

Combating *Aedes*

Researchers have discovered that a common bacteria, *wolbachia*, can inhibit virus infections in mosquitoes



TECH-ENABLED

DEVANGSHU DATTA

One of the more interesting ways to combat mosquito-borne diseases is by infecting the mosquitoes with a parasite. The *Aedes aegypti* mosquito hosts the viruses responsible for dengue, zika, yellow fever and chikungunya. Female mosquitoes bite infected humans and pick up those viruses, which flourish within the mosquitoes' cells. These diseases are passed on when the infected mosquito bites somebody else.

Dengue causes 50-100 million infections every year while zika epidemics in the Latin America have had terrible effects on new-born babies. Yellow fever affects Brazil and Africa and chikungunya has caused epidemics across continents. Researchers have discovered that a common bacteria, *wolbachia*, can inhibit virus infections in mosquitoes. The *wolbachia* bacteria is a parasite that comes in multiple strains. It is naturally present in 60 per cent of insect species, as well as in some nematodes (worms). But aedes is not a normal host for *wolbachia*. The bacteria works in two ways to inhibit virus infections. It seems to boost the mosquito immune system, which makes it harder for viruses to infect the insect. It also competes with viruses for key molecules like cholesterol. Viruses need cholesterol to survive and *wolbachia* is more efficient at consuming cholesterol. Hence it starves any virus that does infect the mosquito. Some strains of *wolbachia* present in nematodes are dangerous. They can

cause inflammation that results in filaria and other diseases. But the strains used by researchers in the anti-mosquito experiments don't harm human beings, or large animals. This makes the introduction of the bacteria to the mosquito (the bacteria is present everywhere, anyhow) safe and environmentally sustainable. Researchers at Universities in Melbourne and Glasgow and the Institute for Medical Research in Malaysia have worked with the World Mosquito Program (WMP) to experiment with the introduction of *wolbachia* to aedes populations. In 2011, researchers led by Scott O'Neill, a professor at the Monash University in Melbourne, Australia, started injecting *wolbachia* into *aedes* eggs, after harvesting the bacteria from fruit flies where it is naturally present. After hatching, the *wolbachia*-infected aedes were released into pilot areas in Queensland to mate with wild aedes populations. Over time, the disease incidences of these pilot zones were com-

pared to nearby control areas where *wolbachia*-mosquitoes were not present. The mating of a *wolbachia*-infected male mosquito with an uninfected female mosquito results in sterile eggs. But *wolbachia*-infected female mosquitoes can breed with uninfected males, and produce offspring born carrying *wolbachia*. These *wolbachia* carrying mosquitoes spread through the population in successive generations. Over time, this brings down infection rates for endemic viral diseases. This method could be more effective in the long run than insecticide sprays and less likely to cause health and environmental hazards. It is also cost effective since the bacteria propagates by itself, generation by generation. There is statistical evidence that these experiments are working. The researchers claim Northern Queensland is almost disease-free due to this treatment. The WMP has set up projects in 12 countries and carrying mosquitoes covered populations of over 4 million people by June 2019. In Yogyakarta, Indonesia, municipal records indicated 76 per cent reduction in dengue infections in the 30 months since the release of the first batch of treated mosquitoes in a pilot zone, compared to the rates in adjoining control areas. Similarly, pilot projects in Brazil have led to a 75 per cent drop in chikungunya cases com-

pared to untreated control sites. Early studies involved one strain of *wolbachia*, known as wMel. But wMel can't handle really high-temperatures. Another team discovered that a different strain of *wolbachia* has better results in high temperature regions. This second team is led by Steven Sinkins, a vector biologist at the University of Glasgow and it introduced the high-temperature strain, wAlbB, in six pilot neighbourhoods in Kuala Lumpur. A study published in Current Biology reports that the second strain seems to thrive even in peak daily temperatures exceeding 36°C. The WMP claims three independent risk assessments have been conducted on the *wolbachia* method. It says there is negligible risk associated with the release of *wolbachia* carrying mosquitoes; the bacteria is safe for people, animals and the environment. Hence, the concept has regulatory approval from government bodies in all countries where WMP has worked. Other biological methods of combating aedes carry more risks. Genetically modifying mosquitoes to prevent breeding takes a very long time to affect large populations. Wiping out a local mosquito population could also have negative environmental consequences — the insects are an important part of the food chain. The WMP may now be looking to scale up the *wolbachia* method.

CHINESE WHISPERS

Cracking the whip



The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) has expelled some senior leaders, alleging indiscipline and working against the interests of the party. They include former state ministers and legislators. Many of these crestfallen leaders had contested the 2019 Lok Sabha polls and recent by-elections in Uttar Pradesh, but lost. Party chief Mayawati has also expelled C L Verma, a trusted colleague who had contested the Lok Sabha election from the Mohanlalganj (reserved) seat in Lucknow, but lost to Bharatiya Janata Party candidate Kaushal Kishore. Interestingly, Verma was a close confidant also of former UP minister Naseemuddin Siddiqui, who, in turn, was a true-blue follower of Mayawati before he fell out with her and joined the Congress.

Five enquiries not enough

The forest department of the Madhya Pradesh government is planning to conduct a record sixth enquiry into a plantation scam that supposedly took place when the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was in power. The scam is of July 2017 vintage. The state government took a mammoth drive to plant 70 million saplings on a single day in the state. Forest Minister Umang Singh, of the Congress, called it "systemic siphoning off of public funds". The forest department had reported that the plantation data was exaggerated. In the fresh enquiry, the government will also assess the capacity of the nurseries in the state.

Better safe than sorry

As onion prices touched ₹100 a kg in some parts of the country and as reports of consumers scrambling for the staple poured in, members of a co-operative society decided to take protection before distributing subsidised onions to consumers. Vendors of the Bihar State Cooperative Marketing Union were seen wearing helmets while unloading sacks of onions priced at ₹35 a kg for distribution. They had set up their stalls near Gandhi Maidan in Patna on Saturday. There were reports of onions being stolen from the stalls in the past couple of weeks. With no assurance of safety from the authorities, the vendors decided to make themselves safe.

Brace up for the sixth rate cut in a row

In his toughest policy, Shaktikanta Das, who completes his first year at RBI this month, must reassure the market that the fiscal slippage is priced in



BANKER'S TRUST

TAMAL BANDYOPADHYAY

Indian economy growing at 4.5 per cent in the September quarter, falling for the sixth quarter in a row, is no surprise. There will also be no surprise if the monetary policy committee (MPC), the policy making body of the Indian central bank, goes for yet another rate cut next week. Will it be a 25 basis points (bps) cut to bring down the policy rate to 4.90 per cent? Or, a 15 bps cut to 5 per cent? One bps is a hundredth of a percentage point. The historic low policy rate in Asia's third largest economy was 4.75 per cent when the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) cut it by 25 bps in April 2009, the last in a series of rate cuts in the aftermath of the fall of Lehman Brothers Holdings Inc. in September 2008, leading to deep recession in many parts of the world. The MPC was not in place then. Between October 2008 and April 2009, the RBI cut the policy rate by 325 bps, from 9 per cent to 4.75 per

cent. This time around, the policy rate has been pared by 135 bps in five phases since February 2019. Since current Governor Shaktikanta Das took over in December 2018, every monetary policy has announced a rate cut. If the December policy does an encore, Das will equal D Subbarao's record of six rate cuts in a row in 2008-09, albeit in a different context. In 2009, the rate was cut to insulate the Indian economy from the impact of global recession; this time around, debates have been on to dissect the internal causes of a severe economic slowdown — structural or cyclical. What has changed since the October policy? The external environment has improved. The US Federal Reserve seems to be done with rate cuts for the time being and the European Central Bank is expected to stay on hold. The Bank of England's action will depend on the fate of Brexit. In India, the pangs of slowdown have become more evident. The GDP, which grew at 5 per cent in the first quarter of the current fiscal year, has grown 4.5 per cent in the second quarter, the worst in six years. It was not a shocker. Eight infrastructure sectors of the core sector contracted for the second consecutive month by 5.8 per cent in October, signalling the depth of the slowdown. The anaemic growth in bank credit corroborates the story. The output gap is widening and the MPC's stated stance is "intensified efforts to restore the growth momen-



Since Governor Shaktikanta Das took over in December 2018, every monetary policy has announced a rate cut. If the December policy does an encore, Das will equal D Subbarao's record of six rate cuts in a row in 2008-09, albeit in a different context

tum". While paring the rate, the last policy statement conveyed the MPC decision to "continue with the accommodative stance as long as it is necessary to revive growth, while ensuring that inflation remains within the target". Does the latest inflation figure queer the pitch? The retail inflation rose 4.6 per cent in October against 4 per cent in September, higher than consensus expectation. However, it was driven by food prices but the so-called core or non-food, non-oil infla-

tion dropped. Higher inflation should not come in the way of RBI cutting the policy rate yet again. However, the central bank may have to revise its inflation projection upwards and growth projection downwards. In October, the retail inflation projections were revised slightly upwards to 3.4 per cent for the second quarter of 2020 but projections for the second half of the year were retained at 3.5-3.7 per cent. Most analysts see retail inflation above 4 per cent by year-end but within 4 per cent one year ahead. The MPC's flexible inflation target is 4 per cent with a plus/minus 2 per cent band. In October, the real GDP growth projection for 2019 was revised downwards — from 6.9 per cent to 6.1 per cent; 5.3 per cent in the second quarter of 2019-20 and in the 6.6-7.2 per cent range for the second half of the year. The GDP growth for the first quarter of 2020-21 was also revised downwards to 7.2 per cent. The September quarter growth figure will douse the central bank's optimism on economic growth. Every successive rate cut diminishes its marginal utility but the current economic scenario does not leave the MPC with any choice — it will probably go for a cut now and one more in March. The question is: Will it be 25 bps or a token 15 bps for now with an assurance for continuing with the accommodative stance and further cuts in the future if the growth moment does not pick up? This is the toughest policy for Das.

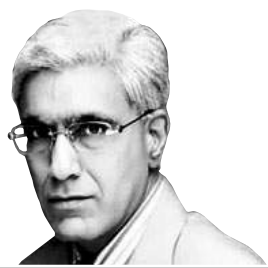
Instead of keeping mum on the worries about fiscal deficit (and reiterating the central bank's faith in the government's ability to stick to the estimated 3.3 per cent deficit for 2020 when the deficit in the first seven months till October exceeded the target for the full year), he must spell out the RBI's take on it. The market does not trust the fiscal deficit figure. The proof of this is the spread between the policy rate and the 10-year government bond yield — around 135 bps. We do not see often such a wide spread in the midst of a rate cutting cycle and abundant liquidity in the system. If the sovereign cannot reap the benefit of a low policy rate, how does the RBI ensure transmission of rate cuts in the real economy? The 10-year bond yield (of the old paper) remains at almost the same level when the policy rate was 6 per cent (and a liquidity deficit of around ₹25,000 crore). Many want the RBI to start buying bonds from the market to bring down the yield or even launching an Indian version of quantitative easing. That's not done as there is at least ₹2 trillion excess liquidity in the system now — primarily driven by the central bank's dollar purchase from the market and higher government spending. The RBI can probably step in when the government announces additional borrowing from the market but the challenge before Das now is to reassure the market that the fiscal slippage is priced in.

The writer, a consulting editor with Business Standard, is an author and senior adviser to Jana Small Finance Bank Ltd. Twitter: @TamalBandyay

AS I SEE IT

Wrong R-Day chief guest?

On any other day the Brazilian President would be very welcome. On Republic Day, however, I would have preferred a person I can look up to



KARAN THAPAR

What is the difference between inviting a head of government on a state visit and inviting him or her as chief guest on Republic Day? I would say the first is an established practice for furthering diplomatic and political relations with key governments and countries. That's why Burmese military dictators, African tyrants and Islamic potentates are regularly welcomed. It's their country we're courting; their personality or character is of little concern. The second invitation is very different. That's because Republic Day has special significance. It's an occasion when we re-affirm our commitment to the Constitution and the democracy it guarantees. And what makes our Constitution truly meaningful is its vision of liberty and rights. So the chief guest on Republic Day should reflect the values and ideals our country upholds. That's why Nelson Mandela, in 1995, was the best possible choice. In contrast, is Jair Bolsonaro, the Brazilian President, the wrong one? There's no doubt Mr Bolsonaro is a controversial personality, particularly

in his own country. But are you aware why? If not, let me explain. It could determine his suitability as chief guest on January 26. First, he doesn't consider women the equal of men and has often spoken derisively of them. In a 2015 interview, he said men and women should not receive equal salaries. In a 2017 speech, he said of his five children the first four were male and the fifth, a daughter, was born out of "a moment of weakness". These, I accept, are flippant and silly remarks and not really incriminating. But what he said of Maria do Rosario, a former human rights minister, is very different. In a 2015 interview, where he claimed she had called him a rapist 12 years earlier, he said she's "not worth raping; she is very ugly". Then he added he wouldn't rape her because she doesn't "deserve it". These comments were widely condemned leading to a federal court conviction in September 2015. In June 2016, the Federal Supreme Court opened criminal cases against him. It ruled he had potentially incited rape for which he could face six months jail and a fine. In August 2017, an appeal court upheld the lower court's conviction. It was only when he became president, earlier this year, that the lawsuit was dismissed because he had acquired immunity from prosecution. If anything, Mr Bolsonaro's views on homosexuality are more disturbing. He told *Playboy* in a June 2011 interview, "I would be incapable of loving a gay son". In fact, he went on to say he would prefer such a son "die in an accident". A month later he told the magazine *Época* if such views "make me

prejudiced, then I'm prejudiced and very proud of it". In 2013 he said to Stephen Fry in a BBC interview "no father is ever proud of having a gay son" and "we Brazilians do not like homosexuals". In November 2017, the Court of Justice for the State of Rio de Janeiro convicted and fined Mr Bolsonaro for hate speech in a 2011 television programme where he said "there is no risk" of his family producing homosexual children because his children had received a "good education". At the time Judge Teixeira said: "You cannot deliberately attack and humiliate, ignoring the principles of equality, just because you invoke freedom of expression". Now it's true that after launching his presidential campaign Mr Bolsonaro has moderated his views. Today he claims he has nothing against gays. In fact, after his election he told *Jornal Nacional* that "aggression against a fellow man has to be punished in the way of law". But does that wipe out — leave aside forgive — his earlier views? Or is electoral expediency the reason why he's singing a different tune? I don't know and I'm not sure anyone else does either. Equally, I don't want to cast the first stone. None of us has a right to do so. But does Mr Bolsonaro as chief guest add to our veneration of the Constitution? Or does it suggest we're forgetting our values as Krishnan Srinivasan, a former foreign secretary and author of *Values in Foreign Policy*, believes? On any other day Mr Bolsonaro would be very welcome. On Republic Day, however, I would have preferred a person I can look up to.

LETTERS

Structural issues



This refers to "GDP growth slips to 4.5%" (November 30). That the country's GDP growth is at a 26-quarter low and eight core sectors including manufacturing, construction and mining have contracted by 8 per cent is a matter of serious concern. It is a clear indication that the measures unleashed by the Union government have not yielded any result on the ground. While the growth in the second quarter is largely driven by government spending, the prospect of government persisting with its higher spending remains low in the backdrop of a fall in its revenues. If the government decides to stick to its fiscal deficit target, it would further intensify the slowdown. Given the present circumstances, the monetary policy committee (MPC) might continue with its accommodative stance and cut the interest rates further. While sector-specific interventions can alleviate some pain in the core sectors of the economy, what is imperative at present is concrete steps towards addressing structural issues plaguing the economy. That holds the key to arresting the slowdown. M Jeyaram Tamil Nadu

All is not lost

Compliments for your editorial "Signals from Hong Kong" (November

29) beautifully analysing the ground realities in the country. Hope the authoritarian Chinese regime is listening. Hong Kong's unique attributes, which have been honed over centuries just can't be replicated in a year or two — as indeed the Chinese government has learnt through their efforts in Macao and Shanghai. Macao's beautiful casinos have managed to attract gamblers — especially from the sub-continent — but that, as you say, means only "limited success"; not even a small fraction of what Hong Kong has been doing. During the 22 years since the UK returned the territory to China, the Chinese government must've earned billions in taxes from businesses and people in Hong Kong. It has also enjoyed tremendous gains from Hong Kong being the financial window to the world and a critical transshipment hub for exports and imports. The unique one-country-two-systems template has indeed worked beautifully with both China and Hong Kong gaining hugely. Being ranked, the world's freest economy for 24 consecutive years is a great badge of honour. It is only because the government of China decided to deepen its control on the erstwhile city-state that all hell broke loose. They should've realised that the culture that prevailed there for almost two centuries cannot be changed by a police or military crackdown. Naturally, people rebelled and it has got so bad that, secretly, Chinese authorities must be regretting the steps taken by them. Suddenly, they



can see this big window closing and businesses from Hong Kong moving to Singapore or Tokyo. Even for a strong economy like China, this loss could be unbearable. All is not lost. The results of Hong Kong's district council elections -- in which pro-democracy candidates won over 90 per cent of the seats -- show that the Chinese regime did not extend their power to control these elections. On one hand, it has created a new set of challenges for the government. I feel, it is also an indication that things haven't yet gone beyond redemption. The Chinese government will do well to go easy and let things in Hong Kong return to how they were before June. Let the very astute Xi Jinping not worry about a loss of face. Krishnan Kalra Gurugram

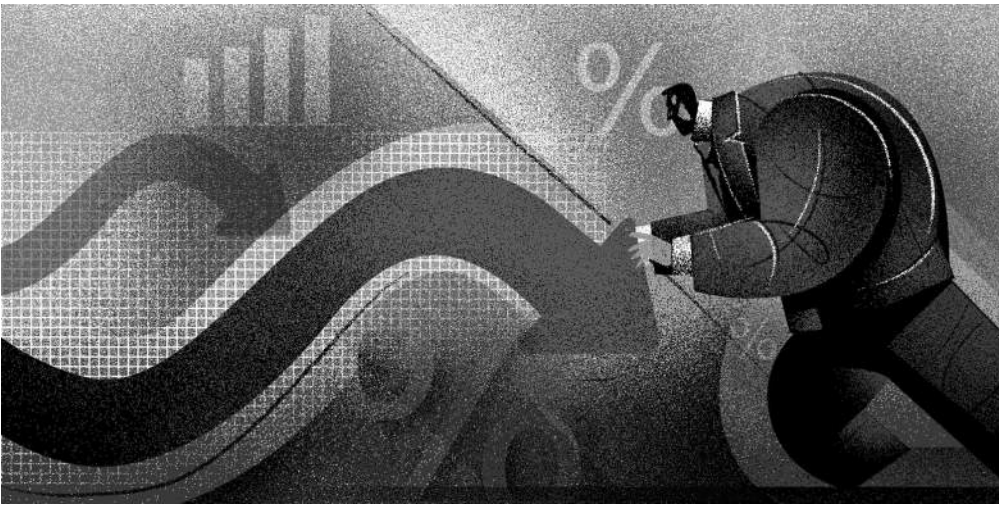
Letters can be mailed, faxed or e-mailed to: The Editor, Business Standard Nehru House, 4 Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg New Delhi 110 002 Fax: (011) 23720201 E-mail: letters@bsmail.in All letters must have a postal address and telephone number

HAMBONE



© Graphic Syndication UK Tel: 01256703004

ILLUSTRATION: AJAY MOHANTY



Monetary policy that stabilises

When expected inflation drops, the policy rate should drop even more

The lever of monetary policy can be a force for destabilisation. When the economy faces new difficulties, the forecasted inflation rate declines. If the policy rate does not also commensurately decline, the real rate goes up. When times become hard, and monetary policy does not respond, it makes things worse by raising the real rate. For monetary policy to be a force for good, two features are required. First, the monetary policy committee (MPC) has to be able to peer into the future and forecast inflation. Second, it must respond strongly to changes in forecasted inflation, both on the way up and on the way down. This diverges from the bureaucratic instinct that prizes being non-controversial.

The first lesson in economics is that only real rates matter. If forecasted inflation is 15% and if you are paying 15% interest, then effectively, it is a zero interest loan. When inflation is 4% and you are paying 12%, this is a very high real rate of 8%. The dynamics of the household or firm balance sheet is shaped by the real rate, and decision-makers respond to real rates.

Suppose we start at a situation where forecasted inflation is at the target, of 4%, and the policy rate is at 6%. This means that the real rate is 2%. Now suppose there are adverse economic shocks. When hard times come along, forecasted inflation goes down. Suppose the forecasted inflation goes down from 4% to 2%.

In this situation, if monetary policy does nothing,

then the real rate just goes up from 2% to 4%. To do nothing, when adverse shocks arise, is tantamount to monetary policy tightening. This is destabilising. When times are tough, the inactive monetary policy makes it worse.



SNAKES & LADDERS

AJAY SHAH

This same story works in reverse. Suppose there are positive shocks, and things are going to get better. Forecasted inflation goes up from 4% to 6%. Suppose monetary policy does not respond, and the policy rate stays at 6%. In this case, the real rate has declined, from 2% to 0%. This is destabilising. When a boom is starting up, the inactive monetary policy makes it bigger.

The solution lies in a monetary policy strategy that responds to changes in forecasted inflation. At the minimum, the response must be one-on-one. Let's think about the scenario with bad news. There are adverse economic shocks, forecasted inflation comes down from 4% to 2%, monetary policy responds one-on-one by cutting the policy rate from 6% to 4%, and the real rate stays at 2% all through. This is neutral, it is better than inaction, monetary policy is no longer destabilising.

But we can do better. Monetary policy can respond more strongly. As an example, suppose we plan that the response of monetary policy to changed inflation forecasts will be 1.5 times (x) larger. For a decline in forecasted inflation of 2 percentage points, we will cut the rate by 3 percentage points. How will this play out?

We start out at forecasted inflation of 4%, a policy

Smoke and mirrors

This is the third in my series on the National Capital Region's (NCR's) air pollution emergency. I first discussed what had been done to reduce emission to date. Then I wrote on the "nature" of the crisis — why we choke in winter and why we need to do more. This time, I want to talk about what needs to be done with urgency and at scale befitting the crisis. I want to write about this, otherwise the smoke will be deflected off the mirrors — we will be angry, indeed outraged, about the air we breathe; but we will not get our right to a blue sky and clear lungs.

