

Optimise your LUP strategy

Don't let multi-layer laminate packaging choke up our drainage systems



AMBI PARAMESWARAN

KK Nair of Ahmedabad Management Association had a strong word of praise for Amul. He was pointing to the ₹10 pack of pouch milk that Amul has launched in Gujarat. He said that he saw a woman, a labourer working in a construction project near his house, buy a ₹10 pouch milk for her child while she was sipping the frugal ₹5 cup of tea in the morning, accompanied by the ₹5 pack of Parle G.

It may come as a surprise to readers

that of all the packaged products sold in the country an astonishing 35 per cent are sold in ₹5 packs and yet another 25 per cent are sold in ₹10 packs.

Small sized packs are not new to India or for that matter any developing country. While Indian shampoos have made the sachet packs famous around the world, HLL used to market Red Label tea in what was then a five paise pack. But due to steep cost increase (of packaging) they discontinued the practice. It was then left to Velvette and its "brother" Chik to sell shampoos in sachets. And this got global recognition as Prof C K Prahlad wrote about the "Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid". The concept has had its detractors who say that multinationals are just exploiting the gullibility of uninformed Indian buyers by offering unnecessary brands in pouch packs. While those arguments may have their merits, it is true that sachet packs have democratised consumption of products including those

little luxuries that are unaffordable to a bottom of the pyramid consumer.

These smaller sized packs now have a nice acronym: LUP. Or low unit packs.

If it started with tea and shampoo, today you can find almost anything in a pouch pack, often priced at ₹5 or ₹10. Let me try and present a few products. The first to go down the path were biscuits, chips, snacks, pickles, jams. Then came spice mixes, dairy whiteners, milk food drinks, fruit mixes, fairness creams, sanitary pads, diapers and chocolates.

Interestingly, while toilet soaps sell in smaller sized packs, their sales from LUPs are not to the extent of shampoos (80 per cent of volume sales of shampoos come from sachet packs). Hair oils and tooth pastes have not had a great run in sachet packs. And there could be a reason. Sachet packs seem to be more popular when the usage is a bit of a luxury. In the case of biscuits it is a simple case of use and throw. So I sus-

pect a cappuccino may have takers in a sachet form, but not the regular tea.

Marketers have a challenge in managing the cost of an LUP. There is the cost of packaging, which is often a significant share of the total cost in an LUP. Then there is the issue of distribution margin, transportation and damages. Some marketers have even tried tinkering around with the formulation of the product being sold in an LUP. What you get in a 200 ml bottle may actually be a superior version of the product being peddled to the bottom of the pyramid consumer buying a ₹5 LUP.

A few years ago, there was a move to bring LUPs under some control through legislation. Apparently this was triggered by a house help complaining to her employer who was a political heavyweight that there was some hanky-panky in the ₹5 packs. So the government got ready to issue a whip about standard package sizes. Marketers had managed to keep the prices of LUPs at ₹5 and ₹10 by simply adding or reducing the grammage they were packing into LUPs. If the government mandated that the smallest pack of biscuit must contain 25 gram of biscuit then the whole ₹5 and ₹10 LUP strategy will go out of the window.

Fortunately better sense dawned and the government decided to overlook the grammage of packs that sported an MRP of ₹1, ₹2, ₹5 or ₹10.

While many sectors are facing headwinds in 2019, I suspect one of the reasons the FMCG sector is a little better off is that it has been able to open up markets for a variety of products, some that could be termed luxury, by adopting the LUP strategy.

But a new threat looms ahead for LUPs.

As the consumption of these LUPs keep growing we are going to see more and more multilayer laminate packaging choking up our drainage systems, our rivers and more. India's record of recycling plastics is pretty impressive, we recycle almost 60 per cent of all the plastics we use. Multilayer laminates pose a newer challenge. They are difficult to recycle unlike PET or LDPE. As the sales of LUPs increase, companies will need to figure out better ways of packaging, better ways of collection and recycling etc. Then LUP strategy would have been fully optimised.

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CHINESE WHISPERS

Why that seat remains empty



While the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) moved quickly to get Om Birla (pictured) elected speaker of the Lok Sabha, the election of the deputy speaker

has been in limbo, with the first session of the new Lok Sabha having concluded. This has been unprecedented in recent years. The BJP was unable to convince any regional party to get an MP for the job. In the previous Lok Sabha, the AIADMK's M Thambi Durai was elected deputy speaker, only after 34 days of the Lok Sabha being convened. Opposition parties have wondered why the BJP, with 303 seats in the Lok Sabha, could not elect a deputy speaker of the House. The BJP had approached the Biju Janata Dal and YSR Congress Party (YSRCP), but their leadership refused. The BJD leadership did not want Bhartruhari Mahtab to occupy the post, while the YSRCP said it could not afford to be seen to be close to the BJP when the Narendra Modi government had not given special category status to Andhra Pradesh.

A course for priests

The Madhya Pradesh government is planning to establish an institute for temple management in Bhopal. This institute will teach priests "better ways" of managing temples and monasteries. The institute will have six branches including engineering, architecture, finance, and history. Priests will learn the history of temples, their functioning, the art of performing rituals, their social and religious responsibilities, and so on. The government is planning to spend ₹50 crore on the infrastructure of the proposed institute.

Two lunches



With the Parliament session having concluded, Raja Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla thought fit to address press

conferences and host journalists for lunch. As the invites were sent on Thursday morning, the Raja Sabha and Lok Sabha secretariats realised that journalists would find it difficult to attend lunches hosted by both Birla and Naidu. The initial invites were for Friday. The Lok Sabha secretariat soon sent a revised invite, shifting Birla's press conference and lunch to Saturday. With Birla being much junior to Naidu, the postponement of his press conference was considered proper. However, officials are now concerned if their boss would get sufficient coverage on a weekend. Naidu, famous for his hospitality and for serving sumptuous Andhra food, is hosting the lunch at his residence, while Birla's will be hosting it in Parliament House.

Interlinking of rivers: A dangerous idea

If completed, the project could endanger the integrity of India's monsoon cycle



WATER: REFORM OR PERISH

MIHIR SHAH

As the water crisis has deepened, so has our desperation and the extent we are prepared to go to violate the basic principles of both science and spirituality. Instead of learning from our errors, we are tempted to go even further in the same mistaken direction.

The proposal for interlinking of India's rivers (ILR) is based on a series of erroneous presumptions. It is claimed that since some parts of India chronically have floods and others have droughts, the solution is to divert water from surplus river basins to deficit ones, so that everyone can live happily ever after! Is it true that some areas in India have too much water? Try telling the north-eastern states that! Did you know that Sohra (previously known as Cherrapunjee), one of the highest rainfall hotspots on the planet, today suffers from an acute shortage of drinking water? The reason for that lies precisely in the old paradigm of water management, where we have failed to protect our catchment areas, destroyed springs and over-exploited groundwater.

Climate change has aggravated the situation. Today, my organisation, Samaj Pragati Sahayog, is working hard to find a solution to this vexed problem but I can tell you in Sohra, with only 70,000 people and as much as 8,000 mm of rain (10 times that of Delhi), we still have no water to spare for anyone else in the country! In the sub-continent, given the dependence on the monsoon, the periods when rivers have "surplus" water are generally synchronous. And a recent study finds a significant decrease in monsoon rainfall over water "surplus" river basins in India, thus raising questions about the basic presumptions of the ILR project.

It was a massive relief that the finance minister did not even make a mention of ILR in her Budget speech last month, hopefully an indicator of the clarity of thinking of the new Jal Shakti minister. But given that the idea keeps popping up from time to time, and how dangerous it is, we must examine it carefully. The Himalayan component of the ILR project plans to store water in dams on the Ganga and the Brahmaputra, in the supposedly surplus northern and eastern states and transfer that water via canals to the water-short central, southern and the western regions. The Peninsular component attempts something similar on peninsular rivers, again transferring supposedly surplus water from the east to the south and west. Overall, the attempt is to connect 44 rivers via 9,600 km of canals at an estimated cost of ₹11 trillion. This is only an approximation of the actual cost, which is likely to be much higher (given expected delays in implementation) and does not include costs of energy, farm and forest sub-



Rivers are not human creations like roads and power lines, to be twisted and turned at will. They are living ecosystems

mergence and human displacement. What is truly ironic is that, given the topography of India and the way the links are envisaged, they might totally bypass the core dryland areas of central and western India, which are located on elevations of 300 to 1,000 metres above mean sea level.

In recent years, scientists have begun to carefully examine the potential impact of such large interventions in India's river systems. A 2018 study of 29 of these 44 rivers published in the renowned international science journal Elementa finds that ILR will submerge 3,400 sqkm of land and displace approximately 700,000 people, other than the huge additional displacement that would be caused by the vast canal network. It will also decrease river flows for 24 of the 29 rivers (as much as 73 per cent), reducing freshwater deliveries to wetlands and estuaries. Waterways will be exposed to new contaminants, invasive species, and disease-causing agents and the already vulnerable deltas of the Indian subcon-

tinents will be further compromised due to reduced silt deposited by rivers in their deltas by as much as 87 per cent. Reduced stream-flows will likely affect delta salinity conditions and under a future rising sea-level scenario, the salinity of groundwater and river channels is expected to increase. Climate-related salinity incursion in rivers and deltas will be exacerbated by the decrease in river mouth discharge. Rare ecosystems and vital agricultural areas would become more vulnerable to storm surges, river flooding, and heightened salinity.

Already, reduced inflows due to natural and man-made processes have led to shoreline losses in the Krishna, Godavari and Mahanadi rivers. The ILR will only aggravate the problem. This scenario is very much in line with the past experience of the Colorado, Nile, Indus and Yellow (Huang He) river systems, where similar but actually smaller projects have been attempted in the past. As the Elementa study argues, India's ILR is "fifty to one-hundred

times the volume of the largest inter-basin water transfer system in the United States and will likely constitute the largest construction project in human history".

Finally, we must recognise that the ILR could profoundly impact the very integrity of India's monsoon system. The continuous flow of fresh river water into the sea is what helps maintain a low salinity layer of water with low density, in the upper layers of the Bay of Bengal. This is a reason for the maintenance of high sea-surface temperatures (greater than 28 degrees Celsius), which create low-pressure areas and intensify monsoon activity. Rainfall over much of the sub-continent is effectively controlled by this layer of low-salinity water. A disruption in this layer because of massive damming of rivers under the ILR and resultant reduction in fresh water flows into the sea, could have serious long-term consequences for climate and rainfall in the subcontinent, endangering the livelihoods of a vast population.

Rivers are not human creations like roads and power lines, to be twisted and turned at will. They are living ecosystems that have evolved over hundreds of thousands of years. In our arrogance we have already caused them much damage. It is time now for us to urgently come together to regenerate our river basin ecosystems, weaving our interventions into the delicate fabric of nature, with humility and wisdom, heeding both science and spirituality.

The writer is co-founder Samaj Pragati Sahayog. Every fortnight, he outlines multiple dimensions of long overdue reforms in the water sector

INSIGHT

Emergence & economy of coffee shops in India



ATANU BISWAS

The book *The Great Good Place* (1999) by Ray Oldenburg has the subtitle: *Cafés, Coffee Shops, Bookstores, Bars, Hair Salons and Other Hangouts at the Heart of a Community*. Certainly "home" was labelled as the "first place", and "work", be it office or college, as the case may be, was designated as the "second place", and these gathering locations were defined as "third places", a place between home and work where people spend their time as a community. While the French use the term "rendezvous" to describe this third realm, Oldenburg adopted the term "third place" to provide "a generic designation for a great variety of public places that host the regular, voluntary, informal, and happily anticipated gatherings of individuals beyond the realms of home and work". And cafés emerged as an ideal "third place" in the cities, and it is related to globalisation and the creation of urban public space.

The tremendous role of French cafés in the French Revolution or the London coffee houses during the Enlightenment are well-known. The same is true in other parts of the globe, even in India. For example, the Coffee House near Presidency College (now Presidency University) and Calcutta University in Kolkata has played a leading role in the cultural and intellectual flow of the city. There is an emergence of chains of coffee shops during the last few decades or so. Certainly, con-



The expansion of cafés beyond the metros will change social interactions by creating ample opportunities for "third places" in small towns as well

versation is still the main activity at these third places. While modern cafés of the Western world like Starbucks offer a comforting and neutral ground for social interaction, the emergence of coffee shops in a country like India with traditional values might have the additional impetus of finding "privacy in a public place".

People hang out there for relaxation, leisure, romance, negotiations, fixing marriage and divorce, business deals, real estate deals, interviews, counselling, studies, projects, and what not. And often along with laptop, tablets, books, study notes, and newspapers — all over a cup of excellent coffee.

The US coffee shop chain Starbucks owns and licenses about 30,000 locations in about 78 global markets. While Starbucks, under the nourishment of Coffee King Howard Schultz, has become the global giant in the business of café, many other countries have their own brand, customised according to their culture and social need. For example, while Second Cup is a very

special chain in Canada, they've another popular but less expensive chain, Tim Hortons, with 4,300 outlets globally. One of my Canadian friends told me that whenever he drives to the US, he stops by the last Tim Hortons' outlet before the US border and picks up a cup of coffee as he'll not get it before returning to the country.

Similarly, there is Costa Coffee in the UK, or the Doutor Coffee of Japan. In some cases they are primarily for coffee, and sometimes they are more of eateries accompanied by coffee — as in the case of Dunkin' Donuts. In the countries with a rich heritage of coffee, like Italy or Spain, excellent coffee shops feature in every street corner, even in small towns or rural areas. They are often local, and also enriched locally. In Singapore and Malaysia, there are plenty of kopitiams, the traditional coffee shops that serve as outlets for tea, Milo, and snacks as well. Many Malaysian towns and cities have their own brand, Georgetown White Coffee, a completely different

type of preparation of coffee powder from the seeds.

While coffee shop chains like Barista, Costa Coffee and Tata Starbucks are operative in the Indian market — even by localising their products, Café Coffee Day has undoubtedly emerged as the "Made in India" brand for cafés or "third places" for the Indian urban middle-class. In addition to offering excellent coffee, these cafés offer comfortable seats in air-conditioned environment, music, and clean toilets. Different studies have projected varied growth rate of Indian coffee shops market over the next four-five years — 6 per cent to 18 per cent CAGR — all due to the growing coffee culture among the youth, increasing urbanisation, rising disposable income levels and changing eating and drinking preferences. For example, according to a 2018 report by market researcher Euromonitor International, the Indian café chain market will reach ₹4,540 crore by 2023. Undoubtedly, a big chunk of the demand for coffee is emanating from the metros and big cities, and expanding, of course. Starting from a single café in 1996, CCD now has around 1,750 cafés, across 250 cities, having 20,000 employees, and a brand value of ₹8,000 crore.

In 2018, the US coffee shop market was \$45.4 billion, while the Indian market was less than 1 per cent of that. However, with the emerging economy of trillions of dollars, and tremendous social aspirations, the inclusion of tea and snacks — offering even local Indian items like *samosa* — and the expansion of cafés beyond the metros and Tier I cities can revolutionise the whole café retail business. Needless to say, it will change social interactions by creating ample opportunities for "third places" in small towns as well.

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LETTERS

A self-goal for Pak

This refers to "Pakistan expels Indian envoy, suspends trade" (August 8). Pakistan's mindless act of expelling the Indian High Commissioner Ajay Bisaria, not sending its high commissioner-designate to New Delhi apart from downgrading its diplomatic ties with India, including suspending bilateral trade, may eventually prove to be a self-goal. Further, its wild threats of taking this matter to the United Nations may not come to its immediate rescue as it has no locus standi to poke its nose in India's internal matters. While barking dogs seldom bite, we have to be extremely cautious about Pakistan's nefarious designs and reactionary foolishness in the wake of its dubious past.

S Kumar New Delhi

It's over-fixing

This refers to Mihir Sharma's column "The big GST question" (August 6). I find it difficult to agree with his postulate and conclusions. His first postulate is that the goods and service tax (GST) was supposed to be a single rate tax. It is not so. The government never said anything to that effect. In fact, the former finance minister Arun Jaitley famously said that chappals and refrigerator cannot pay same rate of tax. Let me point out that Belgium, Canada (if you include sale tax), Brazil, China, France, Germany, Sweden, UK and others have multiple tax rates. We cannot have just 16 per cent tax on cigarettes. We should have 5, 16 and 28 per cents. Only 12 and 18 have to



be merged into 16. Collection of revenue is not at all affected by multiple rates. True, a single rate is easy to administer, but it will ruin the character of the tax. Indirect tax is regressive and one rate will make it more regressive.

The reason for under performance of revenues is not evasion. There is audit, anti-evasion and various verification systems which prevent evasion. There is evasion no doubt since there is some collusion but no cottage industry for invoice manufacture. And universal invoice matching is absurdly illogical. Selective matching of suspected companies is the answer that is being done. The real reason for under performance is slowdown in the economy and fixing the target too high keeping fiscal deficit in view. It is nothing new. It is not under performance but over fixing of target.

Sukumar Mukhopadhyay New Delhi

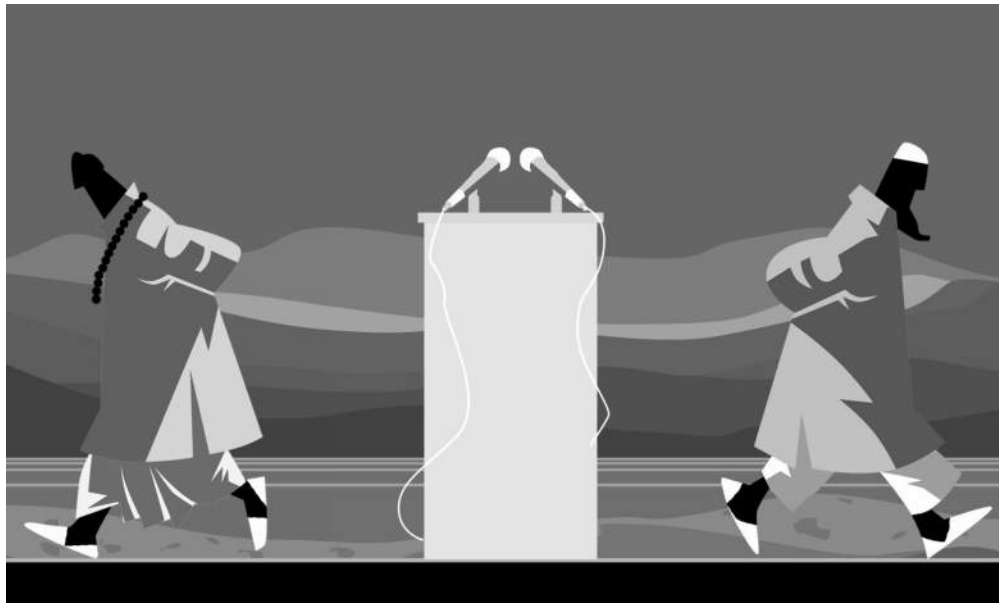
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HAMBONE



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Misleading fiscal deficit

CAG's view on Budget numbers has merit

Questions about the Union government's borrowing have been increasingly heard over the past few years, and are now reaching a crescendo. As this newspaper has reported, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has told both Parliament and the Fifteenth Finance Commission that the numbers in the Union Budget fail to include the growing off-Budget liabilities of the Union government. The CAG would like these numbers to be included in the Budget estimates. However, the government contends that it has already gone further than required in the 2019-20 Union Budget to account for these borrowings because "both the provisioning of repayment of principal and of interest of off-Budget borrowings is being made through the Budget".

The government also points out that there is no formal requirement to include off-Budget borrowing in the estimate of the fiscal deficit. On this matter the government is quite correct — but on the other hand, appealing to formal requirements is a weak argument in this context. After all, the Finance Commission has the powers to alter formal definitions used by the government. While the government might well have procedural correctness on its side, the CAG also has good reasons to complain that the fiscal deficit number is not an accurate reflection of the government's spending and borrowing behaviour over the financial year. It pegs the actual fiscal deficit at close to 6 per cent, as distinct from the 3.3 per cent claimed by the government in the Budget numbers for 2019-20. The government can complain correctly that the statement of the fiscal deficit is in line with the currently accepted definition. But then there can be no credible claim that the fiscal deficit is the right number to look at to judge fiscal prudence.

The correct way of resolving this difficulty would be to examine, instead of the fiscal deficit, a public-sector borrowing requirement measure, and a flow variable for the public debt that takes into account not just budgetary spending and off-budget liabilities but all contingent liabilities of the government. This would provide a clear and transparent accounting of the degree to which the choices of the Union government are adding to the debt burden of future generations, as well as how much private investment is being crowded out by public borrowing. After all, it is these latter two that matter from the point of view of sustainability analysis of Indian public finance. This number would undoubtedly be undesirably large at the moment. The government has taken to using public undertakings such as Food Corporation of India in a manner not previously envisaged. Their implicit sovereign guarantee means they can borrow from the markets and help finance the government's spending priorities like food subsidy. In this manner, the fiscal deficit conceals the government's real fiscal imprudence. The Finance Commission will hopefully take this behaviour on board and reconsider how government spending and borrowing statistics are presented. Such a reevaluation would aid both the government in planning public investment and savings as well as the broader investment community, which seeks a clearer understanding of state choices and the future condition of the public debt market.

The Huawei threat

The govt should take an objective decision

Beijing's warning that any move to block Huawei from upcoming 5G operations will have consequences for Indian firms doing business in China should not come in the way of a well-thought-out and independent view on the matter. India is yet to formalise its decision on whether or not to allow Huawei, which is among the world's biggest telecom equipment manufacturers, in the 5G segment. A high-level committee — headed by the government's principal scientific advisor, K Vijay Raghavan — is looking at security aspects vis-a-vis Huawei.

At the same time, India should also not get swayed by the US stand of blacklisting Huawei, which has been caught in a geo-political battle, without evidence of security risk that the Donald Trump administration has cited. In fact, the US itself has begun relaxing the clampdown, allowing American technology companies to sell their products to Huawei on a case-to-case basis. Also, many countries around the world, including those in Europe, are going ahead with Huawei in their 5G operations. The picture is mixed elsewhere. While Australia and Japan have blocked it, South Korea and Thailand have implemented Huawei technology for 5G networks in a limited way.

Significantly, a British Parliament committee recently rejected a proposed ban on British telecom carriers using Huawei gear. It said there were no technical grounds for excluding Huawei entirely from the UK's 5G or other telecommunications networks. However, UK telcos exclude Huawei's gear from "core" parts of wireless networks, as recommended by the committee. While the European Union refused to ban Huawei, it left the decision to member countries.

Apart from overseas influences, India's decision should be free from internal politics too. Reportedly, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh has raised concerns about the operations of Huawei in the country. In the backdrop of multiple levels of pressure, the government must take a well-informed decision, with the ministries of home affairs and external affairs, along with the Department of Telecom (DoT), playing a key role. Indeed, national security is the most important consideration, weighing much more than business and geopolitical factors. In this context, the Chinese giant has reportedly offered to sign a "no backdoor" agreement with the Indian government to allay concerns that it might use its telecom gear for surveillance. It has also repeatedly told the government that the security concerns raised against it have no foundation. The committee should look into the feasibility of such an agreement.

Huawei is believed to price its products lower than its competitors, but this should obviously not be the sole reason to allow the Chinese firm. The 5G trial guidelines are out and non-commercial pilots will begin soon. Six technology firms including Huawei, Ericsson, and Nokia have submitted their proposals for trials, and there's no indication of any company being blocked. As the guidelines state, Indian entities involved in research and development, and manufacturing; telecom operators; and academia for the purpose of research and experimentation will be given licences for up to two years. In the meantime, telcos have forged partnerships with equipment manufacturers, including Huawei, for the trials. As 5G spectrum auction terms are being finalised for bidding and commercial rollout, an objective and non-discriminatory decision on Huawei will be the right road to take.

How BJP is delivering on its three promises

The party's continued focus on issues concerning Article 370, Uniform Civil Code and Ram temple ensured that it made progress on these

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has all but delivered the three goals of its ideology. These are the abolition of Article 370, the Ayodhya issue and a Uniform Civil Code. All three of these demands were negative and sought something from India's Muslims. In Ayodhya, the BJP wanted them to give up their mosque; on the issue of the civil code, it was giving up their personal law; and in Kashmir, it was for Muslims to surrender their constitutional autonomy.

It is because the BJP and its leadership have continually thought of ways to deliver these that they have made substantial progress, if not outright victory on each. There is no better indicator of this than the fact that even some in the Congress backed the adventurism in Kashmir. The Opposition has no real opinion or belief and it is why they, like the rest of us, were caught off-guard.

Having studied the issue, it was concluded by the BJP leadership (by which one means the prime minister and the home minister, because it is apparent that nobody else counts) that though the abolition of Article 370 was tricky if not impossible,

there were ways around it.

Their solution was to hollow out autonomy in a continuation of the way it was done in the 1950s under Jawaharlal Nehru. I cannot think of anyone who anticipated the events in Kashmir or the way

in which they were achieved. And this is because, to repeat, only the BJP has continually focussed on its agenda. The rest assumed that things were too complicated, both in the international realm and through constitutional entanglements, for the BJP to make any real progress in Kashmir.

There is not much thought India has given to what Kashmiris are going through in terms of their identity and their everyday lives. They have lived under military rule for three decades, and India is at the bottom of the index of media freedom because for large parts of the year Internet connectivity is cut off in Kashmir. This looking away from the rest of us has helped the Indian state achieve what it wanted to through the jackboot from the 1950s to the developments of recent days. And it is what has helped the BJP deliver on the first of its three political promises.



REPLY TO ALL

AAKAR PATEL

Structural slowdown and home market demand

Many economists are now saying what I have been arguing for some time — the present economic slowdown is structural. It is not caused by a downturn in the business cycle. Therefore, countercyclical policies are not appropriate to address the slowdown.

While this is immediately clarifying for policymakers, a structural slowdown can be variously interpreted depending on one's analytical framework and understanding of the ground situation.

For some, "structural" means that sectors that have contributed to growth in the past face sector-specific impediments. Addressing these would involve sector-level policy interventions, for example, addressing questions of credit access or correcting adverse policies. This is currently the discussion about the automobile sector, for example.

At the macro level, a structural slowdown is typically seen as a supply-side problem. Institutional or other impediments to investment are identified, and corrective actions are undertaken. So, economists advocate factor market (such as land and labour market), financial market (credit or capital market) and regulatory reforms to address the situation. The question of demand deficiency is seen as a cyclical phenomenon.

However, this view has only gathered prominence since the rise to dominance of supply-side economics and has, oddly, persisted even when such dominance has globally withered since 2008. Explicating the structural demand problem is important to address the contemporary India-specific economic situation¹.

I have previously argued² that the Indian economy, since 1991, has grown largely by meeting the consumption demands of the top 10 per cent to 15 per cent of the Indian population. This is reflected in the fact that "leading indicators" of Indian economic growth are largely about what these people consume — automobiles, FMCG, consumer durables, financial services, etc.

Post 1991, there was a shift in relative prices to facilitate this growth. Here's a clarifying illustration. My salary as a young college lecturer in 1988 was ₹36,000 per annum. The cheapest car cost ₹1,50,000 (four years' salary), an air conditioner ₹20,000 (seven

months' salary), and a Bombay-Delhi air ticket ₹3,000 (one month's salary). Today, the same job earns ₹7,50,000 per annum. The same goods can now be purchased with six months', 10 days', and one day's salary, respectively.

