

# The theory of the 'timepass' nation

There is such demand for content, even old movies and television shows are being repurposed for the smart phone



AMBI PARAMESWARAN

I used to notice that the two lady trainers in my gym were always glued to their smart phones. I did not know what they were watching and so decided to make a snide comment: "Are you trainers or are you here to watch useless videos". They protested violently and told me that they watch gym training videos on their smart phones, to become better at what they do. I quickly apologised and said to myself, "I wish this was true all over India".

The Economist (June 8, 2019) in its article, *A global timepass economy: How*

the pursuit of leisure drives internet use, has singled out India as the global capital of smart phone video consumption. As of June 2019 Indian smart phone users were consuming 8.8 GB per user per month. These numbers per se mean nothing but when seen in the context of an average American consuming less than one third of this amount, you realise the immense spread of digital data/video in our country. The inherent harm and the potential for good.

The article quotes a Pew Research Center study done in sub-Saharan Africa and I was comforted that we are not alone. While 85 per cent said they use the internet to stay in touch and "timepass", only 17 per cent said they used it to take classes. Yet another survey done in Zambia confirmed that entertainment is the first thing that is demanded by users.

Remember these are not affluent consumers who belong to the "leisure class". In Thorstein Veblen's classic work, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, he postulated that through division of

labour and segregation of classes, it was the well-heeled who had the time and the resources to spend on what he termed conspicuous consumption and conspicuous leisure. The poor were to spend almost all their time toiling in the factories and fields.

The advent of smart phones, the drop in mobile internet charges seem to have upended Thorstein Veblen's theory. The poor now are indulging in conspicuous leisure. Just look around you. The lift operator is watching movies on his smart phone, often in his mother tongue. In 2016, there were only 20 YouTube channels from India with more than one million subscribers; now there are more than 600. T-Series became the most subscribed channel on YouTube dethroning PewDiePie, a Swedish entertainer. In fact, one of YouTube's top 50 channels included one that is in pure Bhojpuri.

Just as Karl Marx described religion as the opium of the people, today, I suspect, timepass videos have taken over the mantle, to keep the masses suitably

engaged. There are multiple spinoffs from this phenomenon.

The first and the most obvious is the growing demand for digital video content. Not only are old movies, old television shows getting repurposed for the smart phone medium, there is a growing demand for fresh content on new platforms. I think just as there were call centres mushrooming in every city of India, today we have digital video content producers mushrooming all over India.

The second is the growing opportunity for brands to ride this video addiction. By creating content in partnership with YouTube channels that have a significant number of subscribers (our 600-plus channels have a million-plus subscribers), brands can help create content that is engaging. Think of a series of recipe videos from a food brand. Or skin tips from a company focused on dermatology (check out Skin Diaries on YouTube). Or baby care videos (J&J's strategic acquisition of Babycenter.com gives them a continued edge in the baby care game). The list is endless.

Finally my favorite topic: The vast potential that digital video content offers with skilling tips to the multitude. My swimming coach was quick to advise me that I should watch a few videos on YouTube before I came for my next session (I did spend a few hours on this task, and it was a big help). The

National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) has approved 38 sector skill councils. The topics range from painting to plumbing, media and entertainment to tourism and hotels, automotive to telecom to textile. My friend who is chairing the Painting Council was speaking about the yeoman service the council is doing around the country. I am given to understand that NSDC has also catalogued several hundred skills in great detail. Each and every skill council needs its own digital video channel with a large number of usable videos. More importantly these videos need to have a strong engagement factor (something that Byju's managed to crack), and need to be promoted actively so that they don't end up languishing on the NSDC platform.

Just imagine if we can get the 400 million smart phone users to watch just a few hours of skill development videos every day, we might indeed be able to make them join the real leisure class in the foreseeable future, and not live in the false shadow of conspicuous leisure.

And my gym trainers would have taught me a very valuable lesson indeed.

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## CHINESE WHISPERS

### Many names of loan mela



Days after Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman (pictured) announced loan camps in 400 districts, finance ministry officials sought to play it down as a simple customer-outreach programme. While Sitharaman refused to term them "loan melas" during her press conference where she announced the move, an internal document circulated by the finance ministry to banks, which listed the districts to be covered from October 3, has branded the campaign "Grahak mela camps".

### A damp squib

The Opposition in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly has decided to boycott the two-day, non-stop session convened by the Adityanath government to mark the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. The three big Opposition outfits, the Bahujan Samaj Party, the Samajwadi Party, and the Congress, have not only decided to skip the Assembly session convened to discuss the UN General Assembly's Sustainable Development Goals, the Congress has also gone ahead and announced statewide protests at all district headquarters against the Shahjahanpur rape case at the time of the session. In the absence of Opposition members, the much-hyped event risks being reduced to merely a ruling-party programme, bereft of debates and alternative voices.

### Breaking sweat over lunch break

Banking unions are upset with public-sector banks for advertisements announcing the implementation of uniform business hours in the National Capital Territory from October 1, but not including lunch hours. According to the advertisements, the banks' business hours will be from 10 am to 4 pm. These were adopted after an advisory from the Indian Banks' Association, and the decision was the outcome of discussions the Department of Financial Services had with heads of PSBs on "banking for customer convenience". The Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh-affiliated Delhi Pradesh Bank Workers' Organisation has termed it a matter of great concern. It has said in the absence of specific instructions about lunch hours, there was a possibility of customer complaints if the staff take a break. It has demanded at least half an hour of lunch break and fresh advertisements specifying it.

# A tough call for mobile handset makers

Why the tax incentive for new manufacturing may not enthrust the global giants

SURAJEET DAS GUPTA

Just over a week after announcing a sharp cut in corporate tax for new investments to 15 per cent, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said she hoped global players, such as Apple Inc, would find it attractive to invest in India and bring in its manufacturing ecosystem.

Her call to Apple came a few days after Communications Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad announced that the US mobile phone giant would be entering the country in a big way.

To transform India into a mobile export hub, the government has to focus on the top five or six global players (Apple, Samsung, Huawei, Oppo, Vivo and Xiaomi) which account for 87 per cent of the global mobile phone production. The government has engaged closely with Apple and Samsung, which account for 60 per cent of the global market.

The government's new-found confidence in making India a global hub for mobile phone manufacturing stems from the fact that it is offering one of the lowest corporate tax rates in southeast Asia, rectifying a persistent complaint from potential global investors. It also has a large and growing domestic market, of which the competing manufacturing hub of Vietnam cannot boast, and an English-knowing labour force.

Will that be enough? To put the issue into perspective: In 2018 India exported \$1.07 billion worth of handsets, less than

3 per cent of Vietnam's handset exports (\$37.60 billion), and less than one per cent of Chinese handset exports of \$173 billion. The two countries account for 82 per cent of mobile handset exports globally.

In 2014, the government set up a Fast Track Task Force (FTTF), which fixed a target of exporting over 120 million handsets worth \$9.4 billion by 2019-20. With Nokia putting in place a large unit for exports, many thought that target looked achievable, but the factory closed the same year following a tax dispute. By 2018-19, data presented to NITI Aayog by the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IMAI) showed that India had achieved 15 per cent of the target by volume and 14.8 per cent by value. Clearly, a policy that included a widely-publicised phased manufacturing programme to encourage local component manufacture had failed.

Now, however, the US-China trade war is creating new opportunities for India. Apple, which makes almost all its iPhones in China, has been looking to hedge its bets by exploring alternative

locations: India, Vietnam and a couple of smaller countries. The size of the manufacturing opportunity can be gauged by the fact that 70 per cent of Apple's \$265 billion revenues come from selling iPhones. If, hypothetically, the Cupertino giant moved even 12 per cent of its iPhone manufacture to India, that would be equivalent to the total revenues from all mobile phones sold in India in 2018-19.

## WRONG NUMBERS

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■ By 2018-19, Internet and Mobile Association of India data showed that India has achieved 15 per cent of the target by volume and 14.8 per cent by value

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■ Indian Cellular & Electronics Association puts the cost disability for a mobile handset manufacturer in India at 10 to 12% against Vietnam and 19-23% against China

■ Effective power cost in India are 40% higher than Vietnam and China, and both countries offer rental exemption of 15 years

Apple has made a beginning with its partners Foxconn and Wistron in Chennai and Bengaluru respectively, manufacturing some of the older iPhone models, mostly for exports. The plan is to progressively shift some part of the manufacture of its newer models too. Says a top executive in the mobile manufacturing space: "Apple's sales in India are less than even a per cent of its total sales so it is not a big market for it and won't be in the near term. The company's focus is on using India as an export hub and that is where the big opportunity lies."

For South Korean giant Samsung, the story is slightly different. In smartphone sales, it is a leading player in India, much ahead of Apple. So it has a substantial domestic base and manufactures a small quantity for exports. Samsung has already made big bets in Vietnam, its largest export hub, investing over \$17 billion, most of it for handset manufacture. In India, Samsung is likely to remain

focused on the domestic market but it is also expanding exports. It has invested ₹5,000 crore in one of the world's largest mobile plants on the outskirts of Delhi, due to start production in 2020. About a third of its annual capacity of 120 million mobile phones will be earmarked for exports. It is also bringing in key component manufacturing facilities for mobile phone display and batteries at an additional investment of ₹2,500 crore.

Chinese player Xiaomi, which sold over 100 million phones in five years in India, is exporting handsets on a pilot basis. Manu Jain, Xiaomi vice-president, has openly said the company will assess how the government incentivises exports, given that local costs are higher than in China and Vietnam.

The lack of cost competitiveness is the chief hurdle to India's manufacturing dreams. A study by Indian Cellular & Electronics Association (ICEA) puts the disability for a mobile handset manufacturer in India at between 10 and 12 per

## INSIGHT

# RCEP and India: The way ahead

Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership is undoubtedly a challenge but worth the effort with a resilient industry and reformative governance to help



RAJEEV KHER

India has taken the plunge and announced its willingness to remain within the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). The negotiations are expected to conclude by November 2019. Since a large part of the text remains to be concluded, the parties might agree on the broad contours of the agreement and continue to negotiate the nitty-gritty. It can be anticipated that the agreement will take effect only after a couple of years from the date of conclusion. This gives India some lead time to prepare for its implementation. Besides, as we understand from various discussions, much of India's commitment vis-à-vis China will be backloaded and will therefore give India even a longer preparatory time.

The industry in India has been wary of the new FTAs, particularly those where China is a partner. This stance is justified if India pursues a static economic policy framework. However, India is perceived to be in a reformative mode. Developments in the area of domestic resources, policy evolution, technology adoption, sectoral reforms and developments in competing economies do influence a national economy and its dynamism. Therefore,

the fear of Indian industry though appreciated, is not desirable. India's opening up in 1991 and joining the WTO in 1995, despite the worst apprehensions, helped in many ways improve its integration with the global economy, thanks to the resilience and entrepreneurship of its industry. India signed trade agreements with neighbours between 1998 and 2006. These were the hay days for global economy. The subsequent FTAs were initiated around this period but concluded post 2006. It was a coincidence that the subsequent set of agreements became effective during the days of recession which inter alia left its shadow on our FTA experience.

When India signed FTAs with four major trading economies — namely, ASEAN, Korea, Japan and Malaysia — it was perhaps presumed that signing alone would prove a manna for all. FTAs are only institutional mechanisms which offer preferential markets to the signatories but not without corresponding work to help their utilisation. The test of utilisation is not a mention on the customs documents alone but much deeper and wider action on the part of all stakeholders. FTAs, without a national strategy to utilise them, are a waste and can give only limited benefits.

In the present production paradigm, a country's capacity to position itself on as many value chains as possible determines its preparedness to utilise FTAs. Boarding a value chain is a comprehensive exercise which includes tariffs, trade facilitation, logistics, technical regulations, regulatory developments, infrastructure, investments and above all an understanding that imports are as much a part of the process as are exports. Unless product areas are selected and

trade friendly ecosystems for production are built around them, mere tariff-play will not help.

These two years must be used to build a conducive ecosystem to make Indian products more competitive and to develop a mindset for international trade. A laundry list of some tasks for our dynamic trade minister could be as follows:

■ The government must take RCEP as a strategic opportunity.

■ The leadership must apprise the multiple silos in the government that the decision belongs as much to them as it does to the commerce ministry. A Cabinet Committee on Trade chaired by the Prime Minister could steer the domestic action agenda.

■ The industry must know that the bullet is real and they must bite it to remain relevant. An ambitious multi-layered, multi-agency and multi-sectoral programme for advocacy and awareness should be launched. A dedicated institutional mechanism must be incorporated. An appropriate narrative mainstreaming the strategic thought should be canvassed.

■ The last few rounds in a negotiation are always critical when unwanted stuff can sneak in or wanted stuff can stay out. The negotiators must guard against such possibility. Negotiating for the nitty-gritty requires hard bargaining and a temptation to relax, assuming a fait accompli, is real.

■ Even before the basic contours are agreed on, an effective committee system, a reconciliation mechanism and a limited emergency snap-back arrangement should be agreed on.

■ The Wuhan spirit will be revived in Mamallapuram in October. Though there may be an important geo-political

agenda, RCEP should be at the top of that agenda. It is as much a strategic issue as many others. There should be a frank conversation leading to clear understanding between the leaders.

■ Serious reforms in selected sectors must begin or speed up. We no more have the luxury of procrastination. In most cases, elements of such reforms are either in the pipeline or need to be dusted out and put on a time-bound track. Many recommendations of the high level advisory group appointed by the commerce ministry are awaiting acceptance and action.

■ India's trade remedy apparatus has evolved over time, but requires an institutional review.

■ A well-evolved standards and technical regulatory system is of utmost importance both for promoting exports and for regulating imports. Therefore, a targeted sector-owned programme must be launched and monitored.

■ Despite two decades of FTA experience we have not been able to create a sound data management system for FTAs. Both the merchandise and services sectors require a preferential data management system immediately.

■ The foreign trade policy in the making must build on its predecessor but prominently bring in the transformational role of technology and the paradigm of value chain manufacturing. A complete review of present market promotion, development and facilitation programmes is also necessary.

RCEP is undoubtedly a challenge but worth the effort with a resilient industry and reformative governance to help.

The author is a former commerce secretary and distinguished fellow at RIS. Views are personal.

## LETTERS

### Need quality learning

Abhishek Waghmare's analysis "Science and tech losing steam" (Statsguru, September 30) leads to some more conclusions that show our higher education system is unable to cope with the need for quality and purposeful thrust in the field of learning.

Taking the year 2014-15 as base and comparing with 2018-19, we find that even as the number of universities has gone up from 760 to 993, the total enrolments (undergraduate and post-graduate) have increased slightly from 23.5 million to 23.56 million with the number in undergraduate classes actually coming down from 21.74 million to 21.58 million.

Also, juxtaposing this negligible increase with the fall in enrolment in engineering and science classes, we realise how adverse and skewed is the education our young generation is receiving. We have a large number of students entering colleges with inadequate learning in schools. They need more close and personal attention at the college-level from teachers.

Y G Chouksey Pune

### The system is okay

This refers to A K Bhattacharya's column on "Separation of responsibilities" (September 30). I submit that the factual position as well as his conclusions need to be reset. He says that compulsory retirement has been used "quite frequently only now". That is not quite correct. It has been done in NDA-I period also for both direct and indirect tax officers when Arun Jaitley was the finance minister (FM). It was done during VP Singh's time when he was the FM. Singh cleaned up the department of corrupt officers at a very high level, such as the collectors, commissioners and members of the board, in one big sweep.

Next is being done by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In between there was nobody as FM or PM who

cared for honesty as such. We had N D Tiwari, P Chidambaram, Manmohan Singh and those who cared two hoots for honesty. It is the truth and nothing but the truth. I stand by what I say as I was in service at that time.

The author has said that it is limited to the income tax department only. Not really. An equal number has been thrown out under Fundamental Rule (FR) 56-J in the indirect tax department also. But he is correct when he says that this has not been done in other departments. While it is true, there is a problem about these officers like in IAS or IPS, as they are assigned to states and they are subject to the jurisdiction of states. If corrupt officers are shielded by the state chief minister, they cannot be brought to the central government for action under 56-J.

Mr Bhattacharya has argued for "creating a Chinese wall between those officers who undertake investigations and those who are responsible for tax collections". This suggestion is far from clear. There are two types of investigations. One is when a tax fraud is detected prima facie at the time of import or manufacture, the task of investigation cannot be obviously detached from the revenue officials. In any case, there are units like anti-evasion or revenue intelligence that are independent organisations. They are not run by revenue collectors. The other type of investigation is against officers that is done by the vigilance department, which too is not run by the revenue officers.

I am of the firm opinion that there is nothing wrong with the system. We need strong and honest FM or PM like V P Singh and Narendra Modi to clean the system. Only they can deliver.

Sukumar Mukhopadhyay via email

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## The antibiotics challenge

Don't extend price caps on drugs

An expert committee, according to a report in this newspaper, is likely to recommend to the drug price regulator that it should "rationalise" caps on antibiotic prices by bringing non-branded generic medicines into the net.

Currently, branded antibiotics like Augmentin have a margin cap of 8 per cent for stockists and 16 per cent for retailers, while their wholesale prices are fixed by the regulator. Similar regulations will now be introduced, if the National Pharmaceutical Price Authority agrees, for generic antibiotics. The immediate impact of such a change is not known, although it is speculated that hospital margins will be most affected. But this is an opportune moment to reflect on the problems with price caps on antibiotics in general. Rather than helping consumer welfare, they destroy value and hurt the consumer.

Any price cap has a supply response. The supply response in the case of medicines like antibiotics will be harmful in many ways. First, shortages of drugs brought under price control may become common: Rationing may take place if the price cut is particularly deep. Resources could be transferred to more profitable production of drugs whose price is not capped, for example. Some companies can exit from producing certain pills entirely. Others might collude with doctors or hospitals to ensure that pills that are excluded from price caps are the ones being recommended — this is perhaps what is happening with regard to branded and non-branded generics. The second form of response will exacerbate the problem: A supply response that will adversely affect quality. Drug makers will cut corners, and in the absence of proper regulatory supervision will produce pills of poor quality. Inappropriate prescriptions are already a serious problem in India and price caps have made them worse. A study by researchers at the Indian School of Business on the supply and demand response in India to the introduction of price caps for Metformin, a medicine used for the treatment of Type II diabetes, showed that all these effects were visible. In addition, companies colluded with one another to capture the market for Metformin following the regulation of the price of Metformin 500, in particular. None of the companies has been hauled up so far for such actions. Regulation without the capacity for follow-up implementation is a bad idea and should be avoided.

Overall, research and studies have established that the effect of pharmaceutical price controls in India is adverse. Emma Dean of the Centre for Global Development in Washington, DC, has shown that an outcome of price caps in India was "decreased sales of price-controlled and closely related products". In other words, some patients could no longer access the drugs. Prof Dean shows that this disproportionately harms poorer and rural consumers.

The obvious corollary is that richer consumers with better access to drugs can procure them more easily. This also encourages an unhealthy rise of inappropriate prescriptions and their misuse by some patients. With antibiotics, the overall effect of such inappropriate prescriptions would then be particularly dangerous — over-prescription to those who do not need the drug. India is already the worst country in the world for antibiotic resistance, which is a global crisis. India also faces a public health crisis, thanks to poor quality drugs being universally available. As the country moves to universal healthcare, it should move away from arbitrary price controls for drugs.

## Warship woes

India needs a clear road map to build naval capacity

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh was correct in stating that the Indian Navy could deal Pakistan a heavier blow today than in 1971, when Indian missile boats attacked Karachi port. But Mr Singh has set his sights very low. The Karachi strikes, while morale boosting, were eventually peripheral to the outcome of that war. Today, given that Indian Navy's budget of \$8 billion is only slightly smaller than Pakistan's entire defence allocation of \$11 billion, far more would be expected from it. New Delhi's strategic vision of the Indo-Pacific requires the Indian Navy to exercise control over not just the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal, but all of the northern Indian Ocean from the Strait of Hormuz in West Asia, to the Malacca Strait in the East. In achieving this, the key challenge would come not from Pakistan's weak navy, but from a bigger and stronger China, which is already asserting its presence in these waters. The question for Indian planners is: How ready is the Indian Navy for that?

Serious capability shortfalls are evident from the Navy's demand for a larger share of the defence modernisation budget. In an unusually blunt statement last fortnight, the Navy vice-chief publicly lamented that, in the last seven years, its share of the overall defence budget has dropped from 18 per cent to under 14 per cent today. Meanwhile, its share of the capital budget has fallen from over 30 per cent to less than 24 per cent today. The Indian Navy's long-term capability plan envisions a fleet of 200 warships and 450 aircraft by 2027, but it currently has just 131 warships and 230 aircraft. Worse, most shortfalls are in capital warships — the multi-role destroyers, frigates and corvettes that are the Navy's workhorses. Submarines are in short supply and the government's inability to conclude a long-delayed contract for building 24 minesweepers has left the Navy with not one of these crucial vessels.

Equally worrying, many capital warships built in the last two decades are operating without sensors and weapons that are central to their capability. Most of the Navy's modern vessels are not fitted with modern towed array sonars, essential for detecting enemy submarines. These warships, each costing several hundred million dollars, risk being torpedoed because of the absence of sonars worth a few million dollars each. Similarly, the Scorpene submarines now entering service at half a billion dollars each are toothless because contracts have not been concluded for modern torpedoes. As a stopgap, the Navy's decades-old SUT torpedoes have been given a lifetime extension but the numbers are falling to barely six torpedoes per submarine.

Part of the blame lies with the Navy, which designs quality warships, but builds just three-to-four vessels in each design class. In comparison, the US Navy builds to a standardised design — it commissioned USS Arleigh Burke in 1988, and has since built 82 destroyers of that class. This allows for incremental design and process improvements and economy of scale for vendors and sub-vendors. In comparison, the Indian Navy's 12 destroyers are spread over three different designs. The challenges before the Navy are clear. Rather than bluster, it is time for the government to set a clear road map, allocate the finances needed and facilitate the Navy in creating the capability needed for supporting India's strategic vision in the region.

ILLUSTRATION: BINAY SINHA



## The way forward for public sector banks

Regulation and supervision of all banks should be made ownership neutral

A release from the Press Information Bureau on June 24, titled "Public Sector Banks", had this to say on strengthening PSBs: "Over the last four financial years, the Government of India has taken comprehensive steps under its 4R strategy of recognising NPAs transparently, resolving and recovering value from stressed accounts through clean and effective laws and processes, re-capitalising banks, and reforming banks through the PSB reform agenda".

There seems to be some confusion between the legitimate functions of the sovereign; the owner; the regulator and the board or management. Recognising NPAs is a matter for the management and the regulator, namely the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). It is common to banking industry as a whole, and not restricted to the public sector. Legislating clean and effective laws and processes is the legitimate function of the sovereign, but that is also common to PSBs, cooperative and private sector banks. Indeed, common to financial sector. Recapitalising banks is a legitimate function of owners; and in the case of PSBs, the government is the owner of majority shares but not the only shareholder. Some clarity on the PSB reform as distinct from the eco-system of the banking industry is essential in considering the way forward.

The press release also stated that PSBs have been recapitalised with an amount of ₹3.19 trillion during 2014-19. An additional amount of ₹70,000 crore towards PSB recapitalisation has

been budgeted for 2019-20. Additional infusion of capital may be needed, if the performance of PSBs continues to be as in the past. To meet capital adequacy norms and retain majority ownership, additional capital will be needed if PSBs do well, and expand their business. Either way, there could be demands on fiscal unless policies change in future.

Union finance minister announced on August 30 the merger of 10 PSBs into four. Is size an advantage for pursuing the objectives of public sector banking?

### Current realities

After the nationalisation of banks in 1969, banking became synonymous with PSBs. But now, private sector banks have significant presence. Further, PSBs are no longer owned 100 per cent by the government. Shares of PSBs are held by FIIs, domestic entities and individuals. By recapitalising unilaterally, the government has injected capital into PSBs, but the other shareholders have not. Whether the unilateral capital infusion by the government has disproportionately benefited non-government shareholders is unclear.

With the recent recapitalisation, the share of government has increased significantly in many banks. Interestingly, the share of domestic private shareholding is minuscule in larger private sector banks. In brief, banking system in India is predominantly government-owned or foreign-owned. Will this persist?



WHAT NEXT

Y V REDDY

## Real interest rate dynamics: Who can help?

Availability and cost of funds are both key drivers of economic growth. The role of India's financial sector in achieving the \$5 trillion economy target is therefore critical. While financial entities will do their share of work, it's important to understand the constraints they face in lowering the cost of funds.

Economists focus on the real rate of interest to gauge the impact on growth. The cost of money has to be set off against its purchasing power. While savers prefer a higher real interest rate, borrowers want this to be low. The trick is to find the optimal real interest rate that produces desired levels of growth.

The choice of interest rate in measuring this real interest rate is critical. A good representative rate would be one at which companies and individuals borrow as it takes into account the "risk" element.

Corporate bond yields are a good proxy. Economists point out that real interest rates are high for India and hamper sustained growth. The real interest on 10-year AAA corporate bond is 1.23 per cent in the US, 1.40 per cent in China, and 5.27 per cent in India.

That's because real interest on corporate bonds can be thought of as an amalgam of risk-free (government bond) real interest rate and risk premium. A major reason for the difference in real interest rates is the difference in risk-free real interest rates. A comparison of 10-year government securities minus inflation shows that India (3.57 per cent) has a higher rate than China (0.31 per cent) and the US (0.02 per cent).

This difference in risk-free real interest rates depends on how much the government borrows. Higher the fiscal burden, the higher the likely risk-free rate. According to International Monetary Fund data, the consolidated fiscal deficit is 1.4 per cent of the GDP in the UK, and 4.8 per cent in China, compared to over 6 per cent in India.

This brings us to risk premium added to real risk-free interest rate to arrive at effective real cost of

borrowing. For India, risk premium on AAA bonds is 1.7 per cent to US' 1.2 per cent and China's 1.08 per cent. The reason this is high is because premiums represent risk and what better index of possible default than the ratio of bad loans to total.

A comparison of gross non-performing loan percentages tells us why India's risk premia are high. The ratio for Malaysia is 1.54 per cent, the US 1.12 per cent and the UK 0.73 per cent as against 9.98 per cent for India. So while borrowers ask for lower rates, good credit habits would help.

