

India’s dark road



TICKER
MIHIR SHARMA

The past weeks have seen many Indians’ worst fears about their country come true. It was almost as if the ruling dispensation was waiting for the first sign of resistance to reveal their real plans for India’s future. Ayodhya, 370, lynchings all went by without any real murmurs of dissent. But the NRC/CAA/NPR imbroglio struck many people, of all faiths and none, as being an assault on the very nature of Indian-ness. In some places, protests were violent — though not as much as many other protests in the past. In most places, the protests have been peaceful.

The reaction, however, has been as if every peaceful crowd was an angry mob carrying Kalashnikovs. In one BJP-ruled state after another, the police have cracked down on the crowds using excessive force. But the real punishment — the “revenge”, in the words of its chief minister — has been saved for Uttar Pradesh. The stories of mass arrest and torture that have emerged from that state, which is under lockdown and intermittent internet blackouts, are harrowing. Children are among those who speak of being beaten mercilessly. Videos show policemen indulging in vandalism, and it has been reported that entire neighbourhoods have been raided by violent police posses. What this revenge is for is not clear. Perhaps for a sense of majoritarian victimhood that will never be satisfied.

This is what UP Chief Minister Adityanath was selected to do. He rose to prominence in east UP’s politics as the leader of the Hindu Yuva Vahini (HYV), a fundamentalist militia that focused on intimidation of and violence against Muslims. It has been tragically easy to turn the UP police into an extension of the HYV. Since the Muzaffarnagar riots in 2013, ghettoisation in India’s largest state has accelerated. Ever more distinct boundaries have formed between Muslim and Hindu areas in even small towns; and so the police can go into the kasbas and do what they like with impunity, safe in the knowledge that no Hindu is being inconvenienced. The media will not report it — in one chilling video that has emerged, you can hear one member of the media tell another, “turn off the cameras, they [the police] are loading their guns”. The UP police have claimed hundreds of country-made shells have been recovered from “protest sites”. They are yet to tell us how many of those were fired, and how many rounds they fired in response.

In many parts of north India, this scourging of Muslim neighbourhoods is likely to be extremely popular. The reaction on social media to the Huffington Post’s reporting of the alleged torture of children in the Nagina area of Bijnor in UP was revealing of this new India. Many responded with congratulations to the UP police for showing Muslims their place. The rhetoric developed for Kashmiris being blinded by pellet guns — they are all stone-pelters, they deserve what they get — is now being deployed against the Muslim children of UP.

The public, political and media culture in much of north India has rotted away. The media responds to public bloodthirstiness by exaggerating the violence of protests; politicians send the police in against the defenceless. It is important to understand the narrative that is being created, and not to live in denial about what it is or where it will lead. It runs as follows: Muslims, even the youngest, are dangerous and violent, each one of them a potential rioter. They are not to be trusted, and must be penned into ghettos that are regularly scourged. Economic blockades and boycotts of these troublemakers are moral acts. Restraint is folly, and human rights are a Western construct. Any act of resistance is seditious. Collective punishment is acceptable.

It is futile to say that this is not the India many of us grew up in, or one we recognise, or that such a narrative has no place in a liberal democracy. Things have gone too far from that. All those who made excuses for the current dispensation, who created the narrative in 2013-14 that brought them to power, who believed that liberal institutions would constrain its actions, who argued that there was no alternative, or who drew false equivalences between various political parties have blood on their hands.

The question is what can be done now. The first step is to recognise the danger that India is in. The product of these actions is inevitable. It is further ghettoisation and stigmatisation of India’s largest religious minority. It is increasing radicalisation within these communities. It is the crowded, poor Muslim enclaves deprived of civic amenities or market access in large parts of north India, which will become convenient punching bags for politicians and eventually incubators of violence, crime and extremism. Once we accept that this is the road we have chosen to walk down, we can then consider how it is we could turn around.

The invisible young heroes of 2019



PEOPLE LIKE THEM
GEETANJALI KRISHNA

In what has been the coldest December in several years in North India, my heart is warmed by the young students helming the movement against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). Video grabs of these brave young women and fearless young men have filled my social media feeds. I have watched them all. For the older I get, the more I find myself focusing on the young. The math is simple: young changemakers have more time than their older counterparts to make a difference. Perhaps that’s why this year, this column has featured so many stories of invisible young heroes. Here’s a recap.

My favourite is of 16-year-old Sachin

Gupta from a Lucknow village. He’d wonder why his four beloved sisters became so withdrawn during certain days of the month until he learnt about menstruation. He designed and built a sanitary napkin incinerator for his sisters and trained as a peer educator on hygiene in his village. Today, the menstrual taboo broken, the atmosphere in his home has transformed.

Seventeen-year-old Shikoh Zaidi of Hardoi district in UP has a similar story. A student of a residential school for meritorious underprivileged students, she realised while working on a school project that in her community, girls tended to drop out of school because of the lack of safe menstrual hygiene practices. The teenager, with the staunch support of her father, started organising meetings where, using animation videos downloaded from the internet, she’d initiate discussions on menstrual hygiene and the need to break the silence enshrouding periods. Many were shocked, others laughed at her. But thanks to her efforts, Zaidi’s community is coming around to the idea of allowing their daughters greater freedom when they’re menstruating. Meanwhile, she’s lobbying with the health department to make low cost sanitary napkins available with the ASHA health worker in her village.

Education is another field where the

young are making an impact. Prafull Sawant, a 24-year-old son of an auto driver father and domestic worker mother, in Mumbai has successfully run a free learning centre in his slum in Powai since February 2016. He’s taught over 400 students and mentored innumerable others to apply to college and appear for competitive exams. Similarly, when 19-year-old Sarathi Tudu from Singhbhum, Jharkhand grew up to find her peers dropping out to work and get married, she started free tuition classes in her village. Forty five students come to her every day to study today.

Mumbai rapper Shaikhsparee AKA Aamir Shaikh of Bombay Lokai is enabling the youth in Mumbai’s slums to find their voices through hip hop. Kanpur’s young “water doctors” Divya, Ekta, Shikha, Alam and Mani Kumar are going door-to-door testing drinking water to convince their neighbours about the importance of water hygiene. Twenty-four-year-old Pooja Itodiya, ASHA worker at Aalri village in Madhya Pradesh, has tested water sources in her village to identify the ones with potable water.

Few know these young and celebrate their work. To me, however, they’re a source of renewed hope for the change they effect will ensure that 2020 and beyond could be better than the years gone by.

Who is Chandrashekhar Azad?

The agitation against the Citizenship Amendment Act and the National Register of Citizenship has raised his profile. It would be interesting to see what he – and other parties – do with it



PLAIN POLITICS

ADITI PHADNIS

For one, the man who played footsie with the police when Delhi was raging against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizenship (NRC). Chandrashekhar or Ravan, the name he has given to himself, is fighting everyone. He was born in Saharanpur, in the Dhadkauli village, in a Chamar family, studied at a Thakur-owned and run college in nearby Chhutmalpur, saw the discrimination against Dalit students and vowed to fight it. Being an Ambedkarite and an admirer of Kanshi Ram (but not of Mayawati) he tried to follow the same principles of organising the Dalits as Kanshi Ram:

via education, through the bureaucracy and in self defence. He founded the Bhim Army and set up 400 Bhim Army schools in Saharanpur district which provides free-of-cost primary education to children irrespective of caste and gender. He started self defence classes and led bike rides through villages — including upper caste Thakur villages — as symbolic self assertion.

This is important. Uma Bharti, a sadhvi from the Lodh caste who rose to become a union minister, once recalled how, in her village Tikampur, others from her caste could not cycle past the homes of Thakur families. They had to dismount and walk past on foot — because the Thakurs saw this assertion as an affront. That was 25 years ago. Nothing has changed.

The Bhim Army asks Dalits over 18 to join them. Most of the members belong to the Chamar community or its sub-caste Jatav. But the Bhim Army also welcomes Muslims. It lacks a formal structure and is an unregistered body, but claims to have over 20,000 members in and around Saharanpur in western Uttar Pradesh. Its stress is on direct action based on confrontation to preserve, protect or restore the dignity of Dalits. “Through the Bhim Army, the Dalit youth become aware that they can struggle for their constitutional rights and they will no longer tolerate oppression. The Bhim Army is

not to scare off anybody but for the security of Dalits,” Azad said in a recent interview.

Ravan’s troubles started in 2015 when he put up a board outside his village which proclaimed: “The Great Chamars of Dhadkauli Welcome You”. In a village that also had Thakurs, how could this be tolerated? The Thakurs defaced this with black ink. This began a phase of direct confrontation that peaked when the BJP took out a “Shobha Yatra” in Saharanpur without permission through communally sensitive areas.

Dalit-Thakur clashes broke out a few weeks later in the same district on the birth anniversary of Rajput king Maharana Pratap. The state government held the Bhim Army responsible for inciting violence. Ravan claimed that the government was targeting it to malign the movement and shield upper caste offenders. The state administration arrested Ravan. The matter went to court and the High Court acquitted him. But within hours, the Adityanath government ordered his re-arrest under the National Security Act. He was incarcerated amid massive protests from civil rights groups and was released partially as a result of that pressure.

Priyanka Gandhi called on him when he was in jail (and hospital). Thence began a dalliance with the Congress...

LUNCH WITH BS ► MALABIKA SARKAR | VICE-CHANCELLOR | ASHOKA UNIVERSITY

Liberal and loving it

Over lunch, Sarkar talks to Geetanjali Krishna about critical differences between the pedagogies followed by older universities and Ashoka and what it is like to be at the vanguard of an academic revolution

As 2019 comes to a close, observers are defining it as the Year of the Indian Student. At a time when university campuses across the country are coming out to protest the Citizenship Amendment Act 2019, students have come to be seen as the bravest and most vocal defenders of democracy, speaking truth to power. Which is why I’m particularly looking forward to meeting my guest, Prof Malabika Sarkar, Vice-Chancellor of Ashoka, the university credited with making the Liberal Arts both fashionable and saleable in India. Prior to joining Ashoka, Sarkar has served as Vice-Chancellor of Presidency and Jadavpur universities (both in Kolkata).

Associated with Ashoka University since 2015, Sarkar has helped develop its curriculum, expand its faculty and create several multi-disciplinary centres of learning and research. She was appointed its Vice-Chancellor in August 2019. I am looking forward to a free-wheeling conversation on what it takes to develop a private university and on helming a Liberal Arts campus in these illiberal times.

Just then, Sarkar bustles in, immaculately turned out in a silk sari. We are at Threesixty restaurant at The Oberoi, New Delhi. She’s spent the weekend in the city to catch some rare moments with her husband, a corporate lawyer who shuttles between Mumbai and Delhi. Ashoka’s Sonepat campus where she lives, isn’t exactly on the way. “We do try and meet every weekend in Kolkata,” she says.

Life on campus is thrill-a-minute. “Being a new university that’s expanding so fast, there’s so much to do,” she says. Since she joined, the student community has grown from 560 in 2015 to 2,000 today, while the faculty has increased from 17 to 111 (plus 28 visiting lecturers) today.

Having a lot of money must help, I comment, as we pore over the menu. Having experienced the relative penury of government institutions earlier, Sarkar agrees wholeheartedly. “The easy availability of funds has enabled us to not only hire the best faculty,” she says, “but has also made it possible for us to retain them with the best pos-

sible infrastructure — labs, grants etc.” This is in sharp contrast to her stint at Presidency during its centenary year, when there weren’t enough funds to, say, repair the crumbling ceiling in the laboratory. “We had no option but to install nets below the ceiling to protect students from the falling plaster,” she reminisces. We pore over the menu, discover a shared fondness for fish and I realise that Sarkar has tried every fishy dish on the menu already. We decide to share some Thai-style Kolkata *betki* steamed with chilly, garlic and lemon and grilled sea bass wrapped in a banana leaf.

The food arrives on the table, the steamed fish fragrant in a light broth. Sarkar pauses to taste it and talks about the critical differences between the pedagogies followed by older universities and Ashoka. “In Jadavpur and Presidency the teaching was unidirectional, she says. “The professor would lecture and the students would listen. Students often discussed issues with professors, but rarely in the classroom...” In contrast, 50 per cent of the classroom time in Ashoka is devoted to discussion and students are incentivised to participate by being awarded marks for class participation. This is why freedom of speech — a pejorative term for some and such an acutely precious commodity to the liberals — is an integral aspect of Ashoka’s ethos.

Could it be, I ask, that Ashoka is raising a generation of liberal and free thinkers at a time when these are not exactly the most desirable qualities? Sarkar disagrees. “I see my students not merely as critics but as change-makers equipped with the right skills to positively impact their environment,” she says. “Free thought and criticism have to go hand in hand with a sense of responsibility.” She comes across as a true administrator. Unsurprising because private universities are as, if not more, hamstrung as government universities these days. She tells me about the Good Governance Associates programme (CMGGA) that Ashoka runs in partnership with the Haryana government. In this, selected students from Ashoka are trained intensively to work with the district administrations in



ILLUSTRATION BY BINAY SINHA

Haryana as representatives of the Chief Minister of the state. “Through the programme, our students learn to not only critique administrative functioning but also find solutions to make it more efficient,” she says. Attesting to this is the fact that the number of companies conducting campus recruitments at Ashoka has crossed 150 this year, and includes McKinsey, AT Kearney,

Saharanpur is well-known for Dalit mobilisation and the unity among Muslims and Dalits. This project has been endorsed by many activists. According to Chandra Bhan Prasad, noted writer and Dalit thinker: “There are around 400 Lok Sabha constituencies where Dalits and Muslims combined constitute 30 per cent of the electorate. Also bear in mind, that 90-95 per cent of Dalits and Muslims go out and vote. So, if they are able to come together, they become significant electorally. And I feel that there is a great desire among Dalits and Muslims — particularly the youth — to come together.” Ravan has emerged as a face of this unity, even though he is not that well known in the rest of India.

At a time when the Bahujan Samaj Party has lost ground electorally and the BJP has begun mobilising Dalits, the Bhim Army is a symbol of resistance from within the Dalit society. Noted Dalit scholar Anand Telumbe writes that its emergence “may be likened to the Dalit Panthers in Maharashtra in 1972, which in turn was the by-product of the bankrupt politics of the erstwhile Republican Party of India.”

Little wonder then that Mayawati and others scowl when his name is mentioned. The current agitation has raised Ravan’s profile. The question is what he — and other parties — do with it.

Deloitte, Microsoft, and *Business Standard* among others.

Meanwhile, the banana leaf parcels emit enticing aromas when we unwrap them. We pause to taste them before moving on to another of her pet subjects. In spite of the availability of funds at Ashoka, Sarkar says, no university in India can ever match the resources of a Harvard or Yale. “What we do have in ample measure are intellectual resources,” she says. The need of the hour, she says, is greater collaboration between institutions in India. For instance, Ashoka students often intern at Bangalore’s National Centre for Biological Sciences. “I’d like to collaborate with more such institutions for student and well as faculty exchange programmes,” she says. Another way of developing world-class intellectual resources is the active creation of multi-disciplinary centres of learning and teaching. For example, Ashoka’s Trivedi Centre for Political Data in partnership with the University of Michigan analyses authoritative political data and disburses knowledge on India’s political life through an open access platform. The Centre for Studies in Gender and Sexuality at Ashoka is the first in India to conduct research into both gender and sexuality. “I believe that such multi-disciplinary centres will take our intellectual resources to the next level,” she says. “I’d like to develop many more such centres in the years ahead.”

Sarkar chooses to end lunch with coffee while I opt for a raspberry and rose sorbet. I ask her about her fabled work ethic and what keeps her going at such a punishing pace. “My days are so full that I’ve no time to think about it,” she laughs. She starts at 10 am, often working past midnight. “I make up by flying to Kolkata every weekend,” she smiles. But it turns out that there too, she has her work cut out. As president of the Women’s Coordinating Council, West Bengal, the apex women’s organisation in the state with representatives from more than 74 social welfare organisations, she spends much of her weekends fundraising. Although she rues not having enough time for her academic work (she’s a professor of English literature and last published *Cosmos and Character in Paradise Lost* on John Milton’s poetry in 2012), the feisty 71-year-old won’t have it any other way. After all, one can never be too old to be at the vanguard of an academic revolution and Professor Malabika Sarkar is living proof of that.

How I’ll spend my New Year’s Eve



PEOPLE LIKE US

KISHORE SINGH

I remember a time when the New Year party was a standard feature of our home. We’d ask our friends over, there were seldom any dropouts, most brought other friends along, some carried bottles of booze for the bar, and if there was dense fog they slept over in whatever bed or sofa was unoccupied. Food was plentiful, but incidental; music was important — and the louder, the better; complaints by neighbours were dealt with friendly indifference; and visits by the force were handled by those who knew how to deal with such incursions. They were egalitarian times, and nobody minded high spirits and a little drunkenness.

Then came liberalisation. Friends began to travel on NY breaks — to Goa, to Thailand, to places and parties more exotic than ours. We dwindled to a few regulars who’d sip mulled wine, sit around a bonfire and recollect times when it was difficult to find elbow room in the house. Stories and incidents about New Year parties past occupied us more than the New Year party present. The music was softer, we ate more than we drank, and bedtime was soon past midnight rather than post-breakfast in the morning.

This was a time when the kids abandoned us. They didn’t want to play bartender at our parties, or manage the music, or hang around with those of our generation, and made their horror of asking their friends over evident. We used to laugh at people who went out on New Year’s to party amidst strangers and had often wondered who these persons were — now we know they include our children.

When a few days ago, I heard the children making plans, and booking reservations, I offered, once more, to host them to a New Year’s at home — but incentives of free alcohol, hot food and music of their choice fell on deaf ears. I suggested a bonfire and barbecue, to all of which they shrugged indifferently,

having done it all before. Reluctant to spend another evening reminiscing of times past, I suggested to the children that we accompany them, but the response has been less than encouraging — they’re not sure yet of where they will be; they might party-hop; there won’t be other parents around; we’ll get bored, or drunk, or worse, and embarrass them; why can’t we just stay home like other oldies and let them be?

Which is why, dear reader, I plan to spend the last hours of 2019 in the countryside, watching 2020 come in not with a crescendo of music, hugs and smooches, but quietly, almost discreetly. I plan on having a drink by my side, a book to read, feet tucked under a blanket. I might take a brief moment to thank for the gift of family — so what if they chose to abandon me on the occasion — and a hope that the madness of governments and societies be of the past. The witching hour that marks the passing of a year, and a decade, holds a magical wish that things might yet be better. I hope to wake to a breakfast I can pluck off the vegetable patch, with milk directly from a buffalo — while the rest of the family, and the world, nurses hangovers. I’m not saying I’ll like it; I’m saying I’ll do it.

A real Budget, please

Among the first things that a finance minister has to do when framing the Budget is determine the likely growth rate for the economy in the year to come. The revenue, deficit, and other numbers depend on getting this foundational number right. In the current year, for instance, some of the serious errors in estimating revenue could have been avoided if nominal GDP growth (i.e. real growth plus inflation) had been correctly estimated. What of next year?

Correct forecasting depends on an accurate reading of past trends. The decade till 2020 will have seen the economy more or less double in size — implying annual average growth of about 7 per cent. But the middle years of the decade saw the economy benefit from the growth spurt triggered by an oil price collapse — something that will not repeat. Besides, the current global economic situation is not encouraging; there are too many things to set right in the domestic economy, not least in the financial sector; exports are stagnant; and there is little scope for either fiscal or monetary policy initiatives. Bearing in mind that the non-government part of the economy grew by no more than 3 per cent in the last quarter, a realistic growth rate for the economy next year should be something like 5 per cent, give or take half a percentage point.

That is not flattering for an economy that has clocked 7 per cent in the previous decade, and even faster growth in the decade before that. But one of the things that acceptance of a modest growth figure necessarily forces on you is hard choices. One can't assume a return to mean, and assume revenue based on an economy growing at 7 per cent. If the money is not going to be there, it's better to face reality — especially the reality of the Budget, in which the deficit is massively understated by about 2 percentage points of GDP. All Budgets face resource restraints, but the coming one will have to confront them in their full severity.

Looking beyond the Budget, the medium-term outlook looks decidedly cloudy if growth takes time to return to the desirable 7 per cent. The finance minister in her Budget speech should spell out how exactly she intends to get back to the 7 per cent track, and the hard decisions she intends to take in order to adjust to the realities of a slowing economy until growth momentum returns. Predictability in government actions is a virtue in itself.

Insofar as revenues fall short, the axe will have to come down on expenditure — even though this is not what economists might advise in the midst of a slowdown. It is important that budgetary discipline be seen to be operating. And so outlays will have to be pruned, or kept at current levels. Unspent moneys should lapse. The sectors that have absorbed so much of public investment should be asked to show results — as railway revenues, highway tolls, higher power tariffs, and so on (internal and extra-budgetary resources, as they used to be called in Planning's heyday). If the finance minister looks hard enough, she should be able to find scope for more non-tax revenue measures. For instance, fresh capital for the government-owned banks should come from the revenue garnered by privatising one or two of them — the taxpayer should not be saddled with the burden.

Above all, the time has come to modernise budgeting. Chiefly, that should mean moving from cash accounting to accrual accounting so that bills that are due but not yet paid are accounted for. Similarly, the government should put out information on off-balance sheet issues that are not there in the Budget. This will prevent further reports by the Comptroller and Auditor General pointing out hidden items of expenditure — like public sector companies borrowing money from banks to pay the food subsidy bills, or taking advance payment from railway entities to avoid showing a loss in railway accounts. A more credible set of numbers will be a good thing in and of itself, it will also help make government functioning more transparent.

Back to the inglorious past

History is repeating itself and there is a back-to-1974 feeling. But India is living in totally different circumstances for Modi to emulate Indira Gandhi all the way

In the non-stop hail of worsening economic indicators, one stands out. That the unemployment levels today are the worst they've been in 45 years. It takes us right back to 1974.

Indira Gandhi was still popular but some disillusionment was building up. Yet, even disappointed voters were still caught in a There Is No Alternative (TINA) trap. All economic indicators were in free fall, inflation was at almost 35 per cent and yet nationalism was still rampant and high.

Sounds familiar? Barring inflation, much else looks, sounds, and feels more than a bit like 1974. A phenomenally popular leader, with a party of unquestioning followers, a broken opposition, a nationalist high and never mind an economy in free fall, crippling joblessness. India isn't just a land of paradoxes, it is capable of producing the same mega paradox twice within a generation, under radically different ideologies.

Let's explore a little backwards, to 1971. Early in the year, Mrs Gandhi had won a famous election, defeating the formidable old guard of the Congress she had just broken up, in spite of the fact that all opposition parties had joined hands against her.

In early 1971, she was riding the “*Garihi Hatao*” pink populism. By the end of the year, she was “*Maa Durga*” incarnate, having defeated and dismembered Pakistan. She could walk on water.

The twin-engine populism of socialism and nationalism, however, was masking the harsher realities of India. The economy was already collapsing under the weight of her maniacal nationalisations; entrepreneurs were fleeing an invasive licence-quota raj; super-high taxation (97.5 per cent ultimately) created the black economy that still hasn't been defeated; and the expense of the war didn't help. But, remember, political fortunes are determined not by statistics, but the mood or what we call the “*hawa*”.

It was in 1971 that poet-lyricist Gulzar made his first film, *Mere Apne*. It was built around Meena Kumari, a poor and abandoned old woman in a city who becomes a central figure of affection and refuge for a bunch of young men played by some who'd become big names later. They have degrees, aspirations, but no jobs and nothing to do except while away time in desperate hopelessness, play some pranks, or get into street fights.



ILLUSTRATION: BINAY SINHA

But they could laugh at themselves and Gulzar wrote for them the anthem for those years of decline: “*Haal chaal theek thaak hai...*” Play it, listen to the lyrics. Almost every line would make you pause and figure out why I take you back there.