This remarkable shift in relative prices fuelled domestic demand. Private investment responded to this spurt. This led to a virtuous cycle of growth with the production structure shifting towards capital-intensive goods consumed by the top 15 per cent. This was buffeted by welfare interventions (like MGNREGS) and a middle-class housing boom, which bolstered construction employment. Exports and agricultural performance, occasionally, complemented domestic demand. High growth expanded fiscal space, which was used to provide universal merit goods and subsidised food, reducing poverty.

This model is unlikely to sustain in the medium term but the current slowdown indicates that its limits seem to have impacted the economy sooner. The demand of the top income deciles is satiating but those earning less (one to three times the minimum wage) are not able to afford the things that the "leading indicators" measure. Sectors that have hitherto been the engine of growth are now plateauing. But investment is depressed because it continues to respond to the demand situation in these sectors.

Other sectors are not picking up the slack despite there being latent demand. This is compounded by poor agricultural performance.

Exports, and increased public investment, are typically proposed to solve a structural demand problem. But India's growth story is not export-led. Exports complement domestic demand but never have been the engine of Indian growth. If this continues, then the structural problem will not go away. Public investment is constrained by limited domestic financial savings. About 65 per cent of the Centre's fiscal deficit is used to finance consumption expenditure. Tax buoyancies cannot realistically be expected to increase sharply when there is a growth slowdown.

Faced with a structural demand problem, the cornerstone of growth policy should be to harness the demand at affordable prices of those earning at

The Uniform Civil Code demand has a primary target. It is not triple talaq, which is incidental and about which neither the BJP nor the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh cares. Gender equality and the rights of women can hardly be the pressing concern of organisations that deliberately exclude women. The RSS website has an FAQ section which reveals the following: "Can the women become RSS members?" The answer is "No. The RSS was founded to organise the Hindu society and considering the practical limitations, allowed entry to Hindu males only..." The RSS packs female Hindutvawadis off to its associate and ancillary bodies because they're unfit for the core group. One does not know of any movement to open up the RSS to women or any demand from its supporters to give Hindu women access.

So then what is the primary target of the Uniform Civil Code demand? It is polygamy. The fear that Muslims are changing India's demography. There is little or no role for truth or data here. The fact is that fertility rate of Muslims is nationally dropping faster than those of Hindus, that the fertility rate of Kashmir's Muslims is lower than that of Gujarat's Hindus, that fertility rates worldwide are falling and are linked to economics, or even that studies show that the incidence of polygamy among Hindus is equal to or higher than that among Muslims.

None of this is important or liable to be believed. As expressed by the prime minister himself once, the issue is that of "hum paanch, hamarey pachchees". Gender equality and triple talaq are the entry point into the Uniform Civil Code, and they will be the reason why, as is quite certain now, polygamy will be struck down sooner than they think. That will settle the Uniform Civil Code debate.

In Ayodhya, the driving force was the offending structure. Once it had been flattened, the BJP backed off because it had achieved the primary aim of mass mobilisation preceding and following the vandalism and the attendant carnage. The matter of the temple has been revived because the forces aligned with the BJP all these decades must now get their due.

The issue of the Ram Janmabhoomi has turned from justice and reparation to that of why a temple should not be immediately built. It is still the Hindus who are aggrieved and they must be assuaged by the construction of the temple. The judiciary has given one appalling judgment (the Lucknow Bench's decision to carve up the land) on this and we should expect that something similar will come that will prioritise the temple. The trial of the accused, including Lal Krishna Advani, continues.

Because it is no longer even-handed, the issue of justice has become secondary to religion and it is seen as a Hindu versus Muslim thing. It is easily and automatically assumed that all of us are partisans from the particular angle of the faith we were born into. This is relatively new and not something that was the case 30 years ago.

It is the credibility of this prime minister, his success at making overt majoritarianism acceptable, and the spectacular victories he has achieved for his party that have made it possible for the BJP to all but deliver on the three goals.

least the minimum wage.

Rural India is treated as a place where we solve the food problem, with the question of income and demand being relegated to residual status. In addition, growth in rural incomes (including, but not limited to, doubling of farmers' income) needs more macroeconomic attention.

Affordable housing is another sector where the private sector could profitably increase economic activity and employment, with demand for homes that those earning the minimum wage can afford being the focus, rather than middle-class homes in suburban conurbations.

We make clothing in India for the rich but we import a lot of clothing for those earning the minimum wage from Bangladesh and Vietnam. Making the textile sector competitive to reduce net imports from such countries would provide a powerful demand stimulus to growth and employment.

Health and education are also areas in which there is latent demand from a much wider base than 20 years ago. The rich now increasingly resort to health and education imports and so the business model based on their demand is failing. A structural shift to meet the demand for affordable health and education of reasonable quality for those earning the minimum wage would increase both economic activity and employment. The current business model fails to meet this demand.

In my next column, I will discuss macroeconomic policies that can be considered to address the deleterious short-term consequences of the slowdown, but in the medium term, we have to address the structural demand problem if growth is to be inclusive and sustainable. Supply-side constraints are very real but need to be addressed with the demand constraint in mind.

¹ Sukhamoy Chakravarty drew attention to the possibility of a structural demand constraint in 1979 ("On the Question of Home Market and Prospects for Indian Growth", EPW, August; For an analytical exposition see Taylor L and Bacha, E 1976 "A First Growth Model For Belindia", Quarterly Journal of Economics)

² Business Standard: Piketty and the middle income trap (August 9, 2018); A common economic programme for India (May 3, 2019)

The writer is director, National Institute of Public Finance and Policy. Views are personal

Recollecting a massacre



BOOK REVIEW

UTTARAN DAS GUPTA

From May 14 to 16, 1979, about 10,000 Partition refugees who had settled in the island of Marichjhapi in the Sundarbans were evicted by the West Bengal government, then run by the Communist Party of India (Marxist)-led Left Front. These were people who had crossed over from East Pakistan at the time of Partition or Bangladesh during the 1971 war, and had been packed off by the state government to Dandakaranya

in central India, to refugee settlement camps. But they returned to West Bengal, drawn by the fertile land which they hoped they be able to cultivate.

According to some sources — and they are very few — about 7,000 people died in the eviction drive in which excessive force, including poisoning and rape, was used. There are very few documented histories of this "massacre", often described as one of the worst human rights violations in post-Independence India. The Left Front government not only managed to effectively cut off all flow of information from the besieged island, but also corrupted the investigation and allegedly influenced the judicial process, denying justice to those who were affected. Senior journalist Deep Halder's book is perhaps the first full-length study of this incident in such detail.

Mr Halder has used the tool of oral narratives, which is becoming more and more popular among journalists and historians, especially for documenting atrocities against the disenfranchised. For this

book, he has interviewed nine people, such as activist Jyotirmoy Mondal, who worked with the survivors and provides eyewitness accounts; lawyer Sakya Sen, who challenged the state in court for its overreach; survivor Mana Goldar; and Dalit writer Manoranjan Byapari, who has also written about Marichjhapi in his acclaimed autobiography. The personal narratives are put together to knit a patchwork of the event, documenting the atrocities and the cover-up by the state.

Even before the eviction, the government enforced an economic blockade around the island. Survivor Santosh Sarkar recollects the suffering of the denizens of the island because of food shortage: "Death knocked on our doors... Naked bodies of children were strewn around the bank of Karankhali river as their mothers wailed." Those trying to get

to neighbouring islands to get food would have their boats drowned by the river police; even women were not spared. "Around 9 am, women volunteers from Marichjhapi set out on three boats... Those b*****s in police uniforms... rammed their launches into the boats and drowned all three..." While the Marichjhapi residents managed to save some of the women, others drowned. "...[A] few women were picked up by the policemen... They were taken to the nearest police station,

gangraped for days..."

Some scholars have argued that the Left Front government used such force against the settlers at Marichjhapi because they were mostly Dalit. "Most of Marichjhapi islanders belonged to lower castes and were given the short shift by the Left Front government, which was predominantly upper caste even though it espoused a classless, casteless," writes Mr Halder in the Preface to his book, quoting scholar Annu Jalais who has studied the "massacre" from a Dalit perspective.

Mr Byapari, who also survived the "massacre", later becoming a famous writer, has also made similar claims. "Caste hatred led to Marichjhapi massacre," he tells Mr Halder. "Even in temporary refugee camps... there was caste discrimination. The upper castes didn't want to stay at the same camps as the Namasudras... If the settlers (in Marichjhapis) were Brahmins, Kayasthas and Baidyas, there would have been no action." He minces no

words in his criticism of the then chief minister Jyoti Basu. "He was a *shuorer bachcha*, son of a pig. He was... the chief architect of the massacre."

In the Preface to his book, Mr Halder recounts a personal link of the story: "It came to me as a story through Mana... Mana herself came unannounced as a distant cousin to look after me and tell me stories... Stories from Marichjhapi." Later, while recording Mana's story, he writes: "Marichjhapi remains the reason I took to journalism — to tell stories the powerful want hidden. Marichjhapi is why I decided, early on in my own career, that being critical of power should be a journalist's default setting." This book provides ample evidence that he has remained true to that calling.

BLOOD ISLAND: An Oral History of the Marichjhapi Massacre
Deep Halder
HarperCollins, 176 pages, ₹399 (paperback)

Opinion

THURSDAY, AUGUST 8, 2019



ONE OF A KIND

Prime minister of India, Narendra Modi

India grieves the demise of a remarkable leader who devoted her life to public service and bettering lives of the poor. Sushma Swarajji was one of her kind, who was a source of inspiration for crores of people

RBI is doing its bit, over to government now

Central bank has cut repo & ensured adequate liquidity; govt needs to do its bit with a fresh burst of reforms

WITHIN HOURS OF RBI governor Shaktikanta Das' unconventional 35 basis points repo rate cut, SBI had dropped the interest rate for fresh loans by 15 bps. That is speedy transmission for sure. However, the fact is there's a fair bit of catching up left for all lenders since the cumulative repo cuts of 75 basis points till June resulted in a fall of just 29 bps in loan rates. Governor Das' efforts to revive credit growth are to be lauded but, unfortunately, merely lowering interest rates may not be enough to stimulate appetite for credit. At this point, when there is a fair bit of surplus capacity and visibility on demand—both locally and overseas—is somewhat poor, the private sector has no real incentive to invest. That would require big reforms in labour, land, regulation and agriculture. As SBI chairman Rajnish Kumar had said a few days ago, it is the demand that is missing.

But the central bank can do only so much. Indeed, it is doing more than its best to create a conducive lending environment for banks; liquidity has been more than ample for two months now—a surplus of around ₹2 lakh crore—and on Wednesday, there was assurance of more if needed. Easing the norms for bank lending to NBFCs is helpful; loans to a single NBFC can now be 20% of Tier One capital compared with 15% earlier. Moreover, banks can route some of their priority sector lending—agriculture investment loans, affordable home loans—through NBFCs. Unfortunately, the addressable opportunity may not be large since the top-quality NBFCs don't really have too more trouble raising money in the bond markets and banks will choose to stay away from the weaker players post the IL&FS and DHFL crises. As Das rightly observed during his interaction with reporters, the central bank cannot compel banks to lend to any particular sector or customers; those decisions are dependent on ratings and are entirely at their discretion. Relaxing the lending norms for consumer credit by lowering the risk weights (except for credit cards) should help banks push through more loans to this space, though most of them already have big retail exposures.

Many have observed that the RBI's revised GDP forecast of 6.9% for 2019-20, with a downward bias, is optimistic. That may be so, but Das has done well to articulate RBI's concern on growth without any alarmist commentary. Das said the slowdown was cyclical, whereas most economists believe a good part of it is structural. Nonetheless, he seems to be working towards his priority to boost aggregate demand. Das has done the right thing in not pressuring banks to link their loan rates to external benchmarks at a time when they are struggling with NPAs and slow deposit growth. Also, he has reassured the markets, saying the RBI would make sure no systemically important NBFC collapses. Given how inflation is expected to remain benign for at least another year—RBI now forecasts Q1 2020-21 inflation at 3.6%—there is room for another rate cut. That could come in early October, but at the risk of sounding repetitive, rate cuts are little use without meaningful transmission.

Efficient, warm, charming

Sushma Swaraj was on top of her job and won many hearts

IT IS NEVER easy competing with a prime minister, particularly one as hyperactive as Narendra Modi when it comes to foreign policy, but it is to Sushma Swaraj's credit that she persevered—she wasn't even Modi's first choice, given her allegiance to LK Advani—and came up with an entirely new style of functioning. Taking to Twitter like a duck to water, it was a style that made the hitherto distant external affairs ministry accessible to every Indian, anywhere in the world, at any time of the day—recall her 3am tweet on one occasion—with just a 280-character message; perhaps too accessible given that, on one occasion, Swaraj was tagged on a tweet desperately asking for help to get a refrigerator repaired. While Swaraj's role in getting justice for Kulbhushan Yadav and hiring Harish Salve, for one rupee, got a lot of attention, what won the hearts of ordinary Indians was the backroom work she did to get hearing- and speech-impaired Geeta back from Pakistan, in helping those with passport and visa issues, and organising mass evacuations from areas like Iraq and Yemen while, all the time being there to comfort and provide solace to the families of victims or those in trouble. Her last act, before her unfortunate passing away, was to tweet a congratulatory message to Modi after Article 370 was revoked.

Known for her excellent oratory, in both English and Hindi, Swaraj was one of India's more efficient ministers, quick to grasp the issues at stake and willing to do what needed to be done to get the job done. In external affairs, that meant preparing the groundwork for Modi's high-profile visits and giving a powerful speech at the UN General Assembly; in telecom, in the Vajpayee Cabinet, this meant doing the homework for a rescue package for the telecom sector that not just rescued beleaguered telcos but also paved the way for the subsequent boom in India's telephony. If she wasn't able to complete the job, it was because her party needed her to step in as Delhi's chief minister as the incumbent was very unpopular due to spiralling onion prices; his unpopularity was too much for Swaraj to reverse, but she was always ready to fight a battle for her party's sake. So, she took on Sonia Gandhi in Bellary, and even learned Kannada to be able to campaign effectively; she lost, but by just 60,000 votes and, later on, Bellary went on to become a BJP stronghold. A staunch conservative, something her Karva Chauth fasts and deep *sindoor* bore very public testimony to, Swaraj was quick to criticise vigilante groups like the Sri Ram Sene that was attacking women going to pubs; she spoke of how her daughter went to pubs as well. By and large, though, at least in public, she toed the party line on most issues.

In a world where politics is increasingly becoming bitter and adversarial, where party loyalties matter more than friendships, Swaraj represented the Vajpayee-era style of politicians who had endearing friendships across party groups. It helped that, though her father was associated with the RSS, she began her career as a minister in Devi Lal's cabinet; that is why, even when she got a lot of flak for helping fugitive Lalit Modi get travel documents, the Opposition never asked for her resignation. A dying breed of politicians, literally.

CrashCURBS

The Motor Vehicle (Amendment) Bill proposes steeper fines to check accidents, but will these work?

EVERY YEAR, AROUND 1.5 lakh people die in India due to road accidents. Now, as a member of the United Nations, India wishes to halve the number of road accidents. Given road accidents cost most countries around 3% of annual GDP, there is a strong economic imperative for this too. The Centre seems to believe that steeper penalties for traffic violations will fix part of the problem. So, the Motor Vehicle (Amendment) Bill raises the minimum fine for those to ₹500 from ₹100—under the draft law, driving drunk will attract a hefty ₹10,000 fine and driving without the seat-belt on will attract a ₹1,000 fine. Rash driving will incur a fine of ₹5,000. While steeper fines may seem a deterrent, research shows it is, in fact, the implementation of laws and fines that proves a deterrent. India has strict provisions against speeding and driving under influence, but their enforcement scores a lowly 3 and 4, respectively, on a scale of 10—only 30% of the drivers and <10% of the pillion riders mandated to wear helmets do so while a whopping 60% of drivers and 89% of front-seat passengers mandated to wear seat-belts do so. Without the deployment of technology to monitor violations continually, higher fines may only encourage present graft practices to continue.

The Bill also seeks to fix responsibility of contractors for faulty road design and poor maintenance causing accidents—this should put pressure on them to adhere to all safety obligations during construction. But, it is tough to ascribe responsibility in a scenario where the government itself puts a premium on the least cost in road project contracts. Also, with poor and unreliable data on factors other than construction quality that affect road infrastructure—weather, traffic additions over the long term, etc—holding the contractor responsible may not work out. The Bill gets it right on immediate, cashless transfers for victims' treatment within the "golden hour" and increased compensation to road accident victims.

KEEPING THE PROMISE

A REDUCTION IN CORPORATE TAX FOR ALL COMPANIES TO 25%, AND NOT JUST FOR MSMES, WILL ENABLE LARGE COMPANIES TO COMPETE GLOBALLY, AND INCREASE GROWTH

Reduce corporate tax to achieve \$5trn economy

TV MOHANDAS PAI S KRISHNAN

Pai is Chairman, Aarin Capital & Krishnan is Tax consultant
Views are personal



IT IS FIVE years since the NDA began its first innings, and it's time to evaluate India's competitiveness on the direct tax front. Arun Jaitley, in his 2015 Budget speech, announced, "We are considered as having a high Corporate Tax (CT) regime but we do not get that tax due to excessive exemptions. I propose to reduce the rate of Corporate Tax from 30% to 25% over the next four years. This process of reduction has to be necessarily accompanied by rationalisation and removal of various kinds of tax exemptions and incentives for corporate taxpayers, which incidentally account for a large number of tax disputes."

He started the process of tax reduction in FY17, with a small reduction of 1% for companies whose turnover was less than ₹5 crore, and announcing a CT of 25% for new manufacturing companies who do not avail of any exemption. In his last 2018 Budget proposal, he extended the 25% rate reduction to MSME's with annual turnover up to ₹250 crore.

There was high expectation that the new FM, Nirmala Sitharaman, in her maiden budget, would fulfil the earlier promise of reducing CT to 25% for all companies by 2019. She said, in her maiden budget speech, "So far as CT is concerned, we continue with phased reduction in rates. Currently, the lower rate of 25% is only applicable to companies having annual turnover up to ₹250 crore. I propose to widen this to include all companies having annual turnover up to ₹400 crore. This will cover 99.3% of the companies. Now only 0.7% of companies will remain outside this rate". The FM forgot to mention that 0.7% of the companies in India contribute about 79% of the total CT.

The Receipt Budget 2019-20 reveals that a small number of companies, 373, with profits before taxes (PBT) of ₹500 crore and above, contributed 52% of CT in FY18 and 16.35% of CT was contributed by 1,236 companies with PBT of ₹100-500 crore. Two years after the CT reduction began, about 68.5% of the total CT was contributed by a minuscule 0.2% of all companies! What was promised by the FM in his 2015 budget speech remains unfulfilled.

The Effective Tax Rate (ETR) and the average statutory CT in FY18 is the highest in the past five years for all companies. The ETR is 29.49% for FY18, compared to 23.22% in FY14—an increase

of 27%. This ETR increase has contributed ₹1.11 lakh crore out of ₹5.24 lakh crore collected as CT. The Receipt Budget 2019-20 states that the impact of 2017 Budget proposal of 25% CT for companies having turnover up to ₹50 crore is minimal. The NDA government has thus phased out profit linked deductions without proportionately reducing the CT. Obviously, FM Jaitley has not kept his promise.

When the FM announced a rate reduction to 25% over four years, it was expected that this rate reduction would benefit all the companies. By providing CT reduction to MSME's, others have not benefited. Instead, they have been forced to pay more tax due to withdrawal of tax incentives and imposition of 2% additional surcharge from FY16. The ETR for large companies has consequently increased from 20.68% in FY14 to 26.3% in FY18, a 27% increase.

Large companies in the services sector are the biggest employers in India. They provide stable jobs at good remuneration. However, the services sector, which is more job oriented, has a 2.7% higher ETR at 30.55% in FY18 compared to 27.83% in the manufacturing

sector, which adopts capital intensive automation and enjoys tax incentives. India incentivises automation and taxes job creation more!

A reduction in the CT of all companies to 25%, and not just for MSMEs, will enable large companies to compete globally, increase their growth leading to higher employment, better quality jobs, and reduce the high cost of capital in India. This will support India becoming a \$5 trillion economy.

The accompanying graphic provides the revenue impact of top six incentives for CT payers during FY18 and FY19.

Budget 2016 reduced the maximum depreciation rate to 40%, with effect from FY18, and removed other deductions. A reduction in the maximum depreciation rates to 25%, and the general rate to 10% would enable the government to reduce the CT for large companies by about 2%. A reduction in the CT will reduce the cost of credit from the banking system over time and make the job-intensive services sector more competitive. A 2% CT reduction will enable banks to write back deferred taxes up to ₹10,000 crore and corporates will be

able to write back about ₹25,000 crore. By lowering the CT, the labour intensive industries will have more cash to grow faster and create more jobs, which is India's top priority.

Jaitley had also announced, in Budget 2015, his "vision of putting in place a direct tax regime which is internationally competitive on rates, is without exemptions, incentivises savings, and does not realise tax from intermediaries."

A study on the CT around the world in CY 2018 reveals that the worldwide average statutory CT to be 23.03%, measured across 208 tax jurisdictions. The average statutory CT is 21.86% among EU countries, 23.93% in OECD countries and 27.63% in the G7. The US has a combined statutory rate of 25.84%. The majority of the 208 separate jurisdictions surveyed have CT below 25% and 103 have rates between 20% and 30%. This study was conducted by Tax Foundation, a tax policy non-profit organisation based in the US.

India's average statutory CT at 34.4% in FY18 is higher by more than 10% compared to the worldwide average statutory CT. Instead of India being internationally competitive in tax rates, it has the highest CT among the large economies in CY18. It is in the ninth spot among the 20 countries with the highest CT in the world. This high CT in India is negatively impacting the competitiveness of Indian multinational companies, and India as a destination for investment. When overseas investors come to India with a much lower cost of capital, Indian entrepreneurs cannot compete with a much higher cost.

At the end of five years of NDA government, the CT reduction is not provided to all companies but only to MSMEs. Tax collection has increased hugely by reduction of depreciation rates and withdrawal of corporation tax breaks. India has the highest CT among large economies, making its direct tax regime most uncompetitive internationally. The quantum of tax litigation in India has gone up considerably at all levels too. While Our FMs have been lofty in making statements, they have not kept their promise.

It is very important for the present FM to first reduce the CT to 25% for all companies, incentivise labour-oriented service industries in India and keep the promise made to its citizens which will enable India to move to a \$5 trillion economy.

Trump's China shock

The Trump administration in its wisdom has managed to accuse the Chinese of the one economic crime of which they happen to be innocent—currency manipulation

PAUL KRUGMAN



NYT

I DIDN'T KNOW that the Dow was going to drop 750 points, so my latest column is El Paso-related. Probably the right choice anyway, because US-China is moving so fast that anything in the print paper would be out of date.

But it does look as if I should try to explain (a) what I think is happening (b) why the markets are going so nuts. By the way, given Mnuchin's declaration earlier this week that China is a currency manipulator, subsequent market action should be...interesting.

So here's the thing: neither Trump's tariff announcement last week nor, especially, the depreciation of China's currency earlier this week should objectively be that big a deal. Trump slapped 10% tariffs on \$200 billion of Chinese exports, which is a tax hike of 0.1% of US GDP and 0.15% of Chinese GDP.

In response, China let its currency drop by about 2%. For comparison, the British pound has dropped around 9% since May, when it became clear that a no-deal Brexit was likely.

So why are these smallish numbers such a big deal? Mostly because we've learned things about the protagonists in this trade conflict, things that make a bigger, longer trade war seem a lot more likely than it did even a few days ago.

First, Trump really is a Tariff Man. Some naive souls may still have been hoping that he would learn something

from the failure of his trade policy so far. More sensible people hoped that he might do what he did with NAFTA: reach a new deal basically the same as the old deal, proclaim that it was totally different, and claim a great victory.

But no: it is pretty clear now that he refuses to give up on his belief that trade wars are good, and easy to win; his plan is to continue the beatings until morale improves. What may have looked like temporary tariffs designed to win concessions now look like permanent features of the world economy, with the level of tariffs and the range of countries facing them likely to expand over time.

Second, China is clearly signalling that it's not Canada or Mexico: it's too big and too proud to submit to what it considers bullying. That slide in the renminbi wasn't a concrete policy measure as much as a way of saying to Trump, "talk to the hand" (no doubt there's a good Chinese expression along these lines.)

Incidentally—or maybe it's not so incidental—while there are many valid reasons to criticise Chinese policy, currency manipulation isn't one of them. China was a major currency

manipulator 7 or 8 years ago, but these days if anything it's supporting its currency above the level it would be at if it were freely floating.

And think for a minute about what would happen to a country with an unmanipulated currency, if one of its major export markets suddenly slapped major tariffs on many of its goods. You'd surely expect to see that country's currency depreciate, just as Britain's has with the prospect of lost market access due to Brexit.

In other words, the Trump administration in its wisdom has managed to accuse the Chinese of the one economic crime of which they happen to be innocent. Oh, and what are we going to do to punish them for this crime? Put tariffs on their exports? Um, we've already done that.

So how does this all end? More important, neither does anyone else. It looks to me as if both Trump and Xi have now staked their reputations on hanging tough. And the thing is, it is hard to see what would make either side give in (or even to know what giving in might mean.)

At this rate, we may have to wait for a new president to clean up this mess, if she can.

Both Trump and Xi have now staked their reputations on hanging tough...it is hard to see what would make either side give in

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A much-loved leader

Sushma Swaraj richly deserved all the encomiums heaped on her. A much-loved leader, her passing filled us with a sense of loss. She was a tall leader of considerable stature on India's political stage. Hers was an instantly recognisable face that exuded confidence, charm and character. Under the tutelage of stalwarts like AB Vajpayee and LK Advani, she blossomed into a capable leader. As a protégé of LK Advani, she climbed up the career ladder to become a prominent politician in her own right. At one time, she even looked like the prime minister-in-waiting. We differed with her ideologically, but admired her for her grace and affability. Her unassuming and unpretentious conduct endeared her to one and all. Even though she subscribed to Hindutva ideology and upheld party interest uncompromisingly, she was never regarded as a hardliner or as a rabble-rouser. In fact, she had the moral courage and humanity to rise above caste, colour and creed when it came to providing humanitarian assistance to anyone in need. She stayed away from jingoism. The nation will remember her with gratitude for her interventions to rescue the Indians in difficult or dangerous situations. She was essentially a fine human being, affectionate and consoling. She will go down in history as a much-loved leader.
— G David Milton, Maruthancode

Write to us at feletters@expressindia.com



PORTRAIT: SHYAM KUMAR PRASAD

SY
QURAISHI

Former Chief Election
Commissioner of India



IN MEMORIAM

A protege's tribute

Sushma Swaraj was a leader with the stature and backbone to withstand political pressures as a minister

MY ASSOCIATION WITH Sushma Swaraj goes back to 1977, when after the end of the Emergency, she became an MLA of the Janata Party and was made minister for cultural affairs by Chaudhary Devi Lal, becoming the youngest ever minister in the country at 25. I was the director in the ministry. She exuded warmth and trust and started addressing me affectionately by my first name Yaqoob, my being six years older than her notwithstanding.

