Caring about air



MIHIR SHARMA

will we start caring about the quality of our air? I used to imagine that almost the only lever left with which to drive Indian government policy in any positive direction was the threat of national humiliation in the eyes of the world. But the national capital, and large swathes of the country, are now widely known as hav-

ing poisoned air and it looks increasingly likely to become a comic stereotype for India — as if we didn't already have enough of those — and yet it does not seem, that we are moving swiftly enough to deal with the problem.

I take almost for granted the notion that a massive public health crisis will not in and of itself cause the Indian state to make necessary changes. But the very fact that India is failing to deal with air that significantly harms people, especially children, and that causes people to think twice about visiting the nation's capital, suggests that as a democracy ours is broken in some fundamental way. I do not approve of comparisons to the People's Republic of China in general, but in this case the difference is truly troubling. When the air in Beijing and some other Chinese cities was a fraction as bad as in India's it became the focus of citizen anger and even the authoritarian government was forced to respond. Yes, because of the nature of the Chinese state its response was naturally more effective. But it nevertheless demonstrated greater responsiveness and co-ordination between different power centres. That has been notably missing in the Indian case.

There is a larger question here about health and politics that we must engage with. Why is it that public health in general is rarely high on the list of what Indian voters care about? We know that it matters greatly in their personal lives. The cost of healthcare is the number one reason for people falling back into poverty if they have managed to somehow scrape their way above the poverty line. You only have to take one trip to a publicly-run hospital in one of India's poorer states in order to realise first, that the conditions are awful, and second, that people are far from satisfied about it. Frequently, hapless healthcare professionals have to face mob anger and even violence from a dissatisfied public. But that does not translate into healthcare being an issue at election time.

Yes, the Aam Aadmi Party is hoping that things will be different in the coming Delhi elections. It is worth considering for a moment how much the party has transformed itself from an anti-corruption insurgent into a regional party that has sought to create a new template for the provision of public goods — not unlike other regional parties in other parts of the country. Because this is Delhi, however, which has the advantages of relative affluence and manageability over many other states, the public goods it has been able to carve out an identity around are education and health. The question is whether its performance has been distinctive enough and its narrative around the subject emphatic enough to convince voters that have not traditionally voted around issues such as healthcare and education.

Overall, however, it is dismayingly clear that issues such as healthcare will only become publicly identified as government responsibilities with electoral salience if politicians themselves take responsibility for them first. The template here, I feel, is sanitation. There too — since at least the Mother India controversy that so irked Mahatma Gandhi — India has had a globally poor reputation. There too, the negative effects on public health were high. But till central governments took responsibility for the problem, first through the Nirmal Bharat programme of the United Progressive Alliance and then, with far greater political resonance, through the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan of Narendra Modi, it seemed to be something that voters did not care to hold politicians accountable for.

We therefore must hope for a similar template to take hold in healthcare. If the AAP goes to the people talking about healthcare, and the Bharatiya Janata Party is forced to respond by claiming that AAP's delivery has been insufficiently effective and that it will do a better job, then that at least might set up a virtuous cycle for politics going forward. What one must hope for now is that this is replicated somehow at the national level. We need to start talking about the successes and failures of the new universal healthcare programme, and whether it is being genuinely effective. If "Modicare" becomes a talisman for the prime minister's second term, then perhaps a similar virtuous cycle could take hold at the national level.

But, even if hospitalisation costs are perhaps on the verge of getting on the national agenda, it is also clear that very few want to take responsibility for air pollution. Naturally the Delhi Chief Minister has to talk about it, but that's not enough. Until public anger across states is stark and unmistakable, it is difficult to see how the problem will be seriously tackled. And the fact is that, in spite of red eyes and sore throats across north India, we're not there yet.

Why India must bother about BRI & RCEP

Its refusal to participate in the two says that this country of 1.2 billion people and a \$3 trillion economy shies away from playing a major part in shaping Asia's future



WHERE MONEY TALKS

SUNANDA K DATTA-RAY

ee Kuan Yew would not have minded Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, whom he got to know as India's high commissioner to Singapore, saying that "the centrality of ASEAN to Asia is not what it is (sic) used to be". But India's retreat from the Asian stage under Jaishankar's watch as external affairs minister would have confirmed his worst apprehensions about Narendra Modi's prime ministership.

ASEAN, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, was not Lee's brainchild. He stressed when I was writing *Looking East to Look West: Lee Kuan Yew's Mission India* that Thailand played the key role in its creation. His own political objectives were twofold. First, to build up tiny Singapore's economy so that it was not swept under by the tides of great power politics. And second, to ensure that a prosperous India was the lead player in taking over Britain's Asian role and balancing China's rising might. As Jagat Mehta, India's foreign secretary from 1976 to 1979, put it, Lee "understood India's potential before we did". Sadly, he might feel that the potential is now being squandered after being carefully husbanded by PV Narasimha Rao (whom he hailed as India's Deng Xiaoping) and Manmohan Singh, whom he came to value as a respected friend.

So far as his own city-state is concerned, Lee was spectacularly successful. He boasted that Singapore had Asia's highest per capita income after Japan and the most dissatisfied people. For the discerning Jagat Mehta, Singapore was "the only former colony to make a success of independence". The survival of that independence called for a certain regional architecture that remains incomplete if India leaves the field open to China. Chagrin is understandable at having to follow China's initiatives but only the sluggards in Delhi, loud with bombastic verbiage but slow to act, are responsible for not coming up with sparkling new ideas.

Whatever the reason, India's earlier refusal to participate in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and now in the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) tells the world that this country of 1.2 billion people and a \$3 trillion economy shies away from playing a major part in shaping Asia's future.

It is coincidence that soon after the RCEP's rejection, Sri Lankans elected as president Gotabaya Rajapaksa, the defence secretary identified with the Hambantota port which greatly increased indebtedness to China and added to India's concerns regarding China's Indian Ocean ambitions. The development highlighted the need not only for constant vigilance but also intelligent responses that don't alienate India's neighbours. The 10 ASEAN members, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand joined the RCEP expecting India to do so too. They have friendly economic and political relations with both Asian giants and know that a continental concert becomes impossible if one stands aloof. The RCEP and BRI supplement each other in Beijing's strategy to ensure the smooth flow of exports and imports. Geography demands India's inclusion.

The objection to the BRI is politically and emotionally understandable but not logically sustainable. If it's because Pakistan illegally ced-

ed Indian territory to China, then Pakistan, not China, is the main offender. If the charge is of forcible occupation of Indian territory, then China should be penalised for Aksai Chin. Consistency of principle isn't static thinking. As for the RCEP, it's defeatist to fear being swamped with cheap Chinese products. A vigorous self-confident economy should be able to undertake reforms and regulatory measures instead of seeking refuge in protection. The longer India holds back, the more difficult it will to adjust to globalisation and boost production to create jobs for millions of new entrants every year into the labour market.

Ideally, India's labour-intensive and low-cost manufacturing should enjoy financial and logistic support from China to the benefit of both countries. Even if the time for such cooperation has not yet come, institutions like the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (India is the second largest shareholder after China), the Shanghai-based New Development Bank (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa are equal partners) and the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Forum, which met in Kolkata in late April, indicate divisive politics can be put aside in the interests of growth.

Lee would have said it's like returning to the cooperative climate in which India and China shaped Southeast Asia, giving Indo-China the culture and traditions of both civilisations. With Asia resurgent, he looked forward to a repetition of that evolutionary process. "If India is not here, I think there will be a lack of balance," he said, adding confidently, "but I think India will come".

Amen to that.

LUNCH WITH BS ▶ SHAHEEN MISTRI | FOUNDER, THE AKANKSHA FOUNDATION & FOUNDER-CEO, TEACH FOR INDIA

The path less trodden

Mistri tells **Anjuli Bhargava** how her experiences and influences as a teenager and young adult shaped the unconventional path she decided to take later on

tarting from the age of 12 and through her teens, she volunteered at Mumbai's EAR school for hearing and speech impaired children, at the Happy Home and School for the blind, again in Mumbai, at an orphanage for special needs children in Indonesia, worked with autistic youth in New York while interacting with and observing closely children with multiple disabilities because her mother worked in the field.

She studied at a French pre-school in Lebanon, a British and then an international school in Greece, an elementary school in Indonesia and completed her junior high and high school in the US, finishing her education from a very high income, elite school in Greenwich, Connecticut, a rich suburb outside New York.

As a result, Shaheen Mistri, now 48, the force behind Teach for India, couldn't help but question the dichotomy between her own life of privilege and the lives of children she came in contact with during her formative years. "What had I done to deserve all that I had" was a question that occupied her mind, unaware that this was an unusual thought for a teenager. Her "powerful" volunteering experiences and such thoughts shaped the direction her life would later take.

We are meeting at Mumbai's Royal China restaurant in the Fort area. Mistri orders a sweet corn soup and a prawn and chive dumpling. I opt for a lemon coriander soup and stir-fried vegetables in black bean sauce and fried rice that I suggest we share.

It was at the age of 18 and after a year at the Tufts University, USA, that, to her parent's surprise and dismay, she decided to drop out of and come back to live with her grandmother in Mumbai, feeling a tug she could not quite explain and one that has lasted 30 years. She enrolled in Xavier's Mumbai to earn a degree, the only condition her parents, who had encouraged her to think independently, placed on her.

Soon she found herself spending all her free time to discover Mumbai in a new light, one that she had not been exposed to in her yearly summer vacation visits. Mistri started going to a slum in Cuffe Parade every day where she made her first friend — a girl who was the same age and who lived a life radically different from her own. With the assumptions that grow nat-

urally from a life of privilege, Mistri expected she would be able to teach her friend and the community a lot but soon found it was the other way round.

She also didn't expect to see so many positives in a community that faced so many challenges. The courage, acceptance and yet the resilience and positivity blew her away. "I came in with this idea that I had so much and I was the one who was going to give not realising that I will be the bigger receiver here," she adds. The unassuming Mistri did however bring her own set of skills to the table and soon started teaching a bunch of kids from the slum every afternoon at Sandhya's house, which had become her base in the slum. That is where the seeds of what would later become The Akanksha Foundation were sown.

There were other traumatic experiences that she feels shaped her world view. At the slum, a 15 year old mentally challenged girl who lived with her working mother succumbed to her burns after her clothes caught fire while cooking. Mistri spent 15 days in the hospital at the girl's bedside as the mother had no time to spare. The mother was almost relieved her child was no more as she felt the odds were stacked against her in more ways than one. "To see a mother actually thinking her only child was better off dead was heartbreaking," Mistri explains. She was also appal kind of superstitions the community held onto even at times to their disadvantage. Education, she felt, was the only way to lift them out of their situation.

A second massive influence that led her on the unconventional path her life took was her maternal grandmother she lived with, a rebel who lived life entirely on her own terms. She'd had a love marriage back when no one understood the concept, helped her children explore things generally forbidden and became a painter at the ripe age of 75.

Our food has arrived and I am the only one focusing on it. My soup is delicious, so are the stir-fried vegetables. She has her soup, dumplings and a tiny amount of stir-fry, eating absent-mindedly.

After she'd been teaching kids in the slum for a while, Mistri felt she needed a space outtwo and spark people's willingness to help.

These "pockets of resources" were brought together and Akanksha grew from that single Colaba centre to 60 across Mumbai. Over 4,000 students over the last 15 years were offered every type of support — adult guidance above all — so that they could overcome the challenges they were born with and find their place in society.

The centres soon evolved into 20 full-fledged schools run in partnership with government schools.

Mistri says that through this journey she enjoyed the privilege of being let into people's lives. "The grace, generosity, lack of resentment we saw in our kids taught us a lot including the fact that no problem is insurmountable," she adds.

She wanted to reach more children and as a consequence Teach For India was born in 2009. She was convinced that you could only change the system if you changed the calibre of people who engage with it. In India, the bottom 10 per cent of the graduates get into the education sector with the stars opting for more lucrative professions like investment banking, law or consultancy.

In 2009, the Teach for India programme was formally launched in India, with the caveat that only the best would be recruited as fellows. Over 2,500 applications came in and 87 fellows were chosen in the first year. "The counter-intuitive approach worked. You take something that people usually don't want to do and make it impossible to get in and lo and behold, people want in!", she points out.

The fellowship teaches youngsters "leadership like nothing else can" by giving them charge of a bunch of young kids in a government school setting, with challenges they may have never faced themselves or knew existed.

Now in its tenth year, 3,000 fellows have completed their tenures and 1,000 fellows are engaged in the two-year fellowship in seven cities currently. A pipeline of leaders has been created for the sector in the process as 70 per cent of the fellows have stayed

on in the education sector and launched initiatives of their own.

I interrupt to ask what else — education is evidently her biggest passion — keeps her going. Mistri is deeply knowledgeable about art (she's recently started taking classes) and theatre, she plays the piano and absolutely loves animals. In fact, the only real conflict she ever faced was whether she should work with children or with animals. She's now glad she picked the former.

As we wind up our conversation, she drives the conversation back to her Akanksha children (she has two girls of her own). As I can see, the lady might have covered a fair distance but is far from done.

How Purvideen Khera got its road The urban-rural culture clash

side the slum so that she could take her students

out of their circumstances and teach in a dif-

ferent environment. She approached 20 schools

in south Mumbai, all of which refused to offer

her their premises even for two hours after reg-

ular school hours were over. Their intransigence

High School in Colaba agreed to give her space

and the first Akanksha centre was born as an

after-school school. Every time she went to

Xavier's, she met dozens of students who were

willing to volunteer their time. She also saw chil-

dren with an insatiable hunger to learn. All she

needed to do was act as a bridge between the

Finally, one of the priests at the Holy Name

in fact strengthened her resolve.



PEOPLE LIKE THEM
GEETANJALI KRISHNA

here was a time when families of eligible girls rejected wedding proposals from families belonging to Purvideen Khera, a huge denotified urban settlement in Lucknow. There was something that this slum lacked, which many of Lucknow's other 700plus slums had -- a road. Ambulances, school vans and trucks carrying vital goods would have to stop outside the slum that sprawls over a kilometer on both sides of the Haider canal. The single alley inside the slum was so narrow that if someone even parked a two-wheeler there, another couldn't pass. It seemed difficult to imagine this as I, with community activist Rampati Devi, walked down the road that dissects the community today. Here's what she told me.

Over the years, many people in Purvideen Khera had demanded a road. No official addressed the issue as the slum wasn't recognised by the municipality. More importantly, space for a road would have to be created by breaking parts of houses on either side of it. It seemed like an impossible task.

"We realised that only we as a community can get this done," said Rampati. 'We'd all have to sacrifice parts of our houses for collective good," she added saying that many of her neighbours were no strangers to collective action. These women were already organised into a collective, Shahri Garib Sangharsh Morcha through Lucknow-based Vigvan Foundation to demand their tenurial rights. However, when the same group placed their proposal to the community, many ridiculed the idea. "No one was willing to relinquish even an inch of space," she said. Help came in the form of Phoolmati Devi.

Phoolmati and her husband had one of the few pucca houses in the slum and operated a general store out of a room in front of their house. "We became the first in our lane to demolish a room and our shop to make way for the road," she recalled. This had a cascading effect. If

the couple could demolish part of their expensive pucca house, couldn't their next-door neighbour give up a mud wall? "Before our eyes, the space for our road was getting created because one by one, everyone was feeling compelled to demolish the fronts of their houses," she narrated. In this manner, the morcha activists were able to clear an astounding one and a half kilometers of area.

Next, the intrepid women had to convince the community to contribute for the actual levelling of the road. Initially, they collected ₹2,000 from every household. With this money they hired a JCB at ₹800 an hour to level the road. Funds quickly ran out. They had to collect more. The road was finally levelled after 22 days of work spread over four months at the cost of ₹4.5 lakh.

Who'd have imagined that a bunch of poor, illiterate women in a slum would be able to achieve this? As Rampati strode down the road she helped build, I mused that perhaps when a disempowered and disadvantaged community is organised into a cohesive group, the consequences are far-reaching. And that it shouldn't come as a surprise that the women of Purvideen Khera who originally came together only to demand their tenurial rights, also ended up building a one-anda-half kilometer road along the way.



PEOPLE LIKE US
KISHORE SINGH

row that we are farmers — sort of - my wife and I have begun to keep bucolic timings as far as our mornings are concerned. Which means, dear reader, while you are snuggling in your quilts, still hours away from your wake-up calls, chota hazris, or walks, we're pottering around amidst our vegetable patch, picking chillies (fiery), uprooting carrots (not yet tender), marvelling at the cauliflowers (perfect), fretting over the broccoli which refuses to flower (imported seeds), monitoring the papaya (which is resisting growth). Thanks to a barter system our caretaker has perfected, we get the pick of neighbouring fields — lemons, brinjals, pomello, cucumbers — for the loan of a lawn mower, or a pipe connection from our bore well. Having fussed around a bit, we drive back to our city home to find the rest of the family still in bed. Only we farmers — sort of — have it tough.

The hard life is accentuated by our urban duality, when we must go to work later in the day despite an early start. Urban lives are the opposite of rural ones, especially when it comes to evenings out. Farmers sleep early, sometimes at times when we're still in office, and parties start even later. It takes a toll, this pre-dawn rising and late socialising, but the reality is that we can't afford to be farmers without a city job.

Our *maali*'s family is generous with sharing produce, charring yam and skinning it for us to relish. My wife has been at pains to tell them they must wash their hands (to their bemusement) before dicing, peeling or otherwise serving anything, and invite some scorn for insisting it be served plated, with fork, spoons and knives, in a tray. So, the radish must be washed and sliced, the fruit peeled, the salad drizzled with dressing. Last weekend, the *maali* wanted to know whether he could pluck me some sugarcane stalks. "You peel the cane back with your teeth and then chew

it for juice," he explained. I told him I'd like some, yes, but sliced and diced, much to his amusement.

If our ways are alien to them, our children — and friends — who come visiting us over weekends prefer not our farm produce because their idea of countryside dining — or a picnic on the lawns seems to consist of pizzas and pastas with freshly crushed herbs for a "rural" flavour. I'm game for something more rustic — a *khichdi*, perhaps, or hot corn rotis made with our own flour, served with saag of mustard greens plucked fresh off the field. The maali gets me lassi sometimes, making the kids turn up their noses — they've only ever had it in tetrapacks. They'd prefer a beer. I join them on occasion, even though farmers oughtn't to be drinking during the day.

For most part, we dress in tracks similar—if a little less soiled—than that of the farm hands, hoping to merge in. Alas, we speak differently, and our family and friends dress in clothes more suited to urban environments. The cultural clash is most evident around the swimming pool—which we are now trying to screen from prying eyes. We'd put it in for exercise, or leisure. Our caretaker, escorting his father around the property, explained to his father however: "This is where they have their baths."

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China is out of economic ammo

NOAH SMITH

he Chinese government has issued vague but stern-sounding warnings that it will retaliate for a bill passed by Congress that would require the White House to protect human rights and ensure the territory's autonomy. But China's options for economic retaliation are limited. And most of these options have already been exercised amid President Donald Trump's trade war.

China's most obvious method of retaliation would be to stop buying American goods. But China has already imposed tariffs on \$135 billion worth of products. Sales to China from all over the US have plunged.

The agricultural industry has been hit especially hard. Farm bankruptcies are up 24 per cent this year. Farm bankruptcies are up 24 per cent this year, and a report by the American Farm Bureau Federation finds that almost 40 per cent of farmers' income this year will come either from insurance payouts or government bailouts. This is an economic catastrophe for farmers and a headache for exporters. Few expect exports to China to recover even if the trade war ends tomorrow because China has found other suppliers. Even those US exporters who are still selling their goods in China must realise their situation is shaky; if they're wise, they're already looking for alternative markets. So China has little left to threaten on the trade front. The other big weapon in the Chinese arsenal is investment. The Chinese government is traditionally a major buyer of US government debt, and it holds the second-biggest stash of Treasuries (after Japan). Over the years, many have fretted that a spat between the US and China would lead the latter to sell off that mountain of debt, creating a world of hurt for the US financial system and economy. But this danger is vastly exaggerated. As recent experience demonstrates, the US simply doesn't need Chinese government cash. In 2015 and 2016 China experienced one of the biggest capital flights in history, with about \$1 trillion pouring out of the country. This resulted in a huge drawdown of China's foreign-exchange reserves, most of which are US bonds. If the US were heavily dependent on Chinese government financing, interest rates on US debt — and by extension, throughout the US economy —should have risen. Instead, they fell.

If China can dump a quarter of its US bond holdings and not cause a noticeable movement in American borrowing costs, then the threat represented by the remaining three-quarters probably is small. The US, like the rest of the developed world, is simply awash in financial capital. Unloading its reserve stockpile in retaliation for US actions toward Hong Kong would put China in greater danger than the US Without the cushion of reserves, a repeat of 2015-16 could lead to a classic emerging-market crisis in China, with capital outflows forcing a sudden currency depreciation, devastating the financial system and bringing the economy to a sudden stop. One final thing China could do is restrict its exports of rare earths, a crucial input for many technology products. China now dominates production of these commodities. But as my colleague David Fickling has noted, this threat also is minimal; when China cut off rare-earth exports to Japan in 2010 as part of a geopolitical dispute, Japan simply teamed up with an Australian company to find new supplies, quickly breaking China's monopoly. The US could easily replicate this feat. So China has few economic weapons left with which to threaten the US over Hong Kong. It will likewise be powerless to retaliate over other geopolitical and humanitarian disputes, such as US condemnation of the mass internment of Muslims in China's Xinjiang province or territorial spats in the South China Sea. For that matter, $\,$ China's continued ability to escalate the trade war seems limited. But China does have other weapons at its disposal. The kind that explode. In pushing China over everything from trade to human rights to Hong Kong's autonomy, the US should remember its own history. It was relentless US economic and diplomatic pressure over Japan's invasion of China that pushed that country into launching a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. With its economic arsenal depleted, China could at some point decide that a harder form of retaliation is in order. ©Bloomberg

Weekend Ruminations will resume next week

Do Indian Muslims matter?

Indian Muslims have been denied their rightful place in the power structure as punishment for their voting choices. This is self-defeating

he perennial regret of the BJP had always been that Muslims punch way above their deserved political weight in India. It was stated most pithily, in the conversations by Balbir Punj, BJP leader, key intellectual voice, and my former colleague in the Express Group: "Muslims," he said, "have a veto on who will rule India and who won't."

The conversation happened just after Atal Bihari Vajpayee's second NDA government had been defeated in the Lok Sabha by a solitary vote in 1999 as all "secular" parties came together against it. Not long earlier (1996). Vaipavee's first NDA government was defeated in all of 13 days.

The second NDA lasted just over a year and Mr Punj made an arguable case that anyone who had any interest in seeking the Muslim vote, or fear of losing it, was happy to bury his hatchet to deny the BJP power. The Muslim vote was much too valuable for them to lose, and their commitment to secular values, in that view stated by Mr Punj, was merely a cynical cover. I bet this view would have been further strengthened after UPA-1 came up, with even the Left supporting the Congress-led government, all to keep the $\operatorname{\mathsf{BJP}}$ out. The difference in seats between the Congress and BJP was marginal then, 145 to 138.

The BJP had, at various points of time, tried to reach out to the Muslims. Vajpayee himself was the party's friendliest and most inclusive face for minorities, L K Advani cultivated many prominent Muslim intellectuals, even the Muslim Left. From participating in Muslim festivals to praise for Jinnah, to the choice of

APJ Abdul Kalam for Rashtrapati Bhavan, the Vajpayee-Advani BJP tried to breach the fortress of Muslim voters. But the party lacked conviction, and failed.

The BJP translated this as the Muslim veto on who will rule India. The UPA decade, when the BJP's power declined across the country, strengthened that view. Then, Narendra Modi and Amit Shah rose in 2014, and turned the equation upside down, or inside out — take your pick. They won a full majority SHEKHAR GUPTA without much — if any — help from India's Muslim voters.

A new template had been set in Indian politics. Many BJP leaders were upfront with it: "We have now accepted we have to fight in a field with only 80 per cent voters, leaving Muslims and most Christians out." Once they accepted that reality, the challenge was simple: "Get about 50 per cent of that Hindu vote, we could rule India with a comfortable majority." They proved this again in 2019. A most unexpected transformation in Indian pol-

itics had come about: The large Muslim population, now nearly 200 million, had been rendered electoral-



ILLUSTRATION BY BINAY SINHA

ly irrelevant. Don't buy into any folklore about Muslim women being grateful for the triple talaq ban, or aspirational younger Muslims having voted for the BJP. Demographic analysis by every reliable exit poll underlines this for us. It stunned the BJP's "secular" rivals. It also left the Muslims searching for answers.

Now, put yourself in the shoes of one of our 200 million Muslims and the picture may look something like this: My vote has lost its power, alright. But, should I be deprived even my rightful place in the power structure? The Modi cabinet, in its sixth year now, has only one

Muslim: Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, in charge of minority affairs. It is also one of those unfamiliar junctures in our history — and it's a long one when none of the key constitutional positions, president, vice-president, speaker of Lok Sabha, heads of armed forces, security and intelligence agencies, the Election Commission, or the judiciary features any Muslim.

There isn't one state with a Muslim chief minister and the one that might have needed to have one. Jammu and Kashmir, isn't even a state any more. None of the secre-

taries in the key ministries is a Muslim, nor any important regulator. We can search deeper, but in my quick recollection, Nasim Zaidi as chief election commissioner (2015-17) was the last Muslim to hold a constitutional position of consequence, besides Hamid Ansari, of course. Among India's 37 states and union territories, there are just two Muslim governors: Najma Heptullah and Arif Mohammed Khan. Where does it leave me in today's India? We know the arguments from the BJP: Sabka saath,

sabka vikas, to begin with. The absence of major communal riots is the next. Then, we can go on. As stories By special arrangement with The Print

by ThePrint's reporters Sanya Dhingra and Fatima Khan have recently shown, under the Modi government the success rate of Muslim candidates in the IAS, etc., has, if anything, risen marginally and more minority scholarships are going to the community's students than under the UPA.

But certainly, a 15 per cent population in a truly equal state would believe it also deserves a place in the sun, a slice of the power and governance pie. We will give you the post-2014 BJP's answer to this: "You can't first insist on voting against us en bloc, as if we are enemies, and then also demand a share in power. Much chutzpah?"

The question we are raising - by choosing a headline like "Do Indian Muslims matter?" - draws precisely from this and seeks to argue against this deeply diluted and qualified notion of constitutional equality. You have your vote, scholarships, jobs, and opportunity. For a share of power, maybe you should rethink your voting choices.

Or, too bad that 15 per cent of you are so scattered as to count for no more than 27 Muslim MPs in this Lok Sabha. You've seen this model elsewhere. The large Muslim minority in Israel is the only Arabic population anywhere to have a free and equal vote, safety, economic, and social opportunity. But the political office they can rise to, a place in the governance structure, is limited. It's a republic, but a Zionist republic. The new deal for Muslims in India also seems to be a similar one. Except, India was never imagined or designed to be a Hindu republic. That is where this argument fails.

The Indian Muslims are not a monolith, nor are the subcontinent's. Think about this. Forty per cent of all of the world's Muslims live in the subcontinent. And yet, the number of the region's Muslims in ISIS has never crossed a few low hundreds. Of these, Indians have never reached even three figures. Why is it so?

It is essentially because the subcontinent's Muslims have a strong nationalism of their own in India, Pakistan, or Bangladesh. They have a flag, an anthem, a cricket team to support, and politicians to adore or detest. The fantasy of a Caliphate as a mythical new and pristinely Islamic nation-state has no lure for them. In different parts of the subcontinent, Muslims also lean on diverse denominators or identities: Language, ethnicity, culture, political ideology, and not just religion. Bangladesh came into being as cultural and linguistic identity took precedence over the religion-driven two-nation theory.

