

हिन्दुस्तान

मतदाता की परिपक्वता

चुनाव में मतदाता जब वोट देते हैं, तो वे सिर्फ उम्मीदवारों को जिताते या हराते नहीं है, वे उम्मीदवारों और राजनीतिक दलों को स्पष्ट संदेश भी देते हैं। महाराष्ट्र और हरियाणा विधानसभा चुनाव के नतीजों को देखें, तो यह संदेश स्पष्ट सुना जा सकता है। पूरे चुनाव के दौरान और मतदान के बाद तक यह माना जा रहा था कि दोनों ही राज्यों में भारतीय जनता पार्टी जोरदार ढंग से सत्ता में वापसी करेगी। यहां तक कि मतदान बाद के तमाम सर्वेक्षण भी यही कह रहे थे। ऐसे नतीजों पर पहुंचना सबके लिए बहुत आसान भी था। सत्ताधारी दल के पास गिनाने के लिए पांच साल के कार्यकाल की बहुत सारी उपलब्धियां थीं। यही हर चुनाव में होता है और अंतिम नतीजे इस पर निर्भर करते हैं कि विपक्ष उसके दावों को खारिज करने में किस हद तक कामयाब हो पाता है। महाराष्ट्र और हरियाणा, दोनों ही जगह के विधानसभा चुनावों को लेकर तमाम विश्लेषकों में इस बात पर आम सहमति जैसी दिख रही थी कि इस बार विपक्ष का नैरेटिव बहुत कमजोर है। कई कारणों से विपक्ष हतोत्साहित दिख रही रहा था। हरियाणा में भूपेंद्र सिंह हुड्डा और महाराष्ट्र में शरद पवार परिवार अपनी राजनीति के कारण कम और अपने खिलाफ चल रहे मुकदमों के कारण सुर्खियों में ज्यादा दिख रहा था। इन्हीं हालात में मतदाता ने संदेश दिया है कि उसे कमजोर विपक्ष पसंद नहीं है।

महाराष्ट्र में तो खैर भाजपा और शिव सेना की सरकार पहले की तरह ही चलती रहेगी, हरियाणा में त्रिशंकु विधानसभा है, सरकार किसकी बनेगी, अभी यह भविष्यवाणी संभव नहीं, लेकिन दोनों ही राज्यों में मतदाताओं ने मजबूत विपक्ष का आधार तैयार कर दिया है। महाराष्ट्र में सत्ताधारी गठजोड़ के पास स्पष्ट बहुमत है, लेकिन संख्या बल इतना ज्यादा नहीं रह गया कि विपक्ष की आवाज दब जाए। वैसे यह भी सच है कि पिछले पांच साल के दौरान विपक्ष की भूमिका ज्यादा अच्छी तरह से भाजपा की सहयोगी शिव सेना ने ही निभाई, कांग्रेस और राष्ट्रवादी कांग्रेस के गठजोड़ ने नहीं। हरियाणा में विपक्ष इस दौरान अंदरूनी झगड़ों और घटकवाद में ही उलझा दिखाई दिया। दिलचस्प यही है कि इन हालात के बाद भी जनता ने विपक्ष को मजबूत बनाने का रास्ता चुना। महाराष्ट्र में तो खैर सत्ता नहीं बदली और हरियाणा में भी भाजपा सबसे बड़ी पार्टी बनकर उभरी है, मगर इसका एक अर्थ यह भी है कि मतदाताओं में बदलाव की कोई बड़ी इच्छा नहीं थी, पर उसने विपक्ष को एक बड़ी भूमिका जरूर सौंप दी है। अब यह विपक्ष पर है कि वह जनता के इस विश्वास को किस तरफ ले जाता है।

दोनों ही राज्यों में भाजपा ने प्रचार का मुख्य मुद्दा कश्मीर और अनुच्छेद 370 को बनाया। ये दोनों ही ऐसे मुद्दे हैं, जिन पर देश भर में आम सहमति है और यह समय-समय पर दिखी भी है। राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर इसे केंद्र सरकार को बहुत बड़ी उपलब्धि भी कहा जा सकता है। दोनों ही राज्यों के नतीजों ने बता दिया है कि चुनावी मुद्दों के रूप में ऐसी उपलब्धियों के इस्तेमाल की एक सीमा है। राज्य के चुनाव में मतदाता के लिए ये शायद उतने बड़े मुद्दे नहीं हैं। स्थानीय समस्याओं, मंदी और बेरोजगारी ऐसे मौकों पर उनके फैसलों को ज्यादा प्रभावित करते हैं। मतदाताओं ने राजनीतिक दलों को सिर्फ संदेश ही नहीं दिया, अपनी राजनीतिक परिपक्वता का परिचय भी दे दिया है।

विदेशी अखबार से

कनाडा में नई चुनौती

अपने विजयी भाषण में प्रधानमंत्री जस्टिन टूडो ने उन दो प्रांतों के लिए एक प्रतिज्ञा की है, जहां उनके नेतृत्व वाली अल्पमत सरकार में अब एक भी निर्वाचित लिबरल सांसद नहीं है। उन्होंने घोषणा की है, ‘ अल्बर्टा और सस्केचेवान में कनाडाई लोगों को पता है कि वे हमारे महान देश का एक अनिवार्य हिस्सा हैं। मैंने आपकी हताशा सुनी है और मैं आपका समर्थन करना चाहता हूं। आइए, हम सभी अपने देश को एक साथ लाने के लिए कड़ी मेहनत करें।’ यह सुनकर सस्केचेवान के प्रमुख स्कॉट मो ने तो टूडो के जारिए संदेश तक भिजवान दिया है। उन्होंने कहा है कि दो परिचित प्रांतों को कनाडा सरकार के साथ नया समझौता करना चाहिए। सस्केचेवान और अल्बर्टा को विकसित करने के लिए वैश्विक बाजार को होने वाले निर्यात को बढ़ावा देना होगा और इसके लिए पाइपलाइन का विरोध करने वाली क्यूबेक जैसी सरकारों का समर्थन और अल्बर्टा जैसी पाइपलाइन समर्थक सरकारों का विरोध किया था। यदि टूडो वास्तव में इन दोनों प्रांतों का भला चाहते हैं, तो उन्हें लॉबित पाइपलाइन परियोजना को फिर चालू करने के लिए हर्ससंभव प्रयास करने होंगे। टूडो इस परियोजना पर 4.5 अरब डॉलर खर्च कर चुके हैं, पर यह योजना सिरे नहीं चढ़ रही है। टूडो को कनाडा की पाइपलाइन क्षमता बढ़ाने की भी जरूरत है। देश के लैंड लॉकड इलाकों से तेल और गैस का ज्यादा दोहन करने और उसे विश्व बाजार में बेचने की जरूरत है। चूंकि अभी संसाधनों का अभाव है, इसलिए तेल काफी रियायती दर पर बेचना पड़ रहा है, इससे कनाडा की अर्थव्यवस्था को हर वर्ष अरबों डॉलर का नुकसान हो रहा है। हालांकि एक आशंका है कि इसमें से कोई काम नहीं होगा। टूडो को तेल विरोधी, पाइपलाइन विरोधी समूहों क्यूबेकियंस और ग्रीन पार्टी का समर्थन लेना पड़ेगा, क्योंकि उन्हें अपनी अल्पमत सरकार चलानी है। इस मामले में टूडो के एक ही सहयोगी हैं, कंजर्वेटिव पार्टी के नेता एंड्रयू चीयर।

देस्टे सन, कनाडा

79 साल पहले

हिन्दुस्तान

साहित्य की जरूरत

राजस्थान हिन्दी साहित्य सम्मेलन के प्रथम अधिवेशन के सभापति श्री मुनि जिनिबजयी के अस्वस्थ हो जाने से श्री हरिभाऊ जी उसके स्थानापन्न सभापति बनाये गये। इस हैसियत से उदयपुर में ७ अक्टूबर को दिये गये उनके भाषण के कुछ अंश दिये जाते हैं। जब हम यह सोचने लगते हैं कि राजस्थान में साहित्यिक संगठन कैसे किया जाये और उसके द्वारा सेवा किस तरह की जाये, तो इतने प्रश्न उठ खड़े होते हैं:-
(१) राजस्थान का दायरा क्या समझा जाये ?
(२) (अ) प्राचीन जीवनोपयोगी साहित्य के शोधन, संग्रह, सम्पादन व प्रकाशन तथा (ब) नवीन साहित्य के निर्माण, प्रकाशन और प्रचार की क्या व्यवस्था की जाये ?
(३) साहित्य-शोधन या साहित्य-निर्माण में क्या दृष्टिकोण या आदर्श सामने रखखा जाये ?
(४) सम्मेलन का कार्यक्षेत्र साहित्य-निर्माण तक ही परिमित रहे या हिन्दी-भाषा तथा नागरी लिपि के प्रचार का भी काम हाथ में लिया जाये ?
(५) राजस्थानी पत्रकारों की स्थिति कैसे ठीक हो (६) लेखकों तथा साहित्यिकों के निर्वह का प्रश्न कैसे हल किया जाये ?
‘ राजस्थान’ शब्द से वैसे ‘ राजपूताना ’ का आशय लिया जाता है। कुछ वर्षों से मध्य भारत-राजपूताना के सम्मिलित प्रान्त को ‘ राजस्थान ’ कहा और लिखा जाने लगा है।

13 अक्टूबर, 1940 को प्रकाशित

जनादेश से झलकती नाराजगी

लोकप्रिय नेता के तौर पर नरेंद्र मोदी अब भी सब पर भारी हैं, मगर मतदाता किसी को भी एकतरफा बढ़त देने के मूड में नहीं है।

लोकसभा-विधानसभा के तमाम उप-चुनावों के साथ हरियाणा और महाराष्ट्र के चुनावी नतीजे भारतीय जनता पार्टी के लिए किसी चेतावनी से कम नहीं हैं। हरियाणा में जहां वह पूर्ण बहुमत से दूर रह गई, वहीं महाराष्ट्र में भी उसे अपनी कई सीटें गंवानी पड़ी हैं। उसके खिलाफ ये नतीजे तब आए हैं, जब दोनों राज्यों में विपक्ष की हालत बहुत खराब थी। महाराष्ट्र में कांग्रेस और राष्ट्रवादी कांग्रेस

पार्टी (एनसीपी) के कई विधायकों ने अंतिम दिनों में भाजपा का दामन थाम लिया था, तो हरियाणा में अंदरूनी गुटबाजी कांग्रेस पर भारी थी। फिर भी जनता ने यदि विपक्ष को वोट दिया है, तो साफ है कि वह भाजपा से नाराज है।

यह नाराजगी आखिर क्यों है? इसकी बड़ी वजह देश की बिगड़ती आर्थिक सेहत है। इस कारण हर जगह रोजगार का संकट बढ़ा है। हरियाणा का आलम यह है

कि वहां सर्वाधिक 24 फीसदी बेरोजगारी है। यह राज्य कृषि-प्रधान तो हैही, कृषि-आधारित उद्योग यहां की अर्थव्यवस्था को मजबूती देते रहे हैं। मगर पिछले कुछ महीनों से ग्रामीण संकट के साथ-साथ औद्योगिक संकट भी यहां खूब बढ़ा है। किसानों को फसलों की उचित कीमत नहीं मिल रही है, जबकि अंटोमोबाइल कंपनियों में सुस्ती छाई हुई है। यही हालत महाराष्ट्र की है। आर्थिक संकट यहां की कंपनियों को खासा प्रभावित कर रहा है। यहां किसानों की आत्महत्या-दर में भी कमी नहीं आई है, और इस साल सूखा व बाढ़, दोनों ने किसानों की मुश्किलें बढ़ाई हैं। सत्तारूढ़ दल ग्रामीण और उद्योग के इस संकट को समझने में नाकाम दिख रहा है।

जातिगत समीकरण ने भी इन राज्यों के नतीजे प्रभावित किए हैं। भाजपा ने दोनों राज्यों में अपना पुराना दांव खेला। इसके तहत प्रमुख जाति को बाहर रखकर गैर-प्रमुख जातियों को तवज्जो दी गई, और उनके साथ गठबंधन

 चित्रांकन : डी. श्रीनिवास

नशतर

दौलत की देवी के वाहन की वंदना

आदमी को फर्क नहीं पड़ता कि वह धन के लिए किसी उल्लू की शरण में जाता है या गधे की।

हे उल्लूक देव, मैं इस धरती का साधारण सा प्राणी आज अपनी तमाम पवित्रताओं और कथित तौर पर संचित ज्ञान को अंजुरी में लिए तुम्हारी कृपा का आकांक्षी हूं। इस कृपा को पाने की प्रार्थना में मुझे कोई हिचकिचाहट नहीं है। कलयुग में उल्लूओं का शरणगत होना ही हम मनुष्यों का प्रारम्भ है। यदि किसी को प्राईनस संप्रेशित करने से अपना उल्लू सीधा होता हो, तो वह प्रार्थना ही परम धर्म है। आदमी को इससे फर्क नहीं पड़ता कि वह धन प्राप्ति के लिए किसी उल्लू की शरण में जाता है या किसी गधे की।

यह बात तो मैंने कहने के लिए कह दी, हे परम प्राणी, गधों की कहां औकात कि वे किसी को धन का वरदान दे सकें ? यह कुव्वत तो माता लक्ष्मी ने आपको ही प्रदान की है। आप सर्वशक्तिमान हैं क्योंकि साक्षात् उल्लू हैं। उल्लू होकर उल्लू की तरह जीने में और आदमी होकर उल्लू की तरह जीने में बहुत अंतर है। आप सेलिब्रिटी हैं। जिधर जाते

साइबर संसार

खाताधारकों के हित

भारत में हर जमाकर्ता के लिए एक लाख रुपये के इश्योरेंस का नियम 1993 में, यानी करीब 25 साल पहले लाह हुआ था। उसके बाद से इसमें बदलाव नहीं हुआ है, जबकि इकोनॉमी कई गुना बड़ी हो चुकी है और महंगाई दर के कारण इस बीच कैश की वैल्यू कम होती गई है। अगर एक लाख रुपये के डिपॉजिट इश्योरेंस को सिर्फ महंगाई दर से जोड़ा गया होता, तो यह रकम आज 15 लाख रुपये से अधिक होती। इसके साथ अगर इस रकम को जीडीपी मल्टीपल से जोड़ा जाता, तो रकम एक करोड़ रुपये के करीब पहुंच जाती और तब इस मामले में हम दुनिया के सर्वश्रेष्ठ देशों में शामिल हो जाते। चीन हर खाते पर 81,000 डॉलर के डिपॉजिट को गारंटी देता है, यहां तक कि दिवाली के हो चुका है।

छोट देश यूनान भी हर डिपॉजिटर को एक लाख यूरो की गारंटी देता है। दूसरी तरफ, पांच लाख करोड़ डॉलर की तरफ बढ़ रही भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था अपने डिपॉजिटर को सिर्फ एक लाख रुपये की गारंटी देती है। यह शर्मनाक है। फिर आप बगैर सोचे-समझे जमाकर्ताओं को छह महीने तक अधिकतम 1,000 रुपये रोज निकालने का परवाना सुना देते हैं, जिसका असर संजय गुलाटी, फ़तोमल पंजाबी और योगिता बिजलानी जैसों की मौत के रूप में सामने आता है।

द क्विंट में **राघव बहल**

मेल बॉक्स

अभिजीत से उम्मीदें

अर्थशास्त्र के लिए इस साल के नोबेल पुरस्कार विजेता, भारतीय मूल के अभिजीत बनर्जी की प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी से मुलाकात और उनके साथ भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था सहित तमाम मसलों पर हुई लंबी चर्चा के गहरे निहितार्थ हैं। अभिजीत वाम विचारधारा से प्रभावित माने जाते हैं।

और पिछले लोकसभा चुनाव में कांग्रेस के घोषणात्रय में जिस ‘न्याय’ योजना का जिक्र था, उसका संबंध भी उन्हीं से है। इस मुलाकात के बाद न सिर्फ अभिजीत ने भारतीय प्रधानमंत्री के लिए काफी कुछ सकारात्मक कहा, बल्कि प्रधानमंत्री ने भी उनकी उपलब्धियों पर गर्व जताते हुए उन्हें विपक्ष के लिए शुभकांक्षएं दीं। अभिजीत बनर्जी से अब यही अपेक्षा है कि वह भारत की आर्थिक तरक्की के लिए कुछ ठोस उपाय लेकर सामने आएँ।

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त्योहारी ऑफर का लालच

त्योहार को खास बनाने के लिए आमतौर पर लोग अपनी हैसियत के मुताबिक कुछ न कुछ खरीदने की कोशिश करते हैं। दिवाली के मौके पर भी तमाम कंपनियों ने बाजार में ऑफ़रों की झड़ी लगा रखी है। मगर ऐसे मौकों पर परोसी जाने वाली योजनाओं के अपने नफ़ा-नुक़सान भी हैं। ऐसे में, कोई बड़ी ख़रीदारी करने से पहले किसी भी ऑफ़र की पूरी पड़ताल जरूर करें। बिज्ञापन पर आंखें मूँकर भरोसा करना नुक़सानदेह हो सकता है। अक्सर

यही देखा जाता है कि कंपनियां अपने विज्ञापनों में दावे तो बड़े-बड़े करती हैं, लेकिन उसकी हकीकत कुछ और होती है। सिर्फ़ हट्ट के लालच में आकर कोई सामान खरीदने से

आपकी जेब पर भी डाका पड़ सकता है। त्योहार को यादगार जरूर बनाएं, पर धोखा और फरेब में फंसे बिना।

सुभाष बुद्धवन वाला, खाचरौद

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भारत करे पहल

गुरुवार को प्रकाशित संपादकीय ‘गुटनिरेपेक्षा और हम’ पढ़ा। एक समय था, जब गुटनिरेपेक्ष आंदोलन को तीसरा गुट कहा जाता था, मगर सोवियत संघ के विघटन के साथ ही वैश्विक राजनीति बदल गई और यह आंदोलन अप्रासंगिक हो गया। वक्त की करवट देखिए, 2019 के

हिन्दुस्तान

आरती आर जेरथ

वरिष्ठ पत्रकार



बनाया गया। इसी ‘कास्ट-इंजीनियरिंग’ के तहत महाराष्ट्र में गैर-मराठा (देवेंद्र फडणवीस के रूप में ब्राह्मण) और हरियाणा में गैर-जाट (मनोहर लाल खट्टर के रूप में पंजाबी) को मुख्यमंत्री बनाया गया था। चुनावी नतीजे बता रहे हैं कि हरियाणा के जाट क्षेत्रों में भाजपा को धक्का लगा है, जबकि महाराष्ट्र के ‘शुगर-बेल्ट’ (जहां चीनी मिलें ज्यादा हैं और चीनी का ज्यादा उत्पादन होता है) में एनसीपी ने अच्छी बढ़त हासिल की है।

कांग्रेस समय रहते इसे भांप गई थी। यही वजह है कि हरियाणा में उसने अशोक तंवर को बाहर का रास्ता दिखाया और भूपेंद्र सिंह हुड्डा पर फिर से भरोसा किया। इससे जाट वोट कांग्रेस के पक्ष में गोलबंद हुए। हालांकि पार्टी में नए जाट नेता को न उभार पाने का नुक़सान कांग्रेस को उठाना पड़ा है। यहां जाटों का वोट जननायक जनता पार्टी (जेजेपी) के खाले में भी खूब गया है और दुर्घुंत चौटाला नए जाट नेता के रूप में उभरे हैं। अगर जेजेपी चुनावी दौड़ में नहीं होती, तो संभव है कि कांग्रेस यहां अपने दम पर सत्ता में होती।

साफ़ है, भाजपा को अब चेतना होगा। उसे न सिर्फ़ आर्थिक मंदी से पार पाना होगा, बल्कि लोगों को राहत पहुंचाने वाले कदम भी उठाने पड़ेंगे। ग्रामीण संकट (खासतौर से खेती-बाड़ी का संकट) का तोड़ भी उसे निकालना होगा। अगर वह ऐसा नहीं कर सकी, तो वोटर उससे छिटकने लगेंगे। हालांकि बीते कुछ हफ़्तों में केंद्र सरकार ने इस दिशा में कई प्रयास किए हैं, लेकिन

नजरिया

धन के पर्व पर अनिश्चितता में उलझा बाजार

धनतेरस के अवसर पर आर्थिक मंदी, करंसी और सोने के समीकरणों का विश्लेषण :

आलोक पुराणिक
निवेश विशेषज्ञ

धनतेरस धन की त्रयोदशी, इस मौके पर धन का हिसाब-किताब करने का चलन है और इस दिन सोना या चांदी खरीदना शुभ माना जाता है। सोने के भाव प्रति दश ग्राम इन दिनों 39,000 रुपये चल रहे हैं, कुछ वक्त पहले 40,000 प्रति दश ग्राम का आंकड़ा सोना पार कर चुका है। सोने की चमक हाल के वक्त में बहुत तेज रही है। 23 अक्टूबर, 2019 के आंकड़ों का हिसाब देखें, तो साफ होता है कि एक साल में सोने के भाव करीब 21 प्रतिशत बढ़े हैं। 21 प्रतिशत की बढ़ोतरी बहुत शानदार होती है। इसके मुकाबले मुंबई शेयर बाजार का सूचकांक सेंसेक्स 23 अक्टूबर, 2019 के आंकड़ों के हिसाब से, एक साल में करीब 17 प्रतिशत की बढ़ोतरी दिखा रहा था। सोना सेंसेक्स के मुकाबले ज्यादा चमकदार दिखे, ऐसा कम होता है। तीन साल का आंकड़ा देखें, तो सोने के भाव सालाना करीब आठ प्रतिशत बढ़े हैं, जबकि सेंसेक्स ने तीन बरसों में सालाना करीब 13 प्रतिशत की बढ़ोतरी दिखाई है। पांच साल के आंकड़ों की तुलना करें, तो सोने ने सालाना करीब पांच प्रतिशत की बढ़ोतरी दिखाई है, जबकि सेंसेक्स ने पांच सालों में सालाना करीब नौ प्रतिशत की बढ़ोतरी दिखाई है।

सोने में जो चमक दिख रही है, उसके पीछे कहीं न कहीं अनिश्चितता है। अनिश्चितता की मुद्रा सोना है-आर्थिक जगत में यह कहावत चलती है। ‘ट्रेड वार’ के दौरान किसी करंसी में कमजोरी आने की आशंका होती है, तो किसी करंसी में मजबूती आने की उम्मीद। पर सोना ऐसी चीज है, जिसमें तेज गिरावट आने की आशंका आमतौर पर नहीं होती है। अनिश्चितता में सोने की मांग बढ़ जाती है। अमेरिका और चीन के ट्रेड वार में मार-धाड़ कुछ कम तो हुई है, पर इसके खत्म होने की सूरत दिखाई नहीं दे रही है। इसलिए संभव है कि आगामी महीनों में सोना फिर तेजी का रुख दिखा दे। सीरिया से जुड़े अमेरिका और रूस के टकराव यदि बढ़ जाए, तो फिर दुनिया में एक अनिश्चितता का माहौल बन जाएगा। अनिश्चितता में तमाम केंद्रीय बैंक सोने का भंडार बढ़ाने लगते हैं। जब ग्लोबल सोना बाजार में केंद्रीय बैंक सोना खरीदने जाते हैं, तो भाव तेजी से ऊपर जाते हैं। वे ग्राम, तोले या किलो में नहीं, बल्कि टनों में खरीदते हैं।

