

The Kiwi role model



COUNTRY CODE

RAHUL JACOB

After a white supremacist went on a shooting rampage in two Christchurch mosques last March that resulted in the death of more than 50 people, New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern led from the front with compassion rather than hot-headed rhetoric. She visited mosques of course, but also pushed through a law disallowing the ownership of military assault weapons within a week of the attack. (The contrast with the US on this issue was stark.) Ardern famously refused to refer to the terrorist by name, arguing that he desired notoriety. “I implore you: Speak the names of those who were lost, rather than the name of the man who took them,” she said in a speech that was Shakespearean in its use of language as it was statesmanlike. As majoritarian populism takes an enormous toll on the pillars of democracy everywhere, from Donald Trump’s America to Boris Johnson’s Britain to Narendra Modi’s India, tiny New Zealand (population: 4.7 million) is an unlikely role model. It has problems, of course; housing prices have spiralled out of the reach of many. In a country much visited for its idyllic countryside, rural suicides are growing in the high teens. Yet, from climate change to dealing humanely with immigrants, New Zealand lives on the seismic faultlines of our zeitgeist. It is fashioning responses that do not evoke the anxiety attack that the once futuristic, even auspicious, year of 2020 has prompted from Washington DC to New Delhi. In our global dystopia, a country whose politics do not evoke unbridled pessimism seems a hopeful place. In neighbouring Australia, Prime Minister Scott Morrison, a staunch denialist of climate change, bumbled through the crisis of bush fires that by last weekend had claimed the lives of one billion native animals and more than 20 people.

One example of the Kiwi focus on the environment is the request to clean the soles of one’s shoes as you walk on paths in reserves in order to save the magnificent kauri tree which risks extinction from dieback disease. On a mostly deserted beach on Barrier Island that looked an idealised, photo-shopped vision of a perfect beach, my host fretted that some young men horsing around were running too close to a cluster of birds that are endangered; the fright could cause permanent stress. The battle to preserve our environment — notably absent in the public consciousness in India on issues such as conserving water — is as urgent as the challenge of democracies managing diverse cultures. New Zealand is grappling with high net inflows of migrants of 1.5 per cent of the population annually, whereas most countries track well below 1 per cent. Every other Uber driver was from India and came to the country on a student visa, many studying at obscure technical institutes where diplomas became a track to citizenship. New Zealand’s population will pass 5 million this year, a jump that has taken 14 years rather than the 30 years that increasing from 3 million in 1976 to 4 million in 2006 did. Inevitably, there is a debate starting on the levels of immigration but little of the harsh rhetoric that one has heard against “immigrants” from India’s government over the past several months. While Australia herds illegal immigrants on a harsh, sweltering island that is expected to act as a deterrent to others, New Zealand has offered to give them shelter. The articulate cab driver taking me to Sydney airport Sunday said that while Aussies had patronisingly regarded New Zealand as “a kid brother”, nowadays it seemed the other way round. New Zealand is also richly bicultural in respecting its original Maori inhabitants and Maori heritage in ways that, for example, the US and Australia fall short. I was at the gay wedding of a Kiwi friend this month where the wedding dinner abounded with moments made more beautiful — the presentation of a feathered cape to a son getting married by his mother — because they were distinctively Maori. Watching the funeral of a Kiwi friend’s father a few years ago, I was struck by how many eulogies were in Maori.

Part of the country’s charm is how laidback it remains. A mecca of fitness for fitness lovers worldwide is Les Mills, founded in Auckland, now a global group fitness phenomenon unlike any other with its patented high-intensity classes taught in 16,000 gyms worldwide. Last week, an exercise class was a minute from starting when the owner of the company, Phillip Mills, gave up his spin bike to a member who had just walked into the full class. I tried to imagine this happening in India, but couldn’t. I have not only worked for a diverse Kiwi macroeconomic research firm, but am such a sycophant of Les Mills Kiwi instructors in Hong Kong that I retain a gym membership in a city I left six months ago. But the lessons from tiny New Zealand about mobilising to prevent an environment going up in flames around us and combating the feral WhatsApp politics of hatred are in many ways Gandhian — and global. We should all sign up.

One example of the Kiwi focus on the environment is the request to clean the soles of one’s shoes as you walk on paths in reserves to save the magnificent kauri tree from extinction

NPR anyone?



PEOPLE LIKE THEM

KEYA SARKAR

With not much to watch on television and there being only one movie hall in the whole of Santiniketan I find myself watching a lot of news. Of course, with the CAA and NRC protests my time in front of the screen has gone up in the recent past. In any case, for a long time now I have been a great watcher of news on TV. My friends often joke about my daily need for a “Mamata-fix” but I am a pretty serious follower of her daily public appearances.

Not that I agree with all that she or her party prescribes but I am totally in awe of her personal stamina. From district level meetings where she pulls up officials to her presence in the control room in times of natural disasters, the way she charms protesting university

students to her ability to out-walk her security and her party men in her by now famous protest walks, all point to a level of energy which I admire.

I had been observing of late that in all her meetings to protest the CAA and NRC she has been advising all those who come for the rallies to do her one favour: “Please update your voter card,” she says repeatedly. “You must do me this favour,” and “I will protect you with my life,” she promises.

Having heard this many times on television I urged my husband to check our details on the National Voters’ Service Portal. He was reluctant to make an effort. Primarily because my existing voter card was fine and secondly because only recently a surveyor had come home to update our details for the voter card. Since this was a few months before the NCR/NPR debate there was no reason to view him with suspicion. And as it happens in small places everyone knows everyone else.

So Somenath who we knew (from a nearby village) fed in our data and confirmed that our details were correct. He stayed on for tea and apprised us of how many people had died in our area since the last elections and how the number of voters had shrunk.

So reposing immense faith in Somenath, my husband thought the need to check the voter list quite superfluous. However he

must have had a rethink. One day just as we were going to sit down for dinner he announced that he had checked the list. “Mine is fine,” he said but your name has been changed. “To what?” I asked in alarm. To “Keya Nilmoni”, he said. “It is fine in Bengali. It reads Keya Sarkar. But in English it is Keya Nilmoni. Your father’s name is also Amiya Kumar Nilmoni,” he said with what I thought was a hint of glee.

I would have laughed too if I wasn’t concerned about having it corrected. Thankfully we had Somenath’s number. We called him and asked how this could have happened. He, of course, blamed it on “technical error”. An error which he said had changed all “Sarkars” of the locality to “Nilmoni”. Since I know no other Sarkar in the neighbourhood I had to take his word for it.

He helpfully informed us that we could correct the error online. While I sent in a request for the change online my husband and I were wondering how any data input person could create such a strange mistake. Our logical minds were trying to find a plausible explanation. And then it struck us. Actually before we had been introduced to Somenath who used to teach in a school for tribal children run by some friends of ours we used to know his father. He was called Nilmoni!

NPR anyone?

About public service and private profit

The BJP’s message is that since the past can’t be checked, it must be reinvented as creatively as imagination allows



WHERE MONEY TALKS

SUNANDA K. DATTA-RAY

Since West Bengal’s governor is a scholar with evidence of Ram’s historical existence, he may also have heard of Oscar Wilde. He may even be aware of the Wildean bon mot, “imitation is the sincerest form of flattery” whose less-quoted conclusion is “that mediocrity can pay to greatness”. Not that Jagdeep Dhankhar would dream of demeaning himself as “mediocrity”. But, undoubtedly, he reveres Narendra Modi as “greatness” epitomised, and repeats — perhaps even tries to improve upon — the Prime Minister’s brave assertions about the mythic achievements of ancient Hindus.

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) loyalists are most stridently devoted in states that — high-decibel propaganda notwithstanding — they don’t have a cat in hell’s chance of capturing.

When not using his professional suffix “Yogi”, Ajay Singh Bisht or Ajay Mohan Bisht (Google records both unfamiliar names), aka Adityanath, might say outrageous things and do worse. But does he really shoot critics “like dogs” (are even dogs indiscriminately shot?) and “drag them away”? When Dilip Ghosh, West Bengal’s BJP chief, says this is standard practice for BJP chief ministers, he is probably only fantasising about what he would like to do if ever his soaring ambition lands him in Writers’ Building. Or, perhaps, he is savouring what should be done to “a female demon, a Lankini”, as another BJP legislator, Surendra Singh, calls Mamata Banerjee. If Assam’s chief minister, Sarbananda Sonowal, whom Mr Ghosh also mentioned, is guilty of such criminal murderousness, it must be attributed to his difficulty in reconciling the Citizenship (Amendment) Act with a lifetime of hostility to Bengalis, especially from East Bengal.

Little does Mr Ghosh realise that his reckless utterances confirm that with friends like him, the BJP needs no enemies in West Bengal. He has also warned the centre (inadvertently of course) that if it at all wishes to earn the country’s respect for responsible governance and upholding the law, it must invoke Article 356 in Uttar Pradesh, Assam and wherever else saffron rule permits men and women to indulge

in such murderousness.

Indian politics being the art of the impossible, West Bengal’s governor is heir to several such conflicting and contradictory traditions. He has travelled a long way, possibly longer than the road from the Vadnagar tea stall in Gujarat’s Mehsana district to the newly-renamed 7 Lok Kalyan Marg. Starting out from Kithana village in Rajasthan, Mr Dhankhar finds himself in the grandeur of a palace built for British viceroys modelled on Kedleston Hall in Derbyshire, stately seat of the Curzon family, where liveried lackeys disregard Jawaharlal Nehru’s advice and call governors “Excellency” and their spouse “lady governor” or even “governess”.

Anyone who scales such dizzy heights must keep eyes and ears open for every rustle of change in how the wind blows, trimming sails and turning coats accordingly. Mr Modi’s announcement in Kolkata’s Old Currency Building the other day that nation-building means “preserving” India’s heritage and history sent aspiring listeners scuttling around to demonstrate their inventive zeal by renaming Calcutta Port Trust after the Jana Sangh founder and proclaiming Mr Modi the new Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.

His further complaint that shallow post-Independence historians overlook important aspects of the past was a clear reminder that

it’s not enough to be content with the stem-cells and plastic surgery to which he himself famously drew attention, ignoring the mirth of realists. The BJP’s message is that since the past can’t be checked, it must be reinvented as creatively as imagination allows. Rising manfully to the challenge, Mr Dhankhar first trotted out that ancient Hindus piloted their own *uran khatola* or flying machines. When listeners murmured this was old hat like Ganesh’s transplanted head, he broke new ground (as he thought) with Arjun’s nuclear-tipped arrows. That should earn Mr Modi’s gratitude. He can now demand that instead of being harassed with NPTs and CTBTs, India, as the nuclear pioneer, should be the sole inter-galactic authority for licensing nuclear weapons.

Bengal grandees like Maharajahdiraja Bahadur Sir Bijay Chand Mahtab of Burdwan and Nawab Sir Khwaja Salimullah Bahadur of Dacca who sniffed that Marwari stood for “more-worry” would have been impressed by Mr Dhankhar’s virtuosity. Having prostrated themselves before the British Crown to be appointed Knight Grand Commander of The Most Eminent Order of the Indian Empire and Knight Commander of The Most Exalted Order of the Star of India they knew all about public service and private profit. Then as now, political life bristles with careerists who may start out to do good but stay on to do well.

LUNCH WITH BS ▶ ABHA ADAMS | EDUCATIONIST

The unconventional

Abha Adams tells Anjali Bhargava how she unintentionally ended up becoming a brand

Abha Adams, 66, has an abiding memory of her own school days. Standing with her two think plait among a long line of cherubic girls as Mother Superior’s voice looms loud: “Girls, I want you to be like limpid water in a crystalline vase”. And she thinks to herself: “Wow, what wouldn’t I give to be limpid water in a crystal vase”, even though she didn’t know what it really meant.

The strongly moralistic values and sense of duty that were ingrained in her through her convent school days in Delhi led her to envision her future as a nun. “I was a disgusting goody two shoes through most of my school years”, she says, a quality she found hard to shed even in later life. So much so that when she first met Bill, who she would marry later, he asked her “what’s with this should and ought”, the only two words she appeared to have in her vocabulary. When he advised she should just “follow her heart”, it sounded like blasphemy to her.

We are meeting for a hurriedly fixed lunch at The China Kitchen at Hyatt in New Delhi, with time at a premium for us both. She orders a stir-fried sole fish and Udon noodles and I opt for some stir-fried vegetables with fried rice that she agrees to try.

As we wait for our food, she tells me a bit about her childhood, a phase that many of former students and parents can’t even imagine. “Abha was once a school girl! Can’t even imagine that!” is how one reacted when I mention my meeting with her to a few people who know her. Most of them swear by her... her charm to be precise. In fact, many say she is “charm personified”.

Adams learnt her p’s and q’s in a highly Anglicised atmosphere in her Kolkata home from one Mrs Robinson who used to turn up in her starched black dress with white cuffs and spent hours perfecting Adams’ handwriting under her watchful gaze. Adams’ mother — a school principal and a stoic nationalist who imbibed many British customs nonetheless — took the young girl regularly to the national library in Kolkata and let her loose, a delightful memory for the avid reader.

In the 1970s when she was 10, Adams moved from the rich, cultural ethos of Kolkata to Delhi that seemed like a “large, electrified village”. After lapping up “duty, convention and morality” in the first few years at school, Adams began to find herself dabbling in the performing arts, expressing herself more freely and going on to become the head girl at Carmel Convent at some stage. The spirit imbued in her by Sister Candice,

one of the nuns at her school, began to come to the surface, much to the chagrin of her conventional-minded father.

The seeds of rebellion had been sown in the young girl, who would soon be attracted to most things forbidden and nun-hood would be jettisoned. Indeed, Adams has never been one to conform. Even today she attempts to be politically correct but prod her a bit and she spills the beans, laughing with gay abandon.

Real rebellion kicked in during college with her joining Barry John’s Theater Action Group — that her father derisively referred to as “*nau-tanki*” — with the likes of Siddhartha Basu and Lilette Dubey. Much to her father’s horror, she also experimented with radio and appeared in a television show, *Around the World*. At 21, she started teaching English at Lady Shri Ram College for Women in Delhi after securing her master’s degree.

After she lost her father around that time, her mother’s plans to arrange a match or her went haywire, thanks to the rebellious streak that had started raising its head. Young Adams had no intention of getting tied down at that stage but agreed to go out for a coffee with a prospective match. After she was seated comfortably, she asked the waiter for an ashtray and lit a cigarette. Needless to say, the wedding bells failed to ring.

After teaching for six years, Adams felt the need to move on and applied for a second master’s degree in theatre arts from the University of Leeds, UK. Thereafter, she left on a scholarship for a year-long course in practical theatre, enrolling for an MPhil in the subject, one she never finished. Upon leaving the Indian shores, she felt the need to rediscover the “Indian” in her and started working on dance and theatre performances with the Indian community in the UK. She began working with artists and theatre personalities and doing ballets like *Ramayana*, operas like *Savitr* and productions like *Dularibai*.

There she also met Bill, her-to-be-husband, who she found “radically different from the average Indian male” she had encountered. “He had no hang-ups, no ego and made me laugh.” He could deal with her confidence, encouraged her to break every norm and live life to the fullest.

In 1984, she landed a job with the BBC, learned to broadcast from the best in the business, presented a prime time show in current affairs and became education producer for Broadcasting House, Leeds. She then joined the Great Britain Arts Council in London which was



ILLUSTRATION: BINAY SINHA

setting up a development agency, Aditi, for South Asian performing arts. For two years, she worked to bring together dancers, artists and performers of South Asian origin and “learnt like never before” while helping with advocacy, promotion and training.

In early 1992, when he was only 44, her husband developed a serious heart condition and was told he didn’t have much longer to live (Bill is 73 today). The upshot of it all was a decision to return to India, something she fought at that time.

With the main course over, we order a chocolate brulee (a poor cousin of crême variety) and decide to share it.

Later the same year, Adams found herself back in India, unsure of what she was really qualified to do. Instead of looking for a job — nei-

ther had a job at that point — the two bought a 17-year old Ambassador car and drove across the Himalayas, discovering parts of the country they didn’t know existed. The car died on them on the way back!

With all their savings spent, Adams first approached Doodarshan for a job since broadcasting was what she knew best. But it was like “entering Dante’s Inferno without the fires burning”. The dusty office with spools of tape resembled “*baba adam ka zamana*” and she quickly retreated. She then decided to go back to teach at LSR and found the place totally unchanged while she had grown by leaps and bounds.

That’s when someone mentioned that the Delhi-based Shriram group was setting up a new, experimental and very out-of-the-box school. She joined the group to set up the senior school and began what she describes as the “best phase of her life”. The founding team — she reels off the list and I know many of them personally — put their “heart and soul” into what they saw as their “baby”, several of them with no background in academics or education but “personalities” nonetheless. Fourteen years flew by, in a whirlwind of activity, led by Adam’s own spontaneity and infectious energy. She gives full credit to Manju Bharat Ram — the founder of The Shri Ram School — who she describes as a true “visionary” in the education space. The Shri Ram School became a brand under the leadership of Adams and Ram.

After 14 years, it was time again to move on. After Adams resigned, she began to get calls from all and sundry asking her to lend her name to their new school ventures. Some offered to pay absurd sums of money for just her name, suggesting that she needn’t even come to the school. That’s when she realised she’d become a “brand” like TSRS! It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to earn a tonne of money for doing very little but her conscience didn’t allow her to go ahead. Finally, it was Ritu Suri’s offer to set up Step by Step in Noida in 2006 that resonated with her. That’s where she spent the next 12 years of her life, building almost an equally formidable name in another part of the city.

At some stage, however, Adams felt her work there was done and she quit in 2018, deciding to end her affair with the high-end schools of the national capital region and spend more time on Ahvaan, a teacher training and mentoring NGO that works in the government schools space. She’s writing a book on the (mainly) negative fallout of the increasingly digital- and social media-led world on today’s children. Students in elite schools “are self-harming in large numbers”, she tells me. She starts recounting some related stories when we realise we need to wrap up as time is running out.

On this somber note, Adams breezes out, leaving me to absorb the dull Abha-less environment. Try meeting her once and you’ll understand why she’s the brand that she is.

An ode to marmalade



PEOPLE LIKE US

KISHORE SINGH

Thirty-four years, one month and nine days after we were married, my wife finally made a vat of orange marmalade at home. It was not at my persuasion, dear reader, the illusion that she would pander to my tastes having being shattered 12,449 days ago. Having a fondness for bitter rinds in the conserve, and finding local brands in the stores sickeningly sweet, I might have expressed the hope that tiny mandarins from the garden be turned into confiture. My wife wasn’t one for such ministrations. “If you want homemade marmalade,” she told me in no uncertain terms, “you can ask your mother to make it — or your sister,” and just to make sure no family members were left out, added, “or sister-in-law.”

I’m not one to complain, but in those years of socialist austerity when fewer things were available at the neighbourhood grocer’s, each of us guarded our hoard of imported goodies with selfish zeal — whether chocolates, cheeses, or jams and jellies. Given my wife’s sweet tooth, you’d expect her to raid the fridge for puddings, but she took a liking for marmalade instead, slathering her toast from edge to edge with greed rather than good sense. She might not make it at home, but she could certainly eat it. Waging battle over a jar of marmalade seemed petty beyond belief so I simply lost my craving for the preserve.

Not that my wife was averse to cooking up a storm in the kitchen when she chose. Two years and a few odd days after our marriage, she decided to make tomato sauce in somewhat alarming quantities. Kilos of tomatoes were deseeded, pulped, cooked and poured into empty bottles purloined from friends — but, alas, she’d forgotten to add sodium benzoate, resulting in the spoilage of 39 bottles of homemade ketchup. Over the years, that list grew — 18 miscellaneous sized jars of chilli pickle, a few dozen pitchers of guava jam, 21 (or was it 22?) pots of mango chutney, failed attempts at baking our own bread and making our own ice-

cream. Through it all, my wife was only resolute in one thing — she would not make marmalade.

Over time that expectation faded. I now bought back armloads of marmalade from my travels, soaked in whisky in Scotland, steeply priced from Fortnum & Mason, artisanal varieties from Switzerland, in jars large and small — so many that they remained untasted past their use-by dates. By now I’d renounced my morning toast in pursuit of a diet, so it was my wife who ate her way through the stock, generous dollops over her now market-bought bread and croissants.

So it was a surprise to see her stirring up a treachery mix from a recipe borrowed from a friend’s friend’s mother, coaxing me to “just taste it” and waiting for the pronouncement. “It’s perfect,” I assured her, “just as it ought to be — sweet enough, but bitter too. I love it.” The enthusiasm wasn’t feigned though it might have been better to moderate it because my wife decided that sharing was her way of caring. “I might give some to my kitchen garden ladies,” she announced. More portions were packaged into handy containers and sent off to acquaintances. This morning, when we sat down to our 12.450th breakfast together, she suggested toast with orange marmalade — store bought, naturally.

Not the obvious solutions

One of the lessons which the Modi government has yet to learn is that the solutions to economic problems can be counter-intuitive. In other words, not the first thing that strikes your mind. As we saw with demonetisation, the solution to black money is not necessarily to attack cash holdings, since most of the old notes came back to the Reserve Bank. Similarly, the solution to a tax shortfall is not necessarily to raise tax rates—a suggestion aired briefly in the context of the goods and services tax—any more than the solution to a trade deficit is to put up the shutters to imports. As the 1991 experience showed, the solution to a large trade deficit may be to open up the economy, not putting up protective walls; and encouraging exports could be done more effectively by scrapping export subsidies and adjusting the external value of the rupee instead.

These and similar lessons don't seem to have been learnt, if recent experience is anything to go by. Thus, the response to pharmaceutical price increases has been to impose price ceilings, just as the response last September to a domestic shortage of onions was to impose an export ban. As critics of Donald Trump's trade policies have pointed out, imposing additional import duties on goods from China has raised the cost of supplies domestically (JP Morgan calculates the impact on a family budget to be \$1,000 in a year). Someone should do a similar exercise in India to work out the cumulative costs of the additional duties imposed on steel imports, the cost of tariff hikes and export subsidies on offer in the effort to make India a manufacturing hub for things like mobile phones, the potential impact of additional duties on imports in the "others" category, the likely cost to the consumer of banning palm oil imports from Malaysia and petroleum from Turkey, and so on.

Then we have the snarky response to Jeff Bezos and Amazon. Given how much of world trade is intra-firm, and how important it is to become a part of global supply chains, Mr Bezos's promise of additional exports of \$10 billion should have encouraged the government to welcome the announcement, or at least to hold its peace. Instead, the response was far from friendly—influenced, no doubt, by the fact that Mr Bezos owns a newspaper that is critical of the Modi government, and by lobby pressure from small traders who fear unfair competition from a company with deep pockets. But the Competition Commission was created to deal with such problems, even if it does not always move when it should (such as in the Jio case). The larger point is that small store owners do not have the ability to create large supply chains that feed into international markets, nor to create a manufacturing base that generates quality jobs. Once again, the tactical response has been the wrong one.

A particularly striking example is offered by Jharkhand, which gives employers a subsidy of ₹5,000 per month for every employee taken on board in the garment industry. Surely, this is a measure of the lack of competitiveness of the country's garment industry—bear in mind that labour cost cannot be the most important reason for lack of competitiveness because China is by far the world's leading garment exporter despite having much higher labour costs. Although the subsidy seems to be generating a positive response from industry, there has to be doubt about whether this really is a "good news" story.