Sample: “*BA kiya hai, MA kiya, lagta hai woh bhi aiwein kiya/kaam nahin hai varna yahan, aapki dua se baaki theek-thaak hai...*” (We've got our BA/MA degrees, looks like it was all a waste/there's no job, nothing to do, yet, with your benevolence all's well with the world.) Gulzar might as well have written it for 2019. Or he can re-release it and pretend he just wrote it. You wouldn't know.

Before we discuss how we got here from the world-conquering optimism of 2014, it is instructive to see how India and Indira Gandhi reached the collapse of 1974 from the high of 1971. That March 1971 landslide and the destruction of all opposition was so heady, she and her deeply ideological (of the chic Left) advisors kept sinking ever deeper into toxic socialism.

Then, when India's economy was at its most vulnerable, two Black Swan events struck. One — the Yom Kippur war (October 1973) and the resulting oil shock — was beyond her control. The second, nationalisation of the wholesale wheat trade, she wrought upon herself. Her Communist cabal said, if it works in the Soviet Union, it shall work here. It didn't.

A disaster followed, with wheat prices rising, farmers furious, traders and private rural middlemen jobless. It could have become her equivalent of



SHEKHAR GUPTA

NATIONAL INTEREST

A rapid reader for 2019



AL FRESCO

SUNIL SETHI

In his coruscating slim volume *The Uncommon Reader* the British playwright and screenwriter Alan Bennett describes what happens when the Queen of England suddenly, and unaccountably, becomes a voracious reader. This habit is met with alarm by her staff and consternation by loyal subjects on her walkabouts. Instead of exchanging polite nothings Her Majesty starts quizzing the public on what they read and discussing the merits of Trollope, Dickens, and Virginia Woolf. A few misguided folk mention Harry Potter — “but to this the Queen (who had no time for fantasy) invariably said briskly, ‘Yes. One is saving that for a rainy

day,’ and passed swiftly on.”

Whether you love or love to hate Harry Potter, Keshava Guha's debut novel *Accidental Magic* (HarperCollins; ₹599) is not just for rainy days. It's the pick of the crop in a strong year for fiction — a hugely inventive and entertaining foray into the intricate, interlinked virtual world of Potter fandom. Kannan, the Bangalore boy's initiation into American college life and the Yahoo! group HP4BK (Harry Potter for Big Kids), is an escape, an intellectual quiz, and an emotional link to diverse milieus and relationships. Vividly observed and articulated, it is a classic bildungsroman of our time.

Madhuri Vijay's prize-winning *The Far Field* (Fourth Estate; ₹599), deservedly praised novel, is a young daughter's unsettling requiem for a lost mother, a brittle, high-strung woman who forged a relationship with a Kashmiri salesman. Her search takes her to the Valley, with the torments of an unresolved past intensifying turbulent lives stained by violence and fear. Fiction can plunge us into those dark recesses that no amount of reportage can; and Ms Vijay's

dense narrative is remarkable for its evocation of a fractured land. *The City and the Sea* (Penguin; ₹499) by Raj Kamal Jha is also about a disappearing mother who fails to return home from work. Partly inspired by the Delhi gang rape of 2012, the book's episodic, intercut structure weaves imagined, often dream-like realities in experimental form.

Several of the year's best non-fiction titles such as *Early Indians* by Tony Joseph were reviewed here (“A bibliophile's summer reading”, June 15, 2019) but here are some notable recent arrivals.

Shanta Gokhale, the novelist, prolific translator from Marathi, theatre archivist, and critic has written a memoir, *One Foot on the Ground: A Life Told through the Body* (Speaking Tiger; ₹399) that can hardly be bettered. As a *femme de lettres* her British counterpart would perhaps be the celebrated Diana Athill, who died this year at the age of 101. Ms Gokhale's unusual education in middle-class Mumbai and London neighbourhoods, her two broken marriages, earning a living, and bringing up a family are sustained by passionate intellectual rigour. It is the rewinding

of life illuminated by candour, insight, humour, and brevity. On the perils of being a bilingual writer, she quotes Arun Kolatkar, “the quintessential Bombay poet” who said, “Well you see, I have a pencil with two points.”

Indeed, if life is being dealt an unpredictable hand of cards, then the most engaging memoirs are those able to shape it into a series of surprising sequences. Fiji-born Bhairach Patel had many avatars — as journalist, barrister, and UN diplomat — and habits — Delhi, London, Bombay, New York, and Manila — before coming to roost in the capital as bon vivant and raconteur par excellence. He has the talent of treating the weightiest of subjects weightlessly and making you laugh out loud. *I Am a Stranger Here Myself: An Unreliable Memoir* (HarperCollins; ₹699) is a pleasure.

Two musical journeys added immeasurably to my year's reading list. Those who admire Shubha Mudgal as a diva of commanding power and range may be unaware that both her parents taught English Literature at Allahabad University and she has a natural gift for storytelling and comic timing. Looking for *Miss Sargam* (Speaking Tiger; ₹499) is her fictionalised encounters with characters and situations in the

madcap musical whirl: Cut-throat producers, ambitious ustads, conniving accompanists et al. It's a delicious concoction. Despite its genealogical sprawl, documentary filmmaker Saba Dewan's *Tawaifnama* (Context; ₹899), a fly-on-the-wall account of the kinship of courtesans and dancing girls in the geographically small Purvanchal region of Banaras and Bhabua is unique for its historical and social investigation. Among many things, it details, how male progeny are sidelined as second-class offspring in a matriarchal community that prizes girl children as bread-winners and keepers of musical tradition.

It's been a fruitful year for scholars. A couple of works of history stand out: Kim A Wagner's *Jallianwala Bagh: An Empire of Fear and the Making of the Amritsar Massacre* (Penguin; ₹599) unveils new research on the city as religious centre and commercial trading post. In sinewy prose it traces the roots of the 1919 tragedy from 1857 and the unravelling of the Raj. And for a history buff's bedtime reading, Manu S Pillai's *The Courtesan, the Mahatma & the Italian Brahmin* (Context; ₹599) is the ideal companion — more than 50 tales familiar and unfamiliar.

Happy New Year!

The universal language

EYE CULTURE

SUHIT K SEN

Recent research has validated the old saying, articulated, among others, by H.W. Longfellow, that music is a universal language that knows no barriers of, well, language, ethnicity, creed, colour or faith. The research project was conducted by a number of US universities, including Harvard University and Pennsylvania State University. The findings were published in the US academic journal *Science*.

The research findings are significant because musicologists and scholars in related disciplines have questioned Longfellow's view, expressed 184 years ago, that “music is the universal language of mankind”.

The research team studied 118 songs from 86 cultures, which were classified into four groups: Dance songs, healing songs, love songs and lullabies. The team consisted of Manvir Singh, a researcher in evolutionary biology at Harvard, Luke Glowacki, a professor of anthropology at Pennsylvania State University and Samuel Mehr, also of Harvard. They created a database and loaded ethnographic and music-related information into it from 315 societies across 60 cultures and 30 geographical regions, but compared 118 songs, as mentioned.

The researchers found significant intra-category similarities. A Marathi lullaby was found to have structural similarities with lullabies sung by people in the Scottish Highlands and the Nahua indigenous people of Central America. A Garo dance song was similar to a Yaqui dance song from northern Mexico and a Tlingit dance song from the Pacific Northwest coast of the United States. The database of 118 songs had lullabies from India, Central Africa, Northern Australia, North America and other places. Healing songs came from Uttar Pradesh, Central America, Africa and North America. And dance songs and love songs came from similarly diverse cultures and regions.

Overall, lullabies were slow and soothing, their sounds were gentle and fluid; dance songs were universally fast, lively and rhythmic; love songs tended to build and release tension with a broader range of pitches than lullabies; and healing songs had shorter notes than love songs and varied more in rhythm than dance songs. “What our study shows is that when we as humans of a particular culture make music, while the sounds may sound unique, they actually reflect deep features of human psychology coupled with social processes,” Glowacki said to *The Telegraph*.

The export of Anglo-American culture has meant that certain forms of music have become global from the second half of the past century. Rock'n'roll music and other forms of popular Anglo-American music — like disco, hip-hop, rhythm and blues and rap — are lionised

throughout the world. The youth, especially in non-English-speaking Europe, including the continent, as it were; Africa; Asia; and south and central America are all hooked to genres of music originating in the United States and Britain. Even an older set of people, who grew up in the 1950s and 1960s listen avidly to early rock'n'roll, blues, jazz, folk rock and country music.

But that's not all. These genres have profoundly influenced popular music across the world, including India. Rap has been adapted across India. And popular music, whether used in films or not, have borrowed rhythms, structures and instruments from popular Western music.

Closest home for this writer, ever since Kabir Suman, as he is known now, launched what later came to be known as “*jibanmukhi gaan*” (life-focused music), Bengali popular music has not only started sounding much more like “Western” music, it also uses lyrics that echo concerns that share more ground with popular music in the West as compared to earlier popular Bengali songs. “Bangla bands” have proliferated. A significant proportion of members of these bands are young people who have grown up on rock and other forms of Western music — Beatles onwards.

The research we have referred to uncovers musical similarities across cultures that are deep-seated and have existed for a long time. But the export of Anglo-American culture, in music and other cultural fields, and its global proliferation, before the age of globalisation and, especially, in that age, raise interesting questions, some not easy to answer. Why has there been a tendency towards a flattening of cultures? And does this kind of growing uniformity betoken large-scale changes in sensibility.

Some technological developments have no doubt made cultural “miscegenation” easier. The ubiquity of the Internet on computers and mobile phones has made cross-cultural consumption substantially easy. Similarly, the spread of satellite television, say, in urban India, has had a similar effect. Exposure through these technologies and devices has perhaps made people more receptive to other cultures.

But does that mean sensibilities are changing? The research alluded to clearly hypothesises that the similarities in types of music stem from deep-seated and shared psychological traits coupled with social or societal traits. And these similarities have been around for a long time. But it is doubtful whether the cultural flattening typical of the post-World War II period and more especially the era of globalisation has created a similar change in sensibilities.

Every week, Eye Culture features writers with an entertaining critical take on art, music, dance, film and sport

In advertising, to err is human



YES, BUT...

SANDEEP GOYAL

There was a lot of hullabaloo earlier this month about an Uber ad that had mistakes in the headline and spelling errors in body copy. Lots of nasty remarks were posted on social media. First Ogilvy, the Uber agency, was targeted. And roasted. When they issued a denial saying the ad was not theirs, the mud-slinging kind of eased somewhat. So now, with Ogilvy out of the frame, it looked as if the client had done the creatives in-house (or done them through a small agency/freelancer) and managed a self-goal.

After 35 years in the business, I sat back, and thought to myself:

“Why so much criticism? Why such self-flagellation? Why such nasty remarks about peers? Aren't we all human? Anyone can make a mistake. Sure the mistake has costs, and maybe has repercussions. But is an inadvertent mistake, an honest error, enough to trigger an avalanche of such nastiness and negativity? Does the advertising industry over-react?”

Back to Uber. The taxi-hailing company ran ads in Delhi and Mumbai (perhaps other cities) too. The headline in Delhi ran something like this ... “Planning to head out of the Delhi?” The mistake of adding a ‘the’ before Delhi got Twitter heated up, and in knots, in no time. Also, in the body copy “anywhere” and “anytime” were written as single words. While the singular/combined usage in “anywhere” was debatable, the “anytime” should have been two separate words for sure. In the Mumbai ad, the name of a destination was wrongly spelt. An extra ‘i’ was added to Bhimashankar, one of the destinations. Hell broke loose on social media.

My personal opinion is that the

original Delhi headline perhaps was meant to say, “Planning to head out of the Delhi smog?” or may be Delhi pollution. Somebody senior at the client end must have felt that the use of words like “smog” or “pollution” may not be politically incorrect. A last minute chopping of the undesirable word must have been ordered. In the haste to catch the newspaper deadline, the offending “the” which too should have been removed, was not deleted. Sh't happens!

I have seen worse. Almost 25 years ago, I ran a new help-line number ad for Lufthansa in Mumbai. Front page solus. Big bold telephone number upfront. And, we managed to get the number wrong! Don't ask me how. The client had seen the artwork; the copywriter had checked and signed the material. Yet somehow the mistake happened. The wrong number was incessantly ringing at the home of an old Parsi lady, driving her nuts. It was an MTNL number, and it took us half a day to get it disconnected. Another half day to double check the originally

allotted number. Getting space...that too front page solus...in the newspaper the next day was another nightmare. In all this, the client did not once fly off the handle. Nor was there any social media those days to deride us or mock us. I just went the next day to the Parsi lady's home with a box of chocolates, and apologised. She was most gracious, and understanding. Period.

Way back in the early 1990s when Star TV used to uplink from Hong Kong, we had a new packaging change commercial running during Christmas-New Year for Fujifilm. That was also the time of the year when Star would shut all commercial operations and the uplinking would be on auto. Well, our “new” commercial went on air but somehow it was the wrong tape that was getting broadcast! And as I said, Star was all but shut for holidays. It took us three days of firefighting across the globe to get the right material to run. In all the chaos, the client in Japan maintained a stoic silence, and in fact sent me a “thank-you” message once the error had been rectified.

The advertising business, methinks, needs to tone down a bit. Take control of itself, and its emotions. Controversy on every small little issue signals an industry either unsure of itself, or a fraternity that is needlessly uptight and too self-righteous. A good laugh, some good-natured banter on the Uber ad was all that was merited. Not the ugly, derisive comments that flooded the social media after the headline debacle.

If advertising practitioners and pundits do need to get themselves into a rage in 2020, there are a lot more pertinent issues than inadvertent mistakes that ought to get them worked up...puffery, plagiarism, puerility...perennial problems that advertising has faced, but never really confronted. Or addressed. Or solved.

The lessons to be learnt from the Uber debacle are simply that (1) To err is human (2) No one is infallible. Tomorrow it could be you (3) Grin and bear it. Forgive and forget (4) Tomorrow is another day.

The writer is an advertising and media veteran

Sebi levies a traffic fine on those that rated IL&FS

Small penalties resulted in their shares rising; equally perplexing is lack of action on IL&FS's board/directors

WHEN THE GRANT Thornton audit report on IL&FS's rating agencies had given so many lurid details of how the rating agency was being told what to do by the client, and hefty bribes were paid to senior managers of these raters, you would have thought markets regulator Sebi would have thrown the book at them. Instead, it slapped the equivalent of a traffic fine—₹25 lakh each on India Ratings, Care, and Icrs—for their lack of 'due diligence', and for basing their reports on primarily the inputs given by the IL&FS management. But, surely, as Grant Thornton revealed, the offer by an India Ratings to keep the rating private was illegal; a senior Fitch/India Ratings manager got a ₹44 lakh discount on a flat, and ₹25 lakh was donated to a trust run by the Icrs's chairman. Email records showed that Care was downgrading an IL&FS group firm to BB+ with a stable outlook, but after a discussion with the IL&FS management, this got bumped up to BBB- with a stable outlook; in another case, Fitch's AAA with a negative outlook for IL&FS became an AAA with a stable outlook. It is hardly surprising, then, that after the Sebi penalty, the shares of the rating agencies rose. And, this is despite the Grant Thornton report saying that the agencies were concerned about the group's exposure even way back in 2011; in one case, an IL&FS staffer even edited the rating rationale given by Icrs.

While credit rating agencies were the eyes and ears of those who invested in IL&FS or lent money to it, none of them drew attention to the fact that, between 2014 and 2018, its consolidated debt ballooned to ₹91,091 crore from ₹48,671 crore. And, while IL&FS earned a profit of ₹584 crore in 2018, this was on a stand-alone basis; at a group level, it made a loss of ₹1,869 crore in that year. In the case of group firm ITNL, the liabilities are ₹16,318 crore on a standalone basis and ₹42,371 crore for the consolidated entity.

While this changes everything, and that is why the IL&FS meltdown has nearly crippled the entire NBFC sector, what is surprising is the lack of action against the group's independent and shareholder directors. Its risk management committee, headed by LIC's managing director—LIC owns over 25% of IL&FS—met just once in the four years when the IL&FS group leverage rose to a frightening 13 from a reasonable 2.6 on a standalone basis. Other high-profile IL&FS directors on the risk committee were Maruti Suzuki chairman RC Bhargava, and former shipping secretary MP Pinto. Another LIC staffer, ex-chairman SB Mathur, headed IL&FS's remuneration committee and had no hesitation in clearing a ₹20 crore annual salary for IL&FS chief Ravi Parthasarathy despite the company being run to the ground and having fishy accounts. Given this, it is truly shocking that no serious action of any type—debaring directors from being on the board of any company for a certain number of years, for instance—has been taken by the government or any regulator. Indeed, despite RBI designating IL&FS as a systemically important NBFC, it failed to detect what was going on. While two audit firms are facing a ban for their role in the IL&FS scam, a lot more action needs to be taken against IL&FS's promoters and directors.

Financial stress worsens

RBI estimates PSU bank NPAs could be 13.2% in a year

EVEN BEFORE THE Reserve Bank of India (RBI) highlighted the rising stress on banks' books in H1FY20, it had been evident that the non-performing assets (NPA) cycle may not quite have come to an end. The reality is that several sectors—power, real estate, NBFCs, telecom, and MSMEs—are not recovering as fast as they should be. Therefore, lenders remain vulnerable to defaults by borrowers. That apart, given how the economy continues to decelerate, with growth having crashed to a six-year low of 4.5% year-on-year (y-o-y) in Q2FY20, borrowers in other segments, too, could delay repayments. Not surprising, then, that macro-stress tests for credit risk show that under the baseline scenario, the gross NPA ratio for banks may increase from 9.3 in September 2019, to 9.9 by September 2020. These are per the central bank's findings in the latest Financial Stability Report (FSR). The fact is gross NPAs are increasing on an absolute basis. For state-owned lenders, these are projected to rise to 13.2% by September 2020, from 12.7% in September 2019, while for private sector banks, the increase forecast is a more modest 30 basis points to 4.2%.

RBI attributed the possible increases in bad loans to a change in the macro-economic scenario, marginal increase in slippages, and the denominator effect of declining credit growth. The question is, how much of a deceleration in growth has RBI pencilled in because the forecasts have been made for a baseline scenario that assumes the current economic situation will continue? However, growth could well decelerate in the coming quarters, pressuring other parameters. Moreover, what is more pertinent is how well the sectors that banks are more exposed to are faring.

High-frequency data show that sectors such as real estate continue to suffer from poor demand, leaving inventories high, while stalled capacity in the power sector remains high at around 25,000 MW. Of the 40,000 MW of stressed thermal capacity—to which banks have an exposure of ₹2 lakh crore—resolutions have been found for just 12,000 MW. Lenders' exposures to NBFCs remain under a cloud because the experience with IBC has revealed that the level of recovery can be very low. In fact, the FSR draws from an industry report on emerging trends in consumer credit to say that the environment for NBFCs remains challenging. Pointing out this is relevant because there has been a sharp rise in delinquencies in the commercial credit segment. What is also worrying is that with rising loan losses and the need for more provisioning, capital adequacy for a group of 53 banks is projected to drop to 14.1% by September 2020, from 14.9% right now; if the macro environment deteriorates, five scheduled banks could see their capital adequacy ratio fall to below 9%.

WinningFORMULA

India can't achieve its Olympic goals if most women athletes are suffering from undernutrition and health risks

WHEN PRIME MINISTER Modi announced, back in 2016, that a task-force would be set up to improve India's medal tally at the Olympics—NITI Aayog also released a plan to get 50 medals by 2024—many had imagined a UK-like push for enhancing India's performance. In the 2012 Olympics, the UK had become an example of mixing technology and sports, as the country finished third in Olympic medal table with 65 medals, of which 29 were gold and 17 silver. But, a new study highlights India still has a long way to go before it can even get its athletes performance-ready. Published in the *Indian Express*, a report by Inspire Institute of Sport (IIS) on women athletes in India shows that an alarming number of them miss their periods, and are deficient in key minerals. Indian female athletes showed higher deficiencies and health risks when compared to their counterparts worldwide, putting them at significant risk of suffering career-threatening injuries as well as long-term health consequences, including osteoporosis.

Data highlight that 20% of the 51 athletes monitored by the study missed their period, while 90% were deficient in iron. More importantly, the study said that 39% of athletes develop what is called Relative Energy Deficiency in Sports (RED-S) syndrome, which occurs due to low-calorie intake, and results in missed periods and weakening of bones. While the study is a first of its kind and does show that India is taking sports seriously, the government needs to act to address the issues it raises. With the 2020 Olympics around the corner, there is not much the government can do. But, it can commission more research, keeping the 2024 50-medal goal in mind.

● YEAR IN REVIEW

RECENT FISCAL HISTORY PROVES EVERYTHING CAN BE MANAGED. EXPENDITURES CAN BE DEFERRED AND DISINVESTMENT ACCOMPLISHED THROUGH INTER-COMPANY HOLDINGS

The economist's year in a lighter vein

ECONOMIC DISCUSSIONS AND debates are now a habit. With so much media time and space to be filled, it is just great to talk about

such subjects. The official view-point mouthed by economists in the establishment play the familiar aria while those in the corporate world tend to discreetly appreciate the same, even if they disagree. Those in the academic field could differ sharply, but, in any case, there is no skin in the game for the profession! This was an exciting year from an economist's point of view, and following are its top-ten highlights.

First, were the global phenomena—Brexit and the trade wars—which entered all discussions. Every policy document spoke of the fear or uncertainty of these two factors, which had replaced oil as the chief concern. This is notwithstanding the general consensus that these won't have much impact on a domestic-oriented economy, except that there will be less discussion once they are resolved. Until then, they serve as a very good excuse for doing or not doing anything. The non-resolution of these issues means that we will hear more of them despite Boris Johnson's promise that January 2020 will see something more firm.

Second, a feeling of *déjà vu* pervaded through 2019 when it came to NSS data. Recall that last year, GDP and the back series dominated media time, with the CSO, NITI Aayog, and PMEAC debating this with economists, analysts and ex-government officials. This year had its moment when the data brought out on consumption—this was not released, but rejected—showed unfavourable trends. This episode of data management gave one the sense that if the results are not to one's liking, one debunks the approach and commissions another study on grounds of the methodology being incorrect.

Third, as a nation, we improved our position in World Bank's Doing Business rankings. While naysayers still complain that we addressed only the elements



Chief economist, CARE Ratings
Views are personal

which go into the formula, a better rank is a better rank. There is no gainsaying this achievement. But, were this ease of doing business to be juxtaposed with the cancellation of contracts in Andhra Pradesh that followed the change of guard, investors would be left dangling in ambivalence. State risk is even more devastating than regulatory risk (ask the telecom companies!).

Fourth, as the year started with the accepted GDP growth numbers, the tagline that went along was that India's the fastest growing economy in the world. When questions were raised on a slowdown, we were reminded that we are the fastest growing country in the world—a fact which could be seen on the IMF and World Bank sites. Therefore, the fall of the growth rate from 7% to 6% to 5% was not really a concern. But, the alacrity with which policies were introduced raised suspicion—the multiple measures wouldn't be required if the economy was really doing very well!

Fifth, economists had a blast with words and the common thought was that we did not have to worry even if growth came down to 5% or lower because things were not 'structural', but 'cyclical'. Simple words have complex undertones, and a layman may not understand these when there is unemployed, there are less jobs, and the price of onions is ₹150/kg. What this means is any one's guess as consumption, investment, overall growth, and exports have all slowed down, with no light at the end of the proverbial tunnel. But, the feeble explanation of things not being structural has dominated thousands of hours of conferences, economic discussions, and articles. It is no wonder that



Chief economic adviser, Allianz
Views are personal

the credibility of economists has—having no skin in the game, they can say anything anytime!

Sixth, if the structural versus cyclical debate dominated discussion time, it was overtaken by the \$5-tn-dollar aspiration. Now, frankly speaking, the number will be achieved at some point of time with sheer gravity. Besides, a \$5-tn-economy with few jobs, little income, and poor living conditions means nothing. Yet, almost everyone has a view on the \$5 tn number, including the IMF, which one would have expected not to get swayed. Truly, the quality of discourse came down to discussing whether it would take five or six or seven years to reach this number. Does it really matter, considering that no one has a solution for reviving the economy today?

