

A different phase

Ministerial statements at last week's meetings with business leaders indicate the government's new approach to industry



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A K BHATTACHARYA

The Union government's engagement with industry leaders is always a keenly watched development. Two national chambers of industry and commerce held their annual functions in New Delhi last week. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and Commerce & Industry Minister Piyush Goyal were among the senior leaders of the government, who attended these events.

There were no fireworks from industry leaders this time, unlike those wit-

nessed at a meeting last month in Mumbai, where veteran businessman Rahul Bajaj raised some apparently uncomfortable questions on why industry leaders did not have the confidence of openly criticising the government. Perhaps a key difference was that the venue of last week's meetings was New Delhi and, given the adverse impact of a slowing economy on businesses, industry leaders were restrained in their response to the suggestions made by government representatives to improve the economy.

So restrained were industry leaders in New Delhi that the Prime Minister had to exhort them on more than one occasion to applaud with more enthusiasm his announcement on the reforms that his government had initiated by decriminalising penal provisions in the companies law and by slashing the corporation tax rates. And industry leaders assembled there indeed fell in line and clapped more loudly in response to the Prime Minister's suggestion.

At the same meeting, he urged the Indian industry to make bold invest-

ments to help the economy reach the goal of attaining the size of \$5 trillion. Giving a hint of what industry could expect from the forthcoming Budget, Modi talked about his government's plans to invest more in infrastructure. He also assured industry that he was confident that his government would come out with steps to rescue the economy from the current slowdown.

But he was obviously keen that industry must appreciate that his government was focused on the need to improve the economy and address the business leaders' concerns about growth. Hence, he made no secret of his desire that industry must recognise the government's intention to reform and revive growth. He thus asked industry to clap a little louder on what his government had already done instead of remaining focused only on what the government would do in the coming months. Clearly, this was a different Modi.

The Finance Minister too held out an olive branch to industry when she addressed the same forum of industrialists. She reiterated the government's

commitment to help revive businesses. Sitharaman said: "This government does not want businesses to close. We want to help them to be revived by legislative and other administrative changes... we are with you. I want this mood of self-doubt to be completely removed from your minds."

Such a statement may reflect the concerns of a government that, unlike in the past, is eager to be openly friendly with industry, recognising that industry's cooperation in reviving investments and growth is crucial. But it also raises questions on whether a government should make any commitment on not allowing businesses to be shut down. Doesn't that defy the spirit of economic reforms where both the entry to undertake economic activity and exit from it should be subject to market disciplines?

In a similar vein, Goyal sought the cooperation of industry in identifying countries and markets that had created non-tariff barriers for Indian exports. The objective of that exercise was to help the government take retaliatory action against countries that imposed such barriers to trade. Goyal said: "Our government is willing to stand by you and look at retaliatory actions and impose similar trade remedial measures." However, it was not clear if that meant India's trade policies would introduce a fresh dose of protectionism, citing the need for retaliation.

More significantly, Goyal assured

business leaders that he and his office would always be available to address industry's concerns, as he believed that a "responsible and listening" government can have a positive impact on businesses.

What stood out at these meetings between industry representatives and government leaders was how the equation between the ministers and industry had undergone a subtle and qualitative change. The government appeared to be unusually keen on making itself more accessible to and understood by industry. It was trying to impress upon the assembled business leaders that the government was keen to understand industry's problems, address its grievances and revive growth through legislative or administrative measures.

This is perhaps a new phase in the Modi government's relationship with the Indian industry. It is possible that this is a temporary phase and an outcome of the current economic slowdown. It could have also been a fall-out of the problems of law and order in the wake of country-wide protests over the recent legislation on citizenship and the associated plan to launch a National Register of Citizens. Industry will, of course, hope that the new equation results in more sustainable industry-friendly policies, increased investments in infrastructure and steps that can revive demand in the economy, which could then boost economic growth.

CHINESE WHISPERS

Stalin or Rajinikanth?
Udayanidhi Stalin, son of Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) President M K Stalin, and the party's youth wing secretary, has received much flak from his political opponents and fans of Rajinikanth for taking potshots at the actor via social media. Rajinikanth, on Twitter, had advised people not to resort to violence and stand united, without mentioning the protests that are taking place across the country related to the Citizenship Amendment Act. Junior Stalin, while inviting people through his Twitter account to participate in a DMK protest against the Citizenship Amendment Act on December 23, attacked the 69-year-old actor, stating, "Those affluent old people who call a protest for rights as violence can stay at their homes with proper security." Rajinikanth fans and Udayanidhi's political opponents thronged the comment box, asking whether Udayanidhi was referring to his father, who is 66 years old.

Together we can



Fifteen first-time MLAs of the Congress in Madhya Pradesh have formed a "pressure" group. The reason? Neither the ministers nor the bureaucrats listen to them. Their main grudge is that their requests — however genuine — go unheeded. These MLAs plan to organise regular meetings — one was held just last week — to review pending requests, ensure execution, and, if necessary, escalate the matter all the way up to Chief Minister Kamal Nath. Among the dissatisfied MLAs are Sanjay Shukla, Surendra Singh Shera, Ashok Marshkole, and Bhupendra Maravi; and among the ministers they are particularly happy with are Jaivardhan Singh (state minister for urban development and housing), Priyavrat Singh (energy minister) and Umang Singhar (forest minister).

Peacenik Mayawati

Against the backdrop of violent protests against the Citizen Amendment Act (CAA), Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) President Mayawati has emerged as a peacenik and has proposed her own version of non-violent non-cooperation. While firmly opposing the CAA and the proposed National Register of Citizens (NRC) and expressing solidarity with the sentiments of the protesters, the Dalit czarina stressed that being "a disciplined party that espoused constitutional values" BSP workers would not hit the road against the CAA. Instead, she suggested, they would "peacefully" hand over a memorandum to their district administration to register their opposition to it.

Where have all the women bankers gone?

Flexi hours and crèches for children can help retain them but a bigger problem at the moment is women bankers don't have too many role models to look up to



BANKER'S TRUST

TAMAL BANDYOPADHYAY

In the run up to *Business Standard's* Annual Banking Forum in Mumbai last month, many took to microblogging site Twitter to express their disappointment at not finding a single woman banker on any of the panels. Gender diversity is always welcome but at the moment there aren't too many women in this space.

Zarin Daruwala, CEO of Standard Chartered Bank; Kaku Nakhate, president and country head of Bank of America India; and Kalpana Morparia, CEO of JP Morgan India; are exceptions in an industry in which women CEOs were bossing over banks with at least 40 per cent share of the total assets till just a few years ago. There were Chanda Kochhar, a Padma awardee, heading ICICI Bank Ltd; Shikha Sharma, CEO and MD at Axis Bank Ltd; Arundhati Bhattacharya in the corner room of the country's largest lender, the State Bank of India; and Usha Ananthasubramanian, chief of Punjab National Bank; among others.

Bhattacharya retired after a one-year

extension while Sharma stepped down after the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) did not grant her a fresh three-year term, that was cleared by the bank's board. Ananthasubramanian, named in the charge sheet of the Central Bureau of Investigation for her alleged role in the \$2 billion fraud in Punjab National Bank perpetrated by diamondaires Nirav Modi and his uncle Mehul Choksi, was first transferred to Allahabad Bank and later stripped of her executive powers.

Kochhar's is the most interesting story: She moved the Bombay High Court challenging ICICI Bank's decision to terminate her after the bank had approved her request for early retirement. Meanwhile, a Delhi court has recently stayed the screening of an upcoming Bollywood film *Chanda: A Signature that Ruined a Career*, based allegedly on her life. In sum, some of the women bankers are in the news for the wrong reasons and there aren't any takers for the space vacated by them.

Tarjani Vakil was the first woman to reach the top at the Export-Import Bank of India in 1996. Ranjana Kumar became the chairman and managing director of Indian Bank, four years later, playing a critical role in turning around the bank before shifting to National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development in 2003. The second woman boss in a commercial bank, HA Daurwalla, became the boss of Central Bank of India in 2005. Nupur Mitra took over as chairman and managing director of Dena Bank (merged with Bank of Baroda) in 2011. It took a little over three decades after bank nationalisation for a woman to become a bank's CEO. However, the pace at

which women bankers were moving to the corner office till a few years ago has slowed down.

Even globally, women took long to break into the male bastion in finance. Janet L Yellen was chosen to head the US Federal Reserve Board in 2017, the first woman to do so after a century of the Fed's existence. No woman has ever headed the US Treasury Department in its 229-year history. Back home, it was a 68-year wait at the RBI for a woman to reach the deputy governor's post (Kishori J. Udeshi, the first woman deputy governor, took over in June 2003). For the State Bank of India, the wait was 206 years to get its first woman head — Bhattacharya.

Women currently represent 24.37 per cent of SBI's employees and at least 2,600 of around 22,000 branches of the bank are headed by woman officers. Its former managing director Anshula Kant has recently been appointed managing director and chief financial officer at the World Bank. HDFC Bank Ltd's 2018 annual report says women represent around 17 per cent of its 88,253 employees. It's an equal opportunity employer but historically not too many women employees have been seen at the bank's top tier, unlike the case in ICICI Bank.

Both Daruwala and Morparia are old ICICI Bank hands. Now, of course,



except for Vishaka Mulye, an executive director, the bank does not have any other women in a senior position even though nearly 30 per cent of its employees are women. Citibank India, in contrast, has four women, including its consumer banking head Shinjini Kumar, in the 15-member management committee, and 32 per cent of its employees are women. Globally, Citibank NA aims to have 40 per cent women employees.

A 2017 study of 71 banks in 20 countries conducted by SKEMA Business School's Observatory found that despite representing, on an average, a little over 52 per cent of the banking industry's workforce, the representation of women, as they moved up in their careers, declined: 37.58 per cent among middle managers and 16.45 per cent in executive committees. The study also points out a wide disparity in the gender balance across countries. Sweden (45 per cent), France (35 per cent) and Canada (34.5 per cent) are the top three countries

for women's representation in the boards of directors of banks while Singapore (15 per cent), China (14 per cent) and Japan (12 per cent) have the lowest female representation.

In India too we see a progressive decline in women's representations in the top tier of the banking industry. There are a few in the private sector — Yes Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Federal Bank — but they are exceptions. Similarly, the representation of women in the top executive cadre — general managers — in state-run banks is just about 10 per cent. There are a few banks that do not have a woman in the top executive cadre. A 2010 human resources study conducted by a committee headed by former chairman of Bank of Baroda, A K Khandelwal, found women making up about 17 per cent of the total workforce in these banks but their representation in the executive cadre was less than 3 per cent, in contrast to 26 per cent in the clerical cadre and 11 per cent among the officers.

The SKEMA Business School study, which does not include India, talks about a double glass ceiling in banking and this is a universal phenomenon. Many banks look for equal representation at the entry level but women become laggards for reasons other than talent while moving up. The challenge is to nurture the pipeline. Offering fully paid, adequate maternity leave, flexi working hours, and running crèches for the children of employees can help the cause but at the moment they don't have too many role models to look up to. That's the problem.

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INSIGHT

Increasing the efficacy of monetary policy

If interest rates aren't reduced quickly & in good measure, the economy will continue to struggle



RAJIV SHASTRI

Another inflation data point has been released with the inflation rate climbing once again. And as expected, commentators are invoking the "stagflation" ghost. Meanwhile, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) continues to chase completely dissonant monetary policy goals, intervening to weaken the rupee even as they maintain a high level of real interest rates.

Monetary policy, especially when operating through the interest rate mechanism, cannot address inflation emerging from consumption items in which demand is either price inelastic and/or interest rate inelastic. Consumption of these items is also called non-discretionary consumption because these items typically include only necessities. Any change in prices of these can cause brief deviations from their trend demand patterns, but not a change in the trend itself. As would be obvious, changes in interest rates do not have much of an impact on the consumption of these items. As such, it is unusual for monetary policy to respond to changes in the price of these items

because, well, it can't do much about it. Higher interest rates do not have an impact on the demand for food and retail consumption of electricity.

This is precisely the reason why another measure of inflation exists, called core inflation, which refers broadly to discretionary items of consumption only. Demand for these items responds to changes in price as well as interest rates and the effectiveness of monetary policy in an economy depends largely on how large the proportion of this consumption basket is. In richer economies, discretionary consumption is a dominant portion of the consumption basket and expenditure on food and energy is quite small. In poorer economies a bulk of the consumption is of necessities, leaving very little for discretionary consumption. As such, the efficacy of monetary policy in an economy increases with its per capita income. This is usually visible in the way changes in policy rates are transmitted across the economy. As would be expected at our current per capita national income, transmission in India is far from perfect with long lags and frequent dissonance.

Coming back to interest rates, if inflation is caused largely by non-discretionary items of consumption, it is almost perfectly wrong to respond to it with high rates. This is because a high level of inflation in non-discretionary items is usually disinflationary for discretionary items of consumption. Over short periods of time when income levels are unchanged, a larger share of non-discretionary consumption resulting from higher food or energy prices will typically result in discretionary consumption and savings both getting

squeezed. The only monetary policy response to this drop in demand for discretionary items of consumption is a lower-than-equilibrium interest rate environment.

Which brings us to ideal equilibrium rates. In any monetary policy regime, the ideal level of interest rates is the minimum possible rate given its inflation environment. It is only at this minimum rate that the growth potential of the economy can be fully realised. There is a lot of commentary on the perspective that in an inflation targeting environment, the central bank isn't responsible for economic growth. This is fallacious because an inflation target doesn't replace the central bank's core responsibility of maximising economic growth, just places a constraint on it. The raison d'être of any central banks remains the pursuit of economic expansion and the only way to achieve this goal in an inflation targeting regime is by keeping interest rates at the minimum possible subject to inflationary constraints.

This minimum rate is a function of expected core consumer price index (CPI) inflation. Not headline inflation and certainly not food and energy inflation, but core CPI inflation because as explained earlier, it is the only inflation indicator which is directly influenced by monetary policy. If expected core CPI inflation is near the inflation target, then overnight policy rates (which is the pure risk-free rate in an economy) need to be equal to (or very close to) the target inflation rate. If expected core CPI is higher than the target inflation rate, then policy rates need to be higher as well and vice versa.

This regime ensures that risk-free

assets don't generate a real rate of return, a phenomenon which severely damages consumption and capital formation. For example, if expected core CPI inflation is at 3.5 per cent and the risk-free rate is at 5 per cent, this means that one can either consume an indicative item now at Rs. 10,000 or invest that amount, get Rs 10,500 after a year and buy the indicative item then, the price of which would have increased to Rs 10,350. In choosing the latter, one gets a risk-free benefit of Rs 150. Obviously, such an environment will result in consumption getting deferred for as long as such an environment exists. Also, if a real rate of return is available on risk-free assets, then capital owners have a reduced incentive to take risks. This hinders the creation of both debt and equity capital by lowering risk preferences and starving the economy of long-term risk bearing capital.

As things stand, existing and expected core CPI inflation is close to, even below, the target rate of inflation. And yet, policy rates are significantly higher with the risk-free rate at least 100 bps higher than the inflation target. The results of this environment, though clearly visible, are still being denied vigorously in defense of the current interest rate environment. This will not end well. If interest rates aren't reduced quickly and in good measure, the Indian economy will continue to struggle. The extent and duration of this struggle is directly proportionate to the time take to reduce rates. Will the RBI step up to the task?