This is a great strength of the region, and no liability. It applies most of all for India. The continued isolation and sullenness of the Muslim minority at their post-2014 irrelevance is not what India needs. Don't confuse silence for acquiescence. Indian Muslims have also grown a new middle-class. An educated and professional elite has emerged. They no longer follow the old dynastic Left-Urdu aristocracies or the Ulema (clergy) as their leaders. As young Delhi University scholar Asim Ali wrote in an article last week, they are now asking them tough questions. Punishing them for their voting preferences may bring some vengeful, servesyou-right joy. But it will be self-defeating. No country or society ever prospered or remained secure by marginalising more than one-sixth of its own.

Solutions to pollution need political will



VIEWPOINT

DEVANGSHU DATTA

Spot — an unending storm that rages across the giant planet. India has its Great Brown Spot — a massive also lack of political will. smudge of pollution that vitiates the quality of life for months every winter.

The Great Brown Spot showed up on satellite pictures about five years ago. Since feature of the Northern winter. Words like Vogmask and acronyms like AOI have entered the Hinglish lexicon, Schemes like odd-even have been implemented. Schools are now braced for regular shutdowns ing solutions. every winter. Air purifier sales

walk or indeed, any walk outdoors, has become an act of reckless courage.

better through all this time despite the fact that this affects the health of every resident of North India's plains. That should make dealing with it a political imperative since it cuts across all ideologies and income classes. Indeed, any the party that offered credible solutions to pollution should stand upiter has its Great Red to gain substantially in vote

share across several states. Why hasn't this happened? The scale is large but there is Ideally, the administrations of four states and the Centre should be setting up a joint task force and inducting experts to tackle the problem. Instead we see a blame game where each then, it's become a permanent state points fingers at the others. Obviously, the solutions would be complicated, and equally obviously, there can be no solution until there's a political consensus that there's something to be gained by seek-

have boomed. The morning an obvious problem becomes edge of starvation. an issue that politicians of every hue are prepared to grapple with? Also, how long does it take before political consensus Things haven't gotten any

> detail. Looking Indira How long does it take back, Gandhi started **before an obvious** Garibi problem becomes an issue Hatao campaign that politicians of every in the 1970s and followed through

with the more political consensus pointed trifecta of Roti, Kapda, Makaan in the 1970s. mid Poverty and some detail hunger have been integral to the subconti-

nental civilisational experience 40 years has made attempts at for millennia. There were localised famines in the 1960s before the Green Revolution, at least in terms of political slo-Indeed, the US' diplomatic gans, was Bijli, Sadak, Paani. leverage over India then was The focus on basic infrastruclargely due to the PL-480 ture gained consensus during Program, which donated wheat the Atal Bihari Vajpayee regime

hue are prepared to

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interesting questions

action? These are

Indira Gandhi may just have been paying lip service to poverty alleviation and tackling years. hunger when she started translates into effective action? mouthing those slogans. But it These are interesting questions did lead to political consensus.

has come to power since 1977 has subscribed to that consensus. Along the way,

been largely alleviated. Poverty reduction is a more controversial subject -policy in this regard hasn't been optimal but every government in the last

poverty reduction.

The next major consensus, How long does it take before to a nation that lived on the and again, it has been followed

through by every political formation that has held power at state or Centre in the last 20

NATIONAL INTEREST

Successes are qualified. There have been multiple financial defaults and unfinand worth pondering in some Every political formation that ished road projects; the power sector is a financial horror-show due to loss-making state electricity boards; water resource management is abysmal. But that is due to the generic incompetence of India's policy-makers, not the lack of political will

It is also undeniable that. despite defaults and abandoned projects, India has a better road network now. The power grid has a larger footprint and it's more reliable, though that's not saving much, given how poor electric supply used to be.

The key factor here is that these are now matters of consensus: Citizens will demand that any government provides basic infrastructure regardless of its ideological stances. Pollution alleviation probably has to hit the same levels of consensus before the Great Brown Spot reduces in size. That might take a couple of decades going by the experiences cited above.

Building the elephant

EYE CULTURE

ATANU BISWAS

he blind men of the parable went on debating whether the elephant was like a winnowing basket (ear), or a plowshare (tusk), or a plow (trunk), or a pillar (foot), by touching only one part of the body. However, instead of fighting for their own beliefs, they could possibly try to build an image of the animal by combining all their data. That's data-linking, of course. People have become different sources by creating a new and matching are declared to be matches. richer dataset, which is of tremendous help in policy making.

Linkages among medical databases, such as electronic health records (EHRs), EHRs across multiple healthcare settings, health insurance claims, and patient-generated data are becoming increasingly important in delivering high-quality health care in different countries. Linking databases of Aadhaar, permanent account number, Voter ID, bank accounts and mobile numbers, for example, has been dominating our lives in the recent past. There has been a paradigm shift in the census methodology over the last two decades or so — especially in Europe. where the traditional questionnairebased censuses have been replaced by register-based ones. In fact, data from population registers, municipalities, jobs files, social security administration, pensions and life insurance benefits, schools, different types of tax records, health and hospital are now assembled to prepare censuses in many places. In India, the home minister recently asked officials to frame a plan to combine the databases such as Aadhaar and voter card into the upcoming 2021 census database.

Linking big datasets from various sources/registers is a daunting task. However, large-scale data-linking is not new; it has been successfully performed elsewhere. For example, in 2010, Luxembourg-based Eurostat launched a micro data-linking project in European business statistics with 10 participating countries. The aim was to link data from the International sourcing survey with structural business and international trade in goods statistics.

The objective of data-integration is to identify and combine information from corresponding records on different source datasets. Standard software packages such as R RecordLinkage package. Merge ToolBox, Link Plus, and Stanford Entity Resolution Framework (SERF) are available for data linking. However, it's certainly not easy to combine different registers concerning 1.35 billion people, for example. Even the name of a person might have been recorded differently in different registers. Are Debdulal Banerjee, Deb Dulal Benerjee, Deb Dulal Bannerjee, Debu Bandyopadhyay, and D Bandyopadhyay, having the same date of birth, the same person? There might have been typographical errors in some registers, but they might also be different individuals. There might be various The writer is a professor of Statistics at the

dling missing data may affect the performance and reliability of the linkage approach. These are issues which must be treated with utmost care.

Typically, while linking two datasets, record linkage algorithm first fixes a set of linking variables, called identifiers (such as name, address), common in both datasets, and a numerical weight is calculated for each compared pair, which reflects the degree of confidence of the paired records, representing the same person or entity. Then, the pairs with smarter, and gather information from weights exceeding some pre-specified

Several techniques are available for such purposes. For example, a "deterministic" algorithm checks whether records agree or disagree on a given set of identifiers in "all-or-nothing" fashion either in a single step or in multiple steps. An "exact deterministic" linkage requires an exact match on all identifiers, while an 'approximate or iterative deterministic' linkage requires an exact match on one of several rounds of matching, but not on all possible identifiers. For example, a procedure may rely on matching two or more of the following identifiers: Year of birth, day of birth, middle initial, and gender.

tifiers (like date of birth) have more discriminatory power than others. More complicated "probabilistic" strategies assess the discriminatory power of each identifier, and also the likelihood that two records are of the same person based on whether they agree or disagree on different identifiers. Matching probabilities may be obtained exogenously, reflecting past experience or expert opinion (e.g Fellegi-Sunter approach), or calculated endogenously (for example, expectationmaximisation algorithm). More sophisticated methods include a "deterministic" component into the "probabilistic" strategy, and such a combined strategy may be characterised as "hybrid probabilistic-deterministic" method.

However, it is likely that certain iden-

In any case, the procedure to be applied should be "iterative" in nature. Moreover, a proper verification of the performance of the data-linking procedure should be done by taking a random sample of linked data. Certainly, matching errors may occur. The errors concerning clubbing a pair from two registers might be of two types — false positive and false negative. The associated data scientists need to devise effective algorithm, depending on the nature of registers to be linked to ensure that the data-linking becomes smooth, sufficiently accurate and, of course, hassle-free for the common people. There should be a convenient guideline to 'errors" subsequently.

Certainly, it's a mammoth task to build up the "elephant" by correctly assembling different types of "registers". However, once the complete elephant is formed, it might create waves of opportunities for more complex and expanded policies and research no doubt about that.

kinds of missingness in data, and han- Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata

UPA, NDA and perfect storms



LINE AND LENGTH

T C A SRINIVASA-RAGHAVAN

hink about it. The NDA 2 is finding itself in exactly the same kind of trouble that the UPA 2 had done after being re-elected in 2009. Not a week goes by without some

The difference is that in the case of the Manmohan Singh government, it was widespread corruption that caused the trouble. In the case of the Modi government, it is the economy. The bad news has been unrelenting.

Dr Singh appeared helpless then, and floundered. Mr Modi also looks helpless now and is floundering. He was not perhis colleagues let him down.

It's exactly the same with grandchildren. Mr Modi. After almost six years in power, we don't know what worms are hiding under which rocks.

By 2013, the last full year of the Singh government, economic bad news had also begun to surface. The man who made the most of it electorally was Mr Modi. No promise of his was rejected by the voter.

It will be interesting if corruption becomes to the NDA in 2022 what inflation had become to the UPA by 2012. It's unlikely, but ministerial colleagues can spring nasty surprises.

Dr Singh, in a desperate bid to give the UPA a cleaner image, ordered many inquiries and punitive actions. None of them helped. Mr Modi has also ordered — and will order similar desperate actions for the economy. Time will tell if these help or not.

By late 2012, the non-Congress members of the UPA had given up. Many of them told me they were looking forward to putting their feet sonally corrupt. Far from it. But up and, in a manner of macro, micro, taxation, and speaking, playing with their administrative matters.

The NDA partners are hav-BJP. Unity is giving way to diversity. Political need, it is evident, waits for no one.

It's worth recalling that in 2010 the BJP was in complete disarray and the Congress appeared firmly in the driver's seat. By 2014, it had been consigned to the dustbin.

What cooked its goose was the perception of incompetence and crookedness. Perceptions are like that only. They don't regard facts as sacrosanct.

It is this problem that Mr Modi's government is currently encountering. The general belief is that it hasn't a clue as to how to tackle the sudden and massive deceleration in the rate of growth of industrial output of the Indian economy. It accounts for 15 per cent of GDP.

Even when it does the right things, the government is being criticised. Indeed, the truth is that it's done exactly what economists and other busybodies have been recommending on

The speed may be disappointing but the direction is ing similar problems with the not. But the mood has turned unforgiving. Once a perception takes hold, the constraints that governments operate under are seen as mere excuses.

The biggest puzzle, about which I have written previously, is the complete disjunction between the government's political policies and economic will because there's no money policies. In politics, it gets the big things — and the associated perceptions — absolutely right. That helps it win elections.

This is the opposite of the UPA, which got its economics generally right, at least until Pranab Mukherjee became finance minister. To date no one knows why he did all that

The perfect storm

Singh one, has thus run into what is called a perfect storm, where everything that can go wrong does so at the same time. It's like a boat that springs a simultaneous hundred leaks and also starts running into a you reduce speed, not bash gale. The crew doesn't know on regardless.

whether to bail the water out or plug the holes or trim the sails or open them out. The current deficiency in

demand for industrial goods is like that. The government is trying to boost both consumer and investment spending but it's like a crew with too few plugs and towels, as well as a

So what should the government do? It has only one economically sensible option: Reduce expenditure — which it but openly instead of by the Chidambaram method of postponing and hiding it.

Indeed, the problem with depressed consumer and investment sentiment is largely because the government is spending too much, and desperately demanding tax revenue. It needs to go easy.

In Keynesian terms, it's the G in the national income identity that is holding C and I The Modi government, like the down, instead of raising them. This is the precise opposite of what Keynes had thought would happen.

When things stop working as they should, you get the perfect storm. And when that happens



SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 2019



ALLIANCE OF CONVENIENCE Union transport minister Nitin Gadkari

The three parties have become united with the only motto to keep the BJP out of power. I have doubts whether this government will be formed ... Even if it is formed, it will not last beyond six to eight months

Forcing faculty quotas will kill IIMs

It will dilute teaching quality, affect the future of reserved category as well as general students

TIS HARD to tell if the government is truly intent upon reforming higher education, since every time it takes a step forward, it takes two backwards. Even as it talks of significant autonomy for institutes of eminence, it was looking to curtail IIMs'autonomy soon after granting it to them by amending the IIM Act to bring in virtual fee caps—ironically, while insisting that this was to be done "without flouting the autonomous spirit of the IIM Act". It promised deliverance from the rotten UGC and AICTE system, but the Higher Education Commission of India, the successor body, is yet to see the light of day. Now, it is likely to direct the IIMs to reserve teaching posts for socially and economically deprived backgrounds. In doing so, the government will be countermanding its own 1975 order that has been used by the IIMs to side-step adhering to quota norms for faculty positions.

The ministry will now force the 20 IIMs to set aside 59.5% of faculty positions this is after factoring in the 10% EWS reservation that the government had brought in earlier this year. The IIMs have, so far, used the cover provided by the 1975 order of the department of personnel and training that allows for exemption of scientific and technical posts in the government from reservation. The government, as per media reports, will likely use the Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Teachers' Cadre) Act 2019 to make the IIMs fulfil the quota obligations—the Act provides for reservation in recruitment of faculty on the basis of clubbing vacant posts of the same ranks across all departments in an institution. There is every likelihood that the government will be issuing an explicit order stating that the provisions of the Act will supersede the 1975 order. The matter is further complicated by the fact that the Reservation in Teachers' Cadre Act brings back the 200-point roster system in reservation of faculty posts. Under this, the university or institute is chosen as a unit for deciding on reservation, which means that the total pool of posts that must be reserved significantly goes up. Read together with the various court judgments and government orders on reservation in promotions and those that put limits on de-reservation of posts, it is likely that teacher-strength could also be affected if the IIMs are unable to find eligible reserved category candidates to fill up reserved posts.

Nor is it the first time the government is thinking on these lines—in 2016, too, the government had talked of faculty reservations at the IIMs. It is difficult to see how the government can keep talking about "full autonomy" for top institutions if it is going to force its social-justice obligations down the IIMs'throats. Reservation at the faculty level will effectively mean that recruitment requirements pertaining to academic achievement will get diluted; once that happens, teaching quality will get impacted. The fact that reservations in jobs are still talked about is evidence of how badly reservations in education have failed. At a time when India should be gearing itself for the next industrial revolution, which will be innovation- and AI-heavy, putting ineffective social justice methods ahead of factors influencing quality in higher education will be a severe drag.

Transforming health systems

NITI largely right, but PMJAY no model for universal insurance

ITIAAYOG BELIEVES believes the health system for New India will rest on reforms in two key areas—healthcare financing (64% of the healthcare spending by households in the country is out-of-pocket), and healthcare delivery (over 98% of the healthcare facilities in India employ 10 or fewer persons, dragging down the efficiency of delivery). NITI's suggested roadmap includes shifting healthcare financing to insurance, and reducing fragmentation of both riskpools for better insurance coverage and health service provision by incentivising much-needed provider consolidation.

Government spending on health in India is just 1.13% of the GDP, compared to the overall healthcare spending of 4% of the GDP. It lags comparable economies on quite a few metrics of health system performance—its per capita health spending was less than a third of China's, less than half of Sri Lanka's, and lagged even Egypt and the Philippines. Its burden of disease, as measured by disability adjusted life years (DALY) per 100,000 population, stood at 34,000—China's was 26,300, and Sri Lanka's 24,000. The path forward, as the NITI report rightly notes, must focus on delivering on the unfinished public health agenda. India is in the midst of an epidemiological transition in which the morbidity burden is shifting away from infectious diseases, and towards non-communicable diseases (NCDs); hence, India must simultaneously strategise to deal with infectious and preventable diseases, and NCDs. Given this shift, medical care alone may not prove a sustainable strategy; a large part of the battle will be prevention—nutritional interventions, checking air and water pollution, etc, therefore, demand as much focus as sanitation and vaccination. As for guiding healthcare financing away from OOP to insurance, the high OOP expenditure itself can be leveraged—if the nature of financing by households is guided away from "point of service" (payments made directly to healthcare facilities) to risk pooling (insurance), it could create large pools of financing that would reduce economic barriers to healthcare (high individual costs) as well as reduce the poverty-push of the financial costs of illness. While it doesn't explicitly pitch for a similar scheme for the non-poor or the middle-class, the NITI report says that Pradhan Mantri Jan Aarogya Yojana (PM-JAY) could be implemented with an eye on its potential to influence overall healthcare transformation in India beyond its current explicit mandate. Read with what the report says of the government's role—"If central governments play an equalization role, it is very difficult to do so in the absence of a standard benefits package, which would set the minimum level of services that a country wants all members of society to have, as well as can afford"—'mandatory health insurance for all'does seem to be the recommendation. While it may seem desirable, any expanded future health insurance coverage the government may plan must carefully study the on-ground shortcomings—from fraud to under-delivery—of the PM-JAY scheme.

Other proposals the NITI report makes include promoting the resolution of governance challenges in publicly-owned commercial insurance, and the Employees' State Insurance (ESI). ESI's record in providing better access to healthcare for beneficiaries is quite poor, and it poses a hurdle to formalisation of employment given how it erodes beneficiaries'in-hand salaries. As has been argued by this paper before, given that there is little possibility of any effective reform, the best thing would be to perhaps junk it.

NotWORKING

In 2023, just one of every five workers in India will be a woman, to the economic and social detriment of the country

FTHE SEVEN crore persons of working age (15-59 years)—5.9 crore or 84.3% of who are projected to be in the age group of 15-30 years—that the National Skills Development Corporation estimates will join India's workforce by 2023, only one in five is expected to be female. While this 20.1% female labour force participation rate between 2019 and 2023 is higher than the 16.4% projected by the Periodic Labour Force Survey for 2017-18 for the 15-29 year age group, it highlights how severe the gender skew in India's labour market is. India lags far behind countries like China (61%), Vietnam (73%), Singapore (60%), and even Bangladesh (36%), Libya (26%), and Pakistan (24%).

For reasons varying from lack of safety at the work place to families exerting control to stature—the latter is especially true of upper class, upper caste households—women, both before and after marriage, are encouraged or forced to restrict themselves to domestic work. However, the skill level of women of working age is also a significant contributing factor. For instance, it is difficult for women from the lower economic strata to find gainful formal employment since they often are illiterate/uneducated. Even basic vocational training of the kind that the Skill India Mission endeavours to impart, such as in tailoring, driving, or essential computer skills, would go a long way in empowering these women. To ensure the labour force participation of such women, reskilling and upskilling them is crucial, apart from ensuring the availability of childcare centres at the workplace, and zero tolerance to workplace sexism and harassment.

NRLM

THE NATIONAL RURAL LIVELIHOODS MISSION HAS ELEMENTS THAT CAN GREATLY IMPROVE THE LOT OF WOMEN IN THE COUNTRY. BUT IT WILL NEED TO FIGHT MANY STRUCTURAL CHALLENGES

Transforming women's lives

KOCHAR

NRLM. Views are personal

CONTINUOUS STREAM of news stories of sexual assault against women, and of religious and caste conflicts conveys the impression that India's commitment to improving the position of women, to secular traditions, and to democracy is tenuous, at best. Though data from Demographic and Health Surveys spanning the period 2005-06 to 2015-16 reveal improvements in women's agency along some dimensions, India lags behind other countries at a similar level of development in indicators such as acceptance of wife beating, son preference, employment, and women's control of their own earnings. It is evident that economic growth hasn't been matched by social progress that ensures the rights and liberties of at least half of its citizenry.

However, though our development in this regard frequently appears excruciatingly slow, incremental changes are occurring. Particularly noteworthy are those that take the form of institutionalised change under the aegis of a large national programme, implemented in an intensive mode in approximately 270,000 of India's poorest villages.

The National Rural Livelihoods Mis-

sion (NRLM), implemented by the ministry of rural development with financial support from the World Bank, promotes SHGs amongst poor rural women. These groups require women to save small amounts ranging from ₹10-20 every week, supporting internal loans to group members. However, small savings and loans can have only a limited impact on the extreme poverty of these women, many of who live in mud houses without access to running water, and on very low incomes. Improvements in wealth require addressing households'vulnerability to weather and ill-heath. They also require overcoming problems associated with the small scale of village markets; coordinated investments in local public goods such as schools, health centres, and sanitation; and significant improvements in the governance of local governments responsible for implementing welfare programmes. As is often the case, and as documented in numerous newspaper articles, these local governments frequently benefit richer members of the village economy at the expense of the poorest. Further, they rarely confront the social problems faced by rural women that must be addressed if India is to fulfil the promise of democracy.

Through support for a federated

structure of community institutions, the NRLM attempts to address these seemingly insurmountable challenges. SHGs of an average size of 10 women, drawn from the lowest castes and poorest households, residing in close proximity to each other in a homogenous "hamlet" of a village, constitute the lowest level of this structure. Approximately 12 such groups are linked together in a "village organisation" comprising the office bearers of the SHGs within a village. In $turn, the \, leaders \, of \, approximately \, 10\text{-}20$ village organisations constitute the highest level, a "cluster level federation,"

that serves as an umbrella institution for

An immediate consequence of this

its 1,200 to 1,400 members.

Author is part of a team, along with researchers from The

Livelihood Resource Centre, engaged in an evaluation of

International Initiative for Impact evaluation and Vrutti

federated structure is that no member of an SHG acts alone; she has a group of 1,200 women behind her. Yet, sheer numbers may be insufficient to overcome the age-old problems caused by the low social standing of women. Institutional changes that ensure a role for SHGs are required, and the government is slowly initiating such changes, vesting these "institutions of the poor" with responsibility for overseeing welfare programmes, local government institutions such as schools, and village governments. More importantly, NRLM also explicitly addresses the capabilities of rural women. In each village, "active women," with higher levels of schooling and leadership potential, are identified and trained with the set of skills required to ensure the sustainability of SHGsskills such as book-keeping, social and group management skills, business management, and financial literacy, that many of us take for granted. Once trained, members of this "community cadre" assume the responsibility of training other SHG members.

This federated structure of institutions of the poor bridges caste and geographical divides, bringing together women to confront social conflicts. They are not democratic; generally, the most active and outspoken women, with higher social standing and education, are nominated to leadership positions. But, in villages where these institutions are functioning well, the programme is changing the nature of civic society. The biggest change, one universally noted by women in villages across India, from Bihar to Rajasthan, is in attitudes, expectations, beliefs, and knowledge. I have watched women who have previously never worked

The biggest change,

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outside their homes, have never stepped outside their village without a male companion, and whose lives have been dictated and determined by decisions made by male relatives, take control of their lives. Women are learning to act collectively to challenge graft, monitor village government leaders, and to confront endemic problems such as absenteeism

amongst teachers, and alcoholism.

The overall impact of the programme will depend on its reach, measured by the number of functioning SHGs and their membership, and its effectiveness. With regard to reach, data from the ministry's Management Information System (MIS) suggest that approximately half (63%) of target households (those meeting at least one of seven deprivation criteria as per the Socio-economic Caste Census of 2011) are members of SHGs supported by the Mission. This relatively low percentage reflects variation across states in the year in which the programme was started. The percentage is significantly higher in states such as Bihar and Jharkhand (93% in both) where the programme started early, and lower in latestarting states such as Uttar Pradesh (15%). For a small sample of "early" blocks in Uttar Pradesh, however, MIS data reveal saturation rates as high as 73%. More encouraging is the fact that 68% of SHGs in the country have been federated at the level of the village organisation, 74% report having received basic training by members,

and 79% adhere to a set of five principles, or "Panchsutras" (regular meetings, savings, internal lending, repayment and maintenance of books of account), that testify to their quality.

But, enhanced reach does not imply that the programme will substantially improve rural incomes and the welfare of women across the country. Change, unfortunately, is never linear and ageold problems of discrimination against women, particularly those from scheduled castes and tribes, render progress slow. Teacher unions have challenged the authority granted to SHGs in some parts of India to monitor teacher attendance. In other states, elected village governments are contesting the

authority of SHGs to work in areas that come under their jurisdiction. And, in many regions, old divides continue to render collective action difficult.

villages across India, A first step towards ensuring impact is evaluating the programme's effectiveness, and understanding the factors that constrain its performance at scale. While studies of small pilot programs contribute to our understanding of the determinants of

welfare, the effectiveness of large scale programmes frequently turns on implementation constraints that rarely arise in pilot projects. Fortunately, we have a good shot at such an understanding for this particular programme due to the ministry's willingness to conduct a large-scale evaluation study covering nine states and approximately 27,000 households. The evaluation, currently underway, is jointly funded by the ministry and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and is being conducted by an external team of academics. The first reports from the study will be available in early 2020.

Our ability to significantly redress age-old problems of discrimination against women, and enhance their welfare requires societal changes in norms and cultures; India's experience shows that high rates of economic growth, by themselves, are insufficient to ensure such changes. It remains to be seen whether the visible improvements in civic society, engendered by the programme in some regions, translate to nation-wide changes. Our challenge is to ensure that they do.

Google ban won't improve political ads

The efficiency of political micro-targeting is questionable, and Google is responding to a moral panic rather than any real danger to democracy

LEONID BERSHIDSKY

GOOGLE SAYS IT will limit the targeting of political ads to make it harder to sneak misinformation to impressionable voters. That puts the company ahead of the pack when it comes to making the political business of big internet platforms look less threatening. But, the efficiency of political micro-targeting is questionable, and Google is responding to a moral panic rather than any real danger to democracy. Since the 2016 US presidential election, the public has become aware of techniques that allow advertisers to aim their messages at narrow groups of people, sliced not just by place of residence, age and sex, but also by consumer and political preferences, browsing histories, voting records and other kinds of personal data. This culminated in the Cambridge Analytica scandal in 2018, when news reports showed that the UK-based micro-targeting firm had improperly harvested lots of private user data from Facebook. The platforms were on the spot to do something.

Twitter has banned political ads entirely, but then it didn't sell many, anyway, serving instead as a free platform for political messages. In an op-ed in the Washington Post following Twitter's announcement, Ellen Weintraub, chairwoman of the US Federal Election Commission, called for an end to political micro-targeting instead of an adban: "It is easy to single out susceptible groups and direct political misinformation to them with little accountability, because the public at large never sees the ad."

That was a controversial proposal. Writing in the same newspaper, Chris Wilson, who had been responsible for digital strategy in Senator Ted Cruz's 2016 presidential campaign (which was the first in that election to hire Cambridge Analytica), countered that microtargeting has helped increase voter turnout and drive down advertising costs for campaigns. His suggestion was

to make the targeting more transparent. Google found it more expedient to go along with Weintraub's proposal than to fight an uphill battle using Wilson's arguments. In a blog post on Wednesday, the company said it would no longer let advertisers target messages "based on public voter records and general political affiliations (left-leaning, right-leaning, and independent)." Only basic targeting by age, gender and postal code would be allowed. This, is course, is no more than Russian trolls would have required in 2016—as Wilson pointed out in his *Post* op-ed. Their propaganda campaign was largely geographically targeted.

There's still no proof that micro-targeting is more effective than other forms of advertising. Academic work on the subject has tended to be rather theoretical, while experimental evidence is scarce. In a paper published this year, German researcher Lennart Krotzek concluded after an experiment matching ads to personality profiles that "candidate messages are more effective in improving a voter's feeling toward a candidate when the messages are congruent with the voter's personality profile, but they do not result in a higher propensity to vote for the advertised candidate."