Any industry will invest if it is given a large enough incentive, but there may be better ways of using the taxpayer's money if the underlying reasons for lack of competitiveness were to be addressed—like a bloated currency that prices India out of world markets. It might be argued that sometimes the best can be the enemy of the good, especially if the former is hard to deliver. But too many such lazy compromises are what create a high-cost economy of the kind that we have lived with for long, and from which we had been moving away until recently.

Return of the Bharatiya 'Baniya' Party

BJP under Modi-Shah is returning to its trader mindset with a vengeance, underlining that strong, full majority governments can also be more risk-averse

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal has been quick to clarify his remark on Amazon founder Jeff Bezos not doing India a favour by investing here. He now says all investment is welcome as long as it complies with India's regulations. You can't argue with that.

Although, if read with the fact that the monopoly watchdog Competition Commission of India had hauled up Amazon earlier this week for "unfair" trade practices, a move hailed breathlessly by Swadeshi Jagaran Manch and trader/retailers' associations, you wouldn't make such a benign interpretation. It won't be some diabolical conspiracy either. It's only pure politics. It will underline the BJP's inevitable return to its basic instinct: Mercantilism.

This needs explanation. For decades, until the Congress-Left, post-Rajiv Gandhi, began describing the BJP as a Hindu party, Indira Gandhi had avoided doing precisely that. In an earlier National Interest, I had quoted from a conversation with Seshadri Chari, former editor of RSS mouthpiece Organiser, that she only described the BJP as a *baniya* (trader caste) party. The BJP has shown signs lately of proving Indira Gandhi right and returning to its trader mindset.

This is where the philosophical impulse of swadeshi also comes from. If someone has to profit from trade and entrepreneurship, it had better be one of our own. And even if we let an outsider come and do so, he'd better be grateful to us rather than the other way around. Several strong emotions get meshed in this: Nationalism, protectionism, mercantilism, and arrogance. Who the hell are you to walk all over my market, out-compete my native businessmen, and then expect me to say thank-you?

Foreign direct investment (FDI) had first started becoming fashionable in 1990-91, just as the Cold War ended. It was also a time when a deep economic crisis was building up in India. Madhu Dandavate was finance minister in V P Singh government.

Addressing one of those industry chamber gatherings, he famously — or infamously — said something like, "I am not against FDI. But I won't go looking for it." Since he was a dyed-in-the-red old socialist, even this reluctant acceptance of FDI was

seen as something to celebrate. But no foreign investor was impressed.

The reform of 1991 changed things. But attitudes deep down didn't. India had already had four decades of "socialist, protectionist, swadeshi, import-substitution; exports are good/imports bad" toxicification across the political spectrum. The only force of the economic Right, the once-powerful Swatantra Party, had been destroyed and entombed under Indira Gandhi's populism. Even the Jana Sangh by this time was singing the same socialist song, only fortified by its own economic nationalism. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the only truly reformist BJP leader in a modern free-market sense, ran with the baton of reform. He had too little time.

Old ideologies, and we say this in a purely non-partisan sense (as in Left or Right, Congress or BJP), are extremely obstinate. Like the proverbial dog's tail, you can't straighten or bend these even in a dozen years. Some individual leaders can make a difference: P V Narasimha Rao and Manmohan Singh for the Congress, Vajpayee for the BJP. Under others, the "tail" goes back to the way it always was.

Over the past five and a half years, we have seen the protectionist, anti-MNC, technophobic old notions return with a vengeance. This government now gives a 20 per cent advantage to capital goods made in India over imports, signalling a return to the old regime.

All it meant was that now a foreign company could ship its kits to India and assemble, for example, metro coaches in a "joint venture" with an Indian minority partner or, even directly, and sell the same coach at a price much higher than an import. In Budget after Budget, we've seen tariffs go up, sectoral protections extended — steel is only the most visible example — and all kinds of government agencies, from regulators to quasi-policing organisations, go after foreign investors, especially in retail. After the last Budget and the BJP discourse around it, that happily forgotten old, Indira-esque expression "import substitution" staged a comeback.

That is the reason global business has seen its romance with Narendra Modi's India fade. No one would say so in public, especially those that already

have investments in India or employees and other interests. Who wants "panga" with a strong government? Even the mighty Vodafone CEO has to retreat after saying in agony that he will have to leave India, although he still might do that, after writing off a couple of tens of billions because of regulatory and taxation shocks and unpredictability.

Want more evidence? See how Jeff Bezos's previous visit to India went in 2014, when he was feted by Mr Modi and others, and his peremptory dismissal now. The explanation also sounds like Dandavate of 1990: I am not against FDI but...

You still want to know where this sentiment or push comes from? Play back the part of RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat's Dussehra speech last year, when he lays out his economic doctrine. We can describe it in one word out of these: Protectionist, xenophobic, swadeshi. Or, it could also be stated as, "We are not against FDI, but only in sectors where we need it, as long as it doesn't hurt Indian business, and control remains with Indians".

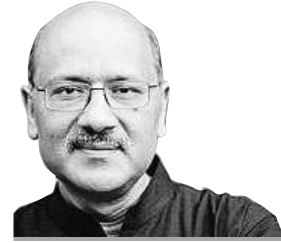
The most fascinating aspect of Mr Modi in his sixth year with a big majority is how compliant his government has been with Nagpur. It has delivered on all of its big concerns: Cow, Article 370, the Citizenship Amendment Act, triple talaq, anti-Pakistanism, and so on. Yet, it has reversed two decades of reform on trade, FDI in retail, and technology to harmonise itself with the RSS, not defy it like Vajpayee did.

In 2014, and again in 2019, India elected a "strong" government and prime minister because it was fed up with a "weak" one for a decade under Dr Singh. It has been stronger and more decisive in many areas, from retaliation for terror attacks to Article 370 to anti-corruption activism. But not on the economy. Besides goods and services tax, however flawed, and the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, it is difficult to find one big, bold reform although I recently listed 10 bits of good news even in gloomy times for the economy.

Think about it. A government as weak as Dr Singh's had the courage to deliver the India-US nuclear deal, thereby fundamentally shifting India's geostrategic posture. Mr Modi's strong government, meanwhile, is struggling even to seal a tiny, partial trade deal with the US, even as it celebrates this "strategic partnership" co-founded by Dr Singh and George Bush/Barack Obama. Vajpayee's weak government ushered in the cotton revolution by permitting genetically modified seeds. Mr Modi's strong government is pussyfooting about on agricultural biotechnology, more respectful of Swadeshi Luddites than a Vajpayee would bother to be.

This takes us to our old argument: Are strong, full-majority governments necessarily good, or do they have a problem? More to lose, no excuses to put off ideological demands and compulsions, and a constant need to save face? Are weak governments actually more decisive and less risk-averse because they have greater flexibility and humility? It is a particularly contrarian and provocative point, which, indeed, is what it was intended to be.

With special arrangement with ThePrint



NATIONAL INTEREST

SHEKHAR GUPTA

Moral considerations and profit maximisation



VIEWPOINT

DEVANGSHU DATTA

In March 1971, about a 100 employees of Polaroid demonstrated in front of their corporate headquarters. They ceremonially burnt several cameras. This group called itself the Polaroid Revolutionary Workers Movement (PRWM). It was led by two black American employees. The PRWM had a three point agenda: It wanted Polaroid to exit South Africa completely; it wanted the company to issue a statement that condemned apartheid; it wanted Polaroid's profits from its South African operations to be donated to support African liberation movements.

At that point of time, the

American multinational corporation (MNC) possessed cutting edge photographic technology that made it a world leader. Its technology was integral to the South African Passbook system. The Passbook was an internal passport that every non-white had to carry. It carried all sorts of details about the individual, which had to be endorsed by the police and his or her employer. Anybody caught without a Passbook risked a jail sentence and was subjected to brutal interrogation at the minimum. Anybody in a whites only area, carrying a Passbook which did not authorise him or her to be that place was also liable to a jail sentence.

Polaroid sacked the two employees. It also sent a mixed race team to investigate the South Africa situation. It issued a statement saying it abhorred apartheid. It made a partial pull out, stating that it would stop servicing government contracts, but it would continue to operate in South Africa. It committed to equalising salaries and supporting various organisations working for people of colour. Much later, it was learnt that Polaroid equipment was

still being sold to the South African government through various local distribution channels.

Ambiguous or wholly evil? Many corporates have done much worse. Polaroid was, as it happens, the first major multinational to exit South Africa. Most stayed right in there for sound economic reasons.

White South Africa was first world in terms of per capita income, and it had a vast pool of skilled, cheap, coloured labour. The profit margins were approximately twice

that of other First World countries as a result of these factors.

By the mid-1980s, moral pressure had built up on corporates operating there. Although Margaret Thatcher chortled that really "teeny sanctions" were being imposed (her son Mark had business interests), corporates had started feeling the heat. Oddly enough, it was

another camera company, Eastman Kodak, which genuinely exited. Kodak quit South Africa cold, refusing to allow its products to be sold there. Other MNCs tried the effect of officially pulling out while allowing the

distribution of their products. McKinsey pulled out of South Africa when an up and coming Rajat Gupta stated he felt uncomfortable with that nation's colour bar.

Corporates tend to stay with undemocratic regimes and to enable them if there's profit to be made. Polaroid that

enabled the South African colour bar with its technology. In an earlier era, IBM helped Hitler set up the enumeration system in concentration camps. Once America ended up at war with the Axis Powers, Big Blue doubled up by using its punch card technology to set up the internment camps for Japanese American citizens. Larsen &

Toubro built the notorious bridge on the River Kwai using prisoners of war. Siemens used slave labour sourced from German concentration camps during the war.

There are countless other examples of corporates supporting horrible regimes. United Fruit, Shell, Rio Tinto are some of the better known cases. In recent times, there's Cambridge Analytica and, arguably, Facebook. Then there are all the companies working in face recognition, AI-driven autonomous weaponry and other technologies that enable evil regimes.

Corporates are supposed to maximise profits. But how far will they go in that endeavour? It's a question Indian corporates need to ask themselves. Starting with Aadhaar, there's a raftload of government schemes, which will generate profits, if moral considerations are ignored. Construction companies will make money building detention centres. Information technology companies will make money on the enumeration of the CAA, NRC and NPR. Being evil pays. Does it pay enough?

gets an insight into what sort of research the RBI is encouraging.

This publication is also something that Dr Patra needs to take in hand and raise it to international standards. The objective must be to make non-RBI researchers also vie to publish in it.

There's so much ferment out there which we are not capturing on an institutional basis. Much of this has now been relegated to the scatter-shot mercies of the twitterati. In particular, I would urge him to associate economists from the Indian Economic Service (IES) in the effort. They may not have PhDs from foreign universities but they understand the Indian economy's dynamics better.

Over the years, the IES has become a sort of a subordinate service which gets virtually no encouragement, not least because their head, the chief economic adviser, has no time for it. Kaushik Basu was the sole exception to this tendency.

I am sure Dr Patra will get the fullest cooperation from the finance minister, who needs workhorses, not prima donnas constantly looking to improve their CVs.

Le Carré's moral compass

EYE CULTURE

SUHIT K. SEN

In 2011, one of the most formidable living novelists in the English language was nominated for the Man Booker International Prize, awarded every two years for lifetime contribution to fiction. John Le Carré, whose real name is David Cornwell, issued a statement saying, "I am enormously flattered to be named as a finalist of the 2011 Man Booker International prize. However, I do not compete for literary prizes and have therefore asked for my name to be withdrawn."

But Le Carré's finally got his award. He's been given the Olof Palme Prize, instituted in 1987, which is given for outstanding achievements "in any of the areas of anti-racism, human rights, international understanding, peace and common security". Le Carré is the 33rd recipient of the award, but only the fourth writer to get it. The three writers to get the award before him were playwright and political dissident Václav Havel (1989), who went on to become president of Czechoslovakia, Danish novelist Carsten Jensen (2009) and the Italian journalist and author of Gomorrah, Roberto Saviano (2011).

That Le Carré is one of the greatest living British novelists ought not to be in doubt. Over a writing career spanning almost four decades, he has written 25 novels, beginning with *A Call for the Dead* (1961) and running up to *Agent Running in the Field* (2019). In between, he's written short stories and non-fiction collections, the latest of which is *The Pigeon Tunnel: Stories from My Life* (2016). Almost all of Le Carré's novels are in the espionage fiction genre, save his second novel, *A Murder of Quality* (1962), which was a crime novel, and his sixth, *The Naive and Sentimental Lover* (1971), which defies classification.

If you're looking to pigeonhole, Le Carré was primarily an espionage novelist. He made his reputation with his third novel, *The Spy Who Came in From the Cold* (1963). Le Carré's early novels were set against the backdrop of the Cold War — from *Call for the Dead* to *The Secret Pilgrim* (1990), his 13th novel. If anyone had even remotely feared that with the collapse of the Soviet bloc and the end of the Cold War, Le Carré would run out of themes and issues to engage him, they could not have been more in error. Le Carré began his post-Cold War career with a stunning debut, *The Night Manager* (1993), the story of an undercover intelligence agent infiltrating the inner circle of an arms dealer to eventually destroy him.

Since then Le Carré has taken on the pharmaceutical industry in *The Constant Gardener* (2001); the devastation of the Congo by big finance in *The Mission Song* (2006); the war against and destruction of Chechnya in *Our Game* (1995); and the horrors of the "War on Terror" in *A Most Wanted*

Man (2008). In all, Le Carré has written 12 novels since the end of the Cold War, though he returns to that era in 24th novel, *A Legacy of Spies* (2017).

Many concerns and engagements interweave in Le Carré's work. Two of the important concerns are exploring moral ambiguities using espionage almost as a metaphor. These moral ambiguities play out in arenas ranging from patriotism, an individual's relationship with the imagined community we call a "people", or 'nation', to an individual's relationship with other individuals. This concern is embedded in a search, I believe, for a bedrock of humanism in which to anchor human existence.

The character Le Carré has chosen to be the vessel of both these themes is George Smiley, the master spy who is unlike any spy in popular imagining or fiction — a seemingly lost, utterly nondescript and donnish man. But Smiley, the protagonist of the classic Smiley trilogy — *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*; *The Honourable Schoolboy*; and *Smiley's People* — has a moral compass that rarely betrays him even as he goes about his business without compunction.

The perfect metaphor for the moral ambiguities that Le Carré explores is caught in Smiley's relationship with his wife, Lady Anne, who is serially adulterous, leaving him often and returning equally often, though fleetingly. But Lady Anne's adulterous betrayals never shake Smiley's belief in her, not even when she has a relationship with his colleague Bill Haydon, who, as part of a coterie within the "Circus", the British Secret Service, works towards and succeeds in supplanting Smiley as number two in the service.

It is during Haydon's time in charge that the service discovers it has been infiltrated by a "mole" — a double agent. Smiley, out of favour by then, nevertheless relentlessly pursues the mole, who turns out to be Haydon himself. Just as Smiley refuses to judge his wife, he refuses to judge the flamboyant Haydon, at one time a close friend, though he spares no effort to run him down to earth. Le Carré's superimposition of these two betrayals and Smiley's reaction to them seem to betoken the author's own refusal to be drawn too easily into judgments.

In his Cold War novels, especially, Le Carré gestures at moral equivalences between the East and West in terms of betrayals and belonging that make it difficult for us to hold on to conventional positions predicated on ideas of patriotism and us-and-them identities. It is here, perhaps, that he has contributed immeasurably to "international understanding, peace and common security".

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

An agenda for Dr Patra



LINE AND LENGTH

T C A SRINIVASA-RAGHAVAN

For several decades, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) used to publish the comprehensive "Report on Currency and Finance" (RCF). It was an excellent report, both as current reading on the Indian economy and as archival material.

In its first avatar it used to have two parts like the Economic Survey — one for analysis, the other for data. Then around 2001 came the annual RBI Handbook of Statistics. So Volume 2 of the RCF was discontinued. After that it became a theme-based publication which came out once in two years.

But after 2013, it suddenly stopped publication. The last edition was in 2013. No explanation was given by Raghuram Rajan, who was then RBI governor, and Urjit Patel, who was deputy governor, for their decision.

Actually, even D Subbarao, who was governor from 2008 to 2013, needed to explain why the five years after 2008 were combined in a single report when, in fact, two were needed. Those were the crucial stimulus years after the Lehman collapse. Towards the end of his term Dr Subbarao kept complaining about irresponsible fiscal policy.

These gripes did come out eventually in the last RCF of 2013 in a well-argued and properly supervised set of essays on fiscal-monetary interface.

Next, Dr Rajan and Dr Patel needed to explain why they quietly junked the RCF. After all, having started the whole full disclosure of non-performing assets and the prompt that it became a theme-based publication which came out once in two years.

a proper account of the state of finance in the next RCF was fully warranted.

In fact, Dr Rajan also needed to explain his decision to adopt the Basel III norms. He must have had good reasons but what were they? Was there a proper debate? The RCF would have been the best place to do it. We would all have understood, as would have the writers of RBI history who will toil without access to the files.

My complaint is that if Dr Rajan and Dr Patel thought the RCF was redundant to requirements, they could have explained why they thought so. If they thought it was poorly written, they could have improved it. Instead they behaved exactly like the vice-chancellor of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) behaves — arbitrarily. In the absence of an explanation, that's how it appears.

As an aside, let me ask what the reaction would have been if this had happened after Narendra Modi had taken over. But in 2013 no one said a thing. The UPA was in its death

throes and no one in government even noticed.

Reviving RBI research

But now that Michael Patra is deputy governor who has to supervise the research department, the RBI should revive the report. After all, Dr Patra would have surely worked on it at some point in his long career at the RBI and is in a better position to appreciate its value than were the outsiders.

Moreover, the seven-year break provides a great opportunity to focus on new developments in monetary theory and global practices. The Indian bits can be woven in.

This is not the only thing on Dr Patra's plate. The RBI also brings out a publication called "Occasional Papers". This contains research by its staff. The last issue came out in July. It comes out once in six months.

One problem with it is that it has become something of a vanity publication and the quality is highly variable. Nevertheless, it serves a useful purpose inasmuch as one

Opinion

SATURDAY, JANUARY 18, 2020

SPEAK UP

Punjab chief minister Amarinder Singh

What happened in Germany under Hitler in 1930 is happening in India now. Germans did not speak then and they regretted it, but we have to speak now so that we don't regret later



ASER lessons: Fix early learning

Foundational learning a secondary focus so far, early entrants in govt schools at a big disadvantage

THE WIDE GAP between the learning levels of students in government schools and those in private schools has become something of a leitmotif of the Annual Status of Education Reports (ASER). The 2019 report focuses on 'Early Years' (ages 4-8) since these are critical to later-stage learning. Experts argue cognitive development in the pre-school years is key to learning outcomes in school, and, thus, children entering schools early—the Right to Education law and the new National Education Policy both set 6 years as the age when a child should enter formal schooling (Standard I)—will be at a disadvantage compared to those who did so at the appropriate age. Indeed, *Early Years* points at the same, with older children in the same class demonstrating sharper cognitive abilities, and, consequently, higher learning outcomes. So, with a much higher population of 4&5-year-olds in standard I in government schools (26.1%) compared with private schools (15.7%)—largely because of the lack of affordable and accessible pre-primary institutions—it can be argued, the feedstock in government schools sets them up for the disparity in learning levels. A Praja Foundation report shows that despite a 44% increase in per student spending by the Delhi government in school education in FY19, the dropout rates have remained more or less unchanged. The report talks of how, of the 3.11 lakh students enrolled in Std 9 in government schools in Delhi, 55% didn't reach Std 10, and of those that did, 25% had dropped out by Std 12. While there are many factors behind such high dropouts—reading RTE's no detention till Std 8' with the poor learning levels at the primary level shows why many students simply may not be able to cope with the curriculum at the secondary and senior secondary levels—the pipeline problem perhaps starts at the foundational level.

ASER 2019 shows how poor the quality of education in government schools is even at the foundational levels. While only 6.7% of government school students in Std I who were aged 4-5 could correctly do early language tasks, this figure was 24.1% for private schools. Similarly, only 16.5% of 4&5-year-olds in Std I in government schools could demonstrate early numeracy competency, compared with 35.3% in private schools. In cognitive skills, too, government institutions lagged their private peers by six to 18 percentage points when performance of 5-year-olds was compared.

The problem is two-fold. India has one of the largest pre-school care programmes in the world—the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), but it remains primarily focused on nutrition/healthcare/immunisation, with early learning often neglected at the *anganwadis*. Moreover, as the report notes, the approach to this is quite flawed, with content knowledge and instruction being the preferred method when research shows that play-based activities geared towards building memory, reasoning, and problem-solving abilities have a much larger impact on building the foundation for later learning. India needs to aggressively bolster its early education programme—in FY20, the Centre budgeted \$3.9 billion for the umbrella ICDS programme while in 2017, China was spending nearly \$19 billion on just early childhood education. With spending on foundational learning high, China had rational school education spends with far better results than India—in 2017, nearly 99% of its primary school students got promoted to the secondary level and 95% of the students in the junior secondary level got promoted to the senior secondary level. That, among other factors, also likely freed up money for its government to focus on higher education and R&D in the manner it has in the last decade or so.

Switching on security

Switch on/off for card payments means additional security

WITH THE DIGITAL transaction push, must come a digital security push. Digital transactions have grown in the past few years, but so have frauds related to online payments—the RBI Ombudsman's December report shows that digital-related complaints have doubled in the last two years. In FY19, digital complaints accounted for a quarter of total claims, even as complaints relating to use of stolen and cloned cards more than doubled. As the Ombudsman only receives a fraction of these complaints, actual numbers are expected to be much higher. RBI's latest move, to allow a switch-on/switch-off option for digital transactions, thus, is welcome.

RBI has made it mandatory for banks to provide a switch-on/off facility for both credit and debit cards, for all transactions, starting March 16. Currently, most purchases require two-factor authentication—entering of a CVV followed by an OTP—but, the new rule will mean another level of security as consumers will be able to deactivate their cards when not in use. Users will also be able to set and modify transaction limits for all kinds of transactions. Additionally, it will give users the choice to activate/deactivate international payments and allow/disallow contactless payments. More important, this facility shall be available via all mediums, viz, mobile app, internet banking, IVR, and ATMs. Although some banks like SBI and Axis already offer this facility, awareness was quite poor. What is not clear though is the time banks will take to switch card payments on or off. In the case of Axis bank, for instance, deactivation takes 24 hours from request. If this can be done instantaneously, it shall mean better security. For example, a person will be able to activate the card service only when they shop, and block once that is done.

Although no data is available from RBI on economic losses due to online fraud, Indian banks have long been a target for hackers. Details of 1.3 million card users had been put online last year, of which 98% were linked to Indian accounts. Cyber-security giant Norton last year highlighted that, in 2017, consumers in 20 big economies, including India, lost over \$170 billion in cybercrime. India alone lost \$18.5 billion. Had this technology been available, hackers would not have been able to use card details as easily. RBI, however, still needs to address security concerns relating to the digital economy. Pushing mediums like UPI can be one solution, but even these are authenticated by debit card. RBI must do more to make sure banks are security-compliant. It has mandated banks to conduct security audits, but it also has to keep introducing new mechanisms. For instance, IDBRT has been talking about blockchain to ensure additional security, and RBI can create a framework for banks to take-up the technology. Given that the central bank spends ₹3,000 to address each complaint, and complaints have been growing, it would save more if it were to invest in a more secure architecture.