The author is an economist and former CEO of Essel Mutual Fund

LETTERS

Do not rush

This refers to the editorial "Mixed signals" (December 20). The editorial rightly makes the point that a thorough analysis needs to be carried out before implementing the zero IUC (interconnect usage charge) regime from January 2021. Though the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India believes that traffic symmetry would be achieved by the end of next year, the whole thing can change with the changing market share of telcos, more so when a new service provider comes up or an incumbent operator winds up. Also, given the current distress in the telecom sector, there should be no hurry in introducing the BAK (bill and keep) regime.

As everything comes at a cost, an operator needs to be suitably compensated for its network usage for the calls originating in another network. The IUC must take into account all cost components including capex and spectrum charges borne by the operator. As telcos are in need of help to tide over the current crisis, the introduction of zero IUC regime should have to wait a bit longer.

Sanjeev Kumar Singh Jabalpur

Change stand

This refers to "Natural partners, unnatural times" (December 20). The author has done an excellent analysis of Indo-

US relations, the compulsions of each country and why it is important for India to "not test the US's tolerance". His closing line, by way of advice for our country, to "return to the values that have brought it influence and admiration in the international arena" is absolutely brilliant. Hope the powers that be are listening. I would like to mention that the "natural partners" slogan that evolved two decades ago, when the warming up of US-India relations began, is just that — a slogan. For 50 years, India kept irritating the US by wooing USSR and also not missing out on any opportunity to criticise America and American policies on every conceivable forum.

Let's accept that despite our pretentiousness we are not yet a super power; and do need to cozy up to the US for cutting-edge technologies, strategic defence equipment, nuclear materials, support in the UN and — very importantly — keeping China in check. Perhaps, we should seriously consider giving up the idea of importing the S-400 air defence missiles from Russia. That could be a really strong positive signal to the Americans.

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Protecting a people's democracy

The executive branch should not have the power to appoint public officials whose role is to protect the Constitution and prevent executive overreach

The past week has seen the rapid spread of public protests against the National Register of Citizens (NRC) and the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA). Besides the immediate cause, these protests also reflect a growing sense that the ruling party, which won 37 per cent of the popular vote, is ramming through its agenda without consulting with Opposition and state governments or taking into account the possible views of the 63 per cent of the voters who did not support them. There is a fear that we are drifting towards a regime where there may be little protection against executive overreach as crucial constitutional positions

Nearby 500 hundred years ago a powerful and pioneering text came out outlining for the first time the principles of sovereignty that rested on people's consent. It is titled "*Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos*" or "*A Defense of Liberty Against Tyrants*". There is much in this ancient text that resonates even today, not just in India but also in other democracies.

With regard to the duty to obey rulers, the text says: "Accordingly, rulers need to know how far they are permitted to extend their authority over their subjects, and their subjects need to know in what ways they are to obey, lest should the one encroach on that jurisdiction, which no way belongs to them, and the others obey him which commands further than he ought."

From the present perspective what is very relevant is the distinction that the *Vindiciae* draws between public officials, who are servants of the ruler and those who should consider themselves servants of the people. Hence the *Vindiciae* states: "The responsibility of the one is proper relation to the care of the king's person; that of the other, to save the commonwealth from da-

mage; the first ought to serve and assist the king, just as all domestic servants are obligated to their masters; the other to preserve the rights and privileges of the people, and to hinder the ruler so that he neither omit the things that are advantageous to the state nor commit anything that may cause damage to the public."

This distinction between the two classes of public officials is not implementable unless the procedures for their appointment are also differentiated so that the executive does not play a decisive role in choosing the public officials who have to protect the Constitution and people's rights. This matters most for the integrity of the election process, impartiality and objectivity in the formation of post-election governments and in the independence of the judiciary and the police from political interference.

The first and most important set of public officials from this perspective of protecting people's rights are the governors of states. At present they are appointed by the ruling entity at the Centre with little regard for any factor other than political loyalty. As of now, all but three state governors

are party loyalists. The Sarkaria Commission made several recommendations to improve matters, including that the governor should be an eminent person from outside the state, that he must not have participated in active politics, at least for some time before his appointment, and not be too intimately connected with the local politics of the state. Most importantly, it argued that the governor should be appointed in consultation with the chief minister of the state, vice-president of India and the speaker of the Lok Sabha. Except for the recommendation that he should be from outside the state, none of the other recommendations have been implemented by this or any previous government despite exhortations from the Supreme Court. This has to change if federalism is to be protected and some semblance of propriety is to be preserved in post-election



NITIN DESAI

to give loans instead of using reverse repo" while asserting "there is no government interference on banks' decision-making". She also "advised" Indian businessmen to bid enthusiastically for government companies, which are being privatised, asking them to come out of "self-doubt" and unleash their animal spirits.

Clearly, she is not listening. Some 16 years ago, Arun Shourie, as disinvestment minister, had said the government companies "are not crown jewels, these are bleeding ulcers". Under successive governments, they have grown worse. To ask anyone "to bid enthusiastically" is laughable. On the same day, the prime minister instructed members of Assocham, a top industry association, filled with successful Indian businesses and multinationals, to take decisions freely and "invest without fear". As I said, politicians live in an echo chamber.

Anybody who has some understanding of doing business in India knows how extraordinarily difficult it is to be successful and scale up operations, creating hundreds and thousands of jobs. Companies that have survived and grown in the toxic political economy of India handled everyday bribery, braved enormous delays in decision-making, cut through scores of maddening rules and licences, battled court cases, negotiated capricious demands from revenue departments, tiptoed around draconian laws are super-achievers. They don't need to be lectured to. How come politicians, some of whom have not even won election, much less contributed anything useful in their lives, never created any jobs or wealth, are never embarrassed to sermonise to these successful businessmen that they should be courageous or overcome self-doubt? Where do they get the confidence to speak with such condescension?

The reason is simple: Once they acquire power, they are removed from reality, labelling all uncomfortable facts as negativity, confident that what they



DEBASHIS BASU

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Twisting the curve

RBI's effort to address yield curve rise may not work as hoped

Investors have noted the steepening of the yield curve for Indian government debt with concern. In recent weeks, the difference between yields on the 10-year government paper (government securities or G-Secs) and the two-year variant has widened the most in nine years, since the high-spending days of the post-financial crisis fiscal stimulus. This is a result, in all likelihood, of worries that in spite of there being practically no fiscal space, the government will feel itself forced to stimulate the economy through some spending or tax measures as a response to stalling gross domestic product (GDP) growth. A difficulty in meeting the fiscal deficit target of 3.3 per cent of GDP means that there is a disconnection between long- and shorter-term expectations of growth and inflation, resulting in a steepened yield curve. Market participants expect enhanced borrowing from the government, weighing down the long-term expectations of yields as ample liquidity at the shorter end has underpinned the market for the corresponding bonds. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) held rates steady at the meeting of the monetary policy committee earlier this month, while financial markets were expecting another rate cut.

The central bank has now responded to some calls from market participants by announcing that it will conduct an unusual set of open market operations — buying ₹10,000 crore worth of 10-year G-Secs and selling a corresponding amount of bonds due to mature on a shorter timeframe. This is being seen as an Indian variant of the United States Federal Reserve's "Operation Twist" early in this decade, which was meant to spur lending by banks. The RBI's concern, reportedly, is that the transmission of its previous rate cuts — by 135 basis points over the course of 2019, in five different cuts — is faulty. This is in keeping with the bank's consistent claims that it manages liquidity and not yields. Heavy government borrowing has put upward pressure on interest rates, which have rendered the transmission of the rate cuts difficult.

Yet it is far from clear that the RBI's goal will be achieved. Certainly, there might be some flattening of the yield curve. But it is not clear that the amounts being discussed are sufficient. The response of the market for short-term bonds is also being questioned. The sale of the shorter-tenor bonds might well blow up yields in that segment, according to some market participants; on the other hand, liquidity at that end is so ample that there might be an effective cap on yields. The essential problem in the Indian bond market is that the country has, in spite of an apparently manageable debt-to-GDP ratio, entered a state of effective fiscal dominance. Heavy government borrowing has rendered monetary policy increasingly ineffective. Measures to address the yield curve might provide some temporary relief. But the broader issue is the long-term uncertainty on the path of inflation, rates, and deficits caused by ballooning government commitments. While the RBI can and must do its part, the primary responsibility for addressing this uncertainty belongs to the government. As the Union finance ministry continues its pre-Budget consultations, it must recognise that fiscal prudence and transparency are non-negotiable.

The global easing cycle

India will need interventions to protect financial stability

The Federal Open Market Committee of the US Federal Reserve changed its policy path significantly in 2019 to counter rising economic uncertainties, largely due to the US-China trade dispute. The Fed reduced rates thrice in 2019 compared to four hikes in 2018. The latest projections suggest that the US central bank will keep interest rates unchanged in 2020. Meanwhile, the European Central Bank further pushed its deposit rate into negative territory and restarted the asset purchase programme. The Bank of Japan continues to pursue its asset purchase programme to support growth and prices. The policy stance of large central banks suggests that global financial conditions would remain accommodative in the foreseeable future.

While the accommodative monetary policy will help support global growth, it could increase risks in the financial system by pushing up asset prices and leverage. Experience shows that the US monetary policy significantly affects global financial cycles. In this context, India will need to guard its interests, and policymakers must make interventions to protect financial stability. A new study by rating agency CRISIL, which has examined both the easing and tightening cycles in recent years, predictably, shows that foreign portfolio investments (FPIs) have been low during the tightening period compared to the easing period. FPI flows were strong during the easing period after the financial crisis, despite the worsening domestic macro situation. However, foreign direct investment (FDI) followed a different path, and was closely related to the domestic economy. India received more FDI during the tightening period than in the easing period, because of higher growth. The Indian economy grew by 7.3 per cent between fiscal years 2014 and 2019. FDI flows have again moderated with the slowdown in the economy. Since FDI is more stable, India will need to revive growth prospects to attract capital of this variety to bridge its savings gap. Higher dependence on portfolio flows to fund the current account deficit could increase financial stability risks. External commercial borrowing also tends to rise with the Fed's policy easing. Although the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has reduced policy rates by 135 basis points in the current cycle, it has not translated into lower lending rates and could encourage Indian businesses to borrow from abroad. As reported by this newspaper recently, Indian firms raised \$13.74 billion through dollar bonds in the first 10 months of this calendar year, compared with just \$1.65 billion in the same period last year.

Higher inflows of external borrowing and FPIs could pose challenges for the RBI. It could put upward pressure on the rupee and affect exports. The real effective exchange rate is showing significant overvaluation and has affected exports in recent years, though problems in the implementation of goods and services tax also contributed. However, if the RBI intervenes in the market as it has been doing in the recent past, it will further increase rupee liquidity in the system, which can potentially affect its inflation-targeting mandate. Therefore, in the given global macro environment, India will need to diligently manage and prioritise foreign fund flows. India should create enabling conditions for FDI and avoid increasing dependence on debt flows. Although the current account deficit is likely to remain at a moderate level, a higher flow of dollar debt at a time of slowing growth and rising fiscal pressures could increase risks to financial stability.

Governance by diktat, in an echo chamber

The first rule of governance in India is that the people's representatives will stop listening to the people the moment they acquire power. The second rule is that the longer a group is in power, the more arrogant and further removed from reality it will become. And the third rule is ruling politicians will echo one another, no matter how ridiculous and far removed from reality it sounds to us. The best examples of these rules are now all around us.

Remember the last days of the Congress-led government in 2011-13? Rampant corruption, a brutal rape, economic stagnancy, and policy failures had gripped the country, to protest against which the docile, the busy and the insensitive — all came out on the streets. Is the current mood turning in that direction? All the ingredients of those gloomy days of UPA2 are here, minus the obvious centralised corruption. Misgovernance and aimless drift are palpable, there are protests against brutal rapes again, the economy is spiralling downwards, and now suddenly, the people have to deal with a new citizenship process and a national registration that will cost more than ₹70,000 crore, at a time when government coffers are empty. Spontaneous protests against this badly-timed move have erupted all over the country. And exactly like the previous regime, the current one, six years in power, is not listening.

The previous prime minister was personally honest but seemed remote from everyday issues of citizens and businessmen — the job creators. The current prime minister does not seem to be any different, while ministers down the line are as divorced from reality. Former finance minister P Chidambaram's diktats were like King Canute, ordering economic actors to act and forcing events to unfold, according to his desires. On Friday the current finance minister lived up to that epithet by announcing Canute-like "I have asked public banks

to give loans instead of using reverse repo" while asserting "there is no government interference on banks' decision-making". She also "advised" Indian businessmen to bid enthusiastically for government companies, which are being privatised, asking them to come out of "self-doubt" and unleash their animal spirits.

Clearly, she is not listening. Some 16 years ago, Arun Shourie, as disinvestment minister, had said the government companies "are not crown jewels, these are bleeding ulcers". Under successive governments, they have grown worse. To ask anyone "to bid enthusiastically" is laughable. On the same day, the prime minister instructed members of Assocham, a top industry association, filled with successful Indian businesses and multinationals, to take decisions freely and "invest without fear". As I said, politicians live in an echo chamber.

Anybody who has some understanding of doing business in India knows how extraordinarily difficult it is to be successful and scale up operations, creating hundreds and thousands of jobs. Companies that have survived and grown in the toxic political economy of India handled everyday bribery, braved enormous delays in decision-making, cut through scores of maddening rules and licences, battled court cases, negotiated capricious demands from revenue departments, tiptoed around draconian laws are super-achievers. They don't need to be lectured to. How come politicians, some of whom have not even won election, much less contributed anything useful in their lives, never created any jobs or wealth, are never embarrassed to sermonise to these successful businessmen that they should be courageous or overcome self-doubt? Where do they get the confidence to speak with such condescension?

The reason is simple: Once they acquire power, they are removed from reality, labelling all uncomfortable facts as negativity, confident that what they

tion government formation.

In a people's democracy, maintaining the credibility of the election process is vital for political stability. The election commissioners are appointed by the ruling executive without any consultation. We have been fortunate that a few outstanding election commissioners have risen to the challenge and helped to build up a credible institution. But lately, there have been growing concerns about their impartiality and the time has come for a more consultative and transparent process of appointment. In June 2012, Lal Krishna Advani suggested that appointment of chief election commissioner should be made by a bipartisan collegium consisting of the prime minister, the chief justice of India, the law minister and the leaders of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha. But it was not accepted then and will not be revived now by the ruling party. But such a procedure is now even more necessary to maintain faith in an electoral process in the midst of deep ideological conflicts.

The independence of the higher judiciary is crucial for protecting people's rights and ensuring constitutional propriety. Following a 1993 judgment, the procedure for the appointment of Supreme Court and High Court judges shifted the power of choice from the executive to the Supreme Court and High Court collegiums. There have been demands for greater transparency to which the Court has responded. But the real guarantee of independence has to come from a judicial culture that stresses the crucial role of judges in ensuring constitutional propriety and protecting people's rights.

The police are part of the executive machinery of the state. But their independence from executive pressure needs to be ensured to protect the rule of law and people's rights. In 2006, the Supreme Court delivered a major judgment on police reform that required, among other things, the establishment of State Security Commissions made up of a responsible minister, leader of the Opposition, other elected representatives, experts, and credible members of civil society, a National Security Commission, a Police Establishment Board, and a Police Complaints Authority, all designed to ensure merit and transparency in higher-level police appointments. Regrettably, the actual pace of implementation of these reforms has been tardy, to say the least.