I was newly married then and she became very affectionate towards my wife, a budding journalist, as well. She granted her an interview for the last page of Sunday magazine—a first for both of them!

Her positivity and my enthusiasm ensured that we reached many landmarks in an otherwise lacklustre and nondescript department. A film star night by Sunil Dutt's troupe at Ambala for social causes was organised. Sushma ji decided that no one would be given free passes. The only two persons who complied were Sushma ji and I. I had to leave my three-month-old bride at home, which she probably begrudged me but never complained! A national award—Sangeet Martand—of ₹1 lakh, a princely sum at that time, was another landmark. A Haryana *suwab* (a folk theatre form) workshop with Habib Tanvir and another with Balwant Gargi resulted in legendary productions which were sent to border areas to entertain our *jawans* for years thereafter.

Even after we moved on to different ministries, our association continued,

though there was increasing acrimony between my journalistic wife and her. She never allowed my wife's hostile writings against her and her party to affect her relations with me. She always said we are different individuals and even defended my wife's freedom of expression.

In 2001, out of the blue, I got a call from Sushma ji saying that she wanted me to come to her ministry, Information and Broadcasting, as Director-General Door-darshan. I was then posted as principal secretary to the chief minister of Haryana, O P Chautala. The post considered the most powerful in the state. I thought it would be awkward to request him to relieve me of this job as he would consider me an ungrateful rascal. I therefore requested Sushma ji to speak to Chautala herself, which she promptly refused to do, saying, "Yaqoob, you know very well that your CM is hostile to me as I had opposed my party's alliance with his." On my persuasion, she kindly agreed to call him and the conversation I heard is best forgotten. I learnt quite a few original Haryanvi invectives. The politest refrain being "you want to ruin me by taking away my principal secretary".

A few days later she again called me asking if I could use some other influence to get my name forwarded to Delhi. Surely there were many in the CM's secretariat who would be happy to push me out. I used their "good" offices. And it worked.

When the news about my appointment as DG DD spread, she faced a barrage of attacks from BJP leaders, including very senior ones, for appointing a Muslim to such a sensitive post, one with an anti-BJP wife to boot. Only a leader of her stature and backbone could have withstood the pressure. The complimentary words of faith and trust she used for me have always moved me. It transpired that she didn't even mention these conversations to me and I got to hear of them from her staff.

At DD, she gave me a direct recruit, especially as I was the first direct recruit for Prasar Bharati and she extended her full support in all my initiatives. The introduction of DD Bharati, a unique channel for women, children and culture, within a month of my joining set the tone. DD India, narrowcasting (local broadcasting from our TV towers) and later setting up of DD Archives on the first Pravasi Bharati Divas were some of the other milestones possible with her support.

One not so fine day, she was abruptly moved out of I&B to the Ministry of Health because of party infighting. I was the next target. Many people suggested that I am being moved out for being a Muslim, which I did not countenance. My belief was that my being considered a protegee of Sushma Swaraj was the real reason. Being labelled a "protegee" of a great leader like her is a matter of pride for me.

Sushma ji was an original thinker and doer par excellence. One of her achievements I can never forget was to declare film production as an industry, a demand that had been rejected for decades. In the one stroke, she killed the phenomenon of the underworld financing in the film industry as it became bankable. Has any one ever heard the name Haji Mastan since?

My last meeting with her was on June 13, when I went to her home to inquire about her health. Rumours were rife that she had been "dropped". I inquired why she had chosen to withdraw from active electoral life. She said that ever since her kidney transplant, she was advised by her doctors to keep away from two things—dust and human physical contact. She said with a constituency which spread over 100 kilometres, and millions of constituents and friends, this was impossible. I had not seen her so happy in a long time. She was glowing. Who knew that this was the proverbial last of a dying flame.

Ma'am, I love you.

She faced a barrage of attacks from BJP leaders, including very senior ones, for appointing a Muslim to such a sensitive post, one with an anti-BJP wife to boot. Only a leader of her stature and backbone could have withstood the pressure

CUSHIONING COTTON

Measures to tap global potential

SHUNMUGAM

Author is Head-Research at MCX
Views are personal



Agencies should work towards enhancing the availability of adequate quantities of desired quality seeds at a subsidised rate

A THIRD OF THE global cotton growing area in India, hybridisation and increasing adoption of BT hybrid cotton varieties have turned India into a major exporter of cotton in the last decade. India was crowned the largest cotton producer in the world in the crop year (CY) 2015-16. In CY 2018-19, the cotton crop fared poorly due to a 20% rainfall deficit, with an estimated 14% reduction in production. Last year's production was also lower by 11% over decadal average cotton production of 352 lakh bales. As the farmers contributed to 'Cotton Revolution' of the last decade, mill consumption also expanded by over 30%. Increasing quality awareness and widespread use of hybrid seeds, led to India's cotton exports witnessing a growth until CY 2017-18, despite lower stocks. Lower crop estimates for 2018-19 pushed Indian cotton millers off the cliff to seek out their raw material requirements through imports. Though the production estimates of the significant trade body are being contested by the stakeholders, the proof of production numbers is attested by the increasing trend of cotton imports estimated at 31 million bales—highest in the last decade on the back of lower exports. Added to the lower production, is also a low stock of 13 lakh bales, which is a third of the decadal closing stock of 38 lakh bales.

Production numbers reveal that after reaching the peak of 398 lakh bales during CY 13-14, production has been south-bound. Domestic consumption and augmented export demand had kept the mill consumption clock ticking annually in the last decade. Increasing exports and mill consumption led to stocks moving to a low of 5% of the consumption in CY 18-19. Given that Indian productivity estimated as 502 Kg/hectare is lower than 1,751 and 944 of China and USA, respectively, one needs to see as to what ails India's production.

Productivity levels seem to have hit a plateau and pulling the country and farmers out of the same would require multi-pronged efforts. First, and foremost issue, is ensuring the availability of adequate good quality seed with traits such as drought tolerance, pest resistance, etc. A major reason for the significant reduction in crop output witnessed during 2018-19 remain the drought conditions in major producing areas and attack of the pink bollworm. Second, the adoption of better agronomic practices such as high-density planting of short duration varieties. This has the potential to increase yields to about 29% via lower exposure to pest attack, efficient use of water and other inputs while also suppressing weeds. Also, management practices such as in-situ soil and water conservation with bunds, integrated pest management, soil fertility testing and management, drip irrigation, etc., can have a significant impact.

Growing cotton varieties of high staple length is an important step towards augmenting the production and making available desired length of cotton fibre in the country. Adoption of better harvesting and post-harvest management practices will eliminate contamination, ensuring production and recovery of good quality of cotton that meets the requirements of domestic consumption as well as exports. Use of commodity derivatives platforms either directly or through aggregators will help the farmers lock in their prices and create quality awareness. This will encourage the farmer to adopt better agronomic practices.

Both the private and public sector agencies should work towards enhancing the availability of adequate quantities of desired quality seeds for the farmers at a subsidised rate. With the sowing of the new crop due in the next few weeks, the performance of monsoon will be a key factor for the output. Amid concerns of end-stocks to fall to an alarmingly low level, there is an urgent need for remedial measures to be taken, to reclaim the coveted position of being the top producing nation.

Amid concerns of end-stocks to fall to an alarmingly low level, there is an urgent need for remedial measures to be taken, to reclaim the coveted position of being the top producing nation

ARTICLE 370

DEMOCRACY IS ALWAYS by the people, for the people, and of the people—it is always representative of the will of the people. In a constitutional parliamentary democracy, the most legitimate means of expression of this will is through elected representatives. The Indian Constitution gives Parliament the legitimate power to express this will, while expressing which, Parliament looks to the Preamble as the guiding light in enacting or amending laws. The principles of justice and equality are building blocks of the Preamble. Unfortunately, post-independence India committed two Constitutional irregularities, which were against the principles of justice and equality—Article 35A, and Article 370. These provisions for Jammu and Kashmir were utilised as "special" provisions by leaders of the valley, and their allies governing in Delhi. Insertion of constitutional amendment 35A through a presidential order was a move that had no constitutional precedent. The Constitution, under Article 368, gives Parliament power to amend it. Bypassing parliamentary powers, 35A, which disenfranchised people of J&K from basic constitutional rights, was inserted through executive means.

On marrying a non-Kashmiri, Kashmiri Muslim women lost their right to get government jobs, settle in Kashmir, or send their children to government schools. However, a

A win for democracy

The Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Bill, 2019, portends a future of hope

PRADIP
BHANDARI

Founder, CEO, Editor & Chief, Jan Ki Baat



Kashmiri woman marrying a Pakistani retained the right to settle in J&K, and was eligible for a permanent resident certificate (PRC). This acute gender discrimination violated the spirit of the Constitution, and was also a threat to unity and integrity of people.

Article 35A also denied basic right to life to more than 4,000 families, who migrated from west Pakistan. They were not entitled to any land, and have been living as refugees for the past 60 years. Even the 200 Valmiki families who were brought from Punjab to J&K following a cabinet decision in 1957, to be specifically employed as *safai karamchari*, were not qualified for government promotion. Their children could not take

admission in government education institutions, nor were they eligible to apply for government jobs. In short, the son or daughter of a *safai karamchari* had no other option but to be one too. Political leaders who claimed represent the downtrodden would always look the other way at this denial of right to life to Dalits in the Valley.

More than one lakh Gorkhas, who historically serve in the Indian Army, suffer from social, economic and educational backwardness. Scrapping of 35A gives social and economic justice to the *suabam* of Kashmir.

The common narrative on J&K consciously overlooked the voice of Jammu, and Ladakh. Recently, when Mehbooba Mufti



and Omar Abdullah called an all-party meeting, not even one leader from Ladakh and Jammu was invited. The assembly was designed such that despite having more geographical area and population density, Jammu had a smaller share of seats in the assembly. No chief minister could be elected without the support of the Valley. The provision supported leaders promoting separatist tendency and isolated leaders displaying overtly nationalist tendencies. Making J&K a temporary Union Territory, and Ladakh a Union Territory is the first step to equalise political power in Jammu and Kashmir.

When Article 370 was enacted, the Constitution makers envisaged it to be "tempo-

rary provisions with respect to the state of Jammu and Kashmir". Even in sub-clause 3, it reads, "Notwithstanding anything in the foregoing provisions of this article the President may by public notification declare that this article shall cease to be operative, or shall be operative only with some exemptions and modifications from such state as he may specify provided that the recommendations of the Constituent assembly shall be necessary before the President issues such notification". This gave the Executive, with the will of the Parliament, the authority to amend and make necessary changes to Article 370. Since the Article was temporary, the word Constituent Assembly was inserted, and not

State Legislature. Neither the spirit, nor the operatives of Article 370 indicate the necessity of consultation and concurrence from the J&K Legislative Assembly before making any constitutional changes.

By continuing with a temporary article perpetually, a constitutional irregularity was committed for political convenience. The Preamble speaks of "We, the people of India". It was unfathomable that a separate Constitution, flag, and proxy dual citizenship in the name of PRC would continue in J&K for seven decades. In the name of preserving *Kashmiriyat*, Article 370 pulled away any investment opportunity in the Valley, leading the state to run the highest unemployment rate. Even J&K's share in new projects announced decreased to a historical low of .02%, as per CMIE data. With more than 40,000 lives lost in Kashmir, and countless soldiers martyred in the line of duty despite continuous talks with all possible stakeholders, there was no other option but to address the genesis of the turmoil. After all, *Kashmiriyat* needs to create progressive opportunities for all people of Kashmir—Muslims, Valmiki, Gorkhas, Bakarwals, Pandits—equally. By passing the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Bill, 2019, India has moved away from 70 years of turmoil to a future of hope and prosperity. The Bill upholds constitutional morality, and, for the first time, permits the application of the entire Preamble of India to the J&K region.



YOU CANNOT CONTINUE TO VICTIMIZE SOMEONE ELSE JUST BECAUSE YOU YOURSELF WERE A VICTIM ONCE — THERE HAS TO BE A LIMIT. — EDWARD W SAID

The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY
RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

Silence of the successful

In 2019, remembering 1992 — a different kind of government, a different kind of protest



RAMACHANDRA GUHA

COMING APART

Congress flails and flounders at a time when both government and Opposition need to find the way ahead in Kashmir

EVEN THOUGH SCRAPPING the special status of Kashmir has long been an important feature of the BJP's core ideological agenda, the Narendra Modi government took everyone by surprise with its move to render Article 370 ineffective and bifurcate J&K into two Union Territories. Everyone seemed caught off guard and outmanoeuvred. But none more so than the Opposition, especially the Congress. It has seemed stunned and slow to react. And then it has spoken in different voices, with many of its prominent younger leaders like Jyotiraditya Scindia, Deepender Hooda and Milind Deora publicly backing the government, saying that the revocation of Article 370 is the national interest, even as seniors like Ghulam Nabi Azad accuse those who support it of being ignorant of history. Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, who led its charge in Lok Sabha did it with spectacular ineptness and its chief whip in Rajya Sabha, Bhubaneswar Kalita, has resigned over the party's stand on the issue. But the question, really — and given that it is the leading party of the Opposition, scandalously — is: Just what is the Congress's position on the reading down of Article 370? The CWC resolution, which blames the manner more than the move itself, only mirrors the Congress fumbling, sharpens the edge of the question.

It is true that the government has struck at a particularly inopportune moment for the Congress, when it is already discomfited. Rahul Gandhi had stepped down as president after the party's embarrassing showing in the Lok Sabha elections, and the aftermath of his decision has exposed a reality hidden in plain sight: Remove the Gandhi at the helm, and you have a party that has forsaken all structures and processes, one that has no mechanisms of survival and movement left. A party, in other words, that finds it difficult to go on. This failure to preserve and nurture a sense of institutional self, this excessive dependence on its ruling family, is a tragic denouement for the grand old party that, at one time, offered the most vivacious and spacious of political platforms and helped win a nation its freedom. For that party to look so hollowed out today, for it to seem so unsure of itself and spooked by its political opponent, is a sad sight.

In its lowest point today, as in its erstwhile highs, the Congress predicament speaks of larger things. Today, its deshabille points to the fragmentation of the Opposition to the BJP. Despite its steep fall, it remains the salient if not primary pole in the non-BJP space. With the Congress floundering visibly, therefore, the smaller regional parties are evidently making their own calculations about the viability of opposing the BJP, and many are joining the bandwagon. The inability of the Opposition to hold its ground is bad news for a democracy that prides itself for its argumentative spirit, and its checks and balances, especially at a time when they will be needed to handle the fallout of the Centre's move in Kashmir.

FOR LAW AND LORD

Catholic church's order to expel a nun who sought justice in a case of alleged rape is victimisation. It must retract it

THE CATHOLIC CLERGY in Kerala seems unwilling to reconcile with the nuns who protested in public against a bishop accused of rape. On Wednesday, Lucy Kalapura, a nun with the Franciscan Clarist Congregation (FCC), was served a dismissal order — ostensibly because she learned to drive, bought a car on loan and published a collection of her poems. The decision to dismiss Sister Kalapura was reportedly taken on May 11 by the FCC, which waited for approval from the Vatican before ordering her to leave the convent in 10 days. The FCC said the nun has been expelled because her lifestyle violated "the vows of obedience and poverty" which she refused to correct despite repeated warnings.

This explanation sounds absurd and especially so since the church has been threatening action against the five nuns who supported a nun who filed a police complaint last year, accusing Franco Mulakkal, the bishop of Jalandhar diocese, of raping her. The clergy has rallied behind Mulakkal, and tried to silence the complainant as well as other nuns who stood by her. In an unprecedented act, nuns, attached to different congregations, staged a public protest in Ernakulam, Kerala when the state police sat on the complaint. Mulakkal, who had accused the complainant of blackmail, was arrested only after public pressure mounted. The clergy seems to have been shaken up by this open challenge from within, that too by nuns, who are expected to function under the supervision of male priests. When the attempts to persuade the nuns to retreat from public forums failed, the clergy sought to transfer them to different, distant centres, which they have resisted.

Mulakkal, who continues to hold the office of bishop, has the right to claim innocence, of course. But the church should not show prejudice against the complainant, or the nuns who have stood with her. It must wait for due process to conclude and not take sides. The move to transfer, and now expel, the nuns who have spoken out against harassment, is a regressive step and a signal that it prefers to protect male privileges within the clergy at all costs. That a significant section of the laity has been sympathetic to the nuns is a sign that the church can't continue to privilege the voice of priests over nuns. In the past, nuns who have crossed the red lines drawn by the church have chosen to walk out voluntarily. Kalapura's apparent defiance indicates a welcome shift on the ground that the Church must take note of.

AN OPAQUE BOUT

Selection of Mary Kom for the World Championship comes as a result of a process that is less transparent

BY ALL ACCOUNTS, Nikhat Zareen is no match for Mary Kom, the poster-woman of Indian boxing. Take away her six World Championship golds in the lighter categories, and Mary's Asiad and Olympic medals at 51 kg still far outweigh Nikhat's exploits as a junior and youth boxer. With Tokyo less than a year away, Mary needs to re-acclimatise herself to the flyweight category. It makes sense, then, for her to go to the World Championships in October. What doesn't seem reasonable, however, is the selection process, which allowed her to do so while a challenger cried foul.

The Boxing Federation of India swears by its performance-based selection process. Only the categories too close to call are resolved via trials. But Mary's selection in the 51 kg division was neither performance-based nor fair to a young boxer like Nikhat. Mary skipped the Asian Championships in April "to prepare for bigger events", making way for Nikhat to defeat a two-time world champion and return with a bronze. Exploits in recent months have been virtually identical (Nikhat's silver in Thailand came in a much tougher field than Mary's gold in Indonesia). The unstated understanding is that the India Open semifinal between the two, which Mary won 4-1, was the clincher.

However, if the bout in May served as a retroactive trial, why did Sarita Devi line up against Simranjit Kaur in the 60kg trial on Thursday? It's true that Indian boxing has seen enough instances of young pretenders pulling upsets on selection day only to fizzle out overseas. It is also true that the federation's result-oriented process has seen more hits than misses. There were enough variables in the Mary-Nikhat case for a trial to be held. 'Transparency' is the mantra of the new administrators. But with no real justification for their decision, they've shown that they can be as opaque as their predecessors.

THE BABRI MASJID was demolished by a crazed mob in broad daylight in 1992. Article 370 was abrogated at night by a secretive government in 2019. That said, there are some striking similarities between these two events, occurring 27 years apart. Both were justified as righting historical wrongs; both were triumphantly acclaimed by the Sangh Parivar and their supporters; both were quietly mourned by those affirming the constitutional values on which this Republic was founded.

When the Babri Masjid was demolished, I was living in New Delhi, in the home of Dharma Kumar, Professor of Economic History at the Delhi School of Economics. Her many students and friends — some active in public life today — will remember Dharma both for her personal charm and for her intellectual courage. She was a classical liberal, equally opposed to the extremities of the Marxist left as well as of the Hindutva right.

Dharma had grown up in Mumbai in the last years of the Raj, where she had sometimes attended Mahatma Gandhi's prayer meetings on Juhu beach. Now, seeing his ideals violated in a nation which claimed him as its founder, she set out to publicly defend them. She drafted a statement, which she had inserted as an advertisement on the front page of the most widely circulated newspaper in India. The statement read: "If you are a Hindu, read on. Do you believe that the demolition of the Babri Masjid restored Hindu pride, enhanced national honour, strengthened India? If so, consider the possibility that the act debased Hindu culture, shamed the nation across the world, increased the tensions between all communities and so weakened India".

Designed by an artist friend of Dharma's, the statement was printed on white type against a black background. Alongside appeared the names of 19 signatories. They included the scientist MS Swaminathan, the writer Vikram Seth, the former RBI Governor, IG Patel, the curator, Pupul Jayakar, the former Solicitor General, Ashok Desai, and the former Chief of Army Staff, K Sundarji. Although Dharma thought up and paid for the ad, and canvassed each signature, she did not — out of both propriety and modesty —

put her own name on it.

Notably, the list of brave, civic-minded Indians who signed Dharma's appeal began with six widely admired industrialists. These were Bharat Ram, RP Goenka, Lalit Thapar, Nanubhai B Amin, Raj Thiagarajan, and Desh Bandhu Gupta. That they signed this statement made it far more credible for the readers of the paper in which it appeared. It could not now be dismissed as the malignant handiwork of misguided jholawalas.

When I heard of the abrogation of Article 370, my mind went back to December 1992. The silencing of the millions of people in whose name this constitutional change was allegedly being enacted seemed — since it was done by a government and not a mob — an even greater violation of the republic's ideals. As I lay awake at night, I remembered Professor Dharma Kumar and what she had done. I was now in my sixties, as she had been in 1992. I had the same sort of position in our intellectual life as she had then. I, too, had a wide spectrum of influential friends in other professions.

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My first thought was to emulate my teacher, to draft a statement appealing to my fellow citizens to abjure crude triumphalism, alerting them to the moral and political consequences of this awful act. This statement might have said: "If you are a patriotic Indian, read on. Do you believe that the abrogation of Article 370 overnight and without deliberation enhanced national honour and strengthened India? If so, consider the possibility that the act undermined the Constitution, degraded our democratic ethos, and increased rather than decreased tensions between Kashmir and the rest of India".

Had I drafted this statement, I could have raised the money to pay for it to be printed in the leading newspaper of the day. Would I have had Dharma's success in getting people of comparable stature to sign? The writers and artists would have been easy work. But which contemporary analogues of Lalit Thapar or RP Goenka would have joined in?

I personally know at least a dozen industrialists even more successful than the ones Dharma had contacted. I know them to be honest, of liberal values, and democratic to the core. While some may have had reser-

variations about the existence of Article 370, none would have approved of the arbitrary, authoritarian manner in which it was removed. I could, I am sure, have drafted a statement which reflected their sentiments accurately and honestly. But, with perhaps only one exception, none would have put their names on it.

This is because — for all the other parallels I began this column with — in one critical respect, 2019 is not 1992. This is that the government now in power in New Delhi is far more vindictive and vengeful than the one that was in power when the Babri Masjid was demolished. When Bharat Ram and Lalit Thapar were approached by Dharma Kumar, they did not think that the fate of the tens of thousands of workers they employed would be put at risk by the mere act of their signing a statement. But were I to approach their counterparts today, even if they entirely approved of what I was trying to do, they would be too scared to sign on. They would have feared retribution, in the form of unannounced raids, cooked-up cases, arrests, and worse.

The comparison with the past is instructive, and with other democracies perhaps even more so. When President Trump imposed an arbitrary travel ban on citizens of six Muslim countries, the CEOs of his country's top companies rose in unison to oppose it. They could express their views openly — because they knew that the president and his cabinet did not have the power to set the FBI or the IRS upon them. These American entrepreneurs also knew that, for merely speaking their mind, they would not be abused by ruling party politicians and demonised in social media as enemies of the nation.

In India today, industrialists — even the most upright and patriotic — are far more fearful than they were in 1992. Like the people of the Kashmir Valley, they have been silenced by the state into submission; by different (but no less malevolent) means. That even the richest and most successful Indians cannot say in public what they truly think tells us all that we need to know about the state of our democracy in the year 2019.

The writer is a Bengaluru-based historian



JAYA JAITLEY

SHE SET AN EXAMPLE

We need more women leaders like Sushma Swaraj

EVER SINCE THE country heard the sad news of Sushma Swaraj's sudden passing, the highest words of praise have been heard repeatedly — dedicated politician, effective parliamentarian, excellent orator, competent administrator, compassionate foreign minister, a caring sister, a friend, a good wife and mother. There is almost nothing more to add. As we take in the enormity of the national loss and move on with a heavy heart, it strikes me that there is an important lesson for both men and women, who aspire to achieve something good out of politics, to learn from all these generous adjectives.

Sushma Swaraj pushed for the Women's Reservation Bill vigorously. But to me, she was a prime example of a capable and intelligent Indian woman working her way up to Parliament without the need for a law. The path in politics is strewn with thorns for all those not entitled women who want to serve the people of this country. Sushma had her share of problems in the beginning of her political journey as egos of leaders in the Janata Party got in the way of her aspirations. Yet she never demanded a smooth path, she found it herself. Most countries have a greater number of women in their legislatures than we do. This happens because their systems are structured so that patriarchal attitudes cannot stop them. Patriarchs do not suddenly become soft because there is reservation — they

soften only when women toughen up.

Feminists, who are the most vocal amongst those who call themselves progressive, liberal and secular, have often made snide comments about Sushma's outward conservatism — her big red *bindi* and *sindoor*, her public celebrations of Hindu festivals like Teej and Karva Chauth. Many of these feminists like to show they don't need men and do not believe in religion-oriented practices. While that is their personal choice, Sushma showed us that to be an effective politician and a representative of our country's traditions and culture, one does not have to show another face — neglect one's family, hide one's own beliefs. Family relationships and practices do not have to be compromised to do a job that requires a progressive outlook and a positive behaviour towards other human beings, irrespective of their politics and religious beliefs.

Sushma's political trajectory teaches us that a woman primarily needs confidence in herself, and hard work to hone her abilities, to serve the public good. While it helps to be a good orator, a party worker must keep the party's welfare above herself. A competent person can have many gifts, but it takes special dedication and commitment to learn Kannada in a month to communicate more effectively when fighting an ideologically and politically crucial election against Sonia Gandhi in Bellary. The contrast between an

Italian-born reading written speeches which betrayed a lack of familiarity with the language and an Indian demonstrating the ability in learning a new Indian language in a month was striking. It requires dedication and a firm belief in the cause.

All these aspects are qualities that are not exclusive to women. They must be part of any politician, and particularly among aspirational women. The premise that women should be confined to kitchens and their role is limited to bringing up children is disproved by Sushma Swaraj, who effectively demonstrated that women should not sacrifice one for the other, and men should not expect them to do so. Along with deep condolences to Sushma Swaraj's immediate family, one must salute Swaraj Kaushal, who did not compromise his work or his effectiveness in society to be a supportive and proud husband. The world must learn to accept what Sushma Swaraj has demonstrated — capable and sincere women in politics will only help with the task of addressing public needs, enable better governance, inject dignity and grace in the political discourse where male aggression is almost the norm, and through compassion, show people in difficulty that they are not alone.

The writer is former president of the Samata Party

AUGUST 9, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO



LAW VS ALLIANCE
UNMINDFUL OF THE attack that has been launched against him by Congress-IMPs, the new law minister, Shyam Nath Kacker, made it clear that he intended to pursue the cases being tried in the special courts. He said there is no proposal to drop the trial of Indira Gandhi and others going on in the special courts. Kacker told H K Dua in an interview that his position is clear: "I will not compromise on this issue and I will advise my colleagues not to compromise." The law minister said that Prime Minister Charan Singh, had told him that the Congress-I support to the new government was unconditional. Kacker's interpretation of unconditional support is

that there is no Congress-I rider that the government has to wind up the special courts.

PLAN CHANGES
MAJOR CHANGES IN sectoral priorities are revealed in the final draft of the Sixth Plan (1978-83) submitted by the Planning Commission to the prime minister and the Union cabinet. The document, which was sent out last Monday, gives much higher priorities to water supply and transport and communications than were accorded in the earlier draft. The deputy chairman of the Planning Commission, D T Lakdawala, is expected to meet PM Charan Singh some time this week to explain the broad features of f

the new draft. The revised document envisages a total public sector outlay of Rs 71,604 crore against Rs 69,380 crore stipulated in the earlier draft.