अमेरिका और चीन के बीच जारी व्यापार युद्ध और वैश्विक अर्थव्यवस्था की रस्तार सुस्त पड़ने के बीच दुनिया भर के केंद्रीय बैंकों ने सोने की खरीदारी बढ़ा दी

फिलहाल वे मतदाताओं को उम्मीदों पर खरे उतरते नहीं दिख रहे। ऐसे वक्त में, जब झारखंड और दिल्ली जैसे राज्यों में विधानसभा चुनाव बहुत नजदीक हों, भाजपा के लिए संभलना जरूरी है। विशेषकर दिल्ली में, क्योंकि यहां उसका मुकाबला आम आदमी पार्टी जैसे मजबूत दल से होने वाला है।

रही बात विपक्ष की, तो इन नतीजों में उसके लिए भी संदेश छिपे हैं। उसे समझना होगा कि स्थानीय मुद्दों पर चुनाव लड़कर ही वह भाजपा को चुनौती दे सकता है। कथित रोफेल घोटला या प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी पर निजी हमलों से विपक्षी दलों के हित नहीं संभगे। दिल्ली के मुख्यमंत्री अरविंद केजरीवाल संभवतः इस मनोविज्ञान को जान गए हैं, इसलिए पिछले कुछ महीनों से वह प्रधानमंत्री मोदी पर सीधा निशाना नहीं लगा रहे। अगर वह दिल्ली के स्थानीय मुद्दों की ही बातें करते हैं। कांग्रेस सहित तमाम विपक्षी दलों को भी यही रणनीति अपनानी चाहिए। इसका लाभ महाराष्ट्र विधानसभा चुनाव में दिखा भी है, जहां कांग्रेस-एनसीपी गठबंधन इसलिए मजबूती से उभरा है, क्योंकि एनसीपी प्रमुख शरद पवार ने मतदाताओं से अपना आखिरी चुनाव लड़ने की भावुक अपील की और मराठा गैरजात का आह्वान किया। नतीजतन, अब गठबंधन में एनसीपी की वह हैसियत हो गई है, जो कभी कांग्रेस की हुआ करती थी।

चुनावी नतीजों का एक बड़ा संदेश यह है कि लोग विपक्ष की अहमियत भूले नहीं हैं। बेशक अब भी लोकप्रिय नेता के तौर पर नरेंद्र मोदी सब पर भारी हैं, लेकिन मतदाता यह जानता है कि सभी चुनावों में एकतरफा जीत किसी भी दल को अहंकारी बना सकता है। ऐसे में, भाजपा को यह समझना होगा कि वह ‘विपक्ष-मुक्त भारत’ की न सोचे। यहां विपक्ष का मतलब सिर्फ कांग्रेस नहीं है। छोटे-बड़े सभी दल इस दायरे में आते हैं। लोग यह भी मानने लगेंगे हैं कि यदि विपक्ष उनकी आवाज नहीं बनेगा, तो वे खुद विपक्षी तेवर अपनाएंगे और सत्तारूढ़ दल के खिलाफ मतदान करेंगे। इससे यह धारणा भी खंडित हुई है कि देश विपक्ष-विहीन है और सभी जगह सिर्फ भाजपा छाई हुई है। विपक्ष के इन छोटे-छोटे उभारों का दिखना भारतीय लोकतंत्र के लिए सुखद माना जाएगा।

(ये लेखिका के अपने विचार हैं)

नजरिया

धन के पर्व पर अनिश्चितता में उलझा बाजार

धनतेरस के अवसर पर आर्थिक मंदी, करंसी और सोने के समीकरणों का विश्लेषण :

आलोक पुराणिक
निवेश विशेषज्ञ

धनतेरस धन की त्रयोदशी, इस मौके पर धन का हिसाब-किताब करने का चलन है और इस दिन सोना या चांदी खरीदना शुभ माना जाता है। सोने के भाव प्रति दश ग्राम इन दिनों 39,000 रुपये चल रहे हैं, कुछ वक्त पहले 40,000 प्रति दश ग्राम का आंकड़ा सोना पार कर चुका है। सोने की चमक हाल के वक्त में बहुत तेज रही है। 23 अक्टूबर, 2019 के आंकड़ों का हिसाब देखें, तो साफ होता है कि एक साल में सोने के भाव करीब 21 प्रतिशत बढ़े हैं। 21 प्रतिशत की बढ़ोतरी बहुत शानदार होती है। इसके मुकाबले मुंबई शेयर बाजार का सूचकांक सेंसेक्स 23 अक्टूबर, 2019 के आंकड़ों के हिसाब से, एक साल में करीब 17 प्रतिशत की बढ़ोतरी दिखा रहा था। सोना सेंसेक्स के मुकाबले ज्यादा चमकदार दिखे, ऐसा कम होता है। तीन साल का आंकड़ा देखें, तो सोने के भाव सालाना करीब आठ प्रतिशत बढ़े हैं, जबकि सेंसेक्स ने तीन बरसों में सालाना करीब 13 प्रतिशत की बढ़ोतरी दिखाई है। पांच साल के आंकड़ों की तुलना करें, तो सोने ने सालाना करीब पांच प्रतिशत की बढ़ोतरी दिखाई है, जबकि सेंसेक्स ने पांच सालों में सालाना करीब नौ प्रतिशत की बढ़ोतरी दिखाई है।

सोने में जो चमक दिख रही है, उसके पीछे कहीं न कहीं अनिश्चितता है। अनिश्चितता की मुद्रा सोना है-आर्थिक जगत में यह कहावत चलती है। ‘ट्रेड वार’ के दौरान किसी करंसी में कमजोरी आने की आशंका होती है, तो किसी करंसी में मजबूती आने की उम्मीद। पर सोना ऐसी चीज है, जिसमें तेज गिरावट आने की आशंका आमतौर पर नहीं होती है। अनिश्चितता में सोने की मांग बढ़ जाती है। अमेरिका और चीन के ट्रेड वार में मार-धाड़ कुछ कम तो हुई है, पर इसके खत्म होने की सूरत दिखाई नहीं दे रही है। इसलिए संभव है कि आगामी महीनों में सोना फिर तेजी का रुख दिखा दे। सीरिया से जुड़े अमेरिका और रूस के टकराव यदि बढ़ जाए, तो फिर दुनिया में एक अनिश्चितता का माहौल बन जाएगा। अनिश्चितता में तमाम केंद्रीय बैंक सोने का भंडार बढ़ाने लगते हैं। जब ग्लोबल सोना बाजार में केंद्रीय बैंक सोना खरीदने जाते हैं, तो भाव तेजी से ऊपर जाते हैं। वे ग्राम, तोले या किलो में नहीं, बल्कि टनों में खरीदते हैं।

अमेरिका और चीन के बीच जारी व्यापार युद्ध और वैश्विक अर्थव्यवस्था की रस्तार सुस्त पड़ने के बीच दुनिया भर के केंद्रीय बैंकों ने सोने की खरीदारी बढ़ा दी

सोना में तेज गिरावट आने की आशंका आमतौर पर नहीं होती है, इसलिए अनिश्चितता में सोने की मांग बढ़ जाती है।

में ग्लोबल करंसी है। जितनी ज्यादा ग्लोबल करंसी जिस केंद्रीय बैंक के पास होती है, उसकी वित्तीय क्षमता उतनी ही ज्यादा मजबूत आंकी जाती है। यही वजह है कि भारत समेत तमाम देशों के केंद्रीय बैंक लगातार सोने की खरीद में व्यस्त हैं। वैश्विक अर्थव्यवस्था में सुस्ती की वजह से तमाम केंद्रीय बैंक ज्यादा सोना खरीदते हैं, उन्हें लगता है कि सोने के भाव बढ़ेंगे, तो उनकी भंडार-क्षमता भी मजबूत होगी। वैश्विक मंदी में तमाम कारोबार, तमाम अर्थव्यवस्थाएं भले ही सुस्त हो जाएं, पर सोने में सुस्ती नहीं आती है, बल्कि मंदी वाली अर्थव्यवस्थाओं में सोना तेजी से दौड़ता है। इस बात का उदाहरण भारत में दिया जा सकता है। इस धनतेरस पर भी करीब 40,000 प्रति दश ग्राम के आसपास टटल रहे सोने को खरीदने के लिए भारतवासी कतार लगाएंगे, इस बात की पूरी उम्मीद की जा सकती है।

(ये लेखक के अपने विचार हैं)

चुकी हैं। ऐसे में, भारत की यह जिम्मेदारी बनती है कि इस आंदोलन को एक नई दिशा और आयाम दे।

गुटनिरेपेक्ष आंदोलन को मजबूत करने से वैश्विक राजनीति में भारत की साख और धमक बढ़ेगी।

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धनतेरस का संदेश

दीपावली से दो दिन पहले मनाया जाने वाला धनतेरस आजकल धन से जुड़ा त्योहार बनकर रह गया है। इस दिन लोग सोना, चांदी, पीतल, गाड़ी, इलेक्ट्रॉनिक सामान आदि खरीदते हैं, जबकि पुराणों में लिखा है

कि इस दिन समुद्र मंथन में धन्वंतरि की उत्पत्ति हुई थी और वह अमृत कलश लिए हुए था। उन्होंने मनुष्य को जल की कला सिखाई कि मनुष्य किस प्रकार लंबा जीवन जी सकता है। उनके संदेश का मूल यही है कि हम जब तक स्वस्थ रहेंगे, तभी तक धरती पर मिलने वाले तमाम पदार्थों का उपयोग कर सकेंगे। स्वस्थ देह रहने पर ही स्वस्थ चित्त और स्वस्थ बुद्धि संभव है। मगर आज दिक्कत यह है कि पैसों के पीछे आदमी इतना भाग रहा है कि अपनी सेहत को नजरंदाज कर रहा है।

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साधारण डाक से पत्र भेजने के अलावा आप ईमेल से भी अपनी राय भेज सकते हैं। ईमेल से ‘आपकी राय’ भेजने के लिए हमारा पता है- mailbox@livehindustan.com

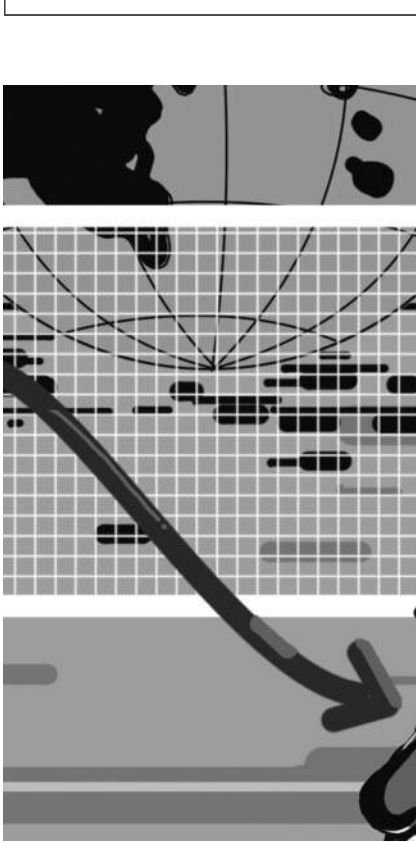
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वर्ष 12 अंक 214

दूरसंचार को एक और झटका

सर्वोच्च न्यायालय ने भारती एयरटेल और वोडाफोन आइडिया समेत देश की शीर्ष दूरसंचार कंपनियों तथा सरकार के बीच लंबे समय से चले आ रहे विवाद पर एक व्यवस्था दी है।

इसका संबंध कंपनियों द्वारा चुकाए जाने वाले शुल्क की प्रकृति से है। अदालत ने सरकार के पक्ष में निर्णय देते हुए कहा है।



अजय मोहंती

वैश्विक निवेशकों से बातचीत का हासिल

यदि वृद्धि और सुधार के एजेंडे पर ध्यान दिया जाए तो भारत के पास यह अवसर है कि वह चीन की धीमी पड़ती आर्थिक गतिविधियों का लाभ ले सके। विस्तार से जानकारी प्रदान कर रहे हैं आकाश प्रकाश

पिछले दिनों मुझे अमेरिका में एक सप्ताह बिताने का अवसर मिला। वहां मैंने सम्मेलनों में हिस्सा लिया और वैश्विक फंड आवंटकों से मुलाकात की। निवेशकों से मुलाकात के लिए यह समय दिलचस्प था। भारत ने हाल ही में कर दरों में कटौती की थी और न्यूयॉर्क में संयुक्त राष्ट्र महासभा का सत्र आरंभ था। इस यात्रा का हासिल इस प्रकार रहा।

1. भारत को लेकर गहरी रुचि देखने को मिली और लोग यहां के हालात को समझना चाहते थे। ज्यादातर लोग कर कटौती से चकित थे क्योंकि उन्हें सरकार से ऐसी उम्मीद नहीं थी। यह सवाल भी उठा कि कॉर्पोरेशन कर दर में कटौती क्यों की गई, मांग बढ़ाने के अन्य उपाय क्यों नहीं अपनाए गए। ज्यादातर लोगों की जिज्ञासा थी कि मध्य वर्ग के लिए कर कटौती या कुछ वस्तुओं और सेवाओं पर का कटौती क्यों नहीं की गई? भारत को बड़ी और उच्च मुनाफा कमाने वाली बहुराष्ट्रीय कंपनियों के अनुकूल नहीं माना जाता जबकि वही इस कटौती से लाभान्वित हुईं। कुछ लोगों ने पूछा कि कंपनियां कर कटौती का प्रयोग कर नकदी प्रवाह कैसे बढ़ाएंगी? अमेरिका में ज्यादा

कानाफूसी

फिल्मी रास्ता

मध्य प्रदेश के अशोक नगर जिले के एक छोटे से कस्बे चंदेरी (साड़ियों के लिए मशहूर) में पर्यटकों की बढ़ती तादाद से उत्साहित मध्य प्रदेश सरकार नई फिल्म नीति लागू करने की योजना बना रही है ताकि इस क्षेत्र में पर्यटन को बढ़ावा दिया जा सके। यह विचार तब आया जब बॉलीवुड फिल्म स्त्री की कहानी के चंदेरी में केंद्रित होने के बाद यहां आने वाले पर्यटकों की तादाद 50,000 का आंकड़ा पार कर गई। फिल्म स्त्री काफ़ी हिट हुई थी और कम बजट में बनी इस फिल्म ने काफ़ी कमाई भी की थी। अधिकारियों का मानना है कि अगर एक फिल्म से क्षेत्र विशेष के पर्यटकों की संख्या इतनी बढ़ सकती है तो इसे बढ़ावा देना आवश्यक है। अब सरकार ने एक समन्वयक की नियुक्ति की योजना बनाई है जो प्रदेश में शूटिंग के लिए आने वाली फिल्म यूनिट का ध्यान रखेगा और उन्हें फिल्मांकन के लिए जगहों के सुझाव भी देगा।

दुविधा निवारक थिंक टैंक

स्वतंत्रता आंदोलन में विनायक दामोदर सावरकर की भूमिका, अनुच्छेद 370 और क्षेत्रीय व्यापक आर्थिक समझौता आदि कुछ ऐसे मुद्दे हैं जिन पर कांग्रेस स्वयं की दुविधा में पा रही है। ऐसे में पार्टी की राष्ट्रीय अध्यक्ष सोनिया गांधी ने इन विषयों पर आंतरिक चर्चा के लिए एक थिंक टैंक का गठन किया है। इस 17 सदस्यीय थिंक टैंक की पहली बैठक शुक्रवार को होने जा रही है। इस दौरान महाराष्ट्र और हरियाणा विधानसभा चुनाव के परिणामों पर भी चर्चा होगी। सोनिया और उनके पुत्र राहुल गांधी के अलावा इस थिंक टैंक में शामिल अन्य नेताओं में मनमोहन सिंह,, ए के एंटनी, गुलाम नबी आजाद, अहमद पटेल, जयराम रमेश, कपिल सिब्बल, आनंद शर्मा, राजीव गौड़ा, रणदीप सुरजेवाला, केसी वेणुगोपाल, अधीर रंजन चौधरी, राजीव साठव और सुष्मिता देव भी शामिल हैं। कांग्रेस महासचिव प्रियंका गांधी इस थिंक टैंक में शामिल नहीं हैं।



शामिल किया जाना चाहिए। यह अतिरिक्त बकाया करीब 23,000 करोड़ रुपये है। सरकार ब्याज, जुर्माना और जुमाने पर ब्याज की मांग भी कर रही है। यह राशि कुल मिलाकर 92,000 करोड़ रुपये हो जाती है। सरकार इस निर्णय से प्रसन्न होगी और राहत महसूस कर रही होगी क्योंकि अतिरिक्त राशि की मदद से उसे अपनी संकट वित्तीय स्थिति को संभालने में मदद मिलेगी। दरअसल इसमें से कुछ राशि का इस्तेमाल वोडाफोन आइडिया और एयरटेल की सरकारी प्रतिस्पर्धियों बीएसएनएल-एमटीएनएल की स्थिति सुधारने में भी किया जा सकता है।

दूसरी तरह से देखें तो यदि सरकार न्यायालय द्वारा दिए गए विकल्प को अपनाती

स्मॉल कैप 40 फीसदी। बाजार के बड़े हिस्से को फिलहाल निवेश योग्य नहीं माना जा रहा। चुनिंदा शेयरों के मूल्य को क्षति पहुंची है। कई शेयर खरीद न होने के कारण नुकसान में हैं। यदि वैश्विक आवंटकों को यह यकीन दिलाया जा सका कि वे शीर्ष 50 कंपनियों से परे निवेश करें तो भारतीय बाजार का मूल्य ठीकठाक है। उस स्थिति में काफी धन आ सकता है।

5. देश के कारोबारी प्रशासन को लेकर निराशा का माहौल था। कई लोग प्रवर्तकों की धोखाधड़ी और बैलेंस शीट की अनियमितताओं को लेकर स्तब्ध थे। वित्तीय सेवा क्षेत्र के कई खुलासे चिंतित करने वाले हैं। आखिर अंकेक्षक, रेटिंग एजेंसियां और नियामक क्या कर रहे थे? ऐसे खुलासे सामने आते रहे तो दिक्कत बढ़ेगी। शेयरों को गिरवी रखने का पैमाना देखकर निवेश चकित थे। कई लोगों ने कहा कि इस संचालन स्तर के साथ भारत महंगे उभरते बाजारों में शामिल नहीं हो सकता।

6. कई आवंटक इस बात से परिचित थे कि भारत एक किस्म की सफाई प्रक्रिया से गुजर रहा है। कई कमजोर कंपनियां और प्रवर्तक समूहों को ढहने दिया जा रहा है। अधिकांश ने माना कि ऐसी सफाई शुरुआत में वृद्धि को धीमा करती है। बहरहाल, आगे चलकर वृद्धि में सुधार होता है और अर्थव्यवस्था मजबूत होती है। अधिकांश ने माना कि बीते चार वर्ष में भारत कई आर्थिक झटके झेल चुका है। पहले नोटबंदी, फिर वस्तु एवं सेवा कर और आखिरकार एनबीएफसी संकट। अर्थव्यवस्था के पास सुधारने का अवसर ही नहीं था। आने वाले वर्षों में जरूर हालात सामान्य हो सकते हैं।

7. अधिकांश निवेशक एनबीएफसी संकट की तीव्रता से चकित थे। यह भारत के लिए लीमन ब्रदर्स का ही एक छोटा रूप था। इस संकट ने इस क्षेत्र के अधिकांश थोक कारोबारियों के कारोबारी मॉडल को ध्वस्त कर दिया। अर्थव्यवस्था को इसकी भारी कीमत चुकानी पड़ी। भरोसे की कमी को देखते हुए आवंटकों को लगा कि आरबीआई को निवेशकों को एनबीएफसी के बहीखातों को लेकर आश्वस्त करना चाहिए था। इससे निवेशकों को काफी मदद मिलती। निजी पूंजी जुटने से ही माहौल में सुधार होगा। निजी पूंजी को रेटिंग एजेंसियां या अंकेक्षकों पर भरोसा नहीं। केवल आरबीआई ही इस गतिरोध को दूर कर सकता है।

8. अधिकांश आवंटकों को यकीन था कि चीन और अमेरिका का तनाव आगे भी बरकरार रहेगा। परिणामस्वरूप चीन में धीमापन आएगा और उसकी अर्थव्यवस्था उच्चतम स्तर देख चुकी है। अधिकांश आवंटक चीन से इतर एशिया के अन्य हिस्सों में अपना निवेश बढ़ाना चाहते थे।

भारत के पास अवसर है कि वह आने वाले वर्ष में निवेश आकर्षित कर सके। निवेशक समझ रहे हैं कि वृद्धि और आय दोनों एकदम निचले स्तर पर हैं। आवंटक धीमी विश्व व्यवस्था में वृद्धि की बात जोह रहे हैं। अधिकांश लोग अभी भी मानते हैं कि लंबी अवधि में देश के पास काफी संभावनाएं हैं। अगर हम स्थिर रहे तो हम लाभ उठाने की स्थिति में हैं।

है तो यह दूरसंचार बाजार पर प्राणांतक वार की तरह होगा। वित्त वर्ष 2018-19 के अंत में भारती एयरटेल पर करीब 1.06 लाख करोड़ रुपये की राशि बकाया थी। कुछ लॉबित स्पेक्ट्रम भुगतान इससे इतर था। इस राशि का आधा हिस्सा अल्पावधि की जवाबदेही था। इसी अवधि में वोडाफोन आइडिया पर कुल 1.2 लाख करोड़ रुपये का कर्ज है। यह अतिरिक्त बोझ ऐसे वक्त में आया है जब ये कंपनियां रिलायंस जियो के साथ कीमतों की जंग में उलझी हुई हैं। जियो अपनी सेवाएं घाटे पर देने को तैयार है। ऐसा इसलिए क्योंकि कंपनी के पास रिलायंस समूह के पेट्रोलैमिकल व्यवसाय से काफी धन आ रहा है। सरकार को अब यह निर्णय लेना है कि आगे क्या राह है।

दो दशक में भारतीय समाज और राजनीति हो गई ज्यादा संकीर्ण

बीस वर्ष पहले सन 1998 में अर्थशास्त्र का नोबेल पुरस्कार एक भारतीय अमर्त्य सेन को मिला था। इस वर्ष एक अन्य भारतवंशी अभिजित बनर्जी को यह सम्मान मिला है। दोनों घटनाओं में दो दशक का अंतराल है लेकिन ऐसा लगता है कि आज का भारत उस वक्त से एकदम अलग है। इस अंतर को दोनों विजेताओं को सम्मानित किए जाने पर सत्ता प्रतिष्ठाान की प्रतिक्रिया से भी समझा जा सकता है। खासतौर पर सत्ताधारी दल के कुछ वरिष्ठ नेताओं ने बनर्जी को पुरस्कार मिलने पर जो प्रतिक्रिया दी है उससे यह स्पष्ट होता है।

