Fly with caution

With growth hitting a new low, the Indian aviation sector needs to tread carefully



OUT OF THE BLUE

ANJULI BHARGAVA

et Airways' abrupt closure may have left many former employees of the airline jobless and many passengers, Jet loyalists and industry observers sad but for India's aviation sector it has been a blessing in disguise whichever way one looks

Had the airline not downed shutters, I shudder to think what would have happened to the sector as growth in the first half of this year fell to single digit. CAPA has just revised its traffic forecast for the year and expects the year on year traffic growth to be less than 5 per cent. This too is based on an assumption of higher growth in the third and fourth quarter of the year than the first two. The slowdown that appears to have gripped India's economy is reflected in aviation too. International traffic growth has been almost flat and could even show a slight fall by the end of the year, according to analysts.

In keeping with the truly peculiar nature of India's aviation industry, the industry is poised to make profits for the first time since 2003, in a year when growth is likely to be among the lowest. CAPA — rather optimistically estimates an industry profit of \$500-700 million if things remain good and \$250-400 million if things don't remain so good for the financial

year ending March 2020.

Jet's closure has sorted out a number of challenges the industry was facing. It made available a total of around 2,100 pilots in an industry that was facing an acute pilot shortage. Almost all the rival airlines have hired Jet commanders (and cabin crew) including those who fly Airbus aircraft like IndiGo and Air Asia India. A type rating training for six months is on for many of the new recruits.

A second major shortage the airlines were facing was a shortage of flying slots at the metro airports -- in particular at Delhi and Mumbai. Jet's exit has freed up 800 weekly slots most at Mumbai where Jet was based — which have been cornered mostly by the incumbents — SpiceJet, Vistara, Go Air, IndiGo and Air Asia. This has been both a relief and a boon at these highly constrained airports.

In addition, Jet's closure helped

check the overcapacity in the market as 35 million seats went out of the system overnight. This has helped improve yields for the remaining players. However, most of the capacity is being replaced with SpiceJet taking the lead followed by Vistara and Air Asia India (which will be adding as many aircraft to its fleet this year as it did in the first five years of operation). Most of the capacity in the domestic market is back on offer although no one has yet stepped in to fill the gap left by Jet on international routes. What has also helped the players so far is that oil has not played truant and the rupee has remained largely stable, even if it hasn't strengthened against the dollar. These two factors can change the economics for all the carriers, both instantly and significantly.

So where do we go from here? As I see it, a lot will depend on the players themselves. If the airlines maintain discipline on fares in the coming quarters, there's a chance (other factors remaining unchanged) that some of the players would end the year with some profit. An all-out fare war as the airlines often find themselves in — could weaken everyone's balance sheet and leave every player and the industry worse off.

What happens if growth does not recover quickly? Capacity will have risen, costs will remain unchanged and yields will take a hit. The gains made in the quarters following Jet's exit could be reversed rather quickly. In the domestic market, the industry could actually do with more consolidation. Fewer and more efficient players is, in my view, the need of the hour.

But it is the next moves that the players make on the international routes that could be the clincher. The yawning gap in this market left by Jet's exit is tempting to fill. Making hay while the sun shines might seem attractive but is fraught with danger. Air India, which has gained little from Jet's demise, remains the next big variable for the industry. With a total of 145 aircraft (including Air India Express), the buyer of this airline will be best placed to fill the gaps left by Jet's withdrawal from the international sectors.

If I were Vistara or IndiGo in particular, I would chalk out my plans after there's some clarity on where this sale is headed. Treading with caution in a world of uncertainties may eventually be the wisest route.

CHINESE WHISPERS

Resisting demotion

of India (CPI), Trinamool Congress, and Nationalist Congress Party on Monday urged the **Election Commission** not to take away their "national party" status, saying they should be given a fresh opportunity to

The Communist Party

improve their electoral performance. They told the Commission they were old parties and had played a key role in national politics. Hence, their status should not be based on recent electoral performance only. The Election Commission had earlier issued them notices, asking why their "national party" status should not be revoked following their performance in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. The CPI is learnt to have said that after the Congress, it is the oldest party in the country and had been the principal opposition party in the Lok Sabha. The Trinamool is believed to have said that it was given national party status in 2014 and it should be allowed to continue with it till at least 2024. The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) escaped the fate of the three after it won 10 Lok Sabha seats and some assembly seats in not just Uttar Pradesh but also Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and some other states.

Family above all

A couple of appointments the Congress announced on Monday set tongues wagging within the party about how it was oblivious of the public mood about the party being the symbol of dynastic politics. Congress communications department chief Randeep Singh Surjewala issued a statement saying Congress President Sonia Gandhi has approved the appointments of Sharmistha Mukherjee and Anshul Meira Kumar as national spokespersons of the party. Mukherjee is the daughter of former president Pranab Mukherjee. Kumar is the son of Congress leader and former Lok Sabha speaker Meira Kumar. Some leaders, however, defended the party by pointing out that most other national spokespersons in the party were non-dynasts, but agreed that the optics of Monday's announcement could have been better.

Message for Vikram As the Indian Space Research

Organisation (Isro) continued its efforts to establish link with Chandrayaan-2's Vikram lander, now lying on the lunar surface after a hard-landing, social media users found ways to humour the Isro team. A tweet by the Nagpur police on Monday urging 'Vikram' to respond went viral in no time for its lighthearted take on the whole episode. "Dear Vikram, Please respond. We are not going to challan (receipt against a fine) you for breaking the signals!" said the Nagpur police through its official Twitter handle. The Isro has said Vikram, which lost communication with ground stations in the early hours of Saturday, was intact and lying tilted on the moon, but not communicating with ground stations.

Low-cost hygiene

ANALYSIS BEHIND THE HEADLINES

There is a social case for price control on hygiene products, but it leaves economic questions for manufacturers working on thin margins

VIVEAT SUSAN PINTO

he government's move to draw up a list of essential hygiene products, on the lines of an existing national list for drugs, could put it at loggerheads with industry. For one, say sources in the know, it signals the Centre's intent to widen its control beyond pharmaceuticals into over-thecounter (OTC) products.

OTC products in India are typically sold like fast moving consumer goods (FMCG), backed by huge marketing budgets and an aggressive

distribution push. It is not heavily regulated, say industry experts, the way the pharmaceutical industry is in the country.

While some experts say it is precisely this lack of regulation that has pushed the government to consider putting a price cap on hygiene products, industry players say it can hardly work for categories such as theirs. "Segments such as

sanitary napkins and diapers are fairly young, having evolved in recent years as disposable incomes and awareness about hygiene products improved. Their adoption also grew after branded players began advertising about their convenience and ease of use." says Kamal Johari, managing director, Nobel Hygiene, which makes adult and baby diapers.

"Over the years, product prices have fallen sharply to improve penetration. Organised players today operate on thin margins. A price cap will not help. Branded players could

pushing them to scale down their market activities and initiatives," he says.

Most big brands today manufacture and market sanitary napkins and baby diapers for under ₹50 a pack, though activists such as the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) argue that accessibility remains poor in rural areas, since people can neither afford branded products nor do these companies reach them through conventional trade channels.

According to the National Family and Health Survey 4, around 48 per cent

of the women in rural areas have access to clean sanitary napkins versus 78 per cent in urban areas. Overall, 58 per cent of the Indian women between 15 and 24 years use a hygienic method for protection, which is mostly sanitary napkins. In other words, there are still gaps to be filled when it comes to access to clean and affordable hygiene products. This, says CSE, builds a case for price control, though com-

panies are not in agreement at all. Procter & Gamble and Johnson & Johnson, two of the country's top hygiene product makers, manufacturing brands such as Whisper and Pampers (both by P&G) and Stayfree

(J&J) declined comment for the story. Unicharm and Kimberly-Clark, also key market players with brands such as MamyPoko Pants and Huggies respectively, were not immediately available for comment. Kimberly-Clark, which until 2017, had a joint venture with Hindustan Unilever, also makes Kotex

But a delegation from the Feminine and Infant Hygiene Association (FIHA), a body of the country's top manufacturers, which includes the above companies, had an urgent meeting with the government last week, said sources, to understand the proposed move to draw up a hygiene list.

At the meeting, the government, said persons in the know, assured the delegation that it was only studying the health and hygiene market right now and that a list would come up later. But companies remain wary of price control.

The proposed list could also look at a broader spectrum of hygiene products including soaps, handwash, disinfectants, toothpastes and mouthwash apart from sanitary napkins and diapers, implying that the larger personal and health care market could be regulated in the future.

"In the last few years, hygiene and health care products have been driven aggressively by FMCG companies and price control could slow down initiatives in this market," says Kaustubh Pawaskar, associate vice-president, research, at brokerage Sharekhan.

The branded feminine hygiene market in India is pegged at ₹4,873 crore, while the infant hygiene market stands at ₹6,006 crore, according to research agency Euromonitor International.

Aggressive launches in the last few years across the price pyramid and awareness campaigns have increased the penetration of both these categories of products, especially, feminine hygiene, Euromonitor says. The compounded annual growth rate of femine hygiene market in Indi.



Feminine hygiene 2018-23 (In ₹cr) Rate of growth (%) Infant hygiene 4,873

2018

2016 2017 Source: Euromonitor International

at 20.5 per cent over the next five years, while that of infant hygiene is pegged at 15 per cent, the research agency says.

"Significant opportunity for category penetration and growth exists for both segments and affordability remains a key factor for companies when looking to capture demand from low-income groups," Euromonitor savs.

The government itself

keenly in the area of feminine hygiene, market experts said. Last week, the Centre reduced the price of biodegradable sanitary napkins to ₹1 per piece from ₹2.50 a pad. The move was aimed at making the product even more accessible to girls, the government said, who were dropping out of school because of the lack of good quality sanitary napkins at an affordable p

Feminine

hygiene

Infant

hygiene

ON THE JOB

Unemployment in Jammu & Kashmir



MAHESH VYAS

fast-frequency measure based on an all-India sample often faces challenges in execution that cannot be overcome in the finite time span available to cover disruptions caused by externalities. For example, if a region is hit by a severe natural calamity that disrupts the execution of a survey for more than a week, then it is not possible to generate a near-realtime weekly estimate for that region.

In the recent past we **Locked in their** faced several challenges houses, Kashmiris in the execution of the face no jobs, no Consumer Pyramids income, no freedom Household Survey. The but, no worst caused by a natu- unemployment. ral calamity was in Kerala during the 2018 floods. There were chal-

lenges in the state this year as well as there were in parts of Maharashtra and Gujarat.

Not funny

These natural calamities suspend the survey for a few days or even a week or 10 days. And then we cover up the losses during days of slack that is available in the survey execution schedule or by adding resources.

We learned through experience that weekly state-level estimates are too vulnerable to natural calamities in small states. So, we suspended these measures. Now, weekly estimates are avail-

able only at the all-India level and at the all-India rural and urban levels. We retained monthly state-level estimates with the belief that no calamity would stall the execution of a household survev for an entire month. The lockdown in Kashmir since

August 5 now challenges this assumption. A manmade affliction has stalled Jammu & Kashmir and in the process it has stalled the household survey execution in the state — now for over a month. We have very little communication with the CPHS survey execution team in Kashmir. The survey depends heavily on GPS-enabled smart phones and internet connectivity. This is a faceto-face survey that requires easy mobility of people from house to house, village to village and city to city. None of this is possible. The survey in Jammu & Kashmir remains totally suspended.

The CPHS has a sample of 2,588 households in Jammu & Kashmir to be surveyed over a period of four months. Of these, 784 were scheduled to be surveyed in August. We could survey only 36 in the month. Past surveys tell us that Jammu & Kashmir has a labour force of about 4.3 million. The labour

force participation rate was a little over 42 per cent and the unemployment rate has been mostly around 15-16 per cent.

The labour force is about 1 per cent of India's labour force and the labour force participation rate is similar to that of India, but the unemployment rate is twice as high it is in India. In August 2019, the labour force participation rate rose a bit to 43 per cent and the unemployment rate rose sharply to 22 per cent.

But, all labour statistics estimates related to Jammu & Kashmir for the

month of August 2019 are unreliable. They are unreliable because they are based on an extremely small sample of 125 respondents from just 36 households. "Non-response" is of the order of 95 per cent. That is a statistically clinical explanation and it is totally unenlightening, like the estimates.

In reality, the state could be suffering a much shrunken labour force and near zero unemployment rate.

The labour force would have shrunk because when there are no tourists and when movement is highly restricted, when hotels, restaurants, transport enterprises and a host of other enterprises are forced to remain shut, they would effectively lay-off labour. In fact, casual labour is automatically laid off. The shikara-owners and such other selfemployed entrepreneurs are all rendered unemployed.

These persons rendered unemployed by the lockdown will necessarily have to exit the labour force because there are no jobs around to look for.

Shops and offices are closed. Markets are also closed. There is no one to offer jobs to the unemployed. And, there is no business for the entrepreneurs.

In recent surveys we recorded an estimated 650,000 unemployed persons in Jammu & Kashmir. The sample representing these people had stated till July that they were unemployed, were willing to work and were actively looking for jobs. How would they respond now? No one could be actively looking for jobs. Not many would be willing to work under the current conditions. As a result, technically, the recorded unemployment rate would be zero.

Locked in their houses, Kashmiris face no jobs, no income, no freedom but, no unemployment. Not funny.

The writer is the MD & CEO of CMIE

LETTERS

New era in banking



This refers to "Bravo FM, but it's only half the job done" by Tamal Bandyopadhyay (September 9). The article has made a case for freeing up public sector banks from the tradition of directed lending. Examples of government sponsored schemes that failed to kick start the rural economy were enumerated. It should be noted schemes like IRDP, SEEUY, SEPUP were well thought-out and aimed to provide employment opportunities to families and educated youths. If these schemes were implemented in letter and spirit, we would have had a different story to tell. The failure of these schemes was in their implementation at grassroots level.

Under these schemes, the identification of borrowers was done by local government functionaries. Banks were used only for the disbursement of the loans. Village-level corruption was endemic. In most cases. it was not the neediest who were chosen to be financed but the one who had the contacts or who knew how to game the system. There was no pressure on banks to recover the loans. While there were targets for loan disbursements, there was no such targets to recover previous loans. Conscientious bankers who went after defaulting borrowers did not get the requisite support. There were also cases of bank officials being tormented for not granting loans. Most of the managers were posted in locations far away from their roots.

With this handicap, it is not surprising managers were not stringent while identifying borrowers or that they did not exert themselves to

recover loans. Let us hope we learn from the past and see the dawn of a new era in banking.

KV Premraj Mumbai

Handle with care

Tamal Bandyopadhyay's insightful article "Bravo FM, but it's only half the job done" (September 9) gives a realistic recap of the progress of the banking sector in India post-nationalisation and gives practical suggestions for making the current phase of banking consolidation purposeful. India might be the only country which has deployed the resources and outreach of banks as an effective tool in the nation's economic development with focus on financial inclusion. The credit goes to the government as the owner of public sector banks and the Reserve Bank of India as the regulator and supervisor of the banking system that whatever has been achieved by financial intermediation across sectors was done without much damage to the institutional system. This was made possible by timely intervention to restructure and reorganise the banking infrastructure, by the reorganisation of existing institutions and the introduction of new players where

necessary. The present merger of 10 PSBs to form four is a continuation of

So long as banks continue to mobilise resources using the public deposit route, they will not be able to



get away from the responsibility to provide need-based banking services including lending to priority sectors. The government and the RBI will have to ensure that all banks get a level playing field to manage their businesses professionally. For this, not only banks, but all statutory bodies and PSUs need a free hand, subject only to transparent regulatory mandates, to manage their resources, personnel and day-to-day administration.

M G Warrier Mumbai

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► HAMBONE



Crunch time on RCEP

India should not risk getting isolated in the region

he Union government is shortly going to have to make a momentous decision about India's economic orientation. The deadline for the conclusion of talks on a proposed free-trade agreement (FTA) known as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is fast approaching. The FTA, which is envisaged to link the 10 members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) with the People's Republic of China, South Korea, Japan, Australia, New Zealand as well as India, is due to be concluded by the time Asean meets next in November. It has become clear over the past years that the major stumbling block to concluding this agreement is the attitude of New Delhi, which understandably worries that entering into an FTA with China — with which India already runs a substantial trade deficit might be disruptive for the domestic economy. The attempt has, therefore, been made to postpone lowering tariff barriers against Chinese goods in particular, especially in more sensitive lines of trade. Other members of the RCEP seem to have taken it for granted that almost all tradable goods — nearly 90 per cent should see the elimination of tariffs in short order. India, if it intends to remain a part of the RCEP process, will clearly have to make some compromises, as has been underlined at the recently concluded ministerial-level RCEP meeting in Bangkok. Some members of the RCEP have reportedly asked India to make up its mind if it wants to stay in the grouping.

The question is how many compromises New Delhi will permit its negotiators to make, and whether its final position will be acceptable to the other countries. India already has FTAs with Asean, South Korea, and Japan, although these have not been fully implemented in some particulars. The concerns are not just about cheap manufactured goods from China but also, for example, dairy products from Australia and New Zealand. The Union commerce ministry has in recent years complained that FTAs that India has signed have not been productive from the point of view of Indian industry — imports into India from FTA countries have done better than exports from India to those countries. But it is futile to blame this on trade agreements. That is a consequence of an unwillingness to take the important domestic reform steps that would enhance the competitiveness of Indian industry and enable it to take on producers from Asean and elsewhere.

There is little doubt that, in its tariff policy, India has taken a turn towards protectionism and import substitution in recent years. Concern about Chinese imports is also high. In this context, entering into an FTA with countries including China would be a significant deviation from the direction of the current policy. The government thus faces two options. It can continue with its current protectionism, at the cost of both being excluded from the RCEP process and, essentially, being isolated in the region. Or it can use the RCEP as a tool — the way Beijing did with its membership of the World Trade Organization in the initial years of this century — to force through important domestic reform measures. There is no question that the second option would be both better for the Indian economy in the long run and also for New Delhi's international standing. The question is whether the government has the political will to take the hard decisions that are required.

Combating air pollution

Stubble burning requires an economically rewarding solution

he Delhi government's recent announcement about working on a plan to bring down air pollution due to the burning of crop residues in the capital's neighbourhood is a welcome move that should spur similar action by the governments of the adjoining states as well. The drive against torching paddy stubble in north-western states seems to have overcome the initial hiccups and has started to show results. The Indian Council of Agricultural Research recently claimed, on the basis of satellite-based studies. that the incidence of biomass burning had dipped last year by 41 per cent in Haryana, 25 per cent in western Uttar Pradesh, and 15 per cent in Punjab over 2017. This is a small, yet significant, beginning. However, much more needs to be done to ensure enduring results.

A key flaw in the present anti-stubble burning strategy of the Centre and states is that it is focused primarily on promoting the use of Happy Seeder, a tractor-mounted machine that cuts the paddy straw and sows the next wheat crop in a single operation. Regardless of the merits of Happy Seeder, a onepronged and single appliance-based tactic to tackle this menace cannot be free from downsides. This is an expensive machine, which most farmers cannot buy despite a hefty 50 per cent subsidy. Though a higher concession of 80 per cent is offered to the cooperatives and farmers' producer organisations to procure these machines for custom-hire services, their limited period use — just around three weeks in a year — does not amply justify large investments in them. Besides, this can be operated only with a high horse-power tractor, which most cultivators do not possess. Moreover, many farmers hesitate to spend on managing the stubble — even though the expenses are recompensed later through higher crop yields — when the same can be done free of cost by torching the fields.

Clearly, stubble burning is an economic issue that requires an economically rewarding solution. The need is to add value to paddy leftovers to make them a marketable economic good. The farmers would not mind spending on collecting the residues if they can earn something from them. Unlike wheat straw, which fetches handsome prices because of its use as animal feed, paddy stalks are unfit for this purpose due to high content of indigestible silica. So, other avenues need to be discovered for their gainful use. Luckily, technologies are now emerging to convert paddy biomass into fuel pellets and bricks. It can also generate bio-gas or other forms of bio-energy. Oil companies, such as Indian Oil Corporation and Hindustan Petroleum, are setting up plants in Punjab to produce bio-CNG from paddy wastes. They may need assistance in developing the logistics infrastructure for procuring and transporting the biomass.

This apart, efforts need to be stepped up to find bio-agents for speedy decomposition of crop residues to make valuable composts. Some successes have already been reported in this field, which should promptly be validated and promoted. A fresh opportunity has now emerged for using paddy straws in the packaging sector, which is the largest user of the now banned single-use plastic. Like in the past, paddy straws can serve as the cushion for packing fragile products, replacing thermocol and other plastic material. Such approaches can transform the baneful crop waste into useful wealth.

ILLUSTRATION: ALAY MOHANTY



Why foreign investors are still selling

Policy measures taken to counter the slowdown are not enough

elling of Indian equities by foreign investors continues unabated. We see a net negative figure between \$100 and \$200 million on a daily basis. India continues to underperform global markets, most of which, unlike India, are solidly in positive territory in terms of performance for the year.

The macro picture for India remains benign. Oil prices seem anchored in a range of \$60-70 per barrel. Nearly \$17 trillion of debt globally is yielding negative interest rates. Any country able to deliver strong growth and have a positive carry should be able to attract disproportionate capital. Central banks around the world are set to embark on another round of easing, and liquidity currently is plentiful.

The government has listened to investors, both local and global, and removed the surcharge on capital gains, which had been a real pain point. There also seems to be acceptance that growth has slowed to unacceptable levels, and policy measures are being taken to counter the slowdown.

Despite the above, global capital continues to exit. On discussion with investors, who run global or regional fund mandates, the following concerns are repeated.

AKASH PRAKASH There is concern as to whether the current slowdown is more structural

than cyclical. The relentless grind down in rates globally seems to indicate that nominal growth rates are expected to slow dramatically across the world. Maybe India is now destined for an extended spell of 5-6 per cent real growth instead of the 7-8 per cent everyone expected. With inflation consistently undershooting, that may translate into nominal growth rate of 8-9 per cent. If you extend this line of argument further, nominal growth in single digit

implies a similar rate of corporate earnings growth. Most investors, given the extremely low profit share of GDP, had budgeted high double-digit earnings growth for India over the coming five years. This was how they would defend the valuation premium of India compared to the rest of the emerging market. These expectations of high double-digit earnings may not be met. Investors are starting to give up on profit share mean reverting. Maybe there is a new normal here as well. While India will still grow faster than most, the absolute levels may be disappointing. Valuations may need to correct for this.

The concern is also that there is absolutely no space for a countercyclical fiscal response. With slower GDP growth, tax revenues will disappoint

and weak markets mean no upside on divestment either. The only tool policy-makers have is monetary policy. They are pulling on this lever, but a despondent corporate sector, determined to deleverage may not invest despite lower rates. Most expect the global economy to slow as well. Thus, trade and exports cannot be a saviour to address our growth challenges. Many investors argue for a structural slowdown, as the government has limited ability to get us out of this funk.

Another fear is around debt dynamics. The stock of government debt has a yield of about 8.3 per cent. If nominal GDP grows slower than this number, as it did in Q1, debt dynamics can turn ugly, if the slow growth persists.

A second concern is around the goods and services tax (GST). Many investors now believe that it will have to be rejigged. The Centre has guaranteed a tax revenue growth of 14 per cent to the states. With nominal GDP in the single digits, that may be impossible to deliver. The central government will have to fill the hole, further straining its finances, Invoice matching may be the last hope. Once that is implemented, we may see some buoyancy. Without this, the whole architecture of the tax may have to be looked at again. We had all thought that GST would create fiscal space. It seems to have severely cramped fiscal maneuverability instead. Given the slowdown, low nominal GDP and continued implementation challenges, the revenue shortfall this year may be ₹1 trillion.

The third concern is around corporate governance and transparency. There is genuine dismay around the governance standards in corporate India — the CG Power episode being the latest. How can the actual debt be double that reported in the balance sheet? How can a company hide thousands of crores of debt for neither the management nor the board to know? The true nature, size and complexity of the IL&FS default are now apparent. Banks may have to take a 50 per cent haircut. The financial system may lose ₹45,000-50,000 crore. The auditors, rating agencies, management and board seem culpable of fraud or at least incompetence. We seem unable to have professionally run, board managed companies (without a credible promoter) with one or two exceptions. Invariably, the board gets captured by management. Most investors now actually prefer a strong promoter with a track record of good governance with high inside ownership. At least it reduces the agency problem. There is a real trust deficit in financial markets. Poor governance standards will corrode valuation multiples.

Indian equity markets had started narrowing in breadth two years ago. In hindsight, the markets were right, it has paid to stick to the proven leaders in governance. The quality premium was worth paying.

Sentiment among corporate India remains very subdued. Investors meeting companies find it difficult to remain positive. Companies complain of no demand, risk aversion in the financial system, judicial activism, unsympathetic policy-makers/regulators and poor profitability. I have not seen such negative sentiment since the taper tantrum of 2012-13.

Although the government has begun to act and appreciate the contours of the slowdown, not enough has been done yet. There still seems to be a lack of communication between the different arms of the government and between policy-makers and corporate India. We need to rebuild corporate confidence.

Investors want to see this slowdown as an opportunity for genuine reform. India has to be seen as being more hospitable for business.

While I am not as negative as some of the above feedback, one hopes the government puts in place a more ambitious economic reform agenda. I do not think this slowdown is structural. As we reach the anniversary of the NBFC crisis, growth will start to look better as the base turns favourable. Profit share/GDP will rise from today's abysmal levels. The global macro has rarely been better. The next six months may turn out to be a buying opportunity, but more on that in a subsequent article.

The writer is with Amansa Capital

Modi 2.0: Baptism by (economic) fire

ou just cannot escape it, no matter how hard you try. The second Narendra Modi government completed its 100 days last week on September 6, and the hosannas haven't stopped. It's not just the government and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) spokespersons who are celebrating what Modi 2.0 has done in this period, but virtually all news channels and newspapers seem to be in competition as to who gives the widest and loudest coverage. By comparison, Prime Minister Modi and the BJP president Amit Shah seem

Why are the first 100 days of an administration special? This landmark was set up in 1933, in the first administration of President Franklin Roosevelt of the United States. Immediately after assuming office on March 14 that year, he set himself a busy agenda. By June 11, the administration had completed 100 days. It had managed to get 15 important economic legislations passed through the Congress, thus boosting public confidence in the administration's ability to cope with a depres-

sion-ravaged economy. Roosevelt himself referred to this in his Fireside Chat on the radio, another of

his innovations, on July 24. The US News and World Report calls the 100-day performance a useful measure to gauge presidential performance because "presidents tend to be most effective when they first take office, when their leadership style seems fresh and new, when the aura of victory is still powerful." While Mr Modi's aura of the second victory is undoubtedly most powerful, his leadership style has been known for five years. So whether the 100-day criterion is relevant for the second term is a matter of detail, inconvenient as details usually are. Let that be.

Modi 2.0 certainly matched Roosevelt's despatch

in managing legislative affairs in its early days. Its feats of abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A, the reorganisation of Jammu and Kashmir, the triple talaq law and passing of a host of other measures have been lauded. But references are rather rare to that elephant in the room, the economy, stupid (the mantra of James Carville, strategist for Bill Clinton's successful campaign for the US presidency in 1992). We hear instead exhortations to achieve a \$5 trillion economy (by 2024/25) and low inflation. Mr Modi talks effusively

of Chandravaan and India's manifest destiny in space, but seldom about the more down-to-earth economic issues.

The immediate reaction to Roosevelt's 100-day economic campaign was, according to economic historian William L Silber, a "remarkable turnaround in the public's confidence." Within two weeks people returned more than half of the cash they had been hoarding, and the first stock-trading day after the bank holiday marked the largest-ever one-day percentage price increase.