CHARAN MET INDIRA
PM CHARAN SINGH secretly met Indira Gandhi, twice during the last five days to seek her cooperation in facing a mid-term poll, according to the Janata Party General Secretary Nanaji Deshmukh. Charan Singh, he said, took the help of "such political elements who were removed from the seat of power by the people in 1977 only to install himself in office. He deliberately did it with the sole motive of inflicting a mid-term poll on the country."

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"The Indian government's decision to revoke the semiautonomous status of Kashmir, accompanied by a huge security clampdown, is dangerous and wrong. Bloodshed is all but certain, and tension with Pakistan will soar."

— THE NEW YORK TIMES

Once there was a commitment

The government may have given up on dialogue in Kashmir. But people of Kashmir must know that there are still people in this country for whom it is an article of faith



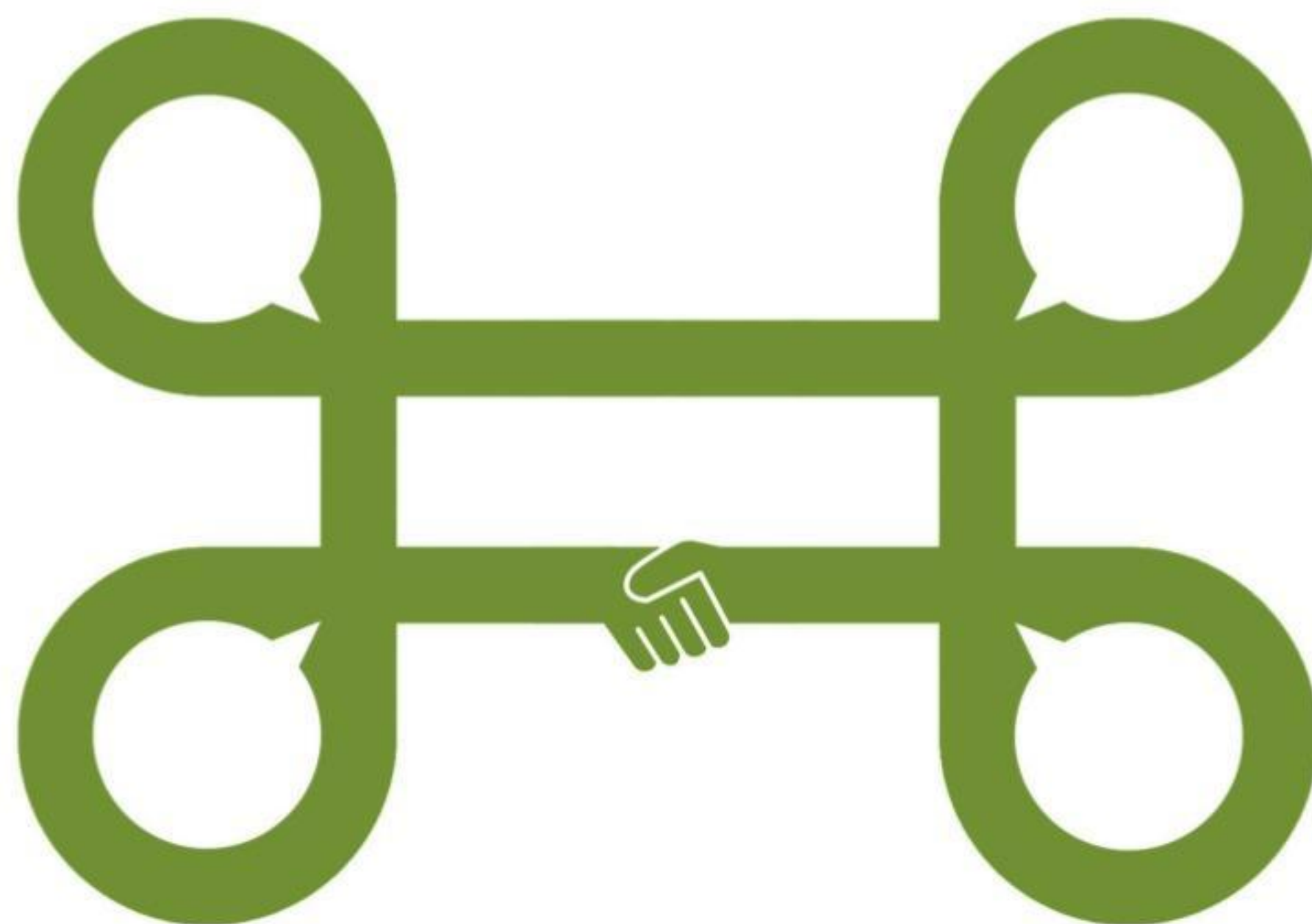
YASHWANT SINHA

ARTICLE 370 HAS gone. So has Article 35A. The state of Jammu and Kashmir has ceased to exist. It has been downgraded and split into two union territories, Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir. The first without a legislature and the second with a legislature; like the city states of Delhi and Puducherry. The decision of the government has been received with wild rejoicing in the rest of the country while Jammu and Kashmir remains completely shut down and under the heel of the boots of the security forces.

I was approached by a few media persons when these momentous events were unfolding in Parliament on the fateful day of August 5. One of their favourite questions was: The BJP has been committed to abolition of Article 370 from its Jana Sangh days; you were in the BJP until recently, so how can you have reservations now? It was a fair question. I thought about it and this is my explanation. The BJP had no qualms in sacrificing this commitment, along with its stand on the common civil code and the construction of the Ram temple at Ayodhya when it had to form coalition governments with parties opposed to its stand on these three issues. So, there was no question of pursuing them when Atal Bihari Vajpayee was prime minister during 1998 and 2004. What is even more important is the fact that his J&K policy was far, far removed from the present narrow, sectarian and warped view of the BJP. His policy of Insaaniyat, Kashmiriyat and Jamhooriyat stood in direct contradiction to the commitment to abolish Article 370. His approach to have a dialogue with all stakeholders including the Hurriyat, to resolve the problems of the state and bring peace to it and the actual initiation of the dialogue with the Hurriyat leaders by no less a person than the deputy prime minister and home minister of his government, I. K. Advani, who is now applauding the abolition of Article 370, was proof enough of his new approach. The matter could progress no further because the Vajpayee government was voted out of office in 2004.

What was the policy of the Narendra Modi government in its first incarnation, even if we forget the Vajpayee government's policy? Modi formed the government in Delhi towards the end of May 2014. Assembly elections were held J&K in November/December that year. It produced a fractured mandate. The PDP and National Conference were reluctant to come together and form a government. The BJP smelt an opportunity here and decided to form a coalition government with the PDP. Mufti Mohammad Sayeed was alive then. He was a tough negotiator and would not compromise on his core beliefs. There was nothing common between the two parties. In fact, they were poles apart in their ideology. Yet, they came together to form a government on the basis of a written agreement between the two parties on March 1, 2015. Some of the paragraphs of that agreement are worth reproducing here to show how shallow the commitment of the present rulers is to the abolition of Article 370. I may mention that Amit Shah, the current Union Home Minister, was the party president of the BJP then.

I can do no better than produce some of



CR Sasikumar

the excerpts from that agreement to make my point, "The PDP and the BJP have entered into a 'Governance Alliance' based on an agreement and agenda which is an effort towards seeking a national reconciliation on J&K."

"In a situation, where socio-political aspirations and grievances of the people have wide ranging differences, economic development on its own can neither bring about peace nor prosperity."

"While recognising the different positions and appreciating the perceptions of the BJP and PDP have on the constitutional status of J&K considering the political and legislative realities, the present position will be maintained on all constitutional provisions pertaining to J&K including the special status in the Constitution of India."

"The earlier NDA government led by Atal Bihari Vajpayee initiated a dialogue process with all political groups, including the Hurriyat Conference, in the spirit of 'Insaaniyat, Kashmiriyat aur Jamhooriyat'. Following the same principles, the coalition government will facilitate and help initiate a dialogue with all stakeholders, which will include all political groups irrespective of their ideological views and predilections. This dialogue will seek to build a broad based consensus on resolution of all outstanding issues of J&K."

Where are these high-sounding words today? Where is the promise of dialogue? The BJP members loudly asked the Opposition: "Who are these stakeholders?" Why ask them? Ask the government which people/organisations they had in mind when they talked of dialogue with the stakeholders? Where was the commitment of our leaders to the abolition of Article 370 when they promised in the agreement to maintain the "present position" on the special status of J&K in the Constitution? Or is it a commitment which can be jettisoned when it is necessary to do so for the sake of power either at the Centre or in J&K?

Yet, I can understand the position of the party on Article 370, but Article 35A is a recent addition. Bifurcation of the state and reducing its parts to the status of union territories was

never part of BJP's agenda. You expect us to stand and applaud when you jettison your "core beliefs" and again stand up and applaud when you bring them back. Tails I win and heads you lose.

As far as the present government's commitment to the unity and integrity of the country is concerned, let me remind you that in August 2015, the Modi government concluded, with fanfare, a "framework agreement" with the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-IM). Prime Minister Narendra Modi was present in the press conference in which this momentous agreement was announced. The Parliament and the people have not been taken into confidence about the contents of this agreement. But in May 2017, according to media reports, a spokesperson of NSCN-IM is reported to have said, "As of now, the Nagas have agreed to co-exist together under shared sovereignty."

What is this shared sovereignty? According to some sources, it could mean a separate constitution, a separate flag and many other separate institutions. The talks are still on; the details are fuzzy. But one thing is clear that with the Nagas, the government has no hesitation in discussing the concept of shared sovereignty. I am not against it; I am all for it. My only point is that if we can discuss that with the Nagas why are we coming down so hard on the Kashmiris? The reasons are not far to seek.

My heart goes out to the people of Kashmir today. I would want them to know that there are still at least some of us in India who believe in dialogue and reconciliation. For us, these words are not mere matters of convenience to be used when it suits us and to be discarded when it does not. For us, these are articles of faith. I have been trained in the school of Jayaprakash Narayan. For me, "will, not force is the basis of state", if I could borrow an expression from political scientist TH Green. And here it is the will of the people of Kashmir which must prevail.

The writer is a former Union external affairs and finance minister

A solution that raises questions

Triple talaq needed to go. But the law criminalises men, while providing few safeguards for wronged wives



SAMEENA DALWAI

WHEN RAKHAMABAI, A 19-year-old Sutar woman from Bombay was dragged to the Colonial Court in 1884, she had very little legal recourse. When she refused to live with her husband upon puberty, he sought restitution of conjugal rights, a concept imported to Hindu law by the British. British courts and the police accepted that the husband is the lord and master of his wife. Instead of following the customary law applicable to lower-caste Hindus and getting a simple *kadimod* (a custom involving literal breaking of a straw signifying breaking of the marital bond) in front of the Sutar panchayat, Rakhambai had to face criminal charges before British judges. Her trial became a major event in India and England. It was to decide the fate of Hindu marriage. The question before the court was whether Hindu women have a right to renounce a pre-puberty marriage solemnised by their guardians.

The concept of Hindu marriage was discussed by legal and religious luminaries and the court was told by the likes of Lokmanya Tilak that Hindu marriage — unlike Muslim marriage which was a contract — was a sacrament. Kanyadot was the "gift" of a virgin daughter to a suitable — from obviously, the same caste — bridegroom. Since the girl was just a "gift" in this transaction, her consent to the marriage was immaterial. The court accepted this and asked Rakhambai to either go back to her husband or face imprisonment. The matter resolved only after the Sutar panchayat intervened and Rakhambai paid heavy monetary compensation to the husband. She went off to America to become the first woman doctor to practice gynaecology in India.

What if Rakhambai was Muslim? The matter would have been much simpler. She could have just utilised the concept of "option of puberty" and repudiated her marriage, which had been solemnised when she was a minor. Islamic marriage is a contract between a husband and wife. With *mehar* or dowry as a monetary consideration that flows from husband to wife upon acceptance of the offer of marriage. Both parties have a right to break off the contract by paying compensation to the other party. Young Muslim brides in colonial India routinely used this religious and customary right — an option not available to a British or Hindu bride. With its possibility of divorce, entitlement of maintenance and property rights both within and after the dissolution of a marriage, Islamic law was considered favourable to women in colonial public discourse.

Now, some 100 years later, we have somehow come to believe that Islamic law is archaic and barbaric towards women. Based on this belief, the Triple Talaq Bill has been passed by Parliament, paving way for criminalising the act of oral instant talaq as a way of ending a marriage. The result being that the ruling party can rejoice that they

have saved Muslim women. We need to be reminded that saving Hindu women from Sati, child marriage and widow tonsuring was used by the British to justify colonial aggression in India. The plight of the women of a community is an easy sociopolitical gimmick employed to vilify a community.

While teaching family law, I witness the dismay of my students when they realise how unfair all personal laws are to women — be it Hindu, Muslim, Christian or Parsi. For example, to get rid of a violent husband, a Christian woman would have to prove cruelty and bigamy on the part of her husband. Or, for instance, that despite the requirement of monogamy in marriage prescribed by the Hindu Marriage Act, it is almost impossible for a Hindu wife to send her husband to jail for bigamy. Husbands have proved time and again in Court that the second wife is actually not so. Sometimes the first marriage itself is shown to be lacking "essential ceremonies" of *homam* and *saptapadi*, as a result of which it is invalid in the eyes of law. To obtain maintenance for women and children is an uphill task in courts, and though Hindu joint family property can now be inherited by daughters, their share is mostly given to their in-laws as dowry. Courts, at times, support the right of the family to control their daughters' behaviour, sexuality, and marriage choices regularly. Not dissimilar to the instantly displaced Muslim woman due to the oral talaq, deserted women — Hindu women who are neither married nor divorced but merely thrown out of their matrimonial homes — are found in every village.

History shows that dogmatic religious practices have been opposed by progressive forces in every community. Hameed Dalwai, my paternal uncle, was the torchbearer of Muslim social reform. He led the first march against triple talaq in 1967 through the streets of Bombay. Following Jyotiba Phule's *Satyashodhak* or truthseekers, he started Muslim *Satyashodhak Samaj* in 1970 in Pune. His organisation was also at the forefront of support for Shahbano against her husband's tyranny, especially when the Congress government changed the law to accommodate the antiquated clerics. So, it is assumed that Hameed Dalwai would be pleased to know that Parliament has outlawed and criminalised triple talaq. But he died at the age of 44 in 1977 — much before the Babri Masjid demolition changed the country's atmosphere and Muslims became a hunted minority, before the Sachar Committee showed us that the economic condition of Indian Muslims has deteriorated more than that of Dalits, and much before the lynching of Muslims by mobs on suspicion of beef eating.

The 2017 triple talaq judgment of the Supreme Court was won for Muslim women by Muslim women themselves — women divorced by triple talaq with assistance from Muslim feminist organisations went to the Supreme Court. Their legal victory has been taken over by the BJP government and turned into legislation that criminalises men rather than one that provides the assurance of shelter and financial security to women in case their marriage breaks down. Must we rejoice?

The writer is associate professor at Jindal Global Law School



GARGI MISHRA

Our notions of motherhood

Bill to promote altruistic surrogacy gives short shrift to women's agency

THE LOK SABHA passed the Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill 2019 on Tuesday. The Bill aims to regulate the practice of surrogacy in India and allow only "ethical altruistic surrogacy". The Bill was first introduced in the lower house in November 2016, then referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Health and Family Welfare. It was introduced and passed by the Lok Sabha again in December 2018 without incorporating most of the recommendations of the Committee, but lapsed. The 2019 Bill is identical to the Bill of 2018.

It showcases the state's heavy reliance on criminal law for managing social issues, criminalisation of choice and prejudiced ideas of what constitutes a family. The Bill disallows single, divorced or widowed persons, unmarried couples and homosexual couples from pursuing surrogacy to have children. It stipulates that only a man and woman married for at least five years, where either or both are proven infertile, can avail of surrogacy. This is blatantly discriminatory and arbitrary.

India's jurisprudence recognises the reproductive autonomy of single persons, the rights of persons in live-in relationships and fundamental rights of transgenders. In *Navtej Singh Johar vs Union of India*, Supreme Court, having decriminalised consensual same-sex between consenting adults, held that the law cannot discriminate against same-sex partnerships and that it must "take positive steps to achieve equal protection". Single persons

have the right to adopt children in India. The Bill is out of step with these developments.

The Bill and its immediate ancestors significantly diverge from earlier, more rational policy positions. Guidelines issued by Indian Council of Medical Research in 2002 and the draft Assisted Reproductive Technologies (Regulation) Bills 2010 and 2014 had permitted commercial surrogacy. The shift to altruistic-only surrogacy was made in the context of sensational news reports about cases of surrogate babies being abandoned and exploited — surrogate mothers being kept in "surrogacy brothels" and rich foreigners using the bodies of poor Indian women to have children. In 2015, a public interest litigation, *Jayshree Vad vs Union of India*, was filed in the Supreme Court which cited these media reports and sought to end commercial surrogacy in India. Prompted by the court, the government declared in October 2015 that it did not support commercial surrogacy and would allow only infertile Indian couples to avail of altruistic surrogacy. The Surrogacy Bill of 2016 was a result of this change of intentions.

There is undoubtedly a danger of exploitation and abuse in commercial surrogacy. The cases that have come up establish that possibility. But formulating a law on the basis of exceptions is ultimately counterproductive. Exploitation takes place because of the unequal bargaining power between the surrogate mother and the surrogacy clinics, agents and intending parents. This can be ad-

ressed by a strong regulatory mechanism that introduces transparency and mandates fair work and pay for the surrogate mothers. Viewing commercial surrogacy as inherently exploitative and banning it only expands the potential for exploitation as it would force the business underground.

Further, criminalisation of commercial surrogacy is a refusal by the state to actually consider the exercise of agency that leads a woman to become a surrogate mother. Interviews with women who chose to provide gestational services for a fee have shown that it is a well-considered decision made in constrained economic conditions. A ban on commercial surrogacy stigmatises this choice and reinforces the notion of the vulnerable "poor" woman who does not understand the consequences of her decisions and needs the protection of a paternalistic State.

As per the Bill, the surrogate mother must be a "close relative" of the couple. This is premised on the mistaken belief that exploitation and vulnerability do not exist within the family. Knowing the reality of patriarchal families in India, the stigma of infertility, the pressure of producing children to maintain lineage and the low bargaining power of women, it can be expected that young mothers will be coerced into becoming surrogates for their relatives. The Bill moves the site of exploitation into the private and opaque sphere of the home and family.

One cannot but question the ethics of this.

The severance of commerce from pregnancy is also tied in to the notion of motherhood being something natural, sacrosanct and above considerations. To be paid for the reproductive labour evokes unease and claims of "dehumanisation" and "commodification" in certain opponents of commercial surrogacy.

The Bill mandates the commissioning couple to only pay for the medical expenses and an insurance cover of sixteen months for the surrogate mother. The Standing Committee had recommended a model of compensated surrogacy which would cover psychological counselling of the surrogate mother and/or her children, lost wages for the duration of pregnancy, child care support, dietary supplements and medication, maternity clothing and post-delivery care. The Bill should, at the very least, incorporate these provisions.

The Bill, as it stands, is a poor attempt at regulating reproductive technologies and preventing exploitation of women. Surrogacy is an important avenue for persons to have a child through a willing surrogate mother who can also benefit monetarily from the process. The Bill, that gives short shrift to women's agency, does little to extend this possibility.

The writer is a gender rights lawyer based in Delhi

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

NEW KASHMIR

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Now, win the peace' (IE, August 8). Articles 370 and 35A hindered the integration of J&K into India. One can now hope for a new J&K, which is a part of the nation, where you do not hear incidents of people throwing stones at security personnel.

Srishti Raturi, via e-mail

BAND AID

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Cut to reform' (IE, August 8). RBI cutting rates are a band aid solution. The disposable income of the common person is not increasing to the extent that it can provide a leg up to consumption. Businesses have lost their animal spirits. Educated youths are compelled to compete for low-paying jobs. The government has ambitious aims to make the country a \$5-trillion economy. But where is the road map for this purpose?

Deepak Singhal, Noida

WIN TRUST

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Un-belonging' (IE, August 7). Being unsafe in your own house is a terrible feeling. One can imagine what the Kashmiris are going through. Even with Article 370, there was discontent among the people and removing the article is likely to aggravate their sense of alienation.

Akshata Anil Rupnawar, Pune

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

To encourage quality reader intervention, The Indian Express offers the Letter of the Week award. The letter adjudged the best for the week is published every Saturday. Letters may be e-mailed to editpage@expressindia.com or sent to The Indian Express, B-1/B, Sector 10, Noida-UP 201301. Letter writers should mention their postal address and phone number.

THE WINNER RECEIVES SELECT EXPRESS PUBLICATIONS

CREATE AWARENESS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Equality at last' (IE, August 7). The abolition of triple talaq is a good move. In several Muslim families, women fear this practice. It remains to be seen how the government enforces this piece of legislation. It should create awareness about the rights of divorced women.

Alisha Khan, Prayagraj

TELLING NUMBERS

Sex ratio at birth: Kerala on top, Northeast states show decline

THE SEX RATIO at birth (SRB) in the country, defined as the number of female births per 1,000 male births, improved from 914 to 919 between the third and fourth National Family Health Surveys (NFHS), carried out in 2005-06 and 2015-16 respectively. The highest improvement was in Punjab at 126 points, but its SRB remained among the lowest among the states at 860 in NFHS-4. The sharpest decline was in Sikkim, where the SRB dropped 175 points to reach 809, the lowest among all states in 2015-16. These trends emerge out of state-wise data tabled by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in reply to a question during the recently concluded Parliament session.

Next to Punjab, the highest improvement in SRB was in Kerala, by 122 points from 925 in 2005-06. Its 1,047 in 2015-16 was the highest SRB among all states.

2015-16: TOP 6 & BOTTOM 6

Kerala	1,047
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	1,013
Meghalaya	1,009
Chhattisgarh	977
Tripura	966
Goa	966
Punjab	860
A&N Islands	859
Puducherry	843
Haryana	836
Delhi	817
Sikkim	809

Source: NFHS-4 via Ministry of Health

HIGHEST IMPROVEMENT

State	NFHS-3 (2005-06)	NFHS-4 (2015-16)	Change
Punjab	734	860	+126
Kerala	925	1,047	+122
Meghalaya	907	1,009	+102
Haryana	762	836	+74
Tamil Nadu	897	954	+58
Maharashtra	867	924	+57

SHARPEST DECLINE

State	NFHS-3 (2005-16)	NFHS-4 (2015-16)	Change
Sikkim	984	809	-175
Jharkhand	1,091	919	-172
Arunachal	1,071	920	-151
Assam	1,033	929	-104
Mizoram	1,025	946	-79
Manipur	1,014	962	-51

Source: Ministry of Health & Family Welfare

THIS WORD MEANS

PREDICTIVE SHOPPING/ANTICIPATORY SHIPPING
 Using algorithms to anticipate orders and deliver faster

AMAZON HAS over the past few years developed and patented a technology called 'anticipatory shipping', which enables it to package items for a certain geographical area even before a customer has placed an order. The precise delivery address can be added after the order has been placed, and customers in certain places can receive their order in under 30 minutes. Amazon can 'anticipate' orders because it has an abundance of actionable data about its customers, and knows when a customer is likely to buy what. It can use this foresight to get into 'predictive' shopping, most probably with the consent of customers. Amazon has held the patent for anticipatory shipping for several years, but with the latest advances in deep learning and AI, it is now in a position to roll out the technology with significant accuracy. E-commerce companies have been

doing this manually, especially for products bought repeatedly, say, diapers or toilet paper. They would reach out to customers days before a pack might be expected to run out, and offer to send more; or offer a subscription for delivery at pre-defined intervals. With predictive shopping, an e-commerce company uses algorithms that know, based on a customer's earlier purchases, the product that she will want at a particular point in time, and ships it to her. Online companies are gradually reducing the distance between warehouses and customers to cut shipping time. Across the world, more hubs are being created to cater to more remote areas. Anticipatory shipping can help keep a product ready closer to a potential customer. In case she wants it, the package is already nearby.

NANDAGOPAL RAJAN



How land relates to climate

A major new IPCC report has underlined the contribution of food production to climate change. As a source as well as a sink of carbon dioxide, land and its use, including agriculture, are key to climate conversations

AMITABH SINHA
 PUNE, AUGUST 8

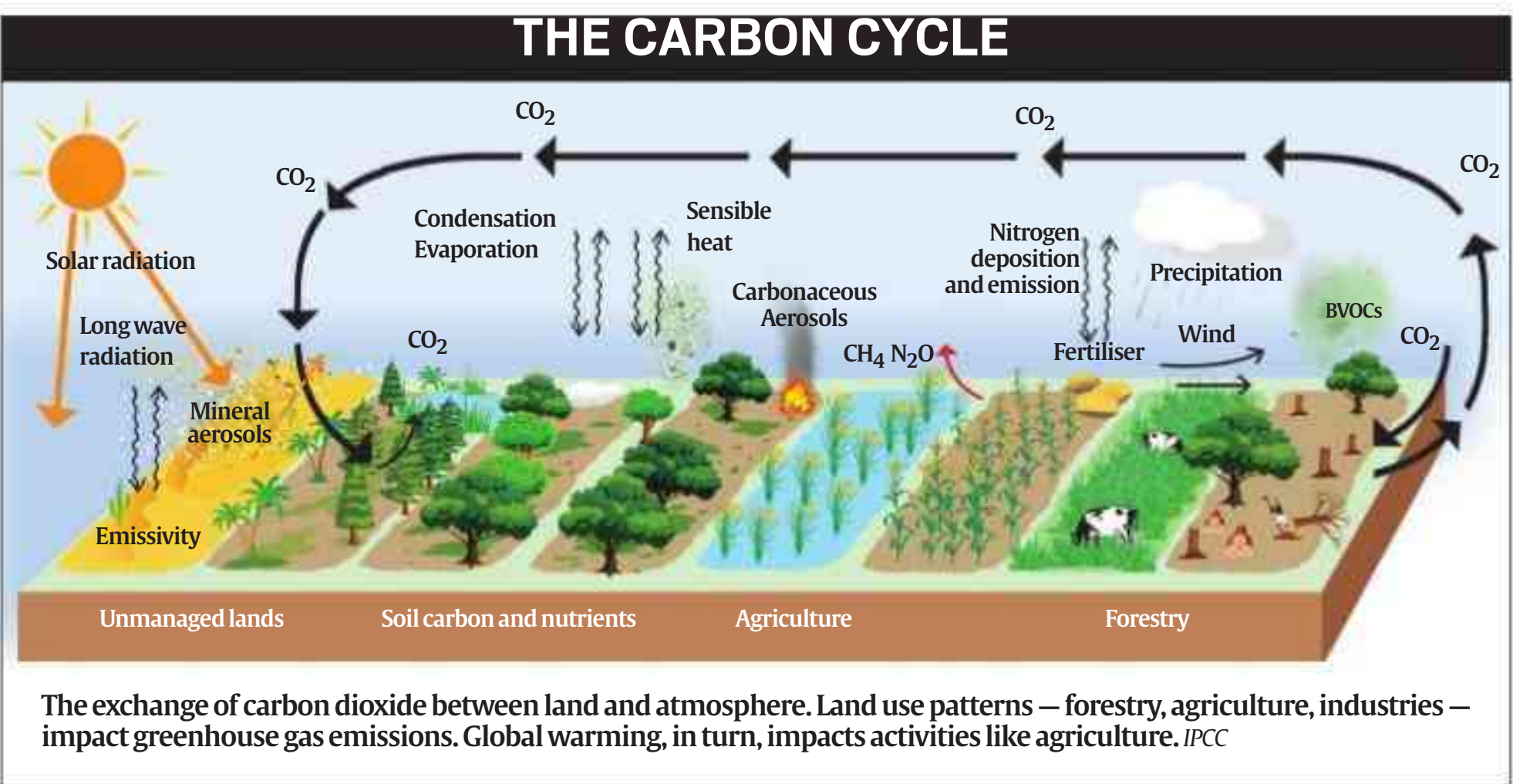
A NEW report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released Thursday presents the most recent evidence on how land affects, and is affected by, climate change. What use land is put to — forestry, agriculture, industries, urbanisation — has an impact on greenhouse gas emissions. At the same time, activities like agriculture are directly impacted by global warming. The Geneva-based IPCC is mandated by the United Nations to assess the science related to climate change. It produces periodic reports, called Assessment Reports, that provide a comprehensive account of the state of climate system.

