

Yogi's ruminations

At a press conference in Lucknow recently, Chief Minister Adityanath was in an uncharacteristically ruminative and expansive mood. He said that the National Register of Citizenship (NRC) was begun in Assam but may be expanded all over India. A survey was on in Uttar Pradesh (UP) to determine whether it was required in the state and once the survey was complete, further decisions on expanding it into an NRC enquiry would be taken. He parried a question about what would happen in UP if the Supreme Court order on the disputed land in Ayodhya went against the Hindus. And when he was asked why he called on Mulayam Singh Yadav, a leader of the party that is conducting a campaign against the BJP, he said he merely wanted to enquire about the health of the senior leader — and in any case, it was an Indian custom and tradition to call on older leaders, no matter what their political persuasion, for they have a lot to impart. When he was asked why he did not call on Mayawati, who is also an elder leader, he said, with a laugh: "first let her accept that she is an elder..."

Matter closed

An enquiry against Union minister of state for finance and Himachal Pradesh BJP leader, Anurag Thakur, for amassing assets exceeding his income, has finally been closed. The enquiry was instituted by the Virbhadr Singh-led Congress government not just against Thakur but also his father, former chief minister PK Dhumal. The state government previously in power had charged that the Thakur family had property and assets not just in Punjab and Delhi but also abroad.

DID THEY REALLY SAY THAT?



"If the BJP or the government has engaged Israeli agencies to snoop into the phones of journalists, lawyers, activists and politicians, it is a gross violation of human rights and a scandal with grave ramifications on national security. Waiting for the government's response"

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra after reports of a global hacking spree involving WhatsApp, November 1

CHECKLIST

FUTURE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS TO LOOK OUT FOR

■2020: Jharkhand (81 seats) will have elections in five phases beginning November 30. Delhi (70 seats) must go to the polls before February 22. Elections in Bihar (243 seats) are due before November. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is in power in Jharkhand and a few days ago, two sitting Jharkhand Mukti Morcha and Congress MLAs each resigned their seats and joined the BJP. In Delhi, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) is in power and the Congress has just replaced its state unit chief who has made public statements in the past that he favours an alliance with AAP. In Bihar, BJP chief Amit Shah has said publicly that the BJP will continue to be a junior partner in the government.

■2021: Assam (126 seats), Kerala (140 seats), Puducherry (30 seats), Tamil Nadu (234 seats), and West Bengal (294 seats) are due for polls

mid 2021. The picture for Jammu and Kashmir (87 seats), due for elections in March is unclear, now that it is a centrally administered area. The three southern polls are expected to be a challenge for the BJP, though its hopes are high for Assam where it is already in power and West Bengal where it hopes to come to power.

■2022: Goa (40 seats), Manipur (60 seats), Punjab (117 seats), Uttarakhand (70 seats) and Uttar Pradesh (403 seats) will go to the polls in the first half of the year. Obviously UP holds the highest interest, though it is important for the Shiromani Akali Dal-BJP combine to dislodge the Congress government from Punjab and hold on to the other states where it has power. Manipur is especially important for it is racked with divisions on issues ranging from a greater Nagaland to citizenship.



OPINION

HOUSE OF COMMONS, UK

You have been a great servant of this Parliament

Prime Minister Boris Johnson: Mr Speaker, I know that the whole House will want to join me in recording that, after 10 tumultuous years, this is your last Prime Minister's questions. As befits a distinguished former Wimbledon competitor, you have sat up there in your high chair not just as an umpire ruthlessly adjudicating on the finer points of parliamentary procedure with your trademark Tony Montana scowl, not just as a commentator offering your own opinions on the rallies you are watching — sometimes acerbic and sometimes kind — but above all as a player in your own right.

Although we may disagree about some of the legislative innovations you have favoured, there is no doubt in my mind that you have been a great servant of this Parliament and this House of Commons. You have modernised, you have widened access, you have cared for the needs of those with disabilities, and you have cared so deeply for the rights of Back Benchers that you have done more than anyone since Stephen Hawking to stretch time in this session. As we come to the end of what must be the longest retirement since Frank Sinatra's, I am sure the whole House will join me in thanking you and hoping that you enjoy in your retirement the soothing medicament that you have so often prescribed to the rest of us.

I wish that Members across the House will want to join me in wishing the England rugby team the very best for the final in the world cup on Saturday.

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab): Mr Speaker, I hope you will indulge me one moment while I say a word about you. I want to thank you for the way you have used your speakership over your decade-long tenure. You have done so much to reform this House of Commons, and our democracy is stronger for the way you have done it.

You have given real power to Back Benchers, vastly expanded the use of urgent questions, which has been overwhelmingly popular with all Ministers, and opened up the number of emergency debates, which is even more popular with even more Ministers. In the traditions of the great Speaker Lenthall and others, you have stood up for Parliament when it has to be stood up for, and we thank you for that. You have also carried that message internationally in terms of the role of parliamentary democracy and Parliaments holding governments to account. As we hope to form a government in the future, we hope to be held to account by Parliament as well.

I am sure the whole House would agree with me that you have done excellent work in opening up Parliament to visitors, exhibitions and children. You have reduced some of the strange customs and strange garments that people wear in this building. I know you are all jealous of my tie, but it is okay. You have used your office to increase diversity among the staff in the House and make this a much more LGBT-friendly place. You have taken it from being a gentlemen's club that happens to be in a royal palace to being a genuinely democratic institution. I want you to accept our thanks and pass on our best wishes to Sally, Freddie, Oliver and Jemima, your wonderful family, for the support they have given you. There will be a great celebration today — I am sure the whole House will join us in this — when you and I celebrate Arsenal beating Liverpool tonight. [Interruption.] The Labour party loves a debate and loves a bit of banter. The Prime Minister's planned sell-out deal with Donald Trump means yet more national health service money being siphoned off into private profit. Why did the Prime Minister previously say the health service was not on the table in any post-Brexit trade deal?

The Prime Minister: It is because it is not on the table. I pay tribute to officials of the NHS, who have just done a brilliant job in reducing the cost of Orkambi — made in America, by the way — so that cystic fibrosis sufferers in this country get the treatment they need, at a cost that is reasonable to the taxpayers of this country. If the gentleman want to know how the people of this country are able to afford the stupendous investments we are now making in the NHS — £34 billion, the biggest ever investment in the NHS, with 40 new hospitals that we are building as a result of the decisions we are taking — I can tell him that it is because this is the party that supports wealth creation. The reason we are able to invest in the NHS is that for the last nine years this economy has been growing. It has grown by 19 per cent since the Conservatives first came into office, and he would ruin this economy and ruin our ability to fund the NHS.

Jeremy Corbyn: We all welcome the fact that Orkambi will now be able to be provided in this country under the NHS. The shame is that we are not told what the deal is with the company concerned. We learned this week that government officials have met US pharmaceutical companies five times as part of the Prime Minister's planned trade deal. The US has called for "full market access" to our NHS, which would mean prices of some of our most important medicines increasing by up to sevenfold. While the government are having secret meetings with US corporations, it is patients here who continue to suffer. Can the Prime Minister explain why the number of people waiting longer for urgent cancer treatment has tripled over the past nine years?

The Prime Minister: This government is investing £34 billion in the NHS. We are seeing improvements in cancer survival rates throughout the country, thanks to the investment that the government are making. I think it absolutely satirical that he should claim credit for getting Orkambi and other drugs delivered at a reasonable price; that is the work of the UK Government and the NHS, supporting the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence to ensure that people in this country get affordable treatments.

Jeremy Corbyn: Of course, we need to import medicines from various places; I just want it to be done in an open and transparent way.

Edited excerpts from Question Hour in the House of Commons, UK, October 30



ILLUSTRATION BY AJAY MOHANTY

At a time when exports continue to struggle with an economic slowdown and a global trade war, India's foray into the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) deal may prove disastrous for domestic industry, says senior trade policy expert and Professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University, Biswajit Dhar. Involved in crafting multiple trade deals over the past two-decades, he tells Subhayan Chakraborty that India has tried the same concept earlier, with little result. Edited excerpts:

'The timing for RCEP is horrible'

How different is RCEP from any of the earlier bilateral or multilateral trade deals India has signed till now?

Firstly, India already has trade agreements with 12 of the 15 countries that are part of the RCEP grouping. When these agreements were signed back in 2004-05 as part of the mega India-Asean Free Trade Agreement (FTA), there was a lot of expectations backed by the Look East Policy and India's increasing closeness with the East Asian region that had become the center of gravity of the global economy. India's economic growth was at historically high rates, and there was hope that integration with these other rapidly expanding nations, would help continue that. All the estimates forecast by the feasibility studies, of trade and investment flows picking up, and India being able to compete with the Chinese, never actually materialised. The narrative remains the same now, with the only exceptions being economic slowdown at home and

a global trade war. The timing is horrible.

So, people should be concerned about history repeating itself?

Not only average people, but even members of the current government had expressed concern about India's FTAs with the Asean bloc, Japan and South Korea before coming to power. As an Opposition party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) had criticised these for not leading to export growth even as imports skyrocketed. This ate into the earnings of domestic industry that ultimately led to job losses. Even after coming to power, this government gave signals to show they were reluctant participants in the RCEP process. The fact that in 2015, India offered to reduce import duties on only 42.5 per cent of the Chinese goods shows that. On the contentious issue of investor state dispute resolution, the government gave momentum to a review process on investment policy that led to a new model bilateral invest-

Facilitating social responsibility

Innovative ventures are using a common platform to woo their potential investors, writes Swapnil Joglekar

When Sheetal Agarwal walks inside the childcare unit of the hospital along with her troupe, the parents wake the children from their slumber. "Uthol! Wo aa gaye. (Wake up! They have arrived.)" Instantly, laughter erupts at one bed and spreads in the ward. She is a clownselor, a wordplay on a clown and a counsellor, who does medical clowning along with a group of 18-20 volunteers. Medical clowning is said to help in healing and is routinely used in the West as a medical aid.

"Many children don't react well to the pain during their treatment and are unable to recuperate. Through humour, we get them to feel things again," says Rehana Quazi, a group member. It all started when Agarwal met a person who did medical clowning in Gujarat's Vadodra. Back in Delhi, she could find none and so she decided to become one. Agarwal started visiting hospitals every Saturday in July 2016, but left her job in 2018 to do this full time. "The first day I did this, I was smile hungover for a week. Till now, almost 170 people have clowned with me," she says.

Ekta Sansi, another member of Clownselors adds, "You don't associate a hospital with happiness. But this has helped me experience that you can do something positive in any environment". Agarwal has given a TEDx talk on the subject and conducts awareness programmes with skits, puppet shows, and games for children and the elderly. Earning their trust is the most

difficult yet the most fulfilling part. Sometimes the parents are apprehensive but even they need to lighten up so we include them in our games, she says.

Playing is the favourite pastime of Pista and Kajju too. These two canines were rescued by Harsha Vats, who started Tiny Tails, a shelter for stray dogs.