In India, the Bombay Stock Exchange Sensex crossed 40,000 for the first time on May 23, the day of the election results, but it has since been subject to rather severe ups and downs, languishing between 36,000 and 37,000. Foreign investors have taken out more than \$10 billion in June and July. The rupee has slid from about ₹69 to the dollar in May to nearly ₹72 now. All of these hardly indicate confidence of investors, domestic and foreign.

As to the general public, I have to narrate some anecdotal evidence. A pharmacist with a robust business and the local sole distributor of our leading dairy brand both said that they had experienced a downturn in their volumes for the first time. Mind you, food and pharmaceuticals are generally considered immune to cyclical swings of demand. Their experience also mirrored that of those infallible weathervanes, the wholesale fruit and vegetable traders. If the economic headwinds turns to a gale, these straws will blindingly multiply.

The good ship Indian economy today is caught between the Scylla of the need to inject significant stimuli and the Charybdis of resource squeeze caused by the economic downturn. The Reserve Bank windfall payment of ₹1.7 trillion for the year may not be adequate to ensure a safe passage to calmer waters, nor the proposed public sector bank amalgamation. Export markets offer no quick fixes either. The activities which will rebound fastest according to Arvind Subramanian, are clothes and shoes. But India will have to strive hard to reclaim the lost ground here. The government and especially its economic bureaucracy would do well to dust off the former chief economic adviser's Economic Survey 2016-17 to devise an eminently practicable strategy.

Mr Modi has espoused Roosevelt's 100-day measure and Fireside Chats (Mann ki baat), even if it is sheer happenstance. The New York Times had observed in 1933 that Roosevelt "considers the President ...the instrument by which profound and necessary changes in the American system are to be effected." Mr Modi will wholeheartedly agree that the prime minister has an identical role to play in India. His discharging that task successfully depends largely on how well the economy is handled now, not through fire-fighting, but through a nuanced strategy. He should realise that his favourite preoccupation of India's standing in the comity of nations depends more on its economic destiny rather than aggressive diplomacy. His choice is between Roosevelt who pulled the US out of depression and his would-have-been rival in 1936 (referred to in this column last month), the populist Senator Huey Long of Louisiana.

The writer is an economist

Learning from start-up failure



NIVEDITA MOOKERJI

oming from the co-founder of Webchutney, a leading digital agency, How I Almost Blew It is a collection of start-up stories that is both authoritative and convincing. As the title suggests. Siddharth Rao's first book is about how successful entrepreneurs have so often been near the end and how they have come out of it either through their decision-making or sheer luck. In all 17 stories, whether it's Sanjeev Bikchandani or Ajit Balakrishnan, Deep Kalra or Deepinder Goyal, the fiascos have proved to be critical life lessons

Having started Webchutney (later

acquired by Dentsu Aegis Network) at age 19 in 1999, Mr Rao has gone through the entrepreneurial grind himself. In his debut book, he has used his own insights to offer a perspective on the variety of experiences the protagonists have gone through.

Zomato's Deepinder Goyal is a case in point. Mr Goyal, who has been in the headlines recently over the company's controversial premium membership plan, Gold, prompting restaurants to threaten logout from the platform, has been through crises before. When the food delivery app, which was initially only a search and discovery business, was on an overseas expansion spree, it failed in many geographies. "Dubai's success gave us the false confidence that we could walk into any market, launch our website and win....We went crazy after perhaps launches in 10 countries in just six months. We failed in half of them and realised that the one-size-fitsall approach doesn't work when you are launching in multiple markets," Mr Goyal told the writer.

From that mistake, Zomato learnt to innovate for individual markets based on local requirements. Most rapidly growing companies including Uber are doing thiscustomising their products not just according to the countries but also according to the cities where they are launching.

That was not the only challenge for Zomato, which recently laid off 600-odd employees. The food delivery scene was getting red hot with companies such as Swiggy, TinyOwl and Foodpanda attracting marquee investors, Mr Goyal realised Zomato had to get into that space. It did in 2015, but within a year the market dynamics changed completely. "Food tech, the darling of every VC was predicted to reach \$78 billion by 2018, growing at 16 per cent YoY," Mr Rao says, capturing the spirit of that time. The next line is telling. "Of the 105 food tech start-ups launched in India in 2014-15, only 58 were still around by 2016."

Like others, Zomato had begun to struggle. It laid off people and shut operations in many markets. The lesson learnt from that

experience, according to the writer, is that it's just a matter of time before everything reboots and bad apples fall away. "But in that moment, it doesn't mean that we can sit tight and not do anything about it. We have to act and move faster. As long as we do that, we will win," Mr Goval told Mr Rao. According to the writer, Mr Goyal and his team would have none of the foolish chivalry or swashbuckling and that they were not afraid to turn their backs on a fight they knew they could not win. Mr Goyal corroborates: "We are happy to run away from any battle that could potentially kill or drain us in the long term.'

SHREEKANT SAMBRANI

MakeMyTrip's Deep Kalra "almost blew it up," too. The first instance was at the peak of the dotcom bubble bust in 2000. Mr Kalra was in Mumbai to collect a second tranche of funds committed by e.Ventures to MakeMvTrip, Instead, Neerai Bhargava, partner, e.Ventures, asked Mr Kalra to repay the previous tranche and buy back the 70 per cent stake the firm had in MakeMyTrip. Following friends' advice, Mr Kalra offered e. Ventures a "distress valuation". He offered his entire savings at that time — ₹46 lakh — fearing all the while that he would be ridiculed. To his surprise, e.Ventures agreed on that price to sell the 70 per cent stake, taking a massive downgrade on the investment.

Mr Rao points out in the introduction to the book that several success stories -Flipkart, Paytm and Ola Cabs — have not been covered here owing to "several unpredictable factors". He also makes it clear that he hasn't set out to give any formula for success. "My goal is to present stories of a few entrepreneurs and prove there is no framework for success except for determination.'

Besides the stories of the entrepreneurs. what keeps the reader engaged is the writer's observations on the start-up world. Take, for example, his comment linking start-ups and unemployment. In the chapter on Jitendra Gupta, co-founder of Citrus Pay, Mr Rao writes, it is fascinating that so many big Indian start-ups were born not out of brilliance but unemployment. Mr Gupta was unemployed for some eight months after he had given up his job as an investment banker. It seems the only thing he was sure about was that people valued his opinion on payments, encouraging him to start a financial technology company.

Mr Rao's take on "start-up pivoting" is interesting too. While on Pradeep Kar, founder, chairman and managing director of Microland, he talks of start-up pivoting as an essential term for changing strategies to make a venture successful. Nokia, he says, is the oldest and the most fascinating example of pivoting. Twitter, he recalls, was born out of a failed podcasting business called Odeo, and Android pivoted out of an operating system for cameras.

Although the author has mentioned entrepreneurs who are not part of this book, who does he think is a class apart? There may not be a clear answer on that, but Mr Rao admits that of all the start-ups stories collected for the book, "I found Delhivery to be the most intimidating business because it is such a daring endeavour in all aspects, from dealing with blue-collar employees to potential frauds and errors."

HOW I ALMOST BLEW IT: Incredible Lessons From India's Most Successful Digital Entrepreneurs Sidharth Rao

Westland, 298 pages, ₹699





100 NOT OUTPrime Minister of India, Narendra Modi

Whatever big decisions were taken in the past 100 days, inspiration behind them were 130 crore people of the country... I thank all the parties for the record work done

Need to relook the current NHAI road-building model

With costs soaring and private sector unable to invest, NHAI took on too much debt and is now near-bankrupt

NDIA'S ROAD-BUILDING programme, which was going places, could be stopped in its tracks. On the one hand, the prime mover—NHAI, or the National Highway Authority of India—is clearly financially stretched. Former chairman Brijeshwar Singh estimated that the contingent liabilities could be more than twice the hard liabilities of ₹1.5 lakh crore. While this observation has been rebutted by the current chairman, it is evident the authority's balance sheet is far from robust. The CAG pointed out the NHAI had failed to set aside the mandatory sum (half-yearly) from its income in a reserve fund. Unless budgetary support to the authority increases substantially, it will become more dependent on costlier market borrowings. As for concessionaires, few today have the financial wherewithal to support projects with an equity contribution; more importantly, they are unwilling to take on project risks. Developers want to work with the BOT-HAM (hybrid annuity model), where the NHAI takes on most of the equity risk, and also shoulders the responsibility of acquiring the land and collecting the toll. The HAM is much like an EPC, with the concessionaire having virtually no skin in the game; the equity contribution is sub-10%. That is one reason why banks are wary of extending loans to these projects.

The government launched the HAM because builders were reluctant to execute the plain-vanilla BOT (build-operate-transfer) projects. Not surprisingly, the share of BOT projects has come down sharply. In FY18, of the overall 7,397 km awarded by the NHAI, around 3,397 km was awarded under HAM, 3,791 km under EPC, and only 209 km under BOT. In FY19, the projects awarded through HAM slowed down to around 880 km of the overall 2,222km awarded, partly because of delays in getting the right-of-way, but also because financial tie-ups were not easy to come by. The authority now wants to re-focus on the BOT, but concessionaires may hesitate to participate in these projects. For one, their balance sheets remain stressed; most will find it hard to bring in equity capital, and even more will be unable to tie up bank loans. Even if NHAI comes forth to acquire the land—which it should—it is doubtful banks will lend to promoters who are stressed. The appetite for BOT, therefore, could be limited unless the model is tweaked.

One reason for the road-building programme losing steam is that after the revised compensation guidelines of 2013, land prices have soared. In 2017-18, they were ₹3.8 crore per hectare, and moderated to ₹2.5 crore in 2018-19 due to more greenfield related acquisitions. The high land costs have compelled NHAI to borrow more; market borrowings rose to ₹62,000 crore in FY19, taking the debt to an estimated ₹1.8 lakh crore from ₹1.22 lakh crore in 2017-18, and a near-threefold increase over the debt in FY14. While the general elections slowed the pace of awards, the fact is that only 500 km of roads projects were awarded between April and July. That was on the back of a subdued performance in 2018-19, when only 2,222 km were awarded, down from 7,400 km in the previous year. In fact, construction rose just marginally to 3,320 km from 3,071 km in 2017-18. Even if NHAI is able to rustle up the funds, concessionaires will find it hard to do so.

Not just market share

SC ruling in Uber-Meru case has important implications

SAGENERAL rule, most people believe that if a firm doesn't have much market-power in an industry, it cannot be construed to be indulging in predatory pricing, even if its pricing is way below its costs. Indeed, as a recent case involving cab firms Meru and Uber shows, even the Competition Commission of India (CCI) seems to believe this to be the case. This never really made sense since, even in the case of imports from countries that have little market share, the government is quick to impose anti-dumping duties, which are, in a fundamental sense, the same as action against predatory pricing. In this particular case, Meru approached CCI in 2015, alleging new entrant Uber was indulging in predatory pricing; to support this contention, it gave details of how much Uber was losing—₹204 per trip—and said that its market share was above 50%, as per a market survey report by New Age Tech Sci Research Private Limited. Meru also said that, while Uber began its service, it charged ₹20 per km—most radio cabs charged around ₹23 at that point—but this was dropped to ₹7-12 per km for different categories of services.

CCI, however, rejected Meru's plea for an investigation on various grounds. For one, it contested the New Age Tech study, and said its findings were quite different from a report by 6Wresearch that CCI had been presented with in another case; CCI also said that the relevant market was Delhi, and not the Delhi-NCR that Meru argued was the case; CCI added that there is a vibrant and dynamic radio taxi service market in Delhi, so Uber was not dominant in the relevant market. This ruling was struck down by the Competition Appellate Tribunal (Compat), and

this has just been upheld by the Supreme Court (SC). Compat pulled up CCI for first dismissing the New Age Tech report, and yet, later, combining this with the 6W research report; and if the findings were contradictory, why not get a fresh report done? More important, Compat said that, under competition law, dominance doesn't necessarily have to be related to just market-share in statistical terms. Compat drew CCI's attention to sub-clauses b, c, d, and e of 19(4) of the Competition Act; the "issue of dominance needs to be seen from a perspective that does not limit to the market share of the enterprise alone..."The Compat ruling, and the SC stamp of approval are an important milestone in India's competition law. Indeed, if the market-share criterion was to be rigidly followed, this would have meant CCI would never take action against an RJio—it didn't, as it happens—or a Flipkart/Amazon, just because their initial market-shares were low. Of course, CCI action has to look at other issues as well, like technology and consumer welfare—technology changes market dynamics more than anything else, and lower prices benefit consumers—but recognising that concepts like significant market share are outdated is also important.

FreebieSPEECH

The SC warning the Delhi govt against its plan to give free rides to women on Delhi Metro smacks of judicial overreach

HE SUPREME COURT (SC), on Friday, warned the Arvind Kerjriwal-led Delhi government against its plan of making metro rides free for women, asserting that it was not beyond the powers of the apex court to intervene in case of mismanagement of public money to provide sops and freebies. Justices Arun Mishra and Deepak Gupta, while hearing the matter of the construction of Phase IV of the Delhi Metro, opined that allowing people to travel free would run the Delhi Metro into a loss, and, given the Delhi government's insistence that the Centre must share any further operational losses that DMRC may suffer, the scale of loss of public funds is unjustifiable. The SC may be right about the distortionary effect freebies have, but dictating, or declaring its intent to dictate, to a democratically elected government on how it should spend public funds is, in principle, overreach.

The question is not whether the AAP government is right or wrong in making public transport free for females, or even, for that matter, whether the other sops it plans to roll out, on electricity and water, for instance, are economically-sound decisions. At the heart of the matter is whether the SC is right in interfering in the matters that are exclusively the turf of the legislature. More so, since it has set no precedent in this regard, cautioning against similar channelling of public money to freebies and sops, say, under the National Food Security Act, which gives almost two-thirds of the country's population substantial subsidies. In intervening in matters of governance, the SC is not only reaching beyond its given mandate but also violating the constitutional principle of the unbiased, and independent functioning of the state organ. There are many institutional mechanisms to check for the soundness, or the lack thereof, of a government's spending decisions. The SC should refrain from pronouncing in a manner that tramples on the separation of powers.

STRUCTURAL FAILURES

WITH THIS COLLAPSE, SEVERAL GROWTH NARRATIVES OF THE PAST TURN OUT TO BE MYTHS

Growth distress returns

DP GROWTH PLUM-**METING** to 5% has triggered another round of downward revisions to FY20 GDP forecasts, closer to 6%, or even lower. The collapse in private consumption has punctured the one leg on which the economy stood. The elephant that was poised to run post-GST has been grounded, pushing the government's \$5-trillion economy dream further ahead. The extent of output collapse (three percentage points *visa-vis* April-June 2018) has surprised even the government's worst critics, invoking a debate if this is cyclical or structural. Many consider it cyclical, including RBI, which also finds trend growth moderating since 2016-17. Lowered potential output suggests the story lies on the structural side.

Economists are advocating more structural reforms. That is for the future. What about the past? Modi 1.0 government introduced several big and small reforms, especially inflation targeting, IBC, RERA, demonetisation, GST, and improving doing business. Modi 2.0 should be reaping the dividend. Instead, growth faltered. What went wrong?

The inevitable comparison with the 2012 slowdown calls for revisiting growth narratives of the time. It is important to see how these hold out, as they guided Modi 1.0's policy responses.

Policy Paralysis: The outstanding explanation of 2012 slowdown was 'policy paralysis'—government failure in timely project clearances, mostly infrastructure, which stalled due to land acquisition, environment and forest rights issues. Attributed to weak leadership of a coalition government, the recommended solution was reforming governance—strong, decisive leadership could take quicker action. The new government cleared many stalled projects, sparking expectations of imminent investment revival. But, investment never recovered; it is probably more depressed. Private participants remain risk-averse to infrastructure exposure even as public capex is exhausted.

The 'policy paralysis' diagnosis was always overblown, limited, and evaded material issues of private risk-taking and sharing, external demand collapse, and other nuances, which 'decisive leadership' alone couldn't resolve. As early as March 2014 (bit.ly/2k2CxSO), we apprehended that these narrow accounts risked skipping policy focus on 'real' productivity-enhancing reforms. Growth costs of overemphasising governance are now apparent.



Growth Domestic demand-driven; External Factors mattered little: External factors were given short shrift. The overwhelming conclusion was India's growth was largely driven by a domestic demand-oriented investment boom; unlike China, and several other emerging markets, India relied less on exports. Growth decomposition, and econometric exercises reaffirmed this, attributing investment shortfall as the major cause. Added to evidence on stalled infrastructure projects, the verdict was that domestic policy uncertainties, not world recession, forced businessmen to abandon ongoing projects; scrap future plans. That India was no exception to a global downturn—prominent economies like Russia, Turkey, Thailand, China and South Africa experienced even sharper slowdowns in 2012-13—was ignored.

This led to subsequent neglect of exports, and trade policy. Exports lost competitiveness not just from rupee appreciation due to illusory external balance improvement but also from failure to recognise the trend fall in world trade volumes, which, ideally, should have urged appropriate structural reforms to gain an extra edge. While our emerging market peers focused upon efficiencyproductivity improvements through structural reforms in that period, the underplayed role of external conditions proved costly, with excessive faith on propping up domestic demand, including from strengthening currency.

Structural Reforms: The failure to make India's factor markets, other institutions more flexible, and efficient, to lower trade-production costs in the post-crisis world was also attributed to an inept, coalition government. The new government did try to revise land acquisition rules, but lacked majority in the Upper House, leaving labour market reforms to state governments. But, Modi 1.0 instituted other signal reforms, whose growth outcomes deserve appraisal.

Inflation Targeting intended to resolve India's high-inflation by anchoring expectations, disciplining wage-price spirals to deliver fairer returns to savers,

and lower costs for producers. The promise was low and stable inflation would lay the foundation for strong and sustainable growth for many years. Inflation did lower, but growth dropped; higher returns haven't quite excited savers as declining household financial savings testify, while producers and several commentators blame high real interest rates for discouraging investment.Contextually,the IT reform missed reading the secular decline in global inflation, which major central banks failed have to

revive. India kept real interest rates astronomically high in this environment, extracting severe output sacrifice.

Demonetisation, a 'structural reform' to encourage formalisation, digitisation, and increase public revenues and savings by discouraging cash holdings, eliminating black money proved noth-

ing as such. But, it deserves flagging the economy struggles, today, from a informal depressed as commentators debate about how to address it! **GST**, the 'one nation-one tax' ush-

ered in Parliament's central hall in July 2017, estimated GDP gains between 0.9-1.7%, and higher exports in the 3.2-6.3% range. Other benefits were structural improvement in fiscal balances from higher compliance and revenues; positive direct tax collection spillovers from removed distortions; better governance from increased transparency; new job opportunities; decentralisation of production, formalisation, etc. Two years later, none of this is visible: GDP and tax revenue growth have precipitously slowed, and market share gains of organised firms are reported to be tapering off even as transport times are reduced and logistics improved. Did GST follow too close after demonetisation, affecting careful designing and implementation?

Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code provides legal exit and resolution

options for failed businesses, imparting certainty. However, its impacts upon existing and potential/new investors need differentiation: IBC increases uncertainty for existing investors, deterring them from further investments seeing the fate of past ones; new investors do have more future certainty, but do not foresee demand. We need to recognise this dynamics to understand that IBC has not yielded any growth benefits.

Banking sector stress was recog nised mid-way through Modi 1.0, which responded to NPA recognition, resolution, recapitalisation and reform. The process has been slow, and is still incomplete; recapitalisation has been inadequate as regulatory and growth capital needs are consistently underestimated and fall short; public banks' reform misses key governance problems. Then, some private banks got similarly sullied. Growth was surely pulled down.

Excess Welfare Spending or Dolenomics: Excessive welfare

The need of

the hour is

to recoup lost

competitiveness,

the 1991 reforms

spending squeezed public capex, worsened expenditure quality, and underpinned the severe resource constraint by 2012. This 'dolenomics' analysis perversely influunaddressed since enced public spending by Modi 1.0: it neither controlled nor reformed revenue expenditure, but rather expanded it, scal-

> borrowings. The outcome is counterproductive, as this pattern pushed up private borrowing costs—a serious mistake—creating further resource constraints while the private investment shortfall persists.

> ing-up capex through large off-budget

The partial growth narratives of the 2012 slowdown led to investing of political capital in inadequate policy actions, missing deep-seated reforms to raise productivity in a stagnant postcrisis world. Potential output is, no doubt, lowered with no fresh capital stock addition for one decade, falling labour force participation and lagging productivity. As growth collapses once more, there is little choice but to take a hard look at what holds India back the most: the high costs of production, and trade transactions. The need of the hour is to recoup its lost competitiveness, unaddressed since the 1991 reforms There is a majority government in both houses. This political dividend needs harnessing to reform land, labour, markets, and institutions for conversion to a growth-dividend and job-creation.

Keep your eye on the road

Tax cuts for the auto industry may cheer the equity markets, but for bond investors, the govt's share matters as much as the private sector's spending capacity

INDIA'S PLUNGING AUTO sales are making investors nervous. Their bigger worry should be the vanishing new roads.

The country's top six automakers reported a 29% decline in August sales. A 45% slump in commercial vehicle sales by Tata Motors Ltd, the No. 1 Indian truck maker, added to the gloom. With GDP growth facing its longest slump since 2012, India is in a quasi-recession, Teresa John, an economist at Nirmal Bang Equities Pvt in Mumbai, said in a report this week.

The bond market seems to agree. A five-year swap, which allows investors to lock in a fixed interest rate by promising to pay a floating overnight rate, has dived to its lowest since the 2008-09 global financial crisis. The swap, a proxy for how traders view short-term rates will behave in the future, is signalling expectations of very deep cuts in the policy rate.

While those cuts would push up bond prices, a 5%-plus drop in the rupee so far this year will undercut the dollar value of capital gains for global investors. New money may be dissuaded by low initial yields plus the risk that the rupee could fall more.

A contrast with Indonesia may be helpful. Like its bigger neighbouring

economy, Indonesia, too, is hungry for capital that would create jobs for its teeming youth population. But while Indonesian government

bonds have attracted \$8 billion in for-

eign money this year, net inflows into

Indian debt securities have been \$4.5 billion. Indonesia's economy will also slow because of the US-China trade war. Still, Jakarta has the fiscal headroom to follow through on its intention of slashing corporate tax rates by 5 percentage points to 20%. If that's not enough to spur business activity, President Joko Widodo can also channel fresh investment into a brand new capital city.

That brings us to Indian prime minister Narendra Modi's pro-growth spending ambitions. A \$70 billion plan to build a 35,000-kilometre (22,000mile) road network is under way. Highways can act as a powerful stimulus by creating new construction jobs, spawning fresh orders for excavators, graders and rollers, and putting spending money in the hands of people whose land is getting acquired.

Trouble is, India doesn't have fiscal resources. Even involving the private sector to share 60% of the cost of new roads—against a guaranteed annuity for 15 years—is getting tricky. After shouldering the burden of the remaining 40% cost, the highway authority's debt has risen to 1.8 trillion rupees from 240 billion rupees five years ago. The agency has to slow down. Realistically, it can award between 3,100 km and 3,500 km annually over the next four years, according to SBICAP Securities, a big drop from the record 7,400 km of contracts it gave out in the year ended in March 2018.

In the absence of more spending in an

ANDY MUKHERJEE

ing of monetary policy is something

investors will take into account.

area with a high fiscal multiplier, deeper interest rate cuts may be needed to arrest plunging GDP growth. That overburden-

More crucially, monetising existing roads could generate the much-needed upfront funds to build more new ones. But a 3-km stretch sold to investors for 30 years garners resources to build only 1 km of new highways. That's partly because the previous government came up with a law to ensure landowners get 34 million rupees per hectare as compensation, versus just 7 million rupees in 2013. All very noble (and extremely populist), but where's this money going? Why can't Modi's all-pervasive goods and services tax pull some of it back for the exchequer to ease the

financial constraints on infrastructure? Investors can keep asking, but a government that has only recently admitted to a widespread slowdown won't accept that its GST is fatally flawed. Some tax cuts for the auto industry may cheer the equity markets. But for bond investors, what matters is not only how much more the private sector can spend out of any tax relief, but also how much less the government will get, and therefore what its borrowing will be.

Let equity markets worry about cars. Bond investors have their eyes on the road.

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THE EDITOR

LETTERS TO

Kashmir imbroglio The Modi government's stand that

the abrogation of Article 370 will bring about the integration of Jammu & Kashmir with the rest of India simply does not stand up to ratiocination. The continuing lockdown in the Valley begs the question of whether the government has really done right by J&K's inhabitants. Instead of allowing the indigenous people of the Valley to integrate with those of mainland India organically and of their own free will, the Modi government has hastened to forcibly graft the crown of the sub-continent onto a supranational entity. It is unfair not to let the people of Kashmir have their say. The overwhelming support for the misstep is explicable in terms of the numerical superiority and predominance of Hindus. To put it candidly and concisely, the Kashmir problem still remains vexed, intractable and unresolved because of the religious fault-lines that run deep through the sub-continent. It is a fallacy to say that the Modi government has 'liberated Kashmir from the clutches of Abdullahs and Muftis' or that its assurance of 'development' will win over disaffected and alienated Kashmiris. It is not unpatriotic to take the view that the restoration of Article 370, granting greater autonomy, coupled with measures to fulfil legitimate political aspirations and adherence to secularism in the rest of India are what is needed for the Valley's integration in its true sense. — G David Milton, Maruthancode

Write to us at feletters@expressindia.com

R.N.I. Reg. No. 6188/61 Printed for the proprietors, The Indian Express (P) Ltd by Vaidehi Chintaman Thakar at The Indian Express (P) Ltd Press, Plot No. EL-208, TTC Industrial Area, Mahape, Navi Mumbai-400 021. Phone: 22022627/67440000. Fax: 022-22856323. Chairman of the Board: Viveck Goenka, Managing Editor: Sunil Jain, Deputy Managing Editor: Shobhana Subramanian* (*Responsible for selection of news under the PRB Act) © Copyright: The Indian Express (P) Ltd. All rights reserved. Reproduction in any manner, electronic or otherwise, in whole or in part, without prior written permission is prohibited. The Financial Express (P) Ltd. All rights reserved.

FINANCIAL EXPRESS





Is the auto slowdown for real?

Governments must stop milking the auto sector unless they wish it goes the telecom way. Neither consumers nor manufacturers want policy uncertainty

OT A DAY passes without reading how the Indian automotive sector is in the midst of a crisis and its appeals to the government for help. This article takes an integrated view of the issues involved with an intent to provoke thought. The author does not claim to be an auto expert.

Amidst sagging animal spirits, Kia Seltos got 23,000 bookings and MG Hector 21,000 bookings, collecting a booking amount of Rs 57.5 crore and Rs 105 crore, respectively. Buyers aspire, have money, hence booked.

Modi 2.0 started on a wrong note by seeking to fast forward the use of electric

Exports

vehicles (EVs) without any infrastructure for charging. It created a perception that only sales of EVs would be allowed and internal combustion engine (ICE) would be banned, especially in two-wheelers. Next, the Budget 2019 levied a special additional excise duty and road and infrastructure cess on petrol and diesel of Rs 1 each. An earlier Supreme Court order increased insurance cost by making it mandatory to have long-term third-party insurance, three years for cars and five years for two-wheelers. As if this was not enough, the government increased registration fees. Governments must stop milking the auto sector unless they wish it goes the telecom way. Neither con-

sumers nor manufacturers want policy uncertainty. It affects consumer confidence and future investments.

