Yes, indeed, but the CDS in that country and most others — the UK, France, Russia, China, to name only four — does not oversee planning and force development, which are left to individual service chiefs, but controls operations. This makes sense because that is where being joint and integrated, both stressed by the prime minister, is essentially required. It is only in Pakistan that the CDS handles these important but mundane tasks, but the chiefs, mainly that of the army, who call the shots. It is not surprising that most of India knows the name of the Pakistan army chief but not that of the CDS. Hopefully, our CDS-to-be will not be placed in that category. So, even as the decision to create the CDS was bold, coming as it did in the face of quite a serious opposition, one hopes the position will not become a merely ornamental one and carry with it the authority and punch that it must have. Only control of operations can provide both. One can be certain that this change will be resisted by the service chiefs, who will see it as encroachment on their turf but, as I have said, the prime minister has the chutzpah to deal with them.

Integral to the CDS concept is the placement of operational theatre commands under his charge. Between them the army, navy and air force have as many as 12 of these, to which should be added the Andaman and Nicobar command and strategic command with two more reportedly in the pipeline. Having quoted the American example of working their higher defence management, we should also go that way. The existing method of functioning has long been overdue overhaul and a great opportunity has come our way to set this house in order. And, if one sensed the prime minister right, he will ensure he walks the talk.

The writer was member of the Task Force on Higher Defence Management. He has also served on the National Security Advisory Board

Trump's deficit economy

JOSEPH E STIGLITZ

PREMVIR DAS

In the new world wrought by US President Donald Trump, where one shock follows another, there is never time to think through fully the implications of the events with which we are bombarded. In late July, the Federal Reserve Board reversed its policy of returning interest rates to more normal levels, after a decade of ultra-low rates in the wake of the Great Recession. Then, the United States had another two mass gun killings in under 24 hours, bringing the total for the year to 255 — more than one a day. And a trade war with China, which Trump had tweeted would be "good, and easy to win," entered a new, more dangerous phase, rattling markets and posing the threat of a new cold war.

At one level, the Fed move was of little import: a 25-basis-point change will have little consequence. The idea that the Fed could fine-tune the economy by carefully timed changes in interest rates should by

now have long been discredited—even if it provides entertainment for Fed watchers and employment for financial journalists. If lowering the interest rate from 5.25 per cent to essentially zero had little impact on the economy in 2008-09, why should we think that lowering rates by 0.25 per cent will have any observable effect? Large corporations are still sitting on hoards of cash: it's not a lack of liquidity that's stopping them from investing.

Long ago, John Maynard Keynes recognised that while a sudden tightening of monetary policy, restricting the availability of credit, could slow the economy, the effects of loosening policy when the economy is weak can be minimal. Even employing new instruments such as quantitative easing can have little effect, as Europe has learned. In fact, the negative interest rates being tried by several countries may, perversely, weaken the economy as a result of unfavourable effects on bank balance sheets and thus lending.

The lower interest rates do lead to a lower exchange rate. Indeed, this may be the principal channel through

which Fed policy works today. But isn't that nothing more than "competitive devaluation," for which the Trump administration roundly criticises China? And that, predictably, has been followed by other countries lowering their exchange rate, implying that any benefit to the US economy through the exchange-rate effect will be short-lived. More ironic is the fact that the recent decline in China's exchange rate came about because of the new round of American protectionism and because China stopped interfering with the exchange rate — that is, stopped supporting it.

But, at another level, the Fed action spoke volumes. The US economy was supposed to be "great." Its 3.7 per cent unemployment rate and first-quarter growth of 3.1 per cent should have been the envy of the advanced countries. But scratch a little bit beneath the surface, and there was plenty to worry about. Second-quarter growth plummeted to 2.1 per

cent. Average hours worked in manufacturing in July sank to the lowest level since 2011. Real wages are only slightly above their level a decade ago, before the Great Recession. Real investment as a percentage of GDP is well below levels in the late 1990s, despite a tax cut allegedly intended to spur business spending, but which was used mainly to finance share buybacks instead

America should be in a boom, with three enormous fiscal-stimulus measures in the past three years. The 2017 tax cut,

which mainly benefited billionaires and corporations, added some \$1.5-2 trillion to the ten-year deficit. An almost \$300 billion increase in expenditures over two years averted a government shutdown in 2018. And at the end of July, a new agreement to avoid another shutdown added another \$320 billion of spending. If it takes trillion-dollar annual deficits to keep the US economy going in good times, what will it take when things are not so rosy?

The US economy has not been working for most Americans, whose incomes have been stagnating — $\,$

or worse — for decades. These adverse trends are reflected in declining life expectancy. The Trump tax bill made matters worse by compounding the problem of decaying infrastructure, weakening the ability of the more progressive states to support education, depriving millions more people of health insurance, and, when fully implemented, leading to an increase in taxes for middle-income Americans, worsening their plight.

Redistribution from the bottom to the top — the hallmark not only of Trump's presidency, but also of preceding Republican administrations — reduces aggregate demand, because those at the top spend a smaller fraction of their income than those below. This weakens the economy in a way that cannot be offset even by a massive giveaway to corporations and billionaires. And the enormous Trump fiscal deficits have led to huge trade deficits, far larger than under Obama, as the US has had to import capital to finance the gap between domestic savings and investment.

Trump promised to get the trade deficit down, but his profound lack of understanding of economics has led to it increasing, just as most economists predicted it would. Despite Trump's bad economic management and his attempt to talk the dollar down, and the Fed's lowering of interest rates, his policies have resulted in the US dollar remaining strong, thereby discouraging exports and encouraging imports. Economists have repeatedly tried to explain to him that trade agreements may affect which countries the US buys from and sells to, but not the magnitude of the overall deficit

In this as in so many other areas, from exchange rates to gun control, Trump believes what he wants to believe, leaving those who can least afford it to pay the price.

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The many personas of A K Ramanujan



SOURADEEP ROY

Reading A K Ramanujan's diary is like meeting the many personas of the same person. The persona is a concept he explains in one of his earlier essays, which appears as an "Afterword" to his translation of *Poems of Love and War* from classical Tamil. According to *Tolkappiyam*, the oldest book of grammar and poetics in Tamil, the speaker of an *akam* (a genre of poetry in classical Tamil referring to the interior, heart, household) is not an individual poet but a persona. The speaking voice in the

diaries, however, is certainly A K Ramanujan, known to the public world as a distinguished poet, translator, and linguist. Yet one of the things Ramanujan says about the speaker in an

akam poem certainly applies to the "speaker" in this book: "The speaker seems to be half talking to herself, yet addressing a confidante. It is like a speech in a play."

For a person who is so specific about boundaries, he has famously described himself

The theatrical metaphor is as the hyphen in apt for his diary: The reader is a listener of a play that Ramanujan narrates. The

play: The theatre of Ramanujan's life. The form: Soliloquy. Ramanujan speaks and we, the readers, listen to him. It is because this book, a selection of Ramanujan's diaries, was published posthumously, without Ramanujan's explicit editorial eye. The result is that

the "confidant" is no longer Ramanujan himself but the wider reading public. In earlier diary entries, Ramanujan reveals that he was jealous of his peers who

For a person who is so specific about boundaries, he has famously described himself as the hyphen in could act, and this was what prompted him to switch to writing. Reading this book, I couldn't help but wonder how Ramanujan would react to the accidental theatre that is this book.

The authorship of this book.

The authorship of this book, however, does not solely lie with Ramanujan. The editors are his son Krishna Ramanujan

and scholar Guillermo Rodriguez. The diary entries have been selected by them and interspersed with published or unpublished poems, some of the latter appearing for the first time in print. These selections have been annotated thoroughly.

The diaries also reveal how Ramanujan wanted to be perceived by the external world. For a person who is so specific about boundaries (in one place he says he cannot allow students into the private world of the household), he has famously described himself as the hyphen in the phrase Indian-American. Similarly, he is a poet, linguist, translator, folklorist, all at the same time, and expects to be seen that way. But the lines are also drawn. He says that Kannada does not interfere with his English when he is writing in English. But as the hyphen flows from one to another, boundaries are staked out.

Like all great writers, what Ramanujan's diary reveals is not restricted to himself. "It's too personal now, the 'I', not large and non-personal," he rebukes himself, and outlines his task: "To enlarge self without mysticism, pomposity, generality, etc". The

self he constructs, I'd argue, is a very Hindu self. In the poem, "Conventions of Despair", also included in this book, he says, "I must seek and will find my particular hell in my Hindu mind..." This is also perhaps why he chose to translate Samskara, U R Ananthamurthy's classic novel about the existential crisis of a Brahmin. The identity of the Hindu is a marker for much political talk these days, so it's even more important that we pay attention to Ramanujan. When he separates his sense of rootedness from patriotism — "This is no reversion to patriotism; patriotism is a primitive evil; I am thinking of a rooting of the cultivated mind" — he, perhaps unknowingly, makes a makes an important statement for our contemporary time.

The Hindu way of life is a recurring description in his poems. Everyday chores such as bathing (sometimes in the Ganges, a predominant image in some of his poems), and such realities as urine, human waste, gastronomic matters, and their association with his father, grandfather, and other members of fam-

ily are his ways of sketching a lineage for himself. Given that the economy of waste in the Hindu world order is also closely related to the caste system, Ramanujan's writing is also important for what it leaves out. His writings, or at least this selection from his diaries, appear to lack any self-awareness of the social systems of oppression the Hindu social order creates. Like the history of Hinduism itself, the diary is also important for its omissions. But Ramanuian also represents the best of what a "particular hell" the "Hindu mind" has to offer. Those who self-identify with the same word for political dividends are a far cry away from the possible meanings of that word.

The reviewer is a poet and translator. He occasionally tweets @souradeeproy19

JOURNEYS

A K Ramanujan; Krishna Ramanujan and Guillermo Rodriguez (Eds) Penguin; 351 pages; ₹599





A WILD TURN
CPI(M) leader, Sitaram Yechury

The fun and frolic in Corbett will not provide the solution to this grave economic crisis, created by the government since 2014. We have not heard any coherent plan from the govt

Climate change denial on floods won't help

Incontrovertible proof exists linking Kerala-Karnataka-Maharashtra floods to climate change effects

HE FLOODS IN Kerala, Karnataka and Maharashtra were, without doubt, aggravated by short-sighted development that ignored the consequence of exploiting the Western Ghats in the manner this has happened and the poor urban planning that followed. But, saying that the floods have nothing to do with climate change, as environment minister Prakash Javadekar has done, is nothing short of climate denialism. In fact, it flies in the face of research on climate change impact on rainfall in the region.

Twenty-one of the 27 studies published in the 6th edition of the Explaining Extreme Events from a Climate Perspective—a special edition of the Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society—that was published in December 2017 state that extreme weather events have strong links to long-term anthropogenic climate change. The devastating floods in Uttarakhand (2013), Kashmir (2014), Gujarat (2017), Kerala (2018), and in Maharashtra, Kerala and Karnataka this year would all qualify as extreme weather events. In fact, the rainfall recorded on August 13 in Kerala was 70% above the normal, and that in Karnataka and Maharashtra, over June 1-August 16, was 20% and 31% above normal. But, more importantly, the precipitation in Kerala over August 8-14 was a whopping 387% above the normal while in Karnataka, it was 176% above the normal for that period. This clearly shows these states that are seeing some of the worst floods in their respective histories have been brought to their knees by cloudbursts. Now, research published in the Indian Meteorological Society's journal, Vayu *Mandal*, analysed rainfall data from 1871 to 2011 to find that the contribution of the southwest monsoon in the rainfall that Kerala receives has declined but there is a trend of increased pre- and post-monsoon rainfall in the recent decades.

The fact is climate change is making extreme and erratic monsoon the new normal for India. Flood-drought cycles are becoming common. Between June 1 and August 14, 25 districts in the country had large deficit of rainfall over the normal for that period while 237 recorded deficit. On the other hand, 38 recorded a large excess over the period compared to the normal while 100 experienced rainfall in excess, as per India Meteorological Department's classification. This, and excessive rainfall in an area over a short period are clearly signs of climate-change impact on the southwest monsoons. A committee of experts that studied the heavy floods in Gujarat in 2017 found that the Dhanera region in the state had received twice the seasonal normal in just two days. Vimal Mishra, of IIT Gandhinagar, had found that such extremes are expected to increase, and one-to-five day extreme rains—at levels found once in a half-millenium—can increase by 20-30% if global warming continues as usual. Inadequate storage and drainage in cities and assault on flood plains exacerbate the effects of a deluge occurring due to climate change. As The Economic Times reports, The Council on Energy, Environment and Water estimates that if emissions continue to be high, the probability of once-in-a-century flood for a city like Kolkata would increase by 1,000 times by 2050. IMD data shows that between 1951 and 2010, the annual and seasonal mean temperatures in the all six of the states of the Western Ghats—Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala—had increased significantly, and all these states have ignored the recommendations of the Madhav Gadgil committee on the conservation of the Ghats.

As per a 2017 study, India had the second-largest number of deaths linked to extreme weather events—floods, heatwaves, etc. A paper published in Nature Climate Change estimates upto 60,000 extra deaths annually by 2030—and 260,000 by 2100—if climate change continues unabated. South Asia will be the worst hit region by the end of the century. Ostrich-like evasion on climate change—worse, climate change denialism—is not going to help. The government, and the green ministry, must get its act together if mitigation steps are to be taken with an eye on avoiding the disasters that are becoming increasingly frequent in these states.

GIVING LEGAL RIGHTS TO INDIAN WATER BODIES IS A GREAT LEAP FORWARD IN THE PREVENTION AND REDUCTION OF WATER POLLUTION, AND OPENS UP A NEW ERA FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

RIVER RIGHTS

Ripples of change

BIBEK

Chairman PMEAC

Views are personal

DEBROY

bath, many people still recite a shloka. Without using diacritical marks, rendering a shloka in Roman is difficult. Nevertheless gange cha yamune chaiva godavari sarasvati narmade sindhu kaveri jale asmin sannidhim kuru. "O Ganga, Yamuna, Godavari, Sarasvati, Narmada, Sindhu, Kaveri! Please be present in this water." Eric Newby's "Slowly Down the Ganges" also quotes this, with the comment, "Prayer to the Seven Sacred Rivers recited by every devout Hindu at the time of taking his bath". There are many more than seven rivers in India. How many? Since there is no proper definition of a river, it is impossible to answer this question. One way to list is in terms of river basins, so that the main river and its tributaries are both included. For Himalayan rivers, one will then list Indus basin, Ganga basin, Brahmaputra basin, Barak basin and so on. Similarly, in the south, one will list basins of rivers flowing east (Godavari, Krishna, Kaveri, Mahanadi) and those flowing west (Narmada, Tapti). This still leaves some loose ends, minor rivers along the coast and rivers that don't drain into oceans. Depending on what is included, there can be more than 100 river basins and more than

T THE TIME of taking a

Rivers now have legal rights. In a way, it started with some rivers in Victoria. Then, in 2017, we had the Whanganui river in New Zealand and Ganga and Yamuna. Because of news reports, most people know what the Uttarakhand High Court said in March 2017, though there is now a stay because of an appeal before the Supreme Court. "All the Hindus have deep Astha in rivers Ganga and

600 rivers in the listing.

Yamuna, and they collectively connect with these rivers...Accordingly, while exercising the *parens patrie* jurisdiction, the Rivers Ganga and Yamuna, all their tributaries, streams, every natural water flowing with flow continuously or intermittently of these rivers, are declared as juristic/legal persons/living entities having the status of a legal person with all corresponding rights, duties and liabilities of a living person in order to preserve and conserve river Ganga and Yamuna. The Director NAMAMI Gange, the Chief Secretary of the State of Uttarakhand and the Advocate General of the State of Uttarakhand are hereby declared persons in loco parentis as the human face to protect, conserve and preserve Rivers Ganga and Yamuna and their tributaries. These Officers are bound to uphold the status of Rivers Ganges and Yamuna and also to promote the health and well-being of these rivers." Ganga and Yamuna obtained legal rights, but as minors. They needed guardians. Granting legal rights to rivers (and

Why did Ganga and Yamuna need legal rights? The core issue is pollution. Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) brings out reports on water quality in our rivers. Strictly speaking, these are measures of water quality along stretches of rivers. There is actually a hierarchy of pollution, based on

water bodies) opens up a new area of

environmental jurisprudence.

levels of biochemical oxygen demand (BOD). One can legitimately argue BOD is at best a partial indicator. There are other measures of a river's well-being. If BOD values exceed 8 milligrams per litre, the river will be regarded as severely pol-

Without contesting

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are used

luted. Between Wazirabad and Okhla, Yamuna has a BOD level of 32,55 and 70, at three different places. Between Kala Amb and Narayan Garh, Markanda river in Haryana has a BOD value of 590. Lists float around of most polluted rivers in the world. Ganga and Yamuna will invariably figure in these lists. Without contesting pollution in Ganga and Yamuna, one should be sceptical of lists and rankings, both because of data problems (there

are good data only for OECD) and because of the way numbers are used. Similarly, there are also lists of most polluted rivers in India and these lists will typically include Ganga, Yamuna, Sabarmati, Oshiwara and Damodar. More often than not, these lists are based on CPCB findings and therefore mean stretches of rivers, not entire rivers. Somewhat more rarely, there are also lists of cleanest rivers in the

world and cleanest rivers in India. For instance, stretches of Chambal, Narmada, Brahmaputra, Umngot, Teesta and Tuipui are remarkably clean. Ill-being of rivers is primarily due

to raw sewage and industrial waste. Neither problem is new. In Britain, a Royal Commission on Sewage Disposal was established in 1898 Between 1901 and 1915, this produced ten reports. For decades, these reports were used to frame policy in Britain. People may know of this Royal Commission. I suspect not too many have heard of Kashi Ganga Prasadini Sabha, established by concerned citi

zens of Varanasi in 1886. The Sabha's objective was to introduce drainage and clean up the river. The Royal Commission and Namami Gange are primarily about what government does. (Namami Gange does have a public awareness component.) The Sabha was about what citizens did and in addition to the government bit, the citizen bit is also needed. Today, Thames is listed among the world's cleanest rivers. "The appearance and the smell of the

my attention. The whole of the river was an opaque, pale brown fluid."This is from a letter Michael Faraday wrote to "The Times". The year was 1855. But more than one hundred years later, in 1957, Natural History Museum declared Thames biologically dead. The story of rebirth dates to late 1960-s, not earlier. Similar to the Rhine timeline.

water forced themselves at once upon

Reverse insurance model

Use trusts/pools for agriculture, insurance for health

HILE THE CENTRE is reportedly planning to tweak the norms of Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY), to make crop insurance voluntary for farmers, it needs to relook the entire insurance model for both PMFBY as well as its flagship health insurance scheme Ayushman Bharat. Indeed, the model needs to be flipped; farm insurance should be based on a trust model or risk-pools, while Ayushman Bharat should be based on pure insurance instead of the trust model that several states are using right now. The reason for this is simple; there are fewer chances of fraud in farm insurance, so the insurance firm can be eliminated whereas, given the high level of fraud in medical insurance, the insurance company is critical in that case.

In the case of farm insurance, no single farmer can claim crop failure, it has to be a

village, a district or a state where there has been crop failure due to flooding, drought etc; and with satellite imagery or drone, the extent of disaster can be immediately crosschecked. So, if there is a pool of insurance premium—from the centre, states and farmers—and this is kept in a trust, if the damages for a year are less than the premium, the balance can remain in the fund for use in the next year. In the two financial years— 2016-17 and 2017-18—the gross premium collected was ₹48,267 crore and the payout was ₹39,789 crore. Also, it is not as if, once the premium is paid, the central/state governments have no more risk. As per the contract, to keep premiums affordable, if the losses in a year exceed a certain level, the difference is to be made good by the government anyway; if gains are above a certain level, these get ploughed back to the government. Having a trust or an insurance pool, without the insurance company, is then a less-costly model as it eliminates the profits of insurance firms. In the case of health insurance, as was evident in Rajasthan's Bhamashah model, the

risk of fraud is quite large; in this case, the fraud was so widespread the PSU insurance firm even walked out of the project. While the insurance company was catching the fraud, the state government was delaying de-empanelling the hospitals doing the fraud; also, the state government didn't make use of Aadhaar biometrics mandatory, nor time-stamped pictures of people being hospitalised/discharged. Ideally, all states enrolled in Ayushman Bharat should stop the trust model and move to insurance firms that are suitably empowered if fraud has to stop. Over time, if things go to plan, the Health Stack which will have digitised records of everyone's treatment can serve as a check, especially if data analytics and artificial intelligence is used to mine the data for frauds, but for now it is clear a good insurance model is critical.

CaughtBEHIND

BCCI finally submits to NADA dope-testing for cricketers after discrepancies in its preferred protocol surfaced

FTER ITS DECADE-long deadlock with the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA), the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) agreed, last Friday, to come under the it's ambit. The agreement was reached after the Union sports ministry based granting of No Objection Certificates for visas to visiting teams on the precondition that BCCI follow laws applied to the country's other athletes, including those against doping. BCCI has, however, requested for some 'premium services' citing concerns over the quality and efficiency of NADA's testing.

Making cricketers subject to out-of-competition testing and target testing will usher in equality in Indian sports. As per the World Anti Doping Agency's (WADA) norms, all athletes competing in a country are to be tested by that country's anti-doping agency. Indian cricket remained out of NADA's reach, being guided, instead, by BCCI's rules adopted in 2009. Testing of sample was outsourced and the results were handled by BCCI. This came under fire recently, when incriminating transgressions were discovered in the handling of a doping case against Indian batsman, Prithvi Shaw. NADA's scrutiny is welcome, especially since now, ICC can lobby for cricket's inclusion in the Olympics—so far, India was the only ICC member that didn't abide by WADA regulations and this is a key reason for the sport not making it to the Olympics.

The currency manipulation game

Fears of currency wars (or competitive depreciation) have always gone hand in hand with the desire to avoid trade wars. Both concerns are rooted in the "beggar-thy-neighbour" policies

THE TRADE WAR between the United States and China is heating up again, with US President Donald Trump abruptly announcing plans to impose a 10% tariff on the \$300 billion worth of imports from China that he had so far left untouched. The Chinese authorities then allowed their currency, the renminbi, to fall below the symbolic threshold of CN¥7 per US dollar. The Trump administration promptly responded by naming China a "currency manipulator"—the first time the US had done that to any country in 25 years. Pundits declared a currency war, and investors immediately sent global stock markets lower.

The US assertion that the recent depreciation of the renminbi amounts to currency manipulation is not true. It would be more correct to say that the Chinese authorities gave in to market pressure—the immediate source of which was none other than Trump's announcement of the new tariffs.

Economic theory says that tariffs do not improve a country's trade balance in the way their proponents think they do. When an exchange rate is marketdetermined, it automatically moves to offset the tariff. Intuitively, if tariffs discourage American consumers from buying imported Chinese goods, then demand for renminbi weakens, and the currency's price falls.

The task of evaluating whether America's trading partners manipulate their currencies lies with the US Treasury Department, which uses three criteria. Two of the three coincide with internationally agreed yardsticks for manipulation under the Articles of Agreement of the International Monetary Fund: persistent one-sided intervention by the country to push down the value of its currency, and a large current-account surplus. Neither of these apply to China today. Since the US Congress assigned this task to the Treasury in 1988, the Department has fulfilled its mandate professionally, regardless of who was in the White House. The sudden decision to label China a currency manipulator, despite it not meeting the criteria, is yet another case of Trump heedlessly running roughshod over established norms, professional expertise, the long-term credibility of US institutions, and even

the plain meaning of the law.

To be sure, there was a time when China did act to keep the renminbi substantially undervalued. From 2004 to mid-2014, and particularly in 2004-08, the Chinese authorities intervened heavily to slow down the currency's marketdriven appreciation. Over this ten-year period, however, the renminbi still appreciated by 30% against the dollar, peaking in 2014.

Then, the wind changed, and market sentiment turned against the renminbi. For the past five years, contrary to what Trump and some other US politicians often claim, the Chinese authorities have intervened to slow down the depreciation of the currency. In 2015 and 2016, the People's Bank of China spent \$1 trillion in foreign-exchange reserves (out of a total of \$4 trillion) in an effort to prop up the exchange rate—by far the largest intervention in history to support the value of a currency.

The Chinese authorities' recent decision to let the renminbi break the CN¥7 barrier may well have been a deliberate response to Trump's latest tariff offensive. At the same time, however, China remains concerned that its currency might slide too far too fast and destabilise financial markets.

Trump, meanwhile, is a master at accusing others of transgressions that he himself has committed or is considering. While accusing China of currency manipulation, he wants to do the same with the dollar. Not content with publicly pressuring the US Federal Reserve to cut interest rates, Trump has explicitly attempted to talk down the currency. Clearly, he sees the world as a game of competitive depreciation.

The Trump administration has even considered the possibility of intervening directly in the foreign-exchange market to weaken the dollar. ("I could do that in two seconds if I wanted,"Trump said on July 26.)

Yet such a move seems unlikely. The last US effort to depreciate the dollar against other currencies, the 1985 Plaza Accord, worked only because it was part of a coordinated G7 initiative to correct an acknowledged exchange-

rate misalignment. If America were now to engage in a

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pure currency war against China, it would find itself outmatched, because the UST reasury has only a fraction of the firepower available to the Chinese authorities for foreign-exchange intervention. Furthermore, no matter how crazy US policy gets, investors continue to respond to any uptick in global uncertainty by piling into dollars, the world's number-one safe-haven currency. Paradoxically, therefore, Trumpian volatility can send the dollar up rather than down.