Google offers a transparency report on political ads placed on its various properties—search pages, YouTube, the sites of media partners. It says that the biggest US advertiser in the last 12

months is the Trump Make America Great Again Committee, which has spent \$8.5 million. The report discloses that the pro-Trump group has targeted its most recent ads at all people older than 18 throughout the US, but offers no clues as to whether any more precise targeting was used. That is the case with the rest of the advertisers, too. Facebook's transparency report is just as opaque when it comes to the precise targeting of ads by

voters'interests and political leanings. It is easier for Google than for Facebook to abandon precise targeting, because one of its key strengths is being able to link ads to search words. That is a form of rather precise targeting not affected by Google's policy change. Slicing and dicing the audience is at the heart of Facebook's offering to advertisers, so it is understandably hesitant to disable the feature, though it, too, has been mulling some targeting curbs.

But Facebook doesn't have to make the sacrifice. It would make more sense to reveal exactly how each political ad is targeted—and to cooperate with researchers interested in evaluating the ads' efficiency. Facebook has the means to deliver messages from such researchers to the target audiences, which would help them recruit subjects for experiments. Google should have done the same instead of introducing drastic curbs that probably won't do much to raise the level of political discourse, anyway. Policymakers need data, not hype, to make informed decisions on how to regulate modern advertising.

This column does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the editorial board or Bloomberg LP and its owners

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

NRC and CAB

While there are many burning issues like the economic slowdown, mounting unemployment problems, agrarian distress, etc to be attended to, it is unfortunate that the BJP government has decided to go in for a nationwide National Register of Citizens (NRC)—not at all a priority issue. While the chaos created by a similar move in Assam should be an eye-opener for the government, it is indeed a surprise that it is trying to expand NRC to the entire nation. The government should also reconsider their move to reintroduce the Citizenship Amendment Bill in Parliament, relying on the having the majority needed to pass the Bill. People haven't voted them to power with such a massive mandate to subject them to unnecessary inconvenience and discomfort. — Tharcius S Fernando, Chennai

On PSU divestment

The Cabinet approval for strategic disinvestment in a clutch of PSUs, including Bharat Petroleum Corp (BPCL) and Concor, makes perfect sense, and not merely because of the need to shore up much-needed nontax revenue in the midst of the slowdown. The government must now vacate areas deemed nonstrategic. It must also exit the likes of Scooters India, HMT, etc. For 2017-18 alone, the losses posted by central PSUs added up over ₹31,000 crore. The cumulative losses and the cost to the exchequer in terms of underemployed resources would be far higher.

— T Anwar, Karnataka

Write to us at feletters@expressindia.com

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FINANCIAL EXPRESS

Re-made in China: TikTok's story

Chinese app TikTok is the new social media phenomenon outpacing Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Youtube and even similar "make and share" apps such as Triller, Lasso and Firework



Singapore-based Sinologist, and adjunct

fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, Delhi

E-MADE IN CHINA" is having a moment, thanks to the popularity of the Chinese app TikTok. The precursor to TikTok was made in America as the app Musical.ly (2014) but acquired by a Chinese company Bytedance (Beijing ByteDance Technology Co) for a cool \$1 billion in 2017. Since then, there has been no looking back for ByteDance and the reticent owner Zhang Yiming. With

TikTok's revenue target of \$16.8 billion in 2019, and TikTok valued more than \$75 billion, Zhang has emerged as the new poster child of Chinese internet companies. But what is TikTok's success story and why on earth is it increasingly in the line of American fire? In 2016, Zhang started TikTok,

Douyin (literally "Shaking Sound") in China, which runs on a different server to comply with Chinese regulations. In 2017, with the acquisition of Musical.ly, Musical.ly was merged into TikTok (2018). The users were moved to the revamped version where they could share 15-second short videos set to music, employing special filters. This was an instant hit and became a huge social media phenomenon, the kind of "Chinese dream" that China's President Xi Jinping wishes to achieve, but hasn't.

Douyin is said to be more "advanced than its global counterpart (TikTok) particularly with respect to e-commerce." Douyin boasts of reverse image search tool (in-video search tool) to find in-video products such as clothing. ByteDance also backs Jinri Toutiao (literally "Today's Headlines"), a news and information content platform.

Zhang's mother was a nurse, and father an entrepreneur, in Dongguan, the powerhouse of China's electronics industry. Zhang graduated from a well-known university, Nankai University, in Tianjin, where he met his wife.

thinks, a lesson

weaned from the dramatic rise and (equally dramatic) fall of Chinese tycoons—think Maotai liquor mogul Wang Xiaoguang, chairman of Anbang Insurance Wu Xiaohui, and Ye Jianming of CEFC China Energy (all of whom fell from grace in 2018). Zhang is reputed to possess the entrepreneurial flair that the Southern Chinese are famous for. Chinese media has found a hero in Zhang, especially after Jack Ma (Alibaba) has stepped down. Chinese media describes Zhang as a "different" Chinese entrepreneur who is as adventurous as a risktaker, and one who relishes a good chal-

Zhang's ByteDance is not owned by Baidu, Alibaba or Tencent (the so-called of China's unicorns—private compa-

TikTok is entrepreneur Zhang's brain-

child, who at 36 years is as young a tycoon as India's Roshni Nadar (CEO, HCL Enterprise). Zhang, born in Fujian, went to school in China, not Ivy League America. Zhang has kept a low profile—and one

lenge. It's a given in China that entrepreneurs have to be on the right side of the Communist Party.

"BAT"), an interesting fact, because half nies with a valuation of \$1 billion or more—are controlled by BAT. Under-

tion from homegrown short video apps, Kuaishou (literally "Fast Hand," Kuaishou Technology, backed by Tencent) and Weishi (literally "Microvideos", Tencent Holdings).

standably, Douyin has strong competi-

Globally, TikTok has emerged as a huge social media phenomenon, or perhaps even a cultural phenomenon, with a 500-million strong user base, outpacing Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat,

YouTube and similar apps such as Triller (2015), Lasso (launched by Facebook in 2018) and Firework (2019). TikTok has been downloaded 1.5 billion times globally on the App Store and Google Play, including 122 million times in America, where it is popular with a younger demographic profile. But India leads the pack with 466 million downloads (31% of the market), followed by China at 173 million. India's sweet-

heart, actor Madhuri Dixit, is on TikTok,

as is China's sweetheart, Angelababy. That TikTok has more downloads in India than China, the mother country, can probably be explained and strangely so, with respect to economics, social class and money spent on advertising. China's economic meat, five times the economy of India, has led to a generation of prosperous millennial Chinese. China's urbanisation hit 59% in 2018 (34% India, 2017) and is estimated to reach 70% by 2035. McKinsey Global Institute estimates 64% urbanisation of the total population in China, compared to 38% in India by 2025. Apparently, Douyin is not popular in tier-1 cities (Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen) or tier-2 cities (Hangzhou, Nanjing, Wuhan, Chengdu) in China, as much as in tier-3 or tier-4 cities. Shanghai-based designer Xing Zhao, one half of the design brand Young Chinese Blood (Y.C.B.), says, "The kind of content on Douyin here is quite the opposite of my taste," indicating that China's city slickers are less taken up by the hope of 15 seconds of fame, and that Douyin is more mass, less class.

As for advertising, Firework, which is based in Mountain View (interestingly, all of Firework venture capitalists have a China connection), uses influencer marketing. Quartz (Quartz Media, New York) has quoted Vincent Yang, the CEO of Firework, as saying that TikTok spent close to

\$1 billion in advertising in 2019 whereas Firework spends a "few hundred bucks" on Facebook ads.

Not all are swooning over the success of TikTok. Homegrown Chinese internet platform Tencent isn't. In 2018, Zhang wrote, "The progress of Douyin was unstoppable despite Tencent's blocking and Weishi's (Tencent's video platform) plagiarism." Tencent's Ma Huateng (Pony Ma) shot back with a "(Your comments) can be understood as slander."

Mark Zuckerberg of Facebook definitely isn't either. Zuckerberg went as far as to say that while Whats App is used by protesters/activists due to strong encryption and privacy protection, content is censored on TikTok. As Zuckerberg pointedly asked, "Is that the internet we want?"

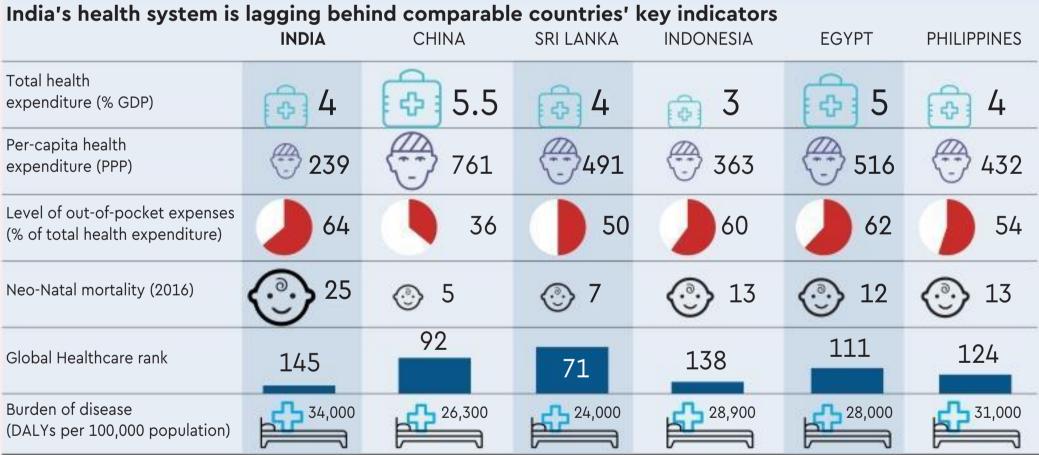
The Guardian (the UK) has cited evidence that TikTok advances China's foreign policy banning content/users or restricting content. The Washington Post (the US) had raised the question whether Hong Kong protests were being restricted on the app. ByteDance has responded saying that it increasingly takes a "local" approach and that it has penalised content that "promoted conflict."

But this argument doesn't seem to fly in the US where the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS) opened a national security review of the acquisition by ByteDance. Many say that TikTok may be forced to send data to the Chinese government (TikTok says it does not send data to China). Senator Marco Rubio has said that TikTok is "censoring content that is not in line with the Chinese government and Communist Party directives."

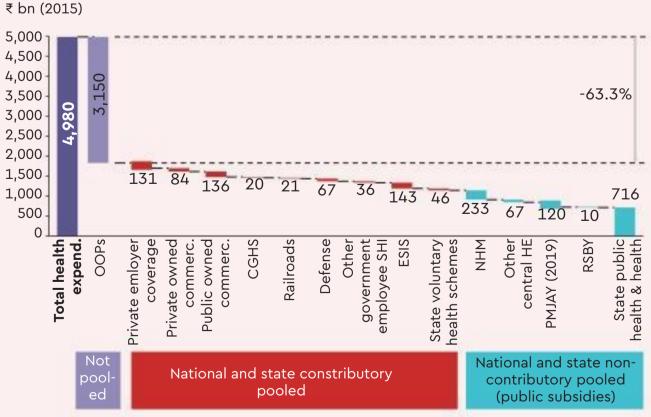
Should TikTok, available freely in 150 countries all over the world and in China, be resented? American companies are understandably cut up with TikTok, because all of them have lost a billion customers in China. US-based social media is censored in China, but Chinese companies aren't. And there is the uneasy question as to whether the Chinese internet companies may kow tow—share data with the Chinese government. After all, Douyin was hauled up in China recently for defaming a revolutionary hero.

The question about TikTok neither centres on China, the Chinese people, nor Chinese companies of admirable intellectual and commercial heft, but hinges on a fundamental principle. Should there be one set of rules that the Communist Party in China conveniently wants for Chinese companies and one for the rest of the world? What is good for the goose is good for the gander, goes the adage. The universality of laws should be applicable to all, including TikTok. No surprises, then, if TikTok be singled out for scrutiny by America.

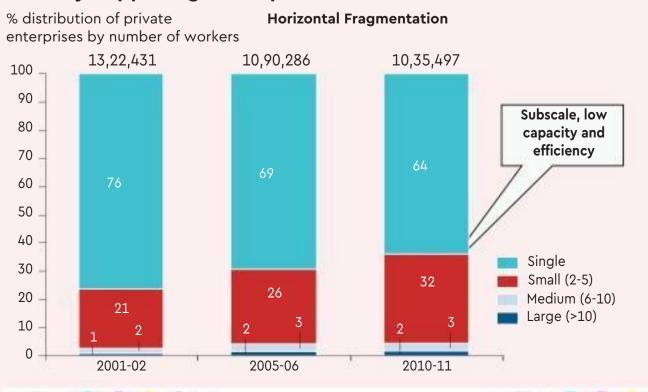
DATA DRIVE



India has low level and very fragmented risk pooling, with household out-of-pocket funding at 64%



Service delivery is highly fragmented, with more than 80% care delivery happening in the private sector



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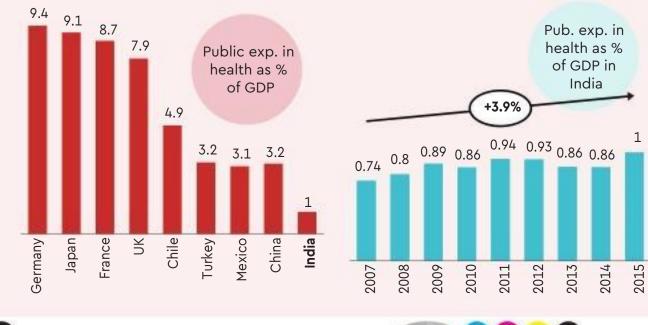
Health systems for the future

ITI AAYOG RECENTLY came up with a report on transforming the health system for 'New India'. Given India spends about 1.13% of its GDP on health, it has a low per capita (PPP) spend. The low penetration of health insurance has meant that as much as 62% of health expenditure incurred by households is borne out-of-pocket (OOP). With noncommunicable diseases on the rise, a healthcare only focus for a health-systems strategy is not advisable. Thus, while the NITI report talks of fulfilling the unfinished public health agenda in the country, it also talks of universalisation of health insurance, so that health spends are geared more towards insurance than OOP payments. The large OOP health spend

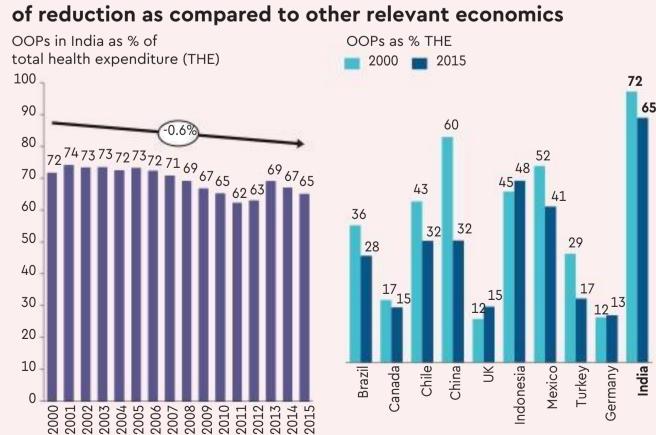
that the average Indian household incurs can be leveraged to prop universal health insurance, given risk-pooling will mean lower premiums and, thus, lower costs for the household. The NITI report doesn't explicitly state this, but talks of the statefunded PMJAY becoming the model for expanding health insurance coverage. The government needs to keep in mind the problems that beset PMJAY as it considers NITI's recommendation.

At the same time, consolidation in the health-service-provision ecosystem would also help lower costs for the households and make digital analysis of health data easier. At the moment, 98% of the health service providers employ 10 or fewer people.

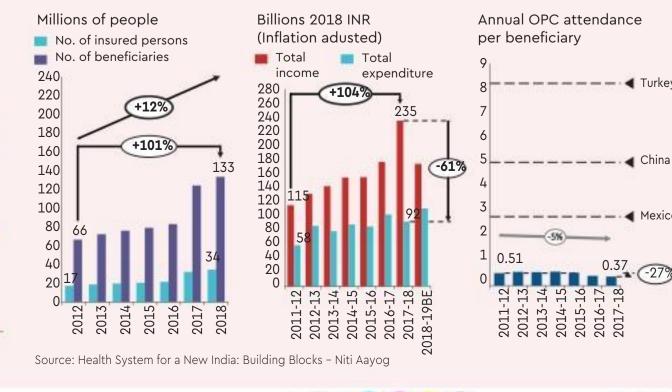
Persistently low level of fiscal allocation to healthcare, with historical allocation around 0.7 to 1% of GDP



Very high out-of-pocket payments (OOPs), with slower rate



Critically low performance of ESIS, facing very low access to healthcare for its beneficiaries



WORDLY WISE

A HANDFUL OF HIDDEN INTERESTS CAN'T BANKROLL OUR ELECTIONS.

— BARACK OBAMA

The Indian EXPRESS

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

MONEY AND POWER

Recent disclosures on electoral bonds raise troubling questions. Government must review political finance reform

THOUT DOUBT, POLITICAL funding in India needs to be made more transparent. Attempts to alter the mechanism of political funding, to move it away from opaque cash donations, need to be at the forefront of political finance reform in India. Yet, the manner in which the electoral bonds scheme was first introduced, and then implemented, raises grave questions over whether the instrument, in its current form, can facilitate a shift towards a more transparent system.

A disturbing picture of the government riding roughshod over the concerns voiced by the Reserve Bank of India and the Election Commission has come to light. Reservations were expressed on whether providing anonymity to the donor was in line with the intended objective of the scheme to clean up political funding. Concerns were also voiced that the scheme could lead to unlimited and untraceable corporate donations, including by foreign companies, through shell companies to political parties. An argument can be made that anonymity shields donors from future retribution. But, in a democracy, in which transparency should be the guiding principle, voters should be aware of the contributions to parties by various entities. No public purpose is served by protecting the confidentiality of donors. Further, allowing the SBI, a government-owned bank, rather than the RBI, to be the issuer of these bonds raises questions over the influence the government can exert on the functioning of this rather opaque system. As the bank has to maintain details of the donor, and has to furnish these details to enforcement agencies upon request, it invites the charge that these details can be accessed by the government and used to its advantage. The ad hoc manner in which the rules of the scheme were tweaked to change the time-period when these bonds can be purchased and deposited lends further credence to the narrative of an uneven playing field — of a system that has been geared to give the ruling party enormous and unfair advantage. Data compiled by the Association for Democratic Reforms shows that the BJP garnered 95 per cent of the Rs 222 crore bonds issued in the first tranche. The lopsided nature of the scheme is further revealed in a report in this paper which showed that electoral bonds with denominations of Rs 1 crore accounted for more than 91 per cent of the Rs 5,896 crore raised in the first 11 phases over which the bonds were sold.

Reforms to address the nature of political funding should pass the basic tests of transparency and accountability. In this case, it would seem that these basic tenets have not been adhered to. This has serious repercussions for the functioning of democracy, and therefore warrants a clearer and deeper look at political funding and its instruments.

SADHVI, AGAIN

Pragya Thakur's membership of a parliamentary panel is yet another reminder of impunity she enjoys, BJP's ambivalence

RAGYA THAKUR, THE saffron-clad BJP MP from Bhopal, is back in the limelight following her nomination to the parliamentary consultative committee on defence. The Congress has termed it an insult "to our nation's defence forces, to our nation's esteemed parliamentarians and to every Indian". The Opposition contends that Thakur is a dismal choice for the defence panel since she faces trial in the 2008 Malegaon blasts case, in which six people were killed. The ruling party is yet to respond to the criticism.

However, the controversy has drawn attention yet again to the action the BJP promised to take against her — and did not take — following her deeply offensive remarks in support of Nathuram Godse, the assassin of Mahatma Gandhi. Campaigning in Bhopal during the general election earlier this year, Thakur had said that "Nathuram Godse was a patriot, is a patriot, and will remain a patriot. those who call him a terrorist should look within. they will get a reply in this election". She found support from at least two BJP MPs from Karnataka, Union minister Anantkumar Hegde and Nalin Kumar Kateel. Following widespread outrage, the party made her withdraw the statement and apologise. BJP president Amit Shah said he had initiated disciplinary action, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi stated that he would not be able to forgive Thakur for her remarks insulting Gandhi. Of course, the promised disciplinary action never happened. But Thakur went on to call Jawaharlal Nehru a "criminal" and attributed the death of decorated police officer Hemant Karkare during the 26/11 terror strike to her "curse".

Members of Parliament are nominated by the ministry of parliamentary affairs to consultative panels, which, unlike standing committees, have a minimal role in influencing policies, on the recommendation of their respective parties. All legislators are likely to make it to some parliamentary panel or the other on the basis of being an MP, and as per their preference. In the case of Thakur, however, the BJP seems caught in a predicament of its own making. It first offered a ticket to Parliament to a person who stands accused of a grave crime and who has, at the very least, shown no respect for the democratic process. And then it has done nothing to follow up on its own top leaders' public criticism of Thakur. The presence of Pragya Thakur MP in Parliament, and now on a parliamentary panel, can be seen as a reproach to a party that has sworn to uphold the Constitution, in letter and in spirit.

MONKEY BAAT

Mathura MP Hema Malini has come out in support of the rights of monkeys. In the divine menagerie, homo sapiens are losing out

N PARLIAMENT, ON Thursday, BJP MP from Mathura, Hema Malini, raised an issue concerning a sub-section of her constituents. Apparently, Mathura's monkeys are falling prey to the scourge of junk food — "samosa and kachori" and "Frooti", in particular — having picked up the vice from their human cousins. Malini's solution is to create "monkey safaris" to address the issue of loss of habitat, and to ensure the simians go back to eating "natural" and healthy.

Hema Malini must be congratulated for caring so much for those that don't even have a vote. However, her approach is not novel: The cow has occupied centrestage in national politics for some time now, and especially in Uttar Pradesh. The state government's approach has been to promote gaushalas, and earlier this year, it announced Besahara Govansh Sahbhagita Yojana, under which those adopting stray cattle — on the rise for the last few years, destroying crops and causing other kinds of damage — will be given up to Rs 3,720 per month. Monkeys, like cows, enjoy a sacred status among the majority community.

The problem with monkeys, though, especially the samosa-eating ones, is that like people, they are neither domesticated nor wild. They attack, snatch, chatter and conspire,

and pick up unhealthy habits. It seems unlikely that they will return to a state of nature — what is a fruit salad when compared to a lip-smacking kachori? But the lovers of holy animals need not worry. There are enough of them left to protect. The swan is Saraswati's vahana, the humble mooshak supports the rotund Ganesh and even the buffalo carries the god of death. There are, in fact, animals enough to turn all of UP into a gigantic divine safari of otherwise mundane fauna. The only ones left out are poor old homo sapiens. But, then, when have they mattered to the powers-that-be anyway?

ess.com

The stunting of dharma



Contrast the indulgence

disruptors with the severe

students in Delhi when they

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custom, tradition, money

boy, look how it will

MRINAL PANDE

"India belongs to the Hindus, the Mohammedans, the Sikhs, the Parsis and others. No single community can rub over the rest. One day's fight brings permanent loss to the country. It brings disgrace upon us."

(MM Malaviya at Congress Session, Calcutta 1933)

ONE WONDERS HOW this fierce upholder of unity and equality, founder of the Banaras Hindu University, would have felt at the sight of some 20 students sitting outside the university's Sanskrit Vidya Dharma Vigyan, raising slogans against the appointment of a fully qualified assistant professor, Firoze Khan, on grounds that he is a Muslim — they reiterated their protest but called off the 15-day dharna on Friday. Their leader, Chakrapani Ojha, says that as per Hindu shastras, a Muslim cannot teach dharma vigyan (theology). Never mind the fact that Khan was shortlisted from 30 applicants, duly interviewed by a (mostly Hindu) panel of experts from the university and finally selected on the basis of proven merit and learning.

It is obvious that these students and their faceless instigators are not aware of the 1962 collection of the BHU founder's speeches on the concept of dharma. The learned educationist says, again and again, that ultimately there is only one Supreme Being whom peoples following different religions worship under different names, but the concept of dharma must undergo a constant and vigorous churning of philosophical ideas, traditions and practices prevalent at the time. The truth, he writes, will rise to the surface on its own.

Holding on to this inclusive concept of dharma, he travelled through the country, raising funds for realising his dream. Among the generous donors for the cause of learning, there were Indians from all communities. Among the royals was the then Nawab of Rampur, a Muslim who donated Rs 1 lakh, a host of Hindu and Muslim students of Darbhanga who donated a purse of Rs 1,000, a Muslim beggar who gave Re 1 and many chaprasis and patwaris at Bilhour, many of them Muslim, who donated a month's salary each.

"Universities", said Annie Besant, at the court meeting of December 12, 1920, "are gion is acquiring knowledge". So why these protests at the BHU, whose founder's "spirit of accommodation" and selfless service Gandhi ji mourned on his death, as

made by love, love of beauty and learning". "For students," Malaviya ji wrote, "their reli-

he grappled with communal fires in Noakhali? Why was this motley crowd permitted to use a redundant scriptural ruling to bar all non-savarna, non-Hindu males, and by extension, also all females, from the teaching and learning of Sanskrit and/or debating the veracity of the so-called scriptures and rules they quote? How could a handful of agitators dare to block a duly appointed professor, force him to return to his native city of Jaipur? Contrast the indulgence shown towards

the disruptors with the severe beatings to the JNU students in Delhi when they demanded a roll-back of the steep increase in their annual fees. It is obvious that dharma in the context of Sabarimala, Ram Mandir and the BHU agitation can be a near obsolete idea but, boy, look how it will command the joint forces of custom, tradition, money and institutions of a secular state. Subjected to scrutiny, each time the state blessed version of Hindu dharma turns out to be basically a cluster of several unformed and half-formed idea atoms, swirling furiously without a God particle of their own.

Semantically, the word dharma emerges from the Sanskrit verb "dhri", which means to carry and to protect, call it a set of universal principles of justice. This is the dharma that, in Mahabharata, a Brahmin is ordered to go learn from a lowly meat-seller selling dog meat in a drought ravaged town. But in India, over the centuries, as Pali, Prakrit and then Persian became court languages, Sanskrit gradually came to be understood by very few and spoken by even fewer, most of them Brahmins. Sanskrit scriptures began, then, to be glibly quoted by this inbred circle that guarded their language as though the laws of Rta and those of Manu had all been divinely created at the same time. They were not.

Concepts such as the superiority of brahminical forms of learning, the inferiority of women and Shudras were mostly shaped and consolidated during the medieval period by the priestly classes. This was the Hindu response to the challenges of Islam. With this firewalling of old texts, the concrete and open-ended live public discourses between Indian peoples of various faiths became obsolete. And this epistemology went on to create discriminatory caste, gender laws for various communities.

As a Brahmin woman with some firsthand knowledge of this version of Hindu tradition and Sanskrit, I watch the TV discussions on recent incidents in Ayodhya, Varanasi Sabarimala and Delhi with shame and alarm as the grand concept of dharma as timeless fundamental laws of justice, is reduced to political fodder by divisive agendas. Doesn't the Rig Veda talk of dharma as Rta, fundamental laws of Nature that bind and protect the universe, including not just a variety of life forms but also the stars, suns and moons? Hasn't the Prithvi Sukta (Atharva Veda) further underscored that the earth (Prithvi) that carries followers of various communities and faiths is itself held together by dharma? It is to dharma as the timeless and universally applicable arbiter that Vyas bows in the Mahabharata. How many of us care to recall that at the end of the great fratricidal war, a guilt-ridden Yudhishthira renounces the throne of blood and leaves on foot, accompanied by dharma, in the form of a dog?

The Varanasi agitation is proof that Hindutva has force fed many with an atrophied concept of Hindu dharma. Debates raging in Parliament further underscore that many of those who have, for centuries, existed outside the pale of Hindutva, shall now fit within no NRC, have no allies. No politician shall represent their case. No state they can appeal to would dare support their demands for compensation, or even political asylum. They were even described as deemak, woodworms, by a major political leader.