All governments so far have resisted changes in the appointment procedures of governors, election commissioners, and higher police personnel. This is not going to be any different now, and maybe even more difficult with strong ideological divides amongst political parties. The only answer lies in effective action by the Supreme Court using its powers of complete justice under Article 142 to set out appointment procedures for these functionaries that will ensure selection based on recognised merit and transparency, neutrality, objectivity, and impartiality in the process of selection.

Till then, one can only exhort those who occupy these key positions to remember that they are not answerable to those who have appointed them but are accountable to the people of the country for protecting constitutional propriety and the rights of the people as a whole.

Let me conclude with one final admonition from the *Vindiciae*: "It is therefore permitted the officers of a kingdom, either all, or some good number of them, to suppress a tyrant; and it is not only lawful for them to do it, but their duty expressly requires it; and, if they do it not, they can by no excuse colour their baseness."

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The story behind the Steele dossier



BOOK REVIEW

JENNIFER SZALAI

In the annals of political warfare, sober recitations of facts often pale next to lurid speculation. Before they founded the private intelligence firm Fusion GPS, Glenn Simpson and Peter Fritsch had long careers reporting and editing for *The Wall Street Journal*. As old journalism hands, they shouldn't have been surprised when their diligent research into Donald Trump's finances slipped into the media stream with barely a ripple, while the raw intelligence memos sent to Fusion by the former MI6 agent Christopher Steele landed like a breaching whale. In *Crime in Progress*, Messrs Simpson

and Fritsch said they "played down" the most "salacious" anecdote in the memos — that the Kremlin may have a videotape of Donald Trump asking prostitutes to urinate on a bed in the Moscow Ritz-Carlton — in order to emphasise their forensic work in following the money. They found evidence suggesting that Mr Trump became dependent on infusions of Russian cash after a string of bankruptcies and "has done business with at least 25 individuals and companies with documented mob ties." But such complex accounting has proved to be less enticing. A peep tape is worth a thousand words.

Republicans have woven an intricate conspiracy theory around the Steele dossier, casting it as a partisan hit job that in July 2016 sparked an FBI investigation into the Trump campaign's ties to Russia. Last week, the Justice Department's inspector general issued a report that laid waste to those accusations. The FBI had already initiated an investigation based on another stream of information before it

got wind of Mr Steele's findings.

Mr Steele was running his own private intelligence firm, called Orbis, when Fusion contracted him in May 2016 to talk to his Russian sources about Mr Trump.

Fusion, in turn, had been hired by a law firm doing work for the Hillary Clinton campaign and the Democratic National Committee. That, though, was only after Fusion's original client, a conservative online publication, backed off from researching Mr Trump when he became the Republican field's front-runner.

Did you get all of that? Messrs Simpson and Fritsch try to tell the story as clearly as

they can, but more money means more convolutions. To head off charges of anti-Trump bias, they stress that their client list includes a number of companies that are big donors to Republican lawmakers.

Crime in Progress describes efforts that started out ordinarily enough — the kind of open-source reporting and due diligence searches that Fusion was used to

doing for its corporate clients. One line of inquiry into Trump's business deals unearthed a flow of Russian money into his projects, what Mr Fritsch once called a "tour de sleaze." Needing a clearer sense of

what was happening inside Russia itself, where public records were hard to come by, Fusion reached out to Mr Steele.

The authors chronicle how Steele became so alarmed by what his sources

were telling him that he asked Fusion's permission to share his raw intelligence notes with the FBI and, later, an adviser to Senator John McCain.

Mr Steele and the authors started talking on deep background to journalists, too, though the authors say they took care not to share the dossier with the media before the election, and were furious when BuzzFeed posted the document in January 2017, ten days before President Trump's inauguration. This timeline, they repeatedly argue, is key: Republicans have tried to portray the dossier as a hoax or a dirty trick designed to prejudice the electorate, but how could it have swayed voters if it was kept hidden before the vote?

Messrs Simpson and Fritsch are able guides to a byzantine world; their presentation is methodical, almost lawyerly, which isn't as bad as it sounds. When reading a story full of weird financial transactions, narratives and counternarratives, it's helpful to have everything laid out as plainly as possible — even if the layers of chicanery are sometimes so densely packed that their syntax gets squeezed into ugly shapes.

Messrs Simpson and Fritsch try to address conservative conspiracy theorists head on, devoting an entire chapter to their work with a Russian real-estate company named Prevezon and its lawyer Natalia Veselnitskaya — who, unbeknownst to Fusion at the time, arranged a notorious meeting with the Trump campaign.

Fusion's conservative critics doubtless won't be placated by this book, even though the authors say that those critics were ultimately what made the book possible. Only when Republican members of Congress forced Fusion to provide documents and testimony in an attempt to ferret out a vast left-wing conspiracy were the authors freed to write about interactions they "would have otherwise been contractually obligated to keep confidential."

It's a nice bit of irony in a book that reads like a morality tale about unintended consequences. As Mr Simpson told congressional investigators back in 2017: "We threw a line in the water and Moby Dick came back."

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Opinion

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FM must slash income tax rates

This is the only way to stimulate demand; the corporate tax cut, in fact, won't boost investment in the short run

VIKRAM KIRLOSKAR'S ADVICE to the government that personal income tax (PIT) cuts can wait and that it should focus on other areas comes as a shock. On second thoughts, not really. India's corporate sector is known more for being greedy than for being generous, ever reluctant to share any benefits with consumers and always happy to retain all the gains. The government recently slashed the corporation tax—from 30% to 22%—a bonanza if ever there was one. But, that is not enough. After all these years, India Inc still wants to be protected from global peers since it is not able to compete with them. Both the Bombay Club, and later, the Bangalore Club, complained bitterly of how global competition was hurting, insisting the rules be written so as to ensure Indian industrialists always got a better deal.

So, individuals—salaried employees, primarily, since they are the ones actually paying taxes while the professionals merrily evade them—don't deserve a tax break. Someone earning just ₹10 lakh per annum must pay tax at the rate of a staggering 30%. But, the dividend distribution tax must go—else, how do industrialists, who are the biggest beneficiaries since they are the ones who earn the dividends from their equity holdings, to make ends meet?

The largesse doled out in the form of the corporation tax should be taken back. The FM would do well to roll back the corporation tax cut, and instead help India's middle classes. The fact is, companies are not going to use the tax break to invest more in fresh capacity or to hire more people. Many of the beneficiaries are FMCG companies and private sector banks—the Nestles and HDFC Banks of the world—that are already doing well and need no help.

Also, most companies remain over-leveraged because in a very benign inflationary situation, the real levels of debt aren't coming down, and revenues aren't going up too much. So, the accent is on cutting costs. In any case, as the data shows, capacity utilisation is barely 70%. Those companies that want to expand their businesses have bought stressed assets that were up for sale via the corporate insolvency resolution process (CIRP). In fact, the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) mechanism is now well established—after several amendments to the code and the crucial Essar Steel verdict by the Supreme Court—and so, the CIRP should be a lot smoother.

Given the need of the hour is to boost spending, cutting income tax rates would put some money in consumers' pockets. A well-constructed, simple tax framework without any exemptions and sharply lower tax rates across several income brackets should do the trick. Exemptions complicate matters, help evasion. Right now, rather than encouraging savings, we need to encourage spending; so, every single exemption—Section 80C, Section 80D, exemptions for principal and interest on home loans, etc—should be withdrawn. A simple structure is certain to produce more returns, and multiple income brackets will help minimise leakages. For instance, if all exemptions are withdrawn, including standard deduction, an individual earning ₹10 lakh per annum should not be paying more than 12%. Tax experts believe lower rates result in better compliance and boost collections. Governments, past and present, have been unable to recover taxes from professionals like doctors, lawyers, and consultants as also businesspeople, and voluntary disclosure schemes haven't worked too well. The number of taxpayers in India is ludicrously low compared to various 'proxy' metrics such as car sales or foreign travel. The number of individual taxpayers in 2017-18 was 8.45 crore; this includes some persons who paid TDS, but did not file returns. An FE study that compared a survey by ICF 360 degrees and IT returns filed showed there could be some 68,000 individuals in India earning above ₹5 crore annually, whereas the IT returns data has only 5,000 people making this amount. So, some steps need to be taken to recover taxes from those who are clearly evading taxes; a cleaner structure, with no loopholes, accompanied by some strict regulation and follow-up—no harassment though—should deliver the goods. Bigger disposable incomes that allow people to spend more will help push up corporate revenues, and in turn, the government's revenues.

The fact is that while the fiscal deficit for the current year 2019-20 might not end up much bigger than projected, thanks to bigger non-tax receipts from telecom dues, the slowdown could see tax receipts remaining under pressure in 2020-21, crimping government expenditure.

Better liquidity in the banking system, greater transmission of repo rate cuts into lower interest rates, and post-election revival in activity were to have lifted growth in H2FY20. Instead, the slowdown has been exacerbated by a combination of slowing credit flows as banks remain unwilling to lend, and less-than-expected transmission as banks stubbornly refuse to compromise on their margins. The post-election spending failed to materialise, with the governments' finances under severe pressure.

The big blow to growth has come from a sharp deceleration in demand. Low nominal rural wage growth, following from the stress in the farm sector, was hurting demand, but that seems to be steady; wages grew 4.5% year-on-year (y-o-y) in H1FY20, similar to levels seen in 2018-19. However, due to a variety of factors, urban spends remain muted. In Q2FY20, when GDP crashed to a six year low of 4.5% y-o-y, the private final consumption expenditure, or PFCE, grew at 5.1% y-o-y; that is the slowest in seven quarters but one. In Q1FY20, the PFCE had grown by an anemic 3.1% y-o-y. At a time when consumer confidence is at decadal lows, consumption needs a big boost. To be sure, consumers are holding back because they are not sure of their jobs, or income levels, or both.

TaggingItForward

There are many use cases for FASTag that the government should consider

TEEHING TROUBLES ASIDE, FASTag holds great promise for India. It is, of course, expected to bring down transport and human resource costs while reducing stoppage time on the road for vehicles. A study conducted by Transport Corporation of India (TCI) and IIM Kolkata in 2014-15 found that even though average speed of vehicles had increased, average stoppage delay per kilometre remained almost the same (0.0032 hr/km vis-a-vis 0.0034 hr/km), whereas the average stoppage expenses per tonne-km worsened, increasing 133% from ₹0.16/tonne-km in 2011-12 to ₹0.28/tonne-km in 2014-15. Given that FASTag addresses this, it may lead to, as another study finds, a benefit of ₹12,000 crore per annum.

UIDAI architect Nandan Nilekani, in a 2010 report, spoke of the benefits of the RFID technology that FASTag is based on. Earlier, when the government had made it mandatory for all cars to have RFID, the absence of a payment mechanism and a vehicle database made the exercise fruitless. With the revolution in digital payments, FASTag is sure to become a success. But, the government shouldn't just think of FASTag as a solution to toll-payment delays. A new high-level RBI committee headed by Nilekani suggests broader use for FASTag. Once the government has a database on vehicles, it can start building services around it—fuel payments, payment of penalty for traffic violations, parking and congestion charges, etc. Not only would this ensure a wider acceptance of the service but it would also mean improving accountability and revenue collection.

FROM PLATE TO PLOUGH

THE GOVT'S RESPONSE TO THE ONION-PRICE SPIKE HAS BEEN KNEE-JERK. INSTEAD, IT MUST BEEF UP STORAGE, JUNK THE ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES ACT & PROMOTE USE OF DEHYDRATED ONIONS

A case of not knowing one's onions

ASHOK GULATI & HARSH WARDHAN

Gulati is Infosys Chair Professor for Agriculture & Wardhan is consultant, ICRIER. Views are personal



horticulture statistics division had reported 7% lower kharif acreage compared to previous year (2.73 lakh hectare) in major onion growing states (Maharashtra, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, and Rajasthan). Due to heavy rains in September/October, almost 58% kharif onions in MP, 18% in Karnataka, and 2% in AP got damaged. Besides, continuous rains led to a delay in harvesting in Maharashtra. However, the government woke up late and directed MMTC to import 1 lakh MT of onions. With relaxed fumigation norms, onions are being imported from Afghanistan, Turkey, and Egypt. The question is, at what price will MMTC import and dump in Indian market.

India is already the largest exporter of onions in the world, with an average of 2 MMTC of exports per year (see graphic). Instead of banning these, it is better to keep imports open, so that when domestic prices rise unduly, private trade can start importing, rather than waiting for the government to take a delayed decision. This way, India can remain a reliable global exporter, helping farmers get better prices on a sustainable basis. Abrupt export bans are anti-farmer and reflect

the failure of government policy. To take care of consumers' interests, India needs to build proper value chains, as envisaged under "Operation Green".

So, how to safeguard the interests of farmers as well as consumers? First, storage facilities for rabi onions must be created on a massive scale, both at the farmers' and traders' ends. When onion prices were hovering around ₹4-5/kg in April-May this year, the government could have purchased these at, say, ₹10/kg and stored them in modern private sector godowns. However, repeated stocking limits, and raids discourage private investments in modern cold storages. To encourage private storages, the Essential Commodities Act has to go, and if traders collude, let the Competition Commission of India (CCI)—and not income tax officials—look into this.

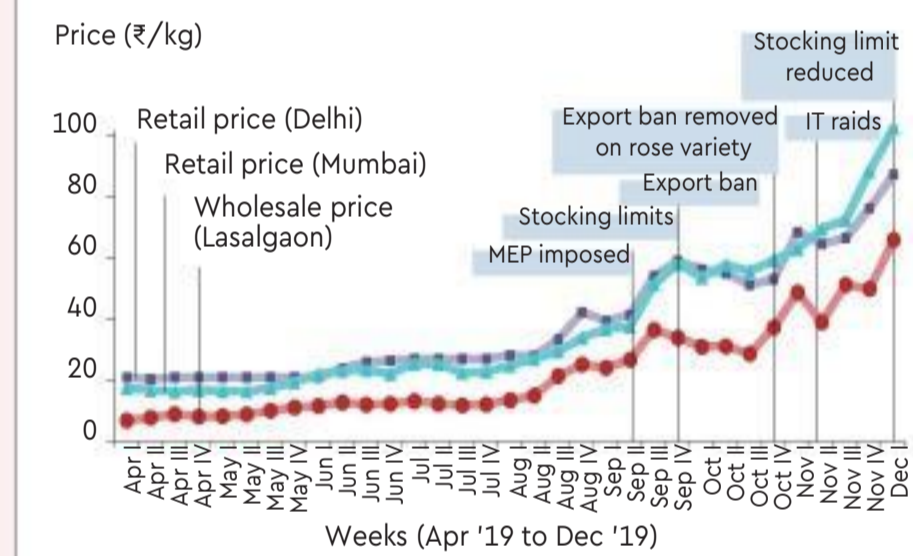
Second, the government needs to promote use of dehydrated onions (flakes, powder, granules) among urban households and bulk consumers (armed forces, hospitals, restaurants, etc). As onions are a sensitive commodity, the government should also keep a buffer stock of dehydrated onions, which have a much longer shelf life, especially since

1kg of the product equals 10kg of fresh onions; this is the right time to promote their use. Mahuva, in Gujarat, is already a hub for the dehydrated onion industry, with more than 100 storage units. However, with low international and negligible domestic demand, these units have a high pile-up of previous year's stocks. On the contrary, Jain Irrigation emerged as the largest dehydrated onion company in India, engaging small and marginal farmers on contract. The price to be paid to growers is assured by the company even before planting. And, if the market price after harvest is higher than the assured price, farmers get a price that is 60 paise/kg less than the market price. Such models of contract farming reduce market risk, and need to be scaled up.