Another related issue is introduction of Bharat Stage 6 norms in April 2020. As a consumer, why would I buy a BS4 car when April 2020 is just six months away? Since India has a vibrant second-hand car market, the resale value of a BS4 car in, say, 2024 would be much lower than a BS6 one. More about BS6 later.

Also, the popularity of shared mobility or cab services, which contributed to a surge in sales earlier, has begun to hurt. And the cost of owning a car has gone up. A consumer pays EMI (high interest rates), recurring cost of fuel, insurance, registration, maintenance, and hassle of car parking. Cab services reduce your investment and stress. Uday Kotak, the MD of Kotak Mahindra Bank, recently said that consumers prefer cab services. It is now considered cool to use cabs, not own a car. Consumer behaviour is changing. As the metro rail coverage increases across India, it might further reduce the demand for cars and two-wheelers.

By nature, Indians are bargain hunters. With the industry clamouring for a GST cut, they are waiting to see if the government succumbs. Modi 2.0 has compounded the problem by taking a piecemeal rather than integrated approach to address the alleged auto industry woes.

Let us look at sales numbers now. Exports of passenger vehicles (PVs) peaked in 2016-17 (see table), growing by only 9% over a five-year period. India has a long tradition of making commercial vehicles (CVs), yet export numbers are an embarrassment. Three-wheeler exports grew by 39% and those of twowheelers by 33% over a five-year period. Two-wheeler exports grew at a good 20.3% and 16.5% in 2017-18 and 2018-19, respectively. One does not need to be an IIM graduate to know that exports compel manufacturers to improve quality, technology and reduce

Domestic vehicle sales (Nos in lakh) 2014-15 2015-16 2016-17 **2017-18** 2018-19 Three-Two-Passenger Commerical vehicles wheeler vehicles wheeler

per unit indirect cost, amongst others.

Also, over a five-year period, growth in domestic sales volumes was 30% for PVs, 64% for CVs, 32% for three-wheelers and 33% for two-wheelers (see table). PV sales grew at a high of 9.3% in 2016-17, falling to 2.7% in 2018-19. Actually, growth rates in PV sales started falling in 2017-18. The decline in sales could also be because of lack of new products, especially in the affordable segment. When I look at the top-20 cars by sales volume in July 2019, I see the same old models. Where is the motivation to buy!

In a recent interview to ET Now, Prashant Jain, CIO and ED of HDFC AMC, said, "Consumer discretionary spending is slowing down. The real reason for this slowdown is that white-collar wages in the private sector have not done well over the last many years. Actually, in many areas of the economy, they have degrown in real terms. The last few years' growth was sustained by increasing household borrowings and falling savings. Household leverage in India has gone up pretty sharply in the last 5-6 years. We are coming to a stage where we do not have much room to borrow and consume. Going forward, consumption will grow when jobs and wages increase."

CVs grew at 20% in 2017-18 and 18% in 2018-19. If one compares sales of CVs in 2019-20 with the previous two periods, the fall would be sharp on account of a high base.

It can be argued new axle-load norms led to an increase in rated load capacity of trucks, allowing transporters to carry additional weight, and thus reduced demand for CVs. Actually, "The higher limit, i.e. increased load, has in a way legalised overloading and given fleet owners the opportunity to sweat their existing assets more instead of purchasing new trucks." (http://bit.ly/2lZjiKu).

Two-wheeler sales grew at 14.8% in 2017-18 as against 6.9% in 2016-17 and 4.9% in 2018-19. Rajiv Bajaj, MD, Bajaj Auto, recently asked, "In terms of motorcycles, I was looking at these numbers, year on year the decline in retail sales is only around 5-7%...if that can be called a crisis, what is it we mean by the normal up and down cycle of a business?"

The above are wholesale numbers, i.e. from companies to wholesalers. Can the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers, the industry body, release retail sales for a better evaluation of trends?

The crisis in the NBFC sector has reduced financing options for consumers. The question is whether overleveraging by NBFCs should be brought out in the open or brushed under the carpet for fear of hitting growth rates?

In order to lure consumers, companies have invested in showrooms. These require investments and increase fixed costs. When demand fails to meet expectations, dealers come under pressure. Has the time come to experiment with multibrand auto showrooms?

Another factor that has received inadequate attention is BS6 norms by April 2020. Are oil marketing companies ready to supply BS6-quality fuel? Since BS6 cars would coexist, would petrol pumps supply a separate fuel for those cars? How would these fuels be priced?

Here is an excerpt from a Team-BHP report 'Busting the myth of BS6 engines in India', "Since there is no clarity yet as to what the final rollout of BS6 norms and fuels would be like (restricted to a few tier-1 cities, or pan-India), we as car buyers and owners can only speculate about the various measures being taken by the government and automobile manufacturers to save money, make more money from customers, and work around the SC orders relating to BS6 rollout."

Change and uncertainty are synonymous. It is imperative for the government and industry to rise above revenue considerations, sales targets and communicate clearly and consistently, failing which the consumer will wait till at least May 2020 to see how things pan out. The Supreme Court should trust these two and refrain from passing orders that will only compound policy uncertainty.

• RBI RATE CUTS

Role of external benchmarks

RBI will need to cut less if banks begin with a lower lending rate

OW WILL THE Reserve Bank of India's introduction of external benchmarks, effective October 1, impact its Monetary Policy Committee's rate policy? We expect it to follow Governor Shaktikanta Das into cutting policy rates by another 'out-of-the-box' 35 bps on October 4 and 15 bps in December, pause as inflation goes up on base effects, and cut 40bps to 4.5% repo rate by September if US recession risks rise. Our base case has banks pricing fresh retail/SME loans on a spread defined as the difference between the current retail/SME lending rate and the external benchmark. As the external benchmark falls on RBI rate cuts, banks would duly reduce lending rates. Second, what if banks settle at a lower spread/lending rate to begin with? This would obviously reduce the need for deeper RBI rate cuts. Finally, what if banks are split between RBI reporate and yield benchmarks? They would end up following the benchmark that is rising/falling faster in a rising/falling rate environment.

So, what's changing? Banks currently price their MCLR by the following formula: *MCLR* = *Marginal cost of funds* (deposit rates, borrowing, cost of equity = risk free + mark up) + CRR cost + tenor/credit risk premiums + opex...(1).

RBI actions enter equation 1 indirectly: (a) deposit rates depend on RBI durable liquidity infusion; (b) borrowing costs on liquidity (repo/reverse repo mode) and RBI repo rates, and (c) cost of equity on RBI rate cut/OMO.

RBI has now mandated that banks should price lending rates on fresh retail/SME loans (about 50% of book) as a spread over external benchmarks like the RBI repo rate, 3m/6m T-Bill or any other benchmark market interest rate published by the Financial Benchmark India Private Ltd (FBIL), by October 1. As floating rate loans are linked to external benchmarks (at 3-month reset), transmission will naturally be direct (for RBI repo rate), or, at least far more rapid (for, say, T-Bills). Banks are free to choose their spread over the benchmark interest rate, subject to the condition that the credit risk premium can change only when the borrower's credit assessment undergoes a substantial change, as agreed upon in the loan contract.

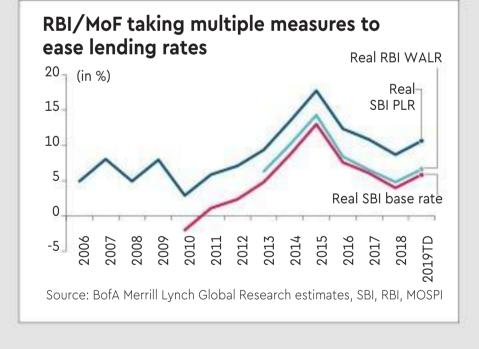
Lending rates headed lower at the margin

Scenario 1. Banks retain current lending rates. Our base case has banks pricing fresh retail/SME loans on a spread defined as the difference between the current retail/SME lending rate and the external benchmark. As the external benchmark falls on RBI rate cuts, banks will duly lower their lending rates. They will likely also cut their deposit rates to protect margins to some extent.

Scenario 2. Banks set lower spread/lending rate. Banks could begin with a lower lending rate if they fix a lower spread. This will obviously reduce the need for RBI to cut rates much further. As real lending rates are still very high, it is unlikely that the RBI rate cutting cycle will immediately ground to a halt (see chart).

Scenario 3. Banks split between RBI reporate and yields. Banks will likely have to follow the faster falling/rising rate benchmark; for example, if yields fall in expectation of RBI rate cuts, banks will have to cut lending rates to retain customers. What if yields go up on fiscal stimulus fears, even though RBI is cutting rates? Banks priced on yield benchmarks will have to follow banks priced on the RBI reporate to retain their customers again.

(Excerpted from the report 'India Economic Watch. RBI rate cuts: How will external benchmarks affect?' by BofAML dated September 9, 2019)



(Nos in lakh) 2014-15 2015-16 2016-17 **2017-18** 2018-19 Commerical Passenger Three-Twovehicles vehicles wheeler wheeler Source: www.siamindia.com

HE GLOBAL TRADING system

is undergoing conflict, chaos. It

has remained static in the face

of disruptive technologies,

automation and shifts in geoe-

conomics in the last few years. The GATT-

based WTO rules are well over 70 years old.

Even the newer version of GATT (Uruguay

Round, 1986-1994) is decades old, and

any attempt to update—through the

adoption of a comprehensive Doha Devel-

opment Agenda (DDA)—has remained

inconclusive after 18 years. The challenges

faced by the global commercial arbiter run

in plenty. To start with, the WTO continues

to be at the mercy of Washington.



The power vacuum

Why free trade belligerents need to be prevailed upon

at the WTO

GARIMA SAHDEV

The author is researcher, international trade and investment law

Despite his earlier disdain for multilateral trade deals and projecting a protectionist stance during the 2016 presidential campaign, Donald Trump appeared to rethink the isolationist approach after the elections. After his initial hawkish stance, Trump erased the fears of the US withdrawing from NAFTA last year. But protectionism is back on the US agenda, with the recent tariff measures against China, India, Canada and the EU. Since July 2018, the US has imposed tariffs on \$250 billion worth of Chinese goods including aerospace, auto parts, electronics. China has also retaliated with duties on about \$75 billion worth of American products. However, despite a year-long tariff war between the two, China had a record \$419 trade goods surplus with the US for the same period (United States Census Bureau). Beijing's engagement in the global

trading system has been questionable. Much has changed since the WTO came into force in 1995. China, a WTO member, has an extraordinary influence in global economics, and is the common aggressor in trade disputes with all major economies. Beijing's predatory trade and IP theft practices, heavy-handed direct government intervention in industrial sector, and its abuse of the "special and differential treatment" clause (Art XVIII, GATT 1947) to subsidise specific export industries and dump its oversupply in other countries is universally agreed upon. In general, the stringent WTO rules squeezed the policy space for developing countries to pursue individual industrial policies—pushing them towards "premature deindustrialisation" (Dani Rodrik). But for Beijing to continue its unrepentant mercantilist policies in open defiance of WTO's free trade rules is evidence that the

trade arbiter has failed to enforce its rules. The American charge against China is fair but doesn't compensate for the general rhetoric of the multilateral trading system. One may recall Washington has exited major multilateral deals like the TPP (now CPTPP) and Paris Climate deal, while renegotiating NAFTA and threatening to pull out of the WTO. It has unilaterally imposed tariffs on steel and aluminium from other countries including India using the Article XXI of GATT. What constitutes "essential/national security" is rather ambiguous and has the potential of weakening the credibility of WTO's Dispute Settlement System. The US also supported Russia's invocation of "essential security" clause in the 2014 blockade on Ukrainian goods headed to Central Asia. The next challenge facing the WTO is

technology disturbing the rules of the game. Digital innovations led by artificial intelligence, blockchain and the internet of things are changing the structure of production and trade. New business mod-



els based on these technologies and big data and analytics are breaking up barriers to trade at a time when nations are embracing protectionism. The current set of WTO rules is not well-equipped to deal with modern trade practices.

So, how is India positioned in the global trade mess? One section says that India stands to gain in terms of moving up in the global supply chain if it capitalises on falling investment in China and uses this as an opportunity to give a boost to its merchandise exports. Manufacturing industry in India, which is central to job creation and diversification of economy, has faced the brunt of trade liberalisation post WTO's inception (having jumped from agriculture to services, without going through a robust industrial stage). India's share in global merchandise exports is under 2% despite 70% of its exports coming from this sector. Keeping in line with

global protectionist trends (America First, Brexit, tariff wars), India has, in the last two years, increased tariffs on several products—mainly from China and the US, and lead. RTAs are easier to negotiate than the other non-FTA trade partners, to give an impetus to manufacturing. But the retaliatory measures by India in response to Washington's increase in tariffs on Indian products are likely to bite India back.

Secondly, India is shying away from an indiscriminate signing of FTAs: India is not a part of any mega-FTAs so far and the logjam at RCEP continues. Keeping in view India's obstructionist view, Beijing even proposed an ASEAN+3 Mega FTA sans India, Australia and New Zealand.

India's approach towards trade liberalisation is under attack. Trump's recent barb at India being the "tariff king" is not misplaced as the World Tariff Profiles 2019 show that India's average tariffs at 13.8% are much higher than most major trading economies like China (9.8%) and the US (3.4%). Considering that its burgeoning trade deficit with China is the primary irritant that's holding India back from RCEP, if India were to bring down its tariffs to nil in 90% of the traded goods as Beijing demands—it is likely to lead to even higher trade deficit with China. As such, intermediate products and raw materials (low-value-added category) constitute India's major exports to China—a matter of concern. With its recent increase in tariff rates on a range of items, it remains unclear if New Delhi has any intent of moving ahead with the Chinese demand under the RCEP, given Beijing's economic hegemony in the region.

The WTO must be saved: With the

ongoing stalemate at the WTO and the near-abandonment of the DDA, RTAsand recently, mega-FTAs—have taken the consensus-based WTO. Some of these mega-FTAs have adopted the "non-issues' and "WTO-plus" provisions (on environ ment, labour, IPR, competition, investment and government procurement) after they had to be dropped from the DDA due to opposition from developing countrieswho, on the other hand, are signing their own mega trade deals to foster greater economic integration, further stealing WTO's thunder.While the WTO encourages sign ing of RTAs to further the goal of economic integration, frequent resort to RTAs bypassing the WTO route has become a vicious practice.

The idea of multilateralism is sold greatly by no other institution as the WTO—founded to instil a confidence in law and institutions. Also, Washington stands accused of returning to unilateralism and its 1930s-styled beggar-thyneighbour policies. Unilateral imposition of sanctions and high tariffs on Chinese products bypassing the WTO DS mechanism sets a bad precedent and countries like India are following suit—belittling the importance of WTO. A strong WTO is essential to check China's intransigence. The global financial crisis of 2008

tested the strength of existing interna tional trade governance framework when the WTO acted as a wall against a descent into protectionism during the crisis years. Can it still do it? The answer lies in how firmly member-states come together to reform and save the WTO.

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

TELLING NUMBERS

Eradicating malaria by 2050: why study says it can be done

A REPORT in *The Lancet* concludes that it is possible to eradicate malaria as early as 2050—or within a generation—with the right strategies and sufficient funding. The report, published by The Lancet Commission on malaria eradication, used existing evidence with new epidemiological and financial analyses.

Lower incidence, many cases

Since 2000, global malaria incidence and death rates declined by 36 and 60 per cent, respectively. In 2017, 86 countries reported 219 million cases and 4,35,000 malaria deaths, down from 262 million cases and 8,39,000 deaths in 2000. Today, more than half of the world's countries are malaria-free.

However, there are over 200 million cases of malaria reported each year, claiming nearly half a million lives. Malaria cases are rising in 55 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

There is also inequity, with 29 countries (27 in Africa) accounting for the large majority of new cases and 85 per cent of global deaths in 2017. Two countries (Nigeria and Democratic

Republic of Congo) account for 36 per cent of global cases. On the other hand, 38 countries had incidences of fewer than ten cases per 1,000 population in 2017 and reported just 5% of total malaria deaths.

Modelling a world free from malaria

The report used new modelling to estimate plausible scenarios for the distribution and intensity of malaria

in 2030 and 2050. Analyses indicate that socioeconomic and environmental trends, together with improved coverage of malaria interventions, will create a world in 2050 with malaria persisting in pockets of low-level transmission in equatorial Africa.

To achieve eradication by 2050, the report identifies three ways to accelerate the decline in malaria cases. First, the world must improve implementation of malaria control programnes. Second, they must develop and roll out innovative new tools to overcome the biological challenges to eradication. Third, malaria-endemic countries and donors must provide the financial in-

vestment needed.

TOP 10 BY MALARIA CASES, INCIDENCE, 2017

			•	•
RANK	COUNTRY	TOTAL CASES*	COUNTRY	CASES PER 1,000
1	Nigeria	53.7 mn (25%)	Rwanda	506
2	DR Congo	25.0 mn (11%)	Burkina Faso	412
3	Mozambique	10.0 mn (5%)	C African Rep	387
4	India	9.6 mn (4%)	Mali	386
5	Uganda	8.6 mn (4%)	Sierra Leone	380
6	Burkina Faso	7.9 mn (4%)	Togo	371
7	Ghana	7.8 mn (4%)	Benin	368
8	Niger	7.7 mn (4%)	Niger	359
9	Cameroon	7.3 mn (3%)	Eq Guinea	343
10	Mali	7.2 mn (3%)	Mozambique	338
Figure 1 and				

Figures in parentheses are each country's share in global cases (219 million in 2017) Source: WHO Malaria Report 2019 via Lancet

TIP FOR READING LIST

Strangers.

Malcolm

Gladwell

WHY WE MISUNDERSTAND STRANGERS

IN 1938, when Adolf Hitler placed German troops along the Czech border, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain flew to meet the German leader to resolve the crisis. Chamberlain came back convinced by Hitler's promise that he had no designs Talking on Poland or the rest of Europe,

and only wanted the Sudetenland part Czechoslovakia. What made Chamberlain think he could trust Hitler? Or, for that matter, why are campus sexual assaults on the rise? American author Malcolm Gladwell addresses several such

situations in his new book. Talking to Strangers: What We Should

Know about the People We Don't Know is a journey through history and news stories to argue that something is very wrong with the strategies we use to make sense of people whom we don't know. Because we don't know how to talk to strangers, Gladwell argues, we are inviting conflict

> and misunderstanding. In Chamberlain's case, he writes, he "was acting on the same assumption that we all follow in making sense of strangers. We believe that the information gathered from a personal interaction is uniquely valuable". He suggests that talking to strangers requires "a willingness to look

beyond the stranger, and take time and place and context into account". Which may be good advice generally, NPR notes in its review — "but some situations are just more complicated than that".

SIMPLY PUT

India vs Pak at UN, since 2014

Ahead of Prime Minister Modi's address to the UN General Assembly, where Pakistan's Imran Khan is expected to bring up Kashmir again, a look at what the two countries have been saying at the UN platform

Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the 69th session of the UNGA in 2014. PMO website

highway, an Army camp near Samba, and a

"four-point peace initiative"; Swaraj re-

meant to destabilise India and legitimise

Pakistan's illegal occupation of parts of the

Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir and its

claim on the rest of it," Swaraj said. "... India

remains open to dialogue. But talks and ter-

ror cannot go together. Yesterday the Prime

Minister of Pakistan proposed what he

termed as a four-point new peace initiative.

I would like to respond. We do not need four

points, we need just one — give up terrorism

Earlier, Sharif had said: "Three generations

of Kashmiris have only seen broken promises

and brutal oppression... When I assumed of-

fice... one of my first priorities was to nor-

malise relations with India... Yet today cease-

fire violations along the Line of Control and

The year saw attacks in Pathankot and

the Working Boundary are intensifying..."

Swaraj: 'Egregious abuses

in Balochistan'

and let us sit down and talk."

2016

Sharif: '3 generations of

Kashmiris saw oppression'

sponded that only one point was needed.

At the UNGA, Sharif proposed a new

"We all know that these attacks are

police station in Punjab's Gurdaspur.

YASHEE

NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 9

ON SEPTEMBER 27, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address the UN General Assembly (UNGA). An address by Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan will follow. India and Pakistan do not have a fixed order of speaking at the UNGA; however, Prime Ministers speak before External Affairs Ministers.

This will be the first time since 2014 that Modi addresses the UNGA; for the 70th-73rd sessions (2015-18), it was addressed by late External Affairs Minister. The UNGA has frequently been a platform for India-Pakistan jousting, mainly over Jammu and Kashmir.

Modi is back with a stronger majority, Article 370 has been abrogated, Pakistan has been trying to bring international attention to Kashmir, and the ties between the neighbours are strained. Imran is expected to focus on Kashmir and alleged violation of human rights. A summary of the UNGA addresses by

India and Pakistan over the last five years.

2014

Modi: 'Friendship with neighbours highest priority'

There was speculation that Modi and the then Pakistan PM. Nawaz Sharif, could meet on the UNGA sidelines. They did not.

"... My government has placed the highest priority on advancing friendship and cooperation with her neighbours," Modi said in his address. "This includes Pakistan. I am prepared to engage in a serious bilateral dialogue with Pakistan in a peaceful atmosphere, without the shadow of terrorism, to promote our friendship and cooperation. However, Pakistan must also take its responsibility seriously to create an appropriate environment."

Sharif: 'We cannot draw a veil on the issue of Kashmir'

"Many generations of Kashmiris have lived their lives under occupation, accompanied by violence and abuse of their fundamental rights," Sharif said. "... The core issue of Jammu and Kashmir has to be resolved... We cannot draw a veil on the issue of Kashmir, until it is addressed in accordance with the wishes of the people of Jammu and Kashmir."

2015

Swaraj: 'Give up terrorism, sit down and talk'

That year, there were terrorist attacks on a police station on the Jammu-Pathankot

> Narayanan by the then Governor of Assam, Lt Gen S K Sinha, in 1998: "The dangerous consequences of large scale illegal migration from Bangladesh... need to be empathetically stressed. No misconceived and mistaken notions of secularism should be allowed to come in the way... The spectre looms large of the indigenous people of Assam being reduced to a minority in their home state. Their cultural

opportunities will be undermined." It was in this backdrop, the order noted, that a writ petition was filed in 2000 by (Assam's present Chief Minister) Sarbananda Sonowal "assailing the Constitutional validity of The Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals)

In his report, Lt Gen Sinha mentioned an answer in Parliament on May 6, 1997 by then Home Minister Indrajit Gupta, which esti-

then Uri. Pakistan raised the killing of Hizb-ul

commander Burhan Wani; India responded

"... The Prime Minister of Pakistan used

by criticising Pakistani abuses in Balochistan.

this podium to make baseless allegations

about human rights violations in my country.

I can only say that those accusing others of

human rights violations would do well to in-

trospect and see what egregious abuses they

are perpetrating in their own country, includ-

ing in Balochistan," Swaraj said.

Sharif: 'Will share proof of

India violating human rights'

"A new generation of Kashmiris has risen

spontaneously against India's illegal occupa-

tion—demanding freedom from occupation,"

Sharif had said. "Burhan Wani, the young

leader murdered by Indian forces, has emerged

as the symbol of the latest Kashmiri Intifada, a

popular and peaceful freedom movement...

would like to inform the General Assembly that

Pakistan will share with the Secretary General

a dossier containing detailed information and

evidence of the gross and systematic violations

of human rights committed by Indian forces

Swaraj: 'We produced scholars,

That year saw Kulbhushan Jadhav sen-

in occupied Jammu and Kashmir."

you produced terrorists'

An NRC Seva Kendra in Guwahati. Dasarath Deka/Express Archive

mated 10 million illegal immigrants in all of India. The report said "Home Ministry /Intelligence Bureau source, the 10 August 1998 issue of *India Today* has given the breakdown of these illegal migrants", with "4 mil-

tenced to death by a Pakistan military court and India approaching the International Court of Justice.

Swaraj said: "On Thursday, from this dais, Pakistan's Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi wasted rather too much of his speech in making accusations against us. He accused India of state-sponsored terrorism, and of violating human rights Those listening had only one observation: 'Look who's talking!'

"... Why is it that today India is a recognised IT superpower in the world, and Pakistan is recognised only as the pre-eminent export factory for terror? We produced scholars, doctors, engineers... You have produced terrorists. Doctors save people from death; terrorists send them to death."

Abbasi: 'UN must send Inquiry Commission to Kashmir'

Prime Minister Abbasi said: "Pakistan demands an international investigation into India's crimes in Kashmir. We ask that the United Nations Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights send an Inquiry Commission to occupied Kashmir to verify the nature and extent of India's human rights violations."

2018

Swaraj: 'Pakistan glorifies killers'

India cancelled a meeting between Foreign Ministers after agreeing to it. After Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi accused India of involvement in the 2014 Peshawar school attack, Swaraj responded: "We are accused of sabotaging the process of talks... Talks with Pakistan have begun many times. If they stopped, it was only because of Pakistan's behaviour... Pakistan glorifies killers; it refuses to see the blood of innocents."

Qureshi: 'Will never forget Samihauta, Peshawar attacks' Qureshi had said that Pakistan would

"never forget the mass murder of more than 150 children in a Peshawar school [in 2014]... and many others that have links with terrorists supported by India... [as well as] the terrorist attack in India against Samjhauta Express" He said that Pakistan had in its custody "a serving Indian Naval officer, Commander Kulbhushan Yadav, who has provided us with the most incriminating evidence by accepting that he, on the instructions of his government financed, planned and executed acts of terrorism and violence in Pakistan".

NRC numbers: what earlier estimates said

2017

SEEMA CHISHTI

NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 9

THE FINAL National Register of Citizens (NRC) published on August 31 contained 19,06,657 exclusions, less than half the number of exclusions in the final draft of July 2018. The Assam BJP said it was "unhappy" with the small number of excluded persons; the All Assam Students Union (AASU) said they believed the number should have been higher.

What is the basis of the assumption that Assam actually has many more "illegals" than the NRC figure of 19 lakh?

The NRC process picked up steam after the Supreme Court order in the Assam Sanmilita Mahasangha & Ors vs Union Of India & Ors case (December 17, 2014).

Paragraph 13 of the order quoted from a report submitted to then President K R

survival will be in jeopardy, their political control will be weakened and their employment

Act, 1983 and the rules made thereunder".

lion" in Assam.

The SC order noted: "On 14th July, 2004 in response to an unstarred question pertaining to deportation of illegal Bangladeshi migrants, the Minister of State, Home Affairs, submitted a statement to Parliament indicating therein that the estimated number of illegal Bangladeshi immigrants into India as on 31st December, 2001 was 1.20 crores, out of which 50 lakhs were in Assam." On August 31, state BJP president Ranjit

Dass said: "In 1991, former Assam Chief Minister Hiteswar Saikia had said there are 30 lakh illegal Bangladeshis in Assam. Then, Congress Home Minister Sriprakash Jaiswal told the Rajya Sabha that 50 lakh illegal Bangladeshis are there in Assam. Even Indrajit Gupta in the H D Deve Gowda government had talked of around 42 lakh illegal foreigners... So how can we today accept the figure of 19 lakh?"

THIS WORD MEANS: VOLFEFE INDEX

Covfefe to Volfefe: A way to track Trump's Twitter impact on markets

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 9

SOON AFTER midnight on May 31, 2017, United States President Donald Trump posted one his most talked-about tweets: "Despite the constant negative press covfefe". The tweet didn't make much sense, but the non-existent word "covfefe" opened up a universe of interpretations, jokes, and memes.

For the many critics of Trump, "covfefe" rapidly became the symbol of his incoherent and erratic behaviour, which they said raised questions about the handling of both the President and of his Twitter account. A month later, a Democratic Congressman introduced legislation titled The Communications Over Various Feeds Electronically For Engagement Act (or Covfefe) Act. aimed at including the US President's social media posts under the purview of the Presidential Records Act of 1978.