Lending and deposit rates must be seen in conjunction. Higher deposit rates set a floor to lending rates. The one-year deposit rate in India is 6.5 per cent (SBI) compared to 3.1 per cent in Malaysia, 1.75 per cent in China and 1.5 per cent in Thailand. The question is: Can deposit rates be brought down without compromising the flow of household savings into India's financial system? Let's remember India faces a shortage of savings. Household saving after netting out liabilities was 6.6 per cent of GDP in 2017-18 (8.1 per cent in 2015-16).

There's a misleading argument that Indian banks earn exorbitant margins on loans, reflected in their high net interest margins (NIMs), and have ample space to reduce lending rates. This is based on selective data where margins of a few private banks are shown to be over 3.5 per cent while that of developed markets, say the UK, is 1.7 per cent. This is comparing apples to oranges. Indian banks' margins do not reflect provisions for credit risk, while those of the UK do.

If we were to use the same accounting norm (from Bankscope), India's average NIMs work out to 2.5 per cent (only 2 per cent for PSBs) for 2018, while Thailand's was 2.9 per cent, the Philippines' 3.3 per cent and the US' 3.3 per cent.

There's a correlation between wage rates and real interest rates. The more tepid the wage growth, the higher the real interest rate. Higher the wage growth, higher the demand and thus inflation. For developed



ADITYA PURI

## In Babu and Ba's shadow



BOOK REVIEW

CHINTAN GIRISH MODI

The Government of India is commemorating the 150th birth anniversary of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (MKG) on a large scale, within the country and on international platforms. When India's image as the land of peace has taken a beating due to human rights violations in Kashmir, the poster boy of non-violent resistance is being deployed for cultural diplomacy. The move might be ironic but is smart nevertheless because

his personality and his ideas make him a sure-shot winner.

MKG's legacy is worth studying but the commemorative moment is more about platitudes, less about critical engagement. In making one person the face of an entire movement, and elevating him to a god-like status, we erase the labour of those who worked behind the scenes and lived in the shadows. Regardless of whether they cared to be in the spotlight or not, we need to recognise the contributions of those unsung individuals who served tirelessly in India's struggle for freedom from British rule. They may not have fought on the frontlines, or taken a bullet, but that does not diminish their sacrifices.

*The Diary of Manu Gandhi 1943-1944* sheds light on one such person. Manu aka Mridula Gandhi was the youngest daughter of MKG's nephew — Jaisukhlal

Amritlal Gandhi — and Kasumba. She came to live with MKG and his wife Kasturba, and called them Babu and Ba respectively. Her biological mother had passed away. Manu became a satyagrahi at the age of 14. She spent her time as a prisoner in Wardha Jail, Nagpur Central Jail, and the Aga Khan Palace in Pune. While in Pune, she began writing a diary on April 11, 1943. Twelve volumes of Manu's diaries, predominantly written in Gujarati, are lodged in the National Archives of India. Tridip Suvrud has translated, edited and annotated diary entries from that collection to put together this book. His reputation as a scholar of the Gandhian intellectual tradition raises expectations from this book, and it does not disappoint.

MKG had made it obligatory for ashramites and satyagrahis to maintain

a diary as a practice of self-examination and self-purification that would help them in the pursuit of truth. However, Mr Suvrud's translation indicates Manu's diary was not a private container for her thoughts and feelings. MKG read, signed and commented on what she wrote. He pointed out spelling errors, and rectified them. He encouraged her to keep an account of the yarn she spun, and record all that she read. He also asked her to improve her handwriting, and note what she learnt from others.

Mr Suvrud has retained these corrections and comments, offering an explanation for these interventions wherever possible. MKG taught Manu about scripture and philosophy, truth and forbearance, health and nutrition. He looked out for her but was also a proponent of tough love. While Manu thought of MKG as "more than a mother," he might come across to contemporary readers as autocratic and abusive.

Manu writes in detail about her daily

schedule. Apart from participating in morning and evening prayers, and attending lessons with MKG and other elders, she has a lot of work to do. This includes cooking meals, preparing juice, making tea, taking Babu for walks when he is unable to walk without support, applying ghee to Babu and Ba's feet, and being on call for Ba in a period of deteriorating health. Manu oils and combs Ba's hair, gives her massages, helps Ba with her bath, and puts up with her temper tantrums that are nothing but an expression of her agony caused by illness.

On one occasion, Manu writes, "The temperature measured 102.5°C, which for Ba's condition is high. She has a burning sensation in the urinary tract. She has become very weak. Last night she could not sleep at all. She would lie down, get up, and sit. I was with Ba in her bed. She clung to me like a child clings to her mother." On another occasion, Manu writes, "Motiba was rather unwell. Every five to 10 minutes, she would need to defecate.

Sometimes, even her clothes were soiled. I would wash her clothes each time they were soiled."

In Mr Suvrud's translation, Manu appears deeply devoted to Babu and Ba. She falls ill repeatedly while discharging her duties and tries to hide this from others. When speak to her harshly, she assigns blame to herself. This must have been a challenging experience for someone of her age who lost her mother early in life, and also saw Ba withering away. Her emotional universe, filled with struggle and resilience, is at the heart of this book. Read it for her, not MKG.

THE DIARY OF MANU GANDHI 1943-1944

Tridip Suvrud (editor and translator) Oxford University Press 184 pages, ₹750

The writer is a former RBI governor

The writer is managing director of HDFC Bank



# Opinion

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2019

## RBI will cut rates, the only question is by how much

With growth momentum slow, there is little expectation of a hike in inflation; RBI will continue to bat for growth

**D**ESPITE THE HUGE fiscal stimulus of ₹1.45 lakh crore unleashed by the government in the form of a sharp cut in the corporation tax rate and some measures for the capital markets, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) will not really be on the horns of a dilemma this week as it deliberates on whether or not to cut the repo. Consensus suggests a 25 basis points cut, to 5.15%, primarily because inflation is expected to stay benign given there are few signs growth is going to revive meaningfully. To be sure, there is some momentum in core inflation, but as some economists have pointed out, the pace of food inflation could be higher than core inflation by Q4FY20. Also, while prices of crude oil do spike every now and then, for various reasons, the broad view appears to be that these will hold steady due to slowing global growth.

The central bank, therefore, is expected to bat for growth. Indeed, the shocking GDP growth reading of 5% for the economy in Q1FY20 has left economists paring their forecasts. Almost everyone agrees the cuts in corporation tax are a supply-side measure and aimed at attracting investment, and that this will play out in the medium term. Consequently, no immediate capacity addition that could create jobs is expected. Therefore, there is no expectation of a big pick-up in demand in the near term.

Despite an estimated fiscal slippage due to the tax cuts—0.35% of GDP, since the central government will pass on less taxes to the states—the repo will surely be trimmed. Having pushed banks to benchmark their loan rates to an external benchmark—such as the repo or treasury bill—RBI should be able to ensure transmission. The new system kicked in on October 1. While there is no guarantee that lower interest rates will trigger demand for loans, at this point, the government and RBI want to do everything it takes to kickstart growth.

The central bank will also ensure there is adequate liquidity support to support to aid transmission—the banking system has been in a liquidity surplus for a few months now. But, as economists have cautioned, RBI also needs to be watchful and calibrate liquidity as and when the rate cycle turns. The bond markets rallied on Tuesday, reassured by the government's gross borrowing programme in H2FY20, of ₹2.68 lakh crore (₹1.33 lakh crore in net terms), staying at budgeted levels. Although the supply of paper is light, bond yields have stayed in the region of 6.6-6.7% probably because investors feel that the scope for cuts in the repo is now less because of the stimulus. They probably believe that after the 35 bps cut in August and the expected 25 bps in October, the repo could remain at 5.15% or at best go down to 5%, but not below that.

The markets will listen carefully to gauge how much RBI is likely to cut in the future; some of the information will come from RBI's growth forecast for FY20. The consensus pegs the GDP growth at around 6%, which assumes an upward momentum for the rest of the year. If RBI's projection is close to 6% and the tone on inflation is dovish, the market would probably pencil in more cuts, but if it is closer to 6.5%, it may not.

## Swachh Bharat gains

Flaws and all, it has put total sanitation within reach

**G**ANDHI JAYANTI IS now also the Rashtriya Swachhata Diwas. So, the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi is likely to be a landmark for the sanitation campaign, Swachh Bharat (SB). While there are reports that the government will declare India officially open-defecation free—the household toilet coverage, as per the SB Rural dashboard, now stands at 100%—a more objective stock-taking will be needed. Perhaps, more so, because two children were recently beaten to death in a Madhya Pradesh village for allegedly defecating in the open. That aside, there can be no denying that the sanitation mission has resulted in unprecedented gains for the nation. Nearly 64% of the country's rural population is already practising solid/liquid waste management (SLWM), also known as open-defecation-free (ODF) plus. The Centre has stated that the next phase of the Swachh Bharat Mission will focus on waste management and access to tapped water. That will be a tall ask, given 75% of the households in the country—90% in the rural areas—don't have tapped water on their premises.

Nearly 40 million Indians suffer from waterborne diseases annually, and 200,000 die, while 73 million working days are lost due to these diseases, leading to an economic loss of \$600 million a year. A recent study by the Research Institute for Compassionate Economics (RICE) had pointed out, citing findings from Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, that while toilet coverage has significantly expanded under Swachh Bharat, toilet usage still remains a concern. However, even if the usage data isn't a spot of cheer like the 100% coverage is, India is already starting to reap the dividends of the campaign. The Economic Survey 2018-19 shows how the sanitation campaign, among other factors, has helped bring down the incidence of diarrhoea, malaria, low birth weight and still-births in villages that saw drastic improvements in toilet coverage. The economic gains from improved health are significant—a Unicef study shows, on average, every household in an ODF area saves around ₹50,000 due to lower morbidity. The poorest households gain the most—financial savings, over a 10-year period exceed costs by 1.7 times on average, and 2.4 times for the poorest households under conditions of 100% IHHL coverage.

Given its immense potential for economic and social well-being, the Swachh Bharat campaign is the richest tribute that can be paid to Mahatma Gandhi's legacy. A focus on SLWM and tapped water access could influence usage as much as nudging behavioural change. With Swachh Bharat 2.0, total sanitation could well be within the country's reach in the next few years.

## Crying WOLF

Brick-&-mortar stores must realise that a customer focus will help them compete with e-tail, not regulations

**T**HE COMPETITION COMMISSION of India may be keeping a close watch on festive discounts, but the brick-&-mortar stores seem to have concerns about e-retail players like Amazon and Flipkart queering competition in other ways. Brick-&-mortar mobile phone store operators have written a letter to the commerce ministry, department for the promotion of industry and internal trade and the Competition Commission of India demanding that government put a curb on online launches of mobile-phone by manufacturers, and exclusive tie-ups between them and e-retail players. According to the *Economic Times*, the All India Mobile Retailers Association (AIMRA) has asked the government to level the playing field by ensuring "same product, same time and same price".

The government, last year, had barred companies from getting into exclusive tie-ups and predatory pricing, but AIMRA's concerns are centred around the online-first policy followed by a lot of mobile manufacturers. Although prices for online sales have rationalised, demanding the banning of exclusive tie-ups and online launches seems uncalled for. Online platforms have a far better reach than brick-&-mortar stores, especially with regards to delivery in Tier-II and Tier-III areas is concerned. Besides, online launches and exclusive tie-ups aren't unilateral moves with e-retail players enjoying leverage over phone manufacturers. But, more important, brick-&-mortar retailers can always choose not to market products that follow an online-first policy. More importantly, what AIMRA needs to realise is that they are not losing out to online launches and exclusivity but to e-retail players' customer-centric approach. If they provide better services, they can acquire a larger share of the market—though, with prices nearly the same across the market given the crackdown on e-retail discounts, chances are brick-&-mortar already enjoys a healthy market share. OnePlus, Xiaomi and Vivo are opening more stores across the country. Apple US is trying to transform its stores into town squares, trying to provide Apple experience rather than selling products.



**PHIR EK BAAR...**

Congress leader, Rahul Gandhi

Thank you Mr Jaishankar for covering up our PM's incompetence. His fawning endorsement caused serious problems with the Democrats for India. I hope it gets ironed out with your intervention

## ECB REFORMS

LAGARDE BRINGS A UNIQUELY WELL-SUITED SKILLSET TO THE CHALLENGE OF AVOIDING A SECOND LOST DECADE OF LOW, INSUFFICIENTLY INCLUSIVE EUROZONE GROWTH

# Lagarde's edge is Europe's opportunity

**A** HIGHLY REGARDED doctor assumes the care of a chronically impaired patient who is growing weaker, and more vulnerable. The patient's longstanding treatment is not only becoming less effective but also introducing harmful side effects. A better approach exists, but it is not available at the new doctor's hospital. And, in the facilities where it is available, the doctors are too distracted to take on the case.

The new doctor is Christine Lagarde, the widely admired former managing director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), who will soon succeed Mario Draghi as president of the European Central Bank (ECB). Her challenge will be to avoid a second lost decade of low, insufficiently inclusive eurozone growth. How the patient fares under her care—and whether she can get key eurozone governments to provide the necessary treatment—will define not just her own legacy but also that of Draghi.

There is little doubt now that the European economy is losing momentum. The earlier, overly optimistic prognosis of a sustained growth pickup has finally given way to the grim reality that both structural, and cyclical headwinds are bearing down on economic activity. The previous consensus growth forecast of around 2% for 2019 is now converging on around 1%; it could well go even lower.

Still to come, is a broader realisation that Europe is at risk of suffering what economists call "stall-speed growth." Under such conditions, growth may remain positive, but it will be insufficient to accommodate the demands of other forces: pockets of excessive indebtedness, rising demand for social services, the need for better infrastructure, and deepening popular anger,

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Views are personal



political polarisation, and alienation.

Moreover, previously unthinkable conditions that could undermine the very integrity of a market system will suddenly become possible—even likely. Negative interest rates in Europe, for example, do not look likely to be reversed any time soon. Worse, in what is already a structurally impaired economy, Europeans have yet to deal fully with the detrimental impact of global trade tensions, which have hit export-dependent industries in Germany—the region's powerhouse—especially hard.

Despite all of these negative developments, European authorities continue to rely on just one response: unconventional monetary policy, involving negative interest rates and large-scale purchases of securities (quantitative easing, or QE). To be sure, this approach was effective in containing a debt crisis that was threatening both the monetary union, and the single currency earlier in the decade. But, it has proven increasingly ineffective in promoting sustainable economic growth.

Concerns over the ECB's protracted reliance on the same old medicine have been increasing, even within the ECB, owing to a growing awareness of the detrimental effects of negative interest rates. Negative rates can curtail the provision of long-term financial-protection services (such as, life insurance, and retirement products)

to European households, thereby undermining economic security. They encourage excessive risk-taking, which can lead to financial instability down the road. And, they promote an inefficient allocation of resources across the broader economy.

To the extent that these risks are real, and mounting (which I believe they are), the ECB will find it increasingly difficult to continue pursuing the same policy in the face of growing complaints, and political pressure. But, it cannot simply stand still, given the deterioration in the European economy. And, it can scarcely even consider the option of unwinding the unconventional policies of the past decade, as that would raise the risk of immediate economic, and financial disruptions.

The ECB's lose-lose-lose trilemma can be resolved only through a comprehensive pro-growth approach at both the national, and regional levels, involving measures that are not available to central banks. European countries need deeper structural reforms—including infrastructure modernisation, and worker retooling and retraining—to boost the productivity of both capital, and labour. Where possible, they should be pursuing fiscal stimulus, and resolving persistent

debt overhangs that are stifling existing growth engines, and impeding the emergence of new ones. And, at the regional level, Europe needs to expand, and improve its policy architecture, not least by completing the banking union, and resolving long-standing differences over fiscal integration.

The hope now is that Lagarde—with her exceptional mix of interpersonal skills, professional networks, and national and international policy experience—will jump-start the pivot that Europe needs. The challenge is one of political will, not engineering, and Lagarde's recent accomplishments at the IMF—where she put a spotlight on the economic implications of gender bias and climate change—show that she is capable of ushering in the necessary changes.

This is not to downplay the scale and complexity of the challenges Draghi has faced. They are real, and they have become deeply embedded in the structure of Europe's political economy. Still, they are not insurmountable.

Lagarde brings a uniquely well-suited skillset to her new position, and she is taking the reins at precisely the right moment for Europe to make the changes needed to avoid a second lost decade. Her legacy will now be bound up with that of Draghi, whose courageous promise in 2012 to do "whatever it takes" to save the euro has since been overshadowed by the renewed threat of recession and financial instability.

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**At the regional level, Europe needs to expand, and improve its policy architecture, not least by completing the banking union**

## Trade policies starve healthy diets

It is important to step away from the reactive and interventionist domestic and international trade policies aimed at alleviating short-term price fluctuations

**DEVESH ROY & MANIKA SHARMA**

Roy is senior research fellow, and Sharma is project manager, International Food Policy Research Institute  
Views are personal

**A RECENT LANCET** study regards dietary factors to be amongst the biggest risk factors for death and disability in India. Healthier, safer and more nutritious diets are keys to fighting high levels of under-nutrition and rising levels of obesity in India.

What characterises Indian diets? Indian diets are typically low on proteins—both animal and plant-based—fruits and vegetables; 57% of the total calorie intake in rural and 48% in urban areas comes from cereals. This is combined with high consumption of unhealthy fats and processed food; the trend cuts across income levels and the rural-urban divide. Indian diets fall short of the recommendations made by the EAT Lancet Commission for healthy and sustainable diets as well as the benchmarks set by National Institute of Nutrition (NIN). Between 1993-94 and 2011-12, the only significant change in the percentage share of calories has been for cereals (decrease by 10%) and oils and fats (increase by 3.5%).

There has been almost no change in the share of pulses, nuts, vegetables, fruits, meat, eggs and fish in consumption, despite rising income levels, urbanisation and lifestyle changes. This lack of diet diversity and consumption of unhealthy calories is a compelling enough reason to back a concerted move towards getting the Indian diets right.

Getting the diets right is incumbent upon getting the markets right. This requires looking at diets in the broader context of a food system. The availability and affordability of, and access to, healthier diets depends on more than just choices made by individuals and families. It depends on the food that is being produced, processed and marketed for consumption, which, in turn, is sensitive to multiple systemic drivers. While agriculture, health, education, social welfare, women empowerment, energy, water, and environmental policies are recognised as the key levers in the food system, one node that is critical but less emphasised upon, is trade and other macroeco-

nomics policies (taxation, industrial, etc). For instance, a major change like the GST is certain to leave system-wide footprints. Trade influences the four pillars of food security—availability, accessibility, stable supply and utilisation. Beyond food security, these can be leveraged for nutrition security as well.

Both domestic and international trade policies have been used for controlling rise in prices of food stuff for which there is little political appetite for a price-rise—cereals, sugar, pulses and vegetables (particularly onion). With trade policies, the incentive effects in production and consumption often get overlooked. An example of the trade policy-diets connect is the liberalisation of edible oil imports in 1992, when it was taken off the negative list. Almost immediately, the cheapest edible oil, i.e., palm oil from Indonesia and Malaysia, became the main item consumed with drastic reduction in prices and increased presence in household consumption, processed food and restaurants. On the production side, this "cheapest" oil only further depressed production of oilseeds by Indian farmers.

Analysis of NSSO consumption data shows *vanaspati*, with the maximum share in total fat intake, reaching 50% of total intake in both rural and urban areas by 2009. Palm or palmolein oil are the main ingredients of *vanaspati*; these are high in trans fats, consumption of which is associated with the risk of cardio-vascular diseases. Other oils also blend palm oil to keep their prices competitive. World Health Organization now recommends elimination of industrially produced trans-fat from global food supply, and the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India in 2018 has committed to reducing trans-fatty acids to less than 2% by 2022.

Domestic trade policies reinforce or offset the effects of international trade policies. Domestic food markets are characterised by unhealthy food crowding out healthy, nutritious food because of both demand- and supply-side fac-

tors. In this outcome, policies have a large part to play, ranging from cereal-centric price support, unregulated promotion of food processing and marketing regulations. Only recently some states have started delisting fruits and vegetables from the APMC; e-NAM does not seem to have taken off for perishables at all. In addition, the incentives for cold-chains have not been large enough to make any sizeable difference to availability of perishables.

Finally, a big part of the food system in India and domestic trade comprises public programmes like the public distribution system (PDS) of cereals, mainly wheat and rice with, state-specific additions like coarse cereals or pulses in the portfolio. Improved access to grains for the poor was expected to reduce malnutrition by improving food security, but most surveys do not indicate adequate reduction in childhood undernutrition, anaemia and adult undernutrition. Policies need to be cognisant of the general equilibrium impact. Dumping subsidised cereals in markets has a huge bearing on the food system. If Bihar is self-sufficient in rice, dumping of additional 2-3 million tonnes due to National Food Security Act 2013 is a fundamental impact shifter, affecting cropping choices and consumption decisions. Indeed, while subsidised cereals should have released money to buy fruits and vegetables and animal-source foods, the net effect from the perspective of healthier diets remains unclear.

It is important to step away from the reactive, and interventionist domestic and international trade policies aimed at alleviating short-term price fluctuations, and look at long-term impact on the food environment. The food system needs to invigorate the producers, consumers and other stakeholders to choose and provide healthier diets. Awareness campaigns can bear fruit only if accompanied by a conducive food environment.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### On banning of single-use plastic

A bold initiative such as imposition of a blanket-ban, is a pre-requisite and an effective way to reduce the volume of non-biodegradable waste and potential risks to life, especially when microscopic-plastic in the present capacity, is being consumed by almost every living form. Plastic goods contaminate the food chain, demand continued production due to difficult recycling-measures, and cause environmental havoc when carried away to long-distances. That said, it is equally important that producers and consumers are given a sufficient length of time to identify/establish viable alternatives. Although bamboo and sea-weed are decent substitutes, due-diligence and robust planning is needed to ensure that packaging by eateries, and availability of daily-use bottles, caps/lids, garbage bags, cutlery, straws, cups, glasses, sachets, plates etc is not hampered. Ironically, production of plastic bags, involves a process which is environment-friendlier than any other procedure used to manufacture alternative materials viz polyester, fabric, paper or cotton. Also, a substitute would have to be reused a large number of times to negate the pollution of its production and to match a single-use polyethene's environmental-footprint. It is important to design/develop cheaper, easier to store and convenient to open/fill non-plastic products, besides ensuring high re-usability, before the one-time plastic goods are phased-out. Plastic bags reduce food-contamination/bacterial risks and fare better when compared to handling of liquid-goods versus fabric counterparts. With one-time-use items comprising nearly forty-percent of the total produce, a significant reduction in plastic-manufacture can impact the unorganised segment/industry, which presently acts a large source of employment and generates a huge annual-turnover.  
— Girish Lalwani, Delhi

Write to us at feletters@expressindia.com



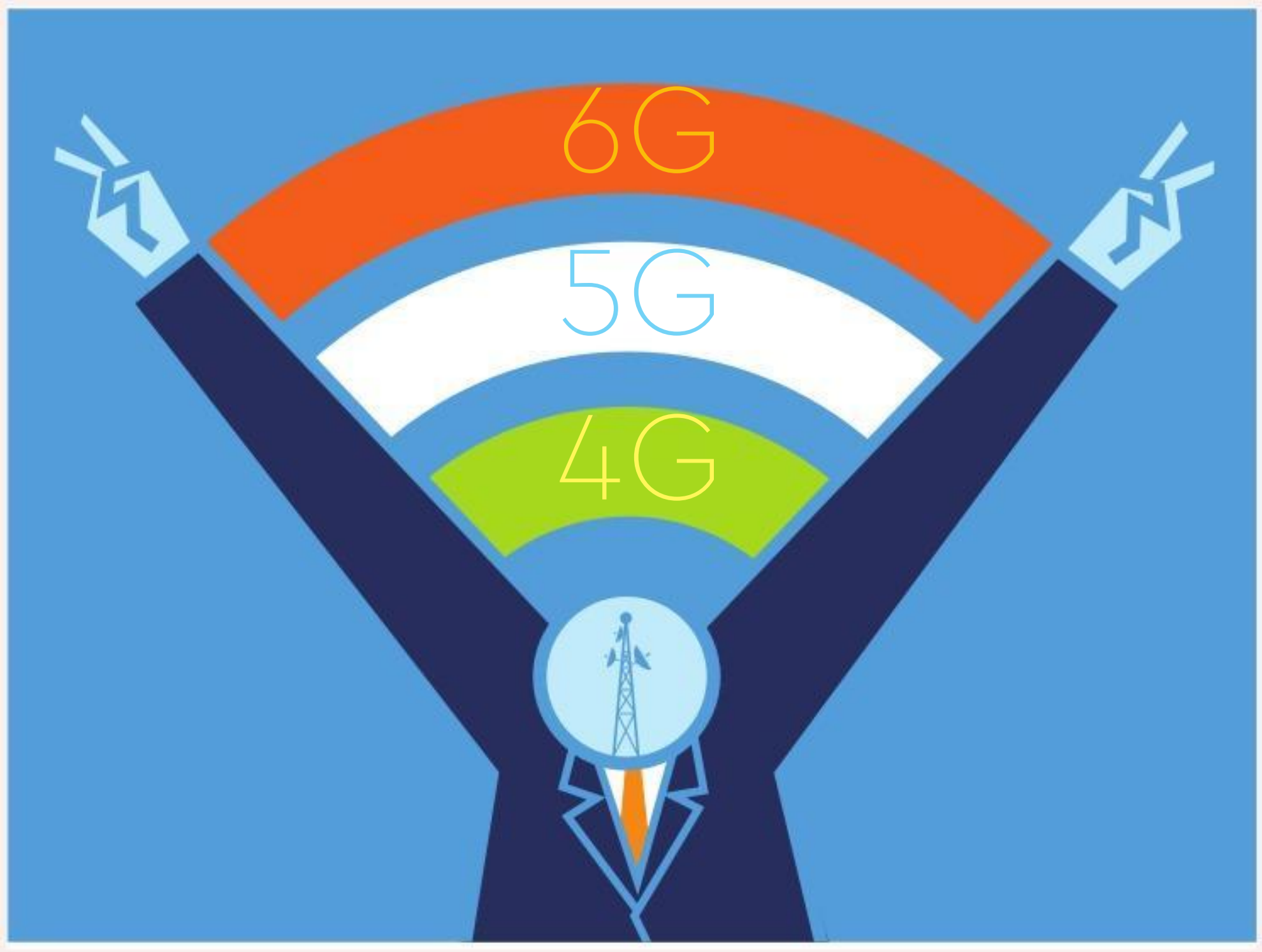


ILLUSTRATION: SHYAM KUMAR PRASAD

every other type of phone technology out of the water. It revolutionised the way the world communicates—5G offers a similar potential to leap into an exciting new world of advanced digital communications.