The bottom line is we need tough action and at scale — it must be transformative enough so that it can beat the galloping pollution. When Delhi moved to compressed natural gas (CNG), it did so within one-two years. All the public transport vehicles — over 100,000 — were converted to the clean fuel. So, the drastic action, however inconvenient, showed up in our pollution figures. We saw the stars in the sky. In these past three years, critical steps have been taken — from a ban on coal usage in Delhi to moving towards cleaner fuel for vehicles and reducing gross-polluting truck traffic — and it is bending the pollution curve. But it is not enough.

So, what do we do next? We know the key sources of pollution — vehicles, factories, thermal power plants, diesel generators, garbage burning in the open and in landfills, and dust and more dust. In addition, there is the month-long pollution due to the burning of crop residue, which hits us just as the weather turns adverse — no wind, moisture,

and inversion. We also know that action is always contested — any steps to control pollution from any source are always faced with the position that we are only 1 per cent. In other words, why us? Every contributor to air pollution says we are not the problem; act elsewhere. So, what do we do?

First, we need a clean fuel transformation — no ifs and buts on this. Everybody mentions that Beijing has cleaned up its air; and, this is how they did it. They forced homes and factories to shift from dirty coal to cleaner natural gas. This is what we need to do, not just in Delhi but across the neighbouring states — all affected by adverse weather and pollution.

It is time for the second gas transition in the region — first it was CNG for vehicles, now we need it to completely take over combustion in industries, power plants, and homes. But this will not be easy. The fact is the price of gas is much more than that of coal, the fuel that is now preferred in the region after the ban on the even more polluting pet coke. Industries say if they switch to gas, they will not be able to compete with others outside the region. They will have to shut down. So, how will this work? Either the price of gas is brought down or industries are asked to move, irrespective of the price. One way or the other, the way ahead is tough. There are no easy options.

The second solution is to move from individual power generation (diesel generators) — in industries or in commercial areas of homes — to electricity. The third solution is to simultaneously make sure that power generation is as clean as it can be. Large



DOWN TO EARTH

SUNITA NARAIN

dividing the regional people into "native" (or "indigenous") and "alien" types.

The book's focus is on the convulsions of the last 15 years, from a seemingly unshakable military dictatorship to the beginnings of democratic rule, but examining the legacy of Burma's colonial past is crucial to grasping what's happened more recently. Aung San Suu Kyi may have been venerated as a democracy activist and a human rights icon, but Thant Myint-U suggests she's better understood as a Burmese nationalist. He cites an essay she wrote in the 1980s, before she became involved in politics, in which she described Indian and Chinese immigrants acquiring "a stranglehold on the Burmese economy" and "striking at the very roots of Burmese manhood and racial purity."

Thant Myint-U has long studied the country, as both an insider and an outsider; his grandfather, U Thant, was born in colonial Burma and later became the secretary general of the United Nations. After the military crushed the pro-democracy uprising of 1988, Thant Myint-U supported aggressive sanctions against the junta regime, only to reverse himself when he realised that boycotts and aid restrictions were harming the ordinary people they

were supposed to help.

He tries to nudge readers away from getting too fixated on messianic solutions. Democracy was a preoccupation among the junta's critics, but the country wasn't quite prepared for how a competitive political system might work — especially one where the peace process itself entrenched a belief in the existence of fixed ethnic groups. Protecting minority rights, such as those of the Rohingya Muslims, has proved to be an unpopular proposition among the Buddhist majority; it's been much easier to rile up voters with rank appeals to identity. As Thant Myint-U puts it, "fear and intolerance" offer convenient cover for opportunists seeking to hide a "failure of the imagination."

Combined with this whipping up of virulent nativist sentiment has been a headlong plunge into free markets, as Burma lurched from being one of the poorest and most isolated countries in Asia to another aspirant on the capitalist world stage. Thant Myint-U acknowledges the real economic gains that have been made over the past decade — a growing middle class, a new kind of self-made entrepreneur unconnected to the cronyism of the old regime — but he also notes that Burma is still a very poor

country where extreme inequality and attendant anxieties have flourished.

The Hidden History of Burma is an urgent book about a heavy subject, but Thant Myint-U, whose previous work includes the marvellous "The River of Lost Footsteps," a mixture of memoir and history, is a writer with a humane sensibility and a delicate yet pointed touch. He observes that for all of Aung San Suu Kyi's soaring rhetoric before she ascended to power, "her instincts were deeply conservative." A telling anecdote has her conducting a discussion with a group of university graduates in 2018, in which she elected to talk not about the Rohingya, or the peace process, or democracy, but about novels. She asked the group what was more important: Plot or character?

©2019 The New York Times News Service

THE HIDDEN HISTORY OF BURMA Race, Capitalism and the Crisis of Democracy in the 21st Century

Thant Myint-U
WW Norton; \$27.95; 288 pages

A new low for growth

The picture is much worse than the 4.5% headline number

It is an ironic indication of how sentiment has become negative about the immediate future of the Indian economy that even a 26-quarter low figure is being seen by some observers as something of a relief. India's gross domestic product (GDP) growth for the second quarter of the ongoing fiscal year is only 4.5 per cent — the lowest it has been in at least six years. Even growth at current prices is only 6.1 per cent. There is little doubt that the Indian economy is in the midst of a slowdown, one that appears to be driven by both supply- and demand-side factors. Nor is there much immediate hope of a sustainable recovery.

Among the most worrying factors in this GDP print are its estimates of gross fixed capital formation (GFCF). At current prices, it is 27.3 per cent of GDP and at constant prices, 30.1 per cent of GDP — in each case, about two percentage points lower than the figure for the same quarter of the previous year. The auguries for the current quarter, between October and December, are not good. The core sector output data, also released on Friday, indicated a shrinkage of almost 6 per cent. It is hard to see growth for the full fiscal year crossing 5 per cent.

The government has attempted to revive demand by ensuring that welfare spending grows and seeking to expand other aspects of its own spending. But that strategy is reaching the end of its usefulness. Government final consumption expenditure, or GFCE, has grown at over 15 per cent year on year, and is about 12.4 per cent of GDP. In other words, it contributes almost 2 percentage points of the 4.5 per cent overall growth in GDP. The non-government sector, therefore, may be growing only at about 3 per cent. Clearly, therefore, the picture is much worse than the headline number of 4.5 per cent and government spending is sucking dynamism out of the private sector.

The government will have to accept that this is a problem that cannot continue to be tackled by its own spending. It has already sought to revive some animal spirits in corporate India through tax cuts, and announced an ambitious disinvestment agenda. However, more is needed. Long-pending structural reforms will have to be given some impetus. Labour and land reform, of course, is at the top of that list. India is too high-cost and risky an economy to attract investment at the moment. Risk must be reduced through administrative, regulatory, and judicial reform. Goods and services tax (GST) needs urgent attention — it will have to be simplified to reduce the burden on taxpayers, and made more efficient so that government revenues can recover.

But various blockages in the economy's arteries must also be cleared. These blockages are not limited to the banking sector or real estate, though those are two obvious culprits. The government and public sector must also start disbursing funds on time. The only way out of this hole for the economy is private investment reviving. That will require more than pep talk from the government. It will require a genuine effort to increase the fund flow to productive sectors of the economy.

Alibaba's stellar HK debut

Asian businesses now have access to large, new capital

The listing of e-commerce giant Alibaba in Hong Kong (HK) in a secondary offer last week has many implications. Alibaba listed on the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) in 2014, raising a record \$25 billion. The offer in HK raised over \$11 billion, by selling 2.8 per cent of stock. It is the largest initial public offering (IPO) of 2019 and can get even bigger, swelling to over \$13 billion, if institutions exercise all their green-shoe options. The IPO is an endorsement of the relaxation of rules by HK's market regulator. Alibaba has a complex corporate structure with dual-class equity; shares controlled by the founders have more votes. This was not permissible under HK's earlier rules, by which all listed firms had to have the "one share-one vote" structure.

The Alibaba prospectus says it will use the funds to move into consumer-focused services like travel booking and video streaming, as well as making investments to improve its supply chain, logistics, and payment ecosystems. It is also ramping up its presence in cloud computing and machine learning. Alibaba claims it has 730 million annual active e-commerce consumers in Mainland China alone, and its mobile payment platform, Alipay, has 900 million active users. The company will qualify for HK's Stock Connect scheme in June 2020. Then Mainland investors in Shanghai and Shenzhen will be able to buy the stock in Hong Kong. While the stock has gained 13 per cent in the first week of listing, another boost to market capitalisation is very likely once that happens. As it is, at least a third of the HK offer has been picked up by Mainland funds, while Taiwanese investors have also made substantial bids.

Alibaba's successful debut in HK might lead to other major Asia-based businesses seeking to list in that country under the new relaxed rules. It could even lead to more dual listings from firms seeking to tap different pools of capital across Asia and the US.

Such initial public offers may be attractive especially for Chinese concerns. The Stock Connect scheme allows them to access HK capital (the HK dollar is convertible) as well as the yuan (not convertible). There are at least 12 Chinese companies listed in the US, with market caps of above \$10 billion (Alibaba is over \$500 billion). But trade war hawks in the Trump Administration have suggested the US restrict access to American capital for Chinese firms. This could happen if the US-China trade war escalates further. HK could offer an alternative avenue to tap capital if it becomes harder for Chinese concerns to access US exchanges.

Investors in HK, or Singapore, may also be more receptive to listings by Indian technology companies, as well as other Asian technology businesses. Investors in HK have a better feel for conditions in Asian economies and, hence, more confidence in potential unicorns based in Bengaluru, Manila, or Jakarta. Traders will respond positively to dual listings, or multiple listings, since they offer them chances to arbitrage and hedge price volatility. The success of Alibaba's IPO could, therefore, lift sentiment in the troubled HK economy and might encourage entrepreneurs across the entire continent by offering them access to a large, new pool of capital.

Myanmar's convulsions and hope



BOOK REVIEW

JENNIFER SZALAI

Thant Myint-U has titled his reflective and illuminating new book *The Hidden History of Burma*, even though he gently suggests that the country's past wasn't so much obscured as it was hiding in plain sight. For decades, especially after a ruthless crack-down on pro-democracy protestors in 1988, Burma had drawn international ire for the brutal rule of its military junta, which for a time went by the grotesque-sounding acronym SLORC (State Law and Order Restoration Council). Against the depredations of the dictatorship stood the charismatic Aung San Suu Kyi: A tireless civilian advocate for democracy who

spoke consistently of hope, enduring years of detention and house arrest with a serene smile and a flower in her hair.

Her public image weighed heavily in the international community's imagination, which was decidedly more familiar with the morality play of "The Lady Versus the Generals" than with the longer history of Burma. That history proved to be stubborn and consequential — its effects only aggravated by how much its convulsions were simplified or ignored.

"In the early 2010s," Thant Myint-U writes, "Burma was the toast of the world." (The junta had changed the country's name in English to "Myanmar" in 1989; a prefatory note explains why this was an "ethno-nationalist" move — the equivalent of Germany demanding that English speakers refer to it as "Deutschland.") The generals seemed to be ceding power, the country seemed to be ending its long isolation, tourism seemed to be on the rise; a number of rebel groups signed cease-fires, and in 2015 the National League for Democracy, led by Aung San Suu Kyi, won enough seats

in the country's first free elections in a generation to form a government.

By 2018, that hopefulness had all but vanished. The year before, the Burmese military had unleashed a scorched-earth campaign against the Rohingya Muslim minority, with more than 700,000 refugees fleeing across the border to Bangladesh. During the military dictatorship, the world had grown accustomed to looking to Aung San Suu Kyi for moral guidance, but once in government as Burma's de facto leader she sprang to the defence of the military that had previously detained her. What Thant Myint-U argues is that the conditions for the current situation were already in place — less a flipped switch than a lit fuse.

He writes briskly about Burma's history as part of the British Raj, when colonial officials were flummoxed by what one of them called the "racial instability" of the region, where distinctions, the official complained, were "neither definite, nor logical, nor permanent, nor easy to detect." Under colonialism, classifications cleaved and hardened, as British administrators insisted on

Imports must be a vital part of any fertiliser strategy

Huge subsidies are hurting both the soil and farm profits. Use cheaper imports, give subsidies in cash to farmers

ALL SUBSIDIES ARE justified as either helping producers or users, but in the case of urea fertilisers, neither seem to be benefiting, as a paper by Icrier’s Ashok Gulati and Pritha Banerjee shows. So, while it is true that around 77% of the cost of urea is subsidised, a large part of this goes to local producers: right now, Indian prices are around \$332 per tonne for urea versus global prices of \$285 (cif), and the latter were a fourth lower than this a couple of years ago. Just seven Indian plants are cost-effective right now, compared to 17 in FY15. And, with the government not accounting for the hike in industry costs for a long time, industry’s PAT-to-Net-Worth has been negative for the last five years; it has been positive for four years if you include some of the promises made in the last price policy, but at an average of 3.3%, this is far below the 12% the industry was assured. Also, a cash-strapped government still owes the industry around ₹39,000 crore.

Apart from the fact that a large part of the ₹50,000 crore urea subsidy goes to local producers, discerning farmers would prefer this be converted into a less distortionary cash-transfer. Right now, since urea (N, to use the chemical term) costs a fraction of what it should, farmers use too much of it; against the ideal N:P:K ratio of 4:2:1, the average is 6.1:2.5:1, and this goes to as high as 25.8:5.8:1 in states like Punjab. This has resulted in a sharp fall in productivity due to the nutrient balance in the soil worsening. While farmers got 13.4 kg of grain for each kg of fertiliser used in 1970, this fell to just 3.7 kg in 2005; it is even lower today. With farmer yields falling, so are profits; if farm incomes are to be doubled by FY23, fixing the nutrient imbalance is critical. If farmers got the same amount of subsidy anyway, they would buy less of urea if its price were raised to market levels; this would, over time, result in higher yields.

Since Indian producers are, on average, more energy efficient than global ones, the price of natural gas is what determines the difference in the costs of urea; till urea plants got more of the cheaper local gas, their costs were more reasonable. In FY13, 76% of the gas used was local; it was 30% in FY20. With gas costs rising from \$9.8 per mmBtu in FY16 to \$12.3 in FY17, Indian costs have surged. The industry’s poor financials, in turn, have limited fresh investment. While that is the reason why the government is trying to revive five shut units at a cost of ₹39,651 crore, it makes little sense since the average cost of these plants will be \$450-550 per tonne. Ideally, India should be importing urea, possibly from plants set up in the Gulf, or in Russia, by Indian firms, or enter into long-term contracts with them; in years when global prices shoot up, India can possibly export urea. Moreover, if the government were to encourage more local production of gas and not insist that more of it be sold to power plants—a lower gas price for power plants lowers the power subsidy while increasing the fertiliser one—local production costs of urea could also fall.

A related issue is the high social and environmental cost of the policy. Gulati and Banerjee discuss the impact of excess nitrogen from urea leaching into the soil, and that of the deficiency of, for instance, sulphur, iron, zinc, and manganese caused by use of too little non-urea fertilisers; this, the authors posit, is responsible for stunting and, due to nitrate contamination of water, even blue babies.

Security vs privacy

National security is paramount, but privacy concerns real

IF THE WHATSAPP-Pegasus controversy wasn’t bad enough, Google’s report on 500 Indian citizens—out of a total of 12,000 worldwide—being the victims of attacks by government-backed bodies has, once again, brought the issue of government spying to the forefront. While the government has continued to sidestep the issue of whether it had bought the Pegasus software that was used to exploit a WhatsApp loophole to hack into the phones of various activists, the matter continues to be debated in Parliament and a parliamentary panel will try and get more clarity on the issue; for the record, the government has sent a notice to the Israeli firm to get more data on who bought the snooping software. Pegasus set the cat among the pigeons when it said it only sold its software to governments; assuming this is true, though, it could still have been available on the dark net. And, even Google’s data from its Threat Analysis Group—TAG tracks more than 270 targeted or government-backed groups from more than 50 countries—may not be wholly accurate. While it finds that the Indian government-backed bodies were intercepting a smaller proportion of Indian citizens than was happening in the US by US-govt-backed hackers—these are attacks on Google Drive, Gmail, and YouTube—the data looks a bit lopsided since it shows that there is less interception by governments in countries like China and Russia! Indeed, in the past, Apple challenged Google over its analysis concerning the monitoring of iPhones.

That said, there is a more fundamental problem that needs resolving—that of reconciling the needs of the government in terms of being able to spy on certain people with their right to privacy. As the Justice Srikrishna panel put it, the design of the current framework for tapping/hacking “lacks sufficient legal and procedural safeguards to protect individual civil liberties”. The tapping or hacking by government agencies is, right now, authorised by the Telegraph Act as well as the IT Act, but as Srikrishna pointed out, there aren’t enough safeguards at the moment. There is, of course, an oversight mechanism within the government; the review committee is headed by the cabinet secretary and has the law secretary as a member, but as Srikrishna says, citing a recent RTI reply, the “review committee has an unrealistic task of reviewing 15,000-18,000 interception orders in every meeting, while meeting once in two months”; in other words, no matter what the government might say, the review process looks less than robust.

It is in this context that the *Puttaswamy* judgment of 2012 is critical. The judgment talked of all such interceptions meeting the tests of “necessity, proportionality and due process”. If a committee is clearing 15,000 interception orders, it is difficult to argue ‘due process’ is being followed. That is why, as Srikrishna suggests, India needs a law on interception that builds in checks like having a non-partisan committee examining the intercepts, why they were ordered, and what they revealed. Such a process could involve a permanent parliamentary committee, with the data/findings not to be made public; another could involve a judicial committee or judicial members on this committee as well. If, for instance, those whose phones were hacked using the Pegasus software were unfairly targeted—say, by a government trying to be vengeful—there has to be some mechanism to punish those responsible.

HealthSPEND

State-sponsored insurance may not be the best idea. Instead, govt should increase spend on offerings

A NEW PAPER by researchers at the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy shows that basic healthcare will suffer after implementation of large government-sponsored health insurance schemes like Ayushman Bharat, especially when the government must contend with a fiscal strain. The researchers examined health insurance schemes implemented by the governments of undivided Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu between 2004-2017. In all three states, the schemes started with covering just the poor, and were gradually extended to other sections of society. Insurance spending cast a shadow on other public health spending, including on primary and secondary healthcare—this increases dependence on private healthcare, which, in turn, pushes up the costs of insurance schemes. The Centre, which is mulling over insurance-based universal healthcare coverage, should take note.

The government must vastly expand its healthcare spend; public spend on healthcare is just 1.13% of the GDP while the total spend is around 4%, indicating, against a backdrop of poor health insurance penetration (total health insurance premium, including government, private, and standalone insurance, stood at just ₹37,000 crore in FY18), massive out-of-pocket expenditure. But, as the NIPFP study shows, public-funded health insurance schemes may not be the best idea, more so, given the high chances of fraud as Rajasthan’s Bhamashah experience shows. Instead, the government must increase healthcare offerings, from infrastructure to direct spending—Delhi offers a template, having made diagnostics and surgery free at private hospitals (the government will pay the hospitals), it is now making ICU beds free, all subject to referral by a government hospital.

● RCEP PULLOUT

WHILE FTAs CAN OPEN LARGE MARKETS FOR INDIA AND DRIVE EXPORTS GROWTH, WITHOUT POLICIES TO IMPROVE COST OF DOING BUSINESS, IT CAN SERIOUSLY HARM DOMESTIC ECONOMY

Innovation & productivity key to benefiting from FTAs

TRADE IS THE life-blood of the world economy. We all know that. The share of global trade grew from around 10% of global GDP

to close to 60% by the 2010s. And, those countries which grew their share of the global trade benefited from the huge multiplier effect on their economy. Given this context, India’s decision to withdraw from RCEP, designed to be the world’s largest trading bloc, was a landmark decision, notwithstanding official comments that we will rejoin if our concerns are addressed. This decision has both passionate supporters and sceptics; the former group agrees with the government’s ‘strong’ decision based on the rationale that the conditions being negotiated for joining RCEP would have been detrimental for Indian industry. The opposite logic put forth is that by withdrawing, we would actually be disadvantaging Indian industry in terms of preferential access to the largest and the fastest growing markets. So, who is right?

To answer this question, let us look at the data from past FTAs and their impact on competitive positioning of Indian industry in global trade. In the last decade and a half, India has signed three regional FTAs—with South Asian, ASEAN, and Mercosur (the trading bloc of Latin American) countries. The other FTAs have been bilateral agreements with individual countries. Of the three regional FTAs, in only the South Asian FTA (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and Maldives) did India increase its exports faster than imports; this is understandable given the member countries. In case of both, the ASEAN and Mercosur FTAs, India’s trade deficit with these two regions increased post signing. For example, post signing of the India-ASEAN FTA in 2010, trade between India and ASEAN increased from \$52.6 billion to \$64.6 billion in 2016. How-



MD and Senior Partner, Boston Consulting Group
Views are personal

ever, ASEAN countries benefited more, with India’s trade deficit increasing from less than \$8 billion in 2009-10 to about \$22 billion in 2018-19. Similarly, post signing of the India-Mercosur FTA in 2009, India’s exports grew from \$2.31 billion in 2009 to \$3.14 billion in 2016, but its imports grew faster, from \$5.34 billion to \$11.46 billion in the same period. This data, thus, supports the government’s view that RCEP will be harmful to India’s interests unless carefully calibrated and negotiated.