Now, more than two years later, I P

Morgan, one of the largest investment banks in the world, has published a research paper introducing the "Volfefe Index", which seeks to track the effect of President Trump's tweets on financial markets.

The Volfefe Index

A standout feature of Trump's Twitter presence is the sheer volume of his tweets. According to the paper, published September 6, Trump has produced more than 10,000 tweets since taking office. More importantly, the pace of tweeting has accelerated in recent months to over a dozen non-retweets a day on his personal account.

What the analysis revealed too, was that "the subject of these tweets has increasingly turned toward market-moving topics, most prominently trade and monetary policy".

According to J P Morgan's analysts, there is now "strong evidence that tweets have increasingly moved US (interest) rates markets immediately after publication". It is noteworthy that Trump's twitter activity peaks between 12 noon and 3 pm - a

35-30-Tweets followed by 0.5bp+ moves 25-20-15-10-**Feb 18** Aug18 Feb19 Source: J P Morgan

A SURGE IN MARKET-MOVING TWEETS

VOLFEFE INDEX AT PLAY 0.12 0.10 Tweets during market hours (RHS) 0.08 0.06 0.04 0.02 Volfefe Index (LHS) **Mar 18** Mar19

timeframe when it can move the markets to move the market and which isn't?

Hence, the Volfefe Index, "which anathe most. But, given the volume of daily tweets lyzes a rolling sample of recent tweets to an average of 10 since the start of 2016 judge how impactful the President's remarks have been on volatility in US interhow does one know which tweet is likely

est rates".

The analysts concede that "such an exercise is necessarily quite approximate", but claim that it nonetheless gives insight into the extent to which the President's remarks contribute to market uncertainty.

Market-moving tweets

Analysts have defined "market-moving" tweets as those that are followed by half a basis point change in US government bond yields within five minutes of the tweet's publication. According to this metric, as Chart 1 shows, the frequency of such tweets has been going up sharply.

The analysts also tried to deduce the keywords that featured in such marketmoving tweets. In the list that they drew up, 'China', 'billion', 'products' came out on top, followed by 'dollars', 'tariffs' and 'trade', and then 'inflation', 'economy' and 'reserve'.

How effective?

Chart 2 shows how the Volfefe Index helps identify the frequency of market-moving tweets during market hours. On the whole, the J P Morgan model found that only 146 tweets out of roughly 4,000 non-retweets occurring during market hours from 2018-present were market-moving ones.

WORDLY WISE

WE ADMIRE ELEPHANTS IN PART BECAUSE THEY DEMONSTRATE THE FINEST HUMAN TRAITS

— GRAYDON CARTER

The Indian EXPRESS

∽ FOUNDED BY ∽ RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

NEIGHBOUR'S COURT

NSA Doval suggests that removal of restrictions on people in the Valley hinges on Pak behaving itself. That's problematic

NTHE WEEKS since the revoking of special status of Jammu & Kashmir, in response to Pakistan's repeated attempts to internationalise the matter, India's position has remained firm and unchanged: It is an internal issue. Indeed, the government's decision to carve the state into two Union Territories, thus centralising its governance, could also be seen to have robbed Pakistan of agency and leverage in the Valley. The world has heard since August 5 about how Pakistan was using Article 370 to foment trouble in J&K, and that that was a pressing reason to do away with it. In this context, it is a little puzzling that National Security Advisor A K Doval, in remarks during a media interaction last week, has chosen to bring Pakistan back into the Kashmir discourse in a manner that appears to return to it some of that agency.

By linking the restoration of communication and removal of other restrictions in the blockaded Valley to "how Pakistan behaves", the NSA appeared to suggest that the neighbour still holds crucial influence in Kashmir. And that the rights of people in the Valley, that they are entitled to as Indian citizens, would hinge upon the next steps taken in Islamabad or Rawalpindi. Not only does this contradict another assertion by him in the same media interaction — that he was "fully convinced that a majority of the Kashmiris totally support" the legal abatement of Article 370 — it also seemed to be at cross purposes with the government's other efforts to present India as the sole arbiter of Kashmir's destiny.

As India prepares to look the world in the eye with the right words on the continued communication shutdown in the Valley at the UN at the General Assembly and Human Rights Council, the messaging will be crucial. The NSA has said that the arrested politicians and activists would be released when "the environment conducive for the functioning of democracy is created". It is not clear who he is addressing in that remark, but it would be fair to say that as it was the Centre that suspended all political activity in the Valley, it also has the responsibility to bring it back. It seems disingenuous to point to Pakistan at this juncture, in the aftermath of a momentous decision by New Delhi that has disrupted status quo in the Valley. According to NSA Doval's assessment, there are 230 Pakistani militants waiting to infiltrate the Valley and create trouble. It should be the responsibility of the Army, with all the resources at its command, to ensure that they do not enter. But the sins of Pakistan cannot be a reason for punishing India's own.

SEIZE THE PACT

India must join regional trade partnership, hook into global value chains, address issues afflicting competitiveness

N SUNDAY, TRADE ministers from the 16-nation regional comprehensive economic partnership (RCEP) group pledged to resolve their issues on the proposed free trade agreement (FTA) by November, when their leaders meet next for the ASEAN summit. So far, the Indian government has been cautious about joining this trade block. But, as pressure from RCEP members mounts, the government will have to carefully think through its strategy on trade pacts. Given the nature of global trade, joining these FTAs will not only gradually facilitate the country's integration with global value chains, but provide greater opportunities for investment as well.

The RCEP is a proposed free trade agreement between the 10 ASEAN countries and their FTA partners, namely India, China, Japan, Korea, Australia and New Zealand. Once concluded, it will account for 25 per cent of the global GDP and 30 per cent of global trade. Part of India's reluctance to join this trade pact stems from the view that the country has not benefited from its FTAs with countries like Korea, Malaysia and Japan. After these pacts came into effect, imports from these countries surged, while exports did not risen commensurately, leading to a widening of the trade deficit. India already runs a trade deficit with most of the 16 RCEP countries. Opening up its market further could worsen the situation. Large sections of India Inc are concerned that being part of RCEP would lead to an influx of more competitively priced Chinese products in both the consumer goods and industrial segments. Thus, eliminating tariffs for a significant section of traded goods is bound to face resistance from domestic industry. A slowing economy will only exacerbate such fears.

Part of the explanation for this dismal performance under FTAs can be attributed to higher compliance costs, administrative delays etc. But with India's exports being almost flat over the past five years, shunning such trade pacts is not a prudent approach. One should be mindful that the long-run benefits from joining these trade blocks will outweigh the short-term costs. To be sure, India should negotiate concessions and safeguards for sensitive sectors. Further, the proposed tariff reductions could be phased over a five to ten-year period which will give time to the industry to adapt. But the costs of not going forward with the trade pact, under pressure from industry, will be great. India must seize this opportunity to hook into global value chains, while addressing the deeper issues that afflict manufacturing competitiveness.

A JUMBO ROMANCE

A Wayanad tusker in Kerala shows a different kind of love is possible

RULAM IS IN mourning. Maniyan, a wild tusker that used to frequent this village bordering the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary in Kerala, died last week. During the weekend, villagers took out a silent procession to mourn the death. It was a rare occasion in a region where herds of wild elephants are known to raid crops and ransack homes in search of food and tuskers in musth are known to trample the unsuspecting villagers who stray on to their path.

Maniyan, however, was different. Even his occasional entry into human habitat never went beyond pulling down the odd bag of salt; when villagers offered fruit, Maniyan would stretch his trunk. He had learnt to co-exist with the villagers, and in turn, taught the villagers to do so too. This, in a district where 67 people had died in a decade in human-animal conflict, a majority of them killed by wild jumbos. In fact, this contradiction runs deep through the Malayalis' relationship with the elephant. The feared beast of the jungle becomes a loved creature once he is tamed. In April, the famed Thrissur Pooram, a temple pageant that features a large number of decked up jumbos, came under a cloud when fans of an aged and ailing elephant, Thechikottukavu Ramachandran, insisted on his participation — Ramachandran, who killed 13 persons, had become some sort of a security risk. Maniyan and Ramachandran present two extreme cases of the Malayalis'

romance with the beast. The elephant has shaped the Malayali imagination like no other animal, celebrated in literature, cinema and in every act of joy and celebration. However, the jumbo's life has only been worse off for this fear-laced affection. The taming of the beast and its later life in chains should rank among the worst kind of torture inflicted on animals. Despite many campaigns, it continues, and is defended in the name of love for the elephant. Maniyan offers a different narrative — a one-off story perhaps — in which love is not predicated on a life in chains.

Regime reveals itself

A hundred days on, Modi 2.0: Its purpose is the show of power, nationalist fervour, social control

PRATAP BHANU MEHTA

THE FIRST HUNDRED days of Narendra Modi's second term as prime minister raise a profound question that goes beyond a mere cataloguing of the government's actions and policies: What is the nature of the regime we are spawning? As we look at the hundred days, two political phenomena stare us in the face. The first is that despite a very poor economic performance, Modi remains immensely popular. Even his staunchest critics have to acknowledge that he has made himself an inescapable figure, someone who has colonised our consciousness so much that even criticism only serves to underscore his importance and reinforce his imaginative hold. His triumph is not what he does; it is that he is the focal point of everything we do. The second is that the authoritarian con-

solidation of this regime over Indian democracy continues unabated. Almost all independent institutions have been reduced to ciphers. The characteristic hallmarks of authoritarian domination have intensified: The state defines a single national purpose and everyone has to march to the same drum beat; the population has to be kept in a permanent state of nationalist arousal to paper over all social and economic contradictions; thought control has to be exercised in order to achieve what Leszek Kolakowski in another context called "the mental and moral sterilisation" of society.

Even majoritarianism is openly justified. In case you think the fears of majoritarianism are a red herring, listen to Swapan Dasgupta, not known to be a BJP critic, writing in *The* Telegraph (August 22) "Many of the fears in the Muslim community are undeniably overstated and tailored to the pre-existing belief that the Modi government is inherently fascist in nature. However, two factors stand out. First, the fears, however misplaced, are nevertheless real; and secondly, the Muslim stakes in the political power structure are more tenuous than ever before. It is the second issue that needs addressing." After suggesting both that Muslims are to blame for their lack of response to Modi, and that the BJP is weak in its outreach, Dasgupta reaches this conclusion: "Hindus and Muslims may not be battling each other on the streets but neither are they talking to each other. This is not a healthy situation and can trigger an un-

There is an odd thread linking Kashmir and the mishandling of the economy that speaks to the regime type. The thread is this. Even in the context of the economy, three things are striking. All governments have to put up a brave face. But it is difficult to remember a time when it was so difficult to get the government to accept the truth about the economy; or when the premium on public and professional discourse marching to the state's tune was as high. So, like Kashmir, the truth remains shrouded in a fog of triumphalism and complacency. Second, the approach to handling the economy has also had the same traits: Power, moralism

and control.

healthy move towards greater ghettoisation." When Swapan Dasgupta begins to worry that the regime is producing ghettoisation, we should worry about the estrangement that lies ahead.

The hundred days is not a catalogue of specific actions, some good some bad. They are certainly marked by Modi's energy, drive, imperiousness and unerring instinct to dominate the political discourse. They, rather, reveal the consolidation of a regime type.

When the purpose of the regime is the show of power, nationalist fervour and social control, "bold" action will be the order of the day. In some sense, the government's unprecedented move in Kashmir is a demonstration of all three regime traits; whether they are actually aimed at solving the problem at hand is an open question. Only in the context of a regime like this can a shutdown of a state, the decimation of constitutional federalism, the suspension of civil liberties, the creation of a climate of fear over reporting from Kashmir, and the heightened risk of war and conflict, be presented as a triumph.

But there is an odd thread linking Kashmir and the mishandling of the economy that speaks to the regime type. The thread is this. Even in the context of the economy, three things are striking. All governments have to put up a brave face. But it is difficult to remember a time when it was so difficult to get the government to accept the truth about the economy; or when the premium on public and professional discourse marching to the state's tune was as high. So, like Kashmir, the truth remains shrouded in a fog of triumphalism and complacency. Second, the approach to handling the economy has also had the same traits: Power, moralism and control. Demonetisation, which wrecked the economy, was a show of power, pure and simple, not linked to any defensible economic objectives. The basic diagnosis on which the government operated was that what ails India is corruption, which a dose of moralism and arbitrary government crackdown can cure. The chimera of chasing black money in the wrong places (while intensifying the hold of a small plutocracy), underlies the government's approach to everything from regulation to taxation, wreaking havoc in an already precarious system.

garb of virtue, all is forgiven.

It also serves the purpose of giving this government the one thing it wants over everyone above all else: Control. So Indian capital now has been pummelled into submission. While there are some individual measures that are laudatory, the fact is there is no consistent framework in terms of which the government has diagnosed the economy, no sense of the ends we are trying to achieve. But when the exercise of power wears the

On the economy, the government has finally been mugged by reality. It will respond, but so far there is no evidence of a blueprint out of our troubles. The prospects of a triumphalist narrative on that front are dim in the short run. So it is very likely that the regime type will continue to manifest itself on the institutional and cultural front. A possible nationwide NRC, the building of a temple at Ayodhya, a possible nationwide anticonversion legislation, will be the new manifestations of power, nationalism and control. Some measures, like the triple talaq law, will use liberal pretexts, but for authoritarian ends. But the striking characteristic of the first hundred days is the consolidation of a power structure that is instinctively geared to total control: Amit Shah and Yogi Adityanath, with all their political talent, are the future ethos of the BIP.

The question the emerging regime type raises is this. Is the danger India facing that it is, through propaganda and misinformation, being hoodwinked into a path that leads away from its potential greatness? In which case, how long will we put up with the politics of illusion? Or are these hundred days revealing a darker truth about ourselves? Is, somehow, this exaltation of power, control and nationalism a completion of our own deepest desires? We are not in a grip of an illusion: This is who we want to be. On this view, Modi's popularity is not because he is peddling an illusion to us; it is because he is peddling the truth about ourselves. How worried you are about the first hundred days in part depends on which side of this debate you are on.

> The writer is contributing editor, The Indian Express

My Friend, Ram

Ram Jethmalani was feared and respected for his candour on political matters

TAHIR MAHMOOD

MY NONAGENARIAN FRIEND Ram Jethmalani has passed into life hereafter. We had known each other for over four decades and had very different views on many matters of national importance. At academic seminars, meetings and workshops we differed — always in a highly civilised manner — on nuances of legal issues, especially those with political overtones. These interactions usually ended with an agreement to disagree.

I had my first academic encounter with Ram in 1977 at a family law conference I was compering. Zealously supporting the demand for implementing the constitutional provision relating to the uniform civil code, he concluded his presentation with the argument that minorities should accept the demand "as a price for living in this country." Before inviting the next presenter, I confronted him by asserting that minorities were not just "living" in this country, they were its equal citizens, entitled to all the fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution. Realising his impropriety, Ram returned to the podium to explain that he wanted to say minorities should accept the uniform civil code as part of their duty to respect constitutional ideals. Seven years later in October 1985, he and I had a dialogue in the columns of *The Indian*

Express, on the issue of uniform civil code. In 1999, when I was Chair of the National Minorities Commission, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee named him as the law ninister. Ram soon icked up a bone with Chief Justice AS Anand, my old friend and classmate in Lucknow, and quit his job. Unable to decide who to support, I kept mum.

Ram began his legal practice in Karachi with the city's leading lawyer Allah Baksh Brohi who, like him, was destined to be his country's law minister. After moving to India, he taught law at a Bombay college. Later, he shifted to Delhi and served four times as the Chair of the Bar Council of India. During the dark days of Emergency, Ram shot into fame for his criticism of the mighty PM of the day. He entered politics soon after. In 2004, Ram contested the parliamentary election from Lucknow to oppose Prime Minister Vajpayee, and lost.

In the legal profession, Ram earned fame for defending all sorts of people — politicians, scamsters, alleged criminals and many others. His clients included navy commander K M Nanavati, BJP stalwart L K Advani, yoga guru Baba Ramdev, Andhra Pradesh's Y S Jaganmohan Reddy, Bihar's Lalu Prasad, stockbrokers Harshad Mehta and Ketan Parekh, mafia leader Haji Mastan, Kashmiri separatist Afzal Guru, and even former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's killers. Ram once said: "I decide according to my conscience who to defend. A lawyer who refuses to defend a person on the ground that people believe him to be guilty is himself guilty of professional misconduct". I often advised students seeking admission to the PhD programme under my guidance to take up research on his briefs, but they were overawed both by his legal acumen and the nature of cases he handled.

In 2013, Amity University conferred on Ram an LLD degree honoris causa. The university's Founder-President Ashok Chauhan concluded the valedictory speech with the words: "We pray that he lives for another hundred years." Raminstantly retorted, "God listens only to reasonable prayers".

For those interested in hearing from the horse's mouth the story of Ram's successes and failures, he has left behind two books, which are partly in the nature of memoirs. The first of these, curiously titled Conscience of a Maverick, was published in 2007. Seven years later, to counter criticism, he wrote another book, Maverick Unchanged Unrepentant. Its blurb spoke of an undeniable truth about the author's personality: "Ram Jethmalani, respected and feared for his candour in matters political, remains an enigma to many. Controversy neither leaves him nor intimidates him." Ram indeed remained enigmatic till the last breath of his life.

May his soul rest in peace.

The writer is former Chairman, National Minorities Commission & Member, Law Commission of India

SEPTEMBER 10, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

DEMOCRACY IN DANGER JANATA PARTY LEADER, Jagjivan Ram, said today that democracy was in greater danger now than ever before. Addressing a largely attended Harijan rally at Ajmal Khan Park, Ram said he had full confidence in the people who, in the 1977 Lok Sabha elections, revived democracy while democracy was breathing its last. He said democracy was in danger now because of the twin forces of dictatorship represented by Mrs Gandhi and facism represented by Charan Singh. Amidst applause from the crowd, Ram declared that in the next elections the Janata Party would win with a greater majority. He said the party's opponents were already panicking. at no stage did Maruti give a list of the items

Explaining his professional

policy Ram had once said: 'I

conscience who to defend. A

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professional misconduct'.

decide according to my

CREDIT CORRUPTION THE GUPTA COMMISSION has revealed that over the years, the Punjab National Bank and the Central Bank of India advanced Rs 90 lakh and Rs 22 lakh respectively to Maruti Limited in violation of all norms and procedures most of which were repeatedly changed whenever Sanjay Gandhi wanted them to be changed. The rate of interest was lowered when he asked for it. At one turn after another, the company exceeded the authorised credit limits. At no stage did either of the banks make any appraisal of the credit requirements or the feasibility of the project that was undertaken by Maruti Limited. And,

it was hypothecating in return for the loans.

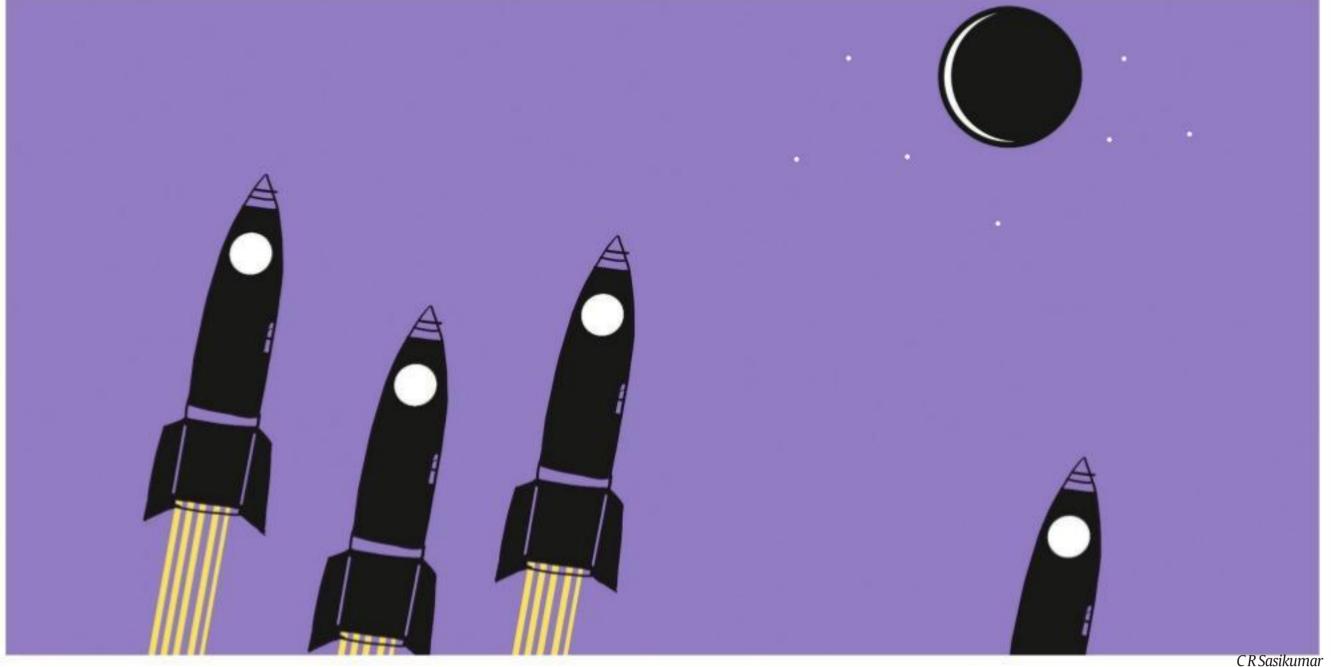
HAVANA SUMMIT

THE HAVANA SUMMIT of non-aligned countries have called for intensification of the armed struggle against the Muzorewa government in Rhodesia and the South African occupation regime in Namibia. and expressed unreserved support for all liberation movements. The heads of state and governments of a hundred countries, in a resolution adopted last night, called for sanctions against Israel to force the Jewish state to give up all occupied territories including Jerusalem and agree to the setting up of an independent Palestinian state.



THE IDEAS PAGE

THE IDEAS PAGE



A stake in the moon

It is time to ponder the future legal, political, economic implications of the window of opportunity that India is helping to open up



Pratik Kanjilal

THE US AIR Force Brigadier General, Homer A Boushey, an aeronautical engineer, a friend of rocketry pioneer, Robert Goddard, commanded the USAF's first jet fighter group and retired as deputy director of air force research and development. Despite such an illustrious career, he is chiefly remembered as a real-life Dr Strangelove. He owes this unsavoury and undeserved reputation to his speech at a Washington aero club in 1958. The venue wasn't exactly strategically significant, but US News and World Report published an extract including a sentence that lingered in public memory for decades: "He who controls the moon controls the earth."

Boushey's opinion was voiced when the tide of the war of perceptions — an important component of the Cold War — had turned against America. Sputnik had been beeping its victory cry from the skies for months, and the USSR had manned missions on the drawing board. Yuri Gagarin and Valentina Tereshkova would take to the skies in three and five years, respectively. The tide of global perceptions would turn decisively only in 1969 with Apollo 11, which planted the stars and stripes on the moon. But after 1972, NASA lost interest in putting space boots on the lunar regolith. The geopolitical point had been made, and there was nothing more to be said. Roma locuta, causa finita.

But almost 50 years later, the race to the moon has heated up again, and it is no longer just about perceptions. China's Chang'e 4 mission is exploring the dark side of the moon. India's Vikram may have crashlanded, but failure is not unusual in space — Israel's Beresheet craft crashed into the moon in April — and is best regarded as experience gained for future missions. Three nations have soft-landed craft on the moon. In a few years, there will be five or more. It'll begin to

get crowded up there, and competitive. Will the laws of space be able to keep pace?

The moon was to be governed by the international community under the Moon Treaty of 1979, which failed for want of ratification by nations conducting manned spaceflight. By default, it is governed by the Outer Space Treaty, a document with highminded principles adopted by the United Nations in 1966, which defines space as the province of humankind, to be used for the advancement of science and of all nations. It recognises no territorial or ownership rights, and goes to the extent of allowing nations to inspect each other's facilities. At the time, and in the time of Boushey's speech eight years earlier, in which the dark side of the moon was seen as a fine location for hidden nuclear missile bases, the focus was on the prevention of militarisation and nuclear conflict, and the encouragement of scientific cooperation for universal benefit.

The Outer Space Treaty bears strong similarities with the highly successful Antarctic Treaty System of 1959, which emphasised these very imperatives. Cynics and wags have always held that Antarctica became the province of science because it was good for nothing else, penguins having no commercial value. When the Moon Treaty sought ratification, our satellite, too, was regarded as a barren, inhospitable waste, rewarding only for science. But, from the late eighties, as knowledge and technology evolved, human motives changed too, and the space community began to discuss the fascinating question of material benefit from the moon and planets.

The first proposal was to mine the lunar regolith for Helium 3, a potential source of clean and safe nuclear energy. The leadership of the Chang'e programme had stated Helium 3 as a mission goal. India's Chandrayaan-1 carried Helium-3-specific payloads, and the search for the valuable isotope will be continued by Chandrayaan-2's orbiter. But, feasibility remained in question. While low lunar gravity could make mining cheaper, establishing a human habitat on a barren world would be prohibitively expensive.

would be prohibitively expensive.
Chandrayaan-1 changed that perception
by confirming the existence of water or hydroxyl (-OH, the anion of the water molecule)
on the moon. The universal solvent is the ba-

sis for a carbon-based ecosystem. It is likely to be a product of the proton-rich solar wind, and is speculated to collect as ice in the polar regions, where low insolation would reduce vapourisation. Significantly, the Vikram lander was to touch down closer to the lunar south pole than any previous mission.

Meanwhile, though weapons remain banned from space, the military is not. In 2015, in the course of military restructuring, Beijing established the People's Liberation Army Strategic Support Force, which has an interest in space. In 2018, the US president Donald Trump proposed a United States Space Force. This does not reflect the imperatives of the Outer Space Treaty, but rather, national imperatives to protect future strategic assets and goals. Competitiveness is an essentially human trait, and in the future, a stake in the moon could not only confer prestige, but also material and geopolitical gain. Recall the history of the internet, which was conceived under the aegis of the state and academia, but grew explosively in commercial hands. Now, space exploration and research, traditionally the province of governments, is seeing strong private interest.

Frontier explorers generally cooperate while the environment is hostile. Litigation and conflict follows when they are secure and in a position to generate assets and value. The Outer Space Treaty may be unequal to such a development. Meaningful case law and precedents have not developed, since most of space litigation has been about patent infringements and satellite interference, or has been frivolous. Material infringement would be a novelty which lunar explorers must work out.

India's lander may have failed, but that is only a setback in the perceptions game. The orbiter, which hosts almost all the science in the project, remains in service. With two successful remote sensing missions, India has effectively joined the tiny club of frontrunners in the race to the moon. It is time to ponder the future legal, political and economic implications of the window of opportunity which India is helping to open up, and the questions involved are much more complex than Boushey imagined in 1958.

pratik.kanjilal@expressindia.com

India's lander may have failed, but that is only a setback in the perceptions game. The orbiter, which hosts almost all the science in the project, remains in service. With two successful remote sensing missions, India has effectively joined the tiny club of frontrunners

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

Brexit, a project supposed to enhance Britain's international stature has only served to diminish it.

—THEGUARDIAN

A different world view

Realists in Islamabad are arguing for diplomatic relations with Israel. This is part of a new urgency to revamp the country's foreign policy



BY C RAJA MOHAN

THERE IS MUCH speculation in the Pakistani and Israeli media about imminent establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Whether this turns out to be true or not, Pakistan is undoubtedly in the middle of a major debate on its international relations. To be sure, the idea of having ties with Israel has been discussed before in Pakistan. The current discourse, however, is part of a new urgency to revamp Pakistan's foreign policy.