Seventh, another subject that should not have merited any discussion was fiscal management. Will the 3.3% target be achieved or not? How much will the slip-page be? Will it affect market borrowings? Will disinvestment target be achieved? Recent fiscal history proves that anything can happen, and everything can be managed. Expenditures can be deferred, discretionary expenditure cut, and disinvestment accomplished through inter-company holdings. Once we fix what level of fiscal deficit is tolerable, the rest can fall in place with relative ease. This is akin to the magician who can pull out just about anything from their hat by waving a wand.

The global economy's luck may run out

Many countries are facing structural uncertainties that could have far-reaching, systemic implications for markets and the global economy

MOHAMED A EL-ERIAN

Chief economic adviser, Allianz. *Views are personal*

THIS BEING DECEMBER, my natural inclination is to review the past year's economic and financial developments to help policymakers and investors anticipate what might be coming in 2020. This year is ending on a relatively positive note, especially when compared to the same time last year. There is hope of a global growth pickup, trade tensions have lessened, and central banks have reaffirmed that they will maintain ultra-low interest rates and continue to provide ample liquidity. Financial volatility is subdued, and there are reasonable expectations of solid investor returns across many asset classes.

As tempting as it is to dwell on current financial and macroeconomic conditions, doing so risks obfuscating a key element in the outlook for the future. There is a curious contrast between the relative clarity of expectations for the near term, and the murkiness and uncertainty that comes when one extends the horizon further—say, to the next five years.

Many countries are facing structural uncertainties that could have far-reaching, systemic implications for markets and the global economy. For example, over the next five years, the European Union (EU) will seek to establish a new working relationship with the United Kingdom (UK), while also dealing with the harmful social and political effects of slow, insufficiently inclusive growth. The EU will have to navigate the perils of a prolonged period of negative interest rates, while also shoring up its economic and financial core. As long as the eurozone's architecture is incomplete, consistent risks of instability will remain.

Moreover, in the years ahead, the United States, having notably outperformed many other economies, will decide whether to continue disengaging from the rest of the world—a process that is at odds with its historic position at the centre of the global economy.

Or consider China's development process. With the global economy acting

more as a drag on growth than a boon to it, China may confront the risk that it has overplayed its hand. Heavy reliance on short-term stimulus measures is increasingly inconsistent with pursuing the longer-term reforms that it needs, and its geopolitical ambitions and regional economic and financial commitments (including the Belt and Road Initiative) are becoming costlier. More important, in the next five years, China and the US, the world's two largest national economies, will have to navigate an increasingly narrow path as they try to secure their own interests while avoiding an outright confrontation.

Such fluidity clouds the economic, financial, institutional, political, and/or social outlook for other countries. Today's macroeconomic and geopolitical uncertainties will amplify those fuelled by technological disruptions, climate change, and demographics. And they will raise questions about the functioning and resilience of the global economy and markets.

This degree of uncertainty is particularly notable in the multi-decade context of globalisation. In recent years, the stability that comes with broad-based adherence to the rules-based international order has been considerably weakened, as has the power of central banks to repress financial volatility and buy time for the real economy.

Left unmanaged, these medium-term structural trends would set the stage for greater political and social fragmentation, and raise the spectre of secular de-globalisation. If there is one thing that neither the global economy nor markets are wired for, it is a prolonged and deepening rupture in cross-border economic and financial relations. Were such a new paradigm to materialise, today's trade, investment, and currency tensions would intensify and spill over to the realm of national security and geopolitics.

Bad outcomes are not inevitable (at least not yet). They could still be averted

through the sustained implementation of policies to promote stronger, more inclusive growth; restore genuine financial stability; and usher in a fairer, more credible (while still free) system of international trade, investment, and policy coordination.

But, much will depend on the functioning of politics in the near term. Going into 2020, politicians have a favourable runway from which to launch the policies needed to extend the positive short-term outlook into the medium and long-term. Worries about global recession have receded, financial conditions are ultra-accommodating, and US-China trade tensions have de-escalated. But, these auspicious circumstances will not last forever.

Unfortunately, a policy push that could improve and clarify the medium-term outlook is unlikely. The US is entering a tense and divisive election year. Germany, Italy, and Spain are in the midst of difficult political transitions. The EU is dealing with Brexit and other regional divisions. And China's government is trying to consolidate power in the face of slowing growth and continuing protests in Hong Kong. The main worry—one that too few market participants have spotted—is that over the next five years, global economic and market conditions may need to deteriorate nearer to crisis levels before national, regional, and multilateral political systems muster an adequate response.

Fortunately, we are now in a period when action could be taken to prevent the worst-case scenario from becoming a binding reality. Let us hope that I am wrong about today's political paralysis. As long as there is still time, there is a chance that policymakers will follow the advice offered by then-IMF managing director Christine Lagarde in October 2017: "Fix the roof while the sun is shining".

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● CYCLE OF TYRANNY

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi

They will form the government, then they will destroy the universities and the Constitution. Then you will protest and then they will call you a "fool". But Youngistan will stand firm on the ground

Inflation came down, and then went up. But, all analysts know one thing for sure—whichever way the number goes, interest rates should be lowered, and the argument can be forcefully articulated. When inflation was below 4%, but core inflation was at 6% and food inflation at less than 1% or negative, we looked at headline inflation and argued for rate cuts. We did not say that food inflation, which is impervious to monetary policy, was responsible for this. When inflation is above 5% due to food inflation, the argument is that we should not look at the headline number, which is influenced by food prices, but only core inflation. English is a wonderful language, and the art of polemics is amazing.

Nine, bankers were a nervous lot. They appreciated everything done on recapitalisation (but are not lending). They said the NPA problems were over as a matter of being politically right (but RBI keeps finding understatement of such numbers). They assured the government that they would reduce interest rates (which they haven't done to the extent expected). They applauded

when they were told to lend more to SMEs and not recognise the NPAs, like had happened during demonetisation (the future offers trepidation). The 'Yes People' have said their lines, just as the playwright had dictated.

Last, the spoken word does not end at the door of Shashi Tharoor and his pompous Stephanian English, which often sends the reader running for the dictionary. This is now passé. This was upstaged by a member of the MPC when the monetary policy minutes revealed the word 'flocinaucinophilification'. Policy minutes will surely get harder to read and understand if such terms are going to be used. But, there can be variety in expression given that the script is the same every time with new numbers.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Crossroads in your imagination

It is important to understand that the prime minister and the home minister are in complete harmony as the NRC has not yet been tabled in the House. It is, however, expected to be introduced in the near future. It is the resistance by misguided individuals that lacks direction, and is apparently fuelled by vested political interests. The present one is the most stable and capable leadership the sovereign can boast of. The government must continue to prioritise the larger interest and penalise the nexus responsible for causing damage to national property and human life. The proposals being opposed haven't undermined the rights of even a single solvent resident yet; therefore, mistrusting the intent of the incumbent government or deliberately creating an environment of uncertainty lacks rationale. While personal assets of offenders are being confiscated, it is important that the so-called critics misleading the public duly penalised, too. It is prudent to limit the influx of illegals in order to preserve solidarity in the longer-run. Developed economies have established tougher immigration norms to boost quality job growth and standard of living—it would be insane to reward infiltration. Adherence to secular, democratic principles demands stringent vetting to segregate illegal immigrants from permitted refugees. India aims to safeguard the long-term interests of minority refugees seeking safety in India. The apex court must intervene if states continue their non-cooperative attitude towards matters of national importance. Serving the larger interest takes precedence over the selfish interests of regional parties and a futile Opposition.

— Girish Lalwani, Delhi

● Write to us at feletters@expressindia.com



ILLUSTRATIONS: ROHINIT PHORE

THE WORLD IN 2020

Bosses will pay a price for mixing politics and corporate values

The downsides of CEO activism will become rather clearer in 2020

THERE USED TO be an iron rule for any American boss tempted to talk about politics: don't. Recently, this rule has been discarded as chief executives have been drawn into taking stands on inequality, the culture wars and climate. So far, they have had an easy ride: it is more fun to outline your vision for humanity than for increasing EBITDA margins. But in 2020, this new breed of activist CEOs will face three problems that politicians know well: the charge of hypocrisy, the risk of a recession and destabilising ideological shifts.

Corporate America's drift away from political neutrality and inactivity began after the financial crisis in 2008-09. Banks gave displays of contrition. A new generation of woke consumers and workers grew up during the crisis. Some were preoccupied by cultural injustices; others attacked capitalism, too. Climate change became an urgent problem and economic nationalism meant firms had to demonstrate their patriotism.

Bosses have responded to these signals. Jamie Dimon, of JPMorgan Chase, pens 50-page letters, ostensibly to its shareholders: the latest touches on education, and military procurement and demands "CEOs: your country needs you!" Silicon Valley chiefs humour a minority of radicalised employees. Bosses like to claim their firms are leading the fight against carbon emissions. In 2017, bosses joined flag-waving summits in the White House. Over 180 CEOs have signed a declaration by the Business Roundtable that their objective is not just to serve shareholders, but customers and workers, too.

Business folk are motivated by idealism, vanity and calculated self-interest. But it also helps that, so far, CEO activism has been cost-free. Like some politicians, some bosses gladly take credit for things they do not control. Most of the CEOs who pledge to fight climate change do not run firms that are responsible for it. Take the biggest 200 Western firms that disclose emission figures. Of these, the top 20 are responsible for 70% of all emissions: the other 180 don't matter much. And like some politicians, some CEOs make promises they don't keep. Despite the Roundtable's concern for workers, executive pay is rising and there is no sign of a rethink on how the spoils are split between labour and shareholders. Profits for the S&P 500 index are forecast to rise by 8% in 2020.

By then the three downsides of CEO activism will have become more apparent. First, the accusations of hypocrisy: it is not hard to find. Nike, which has pushed virtuous branding, has been embroiled in a doping scandal. BlackRock, a fund manager that pushes other firms to invest more, spent over 100% of its own cashflow on buybacks in the past 12 months. Visa signed the Roundtable letter championing customers, but is part of a payments oligopoly. If the inconsistency between bosses' words and actions becomes too glaring, reputations can suffer, as Mark Zuckerberg of Facebook knows.

Second, if there is a recession, CEO activists will struggle to reconcile the interests of employees and their fiduciary duty to shareholders. In the past two downturns, American firms cut their wage bill by 6%; if they had not, profits would have been 24% lower. This flexibility is a hallmark of American capitalism. The conflict between business logic and political posturing is already evident at firms facing technological disruption. Consider Mary Barra of General Motors, a prominent Roundtable signatory. In September 2019, she faced a strike by 46,000 workers who complained of unfair pay and factory closures as she tries to shift GM to electric vehicles.

And third, as any member of Congress will tell you, the ideological ground can shift quickly. CEOs hope that by adopting social and political causes they will defuse more radical sentiments. Dream on. The presidential campaign in 2020 will feature lots of criticism of big business, some of it legitimate. Democrats' proposals include workers on boards, beating up healthcare firms and tackling monopolies, most obviously in big tech.

No such thing as a free declaration: By the end of 2020, the leaders of America Inc will realise that political posturing is no free lunch. Many will worry that it is a gimmick that elicits a backlash. Prudent firms will adopt a simpler vision: it is the job of government to set the rules, and the job of companies to maximise value within these rules. That means delighting customers (including socially conscious ones), investing in profitable innovation (including in green technologies), and attracting workers (sometimes by paying them more). It doesn't mean standing on a soapbox. That is what politicians are paid (much less) to do.

THE ECONOMIST

SUSTAINABLE FARMING

How to ensure sustained growth?

RAJESH AGGARWAL

The author is MD, Insecticides (India) Ltd. Views are personal

AFTER A FEW troubled years, the agrochemicals market is picking pace. According to estimates, the pesticide market is projected to grow at a CAGR of 8.3% during 2018-23, and reach a size of ₹29.9 billion by 2023. As the industry grows, it also must ensure farming practices are sustainable, and impart education to farmers on agrochemicals.

Growth outlook: The available arable land per capita has been steadily reducing due to increasing urbanisation, and is expected to reduce further. However, the rising population will keep food demand high. In order to increase agricultural yield per hectare of available land, pesticides will play an important role. According to the ministry of agriculture, in the 2018-19 agricultural calendar year, farmers cultivating in 45,043 thousand hectare—65% of the total cultivated land—use either chemical or bio-pesticides, or both. The penetration of pesticides in India is significantly lower than other major countries, which means there is room for growth. The government's initiatives of extending credit facilities to farmers in rural areas are likely to provide a strong boost to farming, as increasing availability and low interest rates of farm loans will encourage farmers to invest in agro-inputs like seeds, machinery, pesticides to improve crop yield—that the number of sale points for pesticides across India reached a high of 2,37,083 in 2017-18 is a testimony to the fact. Government and private initiatives to increase farmers' awareness of pesticides is expected to empower them with the knowledge of using the right kind and amount. Combining this with tech interventions such as precision-farming will further improve the outcome.

The rising levels of pest attacks from unknown quarters have made safety of crops a concern. According to the ministry's estimates, the number of sale points for the distribution of pesticides is likely to be 2,00,129 in 2018-19, while the area of cultivable land using chemical or bio-pesticides or both has dropped from the 62,247 thousand hectares in 2017-18. Only educating farmers isn't enough—companies have to boost their investment in R&D of new molecules and compounds. While most Indian companies invest 1-2% of their revenue for R&D efforts, certain MNCs invest 8-10%. Therefore, domestic agrochemical market will continue to face an uneven competition unless they ramp up investment in R&D. It is also an effective way to forge new collaborations with global agrochemical companies. This creates an opportunity for contract manufacturing and research for Indian players as India has one of the largest pools of technically skilled labour. Agrochemical companies may also consider collaborating with tech companies to advance precision-farming and other approaches. As part of the farming community, the agrochemicals industry has a responsibility towards both farmers and the people.

DATA DRIVE

Far from celebration

ALTHOUGH THE NEW year is supposed to start on a cheery note, for India problems abound. As the economy steps into a new year, the government will have a lot, besides the political front, to deal with. The economy is nowhere near recovery, and GDP data highlights growing concerns. The second-quarter GDP slumped to 4.5%, declining for the sixth straight quarter. Although base effect may help overcome this, estimates suggest that Indian economy will barely go above 5%—RBI projects the economy to grow at 5.1% in FY20, way off the 7.4% forecast at the start of the year.

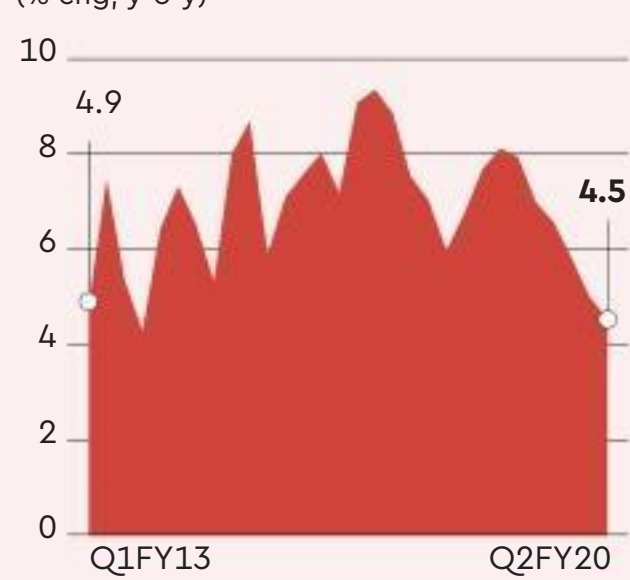
Meanwhile, gross fixed capital formation (investment) has fallen drastically. In the second quarter, it recorded a growth of a mere 1%, much lower than the 11.8% growth recorded in Q2 of FY19. CPI figures are no better. While the low prices were a reprieve from declining growth, but inflation has been rising steadily over the last ten months. November recorded inflation of 5.56% (just a shade below the 6% RBI ceiling). IIP, on the other

hand, has been in the negative for the last three months. Even auto sales show no sign of recovery. Two-wheeler sales, a proxy for rural consumption, have been in the negative for a full year now. Gross tax revenues are no better, tax collections till October have only increased 1.22% over last year. GST collections have also slumped. With credit growth numbers also showing a decline, nothing seems to be working for the Indian economy. The high-frequency data show that the third quarter is going to be no better. India needs structural reforms if it is to regain the tag of the fastest-growing economy. Otherwise, it shall stand reduced to its earlier moniker of fragile five.

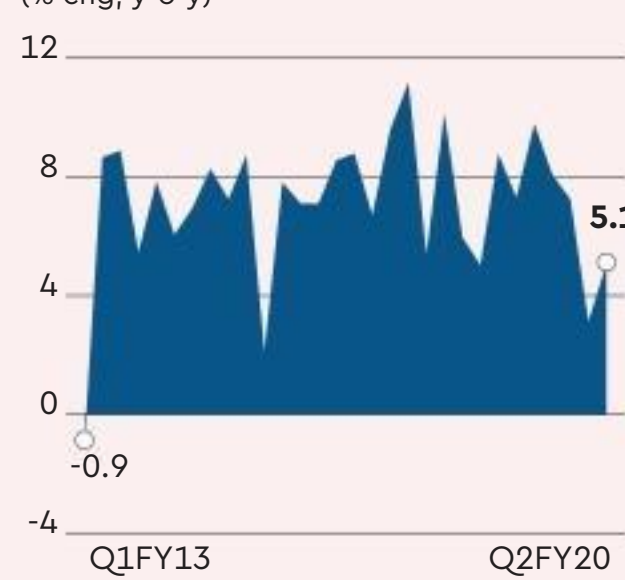


GDP is falling, so are investments. And, private consumption has declined

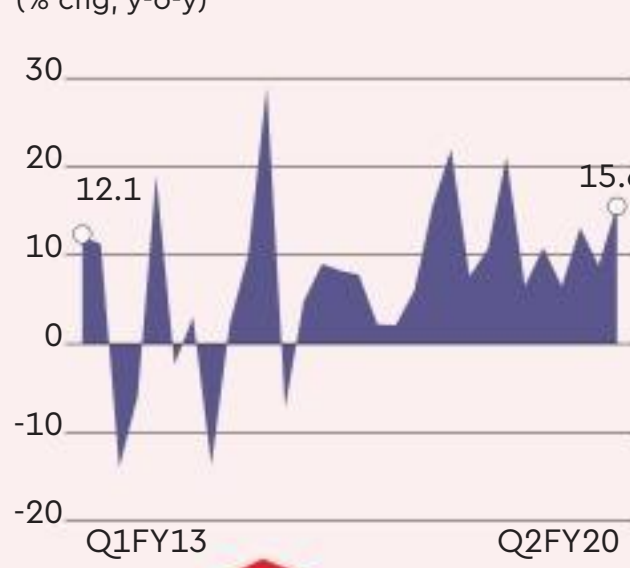
GDP (2011-12 prices)
(% chg, y-o-y)



Pvt final consumption expenditure
(% chg, y-o-y)



Govt final consumption expenditure
(% chg, y-o-y)

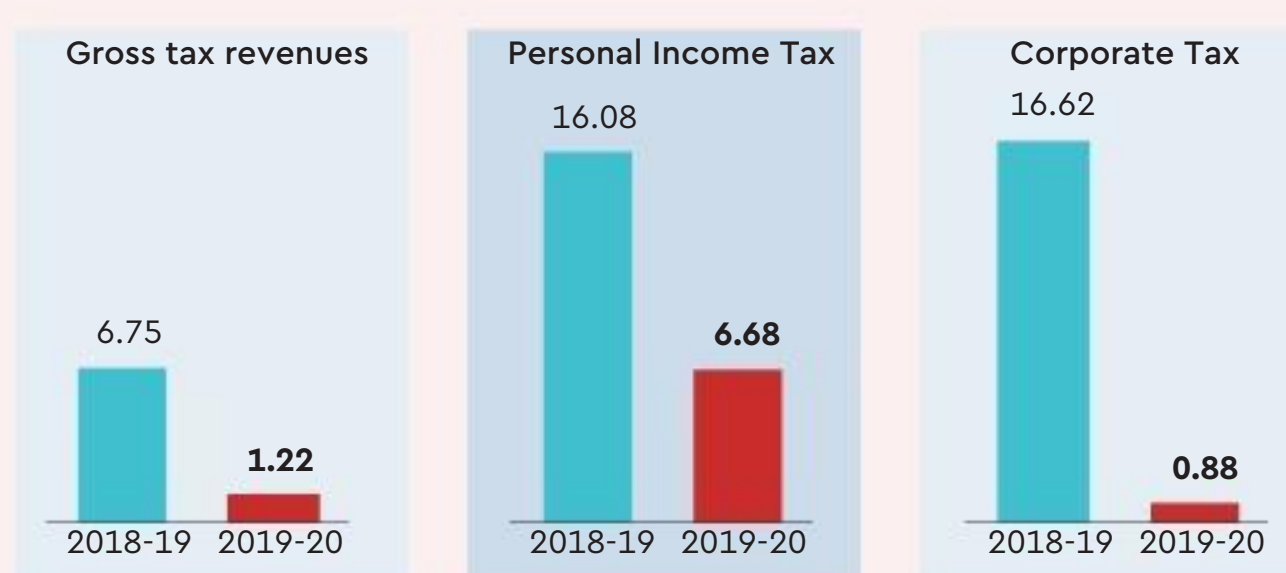


Gross fixed capital formation
(% chg, y-o-y)

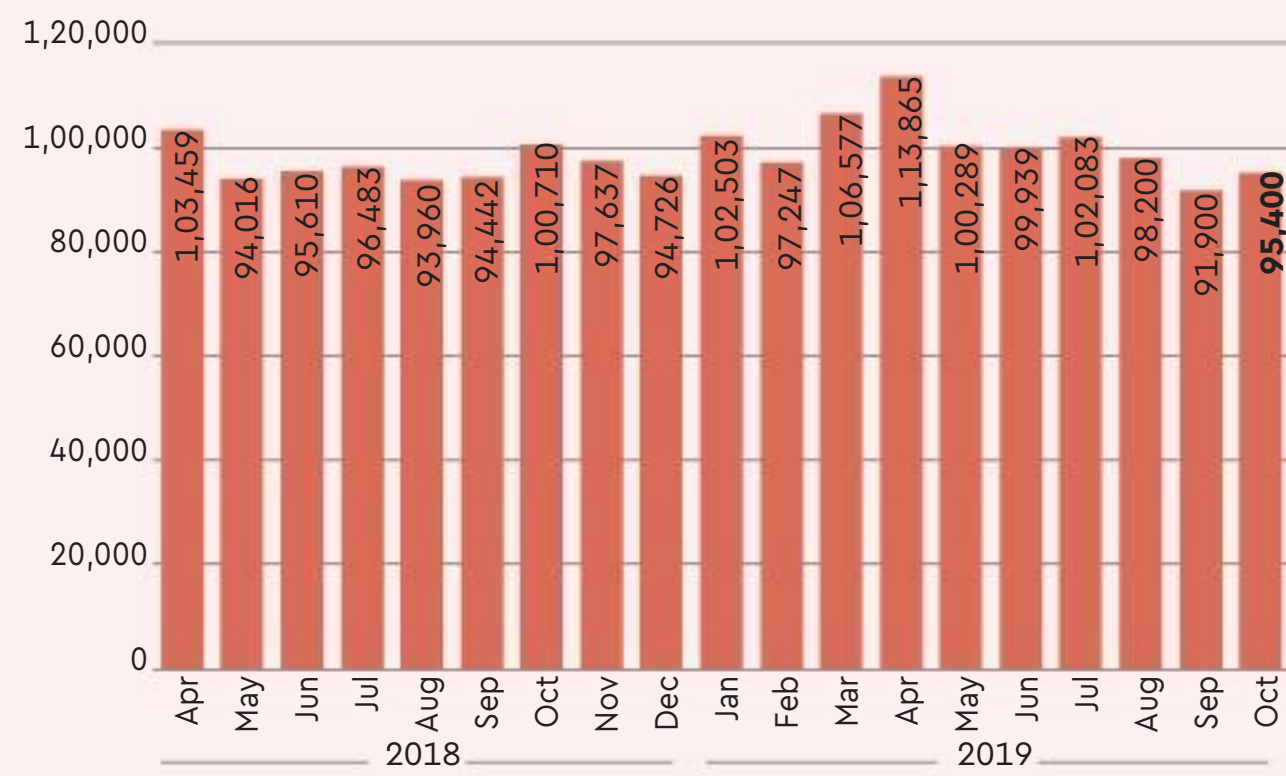


Tax collections provide no reprieve

(FY till October, % change, y-o-y)