Now, let us look at data supporting the logic of the critics of the RCEP pull-out, who claim that this will disadvantage Indian exporters by denying them preferential access to large markets. Let us use the example of apparel exports, which has been a focus industry for Indian policymakers for many years given the potential of its high labour intensity to generate millions of new jobs. While India’s share of global apparel trade has stagnated around 4%, that of competing countries like Bangladesh, and even Vietnam, which entered the global market much later, has leapfrogged ahead of India’s. This, despite the potential advantages India has in terms of higher scale from larger local market, domestic supply of cotton and synthetic yarn, and large pool of labour. In a BCG study of India’s competitive position in the sector, we found that Indian exporters face a cost disadvantage of 14-15% for exports into the EU, compared to Bangladesh. What is interesting to note is that over 60% of this gap is explained by preferential access to the EU market basis Bangladesh’s FTA with



the EU (India has not signed one). The balance cost gap is driven by a variety of domestic structural, regulatory/policy, and productivity factors. For example, the scale of an average Indian clothing plant is much smaller than that in Bangladesh due to our restrictive labour laws (to be fair to the NDA government, they have tried to partially address the labour issue for the textile industry, but much more needs to be done); this gives a cost penalty to the average Indian apparel exporter. India has tried to incentivise exports to overcome some of these structural gaps with several export promotion schemes, but the recent ruling by WTO against India on a complaint by the US has put the future of many of these incentives in doubt.

So, basis the data, the views on both joining and quitting RCEP have a strong rationale. And, one can argue that the government took a pragmatic decision as it did not want a similar increasing-deficit story repeated with the new regional treaty, especially given the fear of being swamped by exports from China. Unfortunately, this decision also highlights the lack of global competitiveness in many sectors of Indian industry—even with smaller developing countries, given the experience post ASEAN and Mercosur FTAs.

India has rightly been focusing on ease of doing business (EoDB) as critical

to build competitiveness and attract FDI. It is equally critical, if not more so, to focus and improve the high cost of doing business (CoDB), which broadly has three components: higher factor costs (land, industrial power, productivity-linked labour, financing), higher cost of compliance with government regulations, and high logistics costs from both hard and soft infrastructure (e.g., time taken by processes at ports). And, unless we annually benchmark and improve the CoDB as we are doing for EoDB, our manufacturing industry, especially compared to our peer developing countries, will continue to be threatened by FTAs rather than seeing them as windows of opportunities.

Clearly, FTAs are a double-edged policy sword for India. If wielded right, it can open large markets and drive growth of exports (and push up GDP). It also puts pressure on the domestic industry to become more globally competitive. If wielded badly, i.e., without the policies to improve CoDB, it can be equally harmful to the domestic economy. Countries that have done it right have ensured that their trade policy, investment

policy, and industrial policy are well-aligned. They calibrate the opening of the domestic market with the right industrial and investment policies to structurally improve the competitiveness of the domestic industry. The industry, in its turn, has to match these enabling policies with a strong effort to improve productivity, and invest in innovation to increase global competitiveness, rather than complaining of cheaper imports flooding the country. Otherwise, we will continue to be ambivalent about FTAs, and struggle to become the next highly competitive manufacturing engine of the world.

Countries that got FTAs right calibrated the opening of the domestic market with the right the policies to improve competitiveness of domestic industry

After the US-China trade war

The politics of the trade war now point more toward de-escalation than a renewed ratcheting up of tensions

FOR THE LAST two years, the conflict between the US and China has dominated the economic and financial-market debate—with good reason. After threats and accusations that long predate the US president Donald Trump’s election, rhetoric has given way to action. Over the past 17 months, the world’s two largest economies have become embroiled in the most serious tariff war since the early 1930s. And the weaponisation of US trade policy to target perceived company-specific threats such as Huawei has broadened the front in this battle.

I am as guilty as anyone of fixating on every twist and turn of this epic struggle between the world’s two economic heavyweights. From the start, it has been a political conflict fought with economic weapons, and is likely to remain so for the foreseeable future. What that means, of course, is that the economic and financial-market outlook basically hinges on the political dynamic between the US and China.

In that vein, the so-called phase one “skinny” trade deal announced with great fanfare on October 11 may be an important political signal. While the deal, if ever consummated, will have next to no material economic impact, it provides a strong hint that Trump has finally had enough of this trade war. Consumed by domestic political concerns—especially impeachment and the looming 2020 election—it is in Trump’s interest to declare victory and attempt to capitalise on it to counter his problems at home.

China, for its part, would also like nothing more than to end the trade war. Politics is obviously very different in a one-party state, but the Chinese leadership is not about to capitulate on its core principles of sovereignty and its aspirational mid-century goals of rejuvenation, growth, and development. At the same time, there can be no mistaking downward pressures on the economy. But, with Chinese policymakers determined to stay the course of their

three-year deleveraging campaign—an important self-inflicted source of the current slowdown—they should be all the more eager to address the trade-related pressures brought about by the conflict with the US.

Consequently, the political calculus of both countries is coming into closer alignment, with each looking for some face-saving truce. There is always a risk that other complications will arise—recent events in Hong Kong and revelations of developments in China’s Xinjiang Province come to mind. But, at least for the time being, the politics of the trade war are now pointing more toward de-escalation rather than a renewed ratcheting up of tensions.

If that is the case, and if a phase one accord is reached, it behooves us to ponder what the world will look like after the trade war. Several possibilities are at the top of my list: deglobalisation, decoupling, and trade diversion.

Deglobalisation is unlikely. Like the first wave of globalisation that ended ignominiously between World War I and the Great Depression, the current wave has generated a mounting backlash. Populism is rearing its ugly head around the world, and tensions over income and wealth inequality—aggravated by fears that technological innovations such as artificial intelligence will undermine job security—are dominating the political discourse. Yet the climactic event that underscored the demise of the first wave of globalisation was a 60% collapse in world trade in the early 1930s. Notwithstanding the current political dysfunction, the odds of a similar outcome today are extremely low.

Global decoupling is also unlikely. Reflecting the explosive growth in global value chains (GVCs) over the past 25 years, the world is woven together more tightly than ever before. That has transformed global competition away from the country-specific paradigm of the past to a far more fragmented competition between widely distributed

STEPHEN S ROACH

Faculty member, Yale University
Views are personal



platforms of inputs, components, design, and assembly functions. A recent IMF study found that GVCs accounted for fully 73% of the rapid growth in global trade that occurred over the 20-year period from 1993 to 2013. Enabled by irreversible trends of plunging transportation costs and technological breakthroughs in logistics and sourcing, the GVC linkages that have come to underpin global economic integration are at little risk of decoupling.

Trade diversion is another matter altogether. As I have long argued, bilateral trade conflicts—even a bilateral decoupling—can do nothing to resolve multilateral imbalances. Putting pressure on one of many trading partners—precisely what the US is doing when it squeezes China in an effort to reduce its merchandise trade deficits with 102 countries—is likely to backfire. That is because America’s multilateral trade deficit reflects a profound shortfall of domestic saving that will only get worse as the federal budget deficit now veers out of control. Without addressing this chronic saving problem, targeting China will mean pushing the Chinese piece of the multilateral deficit out to America’s other trading partners. Such diversion will shift trade to higher-cost foreign sourcing—the functional equivalent of a tax hike on US consumers.

Trade truce or not, a protracted economic struggle between the US and China has already begun. A cease-fire in the current battle is nothing more than a politically expedient pause in what is likely to be an enduring Cold War-like conflict. That should worry the US, which is devoid of a long-term strategic framework. China is not. That is certainly the message from Sun Tzu in *The Art of War*: “When your strategy is deep and far-reaching... you can win before you even fight”.

Copyright: Project Syndicate, 2019
www.project-syndicate.org

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

On electoral bonds

As a nation, we must address ourselves to the concerns expressed by RBI and the Election Commission (EC) over the opaqueness surrounding the electoral bonds. We cannot afford to be indifferent to the issue as it bears on transparency. There were fears of a ‘hidden agenda’ when the government, in 2017, rushed the Bill through the Lok Sabha as a finance bill without proper regard to how it would ensure transparency. Even then RBI and the EC raised serious objections, but the government paid them scant attention and bulldozed the scheme through the Lower House. Now, coincidentally, thanks to the RTI Act, it has come to light that the government violated RBI regulations to enable the party, of which it is principally made of. The charge that the corporates have laundered black money through electoral bonds merits further investigation. As things stand, corporates can influence decision-making and they do. These are not like voluntary donations to charity given out of humanitarian or altruistic instincts. In this sense ‘donation’ is a euphemism or a synonym for ‘bribe’. When electoral bonds are exclusively issued by the state-run SBI, the government cannot feign ignorance of the details and refuse to share them with the people. It is telling that 95% of all funding through electoral bonds went to BJP, and ‘a party with a difference’ to boot. Opposition parties are at a distinct disadvantage because any donation might invite trouble. Nothing short of disclosure of the names of donors and recipients, and the exact sums donated in the public domain alone will meet the people’s right to know how much funds are raised. In a democracy the government should subscribe to the notion of ‘voter sovereignty’, if one may use the phrase and provide or pass on information to those to whom it owes its very existence. — G David Milton, Maruthancode

● Write to us at feletters@expressindia.com

SARTHAK RAY

sarthak.ray@expressindia.com

INDIA'S EXPERIENCE WITH fertilisers, in the later part of the Green Revolution, prompted it to adopt a policy of subsidising fertilisers. In 1977, the country had a total NPK (nitrogenous, phosphatic and potassic) fertiliser consumption of 4.3 million metric tonnes (mmt) and per hectare usage of 24.9 kg—by FY19, total consumption had risen to 27.3 mmt and per hectare usage stood at 137.6 kg. Increased fertiliser usage also meant a concomitant spurt in agricultural production; total foodgrain production reached 284.95 mmt in FY19—an over-three-fold increase from the production in 1977-78. Of course, increased foodgrain production has been a boon for food security, with per capita availability increasing from 155.3 kg in 1976 to 180.3 kg in 2018. Looking at the gains, continuing with the fertiliser policy would not only seem sensible, but also—given foodgrain requirement is going to go up, and the climate crisis impact predicted to be quite severe for India—necessary. However, as a paper by Icrier researchers Ashok Gulati and Pritha Banerjee shows, the challenges rooted in the subsidy policy for the major stakeholders—farmers, industry and the government—are so serious, and the fallout of excessive fertiliser use so severe, that subsidising and producing fertilisers in the country seems a bad proposition.

Thanks to India subsidising primarily urea (N of NPK), there is rampant overuse of urea; imbalance in the consumption of fertilisers has led a worsening of soil quality that has resulted in falling crop response to fertilisers, which, in turn, has caused farm productivity and farmers' profitability to be adversely affected. In 2005, the crop response ratio to fertilisers had fallen to 3.7 kg grains/kg fertiliser, from 13 kg/kg fertiliser in 1970. Ironically, falling productivity, in the face of hugely subsidised urea—urea accounts for 64% of the government's subsidy for fertiliser, with 77% of its price being subsidised—has led to worse overuse, drastically skewing the ideal usage ratio, and altering the soil chemistry further. It is, thus, somewhat of a vicious cycle. Low crop response ratio means lower yields—in 2016, India's average paddy yield per hectare was a good 1 metric tonne lower than the world average. Similarly, India's wheat yield that year was 3,093 kg/hectare, compared with the world average of 3,405 kg/ha. Paddy, maize, cotton, soybean and potato cultivators all experienced losses in FY15, compared with FY13 and FY14. To be sure, there could be other factors at play, too—indeed, since 2014, every year other than 2016 has seen below normal monsoon, with 2014 and 2015 experiencing the worst deficiencies—but the link between fertiliser overuse and the decline in soil productivity is a strong one. With falling farm yields, exacerbated by climate effects, doubling farmers' real income by FY23 will be difficult, which means continuing to subsidise fertiliser will work against the government's stated goal for the agriculture sector.

Fertiliser policy has left the industry, too, fighting many problems. While subsidy and controls meant fertiliser production boomed in the country, over the past two decades these policies have hobbled the industry. With no proper incentives, domestic urea production rose just 4.4 mmt between 2000-01 and 2018-19, even as consumption was



INDIA'S FERTILISER DRAIN

Urea of darkness

A study by Icrier researchers Ashok Gulati and Pritha Banerjee shows how problematic the fertiliser policy is—for farmers, industry, the environment and the government. The need is to urgently end subsidies and switch to direct cash transfers to farmers, while paring down production and relying on less expensive imports

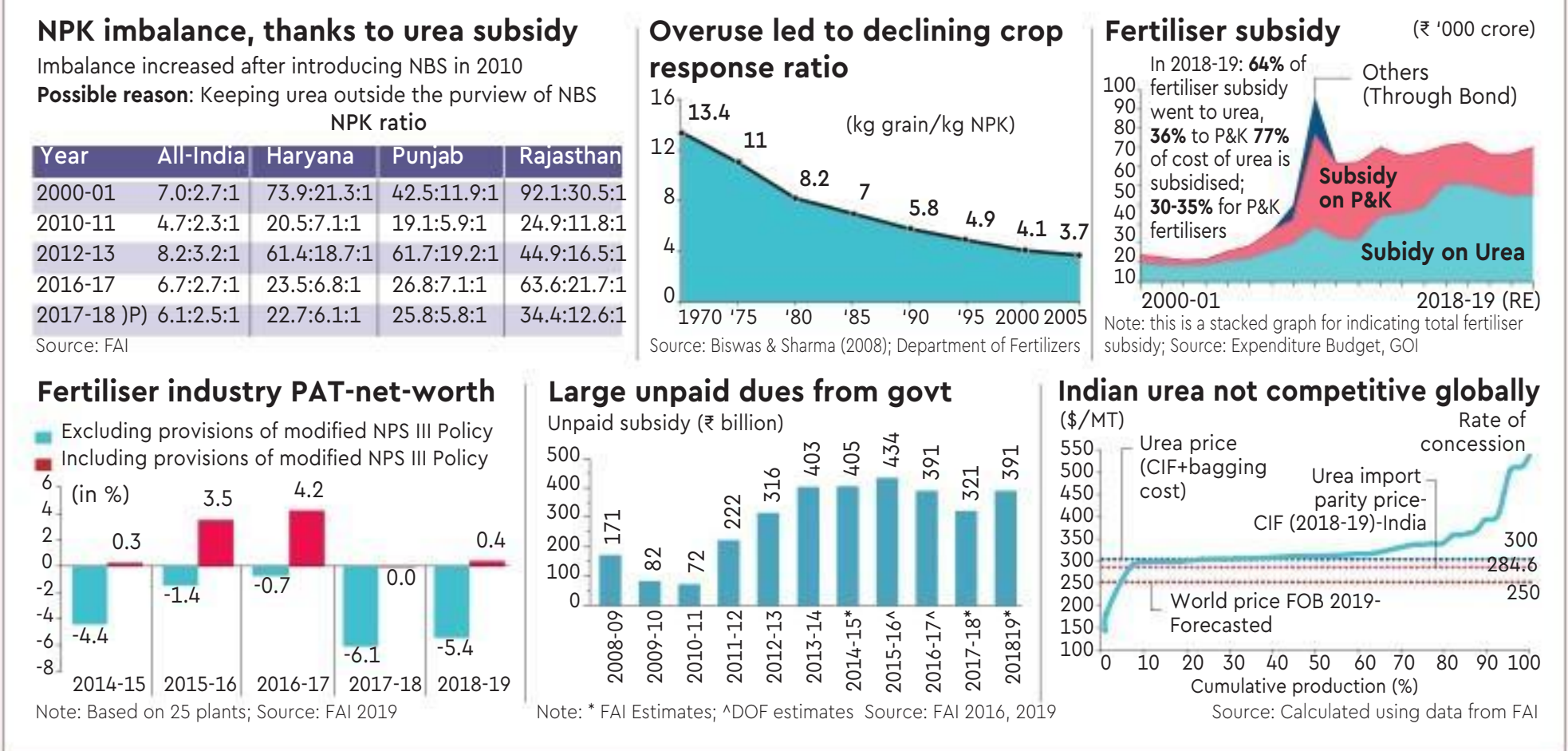
12.8 mmt. Given urea production stood at 23.9 mmt while consumption was at 32 mmt in 2018-19, India, thus, is a major urea importer. Of the 30 urea production plants in the country, 27 use natural gas and three use naptha as the feedstock. The average cost of production for all domestic urea capacity stands at \$332.2/metric tonne. Given the global urea price stood at \$284.6/metric tonne (CIF) in 2018-19—bagging and handling charges took this to \$300/metric tonne—domestic urea production is simply uncompetitive. Only seven of the 30 Indian plants were operating below the global price (CIF + bagging and handling). In 2014-15, when the global price was \$287/metric tonne, 17 Indian plants were operating at costs below \$300/metric tonne. This means, over the last four years, the cost of production has increased significantly for Indian urea production.

While the best of Indians match their global peers in terms of energy

efficiency, the average Indian plant has a better showing than the world average. So, where is the problem? It is the cost of the feedstock. In 2015, the government introduced pooling of natural

gas so that all fertiliser plants got gas at the same price. While the price of domestic gas is still low, the price of the pooled natural gas for the fertiliser industry has shot up from \$9.8/mmBtu

on net calorific value in FY16 to \$12.3/mmBtu. This is because the share of low-priced domestic gas in the total gas consumed by the industry has declined from 62% in 2014-15 to 38%



in FY19, and is estimated to have slipped to 30% in Q1FY20. Part of the fall is because the share of supply of locally-produced gas to the power sector and other users has increased sharply. Gas-pricing (factor of supply, among other things) that is still regulated by the government—though, in November, there were reports that the government is mulling over lifting all control—is just one reason. The fixed costs of the urea industry have been kept constant in nominal terms since 2002-03. While several committees have recommended a review and even the Cabinet has passed a decision to pay ₹350/metric tonne as interim relief—the industry estimates the increase in fixed costs to be much higher than this amount—nothing has been paid. This is on top of the unpaid subsidies of just over ₹39,000 crore to the industry (up from ₹17,000 crore in 2008-09). Thus, it doesn't come as a surprise that the industry's PAT-to-Net-Worth has been in the negative over the last five years; it has been in the positive in the last four years if the provisions of New Pricing Scheme-III are considered, but, even then, this averages 3.3%, much below the 12% promised.

Between FY01 and FY19, urea subsidy has increased from ₹9,500 crore to ₹45,000 crore, and as per FY20 Budget estimates it will be ₹50,000 crore. With the sharply increased share of urea subsidy in the total fertiliser subsidy—and the fact that nearly 77% of the cost of domestic urea production is subsidised, while for P&K fertilisers it was just 30-35%—there is rampant overuse of urea as the difference in prices of urea and P&K fertilisers is now quite large. Over time, the phosphatic and potassic content of the soil is affected greatly even as nitrogenous content is thrown off balance. The indicated N:P:K usage for Indian soil is 4:2:1. While it stood at 7:2:7:1 in 2000-01, it was still askew at 6:1:2.5:1 in 2017-18, while in Punjab and Haryana, two of India's top agrarian states, the ratio was 25.8:5.8:1 and 22.7:6.1:1, respectively.

Given Indian soils have relatively low nitrogen use efficiency (average of 22% estimated in 2008), the bulk of the urea applied contaminates ground- and surface water and the atmosphere. So, the current fertiliser policy is subsidising pollution. The bulk of the applied urea is lost as ammonia (NH3), dinitrogen (N2) and NOx (nitrogen oxides)—while the ammonia gets converted to nitrates, increasing soil acidity, NOx gases are major air pollutants. Nitrate contamination of groundwater, which leads to conditions such as methaemoglobinemia (commonly known as blue baby syndrome), has reached far beyond WHO safe limit in Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan.

Given how uncompetitive local production of urea, and how distortionary the effect of the subsidy policy is, it makes a lot of sense for India to junk domestic production and import urea from, say, a Gulf nation where natural gas is abundant and thus costs of production are low, and, instead of subsidising fertilisers, make direct cash transfers to farmers. With fixed amounts, farmers will likely temper their usage of fertilisers in the interest of soil health as prices of fertilisers will be decontrolled. Instead, the government seems keen on shoring up domestic production—even if the costs are uncompetitive—having announced a plan to rejuvenate five plants, at an investment of ₹39,651 crore. This not only goes against the Prime Minister's call to halve urea consumption by 2022, but will also make domestic urea even more uncompetitive as the fixed costs will be higher for the rejuvenated plants. The government needs to get sensible, else the health of the soil, citizens (including farmers) and the industry will suffer greatly.

OVER THE BARREL

ACHANT HEARD IN every boardroom and management discussion is “Good governance”. The phrase has not been precisely defined. It is variously interpreted, but common to all interpretations is the understanding it means transparent, fair and ethical corporate behaviour; the full and accurate disclosure of financial and operational information and the adherence in the letter and spirit to the law. People start arguing when the somewhat nebulous concept of “social responsibility” is added to the chant. It then befalls upon corporate management to define this phrase and to find a pathway that balances the demands of the shareholders for maximal dividends and capital appreciation with the pressures to contribute to societal welfare. The search for this pathway is what has prompted this article.

The benefits of “good governance”, however imprecisely defined, have been quantifiably established. The NGO Reputation Institute estimates that intangibles like reputation make up approximately 81% of a company's value and that a “strong reputation yields 2.5 times better stock market performance” compared to the overall market. One could debate the methodologies behind these calculations, but the central message is indubitable. Well-governed companies have easier access to capital; they pay lower interest rates; they secure better credit terms; and they attract the best and brightest of talent. Good governance is good business.

The message is further reinforced by the anecdotal evidence of the prohibitive costs of “poor governance”. The whistle-

Good governance is good business

The Gilgamesh solution to good governance and corporate India

VIKRAM S MEHTA

The author is chairman & senior fellow, Brookings India



blower allegation of a breach in the disclosure of financial data by the management of Infosys is a case in point. The market cap of the company dropped by approximately Rs 50,000 crore in one trading session. The twists and turns of the IPO of the Saudi government owned oil and gas company Aramco is another example. The Saudis had valued their company at around \$2 trillion. Their financial advisers, however, came back after testing the market with a valuation of \$1-1.2 trillion. They told the Saudis that the discount was, inter alia, because of perceptions of opacity in the Saudi governance structure. The Crown Prince of Saudi was not pleased and decided to pull back the IPO from the European and US markets.

Few question the business case for good governance. But many wonder how, in fact, it can be delivered. How, it is asked, can management be motivated to balance the interests of the shareholder with that

of the society when the incentive structure is skewed disproportionately in favour of short-term financial performance. The chant of “good governance” is fundamentally hypocritical, it is suggested. And will remain so until a process is engendered to create a balanced incentive structure that motivates the generation of financial returns through societal welfare than the current structure that regards one as a trade-off for the other.

There is no one-size-fits-all response to this conundrum, but a tale from 6,000 years ago may offer guideposts for stakeholders of governance to initiate such a process.