"When I found Pista, she was suffering from a type of bloody diarrhoea. After treatment, I did not want to leave her on the street, so Tiny Tails came into existence. Now it houses 29 dogs," Vats says. Her team consists of seven people and the project costs ₹35,000-₹40,000 a month. While funding remains an issue, veterinary doctors who would provide affordable healthcare remain elusive, she said. "It's good that people help by donating dog food. I get all my dogs sterilised, so it's easier for people to adopt them," she added.

What connects Clownselors and Tiny Tails is Socio Story (SS). It is a platform which brings idea generators and social sector investors in one room. Avadhesh Dixit, Chief mentor of SS, describes their role thus. "We have to discover, help them (changemakers) narrate their story and get them recognised. The biggest responsibility is making a name as a credible entity in the field of social responsibility".

After people submit their ideas, Socio Story prunes the list and invites the top changemakers to present their ideas to investors in person.

ment treaty by the end of 2015. So, the government itself had accepted at the beginning that RCEP, which includes both these issues, was contentious.

What do you think tipped the government's views on RCEP?

With regards to India's earlier FTA's, it was Manmohan Singh's concern about India's image globally. Subsequently, as India got closer to its neighbours, the dynamics started changing, which the current government inherited. When the current government took over RCEP negotiations in 2014-15, the GDP was growing at seven and a half per cent. I feel India could have secured a better deal more so because China's economic growth had started to slow down. Also, India has an important bargaining chip - a large, domestic market which the RCEP needs.

How beneficial is the deal as talks stand?

The trouble is that India is being asked to eliminate import duties on 90 per cent of all traded goods with very little safeguards for domestic industry. Then you have to worry about what goods to keep in the other 10 per cent list, on which tariffs may also go down later.

Also, there are goods in both agricultural and industrial sectors that should be a part of the sensitive list on which countries reserve the right to not reduce duties. Exposing all these sectors to the international market at a time when the economy is not in a good shape will lead to severe adjustment pangs, in the form of job losses. Also, we just came to know that the unemployment rate is among the highest in decades. Finally, you can't negotiate away all your instruments, especially with a group of nations who account for a lion's share of your trade.

But experts are now battling for lower tariffs. The government appointed high-level advisory group on trade has suggested duties be lowered soon to make India competitive.

You don't have a single case anywhere in the world where without systematic intervention by the government, the industry has been able to become efficient. The majority of industry doesn't have deep pockets. In the South-East Asian economies of RCEP, the government provided the optimum measures for growth and expected the private sector to perform. Here, the government doesn't have the authority to ask the industry for growth.

So, what's the solution?

Liberalisation alone is not a prescription for growth. That requires sustained labour reforms to reduce costs and cutting of red tape. As of now, the most important thing is to find ways of reviving both agriculture and industry. This includes manufacturing as well as services, in which India's edge has reduced. To do a revival package, the centre needs policy space that typically requires a mix of tariff protection, facilitating development finance for enterprises to maximise employment and investments in infrastructure. For the medium term, there's a

need for innovation policy. All of these are yet to be done.

How valid are concerns of Chinese dumping at a time when China is moving into high value manufacturing?

Very. With a fast-changing demography, China may be moving into relatively high value manufacturing but they are looking for new markets. With China's export lines under severe strain due to the ongoing trade war with the US, it will need to find a way to push out its huge inventory of products. RCEP will provide it that opportunity with India lying just next door.

What about the industries who actually want to join RCEP?

The limited number of industries that have called for India to join RCEP need to address their own structural issues. Downstream industries who use steel have called for cheaper steel from outside but there isn't a single precedent of any country experiencing serious economic growth on the back of imported steel. The loss of capital goods manufacturing has cost the US economy significant growth. The pharma

industry, which imports an estimated 70 per cent of raw materials from China is also in support of RCEP. But China is also entering into the manufacture of formulations, which India dominates. Finally, have we been able to crack into the Asean market despite having an agreement? The industries hoping to get into China also have to deal with non-tariff barriers, which the Asean economies are also known for."

Moving beyond manufacturing, how do you think the farming sector will be affected?

Till now, in all the trade agreements done by India, the agricultural sector has remained a holy cow that hasn't been touched. So, the government has been deeply aware of the problem in agriculture. And, it's also the social problems that would be created if farmhands - already underemployed - become unemployed. Now, we still don't know to what degree core agricultural products like cereals would be kept out of the deal. The domestic dairy industry sees a real danger in foreign companies like New Zealand-based Fonterra already setting up in India. Items like dairy provide stability to farmers who otherwise repeatedly face volatile prices. On the other hand, farmers also worry that high value plantation crops like pepper from Vietnam may flood the domestic market. Interestingly, India had provided pepper seeds to Vietnam as part of reconstruction efforts after the US invasion and now their productivity is better than India.

Given the prevailing political mood on FTA's, do you think the RCEP deal - if agreed on - will be ratified by Parliament?

The government may not face an issue there. It has full mandate to negotiate an international agreement. The previous FTAs with the Asean bloc, Japan or South Korea were not put to votes in parliament.



The team at Socio Story (left); Sheetal Agarwal of clownselors who does medical clowning along with a group of 18-20 volunteers

Ideas of the rest are shown in a documentary, due to time constraints of a physical event.

Manoj Pachauri, one of the co-founders of SS agrees. "We have to find the people, talk to the block development officials for a list of NGOs, help them file for funding. Even choosing an investor depends on spending patterns. One investor might focus on the education sector, while another may focus on healthcare," he adds.

So they did in the case of Solecraft, a textile upcycle venture which transforms used denim into a school kit consisting of a school bag, a pair of shoes and a pencil box. Partnering with local cafes in Jodhpur, Rajasthan, Solecraft collects used denim fabrics. Once cleaned, dried and ironed, it is sent to their factory. The thicker

fabric is made into yoga mats, or duffel bags for their commercial venture while the finer one is used to make pencil boxes. They donate the school kits free of cost.

Last year they had presented their idea at SS. The platform, SS, aims to branch out into a virtual incubation centre, which can provide assistance and guidance to changemakers online, in the coming years. They are also planning skill development workshops with various institutes of social sciences.

Prajawal Deepraj, who looks after the technology net of SS, says, "We are just the facilitators who are matchmaking the social sector changemakers with those who wish to invest". Their next event is on December 14.

Twitter's new beginning

Discontinuing political ads is a bold move

Jack Dorsey, Twitter's chief executive officer, chief executive officer, made a sensational announcement on Wednesday evening. The micro-blogging social platform has decided to stop accepting political ads starting November 22. It will, however, continue to accept public service ads, such as ads encouraging voters to register and exercise their franchise. Mr Dorsey has explained the rationale: Twitter has come to the conclusion that the reach of political messaging should be earned, not bought. Paid advertising forces highly optimised and targeted political messages onto people. The significant risk is that it can influence votes that affect millions of lives.

Mr Dorsey has said this is about "paying for reach", not free expression, and that paid reach has "significant ramifications that today's democratic infrastructure may not be able to handle". Machine-learning-based optimisation of messaging can micro-target voters with unchecked misleading information at an overwhelming scale.

Twitter is, of course, giving up revenue since it would miss out on some share of internet political advertising through the next year, with US presidential elections, the ongoing Brexit drama, UK general elections, and elections in several European nations. Online advertising for the 2020 US presidential elections alone might run in excess of \$1.2 billion. Although Twitter says

this ban will not have a significant impact on the platform's bottom line, the share price dropped by about 4 per cent following the announcement.

Mr Dorsey also sarcastically said: "We're working hard to stop people from gaming our systems to spread misleading info, buuut (sic) if someone pays us to target and force people to see their political ad ... well ... they can say whatever they want!" This appears to be a shot across the bow at Facebook, whose CEO Mark Zuckerberg said recently that his firm would continue to carry misleading or false messages in paid political ads, without fact-checking.

Donald Trump's re-election campaign has already taken advantage of the Facebook no-check policy by running ads with false claims that the Democratic presidential hopeful, Joe Biden, bribed Ukrainian officials. A similar ad campaign targeted Mr Biden on Twitter but that will be pulled out after the ban. Senator Elizabeth Warren,

another Democratic presidential hopeful, has highlighted the dark side of Facebook's policy, by running ads on FB that claim Trump has been "given free rein to lie on Zuckerberg's platform — and to pay Facebook gobs of money to push out the lies".

This leads into a debate, which has great relevance to the future of political campaigning. Facebook says that it does not believe a social network should be in the business of judging the truth of political claims and it stands to gain significant revenue from this stance. Hence, while Facebook will fact-check normal content, it will not fact-check paid political ads. This allows advertisers to put out lies or misleading information and micro-target voters, maybe using unethical means to harvest their data, *a la* the Cambridge Analytica scandal.

Given the known impact that online advertising had on the Brexit referendum, the 2016 US presidential elections, the last UK elections, and, perhaps, the Indian general

elections of 2019, there are serious problems with this model of ignoring truth in political advertising. It is entirely possible that an advertiser, including quite possibly one backed by a foreign government, can influence voters with dubious online messaging.

Facebook and other online platforms have started to introduce transparency in the form of releasing lists of advertisers. But this vetting process is only a beginning and it doesn't prevent an advertiser from making false claims. Interestingly, most platforms, online or otherwise, do insist on some degree of truth in advertising when it comes to products (such as consumer electronics or automobiles) or services (such as apps and financial services). While Twitter's move is a beginning, it leaves plenty of room for voter-manipulation by other means, such as using fake ids and bots to amplify false messages. It also gives incumbents who have already built a large online presence a big edge.

New solutions for Indian farming

The use of digital platforms can transform delivery mechanisms for agriculturists, reducing costs and turning their vocation into a potentially remunerative one

HARSH KUMAR BHANWALA

There is something odd about many of the world's fastest-growing valuable companies. Facebook does not create content. Airbnb does not own any hotels or apartments. Uber does not own its cars. Alibaba is said to hold no inventory. What is common to all these companies? Their business is about providing an interface between producers and consumers, and all of them have leveraged information technology (IT) in a big way.

These new business models upend the way we traditionally view production and distribution structures. Do these examples provide us with any leads for developing solutions and interfaces for farmers which can transform delivery mechanisms for their various requirements? The answer is yes.

The growth in platform-based architectural solutions has paved the way for new methods to reach the market and the end-customer. The platform harnesses the power of the network (their inter-connectedness) and thrives on it. They also provide easy access to users and create resources in accordance with demand.

Current platforms germinate and grow in the digital ecosystem. This has a positive side-effect. Transacting digitally captures data without additional effort. This data helps in building and improving models, which enriches the platform and helps reach out to more users, hence generating more meaningful data — a sort of self-propelling engine.

The time is ripe to establish a national-level digital platform for agriculture (AgriStack) to address all farming-related requirements end-to-end from the farmer's perspective. AgriStack may have a Farmers' Stack, a Farm Stack and a Crop Stack integrated on a technology platform linking existing digital land records, cadastral maps of farms and information.

Farmers' Stack can consist of farmer data with Aadhaar as unique identifier, Farm Stack can have geospatial information on each farm (with a farm identity) owned by a farmer with cadastral maps, and Crop Stack can contain crop data linked to farms. The Crop Stack would be more dynamic than any other component because of its variations, frequencies and utility.

