CHINESE WHISPERS

While Union Social Justice Minister

Thaawar Chand Gehlot is the leader of

the House in the Rajya Sabha, Home

Minister Amit Shah is the person BJP

guidance whenever he is present.

ministers and floor strategists turn to for

opportunity to assert his position. As the

Raiva Sabha reconvened after lunch to

Medical Commission Bill, the Opposition

protested that neither Health Minister

Harsh Vardhan, nor his deputy Ashwini

Kumar Choubey was present in the

House. It is customary for at least one

the House when it is discussing a Bill

Chairman Harivansh had to adjourn the

House for 10 minutes. A message was sent

to the two ministers. As the two ministers

reached the House nearly out of breath,

tamasha? Neither of you were here and

moved by the department. Deputy

Gehlot scolded them: "What is this

minister of a department to be present in

continue the debate on the National

However, on Thursday Gehlot had his

Gehlot makes a point

Business 'institutions' essential for India's growth

Like brakes and shock absorbers in a car, society needs cushioning from shocks and volatility



INNOCOLUMN

R GOPALAKRISHNAN

eading recent books on business — pharma, financial services, technology firms — it appears that we love to hate business. The truth is that we just cannot do without them. So we mock them, criticise them. Listening to populist politicians, economists, academics and journalists, one could conjure up a vision of the inhabitants of the commercial world as greedy, power-hungry megalomaniacs.

It would not be an incorrect vision, but it would be a seriously partial one. It would be as true and as valid as damning all politicians, bureaucrats, journalists and social sector people through examples of the venal among them. In my last column, I concluded with the statement that there is a difference between a company and an institution, and that, more and more, India needs institutions to realise her potential. Business and entrepreneurship can be soul-elevating, I know that. Atomic physicist, Niels Bohr, said many decades ago, "The opposite of a truth is not a falsehood. It may be yet another truth.'

Business makes most of the stuff that we enjoy, it gives the nation jobs and is a synonym for both opportunity and for prosperity. Business deserves a high status in society and should be respected for its virtues, while striving to reduce its vices. Business is human. The frauds by corrupt business are an extension of the propensity of society. Business practitioners stand as much on a pedestal as educationists, doctors, administrators and the defence forces.

Society needs aggressive, entrepreneurial people, they are like the fuel in the car. Second, business energy must be guided with capabilities and infrastructure (education,

health, housing and communications being the gear). Third, like brakes and shock absorbers in a car, society needs cushioning from shocks and volatility (regulations, surveillance). The three components of a wholesome society are business, infrastructure and governance.

For the first 35 years after independence till liberalisation, Indian business was regarded by society with huge suspicion. Over the next couple of decades since liberalisation, Indian business spread wings in India as well as globally. For sure, some overstretched, a few shockingly so. However, this is a phase in larger economic development.

India needs great business institutions, not just companies. Institutions have durability, philosophy, talent and structures, leading to dependable performance. The building of companies as institutions is at a nascent stage in India. Creating and celebrating strong business institutions must become a national priority.

Business is a fabulous force for good in society, conducted by good people with good results for the national good. For example, Unilever and Tata have been highly ethical and responsible companies for over a century, and they have done so with occasional displays of the human frailties that all of us are prone to. In fact, it is those occasional frailties that remind the observer that there are no gods in society — there are some outstanding people, many good people, with a small number of misdirected people.

As some scholars have pointed out society has three types of people, all operating in the same cauldron. There are "the fearful", who are people with wealth and status but who are afraid of losing them swiftly. Think of zamindars and the princely states from before Independence; think of the wealthy, slow-growing Japanese or European countries, which are anxious that their future generations may be worse off than their own generation. Then, there are "the tormented" who seek to establish themselves as equal members of society — a position that they have failed to achieve because of the historical malpractices of the privileged.

Recall the tribal and Dalit communities in India, or the Arabs in the world economic order, as examples of the tormented. Lastly, there are "the aspirants", the people who fight with industriousness and hard work to win a better life for themselves and their descendants. Think of the South Asian, Chinese and Indian economies. Just as the nurturing and support of the south eastern, Chinese and Indian economies have been important for the global economy, business and enterprise, the aspirant class in the Indian economy needs growing and legitimate nurturing in the coming years.

Business and entrepreneurship can do what governments and infrastructures cannot. Business and trade alone can create wealth, growth and jobs. I feel optimistic that this distinctive role for business in the national economy will be supported by society in the that is developing. Business management is a great career for young people — for at least the next 50 years!

The author is a corporate advisor and Distinguished Professor of IIT Kharagpur. He was Director of Tata Sons and Vice Chairman of Hindustan Unilever rgonal@themindworks.me

English versus Hindi

the House was adjourned."



Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (MDMK) leader and Rajya Sabha Member Vaiko (pictured) on Thursday rattled everyone - from Treasury Bench members to the

Opposition, including the ally Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK). As Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan began his reply on the National Medical Commission Bill in the evening, Vaiko demanded the minister speak in English since the issue was a national one. While the Chair said an interpretation facility was available, MPs of the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Janata Dal (United) tried to shout Vaiko down and demanded the minister speak in Hindi. When Harsh Vardhan, who had switched to English, reverted to Hindi, Vaiko protested. When the Congress' Jairam Ramesh and the DMK's Tirushi Siva tried to mollify him, Vaiko shooed them away. Harsh Vardhan was rattled enough to tell Union Home Minister Amit Shah that he was unsure as to which language he should speak in. The MDMK leader has championed the anti-Hindi movement in Tamil Nadu, and, during slogan shouting in the Rajya Sabha, makes it a point not to add his voice to Hindi slogans.

Tug of war

An upcoming mega convention centre was allotted land in the capital's south-west sub-city of Dwarka last year and construction was expected to be completed by the end of 2019. Now the department executing the project is believed to be lobbying for extra land beyond the allotted perimeter while the Delhi Development Authority (DDA), the city's land-owning agency, is trying hard not to cede ground beyond what it has allotted. The reason, say top DDA officials, is that the land at the location comes at a huge premium. Now the DDA has intensified efforts to auction the patches adjoining the allotted land because it fears that high-profile people involved in the project may use their clout to get what they wanted, said sources.

India-UK relations need a reboot

Is Boris Johnson the man to do it?



HASAN SUROOR

oris Johnson's elevation to Downing Street has evoked con-Downing Street has evoked end flicting reactions ranging from a mixture of barely-suppressed ridicule and concern in Europe and Russia to hoops of joy in the White House with Donald Trump hailing it as "excellent" news for US-UK relations. Prime Minister Narendra Modi confined himself to a bland tweet saying he looked forward to working with Johnson to "further strengthen India-UK partnership".

Currently, for all the apparent bonhomie, the "partnership" is not exactly flourishing. The two countries are just about muddling through, avoiding any major crisis but showing little sense of urgency to reboot a flagging relationship. Will things look up now that there's a self-proclaimed Indophile (calling himself India's "son-in-law") in-charge at No 10?

At the heart of the problem is a lingering colonial mindset that still informs British foreign policy treating former colonies simply as markets to be mined. The reality that countries

like India are now major economic powers in their own right and expect to be treated as equal partners in accordance with their new status has not fully sunk in.

Here's what British Parliament's influential Foreign Affairs Committee said in a report only a few weeks ago: "India's place in the world is changing fast and the UK government needs to adjust its strategy to fit India's enhanced influence and power; the UK cannot afford to be complacent or rely on historical ties.'

It warned that Britain risked being left behind in the global race to engage with India and called for an urgent review of its current approach. Is the Johnson administration willing to take up the challenge? It will mean ditching successive Tory governments' policy solely focused on pressuring India into opening up its economy to British businesses while offering little in return.

Johnson's predecessors, David Cameron and Theresa May, talked a good talk describing India-UK ties as one of the "most important relationships of the 21st century" but then went on to take decisions that directly hurt Indian citizens — like retrospective changes to residency rules for highskilled immigrants that forced many legally settled Indian migrants to return home. Indian protests were ignored. Indians have also been affected by frequent tightening of visa rules for students and intra-company transfers. Indian businesses find visa rules a major hindrance to trading with Britain.

Will Johnson be more accommo-



Looking for clues to Johnson's India policy in his rhetorical flourishes and cabinet choices is to ignore the real issues that divide the two countries

dating given his much-adumbrated "India connection" (through his estranged wife Marina Wheeler's Indian ancestry), and his personal chemistry with Narendra Modi. He has called him a "firecracker", and a "political phenomenon".

His appointment of Priti Patel, a Modi supporter, as home secretary (one of the three great offices of state). and promotion of Alok Sharma and Rishi Sunak to senior positions are seen as a nod towards the BJP/Modi leaning sections of the Indian diaspora.

But looking for clues to Johnson's

India policy (to the extent that he might have a cogent policy given his reputed impatience with details) in his rhetorical flourishes and cabinet choices is to ignore the real issues that divide the two countries. The most contentious of these is immigration with India pressing for a preferential visa regime for its citizens on the lines of the one China enjoys to facilitate a "grand" post-Brexit trade deal Britain

The May administration's response was a blunt "no". Adding insult to injury, it excluded India from an

expanded list of countries from which student visa applicants require "reduced level of documentation". A decision described by Lord Bilimoria, Chancellor of Birmingham University. as "another kick in the teeth for India".

The May government also tried to arm-twist India into taking back thousands of people who it says are Indian citizens living in Britain illegally. But India has questioned the figure. Modi declined to sign an MoU on the issue during his UK visit last year for the Commonwealth conference.

During the Brexit referendum campaign, Johnson promised to open up immigration from Commonwealth countries once free movement of workers from the European Union stopped. Now, however, he's touting an Australian-style points system to be applicable to all applicants with no exemptions for Commonwealth citizens.

Priti Patel, in-charge of immigration, has made clear that only those with "highest skills" would be considered — and that too "only if they have a job offer from an employer registered with the Home Office and if they can speak English".

So, as of now, the prospects of improved India-UK relations don't look too promising. But the threshold is so low that even a slight bounce might seem like a great leap forward. Assuming of course that Johnson himself survives the Brexit turmoil.

The writer is based in London. His new book. Who Killed Liberal Islam, is published

INSIGHT

Is economics enamoured by taboos?



SOUMYA KANTI GHOSH & SAMIR K JHA

ince the global financial crisis, there have been serious doubts about the theory that the economy functions best with "invisible hand" and it should not be jeopardised through government "intervention". In particular, the discipline (read economics) has somehow rejected the pattern of simple policy prescriptions - that any standard economics textbook imbibes.

At the outset, it can be put on record that just as it is important not to overstate what economics can do, it is critical not to understate it. After all, who would expect to predict global outcomes that depend on the individual actions of about five billion working-age individuals, not to mention the intervention of natural and man-made disasters? While this is true, it is also true that economics provides the essential tools for understanding, and to some degree, shaping those events.

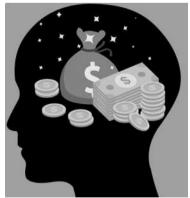
Herein lies the crux of the problem. Such understanding often results in economists limiting their options by reducing their subject to a set of issues that could be modelled. In the process, they are committed to their methods and beliefs that any further movement in the economy, new problems or new topics of interest, are more likely to sit outside their self-defined purview than within. Most of the times, the experts get tempted, therefore, to bang such new problems into shapes to redefine them as per their own predetermined mindset.

Another difficulty that impacts economics as a subject is the fact that the future is inherently uncertain: it cannot be calculated. A lot of human behaviour and some fundamental economic institutions — the desire to hold money, for example — are the result of this fact. Let us again begin with what hap-

pened after the financial crisis. In 2011, when the unemployment rate was 9 per cent, Reinhart and Rogoff had explained that "current debt trajectories are a risk to long-term growth and stability, with many advanced economies already reaching or exceeding the important marker of 90 per cent of GDP". However, even eight years down the line, there has been no such tipping point. However, that did not stop one

from arguing that the main threat to the economy was spiralling debt and a resulting spike in interest rates that would lead to the crowding out of private investment and a stagflation crisis of the type experienced in the 1970s. Such warnings miserably failed to come true but it did not stop the misplaced policies of fiscal austerity. If we look at Greece, it is a classic example of secular stagnation. In fact, Greece were to undergo heavy austerity but did not walk down that path and currently yields are at 2 per cent.

Sadly, this crowding out argument has gained enormous precedence in India too. This was clearly evident in a speech by former RBI Deputy Governor Viral Acharya just a few days back. As economists, we have been now following this debate for ages that combined savings of the government is crowding out private sector investment in India. At the same time, we are also witness to the rising noises about slowing down of growth in India due to falling demands. Simple economics suggests these two cannot co-exist. If growth is



demand constrained, increase in private investment will only lead to higher output. And, a part of the higher output will be saved and, in return, will be sufficient to support private investment. Fact is, only when growth is capacity constrained, which apparently is not the case right now in India, any idea of crowding out can be deemed relevant.

Similarly, government borrowings pushing up interest rate is also being pointed out, again mostly by the same set of experts who are making the noises about crowding out. But again, we need to keep in mind the fact that the government borrowings are the additional flow demand, while interest rates are, primarily determined by stock demand and supply of funds. Instances like the above, quite justifiably, force those with not much interest in the debate to conclude (rightfully?) that economics is just a way for the economists and their brethren to rationalise what they already believe.

However, the problem is also in the other direction, that is, misguided fiscal adventurism that had played spoilsport in a country like India. But again, the link between a higher fiscal deficit and inflation or CAD seems to have broken down in recent years.

Importantly, Dr Acharya's paper rightfully argues that market players

pick up government debt when private debt is risky; that is exactly what is happening now. However, this cannot be called crowding out as claimed in the paper. Additionally, a jump in government debt results in a decline in private debt, clearly implying we are in a demand constrained economy.

Let us also consider the example of monetary policy. Even after years of quantitative easing (QE) and ultra-low interest rates, advanced economies particularly the Eurozone - have continued to undershoot even the minimum inflation targets. Thus the longstanding assumptions downward nominal wage rigidity of the 60s and 70s when organised labour were much stronger is clearly not in vogue now. Employees are willing to work even at a lower wage rate explaining much of the slower growth in labour productivity and a breakdown of the Phillips curve. We are witnessing similar situation in India right now with minimum wage growth and declining productivity.

Another big theoretical assumption, particularly at the micro level, is how strong profit growth will attract new entrants to the market, encouraging more investment. But in recent times, corporate profits and market concentration are both on the rise.

To sum up, knocking economics has become a popular sport, even within the profession. But the world would be much poorer without its contribution to understanding how societies function and without economists' suggestions as to how politicians might improve them. And economists themselves could do wonders by simply incorporating the country-specific factors in their econometric models rather than just applying them in toto.

(The authors thank Prof Sabyasachi Kar for his comments)

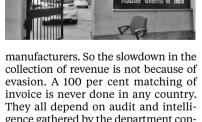
Ghosh is group chief economic advisor and Jha AGM, SBI, Views are personal

LETTERS

CAG's imputation wrong This refers to "2 years after roll-out, GST

glitches still exist, says CAG report" (July 31). The Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) in his report on GST for 2017-18, which was tabled in the Parliament on Tuesday, pointed out that "the invoice matching system has not kicked-in". The CAG also said, "Invoice matching is a critical requirement that would yield full benefit of this major tax reform". The report's indirect implication that a slowdown in tax collection is because of not matching 100 per cent of invoices, isn't correct. Such an imputation is based on the presumption that evasion is taking place because of not matching. The reason why it is not correct is that an overwhelmingly large percentage of tax payers are not evaders. Government-owned companies which manufacture a very large amount of goods and services do not evade. Large companies having excellent reputation and big service sector companies (such as Tata, Mahindra and Mahindra and Infosys etc) do not evade either.

There is already a huge audit system which conducts auditing with the help of computer system installed in the department. Training from Canadian Government for systemic auditing has also been very effective. Then there is an anti-evasion organisation looking into the evasion aspect of companies prone to it. They depend on collecting intelligence. Matching of raw materials with the final production of goods is conducted by the audit parties of individual



gence gathered by the department concerned. So the CAG could better advice that the whole idea of 100 per cent invoice matching should be given up straightaway. As an ex-insider having knowledge about invoice matching, also having experience derived from other countries, I can definitely say that attempt to match 100 per cent invoices should be given up immediately. It will never succeed. Nobody is willing to say so but that is a fact. Matching should be done only for suspected companies. GST is an amalgamation of central excise, service tax and state VAT. Since for all these three taxes no 100 per cent of matching of invoice was being done, there is no logic in introducing 100 per cent matching for GST.

Sukumar Mukhopadhyay

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Fear on D-Street

Tide of bad news has spooked the market

n interest rate cut by the US Federal Reserve, the first since 2008, should have brought cheer to the equity markets. Instead the Indian markets saw huge swings on Thursday and settled lower in line with other Asian bourses. Though the Fed highlighted global growth concerns, it did not signal the beginning of a rate-cut cycle, leading to nervousness. As a result, the BSE Sensex, which had declined 2.1 per cent in intra-day trade, staged a partial recovery, closing the day 1.2 per cent lower. The broader market has been under stress for quite some time now, with the BSE MidCap and SmallCap indices down 26 per cent and 37 per cent, respectively, from their peaks. The Nifty is down about 9 per cent from its peak, but that's because of a handful of large-cap stocks only.

For the Indian market, the global economy is only one of the concerns. It's the local condition that is worrisome with a consistent flow of bad news. Since the IL&FS crisis erupted, non-banking financial companies have been badly affected. The new bankruptcy law, which was supposed to find quick resolutions, is still seeing a majority of the cases dragging on for two years. Jet Airways ended up in insolvency after being unable to find any suitor. Auditors and rating agencies are under the government's scrutiny. Further, the Budget did little for industry, and the super-rich tax has spooked both the C-suite and foreign investors, some of whom will have to bear the additional burden. Other reports such as core sector growth slowing down to a four-year-low, an earlier-than-expected shift to electric vehicles, more powers to customs and excise officers, the amendment to the Right to Information Act, and the prospect of a jail term for violations of corporate social responsibility guidelines are not something that investors were looking for.

Fundamentals, liquidity, and sentiment — three of the key factors that drive stock markets — are all in short supply at present. First-quarter earnings have been disappointing across most sectors because the economy is in the midst of a severe slowdown and consumption is now sputtering. Automobile sales have been falling year-on-year for several months and growth in consumer products is also slowing. With a slump in assets across equities and real estate, the wealth effect has disappeared altogether, as domestic investors are seeing a large fall in their net worth. In such a scenario, they are going to hesitate before investing in equities. Foreign portfolio investors, who brought in net inflows of ₹79,000 crore in the first six months of 2019, pulled out ₹12,000 crore in July. Domestic institutions have been buying for the last three months, but if flows into mutual funds slow, even they would not be able to provide liquidity. Under the current scenario, a 25 bps rate cut in the policy next week from the Reserve Bank of India will not do much for the

Till there are clear signs of an earnings revival, investors may not commit fresh funds. But since the economy is slowing, an earnings revival may not happen fast. At this point, the best that the market can hope for is government action in terms of reforms that will help bring back investor confidence.

Taxation blues

CAG raises valid issues on revenue system inadequacies

anaging government finances in India is becoming increasingly difficult with lower revenue collection and higher spending commitments. If corrective measures are not taken immediately, it would continue to affect economic growth. On the revenue side, the inadequacy of the tax administration, particularly in the context of the goods and services tax (GST), is severely affecting collections. As a recent report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) showed, the GST, which is rightly seen as one of the biggest reforms in recent history, is not working as desired, and some of the implementation issues remain unaddressed. For instance, as the CAG noted, even two years after the roll-out, system-validated input tax credit by invoice matching is still not in place.

Predictably, the inadequacies of the system have had a direct impact on revenue collection. For example, growth in indirect tax collection fell to 5.8 per cent in 2017-18, compared to a growth rate of over 20 per cent in the previous year. The estimated collection was revised lower even for the last fiscal year. Also, the insufficiency of the system has not allowed the appropriate settlement of the integrated GST (IGST). Therefore, instead of lowering GST rates randomly, the GST Council would do well to work on improving the system.

The government's auditor has also highlighted some structural issues in the direct tax administration. While collection and compliance have increased, there is again a need to improve the administration. For instance, the arrears of demand at the end of 2017-18 were in excess of ₹11 trillion, and the tax department thinks that over 98 per cent of this would be difficult to recover. Further, there are plenty of tax cases stuck in different courts. Clearly, there is a case for simplifying tax rules, which will help reduce litigation and improve collection. Hopefully, the task force working on the new direct tax code will recommend ways to reduce litigation.

Therefore, aside from the government's expenditure commitments, subdued revenue collection is affecting the fiscal balance. According to the calculations made by the CAG and presented before the Fifteenth Finance Commission, the fiscal deficit of the Centre in 2017-18 was 5.85 per cent of gross domestic product and not 3.46 per cent as shown by the government. This basically includes borrowing by public sector undertakings to cover government expenditure.

At a broader level, what this means is that the central government, central public sector undertakings, and state governments are using the entire pool of household financial savings. This also explains the overall approach of increasing borrowing from abroad, both at the government and corporate levels, which has its inherent risks.

The government should work on addressing the issues raised by the CAG on the tax administration, especially the GST system, and reassess its expenditure. Though it is correct that rationalising expenditure would be difficult during a slowdown, reservations about Budget numbers and an unsustainable level of public sector borrowing can be more damaging in the medium term. If necessary steps are not taken in time, a course correction would become increasingly more painful.

III IICTDATION - DINAV CINHA



Risks to fiscal federalism

To minimise risks, the president may consider seeking response from states and the Centre on the 15th Finance Commission's suggestions

he government has proposed to the president to extend the 15th Finance Commission's term by a month, and mandate the panel to suggest ways for allocation of non-lapsable funds for defence and internal security.

Under the terms of reference (ToR) of the Commission, it is proposed to ensure an assured allocation of resources towards defence and internal security imperatives. "The amendment provides that the XV Finance Commission shall also examine

whether a separate mechanism for funding of defence and internal security ought to be set up and if so how such a mechanism could be operationalised," an official state-

The proposed additional ToR raises a number of questions. First, how does it fit into the overall scheme of fiscal federalism, Budget and financial management, as per our Constitution? The taxes collected by the Union government to be shared with states are distributed between the Centre and states after deducting the collection charges

attributable to states. The respective shares are allocated to the consolidated fund of India for the Union government and the consolidated fund of the respective states. Grants-in-aid, as recommended by the Finance Commission, are transferred out of the resources of the Union government which includes the Union government's share of taxes.

Y V REDDY

Second, the allocation for defence is entirely the responsibility of the Union government. In fact, the 14th Finance Commission (FFC) had recognised the inadequate allocations in the past, as the following

"...Accordingly, its projections have provided for

an increase in defence revenue expenditure (including salaries) of 30 per cent in 2016-17 which will incorporate the Pay Commission impact, with a stable growth rate of 20 per cent per annum in the remaining years (Para 6.35)."

"Much of the demand on resources from the Ministry of Defence has been in the nature of capital expenditure, which is beyond the scope of our (FFC) assessment. Recognising that revenue expenditure is critical for defence preparedness and mainte-

nance, we (FFC) have kept the defence revenue expenditure-GDP ratio constant during our projection period, instead of allowing growth to decelerate as was the case in the past. In other words, the rate of defence revenue expenditure has been allowed to increase at the same rate as the GDP, which is substantially higher than the past growth of defence revenue expenditure (Para 6.36)."

Yet, it was the Union government that has been empowered by the Constitution to make an actual allocation to defence. Is it appropri-

ate for a body like Finance Commission to suggest specific allocation for an important sector with implications both for the spirit of Parliamentary control over expenditure allocations and the changing demands of security considerations?

Third, internal security to a substantial extent is the responsibility of state governments since law and order is their responsibility. In fact, when the services of the Central Reserve Police or the Border Security Force are requisitioned by state governments, they have to be paid for out of their Budgets. Further, when their services are utilised by state governments for the purpose of elections exclusively,

state governments pay for them. When elections are held simultaneously, such expenses are shared between the Union and states. In brief, both Union and states have respective needs on account of defence and internal security, respectively.

It is hoped that the XV Finance Commission will consider these fundamental issues apart from operational problems and, in any case, it is not obliged to give its recommendations on each and every ToR.

On the process of consultation with states in finalising the ToR of the Finance Commission, the Sarkaria Commission observed: "Any consultation to be meaningful should be adequate." This particular ToR has serious implications for the Unionstate relations. Have states been consulted or will they be consulted on the additional ToR?

The Constituent Assembly in its deliberations concluded that the acceptance of the recommendations should not be left only to the Parliamentary approval since the recommendations affect both the Union and state governments. Hence, the Constitution provides for placing of the action taken on every recommendation together with an explanatory memorandum by the president of India before Parliament. The assumption is that the president will exercise his discretion and act not merely as head of the Union, but as head of the Republic of India consisting of the Union and state governments.

In view of recent developments, the practice of keeping the recommendations of the Finance Commission confidential until the decisions are taken and action taken placed before Parliament has implications for the fabric of Indian fiscal federalism. To minimise risks, the president may consider placing the report of the XV Finance Commission in the public domain and also seek specific responses from state governments and the Union government before a final view is taken on the recommendations.

In this connection, it may be useful to quote extracts from the Republic Day speech of a chief minister in 2012:

There is even larger destruction of the federal structure in fiscal areas. In the name of 'public good' or 'people's rights', more and more funds are making their way to New Delhi. The Finance Commission allocated substantially lesser resources to states keeping the lion's share of funds with the Centre. The Centre has become adept at passing populist schemes but there is no financial support given to states for their execution. Adequate central funds are not an obligation from New Delhi but the right of every state to pursue development."

"These concerns I am sharing today are not only as a chief minister but also as a common citizen of India. Why is it that chief ministers cutting across party lines are expressing serious apprehensions on these repeated attacks on India's federal structure? It is high time the Centre realises that giving to the states what rightfully belongs to them will not weaken the Centre. The states must co-ordinate with the Union government and not remain subservient to it. Co-operative and not coercive federalism must be the norm in our country."

The writer is former governor, Reserve Bank of India

Financial markets: Gatekeepers of money

ccording to the Bank of England, financial markets exist to bring people together so money flows where it is needed the most. Businesses in need of capital should be able to raise it from these markets and repay when no longer in need. In theory, financial markets act as gatekeepers of people's money. But as Yogi Berra famously said: "In theory, there is no difference between theory and practice. In practice, there is.'

Of late, the situation in India has been the opposite. Businesses find it difficult to raise capital as debt is funding personal consumption and equity funds invest in businesses with strong cash flows. The genesis of this situation can be traced to banks slowing loan growth after being forced to recognise bad loans, and the meteoric rise and subsequent collapse of non-banking financial companies (NBFCs). The flow of credit to the economy has slowed considerably. The equity market's conundrum is of too much

money chasing fewer companies, partly due to change in the mandate and largely because 'nothing succeeds like success'.

JIGAR MISTRY

It started with the massive surge in private investments in India during 2006-08 when global economic growth was strong. Bad loans (non-performing assets or NPA) at the time were below 3 per cent. However, the 2008 global financial crisis marked the turning point. Growth slowed materially and rendered many projects, which previously looked attractive, unviable. In the absence of effective bankruptcy code, Indian banks resorted to many schemes (JLF, SDR and S4A) to combat rising bad loans, but failed. By 2015, NPA rose over 4 per cent, but the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) still believed that banks were not recognising all bad loans; an asset quality review (AQR) was conducted.

Banks were forced to recognise bad loans and NPA started piling up (it would eventually rise to 11.5 per cent by 2018). Banks curtailed loan growth and focussed on personal loans. Industry, which had about 44 per cent of all bank loans in 2015, received only 9 per cent of incremental loans between 2015 and 2019; personal loans (at 19 per cent of loans in 2015) got a whopping 41 per cent.

Industry's appetite waned, but banks left even those wanting to invest credit-starved. NBFCs, which were glad to fill the void left by banks got the ammunition when the currency was demonetised (in 2016). This took the shine off of real estate investments and households started moving from physical to financial savings. Mutual funds' non-equity assets under management (AUM) jumped from ₹5.8 trillion in 2015 to ₹12.2 trillion in 2019, a majority of which was invested in NBFC debt

(commercial papers and non-convertible debentures). Between 2015 and 2018, mutual funds became the largest suppliers of credit to NBFCs (42 per cent of funding), replacing banks (37 per cent) and insurance firms (21 per cent).

NBFC loans, which were at about 15 per cent of banking loans in 2014, garnered a third of incremental loans between 2015 and 2019. Nevertheless. asset quality was often poor and many NBFCs turned a blind eye to matching asset and liability durations. This and the subsequent IL&FS collapse in September 2018 created a liquidity crunch. Credit markets froze, making it challenging for all NBFCs to raise fresh debt; and a few could not even refinance their loans. Low liquidity has taken a toll on consumer sentiment — sales of discretionary goods (vehicles, white goods) are down and even staples sales are now at threat.

Equity mutual funds did little to counter this. In 2014, about 60 per cent of domestic equity investments (mutual fund and insurance) were in the top-50 companies by market cap. Between 2014 and 2019, three-fourths of incremental money went to these 50 companies, with the other listed companies receiving little investment.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) categorising mutual fund schemes by market cap in 2017 forced them to sell some mid-caps in existing funds. By 2018, provident and pension funds had decided to invest up to 15 per cent in equity, but in the same 50-stock index. Supply of new paper is limited, and it is quickly becoming a case of too much money chasing a few stocks. The Nifty50 index is down about 5 per cent from its alltime high, but more than 80 per cent of stocks are down more than 20 per cent and 50 per cent stocks have halved. A stock that has halved will face a tough time raising equity.

But it's not all bad — India now has a bankruptcy code and resolutions have started. A few battered NBFCs could end up with new managements or with stronger partners, thereby stemming the rot. Nevertheless, the cost of capital in India is too high. Despite policy rates falling 75 bps, the borrowing cost has not come off. The small savings rate still yields over 7.5 per cent; it needs to come down. Also, Sebi should allow mutual funds to invest a larger proportion of their funds across market caps and provident funds must consider investing in a broader index.

If financial markets fail to help businesses raise money, economic growth will suffer. Participants in financial markets are the gatekeepers of people's money; a more frequent reminder will help.

The writer is director at Buoyant Capital

Anatomy of a flood



UTTARAN DAS GUPTA

n December 1, 2015, a record downpour of 490 mm — often described as "once in a 100-year" rainfall inundated Chennai, killing hundreds and displacing thousands of its citizens. It also exposed how Indian cities are ill-prepared for such extreme weather events, which are likely to become more and more common as the climate change situation worsens. In Rivers Remember, Ms Ge — a writer, editor and citizen of Chennai - investigates what caused the calamity in her

hometown and arrives at the conclusion

that more than extreme weather it was administrative apathy that worsened the situation. This is not a fact of which we are unaware but are often reluctant to

In the Prologue of the book, "How On Earth Did This Happen to Us" (the title is acknowledged to be inspired by Haruki Murakami's Underground: The Tokyo Gas Attack and the Japanese Psyche), Ms Ge writes: "My conversations and investigations uncovered that the floods of 2015 in Chennai were a manmade disaster; that the Tamil Nadu government had played an undeniable role in drowning clueless citizens without any warning... it had also played an active role in sabotaging the city's water bodies."

As she demonstrates through her research, the administration had over the decades mismanaged the uncontrolled expansion of the city, permitting construction on lakes and riverbeds, making people

living there vulnerable to such a weather event. "If you live in urban India and find your home and your city sinking, it's probably because of the mismanagement of water bodies," she writes, "because rivers remember". They remember their old homes and courses, even if people who have encroached upon them forget all about it. This forgetfulness and apathy on the part of the citizens expose them to the vagaries and fury of nature at times of such

The floods in Chennai were widely reported on in the national and international media, but Ms Ge abandons the critical distance expected from traditional journalism and plunges into a personal narrative — of her home, her family, and her city. In doing so, there a recognition of privilege and vulnerability: "There's a creeping sense of discomfort in the air, which is new to those of us cushioned till now by the privileges of the salaried class.'

On the day of the flood, her parents' home – in which she and her brother grew up — is inundated. After the flood waters withdraw, when her family returns, they find their home washed away: "...it looks like a war was fought in there. A battle with the Adyar River... What no one tells you about floods... is that it is not water into your home when it floods is sewage... Mostly human

Her family is, of course, not the only one that's affected. Ms Ge seems to have conducted an endless number of inter-

views and she painstakingly reproduces them in her book. This is a powerful narrative technique, pitchforking the reader into the calamity through its recollection. Why she chooses some narratives

over others is not always clear. Some are obvious, such as that of engineer and volunteer Muhammed Yunus, who gets together a contingent of boatmen to rescue notices for just speculating about

800-odd people stuck in Urappakkam or of Dr Bala, a gynaecologist whose private hospital and pregnant patients were marooned in the flood. The inclusion of some others, such as that of Anantha Narayanan, a resident of Keezhkattalai, and his family, seem a little random. Having said that, it must be acknowledged that comes into your home... what flows that every narrative — of the lucky survivors and those not so

lucky — is acutely

Ms Ge seems to have conducted an endless number of interviews and she painstakingly reproduces them in her book. This is a powerful narrative technique. pitchforking the reader into the calamity through its recollection

poignant. Another subject that the book explores is the role played by journalism in reporting the floods and how it was prevented from doing its job. She writes in detail about how the overtly centralised gov ernment of former chief minister J Jayalalithaa pre vented the free flow of

information, not only about the floods, but also about the incumbent's failing health. "Many newspapers were sent criminal

Jayalalithaa's health... over 200 such cases were filed by the AIADMK between 2011 and 2016." The same lack of transparency plagued information about the floods. "I filed a query under the RTI Act to find out the exact number of casualties due to the Chennai floods... The reply (was)... 38 persons. ... Thirty-eight is the official number... Not 512 as the newspapers had reported. Not 269 as the home minister had claimed." In a note of despair, she writes: "I, unfortunately, failed... to find out just which of these numbers was real."

Amartya Sen has asserted in his writings that famines cannot occur in countries with a free press. After reading Ms Ge book, we can also assert that floods cannot occur in a country with a free press — and the absence of one makes us vulnerable.

RIVERS REMEMBER: #Chennai Rains and the Shocking Truth of a Manmade Flood

Context (Westland); ₹499; 218 pages





ON FREE POWER IN DELHI Chief Minister of Delhi, Arvind Kejriwal

It was a journey and not possible earlier, as power companies' financial state was bad. [Earlier] companies didn't have money to even buy electricity and we had stared at blackouts.

Best to abolish CSR, just add it to the overall tax

Since UPA made CSR a mandatory levy and NDA added penal provisions to this, it is now really a CSR-tax

HEN NARENDRA MODI first came to power, he mocked the Congress by saying that, while many apprehended that he would reduce funding to the MGNREGA job-guarantee scheme—a flagship UPA program—he was too smart to do this. MGNREGA, Modi said, was a living symbol of the UPA's inability to provide jobs; why would he remove this symbol? That sounded good, but with the NDA also increasing allocations to MGNREGA over the years, it isn't out of place to ask whether the boot is now on the other leg, that the NDA too needs a job-guarantee scheme because it has failed to provide jobs. What is even odder is how the UPA's mandatory CSR-spend has been cemented by the NDA. Till the UPA came to power and made it Compulsory Social Responsibility, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) was voluntary in nature, done by corporates who genuinely wanted to help people or by those who wanted to look like responsible citizens; some did it to soften the opposition from local communities to, say, selling their land to them. The UPA, influenced as it was by the NGO lobby, decided to make it mandatory and ruled that 2% of corporate profits had to be invested in CSR. Certain rules were put in place, so investing in an employees' welfare fund, for instance, wouldn't qualify as CSR.