Among the headline statements, the report says land-based activities like agriculture, forestry and "other land use" contribute almost a quarter of all greenhouse gas emissions in a year. This amounts to about 12 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent every year.

It says that the global food system, which would include activities such as cattle rearing, agriculture, food processing industries, energy and transportation, could account for as much as a third (21 to 37 per cent) of all greenhouse gas emissions.

The report, after assessing all different kinds of impacts due to land-use and changes in land-use, provides the possibilities of containing emissions from land in different future scenarios of land-use, without compromising on global food security.

Land & climate change
 Land use and changes in land use have always been an integral part of the conversation on climate change. That is because land acts as both the source as well as a sink of carbon. Activities like agriculture and cattle rearing, for example, are a major source of methane and nitrous oxide, both of which are hundreds of times more dangerous than carbon dioxide as a greenhouse gas. At the same time, soil, trees, plantations, and forests absorb carbon dioxide for the natural process of photosynthesis, thus reducing the overall carbon dioxide content in the atmosphere. In fact, nearly 50 per cent of all carbon dioxide generated on earth is trapped by land and oceans, and the rest is released in the atmosphere. In a complex but constant natural interaction known as the carbon cycle, car-



bon dioxide is continuously exchanged among land, ocean and atmosphere. The debate over the life spans of carbon dioxide in ocean, land and atmosphere is not yet settled. The contribution of livestock — cows, pigs, even chicken generate emissions, mainly methane — to greenhouse gases is also contested.

Because of the fact that land is both the source as well as a sink of carbon dioxide, large-scale changes in land use, like deforestation or urbanisation, or even a change in cropping pattern, have a direct impact on the overall emissions of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

The impact of land use changes on emissions is a separate point of discussion at the international climate change negotiations. And, activities like afforestation or restoration of forests are considered important strategies in the fight against climate change. India's action plan on climate change too has a crucial component on forests. India has promised that it would create an additional carbon sink of about 2.5 billion to 3 billion tonnes by 2032 by increasing its forest cover, and planting more trees.

The IPCC report
 This is the first time that the IPCC, whose job it is to assess already-published scientific literature to update public knowledge of climate change science, has focused its atten-

tion solely on the land sector. It is part of a series of special reports that IPCC is doing in the run-up to the sixth Assessment Report (AR6) that is due around 2022.

Last year, the IPCC had produced a special report on the feasibility of restricting global rise in temperature to within 1.5°C from pre-industrial times. Later this year, it is scheduled to come out with a special report on ocean systems and cryosphere. These three reports were specifically sought by the governments to get a clearer picture of specific aspects of climate change. For the first time, a majority of the scientists who contributed to the report belonged to developing countries.

The assessment
 The report says that the land sector had been contributing about 5.2 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide (not all greenhouse gases) every year between 2007 and 2016. During this same period, the land sector absorbed almost 11.2 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide every year. "The sum of (these two processes)... gives a total net land-atmosphere flux that removed about 6 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide per year during 2007 and 2016," it says.

About the impact of climate change on land systems, the report notes that 25 per cent of ice-free land was subject to degradation due

to human use. And that this process was being exacerbated by climate change. Global food security was already under threat because of warming, changing precipitation patterns and greater frequency of extreme weather events, and this could come under further risk.

The report points out that that nearly 25 per cent of all food produced globally was either lost or wasted. And even the decomposition of the waste releases emissions.

Suggestions
 IPCC reports do not offer any policy prescriptions. They do not even recommend the best course of action. Instead, they just provide the possible pathway scenarios under different assumptions of responses offered by countries. It does mention that reduction in food waste, sustainable agriculture practices, and shifting of dietary preferences to include more plant-based food could avoid a part emissions emanating from land systems without jeopardising food security. In fact, it would also have co-benefits in terms of human health.

It says it was possible to avoid between 2.3 and 9.6 billion tonnes of CO2 equivalent per year from agriculture and livestock activities by the year 2050. Similarly, it was possible to avoid up to 8 billion tonnes of CO2 equivalent every year by the year 2050 just through a change in people's dietary habits.

DECODING
MODI'S ADDRESS ON J&K

Words and ideas in the Prime Minister's speech



IN HIS ADDRESS to the nation two days after Parliament ratified his government's decision to end the special status of Jammu and Kashmir and split the state into two Union Territories, Prime Minister Narendra Modi sought to explain the reasons for the move, and to allay the misgivings of a section of the population.



MODI SPOKE directly to the people of India, including those in Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, and assured them that Article 370 of the Constitution had been removed for their benefit, to fulfill the aspirations of the people, and to lift roadblocks on the path to development and progress of the region.

IN HIS SPEECH, delivered in Hindi, the Prime Minister used the words Jammu-Kashmir and Ladakh 65 times and 28 times respectively, and referred to *desh*

(nation) 22 times. There were 18 mentions of *sarkar* (government), 10 mentions of *log* (people), and eight of *vishwas* (faith). Article 370 was mentioned on seven occasions.

SHRUTINAIIR

Why Gujarat and MP are arguing over Narmada water and hydro power

ADITIRAJA
 VADODARA, AUGUST 8

OVER THE last two weeks, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat have engaged in war of words over the sharing of Narmada river waters. Madhya Pradesh has threatened to restrict the flow of water into the Sardar Sarovar Dam, located in Gujarat. This was after Gujarat, in April, had requested the Narmada Control Authority for permission — which was granted — not to start generation at a power house until the dam fills to its full level.

The power equation
 The Sardar Sarovar Project includes two power houses, the River Bed Power House (RBPH; 1,200 MW) and the Canal Head Power House (250 MW). Power is shared among Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat in a 57:27:16 ratio. The RBPH has been shut since 2017, when the gates were closed and the reservoir height was raised

to 138.63 m. Gujarat has sought that generation should not start until the water reaches the full reservoir level (FRL).

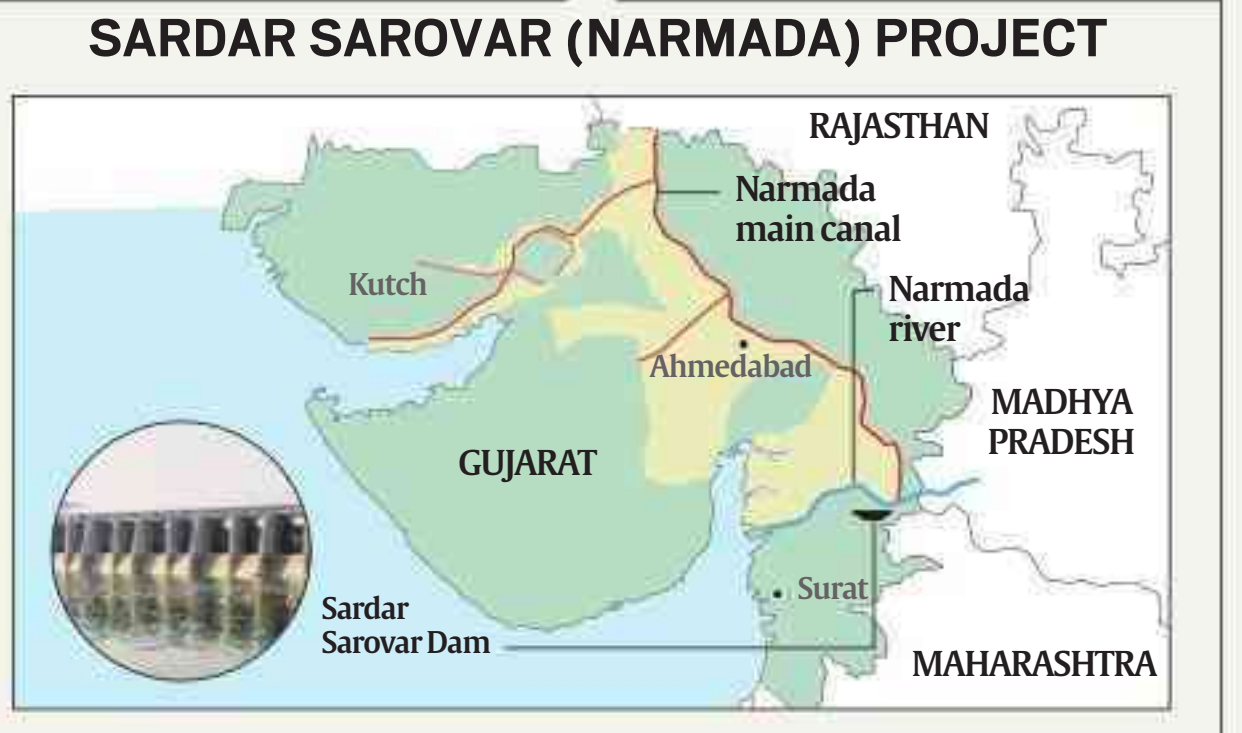
"The protocol is that once the dam crosses 131 m, we ought to release some water as it fills to its FRL. For this, we have to resume power generation in the RBPH, where the turbines release the water downstream into the river. If the inflow exceeds the capacity of the water released by the turbines after power generation, then too we have to open the gates. The dam cannot just be filled to 138.63 metres without balancing the outflow," said Rajeev Kumar Gupta, Managing Director, Sardar Sarovar Narmada Nigam Ltd (SSNNL).

On Thursday, the SSNNL issued a circular announcing an upcoming 6-cusec release, in keeping with the 131m protocol. The current level is 129.65 m

What Gujarat wants
 In April, the SSNNL approached the Narmada Control Authority which granted its request not to start production until the

water reaches 138.63 m. Gujarat has been facing a rain deficit in 2017 and 2018, when the reservoir reached levels of 130.75 m and 129 m. Engineers in Gujarat say reaching the FRL is necessary for testing whether the concrete can withstand the thrust at that level. The construction has lasted close to five decades with gaps of several years. Filling the reservoir is possible only when the RBPH is closed because the water used for generating hydro power cannot be reused — it is drained into the sea. The Garudeshwar Weir is still being constructed to store water released after generation of power at the RBPH. Once the weir is ready, the water can be stored and pumped back using reversible turbines during non-peak hours of the grid, officials say.

Why MP objects
 While MP Chief Minister Kamal Nath has indicated that the state will follow the Authority guidelines in letter and spirit, the government has raised an objection to its consent to Gujarat, terming it 'unilateral',



and has refused to share its surplus water with Gujarat that would allow the reservoir to be filled. MP took that position after frequent power outages led to discontent, the

political power having just changed hands. The BJP attacked the government saying MP has returned to the "dark days" of the previous Congress rule of 1993-2003. The gov-



Knee-jerk

Pakistan must reconsider its decision to downgrade diplomatic ties with India

Pakistan's decision to expel India's High Commissioner, snap trade relations and observe August 15 as a black day in supposed solidarity with the people of Jammu & Kashmir is a serious setback for diplomatic relations. Wednesday's announcements appear to be a knee-jerk reaction to the mounting pressures on the Pakistani establishment to respond to India's executive-legislative actions that whittle down Article 370. Pakistan has consistently described chief ministers of Jammu & Kashmir as "puppets" and never recognised the legitimacy of the government in Srinagar. Its sudden concerns about India's actions in its own territory are reflective of muddled confusion. Ironically, this is the first time Islamabad has articulated that Article 370 was aligned with the interests of the Kashmiri people. Every Pakistani government and the country's permanent establishment have continued to peddle the myth that they could unilaterally alter the status quo in J&K. Now, they feel compelled to respond to the expectations that they have themselves raised in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir. Sections of Indian civil society have legitimate concerns about the actions of the BJP Government in emptying out Article 370 and the continuing lockdown of the Valley, but this does not license Pakistan to interfere in what the MEA correctly described on Thursday as India's internal matter.

In the days to come, India can expect Pakistan to raise the Kashmir issue at the United Nations, mobilise the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and send envoys to friendly capitals. India is well placed to deal with Pakistan on the diplomatic front given the changed international context. India's economic clout has grown enormously in the last couple of decades, and given doubts in the Western world about Pakistan's overt and covert support to Islamist terror, New Delhi has the space to deal with Islamabad's efforts to "internationalise" the Kashmir issue. Downgrading diplomatic relations between troubled neighbours is never a good idea. Neither is snapping trade and transport links. India withdrew its High Commissioner to Pakistan after the 2001 Parliament attack, but chose not to send back the Pakistani envoy at the time. However, the Pakistani High Commissioner was expelled by India after the Kaluchak terror strike in 2002. It's interesting to note that despite all the troubles the two countries have had, High Commissioners have been able to return to their jobs since full diplomatic relations were restored in 1976. In fact, even after the 2001 Parliament attack, India and Pakistan managed to have their High Commissioners back in place by March 2003. Diplomacy is a mechanism to ensure that channels of communication remain open. While India and Pakistan have used back channels in recent years, the presence of seasoned diplomats in Delhi and Islamabad has always benefited the two countries. Pakistan needs to comprehend this.

Cycle of extremes

India must address its crippling cycles of drought and flood with redoubled vigour

After a worrying pre-monsoon phase between March and May, when rainfall was scarce, the current robust season in most parts of coastal, western and central India augurs well for the entire economy. Aided apparently by beneficial conditions in the Indian Ocean, very heavy rainfall has been recorded, notably in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, the north-eastern States, Karnataka, the Konkan coast, hilly districts of Kerala and Tamil Nadu. This pattern may extend into the eastern regions. A normal Indian Summer Monsoon is bountiful overall, but as last year's flooding in Kerala, and the Chennai catastrophe of 2015 showed, there can be a terrible cost. Distressing scenes of death and destruction are again being witnessed. Even in a rain-shadow region such as Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu, the collapse of a railway parcel office after a downpour has led to avoidable deaths. What this underscores is the need to prepare for the rainy season with harvesting measures, as advocated by the Jal Shakti Abhiyan, and a safety audit of structures, particularly those used by the official agencies. In drafting their management plans, States must be aware of the scientific consensus: that future rain spells may be short, often unpredictable and very heavy, influenced by a changing climate. They need to invest in reliable infrastructure to mitigate the impact of flooding and avert disasters that could have global consequences in an integrated economy.

The long-term trends for flood impact in India have been one of declining loss of lives and cattle since the decadal high of 1971-80, but rising absolute economic losses, though not as a share of GDP. It is important, therefore, to increase urban resilience through planning. Orderly urban development is critical for sustainability, as the mega flood disasters in Mumbai and Chennai make clear. It is worth pointing out that the response of State governments to the imperative is tardy. They are hesitant to act against encroachment of lake catchments, river courses and floodplains. The extreme distress in Chennai, for instance, has not persuaded the State government against allowing structures such as a police station being constructed on a lake bed, after reclassification of land. Granting such permissions is an abdication of responsibility and a violation of National Disaster Management Authority Guidelines to prevent urban flooding. As a nation that is set to become the most populous in less than a decade, India must address its crippling cycles of drought and flood with redoubled vigour. Scientific hydrology, coupled with the traditional wisdom of saving water through large innovative structures, will mitigate floods and help communities prosper.

Economic milestone and a poignant anniversary

Bank nationalisation eased rural credit and aided financial inclusion. Any move to reverse it would be self-defeating



R. RAMAKUMAR

The nationalisation of banks in 1969 was a watershed moment in the history of Indian banking. From July 19 that year, 14 private banks were nationalised; another six private banks were nationalised in 1980. It is certain that one cannot locate a similar transformational moment in the banking policy of any country at any point of time in history.

At the time of Independence, India's rural financial system was marked by the domination of landlords, traders and moneylenders. In 1951, if a rural household had an outstanding debt of ₹100, about ₹93 came from non-institutional sources. From the 1950s, there were sporadic efforts to expand the reach of the institutional sector, particularly in the rural areas. Despite these measures, the predominantly private banking system failed to meet the credit needs of the rural areas.

Class to mass banking

India's banking policy after 1969 followed a multi-agency approach towards expanding the geographical spread and functional reach of the formal banking system. First, as a part of a new branch licensing policy, banks were told that for every branch they opened in a metropolitan or port area, four new branches had to be opened in unbanked rural areas. As a result, the number of rural bank branches increased from 1,833 (in 1969) to 35,206 (in 1991). Second, the concept of priority-sector lending was introduced. All banks had to compulsorily set aside 40% of their net

bank credit for agriculture, micro and small enterprises, housing, education and "weaker" sections. Third, a differential interest rate scheme was introduced in 1974. Here, loans were provided at a low interest rate to the weakest among the weakest sections of the society.

Fourth, the Lead Bank scheme was introduced in 1969. Each district was assigned to one bank, where they acted as "pace-setters" in providing integrated banking facilities. Fifth, the Regional Rural Banks (RRB) were established in 1975 to enlarge the supply of institutional credit to the rural areas. Sixth, the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) was constituted in 1982 to regulate and supervise the functions of cooperative banks and RRBs.

The outcomes of such a multi-agency approach were admirable. The share of institutional sources in the outstanding debt of rural households increased from just 16.9% in 1962 to 64% in 1992.

Growth spurring

India's nationalisation experience is an answer to mainstream economists who argue that administered interest rates cause "financial repression". According to this view, if the government administers interest rates, the savings rate would decline, leading to a rationing of investment funds. On the contrary, India's nationalisation led to an impressive growth of financial intermediation. The share of bank deposits to GDP rose from 13% in 1969 to 38% in 1991. The gross savings rate rose from 12.8% in 1969 to 21.7% in 1990. The share of advances to GDP rose from 10% in 1969 to 25% in 1991. The gross investment rate rose from 13.9% in 1969 to 24.1% in 1990.

Nationalisation also demonstrated the utility of monetary pol-



A.M. FARUQUE

icy in furthering redistributionist goals. Some economists argue that banks cannot be used to right "historical wrongs". On the other hand, India's nationalisation shows that monetary policy, banks and interest rates can be effectively used to take banks to rural areas, backward regions and under-served sectors, furthering redistributionist goals in an economy.

A retreat

Yet, strangely, arguments in favour of financial liberalisation after 1991 were based on the theory of financial repression. The Narasimham Committee of 1991 recommended that monetary policy should be divorced from redistributionist goals. Instead, banks should be free to practise commercial modes of operation, with profitability as the primary goal.

Taking the cue, the Reserve Bank of India allowed banks to open and close branches as they desired. Priority sector guidelines were diluted; banks were allowed to lend to activities that were remotely connected with agriculture or to big corporates in agri-business, yet classify them as agricultural loans. Interest rate regulations on priority sector advances were removed.

The outcomes were immediately visible. More than 900 rural bank branches closed down across the country. The rate of growth of agricultural credit fell sharply from around 7% per annum in the

1980s to about 2% per annum in the 1990s. This retreat of public banks wreaked havoc on the rural financial market. Between 1991 and 2002, the share of institutional sources in the total outstanding debt of rural households fell from 64% to 57.1%. The space vacated by institutional sources was promptly occupied by moneylenders and other non-institutional sources.

A to and fro

The government and the RBI probably saw the danger coming. In 2004, a policy to double the flow of agricultural credit within three years was announced. Only public banks could make this happen. So, in 2005, the RBI quietly brought in a new branch authorisation policy. Permission for new branches began to be given only if the RBI was satisfied that the banks concerned had a plan to adequately serve underbanked areas and ensure actual credit flow to agriculture. By 2011, the RBI further tightened this procedure. It was mandated that at least 25% of new branches were to be compulsorily located in unbanked centres.

As a result, the number of rural bank branches rose from 30,646 in 2005, to 33,967 in 2011 and 48,536 in 2015. The annual growth rate of real agricultural credit rose from about 2% in the 1990s to about 18% between 2001 and 2015. Much of this new provision of agricultural credit did not go to farmers; it largely went to big agri-business firms and corporate houses located in urban and metropolitan centres – but recorded in the bank books as "agricultural credit". For this reason, the share of institutional credit in the debt outstanding of rural households in 2013 stood at 56%, still lower than the levels of 1991 and 2002. Yet, in achieving the high growth of credit provision, the expansion of public bank branches was pivotal.

After 2005, public banks also played a central role in furthering the financial inclusion agendas of successive governments. Between 2010 and 2016, the key responsibility of opening no-frills accounts for the unbanked poor fell upon public banks. Data show that more than 90% of the new no-frills accounts were opened in public banks. Most of these accounts lie dormant or inactive, but it is unmistakable that the fulfilling of the goal required the decisive presence and intervention of public banks. The same public banks were also India's vanguard during the global financial crisis of 2007 when most markets in the developed world, dominated by private banks, collapsed.

However, despite such a stellar track record, the macroeconomic policy framework of successive governments has hardly been supportive of a banking structure dominated by public banks. In times of slow growth, the excess liquidity in banks was seen as a substitute for counter-cyclical fiscal policy. Successive governments, scared of higher fiscal deficits, encouraged public banks to lend more for retail and personal loans, high-risk infrastructural sectors and vehicle loans. Here, banks funded by short-term deposit liabilities were taking on exposures that involved long-term risks, often not backed by due diligence. Unsurprisingly, many loans turned sour. Consequently, banks are in crisis with rising non-performing assets. The same fear of fiscal deficits is also scaring the government away from recapitalising banks. The solution put forward is a perverse one: privatisation. The goose that lays golden eggs is being killed.

R. Ramakumar is NABARD Chair Professor at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai

A leaf out of the Chinese playbook

India's actions in Kashmir increasingly show an authoritarian muscularity, reminiscent of its northern neighbour



PALLAVI AIYAR

It has been possible to argue that comparing Asia's two largest countries, China and India, is akin to holding up an apple to an orange. This is not because the challenges facing them are so very different. Neither China's authoritarian polity, nor India's democratic one have prevented large-scale corruption, environmental degradation, yawning inequalities or food contamination scandals from raising their ugly heads on both sides of the border. But what has kept the two from being Himalayan birds of a feather thus far is their markedly divergent temperament and foundational culture.

The potency of this divergence however, is being increasingly diluted, with the Indian state beginning to sound and act like the country it has long had a schizophrenic relationship with. (Modern day India wants to both be China and not-China: a six lane highway-filled, manufacturing powerhouse that is praised for its political openness and liked for its yoga.)

The abrogation of the special

status that gave autonomy to Jammu and Kashmir and more crucially, the style in which this was achieved – relying on secrecy, troops, arrests, curfew and a communications shutdown – has brought India closer than ever before to the 'results oriented,' actions, unhindered by political debate and democratic niceties, of authoritarian China.

Pacifying restive regions

One obvious commonality between New Delhi and Beijing has been their need to grapple with, and pacify, the restive regions on their peripheries: Kashmir and the Northeast in India, Tibet and Xinjiang in China. All of these regions are home to peoples of a religion that is different from that of the country's majority: Muslim (Kashmir/Xinjiang), Lama Buddhist (Tibet), Christian (Northeast India). All are home to ethno-nationalist movements demanding independence or greater autonomy.

Both China and India have declared these border areas as "integral" parts of their territory and refuse to countenance the possibility that they might be disputed. (China claims that Tibet has been part of the country for over 700 years.)

People with dissenting interpretations are labelled "splitists" or "separatists". The periphery is seen as crucial to national securi-



A.P.

ty, while being described as backward, in need of development assistance.

In China, the ruling Communist Party of China portrays itself as having 'liberated' the people of Tibet and Xinjiang from the backward norms of their religions, ending the feudal dominance of religious leaders, bringing equality to women and economic development to the regions. In fact, many Han Chinese believe that Beijing excessively panders to these provinces by giving them special sops. For example, Tibetans were always excluded from the notorious One Child Policy that restricted most Han families to a single child.

Equality before law, economic development, the empowerment of women: these are all arguments being touted today in favour of ending Jammu and Kashmir's special status; for anyone familiar with China, they render a strong

feeling of déjà vu.

Yet, all this rhetoric skirts the reality of egregious human rights abuses that both countries have used in their nation-building endeavours. Torture, rape, illegal detentions, extra-judicial killings and a militarised environment have ensured that hearts and minds have not been won. A common identity has failed to develop, and as the China case demonstrates, this is not because of too much autonomy.

Dibyesh Anand, Professor of International Relations at the University of Westminster, has argued that both India and China are "postcolonial informal empires", whose anti-imperialist rhetoric disguises their imperialistic attempts to "consolidate and discipline their borderlands."

But what used to distinguish India from the more common charges of colonialism faced by China was the fact that the people of Jammu and Kashmir had been provided guarantees under Articles 370 and 35A of the Indian Constitution, along with a strong foundation to build a system of local governance. The ban on non-locals buying land, and permanently settling in the State, also prevented demographic engineering like the large-scale Han migration into Tibet and Xinjiang.

Independent India's crowning achievement to date has been the

development of institutional mechanisms for negotiating large-scale diversity and accommodating frequent, aggressive disagreements. This is an achievement that deserves as much awe and respect as China's economic miracle. It might be less shiny and more chaotic, but it is, in its own way, quite spectacular.

Debate and contestation are not a discardable option for India but an existential necessity. Historically, India has been a civilisational rather than territorial entity, more metaphysical than geographic. It is a nation held together not by language, religion or geography, but by an idea. Multiplicity is foundational to this idea. It is what has allowed India to persist and flourish as a political unit, despite the once widespread belief in the West that an independent India would inevitably Balkanise.

The new choices that the Indian government is making may well help cover up some of the cracks that its relatively liberal history was unable to weld. It may also fail to do so and lead to complete rupture. But the risk of India forsaking its own sources of strength – pluralism and debate – to emerge as a second rate copy of its muscular, nationalist neighbour to the north is clear.

Pallavi Aiyar is the author of the China memoir, 'Smoke and Mirrors'

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.

Blackout

Consequent to the scrapping of the special status accorded to Jammu and Kashmir, the imposition of curfew and large-scale deployment of troops for security reasons was understandable. But a complete snapping of communication is puzzling and against democratic principles (Editorial, "Blackout", August 8). When the government has taken such a bold step to abrogate Article 370, why should it now try and hide actual information? The rest of India is anxious and entitled to know what is happening in J&K. Some sections of the media report many in Jammu having welcomed the decision of integration and of calm prevailing. But how is this to be verified? Official information is generally a one-way process which

could black out what could be unfavourable to them. It would be prudent if the government takes steps to remove the restrictions imposed on the communication flow and the movement of people.