Gilgamesh was the King of the Sumerian town of Uruk. He was a courageous leader and a builder. He had created, by all accounts, a remarkable city with wide boulevards, open spaces and excellent public facilities. He was, however, an unabashed tyrant. No one was safe from



his roving eyes. He treated the citizens of Uruk as his personal chattel, and trampled on their rights like a wild bull. In despair, the people appealed to Anu, the principal deity of the Sumerian pantheon. The Gods responded by creating an exact double of Gilgamesh. His name was Enkidu. He was Gilgamesh's equal in every respect—strength, vision and character. They fought, and whilst Gilgamesh did eventually prevail, it was not before Enkidu had checked his worst excesses and secured his agreement to work together to restore peace and harmony to Uruk. Thereafter, the two cooperated and collaborated as partners and not as competitors.

In the context of corporate governance,

this epic contains two messages. One, to get otherwise competing forces to work together, all parties must converge onto the same page and have comparable powers and authority to check and balance each other into collaboration and cooperation. And two, a new world (“peace in Uruk” or “balanced incentive” structures) cannot be created as an event. It is a process. All stakeholders must appreciate they are on a journey and they will reach their destination only if they learn to work together despite their differences.

These two messages should be internalised by the four divergent and often competing stakeholders that bear on Corporate India.

One, the management—the custodian of operational performance and, as indicated, driven understandably by the objectives of short-term financial metrics. Two, the independent directors who have a fiduciary obligation towards the minority shareholder and also a strategic responsibility to facilitate long-term growth and profitability. Three, the regulator whose role is to prescribe the rules and procedures of governance and to enforce it through broad-based juridical authority. And finally, the government, which is the lawmaker, but more pertinent in the context of governance, the agency for bringing corporates into the developmental net.

Currently, each of these stakeholders chant the same mantra of “good governance”, but they operate autonomously within their own spheres. There is no formal forum that brings them all together. The management and the independent directors do, of course, face each other at the quarterly board meetings, but the interface is constrained by the board agenda and time. The Gilgamesh solution would recommend that these spheres be perforated. It would posit that, squeezed between the demands of the shareholder on one side, and the expectations of society on the other, there is a passageway that balances the interests of the shareholder and society. And that the four stakeholders should find this space and move into it as coequal and collaborative partners. They will not find it easy given their differences, but if they did so, they could eventually flip the current zero-sum dilemma of governance into a positive-sum outcome of balanced incentives.



The IndianEXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

Business case for governance

A balance can be found — between demands of shareholders and interests of society



VIKRAM S MEHTA

THOSE WHO QUESTION

Will government listen to Manmohan-Bajaj message, or read a conspiracy, create a spectre? Much depends on its response

On Saturday, one of India's most respected industrialists spoke about fear to power. Rahul Bajaj, at an awards function organised by *The Economic Times* in Mumbai, with ministers Amit Shah, Nirmala Sitharaman and Piyush Goyal on stage, spoke of corporates afraid to criticise government, of an environment of impunity for phenomena like lynchings, of terror-accused Pragya Thakur's political journey to Parliament with the BJP's full backing and support. A day earlier, from another public stage, former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had talked about how the precarious state of the economy is linked to the state of the society in which it operates, how a "toxic combination of deep distrust, pervasive fear" is "stifling economic activity and hence economic growth". Also on Friday, came news of the GDP growth rate for the second quarter of this financial year hitting a 26-quarter low. It is up to the Narendra Modi government now to join the dots — not to see another conspiracy in the three events, or to create another spectre to deflect and divert attention from them, but to acknowledge and respect their sobering message.

Even as they were strikingly similar in their burden, the difference of tone in the interventions of Bajaj and Singh was telling. Bajaj spoke with the self-conscious hesitancy and bravado of one breaking a taboo and a silence, rushing in where so many others visibly fear to tread. "Nobody from our industrialist friends will speak... I will say openly... we don't have the confidence that you will appreciate if we criticise you openly..." The fact is that in the hall full of distinguished industrialists in which he spoke, Bajaj stood up alone. The fact also is that if his peers and other prominent industrialists had echoed Bajaj's apprehensions in the last few years, articulated them publicly and to government, if they had, for instance, received news of the plunging GDP growth figures with a concern as audible as were their cheers for the government's corporate tax cut, his intervention on Saturday would not seem quite so extraordinary, or as courageous. Former PM Singh, on the other hand, spelt out the current predicament with an understated authority. His message was devoid of drama, but his warning was grave. He spoke of economic development stalling because of the "profound fear and distrust among our various economic participants", eroding public trust in independent institutions and of the "root cause of this" — "the government's policy doctrine that seems to suspect every industrialist, banker, policymaker, regulator, entrepreneur and citizen..." The Modi government seems to view everything and everyone through a tainted prism of suspicion... and it has positioned itself as some saviour, resorting to foolhardy moral policing..." The way out of the economic slump, the former PM cautioned, does not lie in more enlightened economic policy-making alone. It will need, also, the restoring of confidence and exuberance.

The government may, of course, dismiss Singh's words as the lament of the loser. But the extent of the economic downturn has already indicated that the strategy of delinking the political-electoral from the economic could be reaching its limits. Another message is now writ on the wall: To revive the economy, the BJP will have to review its social and political ethos and philosophy. It may well be that nothing less will do.

A TIME TO REBUILD

As Delhi and Colombo renew ties, they must proceed with wisdom, resist being pushed back to square one

AT THE end of his talks with the visiting Sri Lankan president Gotabaya Rajapaksa, Prime Minister Narendra Modi affirmed that "the security and development of our two countries are inseparable. Therefore, it is natural that we should be aware of each other's safety and sensibilities." This proposition appears self-evident. Yet the reality of recent decades has been the intense discord between Delhi and Colombo, triggered by India's involvement in the prolonged civil war in Sri Lanka. India's support for Tamil insurgent groups in the early 1980s followed by a military intervention during 1987-90 and political pressure on the rights of the Tamil minority had convinced the Sinhala majority that Delhi was hostile to the island nation. India had grievances of its own — due to Colombo's steady strategic drift towards Beijing and its lack of progress on political reconciliation with the Tamil population after a decisive victory against the insurgency a decade ago.

Efforts in the last few years to resolve these contentions went nowhere, thanks to inter-necine battles in Colombo between the president and prime minister. The decisive mandate for Gotabaya in the recent elections has opened up space for a renewed effort at rebuilding bilateral relations. In Delhi, Gotabaya affirmed that Sri Lanka will do nothing to undermine India's security interests and promised that his government's engagement with China will be strictly commercial. India, in turn, has extended strong support to Gotabaya's plans to counter the resurgence of terrorism in Lanka and to the new president's ambitious economic goals.

But the Tamil question remains a ticking time bomb that could once again wreck bilateral relations. Modi said Gotabaya briefed him on his plans to address the concerns of the Tamil minority and expressed hope that the Lanka president will meet their aspirations. Gotabaya argues that talk of devolution has delivered little to the Tamils, but only angered the Sinhala majority. He says he would like to transcend Lanka's identity politics by producing meaningful change in the economic conditions of the Tamil population. For many in Chennai, this approach will be unacceptable. But Delhi surely knows that it cannot impose external solutions to Sri Lankan problems. Colombo knows that doing nothing for the Tamils will inevitably escalate Chennai's pressure on Delhi to intervene in Lanka's internal politics and push the two nations back to square one. There is only one way to manage this complex political interdependence — for Colombo to make visible progress on the Tamil condition and for Delhi to support indigenous solutions for Sri Lanka's political reconciliation.

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



AJITA BANERJEE

THE PASSAGE OF the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2019, has caused great disappointment to the transgender community in India that had urged the Rajya Sabha to refer the Bill to a select committee.

The Bill failed to incorporate crucial recommendations of the Parliament Standing Committee and several depositions by the transgender and intersex community. According to the Bill, a transgender person "may make an application to the District Magistrate for a certificate of identity indicating the gender as 'transgender'" and a revised certificate may be obtained "if a transgender person undergoes surgery to change gender either as a male or female". This is in direct violation of *NALSA v Union of India* that had affirmed the right to self-determination of gender as male, female or transgender without the mandate of any medical certificate or sex-reassignment surgery (SRS).

Also, despite including identities such as "gender queer" and "persons with intersex variations" in the definition of "transgender", the Bill has failed to incorporate the rights of such persons, putting them in danger of being excluded by a system which certifies people based on medical examination.

While the Bill seeks to prohibit discrimination, it does not explicitly define what constitutes as discrimination. It also fails to extend protection to transgender persons who might face sexual abuse as the Indian Penal Code recognises rape in strict terms of men and women as perpetrator and victim, res-

The chant of 'good governance' is fundamentally hypocritical, it is suggested. And will remain so until a process is engendered to create a balanced incentive structure that motivates the generation of financial returns through societal welfare than the current structure that regards one as a trade off for the other.

Saudi governance structure. The Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia was not pleased and decided to pull back the IPO from the European and US markets.

Few question the business case for good governance. But many wonder how exactly it can be delivered. How, it is asked, can management be motivated to balance the interests of the shareholder with that of society when the incentive structure is skewed disproportionately in favour of short-term financial performance? The chant of "good governance" is fundamentally hypocritical, it is suggested. And will remain so until a process is engendered to create a balanced incentive structure that motivates the generation of financial returns through societal welfare than the current structure that regards one as a trade off for the other.

There is no one size fits all response to this conundrum but a tale from 6,000 years ago may offer guideposts for stakeholders of governance to initiate such a process. Gilgamesh was the king of the Sumerian town of Uruk in 4,200 BC. He was a courageous leader and a builder. He had created, by all accounts, a remarkable city with wide boulevards, open spaces and excellent public facilities. He was, however, an unabashed tyrant. No one was safe from his roving eyes. He treated the citizens of Uruk as his personal chattel and trampled on their rights like a wild bull. In despair, the people appealed to Anu, the principal deity of the Sumerian pantheon. The goddess responded by creating an exact double of Gilgamesh. His name was Enkidu. He was Gilgamesh's equal in every respect — strength, vision and character. They fought and whilst Gilgamesh did eventually prevail, it was not before Enkidu had checked his worst excesses and secured his agreement to work together to restore peace and harmony to Uruk. Thereafter, the two cooperated and collaborated as partners.

In the context of corporate governance, this epic contains two messages. One, to get otherwise competing forces to work together, all parties must converge on the same page and have comparable powers and authority to check and balance each other into

collaboration and cooperation. And two, a new world ("peace in Uruk" or "balanced incentive" structures) cannot be created as an event. It is a process. All stakeholders must appreciate they are on a journey and they will reach their destination only if they learn to work together despite their differences.

These two messages should be internalised by the four divergent and often competing stakeholders that bear on corporate India. One, the management, which is the custodian of operational performance. It is driven, understandably, by the objectives of short-term financial metrics. Two, the independent directors (ID) who have a fiduciary obligation towards the minority shareholder as well as a strategic responsibility to facilitate long-term growth and profitability. Three, the regulator whose role is to prescribe the rules and procedures of governance and to enforce them through broad-based juridical authority. And finally, the government, which is the law maker and, more pertinently in the context of governance, the agency for bringing corporates into the developmental net.

Currently, each of these stakeholders chant the same mantra of "good governance" but they operate autonomously within their own spheres. There is no formal forum that brings them together. The management and the IDs do, of course, face each other at the quarterly board meetings, but the interface is constrained by the board agenda and time. The Gilgamesh solution would recommend that these spheres be perforated. It would posit that, squeezed between the demands of the shareholder, on one side, and the expectations of society on the other, there is a passageway that balances the interests of the shareholder and society. And that the four stakeholders should find this space and move into it as co-equal and collaborative partners. They will not find it easy given their differences but if they did so, they could eventually flip the current zero-sum dilemma of governance into a positive sum outcome of balanced incentives.

The writer is chairman and senior fellow, Brookings India

THE FIGHT FOR DIGNITY

Transgender Persons Bill has let down the community's long struggle for self respect

spectively. While the Bill makes "sexual abuse" punishable, it does not define the acts that constitute sexual offences, making it complicated for transgender persons to report such crimes.

The Bill also raises concerns around the government's motive behind "the rescue, protection and rehabilitation of transgender persons", which could potentially give rise to police crackdowns against transgender persons, especially sex workers. This clause might also grant impunity to the police to arbitrarily arrest transgender persons under the pretext of "rescuing" them, and, use provisions of anti-beggary laws whose vagueness allows for disproportionate violence against the most marginalised communities.

On the rights of transgender children, the Bill fails to include "gender non-conforming" children and "children with intersex variations". It falls short of addressing and penalising surgeries on infants born with intersex variations with the intention of "correcting" their bodies to fit the binary gender: Many parents subject their children to medical "conversion" therapies or "correction" procedures, including shock therapy, to make them "normal". Further, the Bill states, "no child shall be separated from parents or immediate family on the ground of being a transgender, except on an order of a competent court." This poses a potential threat to the safety and well being of the child as it could give the family the leeway to harass the child and exclude them from their prop-

erty. It also makes the courts the moral guardians for deciding the fate of the transgender persons by sending them to rehabilitation homes where they could face abuse at the hands of their peers or the staff. The Bill puts the young person in a conundrum — of choosing between the violence of the family and that of state rehabilitation centres.

Another major flaw of the Bill is that it does not provide for reservation in education and employment for transgender persons, going against the mandate in *NALSA*, which had clearly stated that the state must take measures "to treat them as socially and educationally backward classes of citizens and extend all kinds of reservation in cases of admission in educational institutions and for public appointments". The Bill does not tackle the question of realisation of civil rights — such as marriage, civil partnership, adoption and property rights, thereby continuing to deprive transgender persons of their fundamental rights and the constitutional guarantee provided by the Supreme Court in *NALSA*.

The Bill has made a mockery of transgender persons' lives and by passing it, Parliament has let down the community that fought for their rights for decades. But the transgender community is resolute in their will to continue the fight against this injustice that's been done to them.

The writer is a human rights activist and researcher based in New Delhi



DECEMBER 2, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

CONGRESS-I MANIFESTO THE CONGRESS-I ELECTION manifesto, which was released by Indira Gandhi in New Delhi, can be summed up in a single sentence that occurs in the manifesto: "The Indian National Congress-I is the only party and Mrs Cndira Gandhi is the only leader who can save the country, after its recent traumatic experience." To back up this thesis, the manifesto asserts that the experience of the last two-and-a-half years has clearly shown that only a stable and progressive government can fulfil the expectations of the masses and lift the country out of the chaos created by the Janata and the Lok Dal governments. The stable government envisaged in the mani-

festo would have a majority in Parliament. And it would have a "leadership that has been tested in times of internal and external upheavals and pressures".

ALLIANCE DISRUPTION

THE LOK DAL-CONGRESS electoral alliance seemed on the brink of disruption with Lok Dal General Secretary Narendra Singh admitting that both parties will contest against each other in a number of seats. Singh said his party was trying to reach an accord on as many seats as possible but if differences persist, there would have to be "some friendly contests". Though he would not admit it, it was also learnt that the Lok Dal's differences

with the Congress were not confined to seat distribution alone. A reliable Lok Dal source admitted that there was disagreement over the manifesto also.

KOYA QUILTS

KERALA CHIEF MINISTER Mohammed Koya called on Governor Jyothi Vencatachellum and tendered the resignation of his 51-day-old ministry. The governor accepted the resignation and requested Koya to continue in office till alternative arrangements were made. Koya, after submitting the resignation, said that the parties presently with him would jointly fight the Lok Sabha poll and state assembly elections likely to be held soon.



THE IDEAS PAGE

Power from nothingness

Gandhi, like the Buddha, found that concern for the well-being of all was an antidote to fear, angst about death



IN GOOD FAITH

By K P SHANKARAN

WHILE RECENTLY REREADING Erik Erikson's 1969 psychoanalytical political biography of Gandhi, *Gandhi's Truth*, I was particularly struck by the following statement: "Freud, in one of his 'economic' moods might well have said that, psychologically speaking, such men (people like Gandhi) save others not so much from their sin but from the fantastic effort not to see the most obvious of all facts: That life is bounded by not-life." Gandhi, according to Erikson, allows us to face the fact that we are "bounded by not-life" and tempts us to draw power from such efforts as exemplified in Gandhi's life struggle.

Our fascination for men like Gandhi, the Buddha or Socrates "rests on the need of all men to find the few who plausibly take it upon themselves to reveal — and give meaning to — what others must deny at all times but cannot really forget for a moment" — death/nothingness. Those of us who are familiar with Gandhi's philosophical, political and intellectual struggles know that he, perhaps more than the Buddha or Socrates, tried his level best to reduce himself to "zero", as he announced in the last paragraphs of his autobiography. Erikson believes that Gandhi almost succeeded in this endeavour and because of this singular achievement, Erikson presents Gandhi as a heroic figure who drew power from "nothingness". Lesser mortals if they ever had the courage to attempt anything similar, Erikson cautions us, would have most likely ended up being crushed between megalomania and self-destruction.

A reading of Gandhi, from a purely philosophical point of view, would tempt one to see him as someone who — like the Buddha — was asking us to replace our unselfconsciously and uncritically held metaphysical beliefs through a series of "experiments with truth". We know that the Buddha did say this in the "Kalama Sutra" and many other sutras. Gandhi's life was a work in progress till it was terminated by his assassin Nathuram Vinayak Godse's bullet.

In the rest of this article, I make an attempt to bring out the significance of Gandhi's desire to reduce himself to "zero" by using some subcontinental philosophical concepts.

Individually speaking, one's own birth is not an enigma. Life as such, although we don't have any clear cut explanations about it, is not an enigma for many since we can marshal some semi-intelligible explanations. But what about death? A person can only infer, like in the case of her own birth, that she will cease to exist just by inductive reasoning. Everything ultimately loses its integrity in the familiar world of ours. The same thing happens to one's own current biophysical integrity. It happens to all inanimate as well as all animate beings. From the point of view of the physical and the biological, there is no enigma here. But from an agent's point of view, she could anticipate a "world lost" that is not enigmatic but could be traumatic psychologically. The natural disintegration "deprives" one of the familiar world of meaningful scenarios in which one is constantly engaged in. This anticipated deprivation of the "world" is what is disturbing emotionally. The "world" is an enigma because it is not explainable biophysically. It is, therefore,



C R Sasikumar

not "natural" but "conventional" — we can at the same time be both, entities capable of a biophysical explanation as well as agents functioning against a background of standards of correctness. The "world" is related to the latter.

That is why the "world" is termed by Nagarjuna as "vyavaharika". It is akin to the other subcontinental idea of "leela". It is correctly described by some of the subcontinental philosophers as "anirvachniya" — inexplicable because it is neither real nor unreal. Indeed, it is like any other game we are familiar with (nether real or unreal) but it is conceptually/historically prior to them all and all of them supervene on it. That is why (we) take it as more fundamental (conventionally) than the ordinary scenarios we call "games". We also acknowledge (under metaphysical compulsion) that the "world" itself supervenes on an "X", which is taken as the "real" — Matter; God, Brahman, Nothingness...

The conventionality of the world can be gauged from the presence of binary oppositions which we deal with regularly. These oppositions are indicators of standards of correctness. The standards are what makes conventional, conventional. Nevertheless, we cannot break out of the conventional/vyavaharika, we can only have useful/useless interpretations of it from within.

The Buddha thought that the fear of death and all other unsatisfactoriness emerge from our metaphysical affectedness. Because we are socialised to treat the "world" as supervening on a "ground everlasting" we habitu-

A reading of Gandhi, from a purely philosophical point of view, would tempt one to see him as someone who like the Buddha was asking us to replace our unselfconsciously and uncritically held metaphysical beliefs through a series of 'experiments with truth'. We know that the Buddha did say this in the 'Kalama Sutra' and many other sutras. Gandhi's life was a work in progress till it was terminated by his assassin Nathuram Vinayak Godse's bullet.

ally presuppose and look for something permanent, if it is not visible in the world, but within us. Because of this, the anticipated loss of the "world" which is undeniable threatens us as inexplicably meaningless and hence makes us angst ridden.

The Buddha's solution for this predicament is to learn to live without metaphysical props like Matter (White or Dark), the Unified Theory of Physics, God and all its versions, Brahman and all its versions, nirvana included. The Buddha himself thought that some ad hoc versions of metaphysics were initially needed to replace the one that we have been socialised into. He suggested for his disciples a "Right View" — an ad hoc metaphysics for temporary use, till they get rid of selfishness significantly enough to make all metaphysical props totally unnecessary. He, like his contemporaries Socrates, Vardhamana Mahavira, and 20th CE admirer Gandhi, prescribed a series of ethical practices for us to cultivate virtues in order to significantly reduce the play of selfishness in our lives. As selfishness reduces (Gandhi's "zero") significantly through ethical practices, all fears, including the fear of death, which are due to the immoderate selfishness in us, disappear. This automatic disappearance of all fears, in other words, is because of the cultivation of all-inclusive "sarvodaya" (concern for the well-being of all) a term Gandhi like the Buddha kept on repeating tirelessly.

The writer taught philosophy at St Stephen's College, Delhi University

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

"In recent years, China's economic might has silenced many critics and muted others... the new US law and renewed protests over the treatment of Muslim minorities in the wake of the leaked files suggest things may be evolving."

— THE GUARDIAN

Grass for lions

Restoring Saurashtra's grasslands is key for the big cats to thrive in their natural habitat



DHEERAJ MITTAL

RECENTLY, A VIDEO showing an Asiatic lion eating grass went viral on social media in Gujarat. Many wondered if lions indeed eat grass! As a matter of fact, wild carnivores often eat grass when they have a stomach upset so as to vomit undigested food, and in some cases, to encapsulate shards in bony food.

Though lions are carnivores, there is an umbilical link between grass and the big cats. Grass is the starting point of all major food chains. Wild ungulates like spotted deer, blue bulls (nilgai), sambar, wild boars etc, which form the main prey-base of Asiatic lions, dependent on good grass. Their habitat comprises grasslands and open patches.