In its wisdom, the Modi government has now added serious penalties for noncompliance apart from deciding that if corporates don't spend this money within three years, it has to be transferred to a fund like the PM's Relief Fund; India Inc has to give reasons for why it never spent the money and its officials could even be fined or imprisoned for not following the law. If this blanket provision wasn't bad enough, the amendments say "the central government may give such general or special directions...as it considers necessary to ensure compliance". While we have to wait for the detailed rules to come out, this does seem like an entry for bureaucrats to decide what will and won't qualify as CSR and, over time, the government can even start deciding what projects will qualify as CSR.

While introducing the amendments in Parliament, finance and corporate affairs minister Nirmala Sitharaman gave it a lofty spin by saying "Gandhiji's trusteeship principle is that legitimate profit-earning cannot be devoid of social responsibility", surely the taxes corporates—and individuals—pay are part of this mandatory social responsibility since a large part of these payments are used to provide facilities for the poor? Indeed, while hard-working corporates and individuals pay taxes, governments continue to fritter this away in many forms, from big leakages in social security programmes to funding massive loss-making PSUs like BSNL and Air India. But, given CSR is no longer voluntary but is completely in the nature of a tax now, with the government deciding the amount of the levy and with penal provisions for not fulfilling the requirements—including, possibly, where and how the money has to be spent—why not just scrap it and replace it with a higher corporate tax; or a cess if the idea is not to share the money with the states. India is now in the august company of countries like Nepal and Mauritius where CSR-spend is mandatory.

Conserving water

Charging for extraction is a good start

HE UNION ENVIRONMENT ministry recommending, for the second time, that users be billed for using groundwater makes a lot of sense. The green ministry has submitted a report to the National Green Tribunal (NGT), outlining a multi-decadal action plan (up to 2070) on regulation of groundwater in the country. The government had notified a similar proposal last year, but the NGT had struck it down and asked it to submit a fresh proposal. As per the current proposal, a water conservation fee (WCF) is to be charged to industrial, residential and farm-based users. The proposal also talks of water credits, earned by users based on water conservation achieved. The Action Plan for the next decade talks of aquifer and recharge area mapping across the country, a sorely neglected area so far, and developing block/village level groundwater management plans, a water security policy and a shift from block-wise groundwater management to aquifer-wise management. A Bureau of Water Use Efficiency is to be created while all groundwater extraction is to be monitored telemetrically with digital flow-meters.

The plan for later decades is to map catchment and protect springs, implement a mega recharge project forwater-stressed areas, establish one monitoring stations per 10 sq km, pollutant monitoring remediation of polluted aquifers, development of a groundwater based drought alert system, etc. Groundwater extraction in overexploited, critical and semi-critical areas will only be permitted for drinking water and sociallyrelevant purposes like building of schools, hospitals, etc. India has just 4% of the world's freshwater reserve and nearly 80% of this is used by agriculture. Given groundwater accounts forwatering needs of 65% of the total area under agriculture in the country, charging agriculture, where water as a resource is most abused was the need of the hour. The new proposal will cover nearly 1.5 crore farmers in the country, or a tenth of the overall farmer population. The exact contours of the WCF are not known yet, but the proposal last year outlined it for industrial users; an industry, after obtaining an NOC from the relevant groundwater authority, can pay and extract water.

Groundwater not only contributes to about 85% drinking water supply in rural areas but also accounts for 60% of urban water needs. With 21 cities in the country set to run completely dry in the next few years, the crushing pressure on ground water is already manifest. Of the 6,584 assessment units in the country for groundwater, 1,034 are over-exploited, 253 are termed critical, and 681 semi-critical. Unless a prudent groundwater management system, with charges deterring over-exploitation, and a sound recharge and reuse management structure is adopted, India stares at a parched future, more so with climate change effects playing out the way they are predicted to.

StillTOBACCO

The tobacco industry hopes to fight the anti-smoking campaign with products like vaping. They are as bad

IGNIFICANT PROGRESS HAS been made in the global—and Indian—fight $against \,to bacco. According \,to \,WHO, there \,are \,1.1\,billion \,smokers \,globally, of \,1.1\,billion \,smokers \,globally, of \,1.2\,billion \,globally, of \,1.2\,$ which, the recent Global Adult Tobacco Survey indicates, 60% of smokers intend to quit and over 40% had attempted quitting in the 12 months preceding the survey. Also, the WHO has made significant progress in creating awareness about the ills of tobacco as well as in coming up with ways to help people cure their addiction. Today, 2.4 billion people in 23 countries can avail of these services as compared to just 0.4 billion in 2007. The WHO gives credit for this to the efforts of countries like India and Brazil, primarily. Yet, as its Report on the Global Tobacco Epidemic, 2019 points out, tobacco firms are trying a new tack, to promote 'healthy' alternatives to cigarettes! These include vapourisers, electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS), heated tobacco products (HTPs). However, as the report points out, the bulk of the intoxicants are the same as in cigarettes, so the health impact is not too different. So apart from the older problems of tobacco firms trying to interfere with political and legislative processes in various countries and operating through various front groups, they are now making unproven claims and discrediting proven science; exaggerating the economic importance of the industry is another way to slow government action.

The burden of smoking-related diseases on the economy is huge and required \$422 billion in global healthcare spending in 2012. As per the report, reduction in tobacco consumption will result in greater savings for nations—productivity loss because of smoking-related deaths and illnesses, have been estimated to be as high as \$1,436 billion. While WHO has its own methods to help people quit smoking, if worldwide risks of tobacco consumption are to be curbed, nations have to take a strict stand against the tobacco industry and its so-called 'alternatives' that create a vicious cycle of addicURBANISE OR PERISH

TO ACHIEVE ITS TARGET OF A \$5 TRN ECONOMY BY 2025, INDIA MUST OVERCOME ITS GANDHIAN FIXATION WITH A VILLAGE-BASED SOCIETY AND INVEST IN URBAN INFRA DEVELOPMENT

Urbanisation is key to drive India's growth engines

EVELOPMENT AND **URBANISATION** are two sides of the same coin. No society in recent history remained agrarian while adequately providing for its population. Urbanisation aggregates human activity—aggregation leads to specialisation, specialisation to increased productivity; enabling greater availability of goods, delivery of services, increased wages, and job opportunities. Urban areas are engines of growth in any modern economy.

China is a shining example of how urbanisation drives economic growth. China rapidly urbanised from 26.4% in 1990 to 59.2% today. The impact is evident in China, where the quality of life and life expectancy have improved dramatically. We can also trace the feedforward effect in China's specialised workforce and productivity improvements—making China a Top 2 economy with nominal GDP of \$14.1 trillion. In contrast, India is at \$2.7 trillion, moving towards the target of \$5 trillion by 2025.

The world, on average, is at 55.3% urbanisation, whereas India lags at 34% (see graphic). India has been slow to urbanise because of the fixation on being a village-based society. Most planners still look to Gandhiji's sentiments on this topic—'The future of *India lies in its villages*', he said in 1947. This is no longer true—complexity has increased, people's economic needs and aspirations have grown, and it is impossible to supply adequate resources to India's six lakh villages. Keeping India's population in villages while being unable to meet their economic needs has resulted in high inequity.

Rural employment is mostly in agriculture. 42.7% of India's workforce in 2016-17 was engaged in the agriculture sector, crawling at a 3.4% growth rate and contributing only 17.3% to the GDP (see graphic). Meanwhile, 57.3% of the workforce was engaged in industry and services, growing at 5.5% and 7.6%, respectively. The income differential is very high, the ratio being 1:3:4 for the average wages of dependents on agriculture to industry to services. Left unaddressed, this large group of agricultural dependents will always be condemned to a sub-aspirational existence—with increasing distress and perpetual dependence on subsidies from the government.

Lack of opportunities is also accel-

TV MOHANDAS PAI & NISHA HOLLA Pai is Chairman, Aarin Capital

& Holla is Technology fellow, C-CAMP

erating large-scale internal migration towards India's few urban growth engines—such as Mumbai, Bengaluru, Delhi, Hyderabad, and others. 2011 Census indicates 43,324 uninhabited villages, presumably abandoned due to migration. People are voting for urban areas with their feet while the government sings the same old romanticised song about India in villages.

Large cities are reeling under the strain of overpopulation, with problems like inadequate infrastructure and rocketing living costs. Employment is unable to keep up with the inflow. Due to high costs, it is uncompetitive to set up industries in cities. Without industries to absorb the incoming rural population, they are mostly making low wages as contract labour. Even if they earn higher wages than in their hometowns, they can't keep up with living costs—resulting in a growing urban population with unfavourable living conditions. Moreover, because of the policymakers' fixation on villages, cities aren't allocated enough to develop infrastructure to handle their rapidly expanding populations. A lose-lose situation all around.

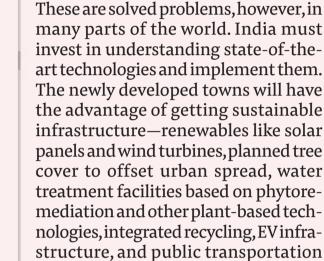
A compelling solution to this unstable situation is the systematic shift of people from rural to urban areas. The 2011 census indicates there are 7,933 towns/cities housing 31.16% of the population, with an average population of 47,536. Of these, 465 towns have a population over one lakh and 53 cities, over ten lakh. On subtracting these, the remaining 7,468 towns must have significantly lesser populations than

the 47,536 average. The upcoming 2021 census will inform us of the current situation.

Census data must be used to suitably identify 4,000-5,000 smaller towns all over India and develop them to absorb the rural-to-urban shift sustainably. GoI's Smart Cities initiative has identified 100 cities so far, focusing on roads, solar, water, and control centres. While expanding to 5,000 towns, four critical aspects must be incorporated:

1. Infrastructure and connectivity: From the planning stage, it is essential to prioritise providing infrastructure like roads and airport access, internet connectivity, and other amenities. Not only is state-of-the-art infrastructure crucial for quality of life, it also provides the logistical backbone for a productive industrial environment. Moreover, commissioning largescale infrastructure development will also boost the construction sector another means of mass employment. We need strategic investments from both the central and state governments in these towns for parallelised infrastructure development.

2. Labour-intensive industry (LII) clusters: Creating many LIIs in and around the 5,000 towns is the best way to provide gainful employment to the transitioning population. By focusing on the right type of industries—garments, fabrication, electronics assembly, automobiles, so on—this move will also boost India's export capabilities. With focused skilling programs, LIIs will offer excellent income opportuni-



with last-mile connectivity-inte-

grated from the planning stage itself. Older cities will need careful planning

to incorporate new technologies into

unwieldy city plans.

ties to the incoming population. Even

a lower wage than cities will go a long

way towards quality of life, especially

since living costs are lower in towns.

Women, who are not as mobile as men,

can also now find employment near

their villages and towns, commute and

earn a living. Governments, apart from

focusing investment here, must also

provide incentives for the private sec-

While urbanisation improves delivery

of services, it poses several challenges

like congestion, restricted mobility,

high waste production, and pollution.

3. New sustainable technologies:

tor to create LIIs.

4. Planning for capacity: Indian policymaking has a jaded tradition of planning projects based on latest available data—usually outdated—like the previous census. By the time projects are completed 5-10 years later, they are operationally overloaded. Instead, it is necessary to plan projects for sewage treatment, airports, roads, water supply, and so on with at least a 20-30-year forecast with provisions for future expansion. Again, China paves the way-many major airports have received the go-ahead to build a third

runway and increase seating capacity

by forecasting the demand to 2030. In

parallel, new airports are being com-

missioned all over the country to pro-

vide additional capacity using fore-

casting beyond 2030. Rapid urbanisation is essential to sustain India's impressive 10-year growth trajectory and meet PM Modi's 2025 economic target of \$5 trillion. The proposed network of small towns and industry clusters can become India's engine of growth and provide jobs at scale, thus improving overall economic prosperity. Sustainable urbanisation can be the force multi-

plier to mobilise India's potential.

Percentage of urban 2016-17 data comparison population in representative ___% GVA ___GVA growth rate regions around the world Workforce distribution Urban population (%) 3.4 41,621 1,25,231 1,64,569 Per-capita GVA (₹) Source: World Bank Source: RBI, MOSPI and World Bank

Achieving investment-led growth

In a world where world trade is undergoing a recession because of protectionist measures, India must look to lower effective corporate tax rates to stimulate the economy

IN A RECENT insightful article in Business Standard entitled "The Budget, the Survey and the trilemma" (https://bit.ly/2 Yva1ri) the author, Sajjid Chinoy, discusses the challenges facing the Indian economy. The author examines the investment led model as the key driver for a sustained 8% growth. Furthermore, he highlights that export growth remains a key determinant of investment rate and cites the 2001-2006 period as an evidence. That is, the causation runs from exports to investments rate. Finally, he concludes by emphasising that the over/undervaluation of real exchange rate is a key determinant for export growth. Hence, rupee depreciation should not be resisted as an under-valued exchange rate implies higher export, which thrusts up investment rate and, hence, overall GDP growth.

Empirically, the argument for an 8% growth, led by an investment growth, remains unquestioned. However, it is the determinant of investment rate which requires further analysis. Examination of two periods for India, 2001 to 2006 and 2012 to 2015, provides some observations. In the first period, exports'y-o-y growth averaged 20% (world exports averaged 25%); investment rate averaged 28%. In the second period, Indian export growth was flat to negative (and so was world export growth) while the investment rate was over 32%. Clearly, exports

being a key determinant of investment rate cannot be comprehensively established. So what determines investment rate, then?

A regression between Indian investment rate and real interest rate (independent variable), provides an R2 of over 0.5 with a negative relationship

in the period from 2002 to 2018. Admittedly, it is a small sample, but it still provides some insights. Stated differently, higher real interest rate hurts investment rate. A simpler way to explain this is as follows. Low real interest rates make it easier for corporate houses to economies of scale, borrow and invest. which provides cost Higher investment rate encourages economies of scale, which provides

cost advantage. Better cost structure make exports more competitive (along with, if possible, a competitive exchange rate), which is a critical ingredient in achieving high economic growth. Hence, the causation runs from investment rate to exports, and not the other way around. Business confidence is another determinant of investment to GDP ratio.

In a world where world trade is undergoing a recession because of protec-

rchawdhry@gmail.com Views are personal tionist measures, it is extremely challenging to propel one's exports via old-fashioned mercantilist policies of the eighties and nineties, without

inviting higher tariffs on our exports.

The way countries are now looking to

ROHIT

CHAWDHRY

Investment professional

stimulate their economies and investment rate is via lower effective corporate tax rates coupled with lower interest rates. For example, most Low real interest major economies have rates make it easier seen a decline in their for corporate effective corporate tax rates from 40% in the houses to borrow 1990s to around 27% in and invest. Higher 2018. With Indian corinvestment rate porate profits to GDP encourages ratio for Nifty 500 com-

panies having halved

from its peak in 2008, it

may be time to realign

our corporate tax rates

with the world, for all

firms. Also, with ongoing convergence of Indian inflation with the global levels, Indian real interest rates cannot stay elevated for long, i.e., interest rates have to come down meaningfully, especially in the current deflationary environment. 25% of all global sovereign bonds offering negative yields is a pointer towards deflationary pressures. A combination of both measures—interest rate and tax rate—will likely yield the

advantage.

THE EDITOR

LETTERS TO

Tiger conservation

It was heartening to know that the tiger population in India has increased by 33% from 2,226 in 2014 to 2,967 in 2018. We like to believe that the figures are true and not exaggerated to claim credit for tiger conservation. The tiger, included in the 'endangered category' by the IUCN since 2008, and regarded as a keystone and flagship species in the eco-system, has become a symbol for the environmental cause and wildlife conservation. India is home to almost 75% of the world tiger population. This fact puts greater responsibility on us to do all that we can to protect them and increase their number to take the national animal off the list of 'endangered species'. According to the Wildlife Protection Society of India, of the 76 tiger deaths in 2019, 45 were natural mortalities (due to old age and disease) and 31 were poaching cases. Habitat destruction, erosion, fragmentation and mining, quarrying and carving outer areas of tiger reserves for road-building, industrial establishments and tourism recreation centres, interference with their food chain and poaching for body parts, mainly skins and bones must end if the big cats are to survive and prosper. We must win the battle to save tigers. It is an interesting fact that the India abounded with about 40,000 tigers just a century ago. Our ambitious target must be to reach this number, say in a century's time from now. — David G Milton, Maruthancode

Write to us at feletters@expressindia.com results for the policy makers. tion, illnesses and deaths.

FINANCIAL EXPRESS



ILLUSTRATION: ROHNIT PHORE

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Authors are Young Professionals, NITI Aayog. Views are personal

Reviving India's consumption narrative

A holistic approach to credit markets—balancing the credit needs of households, MSMEs, private corporations and, of course, the government—is needed, ensuring that public investment 'crowds in' private investment and consumption, not 'crowds out'

AST MONTH, THE Monetary Policy Committee of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) reduced the policy rate by 25 basis points, against the backdrop of a slowdown in global as well as domestic growth. In its monetary policy statement, the central bank mentions that the recent slowdown in the March 2019 quarter is predominantly a consequence of decelerating consumption and export growth in the previous quarter. So, the question needs to be asked: What has

been affecting consumer demand? To understand consumer behaviour better, we have to go back to the basic microeconomic theory. First, we need to understand the difference between the change in quantity demanded versus change in demand. A change in prices leads to adjustments in quantity demanded, not demand. Therefore, in a relatively benign inflation environment, there should be a positive change in quantity demanded, leading to a temporary increase in prices. This, in turn, prompts an increase in quantity supplied, taking us back to our equilibrium price. In essence, this is a movement along the demand/supply curves, rather

than shifts.

The factors affecting demand are, however, not necessarily price-sensitive. Income, preferences and confidence in the economy affect demand—resulting in a shift of the demand curve. These factors reflect the consumers' ability and willingness to pay. An increase in incomes, for example, would raise demand at every price point, not just one. The reverse holds true as well—a decrease in incomes will reduce demand at every price point. The ongoing debate about rural distress in India is essentially about the income effect.

As incomes affect the ability to pay, preferences affect the willingness to pay.

For example, even though consumption as a proportion of GDP has stayed at nearly 59% over the past 15 years, the composition has undergone a shift. While food and beverages have seen the most decline as a percentage of GDP, expenditure on recreation, education and cultural services has actually

grown the most. However, in an economy where the current consumption can be financed through credit,

willingness and ability to pay also depend heavily on credit availability. Consider automobile sales. A large chunk of these sales are financed through various non-banking financial companies (NBFCs). Retail lending from NBFCs saw a decline of 13% year-onyear in the December 2018 quarter from the growth in lending of 21% year-on-year in the previous quarter. Could this be a possible explanation for the deceleration in the sales of consumer durables?

An argument can be made that there is a large unfulfilled demand in India's credit markets that is holding back consumer demand. For example, vehicle loans extended by commercial banks have been showing signs of deceleration as well. Between calendar years 2015 and 2017, vehicle loans grew at an average rate of 15.8% year-on-year. In 2018, growth in loans decelerated to 9.6% year-on-year, and in 2019 further decel-

erated to 6.1% (till May 2019). Clearly, access to credit is impeding consumption activity in the economy. The case of consumer durables' loans is even more tricky. According to RBI data, outstanding consumer durable loans as of July 2018 stood at Rs 20,469 crore. And outstanding consumer durable loans as of May 2019 stood at a meagre Rs 6,063 crore, a precipitous fall.

There is evidence that displays a slowdown in consumption growth. Automobile sales are in a slump, and most FMCG companies reported a slowdown in earnings growth in the March quarter. This decline is further reflected in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) numbers, which show deceleration in both consumer durables' and nondurables' output.

However, there are signs of green shoots. For instance, in the March 2019 quarter, we have seen NBFC retail lending rise by 18.6% year-on-year, compared to a decline of 13% year-on-year in December 2018. Similarly, housing loans continue to grow at a healthy pace, clocking growth of 18.7% year-on-year in May 2019. Accordingly, many analysts see this slowdown as temporary, and expect consumption to drive India's growth story in the future. However, steps must be taken now so as to ensure a smooth growth trajectory for consumption demand, reducing volatility and uncertainty.

With inflation close to the lower bound, an argument can be made for further rate reductions to bring down the real cost of borrowing. A strong policy response to reduce the cost of credit and increase the access to credit for consumers will lead to increased confidence in the economy. As RBI mentions in its statement, it is the sentiment which is weak, but very ironically, it doesn't recognise the major factor affecting it. After the cumulative 50basis-point cut in the policy rate, there was a 21-basis-point cut in fresh loan rates. In an environment of imperfect monetary transmission, successive rate cuts may be needed to bring down the cost of lending.

Apart from reducing the cost of credit, expanding the availability of credit is of equal, if not greater importance. Consider the following: Domestic credit to the private sector (as a percentage of GDP) in India stands at 49.9% of GDP, whilst that of China stands at 161%. In upper-middle income countries, this number stands at 120.7%. This indicates there is sub-

stantial room to expand credit access in India.

Leveraging technology through fintech firms to expand access to credit provides a crucial avenue. RBI has been working on a regulatory sandbox for fintech firms since the beginning of the fiscal. Efforts should be made to operationalise this sandbox as soon as possible, as India can make significant inroads in this nascent industry. The **Boston Consulting Group**

(BCG) has estimated that the digital lending business in India can exceed \$1 trillion by 2023, confirming the enormous potential offered by this sector. Retail lending can get a muchneeded fillip, boosting consumption (especially that of durables), whilst the

bank clean-up process is on. While the theory of 'loanable funds' has been subject to intense debate over the past century, it provides an interesting framework to view India's current situation. In this framework, it is our contention that the pool of loanable funds needs to be expanded. The demand for credit is in excess of supply, pushing up the real cost of capital. A holistic approach to credit markets, balancing the credit needs of households, MSMEs, private corporations and, of course, the government is needed, ensuring that public investment 'crowds in' private investment and con-

sumption, not 'crowds out'.

Reducing trade deficit with China



It's not an impossible task, after all

OON AFTER TAKING power in December 1978, Deng Xiaoping famously stated: "It does not matter which colour is cat as long as it catches mice," and with that private enterprise in China was no longer a dirty word. His perceived catchphrase "To get rich is glorious" unleashed personal entrepreneurship that still drives China's economy. Today, China has spawned a vibrant private sector. India, too, took the inevitable plunge in the early 1990s, but has sadly fallen way behind.

After China joined the WTO, India-China trade has grown exponentially, from \$1.49 billion in 2000-01 to \$70 billion in 2018-19, with China becoming India's largest trading partner. But this has come at a cost—a yawning trade gap.

While most of its exports to China are goods and raw materials, India imports mainly intermediate and finished goods. In 2016-17, its import mix was 16% capital goods, 21% consumption goods, 63% intermediate goods. Among top exports to China are petroleum products, cotton, organic chemicals, iron ore and plastic raw materials, whereas main commodities being imported are machines for reception, conversion-transmission, bulk drugs and drug intermediates, consumer electronics, and telecom instruments.

Keeping in view huge demand for alternative sources of energy, China has developed massive capacity and occupies a dominant position in manufacture of photosensitive semiconductors and PV cells, capturing 34.3% of world market!

How is it that China is more competitive than India? Is it the one-party system with long-term objectives zealously pursued, or government's policy interventions that ensure factors of production (land, labour, capital) are available to manufacturers at the lowest possible cost, or perhaps both?

Setting aside ideological, political and social differences, China has promoted 'Made in China' with a singular zeal. In 2016, in a survey by Deloitte, CEOs of Fortune 500 companies were asked to rank countries in terms of current and future manufacturing competitiveness, in which China was declared the numero uno. No wonder major MNCs such as Samsung, Toshiba, LG and scores of US MNCs have all set up shop in China. China has also cultivated its large pool of non-resident Chinese, offering

Given intensive G2G and B2B talks, and gaining from the fallout of China-US trade war, India should be able to reduce its trade deficit with China

them incentives to participate in socio-economic initiatives in mainland China, with a Cabinet-rank minister to look after their affairs. Belatedly, India has also set up a separate ministry to help NRIs contribute to India's economic growth, but needs to play a proactive role.

While India's average hourly compensation cost in manufacturing rose from \$0.73 to \$1.58 in 2012, in China it rose from \$0.6 to \$3.06. However, Chinese lending rates have remained low—from 3.3% in 2002 to only 4.4% in 2012, whereas India registered a drop from 11.9% to 9.7% for the same period. Cost of land, of course, is another story.

Apparels, electronic goods, telecom, pharma products, oilseeds, gems and jewellery, chemicals, tobacco, plastics, marine products, cotton textiles, synthetics and rayon textiles, and leather are some products that have a bright future.

To feed its billion-plus population, China is a big importer of farm products, reaching almost 10% of global trade. With exports of our agricultural products reaching almost \$40 billion, India has a major stake in gaining access, which currently is mired in Chinese regulatory maze. Similarly, India is the world's largest producer of rice, whereas China is the biggest importer of this commodity. And with China importing 3.4 million tonnes of raw sugar per year, which is subject to a quota system providing concessional tariff, India's sugar industry should be able to negotiate a way in. Similarly, export of sesame seeds has not made much headway as Indian export attracts 10% duty, whereas African countries enjoy zero duty and have captured 90% of Chinese market.

A strategy for import substitution and attracting investments in telecom, solar power, bulk drugs and drug intermediaries, auto components, industrial machinery for dairy, agriculture, food processing, textiles, paper, chemicals, etc, and, last but not the least, electric vehicles and lithium-ion batteries needs to be pursued vigorously. Given intensive G2G and B2B negotiations, and gaining from the fallout of the China-US trade war, India should be able to substantially reduce its trade deficit with China in the years to come.

INFLATION TARGETING & RUPEE

There are signs of

green shoots. NBFC

retail lending rose

18.6% year-on-year

in the March 2019

quarter, and housing

loans continue to

grow at a healthy

pace (grew 18.7%

year-on-year in May)

NTHE LATEST minutes of the Monetary Policy Committee meeting in June 2019 (http://bit.ly/335Vaak), some MPC members made explicit reference to changes in the rupee exchange rate and its consequent impact on imported inflation.

Unlike advanced economies, it is hard to ignore the significant role of exchange rate gyrations when making monetary policy decisions in emerging economies like India. Yet it remains unclear exactly how they impact the economy and what the appropriate policy response should be.

Conventional wisdom suggests that, for any given costs and prices, home currency depreciation could positively impact a country's exports and growth. Insofar as a country has multiple export partners, it is the trade-weighted or effective exchange rate that matters. Of course, the concern is that costs and producer prices could well rise (imported inputs) because of home currency depreciation and, thus, what matters from a price competitiveness perspective is the real and not nominal depreciation. Thus, both inflation and non-inflation targeting central banks in emerging economies constantly have one eye on their real effective exchange rate (REER). RBI is no exception in this regard.

Nominal currency depreciations also raise costs of imported consumer goods, which could directly impact the domestic

A complex relation RBI should persist with ongoing efforts to unclog the financial system and widen financial access



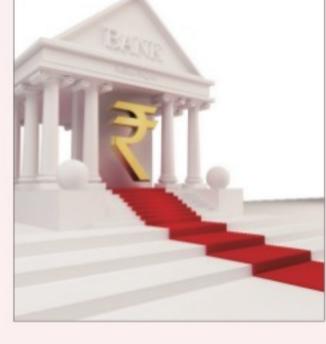
The author is a professor at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore



CPI. For goods that are priced in the producer countries, insofar as a country like India has multiple import partners, once again it is the trade-weighted exchange rate that matters. As the US dollar constitutes less than 10% of India's tradeweighted exchange rate index, it appears, in the first instance, that the rupee-dollar bilateral rate that dominates news and financial markets is grossly misdirected.

Overturning conventional wisdom: In a series of academic papers over the last few years, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) chief economist Gita Gopinath and her co-authors have emphasised the prevalence of dollar invoicing in international trade. They have gone on to show that dollar changes vis-à-vis the home currency (rupee, for instance) are the main drivers of trade prices and quantities, a phenomenon they refer to as the "dominant currency paradigm" (DCP).

The DCP is likely of even more relevance to East Asian countries that are more closely connected than India to global value chains (GVCs), in which dollar trade invoicing is prevalent. However, to the extent that India is a heavy oil importer (80% of its petroleum needs are imported), and oil—like most other commodities—is primarily priced in dollars, India too is not exempt from the DCP.



Also, to the extent that many emerging economies have large external liabilities in dollars, they are likely to be especially sensitive to bilateral dollar changes, as a sharp home currency depreciation to the greenback could impact firms, both by raising the home currency value of external liabilities with negative balance sheet repercussions (if the corresponding assets are predominantly in home currency terms) as well as by reducing their ability to finance dollar debt repayments. The consequence of the home country's depreciation vis-a-vis the dollar appreciation is to curtail international trade and negatively impact economic activity.

Therefore, other things equal, while rupee depreciation against the dollar could improve India's trade balance and provide a degree of economic stimulus, working against this is the negative effect of higher import costs as well as a deterioration in balance sheets and tightening credit conditions due to rising debt service costs. The net effect of such exchange rate movements is, therefore, ambiguous on inflation, trade and overall output.

Conversely, while a depreciating greenback may initially help reduce imported commodity inflation, it could also lead to a build-up of foreign currency debt, hence raising a country's vulnerability over time. Thus, while the exchange rate is certainly important for a country like India, it is unclear what exchange rate to pay closest

attention to and in what direction. **Implications for policy:** While there is not much a country like India can do to impact dollar invoicing of commodities in the short term, it should aim to reduce its direct vulnerability to exchange rate changes as a step towards enhancing the overall resilience of the economy against external financial shocks. But the recent announcement of a \$10 billion sovereign bond issuance seems to be a step in exactly the opposite direction. The government, for its part, should also carefully consider the potential risks of currency exposure in deciding on sovereign bond issuances. If,

on balance, the belief is that the benefits of accumulating external foreign currency debt (in terms of lower interest costs and less crowding out of domestic investment domestically) are worth the risks (of depreciation of the rupee vis-à-vis the funding currency and consequent adverse effects) it is advisable to spread the borrowings across a diversified basket of currencies.

Such a diversified basket would make the financial channel of exchange rate changes more dependent on tradeweighted exchange rate changes rather than bilateral ones. While the financial channel would still impact the economy in a different direction from the trade channel (i.e. REER depreciation improves trade balance, but worsens balance sheets), RBI could aim to ensure REER is broadly stable via sterilised FX operations, while the MPC can focus solely on the direct and indirect impacts of interest rate changes on inflation first and foremost, and then output.

While it is paramount RBI maintains public commitment to its inflation target as a means of anchoring inflation expectations, it should also persist with efforts to unclog the financial system and widen financial access to enhance effectiveness of interest rate transmission, while using macroprudential polices to mitigate the build-up of vulnerabilities. In these efforts, one hopes that government actions do not work at cross-purposes with RBI.

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

TELLING NUMBERS

The rise of unemployment rate, within various religious groups

UNION MINISTER for Minority Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi presented in Lok Sabha data on the rates of unemployment across major religious groups over the last three unemployment surveys conducted by the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) and the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS). The three sets of data correspond to the Employment and Unemployment Surveys conducted over the 66th Round (between July 2009-June 2010) and 68th Round (between July 2011-June 2012) by the NSSO as well as the PLFS (between July 2017-June 2018). The unemployment rates have been disaggregated for males and females as well as ur-

ban and rural areas.

Workers in the "usual status" category include (a) persons who worked for a relatively large part of the 365 days preceding the date of the survey, and (b) persons from among the remaining population who had worked for at least 30 days during the reference period of 365 days preceding the date of the survey. Category (a) refers to "principal status" and the category (b) to "subsidiary status" and the "usual status" definition includes both. As such, usual status is a more relaxed measure of unemployment. For instance, some of the unemployed under "principal status" might be working in a subsidiary capacity.

UNEMPLOYMENT IN USUAL STATUS AMONG MALES ACROSS MAJOR RELIGIOUS GROUPS

RELIGIOUS GROUP	66тн ROUND (2009-10)		68тн ROUND (2011-12)		PLFS (2017-18)	
	RURAL	URBAN	RURAL	URBAN	RURAL	URBAN
Hinduism	1.5	2.9	1.7	2.8	5.7	6.9
Islam	1.9	2.5	2.2	3.8	6.7	7.5
Christianity	2.6	2.2	3.4	4.4	6.9	8.9
Sikhism	2.7	5.6	1.3	3.5	6.4	7.2

UNEMPLOYMENT IN USUAL STATUS AMONG FEMALES ACROSS MAJOR RELIGIOUS GROUPS

RELIGIOUS GROUP	66тн ROUND (2009-10)		68тн ROUND (2011-12)		PLFS (2017-18)	
	RURAL	URBAN	RURAL	URBAN	RURAL	URBAN
Hinduism	1.4	5.8	1.4	5.2	3.5	10.0
Islam	2.0	6.8	3.9	4.4	5.7	14.5
Christianity	6.0	4.6	6.4	8.8	8.8	15.6
Sikhism	1.7	8.3	1.3	5.5	5.7	16.9

TIP FOR READING LIST

A BIOGRAPHY OF THE SEMICOLON

SEMICOLON

CECELIA WATEON

OF ALL the punctuation marks in English writing, the semicolon is perhaps the most controversial. Writers have always been divided over its necessity and effectiveness. Stephen King dislikes it, as did Ernest

Hemingway and George Orwell, while Herman Melville and Henry James loved it. In Semicolon: The Past, Present, and Future of a Misunderstood Mark, historian and teacher Cecelia Watson traces the history of this punctuation mark, from its evolution to the present, and the various controversies surrounding it. The semicolon has two

main functions. One of these is to segregate words into groups that are already punctuated with commas — for example, "Gorakhpur, Amethi and Azamgarh in Uttar Pradesh; Patna, Vaishali and Nalanda in Bihar; Dhubri, Barpeta and Guwahati in Assam..." It is the other function that is usually controversial. As a mark that has a hierarchy between the comma and the period, the semicolon often separates two clauses that could have

served as independent sentences. Some sentences work well with the semicolon, while others can be clumsy. Invented in Venice in 1494 by printer

and publisher Aldus Manutius, the semi-

colon for long had no strictly defined function. In the nineteenth century, as newer and newer grammar rules entered the discourse, disagreements over where and when to use the semicolon became frequent. In her biography of the semicolon, Watson uses a range of examples, from Milton to Martin Luther King Jr to Raymond Chandler, and argues

that grammar fanatics should ignore the rulebooks and focus instead on communicating better.

"Does this mean anything goes? Not in the least," *The New York Times* writes in its review. "Watson opposes conventions only as they exist to spare us from thinking. Don't just learn the rules, her clever, curious book prompts us; learn to ask, whose rules (and to admire that semicolon while you're at it)."

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

Reading the US Fed's rate cut

What does the quarter-percentage-point cut in interest rates by the US central bank — the first rate cut since the financial crisis of 2008 — indicate? How is India likely to be impacted?

ANIL SASI

NEW DELHI, AUGUST 1

LATE WEDNESDAY evening India time, the United States Federal Reserve announced a quarter-percentage-point cut in interest rates — the first rate cut in 11 years.

What makes this rate-cut action — the first since the global financial crisis broke in 2008 — more significant is that barely six months previously, the US Fed was on a hawkish rate-hike trajectory, moving in the direction of bolstering the debt-laden American economy.

Why the rate cut by the Fed?