More generally, major governments have so far abided by a 2013 agreement to refrain from competitive depreciation, in the core sense of explicitly talking down currencies or intervening in foreign-exchange markets. But, if currency wars are defined much more broadly to include central banks' decisions to ease monetary policy with the side effect of depreciating their currencies, then the windmills at which Trump is quixotically tilting may not be wholly imaginary.For example, the Bank of England responded to the Brexit referendum with monetary stimulus that depreciated the pound. More recently, the European Central Bank signaled a further easing of monetary policy in response to slower eurozone growth.

Fears of currency wars (or competitive depreciation) have always gone hand in hand with the desire to avoid trade wars. Both concerns are rooted in the "beggar-thy-neighbour" policies of the Great Depression, when countries tried to gain a competitive advantage vis-à-vis their trading partners in a collectively futile exercise.

In truth, however, currency wars are less damaging than trade wars. Whereas a currency war is likely to result in looser global monetary policy, an all-out trade war could derail the global economy and financial markets.

The real significance of the US decision to label China a currency manipulator, therefore, is that it represents a further escalation of the two countries' avoidable tradewar. And, sadly, Fed interest-rate cuts may give US politicians the impression that monetary policy can repair the damage caused by their own trade-policy mistakes.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I-day reflections

It must be conceded that even after

72 years of self-rule we could not erase the dubious distinction of having the largest concentration of impoverished people on earth. While Shining India enjoys a measure of prosperity on account of lop-sided economic growth, the Suffering India still struggles to cope with dehumanising poverty. With little or no income, many people still cannot even afford basic necessities such as food and clothing. As for the fabric of society, the traditions and values we have inherited from the freedom movement are now under serious strain. The rise of Hindu Right is hastening a retreat from secularism. Hindu nationalism repudiates a pluralist approach to politics and corrodes our pluralist democracy. You can imagine the harm to the country when an ideology hostile to religious diversity becomes the ruling ideology in a multi-religious country! The ruling dispensation's intolerance of dissent is not good for a healthy democracy. In today's India criticism of the government makes one an anti-national! Citing 'national interest' and 'national security' to justify or rationalise violations of constitutionally guaranteed rights and freedoms is not worthy of a free nation. For all the rhetoric of patriotism, the notion of human equality still eludes our hierarchically-organised society. Caste consciousness is still very much there. A high-caste Hindu and a Dalit do not enjoy the same social status. Nor is the value of their lives the same. Nobody seriously seeks to de-sanctify caste. Still the lower castes support the BJP in increasing numbers, thereby lending strength to the saffron party to deny religious minorities their space and rights. Why should any non-Hindu chant 'Jai Shri Ram' to qualify to be an Indian? For 'independence' to be meaningful in its truest sense in the Indian context, three things should happen; poverty mitigation, India's continued existence as a secular democracy and the annihilation of caste. — G David Milton, Maruthancode

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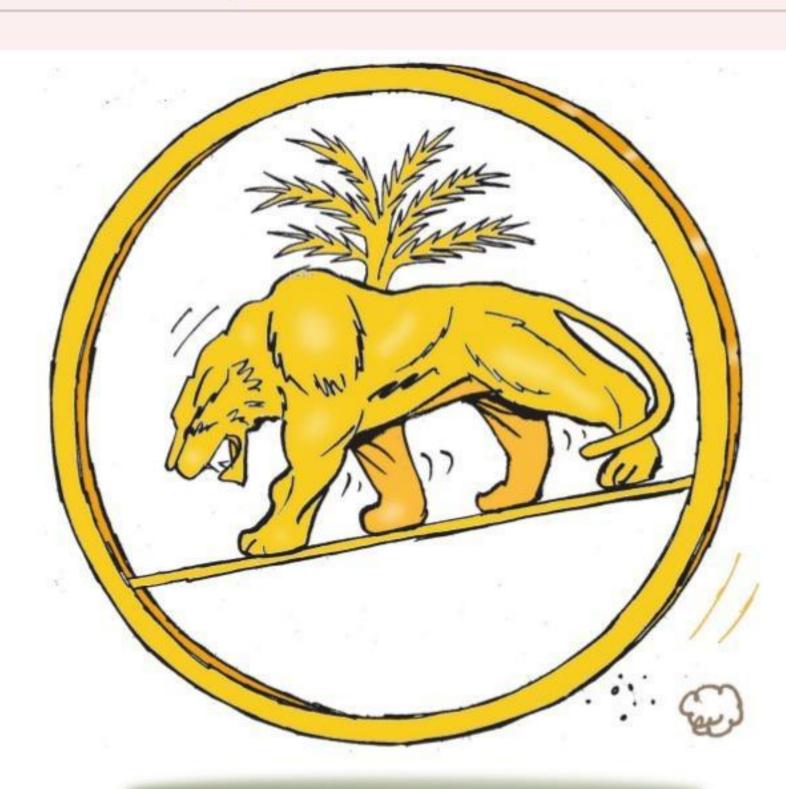


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GROWTH PRESCRIPTIONS

RBI initiatives can reverse slowdown in growth

The central bank's current monetary policy, having evolved from focusing solely on controlling inflation and emphasising independence, is aimed at supporting economic growth

NAN INTERVIEW reported on July 22, 2019, Governor Shaktikanta Das was quoted as saying that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) was doing everything at its disposal to be in sync with the government's efforts to accelerate economic expansion, be it interest rate cuts, ensuring sufficient liq-

uidity or enabling more bank lending. From the time of Das's appointment as Governor, RBI in December 2018, there has been a noticeable change in RBI philosophy. Under the leadership of the two immediately previous governors, RBI had an unwavering focus only on controlling inflation and, emphasising its independence; it ignored other government objectives, such as increasing economic growth or employment.

The objective of the Bank of England's monetary policy is to deliver price stability and, subject to that, to support the government's economic objectives, including those for growth and employment. The US Congress established the objectives for monetary policy by statute, the Federal Reserve Act, not leaving it to the independent thinking of the Fed—maximum employment, stable prices, and moderate long-term interest rates. The Law of the People's Bank of China explicitly stipulates that the ultimate goal of China's monetary policy is to maintain currency stability,

and thereby facilitate economic growth—clearly, economic growth is the ultimate objective. The evolution of RBI's monetary policy objective from solely controlling inflation to supporting the government's objective of economic expansion is a refreshing and much-needed change.

RBI has sought to lower interest rates, but seems frustrated that there is a long lag between the time it lowers its repo rate—the rate at which banks can borrow from RBI in case of shortage of funds and when the banks lower their lending rates. To speed up transmission, RBI should dramatically decrease the reverse repo rate—the rate earned by banks on deposits with RBI—so as to discourage banks from lazy banking. Public Sector Banks (PSBs) are blessed with huge inflows into savings and current accounts, notwithstanding their financial performance because of the customer perception of safety and trust that the Government of India is behind these PSBs; they get a decent return (5.15% even after the reduction on August 7) on such inflows without taking any risk by merely depositing them with RBI. Indeed, the reverse repo amounts totalled over ₹2 lakh crore at the end of

the first week of August, up from ₹1 lakh crore in mid-July. This has occurred at a time when MSMEs, NBFCs, and potential borrowers are complaining of lack of

availability of finance. Since RBI has expressed its intention to enable more bank lending, reducing the reverse repo rate to a level where it is no longer attractive for banks to put deposits with RBI is a desirable and necessary step. One-third of sovereign bonds globally carry a neg-

ative rate of return, i.e., investors will get back less than what they paid at the time of issue, paying a price for safekeeping of their funds. Banks must likewise pay a price if they want the safety of deploying funds with RBI; otherwise, the banks must play their role as intermediaries between savers and borrowers, and seek out borrowers. The private sector banks have shown that there is no dearth of such customers at this time. If the reduction in repo rates leads to a reduction in deposit rates, it is only fair given the low-inflation scenario prevailing currently; the government must then act with alacrity to reduce administered interest rates, such as the uncon-

scionable tax-free rate of return on prov-

ident funds and small deposit schemes.

The US Fed, Bank of England, Bank of Japan have been forward-looking in employing the tools of monetary policy at their disposal. In developing its monetary policy, Bank of Japan employs the Tankan survey, a quarterly poll of thousands of companies that have linkages with economic conditions. The companies are asked about current trends and conditions in the business place and their respective industries as well as their expected business activities for the next quarter and year. For example, firms are asked about domestic demand and supply, inventory levels, projections for inflation, and the number of new graduates they hired in the last year. A rearview mirror of "hard data", which comes with a lag, results in dated inputs for monetary policy decisions. RBI must develop an efficient system of assessing every quarter forward-looking economic sentiments of rural and urban consumers and businesses as inputs for its monetary initiatives.

In the developed world, monetary policy is proactive and fiscal policy lags in response to developing economic situations. In India, monetary policy has hitherto been reactive while fiscal initiatives are more proactive—for instance, RBI, in its Monthly Monetary Policy Statement 2015-16, dated August 4, 2015, acknowledged the "Government's current proactive supply management to contain shocks to food prices, especially of vegetables, alongside its decision to keep increases in minimum support prices moderate"; the central government is trying to pace out capital expenditure evenly over the fiscal year instead of having it bunched towards the end, as was the practice in earlier times. Where the central government has miserably failed is in its own objective of ease of doing business, and in gross inefficiency in administration—witness the initiatives of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, such as striking off companies which only hurts lakhs of innocent employees, directors and creditors while protecting the crooked cronies from tax claims, the poor implementation of the GST and the IBC, the tax initiatives introduced without homework, such as the tax on FPIs. If the central government wishes to slow down the slide in the economy and improve the growth rate, it must recognise that the enemy is within—and

it is the bureaucracy. RBI can also play its part in ease of doing business—for instance, avoiding classifying bank accounts as "dormant or inactive", which entails hassles for small depositors, avoiding paperwork for foreign receipts and payments, which even exporters have to comply with, removing the requirement of filling a KYC repeatedly for a bank customer transferring amounts to mutual funds

or opening broker accounts or demat accounts, encouraging speedier adoption of technology to serve customers better.

Too much was being made of the "independence" of RBI in the recent past. No one ever advocated reducing RBI's role in controlling money supply. Monetary policy objectives must be dovetailed with fiscal policy objectives, and Governor Shaktikanta Das' endorsement of this is a refreshing recent change at

RBI. Along with economic growth, RBI may explicitly aim to facilitate employment, and less-explicitly, to prevent currency volatility; work with SEBI and others to facilitate foreign inflows to augment foreign exchange reserves, and to reduce the onerous formfilling requirements, thereby facilitating the less-privileged to put financial savings into financial instruments rather than land or gold; develop a framework in association with SEBI and the government for managing the possible systemic risk from large finance companies and from debt mutual funds, which do not enjoy lender-of-the-last-resort support or an inter-institutional market like the

inter-bank market.

COMMODITY MARKETS

'PAC'king quite a few benefits



Professor of Finance, IIM Bodh Gaya

Product Advisory Committee will deepen benefits of derivative markets

> **ETTING UP AN** independent Product Advisory Committee (PAC) to deepen the benefits of com-

> modity derivative markets to commodity value

chain actors is a timely move by Sebi. It will address

issues in the contract design of commodities and

cater to needs of physical market participants. Based on Commodity Derivatives Advisory Committee's (CADC) advice, Sebi has directed each recognised exchange, including stock and commodity, to "constitute a PAC for each group/complex of commodities having common stakeholders/value chain participants, on which derivatives are traded or being proposed to be traded". This requires PAC to:

■work on contract design for new commodities, explore a right mix of liquid and hedge contracts, review design of existing contracts, and ensure these are as per industry's needs;

■work on aligning quality/grade and quantity specifications of the product with spot/physical ready-cash markets;

■ provide a choice-set of basis variety, propose additional delivery centres which are exchange-accredited warehouses, and review existing delivery centres;

■ review performance of existing contracts on various explicit and broad-based parameters;

■ discuss the state of markets for the commodity during meet-

ings or at least twice a year But, how will PAC extend benefits of futures to the value chain stakeholders? Will it effectively assess the state of the

market for commodities under the chairmanship of independent advisor—devoid of any principal and agent dichotomy? Performance review of existing futures/options contracts, changing the contract design, and exploration of opportunities for new contract could be an up-hill task.

Fundamental factors of commodities should be studied by assessing the local demand and supply. Stock-to-use ratio is essential from liquidity viewpoint of futures/options contract. In the case of *guargum*, a derivative of *guar* seed, the stock-touse ratio of the seed determines the liquidity position, price and spread of gum contracts. Also, convenience yield benefits to commodity-holder should be appraised before PAC decides frequency of contract, delivery and stack and roll hedging.

Identifying close substitutes or rival contracts can help explore avenues for inter- or intra-commodity spread and/or calendar spread. Selection of basis variety and tenderable varieties for futures/options contract, too, is important, to encourage and sustain participation of physical market actors.

Delivery schedule should mirror the agricultural cycle of the produce while spot price could be depressed. So, in presence of liquid and efficiency futures/option, producers can offload risk, to secure income and stimulate investment in agriculture.

Market micro-structure parameters—bid-ask spread, margining, contract size, contract duration, price band, etc—are critical to assess performance of futures/options contract. A research body aligned with PAC should review historical and stochastic performance of competing/completing contracts.

PAC's expected role, is at both at the micro and meso-levels. At the micro-level, PAC can observe heterogeneity in participation between physical and derivative market actors, helping exchanges and regulators take measures to bring parity in trade and maintain a healthy hedger-to-speculator ratio. At the meso level, it can help internalise the altruistic benefits of commodity derivative markets among market participants. The advisory body can contribute to the commodity/stock exchange utility and management in reliable price discovery, price dissemination, and effective hedging against basis risk. PAC, in its review meeting, should disclose speculator-to-hedger ratio, to help discover optimal number of derivative contracts (liquid) for each group of commodities and rationalise transaction fees.

The membership criteria and margining system for FPOs should be revised in view of financialisation of commodities. PAC and Regulatory Oversight Committee, in consultation with CADC, should enable trading, settlement, and delivery. Exchange of futures for physicals/alternate settlement mechanism should be promoted along with early pay-in facility.

PAC should facilitate index trading to access annualised average yield and volatility from the disclosure of commodity exchanges. In FY19, the average yield at N-Krishi of NCDEX and MCX-Comdex was 6.6% and 12.5%, respectively, while their volatilities varied from 19% to 37.4%. It should adopt good governance practices from international exchanges and regulators. The committee's right intention, autonomy, directed effort in facilitating and designing broad-based contracts can help accommodate a diverse group of commodity stakeholders—from producers and processors to traders.

CENTRAL BANK ALCHEMY

Too much was

being made of the

"independence" of

RBI in the recent

past. No one ever

advocated

reducing RBI's role

in controlling

money supply.

HE FOCUS OF attention is once again on the Jalan Committee as it is to be seen how much money can possibly be transferred to the government and the modalities of the same. This addresses the issue of utilisation of RBI's excess reserves, which have not been touched so far on the balance sheet side though surpluses generated on account of income and expenditure are transferred almost fully to the government. The other issue is how balance sheet entries will be drawn up to accommodate such drawls.

RBI has a balance sheet size of ₹36.3 lakh crore. The liabilities include a large part of issued currency, which, as of June 2018, was ₹19.2 lakh crore. Another part, of around ₹6.5 lakh crore, is deposits kept with RBI, of which ₹5 lakh crore is under CRR stipulation. These two components are tangible. The 'other liabilities' constitute the second largest part of the balance sheet at ₹10.4 lakh crore, and is the Committee's target.

Within this category, there are four significant components: contingency fund (₹2.3 lakh crore), asset development fund (₹0.22 lakh crore), investment revaluation (₹0.13 lakh crore), and currency and gold revaluation reserve (₹6.91 lakh crore). It looks likely that the contingency fund and currency revaluation funds will be the ones targeted for transfer to the government.

The contingency fund has remained vir-

tually unchanged in the last five years at

Converting reserves ınto money

Financing budget expenditure through RBI surpluses is novel financial engineering



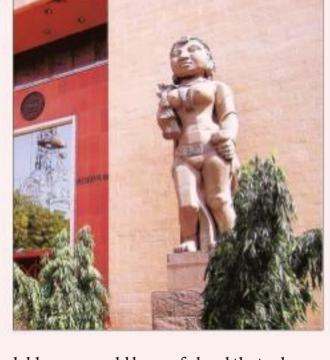
Chief Economist, CARE Ratings. Views are personal

₹2.2-2.3 lakh crore and is supposed to be used in case of revaluation of securities held by RBI. With yields coming down, the value of securities would go up and so would these funds, becoming one potential source of funds. The other is currency revaluation quite high at ₹6.91 lakh crore. If the rupee declines, the fixed set of dollars would be valued higher in rupee terms on the assets side, increasing the reserves on the liabilities side. However, if the rupee appreciates, as is the case today, the reverse would occur and the

rupee value of reserves will come down. Hence, one is really looking at these ₹10 lakh crore of reserves, a part of which can be potentially monetised by RBI and passed on

to the government. Since this is legally permitted, there can be no questions in this regard. Some of the questions that the Committee will address are the following.

First, what is the quantum of reserves that can be monetised and drawn out of the balance sheet? Is the contingency fund adequate or too high. However, if we go back another five years, a level of ₹1.5 lakh crore was also witnessed in 2009. Therefore, depending on how far back the Committee looks, there is still potential to draw down this reserve on the grounds that one could manage with a lower amount, as there has not been an instance when the level dipped sharply. Prima facie, keeping a limit of ₹2



lakh crore could be a safe level that releases ₹0.3 lakh crore.

The currency revaluation reserve has been more volatile—₹5.3-6.9 lakh crore in the last five years, with the lower end being reached in 2017 and a low of ₹1.2 lakh crore in 2010. Here, the Committee can think of lowering the reserves by a considerable amount—by, say, around ₹1.5-2 lakh crore and keeping 15 lakh crore as the floor. Overall, around ₹2-2.2 lakh crore can be drawn from these two reserves.

The second question which follows is that if reserves were to be lowered, how would adjustment be made to the assets side of the balance sheet? If the liabilities get

reduced by, say, ₹2 lakh crore, the assets, too, should be lowered. This will be interesting, because if the currency revaluation reserve is reduced, it means that some part of the forex should drop out of the system. RBI has been buying forex from banks to supply liquidity and, hence, any drawdown of forex will mean selling the same to banks, which will create a liquidity problem. Therefore, it is more likely that the dollars have to be kept in a separate suspense account to balance the accounts. Even if the contingency reserve is reduced, it could mean lowering the stock of GSecs (through OMOs), which will impact liquidity in the system as well as GSec yields. This, too, may have to be held in a different account, much like the MSS bonds. The Committee's call on this aspect is something that will be awaited.

The third question is whether the transfer will be done in one stroke or over a period of time. The indication is that it will be done over a period of three to five years, which, being more manageable, has the advantage of reducing market volatility. A one-shot transfer can mean a major shock for the financial market because if ₹2 lakh crore is taken out from, say, the currency revaluation account, the shock for the forex market can be a matter of conjecture. Alternatively, if the contingency fund is being lowered, a call has to be taken on RBI's GSec holdings, which can create disturbances in bond yields. This is something RBI has to consider finally.

would be conditional or not? Economists would argue that if the RBI reserves are used for financing the budget and are treated as a revenue/capital receipt, depending on how the Committee sees it, it would resemble the disinvestment receipts that are used for general expenses. On the other hand, if they are earmarked for, say, bank capitalisation or specific infra projects, it would be targeted and easier to accept. Unlike disinvestment which can spread over decades as the gov ernment can potentially sell stake in various entities, in this case, it would be almost limited by the target amount decided by the Committee. This is so because the recent experience has been that all RBI annual surpluses are transferred to the government as non-tax revenue. Hence, scope of these reserves increasing may be limited. This will subsume the concept of a macro norm being applied on the desirability of reserves and surpluses in relation to the balance sheet size, which can be 15% or 20%.

Fourth, would the transfer of funds

Using RBI surplus reserves for financing the budget expenditure is definitely novel more akin to recap bonds that finances expenses through a different financial engineering. With fiscal pressures mounting, it is natural that new sources of finance are explored as traction in tax revenue is always uncertain. Sale of assets, like land or prop erty, can be the next frontier, and the Rail ways could open up space for discussion.

#ExpressExplained

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

TELLING NUMBERS

How the number and size of districts vary from state to state

ON THURSDAY, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami announced that Vellore district would be trifurcated to create two more districts, Ranipet and Tirupattur. In January and July this year, the Tamil Nadu government had created three new districts, and the latest move will take the total number of districts to 37. The idea behind creating new districts in any state is, generally, that it is expected to make governance easier; sometimes, the decision is driven by local demands.

The larger states predicatbly have a higher number of districts, with Uttar Pradesh (75) leading the count, followed by Madhya Pradesh (52), while the smallest state, Goa (2), has the lowest number. However, the number of districts in a state is not always a function of the area of the state, or of its population.

For example, Andhra Pradesh is the seventh largest state by area but has among the smallest counts of districts at 13. As such, it has only one district for every 12,000 sq km, which is the largest average size for a district in any Indian state. At the other end of the scale is

Tripura. Being a small state, it has only eight districts, but even that is high, when compared to any other states, in terms of the number of districts per unit area. Tripura has one district for every 1,300 sq km, the smallest average district size in the country. It means an average Andhra Pradesh district is more than nine times the size of an average Tripura district. An Andhra Pradesh district has an average population of 38 lakh while a Tripura district has only 4.5 lakh. Most of the Northeastern states have smaller districts — which means a higher number of districts per unit area.

Tamil Nadu's 37 districts will be the fourth highest count in the country, just behind Bihar's 38. The average size of a Tamil Nadu district will now be around 3,500 sq km, down from 4,000 sq km before January.

Behind UP, MP, Bihar and Tamil Nadu, the highest district counts are 36 in Maharashtra (average 8,547 sq km); 33 each in Assam (average 2,377 sq km), Rajasthan (10,371 sq km) and Gujarat (5,940 sq km); 31 in Telangana (3,615 sq km); and 30 each in Karnataka (6,393 sq km) and Odisha (5,190 sq km).

STATES WITH LARGER DISTRICTS

State	Districts	Area (sq km)		Population (lakh)	
		State	Avg/district	State	Avg/district
Andhra	13	1,60,205	12,323	496	38
Rajasthan	33	3,42,239	10,371	685	21
Maharashtra	36	3,07,713	8,548	1,123	31
Karnataka	30	1,91,796	6,393	611	20
MP	52	3,08,252	6,044	726	14
Gujarat	33	1,96,024	5,940	604	18

STATES WITH SMALLER DISTRICTS

State	Districts	Area (sq km)		Population (lakh)	
		State	Avg/district	State	Avg/district
Tripura	8	10,492	1,311	36	4.5
Manipur	16	22,327	1,395	28	1.8
Nagaland	11	16,579	1,507	20	1.8
Sikkim	4	7,096	1,774	6	1.5
Goa	2	3,702	1,851	14.5	7.3
Haryana	22	44,212	2,010	253	11.5

Source: Census 2011 and state government websites

TIP FOR READING LIST

THE LANGUAGE OF THE INTERNET

Because

Understanding

the New Rules

of Language

Internet

GRETCHEN MCCULLOCH describes herself as an "Internet linguist", someone who "live(s) on the Internet", and "analyze(s) the language of the Internet for the people of the Internet". She summarises her book, Because Internet: Understanding the New Rules of Language, as "a linguistically informed look at how our digital world is transforming the English language".

McCulloch asks — and answers – some questions that are likely to have struck most people at some point of their experience with the digital-virtual world. "Why did emoji become so popular so quickly? What's the deal with how people of different ages punctuate their emails and text messages so differently? Why does the

language in memes often look so wonderfully strange?"

The official promo for the book asserts that "even the most absurd-looking slang has genuine patterns behind it". McCulloch, it says, "explains how your first social Internet experience influences whether you prefer 'LOL' or 'lol', why ~sparkly tildes~ succeeded where cen- about her subject".

turies of proposals for irony punctuation had failed, what emoji have in common with physical gestures, and how the artfully disarrayed language of animal memes like lolcats and doggo made them more likely to spread".

A review of the book in *The New York* Times illustrates McCulloch's project through the LOL/lol distinction that most

of us see frequently (and some of us wonder about). "As early Internet slang, 'LOL' meant 'laughing out loud', but then its definition softened, acquiring additional layers of meaning," says the review. The lowercase 'lol' is still a 'word in transition', sig-

frontational ('what are you doing out so

late lol') or gently poke fun at someone ('good morning lol' to a friend who woke up at noon)," she says. The review describes the book as "in-

Gretchen nifying, as McCulloch says, McCulloch "amusement, irony and even passive aggression". "It can temper a statement that might otherwise sound con-

> cisive and entertaining", and McCulloch as "lucid, friendly, unequivocally excited

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

Understanding post of CDS

What is the office of Chief of Defence Staff that Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced in his Independence Day address? Where did the idea come from, and what is the CDS supposed to do?

NIRUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN MUMBAI, AUGUST 15

IN HIS Independence Day address Thursday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the creation of the post of Chief of Defence Staff to provide "effective leadership at the top level" to the three wings of the armed forces, and to help improve coordination among them.

What is the office of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)?

The CDS is a high military office that oversees and coordinates the working of the three Services, and offers seamless tri-service views and single-point advice to the Executive (in India's case, to the Prime Minister) on long-term defence planning and management, including manpower, equipment and strategy, and above all, "jointsmanship" in operations.