The Saurashtra region is interspersed with 106 reserved *vidis* (grasslands) maintained by the forest department and 434 non-reserved *vidis* controlled by other agencies. They are spread over 1,810 sq km, making up 20 per cent of total grassland cover in Gujarat. Private *vidis*, *gauchars* (community grazing-lands controlled by village panchayats) and government wastelands supplement these *vidis*. Most of these *vidis* are part of the 22,000-sq km Greater Gir landscape, the last abode of Asiatic lions.

A good lion habitat must have a good prey-base. For a healthy prey-base, grasslands are the key. Lion conservation efforts are focused on habitat improvement and, by extension, on improvement of grasslands. Dispersal of lions from the core Gir forest was possible due to a matrix of grasslands and open patches in the Greater Gir area. It is imperative, therefore, to initiate landscape-level interventions to ensure that the lion population keeps thriving. Since these big cats coexist with local agropastoralists, minimising competition for natural resources between wildlife and local communities is crucial. Productive grasslands can help achieve this. They can make a very good habitat for lions while also meeting requirements of the locals.

Lions have been dispersing out of the core Gir forest for the past 15 years. According to the 2015 census, out of total 523 Asiatic lions, 167 were living outside protected forests. That is one-third of their population. The lions living outside protected forests have made these grasslands in revenue areas their home. Hence, these grasslands will be critical to lions' further dispersal and sustaining their robust population growth seen over the past couple of decades.

Over a period of time, however, these grasslands have degraded owing to invasion of woody and shrubby species and have turned into somewhat unproductive woodlots. Hardly any grass grows in them now. Instead, growth of species like lantana, prosopis, van tulsi and cassia defines their vegetation. This vegetation is unpalatable for wild ungulates and domestic animals.

The progressive degradation of grass-

lands has exacerbated some of the present problems like shortage of fodder, lack of good grazing grounds for maldharis (a semi-nomadic pastoralist community), increase in crop depredation by wild herbivores etc. Eventually, it can prove detrimental to animal husbandry, which, after agriculture, is the other major occupation in Saurashtra. As grasslands on forest fringes become unsuitable for wildlife and local livestock, the fringe further shifts towards agricultural fields and human settlements. This, in turn, is aggravating human-wildlife conflict. In the long run, such a scenario may sour the unique sentiment and goodwill the local communities have for wildlife in general and lions in particular.

This gradual, unattended shift has affected both ecology and economics of the region. Village panchayats are unable to maintain their *gauchars* for lack of resources. Nor do they consider managing their *gauchars* and wastelands a priority. The continued apathy is resulting in large-scale encroachment on such swathes and soil mining from such patches. There aren't many management interventions by the forest department either in the non-reserved *vidis*. The net result is that the landscape is suffering the tragedy of commons and a vicious self-perpetuating circle of unproductiveness.

For long-term ecological and economic security, all stakeholders need to make a collective effort. The forest and revenue departments and panchayats need to take up a joint mission to restore these grasslands. Good productive grasslands are extremely important for fodder security. For instance, the more than 1.6 crore kg of grass collected by the forest department from reserve *vidis* in 2018-19 will be available for distribution in the event of a drought. Grasslands are important for water security too as they serve as great watersheds. The conflict due to crop depredation and lions venturing into human habitations can also be mitigated if grasslands are maintained and managed properly. Wild herbivores naturally prefer open and productive patches and thereby keep carnivores interested in such areas. Grassland restoration will also help in the conservation of bustards, floricans, wolves, blackbucks and many other wild species that share a similar habitat.

Wildlife conservation and sustainable utilisation of grasslands are not mutually exclusive pursuits. Grassland restoration will not only have positive ecological effects on long-term lion conservation, it will also yield significant socioeconomic benefits to the locals. Just like with lion conservation, grassland restoration can also be done with the participation of local communities. They can help in tending grasslands and clearing any woodlots, if required. Part of the proceeds from wood clearing can be shared with the panchayats.

The recent UN-led conference to combat desertification committed to achieving land degradation neutrality by 2030. At this conference, India committed to restoring at least 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030. Gujarat can begin with restoration of the grasslands in Saurashtra.

The writer, an IFS officer, presently serves as deputy conservator of forest, Gir West Forest Division in Junagadh. Views are personal

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

EQUALITY FIRST

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'On a new footing' (IE, November 29). Like any bilateral relationship, India and Sri Lanka have their fair share of convergence and disruptions. With the Rajapaksas back in office, it would now be sensible to expect coherence in Sri Lankan policies — unlike the past five years. While India is apprehensive of Sri Lanka's strategic links with China, the island nation may get anxious if India meddles in its domestic affairs.

Anirudh Parashar, Solan

BJP, LIKE CONGRESS

THIS REFERS TO the article, 'New look BJP, old Congress' (IE, November 28). The BJP's poor performance in the Maharashtra and Haryana Assembly elections must serve as a wake up call for the party's brass. It is common knowledge that far from being a party with a difference, the BJP has been following in the footsteps of the Congress. Throwing open doors to rebels of other political parties and rewarding them with tickets during election times is a trait of the Congress.

Ravi Mathur, Ghaziabad

WRONG POTION

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'No cheers for Jagan' (IE, November 26). Prohibition does not address the real problem of addiction. Besides, it also leads to significant revenue losses. It is unfortunate that a serious matter has been reduced to a farce. At times, a political leader of

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

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

a state wins an election by campaigning for prohibition. And when this leader loses at the hustings, his successor often reverses the policy citing revenue losses.

Dilip Kumar Datta, Midnapore

RJD'S NEW LEADER

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, 'A new cast' (IE, November 29). The elevation of Jagdanand Singh, a Rajput, as Bihar unit president of RJD is a departure for a party which has never made bones of championing the cause of Yadavs and Muslims. The BJP's high pitched nationalism has upset the caste-driven politics of Bihar as seen in the RJD's drubbing in the general elections. This has forced the party to course correct.

Kamna Chhabra, Gurugram

VIEW FROM THE NEIGHBOURHOOD



A weekly look at the public conversations shaping ideas beyond borders — in the Subcontinent. Curated by Aakash Joshi

A NEW ACCORD

AS THE newly-elected Sri Lankan president, Gotabaya Rajapaksa was on a visit to India, the Sri Lankan press, like its Indian counterpart, assessed the bilateral relationship. The November 29 editorial in *The Daily Mirror* seems to place great stock in Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Rajapaksa's personalities, and their effect on bilateral ties. This framework of analysis, increasingly common in India as well, seems to set great store by a leader's charisma, ideology and worldview, rather than political-economy and historical and geostrategic factors.

The editorial, for example, says that "Gotabaya Rajapaksa would no doubt touch on issues that are of concern to both nations" and "Prime Minister Modi is a man of conviction and courage". There also appears to be a subtext in the editorial which seems to imply that the Modi government may be more "understanding" of the Rajapaksa brand of politics — presumably, its attitude towards minorities and a federal devolution of power: "He (Modi) has the backing of his people. He does what he believes is best for India, whether or not the world understands or appreciates. He would not hesitate to advocate such thinking for friends in his neigh-

bourhood. This should not be lost on President Gotabaya Rajapaksa."

The thrust of the editorial is against the 1987 Indo-Sri Lanka accord, which called for disarmament during the civil war and greater rights for Tamils, including in a federal structure: "Prime Minister Modi is not Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. President Gotabaya Rajapaksa is not President Maithripala Sirisena. There's reason to hope that a 'Modi-Gota' agreement would make 'Indo-Lanka' something that will not feel, smell and taste bad."

LAW FOR THE CHIEF

PAKISTAN'S SUPREME Court, according to the November 29 editorial in *Dawn* "has helped the government come out of the corner it has painted itself into". The governments move, via a notification, to increase the term of army chief General Qamar Bajwa was challenged in the country's apex court and threatened an impasse between the three organs of the state — the government, army and judiciary. The court, however, rescued the government by allowing an extension of six months for Bajwa. In that time, it has enjoined the legislature to come up with a suitable legislation "to determine the length of the army chief's

tenure — and the question of its extension" and rid the current legal framework of any ambiguity in this matter.

By all accounts, it appears that the government's notion was bad in law, and framed poorly. Yet, according to the editorial, Prime Minister Imran Khan is shirking responsibility: "It is therefore disappointing to note the prime minister's tweets blaming foreign enemies and domestic 'mafia' whereas the real culprit is the government's own legal team that was unable to write a notification that could withstand judicial scrutiny."

The editorial also argues that "given the central role played by army chiefs in Pakistan", it is important that the law regarding the office is framed carefully, after due deliberation and with the Opposition participating. Interestingly, the editorial ends by talking of the role of institutions, which some may construe as a moral plea to General Bajwa: "This paper believes in the strength of institutions. Although the court may have felt it necessary to prevent a sudden vacuum in the army leadership, General Bajwa has been given a face-saving opportunity to decide on a course of action that will serve the interests of his institution and the system as a whole — and not that of a single individual."

CRICKET ANALOGY

MAZHER MIR, an advisor to the ASEAN council and columnist, makes an interesting — if slightly over-stretched — analogy between cricket and the state of an economy. The recent loss in the pink-ball Test form the core of his argument in *The Dhaka Tribune*: "The majority of Bangladeshi people do not hesitate to express their gratitude in India's contributions to their motherland's independence. Still, India's disregard for the environmental impacts and creating a water crisis in Bangladesh due to building water dams have created bitter feelings against India among Bangladeshi people. This sentiment is now leaking into sports matches."

Mir then goes on to argue that "cricket has become an indicator of how well Bangladesh has been shining for the last two decades. There are indeed many positive economic markers, but a large part of the population is dealing with chronic poverty." India, he argues, has become a cricketing powerhouse because of private sector involvement. He argues that Bangladesh's economy — and its cricket — needs training, education in technology to compete on the global stage. This must be taken forward, according to the article, by the private sector.





@ieExplained

#ExpressExplained

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

TELLING NUMBERS

1,275 Gangetic dolphins in UP, another 962 in Assam rivers

AT LAST count, the rivers of Assam and Uttar Pradesh respectively had 962 and 1,275 Gangetic dolphins, India's national aquatic dolphin. These numbers were tabled in Parliament recently by Minister of State for Environment and Forest Babul Supriyo. BJP member Rajiv Pratap Rudy had asked whether the government has carried out an assessment of the population and habitation areas of the Gangetic dolphin in the country; Supriyo replied that such assessments are done by respective state Forest Departments and the data are not collated in the Union ministry. He tabled the figures for Assam and UP based on information received from the two state governments.

The population assessment in Assam was done between January and March 2018, while the UP count of 1,272 is for 2015, up from 671 in 2012. In Assam, the assessment was carried out in three rivers, with the Brahmaputra accounting for 877 of the 962 dolphins. In addition to the species being India's national aquatic animal, the Gangetic dolphin has been notified by the Assam government as the state aquatic animal, too. Silting and sand lifting from rivers in Assam has been stopped to maintain its population.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature has listed the Gangetic dolphin as an endangered species in India. According to the



Gangetic dolphin, or *Platanista gangetica*. Wikipedia

GANGETIC DOLPHINS IN ASSAM RIVERS, 2018...

Brahmaputra river	877
Subansiri river	48
Kulsiriver	37
Total	962

... AND IN UP, 2012 & 2015

2012	671
2015	1,272

WWF, the main threat to the Gangetic dolphin is the creation of dams and irrigation projects. The ministry reply said the Conservation Action Plan for the Gangetic Dolphin, 2010-2020, identified threats to these dolphins that include the impact of river traffic, construction of irrigation canals and depletion of their prey-base.

TIP FOR READING LIST

IS THE MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEM FLAWED?

IN A controversial experiment in 1973, Stanford University psychologist David Rosenhan recruited seven healthy volunteers and made them feign symptoms of mental illness to get admitted to hospitals. This undercover mission was to test the legitimacy of some psychiatric labels. The results left a lasting influence on the field, with some psychiatric hospitals shutting down and psychiatry trying to reinvent itself thereafter. The experiment is the subject of the second book from award-winning author Susannah Cahalan, who ends up questioning the legitimacy of the pathbreaking study itself.

The Great Pretender has Cahalan, an investigative journalist, tracking down the volunteers, about whom nothing was known so far other than their pseudonyms. In the process, she gives the reader a glimpse into the workings of the mental health industry, refers to its diagnostic

system as "flawed and arbitrary", notes contradictions in Rosenhan's work, and questions the extent to which the world understands madness and mental illness.

Cahalan's interest in the theme of madness is drawn from her own experience with several mis-diagnosis of auto-immune disorder and her journey through the recovery phase. "Despite all of our medical progress — of which I am a direct recipient — the sickness among us are getting sicker," Cahalan writes. Referring to the author's realisation about the contradictions in Rosenhan's work, the promotional note on Amazon says, "It may also serve as a reminder that it's not always good for us to meet our heroes."

Cahalan's first book was *The New York Times* bestseller *Brain on Fire: My Month of Madness*, a memoir that dealt with her struggle with a rare auto-immune disorder of the brain.



ABANTIKA GHOSH

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 1

OVER THE last one week, the government has been making a pitch for fundamental duties. In his Constitution Day address to a Joint Session of Parliament last week, Prime Minister Narendra Modi stressed the importance of constitutional duties, while making a distinction between *seva* (service) and these duties. On the same occasion, President Ram Nath stressed the difference between rights and duties, while Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu called for fundamental duties to be included in the school curriculum and the list of the duties to be displayed at educational institutions and at other public places. Also on Constitution Day, Union Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad, writing in *The Indian Express*, called for citizens to remember their fundamental duties as they remember their fundamental rights.

Fundamental Duties are described in the Constitution — an Emergency-era provision that was introduced by the Indira Gandhi government. Days before the pitches made on Constitution Day, *The Indian Express* had reported how the government has been dusting off this provision and asking ministries to spread awareness about Fundamental Duties.

How were Fundamental Duties incorporated in the Constitution?

The Fundamental Duties were incorporated in Part IV-A of the Constitution by the Constitution 42nd Amendment Act, 1976, during Emergency under Indira Gandhi's government. Today, there are 11 Fundamental Duties described under Article 51-A, of which 10 were introduced by the 42nd Amendment and the 11th was added by the 86th Amendment in 2002, during Atal Bihari Vajpayee's government.

These are statutory duties, not enforceable by law, but a court may take them into account while adjudicating on a matter. The idea behind their incorporation was to emphasise the obligation of the citizen in exchange for the Fundamental Rights that he or she enjoys. The concept of Fundamental Duties is taken from the Constitution of Russia.

What are the Fundamental Duties?

The 11 Fundamental Duties are:

- To abide by the constitution and respect its ideals and institutions, the National Flag and the National Anthem
- To cherish and follow the noble ideals which inspired our national struggle for freedom
- To uphold and protect the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India — it is one of the preeminent national obligations of all the citizens of India.
- To defend the country and render national service when called upon to do so
- To promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities; to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women
- To value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture — our cultural heritage is one of the noblest and richest, it is also part of the heritage of the Earth
- To protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wild life and to have compassion for living creatures

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

What Fundamental Duties mean

Over last few days, the Prime Minister, President, Vice President and Law Minister have been stressing Fundamental Duties. A look at what these duties are, and how they were included in the Constitution



Then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi with commemoration volumes of the 25th anniversary of the Constitution. It was her government that introduced Fundamental Duties in 1976. RK Sharma/Express Archive

- To develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform
- To safeguard public property and to abjure violence
- To strive towards excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity so that the nation constantly rises to higher levels of endeavour and achievement
- Who is a parent or guardian to provide opportunities for education to his child or, as the case may be, ward between the age of six and fourteen years.

It is the one on children's education that was added in 2002 by the 86th Amendment that provided for the Right to Free and Compulsory Education for children in the age group 6-14, with the insertion of Article 21A. It also cast an obligation on parents to provide such opportunities under Article 51A(K).

Under what circumstances was the 42nd Amendment passed?

The amendment came at a time when elections stood suspended and civil liberties curbed. The government arrested thousands under MISA (Maintenance of Internal Security Act) and carried out anti-poverty programmes, slum demolition drives, and a forced sterilisation campaign. "With the opposition MPs locked away, a series of Constitutional amendments were passed to prolong Mrs Gandhi's rule," writes historian Ramachandra Guha in *India after Gandhi*.

Apart from adding the Fundamental Duties, the 42nd Amendment also changed the Preamble to the Constitution to include the words 'Socialist and Secular' to describe India, in addition to its being 'Sovereign

Democratic Republic'.

New 'Directive Principles' were added and given precedence over Fundamental Rights. Jurisdiction of the Supreme Court and High Courts to review constitutionality of the laws was curtailed. High Courts were prohibited from deciding on the constitutional validity of central laws. A new Article 144A was inserted, prescribing a minimum of seven judges for a Constitution Bench, besides stipulating a special majority of two-thirds of a Bench for invalidating central laws.

How many of the changes made under the 42nd Amendment are still in effect?

In the 1977 elections, the manifesto of the Janata Party promised to restore the Constitution to its pre-Emergency form. However, after being voted to power, the Morarji Desai government did not have the numbers for a complete reversal. Reversal happened only in bits and pieces.

In 1977, the 43rd Amendment restored the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court and High Courts to review the constitutional validity of laws. The following year, the 44th Amendment changed the grounds for declaring Emergency under Article 325, substituting "internal disturbance" with "armed rebellion", besides requiring of the President that he shall not do so unless the decision of the Union Cabinet is communicated in writing to him.

Right to Liberty was strengthened by stipulating that detention under the Preventive Detention Act shall not be for more than two months. Right to Property was converted from a Fundamental Right to a legal right, by amending Article 19 and deleting Article 31.

OTHER KEY AMENDMENTS TO CONSTITUTION

FIRST AMENDMENT, 1951

Article 15 was amended by inserting Clause 4, empowering the state to make any special provision for the advancement of any socially and economically backward classes or categories of SCs and STs notwithstanding anything in this Article or in Clause 2 of Article 29. Article 19 was amended to secure constitutional validity of *zamindari* abolition laws and to provide for new grounds of restrictions to the Right of Freedom of Speech and Expression and the right to practice any profession or to carry on any trade or business. Articles 31A and 31B, and the Ninth Schedule were inserted to give protection to land reform laws from being questioned on the ground that they are not consistent with Fundamental Rights.

24TH AMENDMENT, 1971

Articles 13 and 368 amended to remove doubts about Parliament's power to amend the Constitution including Fundamental Rights further to the judgment of the Supreme Court in the *Golaknath* case. The President was obligated to give assent to any Constitution Amendment Bill presented to him.

26TH AMENDMENT, 1971

It repealed Articles 291 and 362 dealing with privy purses, sums of rulers and rights and privileges of rulers of former Indian states.

52ND AMENDMENT, 1985

Anti-Defection law was provided for in the Tenth Schedule by providing for disqualification of legislators, vacation of seats and splits and mergers.

64TH AMENDMENT, 1989

Minimum voting age reduced from 21 years to 18, by amending Article 326.

77TH AMENDMENT, 1995

Provided for reservation in promotion in services under the state for SCs and STs by inserting clause (4A) in Article 16.

91ST AMENDMENT, 2003

Put a ceiling on number of ministers at the Centre and in states as 15% of the strength of Lok Sabha or the Assembly, and not less than 12 in the states.

99TH AMENDMENT, 2014

Provided for National Judicial Commission to broad-base method of appointment of judges of the Supreme Court and High Courts. This amendment was however, declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 2015.

101ST AMENDMENT, 2016

It facilitated the introduction of GST with concurrent taxing powers to the Union and the States and Union Territories with legislatures to make laws for levying GST on every transaction of goods and services.

Understanding Pak SC ruling on Army chief, and why it matters for India

SHUBHAJIT ROY

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 1

LAST WEEK, a three-member Bench of the Pakistan Supreme Court, headed by the country's Chief Justice Asif Saeed Khosa, made a carefully calibrated move to question the Imran Khan-led government, seeking that it explain and justify the extension of the tenure of Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa by three years. It is being seen as a challenge to the Army chief's position, which is rare in a country that has been ruled by the Army for more than half of its seven decades, and where the saying goes that that it's not a country with an Army but an Army with a country.

The move & the challenge

On November 26, the Pakistan Supreme Court Bench took up a petition challenging the extension. It was filed by lawyer Riaz Rahi, known in Pakistan's court circles as a "serial petitioner" who has moved court against former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, former President General Pervez Musharraf, and former Supreme Court judges, without much success. Although Rahi tried to withdraw this petition, Chief Justice Khosa did not allow him to do so.

Over the next three days until November 28 — the date of Army Chief Bajwa's scheduled retirement — the Bench questioned the government on the manner

in which it had granted the extension. Prime Minister Imran Khan had announced the extension in August, just two weeks after India had revoked Article 370 concerning Jammu & Kashmir, and had cited the "regional security situation" as the reason behind Bajwa's extension by three years.

The arguments & the verdict

The chief law officer of the state could not give definitive answers when the Bench asked for specific laws that permitted extension or reappointment of the Army chief. The Bench found that Imran Khan had issued the notification on August 19, only to be told later that, under the Constitution, only Pakistan's President could issue a notification of the Army chief's extension. To rectify the error, the Prime Minister's Office moved a fresh summary — a note. This was quickly approved by the President, but it emerged later that the Prime Minister could not send the summary to the President without his Cabinet's approval. The summary was then circulated among Cabinet members, but no fresh notification was issued.

When the court found that the government had not even followed the proper legal procedure, the government issued notifications but got caught in jargon — whether it was an "extension" or a "re-appointment".

The Pakistan government's legal team argued that the extension was done under Article 243 (Command of Armed Forces) of the Constitution. But a simple reading of



Pakistan SC has reduced Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa's tenure extension to six months. AP File Photo

Article 243, the Bench said, showed it did not deal with extension. Article 243(4)(b), which deals with appointment of the Army chief, says: "The President shall, on advice of the Prime Minister, appoint..."

Finally, the Bench ordered — just hours before Bajwa's midnight retirement — that the extension be granted, for another six months, and that the government bring out legislation to regularise such an extension (which has been happening without any legal backing for seven decades in Pakistan).

The Army's influence

So powerful is the Army chief that Pakistan Law Minister Farogh Naseem, also one of the country's top lawyers, resigned to represent Bajwa in the Supreme Court. After the verdict, Naseem was sworn in again as Law Minister. Another pointer to the Army chief's influence was that on the evening before the final order, Prime Minister Khan held a meeting of top legal minds which was attended by Bajwa himself.