The Fed has cited concerns about the global economy and muted US inflation among the key reasons for the decision to cut rates, and signalled a readiness to lower borrowing costs further if needed. At the same time, the central bank has underlined that the US economy grew "at a healthy pace" over the first six months of the year.

Financial markets had expected the quarter-percentage-point rate cut, which lowered the US central bank's benchmark overnight lending rate to a target range of 2%-2.25%.

In a statement issued at the end of its two-day policy meeting, the Fed said it had decided to cut rates "in light of the implications of global developments for the economic outlook as well as muted inflation pressures". It "will act as appropriate to sustain" the record-long US economic expansion, the central bank said.

A cut up to at least 75 basis points in the Fed funds rate had been expected by the end of the year, with the rate-cut cycle beginning from August. (One bps is equivalent to onehundredth of a percentage point.) Fed Chairman Jerome Powell, however, underlined that the rate cut was merely a "mid-cycle adjustment to policy", thus ruling out multiple sequenced cuts in rates.

Does the cut indicate a shift in policy? The cut in policy rates follows months of

pressure from US President Donald Trump, who has been pushing the American central bank for a cut in rates to stoke growth. Powell



Federal Open Market Committee Meeting on Wednesday. Reuters

has repeatedly pledged to follow economic data, and has resisted the nudges from the President — only to change course sharply now.

"Information received since the Federal Open Market Committee met in June indicates that the labour market remains strong and that economic activity has been rising at a moderate rate," the Fed said in its statement. "Job gains have been solid, on average, in recent months, and the unemployment rate has remained low."

The Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) is a panel within the Fed that is responsible for setting policy rates. The ambiguity in the Fed was reflected somewhat in the vote on the decision, with two members of the 10-member FOMC opposing the decision to cut rates. The decision failed to impress Trump,

who has been calling for a big rate cut. The President scoffed at Powell, posting on Twitter: "What the Market wanted to hear from Jay Powell and the Federal Reserve was that this was the beginning of a lengthy and aggressive rate-cutting cycle which would

keep pace with China, The European Union and other countries around the world... As usual, Powell let us down... We are winning anyway, but I am certainly not getting much help from the Federal Reserve!"

What will be the impact on emerging market economies, including India?

Theoretically, a rate cut in the US should be positive for emerging market economies (EMEs), especially from a debt market perspective. Emerging economies such as India tend to have higher inflation and, thereby, higher interest rates than those in developed countries such as the US and Europe. As a result, FIIs would want to borrow money in the US at low interest rates in dollar terms, and then invest that money in bonds of emerging countries such as India in rupee terms to earn a higher rate of interest.

When the US Fed cuts its interest rates, the difference between the interest rates of the two countries increases, thus making India more attractive for the currency carry trade. A rate cut by the Fed would also mean a

greater impetus to growth in the US, which could be positive news for global growth. But this could also translate into more equity investments in the US, which could temper investor enthusiasm for emerging market economies in a proportionate manner.

How did the stock markets react; why?

Indian stocks tanked on Thursday. While domestic factors such as dismal July car sales data and slower GDP growth projections played a role in the selloff, one of the major factors was Powell's characterisation of the rate cut as a mid-cycle adjustment. Markets have taken this as a sign that sharp further cuts were not imminent.

Thursday's sell-off dragged benchmark indices to fresh five-month lows, with the BSE Sensex slipping below the 37,000 mark. The broader Nifty50, too, breached the 11,000 mark in the intra-day trade. Bonds in India too, fell as investors trimmed bets on aggressive interest-rate cuts in high-yield markets after the signal from the US Fed.

The sharp fall in yields of government securities over the past month have already priced in the Fed's action. A major 50 bps cut by the RBI expected next week will likely trigger a further rally in the bond market. (As investors buy government bonds, prices increase, and yields fall. A lower yield indicates lesser risk, but if the yield offered by a bond is higher than what it was when issued, there is a chance that the government that issued the instrument could be financially stressed and may be unable to repay the capital). According to analysts, there are also con-

such as the rupee continue to weaken sharply against the dollar, that may result in central banks such as the RBI turning more cautious about cutting the policy rate too aggressively. The Fed's tempered outlook on rate cuts

cerns that if Asian emerging market currencies

found a reflection in the US markets. The Dow Jones Industrial Average and the S&P 500 lost over 1% after the statement. Asian markets traded mostly lower Thurs-

day, with Hong Kong's Hang Seng falling 0.7% and the Shanghai Composite 0.8%. Japan's Nikkei, however, bucked the trend. Britain's FTSE 100 fell 0.2% and Germany's DAX dropped 0.1%. But France's CAC 40 rose 0.4%.

THIS WORD MEANS: CONSULAR ACCESS (TO KULBHUSHAN JADHAV)

What ICJ ordered; Pak has 'offered' to India

SHUBHAJIT ROY NEW DELHI, AUGUST 1

PAKISTAN has "offered" India consular access to Kulbhushan Jadhav, who has been in jail in Pakistan since March 2016. The former Indian Navy officer was sentenced to death by a Pakistani military court on charges of espionage and terrorism. Late Thursday evening, India was "evaluating" the Pakistani proposal.

The Hague-based International Court of Justice (ICI) had ordered on July 17 that Pakistan must undertake an "effective review and reconsideration" of Jadhav's conviction and sentencing, and grant consular access to him without delay. The ICI upheld India's stand that Pakistan is in egregious violation of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, 1963.

What is the concept of "consular access"? Consular access simply means that a diplomat or an official will have a meeting with the prisoner who is in the custody of another country. Usually, during the meeting, the diplomat will first confirm the identity of the person, and will then ask some basic questions — on how he/she is being treated in custody, and what he/she wants.

Depending on the response, the diplomat/official will report back to his/her government, and the next steps will be initiated.

The principle of consular access was agreed to in the 1950s and 60s. The Vienna Convention on Consular Relations (VCCR) was framed in 1963, at the height of Cold War. This was a time when "spies" from the US and USSR were caught in each other's countries and across the world, and the idea was to ensure that they were not denied consular access.

All countries agreed to the principle, and more than 170 have ratified the Vienna Convention, making it one of the most universally recognised treaties in the world.

But, its implementation has faced challenges. While international law has long recognised the right of missions to assist and protect its nationals detained abroad, the ability of a consulate to provide effective aid has been heavily dependent on the prompt receipt of information of the detention, and timely access to the detainee.

Under Article 36 of the VCCR, at the request of a detained foreign national, the consulate of the sending State must be notified of the detention "without delay". The consulate has the right "to visit a national of the



Jadhav's wife, mother met him across a glass partition in 2017. PTI

sending State who is in prison, custody or detention, to converse and correspond with him and to arrange for his legal representation".

No time interval is indicated for granting consular access. But it must be provided in all cases where a foreigner is "arrested or committed to prison or to custody pending trial or is detained in any other manner", regardless of the circumstances or charges.

Indian diplomats in Islamabad were discussing the terms and conditions of the consular access to be provided to Jadhav.

The key issues on the table: how many Indian officials would conduct Jadhav's inter-

would Pakistani officials other than security personnel be present as well; would there be a glass partition between them and Jadhav; would they be allowed to have physical contact with him. etc. After the ICJ order, the Pakistan Foreign

view; for how long would they meet him;

Ministry had said Jadhav had been informed of his rights under Article 36, Paragraph 1(b) of the VCCR. It had said that Pakistan would grant consular access to him "according to Pakistani laws", the modalities for which were being worked out. India is arguing that Article 36, Paragraph

1(a) of the VCCR says "consular officers shall be free to communicate with nationals of the sending State and to have access to them. Nationals of the sending State shall have the same freedom with respect to communication with and access to consular officers of the sending State". India has asked Pakistan to grant "full

consular access" to Jadhav in "full compliance and conformity" the ICJ verdict and the Vienna Convention. India wants to ensure that the meeting does not become a sham like the one in December 2017, when Jadhav's mother and wife visited him.

One tribunal for all river water disputes: why the proposal, how it will work

AMITABH SINHA PUNE, AUGUST 1

ON WEDNESDAY, Lok Sabha gave its approval to a proposal to set up a permanent tribunal to adjudicate on inter-state disputes over sharing of river waters. The Bill cleared by Lok Sabha seeks to make amendments to the Inter-State River Waters Disputes Act of 1956 that provides for setting up of a separate tribunal every time a dispute arises. Once it becomes law, the amendment will ensure the transfer of all existing water disputes to the new tribunal. All five existing tribunals under the 1956 Act would cease to exist.

Why the change

The main purpose is to make the process of dispute settlement more efficient and effective. Under the 1956 Act, nine tribunals have so far been set up. Only four of them have given their awards. One of these disputes, over Cauvery waters between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, took 28 years to settle. The Ravi and Beas Waters Tribunal was

TRIDUNALS SU FAR						
RIVER	STATES	WHENSETUP	STATUS			
Godavari	Maharashtra, Andhra, Karnataka, MP, Odisha	1969	1980 award being implemented			
Krishna (Tribunal–I)	Maharashtra, Andhra, Karnataka	1969	1976 award being implemented			
Narmada	Rajasthan, MP, Gujarat, Maharashtra	1969	1979 award being implemented			
Cauvery	Karnataka, TN, Puducherry, Kerala	1990	2007 award challenged in SC, later merged with 2018 SC judgment			
Krishna (Tribunal-II)	Karnataka, Andhra, Telangana, Maharashtra	2004	Decision in December 2010, matter now in Supreme Court			
Mahanadi	Odisha, Chhattisgarh	2018	Underadjudication			
Mahadayi	Goa, Karnataka, Maharashtra	2010, reconstituted 2013	Award in August 2018, Goa asked for reconsideration, under adjudication			
Ravi and Beas	Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan	1986	One award in 1987, matter in Supreme Court			
Vansadhara	Andhra Pradesh, Odisha	2010, reconstituted 2012	Under adjudication			

set up in April 1986 and it is still to give the final award. The minimum a tribunal has taken to settle a dispute is seven years, by the

TDIDI IN ALC CO EAD

first Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal in 1976. The amendment is bringing a time limit for adjudicating the disputes. All disputes would now have to be resolved within a maximum of four-and-a-half years.

The multiplicity of tribunals has led to an

increase in bureaucracy, delays, and possible duplication of work. The replacement of five existing tribunals with a permanent tribunal is likely to result in a 25 per cent reduction in staff strength, from the current 107 to 80, and a saving of Rs 4.27 crore per year.

The current system of dispute resolution would give way to a new two-tier approach. The states concerned would be encouraged

to come to a negotiated settlement through a Disputes Resolution Committee (DRC). Only if the DRC fails to resolve the dispute will the matter be referred to the tribunal.

How it will work

In the existing mechanism, when states raise a dispute, the central government constitutes a tribunal. Under the current law,

the tribunal has to give its award within three years, which can be extended by another two years. In practice, tribunals have taken much longer to give their decisions.

Under the new system, the Centre would set up a DRC once states raise a dispute. The DRC would be headed by a serving or retired secretary-rank officer with experience in the water sector and would have

WORDLY WISE

THERE IS NO LOVE SINCERER THAN THE LOVE OF FOOD.

— GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

The Indian EXPRESS

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

BLEAK MATH

Subdued tax revenues indicate that the economic slowdown may be more entrenched than it is believed to be

ATA RELEASED BY the Controller General of Accounts (CGA) paints a worrying picture of the government's finances. The Centre's gross tax revenues grew by a mere 1.4 per cent in the first quarter of the current financial year, and are likely to be well below nominal GDP growth for the quarter. In comparison, the Union budget pegged tax revenues to grow by 18.3 per cent this year. Last year, the Centre's tax revenues grew by 8.4 per cent (as per CGA) — below nominal GDP growth. This indicates that the trend of a rising tax to GDP ratio has been reversed. The first quarter numbers also suggest that the Centre's tax revenues will now have to grow by a staggering 22.3 per cent in the remaining part of the year to meet the budgeted target. Though collections are likely to rise in the coming quarters, achieving this target is a tall task, especially with a more entrenched slowdown in economic activity.

The break-up of the headline tax numbers reveals that direct taxes (both corporate and personal income tax) grew at a modest 9.7 per cent in Q1, but growth was well below the budget target of 18.6 per cent. Notwithstanding sluggish economic growth which would impact corporate profitability and taxes, corporate taxes, which grew by 6.3 per cent in Q1FY20, are typically lower in the first quarter, rising thereafter. But, the impact of the lowering of tax rates on most entities, as proposed in the budget, might temper these estimates. Income tax collections have continued to grow at a healthy pace, clocking 12.3 per cent in the quarter ended June. The surcharge on the super rich will boost collections further.

But the concern on the indirect tax side continues. Indirect taxes, excluding compensation cess and taxes of UTs, actually contracted by 4.9 per cent in Q1FY20. While part of the slippage in GST collections could be on account of IGST allocations, the slowdown in economic activity may well have exacerbated the situation. Also, compliance hasn't really picked up as pointed out by the Comptroller and Auditor General in its audit report. Part of this shortfall could be offset by higher excise and customs collections, which will pick up in the coming quarters as the proposals mentioned in the budget are rolled out. Yet, the larger message from the tax data, of subdued economic activity, is worrying. It is possible that the slowdown is more entrenched that it is believed to be. Limited fiscal space means that monetary policy is the only game in town. But monetary policy has limited ability to stimulate growth in the short term, especially when the transmission of lower rates to the broader system remains restricted. The outlook for growth remains hazy in the near term.

EAT, PRAY, LOVE

Zomato has stood firmly by pluralist principles and heartwarmingly punctured a stereotype

PERSON PROFESSING the Hindu religion in Jabalpur and observing Shravan in a ritually sectarian fashion has turned the spotlight on an India divided, earned widespread derision, and shown that the majority online are not bigoted. He declined to accept a Zomato order delivered by a Muslim, and when he took his peeve to Twitter, the company's handle responded: "Food doesn't have a religion. Food is a religion." In a nation that has weathered centuries of restrictions on commensality, the tweet constituted a resounding affirmation of modernity. The company's CEO joined in the conversation, sticking up for diversity and stating that he was not sorry to lose any business that comes in the way of our values." Reportedly, he supported the actions of his staff and assured them that they would not have to knuckle under to customer demands that were racial or attacked diversity.

As the conversation proceeded, though, it may have become obvious that standing up to bigotry may actually be good for business. While a small minority supported the actions of the peeved customer in Jabalpur, the volume of derision he has earned drowned out their voices. Critics pointed out that to retain ritual purity, he would have to take absurdly extreme precautions. He would have to check if his food was cooked by co-religionists, and that the delivery executive's vehicle did not run on fuel imported from a Muslim nation. At the same time, Zomato received congratulatory messages from all quarters, including politicians, businessmen and influencers, for defending the idea of a diverse India. Standing up for one's principles, it appears, is not necessarily detrimental to business.

India's corporate culture is not celebrated for being led by liberal principles. On the contrary, it is widely criticised for cronyism, for seeking patronage from power and safe markets among majorities. Against that backdrop, Zomato's moral determination to hold the line stands out in sharp relief. It has also busted the stereotype that young digital companies are actuated purely by the profit motive in the marketplace, and by the conservative views of deracinated techies in the boardroom. And it has answered one of the oldest questions about capitalism: Does morality matter in business? It does. Two tweets have won the company more goodwill than an expensive ad campaign would have. More significantly, they have gone some way in reaffirming public faith in the value of decency.

ALL'S NOT WELL

BCCI must realise that if it does not bring in anti-doping reform, it will be made to do so

HE INDIAN CRICKET board has long been an ostrich in matters of accountability. Its dreams of putting in place a self-sustaining T20 league which can rope in the world's finest talent — like America's NFL, NBA and World Series baseball – was realised in this last decade when the IPL turned monstrous in proportion. What did not follow for the BCCI, however, was the American insistence on integrity. Doping is the single biggest threat that can shred the credibility of any sport that wants to be taken seriously. But the way the BCCI has handled the positive test of its brightest young star, Prithvi Shaw, shows its casualness towards the modern day sport's most important protocol. Shaw was let off after a process in which the anti-doping code wasn't strictly adhered to and there was no transparency in hearings.

The government has cracked the whip and in coming days might make it difficult for the BCCI to go on believing it exists in a separate sporting universe. India, which notoriously sat second on doping charts in Olympic disciplines and won a measly total of 2 medals, has gone on believing all's well with cricket. Testing protocols are hardly followed in the world's richest league, the problem compounded by the fact that India's prima donnas have always resisted WADA's regulations. So, while the world's greatest names like Roger Federer and Usain Bolt are answerable to the dope tester's 6.30 am call and obligated to fill in the whereabouts forms, cricketers are rarely tested or punished once they

return a positive sample. The BCCI system has misused discretion in handing Shaw a lenient punishment that will deter no one. The BCCI leads the world in cricket's general obstructionism to any antidoping reforms. Cricket's audience, too, needs to demand clean performances if the summer slam isn't to turn into WWE with balls and bats played by fully covered men with something to hide.

Health care is ailing



But a National Medical Commission is no cure-all. Many important questions remain

K Sujatha Rao

THERE ARE SIX reasons why governments would like to regulate medical education. One, to ensure that doctors are appropriately trained and skilled to address the prevailing disease burden; two, to ensure that medical graduates reflect a uniform standard of competence and skills; three, to ensure that only those with basic knowledge of science and aptitude for the profession get in; four, to ensure ethical practice in the interest of the patients; five, to create an environment that enables innovation and research; and six, to check the corrosive impact of the process of commercialisation on values and corrupt practices. The question is whether the National Medical Commission Bill passed by Rajya Sabha on Thursday addresses these

The problem of inappropriately trained doctors of varying quality has been known since decades. The report of the Mudaliar Committee set up in 1959 had devoted substantial space to pointing out how doctors had neither the skills nor the knowledge to handle primary care and infectious diseases that were a high priority concern then as now. Likewise, standards vary greatly with competence levels dependent upon the college of instruction. In professionalising the MCI, with experts for all levels of education and practice, the NMC Bill can be a gamechanger.

It has the potential to be more nimble in setting curricula, teaching content, adding new courses and providing the much needed multisectoral perspectives. More importantly, the NMC has the potential to link the disease burden and the specialties being produced. In the UK, for example, it is the government that lays down how many specialists of which discipline need to be produced, which the British Medical Council then adheres to. In India, the MCI has so far been operating independently. This gap can be bridged by the NMC. Given the right people, it is also possible that the NMC can encourage and incentivise innovation and promote research by laying down rules that make research a prerequisite in medical colleges.

It is in curbing unethical practice and commercialisation of medical education that

It is a fact that the MCI required a college to be inspected 25 times to get final recognition, each being a rent seeking exercise. That "inspector Raj", as the Health Minister noted, will be done away with, is indeed a positive step. But in relying only on the NEXT as the principal substitute is to abdicate governance. Undoubtedly, there are grey areas giving scope for corrupt practices and production of substandard doctors. It would have been preferable to have tested the waters, examined the implications and then introduced the reform rather than including it in a law

that is difficult to amend.

the Bill falls short. Today, there are 536 medical colleges with 79,627 seats. Of them, 260 or 48.5 per cent are private with 38,000 seats. The bill allows differential pricing with freedom for the college managements to levy market determined fees on 19,000 students, under what is called the management quota. This is admission for those with the ability to pay. There are colleges that are rumoured to arrange admission and the degree for a fee.

To counter such practices, the Bill has proposed mandating the NEET and NEXT. I was Secretary, Health, when these two concepts came into the policy dialogue. The NEET was mooted by the then board of governors for three reasons: One, to reduce the pain of students having to take an estimated 25 examinations to gain admission in a college; two, given the abysmal level of high school education, to ensure a minimum level of knowledge in science, and three, to reduce corruption by restricting student admission to those qualifying the NEET. Measured against these three goals, the experience has been mixed, demanding a rethink.

The NEXT is an idea borrowed from the UK that has for over seven years been struggling to introduce it. In all such countries, the licensing exams are stretched into modules, not a multiple choice questions type of exam. The underlying belief is that in centralising the qualifying examination, a college with the largest number of failed students will automatically close down. Following from this, the Bill has virtually given up inspections for assuring the quality of education.

It is a fact that the MCI required a college to be inspected 25 times to get final recognition, each being a rent seeking exercise. That "inspector Raj", as the Health Minister noted, will be done away with, is indeed a positive step. But in relying only on the NEXT as the principal substitute is to abdicate governance. Undoubtedly, there are grey areas giving scope for corrupt practices and production of substandard doctors. It would have been preferable to have tested the waters, examined the implications and then introduced the reform rather than including it in a law that is difficult to amend.

The excessive reliance on a battery of di-

agnostic tests is reflective of both commercial considerations as well as weak knowledge. Students spending lakhs to become doctors resort to unethical practices to recoup their investment and pollute the system. In the US, despite tight regulations and remunerative payment systems, there is still substantial unethical practice. The Bill, in reducing oversight, allowing extensive discretionary powers to government to set aside decisions of the NMC, making it virtually an advisory body, gives scope for the current state of affairs to continue, only at a higher premium nullifying the major need for reform of the MCI. This is the most worrying aspect of the NMC. In other words, the MCI got into disrepute only when commercialisation of medical education set in in the 1990's, and the amendment of the MCI Act in 1993, reducing the autonomy of the MCI and making it subservient to government. This has now been taken to another level in the Bill.

The Bill has other irritants — like permitting a registered medical practitioner to prescribe medicines. Left vague, much will depend on the rules. While there is a need to decentralise, to give to non-medical personnel some powers and authority, it needs tight regulation and supervision. Given our inability to enforce the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, as seen in the rising rate of the antimicrobial resistance problem, the issue of which comes first needs to be carefully examined. Prudence may be advisable. Another irritant is the continuance of the two parallel streams of producing specialists. By not bringing the DNB under the purview of the NMC, the DNB system is left open to abuse.

No law is perfect. It is dependent upon the people who interpret and implement it. Government has, under this Bill, arrogated to itself an unprecedented power to appoint people in the various arms of the proposed structure. The quality and integrity of these people will then define the future of the health system in India. We hope for the best as the long, bitterly fought battle to reform the 86-year-old MCI comes to a close.

The writer is former Union health secretary, Government of India



KILLING JNU

Throttling of academic freedoms will also affect campuses elsewhere

APOORVANAND

SEPTEMBER 20 IS the birthday of Chandrashekhar, the young left leader who was killed in Siwan in 1997. He was a student of Jawaharlal Nehru University, the president of its students'union. We organise an annual memorial lecture in his name at Patna. This year, we decided to invite a professor from his university to deliver the lecture. She said a cautious yes, as she was not sure if she would be given leave. For the past three years, teachers of JNU have seen their leave applications rejected, not only for popular lectures like the one above but also for seminars organised by professional bodies or their peers. But we insisted that she should try. We wrote her a formal invitation letter.

Before my colleague could submit my letter with her application for leave to the authorities, she herself was sent one by them. It was a chargesheet. She was one of the 48 teachers who were asked to explain why action should not be taken against them for having participated in a protest last year at the administrative block. The chargesheet has been framed under Rule 14 of the Central Civil Services (Classification, Control, and Appeal) Rules 1965 and invokes sections of the CCS (Conduct) Rules 1964. Failing to explain their "crime" to the satisfaction of the authorities can invite penal action.

We knew then that her application for leave would not be accepted. She is one of the foremost scholars of her field internationally, a respected public voice and a much-loved

Academics with their long engagement with knowledge have the tools to test the political and policy promises offered to people. They must share it with the public to help them take informed decisions. So, they need freedom, not for their own sake but for the good of the society.

teacher. But in the eyes of the authorities of the JNU she is merely an "employee" they can discipline with rules.

Teachers had always thought that they were not government employees. Vice Chancellors also knew that they do appoint teachers but they are not their subordinates. Teachers are regarded as minds which function best when not constrained. If you ask former vice-chancellors of JNU, they would talk fondly about the cordial relations they had with the faculty. It was an honour to be accepted as by the community of people, which included scholars such as Bipan Chandra, Romila Thapar, Namvar Singh or Tanika Sarkar. But the current administration in the JNU treats the teachers as its "employees". The invocation of the civil services rules to discipline them is the latest in the list of its atrocities. To tell a teacher that she cannot air her views freely, cannot write or speak publicly without the permission of the "competent authorities" is to take away from them not only their rights but also their fundamental duty.

In democracies, people take decisions. But they do not have the intellectual wherewithal to examine the claims of the "powers that be" which seek their consent to rule them. Academics with their long engagement with knowledge have the tools to test the political and policy promises offered to people. They must share it with the public to help them take informed decisions. So, they need freedom, not for their own sake but for the good of the society. Academic freedom is slightly more than the freedom of expression. It is a basic necessity without which the business of knowledge cannot be conducted. All democracies therefore resist the temptation of controlling the campus. Peers decide, not state bodies.

We have been lucky to get a replacement for the lecture. But the damage done to JNU, if goes unchallenged, could affect university life elsewhere in the country. Indian campuses might resemble the campuses of the Stalinist era and academics would function as government spokespersons.

There is more happening at JNU which should attract public scrutiny. Creation of management, engineering and medical schools to marginalise the humanities and social sciences, the automation and vulgarisation of the admission process and the taking away of powers of the faculty in the appointment of new faculty and violating the principles of seniority is destroying the unique character of the university.

It is beyond the capability of the faculty and students of JNU to save it from an administration which is at war with it. It is the duty of the society, not only its alumni, who are in powerful positions, to speak up. The existence of spaces like JNU help us to think about possibilities which can become a reality.

The writer teaches Hindi in Delhi University

AUGUST 2, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

CHAVAN UNDER FIRE A MEETING OF the pre-split AICC will be held in Bangalore on August 17 and 18. The Congress Working Committee took this decision today. There was a blistering attack on YB Chavan, Deputy Prime Minister, at the CWC meeting for his mishandling of the first list of ministers. Bhola Paswan Shastri, leader of the Congress Party in the Lok Sabha, Yunus Saleem and Vinayak Acharya led the attack They were supported by some others. When the attack was in full cry, Chavan left the meeting possibly in a huff. At one point, when Chavan said he took the blame for all that had happened, Mohammad Ali shouted," Don't try to defend, yourself."

Chavan said the list of nominees would show that the interests of minorities, women and Harijans had been adequately safeguarded.

ANARCHY ON RISE NANAJI DESHMUKH, JANATA Party General Secretary said here that anarchy was fast enveloping the country. Speaking at a rally to mark the death anniversary of Lokmanya Tilak, he said, "politics of opportunism doesn't behove a country of great ideals and leaders of the calibre of Shivaji, Tilak and Mahatma Gandhi. Society should boycott and isolate such power crazy elements." He wondered whether such leaders considered they could serve the nation and society only through the seat of power.

FAREWELL TO ARMS

A BATCH OF 100 rebel Mizos led by "Colonel" Vanthanga, former "Commander-in-chief" of the banned Mizo National Army bid farewell to arms, surrendered themselves before Mizoram's Inspector-General of Police, Ved Marwah, and signed the oath of allegiance to the Indian Constitution at a simple ceremony in the police complex at Aizawl. The government reciprocated the gesture, giving an initial rehabilitation grant of Rs 1,000 each and a promise of industrial and agricultural loans to enable them to start their careers afresh.

THE IDEAS PAGE

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

It is the duty of richer nations to do all they can to hold back the soaring temperatures which they did most to produce. —THE GUARDIAN

Remaking home

Divides between private colonies, flats and government housing reinforce the city's isolating character. Urban spaces need better designed homes and an egalitarian housing policy



GAUTAM BHATIA

TO SAY THAT there is no housing crisis in India is to make a statement of little value. Homelessness is on the rise, and has been for the past half a century. Eight years ago, after the 2011 Census, the demand for new housing was at 25 lakh units. With a great burst of building — mostly sub-standard and low cost units — the central government and state housing agencies added a sizeable number to the mix. But with demand rising exponentially and related to increasing migration numbers, the current requirement for shelter stands at 30 lakh units, more than double from the turn of the century.

Yet, the government's ineffective home building programmes proliferate. The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana aims to provide cheaper houses quickly to low income groups, with substantial interest subsidies on housing loans. The previous scheme, Awas Yojna, has been attempting the same since 1985 without much success. State housing boards have similar unachievable goals. Every year, more houses are constructed; yet, every year the demand increases.

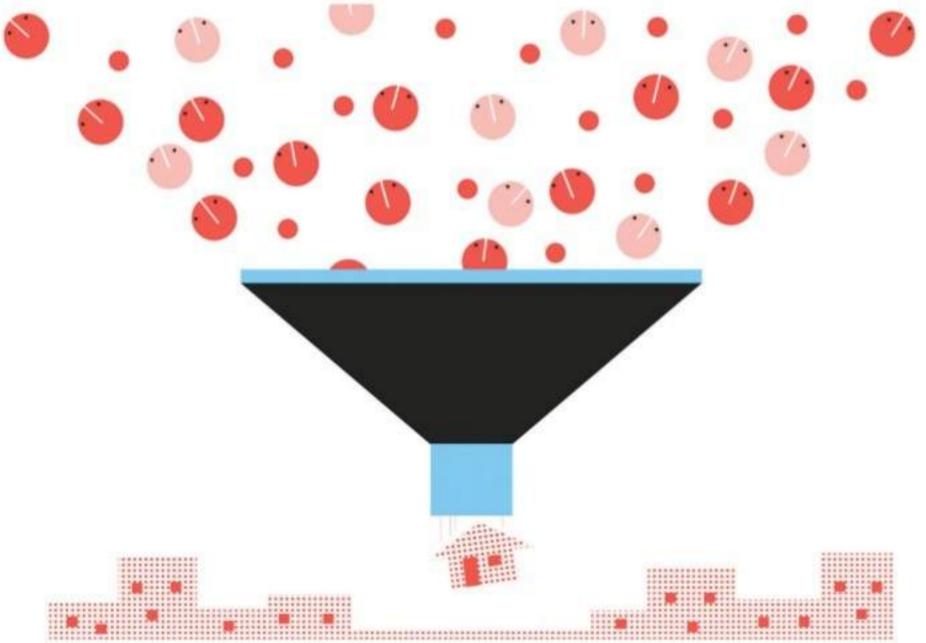
Is this a sane policy for providing homes? When an idea has failed consistently wouldn't a different approach make more sense?

In the early 1950s, new houses in most cities relied on the bungalow model — a free standing home, single storied, spread on private land, and bounded by walls. The home's ownership, independence and property rights were paramount. Nearly 70 years later, despite a 100-fold increase in city population density and land values, little has changed from that ideal. The provision of a shelter is still wracked by the archaic ideal of ownership, still burdened by the unjustified expense of conventional construction, and still stuck to the impracticality of old space and design ideas.

Why is the dream of living in a home tied to ownership? Is the home less of a home if it belongs to someone else? The outmoded notion of a building in self-ownership, as a private family asset, is the primary hurdle in the quest for affordable housing. And in seeking to remedy the situation, four factors need to be evaluated in the search for a new model.

First, of utmost importance is to put a halt to the growing privatisation of the city, which would in effect do away with more private ownership of land and buildings. The current situation creates unfortunate divides between private colonies, flats and government housing — contributing to insecurity and gated colonies. So far, the isolating quality of the Indian city has been reinforced by divisions of profession, ethnicity and economic status. Where is in the world will you find cities with officially recognised subdivisions — Bengalis in their own enclave (Chittaranjan Park), lawyers in Niti Bagh, Jews in Jewtown and Parsis in Parsi Colony. Would white Catholic office secretaries live in their own suburb outside New York, away from Black Presbyterian

By discouraging home ownership, the city becomes more open and accessible to a greater number of new residents, thus creating the potential for a more diverse economic, ethnic and religious mix. Stringent urban land reforms would be the first step in that direction. By making housing part of city infrastructure projects, the government takes away land and construction from private builders and creates diverse pockets of housing in different parts of the city. Short-term rights to a home should ideally be the goal, such that citizens



CR Sasikumar

before the assembly elections and demonstrates how the top leadership in the country plays shamelessly with a city's long range plans for quick short-term gains.

By contrast, Brazil's intervention in its Favelas or slum tenements upgraded individual houses after a rigorous survey of families, providing design improvements, ventilation, storage space and utilities where needed. Singapore replaced their poorer tenements altogether with a basic high rises of low cost low income housing integrated into the fabric of the city. By such inclusion the poorer sections were no longer relegated to depressed parts of the town but were granted space everywhere. Unfortunately, the Indian concept of "regularisation" works on the tacit admission that the city learn to accept the poor as they are, where they are — in self-created clusters outside the mainstream. They remain socially isolated, and develop outside of the norms of civic life — a necessary evil that can be exploited as cheap manual labour and efficient vote bank.

Isn't it the combined future of the government, architects, and planners to constantly test new ideas related to local forms of urban living? In Delhi, the new large-scale housing developments of Nauroji Nagar and Kidwai Nagar fall in the centre of the town and could have been effectively used to demonstrate radical new ideas of urban density, landscape, car-less streets, water collection reservoirs, green construction, alternative systems of energy and waste management and a mixeduse home-work-recreation network. Instead, a shabby mix of eight to ten storey tower blocks adds yet another third-rate sight to the already beleaguered city. Easy and quick time-tested commerce has similarly shaped Mumbai's Bandra Kurla Complex and Indira Nagar in Bengaluru. Over the next decade, as millions of new migrants move to towns, a radical view of the Indian home is the only way to go.

It is no exaggeration to say that housing in India is both inefficient, poorly constructed, thoughtlessly designed, and conforms to outmoded ideas that still hark to the bungalow prototype. Unless more thoughtfully-designed homes, with newer materials and technologies, and a more egalitarian housing policy become part of future government programmes, it is these citadels of waste and decay that will remain the public face of the city.

Bhatia is a Delhi-based architect and writer

A step for gender justice

The law that criminalises instant talaq is framed by constitutional morality



BHUPENDER YADAV

IT IS A historic moment for this country. The arbitrary, unconstitutional and unreasonable practice, generally called triple talaq, has become a practice of past and now, an offence. India has moved on from an era when the name of movie was changed to Nikah because there was a danger that if a husband asked his wife to watch a movie named "Talaq Talaq", she may suffer a heart attack as uttering talaq, talaq was considered as divorce.

The present legislation comes in the backdrop of an evolving society, which has influenced even Islamic states to make corrective changes by legislation to Muslim personal law. I congratulate our Muslim sisters for getting their due right of equality, an issue of paramount importance for the present government. Eradicating the unfair practice of triple talag has ended their insecurity and uncertain future.

The fight against instant talaq was the fight of every Muslim woman, though it was started by an ordinary Muslim woman. Talag-e-biddat left women insecure since it was generally accepted and practiced by the community, when a man wanted to correct his mistake. There was no reason for a woman in a civilised society to go through this trauma. This fight, being the fight of ordinary women against inequality and injustice, deserved the support of the government that considers equality, as outlined in the Constitution, its guiding principle.

Bringing the law that declares triple talag an offence is a victory for the civil society; it should not be seen as a political victory. It is surprising how anyone can oppose such a progressive law, which was essential for the women of one particular community, who were facing discrimination due to this arbitrary practice. It is disheartening to see how those who have been talking about the Beijing declaration were against the passing of this much-needed law to ensure women's dignity.

Instant talaq concerns gender justice. The law banning it is about ensuring human rights and providing liberty to women to live with dignity. Many criminal offences have civil consequences, for example, rash driving. Crime involves punishment by the government while a civil wrong is a wrong against an individual that calls for compensation to the wronged person.

Generally, civil action can provide only compensation. What compensation would be appropriate for a woman like Shah Bano, who was divorced by her husband at 70? There was need for a law, which may act as a deterrent and prevent people from resorting to instant talaq. In short, criminalising instant talaq was the only option.