This is why the Department of Telecom founded a formidable cross-functional body of 5G expertise, the '5G high-level forum', and submitted a report on the investment, infrastructure, policies, and more required to implement 5G. The Digital Communications Commission is deliberating the next steps to a 5G rollout and related spectrum pricing.

Another important reason for 5G trials is security. With 5G, devices around the globe will be empowered to collect, transmit, process, and store large amounts of real-time data. Though this connectivity is essential for the world's digital future, it poses potential security risks that need to be addressed prior to full-scale deployment. While the noise surrounding 5G is impossible to ignore, a relatively under-appreciated technology is the enhanced 4G LTE, or 4.5G. One of the main benefits that 5G technology touts is the reduction in latency speeds (delays in transmission of data across the network) to less than one millisecond! While this is indeed fantastic, few are aware that 4.5G offers a latency speed as low as five milliseconds—much superior to existing levels, and rich in benefits. This is a great time to boost 4.5G adoption in India.

While we have made many admirable strides in the field of Telecom, we are ranked 109th, in a list of 124 countries, for internet speeds—even lower than neighbouring Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar. Mobile internet download speeds in India are about 10.7 Mbps, less than half the global average of ~27 Mbps. Sure, 5G can offer unfathomable speeds of more than 10 Gbps, but with 4.5G LTE, we can achieve download speeds as high as 3Gbps—an incredible improvement on existing technology that will greatly benefit our country. One advantage is that 4G operators are already invested in 4G technology, and can ramp up their efforts around the country.

Meanwhile, India will have to invest, and actively participate in 6G research efforts. Why bother when it might take about ten years to be developed? Elizabeth Warren's quote explains it best: "If you don't have a seat at the table, you're probably on the menu". Countries involved in early-stage research get a leg up in capitalising on manufacturing the technology. India will get to have a say in how testing is conducted, standards are set, costs are estimated, and infrastructure is developed. Indian manufacturing will get a much-needed shot in the arm. By aligning ourselves with 6G research, India can ensure our challenges and issues are addressed, and the technology is developed with India and its citizens in mind, instead of retrofitting the technology ten years down the road.

Earlier this year, 250 researchers from across the world met in Finland to begin 6G-related discussions, including the very basics, such as what it is, and if we need it. The 6G program is set to run for the next eight to ten years, and is funded through both public and private partnerships. Initial thoughts are to shoot for internet speeds of 1 Terabyte/second! At this stage, our brains might not even compute the significance and advantages of this speed, but the 6G forum will research, and map this over the next few years, and set 6G standards. Samsung has set up a 6G research center in Seoul, intending to incorporate satellite communication for enhanced global coverage and faster speeds.

It is a great point in time for Indian entrepreneurs, researchers, and policy makers to play the tri-pronged approach for taking India to global leadership in the Digital Society of 5G and 6G.

Research inputs by Chandana Bala.

INDIA-US TRADE DEAL

Is Trump asking for too much?

BHABESH HAZARIKA

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It remains to be seen when Modi will budge and give in to Trump's demand to effectively implement TMR and lower tariffs

**A**STHE FAMOUS saying goes, politics dominate even the most casual conversations. This holds true for the latest bonding between the US president Donald Trump, and the Indian prime minister Narendra Modi. While Trump has repeatedly called India 'Tariff King' for imposing high tariffs on American products, there seems to be a shift in sentiment, owing to the 'Howdy Modi' euphoria.

But, is this shift of sentiment genuine, or there is more to the story that doesn't meet our eyes? An announcement on a bilateral trade deal was expected on September 25, 2019, on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly meeting, India's refusal to remove the 20% tariff on information and communication Technology (ICT) products seems to be the reason behind the delay. The US Senator Graham Lindsey had recently claimed that India has the worst tariffs in the world on US products; 67% of tariffs across the world have damaged America's trade deficit ratio.

India's import of medical devices jumped 24% to ₹38,837 crore in 2019, as per the latest export-import data.

If reports are to be believed, average tariffs in India are much higher than those in developed economies. An official report released by the USA asserted that India's tariff on other countries, who are members of the World Trade Organization (WTO), are the highest. The average tariff rate demanded by India in 2018 was 17.1%—much higher than the USA, Japan, and the European Union, whose rates ranged between 3.4% and 5.2%. The average tariff levels claimed by India, however, are more in line with other developing nations.

For instance, the average rate in 2018 in Turkey, was 10.7%, in Brazil, 13.4%, and in Egypt, 19.1%. India, however, has always maintained that it has adhered to WTO guidelines. The country cites another measurement of tariff rates, called trade-weighted average, which accounts for imports on volume, thus measuring the average of the tariffs collected. The trade-weighted average tariff of India was 11.7% in 2017—Brazil's was 10%, and South Korea's 8.1%. The trade-weighted average tariffs for the US, Japan, and the EU, however, were much lower at 2.3%, 2.4%, and 3% respectively.

India cites these reasons to have a 'No negotiations' stand, especially in the ICT products category. PM Modi is also concerned that if the tariffs are removed, the decision could open the market to a variety of Chinese products.

Nonetheless, there has been a positive buzz on Trump and Modi's attempts to establish a transparent, and predictable pricing mechanism for a variety of products in the agricultural, and medical devices sector. These interventions will promote quality treatment, with focus on patient safety.

Trump has been vocal about his demands as far as the medical devices sector is concerned, asking for much greater accessibility to the Indian markets for medical devices such as cardiac stents and knee implants, and removal of price caps. Consistent discussion on price control, between experts from the medical devices industry and the government, has also led to 'trade market rationalisation'.

The US expects the policy decisions to be in accord with the condition that global medical devices manufacturers be paid on a 'first point sale' basis, rather than on a 'landing price' basis. First point sale means that the payment should cover cost, insurance, and freight. It may be noted here that there are four to seven points of sale in the supply chain. This incurs expense namely freight, inventory in high-maintenance warehouses specially designed for medical devices, rental, sales and marketing overheads, wages, and service and statutory costs of compliance.

So, the big announcement is awaited. It remains to be seen when Modi will budge and give in to Trump's demand to effectively implement TMR, and, most importantly, lower the tariffs.

The trade-weighted average tariff of India was 11.7% in 2017—Brazil's was 10%, and South Korea's 8.1%

TV RAMACHANDRAN

President, Broadband India Forum. Views are personal



GLOBAL DIGITAL LEADERSHIP

A trifecta for India: 4G, 5G & 6G

India must establish its own use-cases prior to its 5G rollout along with tapping into the potential of 4.5G, and engaging in 6G research to secure its future digital economy

6G research. This three-pronged approach is critical to securing India's economic future.

There is a dangerous sense of urgency worldwide to be amongst the first to implement 5G. However, for India, the winning strategy could be to wait and do it right, and in our own time. History is on our side. When the rest of the world rushed to implement 2G, we waited and introduced GSM digital 2G, and leapfrogged over the analog 2G of our neighbours. The late-entrant Indian telecom quickly surpassed other countries, becoming the second largest in the world, and a source of "neighbours' envy, owner's pride." Reputed international bodies, such as ITU and GSMA, sound several cautionary notes about rushing headlong into 5G implementation. ITU advises that "until the case for 5G networks can be clearly made, policymakers can consider enhancing the availability of and boosting the quality of 4G networks," warns about the "danger of [an] increasing digital divide," especially in the early years of 5G adoption, and offers "16 key issues for policymakers to consider," which will be instrumental to our success.

Clearly, there are a few challenges to address before implementing a 5G rollout. ITU, the global apex telecom standards body, estimates that the cost to deploy a small cell-ready 5G network for a small city to be \$6.8 million (nearly ₹50 crore), and \$55.5 million (approximately ₹400 crore) for larger cities. With India's incredibly dense cities, the investment required will be higher. These would be additional to the huge investments for fibre backhaul and backbone. The overall cost of 5G networks for India would run into a few lakh crores.

Another limiting factor for Telecom Service Providers is the prohibitively high 5G spectrum cost. Currently, while already burdened with heavy debt, there is little incentive for TSPs to switch to 5G—and, rightly so. We need to expand 5G tests, and establish clear use-cases that work for the Indian environment while the industry improves its financial health.

Why are 5G trial use-cases important? It is vital to demonstrate the business viability across the different applications on which 5G can have significant impact. The difference between 5G and 2G, or 3G, is akin to how the invention of the smartphone blew

A limiting factor for TSPs is the prohibitively high 5G spectrum cost. Currently, while already burdened with heavy debt, there is little incentive for them to switch to 5G

move puts more money in the kitty of corporates, who are one of the most efficient deployers of capital in the economy. Corporates with additional profits due to lower tax rates could increase wages, increase distribution to shareholders, invest in additional capacity or expansion, or pass it on to their consumers (by reducing the price of products or services). Each of these has an immediate positive impact on the economy.

Lower corporate tax rate also encourages investment by newer entrepreneurs

TAX CUT

Betting on India Inc

The FM's tax rationalisation measures show that the government is reposing faith in Indian business' ability to generate wealth



AJAY ROTTI

Partner, Dhruva Advisors, LLP

reduced to 22%, leading to an effective rate of a little over 25%. However, this is an optional rate—companies opting for this would not be entitled to any tax incentives, and would be outside the provisions of minimum alternate tax (MAT). Companies are required to elect the tax regime they want to be governed by.

Additionally, a new provision has been introduced to provide for a beneficial rate of 15% (effective rate of 17.16%) for manufacturing companies set up after October 1, 2019, and commencing man-

ufacturing before March 31, 2023. This should be a shot in the arm for the Make in India dream. The Ordinance also reduces the rate of MAT applicable from 18.5% to 15%.

While the impact of this on government finances, and a simplistic view of its impact on fiscal deficit would be the same as that of granting fiscal incentives, or tax holidays, the two are very different. A lower corporate tax rate leads to several positive economic impacts.

The foremost advantage is that the



As per a study undertaken by Tax Foundation, an independent tax policy research organisation, a year or so back, the average statutory corporate rate across 202 jurisdictions was 22.96%. India is now very close to the average, and, in fact, closer than ever before in history. A less talked about impact of the reduction in headline corporate tax rates is that it discourages 'profit shifting' by multinationals since India's tax rate would now be comparable to the average global corporate tax rate. In other words, the incentive, or the savings of shifting profits to tax havens would no longer be large enough to justify profit-shifting strategies.

The only trick the FM seems to have missed is providing certainty. Keeping out surcharge and cess on the new rates would have gone a long way in providing certainty to corporates, ruling out the possibility of increasing the rate indirectly by changing the surcharge rate. Overall, the rate rationalisation shows that the government is reposing faith in India Inc and their ability to generate wealth. The government is clearly betting on Indian business doing well, the economy expanding, and tax collections increasing with a lower tax rate and higher corporate profits.





THE SPIRIT OF DEMOCRACY IS NOT A MECHANICAL THING TO BE ADJUSTED BY ABOLITION OF FORMS. IT REQUIRES CHANGE OF HEART. — M K GANDHI

## The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY  
RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

# The people's policy

In last five years, Swachh Bharat mission has captured people's imagination, they have owned the change



PARAMESWARAN IYER

## STATES AT CENTRE

With their revenues stressed and strained, states need to focus on mobilising their own resources

IN RECENT TIMES, economic discussion in India has focused largely on the stress on central government finances. But state government finances are also facing headwinds. And as states increasingly account for a larger share in general government (Centre and state) spending, this has grave implications for the economy. As an RBI report on state finances notes, over the past two years, the overall size of state budgets has reduced which may have "inadvertently deepened" the economic slowdown. The situation is unlikely to change this year. States have pegged their revenues to grow at a slower pace largely due to lower tax devolution and grants. And as revenue expenditure tends to be sticky in nature — it is also rising due to higher interest and pension payments — states have offset slower revenue growth by curtailing capital spending, which will lower overall public sector capex.

The strains on state finances stem from several sources. First, states are increasingly undertaking capital expenditure through state public sector enterprises. And though states extend support to these enterprises through guarantees on their borrowings, "weak cost recovery mechanisms", as in the case of the power and transport sectors, pose a fiscal risk. Second, under UDAY agreements, states have to take over incremental losses of power discoms. This exerts pressure on already stretched finances. Third, sharp cuts in corporate taxes and sluggish GST collections will also impact tax devolution to states. And then there are concerns over the fiscal costs of Ayushman Bharat. The RBI report also notes that state debt to GDP has surged to 25 per cent of GDP in 2019-20. Bringing it down to 20 per cent, in line with the recommendations of the FRBM (fiscal responsibility and budget management) review committee, will be challenging given the current trajectory of state finances.

On its part, the Centre has been increasingly relying on collections through cesses and surcharges to fund its expenditure. And as revenue through these sources does not form part of the divisible tax pool, it is not shared with states. In 2019-20, the Centre hopes to mop up Rs 3.69 lakh crore through cesses and surcharges (or 15 per cent of its gross tax revenue), implying that states' share in gross tax revenue works out to just 32.9 per cent. To put this in perspective, this amount is more than the Centre's capital expenditure or its allocation to centrally sponsored schemes. Further, the Centre has also asked the 15th Finance Commission to look into the possibility of providing funds for defence and internal security. These are likely to come at the expense of states. In this scenario, states must focus on resource mobilisation. But with little scope to raise own-tax revenue, they must focus on raising non-tax revenue, through hiking user charges on services like power and irrigation.

## MISSING CLOSURE

The low turnout elections in Afghanistan may raise more questions than they are likely to settle

THE LOW VOTER turnout in the presidential elections held in Afghanistan last Saturday is no surprise. The Taliban had openly denounced the elections. In the weeks preceding voting day, the country was witness to brutal bombings in which scores of people were killed. Voting took place only in under 5,000 polling stations out of over 7,000 due to security reasons. There was not much of an election campaign as there was uncertainty about whether an election would be held at all — the talks between the Taliban and the US, until they were abruptly cancelled, were pointing in the direction of a nominated elected government. The final voter turnout is expected to be not more than 2.5 million, out of 9.6 million registered voters. While this may well be the cleanest and least fraudulent vote in Afghanistan since 2004, the low number of voters is certain to raise questions about the legitimacy of the election, and of the winning candidates, complicating an already complex and fragile situation.

When the US called off the talks with the Taliban at the beginning of September, Afghans who believe in the democratic system were relieved that this gave the presidential elections a chance, and that the newly elected leadership could negotiate on its own with the Taliban. In fact, President Ashraf Ghani, who had been excluded from the US-Taliban talks, specifically asked voters for a strengthened mandate to open peace talks with the insurgents. But if the Taliban were contemptuous of Ghani and his government as "American puppets", saying it was better to deal with the puppet masters directly, they would find even less reason to talk to the new government. In their eyes, the new dispensation would be as much American as the last one, with the added drawback of being voted in by far fewer people.

But before all that, the result itself may be contentious, if the last election is anything to go by. The three leading candidates — President Ghani, Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah and former warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar — have already declared themselves the winner, though the counting is still ongoing and results are to be declared later this month. Last time, the transition to the new dispensation could not take place until the US stepped in to broker an agreement between Ghani and Abdullah, the two candidates with the highest number of votes. If the results are deadlocked again, there may be no mediator. It would give the Taliban exactly the opening it is waiting for.

## GET OUT OF HER WAY

Because when mummies race, they illustrate that it is possible to be faster, higher, stronger

FOR TOO MANY women, there comes a time, usually after professional promise shades away to euphoric motherhood and complete exhaustion, when they realise it is impossible to win the mommy race. Being on the mommy track usually involves running at full blast, without moving an inch, with maternal guilt and professional inadequacy for company. And in your ear, a diabolical question, like the crack of a gunshot as you take off: "Can you really have it all?" Well, yes, world — sometimes you can.

Even if it often remains a heroic ask, in the words of Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce, "the females keep showing up" and winning. As she did on Sunday, when the 32-year-old Jamaican athlete raced to a fourth 100m gold at the World Championships at Doha, Qatar. With her, on the victory lap, was her two-year-old son, whose birth in 2017 had forced her to skip the championship. She was not the only new mom to wrest triumph, and prove a point. Chinese athlete Liu Hong, who too had taken a year off after having a child, won the 20km race walk. And to add to the "mother's day" celebrations, American athlete Allyson Felix won her 12th World Championship gold medal in the 4x400m mixed relay. For those who asked, that is one more than Usain Bolt's tally of 11.

For Felix, this is sweet revenge. She was returning to the tracks 13 months after a difficult pregnancy, and a high-profile battle with Nike, in which she and other athletes forced the company to change their maternity policies. Taken together, this trio of powerful performers, as well as athletes as varied in strength and guile as Serena Williams and Mary Kom, land a knockout punch to the perception of women as physically constrained, especially by biological destiny. They illustrate that it is possible to be faster, higher, stronger, even if motherhood makes arduous demands of the body and the mind. When mummies race, they play to win. Now, the world better get out of the way.

MAHATMA GANDHI DREAMT of an India where no one had to suffer the indignity of open defecation. There cannot be a better tribute to him than the transformation of the country, in the last five years, from being the highest contributor to global open defecation to torch-bearer for global sanitation.

What the prime minister has managed to do, through his inspirational leadership for a cause his predecessors stayed silent about, is a testament to his connect with and understanding of the needs of our people at the grassroots. In the last five years, India has triggered a sanitation revolution. The world recognises this, and the Global Goalkeepers Award that the PM was presented with during his recent visit to the US, more than vindicates his decision to put sanitation at the front and centre of India's developmental agenda.

As the states prepare to dedicate an open defecation free (ODF) country to Gandhi@150, it is timely for us to analyse how this campaign became the global benchmark for participatory and transformative development. Team Swachh Bharat Mission Grameen (SBM-G) has identified four key pillars of India's sanitation revolution, which can, more or less, be applied to any large-scale transformation in the world.

First, political leadership. Arguably the biggest game-changer for the SBM, was the prime minister investing his personal political capital in the mission. Inspired by his leadership and commitment, various chief ministers took up the cause, creating a domino-like effect, cascading leadership to the chief secretary and in turn to collectors, all the way down to sarpanchs at the grassroots level. Leaders at all levels are prime catalysts for large-scale transformations.

Second, public financing. Typically, no large-scale transformation can be an unfunded mandate. Over Rs 1 lakh crore was committed to ensuring universal access to sanitation, thereby backing the political will with budgetary support. About 90 per cent of the 10 crore households which received toilets were from socially and economically weaker sections of society and they received

financial incentives to build and use toilets.

Third, partnerships. The SBM (G) partnered with implementors and influencers alike — national and international development agencies, media houses, civil society, celebrities, as well as all departments/ministries of the government of India, who pledged an additional \$6 billion for sanitation in their respective sectors. This "all hands on deck" approach, making sanitation everyone's business, helped to mainstream it into the national consciousness.

And fourth, peoples' participation. The SBM-G trained over half a million swachhagrahis, grassroots motivators, who triggered behaviour change in every village of India. Ordinary people undertook extraordinary roles and inspired others to build and use toilets. Stories of sanitation champions emerged from every nook and corner of the country. A large-scale transformation can be truly successful if it captures the imagination of the people, and becomes a people's movement or a jan andolan.

While the four pillars provided the SBM-G its strategic focus, administrative disruption led to efficient on-ground implementation, which has traditionally been the Achilles heel of large programmes in India. It started with the prime minister setting a target, a sunset clause for the Mission — October 2, 2019. A sunset clause brought with it a sense of urgency and accountability. The deadline drove states to prioritise SBM-G and inspired Team SBM-G to imagine possibilities that they may not have done otherwise.

The next important step was building a team of people who believed that the goal is achievable. Younger people with fresh perspective and lesser administrative baggage believe anything is possible and focus on finding creative solutions. SBM-G brought in a unique blend of young professionals and experienced but driven bureaucrats, and each person became committed to the goal.

It was also important to think scalability during the design process. We attempted to devise solutions which are easy to implement, like the on-site twin-pit toilet systems

for rural India, as opposed to expensive networked sanitation solutions. By providing flexibility to states and implementers by design, the mission allowed them to tailor solutions to local contexts.

To build faith in the rest of the administrative system, it was important for the mission to demonstrate some quick wins. We targeted the low-hanging fruit first — the districts with the highest sanitation coverage — to become ODF on priority. This created a demonstration effect for others to learn from, and created belief in the system. Nothing succeeds like success.

Continuous engagement with implementers made the mission agile. Team SBM-G visited each state multiple times and engaged directly with district collectors through learning workshops, informal gatherings and WhatsApp groups, promoting healthy competition among implementers which spurs local innovation.

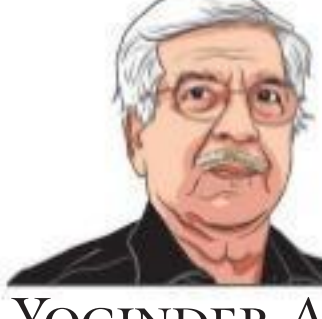
The SBM-G made sanitation glamorous by engaging extensively with the media, leveraging popular culture, and associating Bollywood stars, sportspersons and other influencers to promote the message of sanitation. And lastly, the mission kept the buzz alive throughout its lifecycle through regular, large-scale events with the PM at important milestones, helping sanitation stay on top of public recall.

The job is not over. We recently released the forward-looking 10-year sanitation strategy to move from ODF to ODF Plus, focusing on sustaining the SBM-G gains, ensuring that no one is left behind, and ensuring access to solid and liquid waste management for all villages. The next ambitious goal announced by the PM on August 15 this year is to ensure piped water supply to all households by 2024. This will be an additional shot in the arm for SBM-G's sustainability efforts. India has achieved what was unimaginable a few years ago, but the show must go on.

The writer is Secretary, Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Ministry of Jal Shakti. Views are personal

## BOPAL IN TIMES OF NITI AAYOG

Why 2005 declaration on synergy between government and NGOs is still relevant



YOGINDER ALAGH

IN THE 90s of the last century, an outrageous idea started to emerge. It held that apart from the government agencies, corporates, the cooperative sector, and other citizens could get together for common developmental causes. In some ways this was the creative and "developmental" aspect of what is today loosely called the Fifth Estate. It began in a small way. A former IIM, Ahmedabad director, Ravi Mathai, chucked it all up one day and decided that he would spend his life in seeing if he could develop what a student of his later called 'the bottom of the pyramid'. Ravi set up a "university" for artisans — the rural university.

In Gujarat, former IAS officer Anil Shah got involved in a similar initiative. He set up the Development Support Centre at Bopal, near Ahmedabad (now a part of the metropolis). By then, the Fifth Estate was old hat. In fact, the first round of problems had begun to emerge. There were conflicts with government and corporate entities — all those who had "sanctioned budgets". There was corruption and no one to lead the well meaning when problems arose. The apocryphal story was the so-called message from Bihar that said my son is doing well and has registered an NGO. So a Magna Carta was needed.

Development required technology, capital and other resources but above all, motivation and capability of the concerned people to utilise their resources in efficient, equitable, and sustainable manner. Such participation was the core of sustainable development. The decade of 90s saw sweeping, almost revolu-

tionary changes, in the way rural development — particularly matters relating to the natural resources, crucial for the well being of people living in rural areas — was conceptualised. Rural communities were required to prepare and implement micro plans appropriate to local conditions and needs. Joint Forest Management (1990), watershed development (1995), participatory irrigation management (1997) and Swajaldhara (2003) are good examples.

Those working for participatory management of natural resources were hoping to strengthen and carry forward the participatory approach in 2000-2001 at the time of the formulation of the Tenth Plan. However, the trends in the 10th Five Year Plan were alarming. They point to distortions and reversals of the healthy trends of the 90s. This was forcefully brought out by Anil Shah, by now at the Development Support Centre. When his paper reached M S Swaminathan and me, we encouraged Shah to organise a national deliberation to draft the principles that should guide the formulation and modification of schemes pertaining to natural resources management by the Centre, states or donors.

This led to a national-level meeting on January 16, 2005 at Bopal. It was attended by about 30 leaders from NGO community, academics and policy makers from various parts of India. The deliberations were guided by me and the late B N Yugandhar. That meeting prepared eight declarations based on eight principles proposed by eminent leaders in their respective field.

The first proposed by MYRADA was the centrality of community-based organisations (CBOs). The second proposed by SEWA Mandir at Udaipur was about equity. The third, mooted by the irrigation department in Andhra, was decentralisation. The fourth, proposed, by the N M Sadguru Water Development Foundation, was about the need of a facilitating agency. The fifth by BAIFF at Pune pertained to monitoring and evaluation. The sixth, mooted by V B Eswaran, an IAS officer, was about training and software. Anil Shah proposed the seventh as sustained momentum of development — so that the success story is not just a flash in the pan. And the eighth was proposed by my college friend at Wharton, Pradip Khandwala — organisational restructuring.

Around each declaration is a brief text adopted at Bopal on January 16, 2005. Each principle was elaborated with examples from centrally sponsored schemes and other projects. We lobbied for the execution of these principles in Delhi, with opinion makers, including the press. They had an impact. Also failures.

If we decide to plan again with the large number of new schemes that were declared after planning was abolished, we must reinvent these principles. I have just returned from my morning walk and saw some slum dwellers doing their thing in a defecation free city. Let's do Bopal again.

The writer, an economist, is a former Union minister

## OCTOBER 2, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

**NO POLL DELAY**  
PRIME MINISTER CHARAN Singh has denied that the government was considering putting off the elections due to drought conditions prevailing in many parts of the country. The working president of the Lok Dal was quoted as saying in Varanasi that since many workers of his party were in favour of the elections being postponed, he would discuss the matter with the Prime Minister. Raj Narain told newsmen in Delhi that personally he did not favour a postponement. The PM said in a statement that, "I would like to make it categorically clear that neither I nor my government is in favour of postponing Lok Sabha polls on this account."

**GANDHI SMRITI RULES**  
AS THE GANDHI Samadhi Samiti has prohibited any person from carrying "Ganga jal" into the samadhi grounds, Raj Narain has modified his original programme and now plans to take a self-purifying bath tomorrow morning along with his followers on the lawns opposite the samadhi. Despite the slight alteration in the venue, trouble is expected tomorrow morning as the president of the Yuva Janata, Vikram Singh, has announced that Yuva Janata volunteers will not allow Narain to indulge in "puerile exhibitionism" which would show disrespect to Gandhiji on his birthday.