The data should be interlinked to land registration, cadastral maps and satellite images from state government departments and public entities. This can be put in place in a short time, since the National Land Records Modernisation Programme (NRLMP) has this data. The status of digitisation of NRLMP indicates that out of 35 states and Union Territories, 20 have completed digitisation of record of rights (RoR), nine have linked RoR with registration and seven have completed cadastral maps. AgriStack will be able to address the needs of a variety of stakeholders.

Potential externalities of AgriStack

Indian agriculture is small holder-based. With the average size of landholdings at 1.08 hectares



and declining, innovations need to be found to ensure that farming remains remunerative. IT can play a huge role in this effort if it can leverage the requirements of farmers through a single integrated interface that will reduce costs not only for farmers, but also for the multifarious agencies that try to meet their requirements.

For example, IndiaStack transformed the financial products and services space in the country with acceleration in the pace of fintech applications, which has led to the creation of huge externalities for customers. A similar experience can be replicated for farmers if AgriStack comes into existence.

The success of AgriStack or, for that matter, any intervention that has multiple stakeholders, hinges on the fact that a variety of stakeholders should benefit from it.

AgriStack can have several potential uses:

- It can enable closer study of the flow of agricultural credit to specific land parcels. It will also enable credit flows and interest subventions to become more transparent.

- Crop insurance products and delivery can be improved, especially with geographic information system (GIS) and remote sensing technologies.

- Bankers can have regular "views" of land parcels, ensuring proper end-use of agricultural credit.

- GIS and IoT (internet of things) services can be deployed to give feedback to stakeholders. For example, at the post-harvesting stage, a trigger to harvesting equipment suppliers and buyers may be sent, who can approach the cultivator for providing services.

- A marketplace can be created where various entrepreneurs and suppliers of products and services can meet.

- It can enable the provision of market intelligence for de-risking commodity price fluctuations, demand-supply forecasting and weather advisory.

- The centre-piece of the stack will be the farmer, who will receive all necessary implementation guidance and financial support, which are the focal point of marketing and purchasing channels, so that he can take a well-informed decision for maximising production and profits by harnessing the full potential of his land parcel.

Kick-starting AgriStack

The process of kick-starting AgriStack will be similar to the process adopted for IndiaStack, with governments, fintech companies and industry players collaborating and establishing public utility services on business principles. The learnings from IndiaStack, the National Data Sharing and Accessibility Policy and the Open Government Data platform can provide the necessary framework to commence the task.

Since agriculture is a state subject, it is critical that state governments are taken on board. It may not be out of place to mention that the NITI Aayog should propagate the idea of setting up a federal institution on the lines of the Goods and Services Tax Council, with participation from both the Centre and the states, to implement agricultural reform.

This federal set-up would also facilitate the revisiting of various laws and regulations related to land, labour and markets, besides creating an enabling environment for leveraging AgriStack. Coupling farmers' identities with land parcels will revolutionise the way the ecosystem can reach the farmer. Such an innovation is sorely needed.

The writer is chairman, Nabard. Views are personal

A court order that has profound implications

ARIJUN RAGHAVENDRA M

The Bombay High Court order of October 17 in the case of the Adani group has far-reaching legal implications that threaten to jeopardise the evidence-gathering process of our law enforcement agencies and has the potential to destabilise many ongoing high-profile cases.

The writ petition pertains to the suspected over-invoicing of coal imports from Indonesia, being investigated by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI). The DRI has alleged that several entities, including the Adani group, through a maze of companies in different sovereign jurisdictions, have overvalued coal imports as compared to actual export value in Indonesia with the intention of siphoning off money abroad. They also availed of higher power tariff compensation.

While coal consignments in about 1,300 vessels in this case were shipped directly to Indian ports from Indonesia, the documents were mostly routed through the Adani group's subsidiary companies in Singapore, Dubai and Mauritius. Following the group's refusal to share information regarding subsidiaries, the DRI initiated procedures under the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT), requesting information from competent authorities in different countries to provide specified evidence.

According to the home ministry, India has MLATs — a treaty for effective mutual cooperation and legal assistance — with 39 foreign countries, the evidence obtained under which is admissible in any proceeding before a court of law in India. To secure evidentiary information in this case, at the request of DRI, the competent court in Mumbai initiated letters rogatory under MLAT to Singapore, United Arab Emirates, Hong Kong and British Virgin Islands. This investigative process was challenged before the high court on two counts — should DRI issue a letter rogatory under the Criminal Procedure Code after filing a first information report (FIR) before a magistrate, and if yes, has the agency validly commenced the investigation in this case?

The settled legal practice has been that investigations governed by special codes — including the Enforcement Directorate (ED), Prevention of Money Laundering Act; Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act; Serious Fraud Investigation Office, Companies Act; Wildlife Crime Control Bureau, wildlife protection laws and income tax investigations (income tax, benami and black money laws) — do not require filing of FIRs/magisterial intervention for initiating investigations or issuance of letters rogatory.

Where the DRI investigates offences under the Customs law, a special statute also follows this rule. In case of Customs law, discussed in the high court order, the legislative intent is apparent from the "Report of the select committee on the Customs Bill 1962" and the consequent Parliamentary proceedings, which make it clear

that there is no requirement for magisterial intervention (non-cognisable offence) or filing of FIRs under the criminal code (cognisable offence) for commencing any customs investigation.

The letters rogatory were quashed by the high court because the DRI commenced investigation into a non-cognisable offence, as in the instant case, without obtaining permission from a magistrate, thereby bringing to a screeching halt the entire investigation. By doing so, the court questioned the very integrity of the investigative process and further heavily relied upon a judgment of the Supreme Court in the *Om Prakash* case (2011) — dealing with bailability in the context of arrest under Customs law — which led to consequent amendments to the Customs law in 2012.

The court has grossly erred in failing to evaluate the larger substantive legal issue pertaining to the applicability of the Criminal Procedure Code for investigation under special statutes. A simple interpretation of this order will mean that only police officers can investigate all the offences under special codes, which they are not authorised to under these statutes. The very essence of economic fraud — decoding financial transactions pertaining to offshore entities/subsidiaries — stands completely negated by this order.

When the information pertaining to the subsidiary companies was denied, MLAT was the only available legal remedy for obtaining evidence. Media reports have indicated non-cooperation by certain public sector banks in provision of documents pertaining to the financial transactions in this case. Also, the order of the High Court, Singapore, subsequently challenged in the Supreme Court there, allowing the sharing of the evidentiary information under MLAT with India, has lost focus in this chaos. The extent to which this order of the Bombay High Court will adversely impact the proceedings before the Supreme Court, Singapore, will be

difficult to predict now. This order will have a direct and drastic impact on all on-going investigations pertaining to over-invoicing of imported coal and, more significantly, on litigation before various forums on power tariff compensation. The collateral damage emanating from this order poses a bigger question: What happens now to the information being processed in various sovereign jurisdictions across the world on letter rogatory requests initiated by the ED, NCB, Income Tax and other agencies, pertaining to high-profile cases? This question is significant, especially when it is absolutely certain that the special laws do not mandate filing of FIRs or magisterial intervention for investigation or MLAT proceedings.

Will the DRI appeal against the order of the Bombay High Court? Your guess is as good as mine. Should the DRI appeal against this verdict? The answer is obvious!

The writer is an independent lawyer based out of Delhi and has previously worked with the Government of India. Views are personal

OTHER VIEWS

India and Saudi Arabia finally look beyond Pakistan

The two are consolidating a partnership on the basis of shared interests

The expansion and institutionalisation of strategic cooperation between India and Saudi Arabia during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Riyadh, the second in three years, marks the consolidation of a partnership that has long struggled to realise its full potential. As recently as in February, when the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, Mohammed bin Salman, visited Delhi, the question of India's tensions with Pakistan figured quite prominently. This time around, the joint statement issued at the end of PM Modi's visit made no reference to Pakistan. This was long overdue. It is rooted in Delhi's long overdue realist appreciation that Saudi Arabia has a lot more on its mind than protecting Pakistan in the name of religious solidarity; and that it is possible to build a solid partnership with Saudi Arabia on the basis of shared interests.

Within its immediate neighbourhood, Saudi Arabia has been struggling to cope with an assertive Iran and Turkey, both of whom seek to undermine the authority of the Saudi monarchy within the Kingdom and the region. Meanwhile, the rapidly growing Saudi population can no longer be kept pliable with a rigorous diet of religious orthodoxy and generous subsidies from oil revenues, no longer the source of perennial



comfort. To cope with these challenges, Saudi Arabia has begun serious social and economic reforms at home and diversification of its security and commercial partnerships abroad. Delhi has recognised the urgency of seizing this moment and building a strong security and economic partnership.

The Indian Express, November 1

Centre must deliver in J&K

Kashmiris should accept new realities

Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), as a state, ceased to exist on Thursday. The decision to bifurcate the state into separate administrative units of J&K and Ladakh, and make both Union Territories, is now operationalised. It is now time for all stakeholders to make a new beginning. Delhi has to deliver on promises of enhanced development and economic prosperity; it has to usher in progressive legal changes to give justice to the more vulnerable sections; it has to maintain peace and crack down on terror; it has to restore the political process by releasing leaders and holding elections; and it must ensure all fundamental rights to residents of J&K and Ladakh.

Kashmiris are the key

stakeholder. They should recognise that India has no tolerance for separatism. J&K will remain an integral part of the Union, and Article 370 is gone. The sooner the Kashmiri street understands this, the better it is for the Kashmiris themselves. The Centre has indicated that Union Territory status is not permanent, and Kashmiri political formations should think about fighting for the restoration of statehood as the next step within democratic politics. The final actor in the Kashmir matrix is Pakistan. For its own sake, for the sake of the Kashmiris, and for the sake of peace in South Asia, Pakistan should reconcile itself to the new realities in the Valley.

Hindustan Times, November 1

Surveillance by stealth

Ensuring privacy is a tough task

That privacy is at peril in cyberspace is evident from the disclosure that an Israeli group used spyware to snoop on human rights activists and journalists in India. The information has come into the public domain after the Facebook-owned platform WhatsApp filed a lawsuit in a US court. In another instance, a malware attack has been detected at the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant in Tamil Nadu through an infected PC, reportedly plugged into the system. Surveillance can come from different quarters. Professional hackers use knowledge tools to enter a network, assessing its vulnerability and penetration possibility. In the Israeli case, the spyware got installed on

the phone with just a missed call, giving access to the phone's operating system, compromising both privacy and security.

The other aspect of it is when the government decides to use surveillance to protect national interests. A case on whether social media companies can be forced to trace and reveal the identity of the originator of the message as provided under Section 69 of the IT Act is being heard by the Supreme Court. India plans to have social media regulations by January next year. Official agencies should not misuse them to snoop on citizens while clamping down on cybercrime.

The Tribune, November 1

Opinion

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2019

MELANIE MITCHELL

INTELLIGENT MACHINES CATASTROPHICALLY misinterpreting human desires is a frequent trope in science fiction, perhaps used most memorably in Isaac Asimov's stories of robots that misconstrue the famous 'three laws of robotics.' The idea of artificial intelligence going awry resonates with human fears about technology. But current discussions of superhuman AI are plagued by flawed intuitions about the nature of intelligence.