BigFOUL

The SAI sexual offences scandal exposes the sorry state of affairs; govt can't hope for sports glory unless this changes

SERIAL SEXUAL ABUSE of gymnasts by former US gymnastics national team doctor Larry Nassar—over 250 athletes had complained, and Nassar was later sentenced to 200 years of imprisonment by courts—had shocked the sporting world. An *Indian Express* report reveals similar rot in Indian sports. Just as the US association turned a blind eye to Nassar's crimes for a good 15 years, the Sports Authority of India seems to have ignored sexual offences by the coaches on its rolls. As per the report, of the 45 cases reported over the last decade, coaches were accused in 29, but rarely did the authority take visible action. Rather, it shifted coaches to smaller places, or directed a token pay cut, or cut in pension. In one case, the report highlights, even after five complaints and the case dragging on for six years, the authority handed a mere slap on the wrist—a 10% pension cut—for the offender; that too, for one year. While SAI has 45 cases to deal with, compared with a Nassar's 250, times have changed. Sexual offences, including harassment, are no small matter and the world now refuses to brush it under the carpet—as the MeToo movement across the world, and the resulting trials of high profile offenders have shown.

SAI's sorry treatment of the very sportspersons whose interests it is supposed to protect and promote is just one aspect of its abject failure. The authority has been caught on the wrong foot elsewhere, too. CAG reports talked of rampant wasteful expenditure, on infrastructure, on unused equipment, on even mobile phones for its chairperson, vice-chairperson and their personal staff. Thanks to how poorly SAI has performed on sports administration, India doesn't have any sporting glory to speak. If things remain the same, forget the 50 medals in the 2024 Olympics the government is aiming for.

BUDGET PRIORITIES

AS THE FY18 PERIOD SHOWS, A LARGE FISCAL PUSH TO REVIVE GROWTH MAY END UP HURTING RATHER THAN HELPING A RECOVERY

Lessons from India's growth history

WE LOOK AT the possible macroeconomic foundation of the slowdown, and whether there are any lessons for the upcoming budget.

It is useful to divide the slowdown into FY18 and 2019. After falling for five years, India's investment rate began to rise in FY18, driven largely by higher public sector spending. This had three key implications: (1) because savings did not rise in tandem, the savings (S) minus investment (I) differential fell, and the current account balance (C) worsened in line with the 'C=S-I' macro-economic identity; (2) graphically, the downward sloping 'I' curve moved right (see graphic), and for the given upward sloping 'S' curve, economy-wide interest rates rose; (3) while the objective of higher investment was to spur a recovery, growth fell instead. Investment may have risen, but the fall in net exports (C) that it triggered offset the rise, leading to lower GDP growth.

Challenges in 2019 proved a bit different—marked by strong risk aversion in India's banks as uncertainties around asset quality grew. Credit growth weakened and the rate transmission was impaired, leading to: (1) the vertical financial intermediation curve moving left in our S & I graph, as banks became unwilling to intermediate efficiently. The new intermediation curve became a binding constraint, intersecting the I curve at a higher interest rate than before. Alongside this, funds available for investment shrank; (2) the silver lining is that S-I rose, and the current account balance improved; (3) but, RBI may not have wanted the rupee to appreciate during a downturn and began to buy dollars. Risk aversion at banks may have ended up placing more of the country's domestic savings abroad. There are two important take-aways for budget 2020: one, as the FY18 period shows, a large fiscal push to revive growth may end up hurting rather than helping a recovery; and two,

the experience in 2019 suggests steps that lower risk aversion at banks should be a national policy priority. The slowdown in 2019 has been a much talked about phenomenon, but the fact it is not standalone has received less focus. 2019 is the third year of growth slowdown. These sub-periods have some things in common: economic growth was lower than in the previous year; and interest rates remained elevated. In fact, all the key interest rate spreads were higher than their long-term average, and rising, during this period. And, yet the two periods were distinctly different, with different lessons for reviving growth.

The hallmark of 2017 and 2018 was a rise in investment. Details show a big push by the public sector. The contribution of public investment to GDP growth rose from 0.1ppt in 2016 to 0.8 ppt in 2017. This spending spree was not costless. Public sector borrowing rose from 7.5% of GDP in 2016 to 8.4% in 2018, and there were three not-so-desirable outcomes:

i) Worsening of the C: The rise in savings was not in step with the investment spurt. Consequently, the savings S-I differential, fell. When domestic savings proved insufficient, the reliance on external funding rose. The CAD widened rapidly from 0.6% in 2016 to 2.1% in 2018.

ii) Upward pressure on interest rates: The fall in S-I had implications for economy-wide interest rates. Think about it as an upwards sloping S curve and a downward sloping IR curve. As the I curve moves out (to the right) due to a push in public investment, rates

rise for similar savings behaviour. No surprise then that almost all interest rate spreads in India began to rise around that time.

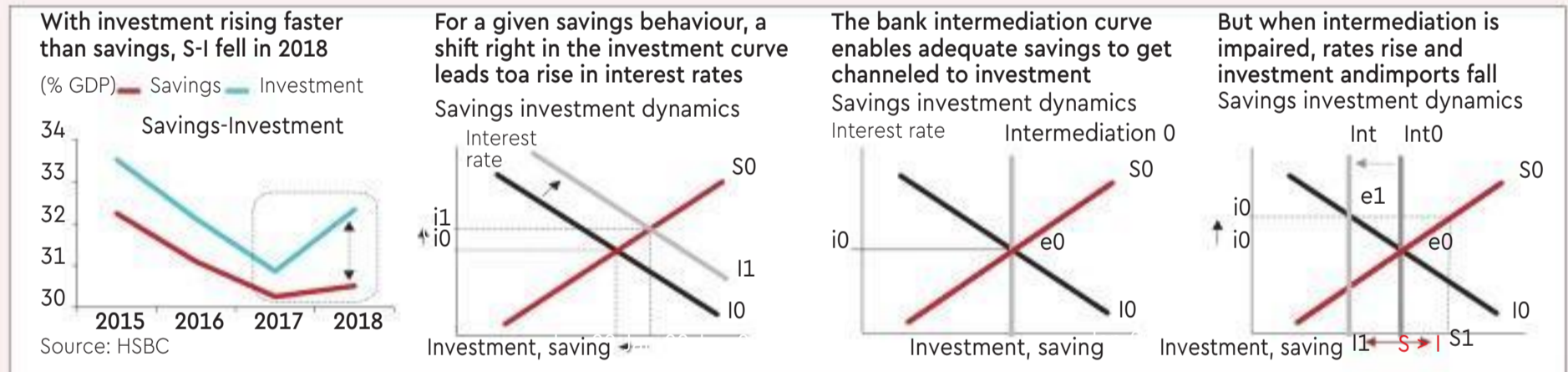
iii) Lower growth: While the idea behind higher investment was to spur growth, growth fell instead. GDP on the expenditure side is C+I+G+X-M. A closer look reveals that while I (and G) rose, (X-M) fell. Because domestic savings did not rise enough to fund the investment spurt, it was accompanied by a wider CAD.

It is tempting to assume that fiscal policy should be pro-cyclical, i.e., fiscal deficit must widen during slowdowns. However, a widening at a time when domestic savings are not enough can put upwards pressure on rates, and pressure net exports, taking away from growth. While some slippage is inevitable this year because revenues have fallen, and it is not possible nor prudent to cut some expenses, a growth revival policy based on a large fiscal push could backfire.

A balance here may be to stick to the new FRBM rule, which allows a fiscal slippage of 0.5%, not more. Any higher government spending would be better paid for by disinvestment, rather than by running a higher fiscal deficit.

RBI cut rates by 135bps, but this barely got transmitted. Economy wide interest rate spreads widened over the year. Something else was going wrong.

Following the NBFC fallout in late-2018, there was much uncertainty about the balance sheet. India's banks had been an important lender to NBFCs, and suddenly they were not sure about the quality of loans. The sharp fall in



Bold measures needed for revival

Given the current economic situation, all eyes are now on the budget day, hopeful for some measures that can take the economy to the \$5-trillion level by FY 25

GAUTAM KHATTAR

Partner, Indirect Tax with PwC India. Views are personal

THE FINANCE MINISTER will present her second budget on February 1, 2020. While there are high hopes in terms of reduction of personal tax rates, ease of doing business, and other economic measures, the FM may have limited flexibility to dole out a big munificence.

A sneak peek into the bygone year indicates that both the government, and India Inc have had to walk a tight rope given the varied economic parameters. The GST regime which has successfully outgrown its infancy seems to be battling issues like unachievable revenue targets, false credit claims, and contradictory advance rulings across states, leading to varied interpretations of the provisions. The rate reduction on various goods and services, and deferment in annual return/audit report along with other compliance deadlines have contributed to reduced GST revenue collections. Withdrawal of clarifications on critical aspects such as GST treatment of intermediary services, discounts, and other promotional schemes offered by companies has created ambiguity within the trading fraternity. Also, for exporters of services, the delay in release of GST refunds has led to blockage of funds. By end-2019, the WTO ruling has put a question mark on various export incentives (including MEIS, SEZs, EOU, and the EPCG schemes), which are inconsistent with the WTO's global trade norms.

Thus, there are expectations the budget will offer a stimulus package to boost consumption and GDP growth.

While the GST Council will take decisions around GST, India Inc will look forward to budget announcements on measures such as electronic invoicing, and new return system, which are proposed to be implemented from April 2020. Further, certain provisions under GST law should be reframed to avoid potential disputes. These include levy of GST on common functions between distinct entities, and on free services. The credit provisions should be revised to allow seamless flow of credits, e.g. input tax credit on construction services needs to be amended to allow tax credits where the constructed facility is used in the course/furtherance of businesses like the real estate or hospitality industry.

The government introduced the Sabka Vishwas Scheme in the last budget to settle pending excise and service tax disputes. This received an overwhelming response from taxpayers. Similar schemes should be considered in the upcoming budget to cover all pending customs disputes under the erstwhile central indirect tax laws.

As a trade facilitation measure, and for faster disposal of pending matters, the government must constitute a separate advance ruling authority for customs related matters. At present, the advance ruling is playing a dual role for matters under customs as well as those under income tax. There is a substantial back-log on the application filed before the advance ruling authority. Further, the AEO status holder—AEO-

T2 and AEO-T3—from a policy standpoint, have been provided with the facility to paste MRP tickers on the importer's premises. However, this has been a challenge to implement on the ground, on account of the enabling provisions under the Customs Act. Hence, an appropriate amendment or suitable instruction needs to be issued to allow such AEO status holders to avail the benefit of pasting MRP stickers in their premises.

Looking at specific industries, the expectation is to bring about clarity on classification of parts of telecommunication networking equipment. This will help avoid the ongoing disputes on account of reduced customs duty of 10%/nil. While last year's budget offered series of concessions, including nil customs duty on parts used for manufacture of electric vehicles (EVs) to incentivise the automobile sector, as per the Phased Manufacturing Program (PMP), there is a proposal to move away from this exemption from customs duty on parts of EVs by April 2021. This exemption should continue for a longer period to promote manufacturing of EVs in India.

With the current economic situation, all eyes are now on the budget day, hopeful for some bold measures that can bring the economy back on track, and take it to the \$5-trillion level by FY 25.

With contributions from Kishore Kumar, Director, & Ashima Agrawal, Senior analyst, Indirect Tax, PwC India

GDP growth also raised worries about the NPL cycle. In its latest review, RBI also raised concerns that after declining in early 2018, NPLs could rise again.

India's banks became increasingly uncertain of their asset base and thus extremely risk-averse. Credit growth slowed and the spreads kept widening.

What risk aversion means for macro? i) Higher rates and lower investible funds: We go back to S-I curves. They intersect at point e0, which determines the investment levels and interest rates. Now let's introduce a financial intermediation curve (see graphic), which determines whether the country's banks are functioning normally. Think about it as a vertical line crossing at e0. The rise in aversion in 2019 meant the intermediation curve moved left. Banks were now only willing to intermediate partially. The new intermediation curve intersected the investment curve at a higher i1. And, the funds available for investment shrank.

ii) Improving CA balance: At the i1, savers may want to save more (all else unchanged). In this situation, the S-I gap improves (increases). And given the S-I-C identity, so does the CA balance. What is the mechanism here?

As investment falls, imports fall as well, improving trade balance. Indeed, CAD has shrunk from 2.1% in 2018 to an expected 1.2% in 2019.

iii) ...but domestic savings are getting placed abroad: There is another angle to the risk aversion fallout. Think of the intermediation curve as allocating domestic savings between domestic investment and funds placed abroad. So, risk aversion at banks can lower domestic investment, placing more of a country's domestic savings abroad.

Budget 2020 presents an opportunity to reduce banks' risk aversion through a host of policies, including (1) strengthening the IBC, (2) untangling stalled investment (3) reducing the weight of government mandates on PSBs, (4) a regulatory overhaul of shadow banks, and (5) increasing the pace of strategic disinvestments and public asset recycling to lower fiscal pressures that weigh on India's banks (e.g. a sharp sell-off in the 10-year G-sec rate can impinge on bank profitability given their large holding of G-secs).

Co-authored with Aayushi Chaudhary, Economist, HSBC Edited excerpts from HSBC's *Lessons from India's three-year growth itch* (January 16, 2019)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A swashbuckling player

BCCI has attributed MS Dhoni's exclusion from its central contracts to him not playing competitive cricket since July 2019. Implicit in it is the admission that the decision to omit his name from the Annual Player Contracts was not taken on the basis of his 'form'. Reportedly MS Dhoni is practising with Jharkhand Ranji Trophy team. Whether MS Dhoni continues to play or calls it a day, he has earned his place in international cricket. It is but natural, that in a land where cricket is an absolute religion for most people MS Dhoni, a star match-winning player is eulogized as a demi-god. As a wicket-keeper, he has always shown quick reflexes and seldom missed chances to stump and catch. As a swashbuckling batsman, he executed 'helicopter shots' and sent the audiences into raptures. As a captain, he has kept his cool in tense moments and led the team to perform to the best of its ability. It has been an incredible journey from being a ticket collector to the world stage as one of the world's finest players. His long hairstyle impressed General Musharraf so much so that he advised him to not have a hair-cut. He sported an army insignia on his wicket-keeping gloves in a 2019 World Cup match to be told by ICC not to repeat it. His business interests also attracted controversies. Little controversies fade before his immense contributions to Indian cricket and his status as a much-loved national icon. — G David Milton, Maruthancode

Write to us at feletters@expressindia.com

De-coding Taiwan's presidential elections

Taiwan's electorate have spoken—not just on Hong Kong but also on China, and going forward, their own future



ANURAG VISWANATH

Singapore-based Sinologist, and adjunct fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, Delhi

LAST WEEK, TAIWAN'S incumbent President Tsai Ing-wen recorded a landslide victory. Tsai won the second term with 57% of the popular vote. Tsai won with 8.2 million votes, 1.3 million more than in 2016, the last election. Tsai's party, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) won 61 of the 113 seats. Tsai's rival Han Kuo-yu of the Kuomintang (KMT) racked up 39% of the popular vote. The KMT won 38 seats in the unicameral parliament.

In the middle of last year, Tsai had been practically written off, with a severe setback in the local elections. In fact, Tsai's nomination for re-election in 2020 was doubtful. Instead, Han Kuo-yu who had won the mayoral elections in Kaohsiung was feted, riding the "Han" wave. How did Tsai upend the soothsayers?

China factor: Hong Kong

The answer to Tsai's spectacular landslide victory lies across the straits from Taiwan—in China.

It would not entirely be an exaggeration to say that Tsai's political star ascended with China's serial descent into mis-steps in Hong Kong. For Taiwan, the China-Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) under the rubric of "One Country, Two Systems" is a closely watched model-in-progress. It is a model that China hopes will coax self-governing Taiwan—a country of 23 million back to the fold of the "motherland".

That could be China's wishful thinking. For China, 2019 unraveled with Hong Kong wracked by anti-China protests. One in seven in Hong Kong protested, uniting as one voice against an extradition bill whereby Hong Kongers could be sent to China for trial. The protests were interpreted as proof of failure, pitting the odds for a China-Taiwan



ILLUSTRATIONS: ROHNIT PHORE

reconciliation and rapprochement lower than before.

Taiwan's older generation, the generation that went into exile in Taiwan after the civil war on the mainland (1949) has given way to a younger demographic profile (the median age is 40.9 years). Though not entirely China's fault, Hong Kong has lost its legendary shine. Not only is Hong Kong's economy floundering, but there have been unexpected glitches in the Mass Transit Railway (MTR). Tourism is struggling to stay afloat. Larger underlying issues such as

the lack of universal suffrage, China's political interference, the question of Hong Kong identity, Hong Kong being tailed into the Greater Bay Area (Guangdong-Macau-Hong Kong) and fears of Hong Kong's coming economic eclipse by Shenzhen, long swept under the carpet, are out at the forefront.

There have been allegations of China's 'black hand' in Hong Kong too. Though China says quite the opposite, pinning the blame on western media's 'black hand', allegations of 'thugs for hire' (Hong Kong triads) who attacked protestors,

fake news, Chinese-media narrative and not least, Hong Kong police-force that seemed to be more on China's side than the people of Hong Kong have turned the tide against China in Hong Kong—and by default, across the straits in Taiwan.

China factor: political optics

Tsai's spectacular landslide victory can also be attributed to the political dispensation and optics of the two major political parties—the DPP and the KMT, especially their thinking on cross-strait relations.

For China, re-unification with Taiwan is of primacy. But the wind in Taiwan is of a complicated kind. The DPP has been widely viewed as openly wary of China and is independence-leaning. In comparison, the KMT, the nationalist party—the party that took the decision of coming to exile, is pragmatic. The KMT supports 'one China', but the interpretation is quite different from China's. In recent years, the KMT has chosen to build economic and political bridges with China. The KMT's stance can be explained in terms of seeking to boost Taiwan's economic opportunities. China is Taiwan's largest trade partner.

China Factor: campaign trail

The China factor echoed and reverberated through the campaign trail too. Tsai chose to ignore China's 'one China' principle. Instead, Tsai chose to interpret the implications of Hong Kong for Taiwan. To reinforce the same, Tsai pitched herself as the candidate that would not buckle under China's pressure—military or economic. Tsai also chose to frame Taiwan's democracy as the model for Hong Kong—contrary to China's 'one-China' model for Taiwan.

This stance helped Tsai, whose popularity partly stems from the passage of Taiwan's same-sex marriage law, the first in Asia, in May 2019. Economically, in the face of trade war, Taiwan reaped the fallout of 'trade diversion effects' which worked in Tsai's favour. Global supply chains moved to Taiwan because of Taiwan's mature technology industry. This in turn, unleashed a spillover effect in real estate and hospitality. TAIWAN posted a 2.9% growth in the GDP in the third quarter of 2019.

In comparison, Tsai's opponent Han "the commoner president" as he called himself, supported the broad rubric of 'one China' (but not 'one country, two systems' per se, this subject to dialogue) as core of cross-strait relations. Han sought to hitch Taiwan's economic star to China. "The 21st century belongs to China," said Han famously.

Han sought to replicate the populism

that worked in his favour in the 2018 local (mayoral) election in Kaohsiung. This backfired. Given Hong Kong's loss of identity and lack of suffrage, the China lodestar was at its unattractive best. Han's populism backfired too, as local media unearthed stories that showed that Han was not the neighbor next door, but lived in a cushy neighbourhood, drove an expensive car and engaged in speculative real estate.

What made Han's case worse were allegations that emanated from a Chinese spy Wang "William" Liqiang which surfaced in Australia. Wang, who has hogged headlines in Australia since last year indicated in a report to the Australian Intelligence Service Organisation (ASIO) that China had infiltrated media, grassroots organisations and temples to influence the elections in Han's favour. One organisation in Kaohsiung "Wecare

Kaohsiung" held a rally with demonstrators holding placards that said "Dismiss pro-communist mayor". As these allegations swirled, news site Formosa (My-formosa.com) said that those who distributed Han grew from 27% (in Feb 2019) to 57% (in Nov. 2019). China responded saying that Wang was a fraudster, a fugitive on the run, convicted in 2016. The KMT and Han denied the allegations.

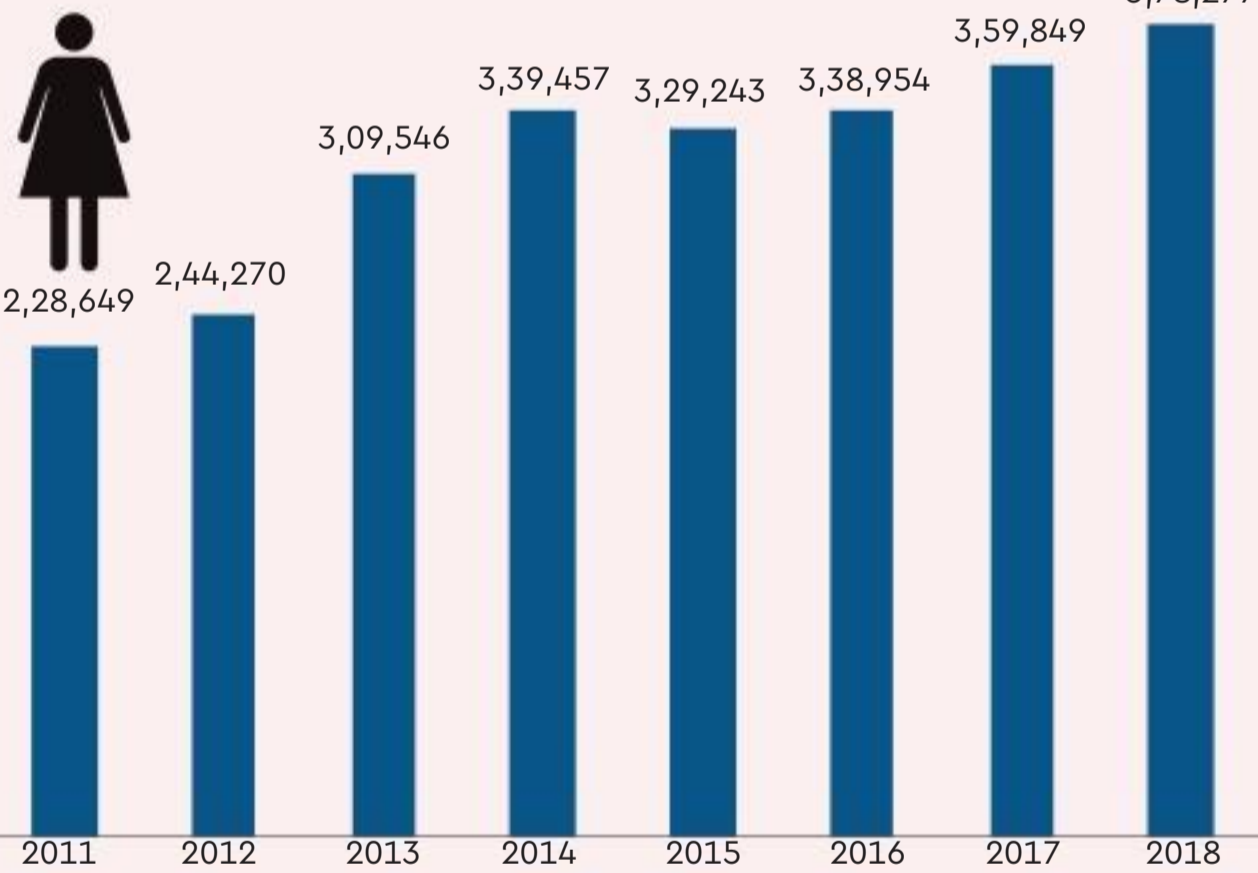
Tsai's spectacular landslide victory can also be attributed to the political dispensation and optics of the two major parties—the DPP and the KMT, especially their thinking on cross-strait relations

Landslide for Tsai

The above were some of the factors that swayed the electorate. In her victory speech, Tsai noted that "peace, parity, democracy and dialogue" were the keys to stability with China. Xinhua has reported that Beijing was still ready to work with patriots in Taiwan to "advance the process toward peaceful re-unification of the motherland". But to China's chagrin, 60 countries including the US, Japan and the UK have congratulated Tsai. Reflecting the mood in the country, in interview with the BBC Tsai said "We are an independent country already and we call ourselves the Republic of China, Taiwan." Clearly, Taiwan's electorate have spoken—not just on Hong Kong but also on China, and going forward, their own future.