Triple talaq was not only a wrong against an individual, but it was an attack on the society in general. The government deserves appreciation for bringing a law that terms it as offence; declaring it a punishable offence makes it an effective law. The deterrence theory of criminology is shaping the criminal justice system in various countries.

We also cannot ignore the constitutional morality. The Supreme Court has held that the practice of triple talaq is not protected under religious freedom and the same is against the dignity of women. Gender justice is an important constitutional goal and without accomplishing the same, half of the country's citizens would not be able to enjoy their rights in reality. When Article 51-A (e) of the Constitution talks about renouncing practices derogatory to the dignity of women, how can a government not bring about an effective law to end the practice? Articles 14, 15 and 21, which are a part of the basic structure of the Constitution, make it clear that there was a need to bring a law, particularly since the Court had declared that the ambit of religious freedom does not cover triple talaq. Democratic values will survive only when people are guided by the constitutional parameters.

It is also important to note that it is not the first law to declare an unreasonable and arbitrary act as an offence. There are so many examples. For example, from the ancient time, polygamy was permitted amongst Hindus. But in 1860, the Indian Penal Code made "polygamy" a criminal offence. Next was The Hindu Marriage Act 1955, which provides the conditions for a valid Hindu marriage. One of the conditions introduced was that neither of the parties to the matrimonial alliance should have a living spouse at the time of marriage. Clearly, the practice of polygamy among Hindus was eradicated by legislation and the same was made a criminal offence through law. So the law criminalising triple talaq is not the first instance of personal law being changed to ensure gender justice in India.

So many reformative laws have been introduced by the state. One such law was the Hindu Widows' Remarriage Act. The issue is not about religion or faith but the concern for gender justice and gender equality. In order to fully emancipate Muslim women from an unjust and discriminatory family law, their unique position and experience at the intersection of gender discrimination and religious discrimination must be taken into account.

The present government deserves appreciation for ensuring equality of women in letter and spirit. What is held to be bad in the Holy Quran cannot be good in sharia. Or, what is bad in theology is bad in law as well.

> The writer is general secretary, BJP and MP, Rajya Sabha

THE Urdu PRESS

DEBATING TALAQ

INQUILAB HAS BACK to back editorials on triple talag, on July 31 and then on August 1. The August 1 editorial writes about the "irony" of one side being so concerned about the Unnao rape incident and the accident, which has the victim "fighting for her life, and most of her family killed, where the accused is a powerful MLA and on the other hand, instant triple talaq, with the government so concerned, as if there were no bigger problem than this one, at present". The newspaper writes: "There is no doubt that this is a bad practice, but the haste displayed while making a law against this has never been seen in any other problem." This, the newspaper goes on to say, is when "Muslim organisations had declared that they will through social reform oppose this".

Rozanama Rashtriya Sahara on July 26 compared the 1980s to now, when the "then Congress government led by Rajiv Gandhi had tried to interfere in Muslim personal law". But widespread protests forced the government's hand to reverse its stance. Now, the people appear "unable to do anything, laachaar". It urges a look at facts, speaking of "back-breaking inflation, unemployment, sharply rising inequality that affect not just Muslim women but all women, includ-

ing Muslim women"."When her son or husband is unemployed, can the Muslim woman be happy?" the editorial wonders.

have easy access to subsidised rental housing

without legal rights of ownership. Rental units

instead would allow residents to live close to

office and employment, keeping the neigh-

incentives and new rental regulations be used

to achieve that goal. One of the key reasons for

a shortfall in middle income housing is the un-

willingness of a home owner to rent out when

the legal rights grossly favour tenants. Besides

obvious change in rental laws, the government

needs to examine the current stock of available

housing and create an equitable rental policy.

The imposition of a high un-occupancy tax on

buildings that are vacant will help to inhabit

almost a third of private housing that remains

empty in most cities. Take, Delhi. The city — in-

cluding Gurgaon and NOIDA — is burdened

with over two lakh unoccupied mid and high

income housing. At the same time, there is a

desperate requirement for housing three lakh

low income and weaker section families.

Builders, however, continue to construct up-

scale luxury apartments because profit mar-

gins are enormous. Such insanity can only be

curbed when stricter construction restrictions

are in place, and the government begins to see

housing as a social service and not a business

venture. Expanding the supply of low-income

housing — something the private developers

refuse to touch — will ultimately help the slum-

space need more efficient modifications. Do

living/dining rooms, and private bedrooms

have any value in new housing or would a

smaller multifunctional and compact unit

make more sense? Given the high land values,

unless there is an increase in floor area ratio

(FAR) with a complementary decrease in a

home's occupancy footprint, economies of

scale will never be achieved in city residential

areas. In fact, subsidies on efficient space plan-

ning, environmental considerations and de-

sign that creates shared community spaces

enmeshed in changing civic status rather than

demonstrating concerns for physical improve-

ments, the Indian city continues to retain its

Third World label. Civic governance structures

need to be separate from politics, which is too

often a happy and willing partner in bartering

civic values for votes. The Delhi chief minister

recently announced that 1,800 unauthorised

colonies will grant home ownership rights to

its residents. The move comes a few months

Fourth, because political concerns remain

should be encouraged and rewarded.

Third, the current densities of residential

dweller to a natural upgrade.

Second, it is imperative that a system of tax

bourhood changing and dynamic.

Siasat on July 27 in an editorial after the passage of the Bill in the Lok Sabha calls the opposition parties and other parties who oppose the Bill to ensure that it not passed by the Rajya Sabha. Siasat writes: "The government will try many moves. And the Opposition must be alert. Those who are scared of opposing the Modi government must also make their stand clear." It writes: "Muslims are watching and will use this as a test to examine their so-called commitment to Muslims, their welfare and secularism. The time for empty words will have to end."

Etemaad (mouthpiece of the AIMIM) writes about the government pushing all the Bills it needs to consolidate its votebank in Parliament. It writes the government that has ignored the Sabarimala and Aadhaar orders of the Supreme Court, has chosen to bring out a bill for triple talaq instead of a law to control mob lynching. When such laws were brought against the majority community, for example in the Sabarimala case, it is stopped by an agitation. But Muslims have been scared beforehand itself, so they do not oppose such laws. While NIA is now a law stronger than POTA, it is clear that Muslims are the only targets. Why are steps not being taken to curb Hindu ex-

tremism? The newspaper calls for Muslims to "use their democratic rights to express their anger against the triple talaq bill, while staying within the law."

LAW AS HARASSMENT

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the government begins to see

Munsif on July 27 speaks of laws being hustled in an unseemly rush *intehaai jaldbaazi*. It takes special note of the RTI Bill, which, according to the newspaper, makes Information Commissioners almost "government servants" and guashes their autonomy and independence. The newspaper speculates if the Modi government is wreaking vengeance on RTI commissioners for the five big orders they gave which brought out the truth on the government. It terms the original bill a fine legislation of the UPA2 era, now being crushed.

The July 28 editorial of *Daawat*, the fortnightly newspaper of the Jamaat-e-Islami, focuses on the "anti-terror" law. It focuses on the "misuse of such laws". "Terror does not end with these laws as the intention is not to end terror. The intention is only to create new means of harassment against people which they take years to get out of," the editorial says. The newspaper writes that "earlier too, the intention was to harass innocents and push them in jail and this is what has happened. So, whenever attempts are made to formulate 'tough laws' they are opposed".

TRAGEDY IN UNNAO

Various editorials have taken note of the accident that wiped out several members of the Unnao rape victim's family. Etemaad on July 30 writes about the BJP MP Sakshi Maharaj meeting the accused, a BJP MLA, in jail recently. It asks for phone records of the truck driver, cleaner and owner scrutinised. Sahara on August 1 wonders, sardonically, why when "the Opposition is angry and brought up this crash in Parliament and the BJP claims to have suspended Kuldip Singh Sengar, the accused BJP MLA, is justice not forthcoming?" It calls for a CBI inquiry to be speedily ordered.

Mourning Sheila

Sahara editorial on July 22 talks about the tradition of leaders praising their opponents when they die. The editorial says it is commendable that BJP leaders praised Sheila Dikshit when she died. But why did they not do so in her lifetime? The editorial points out that if it happens, "political rivalry can never morph into personal enmity". The environment that will emerge in India then will be very positive, the editorial concludes.

Compiled by Seema Chishti

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

LIMITED LAW

'Shortchanged by law' and the article 'Power and Justice' (IE, August 1). The law against triple talaq serves a dual purpose for the government: Humiliating the Opposition and mobilising a section of the educated and professional Muslims in big cities and towns. The practice of triple talaq is no doubt decadent. But the government's aim to confer justice and empower Muslim women, in all likelihood, might not be fulfilled. On the contrary it might do more harm than good to the wronged woman.

THIS REFER TO the editorial,

G lavaid Rasool, Lucknow

GENDER JUSTICE

THIS REFERS TO the article 'Taking down patriarchy' (IE, August, 1). The writer's happiness over PM Narendra Modi's success in getting the anti- triple -talaq bill passed is understandable. Now he needs to show the same zeal to get the Women's Reservation Bill passed.

Tarsem Singh, Mahilpur

REFORM POLITICS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'A familiar drama' (IE, August 1). Citizens will point out that corruption is the norm among bureaucrats, the police, and even the judiciary has not been able to escape its share of blame. India did have stellar politicians B C Roy in Bengal and Y B Chavan in Maharashtra. Therefore, the need is to ensure that honest, educated and well-meaning people join politics and occupy positions of power. Let the Election Commission allow debates among the contestants in state-spon-

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

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PUBLICATIONS

sored auditoriums that are televised or shared through social media.

Kaushik Mukherjee, Pune

EMPTY BOAST

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'The 50-day journey' (IE, July 31). It is wrong to talk about high productivity in the current Monsoon Session. The government has bulldozed Bills on sensitive issues without proper discussion and scrutiny. Moreover, recent incidents of mob violence with forced sloganeering contradicts the vision laid down under "sabka saath, sabka vikas, sabka vishwas".

Tenzin Zhimba, Gandhinagar



Gender justice

Poor women are even more disadvantaged as supplicants before powerful men

Tearly seven years after the Nirbhaya tragedy shocked India and the world at large, a 19-yearold, who was allegedly raped in 2017 by a local MLA in Uttar Pradesh's Unnao district, is battling for her life. Hooked to a ventilator, the girl's latest trauma began on Sunday. She was travelling by car with two aunts and a lawyer from Unnao to Rae Bareli when a truck with a "blackened number plate" rammed into the vehicle. Whether it is an accident or not is now a subject matter of official investigation, but India has had a history of rogue trucks silencing those questioning the system. Since 2017, it's been a long, difficult road to justice for the family. Two years ago, the girl had gone to Kuldeep Singh Sengar, a four-time BJP legislator from Bangermau, for a job. The teenager accused him of sexually assaulting her, but the family's cry for help went unheard till April 2018, when Sengar was arrested, days after the girl threatened to immolate herself outside Uttar Pradesh (U.P.)Chief Minister Yogi Aditvanath's residence in Lucknow. In the meantime, her father was arrested in an arms case and died in police custody. Helpless in the face of such brazen show of power, the family wrote to the Chief Justice of India on July 12, alleging grave danger from the accused. Ranjan Gogoi got to know of the letter only on July 30 and expressed displeasure about the delay.

The family did not get any relief from State government agencies, which appear to have been complicit in the cover-up, with the MLA belonging to the ruling party. The BJP has come under pressure from the Opposition to expel Sengar. In the Unnao case, muscle, money power and the right political alignment weighed heavily against the girl. As for crimes against women, U.P. has a high rate, not least because many are reported, unlike in some other States. According to National Crime Records Bureau figures, released in 2016 - the last time data were uploaded - of the 38,947 cases of rape reported, the second highest was from U.P. (4,816). As for all crimes against women, Uttar Pradesh reported 14.5% (49,262 out of 3,38,954 cases) of the total. The Supreme Court has ruled that five cases relating to the issue will be transferred from U.P. to Delhi, and ordered the State government to pay a ₹25 lakh compensation to the family. This may bring some relief, even though justice has been inordinately delayed. Despite the increased focus on women's rights, nothing changes on the ground. Till such crimes continue with impunity and patriarchal mindsets don't change, as a diverse and plural society, India would have failed the girl, and every woman.

Fed's insurance policy

The rate cut is aimed at insuring against global risks to favourable U.S. economic outlook

he U.S. Federal Reserve on Wednesday announced its first reduction in the funds rate since 1 2008, a move that was widely expected. Elaborating on the Federal Open Market Committee's rationale in deciding policy action, Chairman Jerome Powell was emphatic that the aim was to provide a measure of insurance, especially given that the outlook for the U.S. economy remains favourable. The quarter percentage point interest rate cut, he said, was designed to support economic growth by ensuring that confidence was kept intact and "intended to insure against downside risks from weak global growth and trade policy uncertainty." In the space of less than three quarters, the Fed has pivoted from talking of further rate increases, to being on hold, to finally cutting interest rates as a global economic slowdown is exacerbated by trade tensions unleashed by U.S. President Donald Trump's aggressively insular approach to trade ties. The U.S. economy, which expanded by 2.9% in 2018 and posted a 3.1% expansion in the first quarter, slowed to a 2.1% pace in the second quarter, with the ongoing trade war with China blamed for a manufacturing slowdown as well as a decline in business investment. Just last week, the IMF pared its forecast for global growth in 2019 by 0.1 percentage point to 3.2%, warning that "risks to the forecast are mainly to the downside". The IMF cautioned that further trade tensions could dent sentiment and slow investment, a theme that Mr. Powell too referred to, when he said the rate cut was intended "to help offset the effects these factors are currently having on the economy."

The Fed Chairman, however, finds himself in an unenviable situation with the rate reduction satisfying neither the sharply critical President who appointed him in 2018, nor the markets where investors fretted that Mr. Powell had failed to signal the start of a protracted easing cycle. A fair part of the problem appears to be of his own making as the central bank chief muddled his messaging, speaking at one point during the post policy press conference of a "somewhat more accommodative stance", and at another emphasising that the move was not the start of a long series of rate cuts. Central bankers at the best of times have a delicate balancing act to perform to ensure that policies to support growth do not lead to a dilution of focus on price stability. In the Fed's case, Chairman Powell is clearly concerned that with inflation in the U.S. stubbornly refusing to move toward the central bank's 2% objective, there is a risk that persistent global disinflationary pressures could at some point feed into the domestic economy, undermining its efforts to spur wage and price gains. For the RBI, the Fed's move signals that, for now at least, it can stay on its accommodative path in the confidence that U.S. investors seeking rate arbitrage may hit the pause button on plans to head home.

Marking Tipu's legacy to foster historical temper

Developing an understanding of our conflictual pasts, and not retribution, is the way to deal with 'historical wounds'



JANAKI NAIR

n a recent visit to the University of Leicester, I had the opportunity of visiting the newly established memorial to Britain's controversial King Richard III, the last of the Plantagenet Kings, and also the last British King to die in battle in the War of Roses against the Tudors. Richard III (r. 1483-1485) also has the distinction of being the only British King whose remains, found under a parking lot in Leicester close to the Cathedral, were identified by mitochondrial DNA in 2012.

In 2015, he was reburied in the Leicester Cathedral, under a simple yet beautiful gravestone, unadorned except for a coat of arms in pietra dura. The 'rediscovery' of his remains became the basis of a controversy that was finally settled in court, and the city of Leicester has been the beneficiary, raking in money from tourists who wish to discover for themselves the legacy of this controversial King.

Shakespeare's portrait

Why controversial? Richard III's ascent to the throne, after his brother's children were declared illegitimate, has been under a cloud: did he 'disappear' his brother's son? Shakespeare, loyal to his Tudor masters (the victors of the Battle of Bosworth) fostered the portrait of Richard III as a malevolent ruler in his celebrated play of the same name, from the very first scene.

Shakespeare's Richard III is wracked by self-hate and doubt, ("I am determined to prove a villain") and invites the harshest words from others: like "foul defacer of God's handiwork"; "hell's black intelligencer"; "carnal cur"; "bloody dog"; and "bloody wretch". Richard III was not spared the ignominy of being described as a hideously deformed,

"foul bunch-back'd toad" though we now know he only had a 'crooked' spine. But it is what the Leicester Cathedral has done to this legacy that has interested me the most: the display called for a contemporary reconciliation with the conflicting aspects of the memory of this King, emphasising the necessity of commemorating a brave and remarkable soldier, despite many popular memories to the contrary. Richard III is no unblemished hero, and there is no attempt to varnish that legacy.

The previous Karnataka government had introduced a 'Tipu Jayanti', which was scrapped by the recently sworn-in Yediyurappa regime in one of its first actions in power. I wish the previous regime had installed a 'Museum to Our Conflictual Pasts', which would allow all visitors to come to terms with the most controversial figure of Mysore history, Tipu Sultan. Such a museum would have allowed both those who malign his memory and those who celebrate it to learn how to come to terms with historical controversies – and the Indian past is replete with many such examples. Tipu Sultan for long emblematised the valiant struggle of Mysore against the British and, like Richard III, was the only one to die on the battlefield (all others were defeated by, collaborated or made their peace with, the emerging British power).

Over the last few decades in Karnataka, there has been a steady inflation of shrill debates about Tipu's legacy. There are of course those who focus on his undoubted virtues, as the first early modern ruler to put in place a form of etatisme in the absence of a social class which could undertake radical economic change; whose lust for knowledge bequeathed to us a marvellous library of books; whose spectacular military successes stunned the British, and whose technological inventions – particularly the rocket – were pillaged by the West; whose penchant for restless innovation made him try his hand at transformations that would only much later sent day; or to ask why the early



bear fruit (for instance his experiments with silk production and his interest in large scale irrigation). The list is endless

There is equally the memory, particularly in South Canara, Kodagu and Malabar, of Tipu's real and imagined excesses: his zeal for conversion; his massacre of populations he considered hostile; and his introduction of Persian as the state language at the expense of Kannada.

Reading multiple sources

Our 'Museum of Conflictual Pasts' would not stage Tipu's brief and embattled rule (17 years) as something requiring condemnation or celebration, but present it as an opportunity to develop a historical temper, a new sense of the past. It would urge the visitor, and especially the young visitor, to think historically: to read a variety of conflicting sources – including the words of the man himself – from the vantage point of his times. The museum would make the visitor ask why colonial accounts of this indefatigable foe, which necessarily cast him as a tyrant and a villain, enjoy such an enduring influence up to the pre19th century Jain historian, Devachandra, saw Tipu and Haider Ali (his father) as just one moment in a long Mysore past peppered with desecrations, thefts, and destructions - particularly of Jain temples. Visitors could come to understand why Tipu supported some non-Muslim religious people and institutions and not others and why one temple was attacked but another, located 700 metres away, was left alone, as in Kodungallur Kerala. They could equally ask why he commandeered some Muslim communities and not others - the Navayat traders of Bhatkal recalled, in the richly textured kaifiyats collected by Colin Mackenzie and magnificently annotated by M.M. Kalburgi, that they were made to perform Tipu's government work under duress.

Visitors to the museum could ask why the Dewan of Mysore, Purnaiah, when asked by the British in June 1799 about who they should install after Tipu's defeat, replied that the memory of the Wodeyars had all but been forgotten, and then went on to serve the British faithfully as a placeholder for Krishnaraja Wodeyar III. What does the rich symbolism of Tipu's court - his obsessive use of the tiger stripe for instance – and indeed his adoption of Persian as the official language tell us about the quest for legitimacy? Moreover, was the religious zeal of Tipu, the son of a usurper, politically pioneering since his kingship had to be seen as deriving directly from god (hence Khodadadi - or god-given - sarkar)?

Why is it that indisputable facts - such as Tipu's protection of Sringeri Math following the Maratha attack in 1791, and his continued donations to the place - equally serve as testimony to his 'secularism' and as an example of his political chicanery?

Coming to terms with the past

Tipu Sultan, in short, provides us with mind-boggling opportunities to fulfil one of the most urgent tasks of our times: to help people, and young people in particular, to come to terms with India's many conflictual pasts, to teach people that understanding and appreciation, rather than revenge or retribution, are the ways in which we may deal with real and perceived 'historical wounds'.

Karnataka's pasts offer limitless ossibilities for such instruction, and for refashioning the relationship between history and memory. Such a 'Museum of Our Conflictual Pasts' will help us to deal with the inconveniences of the past, and perhaps heal and reconcile, instead of staging afresh the battles of history.

In a gigantic edifice dedicated to the memory of the 'Battle of the Nations', the city of Leipzig commemorates the successful battle involving 6,00,000 people in 1813 against Napoleonic forces. The adjoining museum, however, acknowledges the many achievements of Napoleon, and is free of the vituperative celebrations of victors. We too must find the resources to develop a historical temper that acknowledges the inconvenient truths of our past.

Janaki Nair is Professor, Centre for Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University

Finding the data on missing girls

The figure quoted by the government fails to completely take into consideration deliveries in private hospitals



SABU M. GEORGE

Temale foeticide continues to increase at an alarming rate, as per the Sample Registration System (SRS) data released in July for the period 2015-2017. The sex ratio at birth (SRB) has been dropping continuously since Census 2011, coming down from 909 girls per thousand boys in 2013 to 896 girls in 2017, to quote the yearly Statistical Reports. In the 2014-2016 period, of the 21 large States, only two - Kerala and Chhattisgarh – had an SRB of above 950 girls per 1000 boys. Thus at present, at least 5% of girls are 'eliminated' before they are born, despite the promises of the Beti

Bachao Beti Padhao scheme. Taking into consideration the SRS estimates, the Niti Aayog acknowledged the seriousness of the problem in its latest report. However, despite all the officially acknowledged facts. Women and Child Development Minister Smriti Irani claimed in the Lok Sabha that SRB has improved from 923 to 931 girls. She was quoting data

from the Health Management Information System (HMIS), a fundamentally flawed source that largely considers home deliveries and births in government institutions. Data from the HMIS are incomplete and not representative of the country as a whole as births happening in private institutions are under-reported. The HMIS report itself acknowledges that based on the estimated number of births, the number of reported births is much less in both the years considered - 2015-16 and 2018-19.

Points of delivery

The differences among the three points of delivery become evident when SRB is calculated using data from National Family Health Survev-4 (NFHS-4). Of the 2.5 lakh reported births in the 2010-2014 period, the distribution of births at home, government hospitals and private hospitals was 21%, 52% and 27% respectively and the corresponding SRB figures were 969, 930 and 851.

Thus, private hospitals had a disproportionate excess of male children births, which the HMIS sample excludes. It is to be noted here that sources in the Niti Aavog confirmed that they did consider HMIS data but found after statistical examination that it was unre-



liable and therefore used SRS. Further, even when we only

consider institutional deliveries in government hospitals, the SRB is falling. The worst regional SRB for government sector was for Northern India (885 girls per thousand boys). The picture was somewhat better for Central India (926) and Southern India (940) while the performance of Eastern India (965) and Western India (959) was even better.

In the Northeast, where the government is the dominant healthcare provider, the government sector SRB rivaled that of the private sector (both are 900).

For too long, institutional births have been the goal of the government. That data for the private sector are more skewed has not been articulated in the NFHS re-

ports or adequately dealt with by the Health Ministry. For two deularly private, too often we observed more male children even when the total number of births were small in number. So, we used NFHS 4 data to quantify this bias. It is criminal to use public funds to privilege boy births and facilitate discrimination against girls right from birth. However, for years, in the special neonatal care units (SNCU) set up by the government, there was an excess of about 8% male children in several States.

Regrettably, the government has prioritised an expansion of SNCUs rather than deal with the issue of the 'missing girls'. Protecting the integrity of birth statistics will help the people, governments and health professionals to focus on ameliorating the known gender gaps at birth rather than be complacent with dubious claims.

Bias over first-born child

An analysis of the NFHS-4 data also revealed a bias when it comes to the first-born child – the SRB among first-born children was 927, meaning that 2.5% of first-born girls are eliminated before birth.

This was not the case historically. Our field visits to various parts of India in the past five years, par-

ticularly in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, where one in every three Incades, in visits to hospitals, partic-dians is born, revealed a massive expansion of ultrasound clinics even in remote corners. And in the absence of a stringent implementation of the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition Of Sex Selection) Act (PCPNDT Act), practically anyone who wants to determine the sex of the foetus was able to get it done illegally. We are disappointed that the Central Supervisory Board established under the PCPNDT Act has not met for over one-and-ahalf years. It should have ideally met at least thrice during this period. We hope the new Health Minister restores the regularity of the

The Supreme Court has been continuously reminding medical associations since 2002 of their obligation to follow the law, its latest reminder being the formidable 92-page judgment against the Federation of Obstetrics and Gynecological Societies of India (FOGSI) earlier this year. The Indian Medical Association (IMA) has to ensure that private hospitals don't profit from discrimination against girls before birth.

Sabu M. George has been a researcher on girl children for 34 years

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.

A wake-up call? The death of billionaire entrepreneur and the founder of Café Coffee Day, V.G. Siddhartha, is extremely saddening. The market capitalisation of the company has taken a nosedive in the last few days, which would force the creditors to take a serious haircut. Had he been part of the U.S. system, there is a very high chance that he would have found a way to deal with the creditors and, most importantly, he would have been alive. His death just shows how nascent the corporate debt markets are in India, and how private equity firms operate in the country. Access to capital

markets is key for entrepreneurship and for businesses to thrive and grow. Hence, this should be a wake-up call for the government to see that capital is made available to the firms with good growth prospects, if it is serious about making India's GDP reach \$5 trillion and beyond (Front page, "Siddhartha cremated in family estate," August 1). VARAD SESHADRI, nyvale, California, U.S.

Criminalising talaq Marriage is a civil contract and criminalising what is obviously a civil issue is a

step in the wrong direction.

The Centre's logic that the

deterrent to the abhorrent practice of instant talag is hard to digest. However, the fact that Muslims take recourse to this detested form of divorce, even after the 2017 Supreme Court verdict, is a worrying development and one cannot but share the government's concerns over this. Religion should not be a factor when it comes to the irresponsible desertion of spouses and children. Herein lies the need for a common divorce law, which the Bill fails to address (Editorial, "Beyond talaq," August 1). ABDUL ASSIS P.A., Thrissur, Kerala

Triple Talaq Bill will act as

■ Rather than addressing a social issue, the passage of the Triple Talaq Bill through both the Houses of Parliament gives rise to questions. The government's reasoning that it was giving effect to the Supreme Court verdict declaring it unconstitutional is absurd, considering that the Bharatiya Janata Party was opposed to the same court's verdict when it came to allowing entry to women in the Sabarimala shrine. The Centre's claim that it is a step towards gender justice also sounds false. The Act may not be of much benefit as it expects the victim or someone from her family, in most cases women who

come from the poorest sections of the society, to take up the issue against her husband with the concerned authority. A.G. RAJMOHAN, Anantapur

Unnao case The Unnao case appears to be a tragedy from the medieval ages – a poor girl is raped by the local strongman, the state machinery doesn't help and even the judiciary fails to protect her family. (Front page, "SC takes note of complaint by rape survivor's family," August 1). Instead, her alleged tormentors keep openly threatening her and get her family members and

witnesses in the case eliminated. This is a fit occasion for the Supreme Court to step in. A thorough inquiry must be held under its aegis, all culprits arrested immediately and the trial conducted on a day-to-day basis. The victim and her family must be provided strong security. Let people like her tormentors know that rule of law does prevail. In this regard, the fact that the CBI has taken over investigation in the case surely comes as a welcome development. HARJAS BAINS,

MORE LETTERS ONLINE:

THE HINDU DELHI FRIDAY, AUGUST 2, 2019

Is banning cryptocurrencies the solution?

PARLEY

A blanket ban will push the currency into the black market and stifle innovation

Recently, a government panel headed by senior bureaucrat Subhash Chandra Garg placed in the public domain a draft bill calling for a complete ban on private cryptocurrencies in India. The panel recommended a fine of up to ₹25 crore and a jail term of up to 10 years for anyone found to be owning or handling private cryptocurrencies. As an alternative to private cryptocurrencies, the panel recommended the introduction of a single cryptocurrency for the whole country that is backed by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). Parag Waknis and Anil Antony examine the soundness of the panel's recommendations in a conversation moderated by Prashant **Perumal**. *Edited excerpts:*

What do you think about the Garg panel's overall guidelines? The volatility of private cryptocurrencies is one of the reasons being given to ban

Parag Waknis: Volatility doesn't sound like a good rationale to ban cryptocurrencies because if cryptocurrencies are volatile, so are many other asset classes. We do not ban investments in any other asset class just because it is volatile. The decision of whether to invest in an asset or not should be left to the investor. The risk return calculation should be done by the investor, not the government.

Also, banning the consumption of a good or service doesn't really mean that people will stop consuming it. The market for the good or service simply goes underground and becomes hard to track. The market continues to exist, but the government cannot track it or tax it to gain revenue. This applies to cryptocurrencies as well.

It is true that the price of cryptocurrencies, especially bitcoin, has been volatile. And that's primarily because of their design. Bitcoin, for example, is designed in such a way that its supply rises rapidly first, but later very slowly, before stopping at a certain point.

You said that banning a currency would push it into the black market. That would also

make it much harder for the government to regulate it,

PW: Yes, exactly. In most cases, if the government feels that there is enough rationale to regulate the consumption of a commodity or a service or investments in a crypto asset, the best way forward is to come up with a regulatory framework that has incentives set right for the users. Maybe you can have a tax on capital gains from investing in crypto assets, just like you have taxes on investments in other assets.

The Garg panel, while being opposed to the idea of private cryptocurrencies, still seems to be a fan of the blockchain technology. It has called for a national cryptocurrency backed by the RBI, which would probably be based on the blockchain.

Anil Antony: The Garg panel opposing cryptocurrencies seems like yet another case of a group of people not really understanding a concept and hence trying to ban it. Most people equate cryptocurrencies with blockchain, but there is a huge difference between them. The cryptocurrency is just one application of the underlying blockchain technology. The blockchain technology has a lot more potential beyond cryptocurrencies.

An issue raised against cryptocurrencies is that they aren't really backed by an underlying commodity or a sovereign government. But do you think it's absolutely essential that a currency needs to be backed by a commodity or an institution for it to be widely accepted in the market?

PW: No. The way we define money is that it is a generally accepted medium of exchange. So, it's just trust that basically drives the value of money. There is nothing to back it, except trust. When two strangers have no other way of transacting with each other, when there's no way they can verify the creditworthiness of each other, money helps. That's all that we basically need. We need trust for that.



Now, what does a crypto asset or a cryptocurrency offer? It is right that it is not backed by anything. But it doesn't really require any backing in the sense that, as long as people hold the expectation that a particular asset will have value, it is sufficient.

So is it the value that people think the currency will possess in the future that really drives its value?

PW: Exactly. Yes. Cryptocurrencies allow people to conduct anonymous transactions. The price of bitcoin, for example, is driven by the access to the anonymity that it offers its users. People may also want to keep their wealth in some asset that gains in value over a period of time. So that is the worth or the "right" that people are paying for when they're buying cryptocurrencies.

There are also cases where fiat money has retained value even when the bank has ceased to exist. For example, in Somalia, the central bank and all the concerned institutions had ceased to work at some point. But people still continued to value the Somalian currency. So there was no backing at all for the currency, but people still believed that it had value and they continued to use the currency in transactions. So the strength of a particular asset boils down to what people think

When talking about anonymity, the common objection to cryptocurrencies is that they

A digital currency issued by

the RBI that gets misused

by criminals can affect trust

in the existing fiat currency

can be used to finance various criminal activities. So, do we require government regulations to prevent their misuse, or are there other market mechanisms to deal with the problem?

protocol.

PW: I have done some research linked to this using money search models, where there is a set of competing monies, which could also be cryptocurrencies, and I basically show that there is a certain equilibrium where competing suppliers of cryptocurrencies would behave in a disciplined way. Theoretically, cryptocurrency providers could issue an unlimited amount of their money. But they're competing against each other, so the competition forces them to restrict their supply to a minimal amount that would help maintain the value of their currency. Thus the discipline imposed by market competition can prevent cryptocurrency providers from overissuing their currencies. We can also think about discipline in terms of reputation effects. For example, if there is a paper currency, and it turns out that it can be used to finance, let's say, crime, terrorism, or anything similar, there is the reputation of the supplier at

So there are some ways by which

the market can discipline cryptocurrencies. But I think regulation, in terms of having the right rewards and punishments in place, would help. Not actions like banning stuff.

AA: Just to add to this... right now, one of the most comprehensive sets of regulations surrounding this debate on cryptocurrencies being used for various nefarious activities is being discussed across the world. It is one of the biggest concerns everywhere. One of the most comprehensive sets of regulations for cryptocurrencies is being brought in by the European Union. The EU is putting in a bunch of regulations to tackle money laundering, and it is called the AMLD-5. It is a bunch of norms to make crypto transactions more secure. It has a lot of very stringent KYC regulations and selfdeclaration laws which every holder of a crypto wallet or user needs to adhere to. Crypto exchanges are all expected to maintain a database that is transparently shared between countries. It is not foolproof, but the EU has started creating a bunch of regulations that could become stronger over time. This could be the best way to go forward rather than putting a blanket ban on cryptocurrencies, because the presence of cryptocurrencies is very important for the further development of the blockchain.

When you impose a blanket ban on private currencies, thus effectively nationalising the market for cryptocurrencies, what exactly are the implications for innovation?

AA: In 2018, in the Silicon Valley alone, almost \$2.9 billion worth of private venture funds have gone into blockchain start-ups. In tech hubs across the world, we are seeing billions pumped into the blockchain technology. In this scenario, if we decide to put a blanket ban on all cryptocurrencies, then our technology entrepreneurs will suddenly lose the incentive to work in the sector. You simply can't just build blockchain applications out of thin air. Right now, currencies are the only viable practical application of the blockchain technology even though it can be extrapolated to a lot of other sectors. So, for the sake of innovation. I think even if the government is bringing in a statebacked currency, it will be better if the other currencies are also allowed to operate with sufficient regulations.

Also, when we are speaking about a country like India, in terms of size, cryptocurrencies constitute a very, very minor share of the total amount of money that is already being used to carry out various activities in the black economy. But the potential rewards that could come out of the blockchain technology

If cryptocurrencies form such a minuscule part of the black economy, why are policymakers so concerned about cryptocurrencies being used to finance criminal activities?

AA: I would say nobody really expected cryptocurrencies to become such a big factor in such a short period of time. Right now, the global market capitalisation of cryptocurrencies is almost \$120 billion. And that's just the tip of the iceberg, it could get way bigger over time.

What impact will cryptocurrencies have on the central bank's control over monetary policy? Is there a good case for a national cryptocurrency issued by the central bank, as proposed by the Garg Panel?

PW: People will move to alternative assets and seek more anonymity only if they lose trust in government institutions. So, as long as the trust is maintained, monetary policy doesn't face any particular threat from cryptocurrencies.

When it comes to a central bankissued digital currency, there is a loose consensus, especially among monetary economists from the New Monetary School, that there is no case for governments issuing cryptocurrencies because it would create a lot of problems in the form of contradictions in existing regulations and the government will have to deal with severe mismatches in regulations. Secondly, there are reputation effects. A digital currency issued by the RBI that gets misused by criminals can affect trust in the existing fiat currency protocol. I don't think a central bank would want to take that risk.