In the last two decades, only General Raheel Shareef retired on time, while General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani and Musharraf stayed on beyond their prescribed tenures. Kayani's extension too was challenged in the Islamabad High Court in 2012; the court dismissed the petition.

Army and judiciary

The current situation reminded many of a face-off in 2007 between Musharraf and the judiciary under then Pakistan Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry, who had been removed by the military ruler. Eventually, this contributed to the downfall of the Musharraf regime.

During the hearings in the latest case, the Chief Justice observed: "We were labelled as agents of India and the CIA when we examined the Army Act." Yet he also said that "it is our right to ask questions."

Some believe that this could be an outcome of rivalry between the Chief Justice of Pakistan and the Prime Minister. Recently,

Justice Khosa had made it clear that the judiciary had nothing to do with the removal of former Prime Minister Sharif's name from Exit Control List. Again, after Prime Minister Khan had requested Justice Khosa to restore public trust in the judiciary and see why two systems existed in the country — one for the rich and the other for the poor — Justice Khosa took exception to the "taunt" and said the courts of the country had convicted a Prime Minister and disqualified another.

The general's legacy

Under Bajwa, the Pakistan Army in February 2017 launched Operation Radd-ul-Fasad (RuF), in the aftermath of a resurgence of terror attacks. Pakistan Army media wing ISPR said RuF was aimed at indiscriminately eliminating the "residual/latent threat of terrorism", consolidating the gains made in other military operations, and ensuring Pakistan's border security. One of the major successes under the RuF has been fencing along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.

But, with India, relations nosedived, with the Pulwama terror attack and then the revocation of Article 370 that prompted Bajwa's extension. However, Bajwa re-kindled the Kartarpur corridor proposal with his hug and conversation with Congress leader Navjot Singh Sidhu.

With China, Bajwa has cultivated a relationship. The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson had said Gen Bajwa was a

"sincere and old friend" of the Chinese government. In September 2018, Gen Bajwa, on special invitation, called on Chinese President Xi Jinping to discuss the region's security challenges, and has committed to the security of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. He accompanied PM Khan on the state visit, which is unusual for a Pakistan Army chief.

Takeaways for India

India has been trying to corner Pakistan at multilateral fora on the issue of terrorism, and the Financial Action Task Force will in February once again take up the issue of Pakistan's blacklisting. The current crisis in Pakistan may give some leverage to Pakistan's civilian government and political class to push the Pakistan Army to take action against the terrorist groups operating out of the territory under their control. This has been one of India's major demands and, if it happens, could unlock the bilateral space between the two countries.

On the other hand, India would be wary about whether this episode could lead to the Pakistan Army becoming more adventurous in Jammu and Kashmir, in a bid to regain its legitimacy and bolster the "regional security" argument.

Whatever be Bajwa's eventual fate, a powerful Army chief in Pakistan has consequences far beyond the territory under the Army's control. New Delhi will be watching the space very closely.



दैनिक जागरण

प्रार्थना हृदय की पुकार है

राज्यों का रवैया

यह बात सामने आने पर हैरानी नहीं कि प्रदूषण की रोकथाम के मामले में राज्यों का रवैया बेहद लापरवाही भरा है। यदि उत्तर भारत को वायु प्रदूषण से निजात नहीं मिल पा रही है तो इसी कारण कि संबंधित राज्य सरकारें प्रदूषण रोधी उपायों पर अमल करने के लिए तैयार नहीं। चूंकि राज्य सरकारों के साथ उनकी एजेंसियां भी अपनी जिम्मेदारी समझने को तैयार नहीं इसलिए स्थानीय निकाय भी कुछ करने के लिए सक्रिय नहीं होते। वैसे भी यह किसी से छिपा नहीं कि वे अपना तय काम मुश्किल से ही करते हैं। यदि वे भ्रष्टाचार और अव्यवस्था के अड्डों के तौर पर जाने जाते हैं तो अपने नाकारापन के कारण ही। वे घटिया राजनीति के गढ़ भी बन गए हैं और इसी कारण कई बार यह सामने आता है कि अगर स्थानीय निकाय पर राज्य में सत्तारूढ़ दल से इतर दल का वर्चस्व हो तो शासन की अपेक्षाओं की भी अनदेखी होती है। इस सबका ही यह नतीजा है कि छोटे-बड़े शहरों में वे सारी गतिविधियां बिना रोक-टोक जारी रहती हैं जो हर तरह के प्रदूषण को जन्म देती हैं।

वास्तव में सभी को यह समझने की जरूरत है कि प्रदूषण और खासकर वायु प्रदूषण पर तब तक प्रभावी लगाम नहीं लग सकती जब तक स्थानीय निकाय प्रदूषण फैलाने वाले कारणों का निवारण करने के मामले में सजगता का परिचय नहीं देते। वे सजग हों, इसके लिए राज्य सरकारों को अपना रवैया बदलना होगा। यह अपेक्षा इसलिए, क्योंकि बीते दो-तीन वर्षों से यह देखने में आ रहा है कि केंद्र सरकार अक्टूबर-नवंबर में राज्यों को इसके लिए आगाह करती है कि पराली जलने न पाए, लेकिन होता वही है जो दरकों से होता चला आ रहा है। दिल्ली के पड़ोसी राज्यों को पराली दहन को लेकर आगाह करने का काम राष्ट्रीय हरित अधिकरण की ओर से भी किया जाता है, लेकिन वह भी काम नहीं आता। आखिर यह लापरवाही की परकाष्ठा नहीं तो और क्या है कि इस बार भी पंजाब, हरियाणा समेत कुछ और राज्यों में पराली जली? इस साल हरियाणा में तो तब भी गनीमत रही, लेकिन पंजाब में पिछले साल के मुकाबले कहीं ज्यादा पराली दहन हुआ। इससे यही पता चलता है कि राज्य सरकारें वायु प्रदूषण से निपटने के मामले में न राजनीतिक इच्छाशक्ति का परिचय नहीं दे रही हैं। उनकी अनिच्छा का नकारात्मक असर स्थानीय निकायों पर दिखता है। यदि यह समझा जा रहा है कि सब कुछ केंद्र सरकार कर सकती है तो यह सही नहीं। वायु प्रदूषण से छुटकारा तो तभी मिल सकता है जब सभी अपने हिस्से की जिम्मेदारी का निर्वहन करेंगे। निःसंदेह इसमें आम आदमी भी शामिल है।

पंचायतों की मजबूती

उत्तरखंड में शहरी निकायों और पंचायतों की व्यवस्था को दुरुस्त करने की जरूरत है। पिछले कुछ वर्षों में स्थानीय निकायों और पंचायतों को धन आवंटन की व्यवस्था में सुधार हुआ है, लेकिन इसके बाद भी उनकी हालत में अपेक्षित बदलाव नहीं हो पाया है। अलग राज्य बनने के बाद उत्तरखंड में शहरीकरण की दर काफी तेज है। अर्द्धशहरी क्षेत्रों में तेजी से इजाफा होने की वजह से सरकार को शहरी निकायों की संख्या बढ़ानी पड़ी है। इन क्षेत्रों में जन सुविधाओं को बढ़ाने का दबाव ज्यादा है, लेकिन निकाय इस बदलाव के लिए खुद को तैयार नहीं कर पा रहे हैं। कमोबेश यही हाल त्रिस्तरीय पंचायतों का है। इनका सांगठनिक ढांचा बेहद कमजोर है। एक ओर निकायों और पंचायतों के माध्यम से सरकार नीति नियोजन को निचले स्तर पर मजबूत करने का दावा तो करती है, लेकिन हकीकत जुदा है। हालांकि केंद्रीय वित्त आयोग और राज्य वित्त आयोग की सिफारिशों के चलते निकायों और पंचायतों को वित्तीय संकट से काफी हद तक निजात मिली है। केंद्र सरकार से दी जाने वाली धनराशि सीधे निकायों और पंचायतों को ट्रांसफर होने लगी है। इसमें देरी होने पर राज्य सरकार के साथ ही संबंधित महकमों की जवाबदेही बढ़ गई है। बावजूद इसके विकास कार्यों के लिए मिलने वाली धनराशि का समग्रबद्ध सदुपयोग करने में तमाम निकाय और पंचायतें अक्षम साबित हो रहे हैं। राज्य सरकार ने शहरी और ग्रामीण जनता से सीधे जुड़ी इन छोटी सरकारों को मजबूत करने की इच्छाशक्ति नहीं दिखाई है। सड़कों, पेयजलापूर्ति, विद्युत आपूर्ति, आवास निर्माण, स्वच्छकों की निगुक्ति, ढांचे को दुरुस्त करने समेत जनसंख्या नियोजन को लेकर निकायों और पंचायतें सरकार का मुंह तकने को विवश हैं। उम्मीद की जानी चाहिए कि मौजूदा व्यवस्था में बदलाव होने पर दोनों संस्थाएं अपनी अहम और चुनौतीपूर्ण भूमिकाओं को सशक्त तरीके से अंजाम देंगी। पांचवें राज्य वित्त आयोग ने निकायों और पंचायतों के ढांचे के सरलीकरण और उसे दुरुस्त करने के साथ ही मौजूदा वित्तीय व्यवस्था में सुधार के संबंध में आम नागरिकों से सुझाव मांगे हैं। इन सुझावों के आधार पर आयोग निकायों और पंचायतों के संबंध में अपनी रिपोर्ट को अंतिम रूप देगा। हालांकि सुझावों और विचारों की भागीदारी की इस प्रक्रिया में अन्य स्ट्रेकहोल्डर्स के साथ भी विस्तार से चर्चा की जानी है। आयोग की रिपोर्ट निकायों और पंचायतों को दिशा देने में अहम भूमिका निभाएगी, ऐसी स्वाभाविक अपेक्षाएं हैं।

वास्तव में राज्य सरकार ने स्थानीय निकायों और पंचायतों को मजबूत करने की इच्छाशक्ति नहीं दिखाई है



अद्वैता काला

हैदराबाद की पीड़िता न केवल उन दरिद्रों की शिकार हुई जिन्होंने उसकी देह की धज्जियां उड़ाईं, बल्कि वह उस तंत्र से भी प्रताड़ित हुई जिसने उसके जीवन की परवाह नहीं की

हैदराबाद की एक हृदयविदारक घटना से मन बेहद व्यथित है। वहां एक महिला चिकित्सक के साथ दुष्कर्म के बाद उसकी हत्या से पूरा देश आक्रोशित है। उस 26 वर्षीय युवती ने अभी अपनी जिंदगी ढंग से शुरू ही की थी। आम हिंदुस्तानी मध्यमवर्गीय परिवार की उस लड़की से मेरा कोई निजी परिचय नहीं था, लेकिन उसने पशु चिकित्सक का जो पेशा चुना उससे यही आभास होता है कि वह करुणा भाव से भरी थी। ऐसा इसलिए, क्योंकि इस काम में बेजुबानों के दुखदर्द को समझकर उनका इलाज करना पड़ता है और यह कोई खास किस्म का शख्स ही कर सकता है।

बीते गुरुवार और शुक्रवार की दरमियानी रात उसके साथ जो हैवानियत हुई, वह मानवता को शर्मसार करने वाली है। उससे भी ज्यादा हमारा रवैया निराश करने वाला रहा कि इतना सब कुछ होने के बावजूद हम खामोश रहे। समूचा तंत्र, पूरा समाज और जिन्हें उसकी हिफाजत करनी चाहिए थी, वे मौन रहे। जिस दिन उसका कुछ का ब्योरा सामने आता गया। उससे पता उस पर चर्चा करना भी उचित नहीं समझा। न उसके साथ हुई बर्बरता की भर्त्सना में एक शब्द फूटा और न ही उसके शोकसंतपन परिवार को कोई दिलासा दिया गया। जब ऐसी बर्बरता के बावजूद लोकसभा में महिला सुखा के मुद्दे पर कोई चर्चा तक न की जाए, तब आखिर महिलाओं को क्या करना चाहिए कि उनके मुद्दों

पर सुनवाई हो? महिलाओं की सुरक्षा को लेकर सवाल उठाना तो दूर हमारे नेता उल्टे पीड़ितों पर सवाल दामने लगते हैं। जब भी महिलाओं के खिलाफ ऐसा कोई अपराध होता है तो किसी न किसी नेता की जुबान जरूर फिसलती है। इस बार भी ऐसा ही हुआ जब तेलंगाना के गुहमंजी ने कहा कि उनके जैसी पढ़ी-लिखी महिला डॉक्टर ने भी पुलिस को फोन करने के बजाय अपनी बहन को क्यों फोन किया। यह एक तरह से अपने पाले में किया गया गोल था। मानों इतना ही काफी नहीं था। बेटी की गुमशुदगी की रिपोर्ट दर्ज करने के लिए भी परिवार को तमाम परेशानियां झेलनी पड़ीं। यह दर्शाता है कि महिलाओं के खिलाफ अपराधों की शिकायत को लेकर प्रशासन कितना नाकारा और निर्दयी होने के साथ-साथ असंवेदनशील भी है। पीड़िता का परिवार रात ब्याह बजे पुलिस स्टेशन पहुंचा, लेकिन उनकी गुमशुदा बेटी की तलाश के लिए निकलने में पुलिस को सुबह तीन बज गए। इस दौरान आपराधिक कृत्य का ब्योरा सामने आता गया। उससे पता चला कि चार लोगों ने उसके साथ बारी-बारी से दुष्कर्म किया। उसे इतना प्रताड़ित किया कि वह मौत के मुंह में चली गई। फिर उन दरिद्रों ने उसकी देह को कंबल में लपेटकर आग के हवाले कर दिया। यह सब उस जगह हुआ जहां से वह टोल प्लाजा बमुश्किल कुछ ही दूरी पर दिखे उसे आखिरी बार देखा गया था। अगर



फाइल फोटो

पुलिस वक्त रहते कार्रवाई करती तो संभव था कि कम से कम उसकी जान बचाई जा सकती थी। इसके उलट तत्परता से कार्रवाई के बजाय पुलिस इसी टालमटोल में वक्त जाया करती रही कि यह अपराध किस थाना क्षेत्र के अंतर्गत हुआ है। क्या इससे भी ज्यादा कुछ भयावह हो सकता है? पूरी तरह टूट चुके उसके पिता ने कई साक्षात्कारों में अपनी आपबीती सुनाई है। वह युवा डॉक्टर न केवल उन दरिद्रों की शिकार हुई जिन्होंने उसकी देह की धज्जियां उड़ाईं, बल्कि वह उस तंत्र से भी प्रताड़ित हुई जिसने उसके जीवन की परवाह नहीं की। पुलिस ने पीड़िता की खोज-खबर के लिए शीघ्रता दिखाने के बजाय उसके परिवार को कायदे-कानूनों की घुट्टी पिलाई। इससे यही सवाल उठता है कि क्या महिलाओं की जिंदगी मायने नहीं रखती?

जाहिर है कि इस मामले में नेताओं ने हमें एक बार फिर निराश किया। मोडिया ने ही इस मामले को उठाया। उन्होंने निर्भया की मां से संपर्क साधा। वह एक और मामले की सुनवाई के लिए पटियाला हाउस अदालत के बाहर मिलीं। अपनी बेटी के साथ हुए वीभत्स

सामूहिक दुष्कर्म और हत्या के बाद से उनकी जिंदगी अदालतों के चक्कर काटने में ही गुजर रही है। पहले तो बेटी के साथ हुई बर्बरता के मामले में इंसाफ को लेकर और अब उस न्याय को हासिल करने के लिए जिसका वादा किया गया था। वह अपनी बेटी के क्रूर अपराधियों को हलाल करने के लिए जिसका वादा किया गया था। फिर भी हमारा न्यायिक तंत्र उन्हें निराश कर रहा है। देश में दुष्कर्म के सबसे अधिक चर्चित मामले में अगर यह स्थिति है तो फिर अन्य मामले में क्या उम्मीद की जा सकती है? वर्ष 2016 के एक आंकड़े के अनुसार भारत में दुष्कर्म के रोजाना 106 मामले सामने आते हैं। इससे पूरी तस्वीर स्पष्ट नहीं होती, क्योंकि यहां दुष्कर्म के सभी मामलों की रफ्त मामले से चं चंद कितनेमीटर की दूरी पर दुष्कर्मों और इंसाफ पाने के लिए जटिल न्यायिक प्रक्रिया के कारण इससे जुड़े सभी अपराध दर्ज नहीं हो पाते। तिस पर प्रत्येक चार में से एक मामले में ही अपराध सिद्ध हो पाता है। यह बहुत निराशाजनक दर है। डीएनए विश्लेषण जैसी तकनीक से दोषसिद्धि दर बढ़ाई जा सकती है। इसमें 2018 की एक रिपोर्ट बताती है कि

हिंदुत्व का अहित करते फर्जी पैरोकार

भो

पाल से भाजपा सांसद प्रज्ञा टाकुर एक बार फिर विवादों में हैं। उन पर संसद में नाथूराम गोडसे को देशभक्त बताने का आरोप है। निःसंदेह देश का एक सांसद यदि राष्ट्रपिता महात्मा गांधी के हत्यारे को देशभक्त कहता है तो इससे शर्मनाक और निंदनीय कुछ नहीं हो सकता। इसके लिए भाजपा ने कार्रवाई करते हुए साध्वी प्रज्ञा के भाजपा संसदीय दल की बैठक में भाग लेने पर प्रतिबंध लगा दिया है। साथ ही रक्षा मामलों की संसदीय समिति से उन्हें हटाने की घोषणा कर दी है। इसकी अलावा उन्हें लोकसभा में दो बार क्षमा याचना भी करनी पड़ी है। हालांकि साध्वी का कहना है कि उनके बयान को तोड़-मरोड़कर पेश किया गया है। दरअसल द्रमुक सांसद ए राजा द्वारा शहीद उधम सिंह का नाम लेने पर उन्होंने कहा था कि किसी देशभक्त को मत घसीटिए। हम उनके स्पष्टीकरण पर नहीं जाना चाहते। चुनाव प्रचार के दौरान भी उन्होंने गोडसे को देशभक्त बताया था। उस बयान ने देश भर में खलबली मचा दी थी। स्वयं प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने उसकी आलोचना करते हुए कहा था कि 'संघ समाज में इस तरह की भाषा नहीं चलती। दूसरा कोई उन्हें माफ कर दे, मैं उन्हें दिल से माफ नहीं कर पाऊंगा।'

अगर साध्वी ने वाकई संसद में गोडसे के बारे में दोबारा यही बात कही तो फिर यह बिल्कुल अक्षम्य है। पार्टी ने इसकी छानबीन करके ही उनके विरुद्ध फैसला किया होगा, लेकिन यहाँ सवाल केवल साध्वी प्रज्ञा टाकुर का नहीं है। देश में एक वर्ग है जो गांधी जी के बारे में अपमानजनक भाषा का इस्तेमाल करता है। वह उनके बारे में निश्वसत हो झुड़ी बातें फैलाने का काम रहा है। यह सच है कि गांधी जी के जीवनकाल में ही जम्मू-कश्मीर में सेना भेजने तथा पाकिस्तानी सेना से लड़ने का फैसला हुआ था, जिसे उन्होंने रोका नहीं था। इसका मतलब हुआ कि उस पर उनकी सहमति थी। हैदराबाद में भी उनके समय में ही सेना भेजी गई थी। वास्तव में गांधी जी अखंड भारत की भावना से अंतिम समय तक काम करते रहे। जिन्होंने विभाजन को रोकने के लिए भी जितना संभव था किया, लेकिन कुछ लोगों ने उनके खिलाफ कई नकारात्मक बातों को फैला दिया है। इस दौरान भाजपा पर हमला करने का कोरेला संसद में भी रहा है कि जिस शिवसेना का यह महाराष्ट्र सरकार में भागीदार हो गई है उसका विचार हमेशा से गोडसे के पक्ष में रहा है। शिवसेना के संस्थापक बाला साहब ठाकरे तो डंके की चोट पर नाथूराम गोडसे को देशभक्त बताते थे। बाल ठाकरे के बेटे और हाथ



अवधेश कुमार



आजकल हिंदुत्व के नाम पर तमाम फर्जी संगठन खड़े हो गए हैं जिनके विकृत विचारों से हिंदुत्व को नुकसान पहुंच रहा है

ही में महाराष्ट्र के मुख्यमंत्री बने उद्धव ठाकरे भी सामना के संपादक रहे हैं। गोडसे के महिमामंडन में उनकी कई टिप्पणियां सार्वजनिक रूप से मौजूद हैं। अगर कांग्रेस को गो रानीजी के सम्मान की वाकई चिंता है और गोडसे की प्रशंसा करने वालों से उनका विरोध है तो फिर शिवसेना के साथ गठबंधन बनाने का मतलब क्या है? इस समय विपक्षी पार्टियां यह भी कह रही हैं कि प्रज्ञा टाकुर ने जो कहा वही संच और भाजपा की आत्मा है, लेकिन यह हकीकत नहीं है। वास्तव में नरेंद्र मोदी ने गांधी जी के नाम का जितनी बार उल्लेख किया है उतना किसी दूसरे प्रधानमंत्री ने शायद ही किया है। जिस संघ परिवार को राजनीतिक पार्टियां और कथित बुद्धिजीवी कटथरे में खड़ा कर रहे हैं, उन्हें पता होना चाहिए कि संघ के प्रशिक्षण शिक्षारों में प्रातः गांधी जी का नाम श्रद्धा से लिया जाता है। वहां गांधी जी के जीवन से जुड़े कई प्रसंग बताए जाते हैं। यह सच है कि नाथूराम गोडसे कभी संघ से जुड़ा था, किंतु उससे निराश होकर उसने जल्द ही संघ छोड़ दिया, क्योंकि हिंदू, मुसलमान, हिंदुत्व के बारे में उसकी जो अतिवादी सोच थी, वह संघ से मेल नहीं खाती थी। उसका देशप्रेम विकृत था। उसमें संतुलन का अभाव था। लिहाजा वह संघ की आलोचना करने लगा था। उसके अखबार पहले दैनिक अग्रणी तथा बाद में हिंदू राष्ट्र के अंकों में उसके विचारों के बारे में काफी कुछ पता चलता है। यह भी सच है कि वह लंबे समय तक गांधी जी और वीर सावरकर,

दोनों का प्रशंसक रहा था, जिसका उसके भाई गोपाल गोडसे ने अपनी पुस्तक 'गांधी वध क्यों' में जिक्र किया है। बाद में उसने सावरकर की भी तीखी आलोचना शुरू कर दी थी। साथ ही गांधी जी को भी वह अधिनायकवादी मानने लगा था।

दरअसल गोडसे के पास भारत, हिंदू, हिंदुत्व को लेकर सही धारणा नहीं थी, जिसके कारण उसके इर्द-गिर्द विकृत सोच वाले लोग एकत्रित होते गए थे। वे भारत को उस समय की स्थिति से उबारने के लिए गलत रास्ते अपनाने लगे थे। वे मानने लगे थे कि गांधी जी की हत्या से ही हिंदू समाज की रक्षा होगी और भारत सही रास्ते पर आएगा। यह उनकी बड़ी घटिया सोच थी। दुख की बात है कि इसी तरह की निकृष्ट सोच का विस्तार देश में पिछले कुछ वर्षों में हुआ है। हिंदू, हिंदुत्व, भारतीय राष्ट्र-राज्य की इनकी कल्पनाएं अतिवाद से भरी हैं। ऐसे तत्वों को संयमित करना जरूरी है। ऐसे लोग किसी संगठन की विचार सीमा और अनुशासन में नहीं रह सकते। अजमेर शरीफ विस्फोट में जिन लोगों को सजा हुई है वे ऐसी ही सोच की उमज हैं। इनसे आज यह पूछने की जरूरत है कि अगर नाथूराम इना ही वीर था तो उसने मोहम्मद अली जिन्ना को गोली की तस्वीर नहीं है। जिस हिंदू महासभा से वह जुड़ा था, वही संगठन उसे महापुरुष या देशभक्त नहीं मानता। हिंदू महासभा के साहित्य में गोडसे की कोई पुस्तक भी नहीं मिलेगी। यहाँ मूल हिंदू महासभा की बात ही रही है। यह अलग बात है कि आजकल जगह-जगह हिंदू महासभा के नाम से संगठन खड़े हो गए हैं, जो गोडसेवादी हैं। वास्तव में थोड़ी गहराई से विचार करें तो देश में इन दिनों एक खतरनाक प्रवृत्ति का प्रसार हो रहा है, जो किसी के भी हित में नहीं। इससे हिंदुत्व का विचार ही बदनाम होता है। इस प्रवृत्ति को कैसे रोका जाए, आज इस पर चिंतन-मनन करने की आवश्यकता है?