**IMPEACHMENT NO ISSUE**  
THE JANATA PARTY will not make the impeachment of the president an election issue. Although, the party's manifesto will contain criticism of his action in denying the Janata Party an opportunity to form a government and for dissolving the Lok Sabha — This was stated during an official briefing on the second day's discussions on the draft manifesto and party's election strategy by the national executive. Not one of the nearly 50 members of the national executive made the demand for making the impeachment of president Sanjiva Reddy an election plank. Most of the speakers, however, criticised the president, according to the official spokesman.





# 15 THE IDEAS PAGE

## WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

Though China's achievements should be celebrated, there should also be a critical review to see what can be improved internally to create greater social harmony and freedom, paired with economic prosperity. — THE DAWN

## Bypassing Gandhi

For too many Gandhians, Gandhism is only a facade or a tactic



RAM MADHAV

WHAT IS COMMON between Dominique Pire, a Belgian priest, Adolfo Perez Esquivel, a teacher in Argentina, Martin Luther King Jr and Nelson Mandela? The immediate answer would be that all four were recipients of the Nobel Peace Prize. Also common to all four is the fact that they were all followers of Gandhism, the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi — Gandhi was one Asian leader in the last century who wielded such a powerful influence and had such an impact across nations and continents. His ahimsa and satyagraha — non-violence and truthful resistance — were the only original political programmes offered by any leader from the southern hemisphere in the last two centuries.

Gandhi was a phenomenon; a phenomenon that wouldn't perish. A hundred and fifty years after his birth and 71 years after death, he continues to stir the imagination of generations across the world. He was a great irritant to many in his lifetime, but he was and continues to be an inspiration to millions more. Whether you hate him or love him, you have to surrender before him. Winston Churchill loathed Gandhi: "It is alarming and also nauseating to see Mr Gandhi, a seditious middle temple lawyer, now posing as a fakir of a type well known in the east, striding half-naked up the steps of the viceregal palace, to parley on equal terms with the representative of the king-emperor", he had bristled. But there Gandhi was, in his "half-naked" attire. When somebody later asked him if it was not improper to go in that attire, Gandhi's reply was "the king had enough dress for both of us".

Even Nathuram Godse, who killed Gandhi, had to admit, "I am prepared to concede that Gandhi did undergo sufferings for the sake of the nation. He did bring about an awakening in the minds of the people. He also did nothing for personal gain... I shall bow in respect to the services done by Gandhi to the country, and to Gandhi himself for the said service".

Gandhi-haters are still there, though Gandhi wouldn't mind it. "I had no sense of humour", he wrote in 1928, "I would long ago have committed suicide". Gandhi used to say that, "Nobody can hurt me without my permission."

Gandhi inspired many to dedicate their lives in silent service. Renowned among those true Gandhians were Thakkar Bapa, who worked selflessly for many years among the so-called untouchables and tribals, and Vinoba Bhave, who championed the cause of the landless. Men and women continue to toil among the under-

privileged masses in far-flung areas even today, away from the glare of the floodlights, inspired by the zeal of Gandhi.

But as far as Gandhians are concerned there are far too many. For some, it is a facade more than faith. For others, it is a tactic. Not just today, even when Gandhi was alive, there were several types of Gandhians. Jawaharlal Nehru, one of the leading lights of Gandhism, was hardly a believer in it. Eminent journalist Frank Moraes wrote that one day he wanted to meet Nehru. "Come and see me during Gandhiji's prayer meeting. I'm never there!", Nehru told Moraes. For Nehru, Gandhism was just a political compulsion and tactic.

Gandhism doesn't lie in spinning the charkha or wearing khadi alone. "If Gandhism means simply mechanically turning the spinning wheel, it deserves to be destroyed," Gandhi had declared bluntly. Gandhi didn't merely preach, he lived by his words. It was his life that had inspired the masses, while leaders and intellectuals continued to juggle with his words and statements. Gandhism is not any creed or sect — Gandhi never wanted it to be that way. Gandhism is to be lived, not lectured.

Gandhism is about truth, non-violence, transparency, openness to criticism, fearlessness, rejection of image consciousness and political correctness. Gandhi's life was an open book. He was not someone from the outside and someone else from within. And he was truly a man of the masses. He lived among the people and spoke for them. He insisted that people should strictly follow certain norms and morals in life. But he was also, always, open to those who disagreed with him. He never believed in tit for tat. "An eye for an eye would make the whole world blind" was his famous quote. It is something that is often repeated but hardly followed by the political class.

Gandhi's life was an example in humility and boldness. "I have nothing new to teach the world. Truth and non-violence are as old as the hills. All I have done is to try experiments in both on as vast a scale as I could," he used to say. He never believed in his infallibility. Deification of Gandhi was a strict no-no for him. Gandhi had the supreme courage to own and correct his mistakes.

We invoke Gandhi aphoristically. We tend to use this invocation either to glorify ourselves or to vilify others. It is a big question as to whether the real Gandhi was ever understood by us. To understand Gandhi, we have to enter his mindscape. Gandhi introduced into our social consciousness a set of values like truthfulness, non-violence, and a courage of conviction that was absent in the public life of his time. Upholding these ideals is Gandhism.

"They might kill me, but they cannot kill Gandhism. If truth can be killed, Gandhism can be killed", is Gandhi's life-lesson for the world.

The writer is national general secretary, BJP, and director, India Foundation

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### NEW GENERATION

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Will contest election from World' (IE October 1). In departing from family tradition and throwing his hat into the electoral ring Aaditya Thackeray has demonstrated a mind of his own. This will enthrone Shiv Sena cadres unable to come to terms with playing second fiddle to the BJP. Post elections he should assume an important responsibility in the cabinet, in case the coalition is voted to office. The exposure would enable him to emerge as a leader in his own right out of the shadows of the earlier generation Thackerays.

SB Bhalerao, Mumbai

### STRATEGY FOR ONIONS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'Wipe away onion tears', (IE, September 30). In the 2018-19 budget, the government proposed Operation Greens on the lines of the Operation Flood with the idea of developing an integrated value chain for tomato, onion and potato. These crops undergo seasonal supply fluctuation and have a very high price volatility. The scheme involves short term price stabilisation measures and a long term integrated value chain development projects. The long term strategy holds promise.

Sudip Kumar Dey, Kolkata

### POLLS, MISTRUST

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Election, restriction' (IE, October 1). Unless normality returns to J&K by polling day, the local body elections will be held in a climate of mistrust. With citizens not allowed free movement, there's unlikely to be proper canvassing. Public transport is off roads, communication networks do not function and every town is teeming with security personnel.

Sankar Paul, Nadia

### LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

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

editpage@expressindia.com or sent to The Indian Express, B-1/B, Sector 10, Noida-UP 201301.

Letter writers should mention their postal address and phone number.

THE WINNER RECEIVES SELECT EXPRESS PUBLICATIONS

### VENDETTA POLITICS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'A win for diplomacy' (IE, September 30). The vendetta politics played by Pakistan in the UN general assembly meeting clearly shows Pakistan's intention. It doesn't want peace to return in Kashmir valley. Pakistan has handed over 5,000 sq km of PoK to China in 1963, without the consensus of all stakeholders. It has changed the demography of PoK.

Niranjan Yadav, Goa

### SEAS AND FOOD

This refers to the editorial, 'At the heating seas' (IE, October 1). The oceans are repositories of marine life which are sources of livelihoods and food security. The acidification of seas will therefore also impact people's eating habits.

Bharat Sethi, Mumbai

## Windows before walls

Gandhiji never left us, we left him. He is with us, but are we with him?



ELA R BHATT

WE DO NOT need Gandhiji today. We killed him then, and kill his ideas, his imagination, year after year.

Gandhiji gave us enough to think and act upon during his lifetime. I was aware of his life and thinking when I started to work at the Textile Labour Association (TLA) founded by Anasuyaben with Gandhiji in Ahmedabad. Industrial relations were re-defined in terms of not capital against labour, but capital and labour for rebuilding a prosperous India. Alas, the industrialist, labour leaders, and the nation have left these ideas behind.

His ideas became valuable to me in terms of women's leadership, where the means of struggle are truth and non-violence. How well he understood the potential of women's leadership and how well he mobilised women in satyagraha. This understanding has appealed to me all my life as I became more and more active in Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA). While facing the overwhelming challenge of moving thousands of working women out of poverty each year, his thinking offered us SEWA sisters a clear way ahead.

The origins of my understanding of Gandhiji were twofold: The immediate reality of thousands of poor honest women workers in the informal sector of Ahmedabad and later, India, and my wonder about if and how Gandhiji's ideas can be or will be of use in addressing that reality. His ideas helped SEWA sisters move towards finding a just, dignified, and secure future of work for thousands of poor work-

ing women in India, and elsewhere.

In our schools, institutions of higher learning, and in professional life today, we are taught how to get to answers quickly. But when we are willing to put in time and effort to observe and understand the process of reaching the answer, in fact understanding the question itself far better and deeper from the point of view of the poorest woman, we do not need Gandhiji. May it be the future of work or the Fourth Industrial Revolution or knowledge economy or social impact investment or cashless banking or modernism in art, design, literature, education and technology.

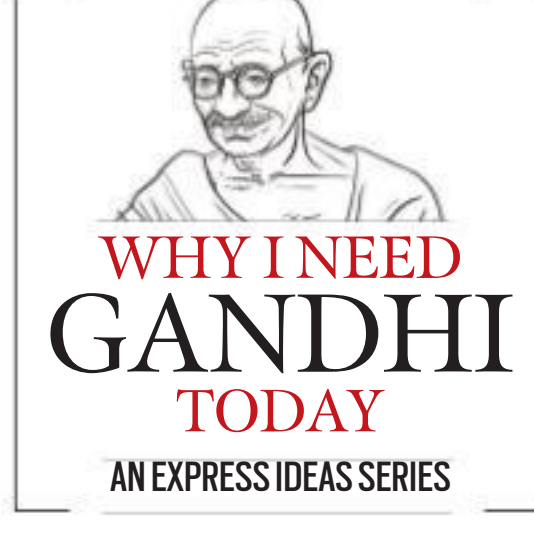
We do not need him because he has given us enough to help deal with new ideas or systems to understand and assimilate them in our thought and action. Coherent, all-inclusive, ever-evolving knowledge for our day-to-day life-long needs: He has given us a way to achieve just prosperity as a nation.

I am not a Gandhian or Gandhi *bhakt*, even though it is my honour to work with dedicated teams of Gujarat Vidyapith or Sabarmati Ashram. Such devotion does not come to me easily. When I think of Gandhiji today, my heart is filled with guilt and what in the Sanskrit language is called *glani*.

Having accepted the automated and mass production as the two most important ways to accelerate economic growth — useful in many ways, but not always — we have reached a stage where we are determined to make us all — tribals, minorities, ethnic groups, women, unorganised sector workers, even as Indians — extinct. He warned us of this *satyanash* almost a century ago.

We have entered a stage in India where Gandhiji and his ideas are valued for what they can give us rather than what he or his ideas can make out of us. The balance between 'to have' and 'to become' has changed in favour of 'to have'. Have more. And fast. And for oneself.

Like the tent of a Mughal emperor, for



Gandhiji offered us a visual vocabulary thorough khadi, ashrams or padayatra. For example, the coarseness of surfaces in textiles; thinking about windows before walls in architecture; settlements surrounding trees or water in a layout plan; meandering pathways towards clear destination, and more. We have underutilised this rich, and Indian, vocabulary.

us his ideas now have less to do with who and how many they cover, but the status it offers in the eyes of the others: Voters, rest of the liberal world, or scholars.

Gandhiji has shown us what we can and must know in terms of satyagraha, sarvodaya, swaraj, or swadeshi, and also the limitations of these ideas. It is up to us, not him, to find out what we do not know about these ideas and how to take these ideas forward in action.

*Je peed parai jane re!* He offered us a new sense of shared destiny, that your suffering one day will be my own suffering, that we are in this freedom struggle together. As, for the ever-elusive political freedom, we have surrendered economic, social, and even, cultural freedoms and the shared destiny of India.

Gandhiji offered us a visual vocabulary through khadi, ashrams or padayatra. For example, the coarseness of surfaces in textiles, thinking about windows before walls in architecture, settlements surrounding trees or water in a layout plan, meandering pathways towards clear destinations, and more. We have underutilised this rich — and Indian — vocabulary.

Every citizen, every nation, has to reach a certain level of conscious self-knowledge. Gandhiji helped India do so then, still does today, and will do so tomorrow if we try to understand his ideas.

Understanding the ideas of Gandhiji is a continual process of recreating our own ignorance — and not increasing our scholarship of Gandhiji's writings or ideas alone — in the sense of not knowing what is coming next. We are scared of acknowledging our ignorance of India and Indians.

We do not need Gandhiji today because he never left us. We left him. He is with us. But are we with him?

The writer founded SEWA in 1972 and was its general secretary till 1996. She is presently Chancellor, Gujarat Vidyapith

## Reading Gandhi in Catalonia

How the Gandhian idea of non-violence is shaping a political struggle in Spain



RAMIN JAHANBEGLOO

GANDHI'S LIFE CONTINUES to inspire people around the world. He changed India and the world with his vision of compassion, tolerance and peace. But he was above all an accomplished strategist who throughout his life worked to develop theories and practices that would advance the rights of marginalised groups and oppressed communities around the world. He inspired moral and political leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr, Nelson Mandela, Vaclav Havel, the Dalai Lama, and impacted social and political movements in Latin America, Asia, the Middle East and Europe. Despite the geographic and cultural diversity of these places, nonviolent movements there have exhibited a remarkable similarity to Gandhi's strategy for checking power and opposing violence. These indicate the practical success of an ethical commitment to norms of political transparency, non-violent negotiation, reconciliation and mutual respect.

Before Gandhi's satyagraha in India, virtually all modern revolutions had been based on bitterness and violence. The bitterness turned the revolutions bloody and vengeful. Gandhi turned the bitterness and violence of traditional revolutions into the positive power of non-violence. His revolution was not born of hatred and despair, therefore it was not driven by bitterness and violence. Far from being utopian, Gandhi's idea of ethical politics based on non-violence continues to be the most practical path to democ-

ratise liberal democracies that have a tendency to forget their foundational values. This is evident in the non-violent political struggle in Catalonia.

For the Catalans, who have dreamt of independence, disappointment might be real. But must they respond with bitterness, hate and violence? Or should they turn inward in self-defeat and self-pity? Neither, for sure. Because, for those who suffer in a non-violent cause, the most fruitful course is to stand firm and stay hopeful. This is the essence of the Gandhian moment of Catalonia. It is based on moral courage and respect for the otherness of others rather than passive submission to the thermodynamics of power. Cicero said that "freedom is participation in power". But for Catalans who believe in political autonomy and freedom, this power is no other than the ability to implement the demands of dialogue and justice in Catalonia. It is the moral strength to bring about a revolution of values in Catalonia. In this sense, we are talking about a power of love, not love of power.

According to Martin Luther King, Jr., "Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, justice at its best is love correcting everything that stands against love." Those Catalans who believe in the force of non-violence in bringing about changes in Catalonia cannot and should not advocate the same conscience-less power that they justly abhor in the Spanish police force. It is precisely this moral collision of the power of the

powerless Catalans with the immoral power of a powerful sovereignty that constitutes the Gandhian moment of Catalonia. That is why creative dissenters of Catalonia know well that the active way of non-violence is the meaningful conviction that they will stand with it till the end. The subversive sweetness and radical tenderness of Catalan non-violence is not only the re-ignition of public life in Catalonia, but also a fundamental transformation of the Spanish and European mode of thinking and living democracy.

As the Gandhian moment of Catalonia is showing the world, democracy is not only about institutions, law-making and carrying on governmental administration by means of popular suffrage and elected officers. Democracy is a mode of thinking and a way of life, where violence is tamed and non-violent social and political arrangements replace coercive and oppressive modes of subordinating individuals to the power of a government. There is no reason why the fundamental beliefs and practices of any democracy, either European, American or Asian, which subjugate and humiliate citizens instead of uplifting them, cannot be put into question. In that sense, democracy has to be a committed journey in the direction of humanness, compassion and maturity. It is a transfer of speech and action from oligarchs and plutocrats to everyday people and ordinary citizens.

Two centuries ago, German philosopher Immanuel Kant said enlightenment was hu-

man being's release from "self-incurred tutelage". It was the process by which human beings could become free of intellectual guardianship, and learn to "dare to think". Kant believed that this tutelage occurred because of many reasons and aspects, cowardice and complacency among them. In other words, for Kant, as for many of us, being mature is about being independent-minded and morally and intellectually mature. This is where the force of non-violent action resides: It helps people to think not only in terms of political autonomy, but mainly in relation to intellectual and moral independence. Where there is a desire and a unity among citizens of a society to think for themselves and emerge from any form of tutelage, that society is already on the path of independence.

This sense of maturity is at the heart of the Gandhian moment of Catalonia. Gandhi's satyagraha showed that the truly civilised party in a clash for maturity, autonomy and independence are those who practise non-violence. This is the moral imperative and the intellectual foundation of Catalonia's political struggle. The line of progress might not be straight in Catalonia, but it is certainly shaping a great spirit of dignity among Catalonians and a sense of respect for Catalonia among those who never believed in the Gandhian moment of Catalonia.

The writer is professor-vice dean, Jindal Global University



TELLING NUMBERS

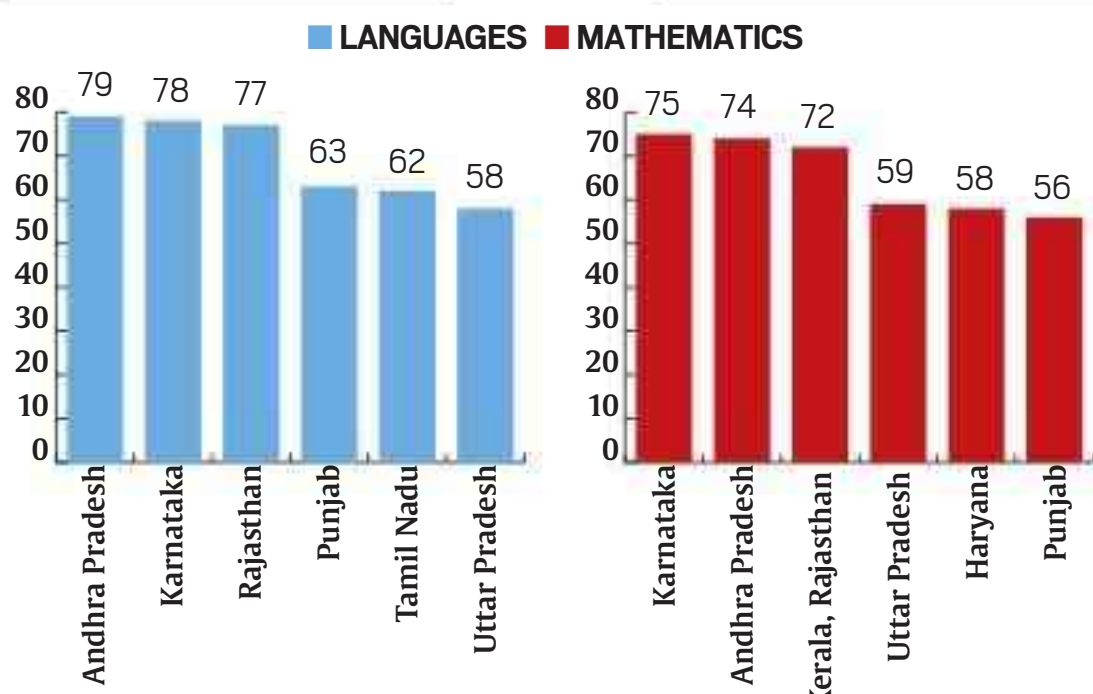
## Education Quality Index: how students did in maths, languages

THE GRAPHS below show average scores by students of three classes in 20 "large states" in the National Achievement Survey 2017, and detailed in the NITI Aayog's report on the School Education Quality Index 2019, released on Monday. Performance in languages and mathematics was among various indicators chosen to assess the "overall effectiveness, quality and efficiency of the Indian school education system", and came under the domain of "learning outcomes". The data were sourced mostly from publicly available sources.

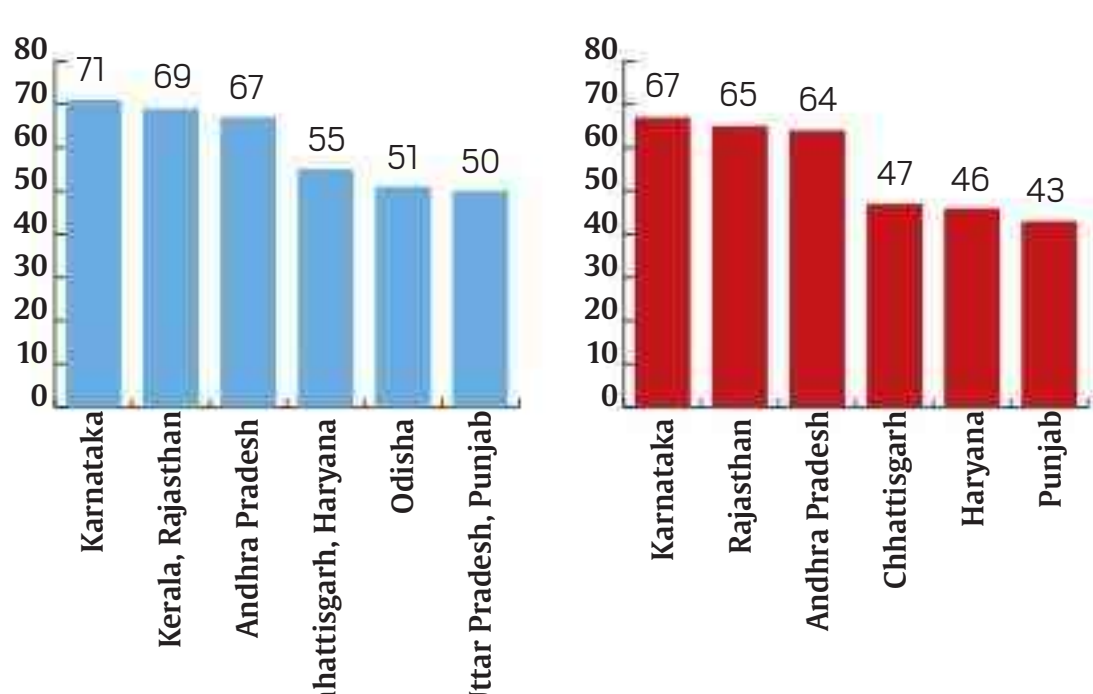
As reported on Tuesday, Kerala had the best overall performance at 76.6 percent and Uttar Pradesh had the worst performance, with 36.4 percent. In Class 3, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka have the highest average scores in language and mathematics, while Uttar Pradesh and Punjab have the lowest. For class 5, Karnataka tops the list with the highest scores in both language and mathematics, while Uttar Pradesh and Punjab are again at the bottom. For class 8, Rajasthan has the highest average scores for both language and mathematics, whereas Telangana, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab have the lowest scores.

TOP 3 & BOTTOM 3 (LARGE STATES)

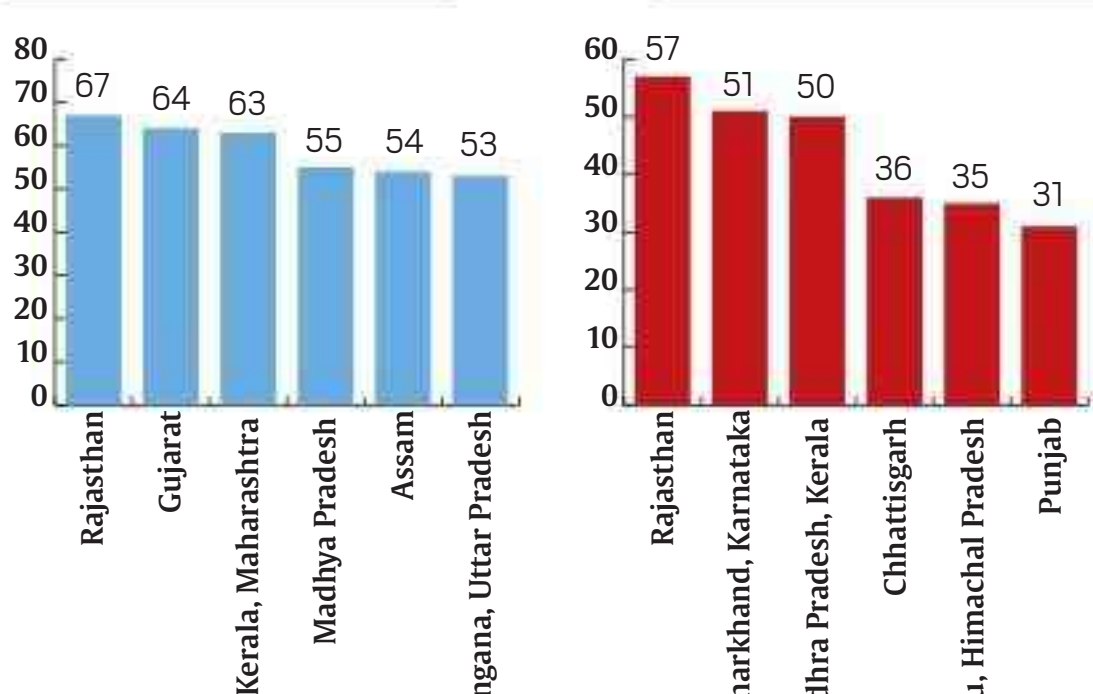
CLASS 3



CLASS 5



CLASS 8



Source: NITI Aayog

AN EXPERT EXPLAINS

# SC/ST judgment, in review

The Supreme Court has recalled its 2018 directions that diluted certain provisions of the SC/ST Act. What were these provisions, and under what circumstances does the court review its own rulings?



FAIZAN MUSTAFA

ON TUESDAY, the Supreme Court recalled its directions in a March 20, 2018 verdict that had effectively diluted provisions of arrest under the Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989. This was following a plea by the Centre seeking a review of that judgment.

What is review of a judgment?

'Review' of a Supreme Court judgment is done by the same Bench. 'Overruling' means that the law laid down in one case is overruled in another case. When a higher court on appeal alters the judgment of a lower court, it is called 'reversal'.