सन 1998 में सेन को सम्मानित करने के नोबेल समिति के निर्णय के बाद चौतरफा सराहना का भाव था। तत्कालीन राष्ट्रपति के आर नारायणन ने सेन को दिए संदेश में कहा था कि यह बेहद नेकनीयत से दिया गया है और उन्होंने कहा कि वह कामना करते हैं कि सेन आगे लंबे समय तक बेहतर अकादमिक और शोध कार्य करें। तत्कालीन प्रधानमंत्री अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी ने भी अपने संदेश में कहा कि उन्हें यह सम्मान मिलना राष्ट्रीय गौरव का विषय है। वाजपेयी सरकार के वित्त मंत्री यशवंत सिन्हा ने भी सेन की तारीफ की।

यकीनन बनर्जी को इस वर्ष नोबेल मिलने के बाद भी राष्ट्रपति रामनाथ कोविंद, प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी और वित्त मंत्री निर्मला सीतारमण ने तत्काल प्रतिक्रिया दी। राष्ट्रपति ने कहा कि बनर्जी के काम ने तमाम अर्थशास्त्रियों को भारत तथा विश्व में गरीबी से लड़ने की बेहतर समझ दी है। मोदी ने गरीबी उन्मूलन में उनके अहम योगदान के लिए उन्हें बधाई दी। सीतारमण ने भी बनर्जी को के दर्शन से अलग था। वाजपेयी वैश्विक दृष्टि को लेकर चलते थे। उनकी सरकार आज की तुलना में अधिक समावेशी और सहिष्णु थी। वित्त मंत्री कोइ आवश्यकता नहीं थी। दिलचस्प यह है कि वाजपेयी सरकार का दर्शन भी आज की मोदी सरकार के दर्शन से अलग था। वाजपेयी वैश्विक दृष्टि को लेकर चलते थे। उनकी सरकार आज की तुलना में अधिक समावेशी और सहिष्णु थी। वित्त मंत्री कोइ वाजपेयी सरकार के प्रमुख सदस्यों में से एक मुरली मनोहर जोशी ने भी बिना किसी पूर्वग्रह के सेन को बधाई दी थी। ऐसा तब था जबकि सेन उस राजनीतिक फलक से आते थे जिससे उन्हें या उनकी पार्टी को कोई सहानुभूति नहीं थी।



दिल्ली डायरी

ए के भट्टाचार्य

की ओर था जिसे बनर्जी का समर्थन मिला था। भारतीय जनता पार्टी के राष्ट्रीय सचिव राकेश सिन्हा ने भी बनर्जी के बारे में बहुत आपत्तिजनक टिप्पणी की। इसकी तुलना सेन से करते हैं। सेन को पुरस्कार मिलने के कुछ ही दिन के भीतर सरकारी विमानन सेवा एयर इंडिया ने जीवन भर की यात्राओं के लिए नि:शुल्क पास की पेशकश कर दी थी। वित्त मंत्रालय के शीर्ष अधिकारियों वित्त सचिव विजय केलकर और मुख्य आर्थिक सलाहकार शंकर एन आचार्य ने उनकी जमकर सराहना की और बधाई दी। तत्कालीन मानव संसाधन विकास मंत्री मुरली मनोहर जोशी ने भी सेन को बधाई दी थी। संक्षेप में कहें तो सन 1998 में 2019 की तरह कोई आलोचना सुनने को नहीं मिली थी।

बीते दो दशक में क्या बदला? सन 1998 में भी भाजपा की सरकार थी और 2019 में भी वही सत्ता में है। सन 1998 में राष्ट्रीय जनतांत्रिक गठबंधन की सरकार को मोदी की तरह बहुमत हासिल नहीं था। संभव है कि वाजपेयी की सरकार गठबंधन साझेदारों पर बहुत हद तक निर्भर थी। मोदी को ऐसी कोई आवश्यकता नहीं थी। दिलचस्प यह है कि वाजपेयी सरकार का दर्शन भी आज की मोदी सरकार के दर्शन से अलग था। वाजपेयी वैश्विक दृष्टि को लेकर चलते थे। उनकी सरकार आज की तुलना में अधिक समावेशी और सहिष्णु थी। वित्त मंत्री कोइ वाजपेयी सरकार के प्रमुख सदस्यों में से एक मुरली मनोहर जोशी ने भी बिना किसी पूर्वग्रह के सेन को बधाई दी थी। ऐसा तब था जबकि सेन उस राजनीतिक फलक से आते थे जिससे उन्हें या उनकी पार्टी को कोई सहानुभूति नहीं थी।



विदेश भाग जाते हैं। नीरव मोदी और विजय माल्या का उदाहरण हमारे सामने है। हाल में पंजाब एंड महाराष्ट्र को-ऑपरेटिव बैंक में हुए घोटाले ने लोगों को फिर सोचने पर मजबूर किया है कि इसके लिए जिम्मेदार कौन है। रिजर्व बैंक ठीक से निगरानी क्यों नहीं रख पाता है। सवाल यह है कि अनियमितताएं वर्षों तक ऑडिटर की नजर से कैसे

महाराष्ट्र के पीएमसी बैंक में गड़बड़ी पाए जाने के बाद रुपये की निकासी पर रोक लगी थी

बच जाती है। ऑडिट रिपोर्ट राजनीतिक हस्तक्षेप से भी प्रभावित हो सकती हैं। ऐसे में निगरानी करने वाली संस्था का ज्यादा मजबूत और

प्रभावशाली होना जरूरी है। बैंकों

गरीबों को मिला आयुष्मान का लाभ

आयुष्मान भारत योजना या प्रधानमंत्री जन आरोग्य योजना केंद्र सरकार की एक स्वास्थ्य योजना है। बेहतर स्वास्थ्य सुविधाएं प्रत्येक नागरिक का अधिकार है। आयुष्मान योजना को सफल बनाने में निजी क्षेत्र के सक्रिय सहयोग की भी जरूरत है। चिकित्सा पर होने वाले खर्च की वजह से कई लोग अपना कीमती सामान गिरवी रखने से बचे हैं। इसे आयुष्मान भारत की बड़ी सफलता माना जा सकता है। देश के लाखों गरीबों के बीच बीमारियों से मुक्त होने की उम्मीद जगाना भी बड़ी उपलब्धि है। यह सभी नागरिकों के लिए अच्छे स्वास्थ्य और कल्याण को सुनिश्चित करने के सतत विकास लक्ष्य को प्राप्त करने का केंद्रीय बिंदु है। केंद्र सरकार ने इस योजना पर काफी जोर दिया है और इस योजना को शहर से लेकर गांव तक पहुंचाया गया है।

दिवाकर कुमार, मधुपुर

आपका पक्ष

बैंक घोटाले रोकने के लिए कड़े कदम जरूरी

लगातार उजागर हो रहे बैंक घोटाले इस ओर इशारा कर रहे हैं कि बैंकिंग व्यवस्था में नीतिगत और क्रियाव्यवन स्तर पर कई खामियां हैं। एक आम आदमी को ऋण लेना हो तो तमाम तरह के दस्तावेजों की मांग की जाती है और बैंक के अनेक चक्कर लगाने पड़ते हैं। लंबी प्रक्रिया के बाद ऋण स्वीकृत होता है। ऋण की एक किस्त चुकाने में अगर देरी हो जाए तो बैंक से फोन आना शुरू हो जाता है। हजारों करोड़ रुपये का ऋण व्यापारियों के लिए आसानी से स्वीकृत होने के बाद वसूल न हो पाना आम आदमी के मन में शंका पैदा करता है। इससे बैंक की नीति और नीयत का संदेह के घेरे में आना स्वाभाविक है। बैंकिंग व्यवस्था को चलाने में आम लोगों का महत्वपूर्ण योगदान है लेकिन उन्हें ऋण लेने में काफी मशक्कत करनी पड़ती है। जबकि बैंक हजारों करोड़ रुपये का ऋण उद्योगपतियों को आसानी से दे देते हैं। ऋण लेकर कुछ उद्योगपति

पाठक अपनी राय हमें इस पते पर भेज सकते हैं : संपादक, बिजनेस स्टैंडर्ड लिमिटेड, 4, बहादुर शाह जफर मार्ग, नई दिल्ली - 110002. आप हमें ईमेल भी कर सकते हैं : lettershindi@bsmail.in

उस जगह का उल्लेख अवश्य करें, जहां से आप ईमेल कर रहे हैं।

जनसत्ता

नतीजे और संकेत

हरियाणा और महाराष्ट्र के चुनाव नतीजे अनुमान के विपरीत आए हैं। भाजपा को पूरा विश्वास था और मतदान पश्चात के सर्वेक्षण भी बता रहे थे कि दोनों राज्यों में भाजपा की सरकार बनेगी। इसकी कुछ ठोस वजहें भी थीं। दोनों जगह कोई सत्ता विरोधी लहर नजर नहीं आ रही थी। महाराष्ट्र में देवेंद्र फडणवीस और हरियाणा में मनोहरलाल खट्टर सरकार के कामकाज कमोबेश संतोषजनक ही नजर आ रहे थे। इसलिए दोनों जगहों पर भाजपा अपनी सीटों में इजाफे की उम्मीद कर रही थी। हरियाणा में तो उसने नब्बे में से पचहत्तर से ऊपर सीटें जीतने का दावा किया था। पर वहां वह बहुमत के करीब पहुंचने से भी रह गई। पिछली बार की तुलना में उसने अपनी करीब आठ सीटें गंवा दी। वहां नई बनी जननायक जनता पार्टी ने अपनी जोरदारी पारी की शुरुआत की। वह दस सीटें अपने खाते में ले गई। जबकि इंडियन नेशनल लोकदल का एक तरह से अस्तित्व ही खतरे में पड़ गया है। इन सबके बीच उम्मीद के उलट दोनों राज्यों में कांग्रेस की हैसियत बढ़ी दर्ज हुई। ऐसे वक्त में जब कांग्रेस के भीतर कलह है, बहुत सारे नेता छोड़ कर जा चुके हैं या फिर नाराज चल रहे हैं, दोनों राज्यों में वह बहुत ढीले-ढाले तरीके से मैदान में उतरी थी, तब उसका भाजपा को टक्कर देना और चौंकाने वाले नतीजों तक पहुंच जाना मतदाता के मन की कुछ और ही थाह देता है।

हालांकि विधानसभा चुनावों में स्थानीय मुद्दे अधिक प्रभावी होते हैं, पर राष्ट्रीय मुद्दे भी कहीं न कहीं उनके साथ नथ्थी होते हैं। भारतीय जनता पार्टी पिछले पांच सालों से विजय रथ पर सवार है। प्रधानमंत्री पर लोगों का भरोसा कमजोर नहीं हुआ है। इसलिए जिन राज्यों में पहले से भाजपा की सरकारें रही हैं, वहां माना जाता रहा है कि यह भरोसा उसे विजय दिलाएगा। मगर राजस्थान, मध्यप्रदेश और छत्तीसगढ़ में यह प्रभाव काम नहीं आया। फिर लोकसभा चुनावों में भाजपा ने अप्रत्याशित विजय हासिल की, तो पार्टी के हौसले स्वाभाविक रूप से बढ़े। इसके अलावा मुख्य विपक्षी दल कांग्रेस लगातार कमजोर होती दिखी। लोकसभा नतीजों के बाद उसके राष्ट्रीय अध्यक्ष ने इस्तीफा दे दिया, फिर लंबे समय तक उन्हें मनाने और नए अध्यक्ष पर विचार की प्रक्रिया चलती रही। अंततः सोनिया गांधी को ही तदर्थ जिम्मेदारी सौंप दी गई। इससे पार्टी में कलह उभरा। हरियाणा विधानसभा चुनाव में कांग्रेस के कई कदावर नेता अलग हो गए। वे अलग-अलग मंचों से अपनी ताकत प्रदर्शित करने लगे। उससे भी भाजपा की स्थिति मजबूत लगने लगी थी। पर मतदाता ने उसकी तरफ एक बार फिर रुख कर लिया।

महाराष्ट्र और हरियाणा में भाजपा को हुए नुकसान की कुछ वजहें साफ हैं। एक तो यह कि उसने स्थानीय मुद्दों के बजाय कश्मीर, राष्ट्रवाद, पाकिस्तान, सुरक्षा आदि मुद्दे उठाए। स्थानीय मुद्दों की तरफ ध्यान नहीं दिया गया, जबकि विपक्षी दल उसे महंगाई, खराब अर्थव्यवस्था, बेरोजगारी, किसानों की बढहाली आदि मुद्दों पर घेर रहे थे। इसके अलावा, भाजपा नेताओं और कार्यकर्ताओं में जीत का अतिरिक्त आत्मविश्वास नजर आने लगा था, जिसके चलते कई नेता ईवीएम और जीत आदि से जुड़े बयान देते देखे गए। महाराष्ट्र में बाढ़ के दौरान पैदा अव्यवस्था से निपटने में जिस कदर फडणवीस सरकार विफल देखी गई और आरे कॉलोनी के वन क्षेत्र को काटा गया, उससे भी लोगों में रोष था। किसानों की स्थिति सुधारने पर भी प्रदेश सरकार अपेक्षित ध्यान नहीं दे पाई। इसके अलावा उपचुनावों के परिणाम भी भाजपा के लिए बहुत उत्साहजनक नहीं हैं। ऐसे में ताजा नतीजे भाजपा को अपनी रणनीति पर फिर से विचार करने की तरफ संकेत करते हैं।

विलय का संचार

पिछले कुछ समय से ऐसी खबरें आ रही थीं कि भारतीय संचार निगम लिमिटेड यानी बीएसएनएल की स्थिति बेहद खराब हो चुकी है और महानगर टेलीफोन निगम लिमिटेड यानी एमटीएनएल भी बीमार है। हालत यह है कि बीएसएनएल के पास अपने कर्मचारियों को तनख्वाह देने तक के पैसे पूरे नहीं पड़ रहे हैं। जाहिर है, कुछ समय तक ऐसी स्थिति बनी रहती तो शायद इन कंपनियों को बंद करने के अलावा कोई और चारा नहीं बचता। देश भर में दूरसंचार के क्षेत्र में फैली इन दोनों कंपनियों के व्यापक तंत्र को देखते हुए यह चिंता पैदा करने वाली बात है। इसे लेकर आलोचना के स्वर भी उभरे कि सरकार अगर दूसरे क्षेत्रों में निवेश की बात कर रही है, तो इन दोनों बेहद अहम कंपनियों को बचाने के लिए क्या कुछ नहीं किया जा सकता! शायद इसी के मद्देनजर बुधवार को सरकार ने घाटे में चल रही इन दोनों कंपनियों को बचाने के लिए अड़सठ हजार सात सौ इक्यावन करोड़ रुपए के पुनरुद्धार पैकेज को मंजूरी दे दी। इसमें एमटीएनएल का बीएसएनएल के विलय, कर्मचारियों के लिए स्वैच्छिक सेवानिवृति योजना और 4–जी स्पेक्ट्रम आवंटन शामिल हैं।

दरअसल, देर से लिया गया यह ऐसा फैसला है, जो अगर सही वक्त पर लिया गया होता तो आज ये कंपनियां इतनी लाचार हालत में नहीं जातीं। अंदाजा इससे लगाया जा सकता है कि कुछ समय पहले जब आर्थिक तंगी से जूझते बीएसएनएल और एमटीएनएल को फिर से पटरी पर लाने के लिए दूरसंचार विभाग ने चौहत्तर हजार करोड़ रुपए के निवेश का प्रस्ताव दिया था, तब वित्तमंत्री ने न केवल इसे ठुकरा दिया, बल्कि इन दोनों कंपनियों को बंद करने तक की सलाह दे दी। जबकि तथ्य यह है कि जब तक प्रबंधन सही तरीके से चला, तब तक खासतौर पर बीएसएनएल काफी फायदे में रही और उसी दौर में देश के अलग-अलग इलाकों में इसने अपनी ढांचगत जरूरतों के मद्देनजर काफी परिसंपत्तियां अर्जित कीं। आज जब बाजार में प्रतियोगिता और प्रबंधकीय नाकामी की वजह से इन कंपनियों की माली हालत बेहद खराब हो चुकी है तो उन्हीं परिसंपत्तियों की कीमत का आकलन किया जा रहा है कि क्या उनकी बिक्री से अर्जित धन से इन कंपनियों की स्थिति को सुधारा जा सकता है!

बीएसएनएल के महत्त्व का अंदाजा इससे लगाया जा सकता है कि आज अपनी ढावांडोल स्थिति में भी यह दूरदराज के उन इलाकों में भी सेवा मुहैया करा रही है जिन्हें दुर्गम माना जाता है और जहां बड़ी निजी कंपनियां भी अपने पांव रखने में हिचकती रही हैं। लेकिन एक ओर दूरसंचार के क्षेत्र में तकनीकी तौर पर तीव्र गति से बदलाव हो रहे थे, दूसरी निजी कंपनियां 4–जी स्पेक्ट्रम की सुविधा से लैस हो रही थीं, उस दौर में बीएसएनएल और एमटीएनएल को 3–जी के भरोसे अपना काम चलाना पड़ रहा था। जाहिर है, दूरसंचार के बाजार में इनके कदम पिछड़ते गए और ये लगातार घाटे में आती गई। अब काफी देर से इसे बचाने के लिए सरकारी कवायद अगर शुरू हुई है तो केवल खर्च काम करने के लिए विलय, कर्मचारियों की तादाद में कमी करने जैसे कदम उठाने के बजाय अगर प्रबंधन और प्रतियोगिता के मैदान में टिकने के लिए संसाधन, तकनीक और कौशल को मजबूत करने पर ध्यान दिया जाए तो संभव है कि आने वाले दिनों में ये कंपनियां फिर से अपने पांव पर मजबूती से खड़ी हो जाएं।

कल्‍पमेधा

अगर हम सही तरह से विचार करें कि वस्तुओं में कितना अंश प्राकृतिक है और कितना श्रम द्वारा, तो हमें ज्ञात होगा कि सौ में नित्यानवे अंश श्रम का नतीजा है।

– जॉन लॉक

वन धन से पहले वनाधिकार जरूरी

अमरेंद्र किशोर

वन धन योजना में उन ज्वलंत मुद्दों की अनदेखी की गई है कि वनोपधियों के चोखे धंधे में जंगलों पर तस्करों का कितना जर्बदस्त शिकंजा है। आदिवासियों के लिए किए जाने वाले फैसलों की फेहरिस्त कितनी कारगर और उनके लिए कितनी मुफीद होती है, यह एक बुनियादी सवाल है। इसके लिए हमें जान लेना होगा कि वन धन कितना टोस है या महज शिगूफा है।

केंद्र सरकार का नया वन धन कार्यक्रम आ चुका है। यह गैर-लकड़ी के वन उत्पादन का उपयोग कर-के जनजातियों के लिए आजीविका के साधन मुहैया कराने की पहल है। मतलब देश के वन धन हैं, कुदरत के कुबेर हैं। इसलिए सरकार कहती है वन से धन कमाना है। याद होगा, जंगलों को कमाई के स्रोत बता कर गोरों ने जंगलात विभाग बनाया था। आज जनमत से चुनी गई सरकार भी बता रही है कि जंगलों के बूते गरीब कैसे अमीर बनें। अमीर बनने के उपाय-जुगाड़ और नुस्खे सरकार के उन नौकरशाहों के पास हैं जो जनजातीय कार्य मंत्रालय से लेकर ट्राईफंड (द ट्राइबल को-ऑर्परेटिव मार्केटिंग डवलपमेंट फेडरेशन ऑफ इंडिया) जैसी संस्थाओं में बैठ कर बताते हैं कि आदिवासी भारत में कितना लावण्य है, कितनी मोहकता है, बांस-घास और टहनियों से बने भवनों की भव्यता है और खलिहानों में विराजती श्रेष्ठता है। आदिवासी भारत के विभिन्न उत्पादों और कलाकृतियों को संजोती कॉफी टेबल बुक सत्ता के गढ़ों से लेकर

प्रशासन के बुजों पर सजाई जा रही है।

वन धन योजना के तहत जंगलों में सीमित मात्रा में मिलने वाले खाद्य पदार्थों के संग्रह करने और उन उत्पादों को बेहतर ढंग से इस्तेमाल किए जाने का गुर आदिवासियों को सिखाया जाएगा। यानी आदिवासियों का लघु वनोपजों से संबंधित लोकज्ञान अंधूरा और अवैज्ञानिक है, ऐसा नौकरशाही मानती है। नौकरशाही कहती है कि जंगलों से सीमित मात्रा में मिलने वाले उत्पाद कुछ खास समय के दौरान ही मिलते हैं। ऐसे में विपरीत मौसम में आदिवासी समुदाय की अपनी आजीविका चलाने और जीवनयापन करने में बेहद दिक्कतों का सामना करना पड़ता है। इसलिए वन धन विकास केंद्रों के जरिए एकत्र किए गए लघु वनोपजों जमा कर उनको प्रसंकृत करके सुरक्षित रखा जाएगा, ताकि प्रतिकूल मौसम या परिस्थितियों के हिसाब से उन वस्तुओं का उचित उपयोग किया जा सके। तो क्या आज तक विज्ञान और प्रौद्योगिकी मंत्रालय के जैव-तकनीकी विभाग ने इसी दर्शन और विचार पर किसी तरह का कोई काम नहीं किया? क्या सरकार ने कभी इस सच को जानने की कोशिश की?

सरकार अपनी प्रतिबद्धता दोहराते हुए कहती है कि जंगल आधारित उत्पादों से आदिवासी समूहों को काम उपलब्ध कराना जरूरी है, जिससे वे वर्ष भर काम में व्यस्त रहें। साथ ही, जनजातीय समूह की महिलाओं को भी आर्थिक तौर पर सक्षम बनाना है, जिससे वे परिवार को सुरक्षा प्रदान कर सकें। माना जा रहा है कि जंगल देश के पांच करोड़ से अधिक जनजातीय लोगों की आजीविका का प्रमुख साधन है और जिन जिलों में जनजातीय लोग निवास करते हैं, उन जिलों में जंगल मौजूद होते हैं। इसलिए ट्राईफंड गैर लकड़ी वन्य उत्पादों के एवज में आदिवासी समाज को उचित मूल्य उपलब्ध कराएगा।

लेकिन सवाल है कि क्या आदिवासी अनुसूचित जनजाति और अन्य परंपरागत वन निवासी (वन अधिकारों की मान्यता) कानून लागू होने के बावजूद जंगलों में जाने के लिए स्वतंत्र हैं?