DATA DRIVE

Crime against women



Conviction rate for all crimes (in %)



Total IPC and SLL crimes 2018

Rate of cognizable crimes (IPC+SLL) 2018



Crime & conviction

WHILE THE LACK of data on lynching became talking point about the National Crime Records Bureau's latest Crime in India (CIR) Reports, one point that has somehow not got highlighted enough is the fact that for the first time in nearly three decades, the conviction rate for IPC crimes has reached 50%. The last time this happened was in 1988. CIR 2018 highlights that the conviction rate at an average remained stagnant at around 40% since 2009-2013. However, ever since, the rate has shown a significant increase. Also, in case of the cognisable crime rate—crime per lakh population—there is a sudden dip from 2015 onwards (from 581.8 in 2015 to 379.3 in 2016), with only a marginal increase in 2018.

However, this has largely been due to a change in the methodology. The new methodology, called Principal Offence Rule (POR), was adopted in 2016. Under this new

methodology, only the gravest crimes are counted.

When it comes to the total IPC and SLL crimes' cognisable rate, Kerala (1463.2) is the state with the most crime rate, followed by the capital Delhi (1342.5).

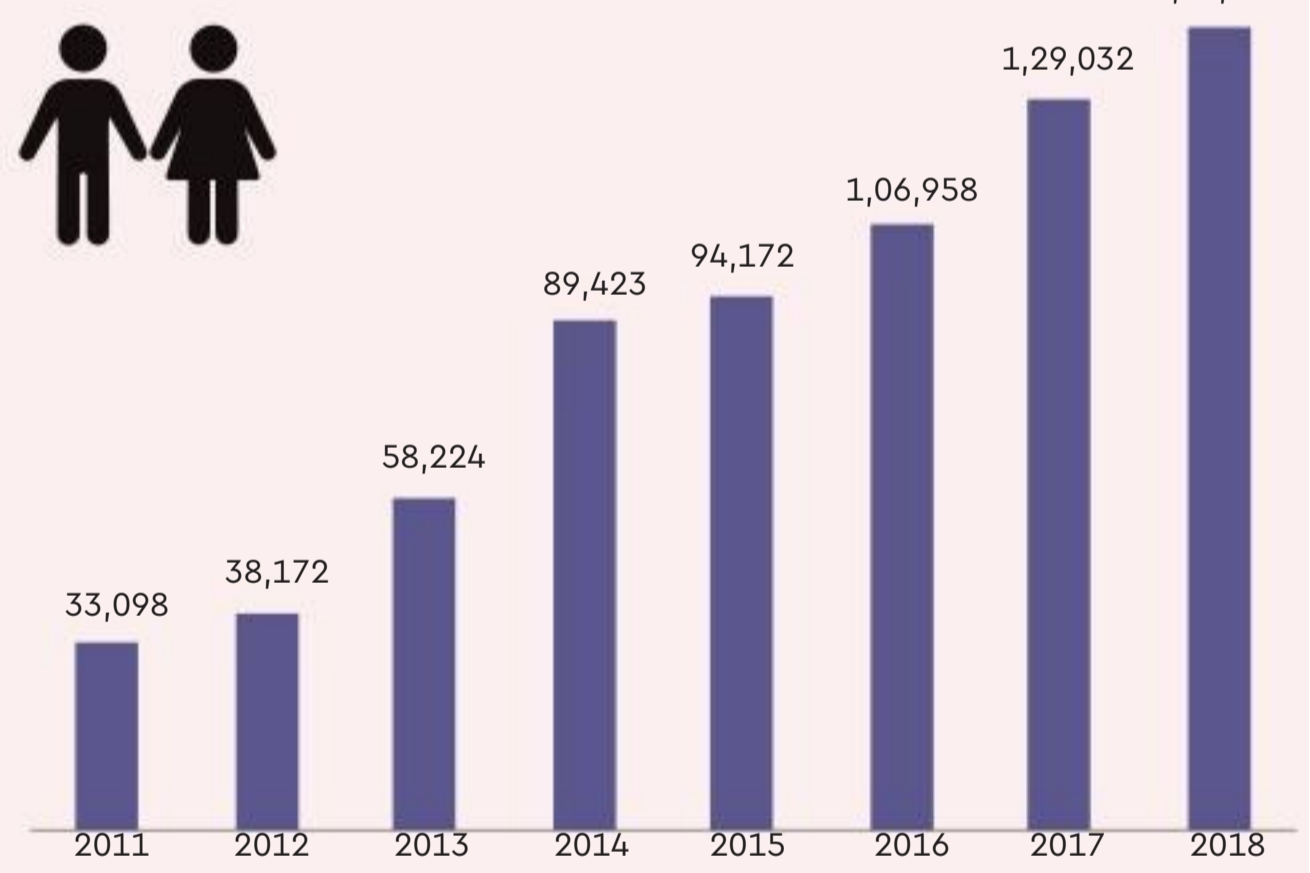
The data also shows that there hasn't been a significant dip in the number of crimes against women and children. On the contrary, the numbers show a growth.

As women and children are the most vulnerable sections of the society, government needs to improve justice delivery in such cases.

Data indicates that conviction rate in crimes against women was less than half the total conviction rate at 21.7%. Pendency rate—cases pending for trial at the end of the year/total cases per trial—was a high 90.7%.

In case of children, the crime rate was 31.8%, and for conviction was 37.8% in IPC cases. The pendency in such cases was 89.8%.

Crime against children



Crime rate for all crimes (Crime per lakh population)





The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY
RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

SEIZE THE SUMMIT

SCO meet offers an opportunity to India — to resume engagement with Pakistan, despite obstacles and constraints

ON THE FACE of it, Delhi's announcement that it will invite all heads of government of Shanghai Co-operation Organisation member countries, including Pakistan, when India hosts the summit later this year, is not extraordinary. The host does not have the luxury of picking and choosing between members. But the summit will assume significance should Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan accept the invitation, as it will be the first by a head of government or state of that country to India since former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif attended the swearing-in ceremony of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2014. The hope of that visit was belied. In these six years — indeed in the 12 years since the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks — India and Pakistan have just about managed to tread water in their relations, keeping their diplomatic engagement from sinking. Sporadic attempts to engage failed, including at a previous SCO summit at Ufa in 2015. The last year has seen relations nose-dive from their already low levels. First, there was the February 2019 Pulwama attack, India's Balakot response, and Pakistan's counter-response. Since August, after India did away with Jammu & Kashmir's special status, India and Pakistan have downgraded even their diplomatic presence in each other's countries, by withdrawing the high commissioners. A war of words is now the only engagement between the two countries. Bilateral trade, which had managed to survive earlier shocks to relations, has stopped completely. That the opening of the Kartarpur corridor took place in this setting was miraculous, but that too was touch and go.

Now the SCO presents an opportunity for a bilateral meeting on the sidelines between India and Pakistan. In deciding whether to accept the invitation, the Pakistan PM will have to take into consideration "inputs of all stakeholders", a polite way of saying that the final yes or no will rest with the Pakistan Army. General Qamar Javed Bajwa appears to have pushed back dissenters in the Army, but his continuance beyond the court-stipulated six months is still up in the air. Even if Imran Khan stays away and sends a minister instead, as India does routinely, however, it would still be a chance for a high-level bilateral meeting. Such a meeting may not lead to anything — the Ufa meeting produced a joint declaration, but Sharif had to walk back from it. Such meetings also become the focus of speculation cloaked in the new nationalism, which turns them into who-won-the-match events, almost setting them up for failure. But the hiatus in ties cannot endure. The world wants India and Pakistan to engage, and this was evident in the way the UNSC refused to take up the Kashmir issue, saying it was not the forum for it.

India, which has declared several times recently that it wants to peel away from historical foreign policy baggage, should make a start with Pakistan by making it possible for such a meeting to take place — or, make it easier for the Pakistan Prime Minister to accept the invitation. A start could be made by resuming trade, which has ground to a dead halt, and by sending India's High Commissioner back to his office in Islamabad.

NO RELIEF

With Supreme Court dismissing telcos' petition, government should revisit its position on the matter

IN A MAJOR setback to the telecom sector, the Supreme Court on Thursday rejected a petition filed by telcos seeking a review of its October 2019 order that had upheld the government's definition of what constitutes adjusted gross revenue (AGR). Telcos will now have to pay around Rs 1.47 trillion, which includes interest, penalties and interest on penalties by January 23. Bharti Airtel, which is reportedly considering filing a curative plea, faces an estimated demand of Rs 35,586 crore, while Vodafone Idea is expected to pay around Rs 53,038 crore — significantly higher than its current market capitalisation. Notwithstanding the provisions already made by telcos towards these payments, the verdict will add strain to their already precarious financial position, impairing their ability to make fresh investments, and perhaps even their viability.

A cash-strapped government, faced with the unenviable task of having to find resources to stimulate a slowing economy, will undoubtedly welcome the verdict. Yet its myopic approach — its insistence on including revenue from non-core activities such as rent, dividend and interest as part of AGR — may end up creating a duopoly structure, with a weak second player. Statements from both partners that Vodafone Idea may have to shut shop unless relief is granted from the Supreme Court order underline the seriousness of this prospect. The ripple effects of a telco shutting down will be felt across a banking sector still struggling under bad loans. Whether or not consumers benefit from such a market structure does not seem to have been factored into the government's consideration.

In December last year, telcos had announced tariff hikes, bringing an end to the brutal price war. But that seemingly coordinated action is unlikely to be sufficient for the sector's long-term sustainability. And though the government had previously provided telcos a two-year moratorium on spectrum payments, more needs to be done. There are suggestions that the government could opt for a staggered payment plan. But this is not a solution. The government should begin by giving up its demand of interest and penalties — around 75 per cent of the AGR dues are on account of penalty, interest, and interest on penalties. It should then undertake a review of the current regulatory regime, especially its position on licence fees, spectrum usage charges and pricing.

RINGING IN THE NEW

As iconic football club Mohun Bagan merges with ATK, there is nostalgia and a sense of inevitability

MOHUN BAGAN'S MERGER with ATK FC marks the end of a 130-year-old sentiment. The biggest name in Indian football and the oldest club in Asia will cease to be a community club, ceding control to the RPSG Group. The Mohun Bagan Football Club (India) Private Limited will be represented by just two directors on the board of the new company.

The new deal will also make members of the Mohun Bagan Athletic Club nearly peripheral in football matters. The club's tie-up with the UB group in 1998 was different, for Bagan and its title sponsors had equal stakes in the United Mohun Bagan Private Limited. This is a takeover. Then again, this was inevitable. As the Indian Super League (ISL) superseded the I-League, Bagan had to get into the top tier. East Bengal, too, will have to follow suit. Without the merger, the Mariners would have been left out. The club, of late, had been struggling to foot the wage bills. Paying an annual franchise fee of Rs 15 crore was beyond them. The Kolkata giants' aversion to modernity for a long period eventually became their bugbear.

The ISL will give Bagan wider attention. Players will have the opportunity to be coached by some of the big names in European and Latin American football. Some players, though, will be temporarily unemployed, because the merged club cannot accommodate all the players from Bagan and ATK. But the ISL will give Bagan a chance to be part of the Asian elite, should they become the group-stage leaders and qualify for the AFC Champions League. The takeover will hurt traditional Bagan supporters, but the club is too dear to its fans to be rejected if it has an ATK prefix or suffix.

A battle worth losing

Dominance in the telecom sector can sometimes mean accommodating opponents, cushioning their fall



RAJAT KATHURIA

INTRODUCTION OR MAINTENANCE of competition, especially in the presence of a powerful incumbent, places extra responsibility in the hands of an independent regulator. It's a hard examination from which few regulators come out publicly unscathed, even if they are sincere in their decision making. Allegations fly thick and fast and it is difficult to unpick the truth under such circumstances. The boundary between fake and real becomes increasingly blurred. Ask Justice R S Sodhi, the first chairperson of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) or Pradip Bajjal, the third. Finding persons who will not toe the political line or succumb to private interests is a bit like a lottery. Incumbents, on the other hand, are much more predictable in their conduct no matter what their identity.

Old habits die hard. Firms exist for themselves first, and then for their shareholders — consumers are collateral benefit at best. Any opportunity to profit will be exploited unless there are restraints in place that limit the maximisation of self-interest. Having said that, we recognise that the private sector is not a charitable enterprise, just like it ought not to be a profiteering one. The challenge for regulators is to align all three interests — those of the principal (owner/shareholder), the agent (managers) and the consumers. It's a hard, if not impossible, act to achieve all three simultaneously. To those familiar with a celebrated macroeconomics postulate — the impossible trinity — in which it is not possible to attain independent monetary policy, openness to capital flows and fixed exchange rate simultaneously, it could very well be a counterpart for regulatory discipline.

The difficulty to achieve a balance doesn't mean that we should allow incumbents to get away with overt and, more importantly, stealthy dominance. Joseph Schumpeter's abiding insight is that capitalism's spirit of creative destruction will ensure that innovation by start-ups or by smaller firms will keep the incumbents honest. Indeed, uneasy is the head that wears the incumbent's crown, especially in markets that are technology-inspired such as telecom. The fact that the identity of powerful incumbents has changed in telecom markets across the world, including in India, gives weight to Schumpeter's insight that markets have an inherent and unpredictable tendency to correct themselves.

I doubt if anyone disagrees with this premise, but the question crucially relevant

for policy-makers is the speed of that adjustment. How soon will markets adjust? Joseph Stiglitz has argued that contrary to the Chicago view, market failures are so pervasive that these could be the norm and may take really long to correct themselves. Even in markets that are technology intensive. Moreover, and crucially from the point of view of regulation, powerful incumbents always impede the process of resolution. Who can forget IBM, Microsoft, Intel and Alphabet simply nipping competition in the bud through the outright purchase of upstarts. Besides, incumbents use all manner of strategies to thwart competition because, after all, as somebody with a great sense of foreboding said "nobody likes competition", especially from close quarters.

Circa mid-1980s, telecom had ceased to be viewed as a natural monopoly — a situation where the market can be efficiently served by just one firm. In the late 1990s, India too embraced telecom reform and invited the private sector to provide fillip to a failing market. BSNL and its predecessor, the department of telecommunications (DoT), and their counterpart in Mumbai and Delhi, Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited (MTNL), did not like the new competition. They subverted competition and squeezed new entrants. Privately they felt new entry was meant only as a complement to public sector enterprise and not to compete with it. Publicly, they forced private players to carry inter-operator traffic through their network rather than among themselves. Therefore, traffic from one private network to another private network had to be routed through DoT and MTNL at exorbitant rates. Further, fixedline to mobile tariffs were made 24 times more expensive than fixed to fixed calls because 99 per cent of the latter network was owned by DoT and MTNL.

Having experienced discrimination at the hands of the public sector, private sector entrants that survived were not destined to remain small. They came with better managerial and technical expertise. Although some perished along the way, the ones who survived grew in size and stature to rule the telecom roost for several years, until they were unseated by a combination of fresh entry, technological disruption and regulatory forbearance. But while they ruled, Airtel, Vodafone and Idea did what incumbents do — they influenced the regulator, cartelised tariffs, acted as "gatekeepers" for subscribers

for start-ups, and in general kept prices above what they would have been with effective competition.

Indeed, in September 2016, when Jio disrupted the telecom market with aggressive pricing, data prices plummeted by 85 per cent and set off a war. In the three years since Jio has been around, its market share by value has gone from zero to 41 per cent in value terms. No one can question the fact that Jio is the new incumbent. One might be tempted to add that even in 2016, it was far from being the hapless new entrant deserving accommodation in a market beset by regulatory and technology disruption. Overall, telecom access revenues are down 33 per cent from roughly Rs 1.5 lakh crore in 2015-16 to about Rs 1 lakh crore in 2018-19 and debt has swelled. Roughly 88 per cent of the total debt of the telecom sector, which stands at above Rs 8 lakh crore, is due to Vodafone & Idea and Airtel, while Jio's debt is less than 8 per cent.

Given this background, Jio's strategy to accommodate the recent tariff hike by Airtel and Vodafone, to raise its own tariffs might come as a surprise to some. By not following the price hike, Jio could have dealt a killer blow and triggered a further exit of firms struggling under the burden of debt. But it chose to raise and give a lease of life to the battling industry. It is another matter that exits might still happen due to the Supreme Court's refusal to give relief to telecom companies on their licence fee liabilities to the government. Vodafone's obligation is upwards of Rs 50,000 crore while Airtel owes over Rs 35,000 crore. Jio's dues are Rs 60 crore.

Why did Jio, alleged to have engaged in predatory pricing not so long ago, agree to raise tariffs? It might partly be related to its own sustainability since the low tariffs had become impossible to sustain and in part, it might have anticipated the result of the telcos' appeal in the highest court. We also feel Jio is better off with enfeebled competition than with no competition at all for it helps dodge the regulatory glare that monopoly attracts. If the SC judgment sticks, competition will remain debilitated. Moreover, the demands that governments make of the telecom sector could be an enormous burden for Jio alone. Sometimes, to win the war one has to lose the battle. This is a battle well worth losing for Jio.

Kathuria is director & chief executive, ICRIR. Views are personal

PAKISTAN'S FRONTIER WITHIN

People living in the country's erstwhile 'tribal areas' must be heard



KHALED AHMED

THE RECENT STANDOFF between the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government of Imran Khan and the Supreme Court of Pakistan has served to highlight the "problem areas" of governance. That Khan is aggressive and near-abusive about his opposition is known, but he has also come up against the wall of past trespasses of the Pakistani state.

Pakistan has two fundamental flaws: The first relates to the instability that hounds most Muslim states; and, the second, non-centralisation of the state — somewhat like Afghanistan — that prevents Pakistan from becoming a "normal state".

This takes us back to the first decade of Pakistan's independence when it was decided to retain its "tribal areas" in hopes of "saving" the "culture" of their inhabitants. (The "tribals" regrettably were then sent into Kashmir as invaders.) Today, after 72 years of the evolution of the state, almost 60 per cent of Pakistan's area is outside the normal writ of the state. In 2017, the much-delayed "merger" of the tribal areas of the north into the "frontier" province of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa took place. But problems still remain from the warlord-driven past and must be resolved through dialogue with such organisations as Pakhtun Tahaffuz Movement (PTM).

The tribal areas of the north — called 'agencies' — were open to infiltration because their borders were open. The state allowed the Afghan Taliban and al Qaeda to plant camps there. Local Taliban joined them and established their own rule that ultimately clashed with Pakistan's state sovereignty. The control enjoyed by these elements was facilitated by a lack of infrastructural development.

The tribal areas of the north — called "agencies" — were open to infiltration because their borders were open. The state allowed the Afghan Taliban and al Qaeda to plant camps there. The local Taliban joined them and established their own rule that ultimately clashed with the state sovereignty. The control enjoyed by these elements was facilitated by a lack of infrastructural development.

The tribal areas were "federally" administered but there were some like the valley of Swat administered by the province of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. In time, Pakistan lost its writ in these territories as well to terrorists like Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri who lived freely there contracting marriages — euphemism for copulation — with many local wives.

The "tribal" province of Balochistan has been restless since 1973 when Pakistan had to "invade" it to put down "rebellion". The province was backward in all respects: There was no police, no normal courts and no law and order in the province except in Quetta, the capital. In 1990, Balochistan abandoned the jirga system and had to wait till 2019 to have police on its territory. In June 2019, three districts of Balochistan were converted into 'A' areas (with police) from 'B' (without police)

areas. Pakistan discovered gas in the province and wastefully "piped" it to households in the rest of the country till it was quickly exhausted.

In reaction, there was an uprising of the Baloch which was brutally put down till the judiciary became concerned about its "disappeared" people. Like the tribal areas, Balochistan's borders too are open to penetration. Today, it is the "tribal" western border that is vulnerable, not the "non-tribal" eastern one. Pakistan needs to dialogue with the Baloch "liberation" organisations that demand rights but are being hunted down.

The feudal region of Sindh province, ruled by the "wadero" aristocracy, is also without a normal writ of the state needed to uplift the poor masses living without adequate health and education facilities. Since the "wadero" politicians get elected to Sindh assembly through their captive votes in the interior and live in Karachi, the dirt-poor masses are frequently subject to famine-like conditions. The region of Thar in Sindh has its children dying of starvation simply because it is inhabited by almost half of the Hindu population of Pakistan.

The writer is consulting editor, Newsweek Pakistan

JANUARY 18, 1980, FORTY YEARS AGO

PM ON AFGHANISTAN
PRIME MINISTER INDIRA Gandhi said in Trivandrum that India was concerned over the mounting tension on her borders. Addressing a news conference, Mrs Gandhi said she did not approve of any interference by any foreign power in the affairs of another country. Replying to a question on Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, she said that she should, however, be remembered that the Soviet Union had sent its troops at the invitation of the Revolutionary Council of Afghanistan. "While I am not justifying the Soviet action, the question is how we should react and what steps we should take to reduce the tension. If the Soviet Union or another country

feels insulted by our reactions, it may have the adverse result," she said

DELHI'S FEARS
BRITISH FOREIGN SECRETARY Lord Carrington justified the US decision to resume arms supplies to Pakistan, which, he said, was feeling threatened after the Soviet armed intervention in Afghanistan. India, he said, need not worry about the US decision because the level of arms to be supplied to Pakistan was not of much significance. Lord Carrington was addressing a news conference after three hours of talks with the new foreign minister, P V Narasimha Rao. Apparently, at the talks, the Indian side ex-

pressed fears that the induction of more American arms into Pakistan would lead to increased tensions in the region.

CARRINGTON'S FAILURE
LORD CARRINGTON WILL return home as a disillusioned man, not for what he did not get but what he gathered. His purpose was to prod New Delhi to take the initiative in mobilising opinion of the countries in the region and the Third World against the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. He failed in this. While trying to do so, he got the impression that India was treating the Soviet control of Afghanistan as a fait accompli and was preparing to live with it.



13 THE IDEAS PAGE

A shared shame

We must try to understand how pathological criminals like the December 16, 2012 rape and murder case convicts are products of a broken society



VIKRAM PATEL

MANY OF US who bear witness to the appalling cruelty of the rape and murder of women in our country have been left searching for an answer to a fundamental question, one which goes to the very heart of understanding what makes us human: What kind of person could commit such a patently evil act? This lack of comprehension fuelled by the extreme violence and apparent lack of remorse has inflamed our anger so much that we demand the immediate execution of those who are found guilty without recourse to any appeal and, even most disturbingly, not to even bother to wait for the judicial process to take its course — lynching or celebrating the murder those who are just suspected of committing these heinous crimes.