In most democracies, the CDS is seen as being above inter-Service rivalries and the immediate operational preoccupations of the individual military chiefs. The role of the CDS becomes critical in times of conflict.

Most countries with advanced militaries have such a post, albeit with varying degrees of power and authority. The United States Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCSC), for example, is extremely powerful, with a legislated mandate and sharply delineated powers.

He is the most senior military officer and military adviser to the President, and his remit extends to the National Security Council, the Homeland Secuirty Council, and the Defence Secretary.

The Chiefs of the United States Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and National Guard too, are members of the JCSC. All, including the CICSC, are four-star officers, but by statute only the CJCSC is designated as the "principal military adviser". However, the CICSC is barred from exercising any operational authority over combat commanders in varied theatres; this authority rests exclusively wit the US President.

So, why had India not appointed a CDS until now?

India has had a feeble equivalent known as the Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee (CoSC); but this is a toothless office, given the manner in which it is structured. The seniormost among the three Service Chiefs is appointed to head the CoSC, an office that lapses with the incumbent's retirement.

The current Chairman CoSC is Air Chief Marshal Birender Singh Dhanoa, who succeeded the former Chief of the Naval Staff

Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Red Fort on Thursday. Neeraj Priyadarshi

Admiral Sunil Lanba on May 31. When ACM Dhanoa retires at the end of September 2019, he would have served as Chairman CoSC for a mere four months.

In 2015, then Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar had described the CoSC arrangement as "unsatisfactory", and its Chairman as a "figurehead". The post did not further tri-service integration, resulting in inefficiency and an expensive duplication of assets, he had said.

The CoSC system is a leftover from the colonial era, with only minor changes being carried out over the years. Apprehensions in the political class about a powerful military leader, along with inter-Services bickering, have long worked to disincentivise the upgrade of the post.

The first proposal for a CDS came from the 2000 Kargil Review Committee (KRC), which called for a reorganisation of the "entire gamut of national security management and apex decision-making and structure and interface between the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces Headquarters". The Group of Ministers Task Force that studied the KRC Report and recommendations, proposed to the Cabinet Committee on Security that a CDS, who would be five-star officer, be created.

In preparation for the post, the government created the Integrated Defence Staff (IDS) in late 2002, which was to eventually serve as the CDS's Secretariat. However, over the past 17 years, this has remained yet another nebulous department within the military establishment.

But what happened to the proposal?

No consensus emerged among the Services, with the IAF especially opposed to such a move. The Congress, then in opposi-

tion, was against the idea of concentrating too much military power in the CDS's post. The Ministry of Defence (MoD) too, opposed it subtly for the same reasons, and because it could disrupt civil-military ties in the latter's favour.

"A CDS with direct access to the Prime Minister and Defence Minister was the last thing that the MoD wanted," said Lt Gen H S Panag (retd), who served as the GOC-in-C, Northern and Central Commands. According to Gen Panag, a major reason why the CDS idea could not be implemented was that the MoD bureaucracy was loath to relinquish its power over the three Services. Consequently, the MoD played one Service against the other.

"Besides," Gen Panag said, "each Service has its own ethos, and the Chiefs feel that under a CDS, they will be rendered virtual nonentities."

The smaller Air Force and Navy fear that the CDS would be from the Army, by far the largest Service. The IAF has long argued that unlike the United States and other western militaries, the Indian Services are not an expeditionary force, for which a CDS is a necessity. The appointment of a CDS would also lead to theatre commands, another aspect that the IAF opposes, fearing a diminution of its operational role.

In 2011, more than a decade after the KRC Report, the UPA government, led by the Congress, which had opposed the CDS proposal when in opposition, set up the Naresh Chandra Committee on defence and security. The 14-member Committee, comprising retired Service Chiefs and other defence experts, suggested a watered-down version of the CDS proposal, in which the Chairman CoSC in the rank of a four-star officer would have a fixed tenure of two years. He would have significantly more authority and powers than the Chairman CoSC, and would be a CDS in all but name.

What is the case for having a CDS?

Although the KRC did not directly recommend a CDS — that came from the GoM — it underlined the need for more coordination among the three Services, which was poor in the initial weeks of the Kargil conflict.

The KRC Report pointed out that India is the only major democracy where the Armed Forces Headquarters is outside the apex governmental structure. It observed that Service Chiefs devote most of their time to their operational roles, "often resulting in negative results". Long-term defence planning suffers as day-to-day priorities dominate. Also, the Prime Minister and Defence Minister do not have the benefit of the views and expertise of military commanders, in order to ensure that higher level defence management decisions are more consensual and broadbased.

The CDS is also seen as being vital to the creation of "theatre commands", integrating tri-service assets and personnel like in the US military. India has 17 Service commands at different locations and duplicating assets, Gen Panag said. In 2016, China integrated its military and other police and paramilitaries into five theatres from the earlier seven area commands, each with its own inclusive headquarters, one of which has responsibility for the Indian border. In contrast, India's border with China is split between the Eastern, Western, and Northern Commands, Gen Panag said.

And what are the arguments against?

Theoretically, the appointment of a CDS is long overdue, but there appears to be no clear blueprint for the office to ensure its effectiveness. India's political establishment is seen as being largely ignorant of, or at best indifferent towards, security matters, and hence incapable of ensuring that a CDS works.

Militaries by nature tend to resist transformation. In the US, the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Act elevated the Chairman from first among equals to the "principal military advisor" to the President and the Secretary of Defence. In the Indian context, critics fear the absence of foresight and understanding might end up making the CDS just another case of "jobs for the boys".

Who at present advises India's Prime Minister on military matters?

In effect it is the National Security Adviser. This has been especially so after the Defence Planning Committee was created in 2018, with NSA Ajit Doval as its chairman, and the foreign, defence, and expenditure secretaries, and the three Service Chiefs as members.

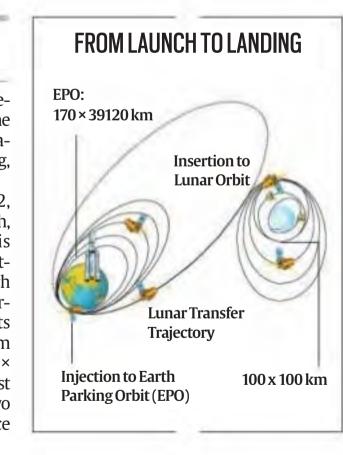
Moon mission reaches key stage, what next?

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, AUGUST 15

ON WEDNESDAY, the Chandrayaan-2 spacecraft left Earth's orbit and moved towards the Moon, which it will orbit over a series of manoeuvres before the ultimate soft landing, scheduled on September 7. **SO FAR**, since its launch on July 22,

Chandrayaan-2 had been orbiting the Earth, moving into higher and orbits. This is achieved by a series of "Earth-bound orbitraising manoeuvres". There were five such manoeuvres before the mission left Earth orbit on Wednesday. These raised the orbits around Earth successively to 230 × 45,163 km (July 24), 251 × 54,829 km (July 26), 276 × 71,792 km (July 29), 277 × 89,472 km (August 2) and 276 × 1,42,975 km (August 6). The two figures with each orbit refer to the distance



at the nearest and farthest points.

ON WEDNESDAY, the final orbit-raising manoeuvre was carried out. Chandrayaan 2 has now entered the Lunar Transfer Trajectory, and is now heading for its next orbit, which will be around the Moon.

ON AUGUST 20, Chandrayaan-2 will approach Moon and the spacecraft's liquid engine will be fired again to insert the spacecraft into a lunar orbit. Following this, there will be further four orbit manoeuvres to take the spacecraft into its final orbit, passing over the lunar poles at a distance of about 100 km from the Moon's surface (see table).

After that, the soft landing. The Vikram lander will separate from the orbiter on September 2. Two orbit manoeuvres will be performed on the lander before the initiation of powered descent on September 7.

Chandrayaan 2 will land on the Moon's south polar region, unexplored by science so

COMINGUP, STAGE BY STAGE

Date	Time	Moon* (km)			
August 20	8:30-9:30 am	118 × 18078			
August 21	12:30 - 1:30 pm	121×4303			
August 28	5:30 - 6:30 am	178 × 1411			
August 30	6-7 pm	126 × 164			
Sept 1	6 - 7 pm	114×128			
* The two figures represent nearest and farthest distances from Moon					
Source for text, data and illustration: ISRO					

far. ISRO said in a statement that the south pole

is especially interesting because of the lunar surface area here that remains in shadow is much larger than that at the north pole. There is a possibility of the presence of water in permanently shadowed areas around it.

Fertility rate: What the data show

PM has flagged 'challenges' posed by India's 'population explosion'. While India is expected to soon overtake China as the world's most populous country, the total fertility rate has been falling almost everywhere in India

RAVISHTIWARI NEW DELHI. AUGUST 15

THE GRAPH shows trends for the total fertility rate (TFR) in various states. TFR. defined as the number of children born to a woman until the end of her child-bearing age, is a key indicator for population trends.

During his Independence Day speech Thursday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi underlined challenges posed by population growth in the country. "I would like to highlight the issue of population explosion in our country from the aegis of the Red Fort today. This rapidly increasing population poses various new challenges for us and our

future generations," the Prime Minister said. The graph is based on TFR data from the Sample Registration System (SRS) under-

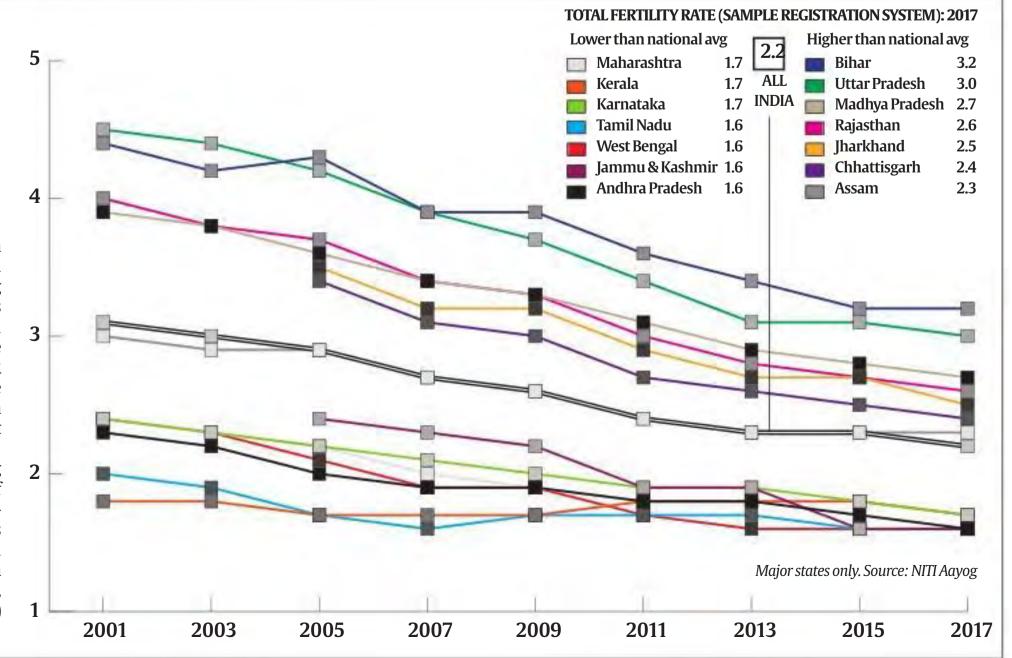
taken by the Office of the Registrar General of India. The SRS also looks at other indicators such as crude birth rate, general fertility rate, age specific/marital fertility rate, gross reproduction rate along with sex ratio at birth. While Census figures provide the total population every decade, the regular SRS estimates provide dynamic trends underlying the population growth.

After four successive years (2013-2016) when the TFR stagnated at 2.3 births per woman of child-bearing age, the latest SRS estimates (2017) show the TFR dropping to 2.2. This figure is only marginally higher than the fertility rate (2.1) required for replacement of the existing population.

SRS estimates over the last decade and more, meanwhile, show a declining trend across the country. Even the states that have a higher TFR — Uttar Pradesh (3.0),

Bihar (3.2), MP (2.7), Rajasthan (2.6), Assam (2.3), Chhattisgarh (2.4) and Jharkhand (2.5) — have been witnessing a declining trend in fertility rates. These seven states account for about 45 per cent of the total population in the 2011 Census. Two more states, Gujarat and Haryana, recorded a TFR of 2.2, which is above the replacement rate but is equal to the national average. Taken together, these nine major states account for 52 per cent of the 2011 population.

This means that in the states barring these nine, and accounting for almost half the population, the replacement level is either 2.1 or has gone below it. These states with a lower TFR include Kerala (1.7), Tamil Nadu (1.6), Karnataka (1.7), Maharashtra (1.7), Andhra Pradesh (1.6), Telangana (1.7), West Bengal (1.6), Jammu and Kashmir (1.6) and Odisha (1.9).



THE INDIAN EXPRESS, FRIDAY, AUGUST 16, 2019

THE EDITORIAL PAGE

WORDLY WISE

FREEDOM IS NOT WORTH HAVING IF IT DOES NOT INCLUDE THE FREEDOM TO MAKE MISTAKES.

— M K GANDHI

The Indian EXPRESS

∽ FOUNDED BY ∽

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

THE PM'S MESSAGE

It was most powerful for invitation to the people to own their change, will resonate when curbs are lifted in the Valley

UNNING THROUGH PRIME Minister Narendra Modi's first Independence Day speech in his second term, were themes that have come to be identified with his political personality. One, he sought to portray himself as a changemaker. While it attached easily to him in 2014, when he projected himself as an outsider and a challenger of the certitudes and corruptions that Congress regimes had presided over in national politics, his continuing courtship of the image of change agent, despite a five-year incumbency, is remarkable. On August 15, he spoke for making big leaps and against incrementalism, and drew stark oppositions to make his case: 70 years vs five years, even 70 years vs 10 weeks of his second term so far. In the PM's picture, the past is a place of darkness, while the last five years were an effort to fulfill the people's necessities, and the next five will be dedicated to meeting their aspirations. Two, he exhorted the people to own the change and participate in it — be it Swachh Bharat then, or the Jal Jeevan Mission now, he spoke of an abhiyan (campaign) that engages jan samanya (ordinary people), does not remain sarkari (government-driven). And three, even as the PM seemed to throw the ball to a diverse people, he also, paradoxically, underlined a sharply unitary message: One-nation-one-tax (GST), one nation-one-election (simultaneous polls), one-nation-one-constitution (in J&K).

The PM also announced significant policy and institutional shifts. A chief of defence staff, a long standing proposal to ensure better coordination and more efficient decisionmaking in the defence forces, will finally be appointed. The PM promised to go beyond ease of doing business", which, incidentally, has had debatable success so far, to "ease of" living", which would presumably reorient the relationship between government and citizens across a range of arenas and sectors. This also raises questions, given that, for all the promises of "minimum government and maximum government", the Modi regime is yet to make government less intrusive in matters ranging from tax policy to data privacy. The PM announced a new campaign against single-use plastic, and expressed the hope that it would be promoted by a range of stakeholders, from shopkeepers, who will start selling cloth/jute bags to people who will gift these bags to each other on Diwali. More controversially, PM Modi announced a shift in the conversation on population policy from "demographic dividend" to "population explosion" ("jansankhya visfot"). This is tricky terrain, given the unhappy spectres invoked by the latter formulation from another regime that spoke of the need to control the population.

Most controversial was the part of the PM's speech where he spoke of the decision to downsize Kashmir, abrogate Article 370. Here, the PM's message hit a wall of his government's making — the continued lockdown of people and detention of leaders, in the wake of its consequential August 5 move. If the most engaging part of the PM's message to the nation was the invitation to the people to take ownership of the change, it will resonate across the country when restrictions on the people in the Valley are lifted.

INJUSTICE SYSTEM

Acquittals in the Pehlu Khan lynching case point to subversion of due process. Gehlot government must urgently make amends

HE ACQUITTAL OF all six persons accused of lynching Pehlu Khan, a cattle trader, near Alwar, is an indictment of the Rajasthan government and its law enforcement agencies. The trial court judge gave the benefit of doubt to the accused and ordered their release because the Rajasthan Police probe had "serious shortcomings" and signified "gross negligence". Simply put, due process was subverted by shoddy investigation, procedural infirmities and poor monitoring of the probe by state authorities. The Ashok Gehlot government in Rajasthan government is appealing against the verdict, but it still needs to answer for the derailment of a high-profile probe that was seen as a test case of the state's commitment to ensuring justice.

A mob had attacked Khan in Alwar on April 1, 2017, following a rumour that he was smuggling cows. He died in a hospital two days later, after naming six persons in his dying declaration to the police. Onlookers made recordings of the attack and circulated them on social media. On TV, persons in the mob proudly claimed responsibility for the murder. However, the police seems to have ignored due procedures when Khan made his statement, and did not authenticate the videos before submitting them in court. Not surprisingly, then, the admissible material proved insufficient to prove the crime. In fact, controversies have stalked the case right from the beginning. First, Rajasthan Police cleared the persons named by Khan. Later, in May 2019, the police charged Khan's sons and the driver of the pick-up truck that Pehlu Khan had hired to transport cattle, with violating the provisions of the Rajasthan Bovine Animal Act. The Congress chief minister, Ashok Gehlot, had then said his government would probe if the investigation was biased.

The Pehlu Khan murder is among the earliest lynching cases involving cow vigilantes the first incident was reported from Jharkhand in March, 2016. The spree of mob lynchings since then — from UP, Assam, West Bengal, Bihar and Jammu and Kashmir — provoked the Supreme Court to ask the government to formulate a law specific to the crime in July, 2018. But law can be a deterrent only if the law enforcers are keen to implement it in letter and spirit. Now, the Gehlot government will be tested on its commitment to justice.

GODDESS OF SMALL THINGS

Vidya Sinha will be remembered for being part of a cinema that eschewed formula, struck a chord with the people

IDYA SINHA, WHO passed away on Thursday, will be remembered for her roles in films that had none of the trappings of Bollywood blockbusters. She made her mark in an interesting period in the history of Hindi films. In 1973, Prakash Mehra's Zanjeer announced the arrival of the angry young man, Amitabh Bachchan's Vijay. A year later, Basu Chatterjee's Rajnigandha made its mark at the box office and swept the Filmfare Awards. In several ways, Rajnigandha was a counterpoint to Zanjeer: Centred on a woman starting out in her career, caught between the affections of two lovers, Chatterjee's film was an ode to a world very different from the predominantly masculine troposphere of the Mehra-Bachchan potboiler. Rajnigandha was Sinha's debut. She did not eschew playing Bollywood's formulaic characters. But Sinha was at her best in films where lovers could be painfully shy and loved blossomed during bus rides.

There was nothing larger than life about the characters of such films. Sinha's second film. Chhoti Si Baat, depicted the everyday life of an office-going woman. The world in such films was far gentler than the violent landscapes of Bollywood potboilers. But this was no escapist cinema. Bombay, the locale of most films in which Sinha distinguished herself, placed its demands. As a character in *Chhoti Si Baat* remarks, "You can escape the gueue system in Delhi or Calcutta but not in Bombay". Getting a job often meant negotiating layers of nepotism, a delay in getting to work would result in a stern reprimand from the boss and find-

ing a house was tough for a newly-married couple with limited means. This was also cinema that subtly depicted the intricacies of human relationships. They brought out the best in Sinha, even when she spoke very little. Like in Rajnigandha, when in a taxi with an ex lover, the character she plays sits glued to the door and yet can't desist from looking furtively at him.

One speech, many PMs

On I-Day, we heard the aspiring statesman, the man of

ideas, the debater, the polemicist, the ruthless executive

SUHAS PALSHIKAR

RIGHT FROM HIS first Independence Day

speech, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been struggling to present himself as a visionary, a statesman, a dreamer, and someone striving to rise above the partisan and the momentary. This year's speech was no exception. His speeches follow an implicit template: Touching upon ideas and dipping into the mundane, floating big plans and getting lost in small matters, highlighting problems but exhorting citizens to do things on their own. This template allows the faithful to detect elements of the extraordinary, leaving behind the ordinary or the controversial as only memory. But the aspiring statesman got easily over-

shadowed by three other personas. The PM began as a debater defending an argument. Claiming that his second government has done in 70 days what could not happen in 70 years, he listed out the accomplishments of the past couple of months, three in particular: A passing reference to the changes made in existing anti-terror law; a proud claim of abolishing triple talaq; and a defence of changes made in J&K. Of course, he did not bother to reconcile democracy with the intimidating changes in the terror law; he did not find it necessary to explain the need to criminalise triple talaq; he was not interested in assuaging the fears over central interventions in federal features when talking about what was

But in defending these actions, another personality of the PM (and his government) came to the fore: The ruthless executive. As the PM proudly pointed out, his government does not avoid problems, nor entertains them. He went on to say that the government will set aside whatever obstacles come in the way. It is these qualities of the PM — debating skills and a show of strength and ruthlessness that have endeared him to many Indians. But he also probably gets carried away by these characteristics to the extent of sidelining the more ambitious project of writing himself into history as a visionary.

Therefore, a third persona kept making its appearance in the speech: Modi himself. Five minutes into the speech, the PM slipped from the more vague "hum" (we) to the more personal "mein" (I), saying "mujhe awsar diya" (people have given me the opportunity). This was not a one-off mention in the first person

Repackaging his earlier idea of maximum governanceminimum government, the PM spoke about "ease of living". This goes much beyond the industry-driven idea of ease of doing business and it would certainly get him headlines in international circles. He theorised that government should be there to help but it should not cramp the citizens. This sounds interesting but with increasing bureaucratic interventions in individual lives, with non-regulated intrusions into citizens' privacy, with controversial attempts of allowing surveillance and with

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singular. Phrases such as "mein", "mujhe", "mera" kept popping up — along with the inevitable reference to his selflessness ("mera apna kuchh nahin"). It is not easy to dismiss this recourse to the first person as a slip; rather, it reminded of his natural connect with the 130 crore Indians. In the course of the speech, the PM made a reference to the union between him and the people by saying that the election was fought not the party, nor the leader, but 130 crore Indians. Conflating the individual with the larger category of "people", showing off ruthlessness and defending policies of the government, took the PM to what he excels in — polemics. Modi the polemicist could not avoid the temptation of mentioning "parivarwad" somewhat out of context, and taking a snipe at previous governments over not making Article 370 permanent, while seeking to delegitimise opposition to his J&K policies as politics for votes (chunavi rajniti).

The PM and his PR machine would like us to remember his speech for the ideas, vision and dreams. These touched a wide range of topics, some particularly close to the middle classes such as tourism or the five trillion dollar economy. And included many non-controversial subjects, such as plastic waste, infrastructure etc. Like the Swachh Bharat Mission in his first I-Day speech in 2014, the PM would want to be remembered for the mission on water now. He also spoke of poverty, but instead of elaborating a road map for poverty eradication, he hedged the issue by saying that the poor had the courage and capacity to fight for their own wellbeing.

Four ideas from the speech need to be engaged with more seriously for their problematic nature. First, and not entirely new, is the penchant for linking everything to "one nation" - GST, common electricity grid and simultaneous elections. While India has been moving towards many policies and initiatives that are common (or similar) across states, the PM's emphasis on uniformity as the underlying value is problematic, suggests a clear preference for the non-federal approach.

Two, the PM's somewhat long exposition on population was deeply problematic. It is one thing to argue that the idea of demographic dividend is debatable but the way the PM lauded the "small sections" who have adopted the small family norm could easily put the poor in the dock and humiliate them. Already, ill-conceived ideas of penalising government servants if they give birth to a third child or disqualifying such families from being representatives in local bodies have gained ground. The PM's exhortation from the pulpit would further encourage non-democratic measures for pushing "population control" as a service to nation.

Third, the PM spoke about giving a fillip to the rural economy by supporting local initiatives. This sentiment would be attractive to many, but in economic terms, it is unclear how the government would reconcile its search for growth and foreign investment with the protectionist idea of localisation of consumer practices. In the political context, it would be interesting to watch how this idea would be received by the aspirational middle class the PM is so enamoured of. In any case, it could be seen as a tactical response to complications that globalisation is bringing. But is this not an abdication of governmental responsibility to ensure a fair balance between global capital and local entrepreneurship?

the PM spoke about "ease of living". This goes much beyond the industry-driven idea of ease of doing business and it would certainly get him headlines in international circles. He theorised that government should be there to help but it should not cramp the citizens. This sounds interesting but with increasing bureaucratic interventions in individual lives with non-regulated intrusions into citizens' privacy, with controversial attempts of allowing surveillance and with government's track record of using all regulatory mechanisms for allegedly partisan action, the idea of a friendly but non-interfering government is bound to remain only a chimera.

Finally, repackaging his earlier idea of max-

imum governance-minimum government

So, even if we discount the debater, the polemicist and the self-consciously self-centred leader, the PM's ideas remain short on promise, high on word play and potent with controversial takes on what we mean by democracy, nation and governance.

> The writer taught political science and is currently chief editor of Studies in Indian Politics

ALOK BANSAL

Unifying The Command

Appointment of chief of defence staff will fill a void in India's defence system

ONE OF THE most significant announcements made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Independence Day is the creation of a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) to ensure better coordination between the three services. This has been a long pending demand of the defence forces and was recommended by both the Kargil Review Committee led by K Subrahmanyam in 1999, as well as the Committee of Experts set up by Ministry of Defence under the chairmanship of General D B Shekatkar. Although, the exact terms of responsibility and assignment of the CDS have not been made public, in all probability it would be a four-star military officer, who would act as the single point adviser to the government on military matters. The CDS would also coordinate amongst the three services and bridge the differences.