One of the compelling factors in Islamabad's rethink has been its difficulty in mobilising international support against Prime Minister Narendra Modi's muscular policies towards Pakistan and Kashmir. Another is the growing sense in Islamabad and Rawalpindi about Pakistan's current alienation from its traditional allies in the West and the Muslim world. Pakistan's "deep state" — or the moniker now in vogue, "miltablishment" — is eager to put the nation's foreign policy back on track and correct the emerging international tilt (with the honourable exception of China) in favour of India.

Pakistan's vigorous foreign policy rejigging is complemented by the decision to implement harsh economic reforms mandated by the IMF, which has come to Pakistan's rescue for the 13th time in the last four decades. The danger of an immediate political backlash has been neutralised by the military establishment's decision to lock up a former president, Asif Ali Zardari of the PPP, and two former PMs, Nawaz Sharif and Shahid Khaqan Abbasi of the Muslim League. When Nawaz Sharif's daughter Maryam Nawaz took to the streets to mobilise people against the government, she soon found herself behind bars.

The July visit to Washington by the Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa underlined the miltablishment's determination to end the steady deterioration in bilateral relations with the US since the beginning of this decade and a more rapid decline under President Donald Trump. In offering to "extricate" the US from Afghanistan and facilitating a peace deal between the US and the Taliban, the miltablishment saw the road to strategic rehabilitation in Washington and more broadly with the West. Whether this strategy will survive the suspension of the peace talks with the Taliban, announced by US President Donald Trump over the weekend, remains to be seen.

Pakistan's debate on engaging Israel is also driven by the belief that India's special relationship with Israel has given Delhi many advantages. Pragmatists in Islamabad and Rawalpindi have argued that normal relations with Israel would improve Pakistan's standing in the US and help dent India's influence in Washington and disrupt its part-

nership with the influential Jewish community in America.

Realists in Islamabad also point to the profound changes taking place in the Middle East and the growing engagement between Israel and some of the Sunni Arab states like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, that have been among Pakistan's closest partners. Although they do not have diplomatic relations with Israel, shared threat perceptions about Iran have nudged Riyadh and Abu Dhabi closer to Jerusalem. (At present Egypt, Turkey and Jordan are among the few Arab and Muslim countries that have diplomatic relations with Israel.)

Pakistan has debated the merits of engaging Israel ever since India established full diplomatic relations with Israel in 1992. But it was General Pervez Musharraf who opened up Pakistan's debate on Israel in the early 2000s. Despite Musharraf's clear-eyed logic of Pakistan's self-interest in establishing ties with Israel, there was no forward movement in Islamabad. The general could not overcome Pakistan's ideological narrative that called for unflinching opposition to the Jewish state in the name of proclaimed solidarity with the Muslim ummah.

Can General Bajwa do what General Musharraf could not? If you are a sceptic you might say it is a bridge too far. After all, Pakistan has long told itself that India and Israel were alike in their "occupation" of Kashmir and Palestine. And that the insurgency in Kashmir, backed by Pakistan, was the same as Palestinian "Intifida" against Israel.

If you are a cynic, however, you might believe that Rawalpindi can easily finesse the ideology of Pakistan if it can score some gains against India. Should Delhi be worried about an engagement, covert or overt, leading to normalisation of relations between Pakistan and Israel? Not really.

Delhi is aware that Jerusalem will welcome formal or informal relationships with any Islamic country, big or small. Ending its isolation in the Islamic world is a major priority for Israel. Although Pakistan sees Israel as an enemy, Israel has no reason to reciprocate the sentiment.

Much in the manner that India pursues relations with all the major players in the Middle East, without reference to their mutual rivalries, Israel would like to do the same in the Subcontinent. Israel would certainly bet that if Islamabad makes a move, Dhaka would find it easier to overcome its own Islamist resistance to relations with Israel. Normal relations with the South Asian Muslims — who constitute more than 40 per cent of the world's Islamic population — will

be a huge diplomatic triumph for Israel.
Some in Delhi might love to see Pakistan eat its long-standing rhetoric on Hindu-Yehudi conspiracies. More seriously, it will be easier for India to deal with a Pakistan that defines its interests as a territorial state. Delhi has found it hard to normalise relations with Islamabad that sees itself as a religious cause. But if Pakistan were a normal country, there would be much room for give and take and the political basis for peaceful coexistence.

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

Kashmir, beyond legalities

The Modi government needs to recognise the essential dignity of its people

in the race to the moon.

Ashwani Kumar

A CONSTITUTION BENCH of the Supreme Court is set to hear in October a batch of petitions challenging the constitutional validity of the Modi-Shah gamble in Kashmir. Substantial questions of law premised on the first principles of constitutionalism arise, which will need to be addressed by the Court.

The essence of the petitioner's case is that the disheveling of Article 370 is an assault on the nation's asymmetrical federalism that recognises India's pluralism and diversity. The decision is seen as the negation of a solemn historical obligation to the people of Kashmir codified in the Instrument of Accession. It is contended that Clause (3) of Article 370 cannot be used to emasculate the constitutional guarantee now deemed permanent. The critics argue that the sovereign power to reorganise states cannot be an instrument for diminution of the status of states, considering the federal nature of our polity — a non-negotiable component of the basic structure of the Constitution. A core legal objection is about non-endorsement of the Union government's unilateral decision by elected representatives of the people, whose will, it is contended, cannot be substituted by the governor, acting as representative of the central government. The curtailment of civil liberties and denial of the citizens' right to communicate are seen as a frontal assault on our Constitution. The Kashmir move can be critiqued, as Christophe Jaffrelot wrote in this newspaper, as "a turning point towards the making of an ethnic unitary state", infracting the basic structure of the Constitution.

The contra arguments advanced in defence of the decision are not without their appeal. In a valiant defence of the decision, Home Minister Amit Shah invoked social and economic justice, the principle of gender equality and hope for peace and progress in the state through the devolution of full benefits of development to the Kashmiri people, in pursuance of the constitutional guarantee of equality under Article 14. It is asserted that the time has come for Kashmiris to enter into a new national pact to strengthen the edifice

of peace and local democracy in the state.
This situation requires the court to give meaning to the Constitution in new settings as society changes. The significance of the

content of the Constitution, it is argued, varies from age to age. Succeeding generations must discover the way forward in the image of their own experiences, without the shackles of history. The government contends that Article 370 is expressly stated to be a temporary constitutional measure, whose applicability and use is essentially a function of the government's evaluation of its efficacy in a given context. The Court will be cautioned against entering into the "political thicket" citing absence of "judicially manageable standards". The government may also argue against the "absolutism" of rights and contend that constitutional adjudication is essentially about balancing and proportionality.

Given the prevailing national mood, the "historical unacceptability of originalism" as a mode of constitutional interpretation has a seductive appeal. The Supreme Court has repeatedly cautioned against the danger of stultifying the spirit of the Constitution by static judicial interpretation (*Puttaswamy* 2017, *Navtej Johar* 2018 et al). In *Puttaswamy*, the Court said: "The interpretation of the Constitution cannot be frozen by its original understanding. The

Constitution has evolved and must continuously evolve to meet the aspirations and challenges of the present and the future."

lenges of the present and the future." The uncertainty of any legal challenge notwithstanding, it seems that the decisive battle between the contrary narratives on Kashmir will not be fought in court rooms or in the drawing rooms of Lutyens Delhi. And history beckons us all to accept that those who feel robbed of their dignity cannot be tamed forever by a muscular state. As Francis Fukuyama writes in a recent work, "a humiliated group seeking restitution of its dignity carries far more emotional weight than people simply pursuing their economic advantage". The challenge before the government, therefore, is to win an uncoerced allegiance of the Kashmiri people by recognising their dignity and identity — the "ultimate driver of history", as Hegel said. Whether the government can do enough to assure the Kashmiri people of its sincerity in this regard is the question.

The writer is former union minister of law and justice. Views expressed are personal

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CUT THE HYPE

continues' (IE, September 9). The failure of the lander, Vikram, could well be a technical issue and it's quite likely that the snag will will be rectified. But the political class needs to learn a lesson. The launch of the Chandrayaan was made an event. Schoolchildren were invited to witness the rover's progress. All these could have been done with the positive intent to make students interested in science but it put unnecessary pressure on the ISRO scientists.

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Mission

Suchak D Patel, Ahmedabad

HURTING ECOLOGY

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Sweet freedom' (IE, September 9). The government has signalled its seriousness about blending of petrol with ethanol. It has also relaxed environment clearances norms for storage of ethanol. Such aggressive measures to increase the production of this water-guzzling crop and put pressure on the ecosystem.

Deepak Singhal, Noida

Dual Boost

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'The problem of skilling India' (IE, September 7). Employers are finding it difficult to find workers with required skills. The economic slowdown has aggravated matters. So, the issue needs to be addressed both from the perspective of skilling

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

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people and boosting the economy. **Tapomoy Ghosh,** Purba Bardhaman

ROLE MODEL

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'The true original' (IE, September 7). After returning from injury, Steve Smith has become the world's highest run-getter this year. He is a role model for young players.

Subhash Vaid. Noida

epaper indianexpress.com

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड वर्ष 12 अंक 175

आरसेप का नाजुक वक्त

(आरसेप) को लेकर जारी बातचीत की समयसीमा खत्म होने के करीब है। दक्षिण-

केंद्र सरकार जल्द ही भारत के आर्थिक ऑस्ट्रेलिया और न्यूजीलैंड के अलावा भारत अभिविन्यास के बारे में एक अहम फैसला से भी जोडने के लिए प्रस्तावित इस मुक्त व्यापार करने जा रही है। मुक्त व्यापार संबंधी प्रस्तावित समझौते (एफटीए) को लेकर चल रही समझौते क्षेत्रीय समग्र आर्थिक भागीदारी बातचीत के नवंबर में होने वाले आसियान सम्मेलन तक पूरा हो जाने की उम्मीद है। गत वर्षों में यह साफ हो चका है कि आरसेप पर्व एशियाई देशों के संघ (आसियान) के 10 समझौते के संपन्न होने की राह में भारत का सदस्यों को चीन, दक्षिण कोरिया, जापान, नजरिया बड़ा अवरोध रहा है। दरअसल भारत

की यह चिंता वाजिब है कि चीन के साथ रहना चाहता है? एफटीए का हिस्सा बनना उसकी घरेलू अर्थव्यवस्था के लिए बहुत नकसानदेह हो सकता है। चीन के साथ व्यापार में भारत पहले से ही बड़े घाटे की स्थिति में है। लिहाजा चीनी उत्पादों पर लगने वाला सीमा शुल्क कम करने की जरूरत टालने की कोशिश होती रही है। आरसेप गठजोड के अन्य देशों ने यह मान लिया है कि करीब 90 फीसदी उत्पादों पर शुल्क ही नहीं लगेगा। ऐसे में अगर भारत इस प्रक्रिया का हिस्सा बने रहना चाहता है तो उसे निश्चित तौर पर कुछ समझौते करने होंगे और गत दिनों बैंकॉक में हुई मंत्रिस्तरीय बैठक में इसका उल्लेख भी किया गया। आरसेप के कुछ सदस्यों ने कथित तौर पर भारत से यह जानना चाहा है कि क्या वह इस समृह का हिस्सा बने

सवाल है कि भारत अपने वार्ताकारों को इस मुद्दे पर किस हद तक समझौता करने की छूट देगा और बातचीत के अंत में उभरने वाली स्थिति बाकी देशों को कितनी स्वीकार्य होगी? भारत ने पहले ही आसियान, दक्षिण कोरिया और जापान के साथ एफटीए समझौते किए हए हैं लेकिन अभी तक इन्हें पूरी तरह अमलीजामा नहीं पहनाया जा सका है। चिंता की बात केवल चीन से आने वाले सस्ते सामान ही नहीं हैं। ऑस्टेलिया और न्यजीलैंड के दग्ध उत्पादों को भी लेकर भारत आशंकित है। वाणिज्य मंत्रालय हालिया समय में कई बार यह कह चका है कि एफटीए समझौते भारतीय उद्योग के लिए उतने फायदेमंद नहीं रहे हैं। एफटीए वाले देशों के साथ व्यापार में भारत

का आयात तो बढ़ गया है लेकिन इन देशों को किए जाने वाले भारतीय निर्यात में वैसी वृद्धि नहीं हुई है। लेकिन निर्यात में अपेक्षित वृद्धि नहीं होने का ठीकरा व्यापार समझौते पर फोड़ना निरर्थक है। यह घरेलू स्तर पर भारतीय उद्योग को प्रतिस्पर्द्धी बढाने के लिए अहम सुधारात्मक कदम उठाने की अनिच्छा का नतीजा है।

इसमें कोई संदेह नहीं है कि भारत ने अपनी आयात शुल्क नीति में एक तरह का संरक्षणवादी नजरिया अपनाया हुआ है और आयात विकल्प तलाशने की कोशिश करता है। चीनी आयात को लेकर भारत की चिंता भी हद से ज्यादा है। इस संदर्भ में चीन समेत कई देशों के साथ एक मुक्त व्यापार समझौते का अंग बनना भारत की आयात नीति की मौजदा दिशा से खासा अलग होगा। ऐसे में सरकार के पास दो विकल्प रह

जाते हैं। पहला, वह मौजूदा संरक्षणवादी रवैया जारी रख सकती है लेकिन उसकी कीमत आरसेप समह से बाहर होकर और दक्षिण-पूर्व एशियाई क्षेत्र में अलग-थलग पड़कर चुकानी होगी। दूसरा रास्ता यह है कि भारत आरसेप समझौते का एक साधन के तौर पर इस्तेमाल करे, जिस तरह चीन ने विश्व व्यापार संगठन की अपनी सदस्यता का फायदा इस सदी के शुरुआती वर्षों में उठाया था। भारत इस समूह का सदस्य बनने के साथ ही घरेलू स्तर पर अहम सुधार लागू कर सकता है। निस्संदेह दूसरा विकल्प अर्थव्यवस्था के दीर्घकालिक लाभ और भारत की अंतरराष्ट्रीय प्रतिष्ठा के भी लिहाज से बेहतर होगा। सवाल है कि क्या सरकार के भीतर जरूरी कड़े फैसले लेने की राजनीतिक इच्छा है?



अंतरिक्ष यान खरीदने नहीं बनाने की जरूरत

अब वक्त आ गया है कि इसरो खुद को योजना बनाने, अनुबंध करने और अनुबंध की निगरानी करने वाले संस्थान में बदले। विस्तार से जानकारी दे रहे हैं **अजय शाह**

रतीय अंतरिक्ष अनुसंधान संगठन (इसरो) की स्थापना की तात्कालिक प्रेरणा अब कमजोर पड चुकी है। उनकी मेहनत के फल अब विश्व बाजार में खरीदे जा सकते हैं। यान को चांद पर उतारने की व्यावहारिक कीमत कुछ भी नहीं। ऐसा करने के लाभ अब पूरी तरह देश में क्षमता निर्माण पर पड़ने वाले प्रभाव पर निर्भर करते हैं। चूंकि इसरो का काम अलग है इसलिए समाज के लिए इसके लाभ भी सीमित हैं। ऐसे में सार्वजनिक व्यय के समाज पर पड़ने वाले अप्रत्यक्ष प्रभाव को देखते हुए इसरो को नासा जैसा बनना होगा। उसे भी अनुबंध संस्थान के रूप में काम करना होगा। इसरो की स्थापना अंतरिक्ष अनुसंधान के लाभ हासिल करने के लिए की गई थी। उस वक्त के लिहाज से वह सोच सही थी लेकिन अब वह दौर बीत चुका है। अब संचार जैसी वाणिज्यिक गतिविधियां. रिमोट सेंसिंग जैसे काम अंतरराष्ट्रीय अंतरिक्ष उद्योग की सहायता से किए जा सकते हैं। दुनिया भर में अब ऐसी वाणिज्यिक सेवाओं की कीमत भी ज्यादा नहीं हैं और भारतीय उपयोगकर्ता आसानी से ये सेवाएं खरीद सकते हैं। सैन्य लक्ष्य हासिल कर सैन्य बलों को हस्तांतरित किए जा चुके हैं। अब उन्हें पता है कि परमाणु हथियार संपन्न मिसाइल

को वांछित ठिकाने पर कैसे भेजना है या निचली कक्षा के जाससी उपग्रह के माध्यम से शी चिनफिंग की सुबह की सैर के दौरान उनकी तस्वीर कैसे निकाली जा सकती है। इस मामले में अब आत्मनिर्भरता उतनी अहम नहीं है। जासूसी उपग्रह की सेवाएं विश्व बाजार से आसानी से खरीदी जा सकती हैं।

चंद्रमा पर यान उतारना रोमांचित कर सकता है लेकिन इसका कोई वास्तविक लाभ नजर नहीं आता। हम इसरो के बजट व्यय को कैसे उचित ठहरा सकते हैं ? इसरो पर बहुत अधिक धनराशि व्यय की जा रही है। हम यह कैसे सुनिश्चित करेंगे कि यह पैसा समझदारी के साथ व्यय किया जा रहा है और इससे समाज को अधिकतम लाभ मिल रहा है ? प्रमुख अंतर्दृष्टि इसके अप्रत्यक्ष लाभों से जुड़ी है। इन अप्रत्यक्ष लाभों की दृष्टि से देखें तो जनता का पैसा अंतरिक्ष अनुसंधान में लगाना उचित है। परंतु संस्थागत व्यवस्था कुछ ऐसी होनी चाहिए कि ऐसे लाभ अधिकाधिक मात्रा में सामने आ सकें।

एक सिरे पर इसरो है जो भलीभांति अवरुद्ध है। जनता का पैसा इसरो में जाता है, इंजीनियरों की टीम यान बनाती है, वे यह जानकारी हासिल करते हैं कि यान को चंद्रमा पर कैसे उतारना है, लेकिन वे देश की मुख्यधारा से पूरी तरह कटे हुए हैं। खासतौर पर उनके काम से जुड़ी गोपनीयता के कारण। इस परिदृश्य में देखें तो इस व्यय से देश को होने वाले लाभ बहुत सीमित हैं।

दुसरे सिरे पर नासा है। नासा में जन नीति और व्यय की उपलब्धियां इंजीनियरिंग की उपलब्धियों से पहले आती हैं। नासा ने कोई अंतरिक्ष उपकरण शायद ही बनाया हो। नासा के कर्मी उपकरण बनाने वाले इंजीनियर नहीं हैं, वे अफसरशाह हैं जो उन निजी कंपनियों और निजी विश्वविद्यालयों से अनुबंध करते हैं जो इंजीनियर उपलब्ध कराते हैं।

सन 1958 से 1965 तक नासा की वास्तविक उपलब्धि ऐसी प्रक्रियाएं विकसित करने की रहीं जिनके जरिये नासा का फंड परी अर्थव्यवस्था में फैला। सन 1960 में नासा 0.3 अरब डॉलर राशि का अनुबंधित काम कर रही थी। सन 1968 में अपोलो 11 के चांद पर पहुंचने से एक साल पहले उसका अनुबंध 4 अरब डॉलर का था। इस राशि का चौथाई हिस्सा अमेरिका के बाहर जा रहा था। नासा का वास्तविक प्रभाव वह क्षमता थी जो इन अनुबंधों से जुड़े तमाम लोगों को हासिल हुई। नासा पर व्यय की गई राशि इसलिए उपयोगी नहीं थी कि इंसान को चांद पर चलते देखना प्रेरक था, बल्कि ऐसा इसलिए था क्योंकि अमेरिका और उससे बाहर की दुनिया से हजारों नए विचार

तकनीकी क्षमता के क्षेत्र में प्राप्त हुए। जेट प्रोपलसन लैबोरेटरी (जेपीएल) नासा का प्राथमिक अंतरिक्ष यान केंद्र है जिसमें 6,000 कर्मचारी और कुछ हजार अंशकालिक कर्मचारी हैं। इसका संचालन कैलटेक नामक निजी विश्वविद्यालय करता है। नासा इसे 3 अरब डॉलर की राशि सालाना मुहैया कराती है। जेपीएल ने वृहस्पति की तस्वीर ली लेकिन इससे बढ़कर इसने कैलटेक विश्वविद्यालय तथा परे देश में व्यापक ज्ञान का संचार किया।

नासा में फिलहाल तीन ऐसे कार्यक्रम चल रहे हैं जो निजी कंपनियों की क्षमता मे इजाफा करेंगे। वाणिज्यिक यात्री कार्यक्रम के तहत निजी कंपनियां अंतरिक्ष यात्रियों को अंतरराष्ट्रीय अंतरिक्ष केंद्र ले जाएंगी। इसके अनुबंध स्पेस एक्स और बोइंग कंपनियों को दिए गए हैं। वहीं वाणिज्यिक माल वहन कार्यक्रम के अधीन स्पेस एक्स और नॉर्थरोप ग्रुमैन रोबोटिक कार्गो उडान को अंतरराष्ट्रीय अंतरिक्ष केंद्र ले जाएंगी। वाणिज्यिक चंद्र अंतरिक्ष उपकरण सेवा में दो कंपनियां अनुबंधित हैं। इनमें से प्रत्येक को 8 करोड़ डॉलर की राशि दी जा रही है। एस्ट्रोबोटिक कंपनी का पेरेग्रिन लैंडर नासा के 14 उपकरणों को चंद्रमा पर ले जाएगा जबकि इंट्यूसिव मशीन का नोवा-सी लैंडर नासा के करीब पांच उपकरणों को चांद पर ही एक अन्य स्थान पर ले जाएगा।

अनुबंध के इन तीनों आयामों के चलते तमाम रोमांचक वीडियो सामने आएंगे। इससे भी अहम, निजी क्षेत्र में सक्षम संस्थान तैयार होंगे। वहां से ज्ञान पूरे समाज और दुनिया में फैलेगा। आवश्यकता है कि इसरो इन विचारों पर आगे बढ़ता हुआ ख़ुद को योजना बनाने, अनुबंध करने और अनुबंध की निगरानी करने वाले संस्थान में बदले। इससे सार्वजनिक व्यय देश में ज्ञान का विस्तार करने के काम आएगा। साथ ही चंद्रमा के अंधेरे क्षेत्र में भी हम अधिक उपलब्धियां हासिल कर सकेंगे।

भारतीय रक्षा, अंतरिक्ष और परमाण कार्यक्रमों की एक प्रमुख चिंता उनकी लागत की है। उदाहरण के लिए देश के परमाणु ऊर्जा उत्पादक संयंत्र वैश्विक स्तर की तलना में बहुत सस्ते नहीं हैं। यह समस्या अंतरिक्ष विज्ञान में भी आ सकती है। अंतरिक्ष शोध में होने वाले कुल व्यय का अनुमान लगाना मुश्किल है।

इस समस्या को दूर करने के लिए उपग्रह या रॉकेट बनाने का काम निजी कंपनियों को सौंपा जाना चाहिए जो वाणिज्यिक रूप से विश्व बाजार में प्रतिस्पर्धा कर सकें। अमेरिका में हम ऐसा होते देख चके हैं। वहां निजी कंपनियां यानों का पूरा डिजाइन तैयार करती हैं और नासा केवल उन्हें अंतरराष्ट्रीय अंतरिक्ष केंद्र तक ले जाती है। मौसम की जानकारी देने वाले उपग्रहों पर जनता का पैसा अधिक सटीक ढंग से व्यय होगा अगर कई निजी कंपनियां इन सेवाओं के लिए प्रस्तिस्पर्धा कर रही हों। अभी स्थिति यह है कि इस काम के लिए इसरो को बजट आवंटित किया जाता है। इसरो को अब आसान कामों से दूरी बनानी चाहिए और नई पीढ़ी के ज्ञानार्जन में लग जाना चाहिए। इसके लिए उसे इंजीनियरों को सेवा देने के बजाय अनुबंध पर काम

(लेखक नैशनल इंस्टीट्यूट ऑफ पब्लिक फाइनैंस ऐंड पॉलिसी, नई दिल्ली में प्रोफेसर हैं)

देशों के सहयोग से ही होगा मरुस्थल समस्या का हल

संयुक्त राष्ट्र मरुस्थलीकरण-रोधी समझौता (सीसीडी) को हमने रियो डि जनेरियो की सौतेली संतान कहा। इसकी वजह यह है कि यह एक उपेक्षित एवं बेहद अवांछित समझौता था जिस पर वर्ष 1992 में रियो सम्मेलन के दौरान दस्तखत हुए थे। अफ्रीकी एवं अन्य विकासशील देशों की इच्छा की वजह से इस समझौते पर सहमति बनी थी। असल में यह एक रिश्वत थी जिसे एक समझौते का रूप दिया गया था और समृद्ध देश इसे समझने या भरोसा करने को तैयार नहीं थे। रियो सम्मेलन का मुख्य एजेंडा जलवायु परिवर्तन था। उसके बाद जैव-विविधता संरक्षण का मुद्दा था जो दक्षिणी गोलार्द्ध के देशों के लिए अहम था। फिर वनों के क्षरण का मसला था जिसके लिए समझौते का प्रस्ताव रखे जाने पर विकासशील देशों ने अपने संसाधनों पर अतिक्रमण की कोशिश बताते हुए कड़ा विरोध किया था। इस कड़वाहट भरे माहौल में मरुस्थलीकरण समझौता अस्तित्व में आया।

इस समझौते के करीब तीन दशक बाद जब दुनिया जलवायु परिवर्तन के दुष्प्रभावों को महसूस करने लगी है, प्रजातियों के विलुप्त होने को लेकर जारी जंग हारने लगी है और विनाशकारी मौसमी बदलावों के खौफनाक अंजाम देखने लगी है, तब मरुस्थलीकरण के भला दिए गए समझौते को भी अपनी सौतेली छवि से निजात पानी होगी। यह एक वैश्विक समझौता है जो हमारे वर्तमान और भविष्य को बना या बिगाड़ सकता है। सच यह है कि अपने प्राकृतिक संसाधनों- खासकर भूमि एवं जल, को संभालना हमारे लिए बड़ी चिंता का विषय बन चुका बडा जोखिम मंडरा रहा है। कुप्रबंधन के साथ ही अजीबोगरीब मौसमी घटनाएं भी इसे गंभीर बना रही हैं। आज करोडों लोगों पर खतरा मंडराने लगा है।

लेकिन इसका एक दूसरा पहलू भी है। अगर हम जमीन एवं पानी का अपना प्रबंधन बेहतर कर सकते हैं तो हम जलवायु परिवर्तन के बुरे प्रभावों को भी कम कर सकतें हैं। हम निर्धनतम लोगों के लिए पुंजी निर्माण करने के साथ ही उनकी आजीविका को भी सुधार सकते हैं। और ऐसा कर हम ग्रीनहाउस गैसों का उत्सर्जन



जमीनी हकीकत

सुनीता नारायण कम कर सकते हैं। पौधे लगाने से कार्बन डाईऑक्साइड पर लगाम लगेगी, मुदा स्वास्थ्य में सुधार से भी कार्बन डाईऑक्साइड पर काबू पाने में मदद मिलेगी और सबसे अहम बात, खेती एवं खानपान की आदतों में बदलाव करने से धरती को गर्म करने वाली गैसों के उत्सर्जन को कम किया जा रहा है। लिहाजा, इस समझौते को सौतेले बच्चे के बजाय मां-बाप के हाथों में सौंपने की जरूरत है। रियो सम्मेलन में उत्तरी