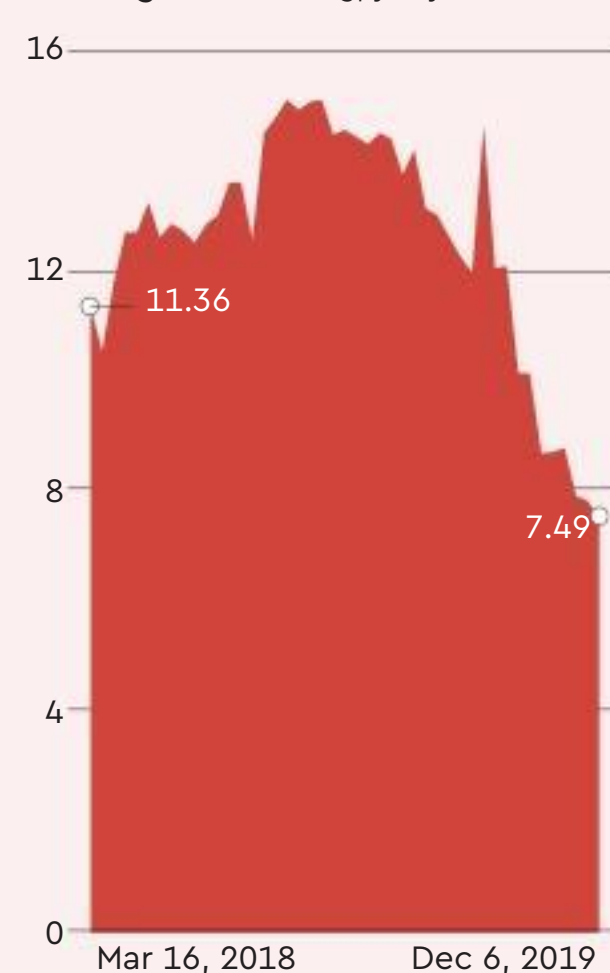


GST (₹ cr)

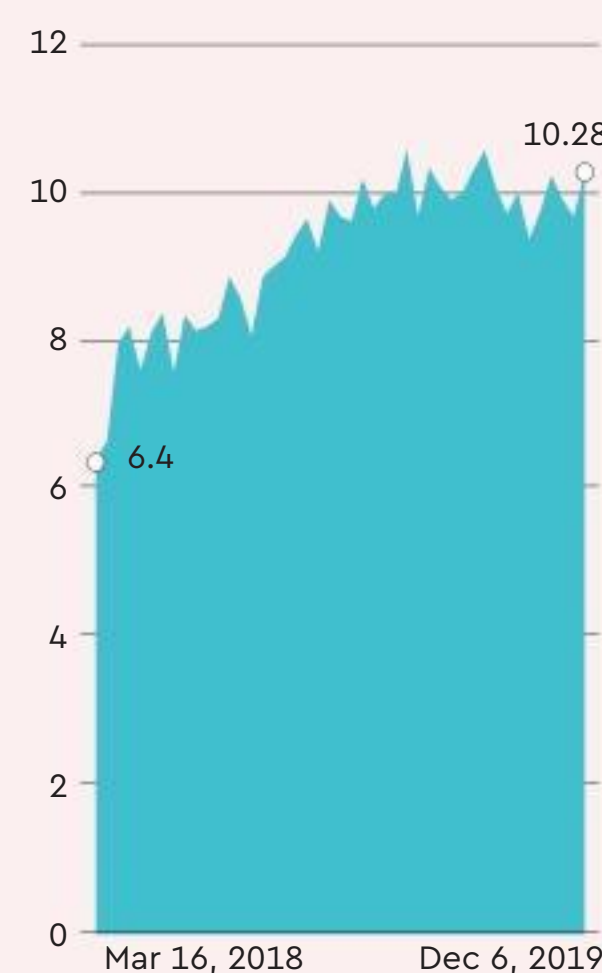


Deposits rise, credit growth slips

Credit growth (% chg, y-o-y)



Deposit growth (% chg, y-o-y)



Source: RBI

While consumer prices are rising

Consumer Price Index (Base 2012=100, % change, y-o-y)



IIP has slumped

(% change, y-o-y, Base 2011-12)



So, have auto sales

Passenger vehicles Two-wheeler (% chg, y-o-y)





The IndianEXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

THOU SHALT

Shifting burden of proof on citizens, telling them that rights are bounded but duties are not — this isn't sabka vishwas

THE GOVERNMENT ASKS the people to believe it when it says that the new Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) is not discriminatory, that the unsettling National Register of Citizens (NRC) process has nothing to do with the CAA and the National Population Register is not a precursor to the NRC. But even as the government asks for the trust of its citizens, it simultaneously makes clear that it does not trust them. And that the onus of proving trustworthiness is, primarily, not on government, but on the people. This shifting of the burden of proof lies behind many of the statements and assertions emanating from the top echelons of government in recent days. In Lucknow this week, for instance, in a state which has seen the maximum number of incidents of brutal police action and the heaviest death toll during the anti-CAA mobilisations, Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke only of the alleged damage to public property by protesters. He exhorted those responsible for it to “ask themselves if their path was right”. And described citizens as bearers not of rights, but duties — “kartavya” and “dayitva” over “adhikar”. Rights are bounded and constrained, “Haq ki ek maryada hai, ek dayra hai, sama hai”, he said, but duties are not, “lekin dayitva, kartavya ki bhavna bahut vyapak hai”.

This change of emphasis, this inversion, is significant and consequential. With the burden of accountability placed squarely on the shoulders of the citizen, it lets the government off the hook. While the citizen squirms in the spotlight, the government, quite literally, gets away with it. For, it is the citizen who must be always on test, who must prove herself constantly. If in the current moment, she is being asked not about her anxieties and apprehensions about the government's new law, but to account for the purported damage to public property instead, she has been similarly challenged to prove good citizenship and patriotism in earlier times — by demonstrating she is not a hoarder of black money (demonetisation), by despite-it-all compliance with tangled tax laws (GST), or by showy solidarity with the Indian army, no questions asked (Balakot). The National Register of Citizens process, which demands proof of belonging from citizens, is a culmination of this larger paradigm shift.

As citizens scramble to make the cut, present documents, do their duty, the government evades the questions on a deepening economic slowdown, on the dwindling of jobs, on the rise of anxiety and waning of optimism, or on a law that violates the letter and spirit of the Constitution by introducing religion as a criterion for citizenship. It was another country and a different time, but the last regime that sought to talk up fundamental duties over and above fundamental rights, was the one that inserted the former in the Constitution as an attempt to subdue citizens and distract attention from its own attempts to curb their rights and freedoms — the government of Indira Gandhi, during the Emergency.

UNCERTAIN STILL

Recently declared results of Afghan elections are not the last word. There is more to come

PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA Modi tweeted congratulations to President Ashraf Ghani of Afghanistan for his election victory, but the Ministry of External Affairs has rightly been more cautious. The recently declared results of the September 28 Afghan elections are only preliminary, and there is a long way yet to go for the final results. Ghani has polled over 50 per cent of the 1.86 votes counted, but has crossed the half-way mark by an extremely thin margin of some 11,600 votes. The results have been contested by his nearest rival Abdullah Abdullah, who polled 39.5 per cent of the votes and has questioned the validity of the counting. He wants 3,00,000 votes invalidated for various irregularities, including that at least a third of them seem to have been cast after voting hours. Protests by his supporters stalled the counting for days, one of the reasons for the delay in announcing this tentative result. The Independent Election Complaints Commission will look into all the complaints, and it could be another month by the time final results are declared. If it takes on board Abdullah's demand for invalidating a substantial number of votes, a second round run-off between the two top candidates is not ruled out.

With the votes divided on ethnic lines — the Pashtun south seems to have voted with Ghani and the non-Pashtun north with Abdullah — the stability of any new government will need the co-operation of all political actors, especially as they all have to deal eventually with a force that has been inimical to the election process and the idea of a democratic Afghanistan. Even as it engaged in talks with the US for the withdrawal of American troops, the Taliban carried out violent attacks in the run-up to the election. The fear of bombings and violence on election day had an impact on the turn-out, the lowest for any election, post 9/11, and in many areas under Taliban control, polling stations could not open. The recently resumed US peace talks with the Taliban, after they were called off abruptly by President Donald Trump just ahead of the election, bring more uncertainty into the mix.

But with weeks to go, if not months, before the tortuously slow election process comes up with the final results, it would be no surprise either if the US announces that it has reached an agreement with the Taliban — the two sides were close at the time of Trump's cancellation — even before a government has taken office in Kabul. At this point, it is difficult to be optimistic about Afghanistan.

UP AND AWAY

The Mig-27 flies into the sunset, bringing a bitter-sweet career to an end

CHAPTER IN the history of the Indian Air Force (IAF) came to an end with the last of the Mig-27 fighter aircraft flying into the sunset at Jodhpur on Friday, 35 years after they were first inducted. Not only will it be the last of the Mig-27s, it will also be one of the last aircraft from the Mig family of fighter jets with the IAF. The first Mig, which stands for the tongue twisting Mikoyan-Gurevich, came from the erstwhile Soviet Union, in the aftermath of the 1962 Chinese debacle — selected over competing aircraft offered by the United States — and soon to be made in India.

The Migs went on to be the major warhorse of the IAF, serving with aplomb in the 1965 and 1971 wars against Pakistan, and the Mig-27 particularly rendered yeoman service during the Kargil conflict, where it flew under strict operating limitations imposed by the political leadership. Its performance surprised the Pakistanis, but it perhaps equally surprised the IAF which had worried about the moniker of “flying coffins” attached to Mig aircraft after multiple crashes. The Migs again proved their mettle in the short aerial combat after the Balakot strike, where the IAF claimed that Wing Commander Abhinandan had shot down a Pakistani F-16 even though he was himself shot down and taken captive in the bargain.

The Mig-27 will go but no obituaries will be written for it, as it leaves the IAF with a severe shortage of fighter jets in its fleet. Authorised 42 squadrons, it has two-thirds that number in its kitty. If India faces a military crisis in the near future, along with “God and the soldier we adore”, the much maligned Mig-27 aircraft will be remembered as well.



CHRISTOPHE JAFFRELOT

WE DONT KNOW if India invented non-violent civil disobedience — sometimes, mistakenly referred to as passive resistance. But India is certainly the first country where this form of protest was practised on a large scale under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, who ascribed it to the Hindu/Jain notion of *ahimsa*. Exactly a hundred years ago, the Non-Cooperation Movement to protest the Jallianwala Bagh massacre set the tone for the satyagrahas that marked the freedom movement. This method of protest became the hallmark of several movements against oppression in post-independent India. The JP Movement, which precipitated the declaration of Emergency in 1975, is a case in point.

Today, the Subcontinent is returning to this peaceful mode of popular protest. In Pakistan, the Pashtuns have reactivated the legacy of Abdull Ghaflar Khan, also called Bacha Khan and Frontier Gandhi because his stronghold was located in the North West Frontier Province. The Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (Pashtun Protection Movement or PTM), formed after Nageebullah Mehsud — originally from Waziristan — was killed in a police encounter in Karachi on January 13, 2018, draws inspiration from Frontier Gandhi's movement. The extra-judicial killing has led to rallies in support of the human rights of Pashtuns. But these spontaneous protests have also been precipitated by other problems that the Pashtuns in the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) are facing. The merger of FATA with the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province hasn't mitigated the area's problems, including that of the landmines left behind by the Taliban. The peaceful protests by PTM followers have been met by repression. The army and paramilitary forces have allegedly forced dissenting voices to “disappear” (hence the “missing persons syndrome”); they have also killed dozens of peaceful demonstrators. Even then, the PTM has been steadfast about protesting in a non-violent manner.

This is also the attitude of most of the Indian demonstrators who have marched against the Citizenship Amendment Act and the National Register of Citizens which they

Subcontinent is witnessing revival of non-violent movements, to protect constitutional values

Ahimsa 2.0

consider as unconstitutional. This non-violent movement has been subjected to intense repression. More than 24 people have been killed so far, most of them in BJP-ruled Uttar Pradesh. The violence by police in the BJP-ruled states against students on university campuses or against peaceful demonstrators has been recorded on videos made on mobile phones — so has the alleged destruction of private properties, including cars, by the custodians of law. This is the era of Ahimsa 2.0, where social media makes it impossible for the state to escape testimonies of committed eyewitnesses, even when there is an internet shutdown. Something similar is happening in the case of the protests by the Pashtuns — those who want to know what is happening do remain informed, irrespective of how the mainstream media engages with the protests.

In Pakistan, PTM leaders have been presented as traitors working for foreign powers. And, in India, several TV channels have characterised non-violent demonstrators as hooligans by repeatedly screening a select number of incidents.

The first challenge that a non-violent protest faces, always, is to remain non-violent in the face of repression and activities of agents provocateurs. Mahatma Gandhi suspended the Non Cooperation Movement in 1922 after Chauri Chaura for that reason. The second challenge pertains to the sustainability of such a movement. As Gandhi used to say, non-violence is not for the coward. It demands a lot of physical courage — a resolve that may weaken gradually in the face of incessant repression. If ahimsa took India to freedom and helped Nelson Mandela defeat apartheid, it failed in China where the Dalai Lama could not stop Beijing from repressing Tibetans and annihilating their culture. Non-violence can work only when states and societies are amenable to moral pressure and likely to develop feelings of guilt. It is bound to fail when the rulers and/or the majorities that support them dehumanise the protestors — whether they are ethnic groups, religious communities or political movements. If moral pressures are a key factor, exter-

As Gandhi used to say, non-violence is not for the coward. It demands a lot of physical courage — a resolve that may weaken gradually in the face of incessant repression. If ahimsa took India to freedom and helped Nelson Mandela defeat apartheid, it failed in China where the Dalai Lama could not stop Beijing from repressing Tibetans and annihilating their culture.

WARS AND PEACE

Imran Khan makes distinction between ‘our’ wars and ‘theirs’. All have taken high toll



KHALED AHMED

ON NOVEMBER 14, Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan talked about the unwisdom of “fighting others' wars” — instead of, presumably, Pakistan's own wars. He said that “Pakistan would no more join any alliance for any other country's war” but “rather play the role of a bridge-builder”. PM Khan referred to the Afghan jihad of the 1980s and the American “war on terror” following the 9/11 crisis. He regretted that the “foreign funding” that flowed into Pakistan's coffers in return for fighting these wars was nothing compared to the cost paid by the country.

Khan is right in saying that no state that is serious about its developmental targets should ever think of war — this requires limitless realism and rejection of nationalism and its adjuncts of pride and conquest. But the truth is that Pakistan has fought certain wars as an “aligned” state when it was in dire need of financial help. It has also fought wars that its allies in the West didn't like. Yet, it failed to avoid the kind of fallout that Khan wishes to avoid. The question is which wars were more damaging for Pakistan.

The practical truth is that when Pakistan fought “others' wars”, it got some money for the material and spiritual damages it suffered but when it fought its own wars it didn't get any money. Moreover, it never really recovered from the damage suffered during these wars. Khan opposes Pakistan's decision to take part in the post-9/11 war in Afghanistan in 2011 which took place under a Chapter 7 resolution of the UN Security

Council on which India, like the rest of the world, had consented to become an ally.

An “international army” of “terrorists” was prepared with American and Saudi funds, and Pakistan, in Khan's words, “trained” this army in terrorism. The irony is that when Pakistan finally turned on its own terrorist outfit called Taliban, Khan and his party sided with this outfit. Khan was “chosen” by this group as its “vakil” (legal representative). At that time, Pakistan was getting out of a “war of others” by getting rid of the Taliban, but that wasn't palatable to Khan.

Then there were wars fought by Pakistan as “Pakistan's own wars” with disastrous results and no international support. It fought the 1965 war against India based on its “moral” stance on Kashmir. It used the weapons it had got from the Western allies for fighting the Soviet Union and thus lost international support. There is no evidence that this “national” war against India gave Pakistan any advantage in its internal development. There is, however, evidence that the 1965 war actually sowed the seeds of disagreement between its two wings leading, in 1971, to the fall of East Pakistan and the creation of Bangladesh.

The ironies springing from Pakistan's “own wars” are hard to stomach as we blame “other states” for what happened even in this case. The common denominator in the military defeats suffered by Pakistan is dominance of the country's army and a succession of martial laws. This dominance continues and PM Khan will have to rethink his wisdom about wars in 2019.

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The last war which Pakistan fought as its own war, and not “for American money”, was the Kargil war of 1999. It suffered a defeat more humiliating than the 1971 war. But instead of stock-taking, this “national war” strengthened the very elements who had undertaken this stupid misadventure. Its planner-executioner, then Army chief General Pervez Musharraf, staged a coup against the democratically elected government of Nawaz Sharif, grabbing the reins of power for nearly a decade. An already crippled economy, struggling under the weight of sanctions imposed by the US after the previous year's nuclear tests, had to cough up \$2 billion for the botched war. And, in the eyes of the world, Pakistan was now a dangerously unstable state led by military officers with little or no accountability.

In conclusion, fighting any war in this day and age is disastrous for the state but fighting others' wars still comes out better than fighting the “patriotic” ones. PM Khan has, though, turned a new leaf by calling out to India to start cross-border trade and embark on a “normalisation” of relations. This means eschewing all kinds of wars — even though fighting “others' wars” still looks a bit more attractive than Pakistan's “own wars”.

The writer is consulting editor, Newsweek Pakistan

DECEMBER 21, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

COUP IN KABUL
AFGHANISTAN PRESIDENT HAFIZULLAH Amin was overthrown in a coup by Babrek Karmel, a former prime minister, Kabul Radio reported. The coup came as Soviet troops and equipment poured into the country to aid in an offensive against anti-communist rebels by the government, now reportedly overthrown. There was no word on Karmel's position on Soviet-Afghanistan relations. The Iranian news agency, Pars, said Karmel announced he had taken power in a broadcast. In his message, Karmel promised “democratic freedoms for all the masses, the release of all political prisoners, and the creation of jobs for the unemployed.” A curfew until

dawn was ordered and people urged to stay indoors. BBC, quoting sources in Washington, said street fighting was underway in Kabul between government forces and insurgents. US officials said reports from Kabul indicated “some involvement of Soviet military personnel” in street fighting in the capital. These officials said they did not yet have “solid information” but Soviet military personnel were reported to be moving about the city.

SOVIET-IRAN TIES
THE SOVIET UNION has assured the Iranian ambassador in Moscow, Mohammed Mokri, that it “will not remain idle” if the US attempts “armed aggression” against Iran. This

statement has been accompanied according to intelligence reports by Soviet troop movement in the area.

RIOTS IN HYDERABAD
OVER 15 BUSINESS and residential premises and a place of worship were set on fire in a fresh outbreak of communal violence in the old city area of Hyderabad. At least 20 persons were injured. The trouble was sparked off by a clash between workers of the Majlis Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen and the Janata Party. Police lobbed teargas shells to disperse a stone-throwing mob of about 1,000 persons. Thirty persons have so far been arrested and 29 cases of arson and looting registered.



The difficulty of being honest

The honest go on, driven by an inner force that borders on recklessness. A society that creates hurdles to exhaust the honest or wound them, paves the path for its own perdition



ASHOK LAVASA

“HONESTY IS THE best policy” was a favourite topic of debates in school. It is another matter that both sides — for and against — ended up supporting the motion; the only point of difference being whether honesty was its own reward or it came with an avoidable cost.

One could wonder at the wisdom in this dictum. A policy by definition is something that is adopted after weighing the pros and cons of various alternatives. It is defined as “a way of behaving that you think is best in a particular situation”, or as “prudent or expedient conduct or action”. In either case, it is a well-considered approach, not merely the ingrained response of an individual based on inherent values.

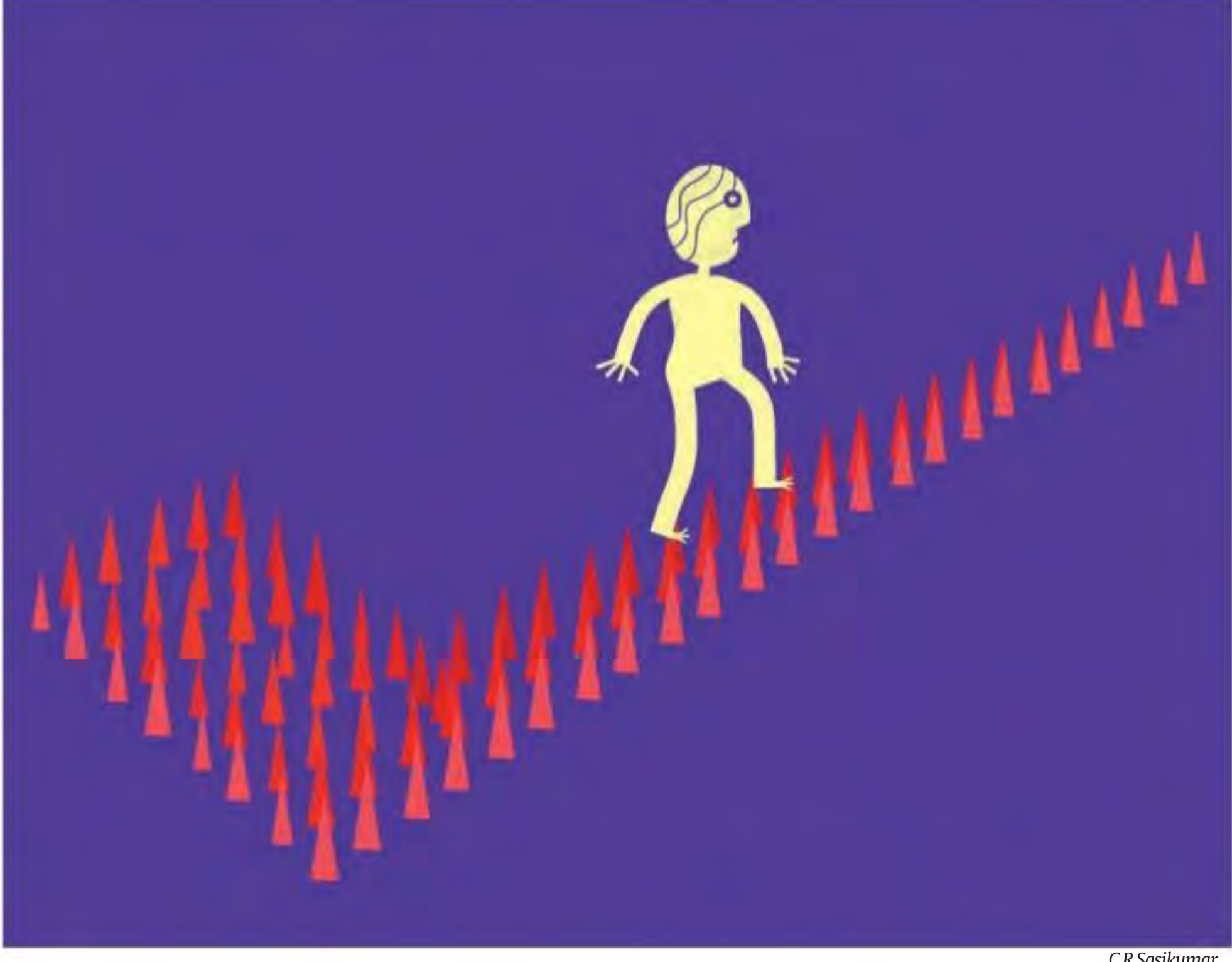
Is honesty to be understood as a pragmatic way of dealing with situations or is it simply an ethical response to any given situation influenced by an individual's character? When an individual is faced with a dilemma of making a choice, he either responds instinctively or makes a well-reasoned decision. For instance, an auto driver finding a passenger's purse in his vehicle, may decide to look for the passenger, deposit the purse in a police station, or report the matter to his owner. As long as he doesn't keep the money with him, he may have acted honestly. His honest act may or may not be rewarded, but he has chosen to exchange the pleasure of pocketing the money with the comfort of his conscience.