We don't need to go back all the way to Isaac Asimov — there are plenty of recent examples of this kind of fear. Take a recent op-ed essay in *The New York Times* and a new book, *Human Compatible*, by the computer scientist Stuart Russell. Dr Russell believes that if we're not careful in how we design artificial intelligence, we risk creating 'superintelligent' machines whose objectives are not adequately aligned with our own.

As one example of a misaligned objective, Dr Russell asks, "What if a superintelligent climate control system, given the job of restoring carbon dioxide concentrations to preindustrial levels, believes the solution is to reduce the human population to zero?" He claims that "if we insert the wrong objective into the machine and it is more intelligent than us, we lose."

Dr Russell's view expands on arguments of the philosopher Nick Bostrom, who defined AI superintelligence as 'an intellect that is much smarter than the best human brains in practically every field, including scientific creativity, general wisdom and social skills.' Dr Bostrom and Dr Russell envision a superintelligence with vast general abilities unlike today's best machines, which remain far below the level of humans in all but relatively narrow domains (such as playing chess or Go).

Dr Bostrom, Dr Russell and other writers argue that even if there is just a small probability that such superintelligent machines will emerge in the foreseeable future, it would be an event of such magnitude and potential danger that we should start preparing for it now. In Dr Bostrom's view, 'a plausible default outcome of the creation of machine superintelligence is existential catastrophe.' That is, humans would be toast.

These thinkers — let's call them the 'superintelligentsia' — speculate that if machines were to attain general human intelligence, the machines would quickly become superintelligent. They speculate that a computer with general intelligence would be able to speedily read all existing books and documents, absorbing the totality of human knowledge. Likewise, the machine would be able to use its logical abilities to make discoveries that increase its cognitive power.

Such a machine, the speculation goes, would not be bounded by bothersome human limitations, such as slowness of thought, emotions, irrational biases and need for sleep. Instead, the machine would possess something like a 'pure' intelligence without any of the cognitive shortcomings that limit humans.

The assumption seems to be that this AI could surpass the generality and flexibility of human intelligence while seamlessly retaining the speed, precision and programmability of a computer. This imagined machine would be far smarter than any human, far better at 'general wisdom and social skills,' but at the same time it would preserve unfettered access to all of

Should we fear superintelligence?

AI resonates with human fears about technology but superintelligence is a flawed concept and shouldn't inform our policy decisions



A robot welcomes participants to the Future Investment Initiative forum in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

its mechanical capabilities. And as Dr Russell's example shows, it would lack humanlike common sense.

The problem with such forecasts is that they underestimate the complexity of general, human-level intelligence. Human intelligence is a strongly integrated system, one whose many attributes — including emotions, desires, and a strong sense of selfhood and autonomy — can't easily be separated.

Similarly, if generally intelligent AI is ever created (something that will take many decades, if not centuries), its objectives, like ours, will not be easily 'inserted' or 'aligned.' They will rather develop along with the other qualities that form its intelligence, as a result of being embedded in human society and culture. The machines' push to achieve these objectives will be tempered by the common sense, values and social judgment without which general intelligence cannot exist.

What's more, the notion of superintelligence without humanlike limitations may be a myth. It seems likely to me that many of the supposed deficiencies of human cognition are inseparable aspects of our general intelligence, which evolved in large part to allow us to function as a social group. It's possible that the emo-

tions, 'irrational' biases and other qualities sometimes considered cognitive shortcomings are what enable us to be generally intelligent social beings rather than narrow savants. I can't prove it, but I believe that general intelligence can't be isolated from all these apparent shortcomings, either in humans or in machines that operate in our human world.

In his 1979 Pulitzer Prize-winning book, *Gödel, Escher, Bach: an Eternal Golden Braid*, the cognitive scientist Douglas Hofstadter beautifully captures the counterintuitive complexity of intelligence by posing a deceptively simple question: "Will a thinking computer be able to add fast?" Dr Hofstadter's surprising but insightful answer was, 'perhaps not.'

As Dr Hofstadter explains: "We ourselves are composed of hardware which does fancy calculations but that doesn't mean that our symbol level, where 'we' are, knows how to carry out the same fancy calculations. Let me put it this way: There's no way that you can load numbers into your own neurons to add up your grocery bill. Luckily, your symbol level (i.e., you) can't gain access to the neurons which are doing your thinking — otherwise you'd get addlebrained." So, why, he asks, "should it not be the same

for an intelligent program?"

In other words, the intelligent part of your mind can't harness the fast-adding skills of your own neurons, and for good reason. This barrier — between the "self" that you are aware of and the detailed activity of your brain — permits the kind of thinking that matters for survival without getting overwhelmed ("addlebrained") by your own thought processes. Similarly, a thinking computer's hardware, like ours, would presumably include circuits for fast arithmetic, but at the level of its cognitive awareness, the machine wouldn't be able to tap into these circuits any more than we humans can. It's fine to speculate about aligning an imagined superintelligent — yet strangely mechanical — AI with human objectives. But without more insight into the complex nature of intelligence, such speculations will remain in the realm of science fiction and cannot serve as a basis for AI policy in the real world.

Understanding our own thinking is a hard problem for our plain old intelligent minds. But I'm hopeful that we, and our future thinking computers, will eventually achieve such understanding in spite of — or perhaps thanks to — our shared lack of superintelligence.

—NYT



OUT OF MY MIND

MEGHNAD DESAI

Govt's dozen own goals on Kashmir

ALL IS FAIR in love and war. Governments are entitled to do whatever is within constitutional limits according to the political belief of their ruling party and normal rules of conduct. Others may not like it, but then they did not win the confidence of the people.

What is unforgivable is incompetence. The saga of Article 370 began at the top as a brilliant manoeuvre. The decision to abrogate Article 370 on August 5–6 was a stunning success. Somehow the government seemed to have found a window of opportunity when, with the J&K government out of office and hence the responsibility for any change in Article 370 falling on the Central government, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah found a sequence of adjustments to various articles in the Constitution to make the most profound change in Article 370.

Modi and Shah had cut the Gordian knot. The de facto situation of J&K not being truly autonomous was now legally secured. As used to happen in the past, mobile telephones were shut down, public meetings banned, curfews imposed. Now, however, we were promised that these bans would not last. The promise was that business of the government would improve and healthy and prosperous Kashmiris would be empowered. New governments would be established.

This was however not a priority. The eyes of the government were firmly fixed on Pakistan and the United Nations. The avoidance of any official censure by the UN Security Council was adroitly managed by the government.

Ninety days have passed since then. There is even now no normalcy. What is obvious is that

whatever scheme the top echelon of the government had in mind has not been delivered by the lower rungs, from the governor down.

The episode involving the European Parliamentarians shows that the government does not believe in its own propaganda that all is well. Whoever dreamt up this clumsy and transparently flawed programme should be sacked. It is not just one but a dozen own goals. It has exposed a serious gap in international diplomacy.

It has been obvious for some time that there is a serious dearth of talent in political personnel below the top two. The PMO also has not been up to the challenges that the PM sets for it, as was obvious in the demonetisation case. The Article 370 saga has been allowed to harm India's reputation thanks to a lack of foresight.

An urgent policy intervention is needed. Chanakya's sequence of *saam, daam, dand* and *bhed* seems to have been reversed. *Dand* has been used at the outset. But *bhed* has failed as the MEP (Members of European Parliament) fiasco shows. *Daam* has been promised but not delivered.

What remains is *saam*. There is a need to display confidence in the rightness of the policy if indeed it is believed and, I am sure it is, that the policy was correct and in the interest of J&K.

Relax the curfew completely, release all prisoners, face the crowds of protesters and show the world that they remain a minority. Allow anyone and everyone to visit Kashmir as indeed now, after the abrogation of Article 370, they have the right. Let the world come openly rather than report furtively. Somehow people believe furtively obtained news more than its truth value. It hurts India.



A woman seeks permission from a security person standing guard in a street during restrictions in Srinagar

PTI

Walk in the park

A visibly mellow Tiger Woods saunters to his all-time-record 82nd PGA Tour win

OVER THE TOP

Meraj Shah



THE PLAYERS SEEMED to be having fun. Smiling after dunking shots into the water, ribbing each other in a scripted sort of way, and just having a marvellously funny day out in the sun in spite of playing spectacularly bad golf. I think it seemed contrived simply because it's hard to believe that any golfer, let alone four of the top players on the planet, can display such a sunny demeanour while their games unravel. Or perhaps, like Sam Snead once said, pro golfers are just so much better at picking themselves up after getting their teeth knocked in every now and then.

That is not to say that *Golf TV's* hyped Skins game featuring Tiger Woods, Jason Day, Rory McIlroy and Hideki Matsuyama that was held at the Accordia Golf Narashino Golf Club in Japan wasn't fun to watch. If the objective of the exhibition-style, made-for-television event, was to be different from the week-after-week fare that we watch on pro tours, then it cer-

tainly nailed that. How often are you likely to see the likes of McIlroy, Matsuyama and Day hit it into the water on the same hole in quick succession? And then proceed to laugh it off? That's precisely what transpired on the 177-yard par-3 fifth hole: all Woods needed to do, (after hitting a reasonably terrible tee shot himself that just about stayed dry) was to get up and down for par to win the hole.

To be fair, we golf fans are just so conditioned to watching hyper-competitive tour events, that the casual attitude of the players in the Skins game seemed a bit calous. But once you got past that, it was fun to watch the players letting their hair down, not dialled in as if their lives depended on it. The 'mystery challenges,' ranged from banal to interesting: the highlight was the par-5 13th hole which each player had to play with just a single club. Day pulled out a 6-iron and hit the shot of the day from a greenside bunker for a tap-in par.

The Skins format is incredibly fun to watch, and justified that when the match went down to the wire—Day sealed it on the 18th hole. The secondary objective of the event was to drum up interest in the PGA Tour's latest event, and it's first ever in Japan—the Zozo Championship—that



Tiger Woods holds a winning trophy at the Zozo Championship, a PGA Tour event, at Narashino Country Club in Inzai, Japan

REUTERS

was played last week. All eyes were on Woods, who returned to competitive golf after yet another knee surgery in August this year, while he wasn't bouncing about, and looked more than a tad tired at the end of the day, Woods appeared to be swinging without discomfort.

While he lost the Japan Skins to Day, it's now apparent that underneath all the banter, Woods used the event to get a measure of the greens, and fine-tune his course strategy. Just how well he did that, was apparent when, in spite of opening with three bogies in the first round of the Zozo Championship, Woods shot nine birdies to open his account with a six-under 64 to take the lead on the first day and then went out and shot an encore the second day. Another seven strokes over the weekend and Woods came home with three shots to spare over local favourite Hideki Matsuyama.