Modern military battles cannot be fought by each service fighting independently. The present Indian Armed Forces are colonial constructs and were configured primarily to serve the interest of their colonial masters during the great wars. The restructuring of armed forces, therefore, has been a crying need as future wars are going to be short intense affairs where all organs of the state are likely to be employed simultaneously. Such a scenario would require unity of command, which is feasible only when the country has a unified command structure led by the CDS. However, political insecurities and bureaucratic stranglehold over the Ministry of Defence have prevented this important void from being filled.

The appointment of the CDS will make the armed forces more effective. However, the mere creation of the office is not enough. This will need to be augmented by restructuring of the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and creating integrated theatre commands.

After the recommendations of the Kargil Review Committee which had recommended a CDS as well as a Vice Chief of Defence Staff (VCDS), a group of ministers headed by the then Deputy Prime Minister LK Advani examined it and recommended CDS with a tri-service joint planning staff. Accordingly, the Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff (HQIDS) was created in October 2001. But, bureaucrats succeeded in stalling the appointment of the CDS by creating the perception that it would be far easier for a CDS to stage a coup. Consequently, an anomalous situation was created wherein an organisation was created, which has been functioning without a head for the past 18 years.

The VCDS was reconfigured as Chief of Integrated Defence Staff to the Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee (CISC). The absence of the CDS has limited the ability of CISC to mediate between the three services. More significantly, being lower in rank, he was never accepted as the sole adviser to the government in a rigidly hierarchical organisation like the military. Consequently, HQIDS was mostly duplicating the jobs being undertaken by service headquarters, rather than performing the tasks the office was meant for.

The appointment of the CDS will make the armed forces more effective. However, the mere creation of the office is not enough. This will need to be augmented by restructuring of the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and creating integrated theatre commands. The CDS has to be a cerebral warrior with good understanding of the global security environment and functioning of the three services. It should not be a rotational appointment; the government must select one after interviewing top officials of the three services.

Despite the PM's announcement, it is not going to be a smooth affair. First, the bureaucrats afraid of losing their salience will create bottlenecks. On top of that, individual services, afraid of losing their turf, are bound to resist the CDS's involvement in their affairs. The government may have to take a leaf out of the US Goldwater-Nichols Act and push the three services. To begin with, all defence land and capital budget must be put under the CDS and appointments in inter-service organisations must be made essential for further promotions. For the CDS to be effective, he must have direct access to the defence minister and through him to the prime minister.

After the reorganisation of MoD and establishment of theatre commands, they should directly be responsible to the defence minister through the CDS for all combat operations. Each service chief should only be responsible for equipping, organising and training of the forces. The creation of the CDS will need to be followed up with further reforms to reconfigure the armed forces to meet India's aspirations to be a global power.

The writer is a former naval officer and is currently director, India Foundation and adjunct professor at New Delhi Institute of Management. Views are personal.

AUGUST 16, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO



PM's I-DAY SPEECH

PRIME MINISTER CHARAN Singh declared in New Delhi that if Pakistan makes an atomic bomb, India will have to reconsider its decision not to make one. Addressing the nation from the ramparts of Red Fort on the 32nd anniversary of Independence, the prime minister said Pakistan's sole aim in going in for the bomb was to use it against India. "Pakistan has friendly relations with China, it has no serious differences with the Soviet Union and it is absurd to think that the bomb will be used against Afghanistan. The bomb is obviously aimed at us and it poses a dan-

ger to our peace and security," Singh declared. In his 21-minute speech, Singh dealt with issues ranging from foreign policy, economy, the people and, of course, politics. It was his first major speech since he took over as Prime Minister last month.

BANGLA BORDER OUIET THE INDIA-BANGLADESH border in West Bengal was quiet today after the threatened long march to Pakistan by non-Bengali Muslims flopped. But the vigil mounted by BSF continued without any let-up. Official sources said border officials were in constant touch with Bangladesh Rifles to ascertain the movement of the refugees since they had made no formal announcement to abandon the march. Reports from across the border had indicated that they might attempt to revive their march again on August 25 after Eid.

MNF ARMS SEIZED

SECURITY FORCES CHANCED upon a hideout of the banned Mizo National Front rebels in north western Mizoram near the Cachar boundary and captured a large number of rebels with arms and ammunition following an encounter.

THE INDIAN EXPRESS, FRIDAY, AUGUST 16, 2019

THE IDEAS PAGE

Why Article 370 had to go

The constitutional, democratic, historical and moral arguments being marshalled against the Centre's move are unfounded



IT IS NOT always that a writer has to quickly deal with the practical consequences of what he wrote about recently. My last article ('A New Deal for Kashmir,' July 5), published in these pages, looked at the difficult choices India faced in Kashmir and suggested that we should have a wider debate about repealing Article 370 as one of the options. Predictably, it caused a furore amongst a section of our intelligentsia for whom Article 370 was more an article of faith than anything else.

Around midnight on August 4, when we received our orders to go on high alert and prepare for some important announcement in Parliament the next day, little did I realise that what I had advocated for debate, had actually been decided. Starting midnight, we began to go into lockdown mode. The communication blackout was total. It would be a few days before one would get access to a mobile phone voice only, no data. And a few more days before one had limited access to internet at speeds that brought back memories of the dial-up modem era.

As one watched the home minister stand up to speak in Parliament to announce the intended changes in the relationship of the state of J&K with the Union of India, one realised that one was witness to something of profound historical significance. A decision that would create immediate professional challenges for all of us serving in positions of responsibility in Kashmir. In the last two weeks of July, all of us had expected that some important decision about J&K was going to be taken. However, the direction and scope of the decision came as a complete surprise.

The first week has seen a whirlwind of activity. On Monday evening, the NSA himself arrived to take charge of the situation. He quickly spelt out the expectations of the Government of India. Our first task was to ensure that the prohibitory orders were effectively enforced to ensure that there was no widespread unrest or violence. We were asked to mitigate the worst effects of the lockdown for those citizens in genuine need, such as for medical emergencies. It is too early to comment on how well these directions have been implemented on the ground, but, so far, so good.

As contact with the rest of the world was reestablished, one began to engage with the public response to this decision. The usual suspects on the Left have gone apoplectic for the usual reasons. Some self-styled nationalists have welcomed this decision with a most offensive and inappropriate display of bigotry and hate-filled language. They deserve the condemnation of all right-thinking Indians and where possible should be booked for inciting hatred and trying to inflame an already explosive situation. One group of critics shows a poor understanding of our national interest and the other is patently oblivious to our civilisational values that celebrate diversity and tolerance.

Broadly speaking, the criticism of the decision to alter 370 and scrap 35 A, takes four main approaches.

First, there is the Constitutional argument that there is serious legal infirmity in the manner in which this was done. Second, the democratic argument that the will of the people of J&K was not ascertained. Third, the appeal to the historical argument that even if these Articles can be legally modified, the Constitutional guarantees offered by Nehru at the time of accession of Kashmir to India must be honoured in perpetuity. The fourth is the moral argument that the harsh security crackdown in Kashmir is unjust and immoral. This kind of curtailment of civil liberties and communications is simply unacceptable in a modern democracy. Each of these arguments deserves serious analysis.



The legal argument is already before the Supreme Court. I would like to see the legal logic that will persuade the SC that Article 370 is somehow part of the basic structure of the Constitution, and therefore, cannot be altered in any way. With regard to the specific wording of 370, it would be interesting to see if the Court rules that amongst all the articles of the Constitution, 370 alone has the privilege of choosing the mechanism of its own repeal. Article 368 is for commoners of the Constitution. Article 370 is some kind of royalty. Is the will of an extinct constituent assembly of J&K somehow expected to prevail in perpetuity over the will of Parliament? I am sure these issues will come up before the Court.

Coming to the democratic argument, the changes announced by the home minister have been passed by both houses of Parliament and have received the assent of the President of India. They were enacted by a government which has just won a sweeping majority in a general election where Kashmir was a central issue. Should the purported wishes of the Valley somehow override the wishes of the people of India? And the wishes of the people of Jammu and Ladakh? This is an extraordinary claim of democratic entitlement.

Coming to the historical argument — there is plenty of evidence to question that the conventional wisdom about these guarantees is misplaced. What was the original intent of Nehru behind offering these guarantees over the objections of Patel and Ambedkar? Did he genuinely want to leave an opening for Kashmir to secede from India? Or did he see these guarantees as a necessary stopgap measure to eventually secure Kashmir's complete assimilation with India? Were these guarantees a one-way ticket to flirt with azaadi? Or were they a bargain that also required Kashmir to offer something in return? It is hard to believe that Nehru intended Article 370 to be some kind of a blank cheque with no expiry date. And people conveniently forget that our

It is, of course, an extremely challenging time to serve in Kashmir. I, for one, regard it as an extraordinary privilege and honour to be a part of this historical exercise. While we cannot satisfy all the prophets of doom and gloom, we are sure that an overwhelming majority of the citizens of India appreciate the challenges ahead and we have their confidence and support. There was never a better moment to serve India in

unitorm.

neighbour has been shuffling the legal status of PoK like a deck of cards.

The last argument, namely, the appeal to morality and civil liberties, comes in the context of a land that has seen 30 years of terrorism and ethnic cleansing. The concerns of public order and public safety are paramount. Abrogating these articles was a difficult decision, bound to have a violent reaction in the valley. Trying to pre-empt large-scale violence is not immoral, rather, it is the duty of a responsible government. The restrictions in place are quite sensitive to ground realities. As and when the situation improves, they will be eased. We simply cannot allow jihadis to have free run to incite mob violence. It is entirely understandable that our civil society has concerns about the present curbs on civil liberties. They are harsh but not unprecedented. It remains the primary concern of all of us enforcing these restrictions to ensure that they are lifted as early as possible with minimal violence and loss of life. Kashmiris too have an obligation to express their sentiments about these decisions without letting their protests be hijacked by violent unrest or terrorism. The fact that Friday prayers, Eid and Independence Day have passed off peacefully is extremely encouraging and I am sure that we will see a calibrated lifting of restrictions and minimisation of inconveniences faced by all Indians in the Kashmir valley.

It is, of course, an extremely challenging time to serve in Kashmir. I, for one, regard it as an extraordinary privilege and honour to be a part of this historical exercise. While we cannot satisfy all the prophets of doom and gloom, we are sure that an overwhelming majority of the citizens of India appreciate the challenges ahead and we have their confidence and support. There was never a better moment to serve India in uniform.

The author is a serving IPS officer posted in Kashmir. Views are personal.

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"The tyranny of snobbery is bad enough when it comes to taste. Let's not add the tyranny of computers too". —THE GUARDIAN

The girl from Barabanki

Her truth-telling recalls Gandhi's scepticism about the state's ability to protect democracy



Krishna Kumar

CONSTANT HUMIDITY MAKES the air feel heavy in August, but memories too have a lot to do with that feeling. Some of these memories refer to the distant past which, for many, extends back to the Gandhi decades. We who were born after freedom and Partition, learnt about them at school. As usual, the school was quick to give us the news, but took a while to explain it. By that time, our parents' memories of freedom and Partition had mutated into the nation's dreams and fantasies.

Whose dreams were they? Not everyone today seems excited about them. Many want to alter the content of those dreams. For instance, the dream of equality does not please a lot of people, including the young. Quite a few of them feel that they have been tricked by the idea of equality. When the reservation policy and minority rights are taught in a school, teachers warn the students that their personal feelings will spoil their marks.

Another dream that irks many is that of a secular India. It is argued sometimes that the term was not part of the original text of the Constitution. Legal debates have clarified that although the term "secular" was inserted during the Emergency, a secular outlook was embedded in the basic structure of the Constitution. However, the debate continues on what it means for India to be secular. Must every Indian be secular or only the state? Some teachers do point out that the idea of a secular state is reflected in all the rights guaranteed in Part III of the Constitution. It forms the edifice of a nondiscriminating state.

How keen some of today's children are to practice these fundamental rights was reflected in a gathering of schoolgirls in Barabanki in Uttar Pradesh. A video showing one of them asking a few questions is a testimony to the effect of mass education. The occasion was a senior-level police officer's visit to raise awareness about the guarantee of protection available to women. He emphasised the value of their protest when they face threats. After his speech, a Grade XI girl asked him whether a girl's protest is treated differently when the person threatening her is politically powerful. She cited the Unnao case to show that her doubt is valid. The police officer was apparently speechless. All he could quote was the helpline number.

In the media, colleges and universities, the freedom and space to discuss things without fear of consequences has been shrinking. Why has it not shrunk in a Barabanki school?

There can be several answers to this question. One that I find plausible points to adolescent idealism. It is intact despite the learning crisis some literacy fundamentalists are projecting as a national concern. If you watch the one-minute long Barabanki video, you notice the girl's awareness of her audience, which includes the visiting officer

and her classmates. They applaud when she elaborates on her basic query and uses proper nouns instead of vague indicators. During each applause, you can notice a faint, momentary smile on her face. It disappears when she elaborates on her question in stern Hindi. You are left in no doubt that she is voicing a collective distrust in the police and political power. Equally clearly, you realise that she knows why she is right. She can be compared to Olga Misik, the

17-year old Russian girl who read aloud the constitution of her country to the riot police in the middle of a demonstration in Moscow last month. Like her, the Barabanki girl — who cannot be named in the prevailing ethos — conveys the spontaneous confidence that only the very young can feel in a complex political situation. Unawareness of the difficulties awaiting them is their strength. This quality of mind is hardly adequate to

sustain the will to assert one's rights. Nor can it suffice for a whole nation to maintain its progress towards democracy. Its value lies in the solace it offers to adults in a moment of pervasive anxiety. It lightens the load of humid, polluted air pervading our public ethos, promising that Constitutional values do have a future. Apart from the Supreme Court, schools have succeeded in promoting these values despite the many weaknesses of the education system.

The ideals listed in the Preamble and the rights listed in Part III of the Constitution portray an individual in whose character and outlook India was destined to be reborn as a free country. The Barabanki girl fits the portrait. The question she posed to a police officer is essentially Gandhian. It asks him to either acknowledge or to deny the truth. That he does not challenge her is more important than his inability to come up with an answer. His official role puts him in a dilemma. It reminds us of Gandhi's anticipatory disillusionment with the process of Constitution-making. Having played a massive role in pushing India to freedom, Gandhi had little hope that the state by itself will suffice to protect democracy and civilisation.

Gandhi was deeply sceptical about the state, especially about the power vested in its colonial apparatus. Yet, he and the Constitution have so far served as two key objects of appreciative national consensus. Both are now being subjected to fresh debates. Not everyone appreciated Gandhi's focus on the village and self-reliance, but no one had so far won an election after praising his murderer. As for the Constitution, it enjoyed a status above religious faith.

As an annual memoir, August reminds us to ask why Gandhi entertained doubts about so many things that we take for granted. He had doubts about the pursuit of material progress for its sake, about the role it might play in choking provinciality and its regenerative vitality. If we look at contemporary life though Gandhi's window, we can figure out why a schoolgirl who speaks the blunt truth in a small provincial town must now feel scared. That is the news we are receiving. Let us hope that the voice we have heard will survive the passage of adolescence and its idealism.

> Kumar is a former director of NCERT and a writer

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

INVEST IN FARMS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Let's draw

lines in water' (IE, August 15). Debates on agricultural crisis have been going on for years. Direct Benefit Transfers instead of subsidy on fertilisers and food grains, diverting the water guzzling crops from dry areas, focusing on food processing sector and investment in agri R&D will double farmers income and eradicate agri-distress. Moreover, it would create a "new middle class" which could be the harbinger for a large market for goods and services. This could rectify the demand side slowdown of the economy.

Anish Manchanda, via e-mail

CLASSROOM MATTERS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Over to the teacher '(IE, August 15). Mathematics is a cause for panic for several students. English, a foreign language, could be imposing to a first-generation learner. These subjects require special teaching arrangements. So Odisha's move to extend the teaching hours for these subjects is not unscientific.

Tapomoy Ghosh, Burdwan

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Over to the teacher' (IE, August 15). Odisha's move to increase teaching time of Mathematics, English and Science is imprudent. The state government should create a conducive environment for education in terms of better infrastructure and a improved student-teacher ratio. Teachers should be competent to gauge the strengths and weaknesses of their wards and promote critical thinking.

Deepak Singhal, Noida

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

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THE WINNER RECEIVES **SELECT EXPRESS PUBLICATIONS**

DYNASTY CONTINUES

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Ringing in the old' (IE August 13). The selection of Sonia Gandhi as an interim chief of the Congress Party has come at a time when after the Lok Sabha elections, the party has been relegated to the margins of the country's political firmament. It's not that the party lacks talent, but it seems that Congress leaders hesitate to take initiatives for fear of incurring the wrath of the Gandhi family. Sonia Gandhi's task would be to introspect on the party's fortunes and take measures to plug the faultlines.

Ravi Mathur, Ghaziabad

THE Urdu PRESS

Kashmir, Article 370

Munsif, on August 6, has an editorial titled,'Kashmiriyat, Insaniyat our Jamhooriyat ka qatl" (the annihilation of Kashmiriyat, Insaniyat and Jamhooriyat). Another editorial in the paper, on August 7, raises several questions. "Why just Kashmir?.. 10 states benefit from special provisions," it points out. The editorial notes that in parts of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Nagaland, Assam, Manipur, Sikkim and Mizoram "residents get reservations in jobs and special land purchase options." It cites the case of Sikkim, "where elections are held once every four years." The editorial asks: "Why is it that the special measures are questioned only in the case of Kashmir. Is that because Kashmir is a Muslim majority state? ..LK Advani said the cancellation of Kashmir's special status marked the fulfillment of the Jana Sangh's old promise. So should we consider this a decision as one for the benefit of the Kashmiri people?"

AIMIM's daily, *Etemaad*, on August 6 views the revocation of Kashmir's special status as the fulfillment of the BJP's "electoral agenda". It traces the plan's origins to the time when

ess.com

the BJP ended its alliance with Mehbooba Mufti's People's Democratic Party (PDP). The editorial notes that in spite of Article 370 and 35A, the people of Jammu and Kashmir were "mired in poverty, illiteracy and educational backwardness." It talks of a complex global situation, and points out that the US president's statement about PM Modi asking him to mediate in Kashmir had created a complicated situation for the latter. It speaks of "India's friend, Afghanistan" witnessing a change with the withdrawal of the US on the cards. The editorial points out that India must manage its home and external situation carefully, after seriously taking stock of devel-

opments in the rest of the world. Siasat's editorial on August 6 notes that "now that Jammu and Kashmir's special status has been revoked, the government must brace up to answer queries of common people". The editorial goes into the question of land being available for people outside the state to buy. Land prices may ease, but locals could be rendered as "employees (mulaazim)" on their own land, the editorial notes. It also argues that "businessmen and people from outside J&K will benefit."

However, people may take "to the courts" to try and stop the new laws from taking effect, the editorial contends.

Inquilab and Roznama Rashtriya Sahara, in a marked shift of tone, welcome the move. Sahara, so far circumspect, expresses happiness, in its editorial on August 14, about the Supreme Court refusing to interfere in the matter. It urges the people of J&K to not get embroiled in *khaamakhaa* (frivolous) matters and "not give an opportunity to militants to take advantage of the situation." *Inquilab*, on August 10, speaks of the PM's address on the matter as a "marham" (balm). It says that "the Kashmiri leaders raising hell on the revocation of Article 370 must answer, how have these articles helped the people? Articles 370 and 35A "pushed the state into a morass and kept it separate from the rest of India." The editorial builds a case for "successful central schemes to be pushed into J&K for improvements in education and progress in economic and social life." Akhbaar-e Mashriq, on August 10, also uses the phrase "soothing balm" for PM Modi's address. It also says that "it was significant for the PM to say that if terror ends, the present status of J&K will be restored."

Ayodhya

Roznama Rashtriya Sahara, on August 3, welcomes the decision of the Supreme Court to conduct daily hearings on the Ayodhya title suit matter and is hopeful that the Court will come to a haatami faisla (final judgement). The paper's editorial says this should have happened much earlier.

Etemaad on August 3, has an editorial on the failed mediation on the Ayodhya issue. It writes, "It is believed that all the participants did not think that a compact was possible in the prevailing political atmosphere." It makes a significant observation: "The Modi government has managed to convince the majority that irrespective of the Court order, a law in Parliament will facilitate matters...Any party that refuses to go with this will be labeled 'anti-Hindu' and the doors of its political future will be shut" It contends that "the way the BJP has been able to push several pieces of legislations in the current session of Parliament raises questions about the sincerity of the secular parties."

Compiled by Seema Chishti

EDITORIAL FRIDAY, AUGUST 16, 2019



Words and deeds

India needs Modi to infuse meaning to his I-Day vision with action on the ground

rime Minister Narendra Modi in his Independence Day speech combined the familiar rhetoric with some fresh thoughts. He spoke at some length about the need for population control, water conservation and plastic use regulation indicating the importance that he attaches to these topics. Some policy measures, including the creation of a separate ministry, are already in place to deal with the crippling water crisis in India which gets worse every year. Indiscriminate plastic use along with the absence of effective solid waste management has already caused such ruin to the ecology that mitigatory measures are required on a war-footing. He also made the significant announcement of creating the position of Chief of Defence Staff, which could improve coordination among forces and restructure the military-civilian relations in a manner that suits the security challenges of the present times better. His call for people's participation in all these and also for development of tourism and local enterprises was in the right spirit. The appeal to produce locally and consume locally may be out of line with globalist prescriptions of development but should be welcomed even if it sounds impractical. His first tenure between 2014 and 2019 focused on the needs of the people while the second one which began this year, he promised, would focus on meeting aspirations. Mr. Modi said his government has achieved in 70 days what previous governments could not in 70 years. He struck an optimistic note and said poverty can be eliminated, and shall be eliminated. As it enters the 73rd year as an independent nation, India needs hope and optimism, now more than at any moment in its recent past.

The triumphalist overtones of the speech, however, sought to camouflage the gathering clouds of a crisis in the economy on the one hand and the threats to the country's social fabric on the other. Going by the trajectory the Indian economy has followed in the past, it could well be on the way to be a \$5-trillion economy in the next five years. But he chose not to adequately address the current slump in rural and urban demand and investment slowdown. There was an attempt, however, to reassure entrepreneurs who were apprehensive of the recent burst of tax activism when he mentioned that wealth creators should not be demonised and he called upon businesses to invest. But while he touched on his decision to strip Jammu and Kashmir of its special constitutional status, J&K will need quietness and slow time to return to normalcy. There were elaborate mentions of unitary schemes – from the 'one nation one tax' that is already in place, to a 'one nation, one poll' plan that is in the making. Such overarching plans are central to his vision and the speech reflected that thinking. But if India is to be on a new course for the better, it needs more than grandstanding from the Red Fort. Deeds must follow words as noon follows dawn.

Trade rhetoric

Trump is not furthering the cause of free global trade with his unfair attack on the WTO

T.S. President Donald Trump opened up another front in the ongoing global trade war on Wednesday by ramping up rhetoric against the World Trade Organization (WTO). He even threatened to pull the U.S. out of the multilateral trade organisation if it fails to treat the U.S. fairly and blamed it for allowing too many countries to claim the status of a "developing country". In a memo to the U.S. Trade Representative last month, Mr. Trump pointed out that nearly twothirds of the 164 WTO members classified themselves as developing countries, and raised the issue of even many rich economies claiming to be "growing" rather than "grown" economies. This time around, in Pennsylvania, the President targeted India and China in particular for "taking advantage" of the U.S. by classifying themselves as "developing countries" at the WTO. The status of a developing country allows countries to seek partial exemptions from the WTO's rules for free and fair trade between countries. The status, for instance, allows countries like China and India, with their special tag, to impose higher tariffs on imports from other countries and also offer more subsidies to local producers in order to protect their domestic interests. Developed countries find this to be unfair on their producers who are put at a relative disadvantage, but countries like China have argued that their developing country status is justified given their low per capita income.

Mr. Trump's recent attacks on the WTO would be welcome if they were truly about creating a global trading arena with lower tariffs and fewer barriers to trade. The "developing country" status, which offers substantial benefits to countries that want to protect their domestic interests and which most countries are more than happy to make use of, has indeed skewed global trade over the years in favour of certain countries. But he may be raking up the issue not to further the cause of global free trade, but simply as a convenient pretext to justify further trade barriers against China and other countries. By pointing fingers at other countries that follow protectionist policies, Mr. Trump will find it justified to impose retaliatory tariffs against them. This will help him bolster his "America First" approach and allow him to successfully hold on to his support base in America's manufacturing belt that has been affected by foreign competition. Even if countries like China and India offer to lower their tariffs, Mr. Trump would not take them up on their offer. That is because it would require reciprocation in the way of lowering U.S. tariffs, which would work against the interests of local American producers.

Rajapaksa redux and a democracy in peril

The return of an authoritarian oligarchy in Sri Lanka could be stopped by a united stand of democratic forces



AHILAN KADIRGAMAR

💙 ri Lanka is again at the crossroads with presidential elections due before December 9, 2019. The political drive since the newly formed Rajapaksa-led Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP), which swept the local government polls in February 2018, has culminated in Gotabaya Rajapaksa, the much feared former Defence Secretary and younger brother of the former President, Mahinda Rajapaksa, being named presidential candidate.