While there are a number of arguments on either side of the contentious debate of whether the killing of a citizen through a judicial route could ever be a just punishment (and, for the record, a Law Commission of India report in 2015 recommended abolishing the death penalty), a dominant argument in favour is that such an extreme penalty is reserved for crimes which are considered the “rarest of the rare”.

Implicit in this notion is that the persons who committed these crimes belong to a particularly rare variant of our species, marked out by their ability to inflict the most brutal violence, often pre-meditated, and with no remorse. An exemplar of this perspective was voiced at the recent final appeal hearings of the men sentenced to death in the December 16, 2012 gang rape and murder case. Appearing for the Delhi Police, then Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, opposing the review plea, referred to the convicts as “monsters” who did not deserve sympathy. He said “there are some crimes for which humanity cries. On that fateful day, god also must have held his head in shame for two reasons. First for not being able to save the innocent girl and second for creating these monsters”.

So there we have it, faithfully recorded like all other statements made by the learned members of our judiciary, for posterity. But, tragically, the statement is devoid of fact for a number of reasons. One, which is probably well-known to anyone who has had the luxury of a decent school education in this country, is that no human being was “created” by any “god”. But of course, that statement was not intended to upend centuries of science, but to convey the gravity of horror of the crimes which could only have been perpetrated by human beings who were born evil. In this reading of the statement, there is little doubt that science has a definitive answer. As with any other human trait, empathy or the ability to feel another person’s pain and fear, to put yourself in another person’s shoes, is ultimately a product of how our brains are wired. The foundations of who we become as adults are indeed laid down by the time of our birth. But, like a house, it is only a foundation we are born with. The rest of the house is built, brick by brick, tile by tile, nail by nail, shaped by our environments, in particular during our childhood and adolescence.

In all the extensive reportage about the



CR Sasikumar

December 2012 victim, almost the entire focus has been on the brutality of the crime. This is like trying to understand the monuments of New Delhi without any awareness of its thousand-year history. Few have bothered to delve into the stories of these six young men to try to understand why they might have been able to inflict such horrific pain on an innocent, helpless, young woman. These rare examples of authentic journalism speak to childhoods blighted by poverty, neglect, violence, educational difficulties, substance use and mental illness. There were often clear pre-existing signals of disturbances in their behaviour or environments, but with a complete absence of any scaffolding to help them deal with these challenges when it mattered most.

For example, one of the men was “remembered by his neighbours for being a troublemaker who frequently got involved in drunken brawls” while another left home when he was just 11, working in New Delhi to support his family because his father had a mental disability. None of these difficult life stories can ever justify their acts, but they are testimony to something developmental science has known for a long time: Neglect, violence and deprivation in the early years of life are powerful determinants of our abilities to feel remorse and manage anger.

By the time one reaches young adulthood, the untrammelled rage and lack of empathy, combined with the impulsivity and risk-taking — the developmental hallmarks of youth — and the patriarchy, violence, class and com-

In all the extensive reportage about the December 2012 victim, almost the entire focus has been on the brutality of the crime. This is like trying to understand the monuments of New Delhi without any awareness of its thousand-year history. Few have bothered to delve into the stories of these six young men to try to understand why they might have been able to inflict such horrific pain on an innocent, helpless, young woman.

munal barriers and sexual repression that pervades our society, make for a toxic brew which can push a vulnerable young person over the cliff of brutal crime at the slightest provocation. Science also shows us that the earlier we detect these difficulties and provide therapeutic interventions, such as parenting support and nurturing environments, the better the outcomes. But what chance do the tens of millions of children in this country facing deprivation and neglect have when our child welfare system is, at best, decrepit and, at worst, frankly abusive?

I am not being an apologist for these young men. They committed an unforgivably horrible crime and they deserve to be punished (though I am resolutely opposed to the idea of capital punishment). But, to return to the question of whether these young men were “created” as “monsters”, I beg to differ with the learned solicitor-general: None of them were born evil. If god does hang his head in shame, it is because we, as a society, fail our children so egregiously. No one is born evil. Think for a moment about the police in this country who routinely murder those under their protection or ordinary people in our communities who see nothing wrong in lynching a person because of the food they choose to eat. Did god create them too? If god does hang His head in shame, it is surely because we are killing in His name.

The writer is the Pershing Square Professor of Global Health, Harvard Medical School

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“As a super-sized society, the Chinese public has various demands. For instance, although they understand the principles of the economy, they still hope the Chinese economy in 2020 can keep the 6 percent growth rate.” — GLOBAL TIMES, CHINA

Of, by and for the Constitution

Protests against the new citizenship law are constitutional, they seek to protect its basic structure



PINARAYI VIJAYAN

THE INDIAN Constitution was framed encompassing all the values put forth by our freedom struggle. That is why ideas such as secularism and equality are part of its basic structure. However, today, the forces who are the descendants of those who tried to betray our national movement, are trying to erode the fundamental tenets of our Constitution and topple our democracy. The Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019, (CAA) falls in line with a series of efforts along those lines.

The Preamble of the Indian Constitution characterises India as a sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic. To be secular is to not discriminate on the basis of religion. In the CAA, there is a clear discrimination on the basis of religion. In Part II of the Constitution, there is no criterion for exclusion or inclusion of individuals who aspire to be Indian citizens on the basis of religion. The CAA makes religion a criterion for granting citizenship. Under Article 14 of the Indian Constitution equality is ensured to any person within the territory of India, as a Fundamental Right. Such equality is denied under the CAA.

As the CAA is the first step which should be followed by the National Register of Citizens (NRC), Kerala has taken a firm stand against the NRC as well. We have also categorically stated that no detention centre will be built in the state to cater to the CAA-NRC exercise. We have stayed all activities within the state, related to the NPR as well, and ensuring that in Kerala, no one will have to live in fear. It is because of Kerala’s unwavering stance that now many other state governments have concluded that the CAA is blatantly unconstitutional and the CAA-NRC combine is fundamentally discriminatory.

State ministers take the oath as prescribed in the Third Schedule of the Indian Constitution. In it we affirm our allegiance to the Constitution of India and pledge to do right to all people in accordance to it. Right now, we are doing our duty, which is to stand by the Constitution, to protect it and to uphold it. Even the act of challenging the CAA in the Supreme Court is based on the Indian Constitution. The suit is instituted under Article 131 of the Constitution, which essentially states that the Supreme Court has original jurisdiction in any dispute between the Government of

India and a state; if the dispute involves any legal or factual question on which the existence or extent of a legal right depends. Kerala has prayed for the CAA to declare the CAA to be void as it is in violation of the basic structure of our Constitution and violative of Article 14 (Right to Equality), Article 21 (Right to Protection of Life and Personal Liberty) and Article 25 (Right to Freedom of Religion) of the Indian Constitution.

The only provision in the Constitution that limits discussion in the legislature is the Article 211 of the Constitution, which curtails discussions on the conduct of judges in the Supreme Court or High Court. State legislatures can discuss any issue that it deems fit and pass resolutions as well. The Kerala Legislative Assembly has passed a resolution demanding the central government to repeal the Citizenship Amendment Act 2019. The Constitution allows a state assembly to do so.

According to Article 2, 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which India is a signatory, prevention of discrimination is applicable for all persons within our territory or under our jurisdiction, not just for our citizens. We are in clear violation of an international covenant, and thus, of our international commitments. It puts a strain on our international relations and risks investments from abroad. What the world thinks about us matters, as more than half of India’s GDP is in the external sector. The CAA will not just affect our society, but will also hamper our economic development.

Kerala is the land of communal harmony; we do not discriminate on the basis of religion or place of origin. We have achieved high levels of development because all sections of the society have been taken care of in all our developmental initiatives. We strive to uphold a scientific temper and achieve progress through scientific and technological interventions. We resist injustice and always lend a helping hand.

The CAA has created anxieties across the country, resulting in large scale protests. Kerala, because of its commitment to the values of humanity, sees it as its responsibility to take up the mantle in this struggle for justice. Our renaissance movements and progressive struggles have taught us to stand up for our rights. Kerala is standing by its commitment to the lofty ideals on which our country has been founded. It is as a mark of our resolve to protect our democracy and Constitution that we are forming a human chain on the upcoming Republic Day, against the unconstitutional CAA.

The writer is Chief Minister of Kerala

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

COURT AND STATE

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘Filtering out free speech’ (IE, January 17). The Supreme Court has been a champion of individual liberties. However, and unfortunately, the same cannot be said of the country’s executive. The methods used to circumvent the apex court’s landmark verdict in *Shreya Singhal vs Union of India* are not new. Arrests under Section 66-A continued to happen in different states, even after such action was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. Therefore, the need of the hour is for the different wings of the state to work together to enforce the court’s judgment, not only in letter but in spirit.

Vatsal Patel, Gandhinagar

LETTER OF THE WEEK

CLEAR THE AIR

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘CAA, myth and reality’ (IE, January 14). The BJP does not care to educate the citizens, but intimidates peaceful protesters by throwing indiscriminate labels such as “tukde tukde Gang” and “Urban Naxals” and “Pro Pakistani”. It seems that the writer’s compassion does not extend to persecuted minorities in our country.

Nalin Thakar, Vadodara

REAL LEADERS

THIS REFERS TO the report, ‘Key question for both BJP, Opposition Will protests percolate below the top soil?’ (IE, January 17). The article makes many reference to students, institutions and film personalities. But what has more noticeable in the nation-wide protests over the Citizenship Amendment Act, the NRC and now the NPR is the overwhelming participation of women. It is remarkable to see women from so called conservative and orthodox backgrounds becoming the vanguard of this agitation. Till the other day, they were labelled by the BJP to be an exploited and helpless lot on account of the triple talaq.

I.R. Murmu, Delhi

HOUSE FOR KASHMIR

THIS REFERS TO the editorial, ‘Ministers in Valley’ (IE, January 17). The first thing that the Union government must do, if it doesn’t want to alienate Kashmiris further, is to provide Kashmir with a Legislative Assembly, while it may remain a UT. The Centre could retain ‘police’ and ‘land’ and delegate all other subjects in state list to the J & K assembly.

The writer is professor of graduate school at the department of economics, University of California, Berkeley

Pretend-democracy

The essence of democracy is in protecting minority rights. India is failing to do so



PRANAB BARDHAN

CONTRARY TO expectation in many quarters five years back, the current regime has proved itself rather inept and incompetent in economic policy matters, partly because of over-centralisation of power with dependence on loyal mediocrities for policy advice, and partly because for a long time, it believed in its own hype and was in denial.

Today large masses of our farmers remain in long-term agrarian and ecological distress, growing numbers of our burgeoning young population do not have anywhere near what can be called good jobs, much of the non-farm economy remains stalled by the slump in private investment and debt overhang and our exports remain uncompetitive in the world market. Meanwhile, corruption in the form of crony capitalism and murky election-funding (including the dubious device of electoral bonds) continues, never mind the empty rhetoric we had heard around demonetisation, which in effect turned out to be largely an assault on India’s poor in the informal sector. Yet such was the magic of propaganda that many in the electorate believed in that rhetoric at that time, just as in 2019 large parts of the electorate went along with the leaders’ call for “dedicating” their votes to the Balakot airstrike (even though the pesky foreign press kept on finding the strike to be largely a fizzle, if not a hoax). In any case, it is a sad commentary on the inferiority complex in our national consciousness

that we feel great as a nation by such an airstrike on a hapless unenviable neighbouring country, which so obsesses our politicians that they fail to see that today we are behind our other neighbours like Bangladesh and Sri Lanka in many socio-economic indicators, not to speak of our towering northern neighbour, China.

As the economy tanks, the incentive for our rulers to divert public attention with divisive Hindu-nationalist antics gets stronger. So, Kashmir loses its state rights, Kashmiris lose their civil rights, effectively anti-Muslim citizenship laws are rammed through the legislature, and all kinds of changes to rights to information or to dissent opinion or even the definition of who is to be called a terrorist are launched. In the name of democracy, majoritarian minority-baiting Hindu nationalists are rampaging all around — these are in a way the step-children of Jinnah, who also believed in the religious basis of nationalism, something Gandhiji fought against much of his political life. All this is regularly cheered on by a largely spineless or intimidated media.

The ruling party is confident in carrying out these excesses on the basis of a supposedly democratic mandate that they think their “landslide” electoral majority (with 37 per cent of the vote) has given them. India today is the world’s largest pretend-democracy, sadly but steadily creeping from democracy to some form of thugocracy. In the last

more than two centuries of world democracy, what has been regarded as the essential kernel of democracy is not so much in the winning of elections as in protecting minority rights. As early as 1787, James Madison, a founding father of the American constitution, made it clear in Federalist Papers that the central concern of democracy really lies in protecting citizens against the tyranny of the majority. Civic, as opposed to religious, nationalist founders of the American and the Indian Constitution thus emphasised various institutional checks and balances and separation of powers to protect minority rights and due process.

One by one these institutions are being decimated in India (the process started earlier, but it has been substantially accelerated under the current regime). The judiciary, which is supposed to guard against this, is timid, erratic, and sometimes, compromised. The police and the bureaucracy are complicit — in fact the police often join the majoritarian lynch-mobs in their mayhem (there are stories that the “termites” from the Sangh Parivar have been quietly eating at the vitals of some these institutions from inside for some time). In India’s largest state, police brutalities against and “encounter killings” of minorities have become routine. The investigative agencies and tax administrators are allegedly harassing, raiding, and persecuting people deemed to be in opposition to

the government. The increased extortionary powers of these agencies have multiplied opportunities for official corruption.

One of the insulating structures in the Constitution (more in the American than the Indian) against centralised abuse of power was that of federalism. For far too long, even the opposition states have allowed the central government to usurp powers arbitrarily, to assault the basic structure of the Constitution in many ways, violate the spirit of federalism in not involving or consulting the state governments while ramming through crucial legislations on policing, law and order and social welfare services (all of which constitutionally are state subjects), in changing the terms of reference of the constitutional body of Finance Commission, in letting Niti Ayog to be merely a central government mouthpiece and the Inter-State Council to be in hibernation, and so on.

Even when the central government actions are technically legal, one can follow Gandhiji who had taught Indians to organise mass non-violent civil disobedience when the laws are not socially legitimate. It is a matter of some hope that there are now some flickering lights in this respect all over the country in the surrounding darkness.



@ieExplained

#ExpressExplained

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

THIS WORD MEANS

YADA YADA VIRUS

A new pathogen discovery that's just, well, yada yada

MERRIAM-WEBSTER says yada yada is "boring or empty talk", a way to recount words that are "too dull or predictable to be worth repeating". The Cambridge dictionary says yada yada is only "blah blah blah".

Researchers who last week reported the discovery of a new virus conceded that the discovery wasn't a big deal, given that "the rise of metagenomic sequencing has resulted in an explosion of virus discovery,

with new viruses being announced every day", as Jana Batovska, one of the authors of the short paper published in the American Society for Microbiology's journal *Microbiology Resource Announcements*, posted on Twitter. Appropriately, therefore, the researchers have named their discovery "Yada Yada virus" (YYV).

YYV takes its name from 'The Yada Yada', an episode of the television sitcom *Seinfeld*, which aired on the American network NBC on April 24, 1997. ("Yes — we did name the virus after *Seinfeld!*... *Seinfeld* is awesome", Batovska tweeted.) Characters in the show used "yada yada" in the sense of "et cetera, et cetera" or "blah blah" — so, when George Costanza's character asks his girlfriend how someone got Legionnaires' disease, she replies, "Oh, yada yada yada, just some bad egg salad..."

While "yada yada" had already been

used by several American stand-up comics and stage personalities for several years before this episode of the iconic TV series (according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, its first known use in the popular sense was in 1967), it was as a "Seinfeldism, the lingo, vocabulary, and phrases coined by the writers of the show", that gave it "a life of (its) own within the American lexicon", University of Montana researchers Elizabeth

Magnotta and Alexandra Strohl wrote in their 2011 paper "A linguistic analysis of humor: A look at *Seinfeld*".

Yada Yada is an alphavirus, a group of viruses that the researchers described as "small, single-stranded positive-sense RNA viruses (that) include species important to human and animal health, such as Chikungunya virus and Eastern equine encephalitis virus... (and which) are transmitted primarily by mosquitoes and (are) pathogenic in their vertebrate hosts". Unlike some other alphaviruses, Yada Yada does not pose a threat to human beings.

The virus was detected in mosquitoes trapped as part of the Victorian Arbovirus Disease Control Programme in Encephalitis Virus Surveillance traps set up overnight in three locations in Victoria, Australia, for seven weeks in late 2016, the researchers reported.



Inspired by Seinfeld

rily by mosquitoes and (are) pathogenic in their vertebrate hosts". Unlike some other alphaviruses, Yada Yada does not pose a threat to human beings.

MEHR GILL

TIP FOR READING LIST

SACKED BY TECHNOLOGICAL PROGRESS

ECONOMIST AND former UK government policymaker Daniel Susskind's *A World Without Work: Technology, Automation, and How We Should Respond*, begins with 'The Great Manure Crisis' of the 1890s. Cities like New York and London, the world's biggest and most advanced, which were critically dependent on horses for transport, found public spaces piled high with manure that the animals produced in copious amounts, as well as "thousands of putrefying dead horses (that) littered the roads" — so numerous that "in 1880 alone, about 15,000 horse carcasses were removed from New York City". Policymakers were at their wits' end; they wanted to ban the horses, but were terrified of the consequences that would bring.

Then came along the internal combustion engine. Automobiles got them in the 1880s; Henry Ford set up the Ford Motor Company in 1903; by 1912, New York had more cars than horses; in 1917 the last horsedrawn tram was taken off the street. Without officials having to do anything at all, The Great Manure Crisis

had blown itself out in the United States.

"The Parable of Horseshit" was seen by Wassily Leontief, the 1973 Economics Nobel Laureate, as the way in which "a new technology... had taken a creature that, for millennia, had played a central role in economic life... and in only a matter of decades, had banished it to the sidelines", writes Susskind.

In the early 1980s, Leontief argued that technological progress would ultimately do to humans what it had done to horses, and "today", says Susskind, "the world is gripped again by Leontief's fear". His book, says Susskind, explains "why we have to take these sorts of fears seriously" — if not always in substance, but certainly in spirit.

"Will there be enough work for everyone to do in the twenty-first century?... The answer is 'no' and... the threat of 'technological unemployment' is now real," writes Susskind. The book, he says, seeks to "describe the different problems this will create for us — both now and in the future — and, most important, set out how we might respond".



SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

What new monsoon dates mean

The monsoon is supposed to begin on June 1, and withdraw fully by September 30. Over the past many years, however, significant changes have been seen in precipitation patterns. So, the 'normals' are now set to shift.

SOWMIYA ASHOK & ANJALI MARAR

NEW DELHI, PUNE, JANUARY 17

EARLIER THIS week, Earth Sciences Secretary M Rajeevan announced that the India Meteorological Department (IMD) had decided to revise the normal onset and withdrawal dates for the monsoon in some parts of the country from this year.

The four-month southwest monsoon season, which brings as much as 70 per cent of the country's annual rainfall, officially begins on June 1, with the onset over Kerala, and ends on September 30. It takes about a month and half after onset on the Kerala coast to cover the entire country; and about a month, beginning from the northwestern parts of the country on September 1, to withdraw completely.

Although the June 1 date for the onset of the monsoon on the Kerala coast is unlikely to be changed, the dates for onset in many other parts of the country are expected to be revised. Mumbai, for example, expects to start getting rain from June 10 — the revision is likely to push this date back by a few days. Adjustments are likely to be made for many other parts of the country as well. Similar changes are expected in the withdrawal dates.

Effectively, the monsoon is now expected to have later arrival and withdrawal dates in most parts of the country.

Why was this revision needed?

The main reason for the revision in the normal dates is the changes in precipitation patterns that have been taking place over the last many years. In the last 13 years, for example, only once has the onset over the Kerala coast happened on June 1. While two or three days of earlier or later onset falls within the yearly variability, in several years the onset happened five to seven days late.

Similarly, the commencement of withdrawal has happened in the first week of

RAINS COME, RAINS GO

	Onset over Kerala	Commencement of withdrawal
2019	June 7	Oct 9
2018	May 29	Sept 29
2017	May 30	Sept 27
2016	June 8	Sept 15
2015	June 5	Sept 4
2014	June 6	Sept 23
2013	June 1	Sept 9
2012	June 5	Sept 24
2011	May 29	Sept 23
2010	May 31	Sept 27
2009	May 23	Sept 25
2008	May 31	Sept 29
2007	May 28	Sept 30
Normal	June 1	Sept 1

September only twice during this period, and last year, the withdrawal started as late as October 9 — and was completed in around just a week.

"This change (of dates) was inevitable because things have been different for more than a decade now. A delayed onset seems clear but the withdrawal is never dramatic, and it may be conflating with the northeast monsoon (winter monsoon, which begins in October) in some places. So we have to watch how the monsoon trough and the monsoon rain itself are related in September and October. Is it still monsoon if the trough has retreated but rainfall is occurring over some parts of India? This question has not been considered seriously so far," said Raghu Murtugudde of the University of Maryland, College Park, United States.

Within the four-month season too, rainfall has been observed to deviate from nor-

mal expected patterns very frequently.

One of the significant changes being noticed is that rainfall is getting increasingly concentrated within a narrow band of days within the monsoon season. So, there are extremely wet days followed by prolonged periods of dry days. A report in this newspaper in September 2018 used IMD data to show that over several previous years, nearly 95 per cent of monsoon precipitation in 22 major cities of the country had happened over a period of just three to 27 days. Delhi, for example, had received almost 95 per cent of its monsoon rainfall over just 99 hours. And half of Mumbai's monsoon rain had fallen over just 134 hours, or five and a half days, on average.

Patterns of regional variations in rainfall are also changing.

Areas that have traditionally received plenty of rainfall are often remaining dry, while places that are not expected to get a lot of monsoon rain have sometimes been getting flooded. Climate change could be one of the factors driving these changes, but there could be other reasons as well.

What will be the impact of IMD's move?

The revisions are meant to reflect the changes in precipitation patterns in recent years. They will help the IMD track the monsoon better, and improve what Rajeevan described as its "impact-based" forecasts. But the revisions will have implications beyond IMD's operations, too.

New dates will likely nudge farmers in some parts of the country to make slight adjustments in the time of sowing their crops. "It would definitely have an impact on our agriculture practices — when to start sowing, when to harvest. Farmers would probably have to make small adjustments in these dates," Rajeevan said.

Agro-meteorologists, however, agree that more than the onset, it is the information about the spatio-temporal distribution of rainfall that will be more helpful for farmers.

"A timely onset of rainfall followed by a prolonged break in the rains would mean that the sown seeds would not benefit. So, even if there is a delay in the arrival of monsoon by three to four days over a region, it would not matter much if there is a fairly good rainfall distribution thereafter," said Kripnan Ghosh, head of the agrimeteorology division at IMD, Pune.

Ghosh said crops that need transplantation, such as rice, require advance knowledge about the arrival of rain. "If the rainfall over the rice-growing regions occurs very late, then the transplantation of rice would be affected, which in turn could hit the crop yield. However, sometimes, a slight delay in sowing can save the crop," Ghosh said.