Conscience-keepers at the helm

The Congress cannot wish for democratisation of the party while continuing to rely on the Gandhis

MOHAMMED AYOOB

teaches monetary

Ambedkar University, Delhi

Anil Antony

is the convener of

the digital media

cell of the Kerala

wing of the Indian

National Congress

Scan the QR code to

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interview online

Congress MP Shashi Tharoor is an eloquent and articulate member of the Lok Sabha. He is one of the few independent-minded parliamentarians of the Congress. He might have been the obvious choice for the position of the leader of the party in the Lok Sabha but was denied the position because the "conscience-keepers" (his term) of the Congress were afraid that he would outshine them and exhibit their mediocrity.

Change in election process

His recent interview published in The Hindu demonstrated his independent streak. In it, he argued that the Congress could not afford to drift aimlessly without a functioning president, adding, "There is a difference between a nominal leadership...and an active leadership. An active leadership would be far more engaged, far more outspoken and far more visible than Rahul Gandhi has chosen himself to be.'

More important, Mr. Tharoor contended that the process of electing the president of the Congress should not be left to the Congress Working Committee (CWC), itself a coterie of appointed members most of whom are unelected and unelectable. Instead, he said, it should be an open process with party workers and functionaries from across the country voting for a new leader to replace Mr. Gandhi as well as the CWC.

This, Mr. Tharoor argued, will provide the president and the party greater legitimacy and, therefore, greater credibility with the voters both in the forthcoming Assembly elections and in the 2024 general election. Mr. Tharoor's stance has found great resonance among party members across the board but has rattled the senior leaders and members of the CWC who continue to hang on to their positions despite the party's abysmal performance in the Lok Sabha election.

It was a surprise, therefore, that in the same interview Mr. Tharoor referred to the Gandhi family as the "conscience-keepers" of the Congress and went on to say, "Whoever takes the position, he or she has to have the cooperation of the Gandhi

parivar because the DNA of the party is inextricably tied up to them." He believes that if a Congress president was ever to take a position that was inimical to the party's ethos, the conscience-keepers will speak out.

This position stands in stark contrast to the rest of the views that Mr. Tharoor expressed about reforming the party and holding open, democratic elections for the president and the CWC. He appeared to underscore this contrast when he said that the current scenario resembled the "old days, before Independence," when, if the Congress president did something and Mahatma Gandhi conveyed disapproval, that would have been enough for the president to understand and presumably apply corrective action.

A contradiction There are two major concerns re-

garding this formulation. First, comparing the Gandhi parivar, which thrives on sycophancy and trades on its increasingly remote ideological and even biological relationship with Jawaharlal Nehru, to the Mahatma is a brazen insult to the tallest leader of the freedom movement. Second, the notion that during the struggle for independence the Congress needed a "conscience keeper," even one of the stature of Mahatma Gandhi, is questionable. Conscience keepers detract immeasurably from the democratic spirit of movements and parties. The Mahatma's machinations as the super boss of the party that led to the forced resignation of the democratically elected president of the Congress, Subhas Chandra Bose, in 1939, are a testimony to this fact. Bose's alienation had major implications for the freedom movement that have not been adequately analysed so far.

I would contend that Mr. Tharoor should seriously think through the contradiction in his reasoning on the issue of "conscience keepers". It is quite inconsistent with the rest of his sensible argument regarding the need to democratise the Congress in order to rejuvenate it.

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NOTEBOOK

The village advantage over a Michelin starred restaurant

Respecting water, soil and forests is the only way to get wholesome food

SHONALI MUTHALALY

I'm powered by curiosity, fried grasshoppers and a wizened old lady. The route to Pryda village, set deep within the West Khasi hills of Meghalaya, involves a gruelling one hour trek. Fortunately Spermon Kharnaior has volunteered to guide me. The sprightly village matriarch, probably in her late 70s, skips from rock to shaky rock as we climb uphill, with an impressively firm grip on my wrist to haul me past the more challenging portions.

A few hours ago we were at a dramatic meeting of the tribes in Shillong helmed by the International eco-gastronomic movement Slow Food. The meeting brought together about 600 delegates representing 140 tribes from over 58 countries. Spending three days among pastoralists, honey gatherers, yak herders, reindeer breeders, fishermen and farmers

made me develop a new

respect for ingredients and the people who bring them to our dining tables.

As a food writer, I spend time learning from chefs and mixologists, who use complicated, impressive techniques to tease and primp ingredients into flamboyant menus and sophisticated cocktails. It is humbling to be reminded that ultimately everything depends on ingredients. And the only way to get quality ingredients is by respecting water, soil and forests, just like the indigenous people do.

Admittedly, it is easier said than done in a world that bristles with processed food, and in which taste buds have been trained to crave the addictive alchemy of fat, salt and sugar that comes in every bagged snack. I try. I gingerly sample crunchy Eri silk worms, reputed to taste like crisps. (They don't!) Eat lunch with a surprisingly tasty and tangy ant chutney. And

snack on salted deep-fried



grasshoppers. Then, I head to Pryda for lunch. A pig has been

killed, and every part of it has been sensibly used, so nothing goes to waste. A sturdy table in the village schoolhouse is laden with food, much of it unfamiliar. There are bowls filled with fresh green herbs and a hefty pot fragrant with sautéed mustard leaves. At the centre of the banquet is the pork curry - rich, spicy and delicious.

There isn't a sauce bottle or plastic packet in sight: none of these flavours have come out of a factory. There are no chefs in the kitchen; the community has cooked together, between cups of tea and gossip. The vegetables were

harvested in the morning from a garden behind the school. The flavours are uncomplicated and alluring in a way no Michelin starred restaurant can compete

As the sun dims, I jump up realising I must leave immediately if I am to reach the main road before the path is plunged into darkness. Spermon presses a cool package into my hands as she hugs me goodbye. It's sohplang, a local tuber, deftly wrapped in banana leaves. I snack on it thoughtfully as I walk back: it is crisp, juicy and refresh-

Environmentalists warn us incessantly that we are marching towards a precipice, propelled by competitive consumerism. Can looking towards the villages save us? It may sound naïve but it is a seductive idea. And I would rather learn lessons from Spermon and her ilk than be disappointed, again, by yet another Facebook warrior.

The Man Frindu. FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO AUGUST 2, 1969

P.M. and Nixon's discussion

In her final round of talks with President Nix-

on to-day [August 1, New Delhi], the Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, got the distinct impression that in its new thinking of Asia, the United States was attaching great importance to better Indo-American relations in the larger interests of peace and stability in the region. The two Heads of Government, who met for over three hours yesterday and to-day [August 1] and discussed almost all aspects of the Asian situation, agreed in principle to explore the possibilities of a new pattern of Asian security to ensure respect for the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and neutrality of the smaller countries of South-East Asia which were vulnerable to both internal subversion and external threats. Mrs. Gandhi is reported to have pointed out that the Indian proposal for a Regional Security Convention did not envisage any military guarantees but only political assurances by the Big Powers and the major countries of Asia, which were prepared to subscribe to the Geneva principle of noninterference in the internal affairs of these small nations. India was not thinking in terms of any political or military condominium in Asia, under the auspices of the U.S. and the Soviet Union, to protest the Asian countries from possible dangers of Chinese

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO AUGUST 2, 1919.

Race Riots in America.

A further recrudescence of racial rioting last night [July 28 in Chicago], resulted in five Negroes and two white men being killed, and forty persons wounded. Racial rioting was renewed this morning. One Negro was killed and two others wounded. It is now known that there were at least ten fatalities last night. It is estimated that up to the present twenty-five have been killed and five hundred injured, and many of the latter are not expected to recover. The authorities have stopped tramcar and elevated railway traffic in the disturbed area owing to the rioters wrecking tramcars. Troops are in readiness. The riots to-day [July 29], assumed the character of a veritable battle. A hundred thousand Negroes and an equal number of whites, participated in the fighting in the streets with knives, razors and revolvers. A semblance of order was restored by the Mounted Police riding over the dead and wounded, and scattering the combatants, but sniping, knifing and incendiarism continued in outlying streets.

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड वर्ष 12 अंक 143

कराधान की चिंता

रहेगा। राजस्व की बात करें तो कर प्रशासन की अपर्याप्तता खासकर वस्तु एवं सेवा कर (जीएसटी) के मामले में ऐसा होने से संग्रह

देश में सरकारी वित्त का प्रबंधन कठिन होता पर बुरा असर पड रहा है। नियंत्रक एवं जा रहा है क्योंकि राजस्व संग्रह कम है और महालेखा परीक्षक (सीएजी) की एक हालिया व्यय प्रतिबद्धताएं बहुत अधिक हैं। यदि समय रिपोर्ट बताती है कि जीएसटी, जिसे देश के रहते सुधार के उपाय नहीं किए गए तो देश इतिहास के सबसे बड़े सुधारों में से एक माना की आर्थिक वृद्धि पर इसका असर जारी जा रहा था, वह वांछित तरीके से काम नहीं कर रहा है और उसके क्रियान्वयन में कुछ मसले बरकरार हैं।

उदाहरण के लिए सीएजी का कहना है

कि शुरुआत के दो वर्ष बाद भी सिस्टम की वैधता वाला इनपुट टैक्स क्रेडिट का इनवॉइस से मिलान अब तक नहीं हो पा रहा है। अनुमान के मुताबिक ही व्यवस्थागत किमयों का असर राजस्व संग्रह पर पड़ रहा है। उदाहरण के लिए अप्रत्यक्ष कर संग्रह में बढोतरी 2017-18 में घटकर 5.8 फीसदी रह गई। इससे ठीक पिछले वर्ष यह बढोतरी 20 फीसदी थी। गत वित्त वर्ष के लिए अनुमानित संग्रह का अनुमान भी कम किया गया। व्यवस्थागत किमयों के कारण इंटीग्रेटेड जीएसटी (आईजीएसटी) का भी उपयुक्त निस्तारण नहीं हो सका। ऐसे में जीएसटी दरों में कटौती के बजाय जीएसटी परिषद यदि व्यवस्था सुधार के लिए काम करे तो अधिक बेहतर होगा।

सरकारी अंकेक्षक ने प्रत्यक्ष कर प्रशासन कुछ ढांचागत मसलों का भी उल्लेख किया। एक ओर जहां संग्रह और अनुपालन में इजाफा हुआ, वहीं प्रशासन में भी सुधार की आवश्यकता है। उदाहरण के लिए वर्ष 2017-18 के अंत में मांग का बकाया 11 लाख करोड रुपये तक है। कर विभाग को लगता है कि इसका 98 फीसदी हिस्सा वसुल कर पाना काफी मुश्किल होगा। इतना ही नहीं कर संबंधी कई मामले विभिन्न अदालतों में उलझे हए हैं। स्पष्ट है कि कर नियमों को सहज बनाने की आवश्यकता है। ऐसा करने से कानूनी मामले कम करने में सहायता मिलेगी और संग्रह में सुधार होगा। आशा की जानी चाहिए कि नई प्रत्यक्ष कर संहिता पर काम कर रहा कार्य बल कानुनी वाद-विवाद

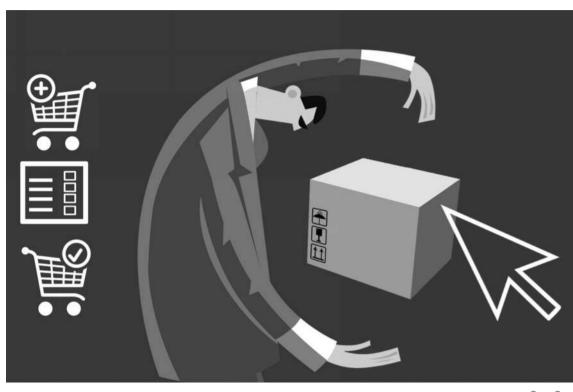
कम करने की राह सुझाएगा।

ऐसे में सरकार की व्यय प्रतिबद्धताओं से इतर, कमतर राजस्व संग्रह भी राजकोषीय संतुलन बिगाड रहा है। सीएजी द्वारा किए गए आकलन के मुताबिक वर्ष 2017-18 में केंद्र का राजकोषीय घाटा सकल घरेलू उत्पाद के 5.85 फीसदी के बराबर था जबकि सरकार ने इसे 3.46 फीसदी दर्शाया था। इसमें सरकारी उपक्रमों द्वारा ली गई उधारी शामिल थी। यह उधारी सरकारी व्यय की भरपाई के

व्यापक स्तर पर देखा जाए तो इसका अर्थ यह हुआ कि केंद्र सरकार, केंद्रीय सरकारी उपक्रम और राज्य सरकारें आम पारिवारिक वित्तीय बचत का इस्तेमाल कर रही हैं। इससे विदेशों से बढ़ती उधारी के पूरे रुख को भी

समझा जा सकता है। यह केंद्र के स्तर पर भी हो रहा है और कंपनियों के स्तर पर भी। इसके अपने जोखिम हैं।

सरकार को सीएजी द्वारा कर प्रशासन को लेकर उठाए गए मुद्दों को हल करने की दिशा में काम करना चाहिए। खासकर जीएसटी व्यवस्था में। उसे अपने व्यय का भी नए सिरे से आकलन करना चाहिए। हालांकि यह भी सच है कि मंदी के दौर में व्यय को तार्किक बनाना कठिन होगा, उधर बजट के आंकड़ों को लेकर तमाम आशंकाएं हैं और सरकारी उपक्रमों का ऋण काफी बढ़ा हुआ है। मध्यम अवधि में यह नुकसानदेह हो सकता है। अगर समय रहते जरूरी कदम नहीं उठाए गए तो संकट कहीं अधिक व्यापक हो जाएगा।



ब्रांड की विदाई का आ गया वक्त?

विपणन की सफलता का आकलन करने में जिस तरह डेटा का इस्तेमाल बढ़ रहा है उससे यह सवाल उठता है कि क्या ब्रांड का अंत हो जाएगा ? विस्तार से बता रहे हैं अजित बालकृष्णन

∙तीत के अकादिमक गर्व और दिखावे की अनदेखी कीजिए। भाषाई दलीलों को तो भूल ही जाइए। आज डेटा यानी आंकडों का जमाना है। डेटा विज्ञान विपणन (मार्केटिंग) का नया

मैंने जब यह बात लिखने वाले के बारे में जानकारी जटाई तो आश्चर्य से अपनी आंख मलता रह गया। इसे लिखने वाले शख्स का ताल्लक नॉर्थवेस्टर्न यनिवर्सिटी से था। यही वह विश्वविद्यालय है जहां से प्रोफेसर फिलिप कोटलर आते हैं। कोटलर ने ब्रांड मार्केटिंग की अवधारणा प्रस्तुत की। सन 1967 में आई उनकी किताब 'मार्केटिंग मैनेजमेंट: एनालिसिस, प्लानिंग ऐंड कंट्रोल' आज 52 वर्ष बाद भी दुनिया के हर कारोबारी स्कुल के लिए अनिवार्य मानी जाती है।

मैंने पहले पैराग्राफ में जिस वाक्य का इस्तेमाल किया वह थॉमस मिलर की किताब 'मार्केटिंग डेटा साइंस' से लिया गया है। मिलर स्वयं नॉर्थवेस्टर्न विश्वविद्यालय में हैं। परंत कोटलर की किताब के उलट यह किताब कंप्यूटर आधारित मॉडल से भरी हुई है और इसमें कंप्यटर प्रोग्रामिंग की भाषा आर और पाइथन की मदद से मार्केटिंग के मॉडल तैयार किए गए हैं।

अगर प्रोफेसर मिलर की बातें सही हैं तो निश्चित रूप से आने वाले दिनों में हमें यकीनन आज की बडी और समृद्ध बाजार शोध कंपनियों, विज्ञापन एजेंसियों, जनसंपर्क कंपनियों आदि की आवश्यकता नहीं पड़ने वाली। इसके अलावा उत्पाद प्रबंधक. विपणन प्रबंधक जैसे रोजगार भी खतरे में पड जाएंगे। मीडिया उद्योग की बात करें तो उसका तो जीवन ही विज्ञापन से होने वाली आय है। इसके आधार पर ही ब्रांड बनते और चलते हैं। कहने का मतलब यह कि संपार्श्विक क्षति न केवल बॉलीवुड के सितारों को नुकसान पहुंचाएगी बल्कि क्रिकेट, फटबॉल और टेनिस जैसे खेलों को भी. जिनके खिलाड़ियों को विभिन्न ब्रांड भारी

ये तमाम आकर्षक उद्योग इस धारणा पर टिके हए हैं कि हर उत्पाद या सेवा के भौतिक गुणों या उसकी कीमत से परे एक खास तत्त्व है जो उसके ब्रांड में समाहित है। ब्रांड के अपने तमाम तत्त्व होते हैं। ब्रांड नाम विशिष्ट और आकर्षक होना चाहिए, एक टैगलाइन होनी चाहिए जो चार या पांच शब्दों में ब्रांड की खासियत समेटे रहे। मिसाल के लिए नाइकी की टैगलाइन कहती है: जस्ट डू इट। इसके अलावा इसमें रचनात्मकता की अलग भूमिका होती है। एक ब्रांड इन सारी चीजों से मिलकर बनता है।

इन अवधारणाओं के इस्तेमाल की शुरुआती सफलता अमेरिका में नजर आई जहां सन 1947 में डी बियर्स के 'डायमंड्स आर फॉर एवर' (हीरा है सदा के लिए) अभियान ने हीरे को अमीरों के अलावा आम लोगो के बीच प्रेम की अभिव्यक्ति की प्रतीक बना दिया। सन 1954 में मार्लबोरो मैन अभियान ने मार्लबोरो सिगरेट को शानदा मर्दों की पसंद के तौर पर स्थापित किया। इस बीच कोलगेट पामोलिव, यूनिलीवर और अन्य कंपनियों के साबुनों के विज्ञापनों की भरमार रही। सन 1950 के दशक में साबुनों के इन विज्ञापनों का इतना प्रभाव था कि जिन रेडियो और टेलीविजन कार्यक्रमों में ये विज्ञापन आते थे उनको सोप ओपेरा कहा जाने लगा। उन आर्थिक और तकनीकी ताकतों पर पुनर्दृष्टि डालना उचित है जिनकी बदौलत ब्रांड विज्ञापनों का यह जबरदस्त सिलसिला शुरू हुआ। ऐसा इसलिए क्योंकि ये हमें मौजुदा ब्रांड विरोधी गतिविधियों को समझने में मदद कर सकते हैं। 20वीं सदी के शुरुआती दौर में रासायनिक तकनीक का उदय हो चुका था और इसके चलते रसायनों के माध्यम से बनने वाले व्यापक उत्पाद

मसलन साबुन, डिटर्जेंट, सिगरेट, नाश्ते में काम आने वाले अनाज आदि चीजें आसपास की छोटी-मोटी किराना दुकानों की शोभा बढाने लगे। खासतौर पर अमेरिका में इन वस्तुओं के बड़े उत्पादकों पर अपनी वस्तुओं को दूसरों से अलग दिखाने का दबाव था। विज्ञापनों पर भारी खर्च करने की उनकी इच्छा के कारण अचानक उभार और वृद्धि देखने को मिली। पहले उनका विस्तार बढ़ा और उसके बाद रेडियो और टेलीविजन पर विज्ञापनों का दौर शुरू हुआ। सन 1960 के दशक में ब्रांड इक्विटी जैसी अवधारणाएं चर्चा में आने लगीं, विज्ञापन एजेंसियों ने ऐसी सेवाएं प्रदान करना शुरू कर दिया। कोटलर ने इसी संदर्भ में मार्केटिंग का सिद्धांत दिया था और कहा था कि मांग को प्रभावित करने में ब्रांड उतना ही प्रभावी है जितनी कि मांग। एक संभावना यह भी है कि प्रोफेसर

मिलर की तरह सोचने और ब्रांड छवि या ब्रांड की अवधारणा को खारिज करना केवल एक किस्म की अतिरंजना हो जिसका संबंध नई तकनीक के आगमन से है। सलाहकार फर्म गार्टनर ने इसे लेकर एक सिद्धांत पेश किया है जिसे वे 'हाइप साइकिल' कहते हैं। हाइप साइकिल की शुरुआत तब होती है जब कोई तकनीकी नवाचार तो हो गया हो लेकिन वाणिज्यिक रूप से व्यवहार्य और इस्तेमाल करने लायक उत्पाद अभी सामने आने हों। बहरहाल शुरुआती प्रचार जल्दी ही उम्मीदों का बोझ भी डाल देता है। जल्दी ही पता चलता है कि इसके साथ ढेर सारी नाकामियां भी जुड़ी हैं और सफलताएं बहुत सीमित हैं। इसके बाद आता है मोहभंग का दौर। कई उत्पादक कारोबार से बाहर हो जाते हैं जबकि कई अन्य साहस के साथ डटे रहते हैं और शुरुआती तौर पर अपने उत्पाद बना लेते हैं। इसके पश्चात आता है वह दौर जहां कई वर्ष लंबी अवधि के बाद उत्पाद सामने आता है और मूल वादे के परीक्षा की घड़ी होती है। इसके पश्चात ही नई तकनीक को अपनाने का सिलसिला शुरू होता है।

फिलहाल क्लिक, फॉर्म भरने, कार्ट में शामिल करने, ऑर्डर, ऑर्डर स्वीकार करने के रूप में विपणन के जो तरीके सामने आ रहे हैं और इन्हें लेकर जो आपाधापी है वह आकलन के उन पुराने तौर तरीकों से एकदम अलग है जहां इस आधार पर जांच परख की जाती थी कि उत्पाद के कितने प्रतिशत संभावित ग्राहक उसे लेकर जागरूक हैं. किनकी उसमें रुचि है, लेने के इच्छुक हैं या ले चुके हैं।

देखने पर यह एक किस्म की प्रगति को परिलक्षित करता है क्योंकि यह वास्तविक नतीजों का आकलन करता है। परंतु शुरुआती चरणों का आकलन न करके क्या हम ऑनलाइन विज्ञापन तकनीक को हाइप साइकिल में मोहभंग के खतरनाक चरण की ओर ले जा रहे हैं? हकीकत के करीब आकलन तभी हो पाएगा जब वही मशीन से सीखने वाला मॉडल जागरूकता, रुचि और इच्छा जैसे शुरुआती चरणों पर भी लागू होगा और आकलन करेगा। कहा जा सकता है कि गणितीय नवाचार का एक बड़ा स्वरूप अभी हमारे सामने आना शेष है।

(लेखक 22 भारतीय भाषाओं में एक पुस्तक लिख रहे हैं। यह पुस्तक नि:शुल्क होगी और कक्षा 8 के बच्चों को मशीन लर्निंग से परिचित कराएगी।)

वित्त सचिव के तबादले को लेकर कई तरह के कयास

एक वित्त सचिव को अपेक्षाकृत कम महत्त्व वाले दूसरे मंत्रालय स्थानांतरित अस्वाभाविक है। किसी भी सरकारी अधिकारी के लिए. खासतौर पर भारतीय प्रशासनिक सेवा के अधिकारी के लिए वित्त सचिव का पद बहुत बड़ी उपलब्धि माना जाता है। वित्त मंत्रालय में पांच सचिव होते हैं। उनमें से केवल एक वित्त सचिव बन पाता है जो सभी समकक्षों में प्रथम होता है। अधिकांश वित्त सचिवों का करियर सेवानिवत्ति से समाप्त नहीं होता। वे प्राय: समितियों के अध्यक्ष बनते हैं या नियामकीय संस्थाओं में चले जाते हैं। कई बार उन्हें अन्य सरकारी संस्थानों का सदस्य भी नियुक्त

आश्चर्य नहीं कि मोदी सरकार ने 24 जुलाई को तत्कालीन वित्त सचिव सुभाष चंद्र गर्ग को विद्युत मंत्रालय का सचिव बनाकर स्थानांतरित किया तो इस पर सरकारी और राजनीतिक हलकों में तुरंत चर्चा शुरू हो गई। सीधा सवाल यह था कि लगभग दो वर्ष की सेवा अवधि के बाद अचानक ऐसा क्या हुआ कि गर्ग का स्थानांतरण कर दिया गया?

किया जाता है।

गर्ग को उनकी टिप्पणियों के लिए जाना जाता था जिन्हें उनके आलोचक साहसिक लेकिन गैर जिम्मेदाराना मानते थे। आरबीआई के साथ उनके रिश्ते तनावपूर्ण थे। आरबीआई तथा भारतीय प्रतिभति एवं विनिमय बोर्ड (सेबी) जैसे अन्य नियामकों के मन में इस बात की आशंका थी कि गर्ग ऐसे कदमों को बढावा दे सकते हैं जो उनके अधिकार क्षेत्र को सीमित करने वाले हों। बाजार भी वर्ष के मध्य में सरकार की ऋण योजनाओं को लेकर गर्ग की घोषणाओं से चिंतित था।

परंतु अधिकांश अफसरशाहों के मामलों की तरह कभी यह संदेह नहीं हुआ कि गर्ग सरकार के निर्देशों का पालन नहीं कर रहे हैं। वह हमेशा सरकार के निर्देश मानते नजर आते। ऐसे में अगर गर्ग आरबीआई के अधिशेष भंडार से अधिक हिस्सा चाहते थे या वह अपने वक्तव्यों से आरबीआई गवर्नर को नाराज कर रहे थे तो किसी ने यह नहीं सोचा कि उनके कदमों को सरकार का समर्थन हासिल नहीं है। सरकारी तंत्र में अफसरशाह अपने बृते कुछ नहीं करते। वे राजनैतिक नेतृत्व के आदेश का पालन करते हैं। गर्ग



दिल्ली डायरी

ए के भट्टाचार्य

वित्त सचिव सभाष चंद्र गर्ग को उनकी टिप्पणियों के लिए जाना जाता था जिन्हें उनके आलोचक साहसिक लेकिन गैर जिम्मेदाराना मानते थे

भी इसके अपवाद नहीं थे। यहां तक कि जब गर्ग ने बजट में बाहरी बाजारों से उधारी के लिए सॉवरिन बॉन्ड जारी करने की बात पर अमल शुरू किया तब भी वह सरकार की ही बात मान रहे थे। सरकार को गर्ग को वित्त

मंत्रालय से विद्युत मंत्रालय भेजना क्यों आवश्यक लगा ? इससे भी अहम बात है कि तबादले के एक दिन बाद ही गर्ग ने यह क्यों कहा कि उन्होंने सरकारी सेवा से स्वैच्छिक सेवानिवृत्ति चाही थी? ये घटनाएं बताती हैं कि सरकार ने जब गर्ग को विद्युत मंत्रालय स्थानांतरित किया था तभी एक पृष्ठभूमि बन गई थी। साथ ही ये घटनाएं बताती हैं

कि गर्ग को सरकारी सेवा से अलग होने का अपना इरादा सार्वजनिक क्या गर्ग सरकार द्वारा स्थानांतरित किए जाने को लेकर अपना विरोध जाहिर कर रहे थे ? यहां दो तारीखें अहम हैं। 17 जुलाई को पूर्व आरबीआई गवर्नर विमल जालान की अध्यक्षता वाली एक समिति ने इस बात पर चर्चा की कि केंद्रीय बैंक का अधिशेष किस प्रकार सरकार के साथ साझा किया जा सकता है। गर्ग भी इस समिति के सदस्यों में शामिल थे। खबरों के मुताबिक उन्होंने रिपोर्ट और समिति की अनुशंसा पर हस्ताक्षर करने से मना कर दिया। अगले दिन यानी 18 जलाई को गर्ग प्रधानमंत्री कार्यालय में एक बैठक

में शामिल हुए जहां उनके मुताबिक उन्होंने स्वैच्छिक सेवानिवृत्ति की योजना पर चर्चा की। उन्होंने खुद बताया कि उन्होंने अपनी तय सेवानिवृत्ति से एक वर्ष से भी अधिक पहले इस विषय पर चर्चा की।

गर्ग को विद्युत मंत्रालय क्यों स्थानांतरित किया गया और बाद में उन्होंने जल्द स्वैच्छिक सेवानिवृत्ति की बात सार्वजनिक क्यों की, इन सवालों के जवाब 17 और 18 जुलाई की बैठकों में छिपे हैं। ऐसा प्रतीत होता है कि गर्ग ने जालान समिति के साथ जो रवैया दिखाया, उसमें उन्हें समिति के सदस्यों और सरकार, दोनों जगह समर्थन नहीं मिला। बहुत संभव है कि गर्ग का स्थानांतरण उन दो दिनों में घटी घटनाओं की वजह से किया गया हो।

एक अन्य कारक था जिसने

गर्ग के लिए हालात को कठिन बना दिया। भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था में धीमापन आने लगा था, वैश्विक स्तर पर कई तरह की दिक्कतों का सामना करना पड़ रहा है। बजट में कई प्रावधान ऐसे थे जिन्होंने बाजार और उद्योग जगत को निराश किया। ऐसी स्थिति में सरकार का अपने वित्त सचिव को बिजली मंत्रालय भेजने का निर्णय उन लोगों के लिए भी संकेत है जो बजट प्रावधान और अर्थव्यवस्था की स्थिति को लेकर चिंतित हैं। गर्ग की विदाई को आर्थिक प्रबंधन के लिए जिम्मेदार अधिकारियों के दंड के रूप में देखा गया। गर्ग की स्वैच्छिक सेवानिवृत्ति की घोषणा को स्थानांतरण के खिलाफ उनके प्रतिरोध के रूप में देखा गया।

बीते दो दशक में केवल तीन वित्त सचिवों को कम महत्त्व वाले मंत्रालयों में स्थानांतरित किया को उद्योग मंत्रालय और सन 2014 में अरविंद मायाराम को पहले पर्यटन मंत्रालय और बाद में अल्पसंख्यक मामलों के मंत्रालय भेजा गया था।

अब गर्ग को विद्युत मंत्रालय भेजा गया है। ये तमाम स्थानांतरण भाजपा सरकार के कार्यकाल में किए गए। न तो मांकड और न ही मायाराम ने स्वैच्छिक सेवानिवृत्ति चाही। दोनों ने अपना कार्यकाल पूरा किया लेकिन गर्ग ने अलग राह चुनी। यही वजह है कि उनके स्थानांतरण और स्वैच्छिक सेवानिवृत्ति की वजह

जमा होने पर कंपनी फरार हो । पर मौजूद पानी का लगभग 70

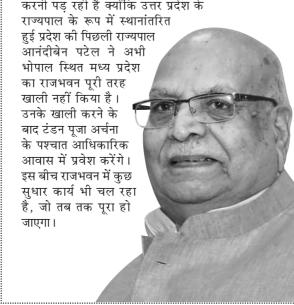
कानाफूसी

संसद में चर्चा के लिए समय का अभाव

गत 4 जुलाई को 15 राजनीतिक दलों के सदस्यों ने राज्य सभा में प्रेस की आजादी को मजबूत करने को लेकर अल्पावधि की चर्चा का अनुरोध किया। इनमें से अधिकांश सदस्य विपक्षी दलों से थे। परंतु इस नोटिस पर हस्ताक्षर करने वालों में भारतीय जनता पार्टी के सांसद सुब्रमण्यन स्वामी भी शामिल थे। सरकार ने सुझाव दिया कि इसके बजाय कैंसर के मरीजों को बुनियादी सुविधाएं और सस्ता उपचार देने के विषय पर चर्चा की जाए। राज्यसभा में बुधवार को कैंसर वाले विषय पर चर्चा हुई और आधे घंटे की चर्चा गंगा सफाई अभियान पर भी हुई। विपक्ष से कहा गया कि राज्य सभा के पास मौजूदा सत्र में प्रेस की आजादी पर चर्चा के लिए वक्त नहीं है। गौरतलब है कि संसद का यह मॉनसून सत्र 7 अगस्त को समाप्त हो रहा है।

थोड़ी सी प्रतीक्षा

भारतीय जनता पार्टी के वरिष्ठ नेता लालजी टंडन ने मध्य प्रदेश के नये राज्यपाल के रूप में पदभार ग्रहण कर लिया है। परंतु अभी आधिकारिक आवास में प्रवेश के लिए उन्हें थोड़ी प्रतीक्षा करनी पड़ रही है। फिलहाल वह राज भवन के प्रेसिडेंट सुइट में रह रहे हैं। उन्हें यह प्रतीक्षा इसलिए करनी पड़ रही है क्योंकि उत्तर प्रदेश के



आपका पक्ष

फर्जी जमा योजनाओं से सावधानी जरूरी

सरकार द्वारा समय-समय पर

मीडिया में विज्ञापन देकर अधिक पैसे कमाने का लालच देने वालों से बचने की सलाह जारी की जाती है। फिर भी लोग लालच में फंस जाते हैं। कई कंपनियां सावधि जमा कराती हैं और अंत में दोगुने से अधिक पैसे देने की बात कहती हैं। बाद में ऐसी कंपनियां जमा पैसे लेकर भाग जाती हैं। ऐसी कंपनियों को पोंजी योजना चलाने वाली कंपनी कहते हैं। पोंजी कंपनियां ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों के लोगों को अपना शिकार बनाती हैं। पश्चिम बंगाल, बिहार, झारखंड तथा ओडिशा में कई पोंजी कंपनियों का खुलासा हुआ है। पश्चिम बंगाल की रोज वैली तथा शारदा चिटफंड इसका उदाहरण है। सरकार के शिकंजे में आई इन कंपनियों का मामला फिलहाल अदालत में चल रहा है। इन पोंजी कंपनियों पर लगाम लगाने के लिए संसद में एक विधेयक पारित किया गया है जिसमें पोंजी योजनाओं पर



प्रतिबंध लगाने और ऐसे मामलों का अदालतों में छह माह में निस्तारित करने का प्रावधान है। पोंजी कंपनियां चेन बनवा कर काम करती हैं। इसके एजेंट किसी एक व्यक्ति को ग्राहक बनाकर उनसे पैसा जमा कराते हैं। इसके बाद उस ग्राहक को किसी अन्य को ग्राहक बनाने पर उसे फायदा देने का लालच देते : हो जाता है। बाद में अधिक पैसे

फर्जी जमा कंपनियों पर लगाम लगाने के लिए संसद में एक विधेयक पारित किया गया है

हैं। पोंजी कंपनी सावधि जमा में पहले तो कुछ लोगों को पूरा पैसा लौटा देती है। इससे लोगों में कंपनी के प्रति विश्वास कायम

बचना चाहिए तथा अपनी जमापूंजी नहीं लगानी चाहिए।

खारे पानी को मीठा बनाने की कवायद इजरायल के प्रधानमंत्री बेंजामिन

जाती है। अब नए कानून के तहत

किसी व्यक्ति को ऐसा प्रचार नहीं

करना चाहिए जो सत्य पर

आधारित नहीं हो। इसके अलावा

पुलिस पोंजी कंपनी चलाने वाले

परिसर या व्यक्ति के घर पर बिना

वारंट के छापे मार सकती है।

लोगों को भी ऐसे लालच से

अजित कुमार, नई दिल्ली

नेतन्याहू ने भारत का दौरा किया था। उन्होंने प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी को समुद्र के खारे पानी को पेयजल में बदलने वाला एक वाहन तोहफे में दिया था। आज पूरे विश्व में जलसंकट छाया हुआ है। पृथ्वी