गोलार्द्ध के देशों का कहना था कि उनका इस मुद्दे से क्या लेना-देना है ? मरुस्थलीकरण एक वैश्विक मुद्दा नहीं है लिहाजा इस पर एक अंतरराष्ट्रीय समझौता भला क्यों होना चाहिए? रियो में मरुस्थलीकरण समझौते वकालत करने वाले अफ्रीकी देशों का कहना था कि रेगिस्तानी इलाका बढ़ने से उनके उत्पादों की कीमतें गिर रही हैं जिससे उनके जमीन के भाव कम होने लगे हैं। यह मरुस्थलीकरण एवं भमि अपकर्ष को बढावा देता है। आज मरुस्थलीकरण के

वैश्वक मुद्दा होने को लेकर कोई संदेह नहीं होना चाहिए। इसके लिए देशों के बीच सहयोग की जरूरत है। सच है कि जलवायु परिवर्तन के प्रभाव दिखने अभी बस शुरू ही हुए हैं। तापमान के लगातार बढ़ते जाने और इस चक्र के बेकाब हो जाने पर ये प्रभाव और घातक होने लगेंगे। यह भी साफ है कि आज दुनिया में गरीब लोग इस 'मानव-निर्मित' त्रासदी के सबसे बड़े शिकार हैं। रेतीले तूफान में किसी धनी शख्स की जान नहीं जाती है। इसी तरह चक्रवाती तूफान की चपेट में आने पर किसी धनवान की आजीविका खतरे में नहीं पड़ती है। लेकिन सच यह है कि ऐसा अजीब मौसम इसका पूर्वाभास देता है कि भविष्य में हमारे लिए क्या छिपा हुआ है ? यह बदलाव एकरेखीय नहीं है और न ही इसका पूर्वानुमान लगाया जा सकता है। यह एक झटके की तरह आएगा और हम उसके लिए तैयार भी नहीं होंगे। न तो विकासशील देश और न ही विकसित देश। जलवायु परिवर्तन का असर सब पर एक जैसा होगा, उसमें कोई भेद नहीं होगा।

यह भी साफ है कि इस विनाशकारी बदलावों के चलते आपदाओं की संख्या बढ जाएगी क्योंकि अजीब एवं असामान्य मौसम की आवृत्ति एवं तीव्रता भी बढ़ेगी। ऐसा होने पर गरीब और भी अधिक गरीब होता जाएगा। समाज के हाशिये पर मौजूद लोग वंचित होने पर अपनी जमीनों से दुर जाने के लिए बाध्य होंगे ताकि वे जिंदा रहने के लिए आजीविका कमा सकें। उनके पास दुसरे देश या दूसरे शहर तक विस्थापन के अलावा कोई चारा नहीं रह जाएगा। यह दोहरा जोखिम गरीबों की पहले से ही खराब हालत को और बिगाड देगी और शरणार्थियों की संख्या बढने से हमारी दुनिया अधिक असुरक्षित एवं हिंसक होती जाएगी। यह विनाशकारी बदलाव का ऐसा चक्र जिससे हमें लड़ना ही होगा। इस तरह मरुस्थलीकरण का संबंध हमारे वैश्वीकृत विश्व से है क्योंकि सभी एक दूसरे से जुड़े और एक दूसरे पर निर्भर हैं।

है। यह मरुस्थलीकरण के बारे में न होकर मरुस्थलीकरण से जंग के बारे में है। हम जिस भी तरीके से मरुस्थलीकरण, भूमि अपकर्ष या पानी की कमी का सामना कर सकते हैं, उस तरीके से हम आजीविका में सुधार और जलवाय परिवर्तन का खतरा कम कर पाएंगे। भूमि एवं पानी जैसे संसाधनों के संयमित इस्तेमाल का एजेंडा जलवायु परिवर्तन के खिलाफ संघर्ष के केंद्र में है। यह लोगों की हालत बेहतर बनाने के लिए स्थानीय अर्थव्यवस्थाओं के निर्माण के केंद्र में है। गरीबी से जंग और इंसानी वजूद को बचाए रखने की जंग जीतने के लिए ऐसा करना ही होगा। मरुस्थलीकरण पर लगाम लगाने का संयुक्त राष्ट्र समझौता इसी बारे में है। ऐसे वैश्विक नेतृत्व की उम्मीद कीजिए जो इस बदलाव का वाहक बन सके।

यही हमारे लिए एक अवसर

(लेखिका सेंटर फॉर साइंस ऐंड एनवॉयरनमेंट की प्रमुख हैं)

जरिये युवाओं में जागरूकता लाने

की बात कही गई है। आर्थिक

कानाफूसी

वर्चस्व की लड़ाई!

मध्य प्रदेश के वन मंत्री उमंग सिंघार और पूर्व मुख्यमंत्री दिग्विजय सिंह के बीच का विवाद अब सार्वजनिक हो चुका है। पिछले दिनों कांग्रेस के दोनों वरिष्ठ नेताओं ने एक दूसरे पर आरोप-प्रत्यारोप राजनीतिक पर्यवेक्षकों का कहना है कि दोनों नेताओं के बीच में अहम का टकराव तो हुआ ही है, साथ ही इसका संबंध कारोबारी हितों से भी है। सिंघार पश्चिमी मध्य प्रदेश के धार जिले से आते हैं और पार्टी का आदिवासी चेहरा हैं। धार गुजरात के नजदीक है जहां शराबबंदी लागू है। कुछ लोगों का कहना है कि यह पूरी लड़ाई शराब कारोबार पर वर्चस्व से जुड़ी हुई है। वहीं कुछ अन्य लोग कह रहे हैं कि प्रदेश कांग्रेस कमेटी के अध्यक्ष की नियुक्ति भी इसके पीछे है। सिंघार खुंद को संभावित दावेदार के रूप में पेश कर रहे हैं और यही सिंह के विरोध की वजह भी है।

चुनावी तैयारी शुरू

उत्तर प्रदेश के मुख्यमंत्री योगी आदित्यनाथ ने अपने कार्यकाल का आधा वक्त पूरा होते-होते सन 2022 के चुनाव की तैयारी शुरू कर दी है। सरकार की प्रमुख योजनाओं के क्रियान्वयन की धीमी गति पर नाखुश मुख्यमंत्री ने सरकारी विभागों को ताकीद की है कि वे राजकोषीय अनुशासन अपनाएं। नई व्यवस्था के अंतर्गत सरकारी विभागों को साल की अंतिम तिमाही में केवल करने की अनुमति होगी। माना जा रहा



आपका पक्ष

चंद्रयान-२ की आधी सफलता ही काफी

चंद्रयान-2 अभियान के तहत

चांद पर उतर रहे लैंडर विक्रम से भले ही संपर्क टूट गया लेकिन अभी भी उम्मीदें बरकरार है। यह कहा जा सकता है कि चंद्रयान-2 को लेकर वैज्ञानिकों का प्रयास सराहनीय है। अभी तक विश्व के किसी भी देश ने लैंडर नहीं भेजा है। वैज्ञानिकों के मुताबिक ऑर्बिटर चांद की कक्षा में स्थापित हो गया है और वह बेहतर काम कर रहा है। हम यह कह सकते हैं कि चंद्रयान-2 के लक्ष्य प्राप्त करने से भले ही चूक गए हों लेकिन इससे काफी कुछ सीखने को मिलेगा। फिलहाल हम गर्व से कह सकते हैं कि अगर चंद्रयान-2 के अन्य उपकरण ठीक से कार्य करेंगे तो हमें निरंतर प्रयास करने की जरूरत है। भारत किसी भी प्रकार की चुनौती का सामना करने के लिए तत्पर रहता है तथा उस चुनौती को पार कर लेता है। इस अभियान से विश्व के सभी देशों को संदेश जा रहा



है कि भारत सभी उपलब्धियों पर गर्व करने के साथ बाधाओं का भी डटकर मुकाबला करना जानता है। भारत के वैज्ञानिक अपनी मेधा दुनिया को पहले ही दिखा चुके हैं। पहले ही प्रयास में मंगलयान की सफलता को या एक साथ 100 से अधिक उपग्रह भेजने के करिश्मे को कैसे भूला जा सकता है। चंद्रयान-2 : हमारी यात्रा जारी रहेगी। जीवन : के साथ-साथ सोशल मीडिया के

विक्रम का चांद पर उतरते समय इसरो से संपर्क टूट गया था

अभियान के बाद प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने कहा कि देश को अपने वैज्ञानिकों पर गर्व है। वे देश की सेवा कर रहे हैं और आगे भी में उतार-चढ़ाव आते रहते हैं। एक बात हम भारतीय होने के नाते बड़े गर्व से कह सकते हैं कि चंद्रयान-2 का भले ही संपर्क टूट गया हो लेकिन कुछ समय के बाद सफलता जरूर मिलेगी। ऐसे समय में निराश होने की जरूरत नहीं है।

आर्थिक विकास दर बेहतर बने

आर्थिक विकास दर को बेहतर करने के लिए वित्त मंत्री निर्मला सीतारमण ने अगली तिमाही तक आर्थिक विकास दर में बढोतरी की बात कही है। 10 सार्वजनिक बैंकों का विलय कर इसकी संख्या चार कर दी गई है। इसमें बैंकों के विलय सेवा शर्ते बेहतर बनाने, दिए गए ऋण प्राप्त करने

बजट के मुताबिक विकास दर में सुस्ती देखी गई है जिसमें विकास दर जीडीपी 5.8 प्रतिशत से घटकर 5 प्रतिशत, विनिर्माण 12 प्रतिशत से घटकर 0.6 प्रतिशत और विकास दर भी घटकर 2 प्रतिशत तक पहुंच गई है। इन आंकड़ों के मुताबिक देश में आर्थिक मंदी बढ़ रही है। वित्त मंत्री को अर्थव्यवस्था में सुधार के लिए कई स्तर पर राहत देने की जरूरत है जिससे विकास दर बढ सके। उन्होंने कहा कि विकास की गति की मंदी को दूर करने के लिए जीएसटी में और छूट के साथ ब्याज दर में कमी की जाएगी। बाजार में पूंजी निवेश, शेयर बाजार में गति, लघु उद्योगों को बढ़ावा देना होगा। युवाओं को अवसर प्रदान करना, वस्तुओं की कीमत में सुधार, विनिर्माण में नई तकनीक के साथ कीमत में सामंजस्य, कृषि के विभिन्न उत्पादों में वृद्धि से देश में आर्थिक प्रगति लाई जा सकती है। जीतराम प्रेमी, छत्तीसगढ़

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





भिवत हृदय की पुकार और मुक्ति का द्वार है

आरक्षण पर बहस

राष्ट्रीय स्वयंसेवक संघ की ओर से यह कहा जाना कोई नई बात नहीं कि समाज में जब तक आर्थिक असमानता है तब तक आरक्षण जारी रहना चाहिए। संघ के सह सरकार्यवाह दत्तात्रेय होसबले की ओर से यह बात शायद इसलिए कही गई, क्योंकि चंद दिनों पहले मोहन भागवत ने आरक्षण की समीक्षा की जरूरत जताई थी। वह पहले भी कई बार आरक्षण की समीक्षा की जरूरत जता चुके हैं, लेकिन वह जब भी ऐसा करते हैं तब कई दल और सामाजिक संगठन यह शोर मचाने लगते हैं कि संघ आरक्षण को खत्म करना चाहता है। यही नहीं, संघ के साथ ही भाजपा को भी आरक्षण विरोधी करार देने की कोशिश होने लगती है। जब ऐसा होता है तो भाजपा भी रक्षात्मक मुद्रा में आ जाती है और इसी के साथ आरक्षण की समीक्षा का सवाल पीछे छूट जाता है। ऐसा शायद इसलिए भी होता है, क्योंकि आरक्षण वोट बैंक की राजनीति का हथियार बन गया है। आखिर जब अन्य संवैधानिक प्रावधानों की समय-समय पर समीक्षा हो सकती है और जरूरत पड़ने पर उनमें संशोधन हो सकता है तो फिर आरक्षण के संदर्भ में ऐसा क्यों नहीं हो सकता? समझना कठिन है कि इसमें क्या हर्ज है कि एससी-एसटी आरक्षण के साथ अन्य पिछड़े वर्गों को मिल रहे आरक्षण की समीक्षा इस उद्देश्य से की जाए कि वह और अधिक प्रभावी एवं उपयोगी कैसे हो सके?

क्या आज यह नहीं देखा जाना चाहिए कि जो वर्ग आरक्षण के दायरे में हैं वे उससे उचित रूप से लाभान्वित हो सके हैं या नहीं? निःसंदेह यह भी देखे जाने की जरूरत है कि केवल पात्र लोगों को ही आरक्षण कैसे मिले ? यह इसलिए आवश्यक है, क्योंकि आरक्षण का लाभ उठा चुके लोगों के परिजन भी उसका फायदा उठाने में लगे हुए हैं। क्रीमी लेयर की व्यवस्था ने इसे और आसान बना दिया है, लेकिन शायद ही कोई दल हो जो क्रीमी लेयर को तार्किक बनाने की वकालत करता हो। बेहतर होगा कि आरक्षण की समीक्षा के तौर-तरीकों पर बहस शुरू हो। आरक्षण शोषित-वंचित तबकों और पिछड़े वर्गों को सामाजिक तौर पर आगे लाने वाली व्यवस्था है, लेकिन बीते कुछ सालों में यह धारणा बन गई है कि यह सरकारी नौकरी पाने का जरिया है। दत्तात्रेय होसबले ने आरक्षण की समीक्षा के सवाल पर यह सही कहा कि यह निर्णय लेना इससे जुड़े लोगों और नीति-निर्धारकों का काम है, लेकिन इसमें संदेह है कि हमारा राजनीतिक वर्ग इसके लिए सहमत हो पाएगा। इसके बावजूद उससे यह तो अपेक्षित है ही कि वह निर्धनता निवारण के उपायों पर ज्यादा जोर दे, क्योंकि तमाम तरक्की के बावजूद भारत में गरीबों की अच्छी-खासी संख्या है।

समर्थ होंगे शिल्पकार

झारखंड के कारीगरों, बुनकरों और शिल्पकारों को ग्लोबल बाजार उपलब्ध कराने की दिशा में ई कॉमर्स कंपनी फ्लिपकार्ट से सरकार का करार एक अच्छी पहल है। वह दिन दूर नहीं जब फ्लिप कार्ट पर झारखंड के ढोल-नगाड़े, मांदर, तीर-धनुष, बांस की टोकरी, मूर्तियां, मिट्टी के बर्तन और ढोकरा कला से शृंगारित धातु की मूर्तियों समेत अन्य सजावटी सामान भी फ्लिपकार्ट पर उपलब्ध होंगे। यह पहल कारीगरों को बाजार, सम्मान और अच्छा दाम उपलब्ध कराने के साथ साथ झारखंड के पारंपरिक कला कौशल को पहचान दिलाने वाली भी साबित होगी। अगर सबकुछ ठीक रहा तो समर्थ नाम की यह योजना झारखंड के स्थानीय हुनरमंदों के लिए वरदान साबित हो सकता है। हां, इतना जरूर हो कि कम पढ़े-लिखे और तकनीकी ज्ञान से अनभिज्ञ शिल्पकारों को इस मंच का सदुपयोग सिखाने पर भी सरकार को जोर देना चाहिए। यह भी ध्यान रखना होगा कि यहां उनके उत्पादों की बिक्री करने वाले बिचौलिये तैयार न होने पाएं। झारखंड के गांव-गांव और सदुर आदिवासी इलाकों में भी परंपरागत शिल्प बिखरा पड़ा है, लेकिन हमेशा से बाजार न मिलना यहां के कारीगरों-शिल्पकारों के लिए एक बड़ी समस्या रही है। बारीक-महीन और शानदार कारीगरी से बनी वस्तएं जहां औने-पौने दाम में बेचना कारीगरों की विवशता रही है साथ ही परंपरा और शिल्प के ये चितेरे फटेहाल जिंदगी जीने को विवश हैं। अच्छी बात यह है कि सरकार ने इस समस्या को शिद्दत से महसूस किया है। सरकार पहले भी कारीगरों के लिए औद्योगिक सहकारी समितियों, झारक्राफ्ट, माटी कला बोर्ड जैसी एजेंसियों का गठन कर और कारीगर पंचायत जैसे आयोजन कर इस दिशा में अपनी इच्छाशक्ति दिखा चुकी है। अब समय की मांग को देखते हुए इसे ई-कॉमर्स से जोड़ा गया है। तेजी से पांव पसार रहा ई-कॉमर्स कारीगरों को बड़ा बाजार उपलब्ध कराएगा। झारखंड के लोग परंपरागत रूप से बांस पर कारीगरी करने, मिट्टी, रेशे, लताओं और धात के संदर बर्तन बनाने, पत्थरों और दीवारों पर चित्रकारी करने, लकडियों के खिलौने बनाने, मुखौटे, वाद्ययंत्र, मूर्तियां और अन्य सजावटी सामान, पारंपरिक हथियार, वाद्ययंत्र, टोकरी, आभूषण आदि बनाने के लिए मशहूर हैं। इनकी मेहनतभरी और प्रकृति तथा परंपरा में रसी-पगी कारीगरी का सौंदर्य भी अद्भुत है। हस्तशिल्प के क्षेत्र से जुड़े कारीगरों का रजिस्ट्रेशन करने का भी सरकार का निर्णय सराहनीय है।

मंदी को मात देने के उपाय



र्थिक मोर्चे पर सुस्ती के बीच उससे निपटने के उपायों पर

चर्चा और साथ ही अमल भी

आवश्यक है। सरकार ने हाल में कुछ छोटे

बैंकों का विलय कर बड़े सरकारी बैंक बनाने

की दिशा में कदम बढ़ाए ताकि उनकी क्षमता

बढ़ सके। यह स्वागतयोग्य है, पर इससे आगे

जाने की जरूरत है। पिछले दो वर्षों में सरकार

ने 250 हजार करोड़ रुपये इन बैंकों में डालने

की योजना बनाई है। इसकी तुलना में आज इन

बैंकों की कुल बाजार हैसियत ही मात्र 230

हजार करोड़ रुपये है। यानी इनके पास पूंजी

का मौजूदा स्तर नकारात्मक है। सरकार ने दो

वर्षों में जो पैसा इन बैंकों को दिया, उसे भी ये

सहेजकर नहीं रख पाए हैं। ऐसे में सरकार को

चाहिए कि वह भारतीय स्टेट बैंक को छोड़कर

शेष सभी सरकारी बैंकों का निजीकरण कर

दे। तब सरकार करीब 230 हजार करोड़ रुपये

की भारी रकम अर्जित कर सकेगी। इस रकम

का उपयोग सेवाओं के निर्यात बढ़ाने के लिए

किया जा सकता है। जैसे हर जिले में विदेशी

भाषाओं को पढाने के केंद्र बनाए जाएं। भारत

के अध्यापकों को सब्सिडी देकर दुनिया भर के

संस्थानों में पढ़ाने के लिए भेजा जाए, भारत

में विदेशी भाषाओं की फिल्में बनाने जैसे दांव

आजमाए जा सकते हैं। इससे सरकार को बैंकों

में लगातार पूंजी डालने के सिरदर्द से मुक्ति

मिलेगी और हमारे सेवा क्षेत्र का विकास होगा।

दूसरा उपाय, निवेश के लिए कर्ज लेने का

डॉ. भरत झुनझुनवाला

केंद्र सरकार को चाहिए कि वह सरकारी खपत पर नियंत्रण करे और निवेश बढ़ाए, निवेश करने के लिए कर्ज लेना नुकसानदेह नहीं

> है। राजग सरकार ने बीते पांच वर्षों में वित्तीय घाटे पर नियंत्रण करने में बड़ी सफलता हासिल की है। वर्ष 2013-14 में सरकार का वित्तीय घाटा 4.4 प्रतिशत था जो 2018-19 में 3.4 प्रतिशत रह गया। वित्तीय घाटा वह रकम होती है जो सरकार द्वारा बाजार से उधार लेकर खर्च की जाती है। वित्तीय घाटे में कटौती का अर्थ है। कि सरकार अपने खर्चों पर नियंत्रण कर रही है और उधार कम ले रही है। यह अर्थव्यवस्था की स्थिरता के लिए जरूरी भी है, अन्यथा महंगाई बढ़ती है और निवेशक निवेश करने से कतराते हैं, मगर इससे बढ़कर कदम उठाने होंगे। सरकार ने वित्तीय घाटे में जो कटौती हासिल की है उसमें तीन चौथाई हिस्सा पुंजी खर्चों में कटौती का है और एक चौथाई हिस्सा सरकार की खपत में कटौती का। सरकार ने अपनी खपत को स्थिर बनाए रखा और पूंजी निवेश कम कर दिया-ठीक वैसे ही जैसे दुकानदार ने घर में एयर कंडीशनर लगाए रखा और दुकान से हटा दिया। सरकार के खर्चों की दिशा का अर्थव्यवस्था पर सीधा असर पड़ता है। सरकार की खपत में कर्मियों को दिया

जाने वाला वेतन प्रमुख होता है। यदि सरकार कर्मियों को बढ़ा-चढ़ाकर वेतन देती है तो इसका अधिकांश हिस्सा सोना खरीदने में, विदेशों में निवेश करने में, विदेशी पर्यटन में अथवा विदेशी माल खरीदने में व्यय हो जाता है और यह रकम देश से बाहर चली जाती है यानी हमारी अर्थव्यवस्था के गुब्बारे से हवा



निकल जाती है। इसलिए सरकार को चाहिए कि वह सरकारी खपत पर नियंत्रण करे और निवेश बढ़ाए। निवेश करने के लिए कर्ज लेना नुकसानदेह नहीं होता, क्योंकि उद्यमी कर्ज लेकर दुकान लगाता है। समस्या तब होती है जब कर्ज लेकर खपत की जाती है। इसलिए सरकार को इस समय दो काम करने चाहिए। एक. सरकारी खपत को फ्रीज कर देना चाहिए। सरकारी कर्मियों के वेतन भी फ्रीज कर देने चाहिए। दूसरा, निवेश करने के लिए विशेष प्रकोष्ठ बनाकर निवेश बढ़ाना चाहिए। तीसरे उपाय के तहत आयात कर बढ़ाया जाए।

सरकार ने छोटे उद्योगों को कर्ज मुहैया कराने के लिए कई कदम उठाए हैं। जीएसटी में रिटर्न भरना भी सरल किया गया है। इन कदमों का स्वागत है, लेकिन सिर्फ इतने से ही बात नहीं बनेगी। छोटे उद्योगों की समस्या है कि चीन से आ रहे माल के सामने वे टिक नहीं पा रहे हैं। चीन में श्रमिकों को रखने और निकालने की छट है जिससे श्रमिक कडी मेहनत करते हैं और भारतीय श्रमिक की तुलना में दो गुना उत्पादन करते हैं। इसलिए चीन का माल हमसे सस्ता पड़ता है। छोटे उद्योगों को बचाने के लिए जरूरी है कि चीन से आयात होने वाले सामान पर आयात कर बढ़ाया जाए जोकि मुख्य रूप से छोटे उद्योगों द्वारा बनाए जाते हैं। इससे छोटे उद्योगों को बड़ा सहारा मिलेगा। इनके द्वारा अधिक श्रमिकों को रोजगार दिया जाएगा और बाजार में मांग बढ़ेगी और मंदी टूट जाएगी।

चौथा उपाय यह हो सकता है कि छोटे उद्योगों

को जीएसटी में छूट दी जाए। इन उद्योगों की एक समस्या यह है कि कंपाउंडिंग स्कीम में उनके द्वारा अपने इनपुट पर अदा किए गए जीएसटी का रिफंड नहीं मिलता है। इस कारण बड़े उद्योग के लिए यह लाभप्रद होता है कि वह दूसरे बड़े उद्योग से माल खरीदे न कि दूसरे छोटे उद्योग से। यदि एक बड़ा उद्योग दूसरे बड़े उद्योग से माल खरीदता है तो बेचने वाले बड़े उद्योग द्वारा अपने इनपुट पर दिए गए जीएसटी का सेटऑफ खरीदने वाले बड़े उद्योग को मिल जाता है, लेकिन यदि वही बड़ा उद्योग वहीं माल किसी छोटे उद्योग से खरीदता है तो बेचने वाले छोटे उद्योग द्वारा अपने इनपुट पर अदा किए गए जीएसटी का सेटऑफ खरीदने वाले बड़े उद्योग को नहीं मिलता है। इसलिए बड़े उद्योगों की प्रवृत्ति बनी है कि वे दूसरे बड़े

उद्योगों से ही माल खरीदें। इस समस्या का उपाय है कि छोटे उद्योगों द्वारा इनपुट पर अदा किए गए जीएसटी का उन्हें नकद रिफंड दिया जाए। तब ही कंपोजीशन स्कीम के अंतर्गत

पांचवां उपाय सरकारी शिक्षा के निजीकरण के रूप में किया जा सकता है। सरकार ने उच्च शिक्षा एवं शोध संस्थाओं में ईमानदार व्यक्तियों को शीर्ष पदों पर नियुक्त किया है। यह स्वागतयोग्य है, लेकिन इन संस्थाओ में सामान्य अध्यापक अथवा वैज्ञानिक की प्रवृत्ति में इससे तनिक भी अंतर नहीं आया है। सामान्य अध्यापकों को वेतन मिलना सुनिश्चित है, भले ही वे पढ़ाएं या न पढ़ाएं। यहां कोचिंग का सहारा है। यह व्यवस्था केवल शीर्ष पर ईमानदार व्यक्तियों की नियुक्ति से ही नहीं सुधरेगी। इसके लिए जरूरी है कि सरकार समूचे सरकारी शिक्षातंत्र का निजीकरण कर दे और अर्जित रकम तथा हर वर्ष व्यय होने वाली रकम से देश के सभी युवाओं को मुफ्त वाउचर बांटे जिससे वे अपने मनचाही शैक्षणिक संस्था में प्रवेश ले सकें। तभी संस्थानों में होड़ शुरू होगी कि अधिक से अधिक वाउचर इकट्ठ करें। इससे कॉलेजों का स्तर सुधरेगा। इस कदम का विशेष प्रभाव सेवा क्षेत्र पर पडेगा आने वाले समय में मैन्यूफैक्चरिंग में रोजगार कम बनेंगे और सेवा क्षेत्र में ज्यादा अवसर बढ़ेंगे। यदि हमारी उच्च शिक्षा व्यवस्था सुचारू रूप से चलने लगे तो हमारे युवा ऑनलाइन ट्यूशन, अनुवाद, स्वास्थ्य पर्यटन इत्यादि तमाम क्षेत्रों में विश्व को सेवा प्रदान कर सकेंगे और मंदी को मात दी जा सकेगी। यदि उपरोक्त कदमों को लागू कर दिया जाए तो महज एक साल में हमारी आर्थिक विकास दर दस प्रतिशत के आसपास पहंच सकती है।