Rajeevan said the change in dates would affect water management practices as well.

"Water management agencies, for example those managing the dams in the central plains, should now expect more rain only in the latter part of June. Instead of planning only until the start of June, they would now be prompted to preserve and hold on to some water until later in the month. Similar adjustments would need to be made towards the end of the monsoon season as well," he said.

The planning that goes to beat the heat — several cities execute heat action plans — just ahead of the monsoon would have to factor in the need to be prepared for longer periods of heat.

Rajeevan said many other activities including industrial operations, the power sector, or those using cooling systems, would also need to change their behaviour. The power grid can, for example, have more realistic planning for peak periods of electricity consumption in certain months.

Ultimately, the change in normal dates of the onset and withdrawal of the monsoon would help people understand when to expect rains, and to plan their activities accordingly. The changed dates are expected to be announced in April, when the IMD makes its first forecast for the monsoon.

FACT CHECK, GROUND REALITY

How 2019 amendment changed 2008 NIA Act



The NIA is India's premier agency to investigate cases related to terrorism

NIA "a parallel police structure", and the amended Act "has gone against the federal structure of the Constitution".

The original Act of 2008 itself had given the NIA powers to supersede the state police in the investigation and trial of terror-related offences. Also, the Chhattisgarh government's petition has challenged the original Act, and not the amended law.

The 2019 amendment in the law focussed on three main areas.

OFFENCES OUTSIDE INDIA: The original Act allowed NIA to investigate and prosecute offences within India. The amended Act empowered the agency to investigate offences committed outside India, subject to international treaties and domestic laws of other countries. The amended section reads: "Where the Central Government is of the opinion that a Scheduled Offence has been committed at any place outside India to which this Act extends, it may direct the Agency to register the case and take up investigation as if such offence has been committed in India." The NIA special court in New Delhi will have jurisdiction over these cases.

WIDENED SCOPE OF LAW: The NIA can investigate and prosecute offences under the Acts specified in the Schedule of the NIA Act. The Schedule originally had The Atomic Energy Act, 1962, The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, and The Anti-

Hijacking Act, 1982, among other entries. The amendment has allowed the NIA to investigate, in addition, cases related to (i) human trafficking, (ii) counterfeit currency or banknotes, (iii) manufacture or sale of prohibited arms, (iv) cyber-terrorism, and (v) offences under the Explosive Substances Act, 1908.

SPECIAL COURTS: The 2008 Act constituted Special Courts for conducting the trial of offences under the Act. The 2019 amendment allowed the central government to designate Sessions Courts as Special Courts for the trial of scheduled offences under the Act. The central government is required to consult the Chief Justice of the High Court under which the Sessions Court is functioning, before designating it as a Special Court. When more than one Special Court has been designated for any area, the seniormost judge will distribute cases among the courts. State governments too, may also designate Sessions Courts as Special Courts for the trial of scheduled offences.

PRS LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH

TELLING NUMBERS

In 2019, fewer death sentences overall; 1 out of 2 sentences for sexual violence-murder; in 3 out of 4 sexual violence-murder death sentences, children were the killer's victims

TRIAL COURTS in India delivered 102 death sentences in 2019, over 60% fewer than the 162 death sentences passed in 2018. The courts were, however, especially unforgiving of murders that involved sexual violence — the proportion of death sentences imposed for murders involving sexual offences was at a four-year high in 2019 at 52.94% (54 out of 102 sentences).

2019 also saw the highest number of confirmations by High Courts in four years; 17 out of the 26 confirmations (65.38%) were in offences of murder involving sexual violence. The Supreme Court, primarily during the tenure of the previous Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi, listed and heard 27 capital cases, the most in a year since 2001.

These are the headline findings in the fourth edition of *The Death Penalty in India: Annual Statistics*, published by Project 39A at the National Law University (NLU), Delhi. Project 39A is a research and litigation initiative focussed on the criminal justice system, and especially issues of legal aid, torture, death penalty, and mental health in prisons.

The report tracked news of death sentences awarded by trial courts published online by news organisations in English and



Hindi, and checked these numbers against judgments uploaded to websites of High Court and district courts. Efforts were made to verify the news reports by applying to the Governor secretariats and Home Departments in each state under the Right to Information Act, the report said.

The NLU's Death Penalty Research Project, which in 2016 produced a comprehensive, first-of-its-kind report on the administration of capital punishment in the country, had noted that there are no reliable numbers of the total number of death row prisoners in India; there is also no official record of the total number of prisoners executed since Independence.

MOST DEATH SENTENCES IN RAJASTHAN IN 2019

State by state, year by year*

	2019	2018	2017	2016
Rajasthan	13	13	8	6
Uttar Pradesh	12	15	18	32
Madhya Pradesh	11	22	6	13
Karnataka	10	15	2	3
West Bengal	8	5	7	35
Jharkhand	8	9	3	3
Maharashtra	7	16	22	13
Bihar	7	5	11	22
Odisha	5	9	0	0
Assam	4	6	0	0
Kerala	4	5	2	5
Tamil Nadu	3	12	13	3
Uttarakhand	2	7	1	1
Punjab	2	4	6	0
Gujarat	2	3	0	3
Chhattisgarh	1	3	1	1
Total**	102	162	108	150

*No death sentences have been passed in Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Sikkim since 2016

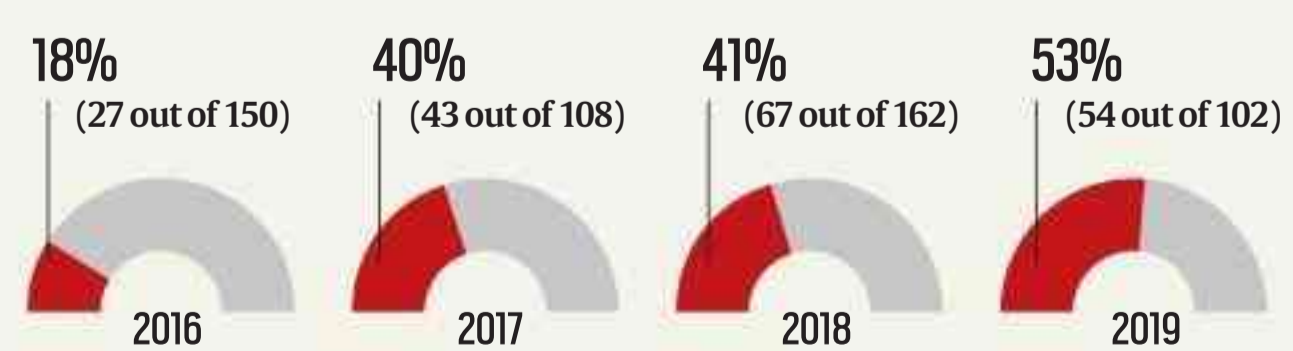
**Top states only; total does not include all states

UTTAR PRADESH HAS MOST PRISONERS ON DEATH ROW

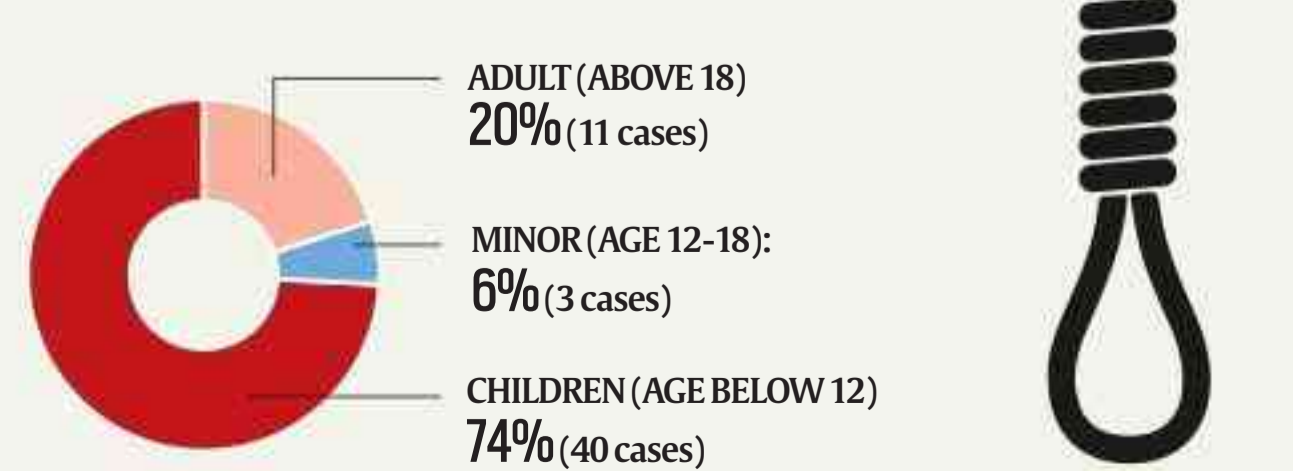
As on December 31, 2019

Uttar Pradesh	54
Maharashtra	45
Madhya Pradesh	34
Bihar	28
Karnataka	27
West Bengal	26
Jharkhand	23
Kerala	19
Rajasthan	16
Uttarakhand	14
Tamil Nadu	13
Haryana	11
Assam	10
Jammu & Kashmir	10
Delhi	9
Chhattisgarh	8
Punjab	8
Telangana	7
TOTAL**	378

SHARE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE CASES IN DEATH PENALTY CASES RISING



CHILDREN WERE VICTIMS IN 40 OUT OF 54 SEXUAL VIOLENCE-MURDER CASE DEATH PENALTIES IN 2019

All data from *Death Penalty in India, Annual Statistics Report 2019*

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड वर्ष 12 अंक 286

आम समझ से अलग

मोदी सरकार को अभी जो सबक सीखने हैं उनमें से एक यह भी है कि आर्थिक समस्याओं का हल आम समझ के प्रतिकूल भी हो सकता है। दूसरे शब्दों में कहें तो जरूरी नहीं कि पहली नजर में जो आपको अच्छा लगे वही सही हो। जैसा कि हमने नोटबंदी के समय देखा, काले धन की समस्या का हल नकदी की जमाखोरी पर हल्लाबोल कर नहीं निकाला जा सका क्योंकि अधिकांश पुराने नोट रिजर्व बैंक के पास वापस आ गए।

इसी तरह कर में कमी का हल अनिवार्य

तौर पर कर दरों में इजाफा करना नहीं है। गौरतलब है कि वस्तु एवं सेवा कर के संदर्भ में थोड़े समय के लिए ही सही, यह हल सुझाया गया था। इसी तरह व्यापार घाटे का हल आयात प्रतिबंधित करना नहीं है। सन 1991 का अनुभव हमें दिखा चुका है कि व्यापक व्यापार घाटे का हल अर्थव्यवस्था को खोलना ही है, न कि संरक्षणवादी उपाय अपनाना। इसी प्रकार निर्यात को प्रोत्साहन देने का काम निर्यात सब्सिडी समाप्त करके अधिक बेहतर ढंग से किया जा सकता है, बजाय कि रुपये के बाहरी

मूल्य को समायोजित करने के। यदि हालिया अनुभवों को देखें तो लगता है कि ये अथवा ऐसे अन्य सबक सीखे नहीं गए हैं। ऐसे में औषधि कीमतों में बढ़ोतरी की प्रतिक्रिया स्वरूप कीमतों की अधिकतम सीमा तय कर दी गई। गत सितंबर में घरेलू बाजार में प्याज की कमी की प्रतिक्रिया स्वरूप निर्यात पर प्रतिबंध लगा दिया गया। जैसा कि डॉनल्ड ट्रंप की व्यापारिक नीतियों का विरोध करने वालों ने कहा भी था कि चीन से आने वाली वस्तुओं पर अतिरिक्त आयात शुल्क लागू करने से घरेलू आपूर्ति की लागत में इजाफा हुआ। जेपी मॉर्गन के अनुसार इससे एक परिवार के सालाना बजट में 1,000 डॉलर का बोझ पड़ा। भारत में भी किसी को ऐसी कवायद करनी चाहिए ताकि इस्पात आयात पर लगे अतिरिक्त शुल्क, टैरिफ बढ़ोतरी और देश को विनिर्माण केंद्र बनाने के लिए दी जाने वाली निर्यात सब्सिडी, कुछ वस्तुओं के आयात पर लगने

वाले अतिरिक्त शुल्क आदि की लागत निकाली जा सके। इसके अलावा मलेशिया से पाम ऑयल के आयात पर लगे प्रतिबंध और तुर्की से पेट्रोलियम आयात पर रोक आदि की भी लागत निकाली जानी चाहिए।

इसके बाद जेफ बेजोस और एमेज़ॉन को

लेकर हमारी प्रतिक्रिया में

बेअदबी की झलक रही।

विश्व व्यापार में एक फर्म के

भीतर होने वाले कारोबार और

वैश्विक आपूर्ति शृंखला का हिस्सा बनने के

महत्व को देखते हुए बेजोस के 10 अरब

डॉलर के अतिरिक्त निर्यात के वादे की सरकार

को सराहना करनी चाहिए थी या कम से कम

शांत रहना चाहिए था। परंतु इसके उलट

सरकार का उत्तर मित्रतापूर्ण होने से कोसों दूर

था। यकीनन इसमें इस तथ्य का भी योगदान

होगा कि बेजोस एक समाचार पत्र के मालिक

भी हैं जो मोदी सरकार का आलोचक हैं।

इसके अतिरिक्त छोटे व्यापारियों की लांबी का दबाव भी होगा जिन्हें डर है कि वे भारी नकदी वाली एमेज़ॉन जैसी कंपनी का मुकाबला नहीं कर पाएंगे। ऐसी ही समस्याओं से निपटने के लिए प्रतिस्पर्धा आयोग का गठन किया गया था। हालांकि वह उस वक्त कदम नहीं उठाता

जब उसे उठाना चाहिए।

जियो का मामला हमारे

सामने है। व्यापक बात

यह है कि छोटे स्टोर

मालिकों के पास यह क्षमता नहीं है कि वे

व्यापक आपूर्ति शृंखला बना सकें। वे विनिर्माण

आधार भी नहीं बना सकते और न ही

गुणवत्तापूर्ण रोजगार दे सकते हैं। जाहिर है

सरकार का रुख गलत था।

झारखंड इसका विशेष उदाहरण प्रस्तुत

करता है जहां वस्त्र उद्योग में नियोक्ताओं को

प्रति कर्मचारी प्रति माह 5,000 रुपये की

सब्सिडी प्रदान की जाती है। यह देश में वस्त्र

उद्योग में प्रतिस्पर्धा की कमी को दर्शाता है। ध्यान रहे कि श्रम की लागत को प्रतिस्पर्धा में कमी की सबसे अहम वजह नहीं माना जा सकता है क्योंकि चीन दुनिया का सबसे बड़ा वस्त्र निर्यातक है जबकि उसकी श्रम लागत काफी ज्यादा है। हालांकि उक्त सब्सिडी पर उद्योग जगत सकारात्मक दिख रहा है। परंतु इसे अच्छी खबर मानने में संदेह ही है।

किसी भी उद्योग को यदि व्यापक प्रोत्साहन मिलेगा तो वह निवेश करना लेकिन करदाताओं के पैसों का इससे कहीं बेहतर उपयोग सुनिश्चित किया जाना चाहिए। बेहतर तरीका तो तलाश में ऐसे तमाम शिक्षित समझौते कर लिए जाते हैं जो दिक्कतदेह हो सकते हैं। ऐसे समझौतों से ही उच्च लागत वाली ऐसी अर्थव्यवस्था निर्मित हो जाती है जिसके साथ हम लंबे अरसे तक रहे और अभी हाल फिलहाल तक हम जिससे दूरी बनाने में लगे थे।

चैनल शुल्क में बदलाव पर ट्राई बनाम भारतीय प्रसारक



मीडिया मंत्र

वनिता कोहली-खांडेकर

प्रभावित करता है।

यह लड़ाई खत्म हो सकती है अगर प्रसारक और वितरक

एकजुट होकर अपनी बात रखना

सीख लें। देश में निजी टेलीविजन

के उदय के 28 साल बाद भारत

में केबल टीवी की औसत कीमत

दुनिया भर में सबसे कम वाली

श्रेणी में है और यह मुद्रास्फीति

दर से भी नीचे बनी रही है। फिर

भी कोई एक ग्राफ या चार्ट ऐसा

नहीं है जो इस बड़े उद्योग के

कीमत पहलू को रेखांकित कर

सके और उपभोक्ताओं एवं

नियामकों को अवगत करा सके।

दोनों पक्षों का यह टकराव

निश्चित तौर पर तभी खत्म होगा

जब ट्राई साधारण प्रभाव

विश्लेषण करना सीख लेता है।

नियमन करने या नहीं करने से

जुड़े प्रभावों एवं लागत का

विश्लेषण करने के लिए

जबरदस्त दृढ़ता की जरूरत है।

यह टीवी उद्योग की रक्षा करेगा

और उपभोक्ताओं को भी पीड़ा

से बचाएगा। ब्रिटेन के ऑफकॉम

जैसे संचार नियामक नियमित रूप

से यही काम करते हैं। अगर ट्राई

ने नए नियम लागू करने से पहले

संभावित असर का विश्लेषण

किया होता तो वह महज एक

साल पहले जारी आदेश में ढेरों

बदलाव लागू नहीं करता।

सबसे पहले वर्ष 2016 में

टीवी चैनलों को लेकर शुल्क

व्यवस्था रखी गई थी। उसमें

चैनलों की अधिकतम कीमत तय

की गई थी और बंडलिंग को

लेकर तमाम कायदे-कानून बनाए

गए थे। लेकिन अदालती कार्यावाही

के बाद इसे फरवरी 2019 में

जाकर लागू किया जा सका था।

इससे पारदर्शिता बढ़ाने में मदद

मिली लेकिन इसने कीमतें बढ़ाने

का भी काम किया। चैनलों के

जटिल पैकेज से परेशान होकर

उपभोक्ता केबल से डीटीएच या

टीवी से ऑनलाइन का रुख करते

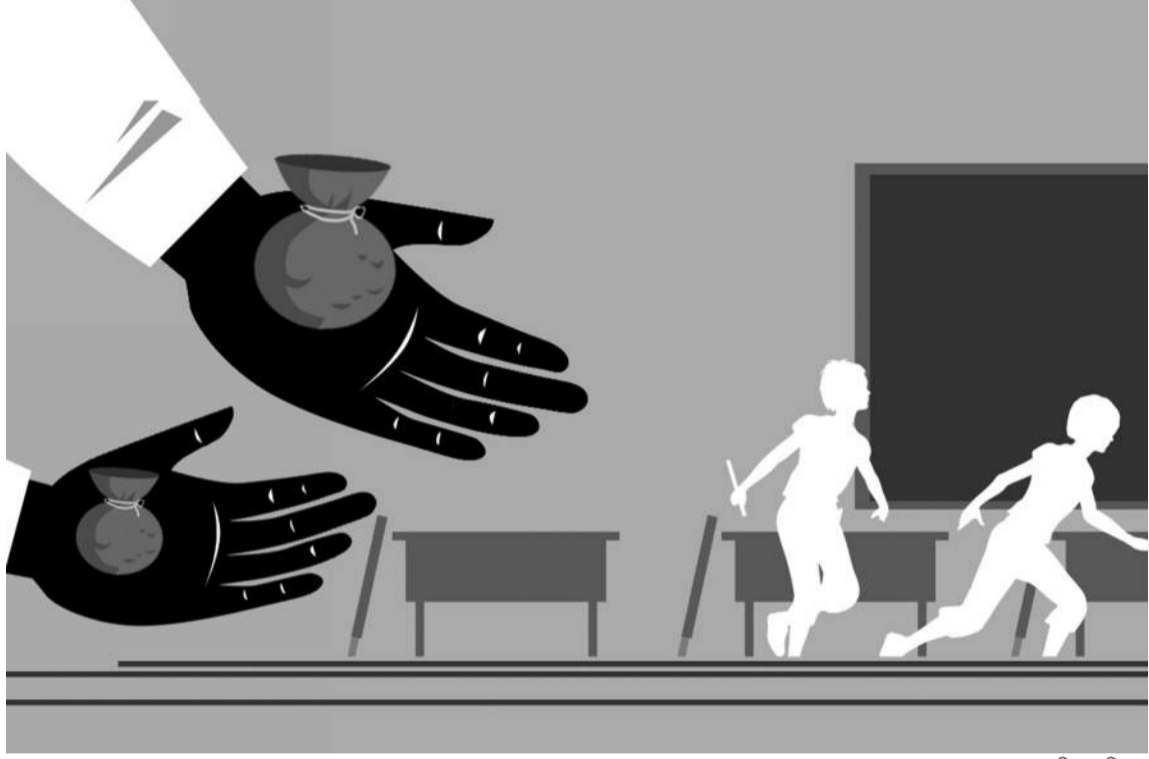
लगे। शिकायतें बढ़ने के बाद ट्राई ने अगस्त 2019 में एक परामर्श-पत्र पेश किया था जो बंडलिंग के खिलाफ श्रेणी बंधारने जैसा था। उसके बाद यह आदेश आया है।

अगर ट्राई का नया आदेश लागू किया जाता है तो कीमतों में और तेजी आएगी, चैनल एवं पैकेज पर संशय बढ़ेगा और इन बदलावों के बारे में सूचित करने पर भी अधिक पैसे खर्च करने होंगे। इसका मतलब लाइफस्टाइल चैनल, कई खेल चैनल और विशिष्ट चैनलों का खाली भी होगा। इससे नौकरियों एवं कर राजस्व का भी नुकसान होगा। यह काफी कुछ एक ऐसे साल में घटित हो रहा है जब आर्थिक सुस्ती ने विज्ञापन वृद्धि को दो अंकों से घटाकर एक अंक में ला दिया है।

ट्राई अक्सर कीमतों के मुद्दे पर जोर देता है। पिछला आदेश लागू होने पर 100 फ्री-टु-एयर चैनलों के लिए हर घर से प्रति माह 130 रुपये का नेटवर्क क्षमता शुल्क वसूलने की व्यवस्था लागू की गई जिससे कीमतें बढ़ गईं। नए आदेश में इसे बढ़ाकर 200 चैनलों के लिए अधिकतम 160 रुपये कर दिया गया है। ऐसे में हर टीवी कनेक्शन पर मासिक शुल्क बढ़ना लाजिमी है।

इस बिंदु पर बंडलिंग को लेकर ट्राई की कवायद का कोई मतलब नहीं दिखता है। वैश्विक स्तर पर बंडलिंग अधिकांश उद्योगों में की जा चुकी है। एयरलाइंस, होटल, मीडिया, उपभोक्ता उत्पाद और सबसे खास चक्र दूरसंचार में भी यह संपन्न हो चुका है। होटलों में बंडलिंग के चलते बफे अपेक्षाकृत सस्ते हैं और उनमें लॉट कार्टे भोजन की तुलना में अधिक विविधता भी होती है। जो कैफे जैसा खास मिजाज का चैनल अधिक महंगा होगा अगर वह एक बंडल का हिस्सा नहीं है जिसमें अधिक मशहूर टीवी भी है।

ट्राई के पास बड़ी मात्रा में शोध संसाधन, ढेर सारे आंकड़े और हितधारकों तक पहुंच है। एक नियामक के रूप में वह प्रभाव विश्लेषण के तरीके समझने के लिए दूसरे देशों के नियामकों से संपर्क साध सकता है। उससे टीवी उद्योग, उपभोक्ता और खुद ट्राई भी शुल्क नियमों में हो रहे बदलावों के असर से बच सकेगा।