The Rajapaksa regime, which decimated the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and consolidated considerable power around a family until it was dislodged in January 2015, may now be on the verge of recapturing state power and drastically changing the political landscape for the next decade, if not longer. Even as the United National Party (UNP) in power is dillydallying on its presidential candidate, the SLPP is moving fast in an electoral game that the Rajapaksas have proven to be masters

Reshaping democratic space

The rise of Gotabaya Rajapaksa, after what seemed like decisive regime change in January 2015, is in good measure due to the failures of the current Wickremesinghe-Sirisena government. Neither did the new government hammer through the allegations of corruption and rights abuse levelled against the Rajapaksa regime nor did it provide a meaningful programme to address economic woes. Rather, infighting and selfserving manoeuvres within the government have brought its stated plans, from economic reforms to a constitutional political settlement, to a standstill.

Despite the many political and economic failures of the current government, the significant shift over the last five years has been the opening of democratic space. The climate of fear and continuing militarisation were to a great degree reversed. In the war-torn regions, where there was fear to even speak in private during the post-war years under Rajapaksa rule, people now take to the streets demanding the release of military-held lands, answers on those who have disappeared in the war and relief for the rural indebted. Throughout the country, with the fear of abductions gone and repression decreasing, dissent and the culture of protests have returned along with greater freedom for the media.

State power and nationalists

This democratic space is greatly at risk with a Gotabaya Rajapaksa presidency. Sri Lanka has gone through bouts of authoritarian rule and gruelling periods of state repression particularly during the Ianatha Vimukthi Peramuna insurgencies in the south and the escalation of the civil war. However, while the current conjuncture may not witness similar mass violence unleashed by the state and armed movements, it is loaded with the dangers of a deeper political shift.

During its decade-long-tenure, the Rajapaksa regime used state power to consolidate its oligarchic ambitions. The significant difference in its current avatar is the mobilisation of considerable popular support and the consolidation of its nationalist base while in the opposition. During its previous stint, it actively politicised the military and bureaucracy and ensnared sections of the business classes. Over the last two years, however, the calls for a return of the Rajapaksa regime are emanating from sections of retired mili-

and the bureaucracy. A craftily built Sinhala Buddhist nationalist base, by mobilisations against Muslims who are construed as the new enemy, binds this constituency. Such a social base combined with state power can drastically change the character of state and society.

The failed 52-day political coup in October 2018, which was engineered by President Maithripala Sirisena to install Mahinda Rajapaksa as Prime Minister, illustrated a capacity to rapidly politicise state institutions. It is due to the independence of the judiciary and the military that their short stint in power was not prolonged. Nevertheless, the political coup exposed their desperate hunger for power and the support that was readily available for them within the bureaucracy.

A Rajapaksa victory in the presidential elections will create the momentum for a major victory in the parliamentary elections. A repeat of events following the elections in 2010 just after the end of the civil war, with drastic changes in Parliament and constitutional amendments leading to further consolidation of state power under a Rajapaksa oligarchy, may reverse curtailment of the executive presidency that came with the 19th Amendment of 2015. The Rajapaksa administration of the past has time and again manoeuvred the legislature and the judiciary, as with its record of swiftly buying over parliamentarians or sacking a Chief Justice with ease, when the judiciary resisted its influence.

The main challenge for the Rajapaksas is going to be the handling of the broader citizenry that in recent years has internalised democratic freedoms after three decades of war and the authoritarian post-war years. With the repressive mechanisms of the state disrupted, if not dismantled after regime change, and the difficulty in justifying militarisation in non-war times, their project of authoritarian consolidation is bound to face resistance. Consequently, they may resort to amassing tremendous power and smashing any resistance to their political and development agenda, leading to more severe measures than the past.

The economic programme and priorities of another Rajapaksa government are likely to be the urban-centred neoliberal policies that they themselves initiated, which the current government wanted to accelerate but failed to do without mustering the political will. Indeed, Gotabaya Rajapaksa, as Defence Secretary after the war, brought the Urban Development Authority under the Defence Ministry as he mobilised considerable investment in urban real estate, coupled with brutal slum demolitions and evictions for the "beautification" of Colombo. The Rajapaksa governments, from their first term in 2005 to the second term in 2010, shifted emphasis from the rural to the urban. And this time around, with the strong backing of the urban professional and business lobby, Gotabaya Rajapaksa will be looking for results, possibly crushing any obstacle in the path of his development drive.

Islamophobic discourse

Ideologically, while an Islamophobic discourse began to take hold in Sri Lanka some two decades ago with the U.S.-led "global war on terror", it was after the end of the civil war in Sri Lanka that the Rajapaksa regime, and Gotabaya Rajapaksa in particular, began supporting reactionary forces such as the Bodu Bala Sena. During the latter years of the Rajapaksa regime, proto-fascist goon squads carried out pogroms against Muslims. With the continued ideological growth of Islamophobia, anti-Muslim attacks have continued with impunity even after regime change. This chauvinist nationalist segment is further emboldened after the Easter Sunday attacks, in April.

DELHI THE HINDU

For a country with a comprador elite on all sides, sovereignty will be peddled to the masses as the ultimate national treasure and combined with an expansive security complex. However, economic concerns could force a new Rajapaksa regime to succumb to the market and cut deals with external powers. In the past, they were the first to sell sovereign bonds in the international markets. And with time. they will align with one or the other great power depending on the fear of the stick they wield and the

carrots they offer. With the current conjuncture of geopolitical instability and the emergence of authoritarian regimes around the world, the conditions seem worryingly conducive for a Gotabaya Rajapaksa regime. The convergence of retired military actors, an extractive business lobby, a nationalist bureaucracy and an organised chauvinistic base, when combined with state power, spell danger not just of authoritarian nationalism but a fascist takeover of the state. It is democracy that is at risk, and ironically, it is elections that might pave the route to shutting down that democratic space. The return of the Rajapaksa oligarchy can be stopped by only a united stand of the fractured democratic forces.

Ahilan Kadirgamar is a political economist and Senior Lecturer, University

Lessons after the great deluge

Kerala needs to adopt watershed-based master planning and review building byelaws

ANJITH AUGUSTINE, SHYAMA KURIAKOSE, RAJESH GEORGE & MONOLITA CHATTERJEE

The unique geography of Kerala, with its steep climbdown from 900m high elevations of the Western Ghats to the coast of Malabar, has resulted in a land with a vast riverine network. There are no less than 44 fast flowing rivers that drain the rainwater Kerala is blessed with into the Arabian Sea. It is a lifeline that supports a very fertile land, some of the most singular flora, fauna and also a people and their lives in a symbiotic way.

Large-scale urbanisation

However, this drainage basin has seen massive urbanisation over the last two decades with the erstwhile wisdom of coexistence with the State's waterways beginning to fade away. This linear development which has been along major road networks, has completely ignored the varying and ecologically sensitive landscape. Substantial portions of revenue lands in the State are wetlands and forests, which has resulted in a shortage of buildable land parcels. This in turn is creating huge pressure on these ecologically fragile areas for conversion to government-supported infrastructure projects as well as private profit-making en-

Not surprisingly, all landslide and flood-affected areas in the State are in Ecologically Sensitive Zones (ESZ-1), as categorised by the Madhav Gadgil report. The

Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) report that was prepared by the UN for Kerala following the massive flooding of 2018 looks at some of the gaps in law and policy. The State Action Plans on Climate Change elucidate measures for disaster-risk reduction in the wake of an increasing frequency of heavy rainfall in turn leading to more flooding and landslides. Though plans and laws such as Integrated Water Resources Management or Coastal Regulation Zone Notification hold key solutions to natural disasters that are linked to water management, most of them are not implemented or followed to the letter. A lack of holistic and coordinated measures within planning departments has resulted in further problems. Also missing are key pieces of legislation for housing and land use in fragile zones which allow buildability but with sensitive development.

Dilution of laws

The need of the hour is for a review and revision of building byelaws for urban and rural areas in accordance with bettering environmental sustainability. In 2017, a judgment of the High Court of Kerala mandating the inclusion of a clause in building rules, and which said that 'natural drains and streams shall not be obstructed by this development/building permit', has yet to come into effect. Further, the Kerala Conservation of Paddy Land and Wetland Act. 2008 – it has immense potential to preserve such land as natural watershed buffers – has suffered too many dilutions even as rampant

reclamation of paddy lands continues. The absence of a databank on paddy lands and wetlands as mandated by the law, has only exacerbated the issue.

Master plan focus

There are, however, cities and regions the world over that deal most successfully with heavier precipitation in much less favourable topography than Kerala's. The dire need is for watershed-based master planning and development legislated guidelines for each major river basin, especially those that impact densely populated settlements. Primarily, such master

plans should focus on these areas. First, there must be a demarcation of ecologically sensitive zones using existing village survey maps and public participation. There must be clear land use plan for these zones specifying flood plains, protected forest areas, agricultural and plantation zones, with details of the types of crops, building usages permitted and the density of buildings permitted.

Second, to compensate owners in non-buildable areas, there must be strategies such as Transfer of Development Rights to buildable zones in cities.

Third, the master plan should focus on permitting only ecologically sensitive building strategies for these areas by proposing new construction techniques. Controlled development can be proposed using building height rules, floor area ratio control, and restrictions on cutting and filling natural land.

Fourth, strategies to make sure that all infrastructure projects are carried out in a scientific manner with strict scrutiny must be specified. This should include roads built on difficult terrain and all public infrastructure projects in wet-

lands and the High Ranges. Such an intensive and sensitive hydrology-driven master plan requires very specialised expertise and experience which may not be readily available in our homegrown available pool of resources. The State should not shy away from acquiring the most appropriate skills to implement this urgently given the massive damage to life and property it now faces both in the short and long term. A complete overhaul of processes to hire technical expertise which allows access to necessary skills, and with a long-term vision of capacity building of local agencies, is the way forward.

Global planning

After the floods in Kerala in 2018, the Chief Minister's team visited the Netherlands to learn how cities with high levels of a water footprint are dealing with climate

change issues. Copenhagen in -Denmark, which faces a similar problem of repeated flooding, has come up with active cloudburst responsive planning as a process to develop the city in line with climate change needs. Though we cannot just transfer or have carbon copy solutions from Europe, we must learn from each experience in order to collectively formulate strategies that address our

post-disaster Furthermore, management of land and geography needs imaginative actions by the authorities and people in order to reverse the damage already done. The floods in 2018 brought high levels of silt from the highlands, reducing river depths and narrowing river mouths. A year later, this silt has not been cleared. reducing the carrying capacity of rivers. Serious strategies are required by the government and the people to reclaim groundwater percolation and flood plains. Legal processes and bye-laws need revisions. The water footprint needs to be reinstated, and the relationship with water resources rebuilt. This may be the only way we can face a future of changing weather

Anjith Augustine is an architect and urban designer; Shyama Kuriakose is an environmental advocate and Senior Project Fellow with the Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy; Rajesh George is a landscape architect working with the hydrology of Kerala, and Monolita Chatterjee is an architect and sustainable environment

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.

Acquitted

The verdict, on Wednesday, by a sessions court in Alwar, acquitting the six accused in the lynching of Pehlu Khan, a Haryana dairy farmer, two years ago, is baffling (Page 1, August 15). It will only embolden so-called cow vigilantes to further take the law into their own hands. There is strong evidence in the form of video footage. If its veracity is in doubt, the court could have well directed the prosecution to seek the opinion of forensic experts. Is it so difficult? Justice should not only be done but also seen to be done. The State should

vigorously pursue this case in the High Court. T. ANAND RAJ,

■ The verdict depicts the sad reality of the criminal justice system in India. A horrific murder was recorded on camera yet there is no justice. We should not forget that injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. It is an irony that this judgment came a day before we celebrated our Independence Day. A country's legal system which cannot ensure justice to a poor victim who was lynched because of the perception that he was an alleged cow

the principles of constitutionalism, rule of law, equality, right to life and liberty. An utterly disgraceful murder takes place and the legal machinery of the state fails to punish the culprits. Such developments will only encourage hate and intolerance, especially

smuggler has no right to

proclaim that it stands for

community.. MANSHA MISHRA,

against a particular

■ The sessions court has sent out a wrong signal: that the guilty can go unpunished as a result of a few legal deformities. Unless the

higher judiciary takes cognisance of the matter and takes up the case suo motu to punish the guilty, such verdicts will only induce other perpetrators to commit even graver and more heinous crimes. The verdict also raises questions about the efficacy of our law enforcement agencies and the justice delivery system. SYED SULTAN MOHIDDIN.

■ A host of factors such as an insincere investigation, an ineffective prosecution and accused-friendly laws are what have led to the miscarriage of justice. The Congress government must

make amends by filing an appeal against the verdict. All the officials concerned should be hauled up for their acts of commission and omission. The Pehlu Khan case not only exposes the chinks in the criminal justice system but also the vulnerability of all governmental agencies. S.V. VENKATAKRISHNAN, Bengaluru

Sectoral crisis

There is a need to support the automobile industry and in turn revive the economy with animal spirits (Editorial, "Symptom as cause", August 15). Disposable income is either stagnant and

employment is at an ebb. There is news of industrial distress if one can use the examples of Jet Airways and the headwinds in the automobile sector. No segment can be said to be in bloom.

Creditors are wary and erring on the side of caution leading to a liquidity crunch. The fallout of demonetisation has not waned as well. The government needs to adopt a take-no-prisoners approach in tiding over the acute economic crisis. DEEPAK SINGHAL,

MORE LETTERS ONLINE:

Noida, Uttar Pradesh

Is the removal of special status for J&K justified?

PARLEY

Article 370 marked a recognition of J&K's history and the circumstances surrounding its accession



was one of the three interlocutors appointed by the Centre for J&K in 2010



Sukumar Muralidharan is a researcher, writer and

On August 5, the Centre decided to end the special status given to Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) under Article 370. In addition, J&K also lost its statehood and was re-organised into two Union Territories. How do

these moves change India's relationship with J&K? More importantly, what do they mean for federalism, parliamentary democracy and diversity? In a conversation moderated by Varghese K. George, Radha Kumar (RK) and Sukumar Muralidharan (SM) look at the changed scenario. Edited excerpts:

The BJP has always argued that Article 370 led to separatism. However, the founding fathers of India had a different idea, believing instead that such provisions were essential to build unity among a diverse population. How do you see it?

RK: A look at the history of Kashmir reveals that the conflict always intensified in response to dilution of Article 370. Empirical evidence also shows that [it is] the periodic erosion of Article 370 that gave strength to separatist elements.

SM: I would agree. It is necessary to understand that J&K is unique among Indian States; it is an amalgam of three cultural regions and finding the proper power balance has been a tricky affair. Since the beginning, there was a conflict between Jammu, which insisted on closer integration, and Kashmir, which believed that autonomy would safeguard the integrity of the State. Article 370 was a compromise between these two demands.

Unfortunately, this difference in political perception has become communalised. The BJP sees the political dividend to be harvested from the rest of India by cracking down on what it has successfully portrayed to be the 'special status' of Kashmir which is but a recognition of the historical realities and circumstances surrounding Kashmir's accession to India.

We could then argue that for both camps - those who believe India is a secular,

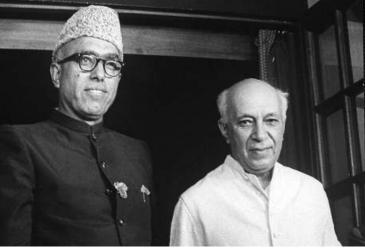
pluralist country and the other who see it as a Hindu nation -Kashmir holds a demonstrative value. Would that be the right characterisation?

RK: I'm afraid so. J&K has been instrumentalised by the rest of India. I'd add a proviso: in a 'quasi-federation' of States like India, it is inevitable that what happens in one State will impact what happens in other States and resonate at the national level too. People in J&K, and particularly in the Valley, are aware of this but do not know how to engage with the political views of the whole of India. Early political leaders like Sheikh Abdullah, G.M. Sadiq, D.P. Dhar and others knew how to engage with Indian political leaders but it was an unfortunate time for democracy in J&K. This is a key element we often forget to consider: in India, the most successful States are those where democracy has grown unimpeded, whereas States where democracy has been interjected are in trouble, tense or volatile. Kashmir is a prime example of it.

Would you then agree that the question of autonomy has been central to the debate on Kashmir? The binary always used in this debate is autonomy vs. integration. Can we argue that relative autonomy in the earlier decades helped development in Kashmir?

SM: In the early years after Independence, J&K recorded some of the best land reforms in India. Landlordism and large feudal estates that flourished were dismantled and land was redistributed. A new Kashmiri middle class was created which was significant in underwriting early phases of stability. [But] subsequently, when they sought a voice, democracy was throttled. The reason is that the operative principle in J&K was not accountability to the people, but to New Delhi. J&K was not allowed to function

like any other State in the Union. The political geography of southern India reflects numerous changes since Independence. The linguistic re-organisation of States gave



Jammu and Kashmir, under Premier Sheikh Abdullah, recorded some of the best land reforms in India in the early years after Independence. Picture shows Abdullah with Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru • GETTY IMAGES

The spectacle of last week

commentary on our

democratic morals

nance. However, J&K has had short

periods of stability interspersed

with long periods of instability and

violence. The first thing should be

to work towards a peace process

that will establish stability on the

ground. That has nothing to do with

duct of black economy in an unsta-

ble region. That is anyway a pro-

blem across the country.

Transparency International would

help us realise that J&K might not be

the most corrupt. In fact, my State,

Tamil Nadu, is probably the second

or third-most corrupt and it does

not have an 'integration' problem.

So, development and integration

legitimacy by claiming that the

majority of Parliament voted in

majority comes from five or six

handful of States has become

the national majority and can

be used as a tool to change the

SM: This is not majority but majori-

tarianism, wherein a brute majority

imposes its will on a reluctant mi-

have little to do with each other.

The government sought

its favour. In essence, that

States. So, a majority of a

composition of any State.

character, nature or

Corruption, as we know, is a pro-

has been a sorry

SUKUMAR MURALIDHARAN

autonomy.

stability to the region. [However] due to constraints owing to the complex history of J&K, it was not reorganised. Thus, a chronic state of instability was created over the [sharing] of power between the three regions, further compounded by New Delhi's interference.

After the 1971 War, India was confident of having diminished Pakistan's status as the homeland of the subcontinent's Muslims. Indira Gandhi was able to conclude a pact with Sheikh Abdullah. Bringing him back to the mainstream of politics might have shown a promise of integration of J&K. [But] in 1980s, when Abdullah's son and successor Farooq Abdullah started functioning in national politics as an Opposition leader, he invited the wrath of Mrs. Gandhi, who dismissed him from office and started to meddle in the politics of the State. J&K has had a history of its democratic processes being impeded.

Radha, what is your view on the difference in terms by which various regions were folded into the Union of India? Is asymmetric federalism good for the regions involved and the idea of India?

RK: First, on the issue of development, I'd like to add that integration is not a matter of pen on paper, but of hearts and minds, processes and sense of belonging. Development depends on stability, peace and efficient and corruption-free goverpreme Court have said that Article 370 cannot be revoked without consent from the Constituent Assembly, in the absence of which the J&K Legislative Assembly fulfils that role. President's rule is, by definition, a transitory phase. He cannot assume the will of the people and allow Parliament to ratify a Bill following a highly questionable legislative procedure. Further, the celebration in [many parts of] the country while Kashmir is under lockdown goes to show how deeply alienated J&K is from the rest of India. The spectacle of last week has been a sorry commentary on our democratic morals and sense of loyalty to constitutional principles.

nority. The Constitution and Su-

Radha, technically this move was democratic in that an elected government did it. Do you, however, fear that this kind of move may be repeated elsewhere in the country?

RK: Before I go to the future, I want to underline that this [move] was completely undemocratic. The Governor and the President represent the Union in a State, not the will of the people of the State which rests in its Legislative Assembly and elected government. Parliament represents, on the other hand, the will of the entire country. Within Parliament, there are only a handful of representatives of J&K. Amongst them, the bulk was not present or displayed their opposition and only one spoke.

Clearly, this parliamentary decision did not include the will of the people of J&K. In such far-reaching parliamentary changes, Parliament cannot substitute the will of the people unless there are compelling reasons (like an armed resistance). Besides, it is not clear how changing the status to a Union Territory would help maintain security since, under Article 370, it is anyway a Central subject.

Due democratic process in the State was pre-empted and it was put under lockdown and its political leadership was arrested. No reason has been given for their arrest, no charges have been pressed and they have not been produced before a magistrate court. The worst is that this may be used as a precedent in other parts of the country.

Can judicial review make the move ineffectual?

RK: I can only hope that a judicial review finds grave fault.

The Prime Minister, Home Minister and a lot of supporters say cultural autonomy and political aspirations are a small price to pay for development.

SM: Since [the days of] Jawaharlal Nehru, there [has been] an aspiration that cultural particularities would be subsumed by modernisation but it has not worked that way. Instead, there is now a re-assertion of these particularities.

The irony is that while claiming to solidify citizenship rights of Dalits and refugees from Pakistan in Kashmir, and enforcing uniform rights on all residents by taking away special rights of indigenous residents, the government is stripping people of their citizenship rights in Assam and, in Nagaland, has permitted granting separate rights to the State's indigenous people. Playing two different games is creating a mosaic of great inconsistency.

[T]he real tragedy is that the people of J&K are being victimised by our lack of ability to arrive at a principled and democratic solution.

Radha, do you think that the BJP's view on cultural particularities has any continuity with the Nehruvian view on utopia?

RK: In a single word, no. In the last five years, the BJP and RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh] have attacked Nehru with increasing virulence. They attack his secular principles and misrepresent his political moves. They pin [Article] 370 on him when we know perfectly well that it was a joint decision between Sardar Patel, Gopalaswami Ayyangar, Sheikh Abdullah and Nehru, not to mention other members of the Cabinet. With respect to development, some of the most developed countries have seen conflict. Countries like Ireland chose to give up development, knowing possibly that they will be [stuck in] a spiral where all institutions are disrupted. China has pushed development over culture and succeeded, but it is not a democracy.



podcast online

Taming Ebola in DRC

A randomised trial has shown two candidate drugs to be highly effective in curing the disease

There is good news a year after Ebola struck the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), making 2,619 people ill and killing 1,823. Assuming that the final test results are valid, the disease – which has had an overall fatality rate of about 67% in the current outbreak in DRC - can be treated with drugs, especially if treatment is started early.

Earlier, Merck's preventive Ebola vaccine (rVSV-ZEBOV-GP), which has had a 97.5% efficacy, helped slow the virus's spread, but was not able to stop the disease in its tracks.

Now, four candidate drugs Zmapp, remdesivir, REGN-EB3 and mAb114 - have been tested in a randomised trial, which began in November last year and, as on August 9, had enrolled 681 of the target 725 patients. Preliminary results, of 499 of the participants, show that two of the candidates, REGN-EB3 and mAb114,

were highly effective in treating people infected with the virus. While REGN-EB3 "crossed the efficacy threshold" set for the trial, the efficacy of mAb114 was also comparable, say the results.

Reduced mortality

The overall mortality among patients randomly chosen to receive REGN-EB3 and mAb114 was 29% and 34% respectively. In the case of Zmapp and remdesivir, the overall mortality was way higher at 49% and 53% res-

The striking difference in efficacy was in patients who were recently infected (and so had a low viral load). Further, REGN-EB3 cured the disease in 94% of such patients, while, in the case of mAb114, it was 89%.

Taking into consideration the superiority of the two candidates, data and safety monitoring board recommended that all future patients be given either of the two, though they have not yet been licensed.

REGN-EB3 is a cocktail of three antibodies generated by injecting Ebola virus into a mice model that has a human-like immune system, while mAb114's development goes back to the Ebola outbreak in 1995 in Congo.

The first step towards finding a cure was taken in 2005 by veteran Congolese microbiologist Jean Jacques Muyembe Tamfum, who helped discover Ebola virus in 1976 and is now tasked with bringing the current outbreak under control. Mr. Tamfum transfused blood of Ebola survivors into eight people with disease and though antibodies were not isolated, seven of the eight survived. In 2006, antibodies isolated from two survivors led to the development of

Final analysis awaited

While we will have to wait till end September or early October before final analysis of all the trial data is performed, there is a high possibility that the final results will be along the same lines as the preliminary results, which were based on the data of 499 patients - nearly 69% of the total number of participants. Vaccination strategies have so far

faced huge challenges, including those relating to tracing primary contacts and contacts of contacts, and the mistrust among the infected people towards authorities and health-care workers. However, in all likelihood,

the attitude of people will change, and they will become more willing to seek medical care without delay, once they know that Ebola is a curable disease.

Trial of a new Ebola preventive vaccine from Johnson & Johnson has already begun in Uganda.

While the interim analysis shows Merck's vaccine to be highly effective, the durability of protection is not known. Further, a high coverage will be required to prevent outbreaks. And when outbreaks do occur, the availability of an approved treatment will be important for optimal responses.

If the final results of Merck's preventive vaccine trial and the two drugs to treat the disease do not spring any adverse surprise, Ebola, which has had a free run so far, is all set to be tamed.

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NOTEBOOK

On scientific corruption and 'recommendation letters'

Underhand dealings come in different forms in T.N., as this reporter discovered

Journalists covering politics in Tamil Nadu often come across political rivals of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) harping on the accusation that the party indulges in "scientific corruption".

The term, it is widely believed, was first used by retired Supreme Court Justice Ranjit Singh Sarkaria, who was appointed during the Emergency to probe graft allegations against the M. Karunanidhi government (1971-1976).

The Sarkaria Commission was constituted in February 1976, soon after the DMK government was dismissed by the Indira Gandhi dispensation. It is said that Justice Sarkaria was so taken in by the ingenuity with which public funds were embezzled that he described it as "scientific corruption". However, there appears to be no record in the public domain of him having used the term.