Third, small and marginal farmers should be organised into FPOs, and direct buying by organised retailers should be encouraged through contract farming, bypassing the *mandi* system. Additionally, market reforms, along with overhauling infrastructure of existing APMC *mandis*, are required. With more than 5.5 years in power, the Modi government has missed the golden opportunity of carrying out APMC reforms in the large number of states it ruled, and this opportunity is slipping further away from their hands by the day. Without that, the question of unified national markets, or stabilising price and fair price to farmers and consumers is mere talk.

It is time to wake up from the onion nightmare and work towards more sustainable solutions than taking ad-hoc knee-jerk measures.

Weekly onion prices and policy interventions



Onion Net Exports from India



Student troubles & political ripples

The urgent need is not to alienate anyone further. The country is perplexed as to why it is urgent to solve the refugee citizenship issue now

MEGHNAD DESAI

Prominent economist & Labour peer. Views are personal



HAROLD MACMILLAN, THE prime minister of the UK in the late 1950s, was known as SuperMac because of his ability to win elections and be an effective leader. He was asked by a younger politician what worried him most. "Events, dear boy, events," he said.

The Modi-Shah government is experiencing what Macmillan was talking about. Without any warning, a tsunami of protests has spread across India within half a week. India has developed a student rebellion much like the 1968 revolutions in USA, France, and the UK. A student revolt starts with a stray incident in some campus and then spreads like a virus across the world through a sense of solidarity. Students have not yet had time to be disillusioned and corrupted by reality. They are innocent enough to be idealistic. They take risks. (I know someone who gave up college and became a Naxal at the first call by Charu Mazumdar. He is now high up advising the government.)

Only once before, in the early 1970s, have we had a similar sudden and widespread protest movement. Jayaprakash Narayan led the Navanirman movement with thousands of students. It shook the Indira Gandhi government. We all know what happened next. That movement brought into politics Lal Prasad Yadav and Mulayam Singh. The Emergency that followed saw a young RSS *pracharak*, Narendra Modi, in an active underground role.

The BJP surprised everyone this past summer by achieving a single-party majority for a second time. It had no opposition to speak of in Parliament. It had every opportunity to implement its vision of India. The question was whether

it would complete the growth story of the first term, concentrate on the target of a \$5-trillion GDP, or finish the health programme promised by Ayushman Bharat or realise the Make in India vision. None of the above. India was in for a surprise.

The government was decisively on the front foot soon after May. First came Article 370. The target was Pakistan, and the arena of combat the UN Security Council. India won that hands down. But, the trouble remains—the Kashmir Valley itself, which refuses to be calm or joyous about the new prospect the government is offering. When Farooq Abdullah is the biggest threat to the government, we

Now, we have the CAA.

Once again, the government saw the two Houses of Parliament as the battleground. That was the predictably easy bit. New battlegrounds have come up in Assam and Bengal. How could the government not see it coming? Assam had been in turmoil over the NCR; the state is not worried about

just the Bangladesh Muslims, the Assamese have been agitating against all Bengalis and Biharis from before the Partition. For them, the Assamese Nation is under threat. Be they Hindus, Buddhists, or Muslims from India or Bangladesh, for the Assamese, they are all outsiders, and unwelcome. The extension of the deadline for entering India has been moved from 1971 in the Assam Accord to 2014 in the CAA's Assamese are angry about the CAA's

inclusiveness; the rest of the country is worried about the exclusion of Muslims.

It is beyond the comprehension of those whose central ideological framework is built around the Two Nation theory. There are at least as many cultural nations in India as there are languages. Remember, Bangladesh is a country today because it was Bengali—this, and not Islam, defined its nationhood. Tamil Muslims will be Tamils first and Muslims second on the issue of Hindi.

Then, there are the campuses. Each is a microcosm of the political nation. These students are also wired into the world at large. Expect student solidarity with Jamia across the world, not just across India. There will be allegations of police brutality, and sooner than not, the accidental mortality of a student bystander. Authorities will blame outside agitators, and overreact. That will inflame matters further. Repression is the wrong response as it inflames emotions further. It is predictable. I saw it in 1968. General Charles

de Gaulle, the Great War hero, had rescued France from chaos, but he was out of his depth when Paris erupted in student revolt. Hard police attacks did not work. Uncomprehending, he resigned.

The urgent need is not to alienate anyone further. The country is perplexed as to why it is urgent to solve the refugee citizenship issue now, in this way. We need a nationwide conversation to explain why and how the fears of the Muslim minority are misplaced.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

On Brexit

While the government enjoys a resounding public mandate and a healthy majority in the house, a lop-sided cabinet structure dominated by Brexiteers is seemingly the new norm. That said, the regime ought to accomplish a lot more in the current term, than merely send across a strong message on sovereign-unity, especially when continued political instability over the last few years has delayed the outcome, despite multiple attempts to build consensus on a viable deal. Although, it sounds fair to respect the first referendum and have a leadership which favours Brexit, a diligent roadmap is required to accomplish the revised deadline. Significant levels of anxiety still prevail among bureaucrats, the EU council, international business forums and select sections of the society, as possibilities of a second referendum or No-Deal Exit are pretty much alive. Instead of closing the chapter for good and concentrating on larger socio-economic issues to prioritise public-welfare, the transition has been prolonged. Of late, a lacking collaboration, political turmoil and uncertainty over availability of goods & basic necessities, has dampened the business-sentiment and forced untimely exits for ventures. As markets keenly eye the implementation of next viable steps by the leadership to improve the business-environment, retain empathy and regain valuations. A lot more than change of guard and iron will is thus needed to bridge the gap. It is the absence of a crystal-clear exit-terms and prevailing ambiguity over EU-requirements, even after an elongated phase of relentless administrative-efforts which is seen impacting the geo-politics.

— Girish Lalwani, Delhi

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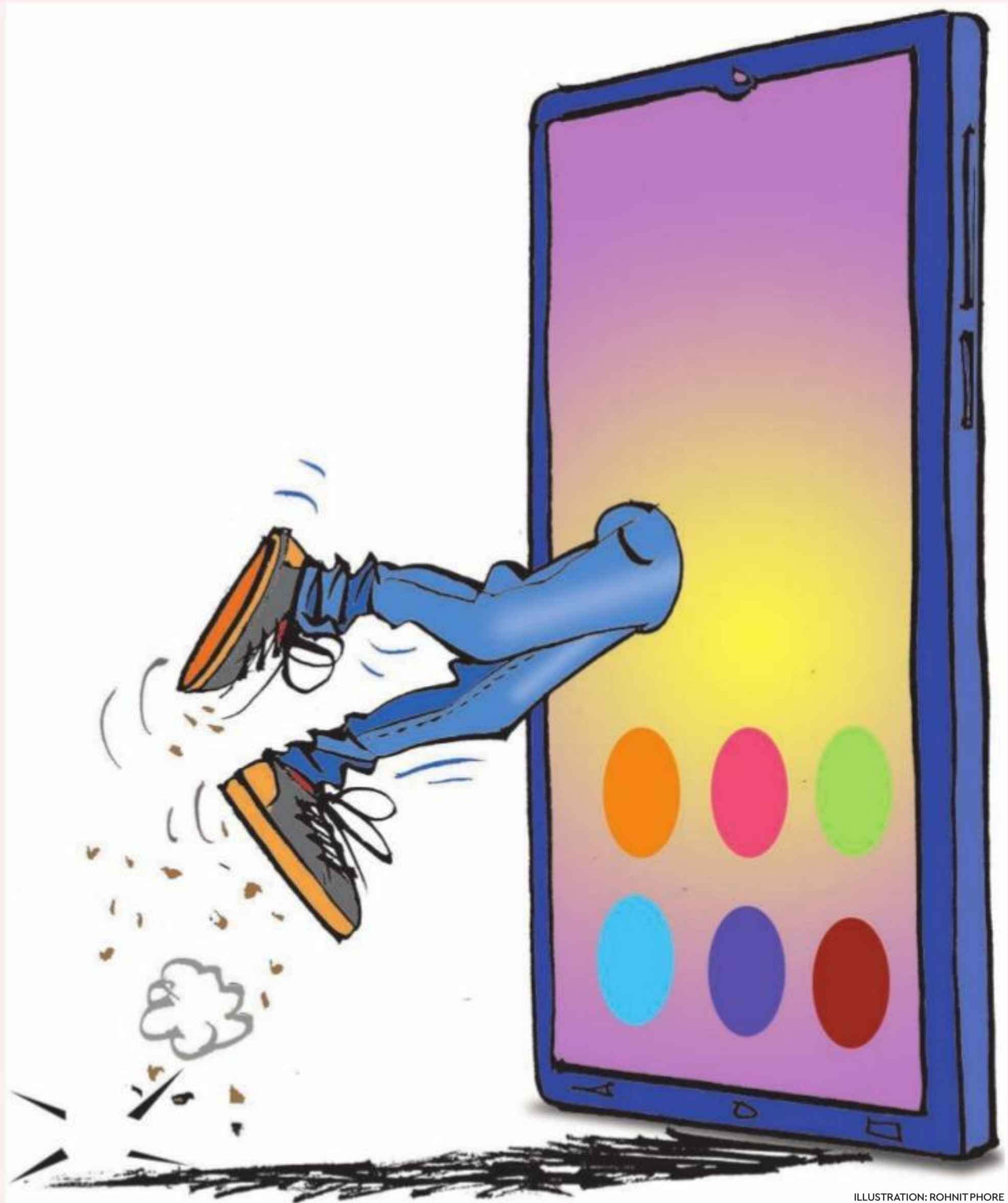


ILLUSTRATION: ROHNIT PHORE

● TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIETY

Pessimism v progress

Contemporary worries about the impact of technology are part of a historical pattern

FASTER, CHEAPER, BETTER—technology is one field many people rely upon to offer a glimpse of a brighter future. But as the 2020s dawn, optimism is in short supply. The new technologies that dominated the past decade seem to be making things worse. Social media were supposed to bring people together. In the Arab spring of 2011 they were hailed as a liberating force. Today they are better known for invading privacy, spreading propaganda and undermining democracy. E-commerce, ride-hailing and the gig economy may be convenient, but they are charged with underpaying workers,

exacerbating inequality and clogging the streets with vehicles. Parents worry that smartphones have turned their children into screen-addicted zombies. The technologies expected to dominate the new decade also seem to cast a dark shadow. Artificial intelligence (AI) may well entrench bias and prejudice, threaten your job and shore up authoritarian rulers. 5G is at the heart of the Sino-American trade war. Autonomous cars still do not work, but manage to kill people all the same. Polls show that internet firms are now less trusted than the banking industry. At the very moment banks are striving to rebrand themselves

as tech firms, internet giants have become the new banks, morphing from talent magnets to pariahs. Even their employees are in revolt. *The New York Times* sums up the encroaching gloom. “A mood of pessimism,” it writes, has displaced “the idea of inevitable progress born in the scientific and industrial revolutions.” Except those words are from an article published in 1979. Back then the paper fretted that the anxiety was “fed by growing doubts about society’s ability to rein in the seemingly runaway forces of technology.” Today’s gloomy mood is centred on smartphones and social media, which took off a decade ago. Yet concerns that humanity has taken a technological wrong turn, or that particular technologies might be doing more harm than good, have arisen before. In the 1970s the despondency was prompted by concerns about overpopulation, environmental damage and the prospect of nuclear immolation. The 1920s witnessed a backlash against cars, which had earlier been seen as a miraculous answer to the affliction of horse-drawn vehicles—which filled the streets with noise and dung, and caused congestion and accidents. And the blight of industrialisation was decried in the 19th century by Luddites, Romantics and socialists, who worried (with good reason) about the displacement of skilled artisans, the despoiling of the countryside and the suffering of factory hands toiling in

smoke-belching mills. Stand back, and in each of these historical cases disappointment arose from a mix of unrealised hopes and unforeseen consequences. Technology unleashes the forces of creative destruction, so it is only natural that it leads to anxiety; for any given technology its drawbacks sometimes seem to outweigh its benefits. When this happens with several technologies at once, as today, the result is a wider sense of techno-pessimism. However, that pessimism can be overcome. Too often people focus on the drawbacks of a new technology while taking its benefits for granted. Worries about screen time should be weighed against the much more substantial benefits of ubiquitous communication and the instant access to information and entertainment that smartphones make possible. A further danger is that Luddite efforts to avoid the short-term costs associated with a new technology will end up denying access to its long-term benefits—something Carl Benedikt Frey, an Oxford academic, calls a “technology trap”. Fears that robots will steal people’s jobs may prompt politicians to tax them, for example, to discourage their use. Yet in the long run countries that wish to maintain their standard of living as their workforce ages and shrinks will need more robots, not fewer. That points to another lesson, which is that the remedy to technology-related problems very often involves more technology. Airbags and other improvements in safety features, for example, mean that in America deaths in car accidents per billion miles travelled have fallen from around 240 in the 1920s to around 12 today. AI is being applied as part of the effort to stem the flow of extremist material on social media. The ultimate example is climate change. It is hard to imagine any solution that does not depend in part on innovations in clean energy, carbon capture and energy storage. The most important lesson is about technology itself. Any powerful technology can be used for good or ill. The internet spreads understanding, but it is also where videos of people being beheaded go viral. Biotechnology can raise crop yields and cure diseases—but it could equally lead to deadly weapons. Technology itself has no agency: it is the choices people make about it that shape the world. Thus the techlash is a necessary step in the adoption of important new technologies. At its best, it helps frame how society comes to terms with innovations and imposes rules and policies that limit their destructive potential (seat belts, catalytic converters and traffic regulations), accommodate change (universal schooling as a response to industrialisation) or strike a trade-off (between the convenience of ride-hailing and the protection of gig-workers). Healthy scepticism means that these questions are settled by a broad debate, not by a coterie of technologists. Fire up the moral engine

Perhaps the real source of anxiety is not technology itself, but growing doubts about the ability of societies to hold this debate, and come up with good answers. In that sense, techno-pessimism is a symptom of political pessimism. Yet there is something reassuring about this: a gloomy debate is much better than no debate at all. And history still argues, on the whole, for optimism. The technological transformation since the Industrial Revolution has helped curb ancient evils, from child mortality to hunger and ignorance. Yes, the planet is warming and antibiotic resistance is spreading. But the solution to such problems calls for the deployment of more technology, not less. So as the decade turns, put aside the gloom for a moment. To be alive in the tech-obsessed 2020s is to be among the luckiest people who have ever lived.