D. SETHURAMAN,
Chennai

■ If the intention behind the Central government's abrogation of Article 370 was to ensure the full integration of Kashmir with the Indian Union so that it could enjoy all benefits available to the rest of the country, what was the need to enforce a massive lockdown and communication blackout that is causing enormous hardship to civilians? Many Kashmiris outside the State are under stress unable to contact their families back home. It is akin to the rigorous restrictions Israel imposes on Palestinians that

one reads about. Unless the restrictions are eased soon, alienation among the Kashmiris is bound to increase manifold, which may go against the objective of a mainstreaming emotionally as well.

M.P. MURALIDHARAN,
Bengaluru

■ The complete shutdown is actually helping in the spread of rumours and the dissemination of propaganda. It is time for normalcy to be restored in the Union Territory so as to stop the misgivings in the minds of Kashmiris and allowing them to get on with life.

V. PADMANABHAN,
Bengaluru

■ Draconian measures such as the imposition of curfew, cutting off the information flow and arresting key political leaders have only

vitiated the environment. It is akin to undeclared emergency where the common man is the one most affected. The fact that there was no dialogue at the ground level before announcing the far-reaching changes in J&K has only made matters worse.

D.B.N. MURTHY,
Bengaluru

Sushma Swaraj

Sushma Swaraj belongs to a rare class of politicians who transcended political lines. Many in India and abroad will miss her for her commitment. The country has lost an able administrator and an outstanding parliamentarian. Her record as External Affairs Minister has been phenomenal, extending a mother's touch to all those in distress. Scaling several heights in politics and governance at a very young

age, she is the right model for today's youth. Telangana remembers her as its "Chinnamma".

SATISH REDDY KANAGANTI,
Tippurthy, Nalgonda, Telangana

■ As Health Minister in the Vajpayee government, Ms. Swaraj's visit to Kerala in 2003 remains golden. During her visit, she got to know of two schoolchildren with HIV, shunned by society and refused education as there were reservations by some school parents. There was also an indifferent political class. The children were at a public function where she was present. On getting to know of their plight, she hugged them and assured them of help.

T.V. SREERAMAR,
Puducherry

■ Ms. Swaraj's memorable tweet, that the "Indian Embassy will help you even

on Mars" signifies the level of commitment and positivity she had towards her job. A strong leader, she will always be remembered for her humanitarianism.

AVIK SETHI,
Zirakpur, Mohali, Punjab

Roaring tiger

India is now home to a significant percentage of the global tiger population. But the point now is that when the carrying capacity of forests is breached, tigers will be forced to migrate to new places, in turn making them vulnerable to poaching and infrastructural projects that pass through wildlife corridors. It is pertinent to monitor the health of wildlife corridors as they are vital to sustain the current tiger population.

ABHISHEK M.R.,
Ajikarad, Udipi, Karnataka

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Does the Medical Commission Bill encourage quackery?

PARLEY

Training practitioners to head health centres is worth trying, but with strong regulations

On August 1, the Rajya Sabha passed the National Medical Commission Bill, 2019, which provides for the training of certain health-care practitioners for modern medicine. The medical fraternity has vehemently opposed this idea and feels that the Bill will encourage 'quackery'. R. Prasad converses with Sujatha Rao and Anant Bhan on the possible ramifications of the Bill. Edited excerpts:



Sujatha Rao
is former Union Secretary of Health

What is the doctor-patient ratio in India, and how acute is the shortage of allopathic doctors, particularly in rural areas?

Sujatha Rao (SR): As you know, we don't have credible data. But estimates show that there could be about eight lakh doctors actively practising, which would mean that we need an additional five lakh doctors, but that's just a gross estimate. The differentials come between the northern and southern States. There is no doubt that there is adequate number of doctors in both Kerala and Tamil Nadu, whereas in Bihar and the northern States, there is an acute shortage. Again, there is a differential between the rural and urban areas, as a large number of doctors tend to cluster in urban areas. So, even in the so-called surplus States like Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, you may find it difficult to find doctors in the tribal areas or in the very backward rural areas though overall, they may not be as badly off as the northern States.

India as a whole also has a huge shortage of specialists. So, you may have doctors but it does not necessarily mean that they can adequately address certain diseases. The whole question of doctor-population ratio as per the World Health Organisation (WHO) norms doesn't really have much of a meaning. You have to really split it and look at the issue in a granular manner.

Anant Bhan (AB): With allopathic doctors, historically, we have had some degree of shortage. I think there have been attempts to try to address that by opening more medical colleges. We've also had many State-level initiatives to increase the number of medical seats. So, I

mean, there is a clear urban-rural divide; there is also an inter-State divide that is quite stark. Some States seem to be doing fairly well as compared to even probably the WHO requirements. But in many other parts of India, there is an acute shortage. Finally, you might have enough doctors in terms of numbers, but will they actually stay on in rural areas if posted there?

What initiatives have been taken to address this shortage?

SR: There are three broad reasons why the public policy has been weak vis-à-vis the doctors in rural areas. One is inadequate investment; two, the incentive structures have been very weak; and three, the nature of work that a doctor in a primary health-care setting is expected to do in a rural area is very different from the kind of training he gets as an MBBS doctor. So, he's not really toiled and trained to cope with the public health issues. Public health is a very weak area of instruction in an MBBS course.

We have not been able to have a proper training programme that really enables young doctors to go and work in rural areas. In terms of bridging this gap, yes, Chhattisgarh and Assam did work on having a three-year-trained physician, something like the old LMPs (Licentiate Medical Practitioners). They're really very good. I do believe that you don't need full-fledged five-year-trained MBBS doctors to deal with some of the basic public health issues in rural areas. What could be adequate are three-year-trained public health practitioners, who would really address all our infectious diseases and public health requirements of the rural poor. This is how this whole community health worker debate started in 2010.

AB: From what I understand, there are three or four ways in which governments have tried to increase the number of doctors working in rural areas. One is by using incentives for practice in rural areas. We've had a mixed bag with that. In States like Chhattisgarh, that has worked for a limited amount of time. The other model that has been



There is a clear rural-urban divide when it comes to the number of doctors in India. A doctor examining a child in Andhra Pradesh. • GETTY IMAGES

used is that of a 'bond' – once you are trained with government support, you have to serve for a certain number of years after your MBBS or after your postgraduation. That has also been a mixed bag; in some States it has been implemented, in other States, it has been very poorly implemented. The third idea is having in-service, postgraduation seats. The government reserves postgraduation seats specifically for those candidates who work for a certain number of years with the government. That has helped to some extent. These are the three or four models. [But] I don't think we have really had a comprehensive way of being able to respond to the gap yet.

Do you think short-term training of people who don't have medical qualification would be sufficient?

SR: I have seen them in the field and they are not good enough to cope with the challenges. I liked what they did in Chhattisgarh with the three-year course. They trained them [the students] in medical colleges like any other student but then restricted them to public health. I'm not very interested in these bridge courses and six-month programmes. I don't think they can be very effective.

AB: The bridge course is an interesting approach. I think it is not the unqualified medical practitioners

who are being trained but formal health-care providers of some kind, whether they are nurse practitioners; or nurses who are being converted to nurse practitioners; or AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy) doctors. All of them have had some health experience.

The question is: Will a six-month course be enough? And what exactly does it train them to do differently than what they were already doing? If they are to be deployed as middle-level care providers or community health officers, do they have adequate skills at the end of six months? And on what empirical evidence is that six-month period being decided? I think reducing the training to six months is a bit of a concern. I guess the reason they're doing this is that it is difficult to get candidates to be trained beyond that, or maybe governments are not willing to stay at them for longer.

Do you think the short-term training of community providers will lead to substandard care for the rural population?

SR: For whatever reasons, doctors are not going to rural areas and there is a huge gap between demand and supply. Now, there has to be a sort of short-term measure. Auxiliary nurse midwives, who are trained for 18 months, are already giving antibiotics and are also in-

involved in immunisation programmes. Even if the nurses stay for 16 months or 18 months as a nurse practitioner, then it's going to be a game changer. But then there must also be a focus on quality. Our bureaucrats are constantly looking for numbers. So they come with all the silly ideas of three- and six-month training [courses] and force the system to churn out substandard training and we end up with people giving substandard treatment.

AB: We already allow certain kinds of health-care providers [non-doctors] to give medicines. The question is: How wide should the scope of such practice be? But I think that fundamental redesign where [such providers] will be heading the health and wellness centres is an experiment worth trying.

Who do you think should be chosen to undergo this training?

SR: Nurses, if trained well, can be a great asset. Or you can have, like in Chhattisgarh, the three-year trained rural medical practitioners. AYUSH doctors provided with some public health training could be a great asset. But I am wondering whether that's the appropriate cadre to bring in as AYUSH by itself has so many strengths. Why on earth are we getting well-qualified AYUSH practitioners to practise allopathic medicine? But then, there's also the political [angle], where AYUSH doctors want to get into government service by becoming mid-level providers.

AB: Individuals currently being considered are certified health providers of some kind. They are not qualified to be allopathic doctors but they are qualified to be nurses or AYUSH doctors.

The individuals who have been considered for even the middle-level care provider positions are people who are within the health system already, or who have trained in some way already and could be taking on this additional position. So, it's in a sense retraining [or] additional training for them.

There are two models for health and wellness centres – AYUSH doctors going through a bridge course, or nurse practitioners going through a bridge course. The Chhat-

tisgarh and Assam model is currently not being tried out. [But considering that] it worked fairly well for rural health care, it's also an experiment worth looking at. However, they [these courses] faced so much opposition from the doctors' collectives, especially the IMA [Indian Medical Association]. And that is going to be an issue whenever you try to scale up any of these programmes. Yet, we don't really have an alternative model.

Further, unless we try out some of these experiments, we will never know and the status quo is not something we should be finding acceptable any longer. I think we've had rural populations and large sections of the population suffering for many years due to the absence of quality health care, and that needs to change. And if that requires certain experiments to happen, those should certainly be tried. But [it should be tried] with regulation, with adequate planning, with adequate lead time, with evidence gathered about whether it works or not.

Do you foresee a situation where the solution, in the form of community health providers, becomes a problem bigger than the shortage of doctors we face today?

SR: It depends on how the designing and implementation goes along. If they [the government] do it all in a hurried way, then the prognosis is not going to be good. But if they have a plan, then it can be a game changer.

But perceptions of patients are changing, preferences are changing, people are not willing to settle even for a nurse. In a State like Kerala, they're not willing to look at even MBBS doctors, they only want specialists. So, these partially trained people may not get preference and may fall by the wayside.

AB: For better or worse, we have to see how the experiment goes. I think a continuous redesign, actually having a strong evaluation framework, a strong regulatory governance framework is extremely important. My sense is that if the experiment fails, it will be abandoned before the number of these providers is too high. I think the key equation is whether this experiment is worth trying or not.



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Much ado about little

Hollowing out of Article 370, which had become a shadow of its original self, doesn't come as a surprise

MOHAMMED AYOOB

The government's decision to abrogate Jammu and Kashmir's special status was duly rubber-stamped by Parliament. Provisions of Article 370 were used selectively to undermine the basic thrust of the Article, namely, regional autonomy.

Close observers of the Indian scene had anticipated this action for some time for a number of reasons.

First, this move has been part of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)'s agenda since it was established in April 1980. It had also been a part of the founding agenda of its predecessor, the Jana Sangh, since Shyama Prasad Mookerjee launched it in 1951. The BJP, when in office from 1998 to 2004, was unable to implement it because it was part of a coalition, and other members of the coalition were averse to any such action.

Erosion began in 1953

Second, and more important, over the years, Article 370 had become merely a shadow of its original self and, therefore, largely redundant as far as the governance of Jammu and Kashmir was concerned.

The process of its erosion began in 1953 with the removal of Sheikh Abdullah from the office of Prime Minister of Kashmir by the Jawaharlal Nehru government on suspicion that he harboured secessionist tendencies. To stay in power, Abdullah's successors, especially Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed and Mir Qasim, were more than willing to see the Centre expand its tentacles into the State by successively amending or distorting Article 370.

The Congress Party, which is shedding tears today at the abolition of the State's special status, was primarily responsible for the attrition of its autonomy over six decades.

Even after Sheikh Abdullah returned to power in 1975 by accepting a watered-down version of the autonomy guaranteed under Article 370, Jammu and Kashmir's special status continued to be more a myth than reality. This was demonstrated very clearly in the 1980s when Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi forced the Na-

tional Conference, led by Farooq Abdullah, into a shotgun marriage with the Congress Party.

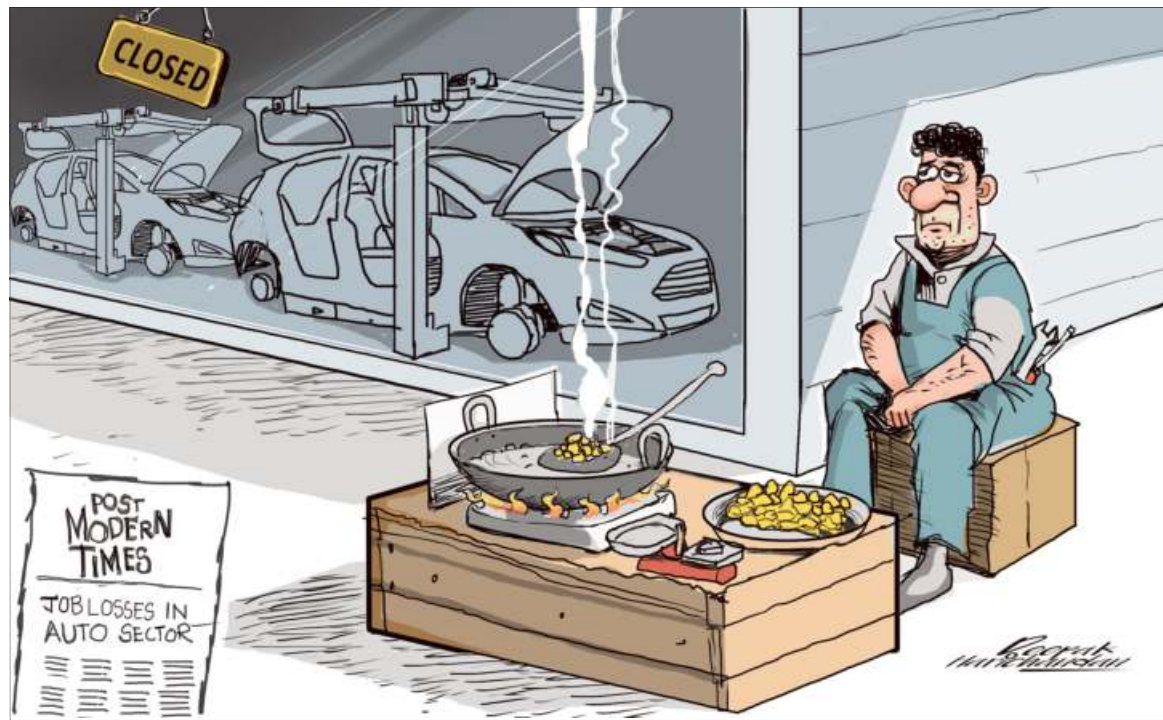
The 1987 elections were allegedly rigged to deny the Muslim United Front a sizeable number of seats in the State Assembly that it was projected to win. The insurgency and terrorism in the Valley in the past three decades can be traced directly to this folly that turned peaceful opponents into violent adversaries. It played directly into Pakistan's hands and provided it the opportunity to export terrorist groups into Kashmir to create mayhem and anarchy.

Article 370 had, therefore, become merely a symbol without any real content of Jammu and Kashmir's autonomy and special status. New Delhi's interference in the State was of a far greater order than was the case with any other State in the Union. The Narendra Modi-Amit Shah duo have merely removed the veneer of the State's special status, thus exploding the myth that India's only Muslim-majority State was being shown greater favour by the Centre in comparison with other States. This myth helped Hindu nationalist forces to mobilise not only against

Articles 370 and 35A; it also contributed hugely to their propaganda that Congress governments were engaged in appeasing Muslims. Jammu and Kashmir's "special status" can no longer be used as a stick to beat Muslims from the rest of the country, who should distance themselves from this controversy for two reasons. First, the Hindutva propagandists will tout any opposition as "anti-national". Second, Muslims in other parts of India owe nothing to Kashmiri Muslims who have in fact become an albatross around their necks by not unequivocally opposing the violence committed by terrorists among them and by raising "azadi" slogans. Further, Muslims from Kashmir have not exactly shown empathy when it comes to the vital concerns of Muslims in the rest of India.

While in the hierarchy of journalists, Hollingworth would be somewhere in the upper atmosphere and I in the lower depths of the Pacific, luck is thankfully agnostic in its favours. It was the 2014 Nobel season and Malala Yousafzai was a favourite to win

Mohammed Ayoob is Senior Fellow, Center for Global Policy, Washington DC



NOTEBOOK

In the right place, at the right time

On being the first Indian to report on Kailash Satyarthi's Nobel win

P.J. GEORGE

Reporting is driven by curiosity, skill, experience, and, sometimes, pure luck.

Journalists who happened to be in the right place at the right time have delivered some of the greatest scoops in the business. Clare Hollingworth, the great war correspondent who broke the news of the outbreak of the Second World War, figured it out when the wind blew apart a cloth separator at the Germany-Poland border while she was crossing it, and she got a momentary glimpse of tanks parked in the valley below, ready to move into Poland.

While in the hierarchy of journalists, Hollingworth would be somewhere in the upper atmosphere and I in the lower depths of the Pacific, luck is thankfully agnostic in its favours.

It was the 2014 Nobel season and Malala Yousafzai was a favourite to win

the Peace Prize. Unlike the science and literature prizes that are announced in Stockholm, Sweden, the Peace Prize is Norway's territory. The winner is announced by the Norwegian Nobel Committee in Oslo in October. This is where the 'right-place-right-time' part falls into place.

Arctic programme

I had reached Oslo at the beginning of October for a slew of interviews and to learn about Norway's Arctic programme. The then-Indian President Pranab Mukherjee was set to arrive in the Norwegian capital a few days later, and a focus area of the visit was India's Arctic programme at Himadri Station, the base located in Norway's Svalbard.

After several days of interviews and presentations, by October 10, I was thoroughly horrified by the potential impact of melting polar ice caps and rising sea levels, and had sought

refuge in my hotel room. It was then that a sympathetic contact in the Norwegian Foreign Ministry mentioned that my press pass could get me into the Peace Prize announcement at the Norwegian Nobel Institute, a few minutes' walk away.

Given the chance to break the tension over impending climatic doom with some award-winning drama, I walked into the press meet and hung around at the back of the room. There was considerable buzz among the media since Ms. Yousafzai was in the running; so when the Nobel Committee chair and former Norwegian PM Thorbjorn Jagland spoke her name, two Japanese television journalists standing near me started screaming 'Malala, Malala' at their cameras and had to be shushed by the rest of the journalists. By then, I had completely missed the second winner's name.

Fortune favours even the

not-so-bold since, seconds later, the circular with the press statement reached the back of the room, and my brain caught on that Kailash Satyarthi was also a winner.

Framing a question

My body took a few more seconds. Then I rushed to the front row on the authority of my shared brown skin with the winners. That worked, since Mr. Jagland quickly acknowledged my raised hand. It was also unfortunate as I was yet to frame a question with enough gravitas on an Indian and a Pakistani sharing the Peace Nobel.

After a short staring contest with the former Premier, I managed to blurt out a tolerable question which got a passable answer. I plopped down immediately after that to file a copy for *The Hindu's* website, becoming the first Indian to report on that historic event.

The Hindu

FROM THE ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO AUGUST 9, 1969

'Social control' of private sector

The formulation of a policy for the "social control" of the private sector is now understood to be engaging the attention of the Union Government, which is at present considering the recommendations of the Industrial Licensing Policy Enquiry Committee. In the course of its recommendations, the Committee has evolved the concept of "joint sector" which refers to the private sector firms, a substantial part of whose production operations is financed by public financing institutions. While State participation in private firms through the financial institutions has been there for a number of years now, the Committee has urged the adoption of more effective State control. Besides the State getting its representation in the management of the private sector units, the Committee has suggested that the financial institutions should insist on the whole or part of their assistance in the form of loans and debentures being convertible into equity at their option. The Committee has suggested that the law should be amended, if necessary, to provide for this.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO AUGUST 9, 1919

Lala Lajpat Rai. Unable to Return.

Lala Lajpat Rai writes in 'Young India' of New York: I am exceedingly sorry that the Secretary of State's order prevents my going to India and England just when I wanted most to be there. India is in the grip of a terrible famine and the conditions there are very distressing. For the last 25 years of my life I have been taking active part in the work of famine relief and it pains me considerably to feel at this juncture that I should be unable to do anything for my people. Events are developing rapidly in India and every Indian who feels for his country and is desirous of taking part in its life must feel that his place is there in the midst of his countrymen and not 12,000 miles away from home in a position of comparative safety, comfort and ease. Personally I am not sorry for having been in the United States during the war, but now I am overwhelmed with a sense of guilt at not being in India, to play my part in the great struggle which my countrymen are carrying on against such great odds. This war was fought to free the world. Its immediate effect is the tightening of the chains of those who were in bonds before and who were induced to fight for world of democracy. Will the governing classes learn nothing from history?"

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड

वर्ष 12 अंक 149

भ्रामक राजकोषीय घाटा

केंद्र सरकार की उधारी के बारे में बीते कुछ वर्षों में लगातार सवाल उठाए गए हैं। अब यह सिलसिला चरम पर है। जैसा कि इस समाचार पत्र ने भी प्रकाशित किया था, नियंत्रक एवं महालेखा परीक्षक (सीएजी) ने संसद के दोनों सदनों तथा 15वें वित्त आयोग को बताया था कि केंद्रीय बजट के आंकड़ों में केंद्र सरकार की बजट से इतर देनदारियों को शामिल नहीं

किया गया। सीएजी ने कहा कि वह इन आंकड़ों को बजट अनुमान का हिस्सा बनाना चाहता है। हालांकि, सरकार का कहना है कि वह पहले ही 2019-20 के बजट में जरूरत से अधिक प्रावधान कर चुकी है क्योंकि मूलधन की अदायगी के प्रावधान और बजट से परे ली गई उधारी के ब्याज भुगतान का प्रावधान भी बजट के माध्यम से किया जा रहा है।

सरकार का यह भी कहना है कि बजट से इतर ली गई उधारी को राजकोषीय घाटे के अनुमान में शामिल करने की कोई औपचारिक जरूरत नहीं है। इस मामले में सरकार काफ़ी हद तक सही है लेकिन दूसरी ओर औपचारिक जरूरत की अपील करना इस संदर्भ में एक कमजोर दलील है। आखिरकार वित्त आयोग के पास यह अधिकार है कि वह सरकार द्वारा प्रयोग की जाने वाली औपचारिक परिभाषाओं को बदल सके। संभव है कि सरकार प्रक्रियागत मामले में सही हो लेकिन सीएजी के पास भी यह शिकायत करने का पर्याप्त वजह है कि राजकोषीय घाटे का आंकड़ा, वित्त वर्ष के दौरान सरकारी व्यय और सरकार के ऋण व्यवहार को भलीभांति परिलक्षित नहीं करता।

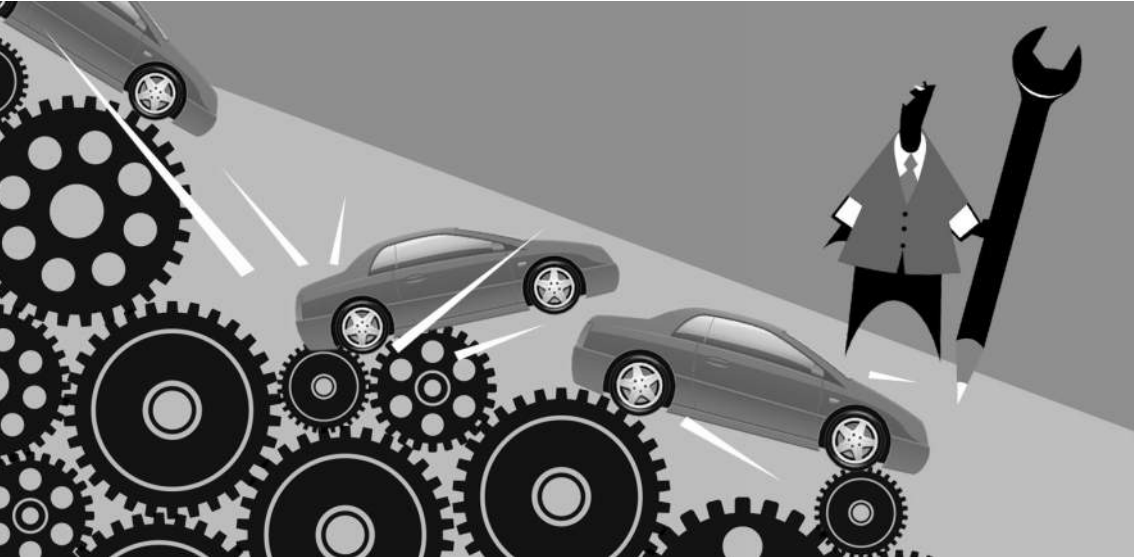
उसका कहना है कि राजकोषीय घाटे का वास्तविक स्तर 6 फीसदी के आसपास है जबकि सरकार ने 2019-20 के बजट आंकड़ों में इसके 3.3 फीसदी रहने का दावा किया है। सरकार उचित ही यह शिकायत कर सकती है कि राजकोषीय घाटे का वक्तव्य मौजूदा स्वीकार्य परिभाषा के अनुरूप है। परंतु इस बात का विश्वसनीय दावा नहीं किया जा सकता है कि राजकोषीय घाटे का आंकड़ा ही राजकोषीय विवेक का आकलन करने की दृष्टि से उचित है।

इस कठिनाई को दूर करने का सही तरीका होगा राजकोषीय घाटे के बजाय सरकारी क्षेत्र की उधारी को जरूरतों को आंकना। इसके अलावा सरकारी कर्ज के प्रवाह के चर को आंकना जो न केवल बजट व्यय और बजट

से इतर की देनदारी को ही नहीं बल्कि सरकार की अन्य आकस्मिक देनदारियों को भी ध्यान में रखता है। इससे इस बात का पारदर्शी परिदृश्य सामने आएगा कि केंद्र सरकार भविष्य की पीढ़ियों पर किस हद तक कर्ज का बोझ डाल रही है। साथ ही यह भी पता चल सकेगा कि सरकारी उधारी के कारण कितना निजी निवेश में किस कदर कमी आ रही है। देश के सार्वजनिक वित्त के स्थायित्व की दृष्टि से यही दोनों सबसे अधिक मायने रखते हैं। फिलहाल तो यह आंकड़ा अवांछित रूप से बढ़ा हुआ होगा। सरकार ने सरकारी उपक्रमों मसलन भारतीय खाद्य निगम आदि का इस्तेमाल इस तरीके से करना शुरू किया है जैसा कि पहले सोचा भी नहीं गया था। उनकी सांवरिन गारंटी का अर्थ यह है कि वे

बाजार से कर्ज ले सकते हैं और खाद्य सॉब्सिडी जैसी सरकार की व्यय प्रतिबद्धताओं की भरपाई कर सकते हैं। इस प्रकार राजकोषीय घाटा सरकार की वास्तविक राजकोषीय स्थिति को छिपा लेता है।