(लेखक राजनीतिक विश्लेषक हैं) **response@jagran.com**



खुशियों का पता

आज की भाग्यदौ भरी जिंदगी में शायद ही ऐसा कोई इंसान हो जिसे तनाव एवं उदारी से जूझना नहीं पड़ता। किसी के सिर पर काम का बोझ है तो कोई अपने निजी एवं पारिवारिक कारणों की वजह से दुखी है। किसी को परीक्षा में कम नंबर आने का मलाल है तो किसी को नौकरी नहीं मिलने का गमा। इन हालातों में अब खुशी और हंसी इंसानी चेहरों से ओझल हो चुकी है।

प्रतिस्पर्धा की जंग में अक्वल आने की चाह में व्यक्ति ने अपना सुख-चैन सब कुछ दांव पर लगा दिया है। हमारे पास जो है उसकी हमें कद नहीं है। मृगतृष्णा के पीछे भागते मन को संतुष्टि नहीं है। संतुष्टि के अभाव में जीवन में बड़ता कोलाहल हमें नरितर नकारात्मक बनाने पर अमादा है। इसका मूल कारण यही है कि हमने अपने जीवन को समझा नहीं, बल्कि हम जीवन को दुखों का घर समझने वाली विचारधारा के पीछे चलते गए और कभी जीवन में खुशियों को ओहरे का निर्माण ही नहीं दिया। हमें जो मिलता है और हमारे साथ जो होता है ये हमारे कर्म तय करते हैं। अतः इंसान के कर्मों में सादगी एवं सत्यता बनी रहनी चाहिए। यकीन मानिए कि हम सौभाग्यशाली हैं, क्योंकि हमारे पास तंदुरुस्त शरीर है। आंख, कान, नाक एवं हमारे हाथ-पैर सही सलामत हैं। एक बड़ी जनसंख्या हमसे वंचित जीवन जी रही है। वास्तव में खुशियां इनसे आस-पास ही हैं। बस उन्हें तलाशने वाली नजर की जरूरत है। समस्याएं तो सबके साथ हैं। बात बस नजरिये की है। जब तक हम अपना नजरिया नहीं बदलेंगे तब तक दुनिया हमारे लिए दुखों का घर बनकर हमारी परेशानी बढ़ाती ही रहेगी। इससे स्पष्ट होता है कि जिस दिन हमने सकारात्मक दृष्टिकोण से जिंदगी को देखना शुरू कर दिया उसी दिन से खुशियां हमारा पता ढूँढते हुए दौड़ी चली आएंगीं। अतः अपनी हंसी और खुशी को अपने बड़ने के साथी ब्रह्म हो करने न दें। ऐसी दौलत का क्या फायदा जो हमारी नींद ही उड़ाकर रख दे। कहा भी गया है-कमाओ हीरा या मोती, कफन में जेब नहीं होती।

देवेंद्रराज सुथार

कब छटेगा असुरक्षा का अंधेरा

आदरणीय प्रधानमंत्री जी, एक ओर घटना घट गई। देश की एक और बेटी दरिद्रों की हवस का शिकार हो गई। एक बार फिर आपके देश की बेटियां भीतर तक सहम गई हैं। लोग सड़कों पर उतर आए हैं। नारे लगने शुरू हो गए हैं। मोमबत्तियां जलाई जा रही हैं। चीजें घूम-फिर कर फिर से वहीं आ गई हैं जहां सात साल पहले निर्भया कांड के समय थीं। मेरे सामने कई आंखें हैं जिनमें हैदराबाद की घटना को लेकर रोष है। कुछ मन हैं जो कष्ट और वेदना से भरे हुए हैं। कुछ आंखों में मुझे वही डर नजर आ रहा है जो मेरे भीतर भी जगह बनाने लगा है।

प्रधानमंत्री जी, घर से सैकड़ों किलोमीटर दूर किसी दूसरे शहर में रोज स्कूल, कॉलेज या ऑफिस के लिए निकलना और रात को सुरक्षित वापस लौट आना कितना असामान्य हो गया है। मैं सुबह जिस बस से ऑफिस जाती हूं, उनके पीछे लिखा होता है-'बेटी बचाओ-बेटी पढ़ाओ', 'बेटियां बेटों से कम हैं क्या?'। ये नारे और स्लोगन आज मुझे मुंह चिढ़ा रहे हैं! सड़क तो वहने वक्त या रात को वापस घर लौटते समय मेरे दिल की धड़कनें बढ़ जाती हैं। कदम तेज हो जाते हैं और दिमाग

फिर से घर आने के बाद मां को फोन कर बताती हूं कि चिंता मत कीजिए मैं आज भी सुरक्षित वापस लौट आई हूं

एक ही बात सोच रहा होता है कि कहीं मेरे साथ भी...! हर रात घर आने के बाद मां को फोन कर बताती हूं कि आप चिंता मत कीजिए मैं आज भी सुरक्षित वापस लौट आई हूं। हम अपनी सफलता की उड़ान किस ओर ले जाएं प्रधानमंत्री जी? आखिर सरकार इन पापियों के खिलाफ कोई ठोस कदम क्यों नहीं उठाती? निर्भया कांड के गुनहगारों को फांसी की सजा सुनाई गई है, लेकिन देश की न्याय व्यवस्था को लाचारी देखिए अभी तक वे नरदानव सिर उठाए खड़े हैं। क्या उन्हें फांसी की सजा देना, हमारे साथ इतनी घिनौनी और विषम हिंसा को अंजाम देने से ज्यादा कठिन है?

हैदराबाद तो वह है जो नजरों में आ गया, लेकिन ऐसे सैकड़ों मामले हैं जिनमें आरोपी जमानत लेकर अपने अगले शिकार की तलाश

में बाहर घूम रहे हैं। सरकार बनाने के लिए तो रविवार के दिन भी न्यायालय खोला जाता है, सुनवाई होती है और सरकार बनाई जाती है। आखिर बेटियों के लिए यह सामूहिक लाचारी क्यों? कई देशों में यौन उत्पीड़न के बाद आरोप सिद्ध होने पर आरोपियों को 'न्युसक' बनाकर का प्रावधान है। यह व्यवस्था हमारे देश में क्यों नहीं लागू की जा सकती है? इसमें क्या मजबूरी है? कोई सांसद इस विषय पर 'प्राइवेट मेंबर बिल' क्यों नहीं लाता? उन्हें बेटियों की चिंता है तो कदम क्यों नहीं उठाते? सरकार और संवैधानिक प्रतिष्ठाओं की यह बेबसी देखकर तर्स आता है कि हम ऐसे देश में रहते हैं जहां बेटियां हाराश हैं, निराश हैं, बेचैन हैं, निःशब्द हैं, असहाय हैं, डरी हुई हैं, सहमी हुई हैं कि जिस क्षण उनके साथ...! प्रधानमंत्री जी, हम जानवरों से तो अपनी सुरक्षा करने में सक्षम हैं, पर राक्षसों से नहीं। आपसे बहुत उम्मीदें हैं। यदि इस पर कोई ठोस कदम उठा सकते हैं तो देश मत कीजिए। और यदि नहीं तो हमें इन राक्षसों की हवस का शिकार होने से पहले वैसे ही जिंदा जला दीजिए, जैसे हैदराबाद में उन दरिद्रों ने...। एक बेटी। (प्राची प्रियम के फेसबुक वॉल से साभार)

कॉलोनिनों को पंजीकृत कर रही है और उन्होंने तंज कसते हुए कहा कि केवल 100 कॉलोनिनों को नहीं, बल्कि सभी कच्ची कॉलोनिनों की रजिस्ट्री होनी चाहिए। हालांकि यह साफ है कि अगर कॉलोनिनों पंजीकृत हो गईं तो उनको कोई यह नहीं कहेगा कि उन्होंने प्रयास नहीं किया था। राज्य सरकार भी पूरी प्रयास में है कि पूरा श्रेय कहीं भाजपा अकेले ना ले ले। अब देखना यही है की अनधिकृत कॉलोनिनों में रहने वाले लोगों के ऊपर अस्थायी छत कब होगी। satyamrainv16304@gmail.com

इस संतंभ में किसी भी विषय पर राय व्यक्त करने अथवा दैनिक जागरण के राष्ट्रीय संस्करण पर प्रतिक्रिया व्यक्त करने के लिए पाठकगण सादर आमंत्रित हैं। आप हमें पत्र भेजने के साथ ई-मेल भी कर सकते हैं। **अपने पत्र इस पते पर भेजें**
दैनिक जागरण, राष्ट्रीय संस्करण, डी-210-211, सेक्टर-63, नोएडा ई-मेल: mailbox@jagran.com

		
6 नई दिल्ली		

२०११ में भारत की जनसंख्या के अनुसार भारत के राज्यों की मानचित्र

मंदी की मार

अब खुद सरकारी आंकड़ों से जाहिर हो गया है कि अर्थव्यवस्था की स्थिति चिंताजनक है। लंबे समय से अर्थशास्त्री चर्चा कर रहे थे कि अर्थव्यवस्था की हालत ठीक नहीं है। इसे लेकर कई सुझाव भी आ रहे थे। अंतरराष्ट्रीय रेटिंग एजेंसी मूडीज ने भी कुछ दिनों पहले बताया था कि भारत की अर्थव्यवस्था ठीक नहीं है और अगले चार सालों तक इसके सुधरने की कोई सूरत नजर नहीं आती। राजकोषीय घाटा बढ़ने के आंकड़े भी इस चिंता को गहराने लगे थे। मगर सरकार यह मानने को तैयार नहीं थी। खुद वित्तमंत्री ने कहा कि आर्थिक वृद्धि दर में कुछ सुस्ती जरूर आई है, पर यह मंदी का दौर नहीं है। अब खुद राष्ट्रीय सांख्यिकी संगठन ने बताया है कि चालू वित्त वर्ष की दूसरी तिमाही में सकल घरेलू उत्पाद यानी जीडीपी नीचे खिसक कर साढ़े चार फीसद पर पहुंच गई है। यह पिछले छह सालों का सबसे निचला स्तर है। चालू वित्त वर्ष की पहली तिमाही में भी जीडीपी पांच फीसद पर थी। अर्थव्यवस्था के इस स्थिति में पहुंचने की वजह विनिर्माण, औद्योगिक उत्पादन, कृषि, मत्स्य पालन आदि क्षेत्रों में सुस्ती और बिजली, डीजल आदि की खपत घटना बताया जा रहा है। अर्थव्यवस्था के इस स्तर पर पहुंच जाने से सरकार के सामने कई मुश्किलें खड़ी हो गई हैं। यह केवल विपक्षी दलों के हमलों से परा पाने का मामला नहीं है, बल्कि इसके चलते अनेक जनकल्याणकारी योजनाएं बुरी तरह प्रभावित होंगी और अंतरराष्ट्रीय बाजार में भारत की स्थिति और कमजोर होगी।

हालांकि सरकार का दावा है कि वह जल्दी ही इस स्थिति से परा पा लेगी। सरकार का लक्ष्य भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था को पचास अरब डॉलर तक पहुंचाना है, पर अर्थव्यवस्था के इस स्तर पर पहुंच जाने से वह लक्ष्य बहुत दूर हो गया है। पहले ही विनिवेश की दर घट चुकी है, उसमें जीडीपी के लुढ़कने से इसके बढ़ने की संभावना काफी क्षीण हो गई है। विदेशी बैंक जीडीपी को ध्यान में रख कर ही कर्ज उपलब्ध कराते हैं, सो वहां भी कठिनाई आएगी। राजकोषीय घाटे को पाटना बड़ी चुनौती है, तिस पर जनकल्याणकारी योजनाओं को चलाए रखने के लिए सरकार को और कर्ज लेने पड़ेंगे, जो खासा जटिल हो सकता है। सरकार पहले ही रिजर्व बैंक से अपना लाभांश तय मात्रा से अधिक निकाल चुकी है, इसलिए वहां से कुछ सहारा मिलने की गुंजाइश भी नहीं बची है। कई बार बैंक दरों में कटौती करके बाजार की सेहत सुधारने के प्रयास हो चुके हैं, पर उसका भी कोई उल्लेखनीय असर नजर नहीं आया। ऐसे में जरूरत है कि सरकार पिछली गलतियों की समीक्षा करते हुए नए सिरे से रणनीति तय करे, तो शायद स्थिति में कुछ सुधार हो।

औद्योगिक उत्पादन, विनिर्माण, खनन, बिजली उत्पादन आदि क्षेत्रों में मंदी की वजह से साफ हैं कि लोगों के पास पैसे की कमी है, जिसकी वजह से उन्होंने खपत पर अंकुश लगा दिया है। पिछले साल से ही वाहन उत्पादन का क्षेत्र सुस्त पड़ा हुआ है। बाजार का रुख ढीला है। आम उपभोक्ता वस्तुओं की बिक्री पर भी काफी असर पड़ा है। इसलिए जब तक लोगों की क्रयशक्ति नहीं बढ़ती, तब तक इन क्षेत्रों की सुस्ती नहीं टूटेगी। क्रयशक्ति बढ़ाने के लिए रोजगार सृजन के मोर्चे पर व्यावहारिक ढंग से काम करना होगा। कृषि क्षेत्र की दुर्दशा दूर करने के लिए कठोर परिश्रम की जरूरत है। देखना है, वह अर्थव्यवस्था की सुस्ती तोड़ने के लिए क्या रणनीति बनाती है।

किसका समाज

तेलंगाना के हैदराबाद में बीते बुधवार की रात एक पशु चिकित्सक युवती के सामूहिक बलात्कार और हत्या के बाद उसे जिंदा जला देने की घटना ने एक बार फिर समूचे देश को झकझोर दिया है। दूसरी ओर, इसके ठीक एक दिन पहले झारखंड के रांची में व्यस्त सड़क से बारह लोगो ने एक युवती का अपहरण कर सामूहिक बलात्कार किया। दोनों घटनाओं के बाद सक्रिय हुई पुलिस ने सभी आरोपियों को गिरफ्तार कर लिया है। लेकिन सवाल है कि पुलिस की सुरक्षा व्यवस्था किस हालत में थी कि आरोपियों को बलात्कार जैसे गघन्य अपराध को अंजाम देने में भी कोई हिचक नहीं हुई? हैदराबाद की घटना के संबंध में आई खबर के मुताबिक सड़क किनारे खड़ी की गई युवती की स्कूटी को पहले पंचर कर दिया गया। फिर मदद के बहाने वहां आए चारों आरोपियों ने युवती का सामूहिक बलात्कार किया और वहां से चालीस किलोमीटर दूर ले जाकर पेट्रोल डाल कर जला दिया। सवाल है कि एक टोल प्लाजा के पास से शुरू हुई यह समूची घटना कितनी देर तक सड़कों के आसपास ही घटती रही और उस दौरान पुलिस किस मोर्चे पर सक्रिय थी?

करीब सात साल पहले दिल्ली में जब एक पैरामेडिकल छात्रा का सामूहिक बलात्कार और हत्या की घटना हुई थी, उस समय समूचे देश में इस अपराध के खिलाफ एक बड़ा आंदोलन खड़ा हो गया था। तब इस मसले पर गठित जस्टिस ऐएस वर्मा समिति की सिफारिशों को ध्यान में रखते हुए महिलाओं के विरुद्ध यौन हिंसा पर कानूनों को और सख्त बनाया गया। कई राज्यों में छोटी बच्चियों से बलात्कार के दोषियों को फांसी तक के कानूनी प्रावधान किए गए हैं। लेकिन तमाम कानूनी सख्ती के बावजूद इस अपराध पर काबू पाने की कोशिशें लगभग नाकाम दिखती हैं। इसी साल जुलाई में आई खबर के मुताबिक छह महीने में चौबीस हजार से ज्यादा बच्चियों के बलात्कार की घटनाएं सामने आ चुकी हैं। दरअसल, एक गंभीर सामाजिक समस्या के रूप में बलात्कार के खिलाफ विचार और कानूनी पहलकदमियों की कमी नहीं रही है। लेकिन बलात्कार जैसे बेलगाम अपराध अपने आप में यह बताने के लिए काफी हैं कि एक ओर हमारा समाज स्त्रियों के प्रति अपेक्षित स्तर तक सभ्य और संवेदनशील नहीं हो सका है और दूसरी ओर सत्ता और प्रशासन इस मसले से निपटने में लगभग नाकाम रहे हैं।

यह बेवजह नहीं है कि तमाम सामाजिक चिंताओं और कानूनी कवायदों के बरक्स आज भी घर की दहलीज से बाहर निकलना महिलाओं को खौफ से भर देता है या फिर वे लगातार एक अनजान आशंका से गुजरती रहती हैं। हालांकि घर की चारदिवारी के भीतर वे कहां खुद को सुरक्षित महसूस करती हैं! अनेक अध्ययन रिपोर्टों में यह उजागर हो चुका है कि बच्चियों से लेकर महिलाओं तक के यौन उत्पीड़न के ज्यादातर आरोपी उनके परिचित या संबंधी भी होते हैं। सवाल है कि जब घर के भीतर भी बच्चियां और महिलाएं असुरक्षित हैं तो बाहर एक ही तरह की मानसिकता वाले पुरुष समाज के बीच उनके महफूज होने की उम्मीद कैसे की जा सकती है! क्या केवल कानूनी सख्ती से इस अपराध पर काबू पाया जा सकता है? जब तक सामाजिक विकास में पितृसत्तात्मक ग्रंथियों से बच्चों को मुक्त करने और स्त्री के अधिकारों का सम्मान करने की योजना पर केंद्रित विकास नीतियां लागू नहीं की जाएंगी, तब तक पुरुषों के भीतर की कुंठाएं महिलाओं के खिलाफ त्रासद घटनाओं को अंजाम देती रहेंगी!