Generally, a review is heard in the judge's chamber, but may be heard in open court in important cases — as in the Sabarimala and Rafale cases, in which no order has been pronounced yet. In the SC/ST case, a Bench of Justice Adarsh Goel and Justice U U Lalit had admitted a review of the March 20, 2018 judgment in *Subhash Kashinath Mahajan vs State of Maharashtra*. After Justice Goel retired, a new Bench was constituted that eventually referred the matter to a three-judge Bench headed by Justice Arun Mishra (who authored the 51-page review judgment on Tuesday) and included Justice MR Shah and Justice B R Gavai.

Why was the SC/ST Act enacted?

Since crimes against SCs and STs are fundamentally hate crimes, the Rajiv Gandhi government enacted the Act in 1989 in furtherance of the provisions for abolition of untouchability (Article 17) and equality (Articles 14, 15) in the Constitution. In accepting the review, Justice Mishra relied on the Statement of Objects & Reasons of the Bill that stated that "despite various measures to improve the socio-economic conditions of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, they remain vulnerable. They are denied number of civil rights. They are subjected to various offences, indignities, humiliations and harassment. They have, in several brutal incidents, been deprived of their life and property".



Protest in Jaipur in April 2018, following the SC's March directions Rohit Jain Paras

What was the Subhash Kashinath Mahajan case about?

Mahajan was Director of Technical Education in Maharashtra. Two non-SC officers had made an adverse entry on the character and integrity of a Dalit employee, whom Mahajan in 2011 denied sanction for prosecution against those officers. The denial was challenged on the ground that the state government and not the director was the competent authority. The Supreme Court held that safeguards against blackmail are necessary as "by way of rampant misuse, complaints are largely being filed against public servant/judicial officer/quasi-judicial officer with oblique motive for the satisfaction of vested interests".

In what manner had the 2018 judgment diluted provisions for arrest?

**ANTICIPATORY BAIL:** Keeping in view the special nature of crimes against Dalits in Section 18 of the Act, Parliament had laid down that the provision of anticipatory bail under Section 438 of the Criminal Procedure Code of 1973 will not be available to an accused under the Act. The provision of anticipatory bail was introduced for the first time on the recommendation of 41st Law Commission in 1973. It is a statutory right, not part of the right to life and personal liberty under Article 21 of the Constitution, and thus there is no fundamental right to anticipatory bail. A few state amendments to Section 438 exclude anticipatory bail. In the March 20, 2018 judgment, the Supreme

Court laid down safeguards, including provisions for anticipatory bail and a "preliminary enquiry" before registering a case under the Act. On Tuesday, the Bench said Section 18 was enacted to instil a sense of deterrence and relied on *Kartar Singh* (1994) in which the court had held that denial of anticipatory bail does not violate Article 21.

**FIR:** Justice Goel had observed that "liberty of one cannot be sacrificed to protect another", and added that the "Atrocities Act cannot be converted into charter for exploitation or oppression by unscrupulous persons or by police for extraneous reasons". He ordered that neither is an FIR to be immediately registered nor are arrests to be made without a preliminary inquiry by an SSP. An arrest can only be made if there is "credible" information and police officer has "reason to believe" that an offence was committed.

In the review judgment, Justice Mishra said public servants already have a remedy in false cases under CrPC Section 482 and can get such FIRs quashed by High Courts. He rejected the need of an SSP's approval for arrest. Section 4 of the SC/ST Act casts a specific duty on public servants to record an FIR as per information given. Non-registration of FIR is punishable. Section 22 protects public servants for actions taken in 'good faith', for which no legal proceedings can be initiated against them.

**PERMISSION:** In 2018, the court had said that even if a preliminary inquiry is held and a case registered, arrest is not necessary, and that no public servant is to be arrested without the

written permission of the appointing authority. The court extended the benefit to other citizens and said they cannot be arrested without the written permission of the SSP of the district. On Tuesday, Justice Mishra said the decision on arrest is to be taken by the investigating authority, not the appointing authority.

Were other provisions diluted?

Justice Goel had observed that "interpretation of Atrocities Act should promote constitutional values of fraternity and integration of the society. This may require 'check on false implication of innocent citizens on caste lines'." Observing that the law should not result in caste hatred, the court overlooked the fact that the Act had to be enacted due to caste hatred. The review judgment said that such riders for registering a report are wrong and it would give an advantage to upper castes whose complaints can be registered without any such inquiry.

How frequently do SCs/STs face atrocities?

A crime is committed against an SC every 15 minutes. Six SC women are raped every day on an average. Between 2007 and 2017, there was a 66 per cent growth in crimes against SCs. Data from the National Crime Record Bureau, which the 2018 judgment was based on, showed cases of rape of SC women had doubled in 10 years.

On Tuesday, Justice Mishra quoted the *Subramanian Swamy* judgment (2014) in which the court had held that where statutory provisions are unambiguous, the court cannot read these down. The court accepted that Dalits have suffered for long and negated the basis of last year's judgment in which the court had commented on false cases under the Act.

Were similar guidelines not issued by the SC in other cases?

The Supreme Court can lay down guidelines only in cases of legislative gaps. For instance, it laid down guidelines on sexual harassment, *khap* panchayats, lynching etc. But where the field is occupied by parliamentary legislation, the judiciary is bound by the text of law. It can, however, examine constitutionality of such a law. The review order observed that the March 2018 guidelines encroached upon the field reserved for Parliament, and therefore recalled these directions.

Faizan Mustafa is a well-known expert in constitutional law

# Unnao case: What Apple says on location data

SHRUTI DHAPOLA

NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 1

A DELHI court on Saturday asked Apple to hand over location data from the iPhone of expelled BJP MLA Kuldeep Singh Sengar, an accused in the alleged rape of a minor girl from Unnao. Sengar has cited call detail records to claim he was almost 50 km away when the alleged crime happened in 2017.

What has the court sought; what has Apple said?

The court has issued direction to Apple's "management/concerned officer" in India "to produce GPS location and GPS location chart" of the phone "for the date 04.06.2017".

Apple asked for two weeks "to seek instructions regarding the availability of the data because as of now it is not known whether or where the data is stored, and if at all it is stored, whether it is available or not". Counsel for Apple also said "they are yet to take a decision as to in what format data, if available, can be supplied". The court granted until October 9 to furnish the "relevant information/data", along with "an affidavit containing certificate of the

system analyst/authorised person in terms of Section 65B of Indian Evidence Act".

Does Apple have access to location data of an iPhone?

Under the "Legal Process Guidelines" for government and law enforcement on Apple's website, the following are listed as available: device registration, customer service records, iTunes information, Apple retail store transactions and Apple online store purchases, along with gift cards, iCloud, and Find My iPhone. Games Center details, information regarding iOS device activation, My Apple ID, iForgot Logs, FaceTime and iMessage too, are listed. Location is not listed as an available data point.

Apple's support page for "Location Services" says the iPhone "will periodically send the geo-tagged locations of nearby Wi-Fi hotspots and cell towers... in an anonymous and encrypted form to Apple". The idea, Apple says, is to augment a crowdsourced database of Wi-Fi hotspot and cell tower locations.

In Apple's privacy policy, the paragraph on Location services says services such as Maps "may collect, use, and share precise location data, including the real-time geographic location of your Apple computer or device". It adds

that "unless you provide consent, this location data is collected anonymously in a form that does not personally identify you..."

Does Apple share data with law enforcement agencies?

Yes. Apple's transparency report for July-December 2018 shows that worldwide, it received 49 device-related requests, 28 requests for financial identifiers, 18 requests for accounts, and 8 emergency requests during this period, and complied with 23, 16, 11, and six of these respectively.

Device requests are typically for data related to device identifiers, which could include serial numbers or IMEI numbers; for accounts, it could be information such as email address or Apple ID. Account requests also seek data such as photos, email, iOS device backups, contacts or calendars, according to Apple's transparency report page. In India, Apple has not provided content-related data in any of the account requests.

What about the 'Find Me' feature, and the location data it collects?

'Find Me' (previously 'Find My iPhone'), mentioned in the list of information available

with Apple for law enforcement agencies, helps pinpoint the last location of a lost Apple device; it can also be used to remotely lock or erase a lost iPhone. Apple's support page says "device location services information" is stored on the device, and Apple cannot retrieve this. Connection logs from 'Find My iPhone' are only "available for a period of approximately 30 days". If this data is available, it "may be obtained with the appropriate legally valid request for the requestor's country".

Does Apple push user data to the cloud?

Going by its support page, it does not appear Apple has access to location data on the iPhone. Apple's philosophy on data processing has been to ensure most tasks are carried out on the device itself. Data in users' iCloud accounts is encrypted; Apple says it "retains the encryption keys in its US data centers".

On data extraction from an iPhone, Apple's support page says "it is unable to perform an iOS device data extraction as the data typically sought by law enforcement is encrypted, and Apple does not possess the encryption key". This applies to all devices from iPhone 6 onward, which are on iOS 8 or a later version.

# In row over High Court ban on animal sacrifice, echoes of Tripura's past

SOURAV ROY BARMAN

NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 1

ON SEPTEMBER 27, a Tripura High Court Bench of Chief Justice Sanjay Karol and Justice Arindam Lodh banned the sacrifice of animals and birds in temples of the state, and directed the government to sensitise people about constitutional values and the importance of love, humanism, and compassion towards all animals and birds.

The managements of two major temples, mentioned in the judgment, chose to defy the order, citing the absence of a notification on the ban. Meanwhile, Pradyot Debbarman, the son of Tripura's last king Kirit Bikram Kishore Manikya, and the state government intend to appeal in the Supreme Court.

State Law & Parliamentary Affairs Minister Ratan Lal Nath told reporters Monday that the government did not want to "hurt anyone's religious beliefs" through its actions.

Debbarman told *The Indian Express* that while the scale of animal sacrifice must be reduced, "courts cannot play the role of priests".

500-year tradition

Animal sacrifice has been happening for at least 500 years in Tripura. The two major sites are the Tripureswari Devi temple in Udaipur, and the Chaturdash Devta temple in Agartala. Both temples were founded by the Manikyas, Tripura's ruling dynasty from the late 13th century until September 9, 1949.

The Tripureswari Temple, considered one of the 51 *shakti peethas*, was founded in 1501 by Maharaja Dhanya Manikya. The Chaturdash Devta Temple, or 'Temple of Fourteen Gods', who were the royal deities, was established in its current location around 1770 by Maharaja Krishna Kishore Manikya.

What the High Court said

The court ruled that the tradition of sacrificing animals "lacks the essence of economic,

commercial, political or secular character" and cannot be protected under Article 25(1) of the Constitution (*Subhas Bhattacharjee vs The State of Tripura and Others*). Freedom of religion is subject to the rigours of public order, morality, and health, it said. Also, animal sacrifice in a temple is violative of Article 21, the court said, adding that religious practice cannot override provisions of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960.

Drawing reference from Rev. James Long's 'Human Sacrifices in Tripura', the court said there was evidence that up to 1,000 humans were sacrificed every year until about 1407 — "Thus it is only logical that when human sacrifice could be stopped then nothing can impede a ban on sacrifice of animals as part of religious practice, for life of both humans and animals are legally required to be valued and protected."

Plea not 'anti-Hindu'

The government argued that under the

terms of Tripura's Merger Agreement with the Indian Dominion, worship at Mata Tripureswari and other temples should continue in the traditional manner. Animal sacrifice was part of tantric worship, and the petition had been filed only to "disturb the Hindu sentiment and presumably by anti-Hindu elements", because it did not challenge the practice of animal sacrifice during Bakr Eid, the government said.

The court rejected this argument as "preposterous": "The State cannot be allowed to take such a stand, more so, in the absence of any material, substantiating the same".

It said: "The issue of animal sacrifice by the minority community (Muslims) on the occasion of Bakr Id, already stands settled in *Mohd. Hanif Quareshi (Mohd. Hanif Quareshi & Others vs The State Of Bihar, 1958)*, *Ashutosh Lahiri (State Of West Bengal vs Ashutosh Lahiri, 1994)* and *Mirzapur (Mirzapur Moti Kureshi Kassab vs State Of Gujarat And Ors, 1998)*; hence, such plea

needs to be repelled at the threshold."

Even in those cases, the Supreme Court had ruled that animal sacrifice was not an essential part of Islam and could not be granted protection on the ground of religious freedom, and that states were free to enact laws to ban the practice, the court said. However, on the question of a blanket ban, the courts have held differing opinions.

Tagore in the judgment

"And here we may only remind the State what message Sri Rabindra Nath Tagore conveyed to the then Raja and his citizenry through his famous work, *Bishorjan*," the court said.

Tagore was closely associated with the royal house of Manikyas, who had accorded him the title of 'Bharat Bhaskar', and gave him financial assistance for the construction of Visva-Bharati. He captured a turbulent phase in the history of the Tripura kingdom in his novel *Rajarshi*, which he later

adapted into the play *Bishorjon*.

*Rajarshi*, written with inputs from Maharaja Bir Chandra Manikya around 1880, chronicled the decision of Maharaja Gobinda Manikya (1660-61 and 1667-76) to ban animal sacrifice, which angered the orthodoxy led by the head priest or Chantai, Raghupati.

The novel begins with the monarch walking on the banks of the river Gomati with a little girl, Hashi. The river is red with blood, and Hashi asks "Eto rokto keno? (Why is there so much blood?)". Soon afterward, Hashi dies of a fever, repeating the question until her last breath.

A shaken Gobinda Manikya bans animal sacrifice at the Bhubaneswari Temple (which now lies in ruins in south Tripura). Raghupati conspires with the king's enemies, and Gobinda Manikya is dethroned in a coup with the help of the Mughals, and replaced by his stepbrother Nakshatra Rai. Gobinda Manikya eventually regains his position with the help of the Arakans.



## बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड

वर्ष 12 अंक 194

### औषधि मूल्य नियंत्रण

इस समाचार पत्र में प्रकाशित खबर के मुताबिक एक विशेषज्ञ समिति औषधि मूल्य नियामक से यह अनुशंसा करने वाली है कि उसे बिना ब्रांड वाली जेनेरिक औषधियों को दायरे में लेते हुए एंटीबायोटिक औषधियों की कीमतों पर लगी सीमा को तार्किक बनाया जाए। फिलहाल ब्रांडेड एंटीबायोटिक औषधियां मसलन अंगमॉटिन आदि पर स्टाकिस्ट के लिए

मार्जिन की सीमा 8 फीसदी और खुदरा कारोबारियों के लिए 16 फीसदी है। जबकि इस औषधि का थोक मूल्य नियामक तय करता है। यदि राष्ट्रीय औषधि मूल्य नियंत्रण प्राधिकरण राजी हो जाता है तो जेनेरिक एंटीबायोटिक के लिए भी समान नियमन जारी किए जाएंगे। अटकलें हैं कि सबसे अधिक प्रभाव अस्पतालों के मार्जिन पर पड़ेगा। परंतु

यह अवसर एंटीबायोटिक औषधियों के मूल्य पर लगी सीमा की दिक्कत को सार्वजनिक करने वाला अवसर भी है। उपभोक्ता कल्याण का काम करने के बजाय वह उसे ही नुकसान पहुंचाने का काम करती है। कीमतों पर किसी भी तरह की सीमा आरोपित करने का असर आपूर्ति पर पड़ता है। एंटीबायोटिक जैसी दवाओं की आपूर्ति प्रभावित होना कई तरह से नुकसानदेह है। पहली बात, मूल्य नियंत्रण के अधीन खरीदी गई औषधि की कमी आम हो सकती है। यदि कीमतों में ज्यादा कटौती हुई तो दवाओं की राशिंग हो सकती है। संसाधनों का स्थानांतरण अधिक मुनाफे वाली दवाओं के उत्पादन में हो सकता है जिनकी कीमत पर सीमा न लगी हो। कई कंपनियां चुनिंदा दवाओं को बनाया बंद कर

सकती हैं। अन्य कंपनियां चिकित्सकों या अस्पतालों से मिलकर वे दवाएं लिखवाना शुरू कर सकती हैं जो तय कीमत की सीमा से परे हों। ब्रांडेड और गैर ब्रांडेड जेनेरिक औषधियों के साथ ऐसा हो भी रहा है। दूसरी प्रतिक्रिया समस्या को और विकराल बना सकती है। आपूर्ति संबंधी प्रतिक्रिया का असर गुणवत्ता पर पड़ सकता है। औषधि निर्माता कटौती करेंगे और पर्याप्त नियामकीय निगरानी के वे खराब गुणवत्ता वाली औषधियां बना सकते हैं। चिकित्सकों के गलत पर्चे पहले ही समस्या बने हुए थे और मूल्य सीमा ने हालत और खराब कर दी है। इंडियन बिजनेस स्कूल के शोधकर्ताओं ने टाइप 2 डायबिटीज के इलाज में इस्तेमाल होने वाली दवा मेटफॉर्मिन पर मूल्य सीमा लागू करने के आपूर्ति एवं मांग पर

पड़ने वाले असर का अध्ययन किया। उन्होंने पाया कि इसका असर स्पष्ट है। इस दवा की कीमत की सीमा तय किए जाने के बाद विभिन्न कंपनियां आपस में मिलीभगत कर मेटफॉर्मिन के बाजार पर कब्जा बरकरार रखने लगीं। अब तक ऐसा करने के लिए इनमें से किसी कंपनी के खिलाफ कदम नहीं उठाया गया है। बिना क्रियावन्धन की क्षमता के नियमन लागू करना सही नहीं है और इससे बचा जाना चाहिए। कुल मिलाकर शोध और अध्ययन से यही साबित हुआ है कि देश में औषधि मूल्य नियंत्रण का असर नकारात्मक ही रहा है। वॉशिंगटन डीसी में वैश्विक विकास केंद्र की प्रोफेसर एम्मा डीन ने यह दिखाया है कि देश में मूल्य नियंत्रण का नतीजा ऐसी औषधियों की बिक्री में गिरावट के रूप में सामने आया है। यानी

दवाएं कुछ मरीजों की पहुंच से दूर हो जाएंगी। प्रोफेसर डीन के मुताबिक यह विसंगति गरीब और ग्रामीण उपभोक्ताओं को नुकसान पहुंचा सकती है। दवाओं तक बेहतर पहुंच वाले अमीर उपभोक्ता दवाएं आसानी से खरीद सकते हैं। इससे गलत पर्चों की आशंका बढ़ती है। कुछ मरीज इनका दुरुपयोग कर सकते हैं। एंटीबायोटिक औषधियों के साथ ऐसे पर्चे खतरनाक हो सकते हैं क्योंकि बिना जरूरत के दवा लिखी जा सकती है। एंटीबायोटिक प्रतिरोध के मामले में हमारी हालत दुनिया में सबसे बुरी है। खराब दवाओं के कारण हमारे यहां जन स्वास्थ्य संकट में है। अब देश सार्वभौमिक स्वास्थ्य सेवा की ओर बढ़ रहा है तो हमें दवाओं के मूल्य पर मनमाने नियंत्रण से बचना चाहिए।



अजय मोहंती

# सफलता के सफर में मील के नए पत्थर

स्वच्छ भारत अभियान की सफलता से यह उम्मीद बंधी है कि देश जल आपूर्ति हासिल करने और प्लास्टिक कचरे से मुक्ति पाने में भी कामयाब होगा। बता रहे हैं परमेश्वरन अख्यर

अहमदाबाद में सुप्रसिद्ध साबरमती नदी के तट पर करीब 20,000 ऐसे सरपंच और स्वच्छाग्रही आज एकत्रित हो रहे हैं जो जमीनी स्तर पर स्वच्छता के लिए काम करते हैं। ये तमाम लोग ऐसे ऐतिहासिक अवसर पर एकत्रित हो रहे हैं जब देश महात्मा गांधी की 150वीं वर्षगांठ मना रहा है। हम उन्हें एक स्वच्छ भारत की सौगात देने जा रहे हैं जो शायद उन्हें समर्पित की जाने वाली सबसे उपयुक्त श्रद्धांजलि होगी। जमीनी स्तर पर स्वच्छता के काम से जुड़े लाखों लोग इस आयोजन को अपने गांवों में लाइव देख सकेंगे। देश की स्वच्छता क्रांति के वास्तुशिल्पी प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी इस अवसर पर एकत्रित जनसमूह के साथ-साथ देश को संबोधित करेंगे और उन यादों को निर्यात लिया गया है और उन्होंने लाल किले के प्राचीर से लोगों के व्यवहार में तब्दीली लाने वाले सबसे बड़े अभियान की शुरुआत की थी। इस अवधि में देश ने खुले में शौच वाले दुनिया के सबसे बड़े देश से स्वच्छता अभियान का प्रेरक बनने तक का सफर तय किया है। भारत का यह सफर कई देशों के लिए प्रेरणा का काम कर रहा है

और वे भी इस व्यापक सामाजिक, स्वास्थ्य संबंधी, आर्थिक और पर्यावरण संबंधी प्रभाव वाली चुनौती से निपटने की दिशा में पहल कर रहे हैं। जब स्वच्छ भारत मिशन की शुरुआत हुई थी तब भारत में स्वच्छता का कवरेज केवल 39 फीसदी था। महज पांच वर्ष में देश के ग्रामीण इलाकों में 10 करोड़ से अधिक शौचालय बने हैं और करीब 60 करोड़ लोगों ने खुले में शौच करना बंद कर दिया है। देश के सभी राज्यों ने खुद को खुले में शौच से मुक्त घोषित कर दिया है। यह केवल इसलिए संभव हो सका क्योंकि राजनीतिक नेतृत्व साथ था। प्रधानमंत्री मोदी ने इसे निजी तौर पर एक चुनौती के रूप में लिया। इस लक्ष्य को पूरा करने के लिए पर्याप्त वित्तीय सहायता प्रदान की गई। इससे देश के नौ करोड़ से अधिक सामाजिक और आर्थिक रूप से गरीब परिवारों को शौचालय निर्माण में सहायता मिली। इस बीच सरकार, निजी क्षेत्र और विकास संबंधी क्षेत्रों के बीच जबरदस्त साझेदारी देखने को मिली। सबसे अहम बात यह थी कि यह कार्यक्रम सरकारी योजना से अधिक एक जनांदोलन में तब्दील हो गया। स्वच्छ भारत मिशन इस बात की

मिसाल है कि कैसे एक व्यापक कार्यक्रम का तेज गति से क्रियान्वयन किया जाए। प्रधानमंत्री के हस्तक्षेप से इसकी अत्यंत आवश्यकता को महसूस किया गया और देश के विभिन्न राज्यों, जिलों और यहां तक कि गांवों के बीच प्रतिस्पर्धा को भावना उत्पन्न हुई। राजनीतिक नेतृत्व एकदम निचले स्तर तक शामिल नजर आया। इस कार्यक्रम ने शौचालयों से जुड़े पूर्वग्रह को समाप्त किया। प्रधानमंत्री ने स्वतंत्रता दिवस पर अपने पहले भाषण में इसे प्रमुखता से शामिल किया और छह लाख प्रशिक्षित स्वच्छाग्रहियों के माध्यम से पंचायतों की बैठक, जन सभाओं में और घर-घर जाकर लोगों में व्यवहार के स्तर पर बदलाव को प्रेरित किया गया। दोहरे पिट वाले स्वउपचारित शौचालयों को देश भर में बढ़ावा दिया गया। देश भर के लोगों ने शौचालय के शुष्क अवशिष्ट को खाली कर शौच से जुड़े कलंक को दूर करने में अहम भूमिका निभाई। इस कार्यक्रम में लोगों के व्यवहार में बदलाव पर जोर दिए जाने का एक अर्थ यह भी था कि इस कार्यक्रम में निरंतरता आए। गांवों के लोगों ने प्रेरणा लेकर अपने यहां शौचालय बनवाए और समुदायों में इनके इस्तेमाल को लेकर भी

चेतना का प्रचार प्रसार हुआ। ग्राम सभाओं में छह लाख गांवों ने अपने आप को खुले में शौच से मुक्त घोषित किया। हाल ही में सर्वेक्षणों से पता चला है कि शौचालय तक पहुंच रखने वाले 95 फीसदी से अधिक लोग इनका नियमित इस्तेमाल करते हैं। बहरहाल, अब जबकि इस दिशा में मील का पहला पत्थर हासिल हो चुका है, तो यह सफर जारी रहना चाहिए। हम सभी इस तथ्य से वाकिफ हैं कि व्यवहार में आए बदलाव पर टिके रहने और नए मानक तैयार करने में समय लगा है और इसके लिए मूलभूत संदेश पर बार-बार जोर देना जरूरी होता है। यही कारण है कि गत सप्ताह जारी की गई देश की अग्रसूची 10 वर्षीय स्वच्छता नीति में खुले में शौच मुक्ति को निरंतर जारी रखे जाने को प्राथमिकता दी गई है। यह नीति इस बात को रेखांकित करती है कि कैसे देश आम जनता को व्यवहार में लगातार बदलाव की चर्चा और संवाद के सहारे खुले में शौच मुक्ति के लाभों से अवगत कराया जाएगा। इसके साथ ही यह सुनिश्चित किया जाएगा कि इस दौरान कोई पीछे न हटने पाए। राज्यों से भी यह कहा गया है कि वे यदि कोई घर या परिवार किसी तरह पीछे हट गया है तो उसके यहां शौचालय निर्माण को प्राथमिकता प्रदान की जाए। यह नीति इस बात पर भी केंद्रित है कि हर स्तर पर क्षमता विस्तार हो, वित्तीय सहायता के नए माडल सामने आए और देश के प्रत्येक गांव में ठोस और तरल कचरे के प्रबंधन को प्रोत्साहित किया जाए। इस दौरान प्लास्टिक कचरे के प्रबंधन को भी तबज्जो दी जाए। स्वच्छ भारत मिशन सहभागिता वाले विकास की नजीर बन चुका है। यहां सरकार पहल करती है और लोग उस कार्यक्रम को पूरा करते हैं। प्रधानमंत्री ने इस वर्ष स्वतंत्रता दिवस पर जो आह्वान किया था उसके तहत देश भर से करोड़ों लोग स्वच्छता ही सेवा अभियान के तहत प्लास्टिक कचरे के संग्रह के लिए श्रमदान की पेशकश कर रहे हैं। इस प्रयास का लक्ष्य है प्लास्टिक के इस्तेमाल को रोकने के लिए एकल प्रयोग वाले प्लास्टिक का इस्तेमाल बंद करना। जो भी प्लास्टिक एकत्रित होगा उसे सड़क निर्माण आदि में इस्तेमाल करके सुरक्षित ढंग से निपटारा जाएगा। इसके माध्यम से अगले कुछ वर्ष के दौरान देश में एकल प्रयोग वाले प्लास्टिक के इस्तेमाल को समाप्त करना ही दिशा में एक मजबूत पहल होगी। सरकार सन 2024 तक देश के सभी परिवारों को पाइप से पेयजल उपलब्ध कराने की तैयारी में है। इसके लिए न्यूनतम संभव स्तर पर एकीकृत निवेश किया जाएगा। इस योजना में स्रोत की उपलब्धता से लेकर जलापूर्ति और उसके दोबारा उपयोग तक सारी बातें शामिल हैं। जिस प्रकार देश स्वच्छता के मामले में नए मानक गढ़ने में तैयार रहा, वैसे ही प्लास्टिक कचरे के प्रबंधन और जलापूर्ति को भी जनांदोलन बनाने का लक्ष्य रहेगा। ऐसे आंदोलनों के पीछे 130 करोड़ लोगों की शक्ति है और इसमें दो राय नहीं कि इसे सफलता मिलेगी। (लेखक पेयजल एवं स्वच्छता विभाग, जल शक्ति मंत्रालय में सचिव हैं)