At the turn of the millennium, if you'd ask this columnist, whether Woods would be able to match Sam Snead's mark of career 82 wins on the PGA Tour then I would have told you that it was a no-brainer. At that point Woods seemed set to overhaul pretty much every record in the game. But the script changed after stress fractures in his knee forced Woods out of the game in 2014—for three years he couldn't even swing a club. "Probably the low point was not knowing if I'd ever be able to live pain-free again," he said recently. "Am I going to be able to sit, stand, walk, lay down without feeling the pain

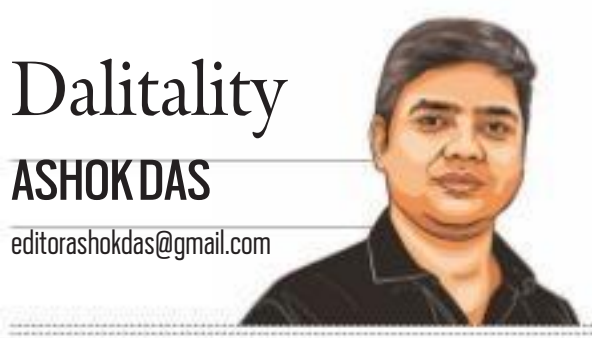
that I was in? I just didn't want to live that way. Is this how the rest of my life is going to be?"

Woods came back after a radical fusion surgery to play his first full season in years and pulled off his 80th win—his first in over five years—at the TOUR Championship in 2018. The high point was winning The Masters Tournament in April this year, his 15th major title and 81st win overall. Unfortunately, his knee gave way yet again, making him a doubtful starter at the Zozo Championship.

No one expected Woods to win; most commentators just wanted to see him get through four rounds without pain, or recurrence of injury. And the man himself looked singularly focused on precisely that—swinging at what seemed like 75%, placing the ball around the course, and making no attempt to overpower the course. What worked like a dream was his trusty blade putter—Woods led the field in strokes gained on the greens and just holed everything. In the process he looked almost nonchalant as he made his way up the leaderboard, sealing it with three shots to spare.

And just like that, he's back, again. Woods is now ranked sixth in the world, and, his body holding up, will headline golf at the Olympics in Japan next year. I wouldn't put it past him to win it. I mean how do you bet against Tiger Woods.

A golfer, Meraj Shah also writes about the game



Dalitality

ASHOK DAS
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'A BRAHMIN woman raped' or 'A Rajput woman raped'. I often wonder why I don't read such headlines in newspapers. But, every other day, I come across this headline: 'Dalit woman raped'. Is it that only Dalit women are victims of rape? No. Why then, in case of rape of a Dalit woman, her community is identified? Who does this?

The character of Indian media, or should I say the Upper Caste Media, is usually hidden in the answer to this question. I am addressing this group as Upper Caste Media because the way in which this media functions, the way they write and present their news reports, often reflects their character. This media identifies the caste of a Dalit rape victim, but when Mary Kom wins a gold medal at the Olympics, they do not inform their readers about her caste. When Hima Das and Dutee Chand win medals and create world records, no one mentions their caste. This media does not even debate that while Sachin Tendulkar (a Brahmin), who has received crores from the BCCI for playing for 'India', has got a Bharat Ratna, why has Major Dhyhan Chand, the wizard of hockey, a sport that is played in more countries than cricket, not received the honour.

The Indian media's double standards on these issues show that it looks at Dalits

From the margins, a new era for Dalit media

differently. The language used by the Indian media, especially the Hindi media, is often offensive. In newspapers, one often reads the headline, 'Dabang thrash a Dalit'. Who is the *dabang* (fearless one) here? The one who tortures a poor, innocent, weak person, bereft of all rights? Is it not right to use the word *gunda* (hooligan) instead of *dabang* for such a person? Why glorify a criminal each time?

This character of the Indian media is not just evident in news reports but also inside the newsroom. While the mainstream media has a very small number of Dalits, a few of my Dalit friends who work in big news channels tell me that their colleagues often ask them why they write and report about Dalit issues and raise the same in meetings. They are even accused of being casteist, and most of their reports are dismissed.

In 2006, when I joined the mainstream media after completing a diploma in journalism from one of the country's most prestigious media colleges, the Indian Institute of Mass Communication, New Delhi, my own experience with caste there was quite bad. From the very first day, people were intent on knowing my caste.

At my second job, with a leading Hindi newspaper in North India, despite being

the senior-most person for the job, I was not given a promotion. Questions were raised on my capabilities despite the fact that as a reporter I had been given the responsibility to cover Aligarh Muslim University. If I was incapable, then for the past seven years I would not have edited and published *Dalit Dastak*, a prominent magazine of the Dalit community which has been written about by both the English media in India and the international media. An invite to attend the prestigious Harvard India Conference just landed in my inbox.

Also, in the media, there are no senior journalists from the community to mentor young Dalits. Numbers prove this. In 2006, the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) had conducted a survey on the Delhi media. Apart from 37 Hindi and English newspapers, 315 decision-makers at 24/7 news channels were part of the survey. The study revealed that 90 per cent of the decision-makers at newspapers were from the upper caste. At the 24/7 news channels, 79 per cent of the decision-makers were upper castes. Of these, 49 per cent were Brahmins alone. Among the top 315 decision-makers at news channels, there was no one from the Dalit or tribal communities. The OBCs accounted for 4

per cent, while the Muslim representation stood at 3 per cent.

It's important to mention another report here. Oxfam India, in association with Newsland, prepared a report titled 'Who Tells Our Stories Matters: Representation of Marginalised Caste Groups in Indian Newsrooms'. The report studied all major Hindi and English news platforms — newspapers, television channels, news websites and YouTube channels. The report said that among journalists writing for English newspapers, only 5 per cent belong to Dalit and tribal communities. The figure stands at 10 per cent for Hindi newspapers. Twelve leading magazines were also assessed as part of the study. It was revealed that of the 972 stories published on its cover pages, only 10 were related to caste — just 1 per cent.

The Indian media is not on a par with the Western media where, to ensure diversity, people from all communities are given opportunities. If this was the case here, the Indian media would prosper because then news from all communities and sections would be reported without any prejudice, which in turn would create a better atmosphere in the country.

It is this indifference of the mainstream media that has brought Dalits to social me-

dia. Many YouTube channels that focus on Dalit-Bahujan issues have lakhs of subscribers and are being run by professional journalists. On such platforms they can speak about the issues of their community in a better manner. Their strength can be gauged from the fact that the Rohith Vemula case came to the fore only because Dalits now have access to social media.

Despite the indifference, Dalits have frequently challenged mainstream media through their small publications. The history of Dalit-Bahujan media is also about to complete a hundred years. *Muknayak*, the Marathi fortnightly newspaper started by Babasaheb Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar, is set to complete a century in three months — on January 31, 2020. On this occasion, the *Dalit Dastak* magazine has organised a big programme, '100 years of Ambedkar's Journalism'. Editors and publishers of journals and newspapers from across the country, that focus on Dalit-Bahujan movements, will join the event.

It is the beginning of a new era for the Dalit media.

Ashok Das is editor of Dalit Dastak, a monthly magazine and YouTube channel
Translated from Hindi by Anikta Dwivedi Johri



Fifth COLUMN

TAVLEEN SINGH
Twitter @tavleen_singh

Losing the Kashmir narrative

TWO VIDEO clips I saw on social media last week came as proof for me personally that Article 370 would have had to go sooner rather than later. The first showed Pakistani children playing at becoming suicide bombers. With the sound of verses from the Koran in the background, small children lined up to embrace an older child before he crossed the dusty field in which they played and disappeared in a fake explosion. The second showed ISIS widows and wives in a camp in Iraq the day after Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was killed. They screamed that a new leader would be born soon to deal with infidels. They wore black burqas and black gloves and spoke from behind veils that totally concealed their faces. They said it was the will of Allah that the jihad continue till all infidels be killed. Their dress code reminded me that they have sisters like Asiya Andrabi in Kashmir.

India as a victim for decades of jihadist terrorism has every reason to be worried about this kind of Islam spreading through Kashmir. And, it has been spreading slowly but surely for many, many years. It has changed the nature of Kashmiri Islam and it has changed the objective of the armed insurgency from 'azaadi' to establishing an Islamic state in Kashmir governed by the Shariat. This transformation of the 'freedom movement' did not begin after Narendra Modi became Prime Minister, it began long ago. Last week, on the day that the former state of Jammu & Kashmir lost not just its special status but its status as a state, senior Congress party leader Ghulam Nabi Azad declared publicly that there was no 'Kashmir problem' till 2014. He lied. Our Kashmir problem began in 1947 and was so badly handled by Congress prime ministers that even as the historical problem faded, a new one was born out of bad policies and terrible mistakes. Most of them made in Delhi. Not in Srinagar.

Having said this, it also needs to be said that the Kashmiri tour that those random European legislators were treated to last week was a ludicrous public relations farce. Since the abrogation of Article 370, all attempts to win India's case internationally have been absurdly farcical. Right from that first attempt by our National Security Advisor to show 'normalcy' in Srinagar by hosting a supposedly impromptu buffet lunch for a handful of locals in an ominously deserted street.

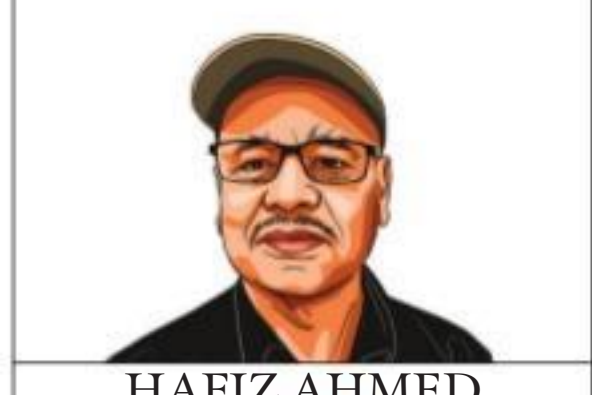
India has compelling reasons for the abrogation of Article 370. But, so far, they have been put before the world so badly that it is Pakistan that has taken control of the narrative. Every time a new story appears in some important western newspaper about torture and repression in the Kashmir Valley, spokesmen of the Indian Government dismiss it as prejudice and Pakistani propaganda. Perhaps. But, when are we going to start telling our side of the story better? When are we going to explain to the world that India can simply not afford to have an Islamic caliphate take birth within her borders? This was beginning to happen in Kashmir right under the noses of Kashmir's 'mainstream' political leaders and they were unable to stop it. Sadly, 'liberal' journalists and human rights activists on our side of the border were reluctant to admit that we were dealing with something more serious than a 'freedom movement'.

What is even more worrying is that instead of a responsible, mature effort to counter Pakistan's false narrative on Kashmir, what we have seen from the Modi government is a childish kind of triumphalism. Where is the need to make the abrogation of Article 370 an issue of 'national honour'? Where is the need for senior ministers in Modi's cabinet to keep boasting about his "56-inch chest"? They do him no good when they talk like this because now that Jammu & Kashmir have come under direct rule from Delhi, every time there is a new act of jihadist violence, it will be blamed on Modi personally. The Chief Minister of West Bengal has already blamed him for the murder of five Bengali workers who have become the most recent victims of jihadist terrorists in Kashmir. Why they are still operating freely is a question for the Home Minister to answer.