कल्पमेधा

विश्व की सारी सेनाएं मिल कर इतने लोगों और इतनी संपत्ति को नष्ट नहीं करतीं,
जितनी नशे की आदत।
 – मिल्टन

		
		
		
जनसत्ता		
		
		

भगवती प्रसाद डोभाल

<div>बढ़ती शहरी आबादी के घनत्व को थामना आज मुश्किल हो गया है। फिर पशुओं पर किसी का ध्यान नहीं है। जबकि वे हमारे भोजन और रहन–सहन में सहायक हैं। हम अपने बीच पशुपालन में एक संतुलन नहीं बना पा रहे हैं। किसी–किसी क्षेत्र में अतिरिक्त उत्पादन हो रहा है, जिसका हम निर्यात कर सकते हैं। उस पर भी ठोस योजना का अभाव है। पालतू पशुओं को चारा–पानी उपलब्ध करा कर उनके स्वास्थ्य को बना कर ही उनकी संतति से लाभ पा सकते हैं। यह एक जीवन चक्र है, इसको नियमित बना कर ही विकास की सही राह पर चला जा सकता है।</div>

भगवती प्रसाद डोभाल, २०११ में भारत की जनसंख्या के अनुसार भारत के राज्यों की मानचित्र

आज भारत की आबादी लगभग एक अरब पचीस करोड़ से ज्यादा है। इसे दूध की आवश्यकता है, शरीर ढकने के लिए गरम कपड़े चाहिए। आर्गेनिक खेती को बढ़ावा देने के लिए कंपोस्ट खेती की जरूरत है, जो हमारी पारंपरिक खेती के लिए इस्तेमाल होती है। वह भी पशुओं से प्राप्त होती है। प्रोटीन की कमी को पूरा करने के लिए पशुओं का मांस खाया जाता है, यानी पशु हमारे कपोत खाने के अंधिन खाते हैं। मनुष्य के जंगल युग से सभ्य होने के साथ से ही हमारा पशुओं का साथ है। वे मित्र हैं और हमारे रक्षक भी हैं।

अगर 2017–18 के आंकड़े देखें तो दूध उत्पादन में भारत प्रथम स्थान पर था। फसल कृषि उत्पादन देश में 17 करोड़ 43 लाख टन रहा। संख्या के हिसाब से अंडे का उत्पादन 95 अरब 22 करोड़ रहा और 77 लाख टन मांस का उत्पादन किया गया। पशुधन का आउटपुट मूल्य कृषि और अन्य क्षेत्र की

भगवती प्रसाद डोभाल, २०११ में भारत की जनसंख्या के अनुसार भारत के राज्यों की मानचित्र

निशा नाग

भगवती प्रसाद डोभाल, २०११ में भारत की जनसंख्या के अनुसार भारत के राज्यों की मानचित्र

हाल ही में किसी ने मुझे कहा– ‘मातृमू मे, ये जो मांग चल रही है कि शिक्षा महंगी कर दी है और हम उसे वहन नहीं कर सकते। ये सब फिजूल की बात है। जेएनयू के विद्यार्थी तो महंगी बाइकों पर घूमते हैं और ब्रांडेड कपड़े पहनते हैं। ...मैंने अभी–अभी फेसबुक पर देखा।’ यह बात उच्च शिक्षित एक महिला ने मुझसे कही तो चौंकना स्वाभाविक था। दरअसल, सामान्य विद्यार्थियों के साथ जेएनयू में पढ़ने वाले ऐसे विद्यार्थी भी बड़ी संख्या में हैं जो दूरदराज के क्षेत्रों से आते हैं और वे बेहद निम्न आय वर्ग के परिवारों के बच्चे होते हैं। वे अक्सर अपनी पीढ़ी के पहले ऐसे विद्यार्थी होते हैं जो उच्च शिक्षा का सपना पूरा कर रहे होते हैं। मैंने उन्हें ट्यूशन पढ़ा कर भी अपना खर्च चलाते हुए देखा है। और जेएनयू की तो पहचान ही मोटे कपड़े और फक्कड़पने से है। कुछ लोग अगर ब्रांडेड कपड़े पहनते हैं तो उसका सरलीकरण ठीक नहीं। यह धारणा ठीक वैसी ही है कि अगर दिल्ली में कुछ लोगों के पास महंगी फेरारी कार है तो समूची दिल्ली में रहने वालों के पास भी है।

सवाल है कि आभासी संसार के गढ़े गए प्रचार को पढ़े–लिखे और वयस्क लोग सहजता से स्वीकार कर

भगवती प्रसाद डोभाल, २०११ में भारत की जनसंख्या के अनुसार भारत के राज्यों की मानचित्र

मेहनताने का हक

मजदूर अधिनियम 2019 पर श्रम संहिता और मसौदा निर्माण ने क्या भारत में पचास करोड़ से अधिक अनौपचारिक श्रमिकों के जीवन और आकांक्षाओं को विफल कर दिया है? संगठित क्षेत्रों में जिस तरह बैंक, स्कूल, बीमा जैसे संस्थानों में जो लोग श्रम कार्य में लगे हुए हैं, उन्हें समय पर वेतन मिलता है, बीमा जैसी सुविधाओं का लाभ मिल जाता है। वहीं असंगठित क्षेत्रों में वेतन–भत्ते, बीमा और काम पर जाना है, कब नहीं, कुछ निश्चित नहीं है। असंगठित क्षेत्र के मजदूर वर्ग के बच्चों के लिए सुविधाओं का घोर अभाव है। अधिकतम समस्या असंगठित क्षेत्र में है। इसमें तिरानवे फीसद जो कार्यशील जनसंख्या है, वह साठ फीसद सकल घरेलू उत्पादन में योगदान देता है।

सन 1991 में निर्वाह मजदूरी अधिकार की अवधारणा सामने आई, लेकिन वर्तमान में विकासशील देशों में भी मजदूर वर्ग न्यूनतम आय से भी अभी बहुत दूर है। 1947 से अब तक वर्तमान परिस्थितियों में भी हालत वही बनी हुई है। उपभोक्ता व्यय सर्वेक्षण का लाभ मिल जाता है। वहीं असंगठित क्षेत्रों में वर्तमान में तिरासी रुपए प्रतिदिन और शहरी क्षेत्र में एक सौ चौतीस रुपए प्रतिदिन के हिसाब से मिल रहा है। वहीं दिल्ली में यह न्यूनतम वेतन 14,842 प्रतिमाह है और केरल में यह छह सौ रुपए प्रतिदिन। इन राज्यों की स्थिति बेहतर है।

सही है कि इस अधिनियम से कुछ फायदे भी समाज में होंगे। इस अधिनियम के जरिए लैंगिक आधार पर एक समान कार्य या एक प्रकृति वाले काम के लिए वेतन और भत्तों के मामले में लैंगिक भेदभाव को खत्म कर दिया गया है। अब एक जैसे काम के लिए महिलाओं को भी उतना ही वेतन मिलेगा, जितना एक पुरुष को दिया जाता है। मजदूर अधिनियम 2019

कितने बोझ हैं पालतू पशु

अपेक्षा 31.25 फीसद था। मछली उत्पादन लगभग एक करोड़ छब्बीस लाख मिट्रिक टन का रहा। चमड़े का उत्पादन महत्त्वपूर्ण है। इसका सबसे अधिक निर्यात किया जा रहा है। इसी तरह चार करोड़ पंद्रह लाख किलो उन का देश प्रति वर्ष उत्पादन कर रहा है। लेकिन जो पशु धन हमारे साथ है, उसकी गणना से पशुओं के अनुपात से हम आर्थिक उन्नति के एक पहलू को देख पाएंगे।

गणना के आधार पर कुल पशु देश में साढ़े तिरेपन करोड़ हैं। यह गणना देश के छह लाख साठ हजार गांवों और नवासी हजार शहरी वाडों की है। इसके मुताबिक उन पशुओं की वृद्धि हुई है, जो हर दिन भोजन के लिए उपयोग में लाए जा रहे हैं। जबकि जिन्हें कृषि और अन्य कार्यों में उपयोग में लाया जा रहा है, उनका अनुपात घटता जा रहा है। जिन जानवरों का मांस के लिए उपयोग हो रहा है, उसकी संख्या में तीव्र गति से वृद्धि हुई है। सिर्फ सुअरों के प्रजनन को छोड़ कर, जबकि इसके मांस का भी उपभोग होता है। इसी तरह अंडे और मुर्गी पालन में 2012 की अपेक्षा 2019 में 16.8 फीसद की वृद्धि हुई है। अगर राज्यवार इसका उत्पादन देखें तो बंगाल और आंध्र प्रदेश में 2012 की अपेक्षा इस वर्ष छियालीस और चौसीस फीसदी की वृद्धि हुई है। भेड़ पालन में भी 2012 के मुकाबले 2019 में आबादी में बढ़ोतरी हुई है। इस समय कुल भेड़ों की संख्या सात करोड़ तैंतालीस लाख है, जबकि 2012 में यह संख्या छह करोड़ इक्वावन लाख थी। यह भी एक आर्थिक आधार है भेड़ पालने वालों का।

इसमें 2012 के मुकाबले 2019 में चौदह फीसदी की बढ़ोतरी हुई है। बकरी पालन में भी लोगों ने रुचि दिखाई। इस रुचि का खास कारण है। बकरी पालन मांस के साथ–साथ दूध उत्पादन में सहायक है। पशुओं के प्रजनन में बहुत सारे राज्यों में कमी पाई गई है। ऊंटों की संख्या में सैंतीस फीसद से अधिक की गिरावट दर्ज हुई है। इसी तरह घोड़े, खच्चर और गधों की संख्या में लगभग बावन फीसद की गिरावट आई। गायों की संख्या में हल्की कमी आई है।

इस पशुधन को पालने के लिए हमें पर्याप्त पानी की आवश्यकता है। यह जरूरी है स्वस्थ पशु जीवन धन को समृद्ध करने के लिए। इसी तरह घास की भी जरूरत होती है। पारिस्थितिकी के हिसाब से सबको स्वस्थ जीवित रहने के लिए हवा, पानी और भोजन आवश्यक है। पालतू पशुओं के लिए चारा बोना

भगवती प्रसाद डोभाल, २०११ में भारत की जनसंख्या के अनुसार भारत के राज्यों की मानचित्र

खंडित सच के दायरे

भगवती प्रसाद डोभाल, २०११ में भारत की जनसंख्या के अनुसार भारत के राज्यों की मानचित्र

रहे हैं तो उस आम अल्पशिक्षित और अशिक्षित जनता के बारे में क्या कहा जाए जिसे कभी विचार और विश्लेषण करने की क्षमता तक पहुंचने ही नहीं दिया गया। सोशल मीडिया पर ‘ऑगमेंटेड रियलिटी’ या संवर्धित वास्तविकता पर आज कभी–कभार चर्चा होने लगी है। संवर्द्धित वास्तविकता आभासी संसार की वह प्रतिछवि है जो वास्तविकता को स्वरचित कल्पना में लपेट कर प्रस्तुत करती है और छवियों की वास्तविकता

दी हुई छवियों के आधार पर हम वास्तविकता के बारे में अपनी अवधारणाएं बनाने लगते हैं। ये छवियां वास्तविकता को लेकर हमारी जरूरतों का अनुकूलन और नियंत्रण करने लगती हैं। सोशल मीडिया में वास्तविक संसार को प्रतिसंसार में गढ़ने वाली फोटोग्राफी के साथ ही इसका खतरा दिखाई देने लगा था। सन 1960 में सूजन सैंटिंग की पुस्तक प्रकाशित हुई ‘ऑन फोटोग्राफी’। इस पुस्तक में उन्होंने यह स्थापित किया कि किसी घटना के बारे में दिखाए गए फोटोग्राफ के बारे में अक्सर कहा जाता है कि वह हजारों शब्दों से भी अधिक प्रभावशाली होता है। जबकि सच्चाई यह है कि ‘क्षण में कैद एक चित्र वास्तविकता का एक टुकड़ा हमें देता है। लेकिन वह टुकड़े को संपूर्णता का पर्याय बना देना चाहता है। हम कैमरे की आंख से ही सब कुछ को देखते हैं। कौन इसे दिखा रहा है? कौन इस पूरे दृश्य प्रपंच का सूत्रधार है, इसे अक्सर नहीं जान पाते’।

यही स्थिति आज वायरल होती छवियों दृश्यों और एमएमएस के बारे में है। यह सही है कि सोशल मीडिया ने सूचना का लोकतंत्रीकरण और ज्ञान का सुलभ स्रोत उपलब्ध कराया है, लेकिन इसका दूसरा पहलू भी है जो आज इस समस्त सूचना तंत्र पर हावी होता नजर आ रहा है।

भगवती प्रसाद डोभाल, २०११ में भारत की जनसंख्या के अनुसार भारत के राज्यों की मानचित्र

		
		
		
किसी भी मुद्दे या लेख पर अपनी राय हमें भेजें। हमारा पता है : ए–8, सेक्टर–7, नोएडा 201301, जिला : गौतमबुद्धनगर, उत्तर प्रदेश		
		
आप चाहें तो अपनी बात ईमेल के जरिए भी हम तक पहुंचा सकते हैं। आइडी है : chaupal.jansatta@expressindia.com		

भगवती प्रसाद डोभाल, २०११ में भारत की जनसंख्या के अनुसार भारत के राज्यों की मानचित्र

तो अनुशासन ही मानव सभ्यता के विकास की पहली सीढ़ी है, जिसके सहारे हमारा क्रमिक विकास संभव हुआ है। प्रकृति के समस्त कार्य–व्यापार किसी न किसी नियम से बंधे होते हैं। पृथ्वी नित्य नियम से अपनी धुरी पर घूमती है। जाड़ा, गर्मी और बरसात हमेशा समय पर आते हैं। लेकिन अब यहां यह कहना उचित होगा कि देश में अनुशासन का पालन करने को विचित्र निगाहों से देखा जाने लगा है।

भगवती प्रसाद डोभाल, २०११ में भारत की जनसंख्या के अनुसार भारत के राज्यों की मानचित्र

भगवती प्रसाद डोभाल, २०११ में भारत की जनसंख्या के अनुसार भारत के राज्यों की मानचित्र

		
		
		
2 दिसंबर, 2019		

भगवती प्रसाद डोभाल, २०११ में भारत की जनसंख्या के अनुसार भारत के राज्यों की मानचित्र

आजकल जंगली जानवर भी खूंखार हो गए हैं। उनके लिए भी जंगलों में भोजन की कमी है, इसलिए वे ईंसानों पर झपट रहे हैं। पूरे उत्तराखंड में जंगली सुअरों से लेकर बंदर, भालू खेती–बाड़ी का नुकसान कर रहे हैं। इनका वैज्ञानिक अध्ययन तक नहीं हुआ कि क्यों इनकी प्रवृत्ति इतनी हिंसक हो रही है। मोटी बात यह है कि जंगलों की कटाई–छंटायें सड़कें बनाने के लिए हो रही हैं। जो बचे जंगल उन पर मशीनें दौड़ रही हैं। यातायात की ज्यादा हो गया है। इसलिए जंगली जानवर खाने की तलाश में गांवों और कस्बों में घूम रहे हैं। पलायन की मार से जो गांव बचे हैं, वहां पर हिंसक जंगली जानवरों का आतंक हो गया है। खेतीबाड़ी में उत्पादन घट गया है। कहने का आशय यही है कि बढ़ती शहरी आबादी के घनत्व को थामना आज मुश्किल हो गया है। फिर पशुओं पर किसी का ध्यान नहीं है।

जबकि वे हमारे भोजन और रहन–सहन में सहायक हैं। हम अपने बीच पशुपालन में एक संतुलन नहीं बना पा रहे हैं। किसी–किसी क्षेत्र में अतिरिक्त उत्पादन हो रहा है, जिसका हम निर्यात कर सकते हैं। उस पर भी ठोस योजना का अभाव है। पालतू पशुओं को चारा–पानी उपलब्ध करा कर उनके स्वास्थ्य को बना कर ही उनकी संतति से लाभ पा सकते हैं। यह एक जीवन चक्र है, इसको नियमित बना कर ही विकास की सही राह पर चला जा सकता है। हाल ही में गौरक्षक अभियान ने ऐसे पशुओं को खुला छोड़ दिया है, जिनका भार संभालना उस मालिक के बस में भी नहीं है जो उसे पाल–पोस, उससे सब कुछ निचोड़ कर खुला छोड़ने में विश्वास रखता है। उन्हीं लोगों की वजह से परेशानियां भी पैदा हो रही हैं। जो अब किसी

तरह से किसान के काफिल मवेशी नहीं रहता है, उसका ठिकाना आवारा जीवन ही रह गया है। उस जीवन की देखभाल करने वाला कोई नहीं है। कभी ऐसे जानवरों को ‘स्लॉटर हाउस’ पहुंचाया जाता था, वहां उनके चमड़े, मांस के उपयोग के अलावा उनकी हड्डियों की खाद बनाई जाती थी जो कृषि उपज में सहायक होता था। उसका उपयोग अब नहीं हो पा रहा है। इसलिए सरकार के पास कोई ठोस नीति होनी चाहिए, जिससे उन जानवरों की जीवन पर्यंत सुरक्षा का भार वह उठाए और जब उनके जीवन का अंत प्राकृतिक रूप से आए, तब उन्हें शांत मृत्यु का रास्ता दे। हमारी पशुओं के साथ न्याय की प्रक्रिया भी सही होनी चाहिए। आखिर वे हमारे पूरक हैं।

भगवती प्रसाद डोभाल, २०११ में भारत की जनसंख्या के अनुसार भारत के राज्यों की मानचित्र

रहा है, जहां सोशल मीडिया में निरंतर गढ़ी जाती ये छवियां सोचने और विचारने की जगह खत्म कर रही हैं। वास्तविकता का अपने लिए अनुकूलन करती ये छवियां कहीं न कहीं वास्तविकता को निरर्थक बना रही हैं। यहां तक कि यह वास्तविकता को एक गल्प में बदल रही हैं। इस तरह की छवियां वास्तविकता के सत्य और सातत्य को खंडित करती हैं। यह अनायास नहीं है कि इतनी विश्वयुद्ध के दौरान आम जनता को दिखाने के लिए तानाशाह हिटलर या भारत में ब्रिटिश सरकार ने जो वृत्तचित्र बनाए थे, वह अपना पक्ष जनता के सामने रखने के लिए ‘मैनीपुलेशन’ यानी तथ्यों को मनमाने तरीके से तोड़ना–मरोड़ना था। उन्होंने उस समय जनता की आंखों में धूल झाँकने के लिए वृत्त–चित्रों और प्रोपेगेंडा का सहारा लिया।

आभासी छवियों के इस संसार में वस्तु की छवि जब तैयार होती है तो वह जैसे उस वस्तु को अपने नियंत्रण में कर लेना चाहती है और वह छवि ही वास्तविकता का प्रतिनिधित्व करने लगती है। प्रश्न यह उठता है कि कहीं हमारे समाज का यह ऑनलाइन प्रतिबिंब, जो अक्सर तात्कालिक प्रतिछवियों द्वारा निर्मित होता है, हमें इतना प्रभावित तो नहीं कर लेगा कि विचार–विमर्श किए बिना हम इस पर विश्वास करने लगेंगे और यह समांतर आभासी दुनिया ही हमें संचालित करने लगेगी!

भगवती प्रसाद डोभाल, २०११ में भारत की जनसंख्या के अनुसार भारत के राज्यों की मानचित्र

आत्मबल, संयम, उपवास, विश्वास, धैर्य,आत्मविश्वास, निष्ठा, कर्तव्य, सादगी आदि गुणों को आत्मसात करके अपने जीवन को व्यतीत करते रहे। इतिया देश ही नहीं, बल्कि दुनिया के सामने उनकी सोच और जीवनशैली आदर्श मानी जाती है। यह दुर्भाग्य है कि देश में गांधीजी की मृत्यु स्वाभाविक नहीं हुई, बल्कि नाथूराम गोडसे ने उनकी हत्या कर दी। उसी हत्याके को देशभक्त कहा जा रहा है।

गांधीजी ने राजनीतिक, आर्थिक, सामाजिक, धार्मिक, पर्यावरण आदि अनेक पहलू पर अपने विचार प्रकट किए, जिन्हें वास्तव में जमीन पर उतारने के लिए देश को प्रयास करना जरूरी है। देश में कुछ नेता और लोग अन्य नेताओं, क्रांतिकारियों, समाजसेवकों के विचार गांधीवादी विचारधारा से श्रेष्ठ मानते हैं, लेकिन किसकी विचारधारा श्रेष्ठ बताने के बजाय खुद के लिए और हमेशा रहेंगे। अब प्रज्ञा ठाकुर ने

भगवती प्रसाद डोभाल, २०११ में भारत की जनसंख्या के अनुसार भारत के राज्यों की मानचित्र

भगवती प्रसाद डोभाल, २०११ में भारत की जनसंख्या के अनुसार भारत के राज्यों की मानचित्र

भगवती प्रसाद डोभाल, २०११ में भारत की जनसंख्या के अनुसार भारत के राज्यों की मानचित्र

भगवती प्रसाद डोभाल, २०११ में भारत की जनसंख्या के अनुसार भारत के राज्यों की मानचित्र

भगवती प्रसाद डोभाल, २०११ में भारत की जनसंख्या के अनुसार भारत के राज्यों की मानचित्र

भगवती प्रसाद डोभाल, २०११ में भारत की जनसंख्या के अनुसार भारत के राज्यों की मानचित्र

भगवती प्रसाद डोभाल, २०११ में भारत की जनसंख्या के अनुसार भारत के राज्यों की मानचित्र

भगवती प्रसाद डोभाल, २०११ में भारत की जनसंख्या के अनुसार भारत के राज्यों की मानचित्र

भगवती प्रसाद डोभाल, २०११ में भारत की जनसंख्या के अनुसार भारत के राज्यों की मानचित्र

भगवती प्रसाद डोभाल, २०११ में भारत की जनसंख्या के अनुसार भारत के राज्यों की मानचित्र

भगवती प्रसाद डोभाल, २०११ में भारत की जनसंख्या के अनुसार भारत के राज्यों की मानचित्र

भगवती प्रसाद डोभाल, २०११ में भारत की जनसंख्या के अनुसार भारत के राज्यों की मानचित्र

भगवती प्रसाद डोभाल, २०११ में भारत की जनसंख्या के अनुसार भारत के राज्यों की मानचित्र

भगवती प्रसाद डोभाल, २०११ में भारत की जनसंख्या के अनुसार भारत के राज्यों की मानचित्र

भगवती प्रसाद डोभाल, २०११ में भारत की जनसंख्या के अनुसार भारत के राज्यों की मानचित्र

भगवती प्रसाद डोभाल, २०११ में भारत की जनसंख्या के अनुसार भारत के राज्यों की मानचित्र

भगवती प्रसाद डोभाल, २०११ में भारत की जनसंख्या के अनुसार भारत के राज्यों की मानचित्र

भगवती प्रसाद डोभाल, २०११ में भारत की जनसंख्या के अनुसार भारत के राज्यों की मानचित्र

भगवती प्रसाद डोभाल, २०११ में भारत की जनसंख्या के अनुसार भारत के राज्यों की मानचित्र

भगवती प्रसाद डोभाल, २०११ में भारत की जनसंख्या के अनुसार भारत के राज्यों की मानचित्र

भगवती प्रसाद डोभाल, २०११ में भारत की जनसंख्या के अनुसार भारत के राज्यों की मानचित्र

भगवती प्रसाद डोभाल, २०११ में भारत की जनसंख्या के अनुसार भारत के राज्यों की मानचित्र

भगवती प्रसाद डोभाल, २०११ में भारत की जनसंख्या के अनुसार भारत के राज्यों की मानचित्र

भगवती प्रसाद डोभाल, २०११ में भारत की जनसंख्या के अनुसार भारत के राज्यों की मानचित्र

भगवती प्रसाद डोभाल, २०११ में भारत की जनसंख्या के अनुसार भारत के राज्यों की मानचित्र