साल 2006 में सरकार ने मान लिया था कि जंगल आदिवासियों के हैं। यानी जंगलों पर पहला अधिकार वहां के मूल वाशियों का है। तभी तो वनोपजों के संग्रह करने और उससे जुड़ी आजीविका के मसले पर अनुसूचित जनजाति और अन्य परंपरागत वन निवासी (वन अधिकारों की मान्यता) कानून आज से तेरह साल पहले अस्तित्व में आया। तब संसद ने समवेत स्वर में माना था कि जंगलों के संरक्षण के नाम पर इन आदिवासियों पर बड़े जुल्म किए गए हैं। चूंकि सरकार

हर हाल में वन्य समाज का विकास और लोगों की समृद्धि चाहती है, इसलिए समय गंवाएं बिना उन पुश्तैनी जुल्मियों के कुकृत्यों को माफ कर इस कानून से जंगल में निवास करने वाली अनुसूचित जनजातियों और अन्य परंपरागत वन निवासियों के वन्य-संसाधनों पर उनके मौलिक अधिकारों की पुष्टि की गई। साथ में जंगल-जंगली जानवर और जैव विविधता संरक्षण को लेकर विभिन्न समाज और समुदायों के दायित्वों की दिशा और दायित्व तय करने की पहल की गई। हालांकि यह सब करते हुए तेरह साल बीत गए, पर जंगल पर अधिकार का सपना अधूरा रह गया। जिन्हें कुछ नहीं मिला, उन्हें व्यवस्था जंगल के कानून जैसी निर्मम लगने लगी।

देश के जंगल जंगलात विभाग और लाल आतंक के चलते आदिवासियों की पहुंच से दूर हैं। जंगलों से आजीविका चलाने की बात आदिवासियों के लिए हवाई किला बनाने जैसा है। लेकिन इस सच को नजरअंदाज कर जैसे नौकरशाही ने माना कि जो दिखता है, वही



बिकता है। लिहाजा, उन आदिम लोगों, उनके घरों और धरोहरों को सजाओ, चमकाओ और दिखाओ। आदिवासी जंगली उत्पादों का सहजता से संग्रह करते हैं। वन धन योजना में उन ज्वलंत मुद्दों की अनदेखी की गई है कि वनोपधियों के चोखे धंधे में जंगलों पर तस्करों का कितना जबरदस्त शिकंजा है। आदिवासियों के लिए किए जाने वाले फैसलों की फेहरिस्त कितनी कारगर और उनके लिए कितनी मुफीद होती है, यह एक बुनियादी सवाल है। इसके लिए हमें जान लेना होगा कि वन धन कितना टोस है या महज शिगूफा है।

वन धन एक मिशन है जो जनजातीय समुदाय के सामूहिक सशक्तिकरण को प्रोत्साहन करने का एक जोरदार प्रयास है। सरकार का कहना है कि गैर-

दीप जले उदारता का

दीप जले उदारता का पर्व पर लुटा देते हैं। दिवाली की रात को जब नीरव सन्नाटा पसरने लगता है, अनेक घरों के दीप बुझने लगते हैं, तब ये लोग पटाखों की लड़ियां जलाते हैं, ताकि दूर-दूर तक उनके वैभव की क्रूर आवाज गुंजती रहे। उन्हें इस बात से लेना-देना नहीं रहता कि पटाखे प्रदूषण फैलाते हैं, हवा को जहर से भर देते हैं। इसी तरह के सोच वाले एक व्यक्ति को मैं जानता हूं। ऐसे और भी लोग हो सकते हैं। वे धनसंचय के मामले में बेहद निर्मम हैं। वर्षों से इसी समाज में रह रहे हैं, लेकिन कभी किसी के साथ कोई सरोकार रखने की उन्होंने कोशिश नहीं की। उनकी संतानें भी उन्हीं की परंपरा को निभाते हुए बड़ी हुई। खाते-पीते संपन्न घर के लोग समाज में रहते हुए भी असामाजिक बने रहे। कभी किसी सामाजिक आयोजन में चंदा नहीं दिया। किसी गरीब के आंसू पोंछने के लिए उनका जमीर तैयार नहीं होता। हालत यह है कि उनके आंगन में लगे हुए पेड़ों के फल भी कोई नहीं तोड़ सकता। भूले-भटके कभी-कभी फल तोड़ने की नादानी करने वाले मासूम बच्चों को वे गालियां देकर भगा देते हैं।

ऐसे आत्मकेंद्रित और अनुदारवादी धनपतियों को जब में देखता हूं तो आश्चर्य में पड़ जाता हूं। सोचता हूं कि कैसे इन्हें मनुष्य कहा जाए। मनुष्यता की बुनियादी विशेषताओं से ये लोग क्यों इतने दूर हो गए हैं? क्या इन्हें बचपन से उदारता के कोई संस्कार नहीं मिले? क्या इन्होंने यह दोहा कभी नहीं सुना कि ‘पानी बाढ़े नाव में, घर में बाढ़े दाम, दोनों हाथ उल्टीचिए, यही सयानो काम?’ हमारे अनेक महापुरुषों, महान कवियों ने आदमी को इंसान बनाने के लिए न जाने कितनी अद्भुत रचनाएं कीं, लेकिन

क्या कारण है कि समाज के इस वर्ग पर इसका कोई असर नहीं हुआ। हिंसा और बलात्कार की वारदात निरंतर बढ़ रही हैं। ज्यों-ज्यों हम तथाकथित आधुनिकता की ओर बढ़ रहे हैं, वैसे-वैसे समाज का एक वर्ग निर्मम होता चला जा रहा है। ये किसी भी धर्म के लोग हो सकते हैं। लेकिन इनकी फितरत में अनुदारता, कटुता भरी रहती है। ये निपट आत्मकेंद्रित होते हैं। ‘मैं-मैं और सिर्फ मैं’ की भावना इनके जीवन का लक्ष्य होती है। यही कारण है कि इनके जीवन में नैतिकता समाहित नहीं हो पाती, क्योंकि उनके जीवन का चक्र अर्थ के इर्द-गिर्द मंडराता रहता है। ऐसे तमाम लोग मिल जाएंगे, जिनका घर बड़ा भव्य और विशाल है, लेकिन हृदय बहुत संकुचित। घर

हूं कि कैसे इन्हें मनुष्य कहा जाए। मनुष्यता की बुनियादी विशेषताओं से ये लोग क्यों इतने दूर हो गए हैं? क्या इन्हें बचपन से उदारता के कोई संस्कार नहीं मिले? क्या इन्होंने यह दोहा कभी नहीं सुना कि ‘पानी बाढ़े नाव में, घर में बाढ़े दाम, दोनों हाथ उल्टीचिए, यही सयानो काम?’ हमारे अनेक महापुरुषों, महान कवियों ने आदमी को इंसान बनाने के लिए न जाने कितनी अद्भुत रचनाएं कीं, लेकिन क्या कारण है कि समाज के इस वर्ग पर इसका कोई असर नहीं हुआ। हिंसा और बलात्कार की वारदात निरंतर बढ़ रही हैं। ज्यों-ज्यों हम तथाकथित आधुनिकता की ओर बढ़ रहे हैं, वैसे-वैसे समाज का एक वर्ग निर्मम होता चला जा रहा है। ये किसी भी धर्म के लोग हो सकते हैं। लेकिन इनकी फितरत में अनुदारता, कटुता भरी रहती है। ये निपट आत्मकेंद्रित होते हैं। ‘मैं-मैं और सिर्फ मैं’ की भावना इनके जीवन का लक्ष्य होती है। यही कारण है कि इनके जीवन में नैतिकता समाहित नहीं हो पाती, क्योंकि उनके जीवन का चक्र अर्थ के इर्द-गिर्द मंडराता रहता है। ऐसे तमाम लोग मिल जाएंगे, जिनका घर बड़ा भव्य और विशाल है, लेकिन हृदय बहुत संकुचित। घर

दोहरा कायदा

असम सरकार द्वारा जनसंख्या नियंत्रण के लिए दो बच्चों की नीति लागू की गई है। इसके तहत दो बच्चों से अधिक होने पर व्यक्ति को सरकारी नौकरी नहीं मिलेगी। प्रथम दृष्ट्या सरकार की यह नीति जनसंख्या नियंत्रण के लिए अच्छी पहल लगती है, पर गहराई से विश्लेषण करने पर इससे उत्पन्न चुनौतियां अधिक गंभीर दिखाई देने लगती हैं। दरअसल, दो बच्चों की नीति पर जो भी आंकड़े हैं, वे यह दर्शाते हैं कि इस तरह की नीति से माता-पिता में पहले बच्चे के तौर पर लड़कों की चाह और बढ़ जाती है



आबादी रात में भूखी सो जा रही है, दवा और पर्याप्त चिकित्सा के अभाव की वजह से हजारों बच्चे मर जा रहे हैं, वहीं असामाजिक और बेईमाना बाबा और आध्यात्मिक संत जैसे समाज के परजीवी कुछ ही सालों में अरबों-खरबों के स्वामी कैसे बन जा रहे हैं? दरअसल, इस देश के समाज में व्याप्त अधिकतर जनता में फैली अशिक्षा, धर्मांधता और कूपमंडूकता आदि की वजह से लोग धूर्त बाबाओं और कपटी संतों की छल भरी बातों में फंस जाते हैं। ऐसा लगता है कि सरकारी की भी यही मंशा है कि जहां तक संभव हो, इस देश के लोगों को अशिक्षित, अंधधर्मवादी और अंधभक्त बनाए रखा जाए। यही इन कथित संतों और राजनीति के आधुनिक कर्णधारों की सफलता का राज भी है।

● *निर्मल कुमार शर्मा, प्रताप विहार, गाजियाबाद*

लकड़ी के वन उत्पादन का उपयोग करके जनजातियों के लिए आजीविका के साधन उत्पन्न करने की यह पहल पूरी तरह से गरीबों के हित में है। इस योजना का उद्देश्य परंपरागत ज्ञान और कौशल को सूचना प्रौद्योगिकी की मदद से और निखारना भी है। सवाल है कि क्या अभी तक इस दिशा में प्रयास नहीं किए गए? वन धन योजना के शिल्पकारों ने इसी तरह के लोकलुभावन उद्देश्य के लिए ग्रामीण विकास मंत्रालय के कपाट (कारंडिल फॉर एडवांसमेंट ऑफ पीपुल्स एक्शन एंड रूरल टेक्नोलॉजी) के हजारों करोड़ की परियोजनाओं का हथ्र पता है? विज्ञान और प्रौद्योगिकी मंत्रालय के सोसाइटल डिवीजन ने वनोपजों के गुण अभिवृद्धि (वैल्यू एडिशन) के नाम पर स्वयं समूहों से लेकर बड़े नामधारी विश्वविद्यालयों- संस्थानों और गैर सरकारी संगठनों के जरिए आदिवासियों को समृद्ध करने की दिशा में लगभग तैंतीस साल तक जो प्रयोग किए उनका आदिवासी समुदायों पर कितना असर पड़ा,

स्थानीय समाज के जीवन स्तर को सुधारने से लेकर उनमें होने वाले पलायन की निष्प्रभावी करने में ये प्रयोग कितने प्रभावी रहे, नौकरशाही को यह जानना जरूरी था। यह सुहानी-सी बात है कि वन संपदा समृद्ध जनजातीय जिलों में वन धन विकास केंद्र जनजातीय समुदाय के जरिए संचालित होंगे। एक केंद्र दस जनजातीय स्वयं सहायता समूह का गठन करेगा। प्रत्येक समूह में तीस जनजातीय संग्रहकर्ता होंगे। एक केंद्र के जरिए तीन सौ लाभार्थी इस योजना में शामिल होंगे। हकीकत यह है कि देश के कुछ हिस्सों को छोड़कर स्वयं सहायता समूह आज अमूमन सफल नहीं है। बैंक, एनजीओ, से लेकर नाबार्ड और कपाट तक इस असफलता के न सिर्फ भुक्तभोगी हैं, बल्कि स्वयं-सहायता समूहों की कारगुजारीयों के राजदार भी हैं।

नौकरशाही यह मानने की भूल कर रही है कि आदिवासी भारत की पूरी आबादी अपने गांव में बैठी है और वनोपज संग्रह की उनकी प्रवृति बरकरार है। आदिवासियों ने वनोपजों के बूते जिंदगी नहीं चला पाने का निष्कर्ष बहुत पहले निकाल लिया और आज कालाहांडी से लेकर गुमला और कांकेड़ के आदिवासी जंगलों में भटकाव और पत्थरों पर माथा टिकाने के बजाय देश के औद्योगिक नगरों में अपेक्षाकृत सहज श्रम कर सम्मानित जिंदगी जी रहे हैं। सरकार ने खुद आदिवासियों को वनाश्रित जीवन दर्शन से दूर कर पैकेज परोसकर मुफ्तजीवी बनाया है। इस योजना का सबसे कमजोर पक्ष यही है कि वन धन आदिवासियों के हितों का और उनके संगठन के ब्रांड के मंसूबे नहीं रखता।

कैसे इन्हें मनुष्य कहा जाए। मनुष्यता की बुनियादी विशेषताओं से ये लोग क्यों इतने दूर हो गए हैं? क्या इन्हें बचपन से उदारता के कोई संस्कार नहीं मिले? क्या इन्होंने यह दोहा कभी नहीं सुना कि ‘पानी बाढ़े नाव में, घर में बाढ़े दाम, दोनों हाथ उल्टीचिए, यही सयानो काम?’ हमारे अनेक महापुरुषों, महान कवियों ने आदमी को इंसान बनाने के लिए न जाने कितनी अद्भुत रचनाएं कीं, लेकिन क्या कारण है कि समाज के इस वर्ग पर इसका कोई असर नहीं हुआ। हिंसा और बलात्कार की वारदात निरंतर बढ़ रही हैं। ज्यों-ज्यों हम तथाकथित आधुनिकता की ओर बढ़ रहे हैं, वैसे-वैसे समाज का एक वर्ग निर्मम होता चला जा रहा है। ये किसी भी धर्म के लोग हो सकते हैं। लेकिन इनकी फितरत में अनुदारता, कटुता भरी रहती है। ये निपट आत्मकेंद्रित होते हैं। ‘मैं-मैं और सिर्फ मैं’ की भावना इनके जीवन का लक्ष्य होती है। यही कारण है कि इनके जीवन में नैतिकता समाहित नहीं हो पाती, क्योंकि उनके जीवन का चक्र अर्थ के इर्द-गिर्द मंडराता रहता है। ऐसे तमाम लोग मिल जाएंगे, जिनका घर बड़ा भव्य और विशाल है, लेकिन हृदय बहुत संकुचित। घर

के भीतर ऐसे लोग सुंदर मंदिर भी बनवा के रखते हैं, जहां धार्मिक पुस्तकें भी रखी होती हैं। उनके घर के लोग नियमित रूप से भगवान को प्रणाम करेंगे, लेकिन वे सब खुद में केंद्रित लोग होते हैं। बहुत पहले मैंने किसी कवि की ये पंक्तियां पढ़ी थीं- ‘काफ़ी धोखाधड़ी हुई है / किंतु इमारेत खड़ी हुई है/ राम तुम्हारी मर्यादा बस/ पूजा घर में पड़ी हुई है’। लगभग सभी धनपतियों की ही हाल होता है। श्रेष्ठ ग्रंथों के होने के बावजूद वे जीवन भर संवेदनहीन बने रहते हैं, क्योंकि अपने अलावा उन्हें किसी अन्य इंसान से कोई मतलब नहीं होता। अर्थ-केंद्रित मानसिकता उन्हें धन पशु के रूप में तब्दील कर देती है। यह एक सच्चाई है कि समाज में ऐसे अनेक सपन्न लोग हैं जो उदार होकर अपने हिस्से की कुछ खुशियां समाज को भी बांटने लगे तो यह समाज खुशहाल हो जाए। गरीबी खत्म हो सकती है। लेकिन जब हम केवल अपने ही आंगन में दीप जलाना चाहते हैं तो फिर स्वाभाविक है कि दूसरी जगह अंधेरा पसरा ही रहेगा। आने वाली दिवाली का उजाला अगर संकुचित मानसिकता के धनपतियों को अगर यह सोचने पर बाध्य कर सके कि हमें जितना वैभव मिला है, उसका कुछ हिस्सा हम वंचितों के तक पहुंचा सकें तो जीवन में, आत्मा में वास्तविक खुशी का एक दीप प्रज्वलित होता रहेगा।

किसी भी प्रकार के बल का प्रयोग करने या दंडित करने वाली नीतियों का विरोध करती है
जनसंख्या नियंत्रण के लिए अंतरराष्ट्रीय समझौते का भारत हस्ताक्षर कर्त्ता है। यह समझौता भी जोर-जबर्दस्ती कर जनसंख्या को काबू करने वाले तरीकों का विरोध करते हैं। दरअसल जनसंख्या नियंत्रण एक सतत चलने वाली प्रक्रिया है, जिसे शिक्षा और जागरूकता के लोगों तक फैलाया जा सकता है। केरल और तमिलनाडु जैसे राज्य भी शिक्षा और परिवार नियोजन के विभन्न कार्यक्रम द्वारा ऐसे लक्ष्यों को हासिल कर चुके हैं। ये सही है कि देश की सीमित संसाधनों के लिए जनसंख्या पर नियंत्रण करना जरूरी है। लेकिन इससे लिए जो तरीके अपनाए जाएं, वे हमारी सामाजिक-आर्थिक परिस्थिति के मद्देनजर हो। दंडित करने वाली नीतियों से वांछित लक्ष्य को हासिल करने की कोशिश स्वयं को भ्रमित करने के समान ही है।

● *राहुल राज, दिल्ली*

आवेश की हद

नई दिल्ली के नेहरू विहार में एक दिल दहलाने वाली घटना हुई। सुबह-सुबह बेकरी संचालक ने अपनी दुकान खोली ही थी कि एक व्यक्ति ने आकर चाय के रस्क (टोस्ट) मांगे। बेकरी संचालक ने टोस्ट कागज में बांध कर दे दिए। ग्राहक ने पॉलिथीन की मांग की। दुकानदार ने पॉलीथिन बैन देने से मना कर दिया। इस पर ग्राहक और दुकानदार में विवाद हो गया। विवाद इतना बढ़ा की ग्राहक ने पास ही पड़ी ईट दुकानदार के मुंह पर दे मारी, जिससे वह बेहोश हो गया और बाद में उसकी मौत हो गई। क्या केवल एक पॉलिथीन के लिए किसी का खून किया जा सकता है? लोगों में धैर्य और संयम जैसे समापत ही हो गया है।

● *मंगलेश सोनी, धार, मध्यप्रदेश*

नई दिल्ली



दैनिक जागरण

इच्छाएं सभी दुखों की जननी हैं

चुनाव नतीजों का संदेश

महाराष्ट्र और हरियाणा के चुनाव नतीजे एक बार फिर यह कह रहे हैं कि विधानसभा चुनावों में राष्ट्रीय मुद्दे कभी-कभार ही कारगर होते हैं। आम तौर पर राज्य स्तर के चुनावों में एक बड़ी भूमिका क्षेत्रीय मसलों की होती है। क्षेत्रीय मसलों के अलावा जाति-विवाद भी अपनी असर दिखाती हैं। यही कारण रहा कि चंद माह पहले लोकसभा चुनावों में महाराष्ट्र और हरियाणा में जोरदार प्रदर्शन करने वाली भाजपा इन राज्यों में अपेक्षा के अनुरूप प्रदर्शन नहीं कर सकी। महाराष्ट्र में उसे जितनी सीटों की उम्मीद थी उतनी नहीं मिल सकी और हरियाणा में वह 75 पार के अपने लक्ष्य के करीब जाना तो दूर रहा, बहुमत तक भी नहीं पहुंच पाई। ऐसा क्यों हुआ, इसकी तह तक जाने के क्रम में भाजपा नेतृत्व को यह अवश्य देखना चाहिए कि जब खेती संकट में हो, रोजगार का सवाल गंभीर होता जा रहा हो और मंदी का माहौल लोगों की चिंताएं बढ़ा रहा हो तब फिर राष्ट्रीय मसले उसकी नैया नहीं पार कर सकते। यह सही है कि महाराष्ट्र में भाजपा इस बार पिछली बार के मुकाबले कहीं कम सीटों पर चुनाव लड़ी थी, लेकिन उसका मौजूदा संख्‍याबल इतना नहीं कि वह शिवसेना के अनुचित दबाव का प्रतिकार कर सके। अगर शिवसेना के साथ खींचतान बढ़ी तो इसका असर सरकार के कामकाज पर पड़ सकता है।

अगर महाराष्ट्र और हरियाणा में भाजपा को मन मुताबिक नतीजे नहीं हासिल हो सके और उसके कई दिग्गज मंत्री भी चुनाव हार गए तो इसका एक अर्थ यह भी है कि लोगों को अपनी सरकारों से जो अपेक्षाएं थीं वे सही तरह पूरी नहीं हुईं। निःसंदेह यह भी दिख रहा है कि मतदाताओं ने विपक्षी नेताओं पर भ्रष्टाचार के आरोपों को अधिक महत्व नहीं दिया। इसकी एक वजह जातीय समीकरणों की भूमिका भी हो सकती है। यह सही है कि भारत सरीखे देश में केंद्र हो या राज्य सरकारें, वे न तो सबको संतुष्ट कर सकती हैं और न ही पांच साल में सभी समस्याओं को हल कर सकती हैं, लेकिन उन्हें इस तरह तो काम करना ही चाहिए कि उनमें जनता का भरोसा बढ़े। कम से कम हरियाणा में तो ऐसा होता नहीं दिखा। बेहतर हो कि भाजपा नेतृत्व अपनी राज्य सरकारों के कामकाज की समीक्षा करे। वह इसकी अनदेखी नहीं कर सकता कि तमाम कमजोरियों के बाद भी विपक्ष अपनी जमीन संजबूत करता दिख रहा है। विपक्ष और अधिक मजबूती हासिल कर सका था, यदि कांग्रेस दिशाहीनता से मुक्त होकर अन्य विपक्षी दलों का सही तरह नेतृत्व कर रही होती। जो भी हो, यह अच्छा है कि विपक्ष महाराष्ट्र और हरियाणा में सत्तापक्ष को चुनौती देता और उसे आगाह करता दिखा।

विदेश में बंधक

अधिक रुपये कमाने की उम्मीद में बंगाल से पहले मुंबई गए और फिर वहां से सऊदी अरब और अब वे सभी वहां बंधक बन गए हैं। दरअसल सऊदी अरब के जेद्दा में 21 भारतीयों को बंधक बना लिया गया है जिनमें 20 लोग बंगाल के हैं, जबकि एक मुंबई का रहने वाला है। यही नहीं उनसे उनका वीजा एवं पासपोर्ट तक छीन लिया गया है। जेद्दा में बंधक बने सभी लोग पेशे से गोल्ड कारीगर हैं। सऊदी में नौकरी कर अधिक रुपये कमा कर अपने परिवार को खुशहाली देने के लिए वे लोग एक एजेंट के माध्यम से जेद्दा गए थे। इन 21 भारतीयों को सऊदी के गोल्ड मार्केट में नौकरी दिलाने का झांसा दिया गया और वे सभी झांसे में फंस भी गए। उन लोगों को यह भी पता नहीं चला कि वे तस्करों के चंगुल में फंस चुके हैं। वहां फंसे कारीगरों में बंगाल के हावड़ा जिले के चार, हुगली के दस, पूर्व बर्द्धमान के तीन, उत्तर और दक्षिण 24 परगना जिले के तीन हैं, जबकि एक मुंबई का ही रहने वाला है। ये लोग मुंबई गोल्ड मार्केट गहने तैयार करते थे।