That, however, is a simplistic example. Honesty as a policy always comes with a price. It demands a premium like an insurance policy, although it might appear not to command a premium or provide any insurance. The path of honesty, like dharma, is straight yet seldom simple. It often turns out to be tortuous, consumes more energy, sometimes even damaging the vehicle because of unfavourable road conditions. The honest, however, go on regardless, perhaps driven by an inner force that borders on recklessness. A society that creates hurdles which exhaust the honest or wound them paves the path for its own perdition.

At the same time, should honesty be an obsession? Should it drive itself so hard that nothing survives save itself? No system would benefit by such a compulsive pursuit of a sacrosanct principle that believes in preserving itself regardless of the outcome of the task at hand. No system can be productive if it is obsessed with defining the idea of honesty narrowly and subjecting everyone to a hidebound, arbitrary ideal. The outcome of such a narrow approach would be a society of persons with their chastity belts seemingly intact but with little else to show.

Honesty is not a fetish to be preserved and worshipped without being practised. It is like keeping a toilet clean without using it. Toilets are meant to be used; if kept clean they will be used more.

The honest, one could say, are those who are honest to their job and achieve the desired result by adopting honest means, being neither unduly swayed by the pressure to perform at all costs nor weighed down by passive principles that shackle performance. For example, in the case of a civil servant, accommodating popular expectations is not necessarily an act of dishonesty; suc-



C R Sasikumar

cumbing to the pressure of the present is.

If a public servant decides to accommodate the genuine concerns of an individual without compromising public interest, it cannot be termed a dishonest act. Interventions to resolve such individual difficulties cannot be treated as favours to individuals. Discretion at senior level becomes necessary because sometimes people find it impossible to wade through the mire of regulations and deal with the cussedness of the system that disregards the peculiarities of an individual situation. Obsession with the appearance of non-discretionary application of rules would create an army of inert bureaucrats who would delight more in the preservation of rules than finding solutions to problems.

The Prevention of Corruption Act is meant to be a deterrent against exercising judgement with malafide intent; if it throttles individual initiative taken in right earnest, bureaucrats would be more servants and less civil. Civil servants have to solve problems without being shackled by the fear that their discretion in resolving a difficulty could be regarded as acts of undue benevolence. If their ability to resolve problems is curbed by such a shining armour around them, civil servants may end up as an unscathed army of defeated warriors.

The essential characteristic of an honest person is that he or she is truthful. His action is based on an inner voice that guides him to make a distinction between what is right and what is wrong, generally influenced by the prevailing law, his moorings and morality. There is seldom a conscious risk analysis of consequences. Therein lies the difficulty of being good. Some would call it foolhardiness, bravado or tactlessness; tact being the “kawach” of successful civil servants.

There is a price for honesty as for everything else in life. Being prepared to pay that price, directly or by way of collateral damage, is part of the honest act. The price depends on who bears the brunt of honest ac-

The Prevention of Corruption Act is meant to be a deterrent against exercising judgment with mala fide intent; if it throttles individual initiative taken in right earnest, bureaucrats would be more servants and less civil. Civil servants have to solve problems without being shackled by the fear that their discretion in resolving a difficulty could be regarded as acts of undue benevolence. If their ability to resolve problems is curbed by such a shining armour around them, civil servants may end up as an unscathed army of defeated warriors.

The sermon is that honesty is its own reward and it is recognised in the long run. In the real world, “the long run” could be unpredictably long. A quiet and prolonged grind could follow the fleeting drone of feeble praise. It is naïve to expect those that have been opposed by the honest to meekly accept the ascendancy of the meek. They strike back and the price for the honest could be in the form of lonely suffering, even noticeable isolation. The honest could be shunned by friends and foe alike. It is an interesting interplay between those who dread the fearlessness of the honest and those that fear the generally dreaded. It would be mawkish to think that those who do not stand by the honest are dishonest. People are generally good; they are also generally timid. Fear cannot always be associated with evil, just as fearlessness cannot be always associated with good. The absence of fear gives courage. Without courage honesty is a pathetic virtue. The honest may not be physically strong or powerful; they have courage and that courage is their strength. Those that do not stand by them in that hour of grief, need or isolation, might not be courageous. They are like spectators who rise to applaud after the drama. Even if they empathise with the actor, they don't take part in the play. They may watch the protagonist suffer, even shed a tear at his plight, offer a silent prayer in his favour and wait for the denouement before they laud his part. They are either happy at the outcome or rue the tragedy. After all, what is drama if there are no silent spectators? They face the dilemma of “to be or not to be”. As far as the protagonist is concerned, however lowly or mighty he might be, he is convinced that his honest deed, whether instinctive or a conditioned response of his character, is the best policy after all.

The writer is a member of the Election Commission of India

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

Devilry has always made for better box office than doing the right thing. Rebellion, especially against divine goodness, requires an unusual and compelling level of intellectual vigour and vim. — THE GUARDIAN

Legality is not enough

Even if a law passes the legal test, it may still be repressive, can instil fear in communities



KAPIL SIBAL

I AM BOTH saddened and concerned about the public discourse that we witness on television channels over the Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019.

Bhaktis contend that since Parliament has cleared the legislation, those opposing it should await the outcome of the challenge in the court or come to power in 2024 to undo it, as if peaceful protests are not part of our constitutional vocabulary. History has witnessed, often enough, the tyranny of the majority. The minority is seldom oppressive. Majoritarian diktats can never be legitimised by the passage of bills in Parliament. These thoughtless denizens should know that courts have often delegitimised legislation by striking them down. Also, courts have on occasion erred in upholding laws that are unconstitutional. Remember, the right to protest peacefully is a fundamental right. No argument, no court, no majority can diminish it.

Bhaktis then contend that this was part of the BJP's manifesto, and having won by a bigger margin in 2019, the legislation is no more than honouring its commitment to the people. Again, the argument is a non-starter. A commitment cannot be clothed with legality merely because a majoritarian government got it passed in Parliament. Even if the law passes the test of legality, it may still be repressive, can instil fear and target communities. Remember, Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code was good law, and yet targeted communities. Even though it has been struck down, the community is still targeted. Legality on most occasions is divorced from reality. Discrimination is an ugly word. The Constitution abhors it, yet people both embrace and encourage it.

A political party which has a discriminatory, divisive agenda cannot occupy the high moral ground because it won an election by including a divisive agenda in its manifesto.

The most ill-conceived argument is that both the law and its makers are being unduly vilified. They only seek to clear the way for members of certain persecuted communities, including Hindus, to be conferred the status of citizens, even if they have illegally entered India from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. The assumption is that they illegally entered India because they were persecuted in these Islamic countries whereas Muslims who entered India without papers were mere illegal migrants.

There are serious fallacies in this argument. First, one wonders how the government knows of the individual intentions of all non-Muslim illegal immigrants. Two, none of them have claimed at the time that they entered India illegally that they were being persecuted. Nor have they made any such claim thereafter to any authority in

India. They certainly are not refugees, since a refugee is one who seeks refuge and thus claims protection. One wonders how the BJP, and that too in 2019, came to the conclusion that all non-Muslims namely Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists, Jains and Parsis were all persecuted when they illegally entered India. For Amit Shah to say that this was a part of the BJP's commitment in the 2014 manifesto is a lie. Apart from a fleeting reference to welcoming Hindus, persecuted around the world, to seek refuge in India, being their natural home, the manifesto nowhere refers to persecuted non-Muslims as claimed. It only referred to the demands of refugees from Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK). The word “refugee” is not mentioned anywhere else.

With reference to the Northeast, the manifesto refers to illegal immigrants (not “refugees”) impacting local people's livelihood and employment. In the 2019 election manifesto, the BJP mentioned the problem of illegal immigration (not “refugees”) in the Northeast and committed to address that problem by initiating a National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam, to be expanded in phases to the rest of India. In it, the BJP also committed to enact a Citizenship Amendment Bill for the protection of individuals of religious minority communities from neighbouring countries escaping persecution and to also clear the apprehensions of those living in Assam who had agitated against all (whether “Hindu or Muslim”) illegal migrants' entry into the state which threatened to destabilise their socio-cultural identity. There was no mention of limiting this exercise to Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. In 2014, and prior thereto, the BJP never mentioned “persecution” of other religious minorities in the neighbourhood, with reference to the Northeast or to the rest of India, except for refugees from POK. How then did the BJP suddenly wake up to this problem only in 2019?

The answer perhaps lies in the fact that lakhs of Hindus were excluded from the NRC in Assam. An attempt was made, first in the Supreme Court, to reject the exercise and carry out a review. That did not work. For the BJP, to allow such exclusion of Hindus to continue, would have been politically suicidal. The only way out was to initiate the CAB to declare all illegal immigrants, other than Muslims, as having been persecuted in the three named Islamic countries through a legislative presumption. If this is allowed, the next step is an NRC exercise in the rest of the country designed to deny all Muslims with no documents the status of citizens. Others who also have no papers will be presumed to have been persecuted, and will therefore be granted the status of citizens.

This demonic political agenda must not succeed. If it does, our body politic will have been amputated and our Republic scarred. Those rejected will lose their homeland, and we, our brothers and sisters. A partition of exclusion is in the offing. If it happens, the outcome is anybody's guess.

The writer, a senior Congress leader, is a former Union minister

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

EXAMPLE SPURNED

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘A more progressive act’ (IE, December 27). The now-lapsed RTI law of Jammu and Kashmir should have been an example for the rest of the country. Providing information under RTI should be seen as part of the Right to Know under Article 19. Instead, the RTI has been systematically chipped away by successive governments.

Akash Mishra via e-mail

ARMY AND POLITICS

THIS REFERS TO the editorials, ‘Towards jointness’ (IE, December 26) and ‘Crossing a line’ (IE, December 27). The army chief has issued a political statement and the army is not immune to political influences. Will an head of the combined services stop this? Today, a former Army chief is a Union minister. There must be a five-year cooling period before a high-ranked armed forces personnel can join politics.

Suchak D Patel, Ahmedabad

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Crossing a line’ (IE, December 27). It criticises the army chief for advising the leaders of protesters, particularly university and college students, against indulging in violence. But the army chief did not question their right to protest, he did not cast aspersions on their cause. As the head of an organisation in which discipline is supreme he was well within his right to counsel restraint. Violent protests cross the limits of democracy and at times, the army is required to step in. General Bipin Rawat's words should be seen from a broader

LETTER OF THE WEEK

TIGER DOES WELL

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘The right count’ (IE, December 26). It's heartening that India's wild tiger population has increased by more than 30 per cent in four years. But there are worrying signs of tigers not able to disperse outside the protected areas. Tigers are extremely territorial and its range could sometimes be as large as 200 sq km, so they need quite a bit of space. If we want the country's tiger numbers to be stable, the tigers would need to disperse. Habitats are increasingly being encroached upon by developmental projects

Vandana, Chandigarh

perspective of democracy.

Y G Chouksey, Pune

CLEAR THE AIR

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘The perils of misinformation’ (IE, December 27). Union minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi has criticised the opposition parties spreading misinformation about the NRC. However, home minister, Amit Shah, has stated several times, both inside and outside Parliament, that there will be a nationwide NRC. Who is right?

Sanwar Nath Siddh, Churu



PRIYANKA DEO

READ IN ITS entirety, the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) answers each and every false narrative that is currently sparking violence across the country. In simple terms, the CAA will help thousands of religiously persecuted immigrants, hailing from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh, who are currently seeking refuge in India. To the question of why Muslims are not included — they are not a religious minority in any of these three countries. Those eligible will now become citizens of India with rights and will lead a better quality of life. The CAA clearly articulates that no Indian citizen, irrespective of his religion, needs to worry. In fact, it is against the law to exclude a person for being a follower of any religion.

That being said, let's talk about the National Register of Citizens (NRC). It is not about religion at all. Further, the NRC does not exclude transgender, atheist, Adivasis, Dalits, women and those without land with and/or without documents. The rules for a countrywide NRC have not yet being made. But in all probability, going by PIB FAQs, a person will only need show the date and place of birth as per any official document. And, there are a plethora of ways to do this,

The intolerance of liberals

CAA, NRC need to be debated objectively

including, passport, Aadhaar card, driving license, insurance papers, birth certificate, land or house papers, documents issued by public authorities and even the school leaving certificate. Additionally, if a person is illiterate and does not have documents, they can bring witnesses, or any proof that would help. This would then be considered under due process. To add to that, one does not have to prove one's ancestry dating to or before 1971. This was only for the Assam NRC, mandated by the Assam Accord. The NRC procedure for the rest of the country is entirely different and can be read under The Citizen Rules, 2003.

Why am I writing this? I recently interviewed an entrepreneur from Assam who expressed her support for the CAA. I shared this on my Facebook account and was bashed for it by my fellow Harvard alumnus. What shocked me was that the attacks were neither objective nor based on the content of the interview. The attacks were nasty and personal. Keep in mind that these are people I have shared laughs with, spent time with, and respected. I was taken completely off-guard. I was called “a disgrace” by one of them. Another threatened to “take (me) down from

all Harvard networks and groups”. For what? For interviewing a person who did not share their opinion? For expressing a viewpoint that did not match theirs?

I tried to explain the text of the Act, and answered their subjective claims objectively. I also repeatedly implored them to argue objectively, rather than personally — to read the text of the Act and factually point out why they disagreed. What was the reply? Well, let's just say that it started out with language that is unsuitable for a public forum. As these are private citizens, and peers of mine, I will not expose their identity. While I could have responded back, I refused to do so. Despite their insults, I still regard them as respected alumnus of my alma mater. When I do meet them at school gatherings, I will be cordial and will simply agree to disagree.

However, the problem with liberals is that this basic courtesy of conduct is not reciprocated. My Harvard experience taught me to present factually, listen and consider the other side, even though I may not agree with them. If I cannot have an objective debate with my peers, then how can I expect it from any other liberal?

This is precisely why liberals are losing

ground in India. They fail to listen to the other side and do not even consider a viewpoint other than their own. The liberal stance is “my way or the highway”. And, this to me, is detrimental to democratic India. Intelligent people who are bound to have different viewpoints. But, one can never innovate, build, develop, discuss and arrive at the best solution without considering all viewpoints.

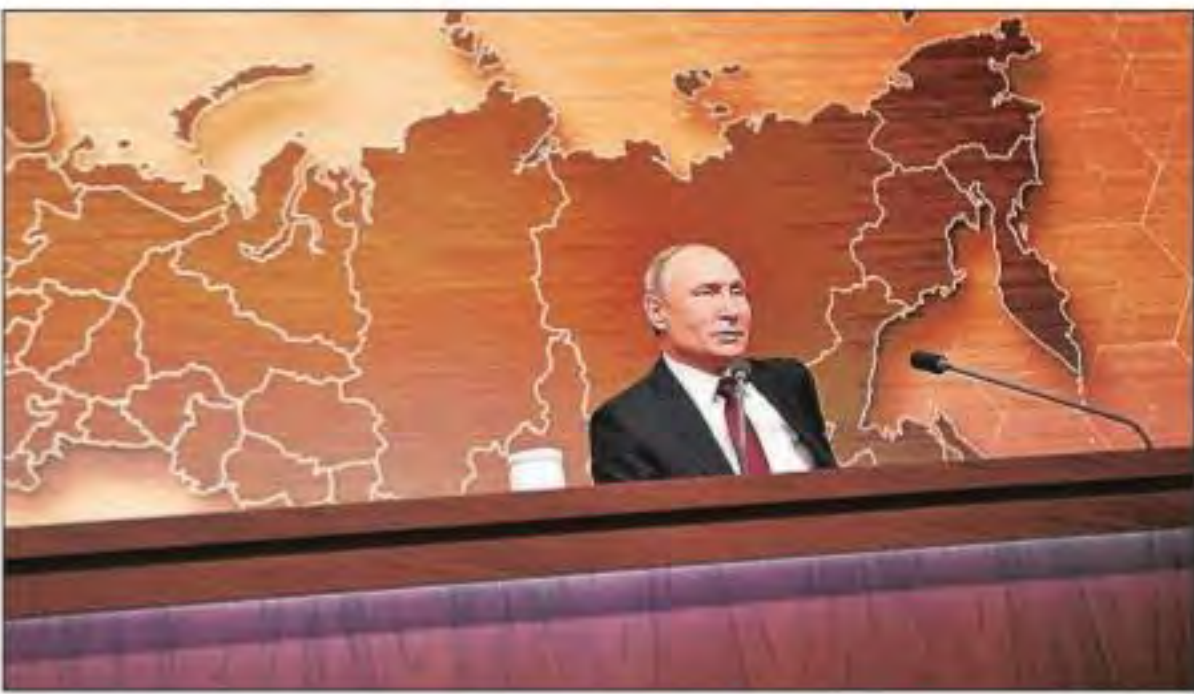
The liberals do not do adopt such an attitude. And, it is sad that this very attitude has resulted in misinformation and fake narratives on CAA and NRC which are currently causing physical injury, death, damage and ill feelings across the country. I find it ironic that the people responsible for this unnecessary violence identify themselves as “liberals”, when actually, it is the open-minded, so called non-liberals, who tolerate their drivel, and focus on putting factual content out there to stop the violence.

Let us debate objectively. Let the facts prevail. Let us not pit rhetoric against facts and expect rhetoric to win. The people of India, I am sure, will be on the side of facts.

The writer is an executive producer and anchor at New India Junction

FACT CHECK, GROUND REALITY

20 YEARS OF PUTIN IN RUSSIA: KEY MILESTONES DURING HIS RULE



Putin has been PM or President since 1999. Sputnik, Kremlin Pool Photo via AP

VLADIMIR PUTIN has been in office as either President or Prime Minister of Russia for two decades now. He was named acting President on December 31, 1999, after having been appointed acting Prime Minister earlier that year. Some of the highlights of Putin's 20 years in power:

1999: Initiation

August 9: During an economic crisis, President Boris Yeltsin names Putin, then little-known security chief, as his acting prime minister (the fifth in less than a year). Yeltsin says he wants Putin to succeed him as President. In the following weeks, bombings across Russia kill more than 300 people, and Putin responds with a crackdown that includes aerial bombing of parts of Chechnya — although critics question if Chechen militants were really behind the bombings in Russia.

December 31: Yeltsin resigns, names Putin acting President.

2000-04: First term

March 26, 2000: Putin wins his first presidential election.

August 12: Nuclear-powered submarine sinks in the Barents Sea after an explosion on board, killing all 118 crew after an explosion. President Putin's image suffers after he comments on the crisis only after four days.

2002: Chechen militants take more than 800 people hostage at a Moscow theatre. Special forces end the siege, but use a poison gas in the process, which kills many of the hostages.

2004-08: Second term

March 2004: Putin wins second term as President with more than 70% of the vote after oil prices fuel a consumer boom and raise living standards, a trend that continues for another four years.

September: Islamist fighters seize more than 1,000 people in a school in southern Russia. A total of 334 hostages are killed, more than half of them children. Some parents say the authorities botched the handling of the siege and blame Putin.

December: Putin scraps direct elections for regional governors, effectively making them Kremlin appointees.

2005: President Putin describes the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union as the "greatest geopolitical catastrophe" of the 20th century.

2006: Investigative journalist Anna Politkovskaya, a critic of human rights abuses in Chechnya, is murdered in Moscow. Kremlin critic Alexander Litvinenko dies in London that same year after being poisoned with a radioactive substance. A British inquiry years later concludes that he was killed by Russian agents.

2007: Putin gives a speech in Munich in which he lashes out at the United States, accusing Washington of the "almost uncontained hyper use of force in international relations".

2008-12: PM & President

May 2008: Because of constitutional limits on serving more than two consecutive presidential terms, Putin becomes Prime Minister instead. His ally, Dmitry Medvedev, becomes President.

August 2008: Russia fights and wins a short war with Georgia.

2012: Putin returns to the presidency, winning re-election with over 60% of the vote after a decision to extend presidential terms to six from four years. Large anti-Putin protests take place before and after the vote, with critics alleging voter fraud.

2012-18: Crimea & Syria

February 27, 2014: Russian forces start annexing Ukraine's Crimea region after Ukrainian protesters oust their country's President Viktor Yanukovich, who was sympathetic to Moscow. Russia incorporates Crimea in March after a referendum condemned by the West. The US and EU impose sanctions on Moscow.

April 2014: Pro-Russian separatist revolt in eastern Ukraine; conflict is still ongoing with more than 13,000 dead. Rebels take control of a vast swathe of territory. Western nations accuse Russia of backing the revolt; Moscow denies direct involvement.

September 30: Russia launches airstrikes in Syria, turning the tide of the conflict in President Bashar al-Assad's favour.

November 2016: Donald Trump is elected President of the United States after promising to improve battered ties with Moscow. US authorities determine that Russia tried to interfere in the election in Trump's favour; Moscow denies it.

March 4, 2018: A former Russian spy, Sergei Skripal, and his daughter are poisoned in England with a nerve agent. They survive but a woman who lives nearby dies after her partner brings home the poison found in a discarded perfume bottle. Britain accuses Russia, which denies involvement.

2018: Until 2024

March 19, 2018: Putin wins a landslide re-election victory and a mandate to stay in office until 2024.

July 2019: Protests break out in Moscow over a municipal election which the opposition says is unfair.

December 2019: President Putin boasts of his country's lead in hypersonic weapons and says other countries are trying to catch up.

Source: Reuters

Why this winter is extra cold

December is always cold in northern India but has been much more so this year. A look at temperature trends, records broken or on the way to being broken, and the possible causes leading to the extreme chill

ANJALI MARAR & AMITABH SINHA
PUNE, DECEMBER 27

EXTREME COLD temperatures, rainfall and intense fog in the months of December and January are not something new for north and northwest India. And yet, this December, north India is feeling the cold much more than earlier. How low have the temperatures been, and why?

What is usual, what is different

Every year, in the second half of December and the first half of January, temperatures routinely drop to 2-4°C at some point of the day in many places in north and northwest India. In December, the maximum daily temperature does not rise beyond 16-18°C in most of Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and western Uttar Pradesh. In Delhi and northern Rajasthan, daily maximum temperatures are usually not over 20-22°C for most of December.

This winter, in many parts of the region, maximum temperatures on some days have been nearly 10°C below normal.

In Delhi, the average maximum temperature for December has been less than 20°C until December 27. This has happened only four times in the last 118 years, and the IMD has said this month would most likely become the second coldest December for Delhi since 1901. The maximum temperatures had averaged 17.3°C in December 1901.

Delhi has clocked 14 consecutive "cold days" at a stretch between December 14 and 27. This is already the longest such spell for December since 1997. That December, consecutive "cold days" lasted for 13 days, out of a total of 17 such days during the month.

How cold is cold

A cold-day condition is said to prevail when the maximum temperature during the day is at least 4.5°C below normal. If the maximum temperature is at least 6.5°C below normal, it is classified as a severe cold day.

Cold-day conditions prevailed in the north since December 15, and intensified after December 21. The most intense cold day — when maximum temperatures fell 7° to over 12°C below normal — was on December 25 over Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, north Rajasthan and some isolated areas in Bihar and Madhya Pradesh.