As the decade turns, put aside the gloom for a moment. To be alive in the tech-obsessed 2020s is to be among the luckiest people who have ever lived

THE ECONOMIST

Unveiling White Revolution 2.0

KUSHANKUR DEY
Assistant Professor, IIM Lucknow, associated with CFAM



The dairy business is expected to reach ₹21,97,100 crore by 2024

IN 2019, INDIA EMERGED as the largest milk producer and consumer. Niti Aayog estimates that the country is expected to increase its milk production to 330 million metric tonnes (mt) in 2033–34 from the current level of 176 mt. Marketing and innovation, thus, are increasingly becoming important on the cusp of White Revolution 2.0. This is also evident from the fact that dairy business is expected to reach ₹21,97,100 crore by 2024 with a CAGR of about 16%. But, is White Revolution 2.0 symptomatic in nature? The new revolution has effectuated dairy firms’ marketing strategy for milk and milk products, resuscitating the outlook of product-market mix. For example, until 1990s, dairy business was more specific to production and sales of butter, *ghee*, skim milk powder (SMP/WMP), spray and the market structure was oligopolistic. When the market integration took place post-liberalisation and Milk and Milk Products Order (2002) was abolished, dairy businesses observed a radical shift toward a strategic product diversification towards functional and traceable foods like nutrition-based health drinks, packaged milk products (such as *paneer*), and frozen/probiotic products and so on. Second, market structure, conduct, and performance has dramatically changed post 2000s. Besides the established cooperative federations like Amul, other state cooperative federations and multinationals (namely, Nestle, Danon, and Lactalis) are aggressively harnessing the untapped business potential. It is interesting to note that there are 28 state federations, 218 district unions, 1,85,903 dairy cooperative societies. These societies are directly associated with 16.6 million farmers. However, the federal structures have outreach to only 24% of villages and around 22% of milch animal population. A majority, 80% of the market share, lies with private dairies and/or informal/unorganised markets. Thus, there is an opportunity to improve milk procurement and processing. Strategic partnership and competitive intelligence can create and distribute tangible benefits by strengthening the backend and frontend supply chain. Third, increase in the market share depends on how dairy firms’ capabilities and their resources are utilised given the opportunities and threats emanating from emerging markets economies. White revolution 2.0 can strengthen the scope of vertical integration between cattle feed industries, dairy machinery firms, producer cooperatives unions, state marketing federations, advertising and marketing firms, logistics and distribution agencies. Fourth, contract/corporate dairying and emerging global dairy trade are required to rope in dairy supply chains stakeholders in order to expand their outreach and “on-the-go” product positioning into the target segment. Also, digital technology-enabled dairy firms need to identify their compatible partners and competitors for co-creation through product-process innovation via relationship/value-based marketing. Freshness in milk, and convenience to store milk or milk products can be a technology innovation brought in by large dairy firms in association start-ups. Fifth, National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) plays a pivotal role in dairy businesses through institutional and structural/policy reforms. For example, National Dairy Plan flagged off in 2012 at the auspices of NDDB has just concluded its phase one with an outlay of ₹2,242 crore. The phase one aimed to improve milk production and animal breed development. The phase two, which will begin shortly with an outlay for ₹8,004 crore, will provide the financial assistance to private dairy units for processing, increasing their outreach to the unexplored market, and improving milk quality testing at the milk collection centres.

The phase two of the National Dairy Plan, which will begin shortly with an outlay of ₹8,004 crore, will provide financial assistance to private dairy units

The article is an abridged version of a lecture note titled ‘Status and Scope of Marketing Intelligence in Dairy Business Management’ presented at the Navsari Agricultural University at the CAAST-NAHEP project, ICAR

SOME OF THE recent scientific studies have found that people who receive higher education live longer than those who do not. What’s more, it also found that failure to obtain a higher education could be as damaging to a person’s life as smoking cigarettes. According to a new study, reading books could extend lifespan by up to two years, and the more often you read, the better. The authors of one of such famous study include professors and research associates from the University of Colorado-Denver, New York University and the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. This includes Patrick Krueger, who is an assistant professor in the Department of Health and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Colorado-Denver’s Anschutz Medical Campus and a member of the research faculty at the Institute of Behavioral Sciences at the University of Colorado-Boulder. It seems American musician Frank Zappa was wrong when he said “so many books, so little time.” According to a new study, reading books could extend lifespan by up to two years, and the more often you read, the better. Reading books is not just a popular pastime; numerous studies have hailed the benefits for health. Few of the recent studies carried on in various Universities in world have reported that reading fictional books and books of your choice encourage thinking empathetically

Education makes us live longer

Over the years, much attention has been paid to mortality rates based on socio-economic status

VIDYA HATTANGADI

The writer is Management thinker and blogger



and it improves rationality of mind too. Back in 1975, economists linked that longer lifespan is linked to wealth of a person, and concluded that wealth itself increases longevity. It seemed self-evident: everything people need to be healthy from food to medical care costs money. But soon it emerged that the data didn’t always fit that theory. Economic upturns didn’t always mean longer lives. In the 1980s, researchers found gaining higher education is associated with a greater increase in life expectancy than gains in wealth. Finally, the more educated people in any country tend to live longer than their less educated compatriots. But such people also tend to be wealthier because of this

higher degrees they find better job opportunities, so it has been difficult to untangle which factor is increasing lifespan. One undeniable fact is of teachers and college professors: they live longer and remain intellectually agile much longer than the rest of the population. The reason being that they engage in research most of their lives for teaching, for publishing which increases their longevity and most importantly also slows down their ageing process. Because they mingle most of their lives with youngsters, they tend to remain young at heart and soul. It’s no secret that over the last few decades, life expectancy in the United States has been rising. However, recent data shows that not everyone has benefited from this



encouraging trend. A new finding from Harvard Medical School and Harvard University shows that individuals with more than 12 years of education have notably longer life expectancy than those who never went beyond high school. “We like to think that as we as a country get healthier, everyone benefits,” says David Cutler, dean for social sciences at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Harvard University. Over the years, much attention has been paid to mortality rates based on socio-economic status, but less attention has been paid to recent trends in life expectancy, mortality, and education level. To understand recent mortality trends, David Cutler and John Meara of Harvard Medical School combined death certi-

ficate data with census population estimates and data from the National Longitudinal Mortality Study. Restricting analyses to whites and non-Hispanic blacks, the team created two separate data sets, one covering 1981-1988, and the other 1990-2000. In both data sets, life expectancy rose for individuals who had more than 12 years of education. For example, comparing the 1980s to the 1990s, better educated individuals experienced nearly a year and a half of increased life expectancy, while the less educated experienced only half a year. For 1990-2000, life expectancy rose an additional 1.6 years for better educated, while remaining fixed for the less educated. Let’s look at what benefits educated

people? Educated people get routinely involved in social networking; they get access to information because of their ability to understand information. People with higher education feel like they have better ability to deal with adversity and have self-efficacy; they have more cognitive skills to manage any sort of complicated situation. They can easily navigate the health care system; they have more social support. Reading helps us understand how other people think and feel. Reading improves our emotional intelligence. This understanding can improve the overall quality of a person’s life as it would allow the person to act with better judgment and have more insight into the feelings and thought pattern of others. Research has shown that reading changes certain areas of the brain and activates certain other parts. According to neuroscientists, reading “rewires” those areas of the brain responsible for spoken language and vision. Hence, we see good readers with strong communication skills and cognitive intelligence. Reading can improve the functioning of the brain area that filters the massive amount of visual information that we see every day. This effect can also be observed in adults who learn to read much later in life. Learning has no age bar. Each and every human is born with a right to be educated irrespective of his or her age. So, don’t hold back your urge to learn. The goal of education is to improve intelligence, character plus caliber.

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड

वर्ष 12 अंक 263

वित्तीय स्थिरता का बचाव

अमेरिकी केंद्रीय बैंक फेडरल रिजर्व की फेडरल मुक्त व्यापार समिति ने वर्ष 2019 में अपनी नीतियों में बदलाव किया। यह बदलाव अमेरिका-चीन व्यापार विवाद समेत अन्य वजहों से बढ़ रही आर्थिक अनिश्चितता से निपटने के लिए किया गया। फेड ने वर्ष 2019 में दरों में तीन बार कटौती की जबकि 2018 में इसमें चार बार इजाफा किया गया था। ताजा

अनुमान बताते हैं कि अमेरिकी केंद्रीय बैंक 2020 में ब्याज दरों को अपरिवर्तित रख सकता है। इस बीच यूरोपीय केंद्रीय बैंक ने अपनी जमा दर को नकारात्मक करने के बाद परिसंपत्ति खरीद का दौर शुरू किया है। बैंक ऑफ़ जापान ने वृद्धि और कीमतों को समर्थन देने के लिए परिसंपत्ति खरीद का सिलसिला जारी रखा है। ऐसा प्रतीत होता है कि वैश्विक वित्तीय हालात

निकट भविष्य में उदार बने रहेंगे। उदार मौद्रिक नीति जहां वैश्विक वृद्धि के लिए मददगार साबित होगी, वहीं यह परिसंपत्ति कीमतों और नकदी की स्थिति में सुधार कर वित्तीय तंत्र के लिए जोखिम भी बढ़ा सकती है। अनुभव बताता है कि अमेरिकी मौद्रिक नीति वैश्विक वित्तीय चक्र पर बहुत असर डालती है। इस संदर्भ में देखें तो भारत को भी अपने हितों का बचाव करना होगा। नीति निर्माताओं को भी वित्तीय स्थिरता का संरक्षण करने के लिए हस्तक्षेप करने होंगे। हाल के वर्षों में मौद्रिक सख्ती और नरमी का अध्ययन करने वाली रेटिंग एजेंसी क्रिसिल का एक नया अध्ययन बताता है कि सख्ती के दिनों में विदेशी पोर्टफोलियो निवेश (एफपीआई) में कमी आई जबकि नरमी के दिनों में वह बेहतर रहा। वित्तीय संकट के बाद

की मौद्रिक सहजता के दौर में एफपीआई की आवक मजबूत थी, हालांकि उस दौर में घरेलू वृहद स्थिति कमजोर थी। बहरहाल, प्रत्यक्ष विदेशी निवेश (एफडीआई) की राह इससे अलग थी और वह घरेलू अर्थव्यवस्था से अधिक करीबी से जुड़ी रही। नरमी के दिनों से तुलना करें तो भारत को सख्ती के दिनों में अधिक एफडीआई हासिल हुआ क्योंकि उस दौर में वृद्धि मजबूत थी।

वित्त वर्ष 2014-19 के दरमियान अर्थव्यवस्था 7.3 फीसदी की दर से विकसित हुई। अर्थव्यवस्था में धीमापन आने के साथ एफडीआई की आवक भी धीमी हुई। देश को आर्थिक वृद्धि में नई जान फूँकनी होगी ताकि बचत के अंतर को पाटने के लिए पूंजी जुटाई जा सके। चालू खाते का घाटा पाटने के लिए

पोर्टफोलियो आवक पर अधिक निर्भरता जोखिम बढ़ा सकती है। फेड की नीतिगत उदारता से बाह्य वाणिज्यिक उधारी भी बढ़ सकती है। हालांकि भारतीय रिजर्व बैंक ने हाल के दौर में नीतिगत दरों में 135 आधार अंकों की कमी की है लेकिन इसका असर दरों में कमी के रूप में नहीं दिखा है। इससे देश के कारोबारियों को बाहर से ऋण लेने का प्रोत्साहन मिल सकता है। खबरों के मुताबिक इस वर्ष के आरंभिक 10 महीनों में भारतीय कंपनियों ने विदेश से 13.74 अरब डॉलर की राशि जुटाई। पिछले वर्ष की समान अवधि में यह मात्रा 1.65 अरब डॉलर थी।

बाहरी उधारी और पोर्टफोलियो आवक में उच्च वृद्धि आरबीआई को चुनौती दे सकती है। यह रुपये पर दबाव बना सकती है और

निर्यात को प्रभावित कर सकती है। वास्तविक प्रभावी विनिमय दर में अधिमूल्यन नजर आ रहा है। इसने हाल के वर्षों में निर्यात पर असर डाला है। हालांकि वस्तु एवं सेवा कर के क्रियान्वयन की दिक्कतों की भी भूमिका है। यदि आरबीआई एक बार फिर हस्तक्षेप करता है तो तंत्र में रुपया बढ़ेगा जो मुद्रास्फीति को प्रभावित कर सकता है। ऐसे में वैश्विक माहौल के मद्देनजर भारत को विदेशी फंड प्रवाह की प्राथमिकता समझदारी से तय करनी होगी। भारत एफडीआई के लिए माहौल बना सकता है और ऋण प्रवाह पर निर्भरता कम कर सकता है। हालांकि चालू खाता घाटा सहज स्तर पर रह सकता है लेकिन धीमी वृद्धि के समय डॉलर डेट में इजाफा और बढ़ता राजकोषीय दबाव वित्तीय स्थिरता को प्रभावित कर सकते हैं।



अजय मोहंती

भारतीय, राष्ट्रवादी और मुस्लिम

नया हिंदुस्तानी मुस्लिम उभर रहा है। वह कपड़े तो मुस्लिमों की तरह

पहनता है लेकिन अपनी देशभक्ति, राष्ट्रवाद, तिरंगे के लिए प्यार,

राष्ट्रगान और संविधान से अपना लगाव भी जाहिर कर रहा है।

भारतीय गणराज्य को मशहूर लेखिका-सामाजिक कार्यकर्ता अरंधती रॉय का शुक्रगुजार होना चाहिए। उन्होंने अकेले अपने बूते पर देश को सशस्त्र माओवादी बगावत से बचाया।

ऐसा तब हुआ जब उन्होंने देश के माओवादियों को ‘बंदूक बांधीवादी’ करार दिया। यह ऐसा उद्धरण था जो लंबे समय तक जिंदा रहेगा। इसने माओवादियों के पीड़ित होने को लेकर रही-सही सहानुभूति को प्रश्नांकित कर रहे हैं। यह काफी कुछ वैसा ही है जैसा ब्रिटेन में चार दशक पहले नस्लवाद के उभार के बाद प्रवासी (जिनमें अच्छे खासे भारतीय थे) कहा करते थे: चाहे कुछ भी हो हम यहीं रहने वाले हैं।

उनसे कोई लड़ नहीं सकता। उनके ऊपर गोली चलाने की कोई वजह नहीं है। देश बंदूक चुका है। आज की भाषा में कहा जा सकता है: मेरा देश बदल गया है, मित्रों। आप उन्हें सीएसएस और एनआरसी के बीच, नागरिक और शरणार्थी के बीच का भेद भी नहीं समझा जा सकते। आप पहले ही काफी कुछ कह चुके हैं, खासतौर पर 2021 के पश्चिम बंगाल विधानसभा चुनाव को ध्यान में रखते हुए। आपने दो चीजें हासिल करने के लिए यह कदम उठाया।

एक, असम में एनआरसी में फंसे बंगाली हिंदुओं को बचाना और बंगाली मुस्लिमों को निकालना। दूसरा, पश्चिम बंगाल के हिंदुओं को इसे दोहराने के वादे से बहलाना। असम में एक आग बुझाने और पश्चिम बंगाल में दूसरी लगाने के क्रम में आपने दिल्ली में आग लगा दी। जामा मस्जिद राष्ट्रपति भवन से महज 7 किलोमीटर की दूरी पर है। वहां धारा 144 लगी थी और उसकी अवमानना कौन और कैसे कर रहा था?