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

प्रतिशत भाग खारा है जो समुद्र में है। शेष 30 प्रतिशत पानी में भी पीने लायक सिर्फ करीब 3 फीसदी है। पानी के संकट को देखते हुए सरकार ने खारे पानी को पेयजल योग्य बनाने की दिशा में कदम उठाए हैं। नीति आयोग देश में पीने के पानी के संकट से निपटने के लिए समुद्र के खारे पानी को पीने योग्य बनाने के लिए संयंत्र लगाने के प्रस्ताव पर काम कर रहा है। इन संयंत्रों को देश के तटीय क्षेत्रों में लगाने का प्रस्ताव है। देश में करीब 7,500 किलोमीटर तटीय क्षेत्र है। अगर सरकार की यह योजना सफल होती है तो समुद्र तट के पास रहने वालों के लिए यह वरदान साबित होगा। इस साल गर्मी के दिनों में चेन्नई में पेयजल संकट गहरा गया था। चेन्नई के अलावा कई शहरों में भी हर साल पानी की कमी की समस्या उत्पन्न हो जाती है। अगर समुद्र के पानी को पीने योग्य बना लिया जाता है

तक हल हो जाएगा। आनंद शर्मा, नोएडा

तो पानी की समस्या का कुछ हद





प्रत्येक समस्या अपना समाधान लेकर ही उत्पन्न होती है

मंदी का अंदेशा

रेटिंग एजेंसी क्रिसिल की ओर से विकास दर का अनुमान घटाने पर हैरानी इसलिए नहीं, क्योंकि बीते कुछ समय से लगातार ऐसे संकेत मिल रहे हैं कि अर्थव्यवस्था के मोर्चे पर सब कुछ ठीक नहीं। बात चाहे मैन्यूफैक्चरिंग सेक्टर में चार वर्षों की सबसे बड़ी गिरावट दर्ज होने की हो या फिर ऑटोमोबाइल सेक्टर में मंदी के हालात की अथवा शेयर बाजार में छाई सुस्ती की, चारों ओर से उभरते विपरीत संकेत कारोबार जगत को हतोत्साहित करने का काम कर रहे हैं। इन नकारात्मक संकेतों के बीच मोदी सरकार इसकी भी अनदेखी नहीं कर सकती कि कैफे कॉफी डे के संस्थापक वीजी सिद्धार्थ की आत्महत्या ने भी आर्थिक माहौल में निराशा घोलने का काम किया है। भले ही सिद्धार्थ की आत्महत्या के मूल कारण कुछ और हों, लेकिन उनकी मौत को जिस तरह प्रतिकूल कारोबारी माहौल से जोड़ा जा रहा है उससे नीति-नियंता अनजान नहीं हो सकते। नीति-नियंताओं को इस बात से भी अवगत होना चाहिए कि मोदी सरकार के दूसरे कार्यकाल का पहला आम बजट उद्योग-व्यापार जगत को उत्साह प्रदान करने में सहायक नहीं साबित हुआ। सच तो यह है कि आम बजट के कुछ प्रावधानों ने कारोबार जगत को हतोत्साहित करने का

इससे इन्कार नहीं कि सरकार के विभिन्न विभाग कारोबारी माहौल ठीक करने की कोशिश में जुटे हुए हैं, लेकिन सवाल यह है कि क्या वे कामयाब होते हुए भी दिख रहे हैं? इससे भी महत्वपूर्ण सवाल यह है कि आखिर कारोबार जगत की चिंताओं का समाधान करने की पहल सरकार के शीर्ष स्तर पर क्यों नहीं हो रही है? क्या यह सही समय नहीं कि वित्त मंत्री या फिर खुद प्रधानमंत्री आगे आकर उद्योग-व्यापार जगत को इसके लिए आश्वस्त करें कि उसकी समस्याओं का समाधान प्राथमिकता के आधार पर किया जाएगा? इस तरह का कोई आश्वासन देना इसलिए आवश्यक ही नहीं अनिवार्य है, क्योंकि उद्योग-व्यापार को गति प्रदान करके ही सरकार जनकल्याण और विकास की अपनी योजनाओं पर अमल कर पाएगी। निःसंदेह गरीब, किसान और अन्य वंचित तबकों का उत्थान सरकार की प्राथमिकता में होना चाहिए, लेकिन इस तरह की प्राथमिकताएं तो तभी पूरी हो पाएंगी जब अर्थव्यवस्था की सुस्ती दूर करने में कामयाबी मिलेगी। यह कामयाबी कारोबारियों को भरोसा दिलाने और उनके मनोबल को बढ़ाने से ही मिलेगी। यह शुभ संकेत नहीं कि अर्थव्यवस्था के मंदी के चपेट में आने का अंदेशा उभर आया है। इसके पहले कि मंदी की आशंका और गहराए, मोदी सरकार को हालात ठीक करने के लिए न केवल सिक्रय होना चाहिए, बल्कि इसकी चिंता करते हुए दिखना भी चाहिए कि कारोबार जगत की समस्याओं का तेजी से निदान करना उसकी प्राथमिकता में है।

ममता की कोशिश

तृणमूल कांग्रेस के लिए 2021 का पश्चिम बंगाल का विधानसभा चुनाव काफी अहम है, क्योंकि लोकसभा चुनाव में जिस तरह से भाजपा ने तृणमूल से 14 सीटें छीन ली है उसके बाद से तृणमूल प्रमुख एवं मुख्यमंत्री ममता बनर्जी की चिंता बढ़ना लाजिमी है। इसीलिए उन्होंने पहली बार भाजपा एवं अन्य दलों की तरह चुनावी रणनीतिकार का सहारा लिया है। उनकी चुनावी रणनीति इन दिनों प्रशांत किशोर संभाल रहे हैं और उनकी रणनीति के तहत ममता ने भी कोशिश शुरू कर दी है। राज्य की जनता में तृणमूल के प्रति भरोसा बढ़ाने के लिए 'दीदी के बोलो' अभियान शुरू किया गया है। तृणमूल नेतृत्व और किशोर की 'इंडियन पॉलिटिकल एक्शन कमेटी' (आइ-पीएसी) के अधिकारियों ने हालांकि फोन पर हुई बातचीत या किन लोगों ने फोन किया, इस संबंध में कोई जानकारी साझा नहीं की, परंतु बुधवार को बताया गया कि सोमवार को डिजिटल मंच के शुरू होने के बाद से अब तक इस पर दो लाख से अधिक फोन कॉल आ चुके हैं। वहीं कम से कम एक लाख लोगों ने हेल्पलाइन नंबर तथा वेबसाइट पर अपनी राय रखी है और समस्याएं बताई हैं। व्यापक प्रतिक्रिया मिलने की बातें कही जा रही हैं। लोकसभा चुनाव में करारी शिकस्त मिलने के बाद ममता ने जनता तक पहुंचने के लिए एक कार्यक्रम शुरू किया है जिसके तहत पार्टी के एक हजार नेता अगले 100 दिनों में 10 हजार गांवों की यात्रा करेंगे और जनता की समस्याओं को समझकर उन्हें दूर करने का प्रयास करेंगे। यह अभियान भी प्रशांत किशोर की रणनीति का हिस्सा माना जा रहा है। राज्य में भाजपा की अचानक बढी लोकप्रियता तुणमूल के लिए चिंता का विषय बनी हुई है। वाम दलों के 34 वर्षों के शासन को समाप्त करते हुए 2011 में सुश्री बनर्जी ने ऐतिहासिक जीत दर्ज कर राज्य में अपनी सरकार बनाई थी. परंत पिछले पांच वर्षों में भाजपा की शक्ति बंगाल में काफी बढ़ चुकी है जिसके मद्देनजर उन्होंने अभी से ही चुनावी तैयारी शुरू कर दी है, क्योंकि तणमूल को पता है कि पारंपरिक राजनीति के जरिए भाजपा से पार पाना संभव नहीं है। इसीलिए आधुनिक राजनीतिक सोच एवं चुनाव प्रबंधन में माहिर प्रशांत किशोर को साथ लेकर ममता भाजपा को 2021 में जमीन चटाने की कोशिश में हैं।

अपनी अफगान नीति को धार दे भारत



ब्रिगेडियर आरपी सिंह

काबुल में संभावित तालिबानी शासन इस्लामाबाद को भारत के खिलाफ सामरिक पैठ बनाने में फायदा ही पहुंचाएगा

किस्तानी प्रधानमंत्री इमरान खान कतर एयरलाइंस की व्यावसायिक उड़ान से जब अमेरिका पहुंचे तो उनकी आगवानी के लिए कोई अमेरिकी मंत्री मौजूद नहीं था। उनके वित्त मंत्री शाह महमूद कुरैशी और पाकिस्तानी राजदूत के अलावा पाकिस्तान मूल के कुछ अमेरिकियों ने ही उनका स्वागत किया। वहां केवल एक अमेरिकी महिला प्रोटोकॉल अधिकारी ही उपस्थित थीं। उन्हें तब और असहज होना पड़ा जब पाकिस्तान के बलूच, सिंधी और मोहाजिर तबके के लोगों ने उनके सामने विरोध-प्रदर्शन किया। इमरान खान के साथ पाकिस्तानी सेना के प्रमुख जावेद बाजवा के अलावा ताकतवर खुफिया एजेंसी आइएसआइ के मुखिया लेफ्टिनेंट जनरल फैज हमीद भी गए। ये सभी हवाई अड्डे से मेट्रो रेल के जरिये पाकिस्तानी दूतावास पहुंचे। ये सभी दूतावास में ही रहे। उनके द्वारा बरती गई इस किफायत की कंगाल और बदहाल होते देश में लोगों द्वारा भारी सराहना की गई। ऐसा पहली बार हुआ जब किसी पाकिस्तानी प्रधानमंत्री के साथ सेना के दो शीर्ष जनरल भी साथ गए। असल में इमरान अमेरिकी रक्षा प्रतिष्ठान से संपर्क साधना चाहते थे और दोनों जनरल अमेरिकी सेना के साथ मिलकर अफगानिस्तान में काम कर चुके थे। पाकिस्तानी जनरल अमेरिका के शीर्ष सैन्य कमांडरों को यह समझाने में सफल रहे कि अपनी धरती पर आतंक के खिलाफ मृहिम में पाकिस्तान खासा गंभीर है। दूसरी वजह यह रही कि व्हाइट हाउस में अपने सैन्य नेतृत्व की परेड कराकर इमरान खान ने अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति को इस बात के लिए आश्वस्त करने की कोशिश की कि जो भी वादे किए जाएंगे उन्हें पूरा किया जाएगा, क्योंकि ये पाकिस्तान के वास्तविक शासकों यानी सैन्य कमांडरों के सामने हो रहे हैं।

डोनाल्ड ट्रंप-इमरान खान वार्ता की कड़ी सऊदी अरब के युवराज मोहम्मद बिन सलमान ने जोड़ी थी जिन्होंने इसके लिए ट्रंप के दामाद के साथ अपने निजी रिश्तों का सहारा लिया। इसकी कोशिशें दिसंबर, 2018 से ही शुरू हो गई थीं जब ट्रंप ने इमरान खान को पत्र लिखकर अफगान शांति प्रक्रिया में उनसे मदद मांगी थी। इमरान खान भी ट्रंप से मिलने को आतुर थे ताकि पाकिस्तान को लेकर उनकी नकारात्मक धारणा दूर कर सकें। इस्लामाबाद ने इसके लिए हालैंड एंड नाइट जैसी लाबिंग फर्म की सेवाएं ली थीं। कुछ अरसा पहले ट्रंप ने ट्विटर पर कहा था कि बीते 15 वर्षीं में पाकिस्तान ने 33 अरब डॉलर की मदद के बदले में झूठ और फरेब के बदले कुछ और नहीं दिया। वही ट्रंप अब पाक के साथ संबंधों में सुधार के मकसद से इमरान खान का स्वागत करते दिखे। ट्रंप को उम्मीद है कि इमरान खान तालिबान से समझौता कराने में मददगार होंगे ताकि नवंबर, 2020 को होने वाले राष्ट्रपति चुनाव से पहले अमेरिकी सैनिक स्वदेश लौट आएं। इमरान खान से मुलाकात के दौरान ट्रंप ने



अपने चिरपरिचित अंदाज में शिगुफा छेड़ा कि पीएम मोदी ने उनसे कश्मीर में मध्यस्थता का अनुरोध किया है। इससे इमरान के मुर्झाए चेहरे पर भी मुस्कान तैरना स्वाभाविक था।

अमेरिका ने इमरान खान से किसी सैन्य या आर्थिक सहायता का वादा नहीं किया है। इस दौरान पाकिस्तान को केवल 16.5 करोड़ डॉलर की गशि मिली वह भी उन एफ-16 विमानों की मरम्मत और रखरखाव के लिए जो उसे अमेरिका से मिलेंगे। इसमें भी एक शर्त यह है कि उन्हें भारत के खिलाफ इस्तेमाल नहीं किया जा सकता। हालांकि इमरान खान के अमेरिका दौरे के कुछ खास निहितार्थ भी रहे। एक तो यही कि अमेरिका-पाक रिश्ते वापस सुधार की ओर अग्रसर हुए हैं। दूसरा यही कि भारत अभी भी अमेरिका के लिए अहम बना रहेगा, लेकिन वाशिंगटन इस्लामाबाद से भी संतुलन साधेगा जैसा कि वह पहले करता था। तींसरा यह कि अफगानिस्तान से अमेरिकी सैनिकों की वापसी के मामले में पाकिस्तान आधार बिंदु बन गया है। ऐसा इस्लामाबाद की संदिग्ध नीति के कारण हुआ है जहां वह तालिबान की मदद करता तो

दूसरी ओर उससे लड़ने के नाम पर अमेरिका से डॉलर वसूलता रहा। यह मानने के पर्याप्त कारण हैं कि पाक की तालिबान पर पूरी पकड़ है। कश्मीर पर ट्रंप की शिगुफेबाजी इमरान के दौरे की सबसे बड़ी थाती रही, लेकिन इससे पाकिस्तान को कुछ हासिल नहीं होने वाला। कश्मीर के मसले पर अमेरिकी मध्यस्थता की संभावनाओं पर पाकिस्तानी मीडिया गदगद हो गया। ट्रंप के बयान पर भारत में विपक्ष प्रधानमंत्री मोदी से निजी स्पष्टीकरण की मांग पर अड़ा, लेकिन मोदी ने बड़बोले अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति को शर्मसार करना उचित नहीं समझा।

इसे अमेरिका ने भी समझा होगा। अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति के साथ अपनी पहली बैठक में इमरान खान ने द्विपक्षीय रिश्तों में आए खालीपन को भरने के साथ ही अविश्वास की खाई को पाटने का काम किया। इमरान का अमेरिका दौरा इसलिए महत्वपूर्ण था, क्योंकि यह तब हुआ जब तालिबान के साथ अमेरिका की वार्ता निर्णायक दौर में पहुंच रही है। दोहा में तालिबान के साथ अगले दौर की वार्ता फिर से होने जा रही है। माना जा रहा है कि जल्द ही

अमेरिका में इमरान खान ने स्वीकार किया कि पाकिस्तानी धरती पर करीब 40 आतंकी संगठनों के 40,000 आतंकवादी सिक्रय हैं जिन पर कार्रवाई करनी होगी। हालांकि इमरान खान के पूर्ववर्तियों ने भी ऐसे दावों के साथ पहले भी अमेरिका को गुमराह किया है और इस मामले में वक्त उनकी भी परीक्षा लेगा। इमरान खान ने अमेरिका में यह भी कहा कि वह तालिबान से मिलकर उसे अफगान सरकार से बातचीत के लिए मनाने की पूरी कोशिश करेंगे। इस पर तालिबान के प्रवक्ता ने भी कहा कि अगर पाकिस्तान आमंत्रित करता है तो हम वहां जरूर जाएंगे।

भारत को भी अपनी अफगानिस्तान नीति में बदलाव करते हए तालिबान से बातचीत करनी चाहिए। कूटनीतिक तकाजा यही कहता है कि व्यावहारिकता को सिद्धांतों पर तरजीह दी जाए तालिबान भले ही आतंकी हों, लेकिन वे हैं तो अफगानी ही। मौजूदा अफगान वार्ता में शामिल न होकर भारत ने इस्लामाबाद को बढ़त बनाने का अवसर दे दिया है। अफगान तालिबान के साथ हालिया वार्ता में अमेरिका, रूस और चीन के अलावा पाकिस्तान भी शामिल हुआ अफगानिस्तान रणनीतिक रूप से भारत के लिए बेहद महत्वपूर्ण है। इस युद्ध पीड़ित देश मे हमने मानव और अन्य संसाधनों में भारी निवेश किया है। भारत को लेकर अफगानियों में सदियो से अच्छी भावनाएं रही हैं। इनमें तालिबान के कुछ धड़े भी शामिल हैं। प्रधानमंत्री मोदी की कूटनीति से भी ये भावनाएं बढ़ी हैं। काबुल में तालिबानी शासन इस्लामाबाद को भारत के खिलाफ सामरिक पैठ और कश्मीर में जारी आतंकी संघर्ष में फायदा पहुंचाएगा। तालिबान की दुश्मनी से ज्यादा उसकी दोस्ती दिल्ली के लिए कहीं ज्यादा फायदेमंद है।

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नैतिक पतन का शिकार लोकतंत्र

देश के इतिहास में पहली बार सुप्रीम कोर्ट के मुख्य न्यायाधीश ने सीबीआइ को इलाहाबाद हाई कोर्ट के एक जज पर भ्रष्टाचार का मुकदमा दर्ज करने की इजाजत दे दी है। तमाम जांच-पड़ताल के बाद जज के प्राथमिक तौर पर भ्रष्टाचार में लिप्त होने के सुबूत मिले हैं। संविधान निर्माताओं ने न्यायपालिका खासकर सुप्रीम कोर्ट और हाई कोर्ट के जजों को नैतिकता की प्रतिमूर्ति मानते हुए उन्हें पद पर रहने के दौरान हर संवैधानिक सुरक्षा कवच से नवाजा था और उन्हें पद से हटाना एक जटिलतम प्रक्रिया यानी महाभियोग के तहत लगभग नामुमिकन कर दिया था। जिस प्रजातंत्र को उन्होंने इतनी कुर्बानियां देकर हासिल किया उसके भावी पतन का शायद उन्हें अंदाजा नहीं था। देश में पहली बार उत्तर प्रदेश के मुख्यमंत्री के आदेश पर पूरा प्रशासन 'कांवड़ियों' के आगे इतना नतमस्तक हो गया कि एक जिले के एसपी ने एक कांवड़िये का सार्वजानिक रूप से न केवल पैर दबाया, बल्कि उसका वीडियो आधिकारिक वेबसाइट पर अपलोड भी किया, ताकि मुख्यमंत्री देख सकें कि उनके आदेश का अमल किस शिद्दत से किया जाता है। एक अन्य जिले में डीएम और एसपी ने उन पर हेलीकॉप्टर से फूल बरसाए और मीडिया को उसका वीडियो उपलब्ध कराया। लौहपुरुष सरदार पटेल को इस 'स्टील फ्रेम'

ब्यरोक्रेसी को फौलादी ढांचा कहते थे) पर इतना भरोसा था कि संविधान के अनुच्छेद-311 में अधिकारियों को दिए गए सुरक्षा कवच के पक्ष में उन्हें कहा था कि यह कवच इसलिए जरूरी है ताकि अधिकारी राजनीतिक आकाओं के सामने तन कर अपनी बात कह सकें और काम कर सकें। आज 70 साल बाद वह फौलादी ढांचा रीढ़िवहीन दिखने लगा है। उत्तर प्रदेश के ही उन्नाव जिले में सत्ताधारी दल का एक विधायक एक नाबालिग लड़की से दुष्कर्म के आरोप में साल भर से जेल में बंद है। कुछ दिन पहले जब परिवार के साथ वह पीड़िता एक गाड़ी में जा रही थी तो गलत दिशा से आ रहे एक ट्रक ने जबरदस्त टक्कर मारी। उसके बाद से वह पीड़िता वेंटिलेटर पर है और उसके वकील गंभीर रूप से घायल हैं, जबकी उसके दो रिश्तेदार मौके पर ही मर गए। पीड़िता की मां तथा चाचा के आरोप पर और पूरे राज्य में लोगों के जनाक्रोश को देखते हुए पुलिस ने विधायक पर हत्या का और हत्या के प्रयास का मकदमा दर्ज किया। जाहिर है अगर आरोपी विधायक गवाहों को डराने-धमकाने के अंदेशे में जेल में नहीं रहता तो इन दिनों विधानसभा में



और कोई नहीं



जनता ने सिक्किम क्रांतिकारी मोर्चा को बहुमत दिया और विधायकों के बहुमत ने, जिनमें भारतीय जनता पार्टी भी शामिल है, अपने नेता प्रेम सिंह तमांग को मुख्यमंत्री बनाया, जबकि वह 2017 में भ्रष्टाचार के मामले में साल भर जेल की सजा काट चुके थे और चुनाव लड़ने के लिए अयोग्य हो चुके थे। यहां सवाल है कि आखिर किसका विवेक गलत था, जनता का या विधायकों का? अब मुख्यमंत्री चुनाव आयोग से गुहार लगा रहे हैं कि कानून में प्रदत्त अधिकारों के तहत वह उन्हें चुनाव लड़ने की अनुमित दे दे। भ्रष्टाचार में चार्जशीट के बावजूद राष्ट्रीय जनता दल के नेता लालू यादव उस समय के कानून (अंतिम अदालत से सजा न मिलने तक अभियुक्त पाक-साफ माना जाता था) के मुताबिक वर्षों तक बिहार में सरकार बनाते रहे और संसद में मंत्री के रूप में कानून बनाते रहे। बिहार की जनता उन्हें वोट भी देती रही। सवाल है कि क्या 70 वर्षों में जनता का विवेक अपने प्रतिनिधियों को लेकर आज भी वही है या अच्छे नैतिक बल वाले लोग राजनीति में आ ही नहीं रहे हैं? आज जनता के सामने विकल्पहीनता की स्थिति आ गई है या फिर सत्ता के असर

के चलते राजनीति अपना नैतिक प्रभाव खोती जा रही है? आजादी के इतने वर्षों प्रजातंत्र के बाद अगर हमारे कुछ न्यायाधीश, जन-प्रतिनिधि और हमारी ब्यूरोक्रेसी का एक बड़ा भाग नैतिक पतन के सबसे निचले पायदान पर दिखाई देते हैं तो यह गंभीर चिंता की बात है। यह भी उतनी ही चिंता की बात है जब जनता भ्रष्टाचार की सजा काट रहे नेता वाली पार्टी को बहुमत दिलाकर और सत्ता में लाकर अपना भाग्यविधाता बनाती है और वह संविधान में निष्ठा की शपथ लेकर फिर वही सब कुछ करता है जो

1828 में अमेरिका में जैक्सोनियन युग के प्रजातंत्र की धूम थी। उसे समझने के लिए फ्रांस के राजनीतिक शास्त्र के जाने-माने विद्वान टोक्विल अमेरिका गए और उन्होंने अपने अध्ययन में पाया कि यह सबसे खराब प्रजातंत्र है जिसमें अल्पसंख्यक मत का न तो न्यायपालिका में, न ही विधायिका में और न ही किसी और जन विमर्श में कोई स्थान है। उन्होंने वापस लौटकर 'बहुसंख्यक का आतंक' शीर्षक से एक लेख लिखा जो भविष्य के प्रजातंत्र के लिए दिशा-निर्देशक बना। उसी तरह 1860 में ब्रिटेन में भी सबको मतदान का अधिकार संबंधी विवाद पर प्रजातंत्र में उदारवाद के जनक जॉन स्टुअर्ट मिल ने कहा था, 'मैं इसका पक्षधर कभी नहीं हो सकता कि अंगूठाछाप आदमी को मतदान का अधिकार मिले।' इसके विपरीत भारत में पंडित जवाहरलाल नेहरू और बाबा साहब डॉ. भीमराव आंबेडकर ने सार्वजानिक व्यस्क मताधिकार के पक्ष में संविधान बनाया, जबकि उस समय साक्षरता मात्र 12 प्रतिशत थी। आज साक्षरता 76 प्रतिशत है, लेकिन क्या इसके साथ लोगों की सोच, तर्क-शक्ति और सामूहिक समझ भी बदली है? क्या बेहतर शिक्षा, प्रति-व्यक्ति आय, सूचना के प्रवाह ने भारत के नागरिकों की नैतिक गुणवत्ता बंदली है? अगर हां. तो जज भ्रष्टाचार का आरोपी क्यों है. विधायक दुष्कर्म और हत्या के आरोप के बाद भी अपनी पार्टी का सदस्य क्यों है? कैसे जनता एक साल जेल की सजा काट चुके एक नेता की पार्टी को सरकार बनाने के लिए चुन लेती है और कैसे वह नेता संविधान को ठेंगा दिखाते हुए मुख्यमंत्री बन जाता है? और अंत में कैसे फैलादी ढांचे की बुनियाद का कोई हिस्सा-आइएएस और आइपीएस रीढ़िवहीन हो जाते हैं? शायद प्रजातंत्र में ही कहीं 'नैतिक लोचा' है।

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मन का विज्ञान

मन मनुष्य के शरीर का अदृश्य अंग है जो दिखाई नहीं देता, किंतु वह शरीर का सबसे शक्तिशाली हिस्सा है। मन के अंदर संपूर्ण दुनिया समाहित है। मन एक ऐसा पर्दा है जिस पर इच्छाएं प्रक्षेपित होती हैं। हमारे शरीर में इंद्रियां जो भी कार्य करती हैं वे मन के सहयोग से करती हैं। मन के बिना इंद्रियां ज्ञान प्राप्त नहीं कर सकतीं। अतः मन को महत्वपूर्ण अंग माना जाता है। अक्सर कहा जाता है कि मन पर काबू पा लिया तो समझो जीवन को साध लिया।

भारतीय शास्त्रों में मन के लिए मनस् शब्द का प्रयोग किया गया है। जिसका अर्थ है वे साधन या उपक्रम जो किसी घटना, विचार या ज्ञान के लिए मुख्य रूप से जवाबदेह होते हैं। मन का महत्व इसलिए अधिक हो जाता है, क्योंकि यह ज्ञानेंद्रिय और आत्मा को परस्पर जोड़ने वाली कड़ी है। जिसकी सहायता से ज्ञान की प्राप्ति होती है। मन अपने आप में निर्जीव तत्व है। जब मन आत्मा के संसर्ग में आता है तभी इसमें अनुभूति होती है। प्रत्येक आत्मा के साथ एक मन जुड़ा हुआ होता है। जो उसका आंतरिक सहायक माना जाता है। इसलिए आयुर्वेद में मन को सत्व भी कहा गया है। जिस प्रकार ज्ञानेंद्रियां ज्ञान प्राप्त करने का बाहरी साधन हैं उसी प्रकार मन ज्ञान प्राप्ति का आंतरिक साधन है।

कहावत है-मन के हारे हार है, मन के जीते जीत। अतः जब व्यक्ति अपने मन में यह सोच लेता है कि वह अमुक काम नहीं कर सकता तो वह अपने अंदर नकारात्मक गुण पैदा कर लेता है। और जब व्यक्ति यह सोच लेता है कि वह अमुक काम कर सकता है तो वह अपने अंदर सकारात्मक गुण पैदा कर लेता है। कबीरदास के अनुसार मन मूर्ख है, लोभी है, चंचल और चोर है। यदि मन बेलगाम हो जाए तो यह हमें विनाश के मार्ग पर ले जाता है। इसलिए मन पर नियंत्रण रखना आवश्यक है। मन पर विचारों का प्रभाव होता है। अत जैसे हमारे विचार होंगे वैसा ही हमारा मन भी होगा। मन भूमि में रोपे गए विचार नामक बीज की किस्म ही किसी के बुरे एवं अच्छे व्यक्तित्व का निर्धारण करती है।

देवेंद्रराज सुथार

फिटनेस पर बढ़ता जोर

हाल ही में एक तथ्य सामने आया है कि बीते दस वर्षों में देश में फिटनेस को लेकर जागरूकता काफी बढ़ गई है। इसके चलते फिटनेस उत्पादों का घरेलू बाजार लगभग चार गुणा बढ़ गया है। एक दशक पहले यह चार हजार करोड़ रुपये का था, जो अब 14 हजार करोड़ रुपये के पार पहुंच गया है। इसमें स्वदेशी उत्पादों का हिस्सा छह हजार करोड़ रुपये और चीन से आयतित उत्पादों का हिस्सा आठ हजार करोड़ रुपये है। बेहतर स्वास्थ्य को लेकर लोगों की सोच में जो बदलाव आया है, ये आंकड़े उसी की झलक पेश कर रहे हैं।

दरअसल आज आधुनिक जीवनशैली और खानपान जनित बीमारियां लोगों की चिंता का एक बड़ा कारण बनती जा रही हैं। हमने आधुनिक जीवनशैली के नाम पर ऐसी आदतों को अपना लिया है जिसने जाने अनजाने कई तरह की गंभीर बीमारियों को हमारे जीवन में जगह दे दी है। जीवन की आपाधापी में हम संतुलित भोजन नहीं ले पा रहे हैं। आहार में शक्कर और वसा की अधिक मात्रा भोजन को हानिकारक बनाती है। ऊपर से सुविधाएं

एक दशक पहले फिटनेस उत्पादों का घरेलू बाजार चार हजार करोड़ का था, जो अब 14 हजार करोड़ रुपये के पार पहुंच गया है

बढ़ने से लोगों की शारीरिक गतिविधियां एकदम कम हो गई हैं जिससे अतिरिक्त कैलोरी शरीर में जमा होती जा रही है। इन सबके चलते विश्व के सबसे युवा देश भारत में आज बड़ी संख्या में युवक हृदय रोग, मधुमेह, तनाव, गठिया, दमा जैसी बीमारियों की चपेट में आ रहे हैं। ये बीमारियां सिर्फ महानगरों तक सीमित नहीं रही हैं, इनका विस्तार छोटे शहरों और गांवों तक तेजी से हुआ है।

विश्व स्वास्थ्य संगठन के अनुसार 2020 तक भारत में सबसे अधिक मृत्यु हृदय संबंधी रोगों के कारण होगी। कुछ शोध बताते हैं कि आज की खराब जीवनशैली के कारण अगले करीब एक दशक में भारत की आबादी के लगभग बीस फीसद युवा हृदय संबंधी बीमारियों से ग्रस्त होंगे। रहन-सहन में आए इस बदलाव ने महिलाओं एवं पुरुषों के प्रजनन

क्षमता को भी काफी प्रभावित किया है। आज करीब 15 फीसद महिलाएं बांझपन की समस्या से ग्रस्त हैं। पुरुषों में गंजे होने और महिलाओं में बाल गिरना भी कहीं न कहीं इसी की देन है। इससे शरीर में जरूरी प्रोटीन, विटामिन और खनिज पोषक तत्वों की कमी पड़ रही है। इसका प्रभाव हमारी उम्र पर भी पड़ रहा है।

युवावस्था न केवल खुद के विकास के लिए अहम होता है, बल्कि यही वह समय होता है जब कोई भी युवा खुद को परिवार, समाज और देश के लिए तैयार करता है। ऐसे में देश की एक बड़ी ऊर्जावान आबादी के स्वास्थ्य में इस तरह की गिरावट का आना निश्चित रूप से चिंताजनक है। इसलिए जीवनशैली और खानपान की आदतों की वजह से पैदा हो रही बीमारियों पर परिवार, समाज और सरकार के साथ हमें खुद भी ध्यान देने की जरूरत है। हालांकि धीरे-धीरे लोग इसके प्रति जागरूक हो भी रहे हैं। और अपने को स्वस्थ रखने के लिए तमाम जतन कर रहे हैं जिसकी बानगी योग के बढ़ते चलन और फिटनेस उत्पादों की मांग में आई यह बढ़ोतरी है।

(लेखक दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय में शोधार्थी हैं)

शिक्षा का माध्यम बनें भारतीय भाषाएं

भारतीय भाषाओं के समक्ष बड़ी चुनौती शीर्षक से शंकर शरण द्वारा लिखित लेख पढा। लेखक ने भाषाओं के संदर्भ में वर्तमान के अनेक महत्वपूर्ण प्रश्नों को उठाया है। निःसंदेह आज भी ब्रिटिश शिक्षा नीति भारतीय शिक्षा व्यवस्था पर पूरी तरह हावी है और उसको हटाने को लेकर अथवा भारतीय भाषाओं की पुनर्स्थापना को लेकर सारा विमर्श राजनीतिक अधिक हो गया है। निश्चित रूप से लेखक द्वारा उठाया गया यह प्रश्न उचित है कि भाषा निर्जीव यंत्र नहीं है, क्योंकि भाषा ही वह माध्यम है, जिसके द्वारा किसी व्यक्ति के संपूर्ण व्यक्तित्व का विकास होता है और उसके अंदर चेतना का स्पंदन भी। यह भाषा ही सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक सरोकारों को संजोती है तथा उन्हें पीढ़ी दर पीढ़ी स्थानांतरित करती है। विश्व के अनेक देश ऐसे हैं जहां प्राथमिक ही नहीं, पूरी शिक्षा वहां की अपनी भाषा में दी जाती है और वे देश आज उच्च शिखरों को छू रहे हैं। फिर कौन-सी बाधा है कि हम अपनी भारतीय भाषाओं को शिक्षा का माध्यम नहीं बना पा रहे हैं? आज यह एक गंभीर समस्या है कि हमारे अबोध बालक विदेशी भाषा के माध्यम से अपने ज्ञान का विकृत विस्तार कर रहे हैं और दादी-नानी के किस्से-कहानियों में छिपे संस्कारों से दूर हो रहे हैं। अंग्रेजी के वर्चस्व से आज हम सब ग्रसित हैं। आवश्यकता है मजबूती से निर्णय लेकर भारतीय भाषाओं में विमर्श की ओर बढ़ा जाए तथा शिक्षा और संस्कार की भाषा भारतीय भाषाएं हों ऐसा प्रयास किया जाए। हिंदी संपर्क की भाषा है, संविधान सम्मत राजभाषा भी है। क्या आज यह अनिवार्य नहीं है कि हम अंग्रेजी को छोड़कर, प्रादेशिक भेदभाव भूलकर हिंदी तथा अन्य भारतीय भाषाओं को पुनर्स्थापित करें?