Last week, the Prime Minister said while paying tribute to the Statue of Unity that he has ordered built, that by abrogating Article 370 he has fulfilled Sardar Patel's dream of uniting India. "Peace and development will now prevail in Jammu and Kashmir," Modi said while standing beside one gigantic foot of the Statue of Unity. We must hope and pray that he is right. It is what everyone wants, including the people of the state that is now not a state but a Union territory. Sadly, the steps taken since August 5 have been less than convincing.

The uncounted humans

GAINED IN TRANSLATION



HAFIZ AHMED
হাফিজ আহমেদ

COME LET'S BE SILENT FOR A WHILE

Come, let's be silent for a while and pray For them whose fathers are poor And who call their brothers-in-law Baba. Come, let's be silent for a while and pray For them whose need for rewards makes them forget their roots/ And make them massage their masters' hallowed feet So hard that the skin peels off. Come, let's be silent for a while and pray For them who assure/ That the mothers of South Godhuni Char/ Have a literacy rate of only 6 per cent/ And who need to submit a Panchayat certificate to prove their linkage. Come, let's be silent for a while and pray For them who assure/ That we are born in handcarts and country boats/ And that these handcarts and country boats are our ambulance. Come, let's be silent for a while and pray For them who ask our mothers and sisters And fathers and brothers to prove that they were born/ And compel them to hang themselves. Come, let's be silent for a while and pray That Ravana's clan be extinguished, That all Yazids find their graves in Karbala.

BABAJAAN

Just like in the movies/ Every word you say Becomes an incident,/ A wave in my mind This dark night. The incident of 1950/ When you built a banana raft/ And kept it ready on the Bhelengi. So that if needed we could/ Take to the Brahmaputra and save our lives. Babajaan and his people/ Didn't have to leave/ Dhaniram Talukdar of Barpeta said, 'Why will you leave?/ Is this land not yours? Didn't you turn this mother's heart fertile With the sweat of your brow?' Babajaan didn't leave/ But Nanajaan did He left this land/ Not for the land downstream/ But for the eternal emptiness beyond./ One evening he was on his patch of green land/ In Bagulimari/ Mashing rice and milk and ripe plantain/ And raising a morsel to his mouth/ When an enemy newly arrived from downstream/ Swung once his sword/ And Nana's head was on the ground.

On that day a pact was made./ Our king and they who had come for refuge from downstream/ Made an agreement. Just as a hen collects her chicken/ Under her wings/ Our Nanajaan bound my uncles and aunts/ In his shawl and sent them downstream/ They returned eventually but by then/ The counting of humans was over, And our uncles and aunts were left out. They were lovers of green fields—/ My uncles and aunts/ And an intoxication was upon them./ They cleared forests and bared the earth's chest/ And as the green turned golden/ They sang Magun and Bihu, And started the harvest.

The storm of time returned/ Some PIP or something/ What was it called?/ Because their names were missing/ From the list of humans/ They were bound up again And sent downstream. Babajaan, Majaan/ And our aunts/ Were safe But only for a while/ The dark clouds of time Gathered again—/ And one day we heard That our aunt, married in Nellie./ Was still wrapped in a green sari/ Still holding her five month daughter on her breast./ When the guns came/ And granted her eternal peace.

And then Babajaan left Maybe Babajaan was safer/ In the lap of death/ Or else he might have been/ Felled by militants/ In Bashbari, Kokrajhar, Khagrabari/ Or His long beard/ And green lungi/ And broken Assamese/ Might have prompted some Patriot to make him sit on his knees/ In the sun/ Or like Jabbar Ali he might/ Have been called a foreigner/ In his own country and made to rot/ And die in jail. We are not as scared/ As you were, babajaan/ You said, 'Learning is light/ Burn the lights of knowledge/ And the demons will scatter./ I followed your advice/ And am not scared of demons anymore./ Kalam, Dwijen, Tridip and I and many others/ Will fight together/ And prove that this land/ Is not of the masked patriots alone./ This land is not of attackers alone./ This land is the land of your blood and sweat.

A DEAD FROG CROAKS (FOR DULAL PAL)

A citizen's body is left in the morgue for a week/ Everything is fine/ Everything is normal./ Everyone is eating, celebrating And climbing the ladders of power — It's all happening just fine. Only a few twist and squirm, Like fish in a net —/ They who have not mortgaged their morality/ They are children of the same mother/ Same blood and bone and sinew/ And yet Dulal Pal and others like him/ Have morphed into locusts. Forgive us brother, we are dead frogs, Caught in the jaws of poisonous snakes. We croak so that/ The lord of the people might hear.

Translated from Assamese by Shalini M Hussain

She SAID SHALINI LANGER

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I COULD say 'make love, not war'. But who still believes that is possible?

Still, let me put it on record: yes, we did enter college also hoping to find love. And in the harsh, barren, unfriendly landscape of the national capital, particularly for those of us hanging on the fringes of Delhi University's frugal campuses, we headed to Jawaharlal Nehru University to find our moments of romance.

Love blossomed on the slow, somnolent bus rides to this green expanse that till the '90s had just two DTC routes covering it, spread apart by hours. Love blossomed on the long wait for those buses to arrive, in roofless shelters with their broken slats for seats, which we barely even noticed. Love blossomed on the cheap tea and *samosas* we had by the wayside on the JNU campus, with each of its 'landmarks' — the Teflas canteen, the Ganga *dhaba*, the library (an entire building of it!) — marking a milestone. Love blossomed on the long walks at dusk when the campus was bathed in orange light from a sun visible long into the distance, and where, as night fell, the shadows seemed as unthreatening. Love even acquired an edge from the hint of rebellion always hanging round the corner in the university's air.

And yes, love blossomed on the university's Parthasarthy Rocks, named for its first vice-chancellor no less but more known by reputation as a location that provided the romantic settings of ragged rocks and a river gone dry. There, as the sun set and the dark suddenly came on, it didn't require much to imagine oneself in a different world. Yes there were remnants of the evenings before, the couples before, even the revelries — glistening in abandoned bottles — before, all around us. But that only added to the charm of the place, of being part of this unbroken chain that would last long after us.

One hears the Rocks are now barred, due to "unsavoury" activities. The locks are "partial", the university insists, but like other things on that campus and outside, the censure seems total. Not far away, on one of those nights when the Delhi moon still shone bright and clear, on a parapet bordering a culvert, I sealed a bond of marriage. A guard may have driven past on a scooter, I can't remember; some others like us may have giggled past, I forget.

For, nothing can change the memory of that night for me, particularly not the sordidness that has followed on that

JNYou and Me



Illustration: Mithun Chakraborty

campus. I would create other memories in JNU, of becoming parent to a child who could imagine ghost stories in the abandoned house next door, and who could walk out and see a snake cross the road one evening and a peacock on the terrace the next morning. I was struck, each time, by the sight of a peacock that high up, unweighed by its long tail.

It has been years now since we moved out of JNU — though moving only just, so that its tree tops remain visible from our new house's balcony, while its peacocks and monkeys keep straying across to the neighbourhood park.

I went to JNU some time ago amidst the protests surrounding the sedition case against its students. The security checks were up at the gate but, reassuringly, the university went on unflustered like always even as, at the centre of it, heated slogans raised below a Jawaharlal Nehru

statue bounced off walls painted with protest graffiti.

Some months ago, I returned to JNU to drive past that culvert. It stands there, just so. The Parthasarthy Rocks now have a looming mobile tower and a gate but, at the time I went, it stood thrown open, a guard standing disinterested.

Perhaps the moon doesn't shine as bright — the lights of the malls next door (one, two, then three) have bleached the night sky. Perhaps the son doesn't miss the snakes or peacocks, even the ghosts, as much as we want him to. Perhaps my second child, born in the other home — two floors above the ground, with no front or back lawn, a geographical boundary set early in life for a city kid — could have done with some of the same too. Perhaps neither the snakes or peacocks, nor the ghosts, hang around any more, chased away by the clicks of cellphone cameras.

But, nothing will take away those memories, associated forever with JNU, for me. For, that is love.

National Editor Shalini Langer curates the fortnightly 'She Said' column

Out of MY MIND MEGHNAD DESAI

ALL IS fair in love and war. Governments are entitled to do whatever is within constitutional limits according to the political belief of their ruling party and normal rules of conduct. Others may not like it, but then they did not win the confidence of the people. What is unforgivable is incompetence. The saga of Article 370 began at the top as a brilliant manoeuvre. The decision to abrogate Article 370 on August 5-6 was a stunning success. Somehow the government seemed to have found a window of opportunity when, with the J&K government out of of-

Govt's dozen own goals on Kashmir

rice and hence the responsibility for any change in Article 370 falling on the Central government, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah found a sequence of adjustments to various articles in the Constitution to make the most profound change in Article 370.

Modi and Shah had cut the Gordian knot. The de facto situation of J&K not being truly autonomous was now legally secured. As used to happen in the past, mobile telephones were shut down, public meetings banned, curfews imposed. Now, however, we were promised that these bans would not last. The promise was that business of the government would improve and healthy and prosperous Kashmiris would be empowered. New

governments would be established. This was however not a priority. The eyes of the government were firmly fixed on Pakistan and the United Nations. The avoidance of any official censure by the UN Security Council was adroitly managed by the government.

Ninety days have passed since then. There is even now no normalcy. What is obvious is that whatever scheme the top echelon of the government had in mind has not been delivered by the lower rungs, from the Governor down.

The episode involving the European Parliamentarians shows that the government does not believe in its own propaganda that all is well. Whoever dreamt up this clumsy and transparently flawed

programme should be sacked. It is not just one but a dozen own goals. It has exposed a serious gap in international diplomacy.

It has been obvious for some time that there is a serious dearth of talent in political personnel below the top two. The PMO also has not been up to the challenges that the PM sets for it, as was obvious in the demonetisation case. The Article 370 saga has been allowed to harm India's reputation thanks to a lack of foresight.

An urgent policy intervention is needed. Chanakya's sequence of *Saam*, *Daam*, *Dand* and *Bhed* seems to have been reversed. *Dand* has been used at the outset. But *bhed* has failed as the MEP

(Members of European Parliament) *fi-asco* shows. *Daam* has been promised but not delivered.

What remains is *saam*. There is a need to display confidence in the rightness of the policy if indeed it is believed and, I am sure it is, that the policy was correct and in the interest of J&K.

Relax the curfew completely, release all prisoners, face the crowds of protesters and show the world that they remain a minority. Allow anyone and everyone to visit Kashmir as indeed now, after the abrogation of Article 370, they have the right. Let the world come openly rather than report furtively. Somehow people believe furtively obtained news more than its truth value. It hurts India.