When Heinrich Boll was laid to rest, writes close friend, Gunter Grass, a band of Europe's most unwanted, the gypsies, led the pallbearers. "It was Boll's wish. It was what he wanted to play him into the grave, that deeply tragic, despairingly gay music." Some ideas are not new but keep having to be affirmed from the ground up, over and over again.

The writer is a senior journalist and author

A Broken Watchdog

Pakistan's National Accountability Bureau has stifled decision-making

KHALED AHMED

PAKISTAN IS BEING torn asunder by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), empowered to arrest its victims on suspicion. Those who get picked up and rot in NAB prisons without bail have to prove themselves not guilty. The NAB targets politicians and it arrests businessmen suspected of siding with politicians. Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, the 21st prime minister of Pakistan from August 2017 to May 2018, is being kept in a cell while the NAB looks for something to pin on him.

The businessmen saw the end coming under the NAB, which had no clue about how the economy runs these days. Recently, Pakistan's harassed businessmen had a good meeting with the army chief. The NAB thereafter publicly excused itself from subjecting them to its brand of accountability which meant billionaires rotting in its smelly jails.

Then the bureaucracy wanted to protest too because the NAB was nabbing the top civil servants in charge of taking big decisions, and keeping them in the doghouse till they pleaded guilty. At the National Institute of Public Policy, Lahore, two civil servants, Shahid Rahim Sheikh and Saifullah Khalid, have come out with a study — "Bureaucratic Decisionmaking amid Multiple Accountability" - explaining why the civil servants had stopped helping the elected government in the implementation of public projects.

The study begins thus: "Turbulent political developments also destabilised the Principal-Agent relationship between politicians and civil servants. This relationship had taken

Bureaucrats are answerable to parliamentary scrutiny, and the propriety of their actions and expenditures is subject to statutory audit by the Auditor General's Office. They also have to defend themselves before the Public Accounts Committees of the national and provincial assemblies. With so much punitive scrutiny in operation, is Pakistan doing well economically? The verdict is in: Pakistan is ranked 136 out of 190 countries on the Ease of Doing Business index.

shape over a decade of democratic dispensation (2008-18). In the whirlwind of political upheaval, the civil servants, it appears, also became increasingly insecure, defensive and indecisive. A very strong feeling [of] receiving an unfair deal took root among civil servants. They feel that while political bosses pressurise them into taking difficult and controversial decisions - often informed by political-economy considerations — when it comes to accountability... regarding the propriety of those decisions, the political bosses disown them."

The study took account of the number of anti-corruption hounds the civil servants have to defend against while helping politicians with "big decisions". Bureaucrats are answerable to parliamentary scrutiny, and the propriety of their actions and expenditures is subject to statutory audit by the Auditor General's Office. They also have to defend themselves before the Public Accounts Committees of the national and provincial assemblies. With so much punitive scrutiny in operation, is Pakistan doing well economically? The verdict is in: Pakistan is ranked 136 out of 190 countries on the Ease of Doing Business index.

That is not the end of the matter. The bureaucrats have to face grilling by additional accountability organisations like "the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), and the Provincial Anti-Corruption Establishments (PACEs)". These outfits are used by the politicians in power to punish their opponents and it hardly matters if they are competent and honest or not. "The ineptitude and incompetence of the staff and agents of the accountability organisations compound the gravity of the difficulty suffered by civil servants."

The authors posit that the bureaucratic indecision in Pakistan is due to the impact of the following factors: Multiple accountability bodies; internal conduct and disciplinary procedures and media trial; public interest litigation by superior judiciary; pressures of political economy and the diminishing social respect for the bureaucracy in society.

It all began with a draconian measure. Political accountability (Ehtesab Commission) was thought up by the caretaker government set up by President Farooq Leghari in November 1996 after he dismissed Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto from office. Revenge was uppermost in the mind of the now deceased Leghari. The draconian NAB was continued for purposes of political revenge by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. Now Sharif is serving a long sentence for corruption and suffering from seemingly grave ill-health.

General Pervez Musharraf seized power in 1999 and immediately beefed up the NAB to punish his political opponents in the two major parties, PPP and PMLN. Now the NAB is taking orders from two quarters to further doom its identity as an instrument of justice. One, of course, is the government of Imran Khan. The other remains unnamed.

> The writer is consulting editor, Newsweek Pakistan

NOVEMBER 23, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

PAK SPY FIASCO

NEW DELHI IS feeling rather concerned at the recent increase in efforts by Pakistan to gather military intelligence from India. During the last few weeks, India is believed to have asked Islamabad to withdraw as many as three of its officials working in the Pakistani embassy in New Delhi. The three officials — reportedly non-diplomats — are said to have indulged in gathering vital military secrets. Two of these officials — Gustaf Rana and Nur Khan — have already left the country. The third Pakistan embassy official, Anwar Ahmad, may also be on the way back home. Pakistan on its part has asked India to pull out two of its employees working in the Indian embassy in Islamabad.

ASSAM TENSE

SHOOT-AT-SIGHT order was issued in the trouble-torn Lumbding town, in Nowgong district of Assam, as the situation worsened, according to the chief minister, JN Hazarika. He said that additional police force had been rushed to the town to strictly enfore the curfew as the government had received reports that despite the curfew, certain sections of the people were being threatened and their lives were in danger. The CM said the deputy

superintendent of police posted at Lumbding

had been transfered with immediate effect

MECCA SEIGE

MOST OF THE gunmen who seized the Grand Mosque in Mecca have been arrested and only a few are still holding out in the sacred compound, the Saudi information minister, Mohammed Abdo Yamani, declared. In a new statement broadcast by the Saudi state radio, Yamani said the situation was under complete control and is expected to end within the next few hours. "The group could have been flushed out any moment had we not been concerned for the lives of innocent Muslims," Yamani added.



— THE GUARDIAN

THE INDIAN EXPRESS, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 2019

15 THE IDEAS PAGE

Starting afresh in the Valley

In Kashmir, people's fears about loss of identity must be addressed, economic links with other parts of country established and ideology of jihad made redundant



ABHINAV KUMAR

FOR MANY WEEKS since August 5, a vocal and influential section of our self-styled Kashmir experts have been preaching doom and gloom. They have drawn fanciful comparisons with Nazi Germany — strangely never with Stalin's Russia or Mao's China by invoking images of concentration camps and genocide. They been regularly breastbeating on prime time TV and in the opinion pages of newspapers about the death of Indian democracy and about violations of the Constitution. For this constituency, the weeks leading to October 31 — when the decisions announced by the Government of India on August 5 took effect — must have felt distinctly anti-climactic.

The two key elements of the worst case scenario propagated by our desi and videshi Cassandras have failed to materialise. Kashmir has not risen up in a bloody mass protest. Neither have the prime instigators of separatism in Kashmir in Pakistan, the country's army and its terrorists proxies, felt confident enough to indulge in large-scale adventurism using conventional or non-conventional means. At the international level, the usual suspects like China and Turkey have made the usual noises. But given China's own challenges in Xinjiang and Hong Kong, not to mention Tibet, and Turkey's own challenges in Syria and with Kurdish nationalism, we can safely ignore the posturing of these two great defenders of democratic norms and international law. There were a few surprises too. Malaysia, that is supposedly liberal, voiced criticism, and Saudi Arabia, that is supposedly theocratic, was supportive. That's international politics for you.

The democracies of the West faced a different dilemma over Kashmir. An influential section of their civil society is sold on the narrative that violence in Kashmir is primarily an issue of human rights violations by the Indian state. However, post 9/11, their governments are more appreciative of India's concerns about Islamist terror, especially with reference to Pakistan. So while the editorial pages of The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Guardian may spew fire and brimstone against India's actions in Kashmir, this media rhetoric has not had a significant impact on the diplomacy of the Western powers.

It is in this background that we must assess what has transpired in the Valley in the three months since August 5. Already, 15 civilians have been killed in 30 different attacks by militants. They include a shopkeeper, an apple grower, truck drivers and labourers. Some were local people, most were migrant workers from other parts of India. The pattern is clear. First, terrorise the locals into submission and bring normal life to a halt by forcing them to shut shops and close schools, thereby attempting to create a narrative that the entire Valley is participating in some sort of a peaceful satyagraha against the Government of India's decisions. Second, create an atmosphere of fear for all non-locals so that the two pillars of the Valley's economic linkages with other parts of the country, tourism and horticulture, take a huge hit and cause widespread economic hardship that finally leads to an intifada-like

situation in Kashmir. Meanwhile, the apologists for jihad and azaadi go on making one absurd claim after another. First, we were told of a massive healthcare crisis. The hospitals and pharmacies across the Valley have functioned uninterrupted. Then we were told of widespread



torture and concentration camps. The security forces have stuck to a deployment grid guided by preventive considerations and performed their job with professionalism and restraint. Then, we were told of an economic crisis caused by a shortage of essential commodities and neglect in harvesting apple. I recently travelled extensively across South Kashmir. The apple orchards were bereft of fruit. Unless the farmers had plucked the apples and decided to let them rot in their houses and barns, this too seemed to be a bunch of lies. Clearly, the jihadi sympathisers in the local media will have to think up a better propaganda to further the separatists' cause.

Many have expressed concern about the hurt caused to Kashmiri sentiments by the decisions announced on August 5 and the manner in which they were implemented. Hurt is a two-way street. The security personnel are in Kashmir precisely due to the excessive importance given to Kashmiri sentiment at the expense of the sentiments of the other stakeholders as well our national interest for the past 70 years. The Kashmiri civil society must understand that in today's India, there is no respect or protection for sentiments based on azaadi and jihad.

Some others have expressed concern about the damage done to India's democracy and constitutional values by the style and substance of the decisions announced on August 5. I think that they have a very shaky faith in our democracy and a somewhat shallow understanding of the relationship between a Constitution and the nation state it guides. A Constitution is meant to ensure the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the nation state. And, if there is a purely non-violent democratic way of fighting separatism and jihad, then it must be the world's best

October 31 has come and gone. The state of Jammu and Kashmir has been bifurcated into the two union territories of Ladakh and J&K. Led by newly appointed lieutenant governors,

What Kashmir needs, above all else, is the restoration of the rule of law. Those propagating violence or supporting it must face the full force of the lawful authority of the state. Those who wish to carry on with their lives peacefully must be accorded every possible protection and incentive from the state. This will require nurturing a culture and grammar of political mobilisation that, thus far, has had few takers in the Valley. However, it is hoped that with the empowering of the panchayati raj system on the one hand, and the creation of the UT model of

administration on the other,

the earlier style of politics

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that incentivised separatist

the practical task of implementing these decisions on the ground has begun. The challenges are huge. An entire political and administrative system that nurtured separatism for 70 years, and had a two-faced approach to jihadi violence for the last 30 years, has to be now reoriented towards national integration, grass roots performance and better delivery of public services. We have to ensure that the irrational fears in the Valley about loss of cultural identity and about losing land and job opportunities are addressed. At the same time, we have to ensure that the cult of death and violence, celebrated by the ideology of jihad, that has long had a hold on a section of Kashmiri youth and civil society, is made to lose its appeal through a careful mix of incentives and penalties.

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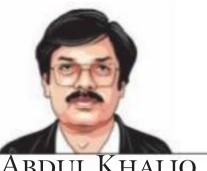
What the post October 31 changes also mean is that all the agencies of the state operating in Kashmir, civilian and uniformed. face a greater burden of responsibility. It is a huge opportunity to prove to the people of Kashmir and to ourselves that the long dark night of violent hatred that began in 1989 is coming to an end in 2019. Naya Kashmir can finally look forward to a new dawn of prosperity and peace in the heart of India.

> The author is an IPS officer serving in Kashmir. Views are strictly personal

The way of the majority upheld the law, nor delivered justice

"Labour's 2019 general election manifesto, launched on Thursday by Jeremy Corbyn, is its most radical in more than 35 years. It will strike a chord with

Supreme Court's Ayodhya verdict has not



WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

millions who want categorical change in Britain."

ABDUL KHALIQ

NOVEMBER 9, 2019 WILL go down in history as the darkest night for justice and Indian democracy. On this day, the fivejudge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court announced that the site of the vandalised Babri Masjid in Ayodhya would be handed over to the deity, Ram Lalla, for construction of the Ram Temple. The cruel irony is, while acknowledging the destruction of the masjid as a "violation of the law", the SC had no compunctions about giving that site to the community that brought down the mosque: The justification being, Hindus considered it to be the birthplace of Lord Ram. Clearly, aastha or faith has trumped justice and the law.

The idea of India as expressed in our Preamble may be as good as dead. Our secularism has hitherto meant the recognition and celebration of a multicultural ethos, equality and respect for all religions but not the expelling of religion altogether from the public sphere. In fact, Mahatma Gandhi's secularism was motivated by his faith that imbued him with a strong religious belief in truth, tolerance of other religions and nonviolence — these values deeply influenced his actions. But today, the deadly cocktail of politics and religion is used as a weapon against minorities. Last month, our defence minister, in full international glare, conducted shastra puja when taking over the first Rafale fighter jet from France. The overt symbolism of intertwining national security with muscular Hinduism in a country that boasts of numerous religions was also an affirmation of the undisputed primacy of the majority religion. Hindutva is now the official creed.

The Ayodhya verdict has not come as a surprise. In the days leading up to the judgment, we were witness to a meticulously orchestrated campaign to pressurise the SC Constitution Bench into delivering a decision favourable to the construction of the Ram Mandir. Sundry Hindu religious leaders had harnessed the electronic media to triumphantly proclaim victory for Lord Ram and the Hindu samaj. It was reported how BJP MP Sakshi Maharaj raised the pitch with his announcement that the construction of the Mandir will begin before December 6, the day when the Babri Masjid was brought down. Most remarkable were the anticipatory celebrations which saw five lakh diyas illuminating Ayodhya on Deepavali, raising expectations to a crescendo. Yogi Adityanath and the RSS appealed for restraint — an obvious dog-whistle aimed at the SC that a verdict unfavourable to Hindus would result in massive social unrest. The underlying message was clear: The Mandir has overwhelming social sanction and the Court must play ball.

Evidently, the SC needed no such coercion. In the past, our apex court has not only acknowledged the social power of supremacist Hindutva, but has even justified it. In fact, in a 1996 judgment, the SC went so far as to

say that Hindutva was "a way of life" and a synonym for "Indianisation, i.e, development of a uniform culture by obliterating the differences between all the cultures coexisting in the country." This view sits perfectly with the Hindutva ideology that talks of the supremacy of the Hindu religion and cultural ethos. The SC has repeatedly passed over the opportunity to revisit and amend this controversial judgment, thereby vindicating Organiser's triumphant assertion that "the Supreme Court has put its seal of judicial imprimatur on the Sangh ideology of Hindutva". The SC's overindulgence of the faith of the majority is matched by cavalier indifference to the sensibilities of Muslims. The SC judgment of 1994 stating that "praying in a mosque is not an essential part of Islam and namaz by Muslims can be offered even in the open" left Muslims out in the cold. The Ayodhya verdict may have been a foregone conclusion considering that it has come at a time when Hindutva and its advocates control the public square and the institutions of governance.

The Allahabad High Court bench, in 2010, tasked with deciding the issue on the basis of a melange of empirical reality, malleable historical data, dodgy reports and aastha, took recourse to what can be termed "the King Solomon solution", dividing the disputed site into three equal parts for the contending parties. The litigants and their supporters were stunned by the ingenuity of the even-handed and impractical order that pronounced no winners, and, in effect, maintained status quo. Predictably, the aggrieved parties appealed to the SC, thereby giving the country a nine-year reprieve.

The SC was conscious of being entangled in a double-bind regarding the deeply contentious issue of ownership of the disputed site and, therefore, sought in parallel, a mediated solution involving the main parties to the dispute. It appears that a settlement had been worked out but was then scuttled by hardliners on both sides. The broad contours of the agreement were: a) Muslims would give up claims over the disputed site; b) Muslims will get an alternative site and funds for a new mosque; and c) the state would ensure implementation of the Places of Worship Act, 1991 which prohibits the conversion of any place of worship. The SC has essentially endorsed this template.

Muslims are aware that those in favour of the Mandir occupy the commanding posts in the social, political and legal structure. They know that their only hope of living in peace, albeit temporary, was to cede their rights to the disputed site, justice be damned. They now pray that their other places of worship will be safeguarded by the Places of Worship Act 1991. But they must also contend with the fact that the Kashmiris once believed that Article 370 was inviolable. Muslims realise only too well that in today's India, the point of view of the majority will prevail, regardless.

Justice O W Holmes had famously remarked that the SC was "a court of law and not a court of justice." In the Ayodhya case, however, our SC has upheld neither law nor justice. It has consecrated the faith of the majority whose God has been bestowed the disputed site.

The writer, a former civil servant, is secretary general of the Lok Janshakti Party. Views are personal

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

IN WRONG SPIRIT

THIS REFERS TO the report. 'In Jharkhand, Shah brings up Ram temple: Cong tried to stall' (IE, November 22). Prime Minister Narendra Modi told the nation before Ayodhya verdict that it is not a victory or defeat of anyone. The same sentiment was echoed by the RSS and VHP chiefs. Raking up the dispute for political mileage is not conducive for peace and harmony.

LR Murmu, Delhi

LANGUAGE MATTERS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'In our own words' (IE, November 22). Language is the true vehicle of self-expression. Recent studies have shown that education in the mother tongue leads to better academic performance. Such education might also make learning of a second language easier.

Abhijit Chakraborty, Howrah

JUGGLING ASSETS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Push for the better' (IE, November 22). The government, on Wednesday, approved sales of stakes in five PSUs. The government's 74.23 per cent holding in THD-CIL along with management control will be transferred to state-owned NTPC, which means government is merely juggling its assets.

Sanjay Chopra, Amritsar

LETTER OF THE WEEK

BE CAREFUL THIS REFERS TO the editorial.

'Fraught course' (IE, November 16). By asking a larger bench to review its 2018 verdict on the entry of women to Sabarimala, the Supreme Court has made the matter more complicated. The primary issue before the SC was to seek a balance between the tradition of the temple trust and the constitutional mandate of equality, freedom and right to practice one's faith. The Court has enlarged the scope of the enquiry which renders it beyond the narrow remit of the review

permitted under law. Ravi Mathur, Ghaziabad

BRING CALM

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'Bully on campus' (IE, November 21). The impasse in JNU can be resolved by having a graded fee structure. For students of economically weaker sections (EWS), the fee may not be hiked. Alternatively, EWS students may be given a scholarship.

Anoop Kumar Srivastava, Greater Noida

With a mask and shield

How the Delhi government is battling air pollution

AIR POLLUTION ON Diwali declined in Delhi this year relative to the last four years due to the Delhi government's extensive preventive measures, including a mega laser show. From an average PM2.5 level of 958 in 2016 to 289 in 2019, Delhi witnessed a 70 per cent decline in the four-year period. However, 1,276 stubble-burning incidents, mostly in Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, were recorded a day before Diwali. Alas, many areas of Delhi recorded an Air Quality Index of 999 on the night of Diwali. As a result, curative measures to reduce the risk of air pollution are required, and the

SATYENDAR JAIN

masks among school students. Prevention has always been, and continues to remain, the best cure. Cognisant of this, the Delhi government undertook various steps in the last four years, including making diesel generator sets redundant through the provision of 24x7 electricity, closure of coal-

Delhi government is undertaking one such

measure through the distribution of 50 lakh

based power plants (thereby becoming a model state), controlling vehicular pollution through the Odd-Even Scheme, and banning a large number of dirty fuels. The Supreme Court's ban on conventional firecrackers in 2018 added to the drive for clean air. Nonetheless, stubble burning in the neighbouring states has negated somewhat the ef-

fectiveness of our preventive initiatives. While we appeal to our neighbouring states to urgently undertake measures to control stubble burning — through provision of alternate machinery and equipment we are also going to ensure that the health of our citizens is not affected by the actions of a few. As a result, the Delhi government is distributing N95 masks to the students of government as well as private schools in Delhi.

While simple paper masks may not be as useful, global studies have proved the effectiveness of N95 masks. Two studies in China showed that blood pressure was

lower amongst those participants who wore N95 masks and walked in the centre of Beijing, than those who did not wear the masks. This finding was true for both healthy participants as well as those with heart diseases. Recently, as a recommendation for protection against the compromised air quality in California (due to the wildfires), experts suggested a respirator mask — such as an N95 facemask, which is designed to filter out 95 per cent of airborne particles. In line with these recommendations and findings, the Delhi government is distributing N95 masks as well.

In previous years, it was noted that face masks were not a successful solution to the air pollution problem in Delhi because the most effective N95 and N99 masks were unaffordable for lower-income groups. There was a lack of awareness and access to good quality masks. Research conducted at the Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago in India (EPIC India)

last year showed that even at a 50 per cent discount, less than one in 10 residents of Delhi stated that they will purchase a mask. The Delhi government has consistently

stressed and worked on increasing provisions for free and quality healthcare. Our constant efforts to reduce the bottlenecks related to the affordability and availability of masks and our endeavours to promote awareness among students should be seen in that light. We will encourage the students, who receive the masks, to act as change agents and raise awareness about the types, use and health benefits of masks.

As we continue to work towards reducing air pollution in Delhi and urge our neighbouring states to cooperate in this endeavour, it is important that individuals are provided the necessary healthcare provisions. Distribution of the masks is a testament to this imperative.

The writer is health minister of Delhi

mess.com

#ExpressExplained

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

TELLING NUMBERS

42,000 killed in 3 decades of J&K militancy; 14,000 were civilians

Year	Incidents	Civilians killed	Security forces killed Militants killed	
PEAK YE	ARS			
1992	4817	634	189	819
1993	5247	747	198	1310
1994	5829	820	200	1596
1995	5938	1031	237	1332
1996	5014	1341	184	1209
RECENT	YEARS			
2015	208	17	39	108
2016	322	15	82	150
2017	342	40	80	213
2018	614	39	91	257
2019*	365	23	78	136
TOTAL				
CHI (OTOTO MOZANI	0* 71 N2Q	14 038	5 202	77.576

*Until September 4

SINCE 1990, 41,866 persons have lost their lives in 71,038 incidents of militant violence in Jammu & Kashmir (now Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh Union Territories), according to data shared by Home Ministry sources. Those killed include 14,038 civilians; 5,292 security personnel and 22,536

From the peak years of militancy during the 1990s, when between 3,000 and 6,000 incidents of violence were being reported each year, the annual number of incidents has been below 500 each year in the last 10 years, the data show.

At a time when the Centre has been stressing that normalcy has returned to the Valley, the Home Ministry data show that all landline connections have been restored since September 4, restrictions under CrPC Section 144 lifted at all police stations since September 27, all schools have reopened since October 23, and mobile phone connections have been restored in all districts since October 14. These dates for restoration of facilities are for the Kashmir Valley.

Jammu did not face snapping of landline connections from August 5. The other restrictions were lifted on earlier dates than in Kashmir, according to the data. Ladakh region did not face any of these restrictions. While orders under CrPC Section 144 CrPC have been removed from all 195 police stations (the two UTs have 202 including those in Ladakh), restrictions are imposed at some places at night, according to the Ministry.

All 93,247 landline phones are said to be functioning now. While mobile phone connections have been restored in all districts, not every connection has been restored. Out of 59,76,359 mobile phones, 20,05,293 post-paid mobile phones (voice) are functioning in the Valley, the data showed. Also, 280 e-terminals with Internet facilities have been arranged for the public in all 10 districts of the Valley, which have benefited more than 2 lakh people so far.

Source for all data: Ministry of Home Affairs

The data showed there has been no loss of life on account of any police firing in law and order incidents after August 5, the day when the government announced the bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir state. There has been a decrease in incidents of stone pelting reported — from 802 incidents in 2018 to 544 so far in 2019, including 190 incidents after August 5.

All 20,411 schools in J&K and Ladakh are open and examinations are going on as per schedule, the data showed. Out of 50,537 students of Class XI in Kashmir Valley, 50,272 (99.48%) appeared in examinations. Further, 99.7% students are writing the 10th and 12th class examinations.

The data showed that in Srinagar City, 7,67,475 OPD patients were treated in September 2019, and 7,91,470 in October.

In this period, the data set says, the

government has issued: 43,998 kilolitres petrol

37,129 kilolitres diesel **4,921** kilolitres kerosene

15,74,873 cylinders LPG.

The data showed 11.59 lakh tonnes of apples have been exported out of Jammu and Kashmir. NAFED has procured 8960 tonnes at Rs 38 crore so far from those farmers who are not able to sell their apples.

RESTORATION OF FACILITIES (KASHMIR VALLEY)

Date	Landline restoration	Restriction relaxation (P/S)	School opening	Mobile restoration (districts)
Aug 5	0	0	0	0
Aug 8	0	0	0	0
Aug 16	0	0	0	0
Aug 17	8,365	35	6,897	0
Aug 18	9,371	50	6,897	0
Aug 24	14,500	69	9,807	1
Aug 27	15,951	81	10,450	1
Sept 4	43,114	81	10,450	1
Sept 9	43,114	93	10,442	1
Sept 27	43,114	105	10,442	1
Oct 14	43,114	105	10,442	10
Oct 23	43,114	105	10,777	10
Nov 2	43,114	105	10,777	10
Total	43,114 (100%)	105 (100%)	10,777 (100%)	10 (100%)

SIMPLY PUT

What's going up in ISRO's next

On Wednesday, ISRO will launch the indigenous Cartosat-3 besides 13 foreign satellites. What is the function of Cartosat-3, and how is it an improvement from previous satellites of the series?

AMITABH SINHA

NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 22

AFTER Chandrayaan-2, it is back to business for the Indian Space Research Organization. On Wednesday, ISRO will launch Cartosat-3, and 13 other foreign satellites, aboard a PSLV (Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle). This will be ISRO's fifth launch this year and the first since the July 22 launch of the Chandrayaan-2 Moon mission.

The payload

The main purpose of the mission is to place the 1,625-kg Cartosat-3 satellite, the third generation of Earth-observation remote sensing satellites that ISRO has been launching and using 1988. These satellites provide high-resolution imagery of the Earth that are used for applications like 3-D mapping, disaster management, agriculture and water management, recording of changes in land use, and urban and rural infrastructure planning, and even border surveillance.

The PSLV-C47 rocket is also carrying 13 commercial nano-satellites from the US. Twelve of them are Flock-4P satellites, also Earth-observation satellites, from the private company Planet, which has sent several such satellites on PSLV rockets earlier. In fact, it was an earlier version of these same Flock satellites that, in February 2017, had helped ISRO launch a world record 104 satellites at one go. Of the 104 satellites on board PSLV-C37, 88 were Flocks. Those Flocks were called doves, and the current bunch is known as super-doves.

Earth observation

The main payload in Wednesday's launch would be the next-generation Cartosat satellite. The Cartosat satellites, used mainly for large-scale mapping of the Earth through high-resolution cameras, are part of the large range of earth observation satellites deployed by ISRO, starting with the Indian Remote Sensing series of satellites. The Earth-observation satellites also include the Resourcesat and RISAT series, the Oceansat series and many more. These satellites now focus on generating theme-based user-friendly data that are in great demand. The Resourcesat and RISAT series of satellites, for example, provide imageries and data that are needed for land and water resources applications. The Oceansat series and the SARAL satellite, meanwhile, produce data on the oceans, while satellites like INSAT 3D, INSAT-VRR or Megha Tropiques study the atmosphere.

PSLV-C47

Cartosat-3 is a third-generation

advanced Earth-observation

satellite with high-resolution

imaging capability.