कपड़े जिसमें टोपियां, बुरका, हिजाब और हरा रंग शामिल हैं, मुस्लिमों की सबसे



राष्‍ट्र की बात

शेखर गुप्‍ता

हैं और इस विचार को खारिज करते हैं कि कोई इस गणराज्य को नए सिरे से परिकल्पित कर सकता है चाहे उसे कितना भी बड़ा बहुमत क्यों न हासिल हो। देश में आए बदलाव को समझने के लिए गहराई से सोचना होगा। मुस्लिम भारतीय देशभक्ति पर बहुसंख्यकों के प्राथमिक दावे को प्रश्नांकित कर रहे हैं। यह काफी कुछ वैसा ही है जैसा ब्रिटेन में चार दशक पहले

नस्लवाद के उभार के बाद प्रवासी (जिनमें अच्छे खासे भारतीय थे) कहा करते थे: चाहे कुछ भी हो हम यहीं रहने वाले हैं।

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एक, असम में एनआरसी में फंसे बंगाली हिंदुओं को बचाना और बंगाली मुस्लिमों को निकालना। दूसरा, पश्चिम बंगाल के हिंदुओं को इसे दोहराने के वादे से बहलाना। असम में एक आग बुझाने और पश्चिम बंगाल में दूसरी लगाने के क्रम में आपने दिल्ली में आग लगा दी। जामा मस्जिद राष्ट्रपति भवन से महज 7 किलोमीटर की दूरी पर है। वहां धारा 144 लगी थी और उसकी अवमानना कौन और कैसे कर रहा था? कपड़े जिसमें टोपियां, बुरका, हिजाब और हरा रंग शामिल हैं, मुस्लिमों की सबसे

फिर भी कुछ मुस्लिम उस राह पर गए।

हैं। नाराज मुस्लिमों के इससे भी कठोर प्रतीक रहे हैं। मसलन एके-47, आरडीएक्स, कई मुजाहिदीन और लश्कर, अलकायदा और आईएसआईएस आदि। उन क्रोधित मुस्लिमों से लड़ना और उन्हें परास्त करना आसान है। हाल ही में जयपुर की एक अदालत ने ऐसे चार लोगों को सिलसिलेवार धमाकों के इल्जाम में मौत की सजा सुनाई। करीब तीन दशक से असल चिंता यह रही है कि यदि मुस्लिम वाकई हताश होकर आतंक की राह पर गए तो क्या होगा?

सिमी से लेकर इंडियन मुजाहिदीन तक छोटे समूहों ने इस धारणा की पुष्टि की है। यहां तक कि डॉ. मनमोहन सिंह जैसे उदार और दूरदर्शी व्यक्ति ने 2009 में कॉन्स्टीट्यूशन क्लब में वरिष्ठ पत्रकारों के साथ बातचीत में कहा था कि मुस्लिमों के विशेष तर्कजोह देने की शिकायत कर रहे लोगों को समझना चाहिए कि यदि देश की कुल मुस्लिम आबादी का एक फीसदी भी यह सोच लेता है कि भारत में भविष्य नहीं है तो देश शासन करने लायक नहीं रह जाएगा। वह संग्रम का दौर था जहां मुस्लिमों के प्रति इसलिए उदारता जरूरी थी कि कहीं वे गलत राह न पकड़ लें।

फिर भी कुछ मुस्लिम उस राह पर गए।

संग्रम उनसे उतनी ही कड़ाई से निपटा जितना शायद आज राजग करे। बाटला हाउस मुठभेड़ इसकी बानगी है। आज इन तथ्यों की कई तरह की व्याख्या हो सकती है। परंतु निष्कर्ष एक ही होगा। एक पक्ष मुस्लिमों के प्रति अफसोस के साथ संतुष्ट करना चाहता है ताकि वे राष्ट्र विरोधी न हों। दूसरा एक आंख के बदले दोनों आंखें चाहता है। बल्कि वह बहुसंख्यक वर्ग से जवाबी आतंकी बचाव भी चाहता है। दोनों ही मुस्लिमों को संदेह से देखते हैं।

भारतीय मुस्लिमों की एक अन्य नकारात्मक बात उनके धार्मिक नेता- जामा मस्जिद के बुखारी, मदनी और वे दाढ़ी वाले जो चैतलों पर आकर हास्यास्पद फतवों का बचाव करते दिखते हैं।

इनकी तादाद बहुत ज्यादा है। आपको हमेशा कोई न कोई बुखारी या मदनी किसी न किसी मुद्दे पर राय देते दिख जाएंगे। बाबरी-अयोध्या निर्णय को ही देखिए या बुखारी का यह कहना कि सीएए-एनआरसी मुस्लिमों के लिए खतरा नहीं है। परंतु वह उस मस्जिद की सीढ़ियों पर एकत्रित हजारों लोगों से यह बात कहने का साहस नहीं कर सकते जिसके वह संरक्षक हैं।

हो सकता है सबकुछ एकदम बेहतरीन न हो लेकिन आज इन नकारात्मक छवियों को चुनौती मिल रही है। कलमा की जगह ‘जन गण मन’, हरे झंडे की जगह तिरंगा, काबा के बजाय आंबेडकर और गांधी की तस्वीरें तथा हिंदुस्तान जिंदाबाद के नारे सुनाई दे रहे हैं। एक चीज जो नहीं बदली है, वह हैं कपड़े। जैसा हमने पहले कहा, ये मुस्लिमों के पहनावे वाले मुस्लिम हैं। वे हमें याद दिला रहे हैं किसी भारतीय के पहनावे और उसकी देशभक्ति में कोई विरोधाभास नहीं है। या एक नागरिक के रूप में उनसे संविधान की अपेक्षाओं पर भी इससे कोई फर्क नहीं पड़ता। एक बड़ी रूढ़ि टूट रही है।

जो लोग भारतीय मुस्लिमों को ‘सभ्यताओं के संघर्ष’ के चरम से देखते हैं वे बड़ी गलती कर रहे हैं। सन 1947 में भारतीय मुस्लिमों का एक बड़ा हिस्सा जिन्ना के साथ अपने नए मुल्क पाकिस्तान चला गया। जिन्ना के बाद के 72 वर्षों में उन्होंने किसी मुस्लिम को अपना नेता नहीं माना। उन्होंने हमेशा गैर मुस्लिम पर यकीन किया।

अभी भी बहुत कुछ शेष है क्योंकि हर कोई उतना संयत और समझदार नहीं है जितना कि जामा मस्जिद की सीढ़ियों पर एकत्रित लोग। जामा मस्जिद से सटे पुरानी दिल्ली के दरियागंज में कारे जलाई गईं। उत्तर प्रदेश, कर्नाटक, गुजरात हर जगह हिंसक तत्त्व सक्रिय हैं। पश्चिम बंगाल हिंसा के मुहाने पर है। परंतु इनमें से कोई उस बदलाव को ढक नहीं सकता जो भारतीय मुस्लिमों ने दिल्ली में दिखाया है।

वे गए भारतीय मुस्लिमों के उभार का संकेत दे रहे हैं। वे मुस्लिम दिखने से नहीं डरते और न ही अपने राष्ट्रवाद का प्रदर्शन करने से। वे संविधान, भारतीय ध्वज, राष्ट्रगान, आंबेडकर और गांधी के साथ हिंदुस्तान जिंदाबाद का नारा लगाते हुए अपनी लड़ाई जारी रखना चाहते हैं। ऐसे समय में शायर राहत इंदौरी का शेर प्राय: दोहराया जा रहा है: सभी का खून है शामिल यहां की मिट्टी में, किसी के बाप का हिंदोस्तान थोड़ी है। वह यकीनन मुक्करा रहे होंगे।

समाज को वही कानून मिलता जिसका वह पात्र होता

हम असाधारण समय में जी रहे हैं। पिछली बार जब मैं यह स्तंभ लिख रहा था तब प्याज और आर्थिक मंदी कारोबारी और उद्योग जगत की चेतना पर हावी थे। इस पखवाड़े देश के शैक्षणिक संस्थानों में अप्रत्याशित और असाधारण विरोध प्रदर्शन देखने को मिला। कुछ लोग कहेंगे कि यह देशव्यापी था जबकि अन्य यह भी कह सकते हैं कि देश के 400 विश्वविद्यालयों से केवल 22 में ऐसा हुआ।

अगर माना जाए कि नागरिकता संशोधन कानून कारोबारी जगत में लागू हो, तो कुछ ऐसा परिदृश्य बनेगा: एक ऐसे कानून की कल्पना कीजिए जिसके तहत कुछ ऐसे उद्योगों को चिह्नित किया जाए जो कठिनाई से गुजर रहे हों। उदाहरण के लिए दूरसंचार, बिजली और इस्पात। कल्पना कीजिए कि ईंधन कीमतों में ऐसा बदलाव आता है, बिजली क्षेत्र अव्यवहार्य हो जाए, राजस्व अत्यधिकारी की व्याख्याओं में गड़बड़ी की वजह से दूरसंचार क्षेत्र अव्यवहार्य हो जाए और चक्रीय दबाव इस्पात क्षेत्र को अव्यवहार्य बना दें। नागरिकता संशोधन अधिनियम में भी तीन देशों का चयन किया गया है- पाकिस्तान, बांग्लादेश और अफगानिस्तान।

साथ ही यह कल्पना कीजिए कि उद्योगपति कह रहे हैं कि वे दशकों तक भारी-भरकम कर दरों से उत्पीड़ित होते रहे हैं। इंदिरा गांधी के कार्यकाल में प्रभावी कर दर 90 प्रतिशत से अधिक थी। परंतु कल्पना कीजिए कि कानून ऐसी भीषण राजकोषीय व्यवस्था के कारण उत्पन्न कठिनाइयों और अत्याचार को लेकर खामोश रहा हो और ऐसे उत्पीड़न की बिना पर इसका बचाव किया जा रहा हो। नागरिकता संशोधन में इस बारे में कुछ नहीं कहा गया है कि धार्मिक उत्पीड़न को अवैध प्रभावित को वैध बनाने की वजह माना जाएगा।

अब कानून में ऐसे संशोधन की कल्पना कीजिए जिसके तहत इन तीन उद्योगों में कार्यरत किसी भी व्यक्ति को विधिक दायित्वों से पूरी तरह बरी कर दिया जाए चाहे उसने भारी-भरकम बेनामी संपत्ति जुटा रखी हो या उस पर सरकार का लंबा चौड़ा बकाया हो। नागरिकता संशोधन कानून केवल इन तीन देशों के बारे में कहता है कि



बाअदब

सोमशेखर सुंदरेशन

इनके अवैध प्रवासियों को अवैध नहीं माना जाएगा।

इसके अलावा कल्पना कीजिए कि उन लोगों को भी विधिक दायित्व से निजात मिलेगी जिनका शायद उन भयंकर कर दरों वाले युग में जन्म भी नहीं हुआ होगा। नागरिकता संशोधन कानून 2014 में सीमा निर्धारित कर रहा है जबकि उसका बचाव सन 1940 के दशक में हुए विभाजन के दौर के अत्याचारों के आधार पर किया जा रहा है। निश्चित तौर पर यह कहा जा सकता है कि जिन लोगों ने 90 प्रतिशत से अधिक की दर से कर चुकाया और पीड़ित हुए वे अपनी संतानों के लिए कुछ बेहतर नहीं कर पाए और इसलिए उस उत्पीड़न को सन 1970 के दशक तक सीमित नहीं किया जा सकता।

इसके बाद इस दलील की कल्पना कीजिए कि कानून संवैधानिक है और इसलिए यह एक अच्छा कानून है। यकीनन आय के स्वीच्छिक खुलासे की कई योजनाओं, काले धन की माफी की योजनाओं और ऐसी तमाम योजनाओं को भी संवैधानिक ठहराया गया जिसमें लोग गंगा में डुबकी लगाकर पवित्र हो जाते हैं। सन 1990 के दशक के मध्य में तत्कालीन संयुक्त मोर्चा सरकार ने सर्वोच्च न्यायालय से वादा किया कि बेनामी संपत्ति को इस तरह स्वच्छ बनाने की गतिविधि बंद की जाएगी। परंतु इसके साथ ही यह एक कानूनी सिद्धांत भी है कि राजकोषीय विधान के मसलों में कोई विवर्धन नहीं किया जा सकता है। आम आदमी की भाषा में कहें तो कानून बनाने की संभु शक्ति को यह कहकर सीमित नहीं किया जा सकता कि कोई विशिष्ट कानून नहीं बनाया जा सकता। इकलौती चुनौती संवैधानिक मान्यता के स्तर पर सामने आ सकती है।

संवैधानिक वैधता के प्रश्न का उत्तर न्यायपालिका ही दे सकती है। इसके अलग-अलग हिसाब से कई नतीजे सामने आ सकते हैं। अमेरिका में राष्ट्रपति डॉनल्ड ट्रंप ने कुछ खास मुस्लिम देशों से यात्रियों के अमेरिका आने पर कार्यकारी आदेश के जरिये रोक लगाई। कुछ न्यायाधीशों ने इसे असंवैधानिक बताया जबकि कुछ अन्य ने उसे कानूनी करार दिया। असंवैधानिक ठहराने वालों ने ट्रंप के चुनावी भाषणों का ध्यान रखा जिसमें मुस्लिम देशों से लोगों के आने पर रोक का असंवैधानिक वादा किया गया था। अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति के विधि अधिकारियों ने यह कहते हुए कानून का बचाव किया कि न्यायाधीशों को भाषणों पर ध्यान नहीं देना चाहिए बल्कि कानून की भाषा को देखना चाहिए। अमेरिकी सर्वोच्च न्यायालय दलील से सहमत था। हालांकि यह भी कहना होगा कि ट्रंप ने संवैधानिक लड़ाई जीतने के लिए संशोधित प्रतिबंध आदेश में कुछ गैर मुस्लिम देशों का नाम शामिल किया। भारत में नागरिकता संशोधन अधिनियम कानून खामोशी के साथ किया जा रहा ‘धार्मिक उत्पीड़न’ है। अच्छा (संवैधानिक रूप से वैध) कानून और तार्किक कानून (स्वीकार्यता की दृष्टि से) अलग-अलग हो सकते हैं।

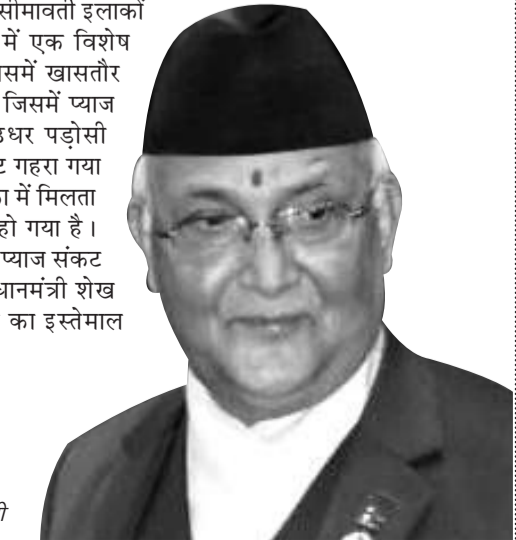
भारत में कारोबारी और उद्योग जगत के लोगों में राष्ट्रवाद की शरण लेने का पुनर्गठन रहा है। ऐसे में यह तुलना ज्ञानवर्धक हो सकती है कि अगर नागरिकता संशोधन कानून कारोबारी जगत में लागू हो तो क्या होगा? जब ढेर सारे बटन एक साथ दबाए जाते हैं। यानी धार्मिक भेद बनाम भाषाई अंतर, आश्रय कानून बनाम नागरिकता कानून, विभाजन युग बनाम सात दशक बाद की राजनीति आदि पर एक साथ बात बहस शुरू होती है तो उम्मीदी की जानी चाहिए कि इससे कोई गंभीर बाद निकलेगी। हकीकत में समाज में वही कानून बरकरार रहता है जो उसे समझ में आता है। अलोकप्रिय समाज सुधारों का क्रियान्वयन उस समय आसान होता है जब उसके पीछे बाहरी औपनिवेशिक ताकत का दबाव हो। उदाहरण के लिए सती प्रथा पर रोक। एक लोकतांत्रिक देश में वही कानून बनते हैं जिनके हम योग्य होते हैं।

(लेखक अधिकृतता एवं स्वतंत्र परामर्शदाता हैं)