डॉ. वेदप्रकाश, हंसराज कॉलेज, दिल्ली

मेलबाक्स

डैमेज कंट्रोल की कवायद

उन्नाव दुष्कर्म कांड में चौतरफा आलोचना झेलने के बाद आखिरकार भाजपा ने अपने विधायक कुलदीप सिंह सेंगर को पार्टी से निकाल दिया है। दरअसल सुप्रीम कोर्ट की सख्ती के बाद बैक फुट पर आई भाजपा को ये कार्रवाई करनी पड़ी। पिछले एक साल में पीड़िता की मां ने उत्तर प्रदेश के पुलिस को 33 पत्र लिख कर सुरक्षा की मांगी की थी। पत्र में उन्होंने लिखा था कि विधायक के आदमी उन्हें जान से मारने की धमकी दे रहे हैं, पर पुलिस ने कोई कार्रवाई नहीं की। साफ है कि विधायक को सत्ता की शक्ति हासिल थी। अब तक पीड़िता के परिवार के कई सदस्य मारे जा चुके हैं। पीड़िता स्वयं अस्पताल में जिंदगी के लिए जंग लड़ रही है। अब सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने भी सख्ती करते हुए विधायक से जुड़े सभी केस दिल्ली ट्रांसफर कर दिए हैं। जांच भी उत्तर प्रदेश पुलिस से लेकर सीबीआइ को सौंपी जा चुकी है। देर से ही सही, भाजपा ने विधायक को पार्टी से बाहर तो किया, लेकिन ये पार्टी की संवेदनशीलता नहीं, सिर्फ डैमेज कंट्रोल करने की कोशिश है।

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बडा सामाजिक बदलाव

कांग्रेस पार्टी के वरिष्ठ राज्यसभा सदस्य गुलाम नबी आजादी का कहना है कि तीन तलाक विधेयक को प्रवर समिति के पास भेजने के बजाय रातों रात सदन की कार्यसूची में डाल कर पारित करा दिया गया। यह हास्यास्पद बयान लगता है। जिसका खंडन भाजपा द्वारा तुरंत किया गया। हालांकि कांग्रेस को समय रहते अपने सदस्यों को व्हिप जारी करना चाहिए था। वैसे भी राज्यसभा में तीन तलाक विधेयक पर सदन में छह घंटे बहस चली। कांग्रेस के वक्तव्य से एक बात तो बिल्कुल साफ है कि राजनीतिक तौर पर मुस्लिम वोट बैंक के खातिर तीन तलाक विधेयक पास ना करवा कर और कोई ना कोई अड़ंगा लगाकर प्रवर समिति के पास भेजने की पक्षधर थी। सदन में 20 विपक्षी सांसदो की अनुपस्थिति ने तीन तलाक विधेयक को बिल बना कर इतिहास रचने के साथ बड़े सामाजिक बदलाव का रास्ता साफ कर दिया है। मुस्लिम महिला विवाह एक्ट का बन जाना राजनीतिक तौर पर कांग्रेस की जड़ों पर जबरदस्त प्रहार है। अब चाह कर भी विपक्षी पार्टियां इस बिल का विरोध नहीं कर सकतीं। इसमें कोई दो राय नहीं कि केंद्र सरकार की जबरदस्त प्रबंधन कौशल की वजह से मुस्लिम महिला विवाह विधेयक को राज्यसभा से पारित करवाया गया जो तलाक-ए-बिद्दत पर फौरन नकेल कसेगा, क्योंकि ये आपराधिक श्रेणी का कानून है। मुस्लिम महिला अधिकारों की रक्षा भी करेगा।

दीपक गौतम, सोनीपत

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

घाटी की सुध

म्मू-कश्मीर में आर्थिक रूप से पिछड़े वर्गों के लिए केंद्रीय मंत्रिमंडल ने शिक्षा और नौकरियों में दस फीसद आरक्षण संबंधी विधेयक को मंजूरी दे दी है। यह प्रावधान कुछ समय पहले अंतरराष्ट्रीय सीमा के पास रहने वाले नागरिकों के लिए लागू किया गया था। अब सभी इसका लाभ उठा सकेंगे। इस फैसले से उम्मीद की जा रही है कि गुमराह हो रहे युवाओं को समाज की मुख्यधारा में लौटाने में मदद मिलेगी। खासकर कश्मीर के मामले में कहा जाता रहा है कि वहां शिक्षा और रोजगार के अवसर उपलब्ध न होने के कारण बहुत सारे युवा अलगाववादी और आतंकी संगठनों के बहकावे में आ जाते हैं। इसलिए इन क्षेत्रों पर विशेष ध्यान देने की जरूरत रेखांकित की जाती रही है। गरीब वर्गों के बच्चों और युवाओं में अशिक्षा के कारण गुमराह होने की संभावना अधिक देखी गई है। जो थोड़े संपन्न लोग हैं, वे तो अपने बच्चों को बाहर के महंगे स्कूल-कॉलेजों में भेज कर उन्हें पढ़ा-लिखा लेते हैं, पर आर्थिक रूप से कमजोर वर्गों के सामने कोई विकल्प नहीं होता। इसलिए शिक्षा और नौकरियों में दस फीसद का आरक्षण उनके लिए बड़ा सहारा साबित होगा।

कश्मीर में चरमपंथी और अलगाववादी संगठनों की गतिविधियों, उनकी युवाओं को बरगलाने की कोशिशों पर नकेल कसना इसलिए भी मुश्किल बना रहता है कि इसमें स्थानीय लोगों का अपेक्षित सहयोग नहीं मिल पाता। उनके भीतर यह धारणा दृढ़ कर दी गई है कि केंद्र सरकार उनकी सुविधाओं, उनकी जरूरतों का ध्यान नहीं रखती। इस तरह केंद्र सरकार और कश्मीरी अवाम के बीच संवाद का तंतु भी काफी कमजोर होता गया है। शिक्षा और रोजगार उनकी दो बड़ी बुनियादी जरूरतें हैं। इस दिशा में पहल करके सरकार ने कश्मीरी अवाम की शिकायतों को दूर करने का प्रयास किया है। घाटी में आर्थिक रूप से कमजोर वर्गों की तादाद बड़ी है। उनके बच्चों को ठीक से शिक्षा नहीं मिल पाती। रोजगार के अवसर भी बहुत कम हैं। इसके चलते वे पारंपरिक रोजगार जैसे फलों, सूखे मेवे की खेती, दस्तकारी, सैलानियों को पहाड़ों पर ले जाने के लिए टट्टू हांकने वगैरह में लग जाते हैं। फिर वहां के अलगाववादी संगठन, कुछ कट्टरपंथी नेता और स्थानीय राजनीतिक दल उनके दिमाग में यह बात भरने में कामयाब हो जाते हैं कि उनकी बदहाली की वजह केंद्र की नीतियां हैं, तो वे आक्रोश से भर उठते हैं। ऐसे लोगों को दस फीसद आरक्षण से उम्मीद की एक लौ नजर आएगी।

कश्मीर में सरकारी नौकरियों के प्रति ललक किस हद तक है, इसका अंदाजा इस बात से लगाया जा सकता है कि आतंकी संगठनों की मनाही के बावजूद वहां के युवा सेना और पुलिस में भर्ती होते रहे हैं। इसकी प्रतिक्रिया में आतंकवादी कई युवाओं को अपनी गोली का निशाना भी बना चुके हैं। इसलिए गरीब परिवारों के युवाओं को अगर दस फीसद आरक्षण से नौकरी मिलने की उम्मीद जगी है, तो उनका जोश और बढेगा। इस तरह स्थानीय लोगों का मन बदलने की भी उम्मीद बनेगी। सरकार ने कश्मीर घाटी की तरफ विशेष रूप से ध्यान केंद्रित किया है, तो यह अपेक्षा भी स्वाभाविक रूप से की जाती है कि वह वहां शिक्षा संबंधी बेहतर सुविधाएं जुटाने पर जोर देगी। अभी खासकर उच्च शिक्षा के क्षेत्र में सुविधाएं अच्छी नहीं हैं, जिसके चलते बहुत सारे युवाओं को दूसरे राज्यों का रुख करना पड़ता है। इसी तरह रोजगार के नए अवसर पैदा करने के लिए नई विकास परियोजनाएं भी तैयार करनी चाहिए।

उत्पीड़न और हताशा

भारत में कॉफी पीने की दुकानों की सबसे बड़ी शृंखला 'सीसीडी' यानी 'कैफे कॉफी डे' के संस्थापक वीजी सिद्धार्थ की आत्महत्या की घटना केवल हताशा में हार गए एक व्यक्ति के अंत की खबर नहीं है। इससे यह अंदाजा लगाया जा सकता है कि बाजार में अपने कारोबार को टिकाए रखने के लिए एक कारोबारी को कैसे दबावों से गुजरना पड़ता है और किस तरह अब कुछ स्थितियों में व्यक्ति मुश्किलों का सामना करने के मामले में हार रहा है। गौरतलब है कि सोमवार को सिद्धार्थ मंगलुरु के पास रास्ते में गाड़ी रुकवा कर अपने ड्राइवर से नेत्रावती नदी पर एक पुल पर टहलने की बात कह कर पैदल निकले और लापता हो गए थे। व्यापक पैमाने पर तलाशी के बाद आखिरकार बुधवार को उनका शव बरामद हुआ। जाहिर है, इस कद के व्यक्ति की आत्महत्या की खबर ने सबको चौंकाया। खासकर कारोबार जगत स्तब्ध है। लेकिन उनके लिखे पत्र में जो ब्योरे सामने आए हैं, अगर वे सही पाए जाते हैं तो यह देश में नियम-कायदे लागू करने के बहाने चलने वाले तंत्र

और उसके संचालकों की कार्यशैली पर सवालिया निशान है। करीब तेईस साल पहले शुरू हुए सीसीडी ने काफी तेजी से अपना विस्तार किया और आज देश के लगभग ढाई सौ शहरों में उसके साढ़े सत्रह सौ से ज्यादा रेस्तरां हैं। भारत से बाहर कराची, दुबई, ऑस्ट्रिया और चेक गणतंत्र जैसे देशों में भी कंपनी ने अपना कारोबार जमाया है। फिलहाल लगभग बीस हजार कर्मचारियों के साथ सीसीडी को बाजार की अहम ताकत के रूप में देखा जाता है। मगर सवाल है कि इतने बड़े कारोबार के बावजूद इसके संस्थापक के सामने ऐसी क्या मजबूरी आ गई कि उसने खुदकुशी कर ली। खबरों के मुताबिक इतने बड़े नेटवर्क और व्यापक कारोबार के बावजूद सीसीडी पर फिलहाल करीब सात हजार करोड़ रुपए की देनदारी है, जिसे लौटाने के लिए उसे भारी जदोजहद करनी पड़ रही है। हालांकि सीसीडी ने बैंकों, म्युचुअल फंड और कुछ अन्य संस्थानों से कर्ज जुटाया था, लेकिन अब उसके सामने पैदा किए गए दबाव के तहत उसे अपने शेयर भी बेचने की मजबूरी आ गई थी। ऐसे में कहीं से मदद या राहत तो नहीं ही मिली, उलटे जैसा कि उन्होंने अपनी चिट्ठी में लिखा, आयकर विभाग के अधिकारियों का व्यवहार भी उत्पीडन वाला था। हालांकि आयकर विभाग ने सिर्फ कानुनी प्रावधानों के तहत कार्रवाई की बात कही है।

इस हालत में सिद्धार्थ की मनःस्थिति क्या होगी, इसका अंदाजा लगाया जा सकता है। उनकी आत्महत्या के बाद इस बात पर भी बहस हो रही है कि कर्ज वसूलने के नाम पर आयकर विभाग की ओर से किसी कारोबारी का ऐसा उत्पीड़न कितना सही है कि उसके सामने खुदकुशी की नौबत आ जाए! कुछ लोग इसे 'टैक्स आतंक' के रूप में देख रहे हैं, लेकिन पिछले कुछ सालों के दौरान कई बड़े कारोबारियों के कर्ज चुकाए बिना विदेश भाग जाने की खबरें आई थीं, उसके मद्देनजर आयकर विभाग की ओर से कुछ सख्ती की गई हो सकती है। फिर भी बड़ी तादाद में लिए गए कर्ज और उसकी वसूली के मामले में यह विकल्प अफसोसजनक है कि अगर किसी को सुविधा मिल जाए तो वह विदेश भाग जाए और किसी के लिए यह संभव न हो तो उसे आत्महत्या करनी पड़े। इसके बावजूद जिस दौर में सरकार उद्यमियों के संरक्षण के दावे कर रही है, उसमें ऐसी घटनाएं कारोबार जगत में एक नकारात्मक स्थिति ही पैदा करेंगी।

कल्पमधा

हमारा गौरव कभी न गिरने में नहीं, बल्कि गिरने पर हर बार उठने में है। -कन्फ्यूशियस

अफगान वार्ता और कूटनीति

संजीव पांडेय

अफगानिस्तान के दक्षिणी और पूर्वी राज्यों के ग्रामीण इलाके तालिबान के कब्जे में हैं। इन राज्यों में अफगान प्रशासन शहरों तक ही सीमित है। इसी मजबूरी में अमेरिका ने तालिबान से शांति वार्ता शुरू की। तालिबान को शांति वार्ता की मेज पर लाने के लिए रूस और चीन पहले से ही सक्रिय थे। लेकिन पाकिस्तान को शांति वार्ता में भूमिका देना काफी जरूरी है, क्योंकि अफगान तालिबान के ज्यादातर कमांडर लंबे समय से पाकिस्तान में ही बैठे रहे हैं।

किस्तान के प्रधानमंत्री इमरान खान के अमेरिका वीरे के दौरान यह स्वीकारोक्ति जरूर महत्त्वपूर्ण थी कि आज भी उनके मुल्क में तीस से चालीस हजार आतंकी मौजूद हैं। लेकिन इससे भी ज्यादा बड़ी बात यह है कि पाकिस्तान को अफगान शांति वार्ता में अहम भूमिका मिल चुकी है। अब इसके बाद पाकिस्तान फिर दक्षिण एशिया की क्षेत्रीय कुटनीति में खास मुकाम हासिल कर सकता है। दरअसल, पाकिस्तान ने अपने पुराने तौर-तरीके अपनाते हुए अमेरिकी दौरे में आर्थिक मदद हासिल करने की कोशिश की। इस दौरे के बाद खबर आई कि अमेरिका पाकिस्तान को 1.3 अरब डॉलर की सुरक्षा सहयोग राशि जारी कर सकता है। पिछले साल टुंप प्रशासन ने पाकिस्तान को मिलने वाली इस सहयोग राशि पर रोक लगा दी थी। दरअसल, इमरान खान के अमेरिका दौरे के पहले ही पाकिस्तानी मीडिया में सवाल उठ रहे थे कि अफगान शांति वार्ता को सफल करने के एवज में पाकिस्तान को अमेरिका

क्या देगा? पाकिस्तान लगातार कहता रहा है कि अफगान युद्ध के कारण पाकिस्तान को एक सौ तेईस अरब डालर का आर्थिक नुकसान हुआ, जबिक अफगान युद्ध पाकिस्तान का नहीं था। इमरान खान अब कह रहे हैं कि वे जल्द ही तालिबान के नेताओं से मुलाकात कर शांति प्रक्रिया को तेज करेंगे। फिलहाल पाकिस्तान अफगान शांति वार्ता में अपनी स्थिति मजबूत करता नजर आ रहा है। पाकिस्तानी भूगोल ने चीन और अमेरिका दोनों को मजबूर किया कि वे अफगान शांति वार्ता में पाकिस्तान की अहम भूमिका स्वीकार करें।

बेशक पाकिस्तान की आर्थिक हालत काफी खराब है। आज पाकिस्तान सरकार को देश चलाने के लिए दूसरों के सामने हाथ फैलाने पड़ रहे हैं। लेकिन एक सच्चाई यह भी है कि अमेरिका पाकिस्तान को इतनी आसानी से छोड़ नहीं सकता। इसके कई कारण हैं। पाकिस्तान का भगोल ही ऐसा है जो उसकी अहमियत कम नहीं होने देता। पाकिस्तान का एक पड़ोसी चीन

है, तो दूसरा पड़ोसी ईरान है। दोनों देशों के साथ अमेरिका के संबंध लंबे समय से खराब रहे हैं। वैसे में न चाह कर भी पाकिस्तान से नजदीकी बनाए रखना अमेरिका की मजबूरी है। अब अफगान शांति वार्ता के प्रयासों को ही लें। पाकिस्तान के सहयोग के बिना शांति वार्ता सफल नहीं हो सकती। पाकिस्तान और अफगानिस्तान पड़ोसी मुल्क हैं, जिनकी आपसी सीमाएं ढाई हजार किलोमीटर से ज्यादा लंबी हैं। सीमा के दोनों तरफ पश्तून आबादी है, जिनकी आपस में रिश्तेदारियां हैं। तालिबान भी मूल रूप से पश्तूनों का ही आतंकी संगठन है। अफगान तालिबान के पाकिस्तान के साथ लंबे समय से अच्छे

संबंध रहे हैं। वैसे में शांति वार्ता में पाकिस्तान की भूमिका की अहम हो जाती है। दसरी तरफ अमेरिका किसी भी कीमत पर

अफगानिस्तान से बाहर निकलना चाहता है। उसे अफगानिस्तान में हर साल अडतालीस अरब डॉलर फुंकने पड़ रहे हैं। अठारह साल बीत गए, लेकिन नाटो सैनिक तालिबान को कमजोर नहीं कर पाए। अफगानिस्तान में अमेरिका के सहयोग से हामिद करजई और अशरफ गनी की सरकार बनी। दोनों को नाटो सेना का सहयोग मिला। फिर भी तालिबान आज लगभग आधे अफगानिस्तान में मजबूत है। अफगानिस्तान के दक्षिणी और पूर्वी राज्यों के ग्रामीण इलाके तालिबान के कब्जे में हैं। इन राज्यों में अफगान प्रशासन शहरों तक सीमित है। इसी मजबूरी में अमेरिका ने तालिबान से शांति वार्ता शुरू की। तालिबान को शांति वार्ता की मेज पर लाने के लिए रूस और चीन पहले से ही सिक्रय थे। लेकिन पाकिस्तान को शांति वार्ता में भूमिका देना काफी जरूरी है, क्योंकि अफगान तालिबान के ज्यादातर कमांडर लंबे समय से पाकिस्तान में ही बैठे रहे हैं। किसी जमाने में यही तालिबान कमांडर सोवियत सेना के खिलाफ लड़ने वाले मुजाहिदीन थे। अमेरिकी खुफिया एजेंसी सीआइए के सहयोग से इन तालिबान कमांडरों को पाकिस्तान के खैबर पख्तुनखवा के अकोरा खटक में स्थित जामिया हक्कानियां मदरसे में सैन्य प्रशिक्षण दिया गया था।

पाकिस्तान को लेकर ट्रंप प्रशासन की नरमी का एक कारण ईरान भी है। इस कारण अमेरिका पाकिस्तान को नजरअंदाज नहीं कर सकता। पिछले साल जनवरी में ट्रंप ने पाकिस्तान से भारी नाराजगी जाहिर करते हुए कहा था कि अमेरिका ने पाकिस्तान को आतंकवाद से लड़ने के लिए पंद्रह साल में तैंतीस अरब डालर दिए। लेकिन पाकिस्तान ने आतंकवाद के



खिलाफ कोई कदम नहीं उठाया और अमेरिका को धोखा दिया। ट्रंप के ब्यान से एकबारगी लगने लगा था कि पाकिस्तान और अमेरिका के संबंध काफी खराब हो गए हैं। लेकिन दिसंबर 2018 आते-आते ट्रंप का रवैया फिर बदलने लगा। ट्रंप ने पाकिस्तान के प्रति नरम रुख अपनाया, क्योंकि अब अफगान शांति वार्ता में पाकिस्तान की अहम भूमिका आने वाली थी।

तालिबान कमांडरों को ईमानदारी से बातचीत की मेज पर लाने के लिए पाकिस्तान के प्रयास जरूरी थे। ईरान और अफगानिस्तान के बीच नौ सौ इक्कीस किलोमीटर लंबी सीमा है। यही कारण है कि ईरान का अफगानिस्तान में हस्तक्षेप अस्सी के दशक से रहा है। तालिबान के प्रभाव वाले अफगान राज्य हेरात और कंधार की सीमा ईरान से मिलती है। ईरान यहां लंबे समय से घुसपैठ करता रहा है। वहीं अफगानिस्तान के उत्तरी राज्यों में जहां शिया हजारा है, वहां भी ईरान की घुसपैठ है। अपने शासनकाल में तालिबान ताजिक और उज्बेक कमांडरों को मदद करता रहा। लेकिन अब स्थिति बदल गई है। अब तालिबान कमांडर भी ईरान के नजदीक है। ईरान ने उनकी आर्थिक मदद की है। यही नहीं, तालिबान कमांडरों के आर्थिक हित भी ईरान में हैं। ईरान उन्हें पैसा और हथियार दोनों देता है, यह साबित हो चुका है। अमेरिका इससे खासा परेशान रहा है।

ईरान और अफगान तालिबान की सांठगांठ का खुलासा तब हुआ जब मई 2016 में तालिबान का मुखिया मुल्ला अख्तर मंसूर ईरान से लौटते समय अमेरिकी ड्रोन हमले में मारा गया था। पिछले तीन-चार सालों में अफगान सीमा के अंदर तालिबान के हमलों में भी ईरानी सक्रियता साफ दिखी। बदली परिस्थितियों में ्ट्रंप प्रशासन की मजबूरी है कि पाकिस्तान को अफगान शाति वार्ता में सिक्रय भूमिका निभाने को कहे।

अफगान शांति वार्ता के कई दौर पुरे हो चुके हैं। दावे हो रहे हैं कि जल्द ही शांति समझौता हो जाएगा। हालांकि शांति वार्ता के दौरान भी अफगानिस्तान में तालिबान के हमले कम नहीं हुए हैं। लेकिन दिलचस्प बात यह है कि इस शांति वार्ता में चीन, पाकिस्तान, अमेरिका और रूस की सिक्रय भूमिका है, लेकिन शांति वार्ता में भारत कहीं नजर नहीं आ रहा है। हाल में शांति वार्ता में शामिल तालिबान कमांडर मुल्ला अब्दुल गनी बरादर ने चीन का दौरा किया था। शांति वार्ता के कुछ दौर दोहा में भी हुए हैं। लेकिन शांति वार्ता से भारत फिलहाल दूर है। हालांकि भारत का रुख स्पष्ट है। भारत अफगान नेतृत्व में होने वाली शांति वार्ता को स्वीकार करेगा।

भारत और पाकिस्तान के बीच खराब संबंधों का एक मुख्य कारण अफगानिस्तान भी रहा है। पाकिस्तान बनने के बाद ही अफगानिस्तान को लेकर भारत और पाकिस्तान के बीच तनाव शुरू हो गया था। बताया जाता है कि कश्मीर में पाकिस्तान के छद्म युद्ध का एक बड़ा कारण अफगानिस्तान भी है। अफगानिस्तान ने पाकिस्तान और अफगानिस्तान को विभाजित करने वाली डूरंड लाइन को नहीं माना। अफगानिस्तान ने पाकिस्तान के पश्तून आबादी वाले इलाकों को अपना हिस्सा बताया। अफगानिस्तान का एक बड़ा तबका आज भी पश्तून आबादी वाले इलाकों पर अपनी दावेदारी करता है। अफगान सीमा पर तनाव के बीच पाकिस्तान को भय बना रहता है कि भारत अफगानिस्तान को हमेशा मदद करता रहा है। दिलचस्प बात है कि आज भी भारत की अफगानिस्तान में अहम भमिका है।

बाजार की चमक

कमल कुमार

π रे घर के पास सिर्फ चौराहा पार करने में पंद्रह-बीस मिनट लग जाते हैं। कारण और भी होंगे, लेकिन इसका मुख्य कारण है मॉल। मॉल में जाना अलग-अलग लोगों के लिए अलग-अलग कारणों से जरूरी है। जो लोग दिल्ली के बाहर से आते हैं, उन्हें तो मॉल जाना ही है। फिर युवा पीढ़ी का तो वह ठिकाना है। अच्छे परिवारों की पढ़ी-लिखी पर गृहस्थ महिलाएं हैं। उन्हें भी जाना है। किटी पार्टी, खरीदारी, फिल्में देखना और समय गुजारना। मुझे निजी कारणों से मॉल जाना अच्छा नहीं लगता। पर बच्चों के साथ चली जाती हूं। वहां बैठ कर आते-जाते, घूमते-फिरते लोगों की भाव-भंगिमाएं देखती हूं।

जो वहां जाते हैं, वे खरीदारी भी करते हैं। थोड़ा आश्चर्य होता है। वहां की दुकानों में ब्रांडिंग के कारण सामानों की कीमतें काफी ज्यादा होती हैं। कुछ दिन पहले मॉल गई तो बेटी ने एक लंबी स्कर्ट पहन रखी थी। दो लड़िकयों ने उसकी तरफ देखा, कुछ बातें कीं और रुक गईं। एक ने पृछा लिया- 'आपने यह स्कर्ट 'जारा' से ली है? वहां तो छह हजार रुपए का है!' बेटी ने हंसते हुए कहा- 'नहीं, सरोजिनी नगर से ली

है चार सौ रुपए में।' उसने उन्हें दुकान का पता भी बताया था। दरअसल, बेटी को भी मॉल से खरीदारी में बहत दिलचस्पी नहीं है। सरोजिनी नगर को वह चीन में शंघाई का 'फेम मार्केट' मानती है, जहां मशहर ब्रांड के कपड़े भी सही कीमत पर उपलब्ध हैं।

खैर, मुझे वहां लोगों के चेहरे पढ़ना बहुत अच्छा लगता है। पहली बार मॉल में आए लोगों के भाव हैरानी मिश्रित ख़ुशी के होते हैं। खरीदारी या शॉपिंग

करने वालों की एक अलग दुनिया है। बड़े-बड़े बैग लिए सामान खरीद कर जाते हुए

लोगों के चेहरों पर उल्लास होता है। पर क्या वे जो सामान खरीदते हैं, उसकी जरूरत होती हैं उन्हें? आज यह सवाल ही नहीं रहा। वहां खरीदारी जरूरत के लिए नहीं की जाती। मुझे कई महिलाओं ने बताया कि कई बार तो याद भी नहीं रहता कि जो पिछली बार खरीदा था, वह क्या था। घर लाया जाता है, आलमारी में पड़ा रहता है और लाकर भूल भी जाते हैं। यह नई संस्कृति है। 'बाई ऐंड थ्रो' यानी खरीदो, पहनो और फेंको। पहले के 'यूज एंड थ्रो' यानी इस्तेमाल करो और फेंको के आगे की। आज की। एक बार इस पर एक बहस हुई थी जिसका निष्कर्ष था कि शॉपिंग एक बहुत बड़ा कैथारिसस होता है। इतना ही नहीं, अवसाद से भी मुक्त करता है। अवसाद में 'शॉपिंग इज ए गुड रमैडी टुकम आऊट ऑफ इट!' यह एक कोटेशन थी जो मैंने पढी भी थी। आज जब घरों में एकल परिवारों में संवाद की स्थिति टूट रही है। साथ बैठने, खाने-पीने, खुशी मनाने के मौके कम होते जा रहे हैं तो सबकी अपनी अलग-अलग दुनिया बन गई है। इस दुनिया में अकेलापन है, अवसाद है, निराशा का अंधेरा है। इसका निराकरण सब अपनी तरह से करते हैं। इसलिए शॉपिंग करना, मॉल जाना उन्हें

दुनिया मेरे आगे कुछ समय के लिए एक दूसरी जगमगाती दुनिया में ले आता है और फिर वे बार-बार यहां आना चाहते हैं। शायद अपने भीतर के अंधेरे से निपटने के लिए!

मनोवैज्ञानिक दृष्टि से देखती हुं तो इनके चेहरे पर हीनभाव या श्रेष्ठभाव होते हैं। यहां आना, अपने को दूसरों से श्रेष्ठ समझना है। उससे मन में एक उत्साह जगता है। हीनभाव से मुक्त होने के लिए, अपने को कमतर न माने जाने के लिए, उन्हें भी वही करना होता है जो दूसरे सब कर रहे हैं और 'ऊंचे' दिख रहे हैं। मुझे वहां एक कप कॉफी के दो सौ रुपए देना भी विचित्र लगता है। मेरी एक मित्र ने कहा था कि तुम कंजुस हो। जबिक कंजुस वह होता है जो खुद को जरूरतों से वंचित रखता है। पर जो दूसरों के पीछे लगता है, वही करता है जो दूसरे कर रहे हैं, बिना जाने-समझे कि उसे खुद को क्या चाहिए और क्यों चाहिए, ऐसे लोग एक तरह से भ्रमित होते हैं।

युवा पीढ़ी के लिए मॉल में आना, घूमना, समय गुजारना एक नशा है। वे नहीं आते हैं तो उन्हें लगता है कि कुछ बहुत जरूरी छूट गया है। यह मॉल-संस्कृति है। पांच सितारा साज-सज्जा में बड़ी-बड़ी ब्रांडेड दुकानें हैं, अंतररष्ट्रीय शृंखला के कॉफी हाऊस हैं, रेस्तरां और सुपर स्टोर। गृहिणियां यहां सुपर स्टोर से घर की खरीददारी करती हैं। घूमती हैं, कॉफी पीती हैं और खुश होकर लौट आती हैं। सबके लिए कुछ न कुछ तो है ही। मैंने इधर-उधर घूम कर जाना था कि मॉल के बाहर भी कुछ रेस्तरां हैं जहां आसानी से बैठ कर सामान्य दाम पर चाय-नाश्ता किया जा सकता है। वहां भी भीड़ थी। उस भीड़ में मुझे छात्र-छात्राएं अधिक दीख रहे थे। वहां से थोड़ी दूर पर एक खुले बाजार में कपड़े, जूते-चप्पलें, घरेलू वस्तुएं और साज-सज्जा के लिए कॉस्मेटिक्स भी। वहां भी भीड़ थी।

किसी विशेष यानी कुछ मशहूर त्योहारों के दिन भी ऐसी भीड़ मौजूद होती है। आज के जीवन की यह नई शैली है। यहां अच्छे-बुरे का प्रश्न नहीं है। बदले समय में जीवन जीने का एक अपना तरीका है।

कानून के बावजूद

त्राक-ए-बिद्दत यानी तीन तलाक की कुप्रथा 🚺 को वर्षों पहले खत्म कर देना चाहिए था। विश्व के अनेक मुसलिम देश तीन तलाक पर पाबंदी लगा चुके हैं, यहां तक कि पाकिस्तान भी। लेकिन हमारे देश के कुछ राजनीतिक दलों ने अपने सियासी स्वार्थों और वोट बैंक के चलते इसे रोकने के लिए कानून नहीं बनाया। नतीजतन, लंबे अरसे से चली आ रही यह कुप्रथा मजहब का हिस्सा जैसी बना दी गई थी, जिसे सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने असंवैधानिक करार देकर और सरकार ने कानून बना कर ऐतिहासिक कार्य किया है। इसे देर आयद दुरुस्त आयद ही कहा जाएगा। इस कुप्रथा के कारण मुसलिम महिलाएं निकाह के बाद भी खुद को असुरक्षित महसूस करती रहीं। मामूली बातों पर शौहर के तीन बार तलाक कह देने भर से उनका और उनके बच्चों का भविष्य अंधकारमय हो जाता था।

यह बहुत अचरज की बात है कि इस कुप्रथा को समाप्त करने में भी कई विपक्षी दल सरकार के साथ खड़े नजर नहीं आए और सरकार का विरोध करते रहे जबिक तीन तलाक कानून को राजनीतिक दृष्टि से नहीं, बल्कि समाज सुधार की दृष्टि से देखा जाना चाहिए था। साथ ही, 1939 के मुसलिम विवाह विच्छेद कानून के समय की तरह ही पर्सनल लॉ बोर्ड को आगे आकर तीन तलाक को खत्म करने के लिए खुद पहल करनी चाहिए थी, पर बोर्ड ने आश्चर्यजनक तथ्य देते हुए तीन तलाक को खुदा का कानून (मिल्ली तशख्खुस) करार दिया और इसमें संशोधन को सिरे से नकार दिया।

तीन तलाक वास्तव में संविधान के अनुच्छेद 14 और 25 का उल्लंघन है। कुरान के सिद्धांतों और हनीफी कानून के तहत भी इसे पाप माना गया है। कहा जाता है कि तीन तलाक इस्लाम-पूर्व होता है। अगर ऐसा होता तो इसकी जद में आए फिर मध्यप्रदेश में विधायक द्वारा सरकारी कर्मचारी 'तलाक केवल दो बार है' कह कर खत्म किया पैदा करने की चुनौती पेश करता। गया था पर इस कुरीति ने बाद में पुनर्जन्म ले लिया और समाज को जकड़ने का कार्य किया।

बहरहाल, तीन तलाक के खिलाफ कानून तो और सरकार ने बना दिया है, पर समाज में शिक्षा को बढ़ावा देकर, जागरूक करने और मुसलिम युवाओं को आगे आकर इस कुप्रथा को जड़ से समाप्त करने की जरूरत है। पाकिस्तान में तीन तलाक पर प्रतिबंध लगने के बावजूद आज भी वहां इस कुप्रथा से

अरब समाज में व्याप्त कुरीति थी, जिसे कुरान में लोगों का चुनाव भी नए आंकड़े और आयाम को भरे बाजार में क्रिकेट के बल्ले से पीटने का।

किसी वाहन द्वारा कोई दुर्घटना हो जाती है तो लोग उसके चालक को पीटना शुरू कर देते हैं। उसमें पहले उसकी पहचान तो नहीं की जाती कि वह किस धर्म, जाति, समुदाय या किस विचारधारा का है। भीड़ में लोगों की पहचान करना चुनौती भरा काम है। इसमें हिंसा में भागेदारी करने वालों की उपस्थिति अनचाही और आकस्मिक

घटना भी हो सकती है। अब इसे

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

निकाह तोड़े जा रहे हैं और कानून सिर्फ कोर्ट-कचहरी परिसर तक सिमट कर रह गया है। विकास बिश्नोई, हिसार, हरियाणा

हिंसा के पीछे

भीड़ की हिंसा ऐसी घटना है जिसका स्वरूप संगठनात्मक होता है और जिसकी पहचान एक आदमी के रूप में नहीं हो सकती है। कई बार इस अपराध को किसी विशेष संप्रदाय, समुदाय और उद्देश्य को केंद्र में रख कर परिभाषित करने की प्रवृत्ति विकसित होती रही है। आजकल हर घटना को राजनीतिक और धार्मिक रूप से देखने के नजरिए में इजाफा होता नजर आया है। अब यह जरूरी नहीं कि हर हिंसा के पीछे एक खास मकसद पैदा किया जाए या यह पूर्वनिर्धारित

किसी धर्म के नारों, किसी विशेष पंथ और समुदाय से जोड़ना एक सोची-समझी साजिश या प्रस्तुत करने का तरीका हो सकता है।

• गौरव मिश्रा, झांसी

कठघर मे

अब्राहम लिंकन ने कहा था कि लोकतंत्र एक ऐसी व्यवस्था है जहां जनता की, जनता द्वारा, जनता के लिए सरकार होती है। यहां 'जनता द्वारा' का मतलब है कि लोग अपने प्रतिनिधि चुनते हैं जो उनके हित के लिए काम करें। लेकिन देश में कुछ जनप्रतिनिधियों के कृत्य भारतीय लोकतंत्र को ही कठघरे में खड़ा कर देते हैं चाहे वह उन्नाव में विधायक द्वारा बलात्कार का मामला हो, गुजरात में विधायक द्वारा महिला को सारेआम पीटने का या

• आयुष जगन्नाथ मौर्य, दिल्ली

तब आर अब

प्रेमचंद की कहानियां भले ही पुरानी हो गई हों पर उनके पात्र हमारे समाज में आज भी मौजूद हैं। अब आप ही बताइए, क्या जो गरीबी होरी ने गोदान में देखी वह आज समाज से खत्म हो गई है? अंतर आया है तो बस यह कि होरी को अब बैंक खाता, शौचालय और गैस सिलेंडर मिल जाता है। पर क्या सच में मिलता है? नहीं, क्योंकि आज भी समाज में 'बाबू' लोग मौजूद हैं जो ऊपरी आय रूपी प्रसाद को ना कहना गुनाह समझते हैं! प्रेमचंद की कहानी 'नमक का दारोगा' याद आती है जिसमें अपने पिता की सिखाई हुई 'व्यावहारिक' बातों को नजरअंदाज करते हुए वंशीधर बिना कुछ सोचे लक्ष्मी पर अपार भरोसा रखने वाले पंडित आलोपिदीन से भिड जाते हैं। उस कहानी में दिखाया गया कि कैसे ईमानदारी का भूत आप पर सवार हो तो भले ही मुहल्ले वाले आपको नासमझ कहें, बाप आपके जैसा बेटा मिलने पर पश्चाताप करे, नौकरी से हाथ धोना पड़े पर आलोपिदीन जैसे लोग भी आपका लोहा मानेंगे और सारी दुश्मनी भुला कर आपको अपना बही-खाता संभालने को कह देंगे। पर अब जमाना बदल गया है।

अब अगर आपने आलोपिदीन जैसों पर सवाल उठाया तो वे आपको बर्बाद करके ही छोड़ेंगे। कैसे? अब आपके दफ्तर पर प्रवर्तन निदेशालय के छापे पड सकते हैं, आप पर देशद्रोह का आरोप लग सकता है और अगर आप पत्रकार हैं तो आपको सरकारी विज्ञापनों से वंचित रहना पड़ सकता है। निष्कर्ष यही निकलता है कि प्रेमचंद के जमाने में अगर वजूद की लड़ाई लड़ी जाती थी तो भी विपक्ष का आदर करते हुए। पर अब वह सब नजर नहीं आता।

• आदित्य झा, सीतामढ़ी, बिहार

नई दिल्ली

ड़क दुर्घटनाओं और हताहतों की संख्या के हिसाब से भारत दुनिया में पहले पायदान पर है. उपलब्ध आंकड़ों के अनुसार, 2015 में हुईं पांच लाख से अधिक दुर्घटनाओं में 1.46 लाख लोग मारे गये थे और घायलों की संख्या पांच लाख रही थी. साल 2006 से 2015 के बीच हताहतों की तादाद में 54 फीसदी की बढ़ोतरी हुई थी. इस अवधि में और इसके बाद देशभर में सड़क नेटवर्क का व्यापक विस्तार हुआ है तथा वाहनों की संख्या तेजी से बढ़ी है. ऐसे में सड़कों को सुरक्षित बनाने में मौजूदा वाहन अधिनियम के प्रावधान कमतर साबित हो रहे थे और उनमें बदलाव की जरूरत महसूस की जा रही थी. संसद के दोनों सदनों से मोटर वाहन संशोधन विधेयक के पारित होने से इस जरूरत के काफी हद तक पुरा होने की उम्मीद है. गंभीर रूप से घायलों को अगर पहले घंटे में उपचार मिले, तो जान बचने की संभावना बढ़ जाती है. संशोधन विधेयक में इस दौरान पीडित को कैशलेस उपचार देने का प्रावधान किया गया है. दुर्घटनाओं का एक बड़ा कारण यातायात नियमों का उल्लंघन और शराब पीकर गाड़ी

चूंकि हर दुर्घटना चालकों की गलती से नहीं होती है, इसलिए सड़कों की समुचित मरम्मत और दुर्घटना-प्रभावित जगहों को ठीक करना भी जरूरी है.