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

कश्मीरियत को बहाल करने की जरूरत

कश्मीरी यह याद

रखें तो बेहतर कि

मुस्लिम एकता का

भारत में हिंदू-

सरी बार प्रधानमंत्री बनने के बाद नरेंद्र मोदी ने अपने प्रारंभिक भाषण में अल्पसंख्यकों के पिछड़ेपन को दूर करने पर भी जोर दिया था और हिंदू-मुस्लिम एकता के प्रश्न को भी उठाया था। एक अन्य संबोधन में उन्होंने आजादी से पूर्व मुस्लिम समाज ने एकता के लिए जो कार्य किए उनका भी स्मरण किया और 1857 के उस संग्राम का जिक्र किया, जिसमें मुसलमानों ने हिंदुओं के साथ मिलकर आजादी की लड़ाई का प्रथम बिगुल बजाया था। दिल्ली अल्पसंख्यक आयोग, जमीयत-ए-उलेमा हिंद के सदस्यों और अनेक विख्यात मुसलमानों ने प्रधानमंत्री मोदी की उन बातों की प्रशंसा की। देखा जाए तो हिंदू-मुस्लिम एकता, एक ऐसा प्रश्न है, जिसे आजादी से पहले देश के लगभग सभी नेताओं ने महत्व दिया। हाल में कश्मीर के संदर्भ में लिए गए फैसलों को देखते हुए इस प्रश्न को नए सिरे से महत्व दिया जाना चाहिए। यह शुभ संकेत है कि आरएसएस और जमीयत मिलकर इस दिशा में पहल कर रहे हैं। यह पहले कश्मीर से हो तो और बेहतर।

एक समय स्वामी विवेकानंद ने कहा था कि मातुभूमि की आजादी के लिए हिंदू-मुस्लिम धर्म का संगम होना अति आवश्यक है। उनके अनुसार, वेदांत के मस्तिष्क और इस्लाम के शरीर के मिलन के बिना भारत का उद्धार होना संभव नहीं है। गांधी जी से जब पूछा गया कि हिंदुस्तान की कौन-सी समस्या है जिसे वह सबसे पहले सुलझाना चाहेंगे तो उनका कहना था कि जब-तक इस मुल्क में हिंदू-मुस्लिम एकता स्थापित नहीं हो जाती उन्हें आगे जाने का कोई रास्ता नहीं दिखाई देता। दुख की बात है कि आजादी के पहले हजारों राष्ट्रीय नेताओं ने हिंद-मुस्लिम एकता के लिए जो कोशिशें की थीं, आजादी आने तक वे छिन्न-भिन्न हो गईं। इसका कारण यह था कि मुस्लिमों का एक वर्ग इस बात पर जोर देने लगा कि हिंदू और मुस्लिम दो अलग-अलग राष्ट्र बनते हैं अतः धर्म के आधार पर दो राष्ट्रों का विभाजन होना चाहिए। जब ऐसी बातें की जा रही थीं तो कश्मीरी भारत के साथ खड़े थे। वास्तविकता यह है अधिकांश उलेमा ने विभाजन को स्वीकार नहीं किया था। देवबंदी स्कूल के उलेमा ने विभाजन का विरोध कर कांग्रेस का खुलकर साथ दिया। बलूच और पश्तुन विभाजन नहीं चाहते थे। फिर भी अनेक कारणों से विभाजन को टाला नहीं जा सका। 1943 तक तो विभाजन का सिद्धांत असहनीय था, किंतु कुछ मुस्लिम नेताओं के कारण ऐसा न हो सका। प्रसिद्ध इस्लामी विद्वान



काम कश्मीर से प्रारंभ होता है



मौलवी वहीदुद्दीन लिखते हैं, 'मुसलमानों की शिकायतें निरंतर बढ़ती गईं। 1947 में जब देश आजाद होने वाला था तब मुसलमानों ने 14 मांगों की लंबी सूची बनाई। आजादी के बाद यह सूची बढ़कर 25 हो गई। विभाजन के पहले, विभाजन के समय और विभाजन के बाद भी मुस्लिम समाज सदैव मांग ही करता रहा। इतिहास इस बात का साक्षी है कि कोई भी संगठन एक साथ देने और लेने का कार्य नहीं कर सकता। यदि आप राष्ट्र को कुछ दे नहीं सकते तो आपको मांगने का कोई हक नहीं बनता।' मौलाना वहीदुद्दीन का मानना है कि भारत में मुसलमान मांगे ही रखते हैं, वे राष्ट्र को क्या योगदान दे सकते हैं, इसके विषय में उन्होंने कभी नहीं सोचा। अल्पसंख्यकों में पारसी समुदाय को ही लें। उन्होंने कभी कोई शिकायत नहीं रखी। परिश्रम करते रहे। आज देश का वह सबसे अधिक समृद्ध समुदाय है। टाटा, भाभा, पालकीवाला जैसी अनेक कर्मठ विभृतियों ने पारिसयों का गौरव बढ़ाया है।

जिस कश्मीर की आज बहुत चर्चा है उसके बिना क्या हिंदुस्तान की कल्पना संभव है? कश्मीर भारत का सिरमौर है। सुफीमत ने हिंदुओं और मुसलमानों के बीच की खाई को पाटकर भारत की एकता को सुदृढ़ किया है। भारत की सूफी परंपरा इस्लाम, शैव भक्ति और वेदांत का मिश्रण है। भारत में हिंदू-मुस्लिम एकता का काम कश्मीर से प्रारंभ

होता है। कश्मीर के मुसलमानों को याद रखना चाहिए कि हिंदू धर्म के प्रभाव से सूफियों की एक नई धारा ने भारत में जन्म लिया, जिसे 'ऋषि शृंखला' के नाम से जाना जाता है। शैव धर्म, सूफियों की ऋषि शृंखला और कश्मीर में विकसित संस्कृत भाषा ने मिलकर जिस कश्मीरियत को जन्म दिया उसके बिना भारतीय संस्कृति के अस्तित्व की कल्पना ही नहीं की जा सकती। भारत का धर्म सबको जोड़ने में विश्वास रखता है अलगाव करने में नहीं। यही वजह है कि भारत का प्रबुद्ध वर्ग यह मानता है कि किसी भी अल्पसंख्यक समाज को भारत में चिंता करने की कोई जरूरत नहीं, क्योंकि देश की बहुसंख्यक हिंदू जनता हमेशा से सहिष्णु और उदार रही है। हिंदू-मुस्लिम एकता को मजबूत करने के लिए जिन विद्धानों का विशेष रूप से उल्लेख किया जा सकता है उनमें कश्मीरी पंडित सबसे महत्वपूर्ण माने जाते हैं। घाटी के शरणार्थी के रूप में जो आज कश्मीरी पंडित हैं वे उन्हीं पाणिनी, पतंजिल, चरक, कालिदास, कल्हण, बिल्हण, अभिनव गुप्त, क्षेमेंद्र, आनंदवर्धन और वामनाचार्य की संतान हैं जिन्होंने कश्मीर में रहकर ही संस्कृत साहित्य को समृद्ध बनाया। कश्मीर के लिए कल्हण द्वारा लिखे ग्रंथ राजतरंगिणी को भारत में इतिहास का सर्वप्रथम ग्रंथ माना जाता है। कहा जाता है कि संस्कृत उच्च वर्ग के विद्वानों की भाषा रही है। वह आम जनता में प्रचलित नहीं थी। कश्मीर इसका अपवाद रहा। जॉर्ज ग्रियर्सन के अनुसार 2000 वर्ष तक कश्मीर में संस्कृत जनता की बोलचाल की भाषा थी। 8वीं से 15वीं शताब्दी के बीच कश्मीर के 13-14 विद्धानों ने जो लिखा था वह समूचे संस्कृत साहित्य का आधे भाग से भी अधिक है। अलंकार शास्त्र, नाट्यशास्त्र, कृषिशास्त्र, चिकित्सा विज्ञान, वास्तु विज्ञान और नक्षत्र विज्ञान के विकास में कश्मीरी विद्धानों का योगदान सबसे अधिक था।

भारत आने पर पश्चिम के विद्धानों ने संस्कृत अध्ययन के लिए जिन विद्धानों की सहायता ली उनमें कश्मीर के गोविंद, नित्यानंद शास्त्री, मुकुंदराम शास्त्री, प्रो. जगधर, पं. दामोदर भट्ट और आनंद कौल प्रमुख थे। इस्लामी और हिंदू, दोनों संस्कृतियों का कश्मीर गढ़ रहा है। कश्मीर में विकसित शैव धर्म आठवीं से बारहवीं शताब्दी तक भारत का सबसे महत्वपूर्ण दार्शनिक और धार्मिक आंदोलन था। इस प्रकार देखा जाए तो भारत की हिंदू-मुस्लिम एकता कश्मीर से ही प्रारंभ होती है।

> (लेखक जेएनयू के पूर्व ग्रीक चेयर प्रोफेसर हैं) response@jagran.com



समस्या और समाधान

प्रत्येक व्यक्ति के पास समस्या होती है। कई बार इनके समाधान के लिए उसे कोई मार्ग नजर नहीं आता ऐसे में वह किसी ऐसे करीबी की मदद लेना उचित समझता है जो उसकी सहायता कर सके, लेकिन संबंधी या मित्र समाधान के लिए या तो हाथ खड़े कर लेते हैं या ऊपरी सलाह देकर छुट्टी पा लेते हैं। ऐसा इसलिए क्योंकि हम अपने मित्र अथवा संबंधी को केवल यह अहसास कराते हैं कि समस्या सिर्फ हमारी है, उसका उनसे कुछ लेना-देना नहीं है। जिस वस्तु अथवा कार्य से किसी का कुछ लेना-देना नहीं होता, वे उस बारे में देखना भी पसंद नहीं करते। इसलिए किसी भी समस्या का समाधान मांगते समय सामने वाले को सदैव यह महसूस कराना चाहिए कि यह उनकी भी समस्या है। हम सभी की संरचना इस प्रकार से बनी हुई है कि हम सामने वाले के बजाय अपनी समस्याओं में अधिक दिलचस्पी लेते हैं तो ऐसा ही दूसरा व्यक्ति भी करेगा। समझदार व्यक्ति समस्या उत्पन्न करने वालों से ही समाधान निकलवा लेते हैं और जीवन को सहज बना लेते हैं।

एक बार मैरीनेट, विस्कांसिन की असुंल केमिकल कंपनी के प्रमुख रॉबर्ट सी हुड के सामने सभी प्रमुख विभागों की लागत कम करने की समस्या आई। उन्होंने इसकी पूरी जिम्मेदारी अपने कर्मचारियों पर छोड़ दी फिर कंपनी के सभी सदस्यों ने अधिक लागत वाले कार्यों का हिसाब बनाना शुरू कर दिया। धीरे-धीरे उन्होंने यात्रा, टेलीफोन, तार, कच्चे माल यहां तक कि टिकट के उपयोग में भी पैसे बचाने के उपाय ढूंढ लिए ऐसा केवल इसलिए हो पाया, क्योंकि रॉबर्ट ने समस्या के समाधान के लिए कंपनी के सभी लोगों को इसमे शामिल होने के लिए कहा। यदि वे उन्हें समस्या उत्पन्न करने के लिए ताने कसते रहते तो निश्चित ही कई कर्मचारी न केवल कंपनी छोड़ जाते, बल्कि जो काम करने वाले थे वे भी उत्साह से क्षीण पड़ जाते। इसलिए किसी भी समस्या को हल करने के लिए व्यक्ति को यह अहसास कराएं कि वह अपनी बुद्धि से हर समस्या को हल कर सकता है।

सहिष्णुता के प्रतीक थे दारा शिकोह

भारत ज्ञान परंपरा का देश है। एक ही एकता को विविध रूप में देखना, जानना, मानना और उनमें समन्वय स्थापित करना यहां का प्रमुख गुण रहा है। भारतीय सभ्यता के इस मर्म को मध्यकाल में शहजादा दारा शिकोह ने बखुबी समझा था। उन्होंने इस्लाम और हिंदू धर्म में समानता वाले तत्वों को खोजा और एक नई बहस शुरू की। दारा शिकोह की वजह से ही भारतीय दर्शन पश्चिमी देशों तक पहुंच सका। दारा शिकोह के अलावा भी ऐसे कई सूफी, विद्वान, कवि, लेखक और नेता हुए जिन्होंने भारत से निकले हुए चिंतन, दर्शन और संस्कृति को समझने और आगे बढ़ाने की कोशिश की, लेकिन दारा एक ऐसी शख्सियत थे जो अगर अपने लक्ष्य में कामयाब हो जाते तो भारत का इतिहास दूसरा होता। दारा शिकोह को उनके छोटे भाई औरंगजेब ने सामूगढ़ की लड़ाई में 30 मई, 1658 को हरा दिया था और खुद बादशाह बन बैठा। औरंगजेब के शासनकाल में कट्टरपंथी तत्वों को बढ़ावा मिला जिससे हिंदुओं सहित अन्य सभी मतावलंबियों को भारी दिक्कतों का सामना करना पड़ा।

अगर दारा हिंदुस्तान का बादशाह बनते तो पूरे देश में हिंदू-मुस्लिम एकता को एक बडा वैचारिक आधार मिलता

अगर दारा हिंदुस्तान का बादशाह बनते तो पूरे देश में हिंदू-मुस्लिम एकता को एक बड़ा वैचारिक आधार मिलता और शायद अंग्रेजों को भी पैर पसारने की जगह ना मिलती। कट्टरपंथी इस्लाम की गैरहाजिरी में कभी ऐसी मांग भी ना उठती कि हिंदू और मुसलमान के नाम पर हिंदुस्तान के दो टुकड़े किए जाएं। सामूगढ़ की लड़ाई, पानीपत और प्लासी की जंग से भी कहीं अधिक महत्वपूर्ण है, क्योंकि वह सिर्फ उत्तराधिकार की लड़ाई नहीं, बल्कि भारत की आत्मा को बचाने की लड़ाई थी।

दारा शिकोह का साफ मानना था कि एक ही दैवीय शक्ति हर जगह विद्यमान है। उसे ही अलग-अलग नामों से जाना जाता है। दारा ने पहली रचना 25 साल की उम्र में की और अपनी हार से दो साल पहले अंतिम रचना की, लेकिन उनकी दो रचनाओं ने उस दौर

में बड़ी बहस शुरू की थी जिसे आज फिर गहराई से पढ़े, समझे और प्रचारित किए जाने की जरूरत है। एक है मज्म-उल-बहरैन और दूसरी है सिर्रे-अकबर। मज्म-उल-बरहैन का अर्थ है दो समुद्रों का संगम। इस पुस्तक में हिंदू धर्म शास्त्र और कुरान का तुलनात्मक अध्ययन करके समानता वाले तत्वों को खोजा गया है। सिर्रे-अकबर का अर्थ है महानतम ज्ञान जिसमें उपनिषदों का अनुवाद किया गया है। दारा का कहना था कि कुरान में जिस एक गुप्त किताब (किताब-अल-मकनून) की बात कही गई है वह कोई और नहीं, बल्कि भारत के उपनिषद ही हैं। दारा शिकोह एक बेहतरीन लेखक, चिंतक, विचारक, दार्शनिक, सुफी, पेंटर और विद्वान थे जो मुगलिया तख्त के सबसे मजबूत दावेदार थे। इस्लामी परंपरा में पैदा हुए दारा शिकोह ने माना था कि आपसी समन्वय, समरसता और सहकार में ही आगे का रास्ता संभव है। दारा शिकोह हिंदू और इस्लामिक दर्शन के बीच की वह कड़ी हैं जो इस दौर में हिंदू-मुस्लिम एकता को एक वैचारिक आधार देने वाला बड़ा प्रकाश-स्तंभ बन सकते हैं। (लेखक दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय में

राजनीति शास्त्र पढाते हैं)

आधा–अधुरा विश्लेषण

लोकतंत्र को चाहिए सशक्त संस्थाएं शीर्षक से लिखे अपने लेख में मनीष तिवारी ने बताया है कि किसी लोकतंत्र में यदि न्यायिक स्वतंत्रता खतरे में पड़ जाएगी तो वहां उपद्रव, अशांति और अराजकता की स्थिति उत्पन्न हो जाएगी। लेखक ने अपनी बात कहने के लिए जर्मनी में नाजी शासन के तमाम पहलुओं को उजागर किया है। साथ ही इटली में बेनितो मुसोलिनी की भूमिका पर चर्चा की है, रूस में तानाशाही के कारण उत्पन्न स्थिति का भी विश्लेषण किया है। यह विश्लेषण उन देशों के इतिहास का एक महत्वपूर्ण हिस्सा भी है, किंतु इस लंबे तथा चिंतनशील लेख में यह स्पष्ट नहीं हो पा रहा है कि कहां के लोकतंत्र की सशक्त संस्थाएं संदेह के दायरे में आ रही हैं। भारत में तो अभी ऐसी कोई स्थिति नजर नहीं आ रही है। यहां आरंभ से ही न्यायिक संस्थाओं यानी पंचायतों और उनके नुमाइंदों को 'पंच परमेश्वर' के रूप में स्वीकार किया गया है। मुंशी प्रेमचंद की कहानी पंच परमेश्वर में लिखा है-पंच न किसी के दोस्त होते हैं न किसी के दुश्मन। स्वतंत्र भारत में अनेक अवसर ऐसे रहे जहां सत्ताधारी दलों ने अपने निहित स्वार्थों के लिए विभिन्न सशक्त संस्थाओं का दुरुपयोग किया, किंतु अब नए भारत में ये सशक्त संस्थाएं निष्पक्षता से अपना काम करते हुए दोषियों तथा भ्रष्टाचारियों के नाम सामने ला रही हैं। यह लोकतंत्र में संस्थाओं की सशक्तता का ही परिणाम है कि आज बड़े-बड़े, नामी लोग भी जेल की सलाखों के पीछे हैं। लेखक की पीड़ा के मूल में उनकी चिंता तो नहीं है, क्योंकि आज न तो न्यायिक स्वतंत्रता खतरे में है और न ही कहीं उपद्रव, अशांति और अराजकता की स्थिति नजर आ रही है।

डॉ. वेदप्रकाश, हंसराज कॉलेज, दिल्ली

मेलबाक्स

डीयू में स्वच्छता

दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय छात्र संघ का चुनाव चल रहा है। इन दिनों कॉलेज परिसरों का हाल बहुत खराब है। हालत यह है कि परिसर में फैलाई जा रही गंदगी किसी भी छात्र प्रतिनिधि का मुद्दा नहीं है। जिन्हें कल का भविष्य कहा जाता है वे आज भी स्वच्छता को लेकर जागरूक नहीं हैं। जगह-जगह पोस्टर चिपके हुए हैं। एक छात्र होने के नाते हमारी स्वच्छता की भी जिम्मेदारी होती है, लेकिन अगर यह हाल छात्र संघ में है तो बाकी आम चुनाव से इसका अंदाजा लगाया जा सकता है। वहीं वोट मांगने के लिए आने वाले प्रतिनिधि से हर एक छात्र को संकल्प दिलवाना होगा कि वे हमारा परिसर गंदा न करें। अगर आज हमने यह आवाज नहीं उठाई तो यह सिलसिला चलता रहेगा।

आशीष, राम लाल आनंद कॉलेज, डीयू

भारत की बडी सफलता

लैंडर विक्रम से भले से संपर्क स्थापित नहीं हो पाया है, लेकिन ऑर्बिटर ने उसका पता लगा लिया है। लैंडर विक्रम चंद्रमा के धरातल पर विद्यमान है, इससे कोई इन्कार नहीं कर सकता। यह भारत की बड़ी सफलता है। इससे संयुक्त राष्ट्र की स्थायी सदस्यता के लिए हमारा दावा और मजबूत हुआ है।

dharmendranath.rastogi@gmail.com

विक्रम नाम के दो व्यक्ति हुए हैं जिन्होंने इतिहास में एक

नहीं हारने वाला विक्रम

विशेष जगह बनाई है। एक विक्रम साराभाई विज्ञान और दूसरे विक्रम-आदित्य (राजा-विक्रमादित्य) जिनका कभी भी बेताल के सामने गलत जवाब नहीं निकला। यानी विक्रम कभी हारे नहीं फिर चाहे वे वैज्ञानिक हों या राजा। इसरो के अध्यक्ष के. सिवन ने भी विक्रम लैंडर को खोज लेने की बात कही है। उम्मीद है कि वह सही सलामत होगा।

mahesh_nenava@yahoo.com

महंगाई का सच

वित्त मंत्री निर्मला सीतारमण ने कहा है कि 2014 के बाद महंगाई में वृद्धि नहीं हुई है। उनका यह कथन गले नहीं उतरता है। आज हर वस्तुओं में महंगाई की आग लगी हुई है। चाहे पेट्रोल-डीजल के दाम हों, खानपान की वस्तुओं के दाम हों या अन्य चीजों के। सांसदों, विधायकों, मंत्रियों को क्या मालूम कि महंगाई क्या है? क्योंकि इन्हें सरकार से इतनी सुविधाएं मिलती हैं कि पैसा कहां से आ रहा है कहां जा रहा है, पता ही नहीं चलता है। उन्हें इस मुद्दे पर पर्दा डालने के बजाय सच्चाई को स्वीकारने की जरूरत है।

hemahariupadhyay@gmail.com

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

अपने पत्र इस पते पर भेजें : दैनिक जागरण, राष्ट्रीय संस्करण, डी-210-211, सेक्टर-63, नोएडा ई-मेल: mailbox@jagran.com



तीरंदाज

अश्विनी भटनागर

मैया. मैं तौ चंद-खिलौना लैहौं। जैहौं लोटि धरनि पर अबहीं, तेरी गोद न ऐहौं॥

> क्त सूरदास की ये प्रसिद्ध पंक्तियां जहां एक तरफ कृष्ण के बाल हठ को दर्शाती हैं वहीं दूसरी तरफ इंसान की गगनचुंबी महत्त्वाकांक्षाओं की भी प्रतीक हैं। इस दोहे में कृष्ण अपनी माता यशोदा से कह रहे हैं कि उनको चांद चाहिए, जिससे वे एक खिलौने की तरह खेल सकें। वे कहते हैं कि वे यशोदा मइया की

गोदी में तभी चढ़ेंगे, जब वे दूर गगन में रौशन अपने खिलौने को लेकर पुनः धरती पर लौटेंगे। कृष्ण विष्णु के अवतार थै। बाल अवस्था होने के बावजूद उनमें यह सामर्थ्य थी कि आसमान में टंके चंद्रमा को धरती पर उतार सकें। सामान्य मनुष्य में ऐसी सामर्थ्य नहीं है, पर गगन में गमन और चांद सितारों को अपनी मुट्ठी में कर लेने की महत्त्वाकांक्षा उसमें लगातार हिलोरें मारती रही है।

वास्तव में हम अपनी हदों में बंधे रहना नहीं चाहते हैं। शायद प्रस्तुत हद के खूंटे से बंधे रहना मानव प्रवृत्ति के विरुद्ध है। हम अपनी परिधि को लांघने के लिए स्वतः आंदोलित रहते हैं। ये सीमाएं व्यक्तिगत, सामाजिक हो सकती हैं या फिर व्यापक संदर्भ में भी हो सकती हैं। चंद खिलौना लेने का मासूम-सा हठ आगे चल कर एक ऐतिहासिक क्रिया भी बन सकता है।

अपोलों के एस्ट्रोनॉट नील आर्मस्ट्रांग जब चंद्रमा पर उतरे थे, तो कहा था कि उनका चांद पर पहला छोटा-सा कदम मानवता के लिए एक लंबी छलांग है। सच में, चांद की तरफ चकोर की तरह सिर्फ देखने और फिर उस तक पहुंचने का सपना केवल मनुष्य की महत्त्वाकांक्षा ही पूरा कर सकती है। हमारी जो कुछ भी भौतिक, मानसिक और आध्यात्मिक उपलब्धि है, वह हमने अपनी प्रस्तुत सीमाओं को पार करके प्राप्त की है।

हठ और होड़

महत्त्वाकांक्षी होना अच्छी बात है। हर व्यक्ति और समाज को महत्त्वाकांक्षी होना चाहिए। पर महत्त्वाकांक्षा और होड़ में एक बड़ा बुनियादी फर्क है। आम जिंदगी में हम होड़ में लगे रहते हैं। कौन कितना आगे निकल गया और हम उसको कैसे पछाड़ें के खेल में फंस जाते हैं। इस प्रतिस्पर्धा को अंग्रेजी में रैट रेस यानी चूहा दौड़ कहा जाता है। इसमें हमारा कोई अपना निश्चित लक्ष्य नहीं होता है। हम बस इस बात पर केंद्रित रहते हैं कि हमसे आगे वाला आगे क्यों है और हम उसको कैसे पीछे छोड़ें। रैट रेस विवेकहीन होती है, इसलिए अंधी होती है।

अमेरिका ने जब अपोलो यान चांद पर उतारा था, तो वह रूस से होड़ की वजह से छोड़ा था। 1960 के दशक में दोनों देशों में चंद खिलौना पाने की जबर्दस्त प्रतिस्पर्धा थी। अमेरिका रूस को अंगूठा दिखाना चाहता था। पर कुछ और अपोलो मिशन के बाद इस रैट रेस का कोई मतलब नहीं रह गया था और चंद्रयान जाने बंद हो गए थे।

हां, इससे कुछ वैज्ञानिक फायदे हुए थे, जिनमें सबसे बड़ा सेटेलाइट युग की शुरुआत थी। आज की अति आधुनिक सेटेलाइट आधारित संचार व्यवस्था परोक्ष रूप से अंतरिक्ष कार्यक्रम की देन है। अगर हम चांद पर नहीं जाते, तो मोबाइल पर कैसे बात कर पाते? पर चांद का मुआयना करने के बाद वहां और श्रम करने का प्रयास दोनों- अमेरिका और रूस- ने त्याग दिया था।

अक्सर समाज की आकांक्षा व्यक्ति की महत्त्वाभिलाषा की दास हो जाती है। ग्रीस आज से तेरह सौ साल पहले चौतरफा विकास के पथ पर था। वह एक बड़ा और समृद्ध राष्ट्र ही नहीं था, बल्कि उसमें अरस्तू और प्लेटो जैसे महापंडित भी पुष्पित हो रहे थे। फिर सिकंदर आया और वह दुनिया जीतने की होड़ में लग गया। हाथ में तलवार लिए वह ग्रीस से हिंदुस्तान तक अपना जयघोष करता हुआ चला आया। हजारों लोग उसका शिकार हुए और लाखों घर उजड़ गए। पर सिकंदर के लिए सिर्फ जीत एकमात्र उपलब्धि थी। वह केवल ग्रीस का नहीं, बल्कि पूरी दुनिया का राजा बनना चाहता था। सेना उसके साथ थी-वह उसको अपना महानायक मानती थी।

सिकंदर हिंदुस्तान तक पहुंच गया। कहीं भी नहीं हारा था, पर हिंदुस्तान में जीत के बाद वह टूट गया। उसके अपनों ने ही विद्रोह कर दिया था और विश्वनायक को उनके आगे घुटने टेकने पड़े थे। सिकंदर लौट गया, पर घर का मुंह नहीं देख पाया था। वह रास्ते में ही मर गया। उसकी मौत के बाद ग्रीस का वैभवशाली साम्राज्य बिखर गया था। विश्वविजयी होने की लालसा में उसने अपने घर को ही जला दिया था। न वह कहीं का रहा था और न ही ग्रीक साम्राज्य किसी काबिल बचा था।

तो क्या महत्त्वाकांक्षा की भी कोई हद होनी चाहिए? क्या व्यक्ति की लालसा देश और काल पर हावी होनी चाहिए? एक तरह से देखें तो नायक, नायक तभी बन पाता है, जब उसे समुदाय की स्वीकृति मिलती है। वह नेतृत्व करने की स्थिति में तब आता है, जब लोग उसके पीछे लामबंद हो जाते हैं। दूसरे शब्दों में, नायक वही बन पाता है, जो हमारे अनकहे भावों को जुबान देता है। हमारे दिल में छिपी बात को पहचान कर उसको प्रकट कर देता है।