Mean altitude:

509 km

inclination:

Overall mass:

1,625 kg

generation: 2,000 MW

Mission life:

5 years

Power

Mean

97.5°

Data from Earth-observation satellites are in great demand, both from government agencies, which need it for planning and infrastructure development, as well as private companies looking to execute infrastructure and other projects.

Cartosat, then and now

13 nano-satellites

WHATITIS FOR

etc, according to ISRO

Cartosat-3 will address increased

demands for large-scale urban

planning, rural resource and

infrastructure development,

coastal land use and land cover

Source: ISRO

Cartosat-3 has been developed as an improvement over the Cartosat-1 and Cartosat-2 series satellites, though ISRO has not yet revealed the full specifications of this satellite.

Cartosat-1, launched in May 2005, was the first Indian remote sensing satellite capable of taking three-dimensional images. With a resolution of 2.5 metres, which meant it could identify a car on the ground from space, Cartosat-1 helped in creating new digital

maps of over 150 towns and cities in the country at a scale of 1:10,000. Earlier maps were of a scale of 1:50,000 or even lower. Data from this satellite were also used to a do an inundation vulnerability assessment of the Indian coastline in the event of a tsunami or a major cyclone, and even for estimating the status of irrigation potential created by the large number of projects under the Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme.

The first of the Cartosat-2 series was launched in 2007 and these have been substantially advanced versions of Cartosat-1 Seven of them are in orbit, each with the capability of taking images of resolution better than 1 metre. The last three Cartosat-2 series satellites are also placed in a lower orbit - 505 km from the Earth's surface compared to the 640 km earlier — thereby increasing their resolution further.

ISRO has not revealed the quality of the camera on Cartosat-3 or the resolution of the images it would be able to take. But it is likely to have the capability to take images with resolution better than 0.25 metres.

"There is great demand for reliable high resolution data because these are needed for a very wide range of applications. It is needed by the government, private companies, and also academics who are studying earth, ocean or atmosphere systems. We need to know how the forest or vegetation cover is changing for example, or how urbanisation is spreading Cartosat satellites come back to the same place after every few months, so that they are able to capture the change that is happening on the ground. And this is valuable for a number of user agencies. ISRO is therefore only catering to the increased demand by deploying more such satellites," said a retired space scientist.

The rocket

Wednesday's mission will fly on a fourstage PSLV rocket that has been the most consistent of ISRO's launch vehicles. This would be the PSLV's 49th flight. All but two of them have been successful. Apart from Chandrayaan-2, which flew on a GSLV rocket, the other three launches this year have all used PSLV variants.

Why a Pacific island is voting for independence

NEHABANKA

KOLKATA, NOVEMBER 22

NEARLY 30 years after a decade-long brutal civil war, the tiny (9,300 sq) km island of Bougainville in the Pacific is going to polls starting Saturday to vote on its independence from Papua New Guinea.

What is the referendum about?

Between 1988 and 1998, armed groups in Bougainville were involved in conflict with the government of Papua New Guinea. The referendum is a result of one of the provisions of the Bougainville Peace Agreement, signed in 2001 and enacted through an amendment of the Papua New Guinea Constitution, Edward P Wolfers, Foundation Professor Emeritus of Politics, University of Wollongong, Australia, told The Indian Express.

Voters choose between 'greater autonomy' or independence for Bougainville. Before any final decision, the referendum would have to be passed by the Government and Parliament of Papua New Guinea, in consultation with the Autonomous Bougainville Government.

How did the island get its current status? Its indigenous population had inhabited it



torate of German New Guinea. In 1914, during World War I, Bougainville and other islands, including what is now Papua New Guinea, fell under the control of Australian forces. The League of Nations controlled the island until 1942 when, following a battle during World War II, Australia took over the island's administration. This arrangement lasted till 1975, ending with Papua New Guinea gaining independence. In the late 1970s, a decentralised system of provincial government was introduced in Bougainville. The Bougainville Peace Agreement in 2001 brought about autonomy.

Why does it want independence?

"There has subsequently been dissatisfaction among Bougainvilleans over implementation of the agreed arrangements for to the constitutionally guaranteed financial grants to which the Autonomy Bougainville Government (ABG) is legally entitled, but which the (Papua New Guinea) National Government has not provided in accordance with the ABG's calculations," Wolfers said. The conflict is rooted in exploitation of re-

Bougainville autonomy, particularly in regard

sources, and unequal distribution of wealth. The Panguna mine, also known as the Bougainville Copper Mine, is the world's largest open cut copper mine. The copper contributed significantly to Papua New Guinea's economy and the mine created job opportunities for people from Papua New Guinea and Australia leading to conflict with Bougainvillean locals who also reported discrimination and racism. The protests inflated into a civil war, resulting in the death of thousands and displacement. The mine was closed in May 1989. The war was brought to a halt due to the Peace Agreement.

What is Papua New Guinea's stance? "Though there have been previous leaders

who expressed reservations, the current National Government is committed to holding the referendum. Prime Minister James Marape has said publicly that he believes that Papua New Guinea will be stronger if Bougainville remains part of Papua New process and the result of the vote, it seems unlikely that a separate independence will receive overwhelming public support elsewhere in Papua New Guinea and that the National Parliament will simply agree." What will possibly follow, Wolfers said, is discussions about ongoing areas of cooperation. What happens if Bougainville gains or

Guinea," said Wolfers. "While the current gov-

ernment can be expected to respect the

does not gain an independence?

According to Wolfers, there can be "little doubt that an independent Bougainville will face serious challenges in financing, staffing and managing a full range of governmental functions, at least in the short to mediumterm". If Bougainville becomes independent the immediate steps would involve putting in place law and order, economic opportunities for villagers, and access to education.

According to Wolfers, the scope of the option of greater autonomy on the ballot-paper has still to be precisely defined, the details of which will need to be negotiated. The referendum is being closely watched by other provinces in Papua New Guinea, and also by various other countries.

Voting will take place over two weeks. The results are likely to be known in December.

In Meghalaya living root bridges, study sees global potential. Can it work?

TORA AGARWALA

GUWAHATI, NOVEMBER 22

THE *JING kieng jri* or living root bridges aerial bridges built by weaving and manipulating the roots of the Indian rubber tree — have been serving as connectors for generations in Meghalaya. Spanning between 15 and 250 feet and built over centuries, the bridges, primarily a means to cross streams and rivers, have also become world-famous tourist attractions. Now, new research investigates these structures and proposes to integrate them in modern architecture around the world, and potentially help make cities more environment-friendly.

What did the study look at, and find? Researchers from Germany investigated 77 bridges over three expeditions in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills of Meghalaya during 2015, 2016 and 2017. Taking into account structural properties, history and maintenance, morphology and ecological significance, the study, published in the journal Scientific Reports, suggests that the bridges can be considered a reference point for future botanical architecture

projects in urban contexts. "The findings relating to the traditional

techniques of the Khasi people can promote the further development of modern architecture," said Professor Ferdinand Ludwig of the Technical University of Munich, one of the study authors and founder of a field of research called "Baubotanik" that promotes the use of plants as living building materials in structures.

While stressing they are "not planning to create new living bridges for contemporary cities" right away, the researchers believe this extraordinary building technique can help facilitate "better adaptation to the impacts of climate change". "We see a great potential to use these techniques to develop new forms of urban green in dense cities," said Ludwig. "By understanding the growth history, we can learn how long the bridge has taken to grow to its current state and from there design future growth or repairs, or growth of other bridges," said Wilfrid Middleton, one of the co-authors.

What is extraordinary about these?

A root bridge uses traditional tribal knowledge to train roots of the Indian rubber tree, found in abundance in the area, to grow laterally across a stream bed, resulting in a living bridge of roots. "Let us redefine these bridges as ecosystems," said Bengaluru- and Shillong-based architect and



These bridges are built by manipulating living roots of rubber trees. FLudwig/TUM

researcher Sanjeev Shankar. In 2015, in one of the earliest studies on these structures, Shankar wrote, "The process begins with placing of young pliable aerial roots growing from Ficus elastica (India rubber) trees in hollowed out Areca catechu or native bamboo trunks. These provide essential nutrition and protection from the weather, and also perform as aerial root guidance systems. Over time, as the aerial roots increase in strength and thickness, the Areca catechu or native bamboo trunks are no longer required."

Ficus elastica is conducive to the growth of bridges because of its very nature. "There are three main properties: they are elastic, the roots easily combine and the plants grow in rough, rocky soils," said Patrick Rodgers, an American travel writer who has done many solo expeditions to these areas since 2011 and has also contributed his expertise to the new study. What is crucial for a root bridge to sur-

vive is the development of an ecosystem around it. "Specifically the entire biology, the

entire ecosystem, and the relationship between the people and the plants, which have, over the centuries, kept it going," said Shankar, who is working with the Meghalaya government along with indigenous communities and other academics to formalise policies and regulations for conservation and responsible development of these ecosystems.

Can this really be replicated elsewhere?

"Regarding the techniques and approaches of Living Root Bridges, we are in an early research phase. There are first concepts how to transfer the idea, but no concrete plans

for projects yet," Ludwig said in an email. Shankar said: "We should ask: where will a plant be happy? Will it be happy in a highly toxic environment of a polluted city, where thousands will walk on it, where cars, trucks and buses are on it, or is the plant a living entity which grows in a specific microclimate?"

A pointer might lie in the deteriorating health of certain root bridges in Meghalaya. While there are hundreds of such bridges, the two most popular (Riwai Root Bridge and Umshiang Double Decker Bridge) have borne the brunt of recent tourism growth.

"Both these bridges have been adversely affected in the past ten years. This is because of the introduction of modern architecture such as new concrete footpaths, building etc around the bridge that have impacted that bridge health. There are cracks in them," said Morningstar Khongthaw, 23, a villager who started The Living Root Foundation in 2018. "My ancestors made these bridges for a practical need: to cross streams and rivers. Now the bridges are too weak to accommodate people beyond a capacity," said Khongthaw.

So, is there any potential?

"My personal opinion is that the basic idea — architectural structures made of Ficus elastica plants — is sound in urban environments. This is because of the robustness of the plant itself," Rodgers said, by email. He added, however, that factors like "civic planning, good governance, preventing people from damaging the bridge" also need to be taken into account. "Certainly, there is no technical impediment to there being living architecture in urban areas." he said.

Shankar feels the Ficus benghalensis (banyan tree) is a related species that can potentially be tried. "How we can apply it to future buildings and structures, and to what extent this integration is appropriate and viable, is a very important question and only a real test in the envisioned environment can prove its feasibility," he said.

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड वर्ष 12 अंक 238

पायोगिक मामला

भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक (आरबीआई) ने संकट में घिरी गैर-बैंकिंग वित्तीय कंपनी दीवान हाउसिंग फाइनैंस कॉर्पीरेशन (डीएचएफएल) का बोर्ड भंग करने के साथ ही एक सेवानिवृत्त बैंकर को कंपनी का प्रशासक नियुक्त किया है। यह कदम डीएचएफएल को कर्ज समाधान एवं दिवालिया संहिता (आईबीसी) के तहत भेजने की दिशा में उठाया गया है। राष्ट्रीय

कंपनी कानून पंचाट (एनसीएलटी) को इस मामले में समाधान पेशेवर के तौर पर एक प्रशासक नियुक्त करना होगा। डीएचएफएल एक प्रायोगिक मामला होगा क्योंकि यह व्यवस्थागत रूप से अहम वित्तीय कंपनी को नए नियमों के तहत दिवालिया प्रक्रिया में भेजने का पहला मामला है। ये नियम 500 करोड रुपये से अधिक परिसंपत्ति वाली एनबीएफसी

के लिए हाल ही में बनाए गए हैं। मामले में पेश नजीरें एनबीएफसी क्षेत्र में व्यापक तौर पर लागू होंगी। यह क्षेत्र आईएलऐंडएफएस के ध्वस्त होने के बाद से ही भारी दबाव में है। उसकी तुलना में कम जटिल होने के बावजूद डीएचएफएल पर करीब 90,000 करोड रुपये की देनदारी है और इसका आवासीय एवं रियल एस्टेट पर व्यापक प्रभाव होगा। कंपनी को करीब 40,000 करोड़ रुपये का भुगतान बैंकों को करना है और 10 फीसदी से भी कम हिस्सा सार्वजनिक जमाकर्ताओं का है।

यूं तो डीएचएफएल जून से ही मुश्किलों में घिरी हुई है लेकिन उसे इस हालत में आने में समय लगा है। पहली वजह यह है कि एक वित्तीय संस्थान होने से इसके कारोबार समेटने को लेकर कोई अलग कानुन नहीं है। मौजुदा

आईबीसी नियमों ने इस बारे में कुछ प्रावधान किए हैं लेकिन उनकी मजबती परखनी होगी। दूसरी समस्या यह है कि एक वित्तीय कंपनी होने से इसके लेनदारों की संख्या बहुत है। न केवल बैंक बल्कि म्युचुअल फंड, बॉन्डधारक और खदरा सावधि जमाकर्ता भी इसके लेनदार हैं। लेकिन इन ऋणदाताओं के अलग-अलग हित होने से तमाम लेनदारों के बीच समझौता हो पाना आसान नहीं होगा। सवाल यह है कि क्या कर्ज समाधान प्रक्रिया इन प्राथमिकताओं के बीच संतुलन साध पाएगी ? आखिरी समस्या यह थी कि डीएचएफएल के खिलाफ धोखाधडी के एक मामले में जांच भी चल रही है। इस जांच की प्रगति ही यह तय करेगी कि लेनदार डीएचएफएल से अपने कर्ज की वसली कैसे करना चाहेंगे ? कंपनी खातों की ऑडिट

रिपोर्ट में ऐसा अंदेशा जताया गया था कि फंड को डीएचएफएल के प्रवर्तकों से जुडे खातों में भेज दिया गया। उस समय लेनदार यही जानना चाह रहे थे कि क्या प्रवर्तकों के खातों में भेजी गई रकम वसली जा सकती है। आखिर में, इस संकटग्रस्त वित्तीय कंपनी को नए सिरे से खडा करने के लिए कई योजनाएं पेश की गई हैं। इनमें से अधिकांश पर सहमति बन पाने या सफल हो पाने की संभावना कम ही है।

आईबीसी को इनका हल निकालना होगा। यह भी देखना होगा कि डीएचएफएल जैसी वित्तीय कंपनी के कर्ज निपटान के लिए आईबीसी प्रक्रिया अपनाकर नजीर भी पेश की जा रही है। एनबीएफसी की व्यवस्थागत अहमियत और डीएचएफएल से जड़ी कई परियोजनाओं के अपने दम पर भी व्यवहार्य

ही होंगे और दूरभाष पर चीन के

संपर्क में होंगे। राजपक्षे भाइयों

की यह जोडी इसके पहले 2005-

15 के दौरान भी श्रीलंका की सत्ता

में रह चुकी है। उस समय महिंदा

राष्ट्रपति और उनके छोटे भाई

गोटाभाया रक्षा सचिव थे। लगभग

उसी समय इस क्षेत्र में भारत की

भू-रणनीतिक भूमिका पर ग्रहण

राजपक्षे बंधुओं की सत्ता के

पहले काल में श्रीलंका के लिए

सबसे बड़ी चुनौती देश के उत्तरी

एवं पूर्वी इलाकों में तमिल

विद्रोहियों पर काबू पाने की थी।

दोनों भाइयों ने लिट्टे विद्रोहियों से

निपटने के लिए हथियार खरीदने

की कोशिश पहले भारत से ही की

थी। लेकिन तमिलनाडु की

राजनीतिक मजबूरियों के चलते

भारत सरकार ने श्रीलंका के उस

अनुरोध पर कोई निर्णय ही नहीं

लिया। ऐसे में राजपक्षे को मजबूर

होकर चीन और पाकिस्तान की

तरफ मदद के हाथ बढाने पड़े और

वहां से उन्हें सहर्ष मदद मिली।

यद्भ विराम एवं शांति स्थापना की

कई नाकाम कोशिशों के बाद

राजपक्षे बंधुओं ने यह तय किया

कि सैन्य कार्रवाई से ही इस समस्या

को हमेशा के लिए खत्म किया जा

सकता है। इसके पहले श्रीलंका ने

लिट्टे विद्रोहियों के खिलाफ सीमित

के साथ संपर्क को लेकर काफी

पुरानी यादें हैं। वर्ष 2000 में लिट्टे

ने एलीफेंट दर्रे की लड़ाई के बाद

जाफना में श्रीलंकाई सेना को घेर

लिया था। तत्कालीन विदेश मंत्री

लक्ष्मण कादिरगमार ने भारत से

सैन्य मदद करने का आग्रह किया

था. जैसा कि भारत ने 1971 के

जनता विमुक्ति पेरामुना या 1987

के लिट्टे विरोधी अभियानों के

दौरान किया था। लेकिन भारत ने

ऐसा नहीं किया। अलबत्ता उसने

श्रीलंका को 20 करोड डॉलर का

महिंदा के मार्गदर्शन में श्रीलंकाई

सेना ने तमिल विद्रोहियों को

करारी मात देकर लिट्टे के

गोटाभाया के नेतृत्व और

अनुदान जरूर दिया था।

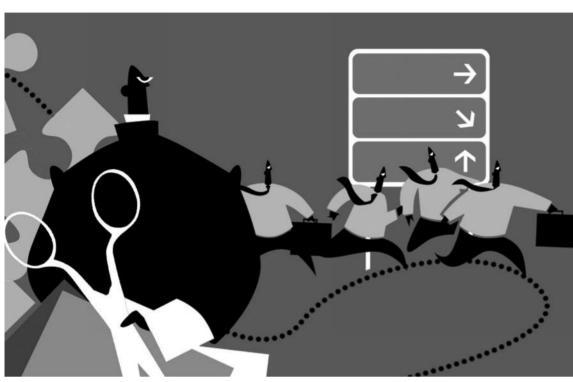
श्रीलंकाई नागरिकों के भारत

सैन्य कार्रवाई ही की थी।

लगना शुरू हो गया था।

होने की बात भी ध्यान में रखनी होगी। सर्वोच्च न्यायालय ने हाल ही में कहा है कि आईबीसी को लेनदारों की अहमियत का भी सम्मान करना होगा यानी सुरक्षित ऋणदाता को असुरक्षित लेनदार की तुलना में अहमियत देनी होगी।

भले ही आरबीआई जमाकर्ताओं की राशि का भुगतान पहले होते हुए देखना चाहेगा लेकिन सच यही है कि आईबीसी प्रक्रिया में सुरक्षित ऋणदाता को प्राथमिकता देनी होगी। अगर डीएचएफएल का यह प्रायोगिक मामला समस्याओं में घिर जाता है तो सरकार को जल्दबाजी दिखाते हुए दिवालिया वित्तीय संस्थानों से संबंधित अपने विधेयक का संशोधित संस्करण लाना होगा। इस विधेयक को पिछले साल सरकार ने वापस ले लिया था जब जमा सुरक्षा को लेकर चिंता जताई जाने लगीं।



कर शरणस्थली और संप्रभुता का अंतर्विरोध

कई संप्रभु देशों के कर शरणस्थली बन जाने से वैश्विक समाज के लिए बहुराष्ट्रीय कंपनियों पर निगरानी मुश्किल हो जाती है। इसके पेचीदा पहलुओं से अवगत करा रहे हैं पार्थसारिय शोम

स लेख में यह कहने की कोशिश की गई है कि कर संप्रभुता एवं कर पनाहगाह के बीच एक निर्णायक संबंध है। राष्ट्र-राज्य अपनी राजकोषीय नीति और खासकर कर संप्रभुता को सुरक्षित रखते हैं। कोई इसे वक्त की शुरुआत से ही जंग लड़ने के एक वित्तीय स्रोत के तौर पर देख सकता है। पिछली सहस्राब्दी में युद्ध के साथ कर का संबंध मध्य युग के यूरोप एवं एशिया और बाद में अमेरिका में असंदिग्ध था। जब संप्रभुता को सुरक्षित रखना होता था तो उसका साधन युद्ध ही होता था और युद्ध के लिए वित्त जुटाने का आसान तरीका करारोपण ही होता था। इसमें एक गड़बड़ यह थी कि युद्ध के लिए जिम्मेदार संप्रभु राज्य ही अपने नागरिकों की सुरक्षा करता था और उनके कल्याण के कार्य करता था।

पिछली सदी में कर मामलों में राष्ट्रों की संप्रभुता का सुव्यवस्थित ढांचा होने से देशों को यह लगा कि एक कारोबार को समान आय पर एक से अधिक देशों में कर देना पडता है। इस तरह दो देशों के बीच द्विपक्षीय दोहरा कराधान वंचना समझौतों (डीटीएए) का स्वरूप सामने आया जो दोनों देशों में कारोबार कर रहे करदाता पर सीमापार दोहरे कराधान को न्युनतम करने का तरीका था।

हालांकि डीटीएए की राहें पूरी तरह साफ

नहीं थीं। कुछ बहुराष्ट्रीय कंपनियों को विभिन्न डीटीएए के बीच यह तय करना पड़ता था कि एक देश में उनकी कंपनी अधिकतम कर लाभ कैसे उठा सकती है और इसका वहां पैदा होने वाले मूल्य सीमा से कोई नाता नहीं था। दूसरा, डीटीएए से देशों की निहित संबद्ध सौदेबाजी ताकत सामने आई। यह एक तरह से संप्रभु राष्ट्रों के बीच पहले से व्याप्त असमता को गहरा करता था। और तीसरा, अक्सर मौन समझ रखने वाले कुछ देशों ने अपनी कर दरों को इस स्तर तक कम कर दिया कि वे कर पनाहगाह कहे जाने लगे। यह व्यवस्था इन देशों को बहुराष्ट्रीय कंपनियों के लिए आकर्षक स्थान बना देती है, भले ही वहां पर प्रबंधन की गुणवत्ता सवालों के घेरे में हो।

वर्ष 2008-09 के वैश्विक आर्थिक संकट के बाद बहुराष्ट्रीय कंपनियों की कर वंचना को उन्नत एवं उदीयमान राष्ट्र–राज्यों पर भारी बोझ के तौर पर चिह्नित किया गया था। उस समय कर समझौतों में बहुपक्षीयता के प्रति दुनिया की रुचि अचानक ही बदल गई। उसी के बाद बेस इरोजन ऐंड प्रॉफिट शिफ्टिंग (बीईपीएस) परियोजना का जन्म हुआ जो जी-20 देशों की तरफ से प्रायोजित अवधारणा थी।

कर पनाहगाहों के खात्मे के लिए कदम नहीं उठाए थे जिनका इस्तेमाल बहुराष्ट्रीय कंपनियां वैश्विक कराधान से बचने के लिए करती थीं। यह आचरण बताता है कि उनमें से कुछ कंपनियां किसी भी अंतरराष्ट्रीय कर के आसन्न बोझ से बचने का कोई रास्ता चाहती हैं। यह नहीं कह सकते हैं कि आर्थिक सहयोग एवं विकास संगठन (ओईसीडी) कर शरणगाहों के वजूद या हानिकारक प्रभावों को लेकर उदासीन बनी रही लेकिन उसने कर शरणगाहों की प्रबलता. नियंत्रण या निष्प्रभावी बनाने का कोई प्रत्यक्ष कदम नहीं उठाया। इसके बजाय ओईसीडी ने सीमापार निवेश पर दोहरे कराधान से संबंधित दंडात्मक उपायों पर जोर दिया और अपने 15 व्यापक बीईपीएस कदमों से बहुराष्ट्रीय कंपनियों की कर वंचना को विश्वास के साथ निपटाने की कोशिश की।

हालांकि यूरोपीय संघ ने 2016-19 में कर शरणस्थली के मसले से निपटने के प्रयास तेज कर दिए हैं। आचार संहिता जारी करने और उल्लंघनकर्ताओं को ब्लैक लिस्ट एवं ग्रे लिस्ट में डालने जैसे कदम यूरोपीय संघ ने उठाए। फिर भी, अचरज नहीं है कि कंपनियों के कदाचार पर नजर रखने वाले गैर-सरकारी संगठन ऑक्सफैम ने यह सवाल कुल मिलाकर, उन्नत अर्थव्यवस्थाओं ने उठाया है कि कुछ देशों को काली सूची के

बजाय ग्रे लिस्ट में क्यों रखा गया है और कुछ देशों को तो किसी भी सूची में नहीं रखा गया है ? खैर, यह तो मानना होगा कि यूरोपीय संघ इस मसले को कम-से-कम तवज्जो तो

ऑक्सफैम ने 18 देशों को चिह्नित किया है जो यूरोपीय संघ की काली सूची में रखे गए 23 बेहद चिंताजनक देशों से मेल खाते हैं। इस सूची में अमेरिकन समोआ, बहरीन, केप वर्डे, कुक आइलैंड, डोमिनिका, फिजी, ग्रेनेडा, गुआम, मार्शल आइलैंड, मोरक्को, नौरु, न्यु कैलेडोनिया, नियु, ओमान, पलाऊ, सेंट किट्स और नेविस, समोआ, त्रिनिडाड ऐंड टोबैगो, तुर्की, टर्क्स ऐंड कैकोस आइलैंड, संयुक्त अरब अमीरात (यूएई), यूएस वर्जिन आइलैंड्स, वनातु को रखा गया है।

इस सूची में छोटे द्वीपीय देशों की भारी मौजूदगी खुलकर नजर आती है। ये छोटे-छोटे देश मुश्किल से आत्म-निर्भर हैं और वे आर्थिक स्तर पर अपने पुराने औपनिवेशिक संपर्कों पर ही निर्भर बने हुए हैं। इसके बदले में वे पर्व-औपनिवेशिक देशों में स्थित कंपनियों को अपने यहां कर संरक्षण की पेशकश करते हैं। यह सुविधाजनक व्यवस्था वेस्टफेलियन अवधारणा वाले संप्रभु राष्ट्र-राज्यों की कर संप्रभुता के खोल में बदस्तूर

इसके साथ, पश्चिमी विद्वानों ने कर संप्रभुता में किसी भी तरह के ह्वास को लेकर सवाल उठाना जारी रखा है। मोटे तौर पर वे कर संप्रभुता के गुणों को एक रक्षणीय दर्शन और कर शरणस्थली को मुकाबला करने वाली परंपरा के तौर पर देखते हैं। पश्चिमी विद्वान इन दोनों संकल्पनाओं के बीच के निहित अंतर्विरोध को दरिकनार करते हुए दोनों को ही चाहते हुए दिखते हैं। कुछ लोगों ने ऐसी आशंका जताई है कि बहुपक्षीयता अपनी संप्रभुता के संरक्षण की जरूरत होने पर देशों से 'ना' कहने का अधिकार भी ले ली। वे इस बात पर बहुत जोर नहीं देते हैं कि आधुनिक वैश्विक समाज की जरूरतों के मताबिक ढाले बगैर महज संप्रभता पर ही जोर देने से विरोधाभास पैदा हुए हैं। डीटीएए समझौते, कर शरणगाहों की बढ़ती संख्या और वहां पर बहुराष्ट्रीय कंपनियों की रणनीतिक मौजूदगी एक वैश्विक समाज की दिशा में बढ़ने की राह में बड़ी बाधाएं हैं।