कानाफूसी

प्याज का किरसा

देश में प्याज की कमी का संकट उसके द्विपक्षीय रिश्तों को भी प्रभावित कर रहा है। पड़ोसियों ही नहीं बल्कि संयुक्त अरब अमीरात जैसे देशों के साथ भी। भारत ने गत 29 सितंबर से प्याज के निर्यात पर प्रतिबंध लगा रखा है। इसके चलते समूचे पश्चिम और दक्षिण एशिया में भारी कमी हो गई है। हर कोई भारतीय प्याज को पसंद करता है और खरीदना चाहता है। नेपाल में जहां भारतीय प्याज का बाजार पर दबदबा रहा है, वहां निर्यात पर रोक के कारण बड़ा बदलाव देखने को मिल रहा है। नेपाल अब चीन से प्याज खरीद रहा है और नेपाली कम्युनिस्ट पार्टी और प्रधानमंत्री के पी ओली को यह पसंद भी आ रहा है। चीनी प्याज से लंदे ट्रक सीमावर्ती इलाकों में देखे जा रहे हैं। नेपाल के ढाबों में एक विशाल मोदी मेन्यू देखने को मिल रहा है जिसमें खासतौर पर ऐसा भोजन शामिल किया गया है जिसमें प्याज का इस्तेमाल नहीं किया जाता है। उधर पड़ोसी मुल्क बांग्लादेश में भी प्याज का संकट गहरा गया है। पहले वहां एक किलो प्याज 30 टका में मिलता था, वहीं अब उसका दाम 260 टका हो गया है। विपक्षी दलों का इल्जाम है कि सरकार प्याज संकट से ठीक तरह से नहीं निपट रही। प्रधानमंत्री शेख हसीना ने कहा है कि वह खुद प्याज का इस्तेमाल बंद कर चुकी हैं।



के पी ओली

आपका पक्ष

स्वरोजगार और बेरोजगारी का हल

वर्ष 1951-52 में जब पंचवर्षीय योजना को हरी झंडी दी गई थी तब इस पर विनोबा भावे ने कहा था कि सरकार की सभी राष्ट्रीय योजनाओं का मकसद रोजगार बढ़ाना भी होना चाहिए। बेरोजगारी से निपटने के लिए सरकार को योजनाएं ही नहीं बल्कि उसे अमल में लाने के लिए भी गंभीरता दिखानी चाहिए। सरकार को ऐसी कोई योजना या नीति बनाने से परहेज करना चाहिए जिससे किसी भी उद्योग-धंधे पर नकारात्मक असर पड़े। भारत जनसंख्या के मामले में दुनिया में दूसरे पायदान पर है। बढ़ती आबादी ने देश में बहुत-सी समस्याओं को जन्म दिया है। इन समस्याओं में से सबसे बड़ी समस्या बेरोजगारी भी है। काम कोई छोटा-बड़ा नहीं होता लेकिन जिसने अपनी पढ़ाई पर लाखों रुपये खर्च किए हों और उसे यकीन हो कि उसे योग्यता और मेहनत की अपेक्षा कम वेतन मिलेगा तो वह अपने काम को मन से नहीं करेगा। अक्सर यह भी देखा गया



है कि सरकारी विभागों में चपरासी या तृतीय, चतुर्थ श्रेणी के पदों के लिए भी बहुत ज्यादा पढ़े-लिखे डिग्रीधारक आवेदन करते हैं, क्योंकि इन्हें यहां संवृष्ट करने वाला वेतन मिलने की आस होती है। लेकिन इसमें भी कोई दोराय नहीं है कि कुछ युवा ऐसे भी होंगे जो थोड़ा बहुत पढ़ लिखकर बाबू बनने से कम कोई काम नहीं करना चाहते

होंगे। आज जिस तरह देश में बेरोजगारी बढ़ती जा रही है उसे देखते हुए अब सरकार को स्वरोजगार के मौके बढ़ाने के बारे में सोचना चाहिए। सभी बेरोजगार

पाठक अपनी राय हमें इस पते पर भेज सकते हैं : संपादक, बिजनेस स्टैंडर्ड, 4, बहादुर शाह जफर मार्ग, नई दिल्ली - 110002. आप हमें ईमेल भी कर सकते हैं : lettershindi@bsmail.in पत्र/ईमेल में अपना डाक पता और टेलीफोन नंबर अवश्य लिखें।

हिम्मत जोशी, नागपुर



दैनिक जागरण

ध्यान की दौलत से कार्य करने की क्षमता अपने आप बढ़ती है

प्रधानमंत्री का संदेश

यह समय की मांग थी कि प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी नागरिकता कानून और साथ ही प्रस्तावित नागरिकता रजिस्टर यानी एनआरसी को लेकर अपनी बात कहने के लिए आगे आते। दिल्ली की एक रैली में उन्होंने यही किया। उन्होंने न केवल नागरिकता कानून को लेकर फैलाए जा रहे भ्रम का निवारण किया, बल्कि यह भी स्पष्ट किया कि जिस एनआरसी को लेकर देश भर में अफवाहों का बाजार गम कर लोगों को भड़काया जा रहा है उसकी तो अभी प्रक्रिया ही तय की जानी शेष है। इसमें संदेह है जिन लोगों और खासकर विभिन्न विपक्षी दलों के नेताओं का मकसद ही लोगों को बरगलाकर अपना राजनीतिक उल्लू सीधा करना है उनके रुख-रवैये में कोई परिवर्तन आएगा, लेकिन आम जनता को तो यह समझना ही होगा कि हकीकत क्या है? इस क्रम में उसे यह भी जानना होगा कि आज जो कांग्रेस नागरिकता कानून के साथ-साथ प्रस्तावित एनआरसी का मुखर होकर विरोध कर रही है उसके शासनकाल में ही मतदाता पहचान पत्र, पैन, आधार कार्ड आदि जारी किए गए। एक सच्चाई यह भी है कि दुनिया के हर जिम्मेदार देश ने अपने नागरिकों का रजिस्टर तैयार किया है। इस जिम्मेदारी का निर्वहन हो, इसकी जरूरत नागरिकता कानून में दर्ज है और इसी कारण 1951 में पहली एनआरसी तैयार की गई। क्या अब यह काम महज इसलिए नहीं होना चाहिए कि कुछ लोग अंधविरोध से ग्रस्त होकर या फिर राजनीतिक रोटियां सेंकने के लालच में अफवाहें फैलाने में जुट गए हैं?

नागरिकता कानून और प्रस्तावित एनआरसी के विरोध में बिना ज्यादा कुछ सोचे-समझे सड़कों पर उतरने वालों को प्रधानमंत्री की इस बात पर गौर करना चाहिए कि क्या उनकी सरकार की रसोई गैस, आवास, बिजली संबंधी किसी योजना में जाति, मजहब के आधार पर भेदभाव किया गया है? यदि अभी तक ऐसा कोई आरोप विरोधी दल भी नहीं लगा सके हैं तो इसका यही मतलब है कि नागरिकता कानून के बहाने मोदी सरकार को मुस्लिम विरोधी साबित करने का एक सुनियोजित अभियान छेड़ा गया। क्या यह किसी से छिपा है कि इस अभियान को किस तरह किस्म-किस्म के दुरुपचार के जरिये आगे बढ़ाया जा रहा है। केवल इतना ही पर्याप्त नहीं कि दुरुपचार में लिप्त इन राजनीतिक एवं गैर राजनीतिक तत्वों को प्रधानमंत्री ने आड़े हाथों लिया। उन्हें इसकी तह में भी जाना होगा कि आखिर ऐसे तत्व किन कारणों से अपने इरादे में एक बड़ो हद तक सफल हो गए। यह अभियान इतना शातिर है कि जहां धरना-प्रदर्शन अराजकता से बच जा रहा है वहां तो भीड़ को श्रेय दिया जा रहा है, लेकिन जहां आगजनी और तोफ़ोड़ हो रही है वहां सारा दोष पुलिस के सिर पर मढ़ दिया जा रहा है।

तकनीक का दुरुपयोग

तकनीक के इस युग में हर सुविधा लोगों के मोबाइल फोन पर उपलब्ध होने से जिंदगी आसान हो गई है। पैसे का लेनदेन हो या कोई खरीदारी करनी हो तो मोबाइल फोन के माध्यम से आसानी से कर सकते हैं। यह स्थिति तभी सुखद है, लेकिन जब इसका दुरुपयोग किया जाए तो यह घातक साबित होता है। साइबर ठग तकनीक का दुरुपयोग लोगों को प्रलोभन देकर ठगने में कर रहे हैं। लोगों के खून-पसीने की कमाई को पल में हड़पा जा रहा है। हिमाचल प्रदेश भी साइबर ठगों के जाल में उलझता जा रहा है। कई बार एटीएम का पिन पछुने व कई बार बैंक अधिकारी का नाम लेकर लोगों के बैंक खातों में सेंध लग चुकी है। प्रदेश में लोगों के साथ ठगी के मामलों की निरंतरता बताती है कि लोग चेतना खो चुके हैं।

बार-बार ठगे जाने पर हायतोबा जरूर मचाई जाती है, चिंता जताई जाती है, लेकिन जागरूक बनने के प्रयास नहीं किए जाते। किरदार बदल जाते हैं, लेकिन साइबर ठगी की कहानी एक जैसी ही होती है। इन मामलों से सबक सीखने के लिए कोई भी तैयार नहीं दिखता। प्रदेश के हर हिस्से से ठगी के मामले सामने आने से साबित हो जाता है कि ठगों का नेटवर्क अपनी पकड़ मजबूत बना चुका है और लोगों की मानसिकता को अच्छी तरह से समझता है। सोचने की जरूरत है कि ऐसा क्यों हो रहा है। इसलिए, क्योंकि लुटने वाले स्वयं तैयार बैठे दिखते हैं। हिमाचल की साइबर पुलिस ने भी कई मामलों को सुलझाने में सफलता हासिल की है। इसी जांच में सामने आया है कि लोगों को ठगने के दौरान साइबर अपराधी जन-धन खातों का उपयोग कर रहे हैं। यह इतने शातिर हैं कि लोगों के खाते कुछ पैसे देकर किराये पर ले रखे हैं, जिससे ठगी के पैसे इनमें ट्रॉसफर कर सकें। हैरानी इस बात की है कि आम लोगों के साथ बड़े अधिकारी भी इनके जाल से नहीं बच पा रहे हैं। साइबर पुलिस अपना काम कर रही है, लेकिन इनके नेटवर्क को तोड़ने के लिए लोगों को जागना होगा। जब तक लोग ऐसे ठगों को पहचानना नहीं सीखेंगे, तब तक पुलिस भी मदद नहीं कर सकती है। किसी भी व्यक्ति पर आंख मूंदकर विश्वास करने से बेवकूफ है कि पहले ईमेल करने वाले या फोन करने वाले की पहचान कर ली जाए।

साइबर ठगी के बढ़ते मामले तकनीक के दुरुपयोग का साक्षात उदाहरण हैं। लोगों को सतर्क रहकर ऐसे लोगों का पर्दाफाश करना चाहिए

न करें अपनी संपत्ति का नुकसान

अनीश कुमार

भारत जैसे लोकतांत्रिक देश में हिंसा, आगजनी और अराजकता की कोई जगह नहीं है। हमने संसदीय लोकतांत्रिक प्रणाली को अपनाया है और हमने स्वेच्छा से मताधिकार को स्वीकार किया है। लोकतंत्र में जनता अपनी पसंद की सरकार बनाती है और कर आदि देकर उसे टिकाए रखती है। किंतु नागरिकता संशोधन कानून (सीएए) को लेकर कुछ दल जिस तरह से देश के कुछ क्षेत्रों में एक वर्ग के लोगों और छात्रों को प्रकट रहे हैं, वह लोकशाही की मर्यादाओं के खिलाफ है।
सार्वजनिक या सरकारी संपत्ति देश की जनता की संपत्ति है। हमारे-आपके दिए गए करों से बनाई गई है। उसकी रक्षा करना हर राजनीतिक दल और नागरिक का भी कर्तव्य है। यदि आप सार्वजनिक संपत्ति जैसे बस, रेल, दफ्तर आदि में आग लगाकर जला देते हैं अथवा तोफ़ोड़ करते हैं तो उसकी भरपाई जनता को ही करनी पड़ती है। सरकार बस या रेल का क्रियाया और टैक्स बढ़ाकर नई बस मंगा लेगी। उसका



सी उदयभास्कर

सीएए विरोधी प्रदर्शनों से सवाल उठता है कि क्या मोदी सरकार के इस कानून से भारत का पहले से ही जटिल आंतरिक सुरक्षा परिदृश्य और पैचीदा हो जाएगा

नागरिकता संशोधन अधिनियम यानी सीएए के खिलाफ देशव्यापी विरोध-प्रदर्शन और उस पर पुलिस की सख्ती के चलते करीब 25 लोगों की मौत हो गई। सैकड़ों घायल भी हुए। कई अशांत इलाकों में इंटरनेट सेवाएं प्रतिबंधित हैं। इसमें उत्तर प्रदेश सबसे अधिक अशांत रहा। सीएए के खिलाफ विरोध प्रदर्शन से निपटने के लिए पुलिस ने अनावश्यक सख्ती बरती। इससे आंतरिक सुरक्षा की स्थिति बहुत प्रभावित हुई है। यहां यह उल्लेख करना जरूरी होगा कि शांतिपूर्ण तरीके से विरोध-प्रदर्शन करना आम नागरिकों का बुनियादी लोकतांत्रिक अधिकार है।

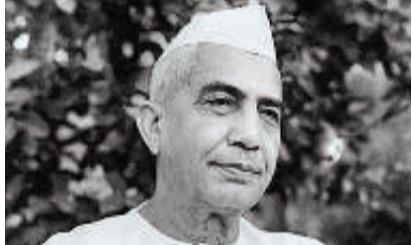
इस दौरान दिल्ली, उत्तर प्रदेश और कर्नाटक जैसे राज्यों में पुलिस ने जो बलपूर्वक कार्रवाई की वह मीडिया और आम नागरिकों के कैमरे में भी दर्ज हुई। यह सरकार के बेहद सख्त रुवैये को दर्शाते वाली है। बंगलुरु में महात्मा गांधी के नामचीन जीवनीकार रामचंद्र गुहा की गिरफ्तारी वाली तस्वीर भी सवाल उठाने वाली है। सीएए और उससे जुड़ी कवायद नेशनल रजिस्टर ऑफ सिटिजन्स यानी एनआरसी को लेकर राष्ट्रव्यापी विरोध प्रदर्शन ने देश का एक अलग चरित्र प्रदर्शित किया है। हालांकि एनआरसी को लेकर अभी कोई स्पष्टता नहीं है और प्रधानमंत्री एवं गुहमंत्री बार-बार इसे लेकर आश्चस्त कर रहे हैं। फिर भी सीएए-एनआरसी के राजनीतिक निहितार्थ खासे जटिल हैं। फिलहाल आठ राज्य सीएए और एनआरसी