Conditions 'not unusual'

While the extreme cold in north India could point to some special causes, scientists say there is nothing unusual in the climatic conditions that influence temperatures in this region at this time of the year. The cold wave usually arrives from the west, through the Western Disturbance wind system. This system is also responsible for causing rains in northern and northwestern parts, after having picked up moisture on its way from the Mediterranean Sea. The intensity of the cold also depends on the amount of snow-fall that happens in Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh and nearby areas.

"All these factors have their annual variabilities. They combine in different ways to produce different kinds of winter conditions. If you look at the climatic conditions this year, no special set of circumstances is visible at the macro level that can be held responsible for causing extreme cold. That can imply that the extreme cold being witnessed is just one of the outlying cases of natural variability that we see from year to year," said a former India Meteorological Department (IMD) scientist.



In Delhi, all days from December 14 to 27 fall into 'cold day' classification. Amit Mehra

DAILY MAXIMUM TEMPERATURES (°C)

Date	Delhi	Ambala	Amritsar	Chandigarh	Bareilly	Varanasi
Dec 27 (Deviation)	11.8 (-9.7)	9.1 (-11.4)	9.4 (-11.6)	8.8 (-12.2)	10.6 (-11.6)	11.0 (-12.0)
Dec 26	12.7	9.5	9.8	10.1	12.1	17.6
Dec 25	17.2	13.0	11.0	—	17.0	14.0
Dec 24	14.3	11.5	10.4	—	12.1	19.4
Dec 23	14.6	13.3	12.1	16.8	17.7	22.0
Dec 22	18.0	14.3	16.2	—	19.0	20.0
Dec 21	17.5	16.6	13.2	18.8	15.8	17.0
Dec 20	18.0	13.8	11.5	12.5	13.0	15.0

Source: IMD

A cold-wave condition now prevails in areas north of Jammu and Kashmir, in northern Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and parts of northern Iran. In all these areas, average temperatures have been 1° to 5°C below normal for the last few days. This could add to the chill bring brought about by the Western Disturbances. North-central China and Mongolia are also experiencing similar conditions.

Looking for causes

CLIMATE CHANGE: The unusually cold December this year could just be another instance of extreme climates becoming more and more frequent, a result of climate change. Across the world, the frequency and intensity of both heatwaves and cold waves have increased in the last few years, and are predicted to increase further. The same is the case with extreme rainfall and drought. Just this year, India experienced an unusually wet August and September. The amount of rainfall that September produced was a once-in-a-century event. Scientists also agree that climate change was bringing in greater uncertainty in weather patterns, making them more difficult to predict.

WESTERN DISTURBANCES: Frequent western disturbances varying from moderate to intense have mainly contributed to the severe cold over all of north India this year. In addition, the flow of northwesterly winds over northwest India, that too over much

lower levels, further fuelled the chill factor, making the days much colder than normal during December. This December also witnessed haze, fog and rainfall after the passing of each western disturbance, triggering cold weather conditions over north India.

LOW CLOUDS: This extended cold spell has been triggered due to low stratus clouds that are blanketed over a large geographical area — between Pakistan, cutting across India and running up to Bangladesh. Similarly, it is prevailing over a stretch of 500 km to 800 km north-south, affecting the entire north India. R K Jenamani, senior scientist at IMD's National Weather Forecasting Centre (NWFC), New Delhi, said that formation of such clouds are unique over the Indo-Gangetic Plains (IGP) and that these clouds have been observed only since 1997. "As these clouds are formed at a height of 300 metres to 400 metres from the surface, they largely block the day's sunlight, resulting in cold days," he said.

"The average maximum temperatures for the month stands around 19.8 degrees (in Delhi, until December 27) and with cold days forecast till month end, December 2019 could be the second coldest after 1997. But, the impact could be higher than that experienced in 1997," Jenamani said.

In fact, cold conditions during the daytime can be more dangerous, said Anupam Kashyapi, head of the weather department at IMD, Pune.

THIS WORD MEANS

SNOWEX

How much water does snow contain?

AROUND 1.2 billion people, or nearly one-sixth of the world, depend on seasonal snow and glaciers for their water supply. For a better understanding of how much water is contained in each winter's snowfall and how much will be available when it melts in the spring, NASA has launched a seasonal campaign — part of a five-year programme called SnowEx, initiated in 2016-17.

While the geographical focus of SnowEx is North America, NASA's overall target is optimal strategies for mapping global snow water equivalent (SWE) with remote sensing and models leading to a Decadal Survey "Earth System Explorer" mission. NASA currently has no global satellite mission to track and study SWE. On its website, NASA acknowledges any future snow satellite mission will require observations from an international collection of satellites.

Within its geographic range, SnowEx assesses where snow has fallen, how much there is and how its characteristics change as it melts. It uses airborne measurements, ground measurements and computer modelling. The airborne campaign will fly radar and lidar (light detection and ranging) to measure snow depth, microwave radar and radiometers to measure SWE, optical cameras to photograph the surface, infrared radiometers to measure surface temperature, and hyperspectral imagers for snow cover and composition. Ground teams will measure snow depth, density, accumulation layers, temperature, wetness and snow grain size — the size of a typical particle. This year, real-time computer modelling will be integrated into the campaign as well.

Source: NASA

MGNREGA trends: fewer jobs since July, wider demand-supply gap

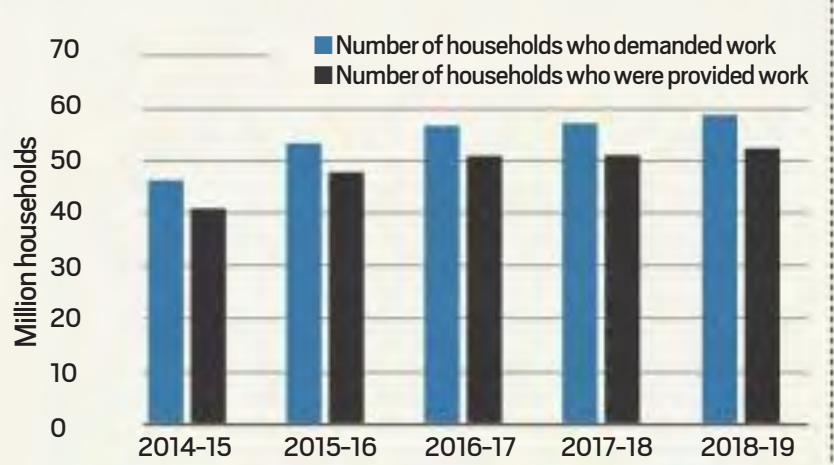
NUSHAIBA IQBAL
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 27

JOBS GENERATED under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) have shown a dip compared to last year after July. This comes even as 2018-19, the year that preceded the Lok Sabha elections, saw a record number of households demanding as well as being provided employment under the flagship rural public works programme.

Reading the numbers

Chart 1 shows the total number of households whose demand for work was registered by the gram panchayat authorities concerned and also the number that were actually provided work (MGNREGA is supposed to guarantee 100 days of total employment to adult members of any rural household that "demands" such employment). In 2018-19, demand was registered from 5.88 crore households, and 5.27 crore of them were provided work. These numbers were the highest, at least during the last five years of the present government. Even in terms of person-days of work generated, the numbers rose from a mere 165.64 crore in 2014-15 (the first year of the Narendra Modi government) to 267.99 crore in 2018-19.

CHART 1: DEMAND & SUPPLY



The current year, however, has witnessed a clear dip in the person-days of employment under MGNREGA, which is visible after July. Significantly, in all the months before, including those leading up to the elections of April-May, the work provided exceeded the corresponding levels for 2018 (*Chart 2*). According to government officials, the fall in MGNREGA employment after July has been largely due to the onset of the southwest monsoon. Rainfall during the monsoon season (June-September) this year was 10% above the historical long-term average — the highest since 1994 — whereas it was 9.4% below average in 2018. An above-normal monsoon meant there was

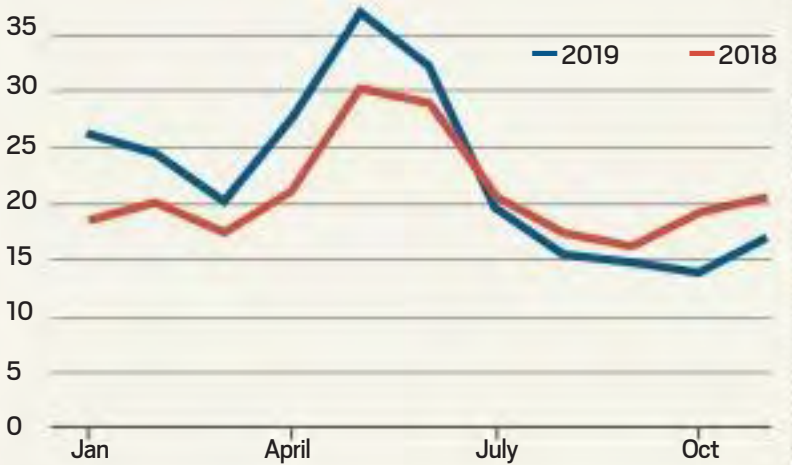
lower demand for MGNREGA work.

However, from *Chart 3*, it can be seen that the gap between the number of households demanding MGNREGA work and the number who were provided work has been the highest in 2019-20. This indicates that even if demand fell, supply of work fell even more.

Lack of funds

The trends raise the question whether all this is linked to lack of funds. For 2019-20, the Modi government has allocated Rs 60,000 crore towards MGNREGA. But out of this budgeted sum, Rs 9,493.80 crore would be required for clearing the liabilities of wages, material and administrative costs for previous

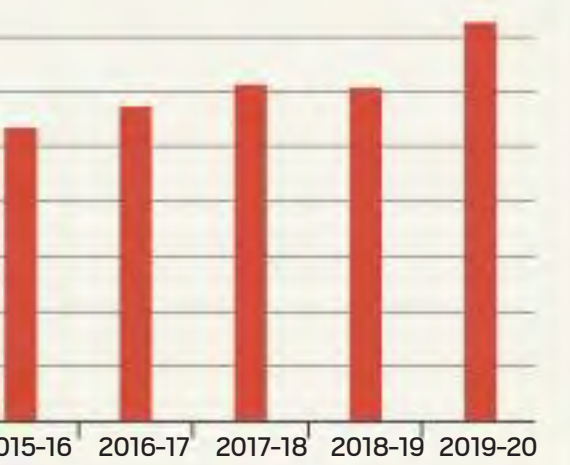
CHART 2: WORK PROVIDED, LAST YEAR & THIS YEAR



years. Nikhil Dey of the advocacy group Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan claimed that in 2018-19, the Centre had asked some state governments to pay wages to workers for February and March in advance and treat this as "loan" that the Centre would repay the states in the new financial year.

The cost of providing a day's work to a single person has been taken at an average of Rs 249.86 for 2019-20. For 270.21 crore person-days of work that was approved, the MGNREGA labour budget alone for this fiscal worked out to roughly Rs 67,514.67 crore. But the total budgetary allocation, which also includes provision towards material and administrative expenses, has

CHART 3: DEMAND-SUPPLY GAP



been only Rs 60,000 crore, out of which Rs 55,829.62 crore was already spent as on December 24. Meanwhile, the Centre has revised upwards its original plan of providing 260 crore person-days of work for 2019-20 to 316.73 crore person-days, following a decision to augment the number of days of employment per household under MGNREGA from 100 to 150 in flood-affected districts of states such as Karnataka.

Other support schemes

It is not MGNREGA alone that is witnessing a deceleration of activity this fiscal. The same goes for the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN), the Modi gov-

ernment's farm income support scheme that was launched in December 2018, ahead of the Lok Sabha elections. In the first instalment released for December 2018 to March 2019, as many as 8.05 crore farmers were covered, with each of them receiving Rs 2,000. Those numbers fell to 7.43 crore in the second instalment (April-July 2019) and further to 5.91 crore in the third (August-November). In all, the total amount disbursed under the income support scheme in the year 2019-20 is Rs 32,320.86 crore, which is significantly short of the Rs 75,000 crore budgeted for it. Further, of the total Rs 95,000 allocated for the scheme since its inception, Rs 48,421.65 crore has been spent up to December 2019, which is roughly half the allocated sum.

Even the number of rural houses built under PM Awas Yojana-Gramin — which had recorded a sharp rise from 11.96 lakh in 2014-15 and 18.22 lakh in 2015-16 to 32.13 lakh, 44.55 lakh and 47.33 lakh during the following three fiscals — has seen a drop to just 7.2 lakh so far in 2019-20. A senior government official clarified, however, that the process of registration, geo-tagging, etc has already started, and more houses will be built later in the year. The official also cited a target of building 60 lakh houses under the PM-AY Gramin by June 2020. Up to 55 lakh new homes are under construction, and 7 lakh have been completed.

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड

वर्ष 12 अंक 268

वास्तविक हो बजट

बजट की रूपरेखा तैयार करते वक्त किसी भी वित्त मंत्री को सबसे पहले आगामी वर्ष में अर्थव्यवस्था की संभावित वृद्धि दर तय करनी होती है। राजस्व, घाटा तथा तमाम अन्य आंकड़े इस बात पर निर्भर करते हैं कि सरकार उक्त वृद्धि दर का कितना सटीक आकलन लगा पाती है। उदाहरण के लिए चालू वर्ष में यदि मुद्रास्फीति समेत जीडीपी वृद्धि दर (नॉमिनल) का अनुमान सही होता तो राजस्व आकलन में कुछ गंभीर खामियों से बचा जा सकता था।

सही अनुमान अतीत के रुझानों के सही अध्ययन पर निर्भर करता है। सन 2020 तक के दशक में अर्थव्यवस्था कमोबेश दोगुनी हो गई। इस दौरान औसत वृद्धि दर 7 फीसदी की रही। परंतु दशक के बीच के वर्षों में अर्थव्यवस्था को तेल कीमतों में भारी गिरावट से भी लाभ मिला। यह शायद दोहराया न जाए। इसके अलावा मौजूदा वैश्विक आर्थिक हालात भी बहुत उत्साहवर्द्धक नहीं हैं। घरेलू अर्थव्यवस्था में कई सुधार करने की आवश्यकता है।

वित्तीय क्षेत्र में सुधार की जरूरत है, निर्यात में ठहराव है, राजकोपीय या मौद्रिक नीति पहल की कोई खास गुंजाइश नहीं है। बीती तिमाही में चूँकि अर्थव्यवस्था का गैर सरकारी हिस्सा 3 फीसदी की गति से ज्यादा तेजी से नहीं बढ़ा, ऐसे में अर्थव्यवस्था के लिए अगले वर्ष के लिए 5 फीसदी के आसपास की अनुमानित वृद्धि दर ही वास्तविक होगी। इसमें ज्यादा से ज्यादा आधा फीसदी का बदलाव हो सकता है।

बीते दशक में 7 फीसदी की वृद्धि हासिल करने वाली तथा उससे पिछले दशक में और तेजी हासिल करने वाली अर्थव्यवस्था के लिए यह बहुत अच्छी दर नहीं है। परंतु हमारे सामने जिस तरह के कठिन विकल्प हैं, उन्हें देखते हुए धीमी वृद्धि को स्वीकार करने के सिवा चारा नहीं है। फिलवक्त तो 7 फीसदी की दर से विकसित होती अर्थव्यवस्था को ध्यान में रखते हुए राजस्व अनुमान लगाया

भी नहीं जा सकता। ऐसे में हकीकत का सामना करना ही बेहतर है। खासतौर पर तब जबकि बात बजट की तैयारी की हो। बजट में घाटे के आंकड़े को काफी कम करके बताया गया है। यह कमी जीडीपी के 2 फीसदी तक है। हर बजट में संसाधनों की सीमा होती है लेकिन आने वाले बजट में यह संकट भी चरम पर होगा।

बजट से इतर देखें तो मध्यम अवधि में पूर्वानुमान काफी उलझाऊ है। खासकर तब जबकि वृद्धि दर को 7 फीसदी के वांछित स्तर पर लौटने में समय लगे। वित्त मंत्री को अपने बजट भाषण में यह साफ करना चाहिए कि वह 7 फीसदी की दर कैसे हासिल करेंगी। उन्हें धीमी होती अर्थव्यवस्था के गतिशील होने तक हकीकत को अपनाने के लिए वह क्या कदम उठाने जा रही हैं उनके बारे में भी उन्हें

सूचित करना चाहिए। सरकारी कदमों के बारे में अनुमान लगाया जा सके तो यह हमेशा बेहतर होता है।

राजस्व में कमी होने पर तलवार व्यय पर गिरेगी, भले ही मंदी के मध्य अर्थशास्त्री ऐसी सलाह नहीं दें। यह बात अहम है कि बजट अनुशासन नजर आए। ऐसे में आवंटन को मौजूदा स्तर पर बरकरार रखना होगा।

जो पैसा व्यय न हो वह समाप्त हो जाना चाहिए। जिन क्षेत्रों में बहुत अधिक सार्वजनिक निवेश हो चुका है, उनसे कहा जाना चाहिए कि वे प्रदर्शन में सुधार दर्शाएं। उदाहरण के लिए रेलवे का राजस्व, राजमार्ग टोल, उच्च बिजली टैरिफ आदि। यदि वित्त मंत्री कड़ी निगाह डालें तो उन्हें और अधिक गैर कर राजस्व की राह निकालने में आसानी होगी। उदाहरण के लिए सरकारी बैंकों के लिए नई पूंजी जुटाने के लिए उनमें से एक

या दो का निजीकरण कर दिया जाना चाहिए।

सबसे बढ़कर बजट को आधुनिक बनाने का वक्त आ गया है। सबसे पहले नकद अंकेक्षण से संग्रहण अंकेक्षण की ओर बढ़ना चाहिए ताकि उन बिलों को शामिल किया जा सके जो बकाया हैं लेकिन चुकता नहीं हैं। इसी प्रकार सरकार को बैलेंस शीट से इतर मुद्दों की जानकारी देनी चाहिए जो अब तक बजट का हिस्सा नहीं हैं। इसे ऐसी खबरें आनी बंद होंगी जिनमें नियंत्रक एवं महालेखा परीक्षक द्वारा छिपे हुए व्यय पर सवाल उठाया जाता है। भिसाल के तौर पर सरकारी कंपनियों द्वारा बैंकों से पैसे उधार लेकर खाद्य सब्सिडी बिल चुकाना या रेलवे संस्थानों से अग्रिम भुगतान लेना ताकि रेलवे के खते में घाटा न दिखे। अधिक विश्वसनीय आंकड़े बेहतर होंगे और इससे सरकारी कामकाज की पारदर्शिता भी बढ़ेगी।



विनय सिन्हा

वित्तीय मजबूती की राह पर चीन निरंतर अग्रसर

विश्व की दूसरी सबसे बड़ी अर्थव्यवस्था वाला चीन मुद्रा के क्षेत्र में कई ऐसे कदम उठा रहा है जिनसे लगता है कि भविष्य उसके ही नाम होगा। विस्तार से बता रहे हैं **श्याम सरन**

चीन जल्द ही दुनिया की सबसे बड़ी अर्थव्यक्था बन सकता है। फिलहाल उसकी अर्थव्यवस्था का आकार 14 लाख करोड़ डॉलर है, जो विश्व के कुल सकल घरेलू उत्पाद (जीडीपी) का करीब 18 प्रतिशत है। वर्ष 2013 से यह दुनिया का सबसे बड़ा कारोबारी देश रहा है और इसका मौजूदा आयात-निर्यात का कुल आंकड़ा 4.5 लाख करोड़ डॉलर से अधिक है। इतना ही नहीं, चीन में दुनिया का दूसरा सबसे बड़ा शेयर एवं बॉन्ड बाजार भी है। इसका बॉन्ड बाजार 13 लाख डॉलर का है और दुनिया के बॉन्ड बाजार में इसकी हिस्सेदारी 14 प्रतिशत है। इसी तरह, इसका शेयर बाजार पूंजीकरण वैश्विक आंकड़े का करीब 12 प्रतिशत है। हालांकि वैश्विक अर्थव्यवस्था में चीन का रुतबा इसके वित्तीय आंकड़ों में नहीं झलकता है।

वैश्विक स्तर पर लेनदेन के माध्यम के रूप में चीन की मुद्रा की हिस्सेदारी 2018 में कम होकर 15 प्रतिशत से कम रह गई है, जबकि 2013 में यह आंकड़ा 25 प्रतिशत तक हुआ करता था। अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तर पर कुल भुगतान में केवल 2 प्रतिशत ही रेनमिनबी के जरिये होता है। 2016 में अंतरराष्ट्रीय मुद्रा कोष के लाख करोड़ डॉलर मूल्य के स्मेशल ड्राइंग राइट (एसडीआर) में अमेरिकी डॉलर, यूरोपीय क्षेत्र की मुद्रा यूरो, जापानी मुद्रा येन और ब्रिटेन के पाउंड के साथ रेनमिनबी भी सुरक्षित मुद्रा के रूप में शामिल थी। रेनमिनबी का भारोष् एसडीआर में 10.86 प्रतिशत दिया गया था। आईएमएफ के सदस्य देशों के विदेशी मुद्रा भंडार में रेनमिनबी की मात्रा अधिकतम 1 लाख डॉलर तक हो सकती है,

लेकिन फिलहाल यह महज 194 अरब डॉलर ही है। चीन ने 30 देशों के साथ मुद्रा अदला-बदली (करेंसी स्वीप) का समझौता कर रखा है और इसका मूल्यांकन फिलहाल 500 अरब डॉलर है। हालांकि इसका इस्तेमाल मामूली स्तर तक ही हुआ है। रेनमिनबी दुनिया की दूसरी शीर्ष मुद्राओं की तरह विश्वसनीयता अर्जित करने में असफल रही है। पूंजी प्रवाह पर नियंत्रण समाप्त करने और मुद्रा में उतार-चढ़ाव झेलने से चीन के इनकार करने से आगे की प्रगति अब तक थमी है।

युआन के अंतरराष्ट्रीयकरण का लक्ष्य प्राप्त करने के लिए चीन ने अब एक अलग रणनीति तैयार की है। अपनी मुद्रा को अपेक्षित स्थान दिलाने के लिए चीन अपने बॉन्ड एवं शेयर बाजार के बड़े आकार का इस्तेमाल करते हुए इन्हें वैश्विक वित्तीय बाजारों से जोड़ रहा है। शुरू में चीन ने अपने शेयरों में कोटा आधारित कारोबार की अनुमति देने के लिए हॉंग कॉंग, शांघाई और हॉंग कॉंग शेनझेन स्टॉक कनेक्ट स्थापित किया और कोटा को उदार बनाया और फंडों के स्थानांतरण की प्रक्रिया सरल बना दी। इसने अपना बॉन्ड बाजार विकसित करने की प्रक्रिया शुरू की और पहले रेनमिनबी में जारी बॉन्ड हॉंग कॉंग और बाद में सिंगापुर, ताइवान और लंदन में उतारे।

प्रमुख वैश्विक सूचकांकों में चीन के शेयर एवं बॉन्ड को शामिल किया जाना उत्साहजनक है। शांघाई एवं शेनझेन स्टॉक एक्सचेंजों पर कारोबार करने वाले चीन के ए-शेयर एमएससीआई इमर्जिंग मार्केट और एमएसएससीआई ऑल कंट्री वर्ल्ड इंडेक्स में शामिल किए गए हैं। चाइनीज गवर्नमेंट बॉन्ड (सीजीबी) अब ब्लूमबर्ग बांर्कलेज ग्लोबल

एग्रीगेट इंडेक्स में शामिल हैं और जल्द ही एफटीएसई का हिस्सा हो सकते हैं। निवेश कंपनी स्क्रोडर्स का दावा है कि आम तौर पर सूचकांकों से जुड़े फंडों में निवेश करने वाले अंतरराष्ट्रीय संस्थागत निवेशक से रकम का प्रवाह शुरू में सालाना 200 अरब डॉलर होगा, जो बाद में बढ़कर सालाना 400 अरब डॉलर तक हो जाएगा।