## क्या जीवनकाल बढ़ाने के लिए प्रक्रिया को पलटा जा सकता है ?

जैव विज्ञान के क्षेत्र में कई उल्लेखनीय प्रगति हुई है लेकिन उम्र बढ़ने की प्रक्रिया अब तक रहस्य नहीं हुई है। बेहतर पोषण, साफ सफाई तथा स्वास्थ्य व्यवस्था में सुधार से जीवन प्रत्याशा बढ़ी है। नई दवाओं की खोज और अनुवंशिक अनुसंधान से असाध्य रोगों का इलाज संभव हुआ है। उम्मीद की जाती है कि बीते दौर की तुलना में आज मनुष्य बेहतर स्वास्थ्य के साथ ज्यादा लंबे समय तक जीता है। लेकिन क्या मानव प्रजाति दीर्घायु हो सकती है ? हर ऐतिहासिक दौर में ऐसे लोग हुए हैं जो 80 से 90 साल या उससे भी अधिक समय तक जिंदा रहे जबकि तब औसत जीवनकाल 40 से भी कम था। निश्चित तौर पर हम यह उम्मीद कर सकते हैं कि ज्यादा से ज्यादा लोग दीर्घायु होंगे। पूरे यूरोपीय संघ (ईयू) में जीवन प्रत्याशा 80 साल की पार कर गई है और जापान, सिंगापुर और स्विटजरलैंड में तो यह 85 साल से अधिक है। भारत में लोग औसतन 69 साल तक जीते हैं। लेकिन क्या जीवन प्रत्याशा को 120 साल या इससे भी अधिक समय तक पहुंचाना मुमकिन है ? कुछ लोगों को लगता है कि ऐसा संभव है। इस तरह शोधकर्ताओं और नीतिनिर्माताओं के समक्ष दो परस्पर लेकिन अलग-अलग लक्ष्य हैं। इनमें से एक लक्ष्य ऐसी व्यवस्था बनाना है जहां लोग लंबे समय तक जी सकें और निरोग रह सकें। दूसरा लक्ष्य ज्यादा महत्वाकांक्षी है। यह है उम्र बढ़ने की प्रक्रिया को समझना और जीवनकाल बढ़ाने के लिए इसके प्रभावों को पलटना।



तकनीकी तंत्र देवांग्शु दत्ता

दुनियाभर में अभी करीब 500,000 लोगों की उम्र 100 से अधिक है। यह संख्या भविष्य में हर दशक में दोगुनी होगी। 'साइंस' पत्रिका में प्रकाशित एक विश्लेषण के मुताबिक मनुष्य के जीवित रहने की कोई सीमा नहीं हो सकती है। इटली की जनसांख्यिकीविद् एलिजाबेता बाबॉ और फ्रांसेस्को लगोना तथा इटैलियन नेशनल इंस्टीट्यूट ऑफ स्टैटिस्टिक्स ने वर्ष 2009 से 2015 के बीच इटली के 105 साल या उससे अधिक उम्र के 3,836 लोगों का रिकॉर्ड खंगाला। हम जानते हैं कि सहज रूप से और सांख्यिकीय रूप से भी हर व्यवस्था का मरने का खतरा बढ़ जाता है। यानी 20 साल के युवक की तुलना में 21 साल के

युवक के अगले 12 महीने में मरने की आशंका थोड़ा ज्यादा है और हरेक साल के साथ यह जोखिम बढ़ता जाता है। इस अध्ययन में एक विचित्र बात सामने आई है कि 105 साल की उम्र के बाद अगले 12 महीने की अवधि के दौरान मरने का जोखिम करीब 50 फीसदी रह जाता है। यह सांख्यिकीय या पद्धति संबंधी संयोग हो सकता है या यह किसी जैविक घटना का संकेत हो सकता है जहां कोशिकाओं की मरम्मत की प्रक्रिया उम्र बढ़ने के प्रभाव को संतुलित करती है। अंतरिक्ष अनुसंधान और रोबोटिक्स को बढ़ावा देने वाली संस्था एक्सप्राइज फाउंडेशन ने भी मनुष्यों का जीवनकाल बढ़ाने के अनुसंधान में दिलचस्पी दिखाई है। एक्सप्राइज बोर्ड के एक सदस्य सेर्गेई यंग ने लॉन्जैविटी विजन फंड के लिए 10 करोड़ डॉलर जुटाए हैं। यह जीवनकाल बढ़ाने से संबंधित क्षेत्रों में अनुसंधान करने वाली जैव प्रौद्योगिकी स्टार्टअप कंपनियों में निवेश करेगा। यंग का मानना है कि जीवनकाल को बढ़ाकर 200 साल किया जा सकता है और इसके लिए प्रौद्योगिकी को एक अरब से अधिक लोगों तक मुहैया कराया जा सकता है। एक्सप्राइज के संस्थापक पीटर डाइमंडिस ज्यादा व्यावहारिक हैं लेकिन इसे लेकर काफी उत्साहित हैं। उन्होंने कहा, 'किसी व्यक्ति के जीवन में 20 से 30 साल जोड़ने का कारोबार धरती पर सबसे बड़ा होगा। जीनोम अनुक्रमण, कृत्रिम मेधा और कोशिकीय दवाओं से ऐसी सफलताएं हासिल होंगी जिससे 100 साल की उम्र 60 की बन जाएगी।' एक्सप्राइज ने हाल ही में जीवनकाल बढ़ाने के बारे में एक सम्मेलन कराया और इसके लिए भविष्य की रूपरेखा भी जारी की। इसमें 12 उन क्षेत्रों का जिक्र है जिनमें सुधार या सफलता से

मानव स्वास्थ्य को बेहतर बनाया जा सकता है और जीवन प्रत्याशा को बढ़ाया जा सकता है। विज्ञान पत्रिका 'द लान्सट' के मुताबिक 70 फीसदी से अधिक मौतें उम्र संबंधी गंभीर बीमारियों से होती हैं। इनमें कैंसर, अल्जाइमर्स, दिल की बीमारी और ज़िगर की बीमारी आदि शामिल हैं। इन 12 क्षेत्रों में उम्र बढ़ने के आंकड़ों का डेटाबेस तैयार करना, बढ़ती उम्र की प्रक्रिया के शोध के लिए दुनियाभर में स्वीकार्य जैविक मार्कर को वैश्विक मानक बनाना, ऐसे अध्ययनों को दोहराना जिनसे संकेत मिलते हैं कि कैलरी प्रतिबंध से जीवन लंबा होता है, बढ़ती उम्र के साथ होने वाली कम से कम तीन बीमारियों की चेतावनी के लिए परीक्षण, यौवन का कोई भी चक्र जो जानवरों पर कारगर हो, कारगर उम्र के साथ पैर पसलने वाली कम से कम तीन बीमारियों की व्यापक इलाज से रोकथाम, पोषक तत्वों को संसाधित करने की क्षमता का विश्लेषण, बढ़ती उम्र को सभी प्रक्रियाओं को जोड़ने वाला सिद्धांत और आसान व्यायाम प्रणालियां या व्यायाम के सकारात्मक प्रभावों को दोहराने वाली जैव चिकित्सा प्रणालियां शामिल हैं। ये अध्ययन के अति महत्वाकांक्षी लेकिन समझ में आने वाले क्षेत्र हैं। इसके तीन काल्पनिक वैज्ञानिक लक्ष्य हैं। पहला यह कि कम से कम एक साल तक उम्र बढ़ने की प्रक्रिया को रोककर बढ़ती उम्र को पूरी तरह रोकना। पहले स्तनधारियों पर इसका प्रयोग किया जाएगा और फिर इंसानों पर। दूसरा लक्ष्य मानव शरीर का विस्तृत और सटीक मॉडल बनाना है जिस पर प्रयोग किए जा सकें। इससे शोध पर मौजूदा प्रतिबंधों को दूरिकरण किया जा सकता है जिससे संभावित फायदे हो सकते हैं लेकिन यह इस विषय के लिए खतरनाक हो सकता है। तीसरा लक्ष्य उम्र बढ़ने की प्रक्रिया को रोकना है। इसके तहत एक व्यक्ति के मस्तिष्क को पूरे सिर के साथ या उसके बिना दूसरे व्यक्ति के शरीर या किसी भी मानव पात्र में एक साल के लिए हस्तांतरित किया जाएगा जबकि चेतना को बरकरार रखा जाएगा। इससे इस बात का प्रदर्शन होगा कि चेतना को कुछ समय के बाद फिर से हासिल किया जा सकता है। इसे हासिल करने का मतलब होगा अमरत्व।

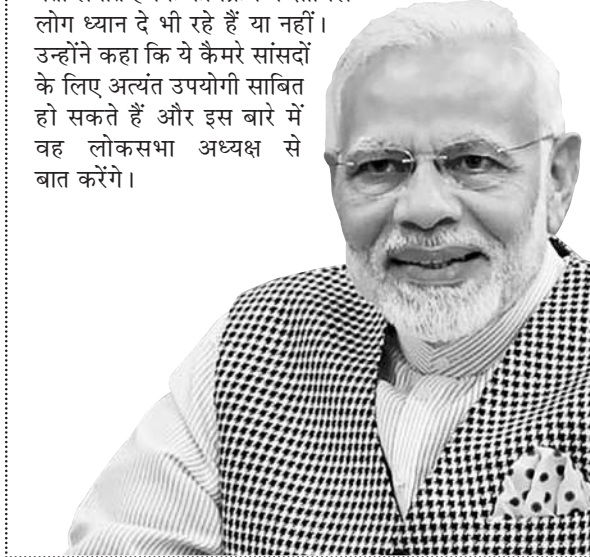
## कानाफूसी

### मनमोहन सिंह को निमंत्रण

कांग्रेस नेताओं का कहना है कि वे पाकिस्तानी विदेश मंत्री शाह महमूद कुरैशी के इस वक्तव्य से चकित हैं कि पाकिस्तान भारत के पूर्व प्रधानमंत्री मनमोहन सिंह को नवंबर में करतारपुर गलियारे के लोकार्पण कार्यक्रम में बुलाएगा। पाकिस्तान, भारत के सिख श्रद्धालुओं के लिए अगले महीने यह गलियारा खोलने वाला है। उन्होंने कहा कि इस कार्यक्रम में भारत के पूर्व प्रधानमंत्री मनमोहन सिंह को आमंत्रित करने का निर्णय लिया गया है और उन्हें औपचारिक पत्र जल्द भेजा जाएगा। उन्होंने कहा कि सिंह सिख समुदाय के प्रतिनिधि चेहरों में से एक हैं। उनका जन्म अविभाजित पंजाब के एक गांव में हुआ था लेकिन बतौर प्रधानमंत्री 10 वर्ष के कार्यकाल में वह एक बार भी पाकिस्तान नहीं गए। कांग्रेस सूत्रों के अनुसार उन्हें पाकिस्तानी विदेश मंत्री के बयान से आश्चर्य हुआ है क्योंकि ऐसा आमंत्रण विदेश मंत्रालय के माध्यम से आना चाहिए।

### सावधान रहें सांसद

यदि प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी अपनी बात पर कायम रहे तो आई आई टी मद्रास में आयोजित सिंगापुर-भारत हैकार्थॉन 2019 में सामने आया एक उपकरण संसद के काम आ सकता है। उपकरण यह पता लगाता है कि किसी कार्यक्रम के दौरान प्रतिभागी कितने गंभीर हैं। इस कार्यक्रम के बाद प्रधानमंत्री मोदी ने कहा था कि उन्हें वे कैमरे बहुत पसंद आए जो यह पता लगाते हैं कि कार्यक्रम में शामिल लोग ध्यान दे भी रहे हैं या नहीं। उन्होंने कहा कि ये कैमरे सांसदों के लिए अत्यंत उपयोगी साबित हो सकते हैं और इस बारे में वह लोकसभा अध्यक्ष से बात करेंगे।



## आपका पक्ष

### छोड़ना होगा प्लास्टिक पर्यावरण हित में

महात्मा गांधी की 150वीं जयंती के अवसर पर देशभर में एकल इस्तेमाल वाले प्लास्टिक पर प्रतिबंध लग जाएगा। 2 अक्टूबर से ही प्लास्टिक से बनने वाले छह उत्पाद प्लास्टिक थैली, स्ट्रॉ, कप, प्लेट, बोतल और शीट पर रोक लग जाएगी। प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने वर्ष 2022 तक भारत को इस तरह के प्लास्टिक से मुक्त करने का लक्ष्य रखा है। भारत में प्लास्टिक पर प्रतिबंध लगाने से यह बंद नहीं होगा। इसके लिए 135 करोड़ लोगों को स्वयं इसका इस्तेमाल बंद करना होगा। मध्य प्रदेश, राजस्थान, छत्तीसगढ़, महाराष्ट्र, ओडिशा, पंजाब, उत्तराखंड, तमिलनाडु, सहित 18 राज्यों में इसे पहले से ही प्रतिबंध कर दिया गया है। इसके बावजूद उक्त राज्यों में इसका इस्तेमाल हो रहा है। जलवायु परिवर्तन और ग्लोबल वार्मिंग के कारण बिगड़ता पर्यावरण दुनिया के लिए इस समय सबसे बड़ी चिंता है। ऐसे में



प्लास्टिक से पैदा होने वाले प्रदूषण को रोकना और प्लास्टिक कचरे का निस्तारण एक बड़ी समस्या बनकर उभरी है। भारत ने प्लास्टिक के खिलाफ इन्हीं कारणों से जंग छेड़ी है। पहले चरण के तहत एकल इस्तेमाल वाले प्लास्टिक को बंद किया जा रहा है। दूसरे चरण में प्लास्टिक को इकट्ठा कर उसे रिसाइकल किया जाएगा। सरकार

प्लास्टिक का इस्तेमाल नहीं करने के लिए कोलकाला में जारी जागरूकता अभियान

प्लास्टिक के इस्तेमाल पर जुर्माना भी लगाने वाली है। वर्तमान में भारत में 220 लाख टन सालाना प्लास्टिक का उपयोग होता है।

प्राशान्त सोलंकी, ईमेल से

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@bmail.in उस जगह का उल्लेख अवश्य करें, जहां से आप ईमेल कर रहे हैं।

### आदर्श और प्रेरणा के स्रोत शास्त्री जी

देश के दूसरे प्रधानमंत्री लाल बहादुर शास्त्री की स्वाधीनता संग्राम आंदोलन में सक्रिय भागीदारी रही जिससे उन्हें कई बार जेल में भी रहना पड़ा। धरातल से उठकर भारत के सर्वोच्च राजनीतिक पद पर पहुंच जाने में शास्त्री जी के अपने आंतरिक गुण तथा आदर्शवादी विचारधारा सहायक हुईं। शास्त्री भारत और पाकिस्तान के रिश्तों को लेकर भी काफी गंभीर थे। वे चाहते थे कि दोनों देशों में आगे कोई युद्ध नहीं हो। कोशिशों से उन्होंने परहस्ताक्षर करने के बाद उनका निधन हो गया। उन्हें मरणोपरांत वर्ष 1966 में भारत रत्न से सम्मानित किया गया। शास्त्री जी को उनकी सादगी, देशभक्ति और ईमानदारी के लिए पूरा देश श्रद्धापूर्वक याद करता है। अजय प्रताप तिवारी, गोंड

### विश्व के शांतिदूत थे महात्मा गांधी

महात्मा गांधी को विश्व में शांतिदूत के रूप में जाना जाता है। गांधी जयंती के उपलक्ष्य में 2 अक्टूबर को अहिंसा दिवस के रूप में भी मनाया जाता है। गांधी जी की विचारधारा को विश्व की महान हस्तियां आज भी सम्मान करते हैं। नेल्सन मंडेला, सर मार्टिन लूथर किंग जैसे नेताओं ने भी गांधीवादी विचारधारा से प्रेरित होकर अपने देश में हो रहे अन्याय के खिलाफ अहिंसा आंदोलन के जरिये अपने अधिकारों को वापस लिया। गांधीजी ने अहिंसा का संदेश दिया लेकिन आज देश में भीड़ की हिंसा जैसी घटनाएं बढ़ रही हैं। इससे देश की छवि धूमिल हो रही है। गांधीजी राजनेता को जनता का सेवक मानते थे लेकिन कई नेताओं पर भ्रष्टाचार के आरोप हैं। गांधीजी के विचारों को सही ढंग से अपनाने में देश अब तक असफल रहा है। देश को अगर सक्षम बनाना है तो गांधीजी के आदर्शों को अपनाना होगा। निशांत महेश त्रिपाठी, नागपुर



# हम सबके प्रकाशपुंज हैं गांधी



अवधेश राजपूत

हिंदू-मुस्लिम एकता की नींव पर खड़े सेकुलर भारत के पक्षधर थे। गांधी का हिंदुत्व सहिष्णु, समावेशी, उदार और दूसरों की आस्थाओं का सम्मान करने वाला था। वास्तव में इस उपमहाद्वीप या पूरी दुनिया के इतिहास में किसी और नेता ने गांधीजी की तरह अंतर-धार्मिक सौहार्द को अपने राजनीतिक संघर्ष का केंद्रीय एजेंडा नहीं बनाया।

दूसरी गलत धारणा, जिसने गांधीजी के बारे में पाकिस्तानियों को निष्पक्ष धारणा बनाने से रोका, यह है कि गांधी यह नहीं चाहते थे कि पाकिस्तान के रूप में एक अलग मुल्क बने। पाकिस्तानियों को पता हेना चाहिए कि आखिर क्यों गांधीजी ने टू नेशन थ्योरी के आधार पर इसका विरोध किया था? भीखु परेख ने अपनी किताब गांधीज पॉलिटिकल फिलॉस्फी: ए क्रिटिकल एर्जाग्मिनेशन में इसे बेहतर ढंग से समझाया है। उन्होंने लिखा है कि गांधी ने भारत को भौगोलिक नहीं, बल्कि मानव सभ्यता के लिहाज से परिभाषित किया और वह इसकी भौगोलिक सीमाओं के बजाय मानव-सभ्यता को अखंड रखने को लेकर अधिक फ़िक्रमंद

थे। उनके लिए भारतीय सभ्यता विविधता और मत-भिन्नता के प्रति न सिर्फ़ सहिष्णु बल्कि उसका सम्मान करने वाली भी थी। अपनी कमियों और कभी-कभार होने वाले झगड़ों के साथ भारत एक खुशहाल परिवार था। चूँकि गांधी के लिए भारत के बारे में यही सत्य था, इसलिए उसका विभाजन एक झूठ था। यद्यपि वह टू नेशन थ्योरी के विरोधी थे, लेकिन भारतीयों और पाकिस्तानियों, दोनों को यह जानना चाहिए कि गांधी जी टू स्टेट थ्योरी पर सहमत थे या नहीं? पाकिस्तान समानता के आधार पर भारत से परिसंघीय जुड़ाव के साथ एक अलग स्टेट बन सकता था।

इसके बारे में उनके और जिन्ना के मध्य हुए पत्राचार से भी पता चलता है। 11 सितंबर 1944 को गांधीजी ने जिन्ना को लिखा, हिंदू-मुस्लिम एकता मेरे जीवन का ध्येय रहा है, लेकिन इसे विदेशी ताकतों को खदेड़े बगैर हासिल नहीं किया जा सकता। इससे अप्रभावित जिन्ना ने जवाब में लिखा, भारत की समस्या का एक ही समाधान है कि पाकिस्तान और हिंदुस्तान के रूप में इसके विभाजन को

स्वीकार कर लिया जाए। गांधीजी अलग राष्ट्र की धारणा से सहमत नहीं थे। लिहाज उन्होंने निराश होकर जिन्ना को लिखा, आप यह तो मानेंगे कि (लाहौर) संकल्प में भी टू नेशन थ्योरी का कोई जिक्र नहीं था। मुझे इतिहास में ऐसी कोई मिसाल नजर नहीं आती जहां पर कोई धर्मांतरित निकाय और उसके बच्चों अपनी पितृ इकाई से जुदा होकर एक अलग राष्ट्र बनने का दावा करें। यदि भारत इस्लाम के प्रादुर्भाव से पहले एक राष्ट्र था तो इसे अब भी वैसा ही रहना चाहिए, भले ही उसके बच्चों के एक बड़े वर्ग की आस्थाएं बदल गई हों।

गांधीजी ने देश के उत्तर-पश्चिमी एवं पूर्वी मुस्लिम-बहुल इलाकों में स्व-निर्णय के आधार पर पाकिस्तान के निर्माण की बात कही थी। उन्होंने जिन्ना से कहा, यदि आप इन्हें पाकिस्तान कहना चाहें तो कह सकते हैं। उन्होंने इस सीमा तक लाहौर-संकल्प को स्वीकार किया था। उन्होंने कहा, मैं एक रास्ता सुझाता हूं। यदि विभाजन होना ही है, तो वैसा हो, जैसा दो भाइयों के बीच होता है।

आज भारत और पाकिस्तान के बीच अमन और सद्भावना की उम्मीद तभी साकार हो सकती है जब दोनों देशों के लोग और सत्ता-तंत्र गांधीजी के मूल सिद्धांतों और दृष्टिकोण को वास्तविक रूप में अंगीकार करें। अपनी हत्या से कुछ दिनों बाद गांधीजी ने घोषणा की थी, भारत और पाकिस्तान, दोनों मेरे मुल्क हैं। मैं पाकिस्तान जाने के लिए पासपोर्ट लेने वाला नहीं हूँ। भले ही भौगोलिक और राजनीतिक रूप से भारत दो भागों में बंट गया हो, लेकिन दिल से तो हम आपस में दोस्त और भाई बने रहें, जो एक-दूसरे की मदद करें और सम्मान करें और बाहरी दुनिया के लिए हम एक हों।

(स्वभक्त 'यूजिक ऑफ़ डे स्पिनिंग व्हील्स: महात्मा गांधीज मैनिफेस्टो फॉर द इंटरनेट एज' पुस्तक के लेखक हैं)
**response@jagran.com**



## संस्कारवान जीवन

पश्चिमी देशों की हवा इन दिनों भारत में भी काफी तेजी से फैल रही है। पश्चिमी देशों में पति-पत्नी कब तक एक साथ जीवन व्यतीत करेंगे, इसकी कोई गारंटी नहीं होती है। ऐसी स्थिति में माता-पिता, भाई-बहन, दादा-दादी की बात ही करना बेमानी है। पश्चिम की यह हवा तेजी से भारत में भी फैल रही है। भारतीय रिती-रिवाज और सात-फेरों के बावजूद परिवार बिखर रहे हैं। कभी पति-पत्नी में मममुताब तथा लड़ाई-झगड़े की बातें आती हैं तो कभी पूरे परिवार में ही लगातार लड़ाई-झगड़े होते रहते हैं जो जीवन भर कटुता दे जाते हैं।

सहते दादा-दादी, भाई-बहन, चाचा-चाची सब एक साथ रहते थे। एक साथ सबका खाना-पीना होता था। इसे विद्वान रसोई को रस-वर्षा का केंद्र मानते थे, क्योंकि इसमें परिवार के कई सदस्य लगाकर भोजन बनाते थे। वैसे भी जिस रसोई में जितने अधिक लोगों का भोजन बनता है, वह रसोई न होकर भंडारा माना जाता था, लेकिन नए दौर में परिवारों में संकुचित दृष्टि देखी जा रही है। इन सब कारणों से परिवार में झगड़े बढ़ रहे हैं जिसका असर परिवार के छोटे बच्चों पर पड़ रहा है। बड़े होकर वे भी वहीं करते हैं जो बचपन में देखे-सुने रहते हैं। विकास के युग में व्यक्ति जितना लड़ाई में समय गंवाएगा, वह आर्थिक दृष्टि से पिछड़ता जाएगा। लड़ाई-झगड़े से दोनों पक्षों को नुकसान होता है। सहनशीलता की कमी से भारतीय समाज खासकर पढ़े-लिखे परिवारों में भी यह सब स्थिति देखी जाती है।

अतः जरूरत है कि परिवार में माता-पिता अपनी संतानों को संस्कारवान बनाएं। बहुत छोटी-छोटी बातों पर ध्यान दिया जाना चाहिए, क्योंकि वही छोटी-छोटी बातें एक समय बड़ी बन जाती हैं। माता-पिता खुद संस्कारवान बनें तो बच्चों में भी संस्कार अच्छे होंगे और उनका जीवन सुखमय होगा। इसके लिए परिवार की कमी से भारतीय समाज खासकर पढ़े-लिखे परिवारों में जीवन न व्यतीत करें, बल्कि वे परिवार में समय दें। आपसी संवाद बनाएं। संवादहीनता से दूरियां बढ़ती हैं जो किसी भी हालत में उचित नहीं।