चलाना है. मौजूदा कानून में इस संबंध में दंड की व्यवस्था है, पर संशोधन में उन्हें कठोर बनाया गया है. इससे वाहन चालकों को अनुशासित करने में सहायता मिलेगी. चालक लाइसेंस की प्रक्रिया को भी चुस्त किया गया है. फर्जी लाइसेंस बनाने और दोषी चालकों द्वारा किसी अन्य राज्य में वाहन चलाने जैसी समस्याओं के समाधान के लिए राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर लाइसेंसधारकों का एक डेटाबेस बनाने का प्रस्ताव भी सराहनीय है. वाहन निर्माताओं द्वारा निर्धारित मानदंडों का

ठीक से पालन नहीं करने की वजह से भी दुर्घटनाएं होती हैं. इस कानून के लागू होने के बाद ऐसे वाहनों को बाजार से वापस लेने और खरीदारों का पैसा लौटाने या गड़बड़ी को ठीक करने का आदेश सरकार दे सकेगी. इसके साथ ही दुर्घटना के पीड़ितों के मुआवजे की रकम को भी बढ़ाया गया है तथा सड़कों का इस्तेमाल करनेवाले हर व्यक्ति के लिए बीमा का निर्धारण भी किया गया है. सिर्फ बेहतर कानून बनाकर हादसों पर अंकुश नहीं लगाया जा सकता है, क्योंकि हर दुर्घटना चालकों की गलती से नहीं होती है. सड़कों की समुचित मरम्मत और दुर्घटना-प्रभावित जगहों को ठीक करना जरूरी है. सड़क बनाने में इंजीनियरिंग की खामियों को भी जानकारों द्वारा लगातार रेखांकित किया जाता रहा है. सरकार ने इन पहलुओं का संज्ञान लिया है. सड़क यातायात एवं राजमार्ग मंत्री नितिन गडकरी के अनुसार, सरकार ने 786 खतरनाक जगहों को चिन्हित कर उन्हें ठीक करने के लिए 14.5 हजार करोड़ रुपये का आवंटन किया है. बेहतर निर्माण को सुनिश्चित करने के लिए खराब सड़कें बनानेवाली कंपनियों को दंडित करने का प्रावधान भी संशोधन विधेयक में रखा गया है. इससे भ्रष्टाचार और लापरवाही पर लगाम लगने की अपेक्षा है. उम्मीद है कि सड़कों को सुरक्षित करने के लिए इस विधेयक को ठीक से लागू किया जायेगा और सभी संबद्ध पक्ष इनका पालन करेंगे.



सदाचरण

अ पने समाज में संपूर्ण रीति से सत्यता का अडिग आधार बनाना चाहिए. राजनेता, धर्मनेता व अभिनेता जब सत्यतापूर्ण प्रदर्शन करने लगेंगे, तो व्यापार-व्यवसाय भी सत्यतापरक हो जायेंगे. यदि जीवन में सत्याचरण नहीं अपनायेंगे, तो परम सत्य परमात्मा से विमुख हो जायेंगे. माता-पिता सत्याचारी होंगे, तो संतति स्वतः उनका अनुसरण करती रहेगी. घर-ग्रहस्थ में सत्य की प्रतिष्ठा हो जाये, तो सारा संसार ही कल्याणमय क्रीड़ांगन बन जायेगा. परमात्मा की सत्य बृद्धि सतयुग में असत्य का नामोनिशान नहीं होगा. सारा संसार ही बसुधैव कुटुंबकम की भावनाओं से ओतप्रोत रहेगा. बेरोक-टोक के सभी लोग कहीं भी जा सकेंगे. असत्य के बढ़ते जाने से स्थितियां बिगड़ती जा रही हैं. दूसरे देशों के सभी नागरिकों को संदेह के दायरे से देखा जाता है. सत्य के बल से ही धरा की सर्वसंप्रदाएं सभी के लिए निर्वाध प्राप्त थी. सही को सदाचरण कहा जाता, तो जो कुछ भी गलत हो रहा दुराचरण ही कहलायेगा. सदाचार ही विश्व सुधार की कुंजी है. इससे विश्व हितकारी भावनाएं पनपेंगी. सतयुगी झाड़ दिखायी देने लगेंगे. कोई भी धर्म या समाज व्यसन और बुराइयों को तथा विलासिता को अच्छा नहीं मानता है. आज के समुन्नत कहलानेवाले राष्ट्र मलिन आचार-विचार-संस्कार को खुली छूट दे रखे हैं. व्यक्तिगत स्वतंत्रता का अर्थ बुराइयों के लिए कदापि छूट नहीं होनी चाहिए. सांप्रदायिकता ने तो संसार में दुराचरण की आंधियां उड़ा रखी है. विश्वव्यापी सदाचरण के रास्ते में सांप्रदायिक भ्रष्टता सबसे बड़ी बाधा है. अब मानव की चरित्र हीनताएं दूर कर उच्च सदाचरण ही स्थापना करना आवश्यक हो गया है. ज्ञान सागर शिव ही सर्वोच्च बोध कराकर मानवता को सत्याचार से समलंकृत कर सकते हैं. जब साधनों के साथ ही साथ साधना से भी समलंकृत होकर विश्व कल्याण के महान कार्य में जुट जाना चाहिए. सारे संसार में सत्य और सदाचरण की स्थापना का कार्य सरल नहीं है. सृष्टि को अलौकिक परिवार बनाना महान कार्य है. ब्रह्म कुमारी

कुछ अलग

ऊंच की नीच

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प्राप्त है. इतना ऊंचा स्थान तो खुद ऊंच और उसे हासिल करनेवाले ऊंचे को भी प्राप्त नहीं. कोई ऊंच-नीच होने पर नीच ही अपनी नीचता के बल पर उसे ऊंच में बदलता है. नीच की यह ऊंचाई

देख ऊंचा भी यहां नीच होने के लिए तरसता है. और क्यों न हो, ऊंचा जब अपनी ऊंचाई प्राप्त ही नीचों के बल पर करता हो. यही वजह है कि जिंदगी के सभी क्षेत्रों में ऊंचों ने कुछ नीच रखे हुए हैं, जो न केवल उनकी ऊंचाई बनाये रखने में योगदान करते हैं, बल्कि दूसरों को उस ऊंचाई पर जाने से रोकते भी हैं. क्योंकि ऊंचों की ऊंचाई खुद के ऊंचा होने पर उतनी निर्भर नहीं करती, जितना दूसरों को ऊंचा होने से रोकने पर निर्भर करती है. नीचों को इसमें महारत हासिल होती है.

जिंदगी में नीच को बड़ा ऊंचा स्थान

साहित्य में अपने नीचों के बल पर ऊंचाई पर पहुंचे कुछ ऊंचों ने अपनी नीचता को खासी कलात्मक ऊंचाई प्रदान की है. एक ने अपने एक नीच की मार्फत दूसरे को गरियाया, तो दूसरे ने अपने नीच से उस पर लांछन लगवा दिया. जब दोनों ने अपनी पूरी छीछालेदर करवा ली, तो दोनों सामने आकर 'मैंने ऐसा तो नहीं कहा था' का मंत्रोच्चारण करते हुए और मन ही मन यह समझते हुए कि कहा तो हमने बिलकुल ऐसा ही था, गले मिले और एक संयुक्त घोषणा-पत्र जारी कर कहा कि उन्होंने जो एक-दूसरे पर कीचड़ उछाला था, वह असल में एक-दूसरे पर न उछालकर किसी तीसरे पर उछाला था, जो उनकी ऊंचाई तक पहुंचने की कोशिश कर रहा था. कोई अचानक भाषा-विशेष में लिखने पर ग्लानि होने की घोषणा कर देता है और फिर समर्थकों और विरोधियों में इसे लेकर होनेवाली जूतम-पैजार का मजा लेता है.

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एसोसिएट प्रोफेसर, डीयू

वित्त आयोग द्वारा केंद्र

साथ ही साथ विभिन्न

और राज्यों के बीच और

राज्यों के बीच संसाधनों

का बंटवारा कोई आसान

काम नहीं होगा . आशा

करनी चाहिए कि एनके

सिंह की अध्यक्षता में

पद्रहवा वित्त आयोग

केंद्र और राज्यों के बीच

संतुलन बनाये रखते हुए

अपनी सिफारिशें देगा .

राजनीति में तो बिना नीचों के काम ही नहीं चलता. वहां हर दल के पास काफी

उच्च कोटि के नीच होते हैं, जिन्हें भिन्न-भिन्न नामों से पुकारा जाता है. यों तो उनके हाव-भाव से ही पता लग जाता है कि हो न हो, ये अपने दल के नीच हैं, लेकिन फिर भी उनमें से कुछ तो इतनी प्रसिद्धि प्राप्त कर लेते हैं कि उनके आते ही अंदाजा लग जाता है कि अब कोई नीचतापूर्ण बात होगी, जो उनके मुंह खोलते ही साबित भी हो जाता है.

साहित्य और राजनीति, दोनों स्थानों पर नीचों को अपनी बात कहने से मुकरने के लिए तैयार रहना होता है. इसके लिए वे चाहें, तो मीडिया पर दोषारोपण कर सकते हैं कि उसने उनकी बात को तोड़-मरोड़कर पेश किया, या चाहें तो उसका ठीकरा अपने अल्प भाषा-ज्ञान पर भी फोड़ सकते हैं. लेकिन, राजनीति में कभी-कभी इसके लिए उन्हें बलि का बकरा तक बनकर तात्कालिक नफे-नुकसान को देखते हुए दल की सदस्यता से निलंबन या बर्खास्तगी भी झेलनी पड़ सकती है, जबकि साहित्य में ऐसा नहीं होता. साहित्य में तो उलटे ऐसे नीच को पुरस्कृत कर काफी ऊंचा स्थान प्रदान करने की कोशिश तक की जाती है, जिसके बाद वह अपने स्वयं के कुछ नीच नियुक्त कर उनसे वैसी ही हरकतें शुरू करवा सकता है, जैसी वह खुद नीच रहते हुए करता रहा था.

कांग्रेस-पुनर्जीवन के कटु प्रश्न

ज्यसभा में सत्तारूढ़ गठबंधन के अल्पमत में होने के बावजूद सूचना का अधिकार कानून में संशोधन और तीन तलाक विरोधी विधेयकों का राज्यसभा में पारित हो जाना, भाजपा के रणनीतिकारों की विजय बतायी जा रही है. इसे गलत नहीं कहा जा सकता, लेकिन इसे विपक्ष, विशेष रूप से कांग्रेस की बड़ी पराजय के रूप में क्यों नहीं देखा जाना चाहिए? कांग्रेस के लिए 'पराजय' शब्द अब हलका लगने लगा है. जो हम देख रहे हैं, वह उस पार्टी के लड़ने और खड़े होने की अंतर्निहित क्षमता का पराभव है.

संपादकीय प्रभात

कांग्रेस चुनाव में हार गयी. यह कोई बड़ी या नयी बात नहीं है. चुनाव में छोटी-बड़ी पराजय लगी रहती है. क्या वह मानसिक रूप से भी पराजित हो गयी है? यह सवाल सिर्फ राज्यसभा में विवादास्पद विधेयकों के पारित हो जाने से ही नहीं उठ रहा. कर्नाटक में कांग्रेस-जद (एस) की सरकार गिराने का बड़ा कारण कांग्रेस विधायकों का खुद को निराश्रित अनुभव करना था. भाजपा विधायकों की खरीद-फरोख्त में लगी थी तो कांग्रेस नेतृत्व क्या कर रहा था? अपने विधायकों-कार्यकर्ताओं की बात सुनने-समझनेवाला नेतृत्व कहां था? केंद्रीय अध्यक्ष नहीं है तो राज्य इकाई के नेता क्या कर रहे थे? उन्होंने अपने निर्वाचित विधायकों को क्यों निकल जाने दिया, जबकि पार्टी वह सरकार में शामिल थी? हालात तो ऐसे थे कि उन्हें विधायकों के चले जाने की आहट तक नहीं सुनायी दी या वे सब जानते-बूझते भी असहाय थे.

सिर्फ कर्नाटक ही क्यों, देशभर में उसके विधायक, सांसद भाजपा की ओर भाग रहे हैं. राहुल गांधी की 'भूतपूर्व' अमेठी के जो संजय सिंह राज्यसभा से इस्तीफा देकर भाजपा में शामिल हुए हैं, उन्होंने साल-डेढ़ साल पहले भी पाला बदलने के संकेत दिये थे. तब कांग्रेस-नेतृत्व ने उन्हें असम से राज्यसभा में भेज कर मना लिया था. सही-गलत किसी भी कारण से आज खिन्न कांग्रेसियों

की सुननेवाला, उनको मनाने-समझानेवाला है कोई? भाजपा कुछ राज्यों में अल्पमत में होने के बावजुद सरकार को बचा ले जा रही है. लेकिन कांग्रेस अपनी बनी-बनायी सरकार भी गंवा दे रही है.

कांग्रेस की तुलना ग्रीक पुरा-कथाओं के उस चमत्कारिक पक्षी (फिनिक्स) से की जाती रही है, जो कहते हैं कि अपनी राख से पुनर्जीवित होकर फिर आसमान में ऊंची उड़ान भरने लगता है. ऐसी तुलना करने के कारण हैं. साठ-सत्तर के दशक के बाद जब-जब ऐसा लगा कि कांग्रेस अब समाप्तप्राय है या जब भी उसके अंत की भविष्यवाणियां की गयीं, वह सभी को चौंकाते हुए नया जीवन पाकर, और भी ताकतवर होकर राजनीतिक परिदृश्य पर छा गयी.

साल 2014 की सबसे बुरी पराजय के बाद भी कहा जा रहा था कि यह कांग्रेस के एक और पुनर्जीवन का अवसर है. साल 2018 में राजस्थान, मध्य प्रदेश और छत्तीसगढ़ के चुनावों में उसकी विजय के बाद यह संभावना बलवती होती दिखी. राहुल में भी नेतृत्व क्षमता की चमक दिख रही थी, किंतु 2019 के चुनाव ने उस संभावना को क्रूर ढंग से नकार दिया.

ऐसा नहीं कि चुनावों में विजय से ही किसी पार्टी के पुनर्जीवन की राह खुलती हो. देश के आम जन के सुख-दुख से जुड़ कर, उनकी आवाज बनने की कोशिश करते

१५वें वित्त आयोग के लिए चुनौतियां

नकारों की निगाहें इस बात पर टिकी हैं कि 15वां वित्त आयोग क्या सिफारिशें देगा. सरकारी खर्च के तमाम

अनुमान भी इन सिफारिशों पर निर्भर करेंगे. जब 2015

से 2020 के पांच वर्षों के लिए केंद्र और राज्यों के बीच वित्तीय संसाधनों

के बंटवारे को लेकर 14वें वित्त आयोग को लागू किया गया, तब वह

एक बड़ा बदलाव था. गौरतलब है कि 2015 से पहले केंद्र द्वारा लगाये

जानेवाले तमाम प्रत्यक्ष और अप्रत्यक्ष करों का मात्र 32 प्रतिशत ही

राज्यों को मिलता था, लेकिन 14वें वित्त आयोग की सिफारिशों के

अनुसार 2015 से 2020 के बीच राज्यों का हिस्सा बढ़ा कर 42

प्रतिशत कर दिया गया. साथ ही राज्यों द्वारा चलायी जा रही केंद्रीय

योजनाओं की संख्या में भी कमी कर दी गयी. दरअसल, राज्यों की यह

शिकायत थी कि केंद्र द्वारा चलायी जा रही योजनाओं का उन्हें कोई खास

फायदा नहीं पहुंचता और इसलिए उन्हें अपने राज्यों की आवश्यकता के

अनुसार इन योजनाओं को चलाने के लिए स्वतंत्रता होनी चाहिए, यानी

एक तरफ केंद्र द्वारा राज्यों को योजनाओं हेतु दी जानेवाली मद को कम

किया गया, वहीं दूसरी ओर राज्यों को केंद्रीय करों में ज्यादा हिस्सा मिलने

लगा और इस प्रकार राज्यों के पास पहले से ज्यादा विकल्प खुलने लगे.

लगा है, उस पर राज्यों का यह दबाव है कि उन्हें ज्यादा हिस्सा मिले.

हालांकि, कुछ अर्थशास्त्री राज्यों की करो में ज्यादा हिस्से की मांग को

यह कह कर सही मानते हैं कि केंद्र सरकार अपने राजनीतिक लाभ हेत्

इन कल्याणकारी कार्यक्रमों को चलाती है और इसका राजनीतिक लाभ

भी उठाती है. लेकिन इन अर्थशास्त्रियों का यह तर्क उचित नहीं लगता,

क्योंकि हमें समझना होगा कि केंद्र सरकार हो या राज्य सरकारें, सभी का

उद्देश्य जनता का कल्याण होता है. यदि केंद्र सरकार सुसंगत तरीके से

कार्यक्रम लेती है, तो उससे लोगों की हालत में सुधार होती है. हालांकि,

अधिकांशतः देखा गया है कि जब से राज्यों को केंद्र से ज्यादा हिस्सा

मिलना शुरू हुआ है, तब से उनके द्वारा वास्तविक सामाजिक कल्याण

योजनाएं घटी हैं और लोकलुभावन योजनाओं में खासी वृद्धि हुई है. कई

राज्य सरकारों ने लोकलुभावन कर्ज माफी आदि कई फैसले लिये हैं.

देखना होगा कि केंद्र सरकार द्वारा लगाये जा रहे उपकर और अधिभारों

रजिस्ट्रेशन शुल्क और उत्पाद शुल्क से आता रहा है. अभी राज्यों के

अधिकांश अप्रत्यक्ष कर जीएसटी (वस्तु सेवा कर) में विलीन हो गये

हैं. हालांकि, पिछले दो वर्षों में अधिकांश राज्यों को न केवल जीएसटी

गौरतलब है कि राज्यों की आमदनी का एक बड़ा हिस्सा बिक्री कर,

के माध्यम से कई लोककल्याणकारी योजनाओं में वृद्धि हुई है.

पंद्रहवां वित्त आयोग अपनी सिफारिशों को अंतिम रूप देने में



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कांग्रेस अपने जन्म से अब तक कई विभाजन देख चुकी है . कांग्रेस का मूल विचार बचा रहेगा और देश की विविधता की रक्षा के लिए लड़ने का संकल्प बना रहेगा, तो कांग्रेस किसी भी छोटे धड़े से पुनर्जीवित हो उटेगी.

राहुल ने इस्तीफा वापस लेने से पहले साफ कह दिया था कि कांग्रेस को नेहरू-गांधी परिवार से बाहर का ही कोई नेता चुनना होगा, लेकिन देखिए कि पूर्णकालिक अध्यक्ष के चयन तक के लिए किसे कार्यवाहक अध्यक्ष बनाया गया. कभी रहे होंगे

में पूर्व के करों से ज्यादा प्राप्ति हुई है, उनमें 14 प्रतिशत वार्षिक से ज्यादा

वृद्धि भी दर्ज हुई है, इसलिए जीएसटी के कारण होनेवाले नुकसान की

भरपाई अब केंद्र सरकार को करने की कोई जरूरत भी नहीं है. जीएसटी

एक कर सुधार के नाते लागू तो किया गया, लेकिन इसका वास्तविक

खामियाजा केंद्र सरकार को ही भुगतना पड़ा है. राजनीतिक दृष्टि से सभी

पक्षों को खुश रखने और जीएसटी को लोकप्रिय बनाने के लिए जीएसटी

की दर को कम रखा गया. इसका असर यह हुआ कि पूर्व में लगनेवाले

करों की तुलना में केंद्र सरकार का राजस्व बहुत नहीं बढ़ पाया, और

कई स्थितियों में कम भी हुआ. रोचक बात यह है कि राज्यों को जीएसटी

के लिए राजी करने के लिए केंद्र सरकार ने उन्हें यह गारंटी भी दी कि

की जिम्मेदारियों के अनुपात में उनके पास संसाधन कम है. गौरतलब

है कि पिछले कुछ समय से केंद्र सरकार अपने अंतर्गत चलनेवाले

सार्वजनिक उपक्रमों में विनिवेश कर संसाधन जुटा रही है, जबकि राज्यों

के पास एक ओर तो यह विकल्प नहीं है, दूसरी ओर राज्य सरकारें अपने

अंतर्गत चलनेवाले विद्युत बोर्डों के नुकसानों की भरपाई तो कर ही रही

हैं. एक प्रकार के पूंजीगत खर्चों को भी उन्हें वहन करना पड़ता है. ऐसे

में राज्य केंद्रीय करों में ज्यादा हिस्सा चाहते हैं. लेकिन हमें समझना होगा

कि यदि राज्य सरकारें वित्तीय बोझ से ग्रस्त हैं, तो केंद्र सरकार भी बहत

अच्छी वित्तीय स्थिति में नहीं है. केंद्र सरकार को अपने जरूरी खर्च

चलाने के लिए ही कठिनाई हो रही है और अब उस खर्च की भरपाई के

लिए विदेशों से भी ऋण लेने की योजना बना रही है. इसलिए राज्यों द्वारा

देती है. अन्य विवादास्पद शर्त के अतिरिक्त एक शर्त यह लगायी गयी

थी कि 15वां वित्त आयोग जनसंख्या गणना के 2011 के अनुमानों

का उपयोग करेगा. देखना होगा कि अभी तक 1971 की जनगणना के

आंकड़े ही इस्तेमाल किये जाते रहे हैं. ऐसे में दक्षिण के राज्य चिंतित हैं

कि अब नये आंकड़ों के अनुसार उत्तर भारत की जनसंख्या ज्यादा होने

के कारण उनका हिस्सा केंद्रीय करों में कम हो जायेगा, इसलिए वे शर्तों

में इस बदलाव को नहीं होने देना चाहते हैं. हमेशा की तरह इस बार भी

वित्त आयोग द्वारा केंद्र और राज्यों के बीच और साथ ही साथ विभिन्न

राज्यों के बीच संसाधनों का बंटवारा कोई आसान काम नहीं होगा. आशा

करनी चाहिए कि एनके सिंह की अध्यक्षता में पंद्रहवां वित्त आयोग केंद्र

और राज्यों के बीच संतुलन बनाये रखते हुए अपनी सिफारिशें देगा.

गौरतलब है कि केंद्र सरकार वित्त आयोग को संदर्भ के रूप में शर्तें

केंद्रीय करों में पहले से ज्यादा हिस्से की उम्मीद सही नहीं है.

जहां केंद्र के पास राजस्व जुटाने के बहुत से साधन है, वहीं राज्यों

यदि उनका राजस्व कम होगा, तो उसकी भरपाई केंद्र सरकार करेगी.

हुए अपने संगठन में प्राण फूंकने से कोई पार्टी अपनी धडकनें बेहतर लौटा ला सकती है. साल 2019 की करारी हार के बाद तो कांग्रेस से ऐसी अपेक्षा की ही जानी चाहिए थी. राहुल स्वयं इस जिम्मेदारी से भाग खड़े हुए तो नेतृत्व की नयी संभावनाएं बननी चाहिए थीं. बल्कि, नेहरू-गांधी वंश के बाहर से नया नेता चुनने का यह स्वर्णिम अवसर कांग्रेस को मिला है. 'वंशवाद' के उस दाग को धोने का इससे अच्छा मौका और क्या हो सकता है, जो कई दशक से विरोधी दलों के पास उसके खिलाफ सबसे

बड़ा हथियार रहा है. कांग्रेस इस अवसर का लाभ उठाने की बजाय हताश-निराश दिखायी दे रही है. अब तक नेता-चयन की कोई प्रक्रिया ही शुरू नहीं हुई है. कांग्रेस कार्यसमिति, जिसे यह दायित्व उठाना है, गुमसुम पड़ी है. अपने राजनीतिक भविष्य के लिए चिंतित कई कांग्रेसी भाजपा की ओर सहज ही खिंचे चले जा रहे हों, तो क्या आश्चर्य? ऐसे में भाजपा पर विधायकों-सांसदों की खरीद-फरोख्त का दोष क्या मढ़ना?

इस पार्टी का इतिहास बताता है कि टूटने-फूटने से कांग्रेस खत्म नहीं होगी. वह अपने जन्म से अब तक कई विभाजन देख चुकी है. कांग्रेस का मूल विचार बचा रहेगा और देश की विविधता की रक्षा के लिए लड़ने का संकल्प बना रहेगा, तो कांग्रेस किसी भी छोटे धड़े से पुनर्जीवित हो उठेगी. लेकिन, पार्टी में टूटन से डरकर ही उस परिवार की छत्र-छाया में पड़े-पड़े तो पार्टी बचने से रही.

मोतीलाल बोरा जनता से जुड़े तेज-तर्रार नेता, आज तो उनकी उम्र ने ही उन्हें राजनीति के नेपथ्य में धकेल रखा है. नब्बे वर्षीय बोरा को जनता की क्या कहें, कांग्रेस की नयी पीढी ही ठीक से नहीं जानती होगी. यदि उनके अंतरिम अध्यक्ष बनने की एकमात्र योग्यता 10-जनपथ के प्रति उनकी वफादारी है, तो पूछना होगा कि आखिर देश की यह सबसे पुरानी पार्टी नेहरू-गांधी परिवार के वर्चस्व से मुक्त कैसे हो पायेगी? या कि वह मुक्त होना भी चाहती है? यह विडंबना नहीं तो और क्या है कि जब भाजपा

75-पार के अपने दिग्गज नेताओं को भी किनारे कर रही है, तब कांग्रेस लाचार और बूढ़े नेताओं के सहारे नया अवतार तलाशने की कोशिश में है. अपने युवा, ऊर्जावान और सक्षम नेताओं की ओर वह देख ही नहीं रही. मध्य प्रदेश और राजस्थान में मुख्यमंत्री के चयन के समय भी युवा नेताओं की उपेक्षा की गयी, जबकि उस समय पार्टी का नेतृत्व पूरी तरह युवा राहुल के हाथों में था.

नेतृत्वहीनता की इस स्थिति में इधर कई कांग्रेसी कोनों से सुनायी देने लगा है कि प्रियंका गांधी को पार्टी अध्यक्ष बना दिया जाये, या कम से कम अंतरिम अध्यक्ष का कार्यभार ही उन्हें सौंप दिया जाये. जाहिर है कि पुराने कांग्रेसी नेता हों या कार्यकर्ता, वे इस परिवार के मोह या जादू से मुक्त हो नहीं पा रहे. युवा नेतृत्व के नाम पर राहुल के बाद प्रियंका ही याद आ रही हैं. यह आशंका भी पुराने और बुढ़े कांग्रेसी ही जता रहे हैं कि यदि परिवार से बाहर का कोई नेता अध्यक्ष बनता है, तो कांग्रेस टूट जायेगी.

आपके पत्र

बदनुमा दाग है उन्नाव की घटना

उन्नाव की घटना ने एक बार फिर महिलाओं पर अत्याचार की कहानी उजागर की है जो वाकई चिंताजनक है. फिल्मी अंदाज में पीड़िता व उसके परिजनों की मौत हो जाती है और इसे मात्र एक इत्तेफाक समझा जाता है. यह कोई पहली घटना नहीं है. इससे पहले भी बुलंदशहर, अलीगढ़, कठुआ आदि अनेक जगहों की घटनाओं ने मानवता को शर्मसार किया है. एक तरफ भारत विश्व गुरु बनने की ओर अग्रसर है, वहीं ऐसी घटनाएं विकास पर एक बदनुमा दाग लगाती हैं. ऐसी घटनाओं के मुख्य कारणों के बारे में हमें अवश्य सोचना होगा. सिर्फ कानूनों से ऐसी घटनाओं पर लगाम लगा पाना असंभव है. जरूरत है सोच बदलने की. नारी को उपभोग की वस्तु न समझकर, उसे एक इंसान समझना होगा. ऐसी घटनाओं के पीछे चाहे जो कोई भी हो, कड़ी सजा जरूर मिलनी चाहिए. तभी ऐसे कुकर्म करने की सोच रखने वालों को एक संदेश मिलेगा.

कन्हाई, रांची

बाढ़ की विभीषिका

बिहार, असम, उत्तराखंड, राजस्थान, मध्यप्रदेश आदि राज्यों में बाढ़ की विभीषिका को देखकर मन व्यथित है. पीड़ितों में मासूम बच्चे, असहाय बुजुर्ग, मरीज इत्यादि भी शामिल हैं. मासूमों के आंसू दिल में चुभन पैदा करती है. बुजुर्गों का चीत्कार सिहरन पैदा करती है. घर तो है पर रह नहीं सकते. नल तो है पर पानी पी नहीं सकते. पैसे तो हैं पर कुछ खरीद नहीं सकते. चूल्हे तो हैं पर खाना पका नहीं सकते. बिछावन तो है पर दुधमुंहे को सुला नहीं सकते. हर साल यही स्थिति पैदा होती है. बाढ़ की इस स्थिति में मानव असहाय व बेबस नजर आता है. सिस्टम भी फेल है. सरकार सिर्फ संवेदना प्रकट कर रही है. ऐसी परिस्थिति में मुझे महान वैज्ञानिक व पूर्व राष्ट्रपति कलाम साहब के 'नदी जोड़ो परियोजना` की याद आती है. काश! इस पर गंभीरता से विचार-विमर्श करके लागू किया जाता. तो शायद आज देशवासियों को यह दिन नहीं देखना पडता. निःसंदेह मुश्किल है पर नामुमकिन नहीं.

प्रिंस, सिकंदरा, जमुई

पर्यावरण सुरक्षा सब की जिम्मेदारी हाल के दिनों में देश की राजधानी दिल्ली समेत

कई शहरों में प्रदूषण के कारण स्वास्थ्य संबंधित बीमारियों ने अपना पांव पसारना शुरू कर दिया है. कई कम उम्र के युवा जो न ही धूम्रपान करते हैं, न ही मदिरापान, उन्हें भी फेफड़े संबंधित कैंसर से दो चार होना पड़ रहा है. पर्यावरण सिर्फ सरकार की जिम्मेदारी नहीं है. यह नागरिकों का भी कर्तव्य है कि हम पर्यावरण की सुरक्षा करें. अपने आने वाली पीढ़ी को एक सुरक्षित पृथ्वी हस्तानांतरित करें, जैसा हमारे पूर्वजों ने दिया था, नहीं तो आनेवाली पीढ़ियां ही नहीं, हम सब पर भी भयंकर खतरा आने वाला है, इससे इंकार नहीं किया जा सकता. सभी युवाओं से आग्रह है कि वे पर्यावरण सुरक्षा की ओर कदम बढ़ाएं, छोटी-छोटी कोशिशों से बड़ी कामयाबी मिल सकती है.

प्रमित मिश्रा, नेवरी विकास, रांची

देश दुनिया से

फिलिस्तीनी राष्ट्रपति को हटाने की कोशिश

ट्रंप प्रशासन के सत्ता संभालने के बाद फिलिस्तीनी राष्ट्रपति महमूद अब्बास पर इस्तीफा देने का दबाव बढ़ता जा रहा है. अब्बास के नेतृत्व में फिलिस्तीनी प्राधिकरण से बातचीत करने की स्पष्ट मंशा अब तक वाशिंगटन ने नहीं दिखायी है. हाल ही में बहरीन कार्यशाला, जहां वाशिंगटन के शांति योजना का आर्थिक पक्ष प्रस्तुत किया गया था, के बहिष्कार करने के अब्बास के निर्णय को व्हॉइट हाउस के वरिष्ठ सलाहकार जैरेड कुशनर ने उन्मादी और

अस्थिर कहा. इसी बीच, अनेक

इस्राइली अधिकारियों ने भी कहा



कि वे अब्बास के कार्यालय छोड़ने की उम्मीद कर रहे हैं. पूर्व विदेश मंत्री डोरे गोल्ड ने तो यह दावा भी कर दिया कि अगले छह महीनों के भीतर फिलिस्तीन खुद ही नेतृत्व में बदलाव की मांग करेगा. वर्तमान इस्राइली सरकार विभिन्न तरीकों से फिलिस्तीनी प्राधिकरण को अस्थिर करने की कोशिश कर रही है. लेकिन इस्राइली सुरक्षा प्रतिष्ठान के कई लोगों ने चेतावनी दी है कि इसके परिणाम गंभीर हो सकते हैं. विदित हो कि अब्बास का राष्ट्रपति कार्यकाल आधिकारिक तौर पर वर्ष 2009 में समाप्त हो गया था और फिलिस्तीन लिबरेशन ऑर्गनाइजेशन ने उनके कार्यकाल को उसी वर्ष अस्थायी रूप से बढ़ा अदनान अबु अमीर दिया था.





साभार: बीबीसी

पोस्ट करें : प्रभात खबर, 15 पी, इंडस्ट्रियल एरिया, कोकर, रांची 834001, **फैक्स करें** : **0651-2544006**, मेल करें: eletter@prabhatkhabar.in पर ई-मेल संक्षिप्त व हिंदी में हो. लिपि रोमन भी हो सकती है