चीन के शेयर एवं बॉन्ड बाजारों का तेजी से विस्तार हो रहा है और खुदरा निवेशकों ने भी इनमें बढ़-चढ़ कर निवेश शुरू कर दिया है, ऐसे में रकम का प्रवाह लाखों करोड़ों डॉलर में रह सकता है। यह ध्यान रहे कि केवल सीजीबी ही अब तक शामिल किए गए हैं। अब कॉर्पोरेट बॉन्ड के शामिल होने में भी अधिक देर नहीं है। स्टैंडर्ड एंड पुअर्स को चीन में रेटिंग एजेंसी के तौर पर काम करने की अनुमति मिल चुकी है। अंतरराष्ट्रीय सूचकांकों के लिहाज से कॉर्पोरेट बॉन्ड को रेटिंग मिलने से उनके लिए वैश्विक सूचकांकों में शामिल होना आसान हो जाएगा और इससे चीन के बॉन्ड बाजार में रकम का प्रवाह भी बढ़ेगा। शांघाई में युआन आधारित तेल वायदा एक्सचेंज की स्थापना से भी चीन की मुद्रा की हैमियत बढ़ रही है। शांघाई इस साल दुबई को पछाड़ते हुए दुनिया का तीसरा सबसे बड़ा तेल वायदा बाजार बन गया है।

चीन के यूनियनपे क्रेडिट कार्ड का अंतरराष्ट्रीय वित्त बाजार में रुबना बढ़ा रहा है। दुनिया में जारी कुल क्रेडिट कार्ड में यूनियनपे की हिस्सेदारी 58 प्रतिशत है और इस समय करीब 7.6 अरब यूनियनपे क्रेडिट कार्ड धारक हैं। यह क्रेडिट कार्ड 174 देशों में स्वीकार होता है। हरेक साल चीन के लोग 15 करोड़ विदेशी यात्राएं करते हैं और पर्यटन

चीन ब्लॉकचेन तकनीक आधारित संप्रभु डिजिटल करेंसी लाने की दिशा में आगे बढ़ रहा है। हालांकि इस बारे में अभी विस्तार से कोई सूचना नहीं है। चीन में इस समय होने वाले कुल लेनदेन में 70 प्रतिशत से अधिक डिजिटल माध्यम से होते हैं, इसलिए सॉवरिन डिजिटल करेंसी की दिशा में काम करना कोई हैरत की बात नहीं। एक ‘एशियाई युआन’ बनाने के लिए इसे एक दूसरी समानांतर योजना से जोड़ा जा रहा है। चीन के अर्थशास्त्री सन मिंगाकी इस रणनीति का खुलासा कुछ इस तरह करते हैं, ‘हॉंग कॉंग डॉलर और न्यू ताइवान डॉलर को आंतरिक स्तर पर जोड़कर ‘ग्रेटर चाइना रेनमिनबी तैयार करना लघु अवधि के लक्ष्य है। मध्यम अवधि में जापान की येन, रिपब्लिक ऑफ कोरिया के वोन और दूसरी एशियाई देशों की मुद्रा के सहयोग से ‘एशियाई युआन’ प्रणाली अस्तित्व में लाने का लक्ष्य है। इससे अमेरिकी डॉलर, यूरो और एशियाई युआन वैश्विक मुद्रा प्रणाली के तहत त्रिकोणीय व्यवस्था के रूप में काम करेगी।’ कुल मिलाकर अंतिम लक्ष्य प्रत्येक देश की आर्थिक ताकत एवं उसके कारोबार को बढ़ाना है। हालांकि आज भी कुछ नहीं बदला। भीम आर्मी ने 18 मूल्यांकन के आधार पर एक आदर्श, डिजिटल एवं विकेंद्रीकृत या गैर-सॉवरिन वैश्विक मुद्रा प्रणाली स्थापित करना है। अब सवाल उठता है कि अगर चीन ने डिजिटल करेंसी के साथ कदम आगे बढ़ा दिए हैं तो यह लक्ष्य प्राप्त होने के बाद भविष्य किसके नाम होगा ? इन घटनाक्रम के बीच भारत कहां खड़ा होता है, जो इस समय अपनी कुछ परेशानियों से जूझ रहा है?

(लेखक पूर्व विदेश सचिव और सीपीआर में सीनियर फेलो हैं।)

यह काफी जरूरी है। लोध जाति से ताल्लुक रखने वाली और बाद में केंद्रीय मंत्री बनीं साध्वी उमा भारती एक पुरानी घटना के बारे में बताती हैं कि उनके गांव टीकमपुर में उनकी जाति के दूसरे लोग ठाकुर परिवारों के घरों के आगे से साइकिल चलाकर नहीं जा सकते थे। उन्हें साइकिल से उतरकर पैदल चलना होता था क्योंकि ठाकुर इसे अपना अपमान मानते थे। यह 25 साल पहले की बात है। हालांकि आज भी कुछ नहीं बदला। भीम आर्मी ने 18 साल से अधिक उम्र के दलितों को संगठन से जुड़ने का आह्‍वान किया। इसके ज्यादातर सदस्य चमार समुदाय या इसकी उजाजति जाटव से संबंधित हैं। लेकिन भीम आर्मी ने मुसलमानों का भी समर्थन किया। हालांकि संगठन का किसी तरह का औपचारिक ढांचा नहीं है और यह गैर-पंजीकृत संस्था है लेकिन दावा है कि पश्चिम उत्तर प्रदेश के

दलित उत्थान के लिए चंद्रशेखर आजाद से ‘रावण’ तक का सफर



सिरासी हलचल

आदिति फडणीस

इस बात में थोड़ा आश्चर्य हो सकता है कि मायावती और अन्य लोग उनके नाम का उल्लेख करने पर भौंह सिकोड़ लेते हैं। हालिया आंदोलन ने रावण की शक्ति्सयत को मजबूत किया है

सहारनपुर में इसके 20,000 से ज्यादा सदस्य हैं। संगठन का ज्यादातर ध्यान प्रत्यक्ष तरीके से मदद करके दलितों की गरिमा को संरक्षण और उसका बचाव करना है। हाल ही में दिए एक साक्षात्कार में आजाद ने कहा, ‘भीम आर्मी की मदद से दलित युवाओं को पता चला कि वे अपने संवैधानिक अधिकारों के लिए लड़ सकते हैं और वे अब उत्पीड़न बर्दाश्त नहीं करेंगे। भीम आर्मी किसी को डगने के लिए नहीं बल्कि दलितों की सुरक्षा के लिए बनाई गई है।’

साल 2015 में उस समय रावण की परेशानी शुरू होने लगी जब उन्होंने अपने गांव के बाहर एक बोर्ड लगाया। इसमें लिखा था, ‘धड़कूल गांव के चमार आपका स्वागत करते हैं।’ जिस गांव में ठाकुर रहते हों वे इसे कैसे बर्दाश्त कर सकते थे ? ठाकुरों ने इस पर काली स्याही पोत दी। अब यह तनाव सीधी लड़ाई में तब्दिल हो गया और उस दौरान शीर्ष पर पहुंच गया जब भाजपा ने बिना मंजूरी लिए सहारनपुर के सांप्रदायिक रूप से संवेदनशील इलाके में ‘शोभा यात्रा’ निकाली। कुछ सप्ताह बाद राजपूत राजा महाराणा प्रताप की जयंती पर दलित-ठाकुर टकराव हो गया। राज्य सरकार ने हिंसा भड़काने के लिए भीम आर्मी को ज़िम्मेदार ठहराया। रावण ने दावा किया कि सरकार इस आंदोलन को दबाने

और ऊंची जाति के लोगों को संरक्षण देने के लिए उन्हें निशाना बना रही थी। राज्य प्रशासन ने रावण को गिरफ्तार कर लिया। मामला न्यायालय में पहुंचा और उच्च न्यायालय ने उन्हें बरी कर दिया। हालांकि कुछ घंटे बाद ही योगी आदित्यनाथ की सरकार ने राष्ट्रीय कांग्रेस कानून के तहत उनको दोबारा गिरफ्तार करने के आदेश दे दिए। नागरिक अधिकारों के लिए काम करने वाले समूहों के भारी विरोध के बावजूद उन्हें गिरफ्तार किया गया था लेकिन इस दबाव के चलते उन्हें रिहा कर दिया गया। जब वह जेल (और अस्पताल) में थे तो प्रियंका गांधी ने टेलीफोन पर बात की थी। आजाद अघोषित तौर पर कांग्रेस के साथ मिलकर काम करने लगे। सहारनपुर दलितों के लिए आवाज उठाने और मुसलमानों तथा दलितों के बीच एकता के लिए जाना जाता है। कई सामाजिक कार्यकर्ताओं ने इस पहल का समर्थन किया। लोकप्रिय लेखक और दलित चिंतक चंद्रभानु प्रसाद के अनुसार, ‘करीब 400 लोकसभा निर्वाचन क्षेत्रों में दलित और मुसलमान मतदाताओं के 30 प्रतिशत हैं। यह भी ध्यान में रखना चाहिए कि 90–95 प्रतिशत दलित और मुसलमान घरों से बाहर निकलकर मतदान करते हैं। इसलिए अगर वे साथ आते हैं तो चुनाव की दृष्टि से अहम हो जाएंगे। मेरा मानना ​​है कि दलितों और मुसलमानों, खासकर युवाओं में एक साथ आने को लेकर काफी उत्सुकता है।’

रावण इस एकता का चेहरा बनकर उभरे हैं। हालांकि देश के दूसरे हिस्सों में अधिक लोग उन्हें नहीं जानते। जिस दौर में बसपा की चुनावी जमीन लगभग समाप्त हो गई हो और भाजपा दलितों को लामबंद करने में जुटी हो, ऐसे में भीम आर्मी दलित समुदाय में से प्रतिरोध का प्रतीक बनकर उभरी है। प्रख्युत दलित विद्वान आनंद तेलतुम्बडे लिखते हैं कि इसकी उत्पत्ति को वर्ष 1972 में महाराष्ट्र में दलित पेंथेंस से जोड़कर देखा जा सकता है जो भारत की तत्कालीन दिवालिया राजनीति का नतीजा था।

इस बात में थोड़ा आश्चर्य हो सकता है कि मायावती और अन्य लोग उनके नाम का उल्लेख करने पर भौंह सिकोड़ लेते हैं। हालिया आंदोलन ने रावण की शक्ति्सयत को मजबूत किया है।

कानाफूसी

समांतर मार्च कोलकाता में प्रेसिडेंसी विश्वविद्यालय के एक वरिष्ठ अध्यापक ने नागरिकता संशोधन अधिनियम 2019 और राष्ट्रीय नागरिक पंजी के विरोध में आयोजित रैली में हिस्सा लिया। घटना का वीडियो सोशल मीडिया पर वायरल हो चुका है। वीडियो में देखा जा सकता है कि मानविकी और सामाजिक विज्ञान विभाग के डीन प्रदीप बसु एनआरसी और सीएए की कॉपी जलाने के नारे लगा रहे हैं। उन्हें फासीवादी सरकार को हटाने की बात कहते हुए भी सुना जा सकता है। बसु ने कहा कि प्रेसिडेंसी विश्वविद्यालय से श्याम बाजार तक चार किलोमीटर लंबा यह मार्च स्वतः स्फूर्त था और किसी राजनीतिक दल या छात्र संगठन का झंडा देखने को नहीं मिला। उन्होंने कहा कि विरोध करने की जरूरत महसूस हो रही थी और छात्रों ने संपर्क किया तो वह तैयार हो गए।

मशविरों का दौर

भारतीय जनता पार्टी (भाजपा) ने सन 2020 के बजट को लेकर आंतरिक मशविरे की प्रक्रिया आरंभ कर दी है। पार्टी की कोशिश यह है कि वह बजट निर्माण के पहले सभी संबद्ध लोगों से संपर्क करे और उस बातचीत से निकला फीडबैक मोदी सरकार और वित्त मंत्री निर्मला सीतारामण को दे। पार्टी ने इस कवायद का जिम्मा संगठन महासचिव बी एल संतोष को सौंपा है। पार्टी के आर्थिक मामलों के प्रवक्ता गोपाल अग्रवाल ने पिछले दिनों कहा कि ऐसे हर सुझाव का स्वागत है जो पार्टी और सरकार को जमीनी हकीकतों से रूबरू कराए। मशविरे की प्रक्रिया गत 19 दिसंबर को आरंभ हुई और यह 14 जनवरी तक चलेगी। इस दौरान अलग-अलग क्षेत्रों में 11 चर्चाओं का आयोजन किया जाएगा। इन मशविरों की रिपोर्ट को भाजपा के कार्यकारी राष्ट्रीय अध्यक्ष जे पी नड्डा से चर्चा के बाद सरकार को भेज दिया जाएगा।

आपका पक्ष

जैविक खेती को मिले बढ़ावा

फसलों की पैदावार बढ़ाने के लिए आधुनिक तकनीक से खेती करना जरूरी है, क्योंकि इससे किसानों को ज्यादा फायदा हो सकता है। देश के किसान अब आधुनिक तकनीक से खेती करने लगे हैं। अगर विज्ञान का उचित प्रयोग किया जाए तो मनुष्य के लिए एवं वरदान साबित हो सकती है लेकिन इसके अनुचित प्रयोग से अधिशाप भी बन सकती है। कुछ किसान फसल की पैदावार बढ़ाने के लिए रासायनिक उर्वरकों का इस्तेमाल करते हैं। ऐसी फसल को जब कोई किसी रूप में सेवन करता है तब उस पर इसका विपरीत असर पड़ता है। फल, सब्जियों की पैदावार या इसके भंडारण में जिन रसायन का इस्तेमाल किया जा रहा है वे भी शरीर के लिए हानिकारक हैं। ये जानलेवा बीमारियों को बढ़ावा देने में योगदान दे रहे। अगर



समय रहते रासायनिक उर्वरकों की जगह जैविक खाद का प्रयोग नहीं किया गया तो अनाज सेहत का दुश्मन बन जाएगा। जैविक खाद का प्रयोग बढ़ाने के लिए सरकार को विशेष योजनाएं लाने के साथ किसानों को तकनीकी मदद देनी होगी। किसानों को पशुपालन के

खेतों में रासायनिक उर्वरकों के इस्तेमाल पर सरकार को रोक लगानी चाहिए

प्रति जागरूकता के लिए नई नीति बनानी चाहिए।

राजेश कुमार चौहान, जालंधर

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

सिर्फ वही इतिहास मूल्यवान है, जो हम आज बनाते हैं

झूट की राजनीति

राष्ट्रीय जनसंख्या रजिस्टर यानी एनपीआर को भी जिस तरह नागरिकता संशोधन कानून के विरोध का जरिया बनाकर लोगों को सड़कों पर उतारा जा रहा है उससे यही पता चल रहा कि सरकार दुष्प्रचार की राजनीति की काट करने में समर्थ नहीं हो पा रही है। वास्तव में इसी कारण उस एनआरसी यानी राष्ट्रीय नागरिकता रजिस्टर को भी नागरिकता कानून और साथ ही एनपीआर से नथ्थी करने का सुनियोजित अभियान जारी है जिसके बारे में खुद प्रधानमंत्री यह कह चुके हैं कि अभी तो उसके बारे में कोई फैसला ही नहीं लिया गया। कहते हैं कि झूठ के पांव नहीं होते, लेकिन फिलहाल तो झूठ की राजनीति ही बेलगाम है। यह राजनीति इस कदर बेलगाम है कि सेना प्रमुख की इस सीधी-सच्ची बात पर भी विप्लाप क्रिया गया कि हिंसा भड़काने वाले नेता नहीं कहे जा सकते। इसकी अनदेखी नहीं की जा सकती कि कांग्रेस समेत अन्य दलों और साथ ही क्रिस्म-क्रिस्म के तमाम गैर राजनीतिक संगठनों की ओर से पहले तो यह माहौल बना दिया गया कि नागरिकता कानून में संशोधन करके सरकार ने कोई घोर संविधान विरोधी काम कर दिया है और फिर यह कि इस कानून को सुप्रीम कोर्ट में चुनौती देने के साथ ही उसके खिलाफ सड़क पर उतरना भी जरूरी है। विचित्र केवल यह नहीं कि संसद से पारित कानून को संविधान की दुहाई देते हुए सड़क पर खारिज करने की जिद की जा रही है, बल्कि यह भी है कि 2016 में जब नागरिकता कानून में संशोधन का विधेयक लोकसभा से पारित हुआ था तो किसी ने हल्ला-हंगामा करने की जरूरत नहीं समझी थी। आज स्थिति यह है कि जिसे देखो वही आसमान सिर पर उड़ाए है।

सरकार विरोधी धारणा के निर्माण का काम किस सुनियोजित तरीके से आगे बढ़ाया जा रहा है, इसका पता इससे भी चलता है कि असम में जिस कांग्रेस ने डिस्टेंस सेंटर बनाने शुरू किए उसी ने मोदी सरकार पर यह तोहमत मढ़ने में संकोच नहीं किया कि ये सेंटर तो वह बना रही है। इसी तरह जिस कांग्रेस ने 2010 में एनपीआर तैयार करया वही अब कुछ ऐसा प्रदर्शित कर रही है जैसे मोदी सरकार कोई नया-अनोखा काम करने जा रही है। एक तथ्य यह भी है कि कांग्रेस के कार्यकाल में कई बार यह रेखांकित किया गया कि एनपीआर के बाद एनआरसी लाया जाएगा। आखिर सरकार और साथ ही भाजपा धारणा के इस खेल में पिछड़ती क्यों दिख रही है? उसे इससे भी चिंतित होना चाहिए कि नागरिकता कानून, एनआरसी और एनपीआर पर उसके तर्कों के आगे वे लोग अपना खेल खलने में सक्षम क्यों हैं जो कुतर्कों का सहारा लेने में लगे हुए हैं?

ताकि सुरक्षित रहे जान

झारखंड में ठंड का कहर जारी है। राजधानी रांची समेत धनबाद, गुमला, पलामू, साहिबगंज, लातेहार, रामगढ़, बोकारो आदि जिलों में बीते कुछ दिनों के दौरान दर्जन भर से अधिक लोगों की जानें जा चुकी हैं। बीते गुरुवार को ही रांची का अधिकतम तापमान नीचे लुढ़क कर 3.7 डिग्री सेल्सियस पर पहुंच गया था। तापमान में अगले कुछ और दिनों तक गिरावट जारी रहने का पूर्वानुमान मौसम विज्ञानियों ने जारी किया है। साथ ही राज्य में कुछ स्थानों पर बारिश होने एवं शीतलहर का प्रकोप रहने की संभावना भी जताई गई है। गौरतलब है कि राज्य में कड़ाके की ऐसी ठंड की स्थिति साल 2008 में देखी गई थी। यह स्थिति आम जनमानस के अलावा गरीबों के लिए दुःख है। उनकी जान सांसत में है। दरअसल बीते दिनों राज्य में हो रहे विधानसभा चुनावों के मद्देनजर अधिसूचना जारी थी। इसके चलते राज्य के जिलों में ठंड से बचाव के लिए होने वाली प्रशासनिक गतिविधियां थमी हुई थीं। नतीजतन प्रशासन की ओर से अलाव जलाने के लिए लकड़ियों की व्यवस्था में खर्च होने वाला फंड जारी नहीं हो पा रहा था। जिसका सीधा असर राज्य के विभिन्न जिलों में देखने को मिला। ठंड की चपेट में आकर लोगों को जान गंवानी पड़ी। लेकिन अब चुनाव के परिणाम आ चुके हैं। 29 दिसंबर को नई सरकार शपथ ग्रहण करेगी। चुनाव की अधिसूचना भी खत्म हो चुकी है। अब ऐसी कोई बंदिश नहीं है कि गरीबों

के हित में ठंड से बचाव के कारगर उपाय न किए जा सकें। ऐसे में राज्य के प्रशासनिक अमले को चाहिए कि वह ठंड की विभीषिका के मद्देनजर जल्द से जल्द राज्य भर के विभिन्न जिलों में अधिक से अधिक स्थानों पर अलाव जलाने के लिए पर्याप्त मात्रा में लकड़ी की उपलब्धता सुनिश्चित कराए। साथ ही राज्य के निकाय भी अपनी जिम्मेदारी को कारगर ढंग से निभाएं। ताकि ठंड का शिकार होकर सड़क पर किसी की जान न जाए। दरअसल अलाव के लिए लकड़ी उपलब्ध कराने की जिम्मेदारी जहां प्रशासन की है। वहीं इसे विभिन्न स्थानों पर जलाने के लिए अपने ट्रैक्टरों से पहुंचाने की जिम्मेदारी नगर निगम की है। ऐसे में यदि दोनों मिलकर इस दिशा में संयुक्त रूप से उपक्रम करें तो आम जनता, विशेष कर गरीबों की जान सुरक्षित हो सकती है। रैन बसेयों की स्थिति भी तत्काल दुरुस्त कराई जानी चाहिए। उनमें जरूरतमंदों को ही स्थान मिले न कि अवैध रूप से कब्जा जमाने वाले वहां काबिज रहें।

हर घर तक जल पहुंचाने का संकल्प

देवेंद्रराज सुथार

प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने सामुदायिक भागीदारी के माध्यम से देश के प्राथमिकता वाले क्षेत्रों में भूजल प्रबंधन में सुधार लाने एवं 2024 तक देश के हर घर तक जल पहुंचाने के संकल्प को सिद्ध करने के उद्देश्य से अटल भूजल योजना की शुरुआत की है। इस योजना के तहत पहचान किए गए प्राथमिकता वाले क्षेत्रों में गुजरात, हरियाणा, कर्नाटक, मध्य प्रदेश, महाराष्ट्र, राजस्थान और उत्तर प्रदेश शामिल हैं। ये राज्य भारत के कुल भूजल के दोहन के संदर्भ में 25 प्रतिशत प्रतिनिधित्व करते हैं, जहां अत्यधिक दोहन वाले, अत्यधिक जोखिम वाले कम जोखिम वाले ब्लॉक हैं। इस योजना के अंतर्गत इन प्रदेशों के 78 जिलों, 193 ब्लॉकों और 8350 ग्राम पंचायतों को शामिल किया गया है। केंद्रीय भूजल बोर्ड की विगत वर्ष की रिपोर्ट के अनुसार देश के 6584 भूजल ब्लॉकों में से 1034 ब्लॉकों का अत्यधिक उपयोग हुआ है। सामान्यतः इन्हें ‘डार्क जोन’ (पानी के संकट की स्थिति) कहा जाता है। गौरतलब है कि भूजल संसाधनों का 2011 में किए गए नमूना मूल्यांकन के अनुसार

जल प्रबंधन सूचना के अनुसार भारत में साठ करोड़ लोग गंभीर जल संकट का सामना कर रहे हैं

भारत में 71 जिलों में से 19 में भूजल का अत्यधिक दोहन किया गया है। जिसका अर्थ है कि जलाशयों की प्राकृतिक पुनर्भरण की क्षमता से अधिक जल की निकासी की गई है। 2013 में किए गए आकलन के अनुसार जिसमें जिलों के ब्लॉकों को शामिल किया गया और पाया गया कि यहाँ का 31 प्रतिशत जल खराब हो गया था। जल प्रबंधन सूचना के अनुसार भारत में साठ करोड़ लोग गंभीर जल संकट का सामना कर रहे हैं। अधिकांश बीमारियों का कारण दूषित जल ही है। लोगों को जो पानी पीने के लिए मिलता है वह आचमन के लायक भी नहीं रहता! पानी मात्र देखने के लिए होता है, पीने और खाने में उसकी गुणवत्ता नगण्य रहती है। पानी की कमी और प्रदूषण के अनेकों प्रत्यक्ष कारण जैसे-रसायनिक खाद, कम वर्षा, ग्लोबल वार्मिंग, पोखर का खात्मा,



रशीद किदवाई

राहुल के लिए फिर से कांग्रेस का अध्यक्ष बनना तो आसान है, लेकिन उसके साथ इंसाफ कर पाना एक बहुत बड़ी चुनौती है। क्या वह इस चुनौती का सामना करने को तैयार है ?