Since the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) often targeted DMK on this score, I once asked a second-line AIADMK leader how he would explain this 'scientific corruption' to the common man. By that time (the early years of the millennium), the massive corruption charges against the 1991-1996 Jayalalithaa regime had dwarfed the DMK government's alleged omissions and commissions.

The leader, now a Minister, said: "Sir, if we ask our and uproot the plant, leaving behind a trail of evi-DMK guys to do the same, they will dig below the field and remove only the

The groundnut analogy cadres to steal groundnuts from a field, they would go dence. But if you ask the groundnuts, leaving the plant in its place. This is what we call 'scientific corruption'."

In as much the remark

evoked laughter, many politicians, irrespective of their party affiliation, have their own way of getting things done under the table. On the eve of a festival in 2004 when Jayalalithaa was Chief Minister, a premier university in Tamil Nadu was in the midst of recruiting faculty members.

I was in the vice-chancellor's room for an interview that afternoon when a young woman, accompanied by her father, walked in, requesting that her candidature be favourably considered. The candidate said she hailed from the same village as an AIADMK Minister and handed over a sealed envelope with the State Government's insignia, which purportedly contained a 'recommendation letter' from him.

The vice-chancellor known for his integrity opened the envelope, read the contents and, to my surprise, said, "Okay, the Minister has written everything. I will take care." The woman and her father thanked him and left the room with high hopes

'Pongal greetings' However, once the door closed, he passed on the recommendation letter, written in Tamil in green ink, to me. The Minister had written something along these lines: "With Tamil Nadu witnessing a golden rule and all-round development under the exemplary leadership of Thanga Tharakai (Golden Star), Dr. Puratchi Thalaivi (revolutionary leader) Honourable Amma (as Jayalalithaa is known among supporters), I am happy to extend my Pongal greetings to you." Period. vice-chancellor

smiled and said: "Maybe the letter was obtained for a price. If she gets selected on merit, she would believe that the letter did the trick. [But] if she is not selected, she won't go back to the Minister."

The Man Bindu.

FROM THE ARCHIVES FIFTY YEARS AGO AUGUST 15, 1969

Finalisation of fertilizer project

There was no issue on August 16, 1969) Representatives of the British Ministry of Overseas Economic Development and the U.K. Firm, Humphrey and Glasgow, the collaborators for the proposed Rs. 37-crore Mangalore Fertilizer Project, are expected in India shortly to finalise matters regarding the choice of Indian partners for the longdelayed project. A loan of about Rs. 10 crores from the British Government has been sought for the project, since the U.K. High Commission in Delhi had earlier indicated that such a request would be considered for a fertilizer project. Mr. Veerendra Patil, Chief Minister of Mysore, during his recent visit to Delhi, had discussions with the Union Minister for Petroleum and Chemicals, Dr. Triguna Sen, for early implementation of the project which continues to be dodged by uncertainties. In this connection, it is stated that the Mysore Government is partly responsible for the delay. It is pointed out that the project would have got going by now but for the Mysore Government's hesitation to take up its equity share of Rs. 2 crores. It is understood that it wanted to give this to a private firm.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO AUGUST 16, 1919 Indian Affairs in Parliament.

Replying to Col. Yate in the Commons [in London on August 13], Mr. Montagu said he was enquiring whether the applications of officers of Indian army reserve for compensation for loss of kit and it had been refused by the India Office and the claim rejected as inadmissible, unless an officer was again called out for training. Replying to Sir J. Rees, Mr. Montagu said he was about to lay papers on the table regarding peace with and the situation in Afghanistan. He regretted that he was unable to make a statement concerning the future of Mesopotamia. Replying to Mr. F. Thomson, Mr. Montagu stated that approximately forty regular Indian army officers had been discharged owing to disability due to active war service. It was not known whether the Government of India had found employment for any, but the majority, if not all, would be either physically unfit or would not be desirous of further employment in India. He would be glad to learn if there was any officer of whom this was incorrect. Replying to Lord Winterton, Mr. Montagu said he had caused an enquiry to be made on every definite allegation regarding transport and medical breakdowns in the operations against Afghanistan and hoped very shortly to lay papers on the table dealing with the arrangements there.



उत्तरदायित्व के बोध के बिना स्वतंत्रता निरर्थक है

भावी भारत का खाका

प्रधानमंत्री ने स्वतंत्रता दिवस के अवसर पर लाल किले की प्राचीर से अपने संबोधन में जो कुछ कहा उसमें बहुत कुछ उल्लेखनीय है, लेकिन जो सर्वाधिक उल्लेखनीय है वह यह कि उन्होंने बढ़ती आबादी की चुनौतियों को रेखांकित करते हुए केंद्र और राज्य सरकारों से अपील की कि वे जनसंख्या नियंत्रण के उपायों के बारे में भी सोचें। प्रधानमंत्री ने जिस तरह सीधे-सपाट शब्दों में कहा कि छोटा परिवार रखना भी अपनी देशभिक्त प्रकट करने का तरीका है और हर किसी को यह सोचना चाहिए कि जो शिशु धरती पर आने वाला है उसकी आवश्यकताएं कैसे पूरी की जाएंगी, उस पर सभी को ध्यान देने की आवश्यकता है। यह ऐसा विषय है जो किसी नियम-कानून से अधिक जनजागरूकता से ही हल होगा। देशहित से जुड़े ऐसे विषयों पर संकीर्ण राजनीति की कहीं कोई गुंजाइश नहीं हो सकती। यह उल्लेखनीय है कि प्रधानमंत्री ने देश के उद्योग जगत को यह भरोसा दिलाया कि उसे किसी तरह की आशंका रखने की जरूरत नहीं है, क्योंकि सरकार देश के विकास में योगदान देने और रोजगार के अवसर पैदा करने वाले उद्यमियों को मान-सम्मान देने के लिए प्रतिबद्ध है। यह भरोसा इसलिए जरूरी था, क्योंकि उद्योग जगत ही देश की संपदा बढ़ाने में सबसे बड़ी भूमिका निभाता है, लेकिन अनेक राजनीतिक दल ऐसे हैं जो सस्ती लोकप्रियता हासिल करने के लिए उद्यमियों-उद्योगपितयों के प्रति लोगों को बरगलाने का काम करते हैं।

लाल किले से प्रधानमंत्री का संबोधन कुल मिलाकर अगले पांच साल के लिए देश के भावी पथ की तस्वीर बयान करता है। अपने संदेश में उन्होंने विकास के प्रति प्रचलित धारणाओं को बदलने पर तो जोर दिया ही, यह भी साफ किया कि सुधार के लिए साहसिक कदमों का सिलसिला और तेज होगा। एक ऐसा ही सुधार पूरे देश में एक साथ चुनाव के रूप में हो सकता है, जिसके प्रति प्रधानमंत्री ने एक बार फिर अपना संकल्प व्यक्त किया है। यदि लोकसभा और राज्यों में विधानसभा चुनाव एक साथ कराने का मार्ग प्रशस्त होता है तो यह एक क्रांतिकारी बदलाव ही होगा। देश इस बदलाव का इंतजार कर रहा है, क्योंकि यह उचित नहीं कि विकास और सुशासन आए दिन आदर्श आचार संहिता की बंदिशों में कैद रहें। बेहतर हो कि राजनीतिक दल एक साथ चुनाव पर आम सहमति कायम करें। ये सहमति तभी कायम होगी जब वे चुनाव सुधारों पर अपने किंतु-परंतु का त्याग करेंगे। मोदी सरकार ने अपने दूसरे कार्यकाल के शुरुआती 75 दिनों में जैसे ऐतिहासिक फैसले लिए हैं उससे यह भरोसा मजबूत होता है कि लाल किले से प्रधानमंत्री ने जो भी घोषणाएं की हैं और भावी भारत का खाका खींचा वैसा वास्तव में हो सकेगा।

पुलिस पर हमला

मॉब लिंचिंग को लेकर बड़े-बड़े बुद्धिजीवियों ने असहिष्णुता की बातें करते हुए पीएम नरेंद्र मोदी को पत्र लिखा था। विरोधी दलों ने कई सवाल उठाए थे, परंतु मॉब लिंचिंग से बचाने की जिम्मेवारी जिस पुलिस पर है यदि उसका ही लिंचिंग, वह भी थाने में, होने लगे तो स्थिति कहां तक पहुंच चुकी है इसका अंदाजा सहज ही लगाया जा सकता है। वह भी किसी दूर दराज के ग्रामीण इलाके में नहीं, बल्कि कोलकाता जैसे महानगर में थाने में घसकर पलिस कर्मियों की जमकर पिटाई की गई। वह भी किस लिए, एक नशेड़ी बाइक चालक को गिरफ्तार किए जाने के विरोध में। यही नहीं पिटाई के बाद भी पुलिस अफसरों को मुकदमा दर्ज करने एवं कार्रवाई में कई घंटे लग गए। पुलिस पर हमले के करीब तीस घंटे बाद 4 आरोपितों को गिरफ्तार किया गया। उधर थाने में हुए हमले और एफआइआर में देरी होने पर टालीगंज थाना प्रभारी अनूप घोष को हटा दिया गया। बता दें पिछले रविवार रात नशे में धुत होकर बाइक चलाने के आरोप में चेतला निवासी रंजन हलदर को पकड़कर पुलिस थाने ले गई। इसकी भनक लगते ही महिलाओं समेत 40-50 लोगों की भीड़ ने थाने पर हमला बोल दिया और पुलिस कर्मियों को जमकर पीटा, जिसमें पांच पुलिस कर्मी घायल हो गए। इसके बाद आरोपित के परिजनों ने पुलिस के खिलाफ ही रिपोर्ट दर्ज करा दी, लेकिन पुलिस को घटना में स्वतः संज्ञान लेते हुए रिपोर्ट दर्ज करने में 11 घंटे लग गए। मामले के तुल पकड़ने पर कोलकाता पुलिस आयुक्त ने थाना प्रभारी अनुप घोष की भूमिका पर नाराजगी जताई थी। साथ ही आरोपितों को शीघ्र गिरफ्तार करने के आदेश दिए। अभी यह मामला शांत भी नहीं हुआ था कि मालदा जिले के रतुआ में भीड़ ने पुलिस चौकी पर हमला बोल दिया और तोड़फोड़ करने के बाद आग लगाने की कोशिश की। बाद में अन्य थानों से पुलिसकर्मी पहुंच कर स्थिति को नियंत्रित किए, परंतु यहां बड़ा सवाल यह उठ रहा है कि आखिर इतना साहस बिना राजनीतिक प्रश्रय के हमलावरों में कहां से आ जाएगा? टालीगंज में हुई घटना में तो तुणमल के ही दो मंत्रियों के बयान से विरोधाभास पैदा हो गया है, परंतु जब मुख्यमंत्री ममता बनर्जी यह कहती हैं कि पुलिसकर्मी से लेकर अधिकारी बिना रंग देखे कार्रवाई करें तो फिर इस तरह की घटनाएं क्यों हो रही हैं? इस पर मुख्यमंत्री को तत्काल संज्ञान लेते हुए जो भी दोषी हो उसके खिलाफ सख्त कार्रवाई करानी चाहिए। ताकि कोई पुलिस पर हमला न कर सके।

जुड़ाव की राजनीति के आगे बेबस विपक्ष



बद्री नारायण

अपने विरोधी विचार से जुड़कर उसे पूरी तरह आत्मसात करने वाली संघ–भाजपा की रणनीति से विपक्ष की बची–खुची सियासी जमीन भी खिसकती दिख रही है

दुत्व परिवार की राजनीति दिन प्रतिदिन विस्तृत हो रही है। राष्ट्रीय स्वयंसेवक संघ इस विस्तार की भूमिका रच रहा है और भारतीय जनता पार्टी यानी भाजपा इसे अंजाम देती जा रही है। भाजपा की राजनीति के इस विस्तार का मूलमंत्र है समावेशन यानी जुड़ाव की रणनीति। यह राष्ट्रीय स्वयंसेवक संघ की वह रणनीति है जिसे उसने अपनी संरचना में आज के संदर्भ में एक लय के रूप में विकसित कर लिया है। यह नीति हालांकि संघ की खोज है, परंतु इसके विकास में निरंतर बदलती भाजपा का प्रभाव भी शामिल है। मैं यहां कहना यह चाह रहा हूं कि संघ एवं भाजपा दोनों अपनी रणनीति के विकास में एक-दूसरे को सकारात्मक रूप से प्रभावित करते दिखते हैं। समावेशन से यहां आशय अपने विरोधी विचारों, प्रतीकों एवं जनाधार को स्वयं में समाहित करने से है। अर्थात अपने विरोधी एवं प्रतिरोधी विचार को अपने दिलोदिमाग में जगह देना, उसके साथ जुड़ जाना एवं अपने से उसे जोड़ लेना ही समावेशन है। भाजपा की यह नीति इतनी कारगर है कि इसने विपक्ष की राजनीतिक जमीन को ही सिकोड़ना शुरू कर दिया है।

दरअसल जनतंत्र की राजनीति में दो तरीकों से जनता की लामबंदी राजनीतिक दल करते रहे हैं। एक तरीका प्रतिरोध का है और दूसरा समावेशन का। विपक्ष प्रायः प्रतिरोध के माध्यम से सत्ता एवं प्रभावी राजनीतिक शक्ति को कमजोर बनाता है। वहीं प्रभावी एवं मुख्यधारा के केंद्र में अवस्थित राजनीतिक शिक्त समावेशन के औजार से स्वयं को मजबूत करती जाती है। इसके लिए अपने विचारों में लचीलेपन का गुण और विरोधियों के विचारों एवं जनाधार को आत्मसात कर लेने की अपार शिक्त का होना जरूरी है। मुख्यधारा की राजनीति प्रायः अपने प्रतिरोधियों को तो पचाती जाती है, अनेक सह उप-राजनीतिक धाराओं को भी स्वयं में समाहित करती जाती है। अपने प्रतिरोधी के साथ प्रत्यक्ष या अप्रत्यक्ष रूप से सतत संवाद बनाए रखना समावेशन की प्रक्रिया का पहला चरण है।

अभी हाल ही में राष्ट्रीय स्वयंसेवक संघ ने भाजपा को अपने दूसरे कार्यकाल को दिलतों, महिलाओं एवं अल्पसंख्यकों पर केंद्रित करने का सुझाव दिया है। इस सुझाव का तात्पर्य यह है कि सरकार अपनी नीतियों, कार्य योजनाओं एवं परियोजनाओं के माध्यम से दिलतों, महिलाओं एवं अल्पसंख्यक सामाजिक समूहों के मध्य प्रवेश करे। हम यह जानते हैं कि दिलत, अल्पसंख्यक एवं नारी आंदोलन भारतीय राजनीतिक जनतंत्र में विपक्ष की राजनीति का आधार रहे हैं। समाजवादी राजनीति, बहुजन राजनीति, वामपंथी राजनीति एवं कांग्रेस की राजनीति इन सामाजिक समूहों के प्रतिरोधी आंदोलनों से ही अपना आधार विकसित करती रही है।

अब संघ एवं भाजपा इन सामाजिक



समूहों को स्वयं में समाहित कर या जोड़कर विपक्षी राजनीति को ध्वस्त करने की दिशा में अग्रसर हैं। इन सामाजिक समूहों को जोड़ने की संघ प्रेरित कार्यनीति का मुलाधार उनमें प्रतिरोधी चेतना जगाकर उन्हें जोड़ने की विपक्षी रणनीति के समानांतर उनमें आकांक्षा जगाकर उन्हें जोड़ने की रणनीति पर आधारित है। इस आकांक्षा का मूल है-महाजनोयेन पन्थाः सुगता। अर्थात जिस रास्ते पर प्रभावी लोग चल रहे हैं, उसी रास्ते पर चलकर प्रभावी होने की आकांक्षा का प्रसार किया जाना चाहिए। मुख्यधारा का प्रतिरोध नहीं, बल्कि मुख्यधारा से जुड़ते जाना, इस कार्यनीति का मुल है। सरकारी योजनाओं को पाने की चाह एवं उनकी तह तक पहुंचने की आकांक्षा अति उपेक्षित रहे दलितों के एक तबके को सत्ता में प्रभावी राजनीति एवं विचार से जोड़ती जा रही है। अगर गहराई से देखें तो राष्ट्रीय स्वयंसेवक संघ समावेशन की सामाजिक संस्कृति रच रहा है एवं भाजपा जनतांत्रिक माध्यम से उपेक्षित एवं अति उपेक्षित समूहों में समाहित होने की आकांक्षा उत्पन्न कर रही है।

राष्ट्रीय स्वयंसेवक संघ की कई अनुषंगी

संस्थाएं जनजातीय समूहों, दिलत एवं उपेक्षित सामाजिक समूहों, नारी शिक्त और अल्पसंख्यकों के बीच कार्यरत है। वनवासी कल्याण के क्षेत्र में संघ की प्रभावी गैर सरकारी सेवाभावी संस्थाएं वन क्षेत्रों में सिक्रय हैं। दिलत सामाजिक समूहों के बीच संघ द्वारा प्रस्तावित सामाजिक समरसता अभियान चल ही रहे हैं। मुस्लिम सामाजिक एवं धार्मिक समूहों के बीच भी राज्य मुस्लिम संगठन की तर्ज पर

अनेक संस्थाएं संचालित हो रही हैं।
संघ ने जिस प्रकार से इन सामाजिक समूहों
से जुड़े वैचारिक आदर्श के प्रतीकों को अपने
में आत्मसात किया है, वह भी समझना जरूरी
है। डॉ. भीमराव आंबेडकर एवं राममनोहर
लोहिया, जो उपेक्षित एवं पिछड़ों की राजनीति
के वैचारिक स्नोत रहे हैं, उन्हें संघ एवं
भाजपा ने अपने साथ जोड़ा है। संघ के तमाम
कार्यक्रमों में डॉ. आंबेडकर एक केंद्रीय प्रतीक
होकर उभरने लगे हैं। नरेंद्र मोदी राममनोहर
लोहिया की बार-बार सराहना करते हैं। संघ
के कार्यालय में कई जगह डॉ. आंबेडकर की
तस्वीरें लगी मिल जाएंगी। बिरसा मुंडा, ऊदा
देवी, सुहेलदेव जैसे दिलत एवं जनजातीय

प्रतीक पुरुषों को संघ एवं भाजपा ने अपने साथ आत्मसात करने की कोशिश की है। इन प्रतीक पुरुषों के लिए स्मृति स्थल विकसित करना, इनकी स्मृति में पार्क एवं चौराहों का नामकरण करना, इनके नाम पर ट्रेन चलाना, इनकी जयंती आयोजित करना संघ एवं भाजपा की इसी कार्य नीति का हिस्सा हैं। भाजपा ने इन सामाजिक समूहों से राष्ट्रपति, राज्यपाल एवं मंत्री बनाकर, उनके नेताओं को राजनीति में समाहित कर उनकी आकांक्षाओं की गति को अपने पक्ष में करने की सफल कोशिश की है। भाजपा दिन-प्रतिदिन नए-नए क्षेत्रों में,

तमाम वंचित सामाजिक समूहों के बीच अपनी राजनीति का प्रसार कर रही है। छोटी-छोटी जातीय एवं सामाजिक अस्मिताओं को अपने में समाहित कर उन्हें बड़ी-सी महसूस होने वाली अस्मिताओं जैसे-राष्ट्र, धर्म, सत्ता के भागीदार समूहों में जोड़ती जा रही है। अस्मिताओं की छोटी एवं ज्यादा करीब की इकाइयां जैसे जाति एवं उप-राष्ट्रीयता हममें सनसनी तो पैदा करती हैं, पर बड़ी अस्मिताएं बड़े सम्मान का बोध जगाती हैं। विपक्ष की राजनीति के सामने अब बड़ा संकट है कि कैसे इन लघु अस्मितापरक इकाइयों को बड़ी अस्मिता की इकाई में बदले और संघ एवं भाजपा द्वारा रची जा रही नई आकांक्षापरक अस्मिताओं के समावेशन से निर्मित एक वृहत सामाजिक गठजोड़ का मुकाबला करे। आगे भारतीय जनतंत्र की राजनीति और भी रोचक होने जा रही है। देखन है कि विपक्ष आने वाले समय में इसके खिलाफ कैसे राजनीतिक अस्त्र विकसित करता है? जाति एवं धार्मिक अल्पसंख्यकों में पीड़ित होने के भाव को कैसे जागृत करता है? साथ ही भारतीय जनतंत्र में जाति की राजनीति को कैसे पुनः परिभाषित करता है?

(लेखक प्रयागराज स्थित गोविंद बल्लभ पंत सामाजिक विज्ञान संस्थान के निदेशक हैं) response@jagran.com

एनआरसी पर अनुचित आपति

सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने स्पष्ट कर दिया है कि असम में नेशनल र्राजस्टर ऑफ सिटिजंस यानी एनआरसी को प्रकाशित करने की मियाद और नहीं बढ़ाई जाएगी। एनआरसी को दोबारा कराने की अर्जी भी खारिज कर दी है। इस पर सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने अपने 26 जुलाई के फैसले पर मुहर लगाते हुए 12 अगस्त को आदेश दिया कि 31 अगस्त तक दी गई समयसीमा में ही एनआरसी की अंतिम सूची जारी करनी होगी। अब इसमें पखवाड़े भर का समय शेष है। शीर्ष अदालत की अगुआई में हो रही इस कवायद से राजनीतिक हलचल भी तेज हो गई है। पक्ष-विपक्ष भी इसमें एक दूसरे पर हमलावर हुए जा रहे हैं। कोर्ट का 26 जुलाई का निर्णय वास्तव में जनवरी 2018 में प्रकाशित प्रारूप सूची के बाद आया है जिसमें असम एनआरसी के 3.29 करोड़ आवेदकों में से लगभग 40 लाख नाम हटा दिए गए थे। यह मुद्दा न केवल नागरिकता और राष्ट्रवाद की अवधारणा से जुड़ा है, बल्कि भारतीय उपमहाद्वीप में लाखों लोगों के जीवन को प्रभावित करने वाला भी है। इसलिए इस मामले का व्यापक मूल्यांकन आवश्यक है। नागरिकता की बहस अठारहवीं शताब्दी में उठी जब

पाश्चात्य समाज पुनर्जागरण आंदोलन से प्रभावित था। उसी दौर में उदारवाद भी जन्म ले रहा था। नागरिकता और राष्ट्रवाद की बहस तब और तीव्र हुई जब यूरोपीय देश संविधान को चर्च से ज्यादा महत्व देने लगे। हालांकि उदारवादियों ने इन दिनों उदारवाद के मुल सिद्धांतों को भुलाकर वामपंथ की कई अवधारणाओं को अपना लिया है। इनमें एक विचित्र अवधारणा ओपन बॉर्डर यानी 'खुली सीमा' की भी है जिसे अपनाकर उदारवादी नागरिकता की संकल्पना को ही समाप्त कर देना चाहते हैं। नागरिकता को लेकर इन हालिया बहसों का वैश्विक संदर्भ भी है जहां यह तमाम देशों के राजनीतिक दलों के बीच बहस का प्रमुख मुद्दा बन जाती है। यह बहस अमेरिका में डेमोक्रेटिक पार्टी और राष्ट्रपति ट्रंप की रिपब्लिकन पार्टी के बीच प्रमुख मुद्दों में से एक है। इस साल जून में पहली डेमोक्रेटिक प्रेसिडेंशियल बहस में तो एक विचित्र स्थिति उत्पन्न हो गई। उसमें सभी उम्मीदवारों ने अवैध प्रवासियों के लिए मुफ्त सरकारी स्वास्थ्य सेवाओं का समर्थन किया। इस पर राजनीतिक विश्लेषकों का मानना है कि डेमोक्रेटिक पार्टी को राष्ट्रपति चुनाव में इस घोषणा का खामियाजा भुगतना पड सकता है। ऐसा इसलिए, क्योंकि दुनिया के दूसरे सबसे बड़े लोकतंत्र के नागरिक भी अवैध प्रवासियों को मिल रहे ऐसे महत्व को लेकर संशय में हैं।



के कारण एनआरसी जैसी बड़ी कवायद की पूरी प्रक्रिया पर सवाल उढाकर उसे खारिज

कुछ छिटपुट गलतियों



उदारवाद की मूल विचारधारा में राष्ट्रवाद को प्रमुखता दी गई थी, लेकिन यह अमेरिकी उदाहरण दर्शाता है कि यह विचारधारा अपने मूल विचार से कितना भटक चुकी है। जब उदारवादी असम में एनआरसी की अवहेलना करते हैं तो वे व्यावहारिक रूप से 'खुली सीमा' की वकालत करते हैं। वे भूल जाते हैं कि पड़ोसी बांग्लादेश से अवैध रूप से आने वाले लोगों के चलते असम की स्थानीय आबादी का स्वरूप बिगड़ रहा है। राज्य के मूल निवासियों को इससे काफी परेशानी हो रही है।

मोदी सरकार के विरोध में तर्क दिया जाता है कि यह विद्वेष फैलाने वाली सरकार है जिसके लिए वे 2016 में बने प्राथमिकता कानून का उदाहरण देते हैं। इस कानून के तहत पड़ोसी देशों के गैर-मुस्लिम शरणार्थियों (हिंदुओं, ईसाइयों और पारिसयों आदि) को प्राथमिकता दी जाती है। आलोचक भूल जाते हैं कि बांग्लादेश से प्रवासी मजदूर बेहतर वेतन और संसाधनों के लिए असम आते हैं, न कि अपने देश में हो रहे उत्पीड़न से बचने के लिए। अंतरराष्ट्रीय कानून के सिद्धांतों के अनुसार प्रत्येक देश में शरणार्थियों को प्राथमिकता मिलनी चाहिए, न कि अवैध प्रवासियों को जो केवल बेहतर आर्थिक अवसरों की तलाश में अवैध रूप से किसी राज्य में घुस जाते हैं।