ऐसा नहीं है कि अकादिमक जगत एवं विशेषज्ञों ने अंतर्निहित संघर्ष को रेखांकित किया है। विद्वान रोनेन पालन के शब्दों में, 'कर शरणगाहों को कानून बनाकर नहीं खत्म किया जा सकता है क्योंकि वे संप्रभता के सिद्धांत की विकृतियां नहीं हैं जब तक वे मोबाइल कैपिटल के दौर में राष्ट्रीय संप्रभुता के परस्पर-विरोधी सिद्धांतों का प्रत्यक्ष परिणाम हैं। नतीजतन, कर शरणस्थली की अवधारणा पर चोट करने की कोई भी गंभीर कोशिश बहुआयामी स्तर पर करनी होगी और उसका संप्रभुता के आधुनिक सिद्धांत पर बड़ा असर होगा। कर शरणगाहों के खात्मे के लिए उद्योगीकृत देशों के बीच सहयोग एवं संप्रभु शक्तियों को थोड़ा सीमित करने की जरूरत पड़ेगी। ऐसा होने पर तथाकथित वेस्टफेलियन व्यवस्था का अंत हो जाएगा।' बहुपक्षीय संप्रभुता संयुग्मन को लेकर दूसरों की तरह लेखक के अंतिम मानक रुख के बारे में कोई भी निष्कर्ष निकालने से पहले स्याही सूख जाती है।



आदिति फडणीस

अपराजेय होने की धारणा ध्वस्त करने के साथ ही सबको अचंभे में डाल दिया था। इस युद्ध को भारत के प्रच्छन्न समर्थन का श्रेय भी राजपक्षे बंधुओं को दिया गया था जिन्होंने भारत को ठीक से 'संभाला' था। भारत की अधिक मदद के बगैर इस युद्ध में निर्णायक जीत से उत्साहित होकर उन्होंने चीन को अपने यहां विकास करने के लिए साहसिक न्योता दे दिया। महिंदा के निर्वाचन क्षेत्र हम्बनटोटा में महत्त्वाकांक्षी विकास कार्यों के लिए चीन को दिया गया निमंत्रण श्रीलंका को कर्ज के जाल में फंसाने का सबब बन गया। लेकिन उनकी सरकार बड़े गर्व से अपने नागरिकों को इस बात का संकेत दे रही थी कि दोनों भाइयों ने भारत को नीचा दिखा दिया है।

महिंदा के राष्ट्रपति रहते समय चीन हम्बनटोटा बंदरगाह एवं औद्योगिक क्षेत्र, कोलंबो बंदरगाह एवं फाइनैंस सिटी, शांग्रीला होटल्स एवं आवास, भंडारनायके अंतरराष्ट्रीय हवाईअड्डे से कोलंबो एवं गाले तक एक्सप्रेसवे और नए सैन्य मुख्यालय के निर्माण के अलावा सैन्य साजोसामान एवं प्रशिक्षण मुहैया कराने में लगा हुआ था। वहीं भारत इस समूचे परिदृश्य से नदारद था।

ऐसे में जब 2015 के चुनाव में महिंदा की शिकस्त हुई तो भारत ने एक हद तक सामरिक संतुलन हासिल कर लिया। उस समय राजपक्षे बंधुओं ने सार्वजनिक तौर पर कहा था कि भारत उनकी हार देखना चाहता था। उस समय तक राजपक्षे की फिजूलखर्ची के चलते श्रीलंका पर नौ अरब डॉलर का भारी कर्ज हो चुका था। राजपक्षे की हार के बाद सरकार बनाने के लिए वाम एवं दक्षिणपंथी दोनों दल एक साथ आए और एक अटपटा गठबंधन वजूद में आया। मैत्रीपाल सिरीसेना राष्ट्रपति बने जबिक रानिल विक्रमसिंघे प्रधानमंत्री बनाए गए। महिंदा

पर आम आदमी पार्टी ने जोर-शोर 🗄

से चुनावी चंदे में पारदर्शिता बरतने

की बात की थी, लेकिन लंबे वक्त

तक वह भी इसे अपनी कार्य

प्रणाली का हिस्सा बनाकर नहीं

रख पाई। पारदर्शिता के स्तर पर

चुनावी बॉन्ड से कुछ उम्मीद

बंधती है। हालांकि इसमें और

अधिक सुधार की गुंजाइश से

इनकार नहीं किया जा सकता है।

पवन यादव

लखनऊ, उत्तर प्रदेश

राजपक्षे ने कुछ महीनों के भीतर ही जबरदस्त वापसी की और प्रांतीय चुनावों में सत्तारूढ़ गठजोड़ का सफाया कर दिया। भ्रष्टाचार एवं नकारेपन के आरोपों से घिरे गठजोड में अविश्वास बढने लगा और राष्ट्रपति एवं प्रधानमंत्री दोनों ही एक-दूसरे के मुकाबले खड़े हो गए। इस लड़ाई का फायदा राजपक्षे बंधुओं को मिलता चला गया।

महिंदा और गोटाभाया को जल्द ही यह अहसास हो गया कि श्रीलंका में राष्ट्रीयता की भावना पर जोर देना उनकी जीत की राह प्रशस्त कर सकता है। बोदु बल सेना (बीबीएस) एवं सिंहल बौद्ध समुदाय को समर्थन देकर उन्होंने दक्षिणी हिस्से में अपनी स्थिति मजबूत करने में कामयाबी पाई लेकिन इससे पहले ही विभाजित समाज और भी खंडित नजर आने लगा। यह काफी रोचक है कि राष्ट्रपति चुने जाने के बाद गोटाभाया ने जो शुरुआती नियुक्तियां की हैं, वे प्रधानमंत्री पद पर अपने बड़े भाई और पसंदीदा रक्षा सचिव की हैं।

लोगों की रात की नींद हराम कर सकती है। वर्ष 2014 में दिल्ली की यात्रा पर आए एक श्रीलंकाई विश्लेषक ने राजपक्षे खानदान का पूरा ब्योरा रखा था। उस समय राष्ट्रपति एवं रक्षा सचिव पदों के अलावा वाणिज्य मंत्री (छोटे भाई बासिल) और स्पीकर (भतीजा चमल) भी इस खानदान के ही थे। महिंदा के बेटे नमल को सत्ता का एक ध्रुव माना जाता था। खानदान के दो और लोग भी थे जो सत्ता प्रतिष्ठान में कहीं न कहीं

गोटाभाया की ड्रीम टीम कई

आप यह दलील दे सकते हैं कि यह तो इतिहास की बात है। चीन की अब श्रीलंका में पहले जैसी रुचि नहीं रही और वह खुद अपनी समस्याओं में उलझा है। ऐसे में बढ़िया मौका देख भारत भी राजपक्षे बंधुओं को पुचकारने की कोशिश कर रहा है। राष्ट्रपति बनने के फौरन बाद गोटाभाया को दौरे का न्योता देना और गरमाहट दिखाना उसी योजना का हिस्सा है। आखिरकार, यह श्रीलंका के लोगों पर निर्भर है कि वे इस खानदान को ही सत्ता में बिठाना चाहेंगे या नहीं। भारत और श्रीलंका के कभी खत्म न होने वाले मनोरंजक एवं दिलचस्प सोप ओपेरा में हमें अगली कडी का इंतजार करना होगा।

कानाफूसी

संसद में वानर चर्चा

लोकसभा में गुरुवार को कई सांसदों ने बंदरों के आतंक की बात की। कुछ की शिकायत लुटियन जोन में सांसदों के बंगलों के आसपास सिक्रय बंदरों से थी तो अन्य धार्मिक स्थानों पर सिक्रय बंदरों से नाराज थे। शून्यकाल के दौरान मथुरा की सांसद हेमा मालिनी ने कहा कि उनके संसदीय क्षेत्र में, खासतौर पर वृंदावन में बंदरों के कारण हालात बेहद खराब हैं। उन्होंने कहा कि बंदरों को नपुंसक बनाने की कोशिशों के बाद वे और अधिक हिंसक हो गए हैं। सांसद ने सुझाव दिया



कि वहां बंदर सफारी स्थापित की जानी चाहिए। उधर



आपका पक्ष

चुनावी चंदे की फांस में उलझे दल

राजनीतिक दलों के चंदे को लेकर शुरू से ही काफी खींचतान रही है। इस संबंध में विभिन्न राजनीतिक दलों द्वारा भ्रष्टाचार और कंपनियों के साथ सांठगांठ के आरोप-प्रत्यारोप भी लगाए जाते रहे हैं। इसी विवाद का समाधान तलाशने के लिए दिवंगत अरुण जेटली ने वित्त मंत्री रहते हुए अपने बजट भाषण में चुनावी बॉन्ड के प्रावधान की घोषणा की थी। अब विपक्षी दल इसे लेकर केंद्र की सत्ताधारी भारतीय जनता पार्टी (भाजपा) पर हमला बोल रहे हैं। उनका कहना है कि भाजपा इसे अपने हित में भुना रही है और इसकी आड़ में भ्रष्टाचार को बढ़ावा दे रही है। वहीं, भाजपा का कहना है कि इसे लागू करने के बाद से चुनावी खर्च में पारदर्शिता आई है क्योंकि बॉन्ड के जरिये मिलने वाली राशि का स्रोत पता करना मुमिकन है। सरकार का तर्क है कि चूंकि इस पैसे पर कर भुगतान किया गया होता है, ऐसे में इसके



स्रोत का पता लगाना आसान रहता 🗄 संसद भवन परिसर में चूनावी है। वैसे तो होना यह चाहिए कि प्रत्येक राजनीतिक दल अपनी वेबसाइट पर चंदे का विवरण अद्यतन करता रहे, लेकिन किन्हीं कारणों से राजनीतिक दल इसके लिए हिम्मत नहीं जुटा पाते हैं। ऐसे में राजनीति दलों की मंशा पर संशय पैदा होता है। विपक्षी दल या वे दल जिन्हें पर्याप्त चंदा नहीं 🗄 दिखने लगता है। उदाहरण के तौर 🗄 में तत्पर हैं, वहीं दूसरी ओर

बॉन्ड के खिलाफ प्रदर्शन करते कांग्रेस के नेता। *फोटो : पीटीआई*

मिल पाता, गाहे-बगाहे इसके खिलाफ आवाज उठाते रहते हैं, लेकिन सत्ता में आने के बाद सभी दलों का आचरण एक समान

जलवायु परिवर्तन खतरे की घंटी जलवायु परिवर्तन गंभीर चिंता का

विषय बनता जा रहा है। आज

प्रत्येक देश तीव्र औद्योगिक विकास में लीन है। जहां एक ओर वे प्रखर विकास कर विश्व पटल पर अपनी धाक जमाने की होड

परिवर्तन इसी का नतीजा है जो वैश्विक स्तर पर खतरा बनता जा रहा है। कॉर्बन डाइऑक्साइड, नाइट्रस ऑक्साइड और मीथेन जैसी गैसें ग्रीनहाउस प्रभाव के लिए उत्तरदायी हैं। इससे वैश्विक तापमान में निरंतर वृद्धि होती जा रही है। इससे बाढ़, सूखा, वनाग्नि, बेमौसम बारिश, ऋतु चक्र परिवर्तन, अकाल जैसी आपदाएं बढती जा रही हैं। ग्लेशियर लगातार पिघलते जा रहे है वहीं समुद्र का बढ़ता जल स्तर भी खतरे का सूचक है। श्वसन रोग तथा हृदय संबंधी नई बीमारियों के मामले भी लगातार बढ़ रहे हैं। जलवायु परिवर्तन का प्रभाव केवल मानव जाति पर ही नहीं बल्कि वन्य जीव जंतु व जंगली प्राणियों के लिए किसी अभिशाप से कम नहीं है। अब भी अगर हमारा जलवायु परिवर्तन जैसे मुद्दे पर ध्यान नहीं गया तो भावी वर्षों में इसके गंभीर परिणाम भुगतने पड़ेंगे।

श्रीनिवास पंवार बिश्नोई

पर्यावरण के साथ उनका खिलवाड़

लगातार जारी है। जलवायु

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



दैनिक जागरण

विचार

निराशावाद कमजोरी की ओर ले जाता है, आशावाद शक्ति की ओर

अराजक राजमार्ग

मार्ग दुर्घटनाओं पर सड़क परिवहन एवं राजमार्ग मंत्रालय की ओर से जारी रिपोर्ट के अनुसार 2018 में सड़क किनारे गलत तरीके से खड़े किए गए वाहनों की टक्कर से होने वाले हादसों में 91 प्रतिशत की वृद्धि हुई है। यह रिपोर्ट यह भी बता रही है कि आमने-सामने की टक्कर से होने वाले हादसों में भी वृद्धि हुई है। इतना ही नहीं, अन्य अनेक कारणों से होने वाली दुर्घटनाएं भी बढ़ रही हैं। इसका सीधा अर्थ है कि सड़क परिवहन एवं राजमार्ग मंत्रालय अपने इस दावे पर खरा नहीं उतर सका कि वह मार्ग दुर्घटनाओं पर लगाम लगाएगा। अगर हकीकत दावे के उलट है तो यह गंभीर चिंता का विषय बननी चाहिए। जब राजमार्गों पर हादसे बढ़ते जा रहे हों तब फिर इसकी कल्पना सहज ही की जा सकती है कि अन्य मार्गों पर हादसों की क्या स्थिति होगी? यह बिल्कुल भी ठीक नहीं कि जैसे-जैसे राजमार्ग बढ़ते और बेहतर होते जाएं वैसे-वैसे हादसे और उनके चलते होने वाली मौतों की संख्या भी बढ़ती जाए। सड़क हादसों के साथ उनमें होने वाली मौतों की संख्या में वृद्धि अन्य बातों के साथ यह भी रेखांकित करती है कि राजमार्गों के संदर्भ में जिस अनुशासन का परिचय दिया जाना चाहिए उसका घोर अभाव व्याप्त है।

राजमार्ग इसलिए नहीं होते कि उनमें इक्का-तांगा, साइकिल, ट्रैक्टर के साथ कार, बस और ट्रक तो चलें ही, पालतू एवं बेसहारा जानवर भी चहल-कदमी करते नजर आएं। दुर्भाग्य से अपने देश में यही स्थिति है। अजीब यह है कि जैसे ही कोई नया राजमार्ग बनता या फिर संवरता है वैसे ही उसके दोनों तरफ या तो बसाहट शुरू हो जाती है अथवा छोटी-बड़ी दुकानें ख़ुल जाती हैं। रही-सही कसर इससे पूरी हो जाती है कि दिन हो रात, जिसे जहां मन करता है वहीं अपना वाहन खड़ा कर देता है या फिर सवारियां अथवा सामान उतारने-चढाने लगता है। राजमार्गों पर वाहन चलाने या उन्हें पार्क करने संबंधी हर नियम-कानून का उल्लंघन होने के साथ यह भी खूब दिखता है कि औसत लोग अपेक्षित सावधानी का परिचय देने से इन्कार करते हैं। इस इन्कार की एक वजह यातायात पुलिस की बेपरवाही है। यदि कभी राजमार्गों पर व्याप्त अनुशासनहीनता के खिलाफ कदम उठाए जाते हैं तो नेतागीरी शुरू हो जाती है। अक्सर यह नेतागीरी इसलिए होती है ताकि राजमार्गों का मनचाहा इस्तेमाल किया जा सके। आम तौर पर शासन-प्रशासन इस नेतागीरी के समक्ष समर्पण ही करता है। यह अनिवार्य है कि विकास के वाहक माने जाने वाले राजमार्गों को जानलेवा हादसों का अड्डा बनने से रोकने के हर संभव उपाय न केवल केंद्र सरकार करे, बल्कि राज्य सरकारें भी। इन हादसों पर केवल

ट्रैफिक की चिंता

झारखंड में राजधानी रांची से लेकर प्रमुख शहरों तक में अस्त-व्यस्त ट्रैफिक व्यवस्था को सुधारने की दिशा में पहल होती दिख रही है। परिणाम जो भी हो, पहल होना ही सकारात्मक पहलू है। नई तकनीक से लैस व्यवस्था में अधिकारी चौक-चौराहों के स्वरूप में भी बदलाव करने की इच्छा रख रहे हैं जिससे ट्रैफिक का संचालन पहले से सुगम हो। यह बदलाव जरूरी भी है। इसके पूर्व मुख्य सचिव ने सभी हाईवे पर 50 से 100 किमी की दूरी पर नागरिक सुविधा केंद्र खोलने का निर्देश जारी किया है जिससे यात्रियों को सुविधा हो। तमाम प्रयास सराहनीय तो हैं, लेकिन इस बात का ध्यान भी रखना होगा कि इनका क्रियान्वयन ईमानदारी से हो।

मुख्य सचिव की बैठक के बाद अगले दिन ही राजधानी में इसको लेकर कार्ययोजना तैयार करने की पहल हुई है। रांची स्मार्ट सिटी कॉरपोरेशन लिमिटेड ने प्रयास तेज कर दिए हैं। तैयारियों के अनुसार जंक्शन इंप्रुवमेंट के बाद चौक-चाराहा पर आटामटड ासग्नल भी लगेंगे, जो कमांड कंट्रोल कम्युनिकेशन सेंटर से जुड़े रहेंगे। स्टेट अर्बन डेवलपमेंट एजेंसी के निदेशालय में कॉरपोरेशन के

हाल के दिनों में यातायात व्यवस्था में सुधार को लेकर मुख्य सचिव से लेकर स्मार्ट सिटी कॉरपोरेशन तक ने अहम निर्देश दिए हैं। इन निर्देशों पर अमल हो तो अस्त-व्यस्त टैफिक व्यवस्था को दरुस्त किया जा सकता है

सीईओ ने निर्माणाधीन चार स्मार्ट सड़कों के क्षेत्र में आनेवाले 26 जंक्शन (चौक-चौराहों) के बदलाव पर अधिकारियों से विस्तृत जानकारी भी ली है। पहले भी जंक्शन इंप्रूवमेंट को लेकर विभागीय सचिव अजय कुमार सिंह ने कमेटी गठित की थी। तमाम प्रयास शहरों में ट्रैफिक को सुगम बनाने के लिए किए जा रहे हैं। प्रमुख सड़कों पर सुविधा केंद्र की जरूरत वर्षों से महसुस की जा रही थी। इससे दोहरा लाभ भी मिलता दिख रहा है। माइल स्टोन के साथ-साथ ऐतिहासिक, दर्शनीय और धार्मिक स्थलों का वर्णन लोगों को जानकारी मुहैया कराएगी। अब देखना होगा कि मुख्य सचिव के निर्देश को अधिकारी कैसे अनुपालन कराते हैं। पायलट प्रोजेक्ट के तहत यह कार्य सबसे पहले रांची-पटना और रांची-जमशेदपुर मार्ग पर किया जा रहा है। दूसरी ओर अनावश्यक ब्रेकर हटाकर यातायात को और सुगम बनाने की बात कही गई है।

शिक्षा का हिस्सा बने हमारी विरासत

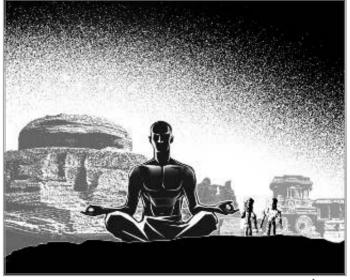


प्रो. रजनीश कुमार शुक्ल

विरासत वह जीवंत थाती है जो अपने पूर्वजों से जोड़कर हमें स्पंदित और आनंदित करती है। इसकी शिक्षा नहीं दिए जाने पर जीवन अंध रूढियों का शिकार हो जाता है

क्षा का उद्देश्य प्रथमतः मनुष्य का निर्माण करना है और मनुष्य का निर्माण अस्मिता और गरिमा बोध से ही होता है। भारतीय शिक्षा सैकड़ों वर्षों से इस दृष्टि से असफल रही है, क्योंकि अस्मिता बोध और गरिमा बोध इतिहास बोध पर निर्भर करते हैं। पूर्वजों के मान-अपमान की गाथाएं और जय-पराजय की स्मृतियां किसी भी समूह में सहज रूप से प्राप्त होती हैं। इसके साथ एक और चीज प्राप्त होती है जो हमारे पूर्वजों के द्वारा हमें उत्तराधिकार के रूप में मिलती है, वह है हमारी विरासत। उसकी विशिष्टता यह है कि उसमें अपमान या पराजय की कोई जगह नहीं होती। विरासत कोई संग्रहालय की वस्तु नहीं है। वह जीवंत थाती है जो अपने पूर्वजों से जोड़कर हमें स्पंदित और आनंदित करती है। इस विरासत की शिक्षा नहीं दिए जाने पर हमारा पारंपरिक जीवन अंध रूढियों का शिकार हो जाता है। भारत विविधताओं का देश है। यह विविधता केवल भाषा, बोली, खान-पान, वेश-भूषा की ही नहीं है, अपितु विरासत का भी वैविध्य है। अपने ही पूर्वजों की सुजनधर्मिता और कृतित्व में वैविध्य के आधार पर संघर्ष की स्थिति भी बनती है। भारत में ऐसा हुआ भी है। विरासत सबकी होती हैं, लेकिन समय के साथ परंपरा को, इतिहास को, विरासत को साझा समझा जाने लगा। भारतीय विरासत चाहे ज्ञान सिद्धांत के रूप में हो, विविध प्रकार के कौशल के विकास के रूप में हो, स्थापत्य के रूप में हो वह साझी नहीं, सबकी है। जब सब सबका है तो हेय कुछ भी नहीं है, लेकिन जो हमारा है, वह हमारे लिए किस तरह उपादेय है, यह जानना जरूरी है। विरासत हमें प्राप्त होती है, उसे हम गढ़ नहीं सकते। इसीलिए विरासत को समझने के लिए शिक्षण आवश्यक है। दुर्भाग्य से भारत में विरासतें और परंपराएं साझेपन के आधार पर समझी गईं। हिस्सेदारी के आधार पर समझी गईं। जब हिस्सेदारी आएगी तो अपने हिस्से का दुर्गुण भी लेकर आएगी। यही हुआ हमारे देश में। हमने परंपरा को बांट दिया। विरासत को बांट दिया।

भारत की विरासत को कैसे समझा जाए. इस पर सर्वोच्च न्यायालय का निर्णय आया है। अयोध्या में रामलला को विधिक पक्ष स्वीकार करना और उसके आधार पर भारत में सबकी विरासत के रूप में रामलला को स्वीकृत करने वाला निर्णय विरासतों को देखने की एक सम्यक दृष्टि देता है। राम को कुछ लोग ईश्वर, कुछ इमामे-हिंद मानते हैं तो यह स्वीकृति को साझा करना है, लेकिन जब सब उन्हें अपना पर्वज, पर्वजों में श्रेष्ठतम स्वीकार करते हैं तो यह परंपरा में सहभागी होना है। अपने मान बिंदु को अपने जीवन का हिस्सा बनाना है। परंपरा और इतिहास के गौरव से स्वयं को गौरवान्वित करना है। इसके लिए एक विशिष्ट प्रकार की शिक्षा का स्वरूप सामने लाना होगा जिसमें इतिहास यश और कीर्ति का इतिहास होगा, जय का इतिहास होगा। जो कुछ हमारे



अवधेश राजपत

लिए गौरवशाली है, उसका भी अपना कोई न कोई इतिहास होगा। इसका यह आशय नहीं कि जय के साथ पराजय का इतिहास नहीं होगा। यश-कीर्ति के साथ अपनी गलतियों-अपयश का इतिहास नहीं होगा, किंतु दोनों शिक्षण के लिए होंगे, ताकि गलतियों को सुधारा जा सके और कलंक के हिस्से का प्रायश्चित किया जा सके। यह स्वाभाविक तौर पर जीवंत समाज करता रहा है, लेकिन कहीं न कहीं हम वर्षीं तक अंधकार में रहे हैं। यह अंधकार है स्पष्ट लक्ष्य के न होने का। जब तक प्रकाशपुंज के रूप में सामने कोई लक्ष्य नहीं होता है तब तक मनुष्य अंधेरे में हाथ-पांव मारता रहता है। विरासत, परंपरा, मान बिंदु-ये ही वे लक्ष्य हैं जहां मनुष्य जाना चाहता है, बल्कि उसके भी पार जाना चाहता है। बेहतर बनने और बनाने के लिए श्रेष्ठ रचना चाहता है, लेकिन उसके लिए विरासत को जानना और मानना

पड़ेगा। समाज को जीवंत परंपरा और विरासत के अनुकूल बनना पड़ेगा। इसलिए जरूरी है कि आज भारत में शिक्षा को उस अधिष्ठान पर खड़ा किया जाए, जिसके मूल में हजारों-हजार वर्ष से भारतीय जन के द्वारा तप और बलिदान द्वारा श्रेष्ठतम सांस्कृतिक परंपराएं विकसित हुईं। ये सांस्कृतिक परंपराएं अद्वितीय दर्शन और सबको समाविष्ट करते हुए सबके हित का विचार करनेवाली संस्कृति निर्मित हुई, वही भारत की विरासत है। उस विरासत का एक छोर स्थापत्य में मिलता है जहां अनगढ और जड़ पत्थर से ऊपर उठता हुआ मंदिर के कलश के रूप में विशुद्ध चेतना विद्यमान रहती है। एक पुरातत्ववेत्ता जमीन के नीचे दबी हुई दुनिया में खोज करते किसी पत्थर, सिक्के, शिलालेख या प्रतिमा के रूप में ऐसा खजाना पा लेता है जिसमें गौरवशाली इतिहास झांकता है। मोहनजोदडो की योगी प्रतिमा से लेकर

सारनाथ की बुद्ध प्रतिमा में ज्ञान की गौरवशाली विरासत का दर्शन भी सहज होता है। विरासत को समझने के लिए लोक जीवन की ध्वनि को समझते हुए शिक्षण की आवश्यकता है। वरना विरासत के आधार पर लड़ाई होगी। हमें नहीं भूलना चाहिए कि हम विरासतों के आधार पर लड़े हैं। वर्ष 1857 के पहले भी लड़ते थे फिर साथ आ जाते थे। वर्ष 1857 के बाद जब विरासतों के बोध से विहीन शिक्षा मुख्यधारा की शिक्षा हो गई, प्रधान शिक्षा हो गई तो हम विरासत के आधार पर लड़ने लगे। अपनी अपनी विरासत को साझा बनाने के लिए लड़ने लगे। भाषा के स्तर पर हम सब जो हम थे, मै और तुम के रूप में सामने आने लगे।

अयोध्या पर सर्वोच्च न्यायालय के निर्णय के बाद आज विरासतों को समझने के लिए पूरे देश में एक दृष्टि बनती हुई दिखाई दे रही है पूर्वजों के महनीय कृतित्व में विश्वास जगाने और गलतियों को सुधारने की जिम्मेदारी भी हमारी है। इस जिम्मेदारी को पूरा करने के लिए शांतिपूर्ण सामाजिक सह अस्तित्व की आवश्यकता है। उस शांतिपूर्ण सह अस्तित्व मे जैविक स्पंदन होगा। उसके लिए हम सबको अपने खांचों और घरौदों से बाहर निकलन होगा। इसीलिए घरौदों से बाहर निकालने और त्राण देने वाली शिक्षा की जरूरत है। उस शिक्षा की जरूरत है जो भारतीय जनों को विरासत की सारस्वत महत्ता का बोध कराए, शील का संस्कार दे, शिष्ट मर्यादाओं और आदर्शो की ओर उन्मुख करे। तभी वैचारिक और ऐतिहासिक दीनता से मुक्ति मिलेगी और शिक्षा राष्ट्रीय अस्मिता की पहचान का उपक्रम बनती नजर आने लगेगी। वह शिक्षा देशवासियों को परंपरागत धार्मिक, नैतिक और सामाजिक मूल्यों के प्रति सुमुख भी बनाएगी।

> (लेखक महात्मा गांधी अंतरराष्ट्रीय हिंदी विश्वविद्यालय, वर्धा के कुलपति हैं) response@jagran.com