चरण सिंह की कमी महसूस करते किसान

आंबेडकर, सरदार पटेल के बाद पूर्व प्रधानमंत्री चौधरी चरण सिंह तीसरे ऐसे महापुरुष हैं जिनके विचारों को उनके जीवनकाल में उतनी स्वीकार्यता और प्रसिद्धि नहीं मिली जितनी उनके निधन के बाद। आज चरण सिंह की जयंती है जिसकी स्मृति में राष्ट्रीय किसान दिवस मनाया जाता है। एक ऐसे दौर में जब देश में किसान और कृषि क्षेत्र तमाम समस्याओं से जूझ रहा है तब जमीन से जुड़े ऐसे नेता का स्मरण और व्यवस्था में उनके योगदान को याद करना बहुत जरूरी लगता है। आज की ग्रामीण बदहाली, उपेक्षा, किसानों की आत्महत्याएं, गांवों से शहर की ओर बढ़ता पलायन, गांव-शहर के बीच बढ़ती आर्थिक-सामाजिक विभक्तताएं आदि विषय उनकी राजनीतिक विचारों की प्रासंगिकता को जीवित बनाए हुए हैं। देश के विभिन्न भागों में चल रहे किसान आक्रोश का केंद्र बिंदु बने आंदोलन उनका जिज्ञ किए बगैर अधूरे ही रहते हैं। एक समय जब बड़े-बड़े दिग्गज पंडित नेहरू से वाद-विवाद करने से कतराते थे, उस समय कांग्रेस के नागपुर अधिवेशन में उन्होंने पंडित नेहरू की नीतियों पर कटु प्रहार किया और सहकारी कृषि के विषयों को लेकर अपने भाषण में अधिकांश कांग्रेस कार्यक्रमोंओं से तालियां भी बटोरीं। उस समय नेहरू कांग्रेस पार्टी के पर्याय और कांग्रेस के वैचारिक सिद्धांतकार के रूप में जाने जाते थे। कांग्रेस के भीतर उनके वैचारिक तिलिस्म को तोड़ने का यह पहला प्रयास था, जिसकी कीमत उन्हें मंत्रिमंडल से बाहर होकर चुकानी पड़ी थी। आजादी के बाद कांग्रेसी सरकारों के समक्ष अपने घोषणापत्रों को अमल में लाने की भी नैतिक जिम्मेदारी हुआ करती थी। अधिकांश कार्यक्रम आजादी के आंदोलन के दौरान स्वतंत्र भारत के निर्माण के लिए गए संकल्प थे जिनमें भूमि सुधार एक मुख्य कार्यक्रम था। उत्तर प्रदेश में उस समय पंडित गोविंद वल्लभ पंत मुख्यमंत्री थे और चौ. चरण सिंह उनके राजस्व मंत्री थे। ग्रामीण आर्थिक नीति-निर्माताओं का यह मानना है कि उत्तर प्रदेश जैसा भूमि सुधार किसी भी राज्य में संभव नहीं हो पाया। वामपंथी और समाजवादी आंदोलन के इस नारे ‘जो जमीन को जोते-बोये वो जमीन का मालिक है’ का क्रियाव्यव करने का दायित्व भी उन्होंने निभाया।

डॉ. लोहिया और पंडित दीनदयाल उपाध्याय गैर कटिबन्धवाद की जिस राजनीति की पटकथा तैयार कर रहे थे, उनको उत्तर प्रदेश में परवान चढ़ाने का काम भी चौधरी साहब के जरिये ही संभव हो सका। वह उत्तर प्रदेश के

उनके प्रयासों से ही आढ़तियों का दबदबा कम हुआ और किसानों के लिए नाबाई जैसी संस्था की राह बन सकी



प्रथम गैर कांग्रेसी मुख्यमंत्री थे। उनकी गिनती आज भी सबसे प्रभावी, कुशल प्रशासक और ईमानदार राजनेता के रूप में होती है। 1974 में उन्होंने राष्ट्रीय राजनीति में प्रवेश किया और कांग्रेस के विरोध में एक प्रभावी विकल्प के निर्माण की दिशा में एक नए दल की रचना की जिसमें भारतीय क्रांति दल के साथ-साथ समाजवादी पार्टी, बीजू जनता दल, स्वतंत्र पार्टी जैसे महत्वपूर्ण दल शामिल हुए। बाद में जयप्रकाश नारायण के आंदोलन के दौरान आपातकाल के बाद यही दल जनता पार्टी के गठन की बुनियाद भी बना। चौधरी साहब के राजनीति में प्रभावी दल से पहले किसानों को न्यूनतम समर्थन मूल्य जैसी कोई व्यवस्था अमल में नहीं थी। केंद्र सरकार मनमाने तरीके से किसानों की फसलों के दाम घोषित किया करती थी। उनके कार्यकाल में आढ़तियों की भूमिका पर अंकुश लगा और किसानों की समस्या की आवश्यक बनाई गई। वित्त मंत्री बनने के बाद उन्होंने नाबाई की व्यवस्था की जिससे किसानों को कर्ज मिलने की प्रक्रिया आसान हुई और सुदूरघों पर लगाम लगी।

राष्ट्रीय राजनीति में उनका प्रवेश देरी से हुआ जिसका एक बड़ा कारण उस समय के कांग्रेस पार्टी के स्थापित नेतृत्व से लगातार वैचारिक मतभेद भी रहा। उन्होंने राजनीति के विमर्श, नारों को बदला, प्राथमिकताओं की अदला-बदली पर जोर दिया और डॉ. आंबेडकर के बाद



अवधेश राजपूत

वाली आंतरिक सुरक्षा चुनौती के रूप में देखते हैं। भारत जनवरी 1990 से ही इस चुनौती से जूझ रहा है जब पाकिस्तान की शह पर भारत के खिलाफ कट्टरपंथी इस्लामिक ताकतों का उभार हुआ था। भारत की आंतरिक सुरक्षा के समक्ष गंभीर चुनौतियां दो श्रेणियों में देखी जाती रही हैं। एक तो पाकिस्तान प्रायोजित आतंकवाद, जिसकी जड़ें पूर्ववर्ती जम्मू-कश्मीर राज्य में बेहद गहरी थीं। या फिर मुंबई में हुए वीभत्स आतंकी हमले को इसमें गिना जा सकता है। दूसरी चुनौती माओवादी-नक्सलवाद यानी वामपंथी चरमपंथ से जुड़ी है जिसने एक लाल गलियारा चिन्हित किया था जो अब छत्तीसगढ़ के एक छोटे इलाके तक सीमित रह गया है।

बोते कई दशकों में भारतीय सुरक्षा तंत्र को तमाम जटिल आंतरिक सुरक्षा चुनौतियों से जूझना पड़ा। ये चुनौतियां अक्सर अतसस्वादी राजनीतिक गतिविधियों या कुछ दुस्साहसिक कवायदों से उत्पन्न हुईं। इनमें सबसे कुख्यात खालिस्तान आंदोलन रहा। हालांकि मौजूदा विरोध प्रदर्शन अतीत के ऐसे अनुभवों से इतर हैं। उन्हें दबाने के लिए ऐसी सरकारी कड़ी

किसानों तथा पिछड़ों की राजकाज में हिस्सेदारी से जुड़े सवाल उठाना। 1937 में ही उन्होंने उत्तर प्रदेश कांग्रेस कमेटी के प्रांतीय सम्मेलन में पहली बार किसानों के लिए 50 फीसद आरक्षण की मांग का मुद्दा उठाकर कांग्रेस नेतृत्व को अचंभित भी कर दिया था। उस दौर में ग्रामीण वृष्टभूमि और खासतौर पर किसान समूहों की हिस्सेदारी न के बराबर थी। बाद में उन्होंने सामाजिक-शैक्षणिक तौर पर पिछड़े वर्गों के आरक्षण की मांग उठाई। काका कालेलकर आयोग की सिफारिशें ठंडे बस्ते में कैद थीं और परिवर्तन तथा भागीदारी के लिए बैचैन इन समूहों का निरंतर संघर्ष जारी था। उन्हीं के प्रयासों से मंडल आयोग का गठन किया गया जिसमें पिछड़े वर्ग के समूहों के लिए भी आरक्षण की व्यवस्था का प्रावधान था। इन्हीं सवालों की प्रखरता के कारण पार्टी में विवाद भी बढ़े और समाज के अभिजात्य वर्ग के द्वारा उन्हें जातिवादी नेता के रूप में बदनाम करने का अभियान भी चलाया गया।

ऐसे महपुरुषों की राजनीतिक विचारधारा समय काल की भी प्रतीक्षा में रहती है। आज कोई दल पिछड़े वर्गों की साझेदारी और भागीदारी को अपनी पार्टी का कार्यक्रम बनाने में गर्व महसूस करता है। सभी दलों के घोषणापत्र वॉचर समूहों के आरक्षण लागू करने के संकल्प के साथ प्रारंभ होते हैं। धीरे-धीरे दलों के नेतृत्व में भी इन समूहों की हिस्सेदारी की झलक स्पष्ट दिखती है।

आज हम चौधरी साहब की 118वीं जयंती पर उनका स्मरण कर रहे हैं। उन्होंने जिन सवालों को आवाज दी उसके स्वर मद्धम न पड़ जाएं, इसके लिए हमें अनवरत रूप से जागरूक रहने की जरूरत है। किसान आत्महत्या के मामलों में बढ़ोतरी हुई है। खेती मुनाफे का सौदा नहीं बची है। गांव महागणों के उपनिवेश बन चुके हैं। कृषि पर बढ़ते बोझ को अन्य गैर कृषि कार्यों में लगाने का सिलसिला बंद है। पिछड़े वर्गों के लिए आरक्षण की व्यवस्था लागू है, लेकिन उच्च नौकरियों एवं शिक्षण संस्थानों में उनकी उपस्थिति ठीक से दर्ज नहीं हो पा रही है। राजनीति में शुचिता और ईमानदारी उनके व्यक्तित्व के गुण थे जो आज उनके समर्थकों की कार्यशैली से लुप्त हो गए हैं। इसलिए आज एक और चौ. चरण सिंह की आवश्यकता अब महसूस हो रही है जो उसी प्रखरता, तत्परता, व्यग्रता, कुशलता के साथ उन कार्यक्रमों को अमली जामा पहना सके।

(लेखक जदयू के राष्ट्रीय प्रवक्ता हैं)

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एक छात्र आइएएस बनना चाहता था। दुर्भाग्यवश काफी मेहनत के बावजूद भी वह अपने सपने को साकार नहीं कर पाया। वह इस असफलता को आत्मसात नहीं कर पाया और समय के साथ निराशाओं के चक्रव्यूह में फंस्ता गया। जीवन में सपनों के टूटने के बाद निराश होना मानवीय प्रवृत्ति है, पर प्रश्न यह उठता है कि आखिर जीवन में असफलताओं से कितना हताश हुआ जाए? क्या अपने लक्ष्य को प्राप्त न करने में असफल होना जीवन को हार जाने सरीखा ही अहम होता है? महान दार्शनिक कन्फ्यूशियस ने एक बार कहा था, ‘हमारी सबसे बड़ी खासियत जीवन में कभी नहीं गिरने में नहीं है, बल्कि गिरने पर हर बार उठकर खड़े होने में है।’ असफलताएं सफलताओं तक पहुंचने के लिए सोपान का कार्य करती हैं। असफलताओं की कोख में ही सफलताओं के भ्रूण छुपे होते हैं। हेनरी फोर्ड के अनुसार, ‘असफलता का अर्थ महज किसी काम को फिर और भी अधिक तमयता के साथ शुरू करने का एक अवसर है।’ असफलता की स्थिति में निराशा से बचना आसान तो नहीं होता है, लेकिन इससे जल्दी बाहर नहीं आने पर जीवन का वजूद ही पतन हो जाता है। लिहाजा जब कभी आप अपने मुकाम हासिल करने में असफल हो जाएं तो परेशान न हों, बल्कि सफल होने के लिए एक बार और गंभीरता से कोशिश करें।

यदि आप अपने जीवन में हार से कुछ-न-कुछ सीखते हैं तो आप हारें हुए नहीं हैं। प्रत्येक हार में जीवन में सफल होने के लिए अनमोल सबक छुपे होते हैं, लेकिन दुर्भाग्यवश हम प्रायः पतन में छुपे हुए उन अनमोल मोतियों को पहचान ही नहीं पाते हैं। असफलता घातक नहीं होती है, पर असफल होने के बाद खुद को परिवर्तित नहीं करने की जड़ता ही हमें सफलता की राह में आगे बढ़ने से रोकती है। यदि आप अपने जीवन में सफलता के मुकदमे में आ गई हैं। सूखी प्याज के भाव चढ़े होने से हरी प्याज भी ऊंचे भाव पर मिल रही है।

श्रीप्रकाश शर्मा

मेलबाक्स

मोदी सरकार की ऐसी ही राष्ट्रहितेपी कार्ययोजनाएं हैं जो देश की असंतुलित जनसंख्या को दुरुस्त करने के लिए बहुत जरूरी हैं। अपने यहां की जनसांख्यिकी को संतुलित करने का अधिकार हर देश को है। भारत की वर्तमान केंद्रीय सत्ता यदि राष्ट्रहित में वही कुछ कर रही है तो विपक्ष को आपत्ति क्यों है?

डॉ. वीपी पाण्डेय, अलीगढ़

हिंसात्मक विरोध गलत

नागरिक संशोधन कानून (सीएए) के खिलाफ हिंसात्मक विरोध को सही नहीं ठहराया जा सकता। लोकतंत्र में शांतिपूर्ण तरीके से अपनी बात रखने का अधिकार सबको है। हिंसा से किसी भी विवाद का समाधान नहीं किया जा सकता। इतिहास गवाह है कि हमारे देश में महात्मा गांधी ने अपने अहिंसात्मक धरने एवं अनशन से देशहित से जुड़ी ज्यादातर बड़ी मांगों को सफलतापूर्वक मंजवा लिया था। यदि मौजूदा कानून को लेकर किसी वर्ग को कोई आपत्ति है तो वो शांतिपूर्वक अपनी बात कह सकता है। नागरिकता संशोधन कानून के ताजा मसले पर लोगों व छात्रों को बरगलाया जा रहा है। हमारे मुकूल में ही मौजूद कुछ स्वार्थी तत्व देश को तोड़ने का षड्यंत्र रच रहे हैं। आम नागरिकों को आपसी भाईचारे की भावना का परिचय देते हुए इस कानून की बारीकियों का अध्ययन करना चाहिए। सीएए से किसी भी मौजूदा नागरिक को कोई खतरा नहीं है। आम नागरिकों को हिंसा का मार्ग त्यागकर सरकार का सहयोग करना चाहिए।

हितेंद्र डेव्डा, चिल्ला गांव, दिल्ली

प्याज-आलू के भाव

प्याज के बाद अब आलू के भाव भी आसमान पर पहुंच गए हैं। दोनों ही फसलों का इस समय सीजन चल रहा है। इसके बावजूद इनके भाव कम नहीं हो रहे हैं। प्रति वर्ष इस समय आलू तो 10 से 15 रुपये किलो के बीच मिलता था, मगर इस साल 30 रुपये किलो किरा रहा है। घर-घर में इस्तेमाल होने वाले आलू को खरीदते समय एक आम आदमी को सोचना पड़ रहा है। इससे भी खराब स्थिति प्याज की है, जो सौ और 120 रुपये किलो तक बाजार में बिक रही है, जबकि हरी प्याज बाजार में आ गई है। सूखी प्याज के भाव चढ़े होने से हरी प्याज भी ऊंचे भाव पर मिल रही है।

पंकज कुमार मुखी, गुरुग्राम

जागरूक बनें

लोगों को पता ही नहीं है कि नागरिकता संशोधन कानून में क्या है। विरोध करने वालों ने जानने की भी कोशिश नहीं की। वैसे भी यदि इसका विरोध शांतिपूर्वक किया जाता तो न तो आम आदमी को परेशानियों का सामना करना पड़ता। कशिश वर्मा, नोएडा

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

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