नेशनल एंटी ट्रैफिकिंग कमेटी के अध्यक्ष शेख जिन्नार अली का कहना है कि उन्हें शांतनु पाल के परिवार ने फोन किया था। उनके जरिये उन्हें पता चला कि दो साल पहले एक एजेंट की मदद से शांतनु जेद्दा के मुशाली फैक्ट्री में काम करने गए थे। वह टूरिस्ट वीजा के तहत वहां गए थे। वीजा पहले से ही एक्सपायर हो चुका है

और लंबे समय से उन्होंने अपने परिवजनों से बात नहीं की है। काफी प्रयासों के बाद उन्होंने अपने परिवार से बात की और बताया कि उनका पासपोर्ट और वीजा जेद्दा में लैंड करते ही उनसे ले लिया गया था। परिवार ने जेद्दा में भारतीय दूतावास में बात करने की कोशिश की, लेकिन असफल रहे।

शांतनु के परिवार ने अली को बताया कि 21 लोगों को वहां अच्छी नौकरी का ख्वाब दिखाकर ले जाया गया था। कई प्रयास के बाद उस नंबर पर संपर्क हुआ जिससे शांतनु ने कॉल की थी। इस बाबत भारतीय विदेश मंत्रालय और बंगाल की सीएम को भी पूरी जानकारी दी गई है। उन्हें सही सलामत वापस लाने के प्रयास किए जा रहे हैं।

परंतु यहां एक सवाल यह उठता है कि लोग तस्करों के झांसे में क्यों फंस जाते हैं? सरकार को भी चाहिए कि ऐसे जालसाजों के खिलाफ सख्त कार्रवाई करे, ताकि फिर कोई गरीब इस तरह से बंधक न बन सके।

सऊदी अरब के जेद्दा

में 21 भारतीयों को

बंधक बना लिया गया

है जिनमें 20 लोग

बंगाल के हैं, जबकि

एक मुंबई का रहने

वाला है



रशीद किदवाई

जहां विधानसभा चुनावों में स्थानीय मुद्दों के बजाय राष्ट्रीय मसलों के दम पर बाजी जीतने का भाजपाई दांव चला नहीं वहीं विपक्ष ने अपने लिए जरूरी संजीवनी हासिल कर ली

महाराष्ट्र और हरियाणा विधानसभा चुनाव के परिणाम निश्चित होैसे नहीं हैं जैसे माने जा रहे थे। दोनों राज्यों के नतीजे ऐसे हैं कि सरकार गठन को लेकर खींचतान तय है। दोनों राज्यों के चुनाव नतीजे अगर भाजपा को अपनी गति-नीति पर नए सिरे से विचार करने के लिए मजबूर करेंगे तो वे कांग्रेस की अंदरूनी राजनीति पर भी असर डालने का काम करेंगे। पहले माना जा रहा था कि कांग्रेस अध्यक्ष के रूप में जल्द ही राहुल गांधी की वापसी हो सकती है। वैसे भी सोनिया गांधी के स्वास्थ्यगत कारणों से कांग्रेस को एक पूर्णकालिक अध्यक्ष की तुरंत आवश्यकता महसूस हो रही थी। सोनिया गांधी खुद भी अड़चन उनके काम करने का तरीका और कांग्रेस के एक तबके को लेकर अविश्वास और तिरस्कार भाव है। दिलचस्प बात यह है कि हरियाणा विधानसभा चुनाव में वहीं तबका कामयाब भी हुआ है। सवाल यह है कि क्या राहुल गांधी खुद के साथ अपनी कार्यशैली बदलने को तैयार हैं?

महाराष्ट्र और हरियाणा के विधानसभा चुनाव परिणाम दोनों ही प्रमुख राष्ट्रीय पार्टियों को कुछ संदेश दे रहे हैं। हरियाणा में भूपेंद्र सिंह हुड्डा पर भरोसा जताने के लिए सोनिया



अवधेश राजपूत

इससे अलग वहां की जीत विपक्ष के निर्जीव शरीर में जान डालने का काम करने वाली है। सोनिया और राहुल गांधी निश्चित ही इस पर चिंतन-मनन कर सकते हैं कि उन्होंने हरियाणा में हुड्डा परिवार पर पहले भरोसा क्यों नहीं किया, जिन्होंने भाजपा की जीत का रास्ता रोक दिया। अब कांग्रेस को कैप्टन अमरिंदर सिंह, कमलनाथ, अशोक गहलोत और भूपेंद्र सिंह हुड्डा जैसे स्थानीय दिग्गजों को ज्यादा महत्व देना चाहिए।

यह याद रखा जाना चाहिए कि 2004 और 2009 की कांग्रेसनीत संग्रम सरकार बनाने और उसे दोबारा सत्ता में लाने में संयुक्त आंध्र प्रदेश प्रांत के वाईएस राजशेखर रेड्डी का बड़ा हाथ था। अगर कांग्रेस वहां जगन मोहन रेड्डी और चंद्रशेखर राव को पार्टी में बनाए रखने में सफल होती तो आज पार्टी दोनों तेलुगु भाषी राज्यों आंध्र प्रदेश और तेलंगाना में कहीं ज्यादा मजबूत होती और वहां उसकी ही सरकार होती।

बरकरार हैं कांग्रेस की चुनौतियां

विधानसभा के चुनाव नतीजे कांग्रेस के राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर कायाकल्प के कोई ठोस संकेत नहीं दे रहे हैं। राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर कांग्रेस के लिए अच्छे

संकेत तब माने जाते जब हरियाणा के ही अनुपात में उसे महाराष्ट्र में भी सीटें मिलतीं, लेकिन ऐसा नहीं हुआ। जहां महाराष्ट्र में वह चौथे नंबर पर जाकर टिकी है वहीं हरियाणा में उसके प्रदर्शन में राष्ट्रीय नेतृत्व का योगदान मुश्किल से ही नजर आता है। निःसंदेह इसी के साथ इसकी भी अनदेखी नहीं की जा सकती कि भाजपा का जहां महाराष्ट्र में दबदबा कम हुआ वहीं हरियाणा में वह बहुमत से पीछे रही। क्या वह एक गैर जाट को मुख्यमंत्री बनाने के भाजपा के प्रयोग की विफलता की निशानी है? जो भी हो, लोकतंत्र प्रमियों के लिए यह कोई संतोष की बात नहीं है कि प्रतिपक्ष की सबसे बड़ी पार्टी क्षेत्रीय उम्मीदों एवं पहचान की राजनीति के बल पर ही जिंदा रहे। आज प्रतिपक्ष जितना कमजोर और दिशाहीन है उतना इससे पहले कभी नहीं था। स्वस्थ लोकतंत्र के लिए यह कोई अच्छी बात नहीं है, पर इस स्थिति के लिए खुद कांग्रेस ही जिम्मेदार है। बीते लोकसभा चुनाव में करीब 12 करोड़ मत हासिल करने के बावजूद कांग्रेस यदि फिर से राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर एक मजबूत पार्टी के रूप में उभरती नहीं दिख रही तो यह अकारण नहीं है। समस्या कांग्रेस की 'काया' में नहीं, बल्कि उसकी 'आत्मा' में है।

वर्ष 2014 में हुए आम चुनाव के पहले सलमान खुशींद ने कहा था कि 'राहुल गांधी हमारे सचिन तेंदुलकर हैं', पर अभी हाल में उन्होंने कहा कि 'हमारे नेता ने हमें छोड़ दिया।' उनके हिसाब से राहुल ही हमें पुनः सत्ता दिलवा सकते हैं, लेकिन उन्हें महाराष्ट्र और हरियाणा में पार्टी की जीत की संभावना नहीं दिख रही थी। पिछले वर्षों में जब-जब कांग्रेस को चुनावी हार का सामना करना पड़ा तब-तब उसने यही कहा कि हम अपनी गलतियों से सीखेंगे, पर सीखने की बात कौन कहे, उन कारणों को भी याद नहीं रखा गया जो हार के मुख्य कारण रहे। 2013 में जब कांग्रेस की चार राज्यों में हार हुई तो राष्ट्रीय नेतृत्व ने कहा कि स्थानीय मुद्दों के असर के कारण ऐसा हुआ, पर जब बीते साल मध्य प्रदेश, राजस्थान, छत्तीसगढ़ भी उसकी जीत हुई तो यह बात नहीं कही गई। 2013 में जब दिल्ली विधानसभा चुनाव में आम आदमी पार्टी की जीत हुई तो राहुल ने कहा था कि 'हम आम आदमी पार्टी से सबक लेंगे।' बाद में यही लगा कि उन्होंने 'आप' से इतना ही सीखा कि किसी पर आधारहीन आरोप लगा दो और



सुरेंद्र किशोर



मुकदमे लड़ने में अपना बहुमूल्य समय जाना करते रहे। कांग्रेस नेतृत्व ने एंटनी कमेटी की रपट से भी कोई सबक नहीं लिया, जबकि एंटनी रपट में ही कांग्रेस के पुनर्जीवन का उपचार मौजूद है। मुश्किल यह है कि पार्टी इस रपट पर सघन चर्चा को ही नहीं तैयार। यह 2014 के लोकसभा चुनावों में कांग्रेस की हार के बाद तैयार की गई थी। एंटनी ने अगस्त, 2014 में अपनी रपट हाईकमान को सौंप दी, पर उस रपट को पूरी तरह नजरअंदाज कर दिया गया। रपट में अन्य बातों के अलावा जो दो मुख्य बातें थी, उन पर यदि कांग्रेस हाईकमान ने चिंतन-मनन किया होता तो शायद पार्टी का कुछ कल्याण होता। ऐसा लगता है कि कांग्रेस ने खुद को सुधारने की क्षमता खो दी है। वह एक खास दर्े पर चल चुकी है जिससे पीछे पलटना उसके लिए संभव नहीं है।

चार सदस्यीय एंटनी कमेटी की रपट में प्रमुख बात यह है कि 'कांग्रेस के बारे में मतदाताओं में यह धारणा बनी कि वह अल्पसंख्यक समुदाय की तरफ झुकी हुई है। इससे भाजपा को चुनावी लाभ मिला। धर्मनिरपेक्षता बनाम सांप्रदायिकता को लेकर कांग्रेस ने जो चुनावी मुद्दा बनाया वह उसके खिलाफ गया। इसके अलावा संग्रम सरकार के दौर में घोटालों की चर्चा ने भी नुकसान पहुंचाया।' क्या कांग्रेस ने एकतरफा धर्मनिरपेक्षता की अपनी रणनीति को छोड़कर संतुलित धर्मनिरपेक्षता की नीति अपनाई? क्या

यदि कांग्रेस के पास कल्पनाशील नेतृत्व होता तो शायद जनता उसकी ओर कहीं अधिक आकर्षित होती

उसने कभी यह कहा कि भ्रष्टाचार के प्रति हमारी शून्य सहनशीलता की नीति है? उसने तो इसके विपरीत हो रखा अपनाया। कांग्रेस नेताओं के खिलाफ जब-जब भ्रष्टाचार को लेकर मुकदमे हुए, छापामारी हुई, बरामदगी हुई, नेतागण जेल भेजे गए, तब-तब कांग्रेस नेतृत्व ने कहा कि 'यह सब बदले की भावना में आकर किया जा रहा है।' यह एक तथ्य है कि कांग्रेस ने चिदंबरम और डोके विश्वकुमार के साथ खड़े होना पसंद किया। भ्रष्टाचार को लेकर जैसी सहनशीलता की नीति कांग्रेस ने आजदी के तत्काल बाद अपनाई वह समय के साथ बढ़ती चली गई। आज वह पराकाष्ठा पर है। कांग्रेस का प्रथम परिवार भी रिश्तेदार सहित आरोपों एवं मुकदमों के घेरे में है। पूर्व प्रधानमंत्री इंदिरा गांधी ने यह कहकर भ्रष्टाचार के प्रति अपनी सहनशीलता प्रकट कर दी थी कि 'भ्रष्टाचार तो वैश्विक परिघटना है। सिर्फ भारत में ही थोड़े ही है।' 'मिस्टर क्लीन' नाम से चर्चित राजीव गांधी को अपनी सरकार पर लगे घोटालों के आरोपों के जवाब देने में ही समय बिताना पड़ा। 1989 में कांग्रेस की सत्ता ऐसे गई कि फिर उसे कभी लोकसभा में बहुमत नहीं मिल सका। बाद के वर्षों में कांग्रेस ने जोड़-तोड़ कर सरकारें बनानी शुरू कीं। एक समय मनमोहन सिंह ने यह माना था कि मिलीजुली सरकार में समझौते करने की मजबूरी होती है। मजबूरी की उसी धारा में कांग्रेस आज भी बह रही है। दूसरी ओर केंद्र में एक ऐसी सरकार है जिसके प्रधानमंत्री कहते हैं कि 'न खाऊंगा और न खाने दूंगा।' उन्होंने अपने मंत्रिमंडल को घोटालों से अब तक दूर रखा है। अधिकतर लोग पहले की और अब की सरकारों में अंतर देख रहे हैं। दूसरा अंतर देश की सुरक्षा के मोर्चे पर आया है। यदि पड़ोसी देश कोई दुःसाहस करता है तो मोदी सरकार नतीजों की परवाह किए बिना उसका प्रतिकार करती है। अनुच्छेद-370 और 35ए को निष्क्रिय करने के निर्णय से जहददी आतंकवादियों से लड़ने में सुविधा हो रही है।

कांग्रेस को सर्वाधिक नुकसान वंशवाद को लेकर हो रहा है। यदि आज कांग्रेस के पास कल्पनाशील नेतृत्व होता और वह वाजिब मुद्दे चुनकर उन पर खुद को केंद्रित करता तो महाराष्ट्र और हरियाणा में जनता उसकी ओर कहीं अधिक आकर्षित होती। तब शायद इन दोनों राज्यों में चुनावों के पहले ही यह माहौल न बनता कि कांग्रेस के जीतने की संभावनाएं कम हैं।

(लेखक राजनीतिक विश्लेषक एवं वरिष्ठ स्तंभकार हैं)

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करती तो महाराष्ट्र में उसकी स्थिति कुछ और बेहतर हो सकती थी। निश्चित ही इस वक्त कांग्रेस को नए नेतृत्व की अत्यंत आवश्यकता है। इसके अलावा पार्टी में ऊपर से नीचे तक सांगठनिक पुर्नगठन और जिम्मेदारियां देने के साथ जवाबदेही तय करने की भी जरूरत है। कांग्रेस के साथ भाजपा को भी यह समझने की जरूरत है कि राष्ट्रीय मसलों के सहारे राज्यों के चुनाव नहीं जीते जा सकते। महाराष्ट्र और हरियाणा के चुनाव नतीजे यह साफ-साफ कह रहे हैं कि मोदी सरकार के प्रति सकारात्मक रखा रखने वाले मतदाता भी भाजपा की राज्य सरकारों के प्रति अपनी नाखुशी जाहिर करने में पीछे नहीं रहने वाले।

महाराष्ट्र और हरियाणा में विधानसभा चुनावों के कुछ राज्यों में विधानसभाओं के उपचुनाव भी उल्लेखनीय हैं। कुछ नतीजे तो बहुत दिलचस्प हैं और वे राजनीति को प्रभावित करने वाले भी हैं। मध्य प्रदेश के झाबुआ विधानसभा क्षेत्र में हुआ उपचुनाव इसका उदाहरण है। वहां से कांग्रेस उम्मीदवार कांतिलाल भूरिया की जीत के मायने कमलनाथ सरकार की मजबूती है। कांग्रेस को अब राज्य में अपने बलबूते पूर्ण बहुमत भी मिल गया है। दूसरी ओर कांग्रेस की आंतरिक राजनीति में इस जीत के दूसरे मायने हैं। कमलनाथ और दिग्विजय सिंह गुट द्वारा अब भूरिया को प्रदेश कांग्रेस अध्यक्ष के रूप में पेश किया जाएगा जिससे ज्योतिरादित्य सिंधिया की अध्यक्ष पद की दावेदारी की काट काी जा सके। याद रहे कि मध्य प्रदेश की राजनीति में प्रभावशाली सिंधिया खेमा अध्यक्ष पद के लिए दावेदारी पेश करता रहता है। भूरिया की जीत के बाद उन्हें भी इस पद के दावेदार के तौर पर प्रस्तुत किया जा सकता है जो प्रदेश के आदिवासी समाज का प्रतिनिधित्व करते हैं।

(लेखक ऑब्जर्वर रिसर्च फाउंडेशन में

फेलो एवं वरिष्ठ स्तंभकार हैं)

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संप्रदाय

संप्रदाय का अर्थ है-धर्म का पथ-विशेष। एक संप्रदाय साधक को या अनुयायी को एक पथ प्रदान करता है, जिस पर चलकर वह धर्म धारा निर्दिष्ट लक्ष्य तक पहुंच सके। एक ग्रंथ, एक उपासना, एक आचार-पद्धति जहाँ भी प्रचलित है, जहाँ भी कला जाता है-कल्याण का यही मार्ग है, वह संप्रदाय है। संप्रदाय-शब्द न संकीर्णतायुक्त है और न हेय है। यह तो विवेकीय लोगों की एक लंबी परंपरा ने इस शब्द के प्रति लोक में अरुचि पैदा कर दी। 'इस साधन एवं मार्ग के अलावा मानव का कल्याण संभव ही नहीं। दूसरे सभी मार्ग भ्रांत, हेय एवं त्याज्य हैं।' यह मिथ्या भ्रम अहंकार एवं अविवेक के कारण पुष्ट हुआ और उसने इस शब्द के प्रति उपेक्षा उत्पन्न कर दी। सांप्रदायिक का अर्थ ही संकीर्ण मनोवृत्ति का व्यक्ति माना जाने लगा। 'हमारा मार्ग सर्वथा ठीक है। हमारा मंत्र, ग्रंथ, गुरु, उपासना, आचार गूढ़ि रहित है। हमारे लिए वही सर्वश्रेष्ठ मार्ग है।' यह निष्ठा काफी हद तक आवश्यक हो सकती है, किंतु इस निष्ठा के साथ दूसरे मार्गों, मंत्रों, ग्रंथों, गुरुओं, उपासना एवं आचार-पद्धतियों से द्वेष अथवा घृणा नहीं होनी चाहिए। सांप्रदायिकता का अर्थ है-साधनपथा रुढ़ा जो धर्म के लक्ष्य को प्राप्त करना चाहता है, उसे कोई न कोई पथ तो अपनाना ही होगा। शैव, वैष्णव, बौद्ध, जैन, सिख आदि ही संप्रदाय नहीं हैं। आज जिन्हें ब्रम्हव धर्म का नाम दिया जाता है, वे यहुदी, ईसाई, इस्लाम, पारसी आदि भी संप्रदाय ही हैं, क्योंकि यह भी लक्ष्य तक पहुंचाने वाले पथ हैं। इनमें एक साधन, एक आधार-पद्धति प्रदान की जाती है। धर्म सार्वभौमिक वस्तु है। वह तो भूमि है, जिस पर नाना-पथ हैं। सब पथ भूमि पर हैं। अतः धर्म का मूल रूप सब संप्रदायों में स्वीकृत है, लेकिन पथों की अपनी विशेषताएँ हैं। चलने वाले के अधिकार के अनुसार है ये पथ। संप्रदाय पथ है, भूमि नहीं। महापुरुष नूतन-पथ का निर्माण सदा से करते रहे हैं और करते रहेंगे। उसके नष्ट होने का अर्थ है प्रलय। धारण करने वाले तत्व का नाम धर्म है। वह नहीं रहेगा तो मनुष्यता पर जाएगी। वह तो नित्य है, सत्य है। इसीलिए 'धर्म' सनातन है।

डॉ. विजय प्रकाश त्रिपाठी

कारण काम के दबाव के कारण अधिकांश कर्मों चुस्त-दुरुस्त होकर अपना काम नहीं कर पाते हैं। पुलिसकर्मों भी एक सामाजिक प्राणी होता है। उसका भी एक परिवार होता है, लेकिन काम के घटे तब न होने के कारण परिवार पर वह ध्यान नहीं दे पाता है। वह खुशी की बात है कि गृहमंत्री ने इस ओर ध्यान दिया है।

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प्रशासन की विफलता

आज कोई भी व्यक्ति सुरक्षित नहीं है। चाहे वह उच्च पद पर आसीन व्यक्ति हो या कोई आम आदमी। इसका सबसे जीता जागता उदाहरण है कमलेश तिवारी की दिन दहाड़े हत्या। ऐसे में इसे किस दृष्टिकोण से देखा जाए, सरकार की कमी या प्रशासन की विफलता? कमलेश तिवारी ने धर्म विशेष को लेकर विवादित टिप्पणी की थी। इसके लिए उन्हें जेल में भी रहना पड़ा था, किंतु सवाल उठता है कि जिस मौलाना ने कमलेश तिवारी का सर कलम करने पर डेढ़ करोड़ का इनाम रखा था, उन पर कार्रवाई क्यों नहीं की गई? anupamnyadav943@gmail.com

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

अपने पत्र इस पते पर भेजें :

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The Tribune

ESTABLISHED IN 1881

Hit hard by hubris

Setbacks in Haryana, Maharashtra a wake-up call for BJP

THE Assembly elections and the Lok Sabha polls are poles apart, even if these are held within months of each other. Euphoric over its emphatic victory in the 2019 General Election, the BJP had conveniently forgotten this basic truism of electoral politics. The results of the Haryana and Maharashtra Assembly polls have bitterly reminded the saffron party that extrapolating the bigger battle's outcome to that of the smaller one is a perilous strategy. The ruling party's tally of seats has dropped significantly in both states. The fall has been harder in Haryana, where Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar faces a Herculean task cobbling together a coalition government. In Maharashtra, ageing stalwart Sharad Pawar has shown the BJP-Shiv Sena alliance that he is no also-ran even in the twilight of his career.

The BJP, which had won all 10 Lok Sabha seats in the northern state in May this year, committed the blunder of writing off the beleaguered Congress and the fledgling Jannayak Janata Party (JJP). With the Grand Old Party's high command lying low, it all boiled down to how hard ex-CM Bhupinder Singh Hooda and former Union Minister Selja could push themselves. And both did a fairly good job as the Congress comfortably emerged as the second-largest party — quite a turnaround after its forgettable show in the 2014 Assembly elections. Another key factor was Khattar's failure to dispel the perception that the state government was being remote-controlled from New Delhi.

The plank of national security had done the trick for the BJP in this year's Lok Sabha polls in the backdrop of the Pulwama terror attack and the Balakot airstrikes. The party tried to run a similar tape in the Assembly elections, where local issues are of paramount importance. In the self-congratulatory mode after the abrogation of Article 370, the BJP came a cropper in addressing the concerns of farmers and other major vote banks. The voters of Haryana and Maharashtra have pricked the party's bubble of invincibility. Accepting the mandate with humility and recalibrating its policies should be the way forward. There is no room for complacency any more.