आम उपभोक्ताओं को राहत की दरकार

कड़ों की मानें तो उद्योग-व्यापार जगत को दीपावली से जो उम्मीद थी वह पूरी नहीं हो सकी। अर्थव्यवस्था में उछाल आने की उम्मीद पूरी होती न देखकर सरकार का चिंतित होना स्वाभाविक है, लेकिन केवल चिंता करने से काम नहीं चलेगा। नीति-नियंताओं को उस दबाव को समझना होगा जो आम मध्यमवर्गीय उपभोक्ताओं पर है। परिवार की क्रमशः बढ़ती जरूरतों, बढ़ती महंगाई के बीच उनके लिए जीवन-यापन करना कठिन हो रहा है। विकास के लक्ष्य प्राप्त करने के लिए जहां पूंजी और उत्पादन आवश्यक है वहीं उद्योग जगत में उत्साहपूर्ण वातावरण भी आवश्यक है। यह तभी संभव है जब उत्पादन के साथ मांग का सुजन भी होता रहे। अभी तक सरकार ने आर्थिक सुस्ती से निपटने के लिए केवल पूर्तिपक्षीय समाधानों पर विचार किया है। आवश्यक यह है कि बाजार की नब्ज को अपनी गति से चालू रखने के लिए उपभोक्ताओं की समस्याओं के समाधान पर भी विचार किया जाए। भारत जैसी बड़ी अर्थव्यवस्था के विकास के मूल में उत्पादित और आयातित वस्तुओं का बड़ा उपभोक्ता बाजार होना है। देश का अधिकांश मध्यमवर्गीय उपभोक्ता वर्ग शहरी और महानगरीय क्षेत्रों में निजी एवं सरकारी क्षेत्रों में रोजगाररत है। पांच लाख से तीस लाख रुपये तक की सालाना आय वाला यह वर्ग, भवन निर्माण, वाहन, घरेलू विद्युत उपकरण, मोबाइल, लैपटॉप, ऑनलाइन मार्केट, मॉल संस्कृति का सबसे बड़ा उपभोक्ता है, परंतु तेजी से बढ़ता हुआ रसोई खर्च, महंगी शिक्षा, आवास के बढ़ते किराये के साथ आधुनिक रहन-सहन ने लोगों की जेब पर बोझ बढ़ा दिया है। लोगों की प्राथमिकताएं तेजी से परिवर्तित हो रही



दरों का अविलंब पुनरीक्षण करे हैं। अब वाहन और मकान खरीदना लोगों की प्राथमिकता नहीं। पेट्रोल, डीजल की बढ़ती कीमतों और रसोई खर्च में बढ़त ने लोगों का बजट बिगाड दिया है। मॉल

सरकार के लिए यह

आवश्यक है कि वह

निजी आयकर की

कल्चर और ऑनलाइन बाजार ने मध्यम आय वर्गीय आम खदरा व्यापारियों की हालत भी खराब कर दी है। सर्वेक्षण कंपनी नील्सन के अनुसार ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में दैनिक उपभोग की वस्तुओं का बाजार उनकी कुल बिक्री का 36 प्रतिशत अनुमानित है। ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में डिब्बाबंद खाद्य पदार्थों का उपभोग पिछले साल की तुलना में घटा है। शहरी क्षेत्रों में भी वह 14 के बजाय 8 प्रतिशत रह गया है। एक अन्य रपट के अनुसार 2017-18 में प्रति व्यक्ति मासिक औसत व्यय ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में 1587 से घटकर 1524 रुपये और शहरी क्षेत्रों में 2926 से घटकर 2906 रह गया है। यह एक गंभीर स्थिति की ओर संकेत करता है।

शहरी क्षेत्रों में घरेलू विद्युत उपकरणों का बाजार लगभग

55 फीसद, दोपाहिया वाहनों का लगभग 40 फीसद और

चार पहिया वाहनों का लगभग 70 फीसद है। मांग की

कमी ने इन उद्योगों को बुरी तरह प्रभावित किया है। मध्यम

विसंगतियों और

स्रोत: रक्षा मंत्रालय

2017-18

देश की कर प्रणाली में कुछ ऐसी विसंगतियां हैं जिनकी तरफ सरकार का ध्यान जाना चाहिए। वर्तमान में यदि किसी की कर योग्य आय पांच लाख रूपये है तो उसे कोई कर नहीं देना है, लेकिन यदि उसकी आय सौ रुपये भी अधिक हो गई तो उसे अधिभार सहित 12,900 रुपये आयकर भरना पड़ेगा। यदि कोई व्यक्ति कर्ज लेकर कोई सामग्री खरीदता है तो उसे उस सामग्री के साथ कर्ज की किश्त पर भी जीएसटी देना होता है। इस तरह वह दोहरी जीएसटी देता है। सरकार के लिए यह आवश्यक है कि वह निजी आयकर की विसंगतियों और दरों का अविलंब पनरीक्षण करे। यह भी आवश्यक है कि व्यवसाय की प्रकृति का भेद समाप्त कर आयकर की न्यूनतम छूट सीमा पांच लाख रुपये निर्धारित की जाए। पांच लाख से तीस लाख रुपये तक की आयकर योग्य आय पर सीधे दस प्रतिशत की कमी की जानी चाहिए। अर्थात 20 से 10 प्रतिशत और 30 से 20 प्रतिशत की जाए। इससे मध्यम आय वर्ग के करदाताओं को लगभग 51,500 से लेकर 2,75,000 रुपये तक की राहत मिल जाएगी। बाजार में प्रभावी मांग के लिए यह उपाय कारगर सिद्ध होगा। यही बूस्टर औद्योगिक उत्पादन, रोजगार और उपभोग योग्य आय में कई गुणा वृद्धिकारक सिद्ध होगा।

आय वर्ग वालों के लिए करों का बोझ भी कम नहीं है।

जीवनयापन की जितनी भी उपभोग योग्य वस्तुएं हैं उन

पर जीएसटी भी अंततः उपभोक्ता को ही देना पड़ता है।

सरकार किसी न किसी तरह करों के रूप में कर योग्य

आय का 25 प्रतिशत वसूल कर लेती है।

(लेखक अर्थशास्त्री हैं) response@jagran.com

10745.77



यह समस्त सृष्टि एक सुनिश्चित रचना है। इस रचना का एक-एक कण प्रभुसत्ता की नियमावली से अनुशासित है, नियंत्रित है। प्रभु का मूल उद्देश्य प्राणिमात्र को शुभ आनंद प्रदान करना है। मनुष्य को छोड़कर विश्व का प्रत्येक प्राणी एक नैसर्गिक आनंद को प्राप्त करता है, परंतु मनुष्य ही एक ऐसा प्राणी है जो स्वत आनंदित नहीं दिखाई देता। इसका स्पष्ट कारण यह है कि परमात्मा की इच्छा है कि वह उसके संपूर्ण स्वरूप का ज्ञान प्राप्त करके आनंद की अनुभूति करे। अन्य पशु-पक्षियों की भांति मनुष्य परमात्मा का ज्ञान प्राप्त किए बिना आनंद को प्राप्त नहीं कर सकता। उसे सच्चा आनंद तभी प्राप्त होगा, जब वह परमात्मा का ज्ञान प्राप्त कर ले। प्रभु ने अपनी इच्छा के अनुरूप मनुष्य को उपादान भी दिए हैं-अद्भुत शरीर, विलक्षण विवेक-बुद्धि। इनका उपयोग कर मनुष्य सहज ही परमात्म का ज्ञान प्राप्त कर सकता है। अपनी विवेक शक्ति को विकृतियों से मुक्त कर मनुष्य यदि प्रत्यक्ष संसार को एक गहरी अनुभूति से देखे, उसका चिंतन करे तो सहज ही वह परमात्मा के अस्तित्व का ज्ञान प्राप्त कर सकता है

मनुष्य को आनंद को खोजने की आवश्यकता नही है, वह तो सृष्टि में स्वयं ओतप्रोत है। मनुष्य को मात्र अपनी अनुभव शक्ति को प्रबुद्ध भर करना है। अनुभव शक्ति के प्रबोध के लिए उसे कोई विशेष तपस्या नही करनी है। वह मात्र एक विस्मय मूलक दृष्टिकोण से उसकी रचना-संसार को देखे उसे श्रेष्ठ शिल्पकार की परम रचना समझकर सम्मान करे, इतना भर कर लेने से इसकी अनुभव शक्ति स्वतः प्रबुद्ध हो उठेगी।

सृष्टि में हर ओर से ओत-प्रोत परमात्मा और परमात्मा में हर-प्रकार से समाहित यह संपूर्ण रचना मनुष्य के समझने के लिए है। समझकर उस रचयिता का जान प्राप्त कर आनंद प्राप्ति के लिए है। अपने सहित सृष्टि के बाहर सच्चिदानंद परमात्मा का अस्तित्व कल्पना करने वाले जन्म-जन्मांतर उसकी अनुभृति प्राप्त नहीं कर सकते। परमात्मा इस सुष्टि में ही है। सुष्टि में जो कुछ है, वह सब उसी का स्वरूप है, उसी का अस्तित्व है।

डॉ. विजय प्रकाश त्रिपाठी

चंद्र प्रकाश शर्मा, रानी बाग, दिल्ली

कैंसर के खिलाफ अधूरी तैयारी

आज देश में कैंसर एक भयावह रूप लेता जा रहा है। प्रतिदिन इसके रोगियों की संख्या बढ़ती जा रही है। इसे देखते हुए एक संसदीय समिति ने देश भर में विशिष्ट इलाज केंद्र बनाने की सिफारिश की है जिससे कि कैंसर के मरीजों को एक ही स्थान पर इलाज की सारी सुविधाएं मिल सकें। साथ ही यह भी कहा है कि कैंसर का इलाज केवल सरकारी अस्पतालों में हो, निजी अस्पतालों में नहीं। विज्ञान एवं तकनीक, पर्यावरण, वन और जलवायु परिवर्तन संबंधी संसद की स्थायी समिति के अध्यक्ष और कांग्रेस के सांसद जयराम रमेश ने इस संबंध में अपनी रिपोर्ट राज्यसभा के सभापति एम वेंकैया नायडू को सौंपी है। इस रोग से देश में होने वाली मृत्यु दर 68 प्रतिशत है।

रिपोर्ट में इस तथ्य की ओर भी ध्यान खींचा गया है कि मौजूदा समय में देश में कैंसर के इलाज की जो व्यवस्था और अस्पतालों को जो नेटवर्क है वह भी अपर्याप्त है। जाहिर है आज इस बीमारी से लड़ने के लिए देश में एक मजबूत और व्यापक ढांचे की दरकार है जो अस्पतालों में जरूरी सुविधाओं का इंतजाम

वर्ष 2018 में देश में 13 लाख कैंसर के मामले आए, जिनकी संख्या वर्ष २०३५ तक बढकर 17 लाख हो जाने की आशंका है

करे और कैंसर की दवाओं के मूल्य को भी नियंत्रित रखे। इसके अलावा सरकार को इस संबंध में शोध और अध्ययन को बढ़ावा देना चाहिए। समिति ने मुंबई स्थित टाटा मेमोरियल कैंसर शोध एवं उपचार केंद्र के नेटवर्क को ही देशव्यापी बनाने की सिफारिश की है।

रिपोर्ट में केंद्रीय स्वास्थ्य मंत्रालय के हवाले से कहा गया है कि वर्ष 2018 में देश में 13 लाख कैंसर के मामले आए थे, जिनकी संख्या वर्ष 2035 तक बढ़कर 17 लाख हो जाने की आशंका है। पिछले साल इस बीमारी से 8.8 लाख लोगों की मौत हुए थी और वर्ष 2035 तक यह आंकड़ा बढ़कर 13 लाख होने की संभावना है। देश में यदि सौ लोगों को कैंसर होता है तो 32 ही बच पाते हैं, जबकि विकसित देशों में यह अनुपात 100 बनाम 62 है। वहीं इसके उपचार की अच्छी सुविधाएं देश के कुछ

काफी महंगा है। छोटी जगहों पर मरीजों के लिए दिक्कत यह आती है कि वहां कई बार बीमारी के बारे में पता ही नहीं चलता या देर से पता चलता है। बीमारी बिगड़ने के बाद इलाज के लिए लोग बड़े शहरों का रुख करते हैं। वहां उन्हें इलाज के मोर्चे पर ही दोहरी चुनौतियों का सामना करना पड़ता है। उन्हें रहने की समस्या आती है। नतीजतन इलाज में खर्च होता ही है, साथ ही शहरों में रहने पर भी खासा खर्च करना पड़ता है। कई बार उन्हें अस्पताल में इलाज के लिए लंबा इंतजार भी करना पड़ता है।

भारत का रक्षा सामग्री निर्यात

2059.18

2015-16

(करोड़ रुपये में)

1940.64

2014-15

जब मरीज का नंबर आता है तब तक बीमारी गंभीर रूप ले लेती है। ऐसे में यह आवश्यक है कि छोटे-छोटे शहरों में इसके लिए जांच और विशेषज्ञ डॉक्टरों की व्यवस्था हो। कैंसर का इलाज करने में सक्षम अस्पतालों का एक नेटवर्क खड़ा किया जाए। कैंसर के बढ़ते मामलों को देखते हुए सरकार को इस संसदीय समिति की सिफारिशों पर अमल करना चाहिए। इसका इलाज सभी के पहुंच में हो इसके लिए पूरे देश में एक मजबूत ढांचा

(लेखक स्वतंत्र टिप्पणीकार हैं)

मूल समस्या को समझे जेएनयु प्रशासन

1521.91

2016-17

राजनीति के दुष्चक्र में फंसा जेएनयू शीर्षक से लिखे अपने लेख में शंकर शरण ने जितनी बातें उद्घाटित की हैं वे निर्विवाद हैं, परंतु जेएनयू की जो मूल समस्या है, जिससे एक अच्छा विश्वविद्यालय कलंकित होता जा रहा है, उसका एक दूसरा पहलू भी है। देश में अपना आधार खोती वामपंथी विचारधारा के ध्वज को लहराने वाले मुद्रीभर छात्र लगभग पांच प्रतिशत से अधिक नहीं हैं। प्रशासन उन्हें संयमित करने के लिए कोई उपाय नहीं कर पा रहा है। हो सकता है कि यह काम कठिन हो, पर असंभव नहीं है। इन पांच प्रतिशत छात्रों की उद्दंडता के कारण 95 प्रतिशत छात्रों समेत पूरे विश्वविद्यालय को बदनाम करके इस हद तक पहुंचा दिया गया है कि जेएनयू एक विलेन की भूमिका में आ गया है। मैंने यह लेख पढ़ते ही अपने एक पूर्व विद्यार्थी, जो जेएनयू में वर्षीं से अध्यापक है और लंबे समय तक छात्रावास का वार्डन भी रहा है, से वस्तुस्थिति जानने का प्रयत्न किया। ऐसा लगता है कि प्रशासन उन पांच प्रतिशत छात्रों के खिलाफ जो कार्रवाई करना चाहता है उसके लपेटे में वह सभी छात्रों को ले लेता है। इससे आंदोलन उग्र हो जाता है। उचित यह होगा कि जेएनयू की फीस बाकी केंद्रीय विश्वविद्यालयों के समान हो। छात्रावास में विद्यार्थियों से भोजन व्यय वास्तविक लिया जाए। मूलभूत सुविधाओं के भार को विश्वविद्यालय वहन करे। आर्थिक दृष्टि से बहुत कमजोर विद्यार्थियों की छात्रवृत्ति, शिक्षा ऋण आदि से सहायता की जा सकती है। जेएनयू में अध्ययन-अध्यापन का ठीक वातावरण बने, इसके लिए प्रशासन को 95 प्रतिशत छात्रों तथा अध्यापन क्षेत्र से जुड़े वरिष्ठ जनों के सहयोग से प्रयास करना चाहिए।

जयपाल विद्यालंकार, अवकाश प्राप्त अध्यापक

मेलबाक्स

2018 - 19

डॉ. फिरोज का विरोध गलत

बीएचयू में संस्कृत या कर्मकांड के एक मुस्लिम शिक्षक का विरोध निंदनीय है। यदि किसी मुस्लिम ने कर्मकांड की पढ़ाई की है और कर्मकांड पढ़ाने का अच्छा ज्ञाता है तो वह छात्रों को यह क्यों नहीं सिखा सकता कि पूजा कैसे की जाती है? यदि फिरोज खान शिखा नहीं रखते, जनेऊ नहीं पहनते तो वे यह तो बता सकते हैं कि कहां शिखा होती है और उसको स्पर्श कैसे करना है, जनेऊ की क्या गरिमा है। आखिर डॉक्टर फिरोज खान का चुनाव उनकी योग्यता को देखकर ही तो किया गया होगा। यदि काबिल नहीं होते तो इसकी परीक्षा में शतप्रतिशत नंबर कैसे लाते? वे संस्कृत के विद्वान हैं, उनका धर्म मायने नहीं रखता। वेद में मूर्ति पूजा नहीं है। दूसरी यदि आज प्रचलन में मूर्ति पूजा है तो कैसे उसकी प्राण प्रतिष्ठा की जाती है, कैसे जलाभिषेक आदि होता है, ये सभी बातें पढ़ाई के दौरान केवल शिक्षा के लिए होती हैं, जो कोई भी इस विषय को पढ़ा व्यक्ति पढ़ा सकता है। अतः डॉ. फिरोज का विरोध सर्वथा अनुचित है।

आमोद शास्त्री, दिल्ली

मोबाइल कंपनियों की रणनीति

अब मोबाइल उपभोक्ताओं पर गाज गिरने वाली है। टेलीकॉम कंपनियां अपना घाटा पुरा करने के लिए अपने टैरिफ बढ़ाने जा रही हैं। वोडाफोन-आइडिया और एयरटेल तो पहले से ही एक दिसंबर से रेट बढ़ाने की घोषणा कर चुकी हैं अब जियो ने रेट बढ़ाने का एलान कर दिया है। इनकी पॉलिसी सही है, पहले तो कॉल फ्री कर दो या रेट कम कर दो, इंटरनेट सस्ता कर दो और उपभोक्ताओं को लत लगा दो। देखो जब वे मोबाइल और इंटरनेट के बगैर रह ही नहीं सकते, हर समय मोबाइल से चिपके रहते हैं तो अपना घाटा पूरा करने के लिए उनकी दर बढ़ा दों।

सांसद की पहल

दिल्ली के सांसद मनोज तिवारी अपने घर से संसद भवन के गेट तक गाड़ी से आए, गाड़ी से उतर कर संसद में साइकिल पर गए। उन्होंने कहा कि इतनी साइकिल चलाने से दिल्ली का कुछ न कुछ प्रदूषण तो कम होगा। यह ठीक नहीं है अगर दिल से वायु प्रदूषण को कम करने की दिशा में कुछ करना है तो कोई सकारात्मक कार्य करना होगा। मनोज तिवारी एक कलाकार होने के साथ ही सांसद भी हैं। वे जो भी करेंगे आम लोग उसका अनुसरण करने की कोशिश करेंगे। उन्हें कोई प्रभावी कार्य करना चाहिए, जो प्रदूषण को दूर करने में सहायक बन सके।

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

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

बेरोजगारी के बरक्स

ज भी बढ़ती बेरोजगारी से उपजी समस्या के विकराल होते जाने का सवाल उठता है, सरकारें या तो इसकी अनदेखी करती हैं या फिर धन और रिक्तियों के अभाव आदि की दलील देने लगती हैं। लेकिन रोजगार और देश की अर्थव्यवस्था का समूचा ढांचा एक दूसरे से जिस तरह अनिवार्य रूप से जुड़ा हुआ है, इस समस्या की अनदेखी या इस पर पर्दा डालने की कोशिश का आखिर क्या हासिल होगा? यह सवाल तब और गंभीर हो जाता है, जब एक ओर बेरोजगारी के आंकड़े रोज नई ऊंचाई छू रहे हैं और दूसरी ओर खुद सरकारी महकमों में लाखों पद खाली पड़े हों। गुरुवार को कार्मिक राज्यमंत्री ने राज्यसभा में एक सवाल के जवाब में जानकारी दी कि केंद्र सरकार के विभिन्न विभागों में करीब सात लाख पद रिक्त हैं। फिर इसी मामले में अलग-अलग राज्यों की स्थिति भी चिंताजनक ही है। ऐसे में अगर केंद्र और राज्य सरकारों के अधीन विभिन्न महकमों में खाली पड़े पदों पर नियुक्ति होती तो बेरोजगारी के आंकड़ों की तस्वीर शायद कुछ और होती। लेकिन यह समझना मुश्किल है कि जब अर्थव्यवस्था के मजबूत होने का दावा किया जा रहा है तो इन पदों पर नियुक्तियों में क्या अंड्चन है।

इसके अलावा, पिछले कुछ सालों के दौरान बाजार की बिगड़ती हालत और मंदी की आशंकाओं के बीच नौकरियों में कटौती की खबरें आम हैं। बंगलुरु स्थित अजीम प्रेमजी यूनिवर्सिटी की ओर से जारी एक अध्ययन रिपोर्ट में यह दावा किया गया था कि भारत में 2016 से 2018 के बीच करीब पचास लाख लोगों की नौकरियां चली गईं। यहां तक कि उपभोक्ता वस्तुओं की खपत में भी कटौती करने वाली आबादी के आंकड़े सुर्खियों में है। इस सबके बीच विकास दर में गिरावट की तस्वीर देश की समूची अर्थव्यवस्था की कोई सकारात्मक तस्वीर नहीं पेश कर रही है। जाहिर है, ये सब रोजगार और आय के अभाव की वजह से क्रय शक्ति में कमी से जुड़े हालात हैं। इसके बावजूद अगर निजी क्षेत्रों में रोजगार के घटते अवसर और सरकारी महकमों में लगभग सात लाख पद खाली पड़े होने की हकीकत सामने है तो समझा जा सकता है कि अर्थव्यवस्था की स्थिति में गिरावट की क्या वजहें हो सकती हैं। इसके बरक्स जब भी बढ़ती बेरोजगारी का सवाल उठाया जाता है तो सरकारी नौकरी के बजाय दूसरे विकल्पों और स्वरोजगार की दलील दी जाती है। लेकिन सवाल है कि अगर रोजगार और आय के अभाव में लोगों की क्रय शक्ति घटती जा रही है तो स्वरोजगार पर आधारित बाजार की हालत क्या होगी!

गौरतलब है कि इसी साल जनवरी में नेशनल सैंपल सर्वे ऑफिस (एनएसएसओ) की उजागर हुई एक रिपोर्ट में कहा गया था कि 2017-18 में ग्यारह राज्यों में बेरोजगारी की दर राष्ट्रीय औसत 6.1 फीसद से ज्यादा है। रिपोर्ट के मृताबिक यह आंकड़ा पिछले पैंतालीस सालों में सबसे ज्यादा है। जाहिर है, यह बेहद निराशाजनक तस्वीर है। लेकिन बीते लोकसभा चुनाव के पहले सरकार ने इस रिपोर्ट को अहमियत नहीं दी थी और नीति आयोग ने इसे खारिज करते हुए कहा था कि यह अंतिम आंकड़ा नहीं है। लेकिन बाद में इसी आंकड़े को आधिकारिक रूप से जारी किया गया था। इस साल की शुरुआत में विश्व बैंक ने कहा था कि बेरोजगारी पर काबू पाने के लिए भारत को हर साल इक्यासी लाख नौकरियां सृजित करने की जरूरत है। सवाल है कि जब मौजूदा खाली पदों को भरने को लेकर सरकार गंभीर नहीं है या फिर निजी क्षेत्र में तेजी से कर्मचारियों की संख्या में कटौती और छंटनी हो रही है तो नौकरियां सृजित करने की विश्व बैंक की सलाह पर कौन गौर करेगा!