वित्त आयोग शायद इस व्यवहार को सामने रखेगा और इस बात पर नए सिरे से विचार करेगा कि सरकारी व्यय और उधारी का अंकगणित किस प्रकार पेश किया जा रहा है। ऐसा पुनर्आकलन न केवल सरकार को सरकारी निवेश और बचत की योजना में मदद करेगा बल्कि व्यापक निवेश समुदाय की दृष्टि से भी यह अहम होगा क्योंकि उसे राज्य के चयन की स्पष्ट समझ और सरकारी ऋण बाजार की भविष्य की स्थिति के बारे में उचित जानकारी की जरूरत है।



विनय सिन्हा

वाहन उद्योग में गिरावट और औद्योगिक नीति

जरूरत इस बात की है कि इस क्षेत्र को वृद्धि का वाहक बनाया जाए और इसे किसी भी तरह के पतन की आशंकाओं से बचाकर रखा जाए। इस संबंध में विस्तार से जानकारी दे रहे हैं श्याम पोनप्पा

औद्योगिक नीति की बात करते ही तरह-तरह की प्रतिक्रियाएं सामने आने लगती हैं। मुक्त बाजार के हिमायती जहां इसकी आलोचना करते हैं, वहीं सरकारी हस्तक्षेप में यकीन करने वाले इसके समर्थन में उतर आते हैं। परंतु जैसा कि अर्थशास्त्री दानी रोड्रिग ने एक दशक पहले कहा था, हकीकत इन दोनों से अलग है। विकासशील देशों में आगे की राह न तो तगड़े सरकारी हस्तक्षेप से निकलती है और न ही सरकार को अर्थव्यवस्था से पूरी तरह दूर रखने से। हालांकि कई बार आयात में रियायत, नियोजन और सरकारी स्वामित्व के कारणों से सफलता मिली है। भारत में अंतरिक्ष शोध संगठन इसरो इसका उदाहरण है। परंतु अक्सर ऐसी सफलताएं अतिरिजना के चलते या लचीलेपन की कमी के चलते नाकामी और संकट में तब्दील हो गई हैं। इसी प्रकार, उदारीकरण के कारण भी नियंत्रकों, वित्तीय बिचौलियों तथा कुछ कुशल कर्मियों को लाभ मिला लेकिन अक्सर यह व्यापक आर्थिक वृद्धि सुनिश्चित कर पाने में नाकाम रही।

इस मुद्दे पर भी मतभेद नजर आते हैं कि विकास की प्रक्रिया में तुलनात्मक बढ़त पर ध्यान केंद्रित करना चाहिए या फिर समर्थन और उद्योग संरक्षण को विस्तार के साथ हांजागत बदलावों की दिशा में प्रयास करना चाहिए। उदाहरण के लिए देश में इलेक्ट्रॉनिक्स और दूरसंचार उपकरण बनाने का मामला। सन 2009 में लंदन स्थित ओवरसीज डेवलपमेंट इंस्टीट्यूट ने विश्व

बैंक के मुख्य अर्थशास्त्री और पेइचिंग विश्वविद्यालय के आर्थिक शोध केंद्र के पूर्व निदेशक जस्टिन यीफू लिन और केंब्रिज विश्वविद्यालय के हा-चुन चांग के बीच एक बहस आयोजित की। लिन तुलनात्मक बढ़त के पक्ष में तो चांग उद्योग जगत को संरक्षण के पक्ष में अपनी बात रख रहे थे। दिलचस्प बात है कि दोनों ने मजबूत सरकारी हस्तक्षेप की हिमायत की, हालांकि उनके तरीके अलग थे। लिन जहां तुलनात्मक बढ़त की सुविधा देने की बात कर रहे थे, वहीं चांग का कहना था कि इसे देश के उद्योग जगत को उन्नत बनाने के क्षेत्र में आधार की तरह इस्तेमाल किया जाना चाहिए।

औद्योगिक नीति की कई व्याख्याएं हैं। बुनियादी ढांचे की एक ऊर्ध्वाधर शैली है, जो अर्थव्यवस्था के सभी पहलुओं के लिए एक ऊंची उठती लहर की तरह होती है। लंबवत स्थिति के लिए राज्य नियोजन और नियंत्रण इसके विपरीत होता है। सरकारी नियमन और सहयोग का मिश्रण इसके बीच की स्थिति है जहां कर प्रोत्साहन, श्रम नियमन, वित्तीय कारण, भूमि आवंटन एवं अधिग्रहण के अलावा निजी क्षेत्र के साथ तालमेल शामिल होता है। इन्हें उद्योग या विनिर्माण तक सीमित किया जा सकता है या फिर अधिक व्यापक करके देखा जाए तो इसे तमाम आर्थिक गतिविधियों से जोड़कर देखा जा सकता है जिसमें कृषि, डेरी और सेवाएं शामिल हैं। ऐतिहासिक तौर पर देखें तो औद्योगिक नीति का आंशिक पालन हर जगह हुआ है। अमेरिका में रीगन

के कार्यकाल में डिफेंस एडवांस्ड रिसर्च प्रोजेक्ट्स एजेंसी (डीएआरपीए) ने सरकारी और निजी प्रतिभागियों का संगठन स्थापित किया ताकि सरकार और निजी क्षेत्र के भागीदारों का समूह बनाकर समन्वित प्रयास किए जा सकें। इसी प्रकार सेमीकंडक्टर विनिर्माण प्रौद्योगिकी समूह (सेमाटेक) में इटेल और टेक्सस इंस्ट्रुमेंट्स जैसी कंपनियों के साथ मिलकर अमेरिकी सेमीकंडक्टर उद्योग में नई जान फूंकने के लिए विनिर्माण लागत और उत्पाद की कमियां दूर करने का प्रयास किया गया। इसी प्रकार विकसित मशीनी उपकरणों और स्वचालन उद्योग के लिए द नैशनल सेंटर फॉर मैनुफैक्चरिंग साइंसेज (एनसीएमएस) का गठन किया गया। एक अन्य परियोजना का संबंध अमेरिका की घटती प्रतिस्पर्धी क्षमता के कारणों का पता लगाने से था। साथ ही इसके अमेरिकी दबदबा दोबारा कायम करने के तरीके तलाशने की बात भी शामिल थी।

इनका निष्कर्ष यह था कि अमेरिका अपनी तकनीक आधारित प्रतिस्पर्धी क्षमता गंवा रहा है क्योंकि दूसरे विश्वव्यवस्था के बाद निर्णय लेने की क्षमता निजी क्षेत्र के आधारित योजना से वित्त आधारित नियोजन की ओर स्थानांतरित हो गई। बाद वाली स्थिति में सफलता का आकलन वित्तीय प्रतिफल से किया जाता जबकि तकनीक आधारित नियोजन में लक्ष्य होता तकनीक की सहायता से प्रतिस्पर्धी बढ़त हासिल करना और ग्राहकों की आवश्यकताओं को पूरा करना। अमेरिका में बुश प्रशासन ने सन

1990 में इस परियोजना को रद्द कर दिया क्योंकि इसे मुक्त बाजार के समय में औद्योगिक नीति में हस्तक्षेप करने वाला माना जा रहा था।

औद्योगिक नीति और भारत का वाहन क्षेत्र

वर्ष 2006 में भारी उद्योग मंत्रालय ने वाहन क्षेत्र के मशरिफे से 2002 की एक पहल पर काम करना शुरू किया। स्वचालन मिशन योजना 2006-2016 एक ऐसा कार्यक्रम था जो सरकारी एजेंसियों, उद्योग जगत के प्रतिभागियों और अकादमिक जगत तक विस्तारित था। इसका लक्ष्य था देश को वाहन उद्योग में वैश्विक गढ़ बनाना। 2008 और 2013-14 की गिरावट के बावजूद यह सफल रहा और 2016 तक इस क्षेत्र के रोजगार एक करोड़ से बढ़कर 3.2 करोड़ हो गये। इसका अगला चरण 2016 से 2026 तक प्रभावी है। इस अवधि में कुल उत्पादन में निर्यात की भागीदारी बढ़ाकर 35 से 40 फीसदी करने की बात शामिल है। इस दौरान इस क्षेत्र के रोजगार बढ़ाकर 6.5 करोड़ करने का लक्ष्य है। गत वर्ष इसकी गति में थोड़ी गिरावट आई है लेकिन इसके लिए कुछ विपरीत कारक उत्तरदायी हैं। इसमें डीजल और इलेक्ट्रिक वाहनों को लेकर नीतियों में भ्रम और अनिश्चितता बड़ी वजह रहे। साथ ही कारोबारी तनाव, जीडीपी वृद्धि में गिरावट, उत्सर्जन नीतियों और करों के कारण लागत में बढ़ोतरी तथा वित्तीय क्षेत्र में संकट के चलते ऐसा हुआ है।

वाहन क्षेत्र में धीमेपन और बड़ी तादाद में नौकरियां जाने की आशंका के बीच क्या तत्काल नीतिगत हस्तक्षेप की आवश्यकता है। कुछ पर्यवेक्षकों को ऐसा लगता है जबकि अन्य मंदा की चक्रवर्ती बताकर खारिज करते हैं। वे मंदा और निराशा की खबरों को भी अतिरिजित करार देते हैं। हमें यह मानना होगा कि भारत की तुलना ओईसीडी के बाजारों से नहीं की जा सकती है। उदाहरण के लिए देश में सन 2017 में प्रति 1,000 में से 27 लोगों के पास कार थी। ओईसीडी देशों में यह आंकड़ा सैकड़ों में रहा और नया निवेश आया तो रोजगार में अपार वृद्धि हो सकती है। हालांकि इस बीच पर्यावरण प्रभाव, ईंधन आयात और अधिक सड़कें बनाने का काम भी करना होगा। इसमें दो राय नहीं कि भारत को विकास के इंजन के रूप में वाहन उद्योग की आवश्यकता है। चूंकि यह क्षेत्र अर्थव्यवस्था के कई अन्य क्षेत्रों में रोजगार उत्पन्न करता है इसलिए इसमें नाकामी का असर तमाम क्षेत्रों पर पड़ सकता है। दूरसंचार, विनिर्माण और वित्त क्षेत्र की तरह इसे पतन से बचना होगा।

कॉर्पोरेट मुनाफा 2008 में जीडीपी के 7.8 फीसदी से घटकर 2018 में जीडीपी के 3 फीसदी पर आ गया। ऐसे में सरकार को जमीनी हकीकतों को समझना होगा। हमारी प्राथमिक आवश्यकता स्थिर और सहयोगी नियामकीय माहौल की है। इलेक्ट्रिक वाहन या डीजल वाहनों आदि की नीतियों जैसे नीतिगत बदलाव समावेशी मशरिफे के जरिये लिए जाने चाहिए।

प्रधानमंत्री मोदी को भी करनी होगी महालनोबिस की तलाश

कुछ दिनों पहले आर्थिक पत्रकार पूजा मेहरा ने सवाल उठाया था कि प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी को आर्थिक मोर्चे पर मदद करने वाला अफसरशाह कौन होगा? पुराने प्रधानमंत्रियों के समय ए एन वर्मा, मोटेक सिंह आहलुवालिया, विमल जालान, वाई वी रेड्डी और विजय केलकर जैसे अफसरशाह आर्थिक मुद्दों पर मददगार भूमिका निभाते रहे हैं। मोदी की ही तरह बुद्धिजीवियों से असहज महसूस करने वालों इंदिरा गांधी ने भी पी एन हक्सर की सेवाएं ली थीं जिन्होंने उनकी राजनीतिक जरूरतों को आर्थिक कलेवर देने का काम किया था।

पूजा के सवाल का मतलब यह जानना था कि मोदी को आर्थिक सलाह कौन देता है? पिछले पांच साल से भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था के तमाम प्रेक्षकों को यह सवाल परेशान किया हुआ है लेकिन अभी तक इसका संतोषजनक जवाब नहीं मिला है। लेकिन यह सवाल जरूरी होते हुए भी पर्याप्त नहीं है। मेरी नजर में अधिक मौजूदा सवाल यह होता कि मोदी का महालनोबिस कौन बनाएगा? पी सी महालनोबिस एक अर्थशास्त्री एवं सांख्यिकीविद थे जिन्होंने जवाहरलाल नेहरू की आर्थिक सोच को जमीनी रूप देने में अहम भूमिका निभाई थी। उन्होंने दूसरी पंचवर्षीय योजना का आर्थिक मॉडल विकसित किया था जो आर्थिक वृद्धि के लिहाज से काफी सफल रहा था।

इससे जुड़ी एक कहानी है। यह वाक्या भारत की मौजूदा आर्थिक संताप से काफी मेल खाता है। पहले आम चुनाव में नेहरू की जीत के बाद के चार वर्षों में आर्थिक प्रगति की दिशा में बहुत कुछ नहीं हो पाया था। पर्याप्त रोजगार नहीं पैदा हो पा रहे थे और मुद्रास्फीति भी बढ़ रही थी। विदेशी मुद्रा का भंडार कम हो रहा था। बचत दर महज पांच फीसदी रह गई थी। राजस्व के स्थिर होने के कारण बजट में भी खास गुंजाइश नहीं रह गई थी। निजी क्षेत्र ने यह कहते हुए अपने हाथ खड़े कर दिए थे कि निवेश के लिए उसके पास पैसे नहीं हैं। बैंक भी छिटपुट लोगों को छोड़कर कर्ज देने से मना कर रहे थे। राजनीतिक तौर पर वह समय नेहरू के लिए निर्विवाद नेता के तौर पर स्थापित होने का था। लेकिन बदले हुए हालात में पार्टी नेता दवे जुवान में शिकायत करने



सुम सामरिग

टीसीए श्रीनिवास-राघवण

लगे। काफी कुछ मोदी की ही तरह नेहरू के समय भी हर कोई अपना सन्न खो रहा था। ऐसी स्थिति में ही कांग्रेस ने 1955 में हुए अवाडी अधिवेशन में एक बेहद अहम प्रस्ताव पारित किया। उस प्रस्ताव में सरकार से अर्थव्यवस्था की राह प्रस्तुत करने को कहा गया था।

लेकिन उसके बाद यह समस्या खड़ी थी कि आगे क्या किया जाए और जो भी किया जाना है उसके लिए पैसे कहाँ से आएँगे? ऐसी स्थिति में नेहरू ने पहले सवाल का जवाब पाने के लिए महालनोबिस से संपर्क साधा और दूसरे जवाब के तौर पर उद्योगपति टी टी कृष्णमचारी को अपना वित्त मंत्री बनाया। जहां महालनोबिस ने आर्थिक वृद्धि का खाका तैयार किया वहीं कृष्णमचारी ने उसके लिए जरूरी पैसे जुटाए। इस तरह दूसरी पंचवर्षीय योजना अस्तित्व में आई और उसने देश को अच्छी वृद्धि दी। सवाल खड़ा होता है कि प्रधानमंत्री मोदी की अगुआई वाली राजग-2 सरकार के लिए यह काम कौन करेगा? कृष्णमचारी की तरह राजस्व जुटाने के काम के लिए जहां निर्मला सीतारमण एकदम मार्कूल है, वहीं आप उनसे महालनोबिस का दायित्व निभाने की उम्मीद नहीं कर सकते हैं। यह पूरी तरह ईमानदार हैं और अपने दायित्व के निर्वहन में समर्पित रहती हैं। वह असरदार होने के साथ अलोकप्रिय भी होंगी लेकिन एक बढ़िया वित्त मंत्री से इसी को अपेक्षा भी होती है।

लेकिन निवेश जुटा पाने में नाकाम रहने पर सीतारमण या किसी भी वित्त मंत्री को दोषी ठहराना मुख्यतापूर्ण होगा क्योंकि निवेश कई ऐसे पहलुओं पर निर्भर होता है जो अकेले वित्त मंत्री नहीं संभालता है। वास्तव में, यह काम मूल रूप से प्रधानमंत्री पर निर्भर

करता है। निवेश का माहौल बनाने के लिए हमेशा ही एक नए आर्थिक नजरिये और एक पूरी तरह तरतोजा परिप्रेक्ष्य की जरूरत होती है। वर्ष 1958-65 और 1992-96 का दौर इसकी तसदीक करता है। मूलतः इस तरह का नजरिया वितरण को पीछे रखता है और वृद्धि को आगे जगह देता है।

मोदी को यहीं पर अपनी भूमिका निभानी है। उन्हें अपने पहले कार्यकाल में अपनाई गई उस नीति को तिलांजलि देने की जरूरत है जो सुदृढ़ीकरण से जुड़ी थी। अब उनके लिए नेहरू का अनुसरण करने और वृद्धि की राह पर चलने का वक्त आ गया है। उसके लिए उन्हें अपने परिचित दायरे से बाहर की समझदारी की जरूरत है। उन्हें ऐसे नए विचारों की जरूरत है जो तार्किक रूप से सोचने की क्षमता रखने वाले लोगों के दिमाग से निकला हो। उन्हें चिंतकों को लेकर अपना संदेह पर रखते हुए किसी ऐसे व्यक्ति को तलाशना चाहिए जो संग्रम के दस वर्षों के शासन के दौरान बने गड़बड़े से देश को बाहर निकालने में मदद करे। इस गड़बड़े में आर्थिक शासन संबंधी नियमों को काफी सीथिल कर दिया गया था और सातारमण उन्हें दुरुस्त कर सकती हैं। लेकिन खुद मोदी को भी राजग-2 सरकार के लिए समुचित उत्कृष्टता कायम करने के लिए आसपास देखना चाहिए।

जब नेहरू ने महालनोबिस को आर्थिक योजना बनाने का काम सौंपा तो वह उन दिनों के चलन के खिलाफ था। उस समय आर्थिक गतिविधियों में राज्य की भूमिका महज नियामकीय एवं सीमांत ही होती थी लेकिन आज इसके विपरीत हालात हैं।

मोदी को भी आज के समय में अवाडी जैसे ही एक प्रस्ताव की जरूरत है लेकिन उसकी विषयवस्तु एकदम उलट होनी चाहिए। उस प्रस्ताव में यह कहा जाए कि राज्य आर्थिक गतिविधियों से खुद को पूरी तरह अलग कर लेगा क्योंकि अब वह खरा नहीं उतर सकता है। जिस तरह नेहरू ने राज्य को अग्रणी शक्ति बनाया, उसी तरह मोदी को भी वृद्धि के लिए निजी क्षेत्र को अग्रणी भूमिका देनी होगी। यह नेहरू की विरासत को पूरी तरह पलटने जैसा होगा और मोदी को तो यह काम खासा पसंद है।

कानाफूसी

दिलचस्प सवाल

एक ओर जहां देश सरकार द्वारा जम्मू कश्मीर को विशेष दर्जा देने वाले संविधान के अनुच्छेद 370 को संशोधित किए जाने पर गंभीर चर्चा में व्यस्त है वहीं कुछ लोग ऐसे भी हैं जिन्होंने इसका मनोरंजक पहलू तलाश लिया है। एक व्यक्ति ने ट्विटर पर सवाल पूछा कि अगर कोई कश्मीर में हाउसबोट खरीदना चाहे तो उसे आवास ऋण लेना होगा या वाहन ऋण? ऐसे में एक कर सलाहकार ने जवाब दिया कि इस मामले को केरल में हल किया जा चुका है। वहीं बैंकिंग में रुचि रखने वाले एक व्यक्ति ने रोचक जवाब दिया कि यह एक आवास ऋण होगा जिसकी दर 'फ्लोटिंग' रखी जाएगी। गौरतलब है कि संसद के दोनों सदनों में विधेयक के पारित होने के बाद बुधवार को राष्ट्रपति ने भी हस्ताक्षर कर दिए हैं। यह विधेयक अब कानून का रूप ले चुका है। इसके साथ ही जम्मू कश्मीर तथा लद्दाख अलग-अलग केंद्र शासित प्रदेश बन गए हैं।

माफ़ी कराएगी वापसी

कांग्रेस की मध्य प्रदेश इकाई ने बागियों को पार्टी में वापस लौटने का एक अवसर देने का निश्चय किया है। परंतु इसके लिए पार्टी ने एक पूर्व शर्त रखी है। पार्टी सूत्रों के मुताबिक पिछले वर्ष विधानसभा चुनाव के पहले पार्टी छोड़कर जाने वाले जो भी नेता वापस आना चाहते हैं उन्हें पार्टी से लिखित माफ़ी मांगनी होगी। इसके बाद ही उन्हें दोबारा शामिल करने पर विचार किया जाएगा। दरअसल पार्टी छोड़कर जाने वाले इन नेताओं ने कई क्षेत्रों में काफी नुकसान भी पहुंचाया था। माना जा रहा है कि अगले कुछ दिनों में पार्टी के पास ऐसे माफ़ीनामों का ढेर लगने वाला है क्योंकि मध्य प्रदेश में पार्टी की सरकार है।



बिनाय

आपका पक्ष

रीपो दर में कटौती, लेकिन फायदा नहीं

रिजर्व बैंक ने लगातार चौथी बार रीपो दर कम की और अब नई रीपो दर 5.40 प्रतिशत है। रिजर्व बैंक रीपो दर में कमी कर देश के बैंकों को उससे सस्ते में कर्ज लेने के लिए प्रोत्साहित कर रहा है। ताकि इस कदम से बैंक अपने ग्राहकों को सस्ता ऋण दे सके तथा देश की अर्थव्यवस्था को गति मिल सके। लेकिन देश के कई बैंक अभी बुरे दौर से गुजर रहे हैं। रिजर्व बैंक से सस्ती दर पर ऋण लेने के बावजूद इसका लाभ बैंक अपने ग्राहकों को नहीं दे रहा है। बैंकों का एनपीए बढ़ रहा है जिससे वे नुकसान में चल रहे हैं। इस नुकसान की भरपाई के लिए बैंक अपनी ऋण दर में कमी नहीं कर रहे हैं। ऋण दरें अधिक होने के कारण बैंक के ग्राहक भी ऋण लेने से हिचकिचा रहे हैं। इससे बाजार में नकदी कम हो गई है जिसका बुरा प्रभाव देश की अर्थव्यवस्था पर पड़ रहा है। इसके अलावा बैंक ने चालू वित्त वर्ष में जीडीपी वृद्धि



दर का अनुमान 7 प्रतिशत से घटाकर 6.9 कर दिया है। यह स्थिति देश की अर्थव्यवस्था के मंदी के साये में होने का संकेत देती है। वहीं चीन ने अपनी मुद्रा युआन का अवमूल्यन कर दिया है जिससे चीनी वस्तुओं की कीमत देश में और भी कम हो जाएगी। इससे घरेलू प्रतिस्पर्धी उद्योगों को कठिनाई का सामना करना पड़ेगा।

भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक ने लगातार चौथी बार रीपो दर में कटौती की है

उद्योगों को महंगा कर्ज मिल रहा है जिससे वे सस्ती लागत में उत्पादन में करने में नाकाम हो रहे हैं। वर्तमान में देश बेरोजगारी एवं छंटनी के दौर से गुजर रहा है।

संसद के मॉनसून सत्र में भी अर्थव्यवस्था पर कोई ठोस चर्चा नहीं हुई जिससे अर्थव्यवस्था पर सरकार द्वारा उठाए जाने वाले कदमों का भी पता नहीं चल पा रहा है।

निशांत मेहेश त्रिपाठी, नागपुर

एनबीएफसी द्वारा ऋण देने की मंजूरी

गैर बैंकिंग वित्तीय कंपनियों (एनबीएफसी) अब कृषि और छोटे उद्यमों को निवेश के लिए ऋण दे सकेंगे। रिजर्व बैंक ने बुधवार को मौद्रिक समीक्षा में यह बात कही है। इससे पहले रिजर्व बैंक ने एनबीएफसी के लिए कई दिशानिर्देश जारी किए थे। आज कई कंपनियां एनबीएफसी क्षेत्र में उतर गई हैं। एनबीएफसी से लेनदेन के लिए ग्राहकों को केवाईसी करना जरूरी किया गया

है। एनबीएफसी में पेट्टीएम सर्वोत्तम उदाहरण है। यह कंपनी भुगतान में काफी लोकप्रिय है। हर छोटे से छोटे भुगतान पेट्टीएम के जरिये किया जा सकता है। रिजर्व बैंक द्वारा जारी नए निर्देश में एनबीएफसी को 10 लाख रुपये तक कृषि ऋण, सूक्ष्म एवं लघु उद्यमों को 20 लाख रुपये तथा आवास के लिए प्रति कर्जदार 20 लाख रुपये (फिलहाल 10 लाख रुपये) के कर्ज देने का प्रावधान किया गया है। रिजर्व बैंक के इस कदम से बाजार में तरलता आएगी और पूंजी का प्रवाह बढ़ेगा। इससे एनबीएफसी कंपनियों तथा ग्राहकों को भी लाभ मिल सकेगा। वर्तमान में देश की अर्थव्यवस्था मंदी के दौर से गुजर रहा है। रिजर्व बैंक के निवर्तमान गवर्नर रघुराम राजन ने काफी सूझबूझ तथा अपनी नीतियों से देश की अर्थव्यवस्था को मजबूत किया था। हालांकि वर्तमान गवर्नर शक्तिवत आंब भी इसी कोशिश में हैं और एनबीएफसी पर उठाए गए कदम सराहनीय हैं।

प्रिया सिंह, नोएडा

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



दैनिक जागरण

शांति समृद्धि की पहली सीढ़ी है

प्रधानमंत्री का संदेश

जैसी कि उम्मीद थी, प्रधानमंत्री का राष्ट्र के नाम संबोधन जम्मू-कश्मीर को लेकर किए गए ऐतिहासिक एवं निर्णायक बदलावों पर ही केंद्रित रहा। चूंकि अनुच्छेद 370 और 35-ए हटाने के बाद जम्मू-कश्मीर और साथ ही लद्दाख में एक नई शुरुआत होने जा रही है इसलिए यह समय की मांग थी कि खुद प्रधानमंत्री जम्मू-कश्मीर और लद्दाख के साथ-साथ देश के लोगों से सीधे अपनी बात कहें। यह अच्छा हुआ कि उन्होंने वक्त की यह मांग पूरी की। राष्ट्र के नाम अपने संबोधन में उन्होंने यह सही कहा कि एक सपने को पूरा करके एक नई शुरुआत होने जा रही है। इस क्रम में उन्होंने यह स्थापित करके बिल्कुल सही किया कि यह प्रश्न दशकों से अनुरजित ही था कि आखिर अनुच्छेद 370 से जम्मू, कश्मीर और लद्दाख के लोगों को क्या लाभ मिल रहा था? इस सवाल का जवाब कम से कम उन्हें अवश्य देना चाहिए जो अनुच्छेद 370 हटाने और राज्य के पुनर्गठन का विरोध कर रहे हैं? उन्हें बताया चाहिए कि वे भेदभाव भरे और अलगाव को बल देने वाले उस प्रावधान की वकालत क्यों कर रहे हैं जो इस राज्य के दलितों और आदिवासियों के अधिकारों पर कुटुरघात करने के साथ ही राज्य के बाहर के लोगों से विवाह करने वाली युवतियों के अधिकारों का हनन करता था? ऐसे लोगों को प्रधानमंत्री की ओर से इंगित की गई उस विमर्श पर भी कुछ कहना चाहिए जिसके चलते राज्य के तमाम लोगों को विभिन्न चुनावों में वोट देने का अधिकार नहीं था। प्रधानमंत्री ने देशवासियों को बल और संबल देने वाले अपने संबोधन में यह स्पष्ट करके तमाम अंदेशों को खत्म करने का ही काम किया कि जम्मू-कश्मीर को केवल कुछ कालखंड के लिए केंद्र के अधीन रखने का फैसला वहां के हालात सुधाने, भ्रष्टाचार एवं आतंकवाद पर लगाम लगाने, विकास और रोजगार निर्माण को गति देने के इरादे से किया गया है। उन्होंने यह जो भरोसा जताया कि जम्मू-कश्मीर को केंद्र शासित प्रदेश बनाए रखने की जरूरत लंबे समय तक नहीं पड़ेगी उसे पूरा करने में राज्य और खासकर घाटी के लोगों की महती भूमिका होगी। उम्मीद है कि वे अपनी इस भूमिका के महत्व को समझेंगे। वे इसकी अनदेखी नहीं कर सकते कि प्रधानमंत्री ने साफ तौर पर यह भी कहा है कि वह अनुच्छेद 370 हटाने के फैसले से असहमत लोगों के विचारों को सुनने-समझने को तैयार है। चूंकि प्रधानमंत्री ने जम्मू-कश्मीर के हालात ठीक करने में देश के लोगों से भी सहयोग की अपेक्षा की इसलिए देशवासियों की ओर से भी समवेत स्वर में यही संदेश उभरना चाहिए कि कश्मीर के साथ कश्मीरी भी हमाएँ है।