हम उसको ऐसा करने पर दाद भी देते हैं, क्योंकि अपनी बात कहने की हमारी खुद की हिम्मत नहीं होती है। उसकी हिम्मत में अपने साहस की अनुभूति कर हम प्रफुल्लित हो जाते हैं। शायद उसके पीछे दुबकने में ही अपना शौर्य समझते हैं। समाज में मातहत की प्रवृत्ति तरह-तरह के नायक बनाती है। ऐसे नायक समाज की महत्त्वाकांक्षा का अपहरण कर लेते हैं। व्यक्तिनिष्ठ समाज अपने खुद के लिए घातक होता है। इसके विपरीत जन-केंद्रित, संस्था-निष्ठ समाज और देश हमेशा स्वस्थ और विवेकशील रहता है। संस्थाएं समाज की महत्त्वाकांक्षाओं को संगठित बुद्धिमत्ता से तोलती हैं और नायकों की महत्त्वाभिलाषा को खरे खुंटों से बांधती हैं। वे निजी स्वार्थ की सीमाएं निर्धारित करती हैं और देशहित को व्यापक रूप से परिभाषित करती हैं।

संस्थाएं चंद खिलौना लैहों वाला हठ नहीं करती हैं, बल्कि अपनी धरती से अच्छी फसल उगाने की मशक्कत में हल-बैल लेकर जुटी रहती हैं। वे सिकंदर को टूटने से बचाती हैं। साम्राज्य की महत्त्वाकांक्षा से स्वराज के यथार्थ की ओर उन्मुख करती हैं। प्रतिस्पर्धा से हटा कर श्रेष्ठता की वैजंती प्रदान करती हैं।

भारतीय होने का अर्थ

रमेश दवे

अर्थ हैं, उतने ही अनर्थ भी हैं। एक है वैचारिक भारतीयता, जो बुद्धिजीवियों द्वारा अपने-अपने ढंग से परिभाषित या

व्याख्यायित की जाती है। आज का भारत एक संपूर्ण प्रभुता-संपन्न स्वतंत्र गणराज्य है। यहां तरह-तरह की भारतीयता होना, भारत की बहुधर्मी, बहु-सांस्कृतिक, बहु-क्षेत्रीय, बहुभाषी, बहु-जातीय और बह-विचारधारागत परंपरा का परिणाम है। संविधान में इंडिया अर्थात भारत कहा गया है। वहां हिंदुस्तान, भारतवर्ष, जंबूद्वीप आदि नामों को संवैधानिक मान्यता शायद नहीं है। पर दुसरी ओर कुछ लोग ऐसे भी हैं, जो 'हिंदुस्तान' और 'हिंदुस्तानी; को तो मानते

हैं. लेकिन भारतीय और भारतीयता को एक प्रकार की कथित सांप्रदायिकता मानते हैं। वे तहजीब के गंगा-जमुनीपन को तो मानते हैं, लेकिन सांस्कृतिक एकता को सांप्रदायिक कहते हैं। केवल कुछ भाषायी शब्दों से भारतीयता तय होती है, तो फिर हम भारतीयता के वे

सब तत्त्व त्याग दें, जो हमें अपने भारतीय या हिंदुस्तानी होने का बोध कराते हैं। संस्कृति कहें या तहजीब, इसमें हम जीते रहे हैं, आज भी जी रहे हैं। यही हमारी परंपरा, हेरिटेज या रिवायत है। अगर हम सांस्कृतिक या कौमी एकता का विभाजन करेंगे, तो फिर क्या यह कहेंगे कि हम तुलसीदास को सांस्कृतिक भारतीयता से जोड़ सकते हैं, अगर दूसरी ओर से यह कहा जाएगा कि हम तुलसी को नहीं, कबीर को सच्चा भारतीय मानते हैं।

अब प्रश्न यह है कि किसे भारतीय कहा जाए और किसे नहीं ? क्या मीर, गालिब, सौदा, मोमिन से लेकर फिराक, बशीर बद्र, निदा फजली अलग किस्म के भारतीय हैं और कबीर, तुलसीदास, प्रसाद, निराला, पंत, महादेवी, अज्ञेय से लेकर हमारे समकालीन तमाम कवि दुसरी तरह के भारतीय हैं? क्या बड़े गुलाम अली से मोहम्मद रफी तक, मकबूल फिदा हुसेन, सैयद हैदर रजा से लेकर समकालीन चित्रकारों तक या प्रेमचंद से लेकर रेणु और आज के कथाकारों तक और अनेक कला-साहित्य में सुजन करने वाले कलाकारों की भारतीयता का बंटवारा किया जा सकता है? भारत ने तो अपने एक हजार वर्ष से अधिक के इतिहास में उन सबको अपनाया. जो बाहर से आए और बस गए। उनका इतिहास, उनका साहित्य, उनकी कलाएं, उनका स्थापत्य, उनका प्रशासन और काफी हद तक उनकी शिक्षा और तहजीब तक से भारत ने अपने को जितना ग्लोबल, उदार और सर्व-समावेशी बनाया, वैसा तो दुनिया के किसी देश में नहीं हुआ यहां हिंदू, पारसी, यहूदी, ईसाई, मुसलिम, सिख सभी एक होकर अगर भारतीय कहलाते हैं, तो ऐसा कोई अन्य देश है, जहां इतने सारे धर्मावलंबियों को उस देश की देशीयता दी गई हो?

विचार, विचारधाराएं, आस्था और विश्वास, खाने-पीने का तरीका अलग हो सकता है, मगर अलग-अलग होकर भी एक लगता है, तो यह सिर्फ भारत की परंपरा है। हम चाहे अपने को भारतीय कहें या हिंदुस्तानी, मकसद सिर्फ एक हो कि यह मुल्क एक है और इस मुल्क का हर बाशिंदा यहां का ही है। और जो नागरिक है वह भारतीय भी है। इसलिए भारतीय होने को किसी भी प्रकार की सांप्रदायिकता से जोड़ना संविधान, देश की परंपरा और राष्ट्रीय एकता का अपमान ही कहा जाएगा, क्योंकि भारतीयता एकता का सुचक शब्द है विभाजन का नहीं।

'भारतीयता' को उसके व्यापक दर्शन में देखना होगा। भारतीय एक स्वतंत्र राष्ट्र की नागरिक राष्ट्रीयता है। भारतीयता का पहला सबक शिक्षा से शरू होना चाहिए। वहां भारतीयता के व्यापक अर्थ से हम छात्र-छात्राओं को जोड़ सकते हैं, ताकि वे भविष्य के ऐसे नागरिक बनें जो एक सर्वधर्म-समावेशी भारतीयता की पहचान हों। अगर संविधान में समानता का प्रावधान है, तो हम संविधान के विरुद्ध जाकर किसी को भी गैर-भारतीय नहीं कह सकते, चाहे उसका धर्म, भाषा या क्षेत्र कोई भी हो। हमें अपना इतिहास और भूगोल, संस्कृति और भाषा

पढ़ाने का और कलाओं, साहित्य आदि को देखने का नजरिया बदलना होगा। हमारी शिक्षा ने हमें आज 'भारतीय' मात्र एक शब्द है या तक गांधी जैसा स्वदेशी नहीं बनाया, जिसका 🛮 📘 📘 विचार ? भारतीयता के जितने परिणाम हमारे अपने–अपने स्वदेश और स्वदेश के धर्म हो गए। शिक्षा को चेतना की पाठशाला होना चाहिए, न कि संस्कृति के नाम पर कट्टरता की। चेतना से मनुष्य विवेकवान बनता है और उस पर कोई भी विचार या विचारधारा थोपी नहीं जा सकती।

> हम आज जिस आधुनिक, उत्तर-आधुनिक समय में रह रहे हैं, उसने हमें उपकरण तो दिए, मगर आचरण नहीं दिए। उसने सारी दुनिया को एक मोबाइल या कंप्यूटर में साकार तो कर दिया, लेकिन हमारे सांस्कृतिक सौंदर्य की छटा कम कर दी। हम सूचना के बंदीगृह में तो कैद हो गए, लेकिन सोचने का मुक्त आकाश गंवा बैठे। हमारे पास अगर बहुत संपन्न संस्कृति, वांग्मय, धर्म-व्यवस्था की नैतिकता

और अपनी जातीय-स्मृति रही है, तो उसे संदर्भ हम ओछी राजनीति और संकीर्ण, कृटिल यह प्रश्न अक्सर उढाया जाता है कि विघटनकारी शक्तियों से बचाएं। क्या संविधान में निहित धर्म-निरपेक्षता, हम युद्ध के शस्त्रों पंथ-निरपेक्षता महज आदर्श-वाक्य की होंड़ के बजाय

शास्त्रों की दौड़ से

ऐसा शास्त्र क्यों न

रचें कि हम हजारों

साल पुराने वांगमय

के सहारे जीने के

बजाय अपने समय

हैं या आचरण और व्यवहार? इन प्रश्नों के उत्तर तो हमारा एक हजार वर्ष का मिला-जुला इतिहास ही दे रहा है।

> के साहित्य को भी नया वांगमय बना कर अगली पीढी को सौंप सकें? जब तक हमारा चिंतन नहीं बदलता, हमारी चेतना नहीं बदलती और हमारी चिंताएं मानवीय नहीं होतीं, तब तक हम वैसे भारतीय कैसे हो सकते हैं जैसे दयानंद, विवेकानंद, श्रीअरविंद, रामकृष्ण परमहंस, जे. कृष्णमूर्ति और गांधी आदि थे। हम जितने तुलसी, कबीर के देश हैं उतने ही मीर और गलिब के भी देश हैं, हम जितने एनी बेसेंट, फादर कामिल बुल्के और रस्किन बांड के देश हैं, उतने ही सर सैयद अहमद खां, बादशाह खान, मौलाना आजाद आदि के भी देश हैं। इसलिए भारतीयता न तो किसी व्यक्ति, धर्म, इतिहास या अपनी अपनी मान्यता से तय होती है, न क्षेत्र, जाति और भाषा से। भारतीय होना एक ऐसा मनुष्य होना है, जिसमें महावीर की महानता और बुद्ध की प्रबुद्धता हो और देश का अर्थ यहां का प्रत्येक जन, प्रत्येक व्यक्ति से प्यार करे, उसका सम्मान करे और सब मिल-जुल कर उस भारतीयता को जिए। भारतीयता में जीने का अर्थ है हम अपने लोकाचार, शिष्टाचार, सामासिक-संस्कृति-बोध, रीति-रिवाज, उत्सव-त्योहार, पूर्वजों के सांस्कृतिक, साहित्यिक और कलात्मक योगदान की स्मृति में जीएं तो जरूर, लेकिन अपनी आधुनिकता को संवेदनशील, गतिशील और सर्वधर्म समावेशी बनाएं, वैज्ञानिक सोच से अंधविश्वास, सांप्रदायिकता आदि से मक्त होकर ऐसे भारतीय दिखें कि सारा विश्व यह कह सके कि यह 'वसुधैव कुटुंबकम; की सभ्यता वाला, सहिष्णु और भावी संभावनाओं का एक ऐसा देश है जिसका हर नागरिक होने पर गर्व करता है।

> यह प्रश्न अक्सर उठाया जाता है कि क्या संविधान में निहित धर्म-निरपेक्षता, पंथ-निरपेक्षता महज आदर्श-वाक्य हैं या आचरण और व्यवहार? इन प्रश्नों के उत्तर तो हमारा एक हजार वर्ष का मिला-जुला इतिहास ही दे रहा है। एक भारतीय हिंदू नागरिक जिस प्रकार की मंदिर-श्रद्धा से मंदिर जाता है, वैसी ही श्रद्धा और सम्मानभाव से वह मजारों पर मत्था टेकता है, गुरद्वारों में सिर ढंक कर गुरुग्रंथ साहब को प्रणाम करता है, चर्च में प्रार्थना करता है। ऐसी भारतीयता क्या दुनिया में कहीं मिलेगी?

> यह देश तरह-तरह की तहजीबों का संगम है। यहां आदिवासी-सभ्यता का भोलापन है, यहां दलित अब सम्मान के साथ खड़े होकर अपनी अस्मिता रच रहे हैं, यहां की युवा शक्ति सारी दुनिया में भारतीयता को समृद्ध और सम्मानित कर रही है, यहां का किसान तमाम अभावों और प्राकृतिक कोपों के बावजूद पूरे देश का पेट भर रहा है, यहां के मजदुर अपने पसीने की हर बूंद देश पर निछावर कर रहे हैं, यहां हर धर्म अपना धर्माचरण के लिए स्वतंत्र है। यहां स्त्रियां बराबरी का अधिकार पाकर सांसद, विधायक, पार्षद के रूप में अपनी शिक्त दिखा रही हैं। एक स्वच्छ, श्रेष्ठ और सकारात्मक भारतीयता से हम देश को बदल कर अर्थ को अनर्थ से बचा सकते हैं।

आधुनिकता बनाम संकीर्णता

तो इसलिए कि एक तरफ तो हम चांद पर जाने के सपने देख रहे हैं और दूसरी तरफ हमारे मंत्रीयों की सोच ऐसी है आज

भी जैसे किसी प्राचीन काल में जी रहे हों। जिस दिन चांद पर हम अपने 'विक्रम' को उतारने की तैयारी कर रहे थे, उस दिन मुंबई के एक अखबार में केंद्रीय पशुपालन मंत्री गिरिराज सिंह का बयान पढ़ा, जिसने मुझे हैरान कर दिया।

मंत्रीजी किसी गोशाले में खड़े होकर बात कर रहे थे पत्रकारों से और उनसे शायद किसी ने मॉब लिंचिंग के बारे में सवाल किया होगा। जवाब में उन्होंने कहा कि इस तरह की हिंसा को कम करने का तरीका उनके मंत्रालय ने ढूंढ़ रखा है, जो अगले कुछ सालों में रंग लाने वाला है। उपाय उनके पास यह है कि गायों को 'आर्टिफिशियल इन्सेमिनेशन' द्वारा गर्भवती किया जाए, ताकि बैलों की संख्या कम हो जाए। मंत्रीजी का मानना है कि इस उपाय के बाद गायों को लावारिस नहीं छोड़ा जाएगा, जैसे आज छोड़ा जाता है, इसलिए कि दूध जब तक देती है गाय, तो उसको किसान अपने पास रखते हैं।

आप अगर पूछ रहे हैं कि मॉब लिंचिंग से इस उपाय का क्या वास्ता है, तो यकीन मानिए कि इसी सवाल को मैंने भी बार-बार पूछा मंत्रीजी का बयान पढ़ने के बाद। शायद मंत्रीजी जानते नहीं हैं कि मुसलमानों की लिंचिंग जब भी हुई है, तो वे अपनी ही गायों को ट्रक में लेकर जा रहे थे, लावारिस गायों को नहीं। या फिर तब हुई है जब उनकी गाड़ियों में गोश्त पाया गया और भीड़ को शक रहा कि गाय को काट कर उसका गोश्त लेकर जा रहे हैं।

जब दलित बने हैं इस तरह की हिंसा का शिकार, तो अक्सर इसलिए कि उनको मृत गाय की खाल उतारते पाया गया। जो भी हो, गोरक्षकों ने भय का इतना माहौल बना दिया है उत्तर भारत में कि कई किसानों ने पशुपालन छोड़ दिया है और जिनका धंधा हुआ करता था बुढ़ी गायों को मारना, उन्होंने

भी-कभी ऐसा लगता है मुझे कि जो थोड़ी- भी यह यह काम छोड़ दिया है। नतीजा यह कि लावारिस गायों वैज्ञानिक विचारों के लिए, आधुनिक तकनीकों के लिए। बहुत आधुनिकता आई है अपने इस भारत की संख्या तीन-चार गुना बढ़ गई है उत्तर प्रदेश जैसे राज्य में। सो, आज जीवित होते सावरकर तो उनको खुशी होती कि महान में, वह गलती से आई है। इस हफ्ते इंडों में घूमने लगे हैं लावारिस पशु और न सिर्फ किसानों की भारत चौथा देश है दुनिया में, जो चांद पर जाने का प्रयास अगर यह खयाल मुझे कुछ ज्यादा सता रहा है, फसलें बर्बाद कर रहे हैं, बल्कि इंसानों पर भी हमला करना करने में लगा हुआ है। साथ में उनको निराशा जरूर होती शुरू कर दिया है गायों ने। हाल में एक वृद्ध औरत को जान गौमता की इतनी पुजा देख कर। हिंदुत्व सोच का आधार है से मार दिया एक लावारिस गाय ने और इस हमले का वीडियो

वक्त की नब्ज

हिंदुत्व शब्द सावरकर ने दिया है और इस सोच को भी, लेकिन उनके हिंदुत्व में गौमाता की पूजा करने वालों के लिए कोई जगह नहीं थी। उनका कहना था कि गौमाता की पूजा करते-करते भारतवासी खुद गाय की तरह शांत स्वभाव के बन गए हैं।

सोशल मीडिया पर वायरल हो गया था।

मैंने कई बार गोरक्षकों की हिंसा की निंदा की है और दोष दिया है हिंदुत्ववादी सोच को, जो नरेंद्र मोदी के प्रधानमंत्री बनने के बाद खूब फैला है देश में। लेकिन पिछले हफ्ते वीर सावरकर पर दो किताबें पढ़ने के बाद मुझे अहसास हुआ कि उनकी सोच तो आज के राजनेताओं से कहीं ज्यादा आधुनिक थी। हिंदुत्व शब्द सावरकर ने दिया है और इस सोच को भी, लेकिन उनके हिंदुत्व में गौमाता की पूजा करने वालों के लिए कोई जगह नहीं थी। उनका कहना था कि गौमाता की पुजा करते-करते भारतवासी खुद गाय की तरह शांत स्वभाव के बन गए हैं। इसलिए भारत का प्रतीक अगर किसी पशु को बनाना ही हो तो नरसिंह होना चाहिए।

सावरकर के हिंदुत्व में जातिवाद के लिए कोई जगह नहीं है और बहुत बड़ी जगह है आधुनिकता के लिए,

भारत के सनातन धर्म में आधुनिक सुधार लाना और उसमें

से वहम और जादू-टोना जैसी खराबियों को निकाल फेंकना। जहां तक जातिवाद को समाप्त करने की बात है, सावरकर की सोच के साथ मेल खाती है राष्ट्रीय स्वयंसेवक संघ की सोच, लेकिन जहां तक आधुनिकता की बात है, दोनों के रास्ते अलग हो जाते हैं। संघ परिवार को वास्तव में इस देश की सेवा करनी है, तो अच्छा होगा अगर मोहन भागवतजी थोड़ा समय निकाल कर सावरकर पर हाल में छपी उन दोनों किताबों को पढें, जो मैंने पिछले हफ्ते पढी हैं।

उनको पढ़ने के बाद शायद आरएसएस भी भारत की सभ्यता में असली आधुनिकता लाने का काम करने लगेगा। इतनी आधुनिक थी सावरकर की सोच कि महात्मा गांधी से मतभेद उनका अक्सर रहता था। उन्होंने गांधीजी का खुल कर विरोध किया, जब

उन्होंने कहा था कि बिहार में भूकंप आया है इसलिए कि सवर्ण हिंदू दलितों को अछूत मानते हैं। जब शंकराचार्य ने इसी भुकंप का कारण बताया जाति-व्यवस्था को समाप्त करने की कोशिश, तो इनकी आलोचना भी सावरकर ने खुल कर की थी।

आज के भारत में सावरकर के हिंदुत्व की बहुत जरूरत है। ऐसा हिंदुत्व, जो देशभिक्त पर आधारित हो और आधुनिकता से रौशन हो, ताकि भारत वास्तव में जगद्गुरु बनने का सपना साकार कर सके। चांद तक जाने वाले भारत में कोई जगह नहीं होनी चाहिए ऐसे लोगों की, जो अपना धर्म मानते हैं इंसानों की जान लेना गोरक्षा के बहाने। कांग्रेस पार्टी ने सालों से प्रचार किया है कि सावरकर मुसलमानों के दुश्मन थे। सच यह है कि उनको शिकायत सिर्फ उन मुसलमानों से थी, जो भारत को अपनी पुण्यभूमि नहीं मानते हैं।

जेल नंबर सात



क बड़ा आदमी काली गाड़ी से तिहाड़ जाता हुआ, और उसके प्रति हमदर्दी की एक आंख भी नम नहीं। नकली त्रासदी की जगह असली कॉमेडी ने ले ली।

एक एंकर न जाने क्यों कह बैठा कि देखो तो कैसा जमाना है कि इतना बड़ा बंदा तिहाड़ जा रहा है और किसी को जरा भी रंज नहीं!

एक एंकर दर्शकों को समझाता रहा कि वे तिहाड़ से बचना चाहते थे और इसके लिए ईडी के आगे सरेंडर करने को तैयार थे, लेकिन सीबीआई अदालत ने चौदह दिन की कस्टडी के लिए सीधे तिहाड जेल भेज दिया

देर तक अपने-अपने रिपोर्टरों से एंकर पूछते रहे कि तिहाड़ जाएंगे तो भी क्या वैसा ही 'वीआइपी ट्रीटमेंट' मिलेगा जैसा कि सीबीआई की कस्टडी में मिल रहा था, यानी एसी, वेस्टर्न टायलेट, पलंग आदि। ऐसे ही अवसर पर रिपोर्टरों और एंकरों के अंदर

की बात कभी-कभी बाहर झांक जाती है। सभी चैनलों के कैमरे सीबीआई के 'स्पेशल कोर्ट' में देर तक तैनात रहे। फिर कुछ चैनलों के कैमरे तिहाड़ के प्रवेश द्वार के सामने तैनात हो गए थे, ताकि तिहाड़ में उनकी 'एंट्री' को दिखा सकें।

एक एंकर बहस कराए जाता था कि बड़ी आदलत ने भी क्या सर जी को भ्रष्टाचार का 'किंगपिन' कहा कि नहीं? एक बोला, हाइकोर्ट ने तो साफ कहा कि वे 'किंगपिन' (सरगना) हैं,

इसलिए 'बेल' नहीं दी। विद्वान लोग अपने-अपने कागज दिखाने लगे कि निचली अदालत ने उसे 'किंगपिन' कहा है, ऊंची अदालत ने नहीं कहा। अरे भैए! अब इससे क्या फर्क पड़ने वाला है? तिहाड़-

दर्शन तो हो ही गए! एक अंग्रेजी एंकर पूछने लगा कि यह 'कर्मा' है कि 'बदले की कार्रवाई'?

कई चैनलों ने लाइन लगाई कि 'पांच प्रतिशत' का अहंकार, पहुंचा तिहाड़! बताइए, भाई जी को क्या पड़ी थी कि एक दिन पहले मुस्कराते

्रहुए पत्रकारों से पंजा दिखा कर कह दिए कि 'पांच प्रतिशत'! क्या

नहीं जानते, क्या है 'पांच प्रतिशत'! अब भुगतो बेटा!

सच, ऐसी कच्ची तो किसी की न हुई कि जब-जब मांगी बेल, तब-तब मिली जेल!हाय रे दुर्भाग्य!

एक चैनल ने चुटकी ली कि 'एनफोर्समेंट डिपार्टमेंट' के सभी आरोपी वीआइपी सुविधा वाली जेल नंबर सात में रखे जाते हैं। इसी में चार्ल्स शोभराज रहा और छोटा राजन रहता है! इसी में 'बेटा जी' भी रहे हैं।

GIRGIGRE

एक चैनल पर कांग्रेस के वरिष्ठ नेता अश्विनी कुमार 'निजी एक के बाद एक सीधे तिहाड़ भेजते नजर आए।

अंग्रेजी चैनल प्राइम टाइम के चिंघाड-शो को देखने में आता है, वह सारे चैनलों को मिला कर देखने में नहीं आता।

अगर 'जले पर नमक छिड़कने' की कला सीखनी हो तो भैया जी से सीखें। ऐसे मौकों पर वे अपना 'हिसाब' चुकता करने में एकदम नहीं चूकते। 'दुश्मन के दुर्दिन' छाप शो में वे देर तक संजीदा नजर आते रहे, मानो किसी शोकसभा में हों। लेकिन ज्यों ही उनका कंठ फुटा, वे दर्जनों विपक्षी नेताओं को

> भैया जी दांत पीस-पीस कर एक-एक का नाम लेकर कहते जाते थे : एक दिन तुझे भी जाना है तिहाड़, फिर एक दिन तू भी जाएगा तिहाड़। फिर एक दिन इसे भी जाना है तिहाड़ और उसे भी जाना है तिहाड़! अंततः 'परिवार' को भी एक दिन जाना है तिहाड़!

> लेकिन भैया जी को इतने से सब्ब कहां, सो लगे हाथ ठोंक लिए लटयन्स छाप मीडिया को भी कि देखा! ऐसा भी एक 'मीडिया' है, जिसने अपने 'आका' को

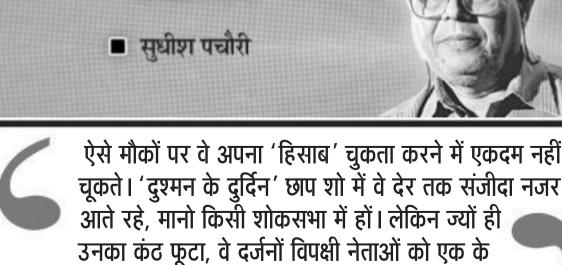
> तिहाड़ जाते हुए नहीं दिखाया तिहाड दर्शन कराते-कराते एक एंकर बोल उठा कि बड़ी ब्रेकिंग न्यूज आ रही है कि 'एमनेस्टी इंटरनेशनल' को 'विदेशी मद्रा' के

मामले में 'फेमा' के अंतर्गत 'नोटिस' दिया गया है। चैनल की बहस में एक चर्चिका ने इस संस्था पर 'सप्रमाण' आरोप लगाया कि किस तरह यह एमनेस्टी इंटरनेशनल 'इस्लामिस्ट' मुअज्जम बेग और जिहादी जान से हमदर्दी रखती है और 'मानवाधिकारवाद' के

नाम पर इस्लामिस्टों के अधिकारों की हिमायत अधिक करती है। आखिरी खबरों में, अगले चैबीस घंटे में, चंद्रमा पर

चंद्रयान की 'साफ्ट लैंड़िंग' की खबर छा गई। छा गया! हर चैनल अपना अपना चंद्रमा देखते दिखाने लगा। वैज्ञानिक बताते रहे कि किस तरह आज की रात चंद्रयान की 'साफ्ट लैंडिंग' एक रिकार्डतोड़ सफलता होगी! सफल 'साफ्ट लैंडिंग' के बाद 'स्पेस रिसर्च' के मामले में भारत दुनिया में चौथे नंबर का देश बन जाएगा!

एक चैनल ने लाइन लगाई : यह 'ऐतिहासिक' और 'युगांतकारी' है! पर, ऐसा न हुआ।



बाद एक सीधे तिहाड़ भेजते नजर आए। कैपेसिटी' में बोलते रहे कि कानून की नजर में जेल 'अपवाद' है और 'बेल' नियम है! इस मामले में यह नियम अपनाया गया

नहीं दिखता। इसका अफसोस है। आखिर एक शख्स की 'डिग्निटी' का भी सवाल है। 'टेब्लायड जर्नलिज्म' जिस भाषा का उपयोग करता है, उसमें किसी की भी 'डिग्निटी' नहीं बचती। कैसे लोग हैं ये कि इधर बंदा जेल को रवाना किया जा रहा है, उधर इनको 'डिग्निटी' की पड़ी है। एक 'भ्रष्ट' की डिग्निटी

क्या ? जब कह दिया 'किंगपिन' तो 'किंगपिन' को पूजोंगे क्या ? एक भक्त एंकर हुलस कर चिल्लाया : यह तो अभी शुरुआत है, आगे आगे देखिए, होता है क्या?

ऐसी ही कॉमिक घड़ी में जो मजा अपने भैया जी के