सलिल पांडेय

# 8 विचार



## दैनिक जागरण

जो खुद सोचना जानते हैं, उन्हें किसी शिक्षक की जरूरत नहीं

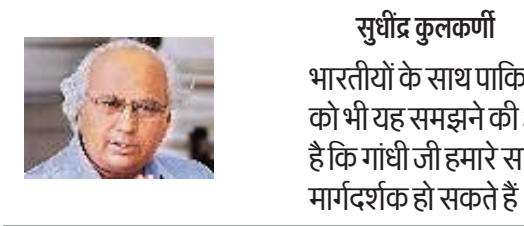
# अदालत में अनुच्छेद 370

जम्मू-कश्मीर से अनुच्छेद 370 हटाने के फैसले के खिलाफ दायर याचिकाओं पर सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने केंद्र सरकार को चार सप्ताह में जवाब देने का निर्देश देकर यहीं संकेत दिया कि राष्ट्रीय महत्व के इस मामले में वह तुरत-फुरत कोई फैसला करने नहीं जा रहा है। हालांकि याचिका दायर करने वालों ने केंद्र सरकार को जवाब देने के लिए चार सप्ताह का समय दिए जाने का विरोध किया, लेकिन वे इसकी अनदेखी कर गए कि अनुच्छेद 370 हटाने के खिलाफ करीब एक दर्जन याचिकाएं दायर की गई हैं और उनके जवाब तैयार करना आसान काम नहीं। इनमें कुछ याचिकाएं ऐसे लोगों की ओर से भी दायर की गई हैं जिनका काम ही है किसी न किसी मामले को लेकर सुप्रीम कोर्ट का दरवाजा खटखटाना। सुप्रीम कोर्ट को इस याचिकाबाजी के खिलाफ कुछ कदम उठाने की जरूरत है। पता नहीं ऐसा कब होगा, लेकिन अनुच्छेद 370 हटाने के खिलाफ दायर याचिकाओं पर 14 नवंबर से सुनवाई शुरू होने का मतलब है कि सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने इस आपात्ति पर ध्यान देना जरूरी नहीं समझा कि तब तक तो जम्मू-कश्मीर और लद्दाख केंद्र शासित प्रदेश के रूप में अस्तित्व में आ जाएंगे। ज्ञात हो कि केंद्र सरकार ने इसके लिए 31 अक्टूबर की तिथि तय कर रखी है। स्पष्ट है कि सुप्रीम कोर्ट इस प्रक्रिया को रोकना आवश्यक नहीं समझ रहा है।

सुप्रीम कोर्ट की यह टिप्पणी भी उल्लेखनीय है कि व्यक्तिगत स्वतंत्रता और देश की सुरक्षा में संतुलन जरूरी है। इसमें संदेह नहीं कि व्यक्तिगत स्वतंत्रता महत्वपूर्ण है, लेकिन इस हद तक नहीं कि देश की सुरक्षा की अनदेखी कर दी जाए। इससे इन्कार नहीं कि जम्मू-कश्मीर से अनुच्छेद 370 हटाए जाने के बाद घाटी में कुछ प्रतिबंध लगाए गए हैं, लेकिन इसका मकसद लोगों की व्यक्तिगत स्वतंत्रता का हानन करना नहीं, बल्कि शांति एवं व्यवस्था सुनिश्चित करना है। इसे सुनिश्चित करने में इसीलिए बाधाएं आ रही हैं, क्योंकि कुछ लोग अराजकता फैलाने की कोशिश कर रहे हैं। ऐसे तत्वों पर लगाम लगाना शासन का दायित्व है। इसी तरह उन तत्वों पर भी लगाम लगाना आवश्यक है जो न केवल अलगाववादियों और आतंकवादियों की भाषा बोलने में लगे हुए हैं, बल्कि उनके हितेषी भी बने हुए हैं। यह विडंबना ही है कि वही लोग संविधान और मानवाधिकारों की दुहाई देने में लगे हुए हैं। ऐसे लोगों को वेनकाब करने और साथ ही उन पर अंकुश लगाने के ठोस उपाय किए जाने चाहिए। निःसंदेह ऐसा करते हुए यह भी देखा जाना चाहिए कि कश्मीर के उन इलाकों में सामान्य स्थिति कैसे बहाल हो जाए अराजक तत्व सक्रिय हैं। बेहतर हो कि केंद्र सरकार 14 नवंबर तक यह काम कर ले।

# सबक की जरूरत

उत्तरखंड से मानसून अब विदाई की दहलीज पर है। बावजूद इसके सितंबर में मौसम के तेवर अभी तक तल्ख बने हुए हैं। आमतौर पर उत्तरखंड में इन दिनों मौसम सुहावना रहता है, लेकिन इस बार लगातार हो रही बारिश से जनजीवन प्रभावित है। विशेषकर भूस्खलन से सड़कें बार-बार बाधित हो रही हैं। इतना ही नहीं, उत्तरकाशी में आपदा के दौरान कई लोग जान गंवा चुके हैं तो पिछले दिनों देवप्रयाग के पास मलबे की चपेट में आकर छह तीर्थयात्रियों की मौत हो गई। इसमें कोई दो राय नहीं कि कुदरत पर किसी का वश नहीं है, लेकिन पहतियात बरत कर नुकसान को कम किया जा सकता है। हैरत रह है कि बरसात के मौसम में हर साल यही हाल रहता है, बावजूद इसके हालात को लेकर गंभीर पहल का अभाव ही नजर आता है। दरअसल, जरूरत कुदरत के संकेतों को समझने की है। प्रकृति के अपने तौर-तरीके हैं, उनमें हम परिवर्तन नहीं कर सकते, लेकिन आने वाले समय की आहट को तो महसूस किया जा सकता है। इसके लिए जरूरत है अग्रिम तैयारियों की। यूं तो अधिकारी मानसून से पहले भी तैयारियों के दावे कर रहे थे, लेकिन अब दावों की असलियत सामने है। पौड़ी से पिथौरागढ़ और रूद्रप्रयाग, चमोली से बागेश्वर तक हर जगह मौसम के असर को महसूस किया गया। आपदा प्रबंधन के नाम पर प्रदेश में पैसा भले ही खर्च हो रहा हो, लेकिन प्रदेश को इसका लाभ नहीं मिल पा रहा। मसलन सड़कों की स्थिति को ही लें, पहाड़ी क्षेत्रों से गुजरने वाले हाईवे पर भूस्खलन जोन चिन्हित भले ही कर लिए गए हों, मगर ट्रीटमेंट को लेकर स्थिति साफ नहीं है। बदरीनाथ हाईवे पर लामबागढ़ भूस्खलन जोन वर्ण से मुसीबत का सचब बना हुआ है, यही हाल यमुनोत्री हाईवे पर भी है। समय बीतने के बावजूद इनका स्थाई उपचार नहीं हो पाया। चुनौती इतनी ही नहीं हैं, अब सर्दी का मौसम भी परीक्षा लेने वाला साबित हो सकता है। यदि हिमापत अधिक हुआ तो देहरादून के जौनसार-बावर, उत्तरकाशी, टिहरी, पिथौरागढ़, चमोली व अल्मोड़ा जैसे जिलों के कई इलाके अलग-थलग पड़ सकते हैं। इसके लिए आवश्यक यह है कि सरकार, शासन और प्रशासन पहले से ही ऐसी तैयारी कर ले कि इन इलाकों में रहने वाले लोगों को परेशानियों का सामना न करना पड़ा। सबसे ज्यादा जरूरी है कि वनत रहते यहां खाद्य सामग्री के साथ ही अन्य आवश्यक वस्तुओं की आपूर्ति कर ली जाए। इसके अलावा संचार साधनों को भी बेहतर करना होगा।



सुधींद्र कुलकर्णी

भारतीयों के साथ पाकिस्तानियों

को भी यह समझने की आवश्यकता

है कि गांधी जी हमारे साझा

मार्गदर्शक हो सकते हैं

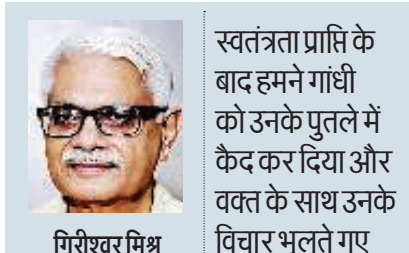
अगस्त के पहले सप्ताह में मोदी सरकार द्वारा जम्मू-कश्मीर से अनुच्छेद 370 हटाने के बाद पाकिस्तान की ओर से बौखलाहट भरी प्रतिक्रिया आना स्वाभाविक थी, लेकिन एक अप्रत्याशित घटनाक्रम यह भी हुआ कि पाकिस्तानी प्रधानमंत्री इमरान खान महात्मा गांधी का हवाला देते नजर आ रहे हैं। चलो इसी बहाने सही, इमरान खान ने महात्मा गांधी की प्रासंगिकता को समझा। पाकिस्तान के गठन के बाद बीते 72 वर्षों में यह पहली बार है जब उसके किसी शीर्ष नेता ने इस तरह सार्वजनिक तौर पर उन आदर्श मूल्यों को याद किया जिनकी खातिर भारत के राष्ट्रपिता ने अपना जीवन कुर्बान कर दिया था। ये आदर्श मूल्य थे- हिंदू-मुस्लिम सौहार्द और भारत-पाक के मध्य सहज संबंध। मैं इसे दोनों देशों के ऊपर मंडराते दुश्मनी के काले बादलों के बीच रोशनी की एक किरण की तरह देखता हूं।

हम उम्मीद करते हैं कि पाकिस्तान की सेना, सरकार, बुद्धिजीवी वर्ग और महजबी तंत्र भारत के स्वाधीनता संग्राम और उसमें महात्मा गांधी की केंद्रीय भूमिका के प्रति अपनी समझ को नए सिरे से तय करने के साथ-साथ जिन्ना और मुस्लिम लीग द्वारा समर्थित टू नेशन थ्योरी यानी हिट्लरए सिद्धांत की गंभीर खामियों को भी देखें, क्योंकि इसी आधार पर पाकिस्तान बना था। कश्मीर समस्या भी एक बड़ी हद तक मुस्लिम लीग की इसी अति-विकृत सोच का नतीजा है कि मुस्लिम और हिंदू दो अलग

# बापू की विरासत सहेजने की जरूरत

महात्मा गांधी चमत्कारिक व्यक्तित्व के स्वामी हैं जो अतिसाधारण भी है, संत भी, राजनेता भी और इन सबसे अलग अपने ही ढंग के निराले क्रांतिकारी भी। सब एक साथ। उन्होंने लंदन में वकालत पढ़ी और पाश्चात्य शिक्षा का अनुभव किया। फिर दक्षिण अफ्रीका में नौकरी शुरू की और वहां वर्षों रहे भी। इन सब विदेशी अनुभवों से उनकी भारतीयता की अवधारणा परिकृत हुई और भारत के लिए प्रति और प्रगाढ़ हुई। दक्षिण अफ्रीका में भयंकर भेदभाव का विकट अनुभव उनके जीवन में एक मोड़ साबित हुआ। नस्ली भेद और पूर्वाग्रह के साथ अंग्रेजी राज के अत्याचारों को उन्होंने निकट से देखा। वहां की सामाजिक-राजनीतिक परिस्थिति से गांधीजी ने बहुत कुछ सीखा। इससे ही एक दृढ़ मन और लोक की चिंत को समर्पित नए गांधी-बापू का उदय हुआ और इसी कारण वह राष्ट्रपिता कहलाए। उन्होंने दमन का विरोध अहिंसा के नयाब तरीके से करने का निश्चय किया। यह बदलाव उनके व्यक्तित्व का स्थाई अंग बन गया। आगे चलकर उन्होंने इसी के साथ भारतीय स्वतंत्रता की लड़ाई भी लड़ी। विश्व युद्ध की विभीषिका के दौरान घनी आबादी वाले

अहिंसक क्रांति की ज्योति जलाने वाले मोहनदास करमचंद गांधी ने जो अनेखी शुरुआत की उससे कोई भी अछूता नहीं रह सका। दक्षिण अफ्रीका से भारत लौटने के बाद उन्होंने देश के जीवन और समाज को जाना। चंपारण में नील किसानों के हक की लड़ाई के बाद उनके सार्वजनिक जीवन ने एक नया रूप लिया। गांधीजी ने अभय और साहस के साथ जिस मानव धर्म को अपना लक्ष्य और आधार बनाया वह भारतीय संस्कृति के अनुसार निर्मित हुआ था और उसे ही उन्होंने लिया। वह स्वयं को स्पष्ट: हिंदू कहते थे, परंतु उनकी धर्म-दृष्टि सर्वव्यापी थी। उनके हिसाब से धर्म का तत्व हिंदू, मुस्लिम, सिख, ईसाई सबमें व्याप्त है। उनके अनुसार धर्म जीवन का नियम है। गांधीजी की यह सोच कई धर्म परंपराओं के अग्राह्यन से बनी थी। उन्होंने बाइबिल इंग्लैंड में पढ़ी। घृणा के विरुद्ध प्रेम का ईसा का संदेश उनके मन को छू गया। धर्मभीरू मां के साथ शुरू हुए साकाहार, आत्मशुद्धि के लिए उपवास, पारस्परिक सहिष्णुता और सद्भाव, अहिंसा, सत्य, अस्तेय, ब्रह्मचर्य और अपरिग्रह आदि के त्रत गांधीजी के जीवन में सदा बने रहे। गांधीजी हिंदू विश्वासों को अन्य धर्मों के सार्वभौम विचारों के लिए संतु मानते थे। वह हर अच्छे सिवाच के लिए प्रस्तुत रहते थे, पर अपने विवेक



की शर्त पर। गांधीजी ने टाल्सटॉय की पुस्तक ‘दि किंगडम ऑफ गाॅड इज विदिन यू’, रिकन की ‘अन टु द लास्ट’ और गीता एवं रामचरितमानस के साथ नरसी मेहता जैसे भक्त कवियों की रचनाओं का विशेष आभार स्वीकारा है।

गांधीजी के व्यक्तित्व की रचना अनेक प्रभावों को आत्मघात करने से हुई। सारे प्रभावों से अविचल उनका एक व्यापक भारत-भाव था जो वहां के समाज और संस्कृति के साथ गहनता से जुड़ा था। उनकी भारतीय समाज और उसके मानस की पकड़ कोरी भावुकता वाली न होकर जीवनी हकीकत पर टिकी थी। उन्होंने देखा कि गांव जो आत्मनिर्भर थे, अंग्रेजी राज में विदेशी वस्तुओं और सेवाओं के मोहताज होते गए। गांधीजी ने यह भी देखा कि शारीरिक श्रम की कैसे उपेक्षा हो रही है और उसके सहारे नया मनोरिया बन रहा है। अंग्रेजी शिक्षा आने के साथ शिक्षा की प्रक्रिया शारीरिक, नैतिक और चारित्रिक पक्ष से दूर हटती गई। ऐसे में गांधी जी ने सामाजिक, आर्थिक, शैक्षिक, राजनीतिक परिस्थितियों का जमीनी आकलन किया और शारीरिक एवं बौद्धिक, दोनों पक्षों के समुचित समन्वय पर ध्यान दिया। अपने विचारों को व्यावहारिक धरातल पर परखने यानी सत्य का प्रयोग करने का जो सिलसिला गांधीजी ने दक्षिण अफ्रीका में शुरू किया, वह जीवन भर चलता रहा। सत्याग्रह गांधीजी की

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### गांधी की राह पर चलने में स्वार्थ वाधा

गांधी के स्मरण का सही तरीका शीर्षक से लिखे अपने लेख में हृदयनारायण दीक्षित ने महात्मा गांधी के बताए रास्तों पर चलने की सलाह दी है। वैसे तो सार्वजनिक स्तर हम सब उनके बताए रास्तों पर चलने और उनकी कही बातों को मानने का संकल्प लेते हैं, लेकिन जहां बात व्यक्तिगत स्तर पर आती है, वहीं हम पीछे हट जाते हैं। चाहे बात सच्चाई की हो, अहिंसा की हो या साफ-सफाई की। पर्यावरण, जीवनशैली, समानता आदि मामलों में उनकी कही बातें आज अक्षरशः सही साबित हो रही हैं। गांधी जी दो तरह की सफाई के हिमायती थे। बाहरी और आंतरिक। आज बाहरी साफ-सफाई पर सब कोई जोर दे रहा है, लेकिन आंतरिक स्वच्छता की बात कोई नहीं कर रहा। जब तक देश का हर नागरिक आंतरिक सफाई पर ध्यान नहीं देगा, तब तक देश विभिन्न समस्याओं के मकड़जाल से कभी मुक्त नहीं हो सकता। महात्मा गांधी ने बिना किसी स्वार्थ के देश को आजाद करवाने के लिए अंग्रेजों की कई यातनाएं सही थीं, लेकिन आज बहुत से लोग अपने स्वार्थ के लिए राजनीति में आ रहे हैं। आज देश को चलाने के लिए गांधी जैसे नेता की जरूरत है। जो सिर्फ देश के बारे में बिना किसी स्वार्थ के सोचे। अगर आज लोग गांधी जी के विचारों को अपना लें तो देश में बढ़ते गलत कामों पर लगाम लग सकती है, लेकिन अफसोस कि आज अधिकांश लोगों की बुद्धि बहुत दूषित हो चुकी है।

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### अहिंसा के पुजारी को नमन

गांधी एक व्यक्ति का नहीं, बल्कि एक विचारधारा का नाम है। देश को आजाद करने के लिए एक अभिमान्यु की नहीं,

## मेलबाक्स

बल्कि भिन्न-भिन्न मानसिकता वाले अनेक अभिमान्यु की आवश्यकता थी। गांधी ने समाज के बड़े वर्ग की मानसिकता का अध्ययन किया और उसे स्वतंत्रता आंदोलन का हिस्सा बनाने के लिए अनेक दर्शन को प्रस्तुत किया। उन्होंने देखा कि समाज का एक बड़ा वर्ग अपने ऊपर हो रहे अत्याचार पर पलटवार नहीं कर सकता। परिवार से स्नेह करने के कारण वह हिंसक न होकर खुद को सुरक्षित रखने के लिए भीरू बन गया है। आज भी गांधी की अहिंसक विचारधारा समाज के बड़े वर्ग के मस्तिष्क में गहरी पैठ बना चुकी है। गीता दर्शन में अटूट श्रद्धा रखने वाले गांधी ने कहा था कि अपराध करने वाले से बड़ा अपराधी वह है जो अपराध सहेन करता है। गांधी के अहिंसक सिद्धांत आज भी प्रासंगिक है। अहिंसा के पुजारी को सादर नमन।

जया शर्मा, फरीदाबाद

### चरणबद्ध तरीके से हो काम

एक अक्टूबर के अंक में प्रकाशित संपादकीय प्लास्टिक विरोधी मुहिम पढ़ा। यह कहना सही है कि प्लास्टिक से बनी वस्तुओं के विकल्प रातों रात उपलब्ध नहीं कराए जा सकते। आज हमारे रसोई घर, स्नान घर, अतिथि कक्ष आदि सब प्लास्टिक से बनी वस्तुओं से भरी हुई हैं। कार, टेलीविजन, मोबाइल आदि में प्लास्टिक की बड़ी मात्रा है। दूध, घी, मिठाई की पैकिंग, ग्लास, प्लेट, चम्मच में प्लास्टिक की बहुतायत है। इन सबके विकल्प खोजने में समय लगेगा। यह कार्य चरणबद्ध तरीके से करने की आवश्यकता है। प्रथम चरण में सिंगल यूज प्लास्टिक में आने वाली वस्तुओं से आम आदिमों को अवगत कराया

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## स्पष्ट रुख

**दो**—ढाई महीनों में यह तीसरा मौका है जब भारत ने स्पष्ट रूप से कहा है कि कश्मीर मसले पर वह तीसरे पक्ष की मध्यस्थता स्वीकार नहीं करेगा। संयुक्त राष्ट्र महासभा के सत्र में हिस्सा लेकर दिल्ली लौटे विदेश मंत्री एस जयशंकर ने फिर इसी रुख को दोहराया है कि कश्मीर मुद्दे पर हम कोई मध्यस्थता स्वीकार नहीं करेंगे। इस मुद्दे पर जो भी बातचीत होनी है, वह द्विपक्षीय ही होगी। पिछले चार दशकों में भारत का यही स्पष्ट रुख है और हम इसी पर कायम हैं। यह बात हाल में एक बार फिर इसलिए उठी कि अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति डोनाल्ड ट्रंप ने कश्मीर मामले पर भारत और पाकिस्तान के बीच मध्यस्थता की फिर पेशकश कर डाली। लेकिन विदेश मंत्री का स्पष्ट रुख बता रहा है कि कश्मीर के मुद्दे पर भारत न तो कभी मध्यस्थता का पक्षधर रहा है, न रहेगा। भारत हमेशा से कहता आया है कि जब कश्मीर समस्या दो देशों के बीच की है तो इसमें किसी तीसरे देश को बीच में क्यों पड़ने देना चाहिए! सवाल है कि भारत और पाकिस्तान आपस में क्यों नहीं बात कर सकते? भारत तो कहता ही रहा है कि वह कश्मीर सहित हर मुद्दे पर पड़ोसी देश के साथ बात करने को तैयार है, बशर्ते वह पहले सीमापार आतंकवाद बंद करे। पर पाकिस्तान ऐसा इसलिए नहीं करता कि कश्मीर को लेकर उसकी मंशा ही साफ नहीं है।

पाकिस्तान कश्मीर को लेकर जिस रणनीति पर चल रहा है, उससे मामला कभी नहीं सुलझने वाला। वह चाहता है कि इस विवाद में कोई ऐसा तीसरा पक्ष बीच में पड़ जाए जो उसके पक्ष में फैसला करवाए। ऐसे में उसे अमेरिका जैसे महाबली देश से बड़ी उम्मीदें हैं और इसीलिए अमेरिका की ओर से भी समय-समय पर मध्यस्थता की बात उठती रही है। इस साल जुलाई के आखिरी हफ्ते में कश्मीर के मुद्दे पर ट्रंप के एक गैर-जिम्मेदाराना बयान ने उस वक्त तूफान खड़ा कर दिया था जब उन्होंने वाइट हाउस में पाकिस्तान के प्रधानमंत्री इमरान खान के स्वागत के बाद मीडिया से बातचीत में यह कह डाला कि भारत ने उनसे कश्मीर मसले पर मध्यस्थता करने को कहा है। ट्रंप का कहना था कि मैं भारत के प्रधानमंत्री से मिला था और उन्होंने मुझसे कहा था कि क्या आप कश्मीर मामले में मध्यस्थता करेंगे। लेकिन भारत ने ट्रंप के इस बयान पर कड़ी नाराजगी जाहिर करते हुए जोरदार खंडन किया था और दो-टुक कहा था कि कश्मीर को लेकर उसकी नीति में कोई बदलाव नहीं आया है और भारत के प्रधानमंत्री ने अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति से ऐसी कोई बात नहीं की।

अगर पाकिस्तान चाकई कश्मीर मसले पर कोई सार्थक वार्ता करना चाहता है तो उसे दूसरे देशों और अंतरराष्ट्रीय मंचों के बजाय खुद सकारात्मक पहल करनी चाहिए। मध्यस्थता की बात तो वह पक्ष करता है जो अपने स्तर पर ऐसी समस्याओं का समाधान कर पाने में खुद को अक्षम पाता हो। सवाल है कि पाकिस्तान को मध्यस्थता की जरूरत क्यों महसूस हो रही है। उसे लगता है कि मध्यस्थता से मामला उसके पक्ष में चला जाएगा। पर ऐसा संभव है नहीं। पाकिस्तान अपनी असलियत अच्छी तरह समझता है। आतंकवाद के मुद्दे पर पूरी दुनिया उसके खिलाफ है। कश्मीर से अनुच्छेद 370 को निष्क्रिय किए जाने के मुद्दे को भी दुनिया पर में उठाया और सहानुभूति बटोरने की कोशिश की, लेकिन कहीं कामयाबी नहीं मिली। ऐसे में भारत के नहीं चाहने पर कश्मीर मसले पर कोई क्यों मध्यस्थता करेगा, यह सोचने की बात है।

## संकट का पानी

आमतौर पर हर साल ही यमुना में प्रदूषण की वजह से दिल्ली में पेयजल तक का संकट जब गहरा जाता है, तब जाकर सरकार इस दिशा में सक्रिय होती है और इसे दुरुस्त करने का आश्वासन देती है। लेकिन फिर थोड़े वक्त के बाद जब मसले का तात्कालिक तौर पर हल निकल जाता है तो संबंधित महकमे के लोग इस ओर से आंखें मूंद लेते हैं। इसी तरह की उदासीनता की वजह से हर कुछ समय के बाद दिल्ली के निवासियों के सामने पीने के पानी तक की मुश्किल खड़ी हो जाती है। खासतौर पर जाड़े का मौसम शुरू होने के वक्त यह समस्या ज्यादा गहरा जाती है। लेकिन इस बार करीब दो महीने पहले ही यमुना में लगातार औद्योगिक कचरा प्रवाहित किए जाने की वजह से इसके पानी में अमोनिया का स्तर बढ़ गया है। जल बोर्ड के मुताबिक सोमवार को यमुना में अमोनिया का स्तर 3.2 पीपीएम तक पहुंच गया था। अंदजा लगाया जा सकता है कि यह पानी लोगों की सेहत के लिए कितना खतरनाक साबित हो सकता है। यही वजह है कि दिल्ली जल बोर्ड के तीन संयंत्रों को पूरी तरह बंद कर देना पड़ा और कई इलाकों के लोगों को पानी की कटौती का संकट झेलना पड़ रहा है।

दिल्ली सरकार का कहना है कि हरियाणा के सोनीपत से यमुना में औद्योगिक कचरा प्रवाहित हो रहा है, जिससे इसके पानी में अमोनिया का स्तर बढ़ा। लेकिन यह कोई पहली बार खड़ी हुई समस्या नहीं है। पिछले कई सालों से लगातार यह स्थिति बनी हुई है। सवाल है कि बार-बार शिकायतें मिलने के बावजूद सरकारों के सामने कौनसी मजबूरियां हैं जिनके चलते वे जहरीला पानी छोड़ने वाली औद्योगिक इकाइयों के खिलाफ सख्ती नहीं बरत पाती हैं? यमुना की सफाई के नाम पर अब तक अरबों रुपए बहाए जा चुके हैं। लेकिन अगर इसमें घुलते जहरीले रसायनों से एक ही तरह की समस्या खड़ी हो जाती है तो आखिर वे पैसे किस काम पर खर्च किए गए? सालों पहले से यह दावा किया जाता रहा है कि सफाई अभियान चला कर यमुना को लंदन की टैम्स नदी की तरह स्वच्छ बना दिया जाएगा। लेकिन आज भी यमुना की हालत देखी जा सकती है कि कई बार इसका पानी नहाने तक के लिहाज से जोखिम भरा माना जाता है। ऐसी स्थिति में पीने की जरूरत के लिए पानी के संकट का अंदाजा भर लगाया जा सकता है।