सड़क दुर्घटनाएं

उत्तराखंड में एक के बाद एक हो रही सड़क दुर्घटनाएं बेहद चिंताजनक हैं। जिस तरह मंगलवार को टिहरी व बरदरीनाथ और फिर गुरवार को पौड़ी के यमकेश्वर में स्कूली बच्चों व यात्रियों से भरे वाहन दुर्घटनाग्रस्त हुए, उससे परिवहन विभाग के सड़क सुरक्षा के दायों की सच्चाई सामने आ गई है। विभागीय लापरवाही इस बात से समझी जा सकती है कि दुर्घटना से दस दिन पहले स्वयं परिवहन मंत्री विभागीय अधिकारियों को स्कूली बच्चों को ले जाने वाले स्कूली व निजी वाहनों के खिलाफ सख्त जांच अभियान चलाने के निर्देश दे चुके थे। यदि विभागीय अधिकारियों ने मंत्री के आदेशों का पालन किया होता तो शायद यह नौबत नहीं आती। इससे साफ है कि सड़क सुरक्षा को लेकर विभाग कितनी गंभीरता से काम कर रहा है। वाहन दुर्घटनाओं की पूर्व में जब भी जांच हुई है, उनमें चालक की लापरवाही एक प्रमुख कारण के रूप में सामने आई है। मंगलवार को टिहरी में हुए हादसे में तो बगैर लाइसेंस अप्रशिक्षित चालक के वाहन चलाने की पुष्टि भी प्रशासनिक अधिकारियों ने की है। इससे पता चलता है कि परिवहन विभाग द्वारा पर्वतीय क्षेत्रों में वाहन जांच अभियान महज खानापूरी के लिए चलाया जाता रहा है। यदि अभियान में गंभीरता होती तो शायद ही कोई वाहन स्वामी अपना वाहन अप्रशिक्षित वाहन चालक के हाथ में सौंपने की हिम्मत कर पाता। दरअसल, देखा जाए तो परिवहन विभाग की नींद हमेशा ही किसी बड़ी दुर्घटना के बाद टूटती है। यह स्थिति तब है जब सुप्रीम कोर्ट के निर्देश पर एक पूरा विंग सड़क सुरक्षा के लिए गठित किया गया है। शासन से लेकर जिला स्तर तक सड़क सुरक्षा समितियां बनाई गई हैं। इनके लिए बाकायदा बजट का प्रावधान किया गया है। इस बजट से सड़क सुरक्षा के लिए वाहन व उपकरणों की खरीद का भी प्रावधान है। यहां तक कि एक पखवाड़ा सड़क सुरक्षा को लेकर ही समर्पित किया गया है। बावजूद इसके हालात बहुत अधिक सुधरते हुए नजर नहीं आ रहे हैं। जाहिर है कि सड़क सुरक्षा के नाम पर केवल खानापूरी की जा रही है। यदि ऐसा नहीं होता तो सड़कों पर धड़ल्ले से नियमों को ताक पर रख कर वाहन नहीं दौड़ रहे होते। सरकार को भी इस मसले को गंभीरता से लेना चाहिए। इसके लिए छोटे अधिकारियों के साथ ही बड़े अधिकारियों की जिम्मेदारी तय करनी होगी और लापरवाही पाए जाने पर उनके खिलाफ भी सख्त कदम उठाने होंगे। अन्यथा ऐसे हादसे रुकने का नाम नहीं लेंगे और लोग असमय काल के गाल में समाते रहेंगे।

चुनाव में सरकारी खर्च की बहस

नरेंद्र जागिड़

लोकतंत्र का पर्व भी होली-दिवाली की तरह हो चला है जिसमें राजनीतिक दलों द्वारा पैसा पानी की तरह बहैया जाता है। लोग पैसों की इस बहली गंगा में अपने वोट के लिए डुबकी लगाते हैं और बदले में बहुत कुछ निकाल लाते हैं, फिर अगले पांच वर्षों तक इस पर्व का इंतजार करने लगते हैं। चुनाव बद चुनाब यही किस्सा दोहराया जा रहा है। देश में चुनाव लगातार मंहंगा होता जा रहा है, क्योंकि चुनाव में उम्मीदवार के खर्चों पर नियंत्रण है, जबकि राजनीतिक दलों के खर्च पर नहीं। अधिकांश राजनीतिक दल और कई विशेषज्ञ चुनाव में सरकारी वित्त पोषण के पक्षधर हैं। उनकी दलील है कि इससे चुनाव में उपयोग किए जाने वाले काले धन पर रोक लगाई जा सकेगी तथा एक स्वच्छ और स्वस्थ लोकतंत्र की छवि को बरकरार रखा जा सकेगा।

राजनीतिक दल, चुनाव आयोग के तमाम नियमों एवं कानूनों की काट खोज लेते हैं। चुनावों में खर्च किए जाने वाले बेहिसाब धन पर लगाम लगाने के लिए इस बात पर बहस चल रही है कि क्या सरकारी खर्च पर

कुछ जानकारों का मानना है कि सरकारी धन से चुनावी प्रक्रिया में भ्रष्टाचार और कारपोरेट का शिकंजा कमजोर होगा

चुनाव कराना उचित है? इसका मतलब है कि सरकार राजनीतिक दलों या उम्मीदवारों को चुनाव लड़ने के लिए धन देती है। इसका मुख्य उद्देश्य उम्मीदवारों के लिए धनवान लोगों से चंदा हासिल करने से रोकना है। यानी सरकार उम्मीदवारों को चुनाव लड़ने के लिए धन मुहैया कराएगी ताकि भ्रष्टाचार व राजनेताओं पर कारपोरेट प्रभाव को कम किया जा सके। हालांकि चुनाव आयोग स्टेट फंडिंग के पक्ष में नहीं है, क्योंकि आयोग राज्य द्वारा प्रदान किए गए तथा उससे अतिरिक्त व्यय पर प्रतिबंध लगाने व जांच करने में सक्षम नहीं होगा।

कई लोग जहाँ इस व्यवस्था के पक्ष में हैं, वहीं बहुत से लोगों का यह मानना है कि भारतीय राजनीतिक व्यवस्था, पश्चिम के लोकतंत्र की तरह नहीं जहाँ राजनीतिक दल का मात्र शासन से ही संबंध होता है। भारत में

दलों का व्यापक सामाजिक सरोकार भी रहा है। वैसे भी चुनावों में सभी राजनीतिक दलों के लिए मैदान बराबरी का होना चाहिए। बड़े राजनीतिक दल जिनका प्रदर्शन भले ही कितना ही खराब क्यों न रहा हो, अपने धन-बल के दम पर मतदाताओं को प्रभावित करने में अक्सर सफल हो जाते हैं और हम स्वयं को ऐसी व्यवस्था देने में असमर्थ हो जाते हैं जो जनता के कल्याण के बारे में सोचती है। गौरवलय है कि चुनाव आयोग ने लोकसभा और विधानसभा के चुनावों के लिए प्रत्येक उम्मीदवार के लिए खर्च की सीमा तय कर रखी है, लेकिन अक्सर देखने को मिलता है कि उम्मीदवार इस सीमा से बाहर कास खर्च कर रहे हैं, फिर भी आयोग के लिए उनके खिलाफ कार्रवाई करना आसान नहीं रहता, क्योंकि इसे साबित करना मुश्किल होता है। ऐसे में सरकारी खर्च पर चुनाव अहम साबित हो सकता है। हम प्रायः इस बात का रोना रोते हैं कि राजनीति एक ऐसी दलदल है जिसमें काले धन के उपयोग से ही चुनाव जीता जा सकते हैं। इसे देखते हुए हमें कुछ ऐसा करने की जरूरत है ताकि सरकार द्वारा चुनावों के लिए धन मुहैया हो सके।

(लेखक स्वतंत्र टिप्पणीकार हैं)



रशीद किदवाई

क्या कांग्रेस का मौजूदा संकट गांधी परिवार की विरासत की समाप्ति पर मुहर लगाएगा या एक नई शुरुआत का जरिया बनेगा?

जम्मू-कश्मीर से अनुच्छेद 370 हटाए जाने के सवाल पर कांग्रेस जिस तरह असमंजस से दो-चार हुई वह कोई नई बात नहीं, क्योंकि वह एक असें से दुविधा से ग्रस्त है। उसकी सबसे बड़ी दुविधा पार्टी अध्यक्ष को लेकर है। रहलुल गांधी के उत्तराधिकारी को लेकर सोनिया और प्रियंका के साथ खुद रहलुल ने अभी तक कोई पसंद ज़ाहिर नहीं की है। इसके चलते इस मसले पर अनिश्चितता और बढ़ गई है। देखना है कि यह दुविधा 10 अगस्त को होने वाली कांग्रेस कार्यसम्मिति की बैठक में दूर हो पाती है या नहीं? जब पार्टी राजीव गांधी का 75 वां जन्म दिवस और शोर-शरा से मना की तैयारी में जुटी है तब असमंजस की स्थिति उसके लिए अच्छी नहीं। कुछ नेताओं को उम्मीद है कि अस्तित्व के संकट से जुझती पार्टी राजीव गांधी की विरासत के दम पर वापसी कर सकती है।

फिलहाल पार्टी के सामने सबसे बड़ी चुनौती रहलुल का उत्तराधिकारी चुनने की है। इसे लेकर कांग्रेस में दो मत हैं। एक धड़ा सचिव पावलक या ज्योतिरादित्य सिंधिया जैसे युवा नेता को अध्यक्ष और मिलिंद देवड़ा को कोषाध्यक्ष बनाने पर जोर दे रहा है। वहीं दूसरा धड़ा मुकुल वासनिक, सुशील कुमार शिंदे या मल्लिकार्जुन खड्गे को अंतरिम मुखिया और पावलक, सिंधिया और देवड़ा को उपाध्यक्ष बनाने के पक्ष में है। पार्टी भविष्य में रहलुल की भूमिका को लेकर असमंजस में ही है। पहले यह सोचा

गया कि रहलुल बिना किसी पद के वैचारिक धुरी की भूमिका में रहेंगे, मगर वह और उनकी टीम पदाधिकारियों की नियुक्ति, संसदीय रणनीति और सभी मुद्दों पर अहम भूमिका निभाना चाहती है। हाल में रहलुल ने कर्नाटक संकट के लिए किसी भीतर व्यक्ति को ही दोषी बताकर सबको सन्न कर दिया। राष्ट्रपति ट्रंप के बयान पर भी उनका खेया शशि थरूर जैसे नेताओं की परिपक्व प्रतिक्रिया के उलट रहा। यही स्थिति कश्मीर मामले में भी दिखी। फिलहाल ऐसे कोई संकेत नहीं मिल रहे कि पार्टी की दशा-दिशा सुधारने के लिए रहलुल कोई देशव्यापी कवायद करने जा रहे हों।

कांग्रेसी हलकों से मिले संकेतों के अनुसार प्रियंका को 2024 के चुनावों में प्रधानमंत्री पद के उम्मीदवार के तौर पर पेश किया जा सकता है। हालांकि यह तीन व्यक्तियों पर निर्भर करेगा। एक रहलुल, दूसरे उनके उत्तराधिकारी और तीसरे खुद प्रियंका। 2022 के उत्तर प्रदेश चुनाव प्रियंका गांधी के लिए एक कड़ी परीक्षा हॉगे। उन्होंने सोनभद्र मामले में कुछ दम जरूर दिखाया, लेकिन उन्नाव मामले में वह केवल टिवटर तक ही सीमित रह गईं। उत्तर प्रदेश में मियुन 2022 के लिए प्रियंका को रोजाना करीब 16 घंटे कड़ी मेहनत करनी होगी। उन्हें सिद्धार्थ, ओमान चांडी और रमेश चेल्लेनाथ जैसे क्षेत्रीय क्षत्रांतों की तरह उभरना होगा। इसके लिए दिल्ली की सुकुन भरी और चमक-दमक वाली जीवनशैली का मोह भी त्यागना पड़ेगा।

कश्मीरियों से सच्चे संवाद की जरूरत



शंकर शरण

कश्मीरी मुसलमानों को मिथ्या इतिहास और झूठे विश्वास की हकीकत से परिचित कराना समय की मांग है



का अलटीमेटम नहीं मिल रहा है। आतंकी गुटों द्वारा उनकी महिलाओं को उठा ले जाने की धमकी नहीं दी जा रही है। न ही सरकार ने उन्हें उनके हाल पर छोड़ दिया है। कश्मीरी हिंदुओं को यह सब झेलना पड़ा था।

वस्तुतः सच्चा संवाद समानता के आधार पर ही चल सकता है। तभी वह प्रभावी भी होता है। इसे रेखांकित करना चाहिए कि दशकों की लफ्फामाजी, संकोच, कपट या मिथ्याचार ने कोई अच्छा फल नहीं दिया। झूठे नेताओं की बातों का पर्दाफाश भी करना चाहिए, जैसे महबूबा मुफ्ती यह दर्शा रही है कि जम्मू-कश्मीर का संपूर्ण बिलय विशेष धर्रा वाले अनुच्छेद के संविधान का हिस्सा बनाने से बहुत पहले हो चुका था। सच तो यह है कि अनुच्छेद 370 हटाने से पूर्वक बनाया गया था और वह 'अस्थाई' ही था। उसमें उसे खत्म करने का उपाय भी लिखा हुआ था। सरकार ने केवल उसी को अपनाया।

भारत प्राचीन सभ्यता वाला देश है। वह कोई जमीन का टुकड़ा नहीं है जिसे यह या वह नेता जैसे-तैसे तय करता है। संपूर्ण इतिहास में किसी विदेशी ने भी कश्मीर को कभी भारत से अलग अस्तित्व के रूप में नहीं देखा। राजे-रजवाड़े, शासक जरूर बदलते रहे, मगर कश्मीर भारतीय हिंदू सभ्यता का अटूट एवं महत्वपूर्ण हिस्सा रहा। 1947 का भारत विभाजन या बाद में हुई ज़हलीद हिंसा, कश्मीरी हिंदुओं को मार भगाना, आदि भी कोई अंतिम या निर्णायक

घटना नहीं है। यह शक्ति संतुलन के हेर-फेर हैं। इससे भारतीय सभ्यता के महत्व पर कोई प्रभाव पड़ने वाला नहीं है। अकबर से लेकर डलहौजी तक का शासन आया और गया। तब अठ्ठल्ला या मुफ्ती कहीं के खुदाईं मुखार हैं? अब भारतीय समाज जग रहा है, अपना सभ्यतागत कर्तव्य पुनः अपने हथ में लेने के लिए सचेत हो रहा है। दुनिया के दूसरे देश अपनी सभ्यता-संस्कृति के प्रति जो अधिकार रखते हैं उसकी तुलना में भारतीय समाज कुछ विमर्श ही रहा है। भारत के सिवा कसम देश में अल्पसंख्यकों को गैर-अल्पसंख्यकों की तुलना में अधिक संवैधानिक अधिकार मिले हुए हैं? दुर्भाग्यवश वे सब बातें हम अपनी ही जनता के बीच-बचन में विफल रहे हैं। इसीलिए यहाँ मुसलमानों को अंदर-बाहर के स्वार्थी लोगों द्वारा बरगलाना चलता रहा है। इसे भी खत्म करना होगा। अभी महबूबा ने 'कमनात्र मुस्लिम बहुसंख्या वाले राज्य' में जनसांख्यिकी बदले जाने की आशंका जताई है ताकि 'मुसलमानों की दूसरे दर्जे का नागरिक बना दिया जाए' यह दर्शाता है कि उन्होंने राज्य के हिंदुओं, सिखों, बौद्धों को कभी गिनती में नहीं लिया। चार दशकों में कश्मीर की जनसांख्यिकी क्रूरतापूर्वक बदली गई। हिंदुओं और सिखों के दर्जनों सामूहिक संतार हुए। क्या कभी महबूबा या उनकी पार्टी ने इसके खिलाफ कुछ किया? उन्मट महबूबा के पिता मुफ्ती मुहम्मद सईद जब गृह मंत्री थे तब कश्मीरी पंडितों के सवाधिक सामूहिक संतार हुए और उन्हें अपने पुरखों की भूमि छोड़कर अपने ही देश में शरणार्थी बनना पड़ा।

जम्मू-कश्मीर के पुनर्गठन, पाकिस्तानी बयानों और देसी अतिवादियों या विदेशी मीडिया की टिप्पणियों पर भी खुलकर संवाद चलाना चाहिए, क्योंकि कश्मीरी मुसलमानों को झूठे इतिहास, झूठे विश्वास और झूठे शक्ति समीकरणों का भुलावा दिया जाता रहा है। अनेक दलों और मतवादी बौद्धिकों ने अपने-अपने स्वार्थंश उन्हे प्रमित रखा है। चूंकि जमीनी राजनीति शक्ति के साथ-साथ मनोबल से भी चलती है अतः सरकार और समाज को पूरे विश्वास के साथ उन मिथ्याचारों को बेपर्दा करना चाहिए, जिनके संतार संप्रदायिक-एट्रोपकरण की घातक राजनीति चलती रही है। सच्चाई और सद्भाव के साथ ऐसा करने पर कश्मीरी मुसलमान वास्तविकता समझकर देश की गति के साथ सहज शामिल हो सकेंगे।

(लेखक राजनीति शास्त्र के प्रोफेसर एवं

वरिष्ठ स्तंभकार हैं)

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मेलवाक्स

पाक का अनर्गल प्रलाप

जम्मू कश्मीर से अनुच्छेद 370 से मुक्त करने के फैसले से पाक बेमतलब बौखला रहा है। कश्मीर में कोई विव्यंस तो नहीं हो रहा। लोगों की हिफाजत के लिए ही सुरक्षाबलों की संख्या को बढ़ाया गया है। संभावित उपद्रव फैलाने वाली को नजरबंद किया गया है। कश्मीरियों की हसरंभव मदद व काला दिवस ममाने की बातें हम पर कोई दबाव नहीं बना सकतीं। कूटनीतिक संबंधों को तोड़ने का भी कोई फर्क नहीं पड़ने वाला है। कश्मीर हमारा आंतरिक मामला है। उसे संपुक्त राष्ट्र में उठाने की बात बेमानी लगती है। कश्मीर से पाक को क्या लेना-देना। इन सब बातों से साफ जाहिर होता है कि कश्मीर में उपद्रव, अलगाववाद, आतंकी हमले ये सब परदे के पीछे पाक की ही कारस्थानियां रही हैं। हमें कश्मीर में कानून-व्यवस्था मजबूत बनाए रखना ही है, साथ ही पाकिस्तान से भी सतर्क रहने की जरूरत है।

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सुष्मा का योगदान

दैनिक जागरण (हरियाणा संस्करण) के 8 अगस्त के अंक में संपादकीय, हरियाणा का मौल्य में पूर्व विदेश मंत्री का सबसे बेहतरीन आकलन है। इसमें उचित कणों के कि सामाजिक क्षेत्र में उनका अतुलनीय योगदान वहाँ तक भुलाया नहीं जा सकेगा। सुष्मा स्वराज का महाप्रयाण भारतीय राष्ट्रीय राजनीति और अंतरराष्ट्रीय परिस्थित में बहुत बड़ा सुनापन दे गया है। राजनीति का कहकरा सीखते हुए सुष्मा ने भाजपा को भारततर्ष की राजनीति में हरियाणा को

तुलना में 2014 और 2019 में हार के बावजूद कांग्रेस में किसी तरह की बड़ी बगावत या बड़े पैमाने पर नेताओं ने पार्टी नहीं छोड़ी, लेकिन लगभग 15 पूर्व मुख्यमंत्रियों, दर्जनों पूर्व केंद्रीय मंत्रियों और पार्टी के पूर्व महासचिवों के रूप में वंशवादी नेताओं की खेप नई प्रतिभाओं को लुभाने के लिहाज से कुछ खास नहीं कर पाई है। जब मध्य प्रदेश, राजस्थान और छत्तीसगढ़ के मुख्यमंत्री चुनने की बारी आई तो पार्टी अध्यक्ष रहलुल की तुलना में प्रियंका का दखल ज्यादा रहा। इससे यह बहस जोर पकड़ने लगी है कि 'प्रियंका रहलुल से बेहतर हैं'।

अगर अगला अध्यक्ष पार्टी के लिए समर्पित न होकर केवल गांधी परिवार की कटपुतली होगा तो कांग्रेस के लिए शायद इससे बुरा कुछ और न हो। जब 1997 में बिना किसी पद के सोनिया गांधी पार्टी में शामिल हुई थीं तो अध्यक्ष रहे सीताराम केसरी की कोई हँसियत ही नहीं रह गई थी। अक्सर ऑस्कर फर्नांडिस और वी जॉर्ज केसरी के आवास पर नियुक्तियों पर उनके दस्तखत कराने के लिए जाते थे। केसरी इससे ख्रासे कुपित रहते थे कि उन्हें बस हस्ताक्षर करने तक ही सीमित कर दिया गया। क्या कांग्रेस का मौजूदा संकट गांधी परिवार की विरासत की समाप्ति पर मुहर लगाएगा या एक नई शुरुआत का जरिया बनेगा?

फिल्मकार महेश भट्ट कहते हैं कि हर अंत की राह में भी एक अंत होता है। कांग्रेस पार्टी उस अंत के पड़ाव पर पहुंच गई है, लेकिन हर एक अंत में नई शुरुआत भी होती है। क्या कांग्रेस अपने पुराने खोल से बाहर निकलकर उसमें नए सुधार कर सकती है। निजी तौर पर कांग्रेसी उनसे अवश्य सहमत होने चाहिए।

(स्तंभकार '24 अक्बर रोड' और

'सोनिया एं बालीयार्ड' पुरतकों के लेखक एवं ऑनब्लॉगर रिसर्च फाउंडेशन में विजिटिंग फेलो हैं)

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ऊर्जा

लोभ

मनुष्य के भीतर तमाम नकारात्मक प्रवृत्तियों में से लोभ एक मुख्य विकार है। किसी भौतिक वस्तु, धन, जमीन-जायवादे से जुड़ा अकर्षण और उसे अधिक से अधिक पाने की तुष्णा को लोभ कहते हैं। लोभी मनुष्य की इच्छाओं की कोई थाह नहीं है। इससे वह सामाजिक प्रतिष्ठा के पतन की ओर बढ़ रहा होता है। लालच के कारण ही व्यक्ति की बुद्धि और विवेक कार्य करना बंद कर देते हैं। हमारे धर्मग्रंथों में शांति, मोक्ष और आध्यात्मिक सुख पाने के लिए काम, क्रोध, लोभ, मोह और अहंकार जैसे विकारों को दूर करने को बहुत तवज्जो दी गई है। दूसरे नजरिये से देखा जाए तो मनुष्य अनेक प्रकार के सामाजिक संबंधों के जाल में फंसा है। लोभ भी मनुष्य की एक प्रकार की आवश्यकता है, क्योंकि इसके बिना किसी भी व्यक्ति को परिवारिक और सामाजिक उत्तरदायित्वों का निर्वहन करना कठिन बंद कर देते हैं। सीमित दायरे में बड़े गंभीर विकार नहीं है, परंतु जब वे अपनी सीमा का उल्लंघन करता है तो बड़ा विकार बन जाता है। यदि रहनापूर्वक विश्लेषण करें तो पता चलता है कि अगर मनुष्य अपने भीतर और बाहर के अस्तित्व के साथ तारतम्य में एकीकृत है तो वह परिपूर्ण है। उसे किसी प्रकार का विकार नहीं घेर सकता, परंतु यह नहीं है तो वह पूर्णतः खाली है। यही खालीपन एक लोभ, मोह और महत्कांक्षा की ओर धकेलता है।

पाक बर इस लालच और महत्कांक्षा के रूपी जाल में फंसने के बाद व्यक्ति के भीतर स्वाभाविक रूप से अधिक पाने की मानसिक प्रवृत्ति उत्पन्न हो जाती है जो तुष्णा में परिणत हो जाती है। इस अवस्था में बुद्धि कुंठित हो जाती है और व्यक्ति सही-गलत के फर्क में अंतर भी नहीं कर पाता है। यह पल सबसे हानिकारक होता है, क्योंकि लोभ व्यक्ति को पथभ्रष्ट कर देता है। इसलिए मनुष्य के पास लोभ रूपी विकार से निजात पाने के लिए सबसे सरल उपाय है कि उसे सब्र, सीमा और संयम के दायरे में रहकर ही हितपूर्ति करनी चाहिए ताकि सामाजिक और मानवीय संबंधों से नाता न टूटे और समाज वे संतुलन कायम रहे। यही जीवन जीने की आदर्श स्थिति है।

रियाशु राय

विशेष पहचान दिलाई। वह संघर्ष, बलिदान की विभिन्न कथाएं लिखते हुए अंततः काल तक अपनी पहचान छोड़ गई हैं।

गुगल किशोर शर्मा, फरीदाबाद

सुष्मा का ओजस्वी स्वरूप

भारतीय राजनीति में महिलाओं ने अहम योगदान दिया है। हमारे देश में प्रधानमंत्री व राष्ट्रपति जैसे महत्वपूर्ण पद को भी महिलाओं ने सुभिता प्रकिया है। भारत की राजनीति में जब भी किसी ऐसी महिला की बात की जाएगी जिसने सत्ता पक्ष व विपक्ष दोनों को जोड़ने का काम किया तो वह निःसंदेह सुष्मा स्वराज ही होंगी। भारत की पूर्व विदेश मंत्री रही सुष्मा स्वराज ने विश्व पटल पर भारत का ऐसा प्रतिनिधित्व किया जो अब तक कुछ ही लोग कर पाए। संयुक्त राष्ट्र में भारत का पक्ष जिस बेहतर ढंग से रखा वह अटल जी की परंपरा को आगे ले जाती हुई प्रतीत होती थीं। वह एक प्रखर वक्ता थीं। शब्दों में बहुत सहज थीं। मर्यादित व गरिमायवी भाषा-शैली उनके आभूषण थे।

अर्पित शुक्ला, नई दिल्ली

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

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