विपक्षी दल अपनी राजनीतिक महत्वाकांक्षाओं को पूरा करने के लिए एनआरसी प्रक्रिया का विरोध कर रहे हैं, लेकिन वे भूल रहे हैं कि इस कवायद की निगरानी सीधे सर्वोच्च न्यायालय द्वारा की जा रही है। वर्तमान प्रक्रिया की जड़ें भी असम समझौते में हैं, जो दिवंगत प्रधानमंत्री राजीव गांधी की विरासत है। इससे कांग्रेस के लिए एनआरसी प्रक्रिया का विरोध करना और भी मुश्किल हो जाता है। एनआरसी के आलोचक यह क्यों नहीं देख पा रहे हैं हैं कि तीन दशकों की अकर्मण्यता के बाद आखिर इस मामले में एक सही पहल हुई है। असम समझौते के बाद राज्य दशकों तक गतिरोध की स्थित में फंसा हुआ था और उसमें बनी सहमित के आधार पर फैसलों को लागू करने के लिए गंभीर प्रयास नहीं हो रहे थे।

इसमें संदेह नहीं कि एनआरसी की गिनती में भी कुछ गलतियां हुई हैं। हालांकि इतनी व्यापक कवायद में कुछ खामियां स्वाभाविक ही हैं। वर्तनी की गलती के कारण एक महिला की गलत पहचान के एक मामले को स्वीकार कर उसे राहत दी जा चुकी है। एक पूर्व भारतीय सैनिक को हिरासत में लिया गया, लेकिन बाद में जमानत दे दी गई। हालांकि उनकी नागरिकता के मामले में अभी सुनवाई शेष है। इन छिटपुट मामलों को उछालकर आलोचक पूरी प्रक्रिया को ही संदिग्ध बताने के अभियान में जुटे हैं। वे इस बात को नजरअंदाज कर रहे हैं कि नागरिकता के महत्वपूर्ण सवाल को निर्धारित करने के लिए सिक्रय कदम उठाने वाला राज्य ही अपने नागरिकों की जरूरतों को बेहतर ढंग से लक्षित कर उनकी पूर्ति कर सकता है। निःसंदेह इन गलतियों की अनदेखी नहीं की जा सकती, क्योंकि एक भी नागरिक को गलत तरीके से अयोग्य घोषित करना एक गंभीर चिंता का विषय है। इससे बचने के लिए तंत्र को और प्रभावी बनाना होगा और सुप्रीम कोर्ट की निगरानी में इसे संभव बनाया जा सकता है। हालांकि इसके लिए कदम पीछे नहीं खींचे जा सकते। सरकारी कार्यप्रणाली और दस्तावेजीकरण को सुधारने के लिए अन्य उपायों पर भी हमें भविष्य में बहस शुरू करनी होगी।

आखिर हमें इस पर ध्यान केंद्रित करना होगा कि क्या महत्वपूर्ण है और क्या नहीं? विपक्ष बुनियादी रूप से जिस काल्पनिक संकट का हौवा खड़ा कर रहा है उसमें तथ्यों, आंकड़ों और ऐतिहासिक दस्तावेजों को नकारा जा रहा है। अब हमें एक नए भारत की कल्पना करनी होगी जहां प्रत्येक भारतीय नागरिक के अधिकार सुरक्षित होंगे और सरकारी कार्यप्रणाली भी सक्षम होगी।

(लेखक भाजपा के राष्ट्रीय उपाध्यक्ष हैं) response@jagran.com



संवेदना

संवेदना हृदय की गहराइयों से उठती हुई एक पुकार है। मानव संवेदनशील होकर ही एक सुसभ्य एवं सुव्यवस्थित समाज की परिकल्पना कर सकता है। संवेदना के अभाव में मनुष्य के जीवन जीने का कोई औचित्य नहीं है। जब इंसान सिर्फ अपने हित या स्वार्थ तक ही सीमित रहेगा और समाज के कमजोर, पीड़ित लोगों के प्रति संवेदना व्यक्त नहीं करेगा तो यह धरती निराशा के घर में तब्दील हो जाएगी। प्रत्येक मनुष्य को एक-दूसरे के साथ संवेदना रखनी चाहिए। संवेदना इंसान के अंतःकरण की गहन और मौन अभिव्यक्ति है। इसमें व्यक्तिगत स्वार्थ के लिए कोई जगह नहीं होती है। जिस व्यक्ति को दूसरों के दुखों को देखकर दुख महसूस नहीं होता या दुखी व्यक्ति के लिए उनके मन में संवेदना उत्पन्न नहीं होती तो यह मान लेना चाहिए कि वह संवेदनहीन मनुष्य है। मानव वही है, जिसमें मानवता है और मानवता वह है जिसमें संवेदना है।

संवेदना एक ऐसा गुण है, जिससे मनुष्य किसी का भी दिल जीतकर उसे अपना बना सकता है। संवेदना से पराए भी अपने हो जाते हैं और संवेदना न हो तो अपनों को पराया बनने में भी ज्यादा देर नहीं लगती। मनोविज्ञान कहता है कि संवेदना व्यक्त करने से दोनों पक्षों को लाभ होता है। संवेदना देने और लेने वाले दोनों एक-दूसरे को मन की शिक्त और भावनाओं की विशालता प्रदान करते हैं। जहां संवेदना लेने वाले को अपने दुखों से लड़ने के लिए मानिसक शिक्त और भावनात्मक बल मिलता है, वहीं संवेदना व्यक्त करने वाले को इसका दोहरा लाभ प्राप्त होता है। संवेदना व्यक्त करने से मनुष्य में उदारता, दया, भावुकता, ईमानदारी जैसे कई सकारात्मक गुण आ जाते हैं।

इन गुणों के विस्तार से न केवल मनुष्य का जीवन जीने का नजरिया बदल जाता है, बिल्क उसकी आयु भी बढ़ जाती है। वास्तव में संवेदना से मनुष्य का मन निर्मल और पिवन्न होता है और बुद्धि-प्रखरता से उसका व्यक्तित्व निखर उठता है। यदि मनुष्य एक-दूसरे के प्रति संवेदना व्यक्त करे तो इस संसार में दुख मिट जाएगा।

सेहत से खिलवाड़

अमृत कुमार

दुनिया में दूध उत्पादन में अव्वल होने के साथ हम दूध की सबसे ज्यादा खपत में भी आगे हैं। देश के प्रत्येक नागरिक को औसतन 290 ग्राम दूध रोजाना मिलता है। इस हिसाब से देश में कुल खपत प्रतिदिन 45 करोड़ लीटर दूध की हो रही है, जबिक शुद्ध दूध का उत्पादन करीब 15 करोड़ लीटर ही है। जाहिर है दूध की कमी की पूर्ति नकली दूध बनाकर और पानी मिलाकर की जा रही है।

देश में दूध का 70 फीसद कारोबार असंगठित ढांचा संभाल रहा है। इस कारोबार में ज्यादातर लोग अशिक्षित हैं, लेकिन पारंपरिक ज्ञान से न केवल वे बड़ी मात्रा में दुग्ध उत्पादन में सफल हैं, बल्कि इसके सह-उत्पाद दही, घी, मक्खन, पनीर, मावा आदि बनाने के भी जानकार हैं। देश में दूध उत्पादन में 96 हजार सहकारी संस्थाएं जुड़ी हैं। 14 राज्यों की अपनी दूध सहकारी संस्थाएं हैं। इससे सात करोड़ से भी ज्यादा लोगों की आजीविका जुड़ी है। रोजाना दो लाख से भी अधिक गांवों से दूध एकत्रित करके डेयिरयों में पहुंचाया जाता है। इतना व्यापक और महत्वपूर्ण व्यवसाय होने के

देश में मिलावटी एवं नकली दूध का खूब बोलबाला है। इस मिलावट के चलते बीमारियां भी फैल रही हैं

बावजूद इसकी गुणवत्ता की निगरानी के लिए कोई नियामक तंत्र देश में नहीं है। इसलिए दूध की मिलावट में इंसानी लालच बढ़ी समस्या बना हुआ है।

इस पर नियंत्रण की दृष्टि से केंद्रीय मंत्री हर्षवर्धन ने दूध में मिलावट का पता लगाने के लिए भारत में ही निर्मित एक नए यंत्र की जानकारी दी है। उन्होंने दावा किया है कि मिलावट की मामूली मात्रा को भी यह यंत्र पकड़ने में सक्षम है। हालांकि केवल दूध के नमूने की जांच भर से शुद्ध दूध की गारंटी संभव नहीं है। वह इसलिए, क्योंकि मवेशियों को जो चारा खिलाया जाता है, उसमें भी दूध की मात्रा बढ़ाने के लिए रासायनिक तत्व मिलाए जाते हैं। यही नहीं मवेशी दूध ज्यादा दें इसके लिए उन्हें जो इंजेक्शन लगाए जाते हैं उनसे दूध का उत्पादन तो बढ़ता है, लेकिन अशुद्धता भी बढ़ती है। दूध में प्रोटीन की मात्रा बढ़ाने के लिए जो डिब्बाबंद चारा बनाया जाता है, वह नाइट्रोजन को बढ़ाता है। जाहिर है दूध की शुद्धता के लिए इन उत्पादों पर भी प्रतिबंध लगाना जरूरी है, क्योंकि दूध के नमूने की जांच में वह दूध भी अशुद्ध पाया गया है, जिसमें ऊपर से कोई मिलावट नहीं की जाती है। यह अशुद्धता चारे में मिलाए गए रसायनों के द्वारा सामने आई है।

यह सही है कि यदि दूध में मिलावट हो रही है तो इसे अच्छी सेहत के लिए दूर करना सरकार का दायित्व है, लेकिन महज तकनीक से मिलावट की समस्या का निदान हो जाएगा, यह मात्र भ्रम है। यदि इंसानी लालच दूध में मिलावट का कारण है तो तकनीक से दूध की जांच भी वही सरकारी नौकरशाही करेगी, जो भ्रष्ट है। ऐसे में तकनीक चाहे जितनी सक्षम क्यों न हो, उसकी अपनी सीमाएं हैं। मनुष्य के लालच के आगे तकनीकी उपकरणों के पराजित होने के अनेक मामले सामने आ चुके हैं। इसलिए इस विकराल समस्या के निराकरण के लिए इसके सहायक पहलुओं के भी शुद्धिकरण की जरूरत है।

(लेखक स्वतंत्र टिप्पणीकार हैं)

समय की मांग है गांधीवाद

'गांधीवाद की ओर लौटने की दरकार' शीर्षक से लिखे अपने लेख में जगमोहन सिंह राजपुत ने विविध सदर्भों में गांधीवाद के महत्व तथा उतरोत्तर गांधीवादी मूल्यों के ह्रास होते जाने पर विश्लेषण के साथ-साथ चिंता भी व्यक्त की है। वर्ष 2014 और फिर 2019 में राजनीतिक रूप से हुए बड़े परिवर्तन ने देश की आगामी योजनाओं की दिशा तय कर दी थी। अनेक योजनाएं प्रभावी ढंग से लागू हुईं, जिसका परिणाम बदलाव के रूप में सामने आया और एक नया तथा सशक्त भारत आज शिखर की ओर बढ़ रहा है। अनुच्छेद 370 का हटाया जाना उसी सफलता में एक महत्वपूर्ण कड़ी है। किंतु स्वच्छ भारत, भ्रष्टाचार मुक्त भारत, गरीबी मुक्त भारत, आतंकवाद मुक्त भारत, ग्राम विकास, जल संरक्षण, सांस्कृतिक दृष्टि से संपन्न भारत तथा राष्ट्रीयता की भावना से परिपूर्ण भारत आदि अनेक महत्वपूर्ण मुद्दे ऐसे हैं जिन पर अभी बहुत कुछ करना बाकी है। गांधी जी ने एक समर्थ तथा सशक्त भारत का स्वप्न देखा था, जिसकी चर्चा वह अपनी महत्वपूर्ण पुस्तक 'मेरे सपनों का भारत' में करते हैं, लेकिन विडंबना यह रही कि गांधीवाद पर और गांधी जी के नाम पर लंबे समय तक राजनीतिक रोटियां तो खूब सेंकी गईं, किंतु उनके सपनों का भारत पुस्तक में ही बंद रहा। गांधी जी के सत्य, अहिंसा, सदाचार तथा अपरिग्रह आदि मूल्य हाशिये पर ही पड़े रहे। निश्चित रूप से आज निहित स्वार्थों को छोड़कर गांधीवाद की ओर लौटने से ही अंतिम जन की आशा आकांक्षा पूरी हो सकेगी।

डॉ. वेदप्रकाश, हंसराज महाविद्यालय, दिल्ली

सत्य थोड़े समय के लिए दब सकता है, लेकिन एक

पाक ने सत्य स्वीकारा

मेलबाक्स

न दिन बाहर आ ही ज्यादा है। पाकिस्तान के द्वारा बालाकोट में एयर स्ट्राइक की बात सिरे से खारिज करना और फिर अपने स्वतंत्रता दिवस पर कबूल कर लेना कुछ इसी तरह के संकेत देते हैं। पुलवामा की आतंकी घटना के कुछ ही दिन बाद भारत ने जिस तरह से पाकिस्तान के बालाकोट में हवाई हमले करके पाकिस्तान के यहां पल रहे आतंकियों की कमर तोड़ने का काम किया था, यह अपने आप में बहुत बड़ी उपलब्धि थी, लेकिन उस समय पाक के पीएम ने इस कार्रवाई को झुठा बताया था जिसमें हमारे देश के भी कुछ विपक्षी नेता और पश्चिमी मीडिया उनका साथ दे रहा था। इमरान ने 14 अगस्त को पाकिस्तान के स्वतंत्रता दिवस मनाने के दौरान इस बात को स्वीकार कर लिया कि भारत ने बालकोट में जबरदस्त हमला किया था। अब जब पाक के प्रधानमंत्री ने बालकोट के सच को स्वीकार कर लिया है तो अब उम्मीद बढ़ गई है कि भारत में सुबूत मांगने वाले लोगों को भी विश्वास हो

नीरज कुमार पाठक, नोएडा

स्वामी दयानंद का योगदान

दैनिक जागरण के 15 अगस्त के अंक में गोपालकृष्ण गांधी का लेख, तिरंगा और आजादी का उत्सव, पढ़ा। इसमें लेखक ने आजादी में योगदान के लिए पांच गणमान्य व्यक्तियों का स्मरण किया। मगर 1857 के पश्चात आजादी के लिए अलख जगाने वाले क्रांतिकारी संत स्वामी दयानंद का नाम स्मरण नहीं किया। स्वामी जी का कथन था कि कोई कितना ही करे, परंतु जो स्वदेशी राज्य होता है, वह सबसे उत्तम होता है। विदेशियों का राज्य भी पूर्ण सुखदायी नहीं है। स्वामी जी के विचार चिंतन का परिणाम ही था कि देश को लाला लाजपत राय, भाई परमानंद, रामप्रसाद बिस्मिल, भगत सिंह जैसे प्रसिद्ध क्रांतिकारी मिले। ये सब

आर्य समाज से प्रभावित थे। डॉ. विवेक आर्य, शिशु रोग विशेषज्ञ, दिल्ली

सामान्य श्रेणी के छात्र

कंद्रीय माध्यम शिक्षा बोर्ड (सीबीएसइ) ने एससी और एसटी छात्रों के लिए परीक्षा शुल्क को 24 गुना बढ़ा दिया है। एससी और एसटी श्रेणी के छात्रों को 1200 रु और सामान्य श्रेणी के छात्रों को 1500 रु परीक्षा शुल्क के रूप में देने होंगे। दिल्ली सरकार भी केवल विशेष वर्ग के छात्रों के लिए चिंतित नजर आई। दिल्ली सरकार ने एससी और एसटी श्रेणी के छात्रों का बढ़ाया गया परीक्षा शुल्क अपनी जेब से भरने का एलान किया, लेकिन सामान्य श्रेणी के छात्रों का शिक्षा अधिकार क्यों नजर नहीं आता? क्या दिल्ली सरकार के लिए सभी छात्र समान नहीं हैं?

निशांत रावत, डॉ. भीमराव आंबेडकर कॉलेज

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

इन्स्

संदेश और संकेत

लिकले की प्राचीर से प्रधानमंत्री का संबोधन न सिर्फ अपनी उपलब्धियां गिनाने का अवसर होता है, बल्कि उससे अनेक राष्ट्रीय और अंतरराष्ट्रीय संदेश भी जाते हैं। इस बार भी प्रधानमंत्री ने कुछ ऐसे ही संदेश दिए। कश्मीर से धारा तीन सौ सत्तर हटाए जाने को लेकर देश में अलग-अलग तरह की प्रतिक्रियाएं उभर रही हैं, सो उस पर उनका बोलना स्वाभाविक था। उन्होंने उन वजहों को रेखांकित किया, जिसके चलते इस धारा को हटाना अनिवार्य था। जम्मू-कश्मीर और लद्दाख के लोगों के जीवन में बेहतरी लाने और सीमा पार से मिलने वाली चुनौतियों से पार पाने के लिए यह फैसला अनिवार्य था। इसके साथ ही प्रधानमंत्री ने आतंकवाद समाप्त करने को लेकर भरोसा जताया। यह पूरी दुनिया के लिए एक प्रकार से संदेश था कि भारत आतंकवाद को लेकर कितना गंभीर है और इस तरह इस समस्या से पार पाने में वह विश्व बिरादरी के साथ खड़ा है। फिर उन्होंने देश की अर्थव्यवस्था को मजबूत करने, किसानों, नव-उद्यमियों की दशा सुधारने के कुछ सूत्र दिए। इनसे सरकार के कामकाज की दिशा का संकेत मिलता है कि वह किस तरफ कदम बढ़ाने वाली है और उसकी प्राथमिकताएं क्या हैं।

इसके अलावा प्रधानमंत्री ने एक बड़ी घोषणा की कि सेना के तीनों अंगों के सुचारु संचालन के लिए एक चीफ ऑफ डिफेंस की नियुक्ति की जाएगी। यह मांग करिंगल युद्ध के समय से ही उठाई जा रही थी, पर किन्हीं वजहों से टल रही थी। हालांकि सेना के तीनों अंगों के बीच तालमेल ठीक न होने की शिकायत अभी तक नहीं आई है, पर दुनिया भर में जिस तरह सैन्य प्रशासन में बदलाव हो रहे हैं और नई चुनौतियों का सामना करने के लिए रणनीतिक स्तर पर मजबूती की जरूरत महसूस की जा रही है, उस मामले में कई देशों से हम कुछ पीछे कहे जा सकते हैं। अभी तक सेना के तीनों अंगों के प्रमुख ही अपनी जरूरतों और स्थितियों के मुताबिक निर्णय करते रहे हैं। मगर उसमें कई बार कोई कमी देखी जाती है। सेना के तीनों अंगों को स्वायत्तता इसलिए दी गई थी कि बाहरी हस्तक्षेप से उनके मनोबल और कार्यकुशलता पर कहीं नकारात्मक असर न पड़े। पर जब रक्षा मंत्रालय रणनीतिक मामलों में दखल देता और सेना के साथ तालमेल बना कर फैसले करता ही रहा है, तो फिर यह तर्क बहुत मायने नहीं रखता कि तीनों अंगों के साथ सामंजस्य बिठाने वाला अलग तंत्र गठित करने से इनके कामकाज पर असर पड़ेगा। इस बात से इनकार नहीं किया जा सकता कि बदलती स्थितियों में हमारी सैन्य जरूरतें भी बदली हैं और नई चुनौतियों का सामना करने के लिए सेना में बदलाव की जरूरत है। ऐसे में चीफ ऑफ डिफेंस की नियुक्ति से बेहतर नतीजों की उम्मीद स्वाभाविक है।

लालकिले से प्रधानमंत्री ने स्वास्थ्य और स्वच्छता, पर्यावरण आदि के क्षेत्र में बेहतरी लाने के साथ पर्यटन क्षेत्र को मजबूत बनाने पर जोर दिया। देश में पर्यटन की अपार संभावनाएं हैं। अगर इस पर ठीक से ध्यान दिया जाए, तो यह नए रोजगार पैदा करने और राजस्व की दृष्टि से बहुत मददगार साबित हो सकता है। इस क्षेत्र में पर्याप्त ध्यान नहीं दिया गया है। प्रधानमंत्री के संबोधन से यह उम्मीद जगी है कि सरकार का इस क्षेत्र पर विशेष जोर रहेगा। इससे कश्मीर का चेहरा और वहां के युवाओं का भविष्य भी बदला जा सकता है। निस्संदेह प्रधानमंत्री के इस संबोधन से बेहतरी की कुछ आस जगी है।

महंगाई का रुख

जार में बहुस्तरीय उतार-चढ़ावों के बीच मुद्रास्फीति के ताजा आंकड़े राहत देने वाले हैं। रोजमर्रा इस्तेमाल में आने वाली कुछ वस्तुओं की कीमतों में कमी दर्ज की गई है। थोक मूल्य सूचकांक के आधार पर तय होने वाली मुद्रास्फीति जुलाई में 1.08 फीसद पर आ गई। थोक मुद्रास्फीति में यह लगातार तीसरे महीने आई कमी है और इसे पिछले दो साल के दौरान सबसे निचले स्तर पर दर्ज किया गया है। पर देखने की बात यह होगी कि बाजार में आम जरूरत की बाकी वस्तुओं की कीमतों पर इसका कितना असर पड़ेगा। गौरतलब है कि थोक मुद्रास्फीति बीते जून महीने में 2.02 फीसद और पिछले साल जुलाई में 5.27 फीसद थी। जबिक जून, 2017 में यह मौजूदा आंकड़े यानी 1.08 फीसद से भी नीचे 0.90 तक चली गई थी। फिर बाजार में तेजी से साथ मुद्रास्फीति की दरों में इजाफा होता चला गया। हालांकि उसके बाद राहत दिखने लगी थी और जुलाई में खुदरा मुद्रास्फीति भी जून के 3.18 फीसद की तुलना में नरम होकर 3.15 फीसद रही।

अब देखना है कि थोक मुद्रास्फीति में ताजा राहत का कितना असर खुदरा कीमतों पर पड़ता है। बुधवार को वाणिज्य मंत्रालय की ओर से जारी आंकड़ों के मुताबिक जुलाई में थोक मूल्य सूचकांक पर आधारित खाद्य वर्ग की मुद्रास्फीति जून के 6.98 फीसद से नरम होकर 6.15 फीसद पर आ गई। आमतौर पर मौद्रिक नीति पर फैसला करते हुए रिजर्व बैंक खुदरा मुद्रास्फीति के आंकड़ों पर ही गौर करता है। इस लिहाज से देखें तो अगर थोक मूल्य सूचकांक में कमी की वजह से खुदरा मुद्रास्फीति में और गिरावट होती है तो संभव है कि अगली मौद्रिक नीति समीक्षा बैठक में भी रिजर्व बैंक की ओर से नीतिगत दरों में कमी की जाए। इसमें कोई संदेह नहीं कि थोक मुद्रास्फीति के आंकड़ों में कमी से आम लोगों को राहत तभी महसूस होगी, जब रोजमर्रा के इस्तेमाल में आने वाली जरूरी वस्तुओं की कीमतों में भी कमी आए। फिलहाल खाद्य वस्तुओं के वर्ग में आलू, समुद्री मछली और पान के पत्ते जैसी कुछ वस्तुओं की कीमतों में गिरावट दर्ज की गई। कुछ सब्जियों के भाव भी गिरे, लेकिन फलों के अलावा गेहूं, मसाले, मूंग, अरहर, धान, मटर आदि के दामों में बढ़ोतरी दर्ज की गई।

आम धारणा यही रही है कि अगर मुद्रास्फीति की दरों में कमी होती है तो वस्तुओं की कीमतों में भी गिरावट होगी। लेकिन अक्सर ऐसा होता है कि जब मुद्रास्फीति की दरों में गिरावट दर्ज की जाती है तब महंगाई में काफी उछाल देखा जाता है। जाहिर है, भारत के बाजार में खुदरा वस्तुओं का कारोबार शायद कुछ अलग ही नियमों से संचालित होने लगा है और कई स्थितियों में थोक कीमतों के मुकाबले इसके उतार-चढ़ाव अलग कारकों से प्रभावित होते हैं। मुद्रास्फीति के आंकड़े नीचे आने से रिजर्व बैंक की ओर से ब्याज दरों में कमी की उम्मीद जरूर की जाती है, लेकिन सस्ता और आसान कर्ज कई बार सट्टेबाजों और वायदा कारोबारियों को लाभ पहुंचाता है। निश्चित तौर पर उद्योगों के लिए आसान और सस्ती दरों पर कर्ज की व्यवस्था की जानी चाहिए, मगर यह ध्यान रखने की जरूरत है कि अगर आम लोगों को महंगाई और बेरोजगारी की समस्या से राहत नहीं मिलेगी, तो इसका सीधा असर बाजार पर पड़ेगा। क्रय-शक्ति में कमी की वजह से मांग में आई कमी समूचे बाजार को बुरी तरह प्रभावित कर सकती है।

कल्पमेधा

अगर हम लोकतंत्र की सच्ची भावना का विकास करना चाहते हैं तो असिहष्णु नहीं हो सकते। असिहष्णुता से पता चलता है कि हमें अपने उद्देश्य की पवित्रता में पूरा विश्वास नहीं है। –महात्मा गांधी