Regularising illegal colonies

Populism apart, providing amenities a major challenge

BY approving the proposal to regularise unauthorised colonies in Delhi, the Centre has sought to trump the ruling AAP ahead of the Assembly elections slated for February 2020. To address its core base — the *aam aadmi* — Arvind Kejriwal's government had been doling out sops in the form of free electricity, water and bus rides for women, to name a few. By announcing the decision to grant ownership rights to those living in illegal colonies, a move expected to benefit 40-50 lakh people, mostly migrants or those belonging to the low-income groups, the Centre has tried to steal AAP's thunder. While Kejriwal had accused the Central government of wanting to demolish these colonies, Union Minister Hardeep Puri returned the barb, blaming AAP for 'delaying' the decision. It is also significant that while the Centre initiated the NRC to identify 'non-citizens', it has opted to be more inclusive in Delhi, electoral gains perhaps the prime mover.

The 1,797 unauthorised colonies are spread over all 70 constituencies, with nearly two lakh voters in each constituency. The government has said ownership rights would be given to the residents at extremely low rates and the colonies would be categorised depending on the type of land they have come up on. The process is to begin with the delineation of boundaries for which there was a proposal to use satellite images or even drone mapping. The Centre has accused the Delhi Government of not doing so and seeking time till 2021. The proposal does not apply to 69 affluent colonies, a major stumbling block earlier.

Regularisation may push up property prices but the challenge lies in providing infrastructure in a city already stretched to its limits. There is a lesson for both the AAP and BJP after the Maharashtra and Haryana elections. You can't rest on your laurels and take voters for granted. Constant striving and maintaining connect are the only ways not to yield ground.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

The only thing more dangerous than ignorance is arrogance. — **Albert Einstein**

ON THIS DAY...100 YEARS AGO

The Tribune.

LAHORE, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 25, 1919

Mr. Norton on Lord Sinha.

MR. Eardley Norton's ill-tempered attack on Lord Sinha in the pages of a recent issue of the *Looker On* must have been noticed by many. It was reproduced, we have not really been able to understand why, by almost all Indian-edited papers, perhaps with the solitary exception of ourselves. Mr. Norton brought some definite charges against Lord Sinha. We are glad to find that Mr. S.R. Bomanji writing to the press from England nails to the counter almost all these charges. One of these charges was that Lord Sinha was elected President of the Bombay Congress in 1915 by official authority. Mr. Bomanji, who was one of the Secretaries of the Reception Committee, says that he knows it as a matter of fact that it was at the earnest request of Sir Pherozeshah Mehta and Sir Dinshaw Wacha backed by Mr. Bhupendranath Basu and other Congress leaders that Lord Sinha ultimately agreed to accept the Presidency of the Congress. As regards the other charge that Lord Sinha never subscribed to the Congress funds Mr. Bomanji writes: "I know he personally paid a considerable sum of money to the Congress and paid off a substantial portion of the debt which the Bengal Congress Committee owed to the British Committee." On the other charge brought by Mr. Norton that Lord Sinha had submitted the draft of his Presidential address to Lord Carmichael for approval, Mr. Bomanji observes: "I know it is not true and I speak on the best authority; he sent to Lord Carmichael a printed copy of his speech when he was sending other copies to the Press." Any comment on the above is needless. We hope that Mr. Norton will, after this, withdraw all that he said. That is the only honourable course left open to him.

Two states, one message

BJP's cloak of invincibility is off, but the Opposition is stuck without a leader



NOUS INDICA
RAJESH RAMACHANDRAN

AFTER two high-profile Assembly elections, it may seem odd to analyse the performance of the loser instead of finding reasons to praise the winner. Well, the story of the Opposition snatching defeat from the jaws of victory is infinitely more interesting than a lacklustre, down-to-the-wire victory for the ruling party. Despite being two completely dissimilar states, Maharashtra and Haryana have thrown up results that have a lot in common: while the BJP dropped more than 10 per cent seats, thereby losing its sheen of invincibility in Maharashtra, it has lost even its majority in Haryana. Most Haryana ministers have lost, again proving that the Modi magic is not enough to tide over anti-incumbency. In short, the abrogation of Article 370 or Hindutva hyper-nationalism is no counter to the lack of governance, administrative sloth and representational politics, termed loosely as caste combinations.

Yet, the Opposition could not win these elections. And the prime reason is the brand of politics pursued by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, who gets it wrong election after election. He refused to anoint a strong satrap for Maharashtra; and his antipathy for Bhupinder Singh Hooda has cost his party the government in Haryana. This is a strange situation where the primary Opposition party's leader lands up to perform during the polls, only to vanish later, leaving the cadre and its regional leaders in the lurch. There is something seriously wrong with Rahul Gandhi's leadership, particularly when he is compared with the 78-year-old Sharad Pawar and 72-year-old Hooda. Pawar single-handedly campaigned all across his strongholds in Maharashtra, turning the tide in favour



IRONY: Bhupinder Singh Hooda's performance is a bigger setback to Rahul Gandhi than to BJP Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar.

Despite a stunning show, the Opposition could not taste victory. The prime reason: the brand of politics pursued by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi.

of his party, NCP, which emerged as the single-largest Opposition party.

The Congress has always taken the larger share of seats in the Maharashtra alliance, but this time around, the NCP has proven that though it contested a lesser number of seats, it is the bigger and stronger partner. This, despite the BJP trying its best to poach and get NCP's second-rung leaders to defect. What was missing in the campaign for the Congress was a tall leader, who could sway the masses or concentrate all the anti-government forces, factors and emotions. The results could have been different had the alliance worked as one under the leadership of Pawar. But then, Congress president Sonia Gandhi could never trust Pawar, or for that matter any organic mass leader who could pose a threat to her son.

Hooda was on the verge of splitting the Congress in Haryana until the first week of September. Rahul Gandhi's chosen men in Haryana, Ashok Tanwar and Randeep Surjewala, had been proven disastrous, yet the high command did its best to push the party's tallest leader out. Somehow Hooda managed to hang on and his performance is actually a bigger setback to Rahul than to BJP Chief Minister

ML Khattar, because Hooda managed to win 100 per cent more seats than the Congress did in 2014. Hooda's comeback could have been more spectacular had he been in the saddle after Surjewala's miserable defeat in the bypolls earlier this year.

That brings us to the biggest question: what is essentially wrong with Rahul's politics? He claims to usher in alternative politics of social transformation. But this cannot be achieved by frequently flying out for vacations and flying in to abuse Modi. Transformative politics happens on the ground and Rahul as a politician always relied on others to even manage Amethi, his family inheritance, finally losing it after he threw out the man who worked hard all these years for him. A politician who claims to represent new ideas in politics had to rely on Kerala's moth-eaten minority politics to re-enter Lok Sabha.

So, his great disdain for the old guard is just skin-deep, or more precisely a bundle of prejudices over personal choices, and has nothing to do with politics of probity or justice. Most in his coterie are just as feudal, opportunistic and corrupt as those he dislikes. The only difference is that his coterie com-

Gifting, the big dilemma

ANIRUDH DHANDA

I AM again confused. Should I try contributing to the economy of the country by buying gifts on Diwali or stick to the long-taken vow to refrain from this useless and painfully tiring activity?

Buying a gift is a tedious exercise. More than the money involved, you have to invest time in thinking if the gift would be appropriate for the person. What would suit his taste or what his household would love to display?

Even in case of gifting on general occasions like birthdays and anniversaries you have to be very careful. A vase or a bedcover on a birthday or just anything lying in the house on an anniversary are absolute disas-

ters. It is particularly tricky when you want to pass off something gifted to you by someone, which you yourself don't like. It is possible that you are gifting back the same suit length that was given by the same friend on your previous birthday! Such passing off of a gift is a social risk.

Though a gift is bestowed voluntarily, it may have an underlying wish and expectation of return. That would be the case where gifting is being done as a quid pro quo. A gift can also be a thanks-giving act for the deed done to you by the other person, perhaps for a service rendered free of cost. And Diwali is the most opportune time to express gratitude in the form of a thoughtful gift. Again, weird things may happen.

You may be the sixth person giving the same vase or same cake the other person has received since morning. If you are in public life, you may not even know the face hidden behind the huge box that he carries to your room. The wives are also decked up since morning with a tray of sweets and dry fruits to be offered to the 'gifters', known personally or through business cards stapled on the top of the gift box.

Gifting also has its codes. A significant fraction of gifts are unwanted. At times, the giver pays more for the item than the recipient values. A 2009 study in the *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* found that although givers tend to think a fancier, expensive gift will be appreciated more, receivers are happier with

cheaper, more practical presents.

Nathan Novemsky, a professor of marketing at Yale University, cautions not to overdo the gift wrap. Pretty wrapping raises expectations for a gift and increases the risk of the receiver being disappointed if the present doesn't live up to their expectations. A heavy box containing a fluffy cake may result in immediate disappointment.

It also helps to ask what he or she wants because there comes a point in everybody's life when you just don't want any more useless, though well-intentioned, junk.

The best, I would say, is to stay home, away from the market. This also will save fuel and the environment from toxic fumes!

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Let Sikhs take first step

Apropos 'Let's imbibe Guru's message of harmony' (October 24), the writer has rightly concluded that the country must act sincerely on the Guru's teachings on universal brotherhood. However, he seems to be asking for the moon. For, leave alone the country as a whole, first let the Sikhs sincerely adopt and practise the Guru's preachings, not only regarding social harmony, but also those prohibiting them to perform Brahmanic religious rituals, which the Guru condemned vociferously.

BALVINDER, BY MAIL

Wary of Khalistani agenda

The leader of the New Democratic Party, Jagmeet Singh, can become the kingmaker with his party's 24 seats in Trudeau's minority government. But Trudeau will do well to keep in mind Punjab CM Capt Amarinder Singh's earlier advice about keeping a check on Khalistani forces if he takes NDP's help to form the government. The CM's concerns about the burgeoning Khalistani elements and influence in the Canadian government must be taken seriously. Jagmeet Singh reportedly has Khalistani leanings.

PS KAUR, BY MAIL

Why not disqualified?

Refer to 'U-turn may not help Khaira, Jaito MLA' (October 24); they ought to have been disqualified from the state Assembly as they were ousted from the AAP and further 'voluntarily gave up their membership' in the wake of forming a new political outfit which contested the 2019 Lok Sabha elections but couldn't win a solitary seat. It shows the inefficiency of the Speaker, who did not attend to the matter for nearly a year, and later permitted the rebel MLAs to withdraw their resignation.

SIRAT SAPRA, FAZILKA

Kerala paradox

Reference to 'Haryana has 3rd highest crime rate: NCRB report' (October 23); Kerala has recorded the highest crime rate in India, followed by Delhi and Haryana. It is strange since Kerala has always led with the highest literacy rate. And now, it has the highest crime rate! If there is no control on crime in such a literate state, what about states where the literacy rate is already poor?

GARIMA SHARMA, CHANDIGARH

Haryana crime rate

The NCRB report has rated Haryana as the third highest crime state, with 1,072 murders

and 1,099 rapes. The state registered 2,408 cases of rioting and over 20,000 thefts. The most surprising fact is that in the past few years, crime against women and children have increased rapidly. The condition of police reforms is more deplorable than other states. Unnecessary political interference must be avoided and police personnel should be equipped with police manuals and the latest legal challenges.

DEVENDER KUMAR, SIRSA

BCCI in safe hands

Much is expected from the new BCCI president Sourav Ganguly because he is known as a person with practical approach in the action-oriented field of cricket ('Dada takes charge', October 24). His words after assuming the charge speak volumes of his awareness of ground realities. The future of cricket in the country is now in safe and able hands. It will also show the way to other sports bodies to give the reins of respective sports to capable sportspersons for better results on the field.

DV SHARMA, MUKERIAN

Ganguly inspires

Refer to 'Ganguly takes over' (October 24); the Committee of

Administrators has done a good job, though arduous, by selecting Sourav Ganguly as BCCI's 39th president. The formation of a Cricketers' Association is an appreciable move towards maintaining the genuineness of the sport and enabling players to have a say in how to run its administration. All state units should also be firmly directed to comply with the Lodha Committee's recommendations.

SUNENA, CHANDIGARH

For meaningful Diwali

Diwali is the celebration of lights and happiness, but we celebrate it by burning crackers and polluting our environment by generating poisonous gases — '*Jab diyon se ho sakta hai ujiyara toh kyon lein hum patakon ka sahara?*' Light diyas and share sweets with neighbours. Shun bad habits like drinking, gambling and violence. Plant more trees. Stay away from crackers and start making your resolutions for the coming year. Celebrate Diwali by taking blessings from your parents and elders. Share your love with poor children and illuminate their home through some act of charity. A single smile on the face of a poor child can make your Diwali most successful and rewarding.

SUBER SINGH PARIHAR, JALARI

Regional leaders make their presence felt



RADHIKA RAMASESHAN
SENIOR JOURNALIST

IN the end, regardless of the numbers and the degree of competition among the stakeholders, it is the spirit of the mandate emanating from the Maharashtra and Haryana Assembly polls that is likely to leave its imprint not only on the states but also on the country. Every electoral outcome carries one or more messages for the players and the electorate. The latest Assembly elections — the first to be held after the BJP's spectacular showing in the Lok Sabha polls in May 2019 — came with a cautionary tale for the ruling party, valuable counsel for the Congress and hope and optimism for the regional parties that have emerged as king-makers or pressure groups in both Haryana and Maharashtra after a long spell of a near-hegemonic hold over the polity by the BJP.

Dismissed as 'tiresomely one-sided' by political pundits and a 'BJP-all-the-way' reading by most pollsters, with one honourable exception, the results sprang a surprise. Doubtless, the BJP and its ally, the Shiv Sena, swung Maharashtra for a second innings, but the result had a significant subtext.

First, the BJP's aspirations to surpass the Sena, that had not been the amenable of partners in Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis' first tenure, were dashed. The BJP barely reached the three-digit mark,

although objectively speaking, it contested fewer seats this time than it did in 2014 when it went solo and teamed up with the Sena after the elections. The BJP and the Sena riled each other on quite a few seats, while on one, the allies were pitted against one another, although the BJP picked up this contentious seat.

The debut of Aaditya Thackeray, son of Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray, was a source of unease for the BJP. Aaditya, who is on a serious image makeover for a party that was identified with parochialism, minority bashing and a warped sense of what 'Indianness' was, largely discarded the Sena's legacy issues such as disrupting Valentine's Day celebrations and shutting down pubs and spoke a modern language that facilitated a connect with the new urban demography. Aaditya's cheerleaders became his ventriloquists mid-way through electioneering and demanded that he should be made the CM in sync with the BJP's old formula of leaving Maharashtra to the Sena and keeping the Centre. Uddhav half-heartedly squashed the demand, while the BJP insisted that Fadnavis would continue to helm the coalition.

Fadnavis looks a tad vulnerable because the BJP has not secured the numbers it had hoped for, certainly not achieving a tally that would place it in a commanding position over the Sena. Worse, for Fadnavis, the BJP suffered its losses in Vidarbha, his backyard (he won from Nagpur south west), whose farmers were seriously impacted by successive droughts that Fadnavis' flagship irrigation schemes were unable to mitigate.

Although the 36 seats in Mumbai were not affected by poor civic infrastructure, the environmental damage caused by the reclamation of forest



OLD WARHORSE: NCP chief Sharad Pawar with granddaughter Revati Sule. He continues to be relevant in Maharashtra politics.

The Nationalist Congress Party won more seats than the Congress to become the third-largest party in the new Maharashtra Assembly. However, the more significant takeaway from the NCP's showing was that regional leaders with a grassroots connect were more capable of challenging the BJP, when push came to shove.

land at the Aarey Milk complex for Metro rail expansion and a massive cooperative bank scam that entailed the loss of lifetime savings for middle-class pensioners, the BJP had to forgo seats in the rural areas, reinforcing the trend of a rural-urban divide that was manifest in an earlier slew of Assembly polls held in December 2018. While the Congress, beset with factionalism, bereft of credible state leaders and the absence of the Gandhis for the most part from the campaign (Rahul Gandhi addressed occasional meetings), proved hopelessly ineffective in taking advantage of the anti-incumbency sentiment against the Maharashtra government, its ally, the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), took as much advantage as its leader, Sharad Pawar, could in the twilight of his political career.

The BJP hollowed out to the NCP,

spiriting away its local weighty leaders who controlled the cooperatives and other sources of institutional patronage to the extent it could. Pawar was not deterred. He soldiered on, invoking his Maratha legacy. Perhaps, a defining image of the election was of Pawar campaigning in heavy rain at Satara, where the BJP had taken away a strong local influencer, Udayan Raje Bhosale, a descendant of Chhatrapati Shivaji. The combination of sympathy and his political inheritance worked because Bhosale lost to the NCP's new candidate. The NCP won more seats than the Congress to become the third-largest party in the new Assembly. However, the more significant takeaway from the NCP's showing was that regional leaders with a grassroots connect were more capable of challenging the BJP, when push came to shove.

The BJP's attempts to frame Pawar

and his political confidant, Praful Patel, on graft charges and for alleged links with the Mumbai underworld, did not upset the NCP's prospects because the allegations were levelled on election eve and smacked of ruthless cynicism.

If the Congress cared to objectively analyse the results of the Maharashtra and Haryana polls, two features will not escape its attention. One, they underscored the indisputable place that the regional satraps hold, irrespective of how 'powerful' a high command might be. The performance put in by Pawar, Bhupinder Singh Hooda and young Dushyant Chautala underscored the importance of identifying and nurturing provincial leaders. Indeed, had the Gandhis given Hooda and his son, Deepender Hooda, enough political and managerial latitude well in advance, and not pitted factions against one another through rootless players, Haryana might have turned in a different narrative.

Second, the involvement of the Gandhis in these elections was minimal. Sonia Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra were absent, while Rahul put in a token appearance. What did that signify? That the Congress seriously needed to revisit its command structures?

For the BJP, the takeaways were that overuse of aggressive nationalism had its limitations; economics cannot be decoupled from politics; and the Assembly and parliamentary elections are qualitatively different. Doubtless, it has morphed a Lok Sabha election into a presidential-style mandate for an individual. A state election has its own dynamics, one of them being that *dal-roti* issues take precedence over an offensive against Pakistan.

India should tread warily on free trade treaty



India must not be at a disadvantage in opening up to countries that are highly competitive. The country has to weigh carefully the gains to be had from signing the treaty under the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). The main advantage will be that India would be able to purchase its raw material and intermediate goods at concessional prices from other members.

THE recent one-on-one talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping at Mamallapuram on trade and investment had one tangible outcome. There will be a mechanism in place soon to study the problems pertaining to trade and investment between the two countries. It will be important to sort out various trade issues before India accepts the terms and conditions of the mega free trade treaty, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), comprising 16 countries — 10 ASEAN nations plus China, Japan, India, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand. It will be the world's biggest economic bloc, covering nearly half of the global economy, a little less than half of the world's population, and accounting for 39 per cent of the world's GDP. Joining it perhaps will give India an advantage to negotiate the terms and conditions from within. Many members of the deal are now quite impatient about completing the treaty by November 2019.

While it is true that most of the world trade is taking place within regional arrangements and Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), India must not be at a disadvantage in opening up to countries that are highly competitive; its most important competitor is China. India has to weigh carefully the gains to be had from signing the treaty, which may mean making itself vulnerable to having its markets inundated with Chinese goods.

The main advantage will be that



FORMIDABLE: China subsidises its exports and its financial architecture supports export production massively. China is India's most important competitor.

India would be able to purchase its raw material and intermediate goods at concessional prices from other members under the mega FTA. On its own, if India has to purchase these goods in the international markets, these would cost much more. Intermediate goods are vital for making Indian exports competitive.

The other advantage which many economists are pointing out is that India has to integrate itself into the global value chains which produce parts of goods in different countries but are assembled in a host country like China. The edge lies in being able to enter into a chain of global orders by multinational corporations to developing countries to produce goods that are sold internationally

under well-known brand names. Most of the countries to our East are participating in the global value chains and reaping the benefits of an increase in income and employment.

The treaty may also lead to more FDI inflows from member countries, now that the government has reduced the corporate tax rates. FDI can create jobs and rev up exports and reverse the economic slowdown.

In the recent past, however, according to a research paper by Niti Aayog, India's numerous FTAs with regional partners have not yielded positive results. In most cases, the FTAs have been followed by an increase in imports from the partner country; India has trade deficits with 13 member countries of the RCEP. The India-ASEAN FTA

has led to a bigger trade deficit than before. With South Korea, Japan and Thailand, too, there have been similar results. The surge in imports takes place as soon as the FTA is concluded, but a similar thrust in exports is missing. The auto trigger mechanism of higher tariffs proposed by India to check the sudden surge in imports may be ineffective due to lack of monitoring infrastructure. Slack export production in India is due to lack of competitiveness in today's world, as shown by the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Index on which India has slipped 10 places to the 68th rank.

We are losing out to our neighbouring countries due to higher logistics costs and lack of proper port facilities that lead to higher turnaround time for ships. Indian companies' labour costs are high because India is not resorting to sweatshop wages. On the whole, in terms of quality and price, we seem to be lagging behind our neighbours and that is why foreign firms leaving Chinese shores due to the US-China trade war and an increase in tariffs are not coming to India. Also, industrial growth was only 1.1 per cent in August.

India has an advantage in services exports and has demanded freer movement of its service personnel within the RCEP and data localisation. This will give a boost to our services exports despite the language barrier. This demand has not been accepted by the RCEP so far. All that the treaty wants India to do is to reduce its tariff lines on

80 to 90 per cent of imported goods. Reducing tariffs on almost all imports would be like an open invitation to all 15 members to flood Indian markets with their goods. India is not able to compete with China on many items and New Zealand in dairy; it is this lack of competitiveness which has led to greater unpreparedness for India.

First and foremost, India has to improve its industrial growth rapidly which may not be easy, given our creaky infrastructure, shortage of skilled labour and complex bureaucracy. For all RCEP members, except China, the domestic market is small and hence, they need to expand exports and are doing so aggressively. China subsidises its exports and its financial architecture supports export production massively. Being an authoritarian state, it has a smoother bureaucracy and there is little scope for disruptions in production. That is how China has become the world's biggest exporter.

China has to give more access to Indian exports, especially of pharmaceuticals and agricultural products. Hopefully, the Modi-Xi meeting will lead to addressing the reasons for India's ballooning trade deficit of \$53 billion in 2018-19. There are too many non-tariff barriers in place in China which have to be removed, which could lead to more investment flows between the two countries. Otherwise, progressively low tariff rates which form the core of the RCEP treaty, will seriously hurt our dairy, steel, MSME and textile sectors.

QUICK CROSSWORD

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YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

Across: 1 Apathy, 4 Across, 9 Spartan, 10 On end, 11 Match, 12 Endgame, 13 Warts-and-all, 18 Infidel, 20 Vital, 22 Huron, 23 Up to now, 24 Return, 25 Devour.