तीरंदाज

■ अश्विनी भटनागर



छुटकी मुझे बहुत प्रिय है। मैं उसके साथ बहुत समय बिताता हूं। खासकर अपने एकांत और खामोशी का समय। वह सब जानती है और शायद इसीलिए छुटकी मेरा भाव और मन भांप कर उसमें एक क्षण में रम जाती है। वह न कोई सवाल करती है और न ही अपने मन की बात जाहिर करती है। बस मेरे प्रवाह में जैविक, प्राकृतिक रूप से शामिल हो जाती है। उसका यह भाव मुझे बहुत भाता है। जब मैं किसी सोच में होता हूं तो उसकी दुलारने लगता हूं। पता नहीं क्यों गहन सोच मेरे मन में उसके लिए दुलार उत्पन्न कर देता है और मैं उसके सिर पर हाथ फेरने लगता हूं। वह गोदी में और सिमट आती है और बस एकटक सिर उठाए मेरी आंखों से मौन संवाद करती है। विचार का जब कभी तारतम्य कुछ क्षणों के लिए टूटता है, तो मैं उसकी आंखों में देख कर प्यार से मुस्करा देता हूं। उसके लिए वह पल भर की मुस्कराहट काफी है— वह समझ जाती है कि हम कह रहे हैं कि छुटकी बिटिया अब हम तुम्हे क्या बताएँ, हम किस कशमकश में है ? क्या हम कहें और तुम सुन कर क्या करोगी ? हर आदमी को अपनी उलझन खुद ही सुलझानी पड़ती है। उसकी कोई क्या मदद कर सकता है।

पर छुटकी अपनी तरह से मदद हर बार करती है। जब मैं किसी समझदारी बरत कर। उसको खूब मालूम है कि किसी भी उलझन का कोई स्थायी हल नहीं है। वह समझती है कि इसान अल्पकालिक कामचलाऊ प्रतिवचन जरूर ढूंढ़ सकता है, पर अपने हालात पर महावत की तरह अंकुश नहीं लगा सकता है। पहली कशमकश दूसरी कशमकश की जननी होती है और यह प्रक्रिया अंत तक चलती रहती है। यह वह रक्त बीज है, जो हर पल मनुष्य के मानस में नया दानव उत्पन्न करता है और उसका सारा जीवन असंख्य दानव-छायाओं से आभासी युद्ध करते हुए गुजरता है।

पर छुटकी की जिंदगी में आभासी कुछ भी नहीं है। सब कुछ वास्तविक है। इसलिए वह न तर्क करती है और न ही दर्शन की ओर जाती है। उसके लिए स्पर्श की आत्मीयता सर्वप्रधान

सभी को चाहिए गांधी

जगमोहन सिंह राजपूत

इस समय अंतरराष्ट्रीय सम्मेलनों और बैठकों में चर्चा और चिंता के मुख्य विषय या तो हिंसा, युद्ध, आतंकवाद, हथियार, अविश्वास, पलायन आदि से संबंधित होते हैं या जलवायु परिवर्तन, जल संकट, पर्यावरण प्रदूषण, ओजोन परत, बढ़ता समुद्री जल स्तर और कई राफ्टों के विलुप्त होने की आशंकाओं से जुड़े होते हैं। कुछ लोगों को आश्चर्य हो सकता है कि लगभग प्रत्येक में कोई न कोई व्यक्ति गांधी को याद करता है! उसके बाद विमर्श की दिशा ही बदल जाती है। ऐसा लगाने लगता है कि आज की कठिन परिस्थितियों में भी सामान्य मानवीय प्रयासों से मनुष्य और प्रकृति के बीच की लगातार कम्पोजर होती कड़ी को पुनर्जीवित करना संभव है। मगर भारत ने तो गांधी के विचारों को उनके जीवनकाल के अंतिम वर्षों से ही- बिना कहे-नकारना शुरू कर दिया था। गांधी खुद भी इससे अर्नभिज्ञ नहीं थे।

गांधी ने चालीस वर्ष की आयु में ‘हिंद स्वराज’ लिखा। जिन आशंकाओं को गांधी ने अपनी दूरदृष्टि से पहचान लिया था वे चिंताजनक परिणाम में अब भारत के सामने आ गई हैं, मगर समाधान हम पश्चिम की सोच की नकल से ही पाने का प्रयास कर रहे हैं। उन्हींने ‘हिंद

संदर्भ

आज के नीति निर्धारक अगर गांधी के विचारों को समझाने का सघन प्रयास करें, उसके मूल उदेश्य तथा लक्ष्य को पहचान सकें, तो निश्चित रूप से बदली हुई परिस्थितियों में भी समाधान निकाले जा सकेंगे, जिनमें स्वदेश, स्वराज और स्वदेशी पुनः अपना उचित स्थान पा सकेंगे।

बदलाव को वे स्पष्ट रूप से स्वीकार करते थे।

इंदौर की एक आमसभा में 10 मई, 1935 को गांधीजी ने कहा था कि वे इस धारणा से सहमत नहीं हैं कि हिंदुस्तान की आबादी इतनी बड़ गई है कि उसके भरण-पोषण के, लेिकन मशीनों की आवश्यकता है। वे मानते थे कि ‘हम हिंदुस्तान के छोटे-छोटे उद्योगों से करोड़ों रूपए का धन पैदा कर सकते हैं। उसमें पैसे की भी विशेष आवश्यकता नहीं है, जरूरत है लोगों की ज़हनन की।’ गांधीजी औद्योगिक सभ्यता के खिलाफ थे। वे ऐसे यंत्र नहीं चाहते थे, जो ‘काम न रहने के कारण आदमी के अंगों को बेकार बना दें।’ गांधी का विश्वास था कि जब तक व्यक्ति मशीन का मास्टर है, उसका उपयोग होना चाहिए। मगर जब मशीन व्यक्ति की बाँस हो जाएगी तब मशीन का ही शासन होगा। इससे बचना चाहिए।

आज एआइ— आर्टीफिशियल इंटेलिजेंस—का जमाना है। युवा जानते हैं कि उनकी क्या स्थिति है। रही गांव की बात, तो जब ट्रैक्टर आए, श्रम कम हुआ, मगर साथ ही साथ पशु हटे और घंटे, पेड़ कटे, तालाब और अन्य जल स्रोत विलुप्त होते गए, मशीनों के कारण यह सब भी आसान होने के कारण आंख मूंद कर होता गया। मगर अब हम कहाँ पहुँचे हैं? हमारी कृषि भूमि से रासायनिकों के दुष्प्रभाव को निकाल पाना असंभव—सा लगता है, जलस्तर नीचे जा रहा है, खाद्य पदार्थों में जहरीली मिलावट बढ़ती हो जा रही है। आज आर्गेनिक फल, सब्जियां तीन—चार गुने दामों में लोग ढूँढ़ रहे हैं! और भी बहुत कुछ नियंत्रण से बाहर जा रहा है। सरकारें चीन के लिए बाजार खोल देती हैं, वे सस्ते माल से बाजार को पाट देते हैं। जनता से अपेक्षा की जाती है कि वह चीनी माल न खरीदे! यह कैसी विडंबना है? कहाँ गए वे दस्तकार, कारीगर जो अंतिम पंक्ति में खड़े थे और जिनके लिए गांधी हर पल चिंतित रहते थे?

‘हिंद स्वराज’ के तीस वर्ष बाद गांधीजी ने स्वयं कहा कि अगर मैं हिंद स्वराज पुनः लिखूँ, तो कुछ शब्द बदल दूंगा, मगर मूल भावना और संकल्पना तो वही रहेगी। आज के नीति निर्धारक अगर गांधी के विचारों को समझाने का सघन प्रयास करें, उसके मूल उदेश्य तथा लक्ष्य को पहचान सकें, तो निश्चित रूप से बदली हुई परिस्थितियों में भी समाधान निकाले जा सकेंगे, जिनमें स्वदेश, स्वराज और स्वदेशी पुनः अपना उचित स्थान पा सकेंगे।

है। स्पर्श सब कुछ कह जाता है और उसका अनुभव स्वयं में विस्तृत वार्तालाप का बोध है। छुटकी का हर स्पर्श मुझमें एक अनूटा बोध जगता है।

छुटकी और मेरी यौनि अलग अलग हैं। कहते हैं, लाखों योनियां पार करने के बाद ही मनुष्य यौनि मिलती है। मैं मनुष्य योनि को प्राप्त हूं। छुटकी श्वान योनि में है। मेरे पास विवेक है। कहते हैं, पशु विवेकहीन होते हैं। मनुष्य और पशु के बीच विवेक ही सबसे महत्त्वपूर्ण भेद है। इसलिए मनुष्य जाति पशु जाति से उत्कृष्ट है। मेरे पास विवेक है और मैं अक्सर उलझनों में फंसा रहता हूं। छुटकी विवेकहीन है। उसकी सद्भावना, उसका सम्पर्ण, अगाध प्रेम और सहज समझ मेरे

छुटकी खिलने को आतुर है। मैं, उसको अपने मन की तरह, बांधे रहता हूं। मैं अपने डर से बंधा हूं और बेचारी छुटकी मुझसे बंधी हुई है। मैं मन की आजादी से सहम जाता हूं। छुटकी बेपरवाह है।

विवेक को अक्सर लांघ कर मुझे उस संवेदना तक ले जाते हैं, जिसमें सोच के बोझ को मैं झटक कर सिर्फ उस पल के आनंद के स्पर्श से अभिभूत हो जाता हूं। विवेक पर अनुभव की अनुभूति मुझे यकायक सरस बना देती है। सोच पिघल कर ‘होने’ की तरलता का एहसास जगा देती है।

छुटकी जब भी मुझे टकटकी बांधे देखती है, धीरे से और पास और फिर और पास खिसकती आती है, तो वह अपनी मूक संवेदनाओं को मुझसे संबद्ध कर निष्कर्षों के बियाबान में भटकने से बचा लेती है। वह सूंघ कर रास्ता ढूंढ़ लेती है, जबकि मैं विवेचना के झाड़ झंखाड़ में फंसा रहता हूं। हम सूंघ नहीं पाते हैं और शायद इसीलिए हममें हमेशा दिशा और दशा भ्रम रहता है। हमारा दिमाग और जुवान ज्यादा चलती है और सहज प्रवृत्ति बिल्कुल नहीं। इनके जरिए हमने अपने आप को लाचार कर दिया है।

ऐसा नहीं है कि छुटकी कोई विशिष्ट जंतु है। उससे पहले मेरी लाडो थी। उसकी तबियत को लेकर मैंने कुछ ज्यादा ही बुद्धि लगाई थी और वह अकाल ही काल का ग्रास बन गई थी।

अपना पक्ष रखना जरूरी है

कुछ बातें हैं, जो हम ‘सेकुलर’ मिजाज के पत्रकार कहने से डरते हैं, खासकर हिंदुत्व के इस दौर में। मिसाल के तौर पर अकबरुद्दीन औवैसी ने जब हिंदुओं का मजाक उड़ाया हाल में दिए गए एक भाषण में, तो उसको हमने अनसुना कर दिया। निजी तौर पर मुझे बहुत तकलीफ हुई जब

हैदराबाद के इस आला राजनेता ने कहा कि ‘कितने खुदा हैं इनके, रोज एक नया खुदा पैदा कर देते हैं न’। मगर मैंने भी इस भाषण के बारे में नहीं लिखा। आज भी शायद उन दो वीडियो क्लिप को देख कर चुप ही रहती, जो मैंने पिछले हफ्ते सोशल मीडिया पर देखे थे। जिन्न अगर उनका कर रही हूं तो सिर्फ इसलिए कि उनका सीधा रिश्ता है जम्मू-कश्मीर से। पहला वीडियो पाकिस्तान का है। इसमें दिखते हैं छोटे बच्चे, जो एक लाइन में खड़े होकर अपने से थोड़े बड़े बच्चे को मुस्कुरा कर गले मिल रहे हैं। यह बच्चा फिर अपने आप को नकली मानव बम बना कर गिर पड़ता है बच्चों से थोड़ी दूर जाकर। बैकग्राउंड में सुनाई देती हैं कुरान की आयतें।