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सड़क सुरक्षा और नया कानून

अभिषेक कुमार सिंह

बेशक देश में तीस प्रतिशत ड्राइविंग लाइसेंस फर्जी हैं। लेकिन इसके लिए दोषी आम लोगों से ज्यादा वह व्यवस्था है जिसने फर्जी लाइसेंस बनाए या बनने दिए। सच्चाई यही है कि देश के परिवहन क्षेत्र में भारी भ्रष्टाचार है, लिहाजा सड़कों से लेकर बसों तक का रखरखाव ढंग से नहीं होता। इसी कारण बसों में बैठने वालों की जिंदगी दांव पर लगी होती है।

📜 ड़क दुर्घटनाओं में हर साल डेढ़ लाख मौतों के आंकड़ें को देख कर यह स्वाभाविक ही लगता है कि हमारे देश में इन हादसों को रोकने वाले कड़े कायदे-कानून हों और नियम तोडने वालों पर भारी से भारी दंड लगाया जाए। इस नजरिए से देखें तो हाल में संसद से पारित मोटर वाहन संशोधन विधेयक. 2019 एक बडी राहत देता हुआ प्रतीत होता है। इस बिल को कानून की शक्ल में लागू किए जाने पर गलत तरीके से वाहन चलाने वालों को पहले के मुकाबले न सिर्फ कई गुना ज्यादा जुर्माना देना होगा, बल्कि लंबे समय तक जेल की सजा भी भुगतनी पड़ेगी। हालांकि कानून का सौ फीसद पालन कराना पहले की तरह अब भी बड़ी चुनौती होगा, क्योंकि पैसे ले-देकर अभी ही कानून की आंख में धूल झोंकी जा रही है और सड़कें भारी अराजकता का प्रतीक बनी हुई हैं। इसलिए सवाल यह है कि क्या सख्त कानून और भारी जुर्माने से

सडक हादसे वास्तव में रोके जा सकेंगे? लेकिन इससे भी बड़ा सवाल तो यह है कि एक तरफ सरकार वाहन चालकों के लिए तो कड़े कायदे बना रही है, वहीं दूसरी तरफ वाहन निर्माताओं को अपने ग्राहकों को लुभाने के वास्ते गाड़ियों में मनोरंजन आदि के वे सारे इंतजाम करने की छूट मिली हुई है जो सड़क हादसे का कारण बनते हैं। इन बातों पर यदि गौर किया जाए तो पता चलेगा कि असल में सड़क सुरक्षा नियमों के उल्लंघन और दुर्घटनाओं के पीछे वाहन निर्माता कंपनियों को मिलने वाली छूटें कहीं ज्यादा जिम्मेदार हैं। नए कानून में जुर्माने और सजा के जो प्रावधान

हैं, वे पहली नजर में ही हर किसी को चौंका रहे हैं। जैसे, हेलमेट नहीं पहनने पर दुपहिया वाहन चालक को पहले के एक सौ रुपए की बजाय अब दस गुना ज्यादा यानी एक हजार रुपए जुर्माना भरना पड़ेगा। सीट बेल्ट नहीं पहनने पर भी सौ रुपए की जगह एक हजार की रसीद कटानी पड़ेगी।

बिना इंश्योरेंस के गाड़ी चलाने पर मौजूदा एक हजार के स्थान पर दो हजार रुपए वसूले जाएंगे। इसी तरह दूसरे वाहन संग होड़ लगाने पर पांच सौ रुपए की जगह दस गुना ज्यादा यानी पांच हजार का जुर्माना भरना पड़ेगा। शराब पीकर गाड़ी चलाने और खतरनाक ढंग से वाहन चलाने पर जुर्माना दो हजार रुपए से बढ़ा कर दस हजार रुपए कर दिया है, साथ ही जेल की सजा का भी प्रावधान है। नाबालिग को वाहन चलाते पकड़े जाने पर जुर्माना एक हजार से पच्चीस हजार रुपए और तीन महीने जेल की सजा को तीन साल की सजा का नियम बना दिया

गया है। इसके अलावा नाबालिग के खिलाफ भी पचपन हजार मामले आए थे, जिनमें बाईस हजार लोगों को जान गंवानी पड़ी थी। इसलिए नए कानून के मुताबिक ऐसे मामले में पीड़ित के घायल और मृत होने पर आरोपी वाहन चालक पर साढ़े बारह हजार और पच्चीस लाख जुर्माने का प्रावधान है।

हालांकि ऐसा नहीं है कि सड़क नियमों के उल्लंघन और हादसे की स्थिति में सारी सजाएं वाहन चालकों के लिए हों, बल्कि वाहन की गलत बनावट और उससे सुरक्षा के मानदंड पूरे नहीं होने पर वाहन डीलर और निर्माता पर भी भारी जुर्माने का प्रावधान किया गया है। दोषपूर्ण सड़क बनाने वाले कंपनी-ठेकेदार पर एक लाख रुपए जुर्माने की बात है। नए कानून के तहत

सरकार एक मोटर दुर्घटना कोष भी बनाएगी जो सड़क का इस्तेमाल करने वाले प्रत्येक व्यक्ति को अनिवार्य बीमा कवर देगा। पर जुर्माने और सजाओं के इन सारे इंतजामों से अलग ज्यादातर सड़क हादसों के बारे में एक आम राय यह है कि ये दुर्घटनाएं मानवीय भूल का नतीजा होती हैं। जैसे यातायात सिग्नल की अनदेखी, हेलमेट नहीं पहनना, सीट बेल्ट न लगाना, गाड़ी चलाते वक्त झपकी आ जाना और नाबालिंग को वाहन चलाने देना ऐसी ही लापरवाही हैं।

जुर्माने और सजा की व्यवस्थाओं को आलोचना के दायरे से बाहर रखने में कोई गुरेज नहीं, बशर्ते जुर्माने की बढ़ी रकम की आड़ में यातायात पुलिसकर्मी विधिवत चालान करने की बजाय खुद की जेब भरने में न लग जाएं। अभी यही होता है कि सड़क के नियम-कायदों की किसी अनदेखी पर बहुसंख्य लोग ट्रैफिक



पुलिसकर्मियों की नीयत जानते हुए सौदेबाजी कर किशोर न्याय कानून के तहत कार्रवाई होगी। हिट तय जुर्माने से आधी रकम पर मामला रफा-दफा एंड रन मामले तेजी से बढ़े हैं, वर्ष 2018 में ऐसे करवा लेते हैं। मुमकिन है कि दिल्ली-बंगलुरु जैसे बड़े शहरों में मौके पर मामले रफा-दफा करने वाली ऐसी नजीरों की संख्या कम हो, लेकिन देश के बाकी शहरों में तो तकरीबन यही हालात हैं।

> सारी सडक दुर्घटनाओं को मानवीय भूल के तर्क से आगे जाकर देखने की जरूरत अब बनती है। कुछ महीने पहले यमुना एक्सप्रेस-वे पर उत्तर प्रदेश परिवहन निगम की पचास यात्रियों से भरी बस लखनऊ से दिल्ली के रास्ते में ड्राइवर को अचानक झपकी आने के कारण बेकाबू होकर रेलिंग तोड़ती हुई नाले में जा गिरी थी और इस हादसे में चालीस से ज्यादा लोग मारे गए थे। बेशक यह मानवीय भूल थी पर इसका अहम कारण यह था कि

लखनऊ से दिल्ली के पांच सौ किलोमीटर के सफर की पूरी जिम्मेदारी सिर्फ एक ड्राइवर पर थी, जबिक चार सौ किलोमीटर पर ड्राइवर बदल देने का नियम बना हुआ है। थकान की स्थिति में ड्राइवर की सफर में आंख लग जाना आखिर कैसे मानवीय भूल हो सकती है! रोडवेज के पास ड्राइवरों की कमी है। मांग के अनुपात में बसें भी कम हैं, इसलिए अनुबंधित बसें चलाई जाती हैं। एक समस्या और है, जिस पर नीति-निर्धारकों ने

शायद ध्यान देने की जरूरत ही नहीं समझी। असल में, जिन उल्लंघनों के लिए वाहन चालकों को दोषी मान कर जुर्माना लगाने की व्यवस्था है, उनमें से कुछ के बारे में यह विचार करने की जरूरत है कि कहीं वे वाहन निर्माता की तरफ से दी गई सुविधा का ही तो अंजाम नहीं है। जैसे वाहन चलाते समय मोबाइल पर बात करना टैफिक नियमों का उल्लंघन

है और इसके लिए सजा का प्रावधान है। लेकिन अब तो ज्यादातर कारों में वाहन चलाते समय बात करने की सुविधा है। इन कारों के स्टीयरिंग में लगा एक बटन कार को आपके मोबाइल से जोड़ देता है और आप बिना मोबाइल उठाए गाड़ी चलाते समय बात कर सकते हैं, या तेज आवाज में संगीत के मजे ले सकते हैं। क्या इस तरह वाहन चलाते वक्त बात करने या तेज संगीत सुनने से हादसे नहीं होते? ऐसा होता है लेकिन यह खुली छूट वाहन निर्माताओं को मिली हुई है। ऐसे में यातायात पुलिस वाहन चलाते समय मोबाइस पर बात करने वालों के खिलाफ कैसे कार्रवाई करेगी? जबिक हकीकत यह है कि गाड़ी चलाते समय मोबाइल का उपयोग करने से होने वाले हादसों की संख्या मामूली नहीं है।

बेशक, देश में तीस प्रतिशत ड्राइविंग लाइसेंस

फर्जी हैं। लेकिन इसके लिए दोषी आम लोगों से ज्यादा वह व्यवस्था है जिसने फर्जी लाइसेंस बनाए या बनने दिए। सच्चाई यही है कि देश के परिवहन क्षेत्र में भारी भ्रष्टाचार है, लिहाजा सड़कों से लेकर बसों तक का रखरखाव ढंग से नहीं होता। इसी कारण बसों तक में बैठने वालों की जिंदगी दांव पर लगी होती है। अगर देश भर में बसों आदि के अलावा सड़कों और हाइवे के रख-रखाव, सार्वजनिक वाहनों के परिचालन, ड्राइवरों की योग्यता और अन्य मामलों में एक-समान मानक लागू कर उनका पालन सुनिश्चित कराया जाए, तभी लोग खुद के या किसी सार्वजनिक परिवहन प्रणाली के जरिए निश्चिंत होकर यात्रा कर सकेंगे।

परदे के नायक

संतोष उत्सुक

ारानी फिल्मों में कई बार फिल्म का हीरो चोर होता उथा। हमारे दिग्गज अभिनेताओं और अभिनेत्रियों ने चोरी करने वाले की भूमिका में सशक्त अभिनय किया है। कहानी और चरित्रों की जिंदगी में आते नए उतार-चढाव दिलचस्प राज खोलते थे कि यह चरित्र चोर क्यों बना। उसे भूख ने चोर बनाया या जिंदगी की किसी और परिस्थिति या व्यवस्था ने। पहले वह ईमानदार हुआ करता था। फिर व्यवस्था का शिकार, फिर हीरोइन के निश्छल प्यार व समर्पण के कारण फिल्म के अंत में वह ईमानदारी और मेहनत की जिंदगी का दामन थाम लेता था। कुछ चोर वास्तव में 'नायक' होते थे। वे बेईमानी से अमीरों का कमाया धन चुरा कर गरीबों में बांटते थे। फिल्में सामाजिक बुराइयां दिखाती थीं, साथ-साथ उनके हल भी सुझाती थीं। दर्शक भी प्रेरित होते थे।

हमारी फिल्में बदलीं. 'एंग्रीमैन' हमारी फिल्मों और समाज का 'हीरो' बनता गया। फिल्मों में चोरी, बदमाशी, हेराफेरी के जो नए तरीके मनोरंजन के नाम पर दिखाए जाते, धीरे-धीरे समाज उनका अनुकरण करने लगा। यानी पहले फिल्में समाज का आईना होती थीं, फिर समाज फिल्मों की छाप होने लगा। 'बुद्धू

बक्सा' ज्यादा व्यावसायिक होता गया और फैलता दर्शक वर्ग और बहुत कुछ सीखने में लग गया। वास्तव में समाज में बिगड़ते राजनीतिक अनुशासन, बढ़ती और गहराती असमानता, प्रशासकीय भेदभाव, बढ़ते स्वार्थ और ताकतवर लोगों के मनमाने रवैये ने दूसरों को भी बदलने के लिए कुप्रेरित किया।

इधर कला संस्कृति के पहरुओं ने दर्शकों को नए मनोरंजन के नाम पर मनमानी कहानियों पर बनी फिल्में दिखानी शुरू कीं। यह

दुनिया मेरे आगे कुछ भी दिखाना समाज के सांस्कृतिक विकास या सही बदलाव के लिए बिल्कुल नहीं, बल्कि पैसा कमाने के लिए था। एक वक्त आया जब हेराफेरी, चोरी, बदमाशी, बलात्कार करने वाले सामाजिक चरित्र ने अच्छे हीरो की सुनियोजित तरीके से हत्या कर दी। परिस्थितिवश इन चरित्रों का समाज में अवतरण हो गया और अब उसी 'हीरो' बने विलेन का जमाना चल रहा है। बिना मेहनत किए पैसा ठगने या लुटने

का चलन समाज में काबिज होता जा रहा है। अब अधिकतर फिल्मों से उद्देश्य गायब है। फिल्में खालिस मनोरंजन कर पैसा कमाने के लिए ही बनाई जाने लगी हैं। फिल्मों का हीरो चोर नहीं होता, लेकिन चोरी की संस्कृति कम नहीं हुई है, बल्कि समाज में दबंगई

फैलते हुए गहराती जा रही है। पिछले कई साल से सुनते-पढ़ते आ रहे हैं कि फलां क्षेत्र के फलां बैंक के एटीएम में बदमाशों ने सेंध लगा कर चोरी की। वास्तव में एटीएम की मशीन काफी सुरक्षित होती है और आमतौर पर इसे तोड़ना आसान नहीं होता। चोर-लुटेरा आ जाए, लेकिन उसे कुछ करना न आता हो तो काफी समय खराब करने के बाद भी नकदी लुटी नहीं जा सकती। एटीएम मशीन को पहुंचे नुकसान से ग्राहकों को बहुत असुविधा होती है। बैंक

कंपनी का नुकसान होता है। कई बार एटीएम मशीन की मरम्मत का अनुमानित खर्च नई मशीन की कीमत से ज्यादा होता है। पिछले कई सालों की खबरें बताती हैं कि शातिर लुटेरों ने 'सुरक्षित' तरीका इस्तेमाल किया। उन्होंने एटीएम मशीन से पैसे निकालने की कोशिश नहीं की, बल्कि पूरी मशीन को ही उखाड़ कर अपने साथ ले गए और इत्मीनान से पैसा निकाला। ऐसे मामलों में पुलिस को भी नई शैली में ज्यादा मेहनत करनी पड़ी। चोरों ने एक नहीं कई बार ऐसा किया।

वाले भी परेशान होते हैं, बीमा

पिछले दिनों देवभूमि कहे जाने वाले हिमाचल प्रदेश की औद्योगिक नगरी बद्दी में बदमाशों ने एटीएम में संभवतः नकदी भरते समय नजर रखी और जब एटीएम में लाखों रुपए डाल दिए गए तो पहले आजमाए सफल

और सुरक्षित तरीके से लुटेरे एटीएम मशीन ही उखाड़ ले गए, ताकि आराम से बैठ कर नोट गिन सकें। राज्य में एटीएम मशीन चुरा ले जाने का शायद यह पहला मामला था। यह अलग बात है कि पुलिस ने चौकसी दिखाते हुए चोरों को दबोच लिया। चोरियों में व्यावसायिक खुलापन, निडरता और दबंगई बढ़ती और फैलती जा रही है।

इसका एक दिलचस्प उदाहरण देश की सुरक्षित राजधानी का है। कुछ लोगों ने ज्यादा गाड़िया चुराने के लिए क्रेन ही रख लीं, ताकि काम आसान हो जाए। उन्हें लगा कि क्रेन से गाड़ी उठाने पर कोई शक नहीं करेगा, क्योंकि ऐसी कार्रवाई तो पुलिस ही करती है। वे लोग गाड़ियां उठा कर दूसरे शहरों में कबाड़ियों को बेच देते थे जो गाडियों को काट कर पार्ट निकाल कर आगे बेचते थे। क्रेन द्वारा कार को घसीट कर ले जाने पर एक जागरूक पुलिसकर्मी को शक हुआ तो चोर पकड़े गए। बाद में चोरों ने बताया कि उन्हें इस तरह गाडियां उठाने का आइंडिया अपराध कथओं पर आधारित एक धारावाहिक से मिला। पुलिस वालों को भी इस नए चलन ने हैरान किया होगा। सरकार को चाहिए कि पुलिस को ज्यादा प्रशिक्षित कर्मचारी, आधुनिक संचार व्यवस्था और सुरक्षा उपकरणों से लैस करे, ताकि आने वाली चुनौतियों से अविलंब निबटा जा सके। क्या फिल्मों और सीरियलों में अच्छे चरित्रों की वापसी की जरूरत नहीं है?

धारा के साथ

क्ति से कमजोर चल रही कांग्रेस पांच अगस्त को फिर 🖣 गच्चा खा गई, जब केंद्र सरकार ने जम्मू कश्मीर से धारा 370 हटाने का बिल संसद में पेश किया। 2014 से चुनावों में लगातार पिट रही यह पार्टी एक बार फिर जनमानस को नहीं समझ पाई और धारा 370 के मुद्दे से जुड़ी भारतीय मानसिकता की संवेदनशीलता का एहसास नहीं कर सकी। नजीजतन, वह कश्मीर मुद्दे पर बंट गई और जनमानस में पिट गई। जिस राष्ट्रीयता व राष्ट्र बोध का उद्घोष कर भाजपा आगे बढ़ रही है कांग्रेस न उसे समझ पा रही है न समझने की कोशिश कर रही है। आज देश के पचास फीसद से अधिक मतदाता उस नई पीढ़ी के हैं जिसे कांग्रेस की स्वतंत्रता संग्राम में दी गई कुर्बानियों से कुछ लेना-देना नहीं है। नई पीढ़ी के सोचने के प्रतिमान व मूल्य बदल गए हैं मगर कांग्रेस अपनी घिसीपिटी रीति-नीति पर चल कर देश में अपनी भूमिका तय करना चाहती है, जिसे नई पीढ़ी तो क्या, कांग्रेस के अंदर मौजूद नेता भी स्वीकार नहीं कर रहे और पार्टी को छोडते जा रहे हैं। बदले परिप्रेक्ष्य में कांग्रेस भले भाजपा की नीति पर न चले. पर उसे अत्यंत नृतन ढंग से शीर्ष नेतृत्व से लेकर कार्यकर्ता तक अपनी रीति-नीति, सोच, चिंतन, संरचना व कार्य शैली में आमूलचूल परिवर्तन करना होगा।

कांग्रेस को बोध नहीं था कि अनुच्छेद 370 देश की जनता के लिए अत्यंत संवेदनशील मुद्दा है और 1956 से अब तक झेलम में बहुत पानी बह चुका है। संविधान सभा के अध्यक्ष डॉक्टर आंबेडकर की स्पष्ट मनाही के बाद इस धारा को शेख अब्दुल्ला की जिद और नेहरू की भावकता के चलते राष्ट्रपति के आदेश से संविधान में जोड़ा गया था। यह धारा जम्मू-कश्मीर के निवासियों को तो विशेष अधिकार देती थी पर शेष भारतीयों से गैर बराबरी करती थी। इसी धारा के कारण आजादी के समय जम्मू-कश्मीर में बसे पाकिस्तान से आए लाखों

शरणार्थियों को मताधिकार से वंचित कर रखा गया था। भारतीय संसद द्वारा पारित अधिकांश कानून वहां लागू नहीं होते थे। प्रदेश का ज्यादातर बजट केवल कश्मीर घाटी में खर्च होता था। अलगाववादियों के कुछ परिवार वहां फल-फूल रहे थे, आम आदमी की हालत खस्ता थी और बावजूद विशेष अधिकारों के कश्मीर के लोग पाकिस्तान का गुणगान करते थे। जवाहरलाल नेहरू ने उम्मीद जरूर की थी कि यह धारा धीरे-धीरे घिस जाएगी पर ऐसा हुआ नहीं। समय के साथ यह धारा देश की एकता व अखंडता के लिए खतरा बनती गई। इतनी कि भारत सरकार अपने कानूनों को लागू करने में लाचार थी। विचारधारा से प्रतिबद्धता हो सकती है पर देश व

हो जाती है। कांग्रेस इन्हीं भावनाओं का अंदाजा नहीं लगा सकी। वह एक विपक्षी दल है और इस नाते विरोध करना उसकी सियासी जरूरत है पर राजा हरि सिंह के पुत्र कर्ण सिंह सरीखा दृष्टिकोण रख कांग्रेस अपनी भद पिटने से बचा सकती थी।

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समता का सपना

भारत को स्वतंत्र हुए 72 वर्ष हो गए हैं, लेकिन इतने वर्षों बाद भी स्वतंत्रता और समानता से जुड़े प्रश्नों का उठना बंद नहीं

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

जनमानस की मांग प्रतिबद्धता से ऊपर है। 1984 में जब खालिस्तान आंदोलन देश के लिए खतरा बन गया तो तत्कालीन प्रधानमंत्री इंदिरा गांधी को सख्त कार्रवाई करनी ही पड़ी थी। बाद में मुख्यमंत्री बेअंत सिंह ने भी ऐसी ही सख्ती दिखाई। हालांकि दोनों को शहीद होना पड़ा पर जनमानस और समय की मांग सख्ती की थी। दोनों की कार्रवाई से जहां देश बच गया वहीं पंजाब में अमन भी कायम हो गया।

जम्मू-कश्मीर को देश का अभिन्न अंग बनाने के लिए धारा 370 का हटना जरूरी था जिसके लिए लोकतांत्रिक सख्ती अनिवार्य थी। हालांकि स्थानीय विधानसभा के प्रस्ताव का न होना लोकतांत्रिक प्रक्रिया का एक मुद्दा हो सकता है लेकिन देश हित में और परिस्थितिवश ऐसे निर्णय लेना आवश्यक हो जाए तो जनमानस की भावना ही लोकतंत्र का प्रतीक हुआ है। राजनीतिक क्षेत्र में समानता तो समान अधिकारों के रूप में निर्धारित की गई है लेकिन यह आर्थिक और सामाजिक क्षेत्र में निर्धारित नहीं है। लोगों के पास समान राजनीतिक अधिकार तो हैं पर किसी न किसी वजह से समाज में उनके साथ अभी भी भेदभाव हो रहा है। हमारे समाज में कुछ लोगों को अनेक विशेषाधिकार प्राप्त है मगर कुछ लोग बुनियादी जरूरतों के लिए भी तरस रहे हैं। इन लोगों के लिए स्वतंत्रता अभी भी दूर है। आखिर ऐसी स्वतंत्रता का क्या फायदा जिसमें नागरिक अपनी

न्यूनतम आवश्यकताओं के लिए भी तरस रहा हो! • चांद मोहम्मद, आंबेडकर कॉलेज, दिल्ली

शोहदों का आतक

'बेटी बचाओ बेटी पढ़ाओ' योजना के तहत उत्तर प्रदेश सरकार बेटियों की शिक्षा और सुरक्षा

को लेकर हर जिले के प्रमुख विद्यालयों और महिला कॉलेजों में जागरूकता कार्यक्रम चला रही है। इसके बावजूद जमीनी हकीकत यह है कि लड़िकयों के साथ छेड़छाड़ करने, भद्दा फाब्तया कसने और अश्लील इशारे करने वाले शोहदे अपनी हरकतों से बाज नहीं आ रहे हैं। इनका आतंक इस कदर हावी है कि अनेक लोगों ने अपनी बहन-बेटियों का विद्यालय जाना ही बंद करा दिया है। उनका कहना है कि हम इतने सक्षम नहीं कि इन शोहदों से लड़ सकें। ये राह चलती लड़कियों का हाथ पकड़ कर अश्लील हरकतें करने से भी बाज नहीं आते हैं। सरकार से गुजारिश है कि बालिकाओं की सुरक्षा के लिए स्कूल-कॉलेज, कोचिंग संस्थान, फूड प्लाजा आदि जगहों पर सादी वर्दी में पुलिस बल की तैनाती कराए।

अच्छा कदम

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उत्तर प्रदेश में सडक पर किसी भी प्रकार के धार्मिक आयोजन करने पर पाबंदी लगा दी गई है। यह सरकार का अत्यंत प्रशंसनीय कदम है। अभी तक एक वर्ग अक्सर सड़क पर नमाज पढ़ता था जिससे सड़कों पर जाम लग जाता था और आने-जाने वालों को भारी दिक्कत का सामना करना पड़ता था। इसके जवाब में दूसरे वर्ग ने सड़कों पर हनुमान चालीसा का पाठ करना प्रारंभ कर दिया। इसकी वजह से कुछ दिन पहले अलीगढ़ में भयंकर जाम की स्थिति उत्पन्न हो गई थी। इन तमाम बातों को देखते हुए उत्तर प्रदेश सरकार ने फैसला किया है कि अब से सड़क पर कोई धार्मिक आयोजन नहीं होगा। यह फैसला समाज और जनता के हित में लिया गया है। हम सबको इसका स्वागत करना चाहिए।

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नई दिल्ली