दूरसचार का सकट

🔁 श की प्रमुख निजी दूरसंचार कंपनियों ने आने वाले दिनों में ग्राहकों की जेब ढीली करने के जो संकेत दे दिए हैं, वे निश्चित ही आम लोगों के लिए बड़ा झटका हो सकता है। मोबाइल फोन आज लोगों की सबसे बड़ी जरूरत बन चुके हैं। फोन कॉल से लेकर डाटा और दूसरी अन्य सेवाएं सस्ती से सस्ती दरों पर मुहैया कराने के लिए दूरसंचार सेवा प्रदाता कंपनियों के बीच जबर्दस्त होड़ मची है। लेकिन अब ये दिन हवा होते इसलिए लग रहे हैं कि कंपनियां भारी घाटे की मार झेल रही है और फिर हाल में सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने जुर्माना भरने का दबाव और बना दिया है। कुल मिलाकर दूरसंचार क्षेत्र गंभीर संकट में फंस गया है। ऐसे में सवाल यही उठता है कि क्या कंपनियों के पास ग्राहकों की जेब से पैसे निकालने के अलावा कोई और विकल्प नहीं बचता है जिस पर विचार हो। पिछले दो दशक में भारत में निजी दूरसंचार कंपनियों के कारोबार का ग्राफ जिस रफ्तार से बढ़ा है, वह भी कम आश्चर्यजनक नहीं है। हाल में मोबाइल दरें का बढ़ने का मामला तब गरमाया जब पिछली महीने सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने एअरटेल, वोडाफोन-आइंडिया और दूसरी दूरसंचार सेवाप्रदाता कंपनियों को बानवे हजार करोड़ रुपए से ज्यादा का बकाया और लाइसेंस फीस केंद्र सरकार को देने को कहा। इतना ही नहीं, यह बकाया रकम जमा कराने के लिए सिर्फ तीन महीने का वक्त दिया गया है। दूरसंचार विभाग ने भारती एअरटेल, वोडाफोन-आइडिया, आर कॉम और अन्य कंपनियों पर कुल लगभग एक लाख तैंतीस हजार करोड़ के बकाया का दावा किया है जिसमें बानवे हजार करोड़ रुपए लाइसेंस शुल्क और इकतालीस हजार करोड़ रुपए स्पैक्ट्रम शुल्क के बकाया हैं।

सुप्रीम कोर्ट के निर्देश के बाद निजी दूरसंचार कंपनियों के हाथ-पैर फूले हुए हैं। माना जा रहा है कि इससे सबसे बड़ा असर तो यह पड़ेगा कि कंपनियां अपने संकट से निपटने के लिए बोझ ग्राहकों पर डालेंगी। सबसे ज्यादा संकट एअरटेल और वोडाफोन-आइडिया पर है। इसीलिए इन कंपनियों ने सबसे पहले शुल्क बढ़ाने के संकेत दिए थे। इसके बाद जियों की तरफ से भी ऐसा ही सुनने को मिला। कंपनियां इस बात को अच्छी तरह समझ रही हैं कि अब लोगों का जीवन पूरी तरह से मोबाइल और इंटरनेट सेवाओं पर निर्भर हो चुका है, ऐसे में लोग सेवाएं लेना तो बंद करेंगे नहीं और दाम बढ़ा कर घाटे और जुर्माने की भरपाई करना ही सबसे आसान विकल्प है। लेकिन अगर कंपनियां इस तरह के संकट को नहीं झेल पाती हैं तो बाजार में इक्का-दुक्का कंपनियों का एकछत्र राज्य हो सकता है और फिर ये कंपनियां ग्राहकों को नचा सकती हैं।

दूरसंचार कंपनियों के बढ़ते संकट को देखते हुए सरकार भी सकते में इसलिए है कि कहीं अचानक इस क्षेत्र से भी कंपनियों के दिवालिया होने या बंद होने जैसी खबरें न आने लगें। इसीलिए सरकार ने फौरी राहत के तौर पर कंपनियों को स्पैक्ट्रम शुल्क दो साल के भीतर किश्तों में जमा कराने की छूट दे दी है। लेकिन कंपनियों के सामने बड़ा संकट यह है कि उन्हें एजीआर यानी समायोजित सकल राजस्व के रूप बानवे हजार से ज्यादा की रकम तो इसी वित्त वर्ष में जमा करानी है। सवाल यह है ये पैसा कहां से लाया जाए। इसलिए कंपनियों को इसका रास्ता ग्राहकों की जेब की ओर ही दिख रहा है। देश में एक अरब से ज्यादा लोग मोबाइल सेवाओं का उपयोग कर रहे हैं। ऐसे में अगर मोबाइल सेवाएं महंगी होती हैं तो यह ग्राहकों के लिए बड़ी मार होगी, वह भी तब जब मंदी से लोगों की कमर टूट रही है।

कल्पमेधा

कविता वह मन की इच्छा है, जो हृदय को आहलादित कर देती है। - खलील जिब्रान

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प्रदूषण की कीमत चुकाते बच्चे

प्रदीप श्रीवास्तव

शिशुओं की मौत का वायु प्रदूषण से गहरा नाता है। जैसे-जैसे घर और घर के बाहर वायु प्रदूषण बढ़ रहा है, इससे शिशुओं की मौत का आंकड़ा भी बढ़ रहा है। इसकी मुख्य वजह यह है कि शिशुओं के फेफड़े सबसे ज्यादा संवेदनशील होते हैं और जहरीली हवा से तत्काल प्रभावित होते हैं। वैज्ञानिकों का मानना है कि शुरुआती स्तर पर वायु प्रदूषण शिशुओं के दिमाग, तंत्रिका विकास और फेफड़ों की कार्य क्षमता पर असर डालता है।

शहरों की जहरीली होती हवा में सांस लेना दूभर हो गया है। प्रदूषित हवा न सिर्फ हमारी दिनचर्या पर प्रभाव डाल रही है, बल्कि आने वाली पीढी को भी इससे ग्रसित कर रही है। प्रदूषण के प्रति हमारे समाज, नेताओं और प्रशासनिक अमले की उपेक्षित सोच ने दिन-प्रतिदिन इस समस्या को और गंभीर बनाया है। हालत यह है कि अभी हाल तक प्रदुषण और उससे होने वाले मानव समाज पर प्रभाव को लेकर सरकारों के पास सटीक आंकड़े तक नहीं हैं। जो अध्ययन या शोध हो रहे हैं, वे गैर सरकारी संगठनों के भरोसे हैं। विश्व स्वास्थ्य संगठन (डब्ल्यूएचओ) के दिशानिर्देशों के अनुसार भारत में वायु प्रदूषण का स्तर सामान्य से काफी ज्यादा है, जो बच्चों को बीमार बना रहा है।

आधुनिक जीवनशैली के कुछ दुष्परिणाम हैं, जिन्हें हम तात्कालिक जरूरतों के कारण नजरअंदाज कर रहे हैं। शहरों का बेतरतीब विकास और नगर विकास प्राधिकरणों की उदासीनता शहरों को दिन-प्रतिदिन

खतरनाक बनाती जा रही है। शहरों में बढती रोजगार की संभावनाएं और जीवनस्तर में सुधार के कारण भीड़ बड़े शहरों की ओर खिंची चली आ रही है। गांवों में भले ही शहरों से ज्यादा साफ हवा और पानी हो, लेकिन हवा-पानी हमारी जिंदगी के स्तर को बेहतर नहीं बनाते और न ही रोजी रोटी की व्यवस्था करते हैं। पूंजीवादी असमान विकास और अराजक व्यवस्था ने शहरों की ओर पलायन को बढ़ाने का काम किया है। शहरों में भीड़ बढ़ने से बुनियादी सुविधाओं पर भार पड़ता है। स्थानीय निकायों को पानी, बिजली, सड़क आदि जरूरतों पर ज्यादा खर्च करना ही पड़ता है। भीड़ ज्यादा होने से हर चीज का उत्पादन ज्यादा होता है, ज्यादा उत्पादन कहीं न कहीं प्रकृति को नुकसान पहुंचाता है। ज्यादा भीड़, ज्यादा वाहन खरीदती है। वाहनों का धुंआ, ईंधन और मरम्मत आदि में ज्यादा व्यय होता है। संपूणर्ता में यह व्यय मात्र रुपए में नहीं आंका जा सकता है। इसके चक्र में श्रम, स्वास्थ्य, समय, प्राकृतिक साधन, कार्य दिवस,

क्षरण आदि सभी आते हैं, जो कहीं न कहीं प्राकृतिक संसाधनों को नुकसान पहुंचाते हैं।

गर्भवती महिलाओं पर वायु प्रदूषण के असर को लेकर पिछले दिनों एक अध्ययन प्रकाशित हुआ। इसमें विशेषज्ञों ने वायु प्रदूषण के जोखिम और थायराइड संबंधी जानकारी जुटाने के लिए नौ हजार से ज्यादा गर्भवती महिलाओं के डेटा का विश्लेषण किया। शोधकर्ताओं ने अलग-अलग मॉडलों का उपयोग करके गर्भावस्था की पहली तिमाही के दौरान नाइट्रोजन ऑक्साइड और पार्टिकुलेट मैटर (पीएम) जैसे वायु प्रदूषण कणों का महिलाओं और गर्भ पर उसके असर का आकलन किया। शोधकर्ताओं का कहना है कि गर्भावस्था की पहली तिमाही के दौरान वायु प्रदूषण के संपर्क में आने वाली महिलाओं को

आशंका कहीं ज्यादा रहती है। डाक्टरों के अनुसार वायु प्रदुषण स्त्री-हार्मोन (एस्ट्रोजन) को प्रभावित करता है। भ्रूण के मस्तिष्क के विकास में थायरॉयड की भूमिका होती है। शोध में महिलाओं में थायरोक्सिन, थायरॉयड-उत्तेजक हार्मीन और थायरॉइड पेरोक्सीडेज (टीपीओ) एंटीबॉडी के स्तर को भी मापा गया। देखा गया कि चार सौ चार महिलाओं को हाइपो-थायरोक्सिनमिया और पांच सौ छह महिलाओं में टीपीओ का स्तर काफी ज्यादा निकला। शोधकर्ताओं का कहना है कि जो महिलाएं गर्भावस्था के दौरान किसी भी कारण से घर के अंदर या बाहर के प्रदूषण से प्रभावित रहती हैं, तो उनके गर्भ पर काफी असर पड़ता है। पीएम 2.5 के संपर्क में आने

वाली महिलाओं में हाइपोथायरोक्सिमया होने का खतरा इक्कीस फीसद ज्यादा पाया गया।

विश्व स्वास्थ्य संगठन के अनुसार क्रॉनिक ऑबस्ट्रक्टिव पल्मोनरी डिजीज (सीओपीडी) के कारण दुनिया में सबसे ज्यादा मौतें होती हैं। इसे सामान्य तौर पर सीओपीडी बोला जाता है। सीओपीडी का अर्थ है कि फेफड़ों के वायू मार्ग का बाधित हो जाना। यह बीमारी धुएं के कारण होती है। यूरोप और अमेरिका जैसे महाद्वीपों के अमीर देशों में तंबाकू का धुआं सीओपीडी का प्रमुख कारण है। अफ्रीका, लातिन अमेरिका और एशिया आदि गरीब देशों में लकड़ी, उपले, कोयला और फसल के अवशेष को ईंधन के तौर पर घर में चूल्हे पर इस्तेमाल करने के कारण सीओपीडी बीमारी जड़ जमाए है। लंबे समय तक सीओपीडी ठीक नहीं होने पर दमा हो जाता है। ग्लोबल बर्डन ऑफ डिजीज स्टडी के अनुसार 2016 में



सामान्य महिलाओं की तुलना में थायराइड रोग होने की वैश्विक स्तर पर सीओपीडी के पच्चीस करोड़ मामले सामने आए। पूरी दुनिया में 2015 में सीओपीडी के कारण तीन लाख से ज्यादा मौतें हुईं। जागरूकता का अभाव, लापरवाही और खराब स्वास्थ्य सेवाओं के कारण सीओपीडी से सबसे ज्यादा मौतें गरीब देशों में होती है। डब्ल्यूएचओ के अनुसर नब्बे फीसदी मौतें गरीब देशों में हुईं। भारत में 1990 में प्रतिवर्ष औसतन अट्ठाईस लाख लोग सीओपीडी से ग्रसित होते थे, लेकिन सन 2016 में यह संख्या तेजी से बढ़ती हुई पचपन लाख से ऊपर निकल गई।

> सामान्य अवस्था में भी प्रदुषण का असर बच्चों पर सबसे ज्यादा होता है। बच्चों के लिए धूल और धुआं दोनों बेहद खतरनाक होते हैं। डीजल से उत्सर्जित होने

वाले कण और धुएं के कारण दमा तेजी से फैल रही है। बच्चों के स्वास्थ्य पर काम करने वाली अंतरराष्ट्रीय संस्था- द इंटरनेशनल सोसाइटी फॉर ऑगुमेंटेटिव एंड अल्ट्रानेटिव कम्युनिकेशन (आइएसएएसी) ने बच्चों में सांस रोगों के प्रसार को लेकर किए गए एक शोध में बताया कि भारत के कई हिस्सों में खासतौर से स्कूल जाने वाले बच्चों में छह से सात वर्ष की आयु वर्ग वाले कुल चवालीस हजार बच्चों में से ढाई हजार को दमा था, जबिक करीब एक हजार बच्चे इस रोग की गंभीर अवस्था में थे। इसी तरह तेरह से चौदह वर्ष वाले अड़तालीस हजार बच्चों में तीन हजार बच्चों को दमा निकला, जिनमें डेढ़ हजार बच्चों की स्थिति गंभीर थी। भारी यातायात के दौरान बच्चों में डेढ़ गुना ज्यादा अस्थमा पैदा होने का जोखिम होता है।

तमाम शोधों और रिपोर्टों की मानें तो भारत में वायु प्रदूषण खतरनाक स्तर पर पहुंच गया है। बड़े शहरों के अलावा छोटे शहर भी इसकी जद में आ गए हैं।

जहरीली हवा के कारण पांच वर्ष से कम उम्र के बच्चे सबसे ज्यादा समय पूर्व मौतों के शिकार हो रहे हैं। वर्ष 2016 में जारी विश्व स्वास्थ्य संगठन की रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक बाहरी और घर के भीतरी प्रदूषण के कारण पांच वर्ष से कम उम्र के एक लाख से ज्यादा बच्चे समय पूर्व दम तोड़ देते हैं, यानी हर दिन करीब तीन सौ बच्चे असमय काल के ग्रास बन जाते हैं। इनमें भी आधे से ज्यादा लड़िकयां हैं, क्योंकि लड़िकयों की देखभाल हमारे यहां लड़कों से कम की जाती हैं।

शिशुओं की मौत को वायु प्रदूषण से गहरा नाता है। जैसे-जैसे घर और घर के बाहर वायु प्रदूषण बढ़ रहा है, इससे शिशुओं की मौत का आंकड़ा भी बढ़ रहा है। इसकी मुख्य वजह यह है कि शिशुओं के फेफड़े सबसे ज्यादा

संवेदनशील होते हैं और जहरीली हवा से तत्काल प्रभावित होते हैं। वैज्ञानिकों का मानना है कि शुरुआती स्तर पर वायु प्रदूषण शिशुओं के दिमाग, तंत्रिका विकास और फेफड़ों की कार्य क्षमता पर असर डालता है। लंबे समय तक जहरीली हवा में रहने से बच्चों में कैंसर और मोटापा जैसी समस्याएं भी बढ़ जाती हैं। अध्ययन बताते हैं कि पर्यावरणीय प्रदुषण के कारण बच्चों के व्यवहार पर भी काफी असर होता है। लेकिन, यह दुर्भाग्य है कि हमारे यहां प्रदेषण को लेकर सरकारी आंकडे न के बराबर ही हैं। सरकारी एजेंसियां भी अपडेट नहीं रहती हैं। ऐसे में दो-तीन साल पुराने आंकड़ों से प्रदूषण के खिलाफ लड़ने की योजना बनानी वाली एजेंसियां फ्लॉप हों तो कोई आश्चर्य नहीं।

साझा संघर्ष

राजकुमारी

भारतीय समाज में अगर स्त्री को सामाजिक और धार्मिक वातायन से देखें तो स्त्री को हमेशा ही परिधि में रखा गया। सामाजिक, धार्मिक दायरों में रह कर जीवन व्यतीत करने की हिदायतें देने का काम खुद को परिवार, समाज और देश का सर्वेसर्वा समझने वालों ने किया। इस व्यवस्था में एक लंबी प्रक्रिया के तहत उनकी सोच को इतना संकृचित बना दिया गया कि वे पारंपरिक या बंधी-बधाई परिपाटी की रेखाओं को न पार करें। जो पुरुष कहता है, जो पुरुष करता है, वही 'भाग्य' का लिखा समझ कर सहर्ष स्वीकार करना अपनी नियति मान लें। पुरुष से यहां अभिप्राय पुरुष के रूप में परिवार से लेकर समाज में मौजूद हर रिश्ते से है। उन्हें बिल्कुल गवारा नहीं था कि स्त्री कोई आवाज उठाए। अधिकार मांगना तो वह सपने भी नहीं सोच सकती थी। शिक्षा उसके सोच से परे की परिकल्पना थी।

बहरहाल, कुछ महापुरुषों के आजीवन और अथक प्रयासों से कुछ संभव हो पाया, चाहे उन्होंने सामाजिक यातनाओं के कितने भी दंश झेल हों। लेकिन हमारे हिस्से के हकों की लड़ाई और संघर्ष वे कर गए और हमारे सामने सब कुछ तैयार सिर्फ जीने-खाने को मिल गया तो हमें लगा कि बड़ी आसान और मौज वाली जिंदगी है और हम अपनी-अपनी राहों को संवारने में लगे हैं। मान लिया गया कि शिक्षा का मतलब परीक्षा, नौकरी तक सीमित है, सामाजिक, राजनीतिक, धार्मिक परिवर्तन नहीं।

हम अपने आप को पढ़ी-लिखी औरतें कहती हैं, लेकिन सच है कि कई बार अधिक पढ़ी-लिखी होने के बावजूद हम दब्बू ही हैं। केवल अपनी उपलब्धियों के बारे में सोचती हैं। हमारे आसपास की दुनिया में क्या हो रहा है, क्यों हो रहा है, इससे हमें

दुनिया मेरे आगे कोई फर्क नहीं पड़ता। लड़िकयों को दहेज के लिए सरेआम जला दिया जाता है। बलात्कार के आकड़े कहां तक पहुंच गए हैं, यह सबकी नजर में है। कहीं भरे बाजार में लडिकयों को अगवा कर लिया जाता है। किसी लड़की के चेहरे और शरीर पर तेजाब फेंक देना, फिर जिंदगी भर उसका रोना। स्त्रियों के गर्भपात, बच्चियों के साथ धार्मिक स्थलों

से लेकर शिक्षण संस्थानों तक में यातनाओं की दास्तान

सुन कर हम पिघल नहीं पाते। आखिर क्यों? दरअसल, कभी धर्म, कभी जाति, कभी संप्रदाय आड़े आ जाता है। लेकिन यह सोचने की जरूरत है कि अगर शिक्षा के लिए मार्ग प्रशस्त करने वालों ने या अधिकार देने वालों ने भी यही दिकयानुसी सोच वाला रवैया रखा होता तो हम सब स्त्रियां कहीं किसी कोने में सड़ रही होतीं। जहां कोई महिला आज मंचासीन होकर स्त्रीवादी संबोधन देती है, अस्मिताओं के संघर्षों की बात करती है, वह शोषण और अपराधों की शिकार हो रही होती, उफ्फ तक करने के लिए मर्दों की इजाजत लेनी पड़ती। कितना भी विरोध किया गया, आज भी स्त्रियों के खिलाफ पुरुषों का रवैया छिपा नहीं है। अगर महिलाएं यह सोचती हैं कि पुरुषों की कामुकता रहम कर देगी, यह सिर्फ एक वहमं है। कब कौन हमलावर हो जाए, कहा नहीं जा सकता।

महिलाओं को इस गफलत में

जीने की जरूरत नहीं है कि कोई काफिला उनके पक्ष में करीब आकर खडा हो जाए। अगर वे नहीं चाहती कि कोई जिंदगी निगल जाने वाला हादसा उनके जीवन में हो और उनकी बच्चियां सुरक्षित रहें, तो एकजुट होकर स्त्री सशक्तिकरण का लोहा समाज को मनवाना पड़ेगा। जब समस्याएं समान हैं तो मंच अलग-अलग क्यों हैं? अगर हम सामृहिक बलात्कार, जातिवाद के कारण लड़कियों की आत्महत्या, घरेल हिंसा, उपेक्षा, भेदभाव जैसी भयंकर समस्याओं से नहीं घिरे होते, तो हम अपनी जातीय, सांप्रदायिक रेखाओं को लांघ कर बिना किसी भय के साझा अधिकारों की लड़ाई लड़ने और असामाजिक ताकतों से भिड़ने का जज्बा लिए साथ खड़े होते। खुद

को वर्गों में पाट कर हम उन लोगों की राहों को आसान कर रहे हैं, जो घात लगाए रहते हैं कि कब अवसर मिले कि जाति धर्म के नाम पर बेलिबास कर दें। इतना दहशतजदा कर दें कि अंधेरे बंद कमरों में रस्सी पर लाश झूलती मिले! रोज सुबह ऐसी त्रासद खबरें कब खत्म होगी, पता नहीं। कब हम अपनी बेटियों के लिए फिक्रमंद होंगी? कब खत्म होगी दिमाग से अस्पृश्यता? ये सवाल सभी स्त्रियों के लिए है। उम्मीद है कि वे स्त्री होकर संवेदनहीनता को अपने पास नहीं फटकने देंगी और पीड़ित स्त्रियों के खिलाफ नहीं खड़ी होंगी।

सच यह है कि चुनौतियों की भरमार है स्त्री जीवन में। सहसंकल्पी होकर ही हम अपनी चुनौतियों की आंखों में आंखें डाल कर डटी रह पाएंगी। स्त्रियों को प्रतिरोध करना होगा अपने खिलाफ हो रहे गलत का। अधिकारों की मांग को बुलंद स्वर देने होंगे। सामाजिक, राजनीतिक स्तर पर और शैक्षणिक संस्थानों आदि हर वह क्षेत्र, जहां उनके अधिकारों का हनन हो रहा हो, वहां अन्याय के विरुद्ध हस्तक्षेप करना होगा। शिक्षा और अधिकारों के जब वर्णविहीन मार्ग हमारे महापुरुषों ने खोले हैं, तो क्या हम इतने कमजोर हैं कि वर्ग, वर्णविहीन चेतना के रास्ते खोल कर संघर्षरत नहीं हो सकती? हम एक होंगे, लड़ेंगे और जीतेंगे भी। स्त्रीवादी शक्ति के गर्भ से अब साझे संघर्षों का जन्म होगा। पीड़ा बढ़ती जा रही है।

इंसाफ की राह

🗾 ह विडंबना ही है कि इस देश के जिस भव्य लोकतंत्र 🖣 का ढिंढोरा पीटा जाता है, उस लोकतंत्र को चुनाव के माध्यम से इस देश के करोड़ों गरीब ही बनाते हैं। लेकिन इसी देश में पुलिस अपने किसी कथित अमीर और रसुखदार मित्र को बचाने की खातिर किसी ऐसे निरपराध गरीब को उठा कर जेल भेज देती है, जिसके पास जमानत कराने को भी पैसे नहीं होते। वह दशकों जेलों में सड़ता रहता है, जब तक वह यहां की कथित अधिक मुकदमों के बोझ से चरमराती न्यायिक प्रणाली उसे दोषमुक्त नहीं घोषित करती है। तब तक उसकी सारी जवानी और उसके बच्चों के पढ़ने-लिखने के दिन बीत चुके होते हैं और उसकी बीवी अकेली जीवन गुजारते हुए प्रौढ़ उम्र को भी पार कर चुकी होती है। कहने का मतलब उसका सब कुछ बर्बाद हो चुका होता है। ज्ञातव्य है यह केवल गरीब और सामान्य कैदियों पर ही लागू होती है, अमीरों और रसूखदार कैदियों के बारे में सभी जानते हैं। आश्चर्य की बात है कि इस स्थिति के लिए जिम्मेदार पुलिस या कोई भी अपने इस कुकृत्य पर जरा भी अफसोस या ग्लानि भाव में नहीं होता, न उसे इसके लिए कहीं कठघरे में खड़ा किया जाता है।

राष्ट्रीय अपराध रेकार्ड ब्यूरो की रिपोर्ट के अनुसार भारत में पकड़े जाने वाले सौ कैदियों में 68.7 फीसद कैदी निर्दोष होते हैं। इसके विपरीत चीन जैसे देश में वहां की पुलिस किसी भी अपराधी को पकड़ने और हवालात या जेल में भेजने से पूर्व पूरी छानबीन करती है कि कहीं कोई निरपराध या निर्दोष व्यक्ति का जीवन बर्बाद न हो। वहां की पुलिस द्वारा पकड़े गए सौ अपराधियों में केवल 0.1 प्रतिशत कैदी ही निर्दोष होते हैं। कितना फर्क है भारत, चीन और विकसित देशों के पुलिस और न्यायतंत्र में!

क्या इस तरह निर्दोष गरीब लोगों के साथ अमानवीय अत्याचार को रोका नहीं जा सकता? इसमें हमारी समुची व्यवस्था ही कठघरे में है। मसलन, जमानत के लिए भी पैसे न हो सकने के कारण लाचार गरीब की सनवाई कभी वकील साहब, कभी जज साहब के न आने से तो कभी हड़ताल की वजह से अगली तारीख के लिए टाल दी जाती है, लेकिन उसका पैसा हर तारीख पर खर्च हो ही जाता है। इसके अलावा सत्ता का सामंती चरित्र और पुलिस की रसुखदार और धनाढ्य वर्ग से मजबूत गठजोड़ किसी भी गरीब और निर्दोष को उठा कर हवालात में बंद कर देना जैसी स्थितियां भारतीय परिवेश में आम रही हैं।

हमारे नीति-निर्माताओं को केवल अमीरों और रसुखदारों के लिए ही मानवाधिकार की रक्षा करने के

साधु-संत तक भड़काने में लगे हैं। सवाल है कि क्यों नहीं विश्वविद्यालय प्रशासन परिसर में ऐसे भडकाऊ लोगों को अने दे रहा है। हमें तो गर्व और ख़ुशी होनी चाहिए कि संस्कृत भाषा का प्रचलन बढ़ रहा है जिसे हर धर्म के लोग पढ़ना-पढ़ाना चाहते हैं। कई विद्वानों का भी मत है कि हमें किसी भी व्यक्ति की जाति नहीं, वरन ज्ञान देखना चाहिए। विश्वविद्यालय के संस्थापक महामना पंडित मदन मोहन मालवीय का भी यही कहना था कि यह देश हिंदू, मुसलिम, सिख, ईसाई अर्थात हर धर्मों का है,

इसलिए सबके बीच हमेशा

किसी भी मुद्दे या लेख पर अपनी राय हमें भेजें। हमारा पता है : ए-८, सेक्टर-7, नोएडा २०१३०१, जिला : गौतमबुद्धनगर, उत्तर प्रदेश

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

साथ भारत के करोड़ों गरीबों के साथ हो रहे इस भीषण त्रासदी और अमानवीय अत्याचार पर भी संजीदगी से सोच कर उनके सहित समस्त परिवार को बर्बाद होने से बचाने के लिए कुछ न कुछ मानवीय उपाय और निदान करना ही चाहिए।

• निर्मल कुमार शर्मा, गाजियाबाद

संकीर्ण मानसिकता

बनारस हिंदू विश्वविद्यालय के संस्कृत विद्या धर्म विज्ञान संकाय में सहायक प्रोफेसर पद पर मुसलिम शिक्षक की नियुक्ति का विरोध एक अराजक व्यवस्था और सोच का परिचायक है। यह कृत्य विरोध करने वालों की संकीर्ण मानसिकता को बताता है। दुख की बात तो यह है कि इन छात्रों को बाहर से आ रहे कुछ सद्भाव बना रहे और यहां के हर छात्र अपनी श्रेष्ठता

• मनकेश्वर महाराज 'भट्ट', मधेपुरा

खतरे की घंटी

परे विश्व में एक महान व्यक्तित्व को साबित करें।

आज दुनिया में जिस तेजी से पर्यावरण प्रदूषण बढ़ रहा है और वैश्विक तापमान में वृद्धि धरती के लिए बड़ा संकट बन चुकी है, उससे संपूर्ण प्राणी जगत के अस्तित्व के लिए चुनौती खड़ी हो गई है। इस संकट के लिए कारकानों से निकलने वाली कॉर्बन डाइऑक्साइड, नाइट्रस ऑक्साइड और मीथेन जैसी गैसें ग्रीनहाउस प्रभाव के लिए उत्तरदायी हैं। बिगडते पर्यावरण से बाढ, सूखा, जंगलों में आग, बेमौसम बारिश, ऋतु चक्र में परिवर्तन और अकाल जैसी आपदाएं बढ़ती जा रही हैं।

ग्लेशियर लगातार पिघलते जा रहे हैं, समुद्रों का बढ़ता जल स्तर भी खतरे का सूचक हैं। इन सबका असर यह हुआ है कि धरती पर इंसान को कई नई बीमारियों का सामना करना पड़ रहा है। जलवायु परिवर्तन का प्रभाव केवल मानव जाति पर ही नहीं, बल्कि वन्य जीवों के लिए किसी अभिशाप से कम नहीं है। अब भी अगर हम जलवायु परिवर्तन जैसे मुद्दे पर सचेत नहीं हुए तो आने वाले वर्षों में इसके गंभीर परिणाम भुगतने पड़ेंगे

श्रीनिवास पंवार बिश्नोई, दिल्ली विवि

जायज विरोध

जेएनयू में पिछले कई दिनों से छात्र फीस बढ़ाने का विरोध कर रहे हैं। यह विरोध किसी इशारे पर नहीं हो रहा है, बिल्क इससे सीधे-सीधे छात्रों की समस्या जुड़ी है। शिक्षा सबके लिए जरूरी है, चाहे वह आम हो या खास। शिक्षा तो सभी को सस्ती मिलनी चाहिए, ताकि आम, गरीब, मजदूर, किसान और हर तबके के बच्चे को पढ़ाई का उचित अवसर मिल सके और पैसे के अभाव में वह शिक्षा से वंचित न हो। वैसे भी सभी को शिक्षा मुहैया कराना राज्य की जिम्मेदारी है। एक तरफ देश के समस्त जनप्रतिनिधयों, सांसदों, विधायकों, मंत्रियों को कई प्रकार की सुख सुविधाएं दी जाती हैं, फटाफट इनके वेतन बढ़ा दिए जाते हैं, लेकिन शिक्षा के मद में इतनी बढ़ोतरी नहीं की जाती कि छात्रों की फीस को न्यूनतम स्तर पर रखा जा सके। सवाल है कि जब जनप्रतिनिधियों को खजाने से भारी भरकम वेतन मिलता है तो फिर उन्हें चार हजार यूनिट बिजली मुफ्त, कैंटीन के खाने पर सब्सिडी, टेलीफोन सुविधा या अन्य कई प्रकार के भत्ते क्यों दिए जाते हैं ? शिक्षा को अति कम शुल्क या शुल्क मुक्त रखा जाना जरूरी है। महात्मा गांधी तो चाहते थे कि चाहे आम हो या खास, सभी को शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य और न्याय की सुविधा मुफ्त में मिले।

हेमा हरि उपाध्याय, उज्जैन

नई दिल्ली