विनय सिन्हा

अमेरिका में असमानता को सामने रखते शैक्षणिक तथ्य

शैक्षणिक आंकड़ों से भी इस बात की पुष्टि होती है कि अमेरिका के समाज में असमानता बढ़ी है। इस संबंध में विस्तार से जानकारी प्रदान कर रहे हैं पार्थसारथि शोम

गत माह अपने स्तंभ में मैंने अमेरिका में बढ़ती असमानता का जिक्र किया था। बीसवीं सदी के अंत तक वहां आर्थिक वृद्धि धीमी पड़ चुकी थी तथा आय और संपत्ति की असमानता में इजाफा हुआ था। जो भी लाभ थे वे आबादी के एक छोटे हिस्से को मिले जो शीर्ष पर था। सन 2003 में जब थॉमस पिक्केटी और एमेनुएल साएज ने पर्व में फ्रांसीसी आंकड़ों का इस्तेमाल करके यह दर्शाया था कि सन 1970 और 1980 के दशक में शीर्ष पर आय और उसके घटक में चक्करदार वृद्धि देखने को मिली थी। उसके बाद कर आंकड़ों के इस्तेमाल से विश्लेषण का चलन बढ़ा था।

बाजार का तथ्यांकित 'प्राकृतिक कानून' जो आश्वस्त करता था कि अर्थव्यवस्था के विकसित होने का लाभ सभी को मिलेगा, वह विफल हो गया। पूंजी पर प्रतिफल की दर आर्थिक वृद्धि की दर से आगे निकल गई और असमानता में इजाफा होने लगा। आर्थिक वृद्धि के क्षेत्र के जानकार रॉबर्ट सोलो ने दोहराया कि समतामूलक वृद्धि के द्रोण आर्थिक विषय है। आय का वितरण तेजी से असमान होता गया। संपत्ति के आगमन ने इसमें अहम भूमिका निभाई। संपत्ति का एक हिस्सा जिसमें पैसा, परिसंपत्ति, शेयर,

बॉन्ड और अन्य तरह की पूंजी शामिल है, को छिपाया जा सकता है। मैक्रिएल जकमैन के अनुसार विश्व के सकल घरेलू उत्पाद का 11.5 फीसदी हिस्सा यानी करीब 8.7 लाख करोड़ डॉलर की राशि विदेशी खातों में छिपाई गई है।

आय और संपत्ति वितरण को स्थिति खराब होने से कुछ ही बच्चे अपने माता-पिता से बेहतर स्थिति में हैं। ऐसा करते हुए वह सन 1960 और 1970 के दशक की उपलब्धियों का प्रतिकार करते हैं। चेट्टी तथा अन्य का अनुमान है कि यदि आय और संपत्ति में असमानता पर नियंत्रण रहता तो विशुद्ध गतिशीलता में 70 फीसदी की कमी नहीं आती।

आर्थिक असमानता से स्वास्थ्यगत असमानता उत्पन्न हुई और लोगों द्वारा हासिल किए जाने वाले कौशल में भी अंतर आया। क्लॉडिया गोल्ल्डन, लॉरेटस काट्ज, जैनेट क्यूरी, डगलस अलमॉन्ड और डंकन

थॉमस ने इसे कई तरह से दर्शाया।

ब्रिटेन में एक ही सप्ताह में पैदा हुए 17,000 बच्चों पर किशोरावस्था में अध्ययन किया गया कि पता चला कि जो बच्चे स्वस्थ थे उन्होंने हाईस्कूल अंग्रेजी और गणित अच्छे से पास की। उन्हें

रोजगार भी ज्यादा मिले और 33 वर्ष की उम्र में उनका वेतन भी दूसरों से अधिक था। इसी आधार पर सन 1999 में क्यूरी और रोजमैरी हायसन ने यह नतीजा निकाला कि जन्म के समय बच्चों के स्वास्थ्य का संबंध उम्र में उनके स्वास्थ्य से है। वहीं वस्त्रक रोजगार का संबंध जन्म के समय कम वजन से है। स्पष्ट है कि विद्यालय में बच्चों और परिवार का व्यवहार तथा बिताए गए वर्षों का काफी हद तक भविष्य का निर्धारण करते हैं। महाभारतीय विद्वान डेविड बार्कर ने बीमारियों के मामले में जेनेटिक या खराब जीवन शैली के संबंध माओं के पोषण और स्वास्थ्य को अहम बताया। अन्य लोगों ने जन्म के समय के वजन को हाईस्कूल पास करने की संभावना से जोड़ा। शोधकर्ताओं ने माना कि मातापिता की स्थिति जीवन भर प्रभावित करती है। शिक्षा में अंतर का संबंध भी असमानता से है। आर्थिक सहयोग एवं विकास संगठन के 31 देशों में बच्चों का अर्थ

रखे जाने की बात करें तो इस क्रम में अमेरिका 20वें स्थान पर आता है। वहीं प्रीस्कूल नामांकन के मामले में वह 29वें स्थान पर है।

संयुक्त लेखन करने वालों द्वारा करीब आधी सदी पहले कम आय वर्ग वाले मिश्रित परिवारों के 123 अफ्रीकी अमेरिकी बच्चों पर किए गए अध्ययन में पाया गया कि 3-4 वर्ष की उम्र में बच्चे यादृच्छिक रूप से बेहतर गुणवत्ता वाले प्रीस्कूल में शामिल हुए या उससे बाहर रहे। जब ये बच्चे 40 के आसपास की उम्र में पहुंचे तो जिन बच्चों ने प्रीस्कूल की पढ़ाई की थी उनके स्कूल की पढ़ाई पूरी करने का प्रतिशत ज्यादा था। कॉलेज में भी वे ज्यादा गए, उनकी आय अधिक थी, आवास के मामले में स्थायित्व था और पारिवारिक रिश्तों में बेहतर थी।

शिक्षा में अंतर, संसाधनों तक पहुंच में अंतर के रूप में भी सामने आता है। केरिस कूपर और किटी स्टीवर्ट ने सन 1988 से 2012 के बीच के शोध के आधार पर निष्कर्ष दिया कि गरीब बच्चों का प्रदर्शन उनका गरीबी की बदौलत खराब रहा। स्पष्ट था कि उन परिवारों के पास पैसा पहुंचने पर उनका प्रदर्शन बेहतर होता।

केवल नकदी नहीं बल्कि मां का पोषण, साफ पेयजल, प्री-स्कूल सेवाएं, स्कूल की गुणवत्ता, पड़ोस की सुरक्षा, पुस्तकालय, पार्क, चिड़ियाघर, संग्रहालय आदि सभी का बच्चों पर दीर्घकालिक प्रभाव पड़ा। बेहतर परिवार कल्याण के लिए माता-पिता को सवैतनिक अवकाश देने की बात की गई। हालांकि अमेरिका इस मामले में भी यूरोप से पीछे है। गैरे रामे और वैंलेरी रामे को दलील है कि कॉलेज शिक्षा प्राप्त मां-बाप बच्चों के साथ अधिक समय बिताते हैं ताकि उन्हें शीर्ष कॉलेजों में दाखिला मिल सके। जाहिर है ऐसा न होने पर बच्चे प्रतिस्पर्धा में पिछड़ जाएंगे।

नतीजा पेश करते हुए बाउशे का कहना है कि बच्चों और अमेरिकी अर्थव्यवस्था पर उनके प्रभाव को समग्रता में देखा होगा।

बाउशे के मुताबिक इसके लिए कुछ कदम उठाए जाने चाहिए: (1) हर बार जब आधिकारिक रूप से आय और संपत्ति में वृद्धि के आंकड़े दिए जाएं तो बताया जाए कि आय और संपत्ति का वितरण किस प्रकार हुआ। (2) अवसरों को शीर्ष लोगों तक सीमित न रहने दिया जाए क्योंकि इससे अन्य लोगों के अवसर या लाभान्वित होने की संभावना प्रभावित होती है। (3) इसे हासिल करने के लिए सामाजिक आर्थिक नीति ऐसी हो कि बेहतर बाल स्वास्थ्य, प्रीस्कूल, सरकारी स्कूल और जन स्वास्थ्य हासिल का शुल्क तय करने का पूरा प्राथमिकता दी जाए। (5) समुचित प्रक्रिया को नुकसान पहुंचाने और आर्थिक वृद्धि को अपने पक्ष में इस्तेमाल करने वालों का नियमन। (6) एकाधिकार पर लगाम ताकि अधिक सरकारी राजस्व अर्जित किया जा सके, उसका इस्तेमाल जरूरी व्यय में किया जा सकता है। (7) कामगारों की सामूहिक मोलभाव की क्षमता में इजाफा और (8) ऐसे वित्तीय उत्पादों में पूंजी निवेश को हतोत्साहित करना जो वास्तविक उत्पादक गतिविधि में शामिल नहीं होते या आर्थिक स्थिरता नहीं बढ़ाते।

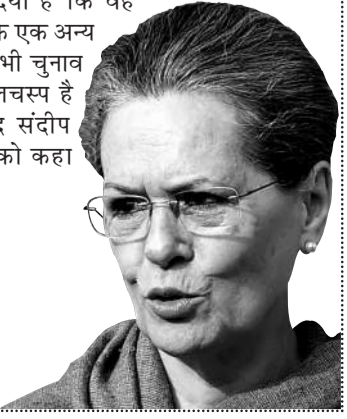
कानाफूसी

जन्मदिन पर धक्कामुक्की

बीते तमाम वर्षों के दौरान बहुजन समाज पार्टी की अध्यक्ष मायावती का जन्मदिन पार्टी के हर कार्यकर्ता के लिए एक खास दिन रहा है। पार्टी कार्यकर्ता की दर आर्थिक वृद्धि पर न केवल भारी जलसा मनाते हैं बल्कि बहुजन आंदोलन को भी नई गति प्रदान की जाती है। प्रशासकों में बहनजी के नाम से प्रसिद्ध मायावती अपने जन्मदिन को जन कल्याण दिवस के रूप में मनाती हैं। बुधवार को उनके 64वें जन्मदिन के मौके पर पार्टी कार्यकर्ताओं में केक खाने के लिए होड़ मच गई। इस दौरान पार्टी कार्यालयों में धक्कामुक्की जैसी स्थिति बन गई। आलोचकों ने कहा कि ऐसे अवसरों पर इस तरह के दृश्य आम हो गए हैं और इससे खुद को बहुत अनुशासित पार्टी कहने वाली बसपा का नाम खराब हो रहा है।

कांग्रेस में ऊहापोह

कुछ दिन पहले कांग्रेस अध्यक्ष सोनिया गांधी ने पार्टी की दिल्ली इकाई के वरिष्ठ नेताओं के साथ एक बैठक की। उन्होंने इन नेताओं से कहा कि वे 8 फरवरी को होने वाले दिल्ली विधानसभा चुनावों में पार्टी की ओर से लड़ें। लेकिन कई प्रमुख नेता चुनाव लड़ने को तैयार नहीं हैं। दिल्ली प्रदेश कांग्रेस के पूर्व अध्यक्ष अजय माकन अमेरिका चले गए हैं। उनकी बेटी बीमार है। माकन ने दिल्ली मामलों के प्रभारी पीसी चाको को बता दिया है कि वह चुनाव नहीं लड़ेंगे। पार्टी के एक अन्य वरिष्ठ नेता नसीब सिंह भी चुनाव नहीं लड़ना चाहते। दिलचस्प है कि पार्टी ने पूर्व सांसद संदीप दीक्षित से चुनाव लड़ने को कहा ही नहीं।



आपका पक्ष

राज्य नागरिकों को दें आधारभूत सुविधाएं

देश के सभी राज्यों को पुरुषों और महिलाओं को जीविकोपार्जन के पर्याप्त साधन मुहैया कराना चाहिए। उन्हें समान कार्य के लिए समान वेतन की व्यवस्था करनी चाहिए। वे कार्य के अधिकार प्राप्त करने के लिए प्रभावी व्यवस्था, बेरोजगार के मामले में शिक्षा एवं सार्वजनिक सहायता, वृद्धावस्था, बीमारी एवं असमर्थता या अयोग्यता के मामले में सहायता करें। राज्य कर्मचारियों के लिए निर्वाह मजदूरी, कार्य की मानवीय स्थितियों, जीवन का शालीन स्तर और उद्योगों के प्रबंधन में कामगारों की पूर्ण सहभागिता प्राप्त करने के प्रयास करें। आर्थिक क्षेत्र में राज्य को अपनी नीति इस तरह से बनानी चाहिए ताकि सार्वजनिक हित के सहायक होने वाले भौतिक संसाधनों का वितरण का स्वामित्व एवं नियंत्रण हो और



यह सुनिश्चित करने के लिए कि आर्थिक प्रणाली कार्य के फलस्वरूप धन का और उत्पादन के साधनों का जमाव सार्वजनिक हानि के लिए नहीं हो। राज्यों के बच्चों के लिए अवसरों और सुविधाओं की व्यवस्था की जाए जिससे उनका विकास अच्छी तरह से हो। 14 वर्ष की आयु तक के सभी बच्चों के लिए मुफ्त शिक्षा अनिवार्य की जाए। अनुसूचित

देश के भविष्य के लिए 10वीं तक की शिक्षा को निःशुल्क करना चाहिए

से हो। 14 वर्ष की आयु तक के सभी बच्चों के लिए मुफ्त शिक्षा अनिवार्य की जाए। अनुसूचित

जाति, अनुसूचित जनजाति और अन्य कमजोर वर्गों के लिए शिक्षा और आर्थिक हितों की रक्षा की जाए। पूरे देश में एकसमान नागरिक संहिता लागू करने की जरूरत है। राष्ट्रीय स्मारकों की रक्षा, समान अवसर के आधार पर न्याय का संवर्द्धन तथा मुफ्त कालनी सहायता की व्यवस्था करने की जरूरत है। इसके अलावा पर्यावरण की रक्षा करने, वनों एवं वन्य जीवों की रक्षा करने की भी जरूरत है।

हरिओम हंसराज, सारण

बेरोजगारी दूर करने के उपाय

देश की आर्थिक स्थिति मंद पड़ी हुई है। बेरोजगारी की समस्या

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@bmail.in पत्र/ईमेल में अपना डाक पता और टेलीफोन नंबर अवश्य लिखें।



ज्ञान के अभाव में जोश प्रकाशरहित अग्नि के समान है

पाकिस्तानपरस्त चीन

अमेरिका में परमाणु हथियार संबंधी तकनीक अवैध तरीके से खरीदने के आरोप में पांच पाकिस्तानी नागरिकों की गिरफ्तारी खतरे की नई घंटी है। इन पाकिस्तानियों ने अमेरिका में गुपचुप रूप से वे उत्पाद खरीदकर पाकिस्तान भेजे जो अमेरिका के सुरक्षा हितों के साथ-साथ दक्षिण एशिया के शक्ति संतुलन के लिए भी खतरा बन सकते हैं। चोरी की तकनीक से अपने परमाणु कार्यक्रम को आगे बढ़ाने में माहिर पाकिस्तान की इस नई हरकत से भारत और अफ्रीका के साथ-साथ विषय समुदाय को भी चेतना चाहिए। वास्तव में सबसे अधिक चेतना चाहिए चीन को, क्योंकि वही है जो पाकिस्तान का अंध समर्थन करने में लगा हुआ है। ऐसा करके वह पाकिस्तान को और अधिक गैर जिम्मेदार राष्ट्र बनाने का ही काम कर रहा है। इसी के साथ वह खुद भी बदनाम हो रहा है। समझना कठिन है कि हर मोर्चे पर गैर जिम्मेदारी का परिचय देने और साथ ही किस्म-किस्म के आतंकी गुटों का समर्थन करने वाले पाकिस्तान की पैवची करने से चीन को हासिल क्या हो रहा है? यदि चीनी नेतृत्व यह समझ रहा है कि आतंक समर्थक पाकिस्तान को शाह देकर वह भारत की रह रोकने में कामयाब हो सकता है तो यह उसकी भूल ही है।

चीन को यह आभास हो तो बेहतर कि उसकी पाकिस्तानपरस्ती उसकी अंतरराष्ट्रीय छवि को दायगर करने का ही काम कर रही है। उसकी इस अंध पाकिस्तानपरस्ती से विश्व समुदाय न केवल अवगत हो रहा है, बल्कि उसे शर्मिंदा भी कर रहा है। चीन को यह समझना होगा कि आतंकी सरगना मसूद अजहर की ढाल बनने और फिर संयुक्त राष्ट्र सुरक्षा परिषद में कश्मीर मसला उठाने से उसे कुछ हासिल हुआ तो अंतरराष्ट्रीय समुदाय की झिड़की। चीन एक ओर दुनिया की नई महाशक्ति बनने को आतुर है और दूसरी ओर यह देखने से इन्कार कर रहा है कि उत्तर कोरिया और पाकिस्तान जैसे बेलगाम देशों का संरक्षण बनने के कारण उसे विश्व शांति के लिए खतरा माना जाने लगा है। यदि चीन सचमुच पाकिस्तान का हितैषी है तो फिर क्या कारण है कि उसके तमाम समर्थन-संरक्षण के बाद भी वह नाकामी की ओर बढ़ रहा है? माना कि अपनी राष्ट्रीय एवं अंतरराष्ट्रीय जिम्मेदारियों के प्रति पाकिस्तान को आंखें बंद हैं, लेकिन क्या चीन को भी भले-बुरे की समझ नहीं है? भारत को विश्व समुदाय के समक्ष यह रेखांकित करने के लिए सन्निय होना चाहिए कि चीन की सरपरस्ती पाकिस्तान को और अधिक बिगड़ेला देश में तब्दील कर रही है। इसी के साथ उसे चीन के समक्ष भी यह स्पष्ट करना चाहिए कि कश्मीर के मामले में उसका रवैया न तो वुहान की भावना के अनुकूल है और न ही मामल्लापुरम में कायम हुई समझ-बूझ के।

कब सुरक्षित होंगी बेटियां

झारखंड की बेटियां अपने आप को आखिर कब सुरक्षित महसूस करेंगी। कम उन्हें बेहतर एवं स्वस्थ सामाजिक वातावरण नसीब होगा। मौजूदा हालात तो यह संकेत कर्तई नहीं देते हैं कि राज्य में बेटियों की आवश्यक सुरक्षित है। आलम यह है कि अराजक तत्व प्रत्येक स्थान पर उन पर अपनी नजरें गड़ाए रहते हैं। मौक़ा मिलते ही अपनी करतूत को अंजाम दे देते हैं। खूंटी में टुसू मेला देखकर पैदल लौट रही छह किशोरियों को स्कूटी और बाइक सवारों ने घर तक छोड़ने की बात कहकर जबरन अपने साथ बैठा लिया। किशोरियों को सूनसान जंगल में ले जाकर एक कम्बरे में बंद कर दिया। दो किशोरियों से दुष्कर्म करने का प्रयास किया। खूंटी की यह घटना न केवल सभ्य समाज के मुंह पर करारा तमाचा है वरन पुलिसिया कार्यप्रणाली पर भी बड़ा

सवाल है। आखिर कैसे पुलिस के दवाों के विपरीत अराजक तत्व अपने मंसूबों में कामयाब होकर अपनी कारगुजारियों को अंजाम दे देते हैं। दरअसल खूंटी का जंगली क्षेत्र पहले से ही बेहद संवेदनशील रहा है। वर्ष 2018 में मानव तस्करी के खिलाफ नुककड़ नाटक करने वाली मंडली की पांच युवतियों के साथ सामूहिक दुष्कर्म की घटना घटी थी। राज्य ही नहीं देश भर में यह मामला

बेहद सरगम रहा था। सरकार से लेकर पुलिस के आलाधिकारियों के स्तर तक से राज्य में बेटियों की सुरक्षा के बड़े-बड़े दावे किए गए थे, लेकिन ताजा घटना से लगता है कि सारे दावे कि सारे दावे-टयंग फुसस हो गए। इतना ही नहीं, बीते दिसंबर माह में राजधानी रांची में ही अपने दोस्त के साथ घूम रही विधि की छात्रा से भी सामूहिक दुष्कर्म की घटना को अंजाम दिया गया था। इस मामले ने भी काफी तूल पकड़ा था। फिर पुलिस ने बेटियों की सुरक्षा को लेकर नए दावे किए थे, लेकिन सब बेअसर दिख रहे हैं। खूंटी की इस घटना के बाद पुलिस महकमा एक बार फिर सक्रिय है। रांची स्थित पुलिस मुख्यालय में भी सरगमी है। कार्रवाई और पड़ताल का दौर जारी है, लेकिन जरूरत इस बात की है कि इस बार सिर्फ खानापूति न की जाए, राज्य में बेटियों की सुरक्षा की पुख्ता व्यवस्था के उपाय किए जाएं। आरोपितों पर ऐसी कार्रवाई हो जो समाज के लिए नजीर बने।

खेतिहर मजदूरों की बढ़ती संख्या

देश में तमाम किस्म की उथल-पुथल और विरोध प्रदर्शनों के बीच एक आंकड़ा आया और आकर चला गया। अधिकांश लोगों ने उस पर ध्यान नहीं दिया। नेशनल क्राम रिर्काईंस ब्यूरो (एनसीआरबी) ने लंबे समय बाद देश भर में 2016 में हुई आत्महत्याओं का आंकड़ा जारी किया है। एनसीआरबी के आंकड़ों के लिहाज से देश भर में कतिपय कारणों से कृषि श्रमिकों की आत्महत्या में बढ़ोतरी हुई है। एटसीआरबी के अनुसार 2016 में देशभर में कुल 1,31,008 लोगों ने आत्महत्या की। इसमें कृषि क्षेत्र में की गई आत्महत्या 8.7 फीसद है। 2015 की तरह 2016 में भी महाराष्ट्र में सबसे अधिक किसानों ने आत्महत्या की। 2016 में कृषि क्षेत्र (किसान और खेतिहर मजदूर) की कुल 11,379 आत्महत्याएं हुईं। इस आंकड़े को विस्तारित करें तो हर महीने करीब 948 और रोजाना करीबन 31 आत्महत्याएं देश भर में हुईं। आत्महत्या करने वाले 6,270 किसानों में 275 महिलाएं थीं। वहीं कृषि श्रमिकों में 633 महिलाओं ने आत्महत्या की। रिपोर्ट के अनुसार बिहार, बंगाल और नगालैंड जैसे राज्यों में किसी किसान ने

फिर से

किसानों की संख्या में आई गिरावट और खेतिहर मजदूरों की संख्या में बढ़ोतरी साफ संकेत है कि किसान अब मजदूर बन रहे हैं

आत्महत्या नहीं की।

हालांकि देश में 2015 के मुकाबले किसानों की आत्महत्याओं में 11 फीसद की कमी आई है। गौरतलब है कि साल 2016 में देश भर में कुल 6,270 किसानों ने आत्महत्या की है। साल 2015 में यह आंकड़ा 8,007 था। दूसरी तरफ खेतिहर मजदूरों की आत्महत्या की गिनती में बढ़ोतरी हुई है। इस बीच एक आंकड़ा यह भी है कि देश में किसानों की संख्या (अंदाजन 86 लाख) में कमी आई है तो कृषि मजदूरों की संख्या में भारी बढ़ोतरी हुई है। इस समस्या की जड़ हमारी व्यवस्था में है और किसानों की मौत का आंकड़ा सिर्फ एक संख्या ही नहीं है।