Down: 1 Assume, 2 Adapt, 3 Hatchet, 5 Crowd, 6 Overall, 7 Sadden, 8 Under a cloud, 14 At first, 15 Devotee, 16 Dither, 17 Glower, 19 Donor, 21 Tango.

ACROSS

1 Suave (4-6)

8 Romany (5)

9 Power of endurance (7)

10 Caller (7)

11 Standard of perfection (5)

12 Downgrade (6)

14 Greek Aegean island (6)

17 Largest African country (5)

19 Result (7)

21 Tropical cyclone (7)

22 Move stealthily (5)

23 Tough and realistic (4-6)

DOWN

2 Resisted (7)

3 Lover's meeting (5)

4 Piecrust (6)

5 Rascally (7)

6 Din (5)

7 Nod off (4,6)

8 Bring about (4,4,2)

13 Frankness (7)

15 Bishop's jurisdiction (7)

16 Associate familiarly (6)

18 Profundity (5)

20 Unspoken (5)

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EASY

CALENDAR

OCTOBER 25, 2019, FRIDAY

■ Vikrami Samvat

2076

■ Shaka Samvat

1941

■ Kartik Shaka

3

■ Kartik Parvishte

9

■ Hijari

1441

■ Krishan Paksh Tithi 12, up to 7.08 pm

■ Brahma Yoga up to 9.56 pm

■ Ender Yoga up to 6.03 am

■ Purvaphalguni Nakshatra up to 11.00 am

■ Moon enters Virgo sign 4.23 pm

■ Dhan Triyodshi Vrat.

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

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FORECAST

SUNSET:

FRIDAY

17:41 HRS

SUNRISE:

SATURDAY

06:32 HRS

Sunny

Partly Cloudy

Cloudy

Rainy

Foggy

CITY

Chandigarh

30

18

New Delhi

31

17

PUNJAB

Amritsar

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Bathinda

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Jalandhar

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Ludhiana

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HARYANA

Bhiwani

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Sirsa

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HIMACHAL PRADESH

Dharamsala

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Manali

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Shimla

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JAMMU & KASHMIR

Jammu

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Leh

Srinagar

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04

UTTARAKHAND

Dehradun

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16

Mussoorie

21

10

TEMPERATURE IN °C

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The IndianEXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

DENTED AT THE TOP

BJP returns in Maharashtra, may be back in Haryana, but will have to address new questions

FOR A PARTY for which no election is too small, and which aggressively courts an aura of invincibility, there are unmistakable messages writ on the Haryana and Maharashtra walls. The outcomes of the assembly elections in these two states are a warning that the BJP cannot take its winning streak for granted, that there is something tenuous and nothing inevitable about it — it managed to retain power in one, but not as convincingly as it had projected, and lost its majority in the other, only months after sweeping the state in the Lok Sabha elections. The Maharashtra and Haryana results are a reminder that political dominance in a democracy, beyond the whirring of the marvellous election machine, is made of the several pacts between the voter and the party at local levels that need to be constantly worked upon, and renewed.

In days to come, the BJP must ask itself if the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, his popularity, is enough. It may have helped the party win the Lok Sabha election decisively across states — as in Haryana, where it won all 10 seats — but it has now evidently failed to carry it past the halfway mark in the Haryana assembly or hold on to its numbers in Maharashtra. It can even be argued that the BJP's underwhelming performance in Haryana and Maharashtra is not despite PM Modi, but because of him — that's a question that can no longer be un-askable in the party. If these elections signal the possible limits of the personality cult that the BJP has constructed around PM Modi, and the dangers of banking on it excessively or exclusively, they also point to the diminishing returns of the emotive nationalism card, played in these two elections by the insistent and emphatic invocation of the Centre's abrogation of Article 370 in Kashmir. There is no evidence to suggest that the electorates in Maharashtra and Haryana opposed the removal of J&K's special status, but there is reason to conclude that at a time when the aam voter is cramped and cornered by agricultural distress and raging joblessness closer home, it was not their primary concern. For some time now, it had seemed that the BJP had been able to accomplish two feats — to separate the economic from the political, and to subsume the political into a test of nationalism. These election results indicate that that separation, that distraction, can no longer be working as well to the BJP's advantage as it did in the past.

In both states that went to polls, the BJP had become, not without its own complicity, the most favoured destination for defectors. If it opened its doors wide to leaders from the NCP and Congress in Maharashtra, it took in large numbers from the INLD and Congress in Haryana. The final tallies in both states have also put a question mark against the anything-goes, moveable politics that it seems to be turning to, to win.

A CRACK, AN OPENING

BJP's dimming numbers may not signal an endorsement of Congress politics. But they provide it an opportunity

THE MAHARASHTRA AND Haryana assembly election results offer the Opposition, especially the Congress, some reason to cheer. After the drubbing in the general election a few months ago, it has crawled back to relevance in both states. In Haryana, the Congress stood in the way of the BJP winning a simple majority whereas in Maharashtra, the BJP's final tally is likely to be significantly less than its strength in 2014. Yet, while the results are a wake-up call for the BJP, the Congress would be mistaken if it reads them as a sign of its own resurgence.

By all accounts, the Congress has been the indirect beneficiary of anti-incumbency in these states. In Haryana, the party has made considerable gains from 2014, but it may have more to do with it being the default option for voters angry with the Manohar Lal Khattar government. A divided house, the Congress was rocked by resignations and desertions till days before polling. The party organisation is in disarray, its district units remain headless. If it has been thinning organisationally, it has been missing in action politically, staying away from street mobilisations in the past five years despite the growing stress in the agriculture sector and disquiet among youth over joblessness. In Maharashtra, the NCP has won more seats than its parent body and is poised to be the main Opposition party. Here, the Congress hitched its wagon to NCP chief Sharad Pawar, who, at 80, was the Opposition's star campaigner. In fact, the party could learn from Pawar how to turn adversity into advantage and hold the fort against odds. Maharashtra was rocked by protests over farm distress, unemployment, social discrimination and so on in the past five years. Yet here too, the Congress was missing in action even as a large section of the population turned restive. The party's failure to do its job as the Opposition and engage with the public is now reflected in its failure to make bigger gains from the clear anti-incumbency in the two states.

The Congress leadership may well conclude that electoral success is cyclical and that its turn will come when the BJP exhausts itself. Such smug optimism would be misplaced. The Congress is no more seen to be the natural party of governance, that mantle seem to have shifted to the BJP. The party will need to sort out leadership issues, revitalise its cadre, and voice public concerns by mobilising on the streets if it wishes to be in the reckoning more than it is at the moment.

CHARMINGLY CHUBBY

Bikaner police is monitoring waist sizes of policemen. But there was something comforting about corpulent cops

MAYBE IT'S BOLLYWOOD'S fault. Too often, the beat constable or the junior sub-inspector is given short shrift during a chase scene. The villain easily outruns the cops in a foot chase, if the police do manage to arrive in time to stop anything at all. The Rajasthan police has, in Bikaner, decided to address this problem. And like all bureaucracies, it has reduced a social problem to one of numbers — in this case, weights and measures. The officers in Bikaner have been instructed by the Superintendent of Police (SP) of the district to provide details of the men under their charge who have an "above average weight/waist size" and "chest size".

A fighting-fit police force is, of course, something that all civic governments now assume society requires. But there is something comforting about the archetypal image of the beat constable, whose belly would always enter a room before him. Ganpat Havaladar from Nukkad, for example, gave joy to an entire generation, much more so, perhaps, than the muscle-bound John Abraham or Ajay Devgn have on the big screen. And, given how intimidating and frustrating most interactions with the police can be for ordinary citizens, it might be better if cops looked like friendly neighbourhood uncles.

Of course, the Bikaner SP's initiative is in keeping with the way India views its police forces. The criterion, even at the time of entry, is largely physical. And despite laudable initiatives at trying to introduce community policing, investigative skills that go beyond intimidation and sensitivity to issues of caste, gender, community, etc, the police continue to retain aspects of their colonial origins. And, given their abysmal working conditions and hours, is it any wonder many don't have time to eat salads and hit the gym?



PRATAP BHANU MEHTA

IN HINDSIGHT, all election results seem over determined, paradoxically even more so when they go against projected trends. The close result in Haryana, and the BJP's inability to put in a command performance in Maharashtra has, to borrow Leonard Cohen's phrase, "opened up a crack" through which some light can come in. Far from the hang-over effect of the Lok Sabha election, the BJP's drop in vote-share in Haryana is more than 20 per cent, quite spectacular by any means. It will be too quick to draw large conclusions, but these elections have brought back some home truths about politics.

There is nothing inevitable about the BJP juggernaut, even with all its resources, leadership, organisational acumen, and the use (and abuse) of state power behind it. There is an undercurrent of dissatisfaction that is sidelined by high-decibel nationalism issues. The intriguing question is that the scale of the upset might have been even greater had this undercurrent been tapped into with greater resources and organisational acumen by the Opposition. The dent in Haryana has occurred despite a lack of deep presence and intensity in the opposition. Even with Narendra Modi's popularity, there is a sense of unease about India's economy; rural India seems to be a little riper for revolt. By playing the nationalism and the Article 370 card in local elections, the BJP may itself have expressed contempt for local voters. Both Haryana and Maharashtra, like many Indian states, have a strong sense of their identity. The support for nationalism and abrogation of 370 is very high. But voters can also see the sense in which this achievement can be used as a shield to mask other important issues. It is an interesting question whether in this instance, the BJP's attempt to nationalise the election actually hurt it, and it might be a case of the central leadership needing to be blamed more than local strategists. As Haryana demonstrates, messaging requires responsiveness to context, not just the wielding of a mantra, which is what nationalism might have become.

Voter preferences are not too deeply congealed into ideological formations just yet. One of the interesting things in this election is that the turnover of seats is fairly high. There is a thesis that has been propounded of

There is an interesting lesson here in the politics of anti-corruption/anti-dynasty at two levels. There is the simple fact that lots of candidates who have been in the swirl of corruption allegations have actually done quite well in the elections; and the anti-dynastic card seems a generic national trope rather than an effective strategy at the local level. But more importantly, the Indian voters can spot the difference between the intent to clean up the system, and a vendetta to target political opponents. We might want the system cleaned up, but we do not want leaders who represented it persecuted in political terms. Leaders, even sometimes corrupt ones, are our own alienated selves, and there are limits to persecution.



BINOY VISWAM

MOHAN BHAGWAT has rediscovered Mahatma Gandhi. In an article on October 2, he called him the brightest leader that India's freedom struggle had produced. But, he did not rebuke the BJP and the RSS leaders who unleashed their diatribes against Gandhi. The "saint" who declared Godse to be a true patriot, is a member of Parliament from the BJP. It may surprise some that Bhagwat chose to wax lyrical about Gandhi on his 150th birthday, but did not defend him on any of those occasions.

This is a textbook example of how the RSS works; they can't bury Gandhi's ideas, hence they must appropriate them to their end. One can say anything that serves its purpose as long as it is loaded with force and vigour. We have seen them paint the legacies of Sardar Patel, Subhash Chandra Bose and Bhagat Singh in saffron. Now they brandish that brush at the Mahatma, marking the political-ideological contradictions of our times all too clearly.

Bhagwat claims that K B Hedgewar was one of those who spoke at a rally in Nagpur organised in protest of Gandhi's arrest in 1922. However, he wouldn't reveal why Hedgewar left the Congress soon after. He wouldn't allude to the ideological transformation that led the speaker at a Congress rally in 1922 to become the founder of RSS in 1925. This shift reflects the chasm between the ideals of Indian national movement and Hindu fundamentalism.

WHOSE MAHATMA

After Patel, Bose and Bhagat Singh, RSS is trying to appropriate Gandhi

The roots of Godse's hatred against Gandhiji cannot be traced elsewhere. Gandhiji stood for harmony and unity between Muslims and Hindus. It was the entrenched hatred for Muslims that led Hedgewar to embrace fascism in the way it was propounded by Benito Mussolini. How can anyone draw parallels between this and Gandhian vision? Can Bhagwat or anyone else prove that Gandhiji harboured any sympathy towards the Sangh's hatred for Muslims?

MS Golwalkar codified the thoughts that underpinned the Sangh's ideology. His perspectives are espoused in his books *We or Our Nationhood Defined* and *Bunch of Thoughts*. He deals with India's enemies: Muslims, Christians and Communists, in that order. The similarity of this list with Hitler's list of enemies, as noted in *Mein Kampf*, is striking: Jews, Christians and Communists in that order. Bhagwat might not like to mention these now.

Instead, he writes of Gandhiji's visit to Sangh Shala in Delhi during partition and the reports that appeared in this respect in *Harjan* on September 27, 1947. To portray it as Gandhiji's patronage of communalism as opposed to his desperate cry to put an end to the bloodshed in those moments of despair is appalling.

Gandhi's murder was not an outcome of a madman's sudden provocation. Godse undertook preparations that spanned several

late, that politics has become detached from social cleavages. We sometimes veer between placing too much emphasis on social cleavages, or we write them off prematurely. In most elections, social identities split votes across all parties, though the distribution varies. The real question is when do they matter and how. It will be simplistic to see this election as a Maratha revolt against a non-Maratha CM in Maharashtra or a non-Jat CM in Haryana. The seemingly greater salience of social identity can be as much as an effect, not a cause of politics. In contexts where there is a credible ideological identity, social cleavages can be overcome. If caste seems to reassert itself a little more in some elections, it is probably because there is no other narrative or organisational formation around which to congeal.

Contrary to popular perception, there is nothing inevitable about the hankering for stability and strong leadership at the state level. The voters have expressed their protest, or in some cases reasserted their identity, in the best available form they could. Both states have returned a fractured verdict, with voters, rightly not unduly worried about the implications for stability. Not only will there be more effective opposition in Maharashtra, but even the BJP Shiv-Sena bargaining game is not as lopsided in the BJP's favour as it might have hoped. It does seem to matter if a party can project who its own leader is. The Congress did that much better in Haryana than Maharashtra.

There is an interesting lesson here in the politics of anti-corruption/anti-dynasty at two levels. There is the simple fact that lots of candidates who have been in the swirl of corruption allegations have actually done quite well in the elections; and the anti-dynastic card seems a generic national trope rather than an effective strategy at the local level. But more importantly, the Indian voters can spot the difference between the intent to clean up the system, and a vendetta to target political opponents. We might want the system cleaned up, but we do not want leaders who represented it persecuted in political terms. Leaders, even sometimes corrupt ones, are our own alienated selves, and there are limits to persecution. Sharad Pawar's biggest achievement was to respond to the

government's attempts to tighten the noose around him by mounting a political response, responding with new energy. This is a cautionary tale for the BJP using state power to only appear to target opponents and protect its own, and a lesson for the Opposition in how to fight such a targeting — mobilise.

The most significant consequence of this election might be this. One of the mechanisms by which dominant party systems reinforce themselves is by their power to distribute patronage. For anyone wanting a share in power, aligning with the ruling dispensation becomes a winning strategy. At one level, this is manifest in defectors who join the ruling dispensation. Many of those defectors have been punished. The opposition also is demoralised since the possibility of gaining access to power remote. The biggest significance of this election is that it breaks that self-fulfilling cycle of single-party dominance. The fragmentation of protest through state patronage may have its limits; and it still makes sense for some political groups to hedge their bets rather than join the winning bandwagon. This election demonstrates the rationality of doing so. It is a break on the logic of state patronage creating its own power.

Where does India head after this? The election gives a small, but important reprieve against the BJP's arrogance and their consolidation of power. What the BJP will do next is an open question. Will its economics turn more leftward and politics more right? The opposition can take some heart from the fact that there is political space for them to exploit. But this political space can only grow and have a multiplier if there is more smart and credible coordination amongst all opposition groups that converts a protest vote into an alternative economic and ideological narrative. It will be a pity if this moment is squandered on the shoals of personal ambition, or short-term thinking. There is also going to be another interesting question: Does the Congress do better in the relative absence of its central leadership? Nothing is a foregone conclusion in Indian politics, provided we can give up on complacency or resignation.

The writer is contributing editor, The Indian Express

months. During the trial, he narrated the groundwork that preceded the killing. Whether Godse was a member of RSS at the time of firing his pistol is nothing but a technical detail. He had always maintained that he had nothing personal against Gandhiji. Yet, he was convinced that every day Gandhiji remained alive was an affront to Hindu dignity. The murder was as much political as it was heinous.

At the time of his crime, Godse was still the editor of the mouthpiece of Hindu Mahasabha. Gopal Godse, Nathuram's brother had emphasised the Sangh's influence over their lives. They spent longer hours at the RSS office. Hatred for Muslims was inculcated in them in those formative years. Gandhiji led a war against such hatred. That is why in Godse's eyes Gandhi became unfit to live.

Let us not take our eyes off from the bunch of thoughts that fuel atrocities in the name of citizenship and Article 370, that allow cow vigilantes to lynch citizens or violent men to kill Dalit children for defecating in the open, that systemically degrade Dalits and Muslims. Let us not forget how it propelled the bullets that took Gandhiji's life then, and the lives of Govind Pansare, Narendra Dhabolkar, M M Kalburgi and Gauri Lankesh now.

The writer is Rajya Sabha MP from the Communist Party of India



OCTOBER 25, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO

LOK DAL ALLIANCE WOES THE POLICY differences between the Lok Dal and the Congress that generated considerable strain between the alliance partners will remain the main issue that Congress president Devaraj Urs will discuss with Prime Minister Charan Singh. Urs, who is arriving in Delhi, is expected to meet the Lok Dal President in a day or two and seek clarifications on Singh's views, expressed at election meetings in Andhra Pradesh, that have caused serious concern in Congress circles. While the AICC general secretary reiterated that the Congress would not compromise on its fundamental policy of pursuing Nehru's policies, the Lok Dal general secretary,

Rajinder Puri, defended Singh's criticism of Nehru's policies. He said the Congress should not be under illusions on these issues.

BAHUGUNA'S MOVE FORMER FINANCE minister H N Bahuguna is still undecided about his future course of action. Sources close to the CFD leader say he had held discussions with a number of Congress leaders recently. The AICC general secretary, N K Tirpude, had met him yesterday. A day before, Congress president Devaraj Urs, had a telephonic discussion with him from Bangalore. Urs is scheduled to meet him in Delhi. While admitting that he had been invited to join the Congress, sources say that

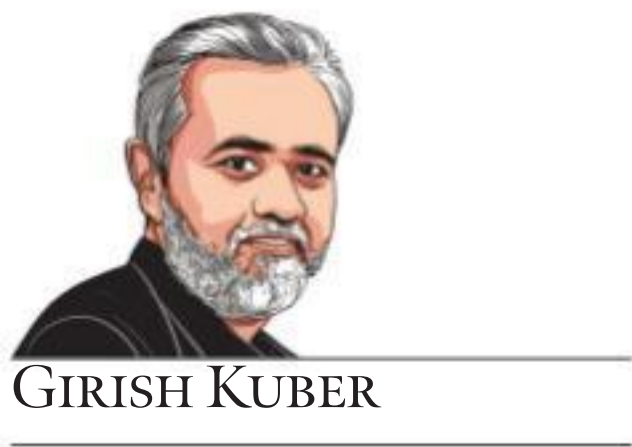
Bahuguna will have to consider "many factors" before reacting either way.

CISF STRIKE THE CENTRE is nonplussed as those guarding its industrial establishments are poised for a showdown in an effort to wrest largescale concessions. The home ministry is yet to make up its mind on how to deal with the threatened strike by some sections of the CISF, scheduled to begin on November 5. According to sources, the home ministry is "willing to strike but afraid to wound." The government is unable to grant some of the demands raised by the agitators nor is it ready to take firm action to enforce discipline.



Restoring a balance

BJP's weakened showing in Maharashtra polls is a lesson for the party that ridiculed the Opposition and displayed over-confidence



GIRISH KUBER

“AAG KE liye pani ka hona zaruri hai, satta ke liye santulan zaruri hai,” says Om Puri in his inimitable style in Vishal Bhardwaj’s *Maqbool*, based on Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*. Voters in Maharashtra have displayed what that santulan, or equanimity, is all about. The hubris with which the BJP-Shiv Sena conducted its business in the past few months has led to the saffron combine’s wings being clipped to a large extent — and rightfully so.

Before the electioneering began, the BJP seemed way ahead of the other parties. Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis had an unblemished record and his performance was nothing short of spectacular. However, just before the elections, he started showing signs of over-confidence, and times, this bordered on recklessness. The first indication of this attitude was the Maharashtra BJP’s “free-import” policy. The party inducted all and sundry from other parties, forgetting that not so long ago, its leaders had dubbed some of the new recruits as corrupt. The height of the BJP’s brazenness was inducting the NCP MP from Satara, Udayan Raje Bhonsale, a descendant of the great Maratha warrior Chhatrapati Shivaji, and a controversial leader. The BJP made him resign just before the polls, forcing the Election Commission to hold by-polls in Satara along with the state assembly elections. The BJP had hoped that Shivaji’s descendant will bring in the much-needed Maratha votes. But the Satara by-poll is a case study in BJP’s adventurism. Satara not only handed a resounding defeat to the BJP but hurt the party in adjoining constituencies as well. Barring a few exceptions, many of the newly-imported leaders bit the dust.

The BJP’s second mistake was dismissing — in some cases, even ridiculing — all those trying to raise economic and agrarian issues. The BJP’s response to such matters was “all is well” and “only the media is creating a fuss out of nothing”. This indifference to economic issues has cost the BJP a significant number of seats in rural and semi-urban areas. Vidarbha, a stronghold of the BJP — thanks to the RSS headquarters being located at Nagpur and chief minister Devendra Fadnavis and party stalwart and Union Minister Nitin Gadkari hailing from the region — has turned away from the BJP. CM Fadnavis’ victory margin is significantly lower than in 2014. The Marathwada region too has deserted the BJP and Sena. These regions have reported the maximum farmer suicides.

The third and the most important lesson for the BJP from this election is: Never humiliate the Opposition. There may not be an opposition leader who can match the BJP’s leaders in stature, but it is the voter in whose minds the seeds of opposition are sowed. And, when the voters realise that the time has come to rein in the party in office, they stand with anyone who is willing to take on the ruling dispensation. This is exactly what has happened in Maharashtra. While the BJP’s leaders — including Fadnavis, party chief Amit Shah and even Prime Minister Narendra Modi — kept harping on the fact that there is no challenger on the other side of the fence, voters in Maharashtra backed even rookies against the party’s stalwarts. It’s not surprising that several



CR Sasikumar

cabinet ministers in the Fadnavis government were sent packing by voters.

The performance of the BJP’s alliance partner, Shiv Sena, has been underwhelming. Political observers have time and again pointed out the Sena’s helplessness in tagging along with the BJP. The Sena did the most laughable thing in politics — have their cake and eat it too. Though sharing power with the BJP, the Sena tried to occupy the Opposition’s space. It was neither here, nor there. Voters have sent out a clear message to the Sena that it can not have the best of both worlds. The Sena has been hopped from one agenda to other; in the process, it seems to be losing its identity. To begin with, the Sena talked about the Marathi Manooos, it then jumped onto the Hindutva bandwagon and in the current election, it tried to offer a mix of both. The election outcome suggests that both issues have slipped out of the party’s hands.