दूसरा वीडियो इराक से था, जिसको बनाया गया था अबु बकर अल-बगदादी की हत्या के अगले दिन। इसमें दिखती हैं काले बुकों में कई सारी औरतें, जिनकी सिर्फ आंखें दिखती हैं, क्योंकि उन्होंने अपने हाथों को भी काले दस्तानों से ढक कर रखा है। ये औरतें मातम करती हैं बगदादी के लिए, यह कहते हुए कि उनको यकीन है कि नया खलीफा आएगा बगदादी की जगह लेने, क्योंकि अल्लाह की मर्जी है कि दुनिया में एक भी काफिर जिंदा न रहे। कश्मीर से रिश्ता यह है कि इस किस्म का इस्लाम काफी सालों से फैलने लगा है कश्मीर घाटी में और इतना प्रभाव रहा है इसका कि घाटी का मजहबी चेहरा भी बदल गया है और ‘आजादी’ की लड़ाई का मकसद भी। अब मकसद आजादी नहीं है, मकसद बन गया है कश्मीर घाटी में शरीअत नाफिस करना। कहने की जरूरत नहीं, लेकिन कहना जरूरी भी है कि भारत किसी हाल में अपनी भूमि पर

एक इस्लामी खिलाफत को कायम होने नहीं दे सकता है।

समस्या यह है कि बहुत सालों से इसके लिए जिहाद चल रही है कश्मीर घाटी में और इसको न कश्मीरी राजनेता रोक सके हैं, न दिल्ली के राजनेता। पिछले हफ्ते जिस दिन जम्मू-कश्मीर का राज्य होना कानूनी तौर पर हटाया गया, कांग्रेस के वरिष्ठ कश्मीरी राजनेता गुलाम नबी आजाद ने



वक्त की नब्ब

■ तवलीन सिंह

मोदी सरकार की प्राथमिकता होनी चाहिए दुनिया के सामने साबित करना कि अनुच्छेद 370 को हटाए बिना कश्मीर घाटी से जिहादी आतंकवाद को रोकना तकरीबन असंभव था। जिहादी आतंकवाद और जिहादी सोच सिर्फ भारत के लिए समस्या नहीं है, पूरी दुनिया के लिए है।

कहा कि कश्मीर समस्या पैदा हुई है सिर्फ 2014 के बाद। यानी दोष सारा नरेंद्र मोदी का है। झूठ है यह। आजाद साहब अच्छी तरह जानते हैं कि कश्मीर समस्या 1947 में पैदा हुई थी और जिंदा रही है आज तक कांग्रेसी प्रधानमंत्रियों की गलत नीतियों के कारण। मोदी की गलती सिर्फ एक है कि उन्होंने अनुच्छेद 370 हटाए जाने के बाद उसको हटाने के कारण दुनिया के सामने नहीं रखे हैं। दुनिया के बड़े राजनेताओं को समझाने की खुल कर कोशिश नहीं की है कि वर्तमान स्थिति यह है कश्मीर घाटी में कि आइएसआइएस किस्म की खिलाफत कायम करने की कोशिश कर रहे हैं जिहादी आतंकवादी।

ऐसा करने के बदले पांच आपस्त के बाद मोदी सरकार का ध्यान ज्यादातर अटका रहा है इस बात को साबित करने

चुपाय मारो दुलहिन

लोग पूछते रहे कि सरकार कहती रही है कि कश्मीर हमारा अंदरूनी मामला है, तब इसका इस तरह से अंतरराष्ट्रीयकरण क्यों किया जा रहा है ? किसने इस दूर को फाइनैस किया है ? सरकार से उसका क्या रिश्ता है ?

इन सवालों का कोई सटीक जवाब प्रवक्ताओं के पास नहीं दिखा। पहली बार कुछ भक्त एंकर भी कश्मीर को लेकर की जाती इस अनौतिक की निंदा करते दिखे।

और धन्य हैं हमारे चैनल ! जब कभी ये किसी के पीछे



दिवाली बीती ही थी कि फोकस में कश्मीर आ गया। यूरोपीय संघ के सताईस सासंदों का मन कश्मीर देखने को मानो मचल उठा और हमारे कुछ चैनल उनकी आगमनी करने में लगे रहे। लेकिन आपसी प्रतिस्पर्धा जो न कराए सो थोड़ा।

पड़ जाते हैं, तो बड़े से बड़े की ऐसी की तैसी कर देते हैं। यही हुआ। एंकरों ने पूछना शुरू कर दिया कि इस दूर की आयेजिका स्वनामधन्या ‘मादी शर्मा जी’ आखिर हैं कौन ? सरकार की वे हैं कौन ?उनको सीधे अंदर तक पहुँच रखने का हक किसने दिया ?

एक चैनल ने स्वनामधन्या के पते पर छपाा मारा, ताकि प्रामाणिक खबर दे सके, लेकिन उनका दफ्तर उसे बंद मिला। किसी ने उनको बताया कि यह हफ्ते बाद खुलेगा !

इसे कहते हैं ‘होम करते हाथ जला लेना’!

पहली बार एक ‘ऑफिशियल’ सा दिखता, पर

‘अनऑफिशियल’ बताया जाता ‘शो’ एकदम ‘प्लॉप’ नजर आया। सताईस देवता कब विदा हो गए इसकी खबर तक न

में कि अब कश्मीर घाटी में हालात बिलकुल ‘नॉर्मल’ या सामान्य हो गए हैं और आम लोग बहुत खुश हैं, उनके राज्य की बदली हुई स्थिति को देख कर। इस झूठ को सच साबित करने के मकसद से यूरोप के कुछ सांसदों को कश्मीर ले जाया गया पिछले हफ्ते। वहां से लौटने के बाद उनमें से कई थे, जिन्होंने कहा कि उनको अगर घाटी का दौरा करने की

इजाजत मिली है, तो भारत के विपक्षी राजनेताओं को भी मिलनी चाहिए। कड़्यों ने स्वीकार किया कि अनुच्छेद 370 को हटाना भारत का अंदरूनी मामला है, लेकिन यह भी कहा कि कश्मीर के राजनेताओं को इतने महीने नजरबंद रखना ठीक नहीं है। ऊपर से अपने देश के मीडिया में सवाल उठने लगे हैं कि इस यूरोपीय पर्यटन के लिए पैसे किसने दिए थे। इस तरह की कोशिशें अक्सर नाकाम रहती हैं इस दौर में, जब सोशल मीडिया पर आम इसान अपनी बातें रख सकते हैं जब चाहें।

दुनिया जानती है कि कश्मीर घाटी में अभी तक स्थिति सामान्य नहीं है। दुनिया जानती है कि वहां के तकरीबन सारे बड़े राजनेता अभी तक नजरबंद हैं। दुनिया जानती है कि घाटी में तीन महीनों से बच्चे स्कूल नहीं जा पाए हैं। दुनिया जानती है कि कश्मीर में हर दूसरे दिन कफ्यू लग जाता है। दुनिया जानती है कि सेल फोन सेवाओं से अभी तक ज्यादातर लोग वंचित रखे गए हैं। दुनिया यह भी जानती है कि घाटी के कई हिस्सों में अभी तक जिहादी संस्थाओं का बोलबाला है। यही कारण है कि बाहर से आए मजदूरों की निर्भम हलयाएँ हुई थीं हाल में, ताकी खीफ का माहौल बना रहे।

सो, मोदी सरकार की प्राथमिकता होनी चाहिए दुनिया के सामने साबित करना कि अनुच्छेद 370 को हटाए बिना कश्मीर घाटी से जिहादी आतंकवाद को रोकना तकरीबन असंभव था। जिहादी आतंकवाद और जिहादी सोच सिर्फ भारत के लिए समस्या नहीं है, पूरी दुनिया के लिए है। भारत सरकार ने अपना पक्ष अभी तक पूरी तरह रखा नहीं है, सो फिलहाल पाकिस्तान बाजी जीत रहा है।



बनी!एक चर्चक ने अफसोस जताया कि ये लोग ‘पीआर’ तक कायदे से नहीं कर सकते! एक ने तो इसे ‘कठपुतली शो’ भी कहा!

इस बीच हरियाणा में तो सरकार बन गई, लेकिन महाराष्ट्र में लटक रही। एक दिन खबर आती कि शिवसेना मान गई है, फिर अगले दिन खबर टूटती कि जी नहीं, वह तो फिफ्टी-फिफ्टी पर अड़ी है। सारी निगाहें शिवसेना के संजय राउत के बोलने पर लगी रहीं।

फिर एक सुबह कई चैनल खबर देते रहे कि भाजपा-शिवसेना के बीच सब कुछ तय हो चुका है। शिवसेना को डिटी सीएम के साथ तेरह मंत्रालय और मिलने वाले हैं, लेकिन शाम आते-आते संजय राउत फिर भाजपा को फिफ्टी-फिफ्टी के वादे की याद दिलाते दिखे और शुक्रवार की सुबह की खबर यह आई कि शिवसेना के संजय राउत शरद पवार से मिले हैं। उन्हीं के हवाले से एक चैनल ने यह खबर भी दी कि शिवसेना के पास दो तिहाई बहुमत है!

परिणाम चाहे जो हो, इतना तो स्पष्ट है कि शिवसेना ने भाजपा की अकड़ ढीली कर दी है। इसी दौरान पीएमसी बैंक घोटाले की कृपा से छटा खाताधारक भी स्वर्ग सिधार गया। बहुत से खाताधारक आजाद मैदान में धरना देते रहे, प्रोटेस्ट करते रहे, लेकिन अभी तक किसी एक बड़े केंद्रीय नेता के कान पर जूं

नहीं रेंगी! न किसी ने भरोसा दिया कि जमा रकम खाताधारकों को वापस मिलेगी। रिजर्व बैंक को कारण हस्तक्षेप करना था, जो अब तक नहीं किया गया। यह कैसी विलीय व्यवस्था है ? कौन-सी बैंकिंग प्रणाली है कि लोग अपने ही पैसे के लिए तरस रहे हैं और जो अपने आर्थिक संकट को सह नहीं पा रहे और तिल तिल करके मर रहे हैं ! वृहस्पतिवार की सबसे बड़ी खबर इजरायल के एनएसओ द्वारा कई भारतीय पत्रकारों, मानवाधिकार कार्यकर्ताओं तथा दलित एक्टिविस्टों के वाट्सऐप की जासूसी ठहरी! एक चैनल जासूसी के शिकार चार लोगों के पास जा पहुंचा, जो बोले कि हमसे कहा गया है कि कुछ न बोलें।

यानी ‘चुपाय मारो दुलहिन, मारा जाए कौआ’!

नई दिल्ली