आंकड़े यह बताते हैं कि देश में शीर्ष 10 फीसद ग्रामीण परिवारों के पास कुल कृषि



वैजयंत जय पांडा

नागरिकता संशोधन कानून उन वैश्विक मापदंडों के अनुकूल है जो यह कहते हैं कि धार्मिक उत्पीड़न के शिकार शरणार्थी प्राथमिकता पाने के हकदार हैं

बीते कुछ सप्ताह से नागरिकता संशोधन कानून को लेकर राजनीतिक और सामाजिक स्तर पर भावनात्मक प्रतिक्रियाओं का दौर जारी है। देश यह देख रहा है कि राजनीतिक दल, एक्टिविस्ट, छात्र और आम लोग नागरिकता संशोधन कानून के समर्थन अथवा विरोध में सड़कों पर उतर रहे हैं। संसद के दोनों सदनों से पारित कानून को लेकर इस तरह की गतिविधियों की जरूरत नहीं पड़ती, अगर इस मसले पर तार्किक ढंग से बहस की जाती। जो लोग इस कानून के विरोध में हैं वे इस कानून को लाने के संस्कार के उद्देश्य को समझने के लिए तैयार नहीं दिखते और इसीलिए इस मसले पर सार्थक बहस की जरूरत है। यह दुर्भाग्यपूर्ण है कि नागरिकता कानून के अधिकतर विरोधी पूर्वाग्रह से भरे दिखते हैं। ऐतिहासिक पृष्ठभूमि में गए बगैर कुछ लोग सवाल उछाल रहे हैं कि आखिर इसमें मुसलमानों को शामिल क्यों नहीं किया गया? इसका साधारण जवाब यही है कि नागरिकता संशोधन कानून के रूप में की गई मानवीय पहल पड़ोसी देशों के प्रताड़ित अल्पसंख्यकों को रहत देने के लिए की गई है। ये वे पड़ोसी देश हैं जहां इस्लाम राजकीय धर्म है और जहां की आबादी का ढांचा भारत जैसा नहीं है। यह ठीक उसी तरह की पहल है जिसका समर्थन अतीत में मनमोहन सिंह और अन्य अनेक नेताओं ने किया, पर राजनीतिक कारणों से अब वे पीछे हट रहे हैं। यह महत्वपूर्ण है कि

नागरिकता कानून के विरोधी इस तरह का कानून बनाए जाने के कारणों को समझें। उन्हें यह भी समझना होगा कि इस कानून के दायरे में पड़ोसी देशों के मुसलमानों को शामिल करना क्यों उचित नहीं होता? जिन तीन देशों के अल्पसंख्यकों को इस कानून के दायरे में रखा गया है वे न केवल मुस्लिम बहुल हैं, बल्कि उन्हें संवैधानिक महत्ता भी हासिल है। यह भी ध्यान रखने की बात है कि नागरिकता संशोधन कानून में ऐसा कुछ भी नहीं है जो इन देशों के मुसलमानों को भारत की नागरिकता हासिल करने में आड़े आता हो। मोदी सरकार के कार्यकाल में ही इन देशों के करीब छह सौ मुसलमानों को भारत की नागरिकता प्रदान की गई है और वे भारतीय बन चुके हैं।

भले ही नागरिकता कानून के विरोधी यह मानते हों कि यह कानून पक्षपातपूर्ण है, लेकिन सच्चाई यही है कि किसी देश के ऐसे अल्पसंख्यकों को चिन्हितकर उन्हें रहत देना कोई अस्वाभाविक अथवा प्राथमिकता देने के लिए की गई है। ये वे पड़ोसी देश हैं जहां इस्लाम राजकीय धर्म है और जहां की आबादी का ढांचा भारत जैसा नहीं है। यह ठीक उसी तरह की पहल है जिसका समर्थन अतीत में मनमोहन सिंह और अन्य अनेक नेताओं ने किया, पर राजनीतिक कारणों से अब वे पीछे हट रहे हैं। यह महत्वपूर्ण है कि



और अफगानिस्तान के अल्पसंख्यकों का है। ये वे देश हैं जहां एक उपसना पद्धति को अन्य उपसना पद्धतियों के मुकाबले श्रेष्ठता प्र प्राप्त है। इस बहस में पड़ने का कोई मतलब नहीं कि आखिर कैसे माना जाए कि किसी का नरसंहार हो रहा है या फिर यह कैसे तय होगा कि कोई समुदाय अपनी धार्मिक आस्था के कारण उत्पीड़न का शिकार हो रहा है? उत्पीड़न चाहे धार्मिक आस्था के कारण हो रहा हो या फिर भाषा के कारण, कोई भी उन रपटों से मुंह नहीं मोड़ सकता जो यह बताती हैं कि इन तीन देशों में अल्पसंख्यक समुदाय गंभीर खतरे का सामना कर रहे हैं। वे जबरन धर्मांतरण के बाद जबर्जिया विवाह को भी शिकार हैं और अहण्ड, हत्या सरीखे संगीन आपराधिक गतिविधियों का भी इन देशों के अल्पसंख्यक हर स्तर पर बहुसंख्यकों की प्रताड़ना से इस हद तक दो-चार हैं कि उनकी आबादी घटती जा रही है। उनकी तेजी से घटती आबादी उनकी दारुण स्थिति को बयान करने के लिए पर्याप्त है।

चूंकि ये सभी अल्पसंख्यक अविभाजित भारत का हिस्सा हैं इसलिए नैतिक स्तर पर भारत की जिम्मेदारी बनती थी कि वह उन्हें भीषण उत्पीड़न से बचाकर रहत दे। इसके लिए उसी रस्ते पर चला गया जो गांधी, नेहरू, पटेल और अन्य महान नेताओं ने सुझाया था। इन नेताओं ने इन अल्पसंख्यकों को शरण देने की बात कही थी। विरोधी कुछ भी कहें, नागरिकता संशोधन कानून उन वैश्विक मापदंडों के अनुकूल है जो यह रेखांकित करते हैं कि धार्मिक उत्पीड़न के शिकार शरणार्थी स्वाभाविक तौर पर उन लोगों के मुकाबले कहीं अधिक प्राथमिकता पाने के हकदार हैं जो आर्थिक कारणों से किसी देश आते हैं। राजनीतिक और आर्थिक कारणों से होने वाले भेदभाव की अनदेखी नहीं की जा सकती, लेकिन धार्मिक आधार पर होने वाले उत्पीड़न पर अधिक ध्यान देना ही होगा, क्योंकि यह सबसे खराब किस्म का उत्पीड़न होता है। इसी कारण अतीत में भारत ने यूगोंड के शरणार्थियों की मदद की और

सास, बहू और साजिश का नया अध्याय

हाल में खबर आई कि बिहार के पूर्व मुख्यमंत्री लालू प्रसाद यादव की पत्नी राबड़ी देवी और बहू ऐश्वर्या के बीच लड़ाई बहुत बढ़ गई है। दोनों अपनी-अपनी शिकायतें पुलिस में रिपोर्ट दर्ज करा चुकी हैं और बेचारी पुलिस को हालत में 'भई गति सांप छद्दूर केरी' हो गई है। किसका पक्ष ले और किसकी शिकायत को सही माने। कई साल पहले राबड़ी देवी ने कहा था कि उन्हें अपने बेटों के लिए मॉल में जाने वाली नहीं, घर चलाने वाली बहू चाहिए। अब घर चलाने वाली बहुओं की परिभाषा क्या है, यह तो राबड़ी ही जानें, मगर जब ऐश्वर्या से उनके बेटे की शादी की खबरें आई थीं तो यही लगा था कि आखिर राबड़ी तैयार कैसे हुई, क्योंकि उनके बयान से तो यही महसूस होता था कि उन्हें ऐश्वर्या जैसी आधुनिक जीवनशैली में पली-बढ़ी लड़की नहीं चाहिए। शादी के बाद ऐश्वर्या के साइकिल पर बैठे और तेजप्रताप द्वारा उस साइकिल को चलाते चित्र भी दिखाये थे। फिर उनमें और छोटे भाई तेजस्वी में मन-मुटाव की खबरें आने लगीं तो कहा जाने लगा कि इन सबके पीछे ऐश्वर्या ही हैं। बताते चलें कि ऐश्वर्या एमबीए हैं, जबकि तेजप्रताप कहीं कम पढ़े हैं। जब तेजप्रताप का अपनी पत्नी से मनमुटाव हुआ तो वह कहने लगे कि उनसे उनकी नहीं पट सकती। वह साधारण किस्म के इंसान हैं, जबकि वह बहुत महत्वाकांक्षी है। जब उन्होंने तलाक की अर्जी दी तब बताया गया कि लालू प्रसाद यादव इस बात से बहुत नाराज हैं। वह तेजप्रताप को समझाने में लगे हैं। तभी ऐसी खबरें भी आने लगीं कि ऐश्वर्या को रोते हुए घर से निकलते देखा गया। इसके बाद तेजप्रताप के तरह-तरह



क्षमा शर्मा

राबड़ी-ऐश्वर्या की तरह कितनी सास-बहू हैं जिनकी पहुंच पुलिस तक हो पाती है और कानूनी सहायता मिल पाती है

के चित्र भी नजर आने लगे थे। किसी में वह कृष्ण-कन्येया बने दिखते तो किसी में शिव। हालांकि ऐश्वर्या ससुराल में ही रहती रही।

हाल में खबर आई कि ऐश्वर्या ने अपनी सास राबड़ी देवी और ननद मीसा भारती पर आरोप लगाया है कि उन्हें दहेज के लिए तंग किया जाता था। सास कहती थी कि दहेज में एक कार तो ले आती। उन्हें खाना नहीं दिया जाता था। उनसे मार-पीट की जाती थी। ऐश्वर्या की शिकायत पढ़कर लगा कि जो लालू सैकड़ों करोड़ रुपये की संपत्ति के मालिक कहे जाते हैं, बिहार के मुख्यमंत्री रहे हैं, राबड़ी भी मुख्यमंत्री रह चुकी हैं, क्या वह एक मामूली कार के लिए अपनी बहू को सताएंगी। इसी प्रकार खाना न देना जैसी बात पर भी विश्वास नहीं होता। राबड़ी दोषी हैं या ऐश्वर्या, कौन बता सकता है? सच्चाई तो जांच-पड़ताल के बाद ही मालूम पड़ेगी।

ये खबरें भी आई कि राबड़ी गिरफ्तार हो भी सकती हैं। शायद इसी खतरे को भांपते हुए राबड़ी ने भी बहू ऐश्वर्या के खिलाफ शिकायत की कि वह उनके साथ

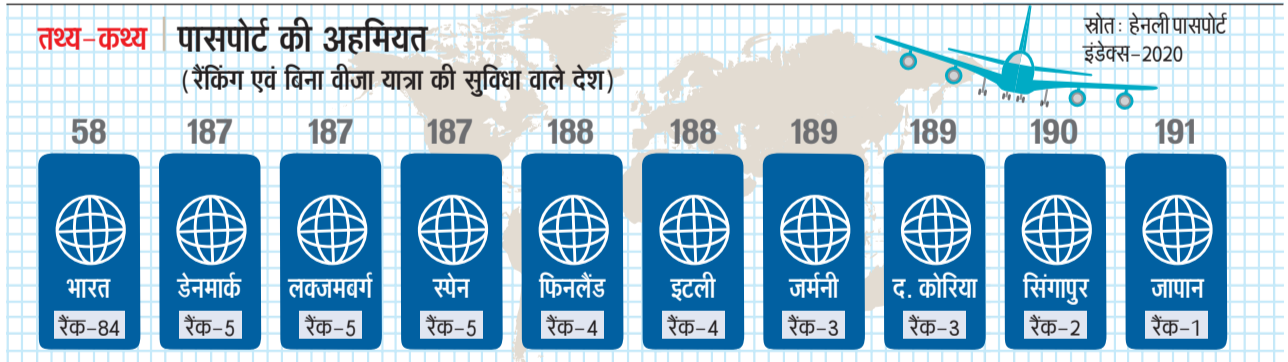
मारपीट करती है। उससे उन्हें जान का खतरा है। दोनों शिकायतों पर अगर गौर करें तो एक तरफ जहां बहू को दहेज निरोधी धारा 498ए और घरेलू हिंसा के खिलाफ बने कानून मदद देंगे तो वहीं राबड़ी को बूढ़े माता-पिता को सताने पर बच्चों को जेल भेजने संबंधी बिहार सरकार के फैसले और बूढ़ों के प्रति हिंसा के खिलाफ बने कानून की मदद मिलेगी। इस प्रकार दोनों की शिकायतें एक-दूसरे को संतुलित करेंगी और हो सकता है कि किसी को भी कोई सजा न मिले। यह भी संभव है कि दोनों में सुलह हो जाए।

इस पूरे प्रकरण से किसी जमाने में कांग्रेस के बड़े नेता रहे अरण नेहरू की बेटी की भी याद आती है जिससे अनेक पति के खिलाफ दहेज प्रताड़ना की शिकायत दर्ज कराई थी। हालांकि दहेज के लिए किसी औरत को कहीं भी सताया जा सकता है। यह बात सच है, लेकिन ऐसी शिकायतों का हल्ला मीडिया में तभी महकता है जब मामला किसी नामी-गिरामी परिवार से जुड़ा हो। वरना तो किसी आम औरत, चाहे वह बहू हो या सास, उसकी पहुंच न पुलिस तक हो पाती है और न ही उसे कानूनी सहायता मिल पाती है। उसकी मदद के लिए राजनीतिक दल या नागरिक संगठन भी तभी आगे आते हैं जब इसमें उन्हें कोई फायदा नजर आता है।

कुल मिलाकर महिला कानूनों और बुजुर्गों के कानूनों में चल रही हैं, बर्हा न्याय किसे मिलेगा, यह देखा दिलचस्प होगा।

(लेखिका साहित्यकार हैं)

response@jagran.com



ऊर्जा

परोपकार

मनुष्य एक सामाजिक प्राणी है। अतः समाज के प्रति उसके कुछ कर्तव्य भी होते हैं। सबसे बड़ा कर्तव्य है एक-दूसरे के सुख-दुःख में शामिल होना एवं यथाशक्ति सहायता करना। एक चीनी कागज की चाब चलाकर इकट्ठा करने वाले हाथ में कुछ सुगंध हमेशा रह जाती है। जो लोग दूसरों की जिंदगी रोशन करते हैं, उनकी जिंदगी खुद रोशन हो जाती है। हंस सुख, विनोदप्रिय, आशापूर्ण लोग प्रत्येक जगह अपना मार्ग बना ही लेते हैं। मनोवैज्ञानिक मानते हैं कि खुशी का कोई निश्चित मापदंड नहीं होता। एक मां बच्चे को स्नान कराने पर खुश होती है। छोटे बच्चे मिट्टी के घर बनाकर, उन्हें ढहाकर और पानी में क्रीक की चाब चलाकर खुश होते हैं। इसी तरह विद्यार्थी परीक्षा में अच्चल आने पर उन्हाहित हो सकते हैं। भूख-प्यास-बीमार की आंखों को कम करना, अन्याय और शोषण से प्रताड़ित की सहायता करना, सर्दी से ठिठुरते व्यक्ति को कंबल ओढ़ाना या जीवन और मृत्यु से जुड़ा रहे व्यक्ति के लिए रक्तदान करना हो-ये जीवन के वे सुख हैं जो इंसान को भीतर तक खुशियों से सराबोर कर देते हैं।

महापुरुषों ने हमें जीवन में खुश, नेक एवं नीतिवान होने का संदेश दिया है। उनकी परिस्थितियों अनुकूल नहीं थीं। हर किसी ने मुश्किलों से जुझकर उन्हीं अपने अनुकूल बनाया और जन-जन में खुशियां बांटीं। इंसान ने अपने हत्यों के लिए भी प्रभु से प्रार्थना की कि प्रभु इन्हें क्षमा करना, इन्हें नहीं पता कि ये क्या कर रहे हैं। ऐसा कर उन्होंने परोपकार का संदेश दिया। बुद्ध ने शिष्य आनंद को 'आधा गिलास पानी भरा है' कहकर हर स्थिति में खुशी बटोरने का संदेश दिया। मोहम्मद साहब ने भेदभाव रहित मानव समाज का संदेश दिया। परोपकार को जीवन में स्थान दीजिए, जरूरी नहीं है कि इंसानें धन ही खर्चें हों। बस मन को उदार बनाइए। आपके आसपास अनेकों लोग रहते हैं। हर व्यक्ति दुःख-सुख के चक्र में फंसा हुआ है। आप उनके दुःख-सुख में सम्मिलित होइए। यथाशक्ति मदद कीजिए।

ललित गर्ग

महापुरुषों ने हमें जीवन में खुश, नेक एवं नीतिवान होने का संदेश दिया है। उनकी परिस्थितियों अनुकूल नहीं थीं। हर किसी ने मुश्किलों से जुझकर उन्हीं अपने अनुकूल बनाया और जन-जन में खुशियां बांटीं। इंसान ने अपने हत्यों के लिए भी प्रभु से प्रार्थना की कि प्रभु इन्हें क्षमा करना, इन्हें नहीं पता कि ये क्या कर रहे हैं। ऐसा कर उन्होंने परोपकार का संदेश दिया। बुद्ध ने शिष्य आनंद को 'आधा गिलास पानी भरा है' कहकर हर स्थिति में खुशी बटोरने का संदेश दिया। मोहम्मद साहब ने भेदभाव रहित मानव समाज का संदेश दिया। परोपकार को जीवन में स्थान दीजिए, जरूरी नहीं है कि इंसानें धन ही खर्चें हों। बस मन को उदार बनाइए। आपके आसपास अनेकों लोग रहते हैं। हर व्यक्ति दुःख-सुख के चक्र में फंसा हुआ है। आप उनके दुःख-सुख में सम्मिलित होइए। यथाशक्ति मदद कीजिए।

ललित गर्ग

इतिहास का महत्व

इतिहास के पुनर्लेखन में देरी शीघ्र से लिखे अपने लेख में प्रो. मकखन लाल ने भारतीय इतिहास के विविध आयामों का विश्लेषण करते हुए उसके पुनर्लेखन की बात कही है। अभी तक देश के विद्यालयों एवं महाविद्यालयों में पढ़ाया जा रहा इतिहास का पाठ्यक्रम नितांत अधूरा तथा अताकिक है। आज यह भी समझने की आवश्यकता है कि इसके या उसके जन्म-मृत्यु के व्योरे, जय-पराजय की कहानियां मात्र इतिहास नहीं हैं। इतिहास अतीत, वर्तमान और भविष्य के बीच का सेतु है। इतिहास में किसी समाज एवं राष्ट्र की चेतना, सांस्कृतिक वैभव तथा गौरवशाली परंपरा मुखरित होती है। लेखक द्वारा प्रधानमंत्री के वक्तव्य, कनाडा का उदाहरण एवं गुरदवे के विचारों के आलोक में इतिहास के पुनर्लेखन की आवश्यकता पर जोर देना औचित्यपूर्ण है। क्या गांधी जी के सपनों का भारत और स्वतंत्रता के लिए बलिदानों की गायण इतिहास के पाठ्यक्रम में नहीं आनी चाहिए? जब इतिहास बनता-बिगड़ता है तो उसका पुनर्लेखन क्यों न हो? आज गुलामी के इतिहास को छोड़कर भारतीय चेतना के इतिहास को सामने लाने की आवश्यकता है जिससे युवा भारत ऊर्जा प्राप्त कर सके।

डॉ. वेदप्रकाश, हंसराज कॉलेज, दिल्ली

दलित-मुस्लिम गठजोड़

दैनिक जागरण के 16 जनवरी के अंक में प्रकाशित बर्दनीकरण के लेख, दलित मुस्लिम गठजोड़ की राजनीति, में लेखक ने भारतीय राजनीति में दलित मुस्लिम गठजोड़ की विफल कोशिश का उल्लेख किया है। जो सही है, क्योंकि किसी भी गठजोड़ में बकावर की

मेलबाक्स

भागीदारी जरूरी है। इस बात का उदाहरण जोगेंद्र नाथ मंडल का है, जिन्होंने मुस्लिम लीग में शामिल होकर पाकिस्तान बनवाने में सहयोग किया और एक बड़ी संख्या में दलितों को पाकिस्तान में रकने के लिए राजी किया, वो ही पाकिस्तानी सरकार में कानून मंत्री बनने के बावजूद पाकिस्तानी दलितों का भला न कर पाए और पाकिस्तान के इस्लामिक शासन और समाज में दलितों की उपेक्षा और उत्पीड़न को देखकर खुद तो भारत लौट आए, मगर खुद उनकी वजह से पाकिस्तान में रुके एक बड़े दलित समाज को पाकिस्तानियों को धार्मिक उत्पीड़न सहने को विवश होना पड़ा। उसी उपेक्षित और धार्मिक उत्पीड़न के शिकार दलित समाज के, भारत में भागकर आए शरणार्थियों को भारत सरकार भारतीय नागरिकता देने जा रही है। जिसका विरोध दलित मुस्लिम गठजोड़ के हिमायती लोग ही कर रहे हैं।

संजय अग्रवाल, हनुपड़

आखिर किसका नुकसान

नागरिकता कानून के विरोध में देशभर में हुए हिंसक धरना-प्रदर्शन से रेलवे विभाग को कई करोड़ का नुकसान हुआ है। यह राशि प्रदर्शनकारियों से वसूलने की कवायद चल रही है, पर यह इतना आसान नहीं है। पहचान होने के बाद ही हर कोई जुर्माना देने की स्थिति में नहीं होगा या देना नहीं चाहेगा। जुर्माना वसूलने की कार्रवाई में भी सरकार का कुछ खर्च तो आएगा ही। वैसे भी आंदोलनकारियों को यह इन्क होना चाहिए कि सार्वजनिक संपत्ति को नुकसान पहुंचा कर वे देश के विकास को ही बाधित कर रहे हैं।

कुछ शरारती तत्वों के उकसाने पर कम पढ़े लिखे लोग अपने पैरों पर ही कुल्हाड़ी मारने पर आमादा हो जाते हैं। वे यह नहीं जानते कि नष्ट हुई संपत्ति अपरोक्ष रूप से उन्हीं के टैक्स के रूप में दिए पैसे की थी। आखिर वे किसका नुकसान कर रहे थे।

lalit.mahalkar@gmail.com

रोजगार के स्रोत बढ़ें

आज भारत में युवाओं के लिए नौकरी की कमी दिख रही है। सरकार युवाओं का कोशल विकास कर उन्हें निजी व सरकारी क्षेत्रों में रोजगार दिलाने का प्रयास कर रही है, यह बहुत अच्छा उपाय है। लेकिन इसमें और सक्रियता लानी होगी और देखा होगा कि कोई बेरोजगार न रहे। इस दिशा में छोटे उद्योग लगाने व बंद पड़े उद्योगों को चालू करने में मदद करना भी कारगर उपाय हो सकते हैं। इसी तरह महंगाई पर नियंत्रण, भारतीय सामान की खपत के लिए विदेशों में बाजार फैलाना व चीनी वस्तुओं के भारत में बिकने से रोकने का उपाय करना भी उपयोगी सिद्ध होगा।

मो. जमील, नई दिल्ली

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