कांग्रेस अपना 135वां स्थापना दिवस एक ऐसे समय पर मना रही है जब वह विचारधारा और नेतृत्व, दोनों मामलों में दोराहे पर खड़ी है। विचारधारा का मामला तो महाराष्ट्र में शिवसेना से गठबंधन कर सरकार बनाने के बाद से थोड़ा नरम पड़ गया है, किंतु नेतृत्व का मामला अभी भी उलझा हुआ दिख रहा है। एक तरफ जहां अंतरिम अध्यक्ष सोनिया गांधी अपने पुत्र राहुल गांधी को कांग्रेस अध्यक्ष बनाने के लिए उत्सुक नजर आती हैं, वहीं आम कांग्रेसी नेताओं में एक ऐसी सोच है कि अभी सोनिया गांधी ही कांग्रेस पार्टी का नेतृत्व संभाले रहें। कांग्रेसी नेताओं का यह भी मानना है कि दिल्ली में विधानसभा के चुनाव के बाद ही कांग्रेस के नेतृत्व के मुद्दे को देखने और समझने की कोशिश की जानी चाहिए। दिल्ली में अगले महीने ही विधानसभा हो सकते हैं।

आज कांग्रेस के अंदर जो हलचल मची है उसका एक दिलचस्प पहलू यह भी है कि महत्वपूर्ण पदों पर बैठे हुए कांग्रेसी नेता इस बात के लिए तो बिल्कुल तैयार नजर आ रहे हैं कि वह राहुल गांधी को ही दोबारा अपना अध्यक्ष चुन लें, लेकिन इसके साथ ही वे राहुल गांधी के कामकाज करने के तौर-तरीके में थोड़ा बदलाव भी देखना चाहते हैं। उनकी एक एक उम्मीद यह भी है कि सोनिया गांधी और राहुल गांधी, दोनों जल्द ही कांग्रेस कार्य समिति का निष्पक्ष चुनाव कराएंगे। देखना है कि ऐसा हो पाता है या नहीं?

दरअसल कांग्रेस में कार्य समिति के चुनाव हमेशा एक बहुत बड़ी चुनौती रहे हैं। वर्ष 1991 में जब पीवी नरसिंह राव कांग्रेस अध्यक्ष बने थे तो उन्होंने तिरुपति में अप्रैल 1992 में चुनाव कराए थे। इसके अलावा दूसरी बार सीताराम केसरी ने कोलकाता में अगस्त 1997 में कांग्रेस कार्य समिति के चुनाव कराए थे। कांग्रेस जन यह चाहते हैं कि कार्य समिति के चुनाव के जरिये कांग्रेस के वरिष्ठ नेताओं की भूमिका तय हो जानी चाहिए। खासतौर से उन नेताओं के लिए जो नेहरू-गांधी परिवार के सदस्य नहीं हैं।

सोनिया गांधी के तकरीबन 20 वर्ष के लंबे अध्यक्षीय कार्यकाल में कांग्रेस में महत्वपूर्ण पद पर ऐसे लोग मौजूद रहे हैं जो उनके पसंदीदा थे। हालांकि राहुल गांधी ने भी उसी विधि को अपनाते हुए महत्वपूर्ण पदों पर अपने लोगों को बिठाने की कोशिश की, लेकिन उसमें वह पूरी तरह से कामयाब नहीं हुए थे। अब कांग्रेस के जो वरिष्ठ नेता हैं उन्हें डर है कि राहुल गांधी जब कभी वापस आएंगे तो कहीं वह पार्टी में बड़े पदों पर जैसे कार्य समिति के सदस्य, पार्टी के महासचिव या प्रदेश अध्यक्षों को अपना पसंद से मनोनीत करना न शुरू कर दें। जाहिर है कि यदि कार्य समिति का चुनाव होगा तो उसमें वरिष्ठता का एक तरीके से क्रम तय हो जाएगा। कांग्रेस कार्य समिति चुनने का अधिकार ऑल इंडिया कांग्रेस कमेटी के 1500 सदस्यों को है जो पूरे देश के विभिन्न राज्यों से आते हैं। कांग्रेस के संविधान के अनुसार कांग्रेस कार्य



अवधेश राजपूत

समिति 24 सदस्य की होनी चाहिए। जिसमें 12 सदस्यों का चुनाव होना चाहिए और 12 सदस्यों को कांग्रेस अध्यक्ष मनोनीत कर सकता है। इन 12 सदस्यों में अल्पसंख्यक, महिलाएं और कमजोर तबके के लोग होते हैं। एक तथ्य यह भी है कि कांग्रेस कार्य समिति के चुनाव बहुत बार इस बिना पर नहीं किए जाते हैं कि उससे पार्टी में बिखराव हो सकता है और आपसी झगड़े बढ़ सकते हैं। फलस्वरूप कार्य समिति ही कांग्रेस अध्यक्ष को अधिकृत कर देती है कि वह समस्त 24 सदस्यों को मनोनीत कर दें, लेकिन आज पार्टी के अंदर से कुछ आवाजें उठ रही हैं। सोनिया गांधी और राहुल गांधी को पार्टी के अंदर से उठती इन आवाजों का संज्ञान लेना चाहिए।

झारखंड विधानसभा के चुनाव परिणाम आने के बाद कांग्रेस में आशा की एक नई

किरण आई है। यहां झारखंड मुक्ति मोर्चा और राष्ट्रीय जनता दल के साथ मिलकर चुनाव लड़ी कांग्रेस को 16 सीटें मिली हैं। झारखंड चुनाव नतीजों के बाद कांग्रेसी नेताओं को लगता है कि यदि केंद्रीय नेतृत्व पार्टी में सबको साथ लेकर चले तो राज्यों में नतीजे बेहतर हो सकते हैं।

हरियाणा और महाराष्ट्र की तरह झारखंड में भी गांधी परिवार की बहुत सक्रिय भूमिका नहीं थी। राहुल गांधी और प्रियंका गांधी वाड्रा, दोनों ने प्रचार में हिस्सा तो लिया था, लेकिन गठबंधन के अधिकतर काम हेमंत सोरेन के जिम्मे ही थे। कांग्रेस पार्टी की जिम्मेदारियों के निर्वाह का जिम्मा बहुत मौजूद कांग्रेस के नेता और पूर्व केंद्रीय मंत्री आरपीएन सिंह और दूसरे जमीनी नेताओं पर था। कामकाज की इस परिपाटी में कांग्रेस को उम्मीद से ज्यादा

भय का भूत खड़ा करने की कोशिश

नागरिकता संशोधन कानून और एनआरसी के बाद अब एनपीआर अपडेट करने के फैसले को लेकर समाज के एक वर्ग में भय और भ्रम का जो भूत खड़ा किया जा रहा है वह झूठ के झाड़ से सच के पहाड़ को छिपाने की कोशिश ही है। ऐसा तब किया जा रहा है जब मोदी सरकार समावेशी सशक्तीकरण और सर्वस्पर्शी समृद्धि को समर्पित है और वह भी बिना भेदभाव, बिना धर्म-जाति देखे। उसने दो करोड़ गरीबों को घर दिया तो उसमें 31 प्रतिशत अल्पसंख्यक और विशेषकर मुस्लिम समुदाय हैं। छह लाख गांवों में बिजली पहुंचाई तो 39 प्रतिशत से ज्यादा अल्पसंख्यक गांव थे, जहां उजाला हुआ। 22 करोड़ किसानों को किसान सम्मान निधि के तहत लाभ दिया तो उसमें भी 33 प्रतिशत से ज्यादा अल्पसंख्यक समुदाय के गरीब किसान हैं। आठ करोड़ महिलाओं को उज्ज्वला योजना के तहत निशुल्क गैस कनेशन दिया तो उसमें 37 प्रतिशत अल्पसंख्यक समुदाय के गरीब परिवार लाभान्वित हुए। 21 करोड़ कर्मजो को मुद्रा योजना के तहत व्यवसाय सहित अन्य आर्थिक गतिविधियों के लिए आसान कर्ज दिए तो उसमें 36 प्रतिशत से ज्यादा अल्पसंख्यकों को लाभ हुआ। इसी तरह बिजली-सड़क-पानी-शिक्षा-रोजगार-स्वरोजगार कार्यक्रमों का भरपूर फायदा भी अल्पसंख्यक समाज के गरीब-कमजोर तबके को हुआ, क्योंकि अधिकांश योजनाएं गरीबों, कमजोर तबकों के लिए ही हैं। मोदी सरकार की गरीब और कमजोर तबकों के सशक्तीकरण की योजनाओं का भरपूर फायदा अल्पसंख्यक समाज को इसलिए मिल रहा, क्योंकि आजादी के बाद वही और खासकर मुस्लिम समाज गरीबों और अशिक्षा का ज्यादा शिकार रहा। आखिर जिस प्रधानमंत्री ने बिना भेदभाव गरीबों को मकान दिया और उनके घरों में उजाला किया, उन्हें बेघर करने की कैसे सोच सकते हैं? ध्यात रहे कि खुद प्रधानमंत्री ने स्पष्ट किया है कि नागरिकता कानून किसी की नागरिकता लेने के लिए नहीं, बल्कि देने के लिए है और एनआरसी की 1951 से चल रही प्रक्रिया असम के अलावा कहीं और नहीं है।

पाकिस्तान में अल्पसंख्यकों की आबादी 24 प्रतिशत से घट कर 2 प्रतिशत के इर्द गिर्द सिमट गई है। वहां और साथ ही बांग्लादेश एवं अफगानिस्तान के जो अल्पसंख्यक जान बचाकर भारत भाग कर आए उन पर यहाँ कानून का डंडा लटक रहा था। इन्हें मानवीय सम्मान देने के लिए नागरिकता कानून में संशोधन किया गया है। भारतीय



मुख्तार अब्बास नकवी

लोगों को बरगलाने का काम तब हो रहा है जब मोदी सरकार बिना धर्म-जाति देखे समावेशी सशक्तीकरण को समर्पित है



मुसलमानों का तो इस कानून से कोई लेना-देना ही नहीं है। यदि कोई विदेशी नागरिक, जिसमें मुसलमान भी शामिल हैं, भारत की नागरिकता लेना चाहते हैं तो वे नागरिकता कानून की धारा 55 के तहत ऐसा कर सकते हैं। पिछले पांच वर्षों में 500 से ज्यादा मुसलमानों को भारतीय नागरिकता दी भी गई है।

जहां पाकिस्तान में अल्पसंख्यक अपमान और उत्पीड़न के शिकार हैं, वहीं भारत में अल्पसंख्यक प्रगति के बराबर के हिस्सेदार-भागीदार हैं। अल्पसंख्यकों के आर्थिक, शैक्षिक, सामाजिक सशक्तीकरण के लिए मोदी सरकार की योजनाएं सबसे ज्यादा प्रभावी रही हैं। पिछले 5 वर्षों में विभिन्न स्कूलरशिप योजनाओं से गरीब, कमजोर अल्पसंख्यक समाज के रिकॉर्ड लगभग तीन करोड़ 20 लाख विद्यार्थी लाभान्वित हुए हैं, जिनमें 60 प्रतिशत छात्राएं शामिल हैं। 2014 से अभी तक सीखों और कमाओं, उत्साह, गरीब नवाज रोजगार योजना, नई मंजिल आदि के माध्यम से आठ लाख से ज्यादा अल्पसंख्यक समुदाय के युवाओं को कौशल विकास और रोजगार के अवसर मुहैया कराए गए हैं। इनमें लगभग 50 प्रतिशत लड़कियां शामिल हैं। हुनर हाट के माध्यम से पिछले दो

वर्षों में दो लाख 65 हजार से ज्यादा अल्पसंख्यक समुदाय के दस्तकारों/शिल्पकारों को न केवल रोजगार के अवसर उपलब्ध कराए गए, बल्कि उन्हें देश-विदेश का बाजार भी मुहैया कराया गया। जहाँ संग्रग सरकार में मात्र 90 जिले अल्पसंख्यकों के विकास हेतु चुने गए थे, वहीं मोदी सरकार में इसका विस्तार कर देश के 308 जिलों में किया गया और 1300 ब्लॉकों में अल्पसंख्यक समाज के विद्यार्थियों और विशेषकर लड़कियों की शिक्षा हेतु मूलभूत सुविधाओं के लिए युद्धस्तर पर काम किया जा रहा। पिछले पांच वर्षों के दौरान 33 डिग्री कॉलेज, एक हजार 398 स्कूल भवन, 40 हजार 201 अतिरिक्त क्लास रूम, 574 हॉस्टल, 81 आइट्टीआइ, 50 पॉलिटेक्निक, 39,586 आंगनवाड़ी केंद्र, 398 सद्भावना मंडप, 123 आवासयी स्कूल, 570 मार्केट शेड, 104 कॉमन सर्विस सेंटर आदि सुविधाओं का निर्माण अल्पसंख्यक बाहुल्य क्षेत्रों में कराया गया है। यही सब कुछ विघटनकारी ताकतों की आंख की किरकिरी बन गया है और वे भारत की अनेकता में एकता की ताकत को कमजोर करने का ताना-बाना बुन रहे हैं।

एनआरसी की प्रक्रिया 1951 से असम में शुरू हुई, फिर 1975 में इसे आगे बढ़ाने का आंदोलन और मांग हुई। 2013 में सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने इसे आगे बढ़ाने का आदेश दिया। यह प्रक्रिया अभी भी चल रही है, पर मात्र असम तक सीमित है। एक अंतरिम सूची 31 अगस्त 2019 को जारी हुई। जिसके नाम इसमें नहीं हैं एवं एनआरसी सेवा केंद्रों, ट्रिब्यूनल्स आदि के जरिये सरकार मदद दे रही है। देश के अन्य भागों में एनआरसी लागू करने का कोई अधिकृत निर्णय नहीं लिया गया है, लेकिन इसे लेकर हंगामा और सियासी झुमा चरम पर है। मनगढ़ंत झूठ से भरपूर कहानी बनाकर एक समाज विशेष के कंधे पर बंदूक रख कर सियासत की सांप-सीढ़ी का खेल खेला जा रहा है। अब तो जनगणना को लेकर भी भ्रम का जाल बुना जा रहा है। कुछ दल लोगों को चक्रव्यूह में फंसाने की कोशिश कर रहे हैं। जनगणना या एनपीआर लगातार चलने वाली प्रक्रिया है। भारत की मिट्टी में जन्में किसी व्यक्ति के सामाजिक, धार्मिक, संवैधानिक, नागरिक अधिकार पर कोई सवाल या खतरा न है और न होगा। चूंकि यही हकीकत है और बाकी सब भ्रम से भरपूर फसाना इसलिए सभी को भय और भ्रम के भूत भगाने के लिए आगे आना चाहिए।

(लेखक केंद्रीय मंत्री हैं) **response@jagran.com**

मेलबाक्स

नागरिकों को स्वतः ही भारतीय नागरिकता मिल जाएगी और भविष्य में एनआरसी का भी भय नहीं रहेगा।

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लोकगीत, संगीत व भाषा

आज की युवा पीढ़ी में अपनी स्थानीय भाषा के प्रति हीनता बोध घर कर गया है, फलस्वरूप वह अंग्रेजी भाषा के शब्दों को तो दर्दनिंद भाषा में बदलायत से प्रयोग करती है, परंतु देशज शब्दों के उपयोग से बचती है। अंग्रेजी मानसिकता के कारण लोक कला, लोकगीत, संगीत, लोक नृत्य आदि से वह विमुख होती जा रही है। फलस्वरूप ये विधाएं लुप्तप्राय हो रही हैं। जबकि देशज तथा स्थानीय भाषा, संस्कृति, परंपरा, लोकगीत, लोक संगीत व स्थानीय ज्ञान को बढ़ावा देने के लिए ही है। भाषा से ज्ञान का परिमार्जन होता है तथा संस्कृति को खाद पानी उपलब्ध होता है। देशज भाषा दस-पांच- किलोमीटर पर ही परिवर्तित होती दिखती है। वस्तुतः अच्छा लोकगीत, संगीत व नृत्य तथा भाषा सबको आज भी आकर्षित करता है। फिल्मों में भी पंडित शिवकुमार शर्मा व पंडित हरिप्रसाद चौरसिया ने शिव-हरि के नाम से लोक गीत और संगीत को लेकर प्रयोग किए तो जनता ने भी उन्हें सिर आंखों पर बिठा लिया। लम्हे, चांदनी, डर जैसी फिल्मों में प्रयुक्त लोकगीतों पर आज भी मन मग्न नाच उठता है। वैज्ञानिक तथ्य भी यही है कि व्यक्ति अपनी मातृभाषा में शीघ्र सोच, समझ सकता है व सहज महसूस करता है। अतः जड़ों से जुड़े लोगों को इन विधाओं को सहेजना ही होगा। लोक परंपराओं में प्रकृति को सहेजने व मानवता को लाभ पहुंचाने की क्षमता होती है। ये सलल, सुलुभ मनोरंजन

कामयाबी मिली है। उम्मीद है कि यह मॉडल आने वाले समय में रहेगा और चलेगा।

कांग्रेस के शीर्ष नेतृत्व का काम यह है कि वह सबको साथ लेकर चले और जो राष्ट्रीय मुद्दे हैं उस पर एक स्पष्ट नीति तय करे। कार्य समिति के चुनाव होने से उसके जो सदस्य होंगे उनसे भी ऐसी आशा की जाती है कि वे संवेदनशील मुद्दों पर अपनी बात रख रखेंगे। कांग्रेस के अंदर फैसला लेने का अभी जो अधिकार है वह सोनिया गांधी के पास है। उनके सलाहकारों का पार्टी के अंदर या बाहर लोकप्रियता या जनाधार जानना का कोई पैमाना नहीं है। प्रश्न यह उठता है कि क्या सोनिया गांधी और राहुल गांधी कांग्रेस कार्य समिति का चुनाव करने के लिए तैयार हैं? क्या कांग्रेस दिल्ली में भी एक ऐसी रणनीति अपनाएगी जहां वह पार्टी हित को सब कुछ न मानकर भाजपा के खिलाफ एक गठबंधन तैयार करेगी या फिर उसकी कोई और रणनीति होगी? यह समय यही बताएगा, लेकिन यह समझना आवश्यक है कि कांग्रेस जन और नेहरू-गांधी परिवार का रिश्ता बहुत दिलचस्प है। एक आम कांग्रेसी सोनिया गांधी, राहुल गांधी और प्रियंका गांधी को अपनी तमाम शक्ति देने को तैयार है। वह उनकी बातों को मानने को भी तैयार रहता है और उनके निर्देश पर अपना सब कुछ गंवाने को तैयार रहता है। वह कुछ पाने की भी इच्छा रखता है, लेकिन उसकी सिर्फ एक ही चाह है कि कांग्रेस सत्ता से दूर न रहे। यह मंत्र सोनिया गांधी बखूबी समझती हैं। क्या राहुल गांधी यह कर पाएंगे? कांग्रेस का अध्यक्ष बनना तो आसान है, लेकिन इसके साथ इंसाफ कर पाना, एक बहुत बड़ी चुनौती है, जो राहुल गांधी को पूरा करना है। क्या वह इसके लिए तैयार हैं? यह वह सवाल है जिसका जवाब आने वाले दिनों में ही सामने आएगा।

(लेखक वरिष्ठ पत्रकार एवं ऑब्जर्वर रिसर्च फाउंडेशन में विजिटिंग फैलो हैं) **response@jagran.com**



दैव-साधना

मनुष्य जीने के लिए कई-कई प्रकार के साधन (जुगाड़) ढूंढता रहता है। अपने लक्ष्य में सफल होने के लिए वह सत्य और असत्य का सहारा ही नहीं, बल्कि कितने-कितने यंत्रों-षडयंत्रों, नीतियों-कुनीतियों का सहारा लेकर अपने खास उद्देश्य को प्राप्त करना चाहता है। मानव कृत कल्पना एवं यथार्थ का समूचा संसार छलनायक है। वह जिसको सत्य समझता है, वह नितांत असत्य, कष्ट पद एवं क्षरणीय है। कोई चमत्कारी शिवलिंग अथवा दुर्लभ रत्न किन्हीं अनुपयोगी वस्तुओं से ढके होने के कारण विशेष दृष्टि के अभाव में सामान्य आंखों को नहीं दिखाई देता। उसे केवल अनुपयोगी पदार्थ एवं कूड़ा भर दिखाई देता है, लेकिन एक साधक की आंखों को नहीं पहचान करने वाली दृष्टि को उन पदार्थों में केवल वही दिव्य रत्न अथवा चमत्कारी शिवलिंग ही दिखाई देता है। उस संपूर्ण भ्रम में उसे अथाह आनंद की प्राप्ति होती है, जबकि सत्य को न देख पाने वाली आंखें उस संपूर्ण उपक्रम में दुःख, पश्चाताप एवं विपरीत विचारों के सिवा कुछ भी नहीं हासिल कर पातीं।

अनाप-शनाप माध्यमों से जो घन-संपदा, भौतिक ऐश्वर्य, पद-प्रतिष्ठा एवं अस्थायी सुख अपने प्राप्त किया है वह अंत में ब्याज रूप में आपको गहन कष्ट, पीड़ा, पश्चाताप एवं सबक देने वाला है। संसार के संपूर्ण आभासित सुखों का शुभारंभ सुख से होता प्रतीत होता है, लेकिन उसका अंत गहरी पीड़ा एवं दुःख में होता है। दैव साधना का मार्ग पहले-पहल कष्टपद एवं दुःखों से परिपूर्ण प्रतीत होता है, लेकिन उसका अंत स्थायी आनंद के रूप में होता है। इस मार्ग का पथिक सीमा में भी असीमित आनंद होता है एवं भौतिकता की चक्रीचौध में डूबा व्यक्ति असीमित ऐश्वर्य एवं संपदा के चलते भी मुद्गीभर आनंद बटोरने के लिए छटपटाता रह जाता है।

ईश्वर ने यह दुर्लभ मानव जीवन चालाकियों, व्यर्थ चमचागिरी एवं छलमपूण के अंत में नष्ट करने के लिए नहीं दिया है, अपितु अपने पौरुष से दुर्लभ गुणों एवं शक्ति-साधनों का सुव्यवहार कर दैव साधना के माध्यम से स्वयं एवं मानव के कल्याण के लिए दिया है।

प्रो. दिनेश कुमार 'शैलेश'

करती हैं। देश काल व परिस्थिति के अनुसार इन विधाओं के अलग-अलग रूप रंग हैं। तथापि आज इन्हें बचाने के लिए सत् प्रयासों की आवश्यकता है।

डॉ. हेमा शर्मा, स्याना

सोच में हो राष्ट्रधर्म

दैनिक जागरण के 24 दिसंबर के अंक में हृदयनारायण दीक्षित का लेख, खत्म होता आंदोलन और अराजकता का भेद, पढ़ा। आज के आंदोलनों में अराजकता का जो छौंक लगने लगा है उसका एक ही कारण है और वो है कि हम अपने राष्ट्र धर्म को भूलकर, जाति, संप्रदाय, राजनीतिक पार्टी, परिवार हित व न जाने कितने निजी हित धर्मों को साधने में लग गए हैं। आज हमारे लिए राष्ट्रीय हित का कोई मुद्दा ही नहीं रह गया है। हम आजादी के संघर्ष और बलिदानों को भूल गए हैं। हम तो हमेशा रोजी रोटी में ही फंसे रहते हैं। यही कारण है कि पिछले 25-30 सालों से विकासशील देश की श्रेणी में ही है एक विकसित राष्ट्र नहीं बन पाए।

सतीश त्यागी काकड़ा, इंदिरापुरम, गाजियाबाद

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

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