दरअसल, बरसात के दिनों को छोड़ दिया जाए तो यमुना वैसे ही प्रदूषण की वजह से किसी नदी के बजाय एक बड़े नाले के रूप में बची दिखती है। इसके बावजूद इसके बचे हुए हिस्से से ही जलशोधन संयंत्रों के जरिए दिल्ली में पीने के पानी की बड़ी जरूरत पूरी होती है। मगर जब समूची दिल्ली में पीने तक के पानी पर संकट आ खड़ा होता है तब जाकर आनन-फानन में तात्कालिक उपाय किए जाते हैं। सवाल है कि यमुना जिन इलाकों से गुजरती है, उन राज्यों के संबंधित महकमे यह सुनिश्चित कर पाने में नाकाम क्यों हैं कि नदी में औद्योगिक इकाइयों से निकले जहरीले रसायन नहीं बहाए जा सकें। अगर दिल्ली में यह समस्या हर साल गहरा जाती है तो हरियाणा के साथ मिल-बैठ कर इसके किसी स्थायी हल तक पहुंचने की जरूरत क्यों नहीं लगती है? फिर यमुना में अगर अब भी औद्योगिक कचरा घुल रहा है तो ऐसी स्थिति में सरकारों की क्या जिम्मेदारी बनती है? नदी समूचे समाज के लिए जीवन होती है। लेकिन अरबों के खर्च के बावजूद उसे बचाने का काम अब तक कागजों पर ही दिखता रहा है।

## कल्पमेधा

**हम ऐसा मानने की गलती कभी न करें कि कोई अपराध आकार में छोटा या बड़ा होता है।**

**—महात्मा गांधी**

## जगमोहन सिंह राजपूत

**भारत में अवैध खनन, जंगलों की कटाई, जमीन का दुरुपयोग, नदियों के आसपास अतिक्रमण के दुष्परिणाम अब भयावह रूप में सामने आने लगे हैं। कई बार लगता है कि बहुत देर हो चुकी है। आज अगर गंगा प्रदूषित है, तो सतासीनों के शर्मनाक लालच का उसमें कम योगदान नहीं है। अनगिनत उदाहरण हैं। कारण स्पष्ट है, नेताओं और गांधी का दम भरने वालों ने गांधी के जाने के बाद उनके सिद्धांतों से पूरी तरह मुंह मोड़ लिया है।**

## स्वतंत्रता प्राप्ति के बाद जिस तेजी से भारत में गांधी दर्शन और भारत की उनकी समझ की गहराई से उपजी विकास की दृष्टि को नकारा गया, उनके सैद्धांतिक और व्यावहारिक जीवन मूल्यों को भुला दिया गया, उसके परिणाम अब दिखाई देने लगे हैं। यदि केवल कृषि और छोटे उद्योगों के विकास के संबंध में उनकी अवधारणा को अपनाया गया होता तो आज किसान का जीवन सम्मानपूर्ण और गरिमामय होता, शहरों की ओर युवाओं की वौड़ सीमित होती।

गांधी दर्शन पर विचार-विमर्श इस शताब्दी के प्रारंभ से कुछ इसी तर्ज पर हो रहा है। सन 1909 में ‘हिंद स्वराज’ के सौ वर्ष पूरे होने से 2019 में उनके जन्म के एक सौ उन्सठवें वर्ष के समारोहों के बीच के दशक में यह चर्चा जारी रही है। गांधी के जीवनवृत्त का गहन अध्ययन करने वाले आगे भी उनके व्यक्तित्व विकास को लेकर उसे और गहराई से समझाने का प्रयास करते रहेंगे।

## भावना मासीवाल

एक संयोग है कि ‘बा’ और ‘बापू’ के जन्म के लिहाज से देखें तो दोनों के ही डेढ़ सौ साल हो गए। ‘बापू’ यानी महात्मा गांधी को तो हम सभी विद्यालयी पाठ्यक्रम की किताबों से लेकर व्यावहारिक शिक्षा में परिवार और समाज में पढ़ते आ रहे हैं, लेकिन ‘बा’ यानी कस्तूरबा गांधी की चर्चा कम होती है। ‘बा’ से मेरी पहली पहचान बापू के जीवन परिचय को पढ़ने के दौरान हुई। फिर महात्मा गांधी की आत्मकथा ‘सत्य के प्रयोग’ पढ़ी तो जाना कि एक हद तक सीमित पहचान वाली ‘बा’ ही ‘बापू’ के प्रयोग यानी अहिंसा, आत्मबल, संयम, उदासता, ब्रह्मचर्य, विश्वास, धैर्य, आत्मविश्वास, निष्ठा, कर्तव्य, सादगी को भोक्ता और दूष्टा रहीं। यही प्रयोग वैश्विक स्तर पर बापू के ‘सत्य के प्रयोग’ बने, जिन पर भारत और विश्व में खूब चर्चा हुई, लेकिन ‘बा’ यानी कस्तूरबा गांधी चर्चा का विषय नहीं बन सकीं। जबकि वे आजादी की लड़ाई में अपनी पूरी निष्ठा और बलिदान के साथ मौजूद थीं।

‘बा’ ने अपने पूरे परिवार, पति, बच्चों को समाज और देश सेवा के प्रति न केवल समर्पित कर दिया, बल्कि अपना जीवन भी प्रेम, समर्पण, त्याग और सेवा के माध्यम से देश को सौंप दिया। सवाल

## गांधी का रास्ता

आधुनिक भारतीय चिंतन प्रवाह में गांधी के विचार सार्वकालिक हैं। जैसे-जैसे दुनिया बदल रही है, महात्मा गांधी उतने ही ज्यादा प्रासंगिक होते जा रहे हैं। वे दो अक्टूबर के अलावा भी पूरे विश्व में याद किए जाते हैं। यही प्रमाण है कि वे विश्व विभूति हैं। महात्मा गांधी कभी अमेरिका नहीं गए लेकिन आज पूरे विश्व में भारत के बाद अमेरिका में ही उनकी सबसे अधिक प्रतिमाएं लगाई गई हैं। वे अहिंसा और सत्याग्रह के अग्रदूत थे। अंग्रेजी राज को घुटने टिकाने वाले उनके इत्य मंत्र का जन्म दक्षिण अफ्रीका में हुआ था। सत्याग्रह से लेकर सामूहिक रिहाइश, अपना काम खुद करने की सलाह और पर्यावरण संबंधी कदम (जैसे मिट्टी के बर्तनों का इस्तेमाल और जल संरक्षण) जैसे विचार फीनिक्स सेटलमेंट के गांधी आश्रम में जन्मे और पनपे।

गांधी को समझना आसान नहीं, विशेषतः अगर बात उनके अर्थशास्त्र की हो तो। इसका मुख्य कारण यह है कि गांधी विश्व की नैतिक समझ के कारण अपने निष्कर्षों तक पहुंचे, न कि विकास, निवेश, मांग या पूर्ति की समझ के कारण। यही वजह है कि उनके अर्थशास्त्र के विचारों को वामपंथी-दक्षिणपंथी-मध्यमार्गी-कम्युनिस्ट-समाजवादी-पूंजीवादी खानों में रख पाना संभव नहीं है। वे स्वदेशी, ग्रामीण आत्मनिर्भरता, बड़े उद्योगों के बजाय कुटीर और छोटे उद्योगों और उत्पादन में मशीनों की अपेक्षा श्रम के इस्तेमाल में विश्वास रखते थे। उनका मानना था कि ‘इसमें कोई संदेह नहीं कि पूंजी निर्जीव है, पर पूंजीवादी सजीव हैं और उन्हें परिवर्तन के लिए तैयार किया जा सकता है।’ गांधीजी के कई बयान हैं जिन्हें टिकाऊ विकास

# गांधी को समझने का समय

चालीस वर्ष की अवस्था में उन्होंने हिंद स्वराज लिखा था। लोगों ने अधिक ध्यान नहीं दिया। बाद में भी उसका सार-तत्व समझने में पश्चिमी सभ्यता से प्रभावित लोगों ने अधिक दिलचस्पी नहीं दिखाई, क्योंकि उसमें निहित अनेक विचार और विश्लेषण इन लोगों को सतही तौर पर अव्यावहारिक लगते थे। उसके पीछे के दर्शन और गहन चिंतन का जिन्होंने गहराई से अध्ययन किया, केवल वे उसे प्रारंभिक वर्षों में सही ढंग से समझ पाए। आइंस्टीन ने जब सापेक्षता का सिद्धांत दिया था, तब भी अनेक वर्षों तक वैज्ञानिकों में उसे समझ पाने वाले गिने-चुने लोग ही थे। समय के साथ उसका क्रांतिकारी महत्त्व विज्ञान जगत में उजागर हुआ। लगभग उसी प्रकार आज हिंद स्वराज और गांधी दर्शन का अध्ययन करने वालों की संख्या सारे विश्व में लगातार बढ़ रही है और यह वैचारिक विमर्श जीवन के हर पक्ष तक विस्तार पा रहा है।

जिस पश्चिमी सभ्यता के प्रति युवा गांधी ने तल्ली से लिखा था और अनेक आशंकाएं व्यक्त की थीं, उसका असली स्वरूप अब सभी के समक्ष उभर आया है। गांधी ने जीवन के लगभग हर पक्ष पर चिंतन किया और लिखा। उन्होंने गुजराती में बाल पोथी लिखी, शब्दकोश लिखा, बाद में अखबार निकाले, स्वास्थ्य पर लिखा, भाषा पर लिखा, युवाओं के लिए लिखा, प्राकृतिक चिकित्सा पर लिखा, जो लिखा उसे व्यवहार में लाए, अधिकतर तो व्यवहार में लाने के बाद लिखा। हिंद स्वराज लिखने के समय जब एक हाथ थक जाता था तो वे दूसरे से लिखने लगते थे। व्यक्ति निर्माण और शिक्षा का ऐसा कोई पक्ष नहीं है जिस पर उन्होंने लिखा न हो। मातृभाषा, सदाचार, स्त्री शिक्षा, देश भक्ति, आप जो दूढ़ें, उनके लेखन में मिल जाएगा।

आज हम शिक्षा में कौशलों की अनुपस्थिति पर चिंता व्यक्त करते हैं, गांधी चमड़े की चप्पल बना कर वाइसराय तक को भेंट करने में नहीं हिचकते थे। स्वच्छता के लिए जो उन्होंने किया और लिखा, उसका अनुपालन कितना आवश्यक था, इसकी पहचान अब हो रही है। हर शहर में कूड़े के ढेर लगे हैं जो बढ़ते ही जा रहे हैं। स्वच्छ भारत अभियान ने लोगों का ध्यान तो आकर्षित किया है, मगर दृष्टिकोण परिवर्तन एक कठिन और समय लेने वाली प्रक्रिया है और देर उसी से गुजर रहा है।

युवाओं के लिए गांधी के व्यक्तित्व विकास को समझने में उनके कुछ कालजयी कथन अत्यंत सहायक हो सकते हैं। इनमें पहला है कि ‘मेरा जीवन ही मेरा

संदेश है’। आज वैश्वीकरण और निजीकरण की चकाचौंध भरी दौड़ में विश्व केवल बाजार बन कर रह गया है, इस दौड़ की भयानक आशंकाएं अब उभर कर सामने आ रही हैं और इनसे हर पीढ़ी शक्ति और आशंकित हैं। स्कूलों में विद्यार्थी और बाहर युवा अब समझने लगे हैं कि यह प्रश्न अब सामने दिखाई दे रहा है कि पृथ्वी कितने वर्ष और बचेगी? यह कपोल कल्पना नहीं रही है, वैज्ञानिक अनुमान लगा चुके हैं कि यदि सारा विश्व अमेरिका या यूरोप के स्तर का जीवन यापन करने लगे तो क्रमशः पांच या तीन ऐसे ही अन्य पृथ्वी ग्रहों की आवश्यकता होगी! दो फरवरी 1925 को गांधी ने ‘यंग इंडिया’ में लिखा था कि भारत कर्मभूमि है, भोग भूमि नहीं। भारत का मिशन, लक्ष्य, उद्देश्य अन्य से भिन्न है। यह देश अपने आत्मिक बल के आधार पर सदा सराहा गया है, यहां लोग जीवन के लक्ष्य, उद्देश्य और अध्यात्म को समझाने, सीखने और आत्मसात करने सदा आते रहे



हैं, और आते रहेंगे। तलवारों और हथियारों की विजय क्षणिक होती है, अध्यात्म और आत्मबल की स्वीकृति सदा के लिए होती है। गांधी इसे भारत का वैश्विक उतरदायित्व मानते थे। वे कहते थे-‘अहिंसा के पंथ पर चलते हुए मेरा जीवन भारत की सेवा के लिए समर्पित है।’ भारत का रास्ता पश्चिम का धैर्यपूर्वक विश्लेषण कर जहां आवश्यक हो वहां प्रतिरोध भी कर सके, सभी कुछ आंख मूंद कर स्वीकार न किया जाए। यदि हम ध्यान से देखें तो अपरिग्रह की संस्कृति के महत्त्व की सामान्य

# समांतर संघर्ष

है कि क्या व्यक्ति का शिक्षित वैचारिक आग्रह और राजनीति में सक्रिय हस्तक्षेप ही उसे पहचान दिलाता है? क्या नेपथ्य में काम करने वाले हाथ महत्त्वपूर्ण नहीं? हर पुरुष की सफलता में एक स्त्री का सहयोग होता है। लेकिन मोहनदास करमचंद गांधी को ‘महात्मा’ बनने में हर स्तर पर सहयोग करने वाली कस्तूरबा गांधी को इतिहास में वाजिब अहमियत नहीं मिल सकी। हालांकि गांधी खुद मानते थे कि ‘बा’

से ही उन्होंने जीवन में आत्मसंयम और संतुलन सीखा। बापू का जीवन, उनके जीवन के दृढ़, तनाव, संघर्ष- सभी कुछ को ‘बा’ ने संभाला। वे तो परिवार से विरक्त समाज और देश हित के लिए काम करते थे। दूसरी ओर ‘बा’ परिवार और उसके उद्देश्यों के बीच सामंजस्य लाकर बच्चों को उनसे जोड़ती है। वे कस्तूरबा गांधी ही थीं, जो मोहनदास करमचंद गांधी के अहिंसा के सिद्धांत की नींव थीं। सिद्धांत के व्यवहार में सफल प्रयोग से ही सिद्धांत की उपयोगिता सिद्ध होती है।

भारत की आजादी के आंदोलन में कस्तूरबा गांधी ही वह महिला थीं, जिन्होंने महिलाओं को निजी दायरे से बाहर निकाला और आजादी के आंदोलन में सार्वजनिक भागीदारी का हिस्सा बनाया, आजादी में महिलाओं की अहम भूमिका सुनिश्चित की। ‘बा’ को लगता था कि महिलाओं

को भी असहयोग आंदोलन में सक्रिय योगदान देना चाहिए। वे घर-घर जाकर महिलाओं को असहयोग के दूसरे दौर में भाग लेने के लिए प्रेरित कर रही थीं। उनको समझा रही थीं कि शराब की दुकानों पर धरना दो, यही देश की आजादी की दुश्मन है।

‘बा’ का महिलाओं का नेतृत्व करना और उन्हें आंदोलन का हिस्सा बनाना दरअसल उनके सरल और अभिमान रहित व्यवहार का प्रभाव था। आशा प्रसाद ने ‘कस्तूरबा, कमला, प्रभावती’ पुस्तक में लिखा है कि ‘बा’ के इसी व्यवहार ने देश की साधारण और गरीब स्त्रियों के हृदय जीत लिए थे। इसी कारण नमक सत्याग्रह के समय या अन्य अवसरों पर वे स्त्रियां घर की चारदिवारी से बाहर आईं, समय-समय पर लाटियां खाईं और जेल गईं।’ यहां जाति, वर्ग, धर्म किसी भी तरह का भेदभाव नहीं था, बल्कि ‘आजादी’ के पूरे आंदोलन का एक मत था।

यही हरद दौर था जब स्त्रियां सक्रिय रूप से राजनीति और आंदोलन का हिस्सा बन कर उभर रही थीं। यह ‘बा’ चरित्र का ही गुण था कि महिलाओं ने आजादी के आंदोलन में अपनी भूमिका को पहचाना। बिहार में चंपारण आंदोलन के बाद ‘बा’ के नेतृत्व में ही 1922 के असहयोग आंदोलन का कार्यभार आया। असहयोग आंदोलन में नेतृत्व के कारण बापू को मार्च 1922 में छह वर्ष के लिए जेल की सजा हो गई। बापू

लेकिन भारी बारिश ने उसके विकास, निर्माण, सुव्यवस्थित नियोजन व सुशासन की ध्वजियां उड़ा कर रख दी हैं। आज मनात कितनी परेशानी में होगी, इसका एहसास हमारे नेताओं को होना चाहिए। इस आपदाओं से दूर भागने की बजाय उन्हें चुनौती मान कर नियोजित विकास पर जोर देना चाहिए। केवल सुशासन का ढोल पीटने से काम नहीं चलता। उसके लिए सुशासन को जमीन पर हकीकत के रूप में उतारना होता है।

- हेमा हरि उपाध्याय अक्षत, खाचरोद, उज्जैन**

**किसी भी मुद्दे या लेख पर अपनी राय हमें भेजें। हमारा पता है : ए-8, सेक्टर-7, नोएडा 201301, जिला : गौतमबुद्धनगर, उत्तर प्रदेश**

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

में जाना चाहिए। दुर्भाग्य है कि गांधी के ही देश में उनके आदर्श विचारों की कद्र नहीं है। आज के दौर में भारत ही नहीं बल्कि विश्व समुदाय को भी समझना होगा कि गांधी के सुझाए रास्ते पर चल कर ही एक समृद्ध, सामर्थ्यवान, समतामूलक और सुसंस्कृत विश्व का निर्माण किया जा सकता है।

- अजय प्रताप तिवारी, गोंडा, उत्तर प्रदेश**

### आपदा और चुनौती

पटना में भारी बारिश के चलते उपमुख्यमंत्री के घर में पानी घुस जाने पर उनके परिवार को बचाव दल ने निकाला। खास लोगों का यह हाल रहा तो आमजन का क्या हाल होता है यह पीड़ा जनसेवकों को दिल की गहराइयों से महसूस करनी होगी। बिहार सरकार सुशासन का दावा करती है,

जनजीवन में सार्वजनिक स्वीकृति का दूसरा उदाहरण किसी अन्य समाज और सभ्यता में इतनी गहनता से नहीं मिलता है जितना बल इस पर प्राचीन भारत के समाज और सभ्यता में मिलता है। विश्व में सारा दंड, भयानक प्रतिस्पर्धा, आयुधों पर बेतहाशा व्यय, हिंसा और तनाव तो अनियंत्रित संग्रह को लेकर ही है। इसे सरल और संक्षेप में गांधी ने सबके सामने रखा-‘प्रकृति में सभी की आवश्यकता पूर्ति के लिए संसाधन उपलब्ध हैं, मगर एक के भी लालच के लिए नहीं।’ अफ्रीका के नए स्वतंत्र हुए देशों के अनेक उदाहरण दिए जाते हैं जहां एक सतासीन के लालच ने सारे देश की प्राकृतिक धरोहर को बर्बाद कर दिया। भारत में अवैध खनन, जंगलों की कटाई, जमीन का दुरुपयोग, नदियों के आसपास अतिक्रमण के दुष्परिणाम अब भयावह रूप में सामने आने लगे हैं। कई बार लगता है कि बहुत देर हो चुकी है। आज अगर गंगा प्रदूषित है, तो सतासीनों के शर्मनाक लालच का

उसमें कम योगदान नहीं है। अनगिनत उदाहरण

हैं। कारण स्पष्ट है, नेताओं और गांधी का दम भरने वालों ने गांधी के जाने के बाद उनके सिद्धांतों से पूरी तरह मुंह मोड़ लिया है। इस एक सौ पचासवें वर्ष में क्या गांधी चर्चा अपना कुछ प्रभाव डाल सकेगी? क्या आज के राजनेता कुछ छोटे-छोटे प्रकरण याद रख कर अपना जीवन संवारना चाहेंगे? उनके लिए यह जानना लाभकारी होगा कि गीता का अध्ययन गांधी को जीवन पर्यंत संबल देता रहा! बचपन में हरिश्चंद्र नाटक का उन पर प्रभाव पड़ा था। दक्षिण अफ्रीका में जिस पुस्तक का उन पर चमत्कारी प्रभाव पड़ा था, वह थी रस्किन की ‘अनटू दिस लास्ट’ जिसे हाथ में लेकर वे छोड़ ही नहीं सके। एक बार पढ़ कर उन्हें उस रात नींद नहीं आई। वे लिखते हैं- ‘मेरा विश्वास है

कि जो चीजें मेरे अंदर गहराई में छिपी पड़ी थीं, रस्किन के ग्रंथ-रत्न से मैंने उनका स्पष्ट प्रतिबिंब देखा और इस कारण उसने मुझ पर अपना साम्राज्य जमाया और मुझ से उसमें दिए गए विचारों पर अमल कराया। जो मनुष्य हम में सोई हुई उतम भावनाओं को जागृत करने की शक्ति रखता है, वह कवि है।’ इसके प्रभाव में आकर गांधी लिखते हैं कि सर्वोदय के सिद्धांत को वे इस तरह समझते हैं: ‘एक- सबकी भलाई में हमारी भलाई है, दो- वकील और नाई दोनों के काम की कीमत एक-सी होनी चाहिए, क्योंकि आजीविका का अधिकार सबको एक समान है, तीन- सादा मेहनत-मजदूर का, किसान का जीवन ही सच्चा जीवन है।’

क्या भारत में इसका पुनापत्त संभव होगा?

को कारावास में डाले जाने के बाद निराश लोगों को ‘बा’ संभालती है। आशा प्रसाद के मुताबिक, ‘उस समय कस्तूरबा का रूप एक वीरंगना की तरह लोगों के सामने उभरा। उन्होंने राष्ट्र के नाम यह हृदय-स्पर्शी संदेश दिया- ‘गांधी को दी गई सजा का उत्तर भारत इस तरह से देगा- एक, सभी स्त्री-पुरुष विदेशी कपड़ा पहनना छोड़ दें, खुद खादी पहनें और दूसरों को खादी पहनने के लिए बाध्य करें, दो, सभी स्त्री-पुरुष प्रतिदिन कताई को अपना धार्मिक कर्तव्य समझें और दूसरों को भी कानातान सिखाएं-समझाएं और तीन, सभी व्यापारी विदेशी कपड़ों का व्यापार करना छोड़ दें। इस संदेश के बाद विदेशी कपड़ों की होली जलने लगी और घरों में चरखे की धूम मचने लगी।’

भारत इस तरह से देगा- एक, सभी स्त्री-पुरुष विदेशी कपड़ा पहनना छोड़ दें, खुद खादी पहनें और दूसरों को खादी पहनने के लिए बाध्य करें, दो, सभी स्त्री-पुरुष प्रतिदिन कताई को अपना धार्मिक कर्तव्य समझें और दूसरों को भी कानातान सिखाएं-समझाएं और तीन, सभी व्यापारी विदेशी कपड़ों का व्यापार करना छोड़ दें। इस संदेश के बाद विदेशी कपड़ों की होली जलने लगी और घरों में चरखे की धूम मचने लगी।’ लेकिन यह और भी कानातान सिखाएं-समझाएं और तीन, सभी व्यापारी विदेशी कपड़ों का व्यापार करना छोड़ दें। इस संदेश के बाद विदेशी कपड़ों की होली जलने लगी और घरों में चरखे की धूम मचने लगी।’ लेकिन यह और भी कानातान सिखाएं-समझाएं और तीन, सभी व्यापारी विदेशी कपड़ों का व्यापार करना छोड़ दें। इस संदेश के बाद विदेशी कपड़ों की होली जलने लगी और घरों में चरखे की धूम मचने लगी।’ लेकिन यह और भी कानातान सिखाएं-समझाएं और तीन, सभी व्यापारी विदेशी कपड़ों का व्यापार करना छोड़ दें। इस संदेश के बाद विदेशी कपड़ों की होली जलने लगी और घरों में चरखे की धूम मचने लगी।’ लेकिन यह और भी कानातान सिखाएं-समझाएं और तीन, सभी व्यापारी विदेशी कपड़ों का व्यापार करना छोड़ दें। इस संदेश के बाद विदेशी कपड़ों की होली जलने लगी और घरों में चरखे की धूम मचने लगी।’

लोग मारे गए। साफ-सुथरे शहर पुणे का हाल देखकर लगा जैसे वहां भूकंप आया हो। यह असल में जलवायु परिवर्तन का नतीजा है। हम इंसानों द्वारा प्रकृति के अतिशय दोहन का परिणाम है कि जिन देशों का तापमान कभी शून्य से नीचे हुआ करता था आज वह 40 डिग्री को पार कर रहा है। जहां गर्मी पड़ती थी वहां बर्फबारी हो रही है। आज पूरा विश्व मौसम की भार को झेल रहा है। मगर प्रकृति का अनियंत्रित दोहन रोकने को कोई तैयार नहीं है।

- जग बहादुर सिंह, गोलपहाड़ी, जमशेदपुर**

### कब्जे की जमीन

कहना शायद गलत न हो कि जमीन हड़पना हमारी फितरत का ही हिस्सा है। अगर खाली पड़ी सरकारी भूमि हो तो पी-बारह। बंगले भले ही आलीशान हों लेकिन हमारे ‘रैप’ और ‘गॉर्ड रूम’ सरकारी जमीन पर ही बनेंगे। छोटे घरों के छज्जे, सोकपटि और चहारदीवारी का कुछ हिस्सा सड़कों पर होना भी हमारा हक है। जिम्मेवार महकमा भी अपनी गैरजिम्मेदारी का सबूत देने में पीछे नहीं है। हद तो तब है जब सघन आबादी वाले इलाकों में फुटपाथ का इस्तेमाल धड़ल्ले से पार्किंग के लिए किया जाता है। पुलिस-प्रशासन की नाक के नीचे दुकानदारों द्वारा किए गए अवैध कब्जों का दायरा फुटपाथ के पार तक हो जाता है। क्यों न ऐसी लापरवाहियों के लिए भी त्वरित दंड का प्रावधान हो? राहगीरों के लिए फुटपाथ एक अहम जरूरत है जहां सरकारों की उदासीनता साफ झलकती है। अनधिकृत कब्जे पर सुप्रीम कोर्ट की सख्त टिप्पणी भी बेअसर है। निश्चित रूप से एक ईमानदार कार्ययोजना बनाने की जरूरत है ताकि राहगीरों को अतिक्रमण मुक्त फुटपाथ पर बेरोक-टोक सुरक्षित चलने का हक मिले।

- एयके मिश्रा, मां आनंदयमीनागर, रातू, रांची**