Not surprisingly, the only leader who can savour the election result is the old war horse, Sharad Pawar. When every other opposition leader was either giving in or joining the BJP, the Maratha strongman demonstrated how to tame the raging bull. The octogenarian leader criss-crossed the state and single handedly took on the BJP. Fadnavis will rue the humiliation he handed out to the NCP chief at various platforms. Putting behind a life-threatening ailment and his advancing years, Pawar demonstrated how to convert challenge into an opportunity. For instance,

The performance of the BJP’s alliance partner, Shiv Sena, has been underwhelming. Political observers have time and again pointed out the Sena’s helplessness in tagging along with the BJP. The Sena did the most laughable thing in politics — have their cake and eat it too. Though sharing power with the BJP, the Sena tried to occupy the Opposition’s space. It was neither here, nor there. Voters have sent out a clear message to the Sena that it can not have the best of both worlds.

Pawar converted the ill-timed ED notice to him into a media spectacle. Under the glare of cameras, he walked into the ED office in Mumbai with hundreds of supporters to “surrender” before authorities. Caught completely off guard, the ED had to publicly give a “clean chit” to Pawar.

This was the turning point of this election campaign. By beating the ruling party with its own stick, Pawar also gave a lesson or two to the NCP’s alliance partner, the Congress. Virtually rudderless, the Congress was the most invisible political force in the current elections. It was Pawar who galvanised the Congress and towards the end of the electioneering, it at least resembled a political party. The point to be noted here is that neither Sonia Gandhi nor Priyanka Gandhi had a single rally or meeting in Maharashtra. One can understand Sonia’s absence because of her ill-health, but the Congress could have deployed Priyanka in the Maharashtra election campaign.

This, in fact, makes the election outcome even more interesting. The message is very clear: No political party can — and should — take the electorate for granted. A ruling party’s slide begins the moment it gives a call for getting rid of the Opposition. Such hubris creates an opposition for the ruling dispensation in the voter’s mind. And, it is the voter who knows, *Satta ke liye santulan ka hona zaruri hai*.

The writer is editor, Loksatta

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“While Justin Trudeau’s defeat of the Conservatives is welcome, closer scrutiny of his record is overdue.” — THE GUARDIAN

Medical devices are not drugs

Why government should bring a new law to regulate medical devices, not apply the 80-year-old Drugs and Cosmetic Act



DINESH THAKUR

ASTONISHING THINGS are happening in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare these days. In less than 30 days, the ministry is going to put in place a regulatory framework for medical devices that will likely give lobbyists for the medical device industry a wonderful Christmas present. Amazingly enough, the ministry aims to implement this new framework without the Parliament casting a single vote to determine the future of an industry which has already proven itself to be brazenly irresponsible towards patients in India as we are seeing in the ongoing hip-implant scandal. Rather than moving a new law in Parliament to regulate the medical device industry, the ministry is creating an entire regulatory framework out of notifications and rules, using powers delegated to it under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 — a pre-independence legislation that was enacted almost 80 years ago.

The first move towards the new framework was made in 2017 when the ministry, using powers under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, notified the Medical Device Rules, 2017. At that time, only a few medical devices were notified as “drugs”. In a notification a few days ago, the government announced its intention to treat all medical devices, be it an implant or a MRI machine as “drugs” under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act. This means that all medical devices would be placed within the framework of the Medical Device Rules, 2017. This attempt to deliberately retrofit medical devices into the Drugs and Cosmetics Act will lead to a toothless regulatory framework for devices, similar to what exists for drugs today. I say this for two reasons after having spoken to legal experts.

First, the ministry cannot create new offences or penalties through its rule-making authority. Only Parliament can enact a law that creates new offences and penalties for wrongdoing. As a result, the Medical Device Rules 2017 contain no penal provisions. Although the Drugs and Cosmetics Act does contain a penal provision for the manufacture of sub-standard drugs, it cannot be used to penalise manufacturers of sub-standard medical devices (although medical devices will now be legally defined as drugs) because legally binding standards recognised in the Second Schedule to the Drugs and Cosmetics Act covers only pharmacopeias for drugs. If no standards for medical devices are recognised in the Second Schedule, it follows that there can never be a prosecution of a manufacturer of sub-standard medical devices.

What will unfold, if the current proposal is adopted, will be similar to what we see with substandard drugs: Companies that make defective products will recall them from foreign markets while continuing to sell the same product in India, and comply with the law. There is one subtle

distinction here. Even though sale of sub-standard drugs can be prosecuted under the current law, because there is no political will, most manufacturers who make poor quality drugs go scot-free. Under the present proposal, even if there is public pressure, similar to what we have seen in the faulty hip-implant case, no prosecutions will take place because there will be no basis to prosecute intentional wrongdoing in the law.

More importantly, medical devices, because of their nature, will be far more difficult (if not impossible) to standardise when compared to drugs. So, what are the tools available to Indian regulators under the proposed framework to hold makers of sub-standard medical device manufacturers to account? The answer is none whatsoever. At most, the ministry can prohibit the manufacture and sale of certain medical devices under Section 26A or cancel a license to prevent future harm. But, what of penalties or prosecution to punish for the harm already inflicted on patients due to negligence or worse, intentional wrongdoing by the manufacturer?

The second reason is that it is quite clear that the ministry has not learnt any lesson from the recent hip-implant debacle. One of the main challenges faced by the government in securing justice for faulty hip-implants was to secure a list of patients who had received the implant through surgery. Since the manufacturer sold these devices to doctors and hospitals and not patients directly, it did not have a list of patients who had these devices implanted. It could therefore conveniently skirt the government’s query for a list of all the patients with faulty implants. Neither the doctors nor the hospitals have an incentive to share the list of patients or even inform the patients because it would mean opening themselves up to legal liability for surgically implanting faulty devices in the patient’s body. One of the solutions to solve this information deficit is to create a confidential patient register that should be maintained by the government to record all details of implants. This register could be used to notify patients in the case of malfunctioning devices. The proposed regulatory framework does not offer any such provision. As a result, the next time there is such a case, the government will once again not be able to contact the patients to inform of their rights.

While medical devices have tremendous potential to revolutionise healthcare, the hip-implant scandals in India and abroad have shown us the dark underbelly of this industry. The proposed regulatory framework lacks teeth and will do little to hold the powerful medical devices industry accountable in cases of intentional wrongdoing. The government must rethink this toothless framework and instead enact a new law through Parliament. Medical devices are not drugs, and it would be a grave mistake to apply the same regulatory framework to regulate these complex devices. The need of the hour is for new ideas to regulate this industry in the Indian context where the courts lack the capacity to tackle such complex issues.

The writer is a public health activist who blew the whistle on Ranbaxy Laboratories

THE Urdu PRESS

WAITING FOR VERDICT

THE HEARINGS before a Constitution bench for title rights to the land where the Babri Masjid stood ended a week ago. Urdu dailies have extensive reports on it and *Etemad*, the Hyderabad-based AIMIM’s daily, published an editorial on the subject on October 17.

Etemad reflects on what the Supreme Court had said before the trial began. The editorial says: “It (SC) had said it would hear only those sides that had appealed the Allahabad High Court order and no new side. It rejected Subramaniam Swamy’s plea to be heard. It also said that only the title suit would be heard and no other claims.” The editorial goes onto say that, “instead, in Court, the Hindu side focussed on the question of the birthplace of Lord Ram and puja rights. The Court had asked for a mediation panel, which has now given its report.” The editorial says that “all eyes are now focussed on what the Court says. In this, news has emerged that one party and person, the chairman of the Sunni Waqf Board, against whom an FIR had been registered, has retreated from the case and this has created immense restlessness amongst Muslims.” The editorial asserts: “Muslim ulema, intellectuals and politicians have all said that the Supreme Court ruling must be respected. But no Hindu side has said this.”

Munsif, on the same day, has an extensive report on its front page. It raises question marks (literally) over the talk of a “deal” be-

tween some Hindu and Muslim parties. It quotes the Shahi Imam of Delhi’s Jama Masjid, Ahmed Bukhari, asking why there is *saudebaazi* (deal-making) at the *lamhe-aakhir* (last moment).

Mumbai-based *Urdu Times* on October 16 published an editorial, ‘Masjid ka Maamla’ (The Masjid matter). It gives its view, wherein it holds that the Hindu side has failed to establish that there was a mandir on the ground that was destroyed to build the Babri Masjid, or that it stood where the Babri Masjid was. The editorial outlines the arguments laid down in Court by both sides. “These arguments in Court will determine which side gets the land,” it says. The editorial ends on an interesting note: “If the Court decides on the logic of arguments presented before them, then it should be clear that the top Court is still not overwhelmed by Hindutva and is still unaffected or pure — untouched by Hindutva sentiments.”

RESTIVE OVER NRC

INQUILAB ON October 14 ran an editorial on the NRC (National Register of Citizens), calling it a “new fancy” (*naya shosha*). It mentions a “central minister” (unnamed) who dropped a *naya shosha* in a rally in Mumbai’s Bhandi Bazaar, stating that NRC is not for Indian Muslims but for foreigners. The minister did not reveal where or how he discovered that Muslims are scared, or did he think it necessary to advise Indian Muslims about

not being scared, before they are scared?” The paper argues: “Then, another question arises. Why did he deem it necessary to say this? Actually, by framing the NRC as a Hindu-Muslim question, it makes it clear that not only *daal mein kuch na kuch kaala hai*, *balke poori daal kaali hai*. Now, is it that blackness has crept in because of the compulsion to bring in black money?” The editorial mixes metaphors and goes on: “Or, is it that people are trying to keep their hands clean of their attempt to clean corruption?” It concludes that through several contradictory statements, ministers and leaders of the ruling party are deliberately trying to keep the people in the dark about the whole thing (NRC exercise).

Siasat has an editorial on October 9, on “(Bangladesh Prime Minister) Sheikh Hasina’s silence over the NRC”. On October 12, it poses a more direct question, asking, “Who is the intended target of the NRC?” It claims: “The government is trying to divert the focus from burning issues that need peoples’ attention. And this policy of diversion is being concretely implemented as the new NRC is being spoken of for all India.” It has harsh things to say about India’s social atmosphere. “After Assam, West Bengal was made a centre and all issues that spread disagreement, hate and division in society are being spread there”. The newspaper argues that “(Home Minister) Amit Shah is so obsessed with NRC that he can see no other issues pertaining to the common man. It ap-

pears that this is not a matter of home affairs alone but the entire central government is taking this on, on a war footing.” It elaborates that all ministers holding different portfolios are also talking of NRC, which “makes it clear that before all ministers, peoples’ issues have no significance”.

NOBEL PURSUITS

EDITORIALS HAVE lauded the Nobel to Indian-origin and educated economist, Abhijit Banerjee. Banerjee and Esther Duflo’s work on combating poverty has also been discussed at length.

The October 17 editorial in *Inquilab* says: “(Abhijit Banerjee) has used many opportunities to point out the problems with the Indian economy, but his viewpoint has been ignored and there has been no attempt to use his talent, skills or expertise. The government tried during demonetisation to paint all these experts as communist and as those with Leftist views.” It asks if labelling people like this is not an “insult to their knowledge and status in the world?”

Siasat on October 16 has an editorial devoted to Banerjee. It talks about the need for strong and concrete policies to battle poverty. It says: “They offer lessons which need to be learned by those in developing countries, where the problem of poverty exists.”

Compiled by Seema Chishti

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

STRINGENCY TOO

THIS REFERS to the editorial, ‘Put away the stick’ (IE, October 24). Overpopulation is a hydra-headed devil. Several factors like the mortality rate and migration come into play. History shows us that the two-child policy is effective in capping population growth. To check overpopulation, stringent measures are the need of the hour. Affordable healthcare is also imperative to contain population growth.

Varun Das, Zirakpur

FUEL PUMP POLITICS

THIS REFERS to the editorial, ‘Fuel retail business rules eased: Non-oil firms can now set up petrol pumps’ (IE, October 24). Lowering the investment threshold for fuel retailing is a welcome decision. Though few foreign and Indian firms like Total, Adani, Reliance and Aramco have presence in this space this decision will help them penetrate the market. It is also good that the government has inserted a clause to open at-least one CNG, LNG or electric charge station for every petrol pump in the next three years. But it should have increased the cap on the private sector for setting up fuel pumps in rural areas. But given the importance of electric cars in the government agenda, diesel firms will look to tread carefully.

Bal Govind, Noida

LETTER OF THE WEEK AWARD

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

SANCTITY OF SPACES

THIS REFERS to the article “Don’t sing in Pilibhit” (IE, October 22). The society seems to have normalised bringing Hindu practices into what are supposed to be secular systems. We see photos of Hindu gods in government offices just like the ones of Gandhi, Ambedkar. I work in a government office in a rural Karnataka. On Gandhi Jayanti this year, I was astonished to see poja being performed to a Gandhi photo. Kumkum, agarbattis and coconut were being used in much the same way as in a Hindu festival.

Rajiv M V, Chitradurga

SIMPLY PUT

Reading the two verdicts

In Maharashtra, BJP falls short of ambitions and finds itself dependent on Shiv Sena. In Haryana, it is short of a clear majority. A number of factors were at play in the polls, some exclusive to either state, and some common, such as state units driving the Congress campaigns. **Five takeaways from each state.**

Resurgence of Pawar with Cong riding piggyback, and fissures within BJP-Sena

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, OCTOBER 24

Opposition is not dead, yet

Weeks before the Maharashtra Assembly election, Sharad Pawar, 79, was staring at the remains of his NCP after the BJP had systematically poached key members in areas that remained Pawar strongholds despite the Modi wave. The BJP scaled up its ambitions to winning 145 seats on its own so that it would not be at the mercy of its alliance partner, Shiv Sena. It proved a bridge too far, although the BJP-Sena did hold on to power.

There were two turning points for Pawar in the run-up to the polls. The first came when he was named by the Enforcement Directorate in a money-laundering case against the Maharashtra Cooperative Bank. He announced he would voluntarily present himself at the ED office in Mumbai. On the given day, NCP supporters swarmed Mumbai, turning it into a Maratha pride moment, while the ED frantically put out a statement that it had not summoned Pawar. He called off his visit to the ED office at the request of the Mumbai police commissioner, but had sent out a strong political message.

It was on the very last day of the campaign that the second turning point arrived. He addressed a widely televised rally for the Satara Lok Sabha bypoll, standing under pelting rain, to thundering applause. The footage went viral overnight. It was NCP's magic moment, and possibly set a template for the opposition in the state and country.

Nationalism vs local issues

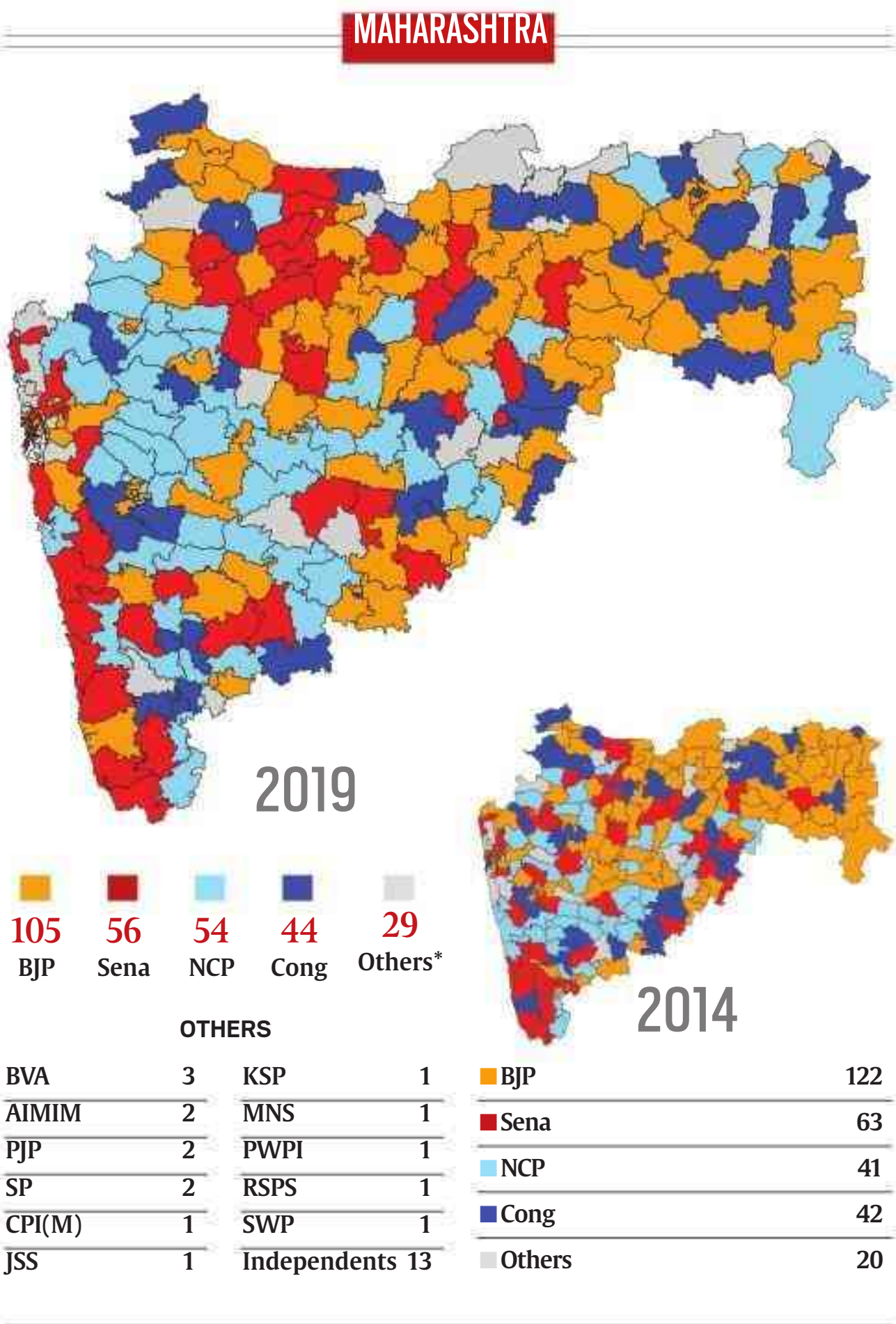
In rallies, the emphasis by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis was mainly on work by his government, but he also ended every meeting with the Centre's decision to revoke J&K's special status. In an interview to *The Indian Express*, Fadnavis said the Kashmir issue had resonance in Maharashtra. In speeches by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah, too, the Centre's action to abate Article 370 was a main pitch. The results indicate it may not have had as much resonance among Maharashtra voters as local issues such as farm distress, and rural indebtedness. In Nashik, the BJP-Sena paid heavily for the government's onion price control measures. Throughout its campaign, a confident BJP did not address the consequences of the economic slowdown in the country's most industrialised state.

SOPS DON'T ALWAYS FETCH VOTES: In the BJP's calculus, the Maratha quota, granted in 2018, was the silver bullet to winning over Maharashtra's politically most dominant community. The Marathas had been a mainstay of the Congress and NCP's voter base but the BJP's dominance in the Lok Sabha polls appeared to suggest the community had shifted loyalties. The Assembly polls made it clear that the BJP could not take this for granted. Out of 70 seats in Western Maharashtra, a Maratha stronghold, the BJP won only 16 seats, against its 25 of 2014. The promise of the Bharat Ratna to V D Savarkar did not help the BJP quest for dominance either.

Gandhis weren't missed

After the rout in the Lok Sabha elections and the leadership crisis within, the Congress appeared not to be in the fight for the Assembly elections, and was a feeble partner of the NCP. Rahul Gandhi addressed only five meetings, and Sonia Gandhi stayed away from the campaign for health reasons.

It was left to the Maharashtra Congress to make the best out of a bad situation. What may have helped it in constituencies it won was its choice of candidates who were locally well known though they may not have had a state-wide profile. A rudderless Congress,



The Congress coat-tailed on a resurgent NCP. One of the curiosities of their alliance was that the Congress and the NCP did not address a single rally from the same platform but still managed to project a united front. On the other hand, the BJP-Shiv Sena alliance was beset by tensions from the very start.

coat-tailing on the NCP, won four more seats than in 2014. In many seats, it also benefited from bad vibes within the BJP-Sena alliance. One of the curiosities of the Congress-NCP alliance was that the two parties did not address a single rally from the same platform but still managed to project a united front. However, despite its improved seat tally, the Congress finished fourth, and its vote share fell from 17.8 per cent to 15.2 per cent.

Divided saffron alliance

From the start, the BJP-Shiv Sena alliance was beset by tensions, born out of BJP's ambition of finishing the Sena, and the latter's insistent demand for "equal" power sharing, by which it meant a shared chief ministership, or the deputy chief minister's post. While Fadnavis and Uddhav Thackeray managed to paper over these issues, the Sena's acceptance of a lower seat share was a shock to cadres. It was a battlefield between Sena and BJP in many seats.

Tensions within the BJP too played a part, especially in Vidarbha, marked by the sidelining of Nitin Gadkari, and ticket aspirants seen as close to him. On the ground, unhappy RSS cadres are said to have worked for rejected candidates who contested as independents. Also, only 16 of 31 defectors from Congress-NCP to BJP-Sena won, an indicator that not all voters are receptive to party hoppers.

Fadnavis suffers a setback

Fadnavis had outsmarted rivals in 2014 to become the Chief Minister, and defied critics who saw his Brahmin identity as unworkable in a Maratha-dominated political ecosystem. He proved them wrong, along the way deftly dealing with the Marathas by granting them a quota, then breaking their stranglehold by going after cooperatives. This time, his mission was to return the BJP with a near majority of its own, so that it could shake off the Shiv Sena. Instead, the BJP has become more dependent on the Sena than it was. The loss of seats in Vidarbha, his home turf, is another setback to Fadnavis.

MANRAJ GREWAL SHARMA
CHANDIGARH, OCTOBER 24

For youth, absence of jobs

The election results in Haryana went against the idea that the BJP has successfully managed to disconnect economics from politics by focusing on its nationalist agenda. Haryana, which has a population over 40 lakh in the 20-29 age bracket, has witnessed a steep rise in unemployment over the last five years. A report by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy for May-August 2019 pegged unemployment in the state at 28.7 per cent, the highest in the country. A few years ago, it had been only 8 per cent. It is estimated that there are 2.02 million unemployed young people in the state and over half of them are matriculates and above.

While the BJP sought to highlight transparency in recruitment to Class IV posts, its rivals drummed home the rising joblessness. The loss of jobs in the Manesar-Gurugram belt also appear to have hurt the BJP, which fell short of the halfway mark.

The Congress and the Jannayak Janata Party (JJP) harped on disappearing jobs during their campaign, with the latter promising to implement the right to work and a 75 per cent job quota for locals. Many Haryanvis, who had voted for the nationalist agenda in the Lok Sabha polls, seem to have decided that local issues mattered more in the Assembly polls.

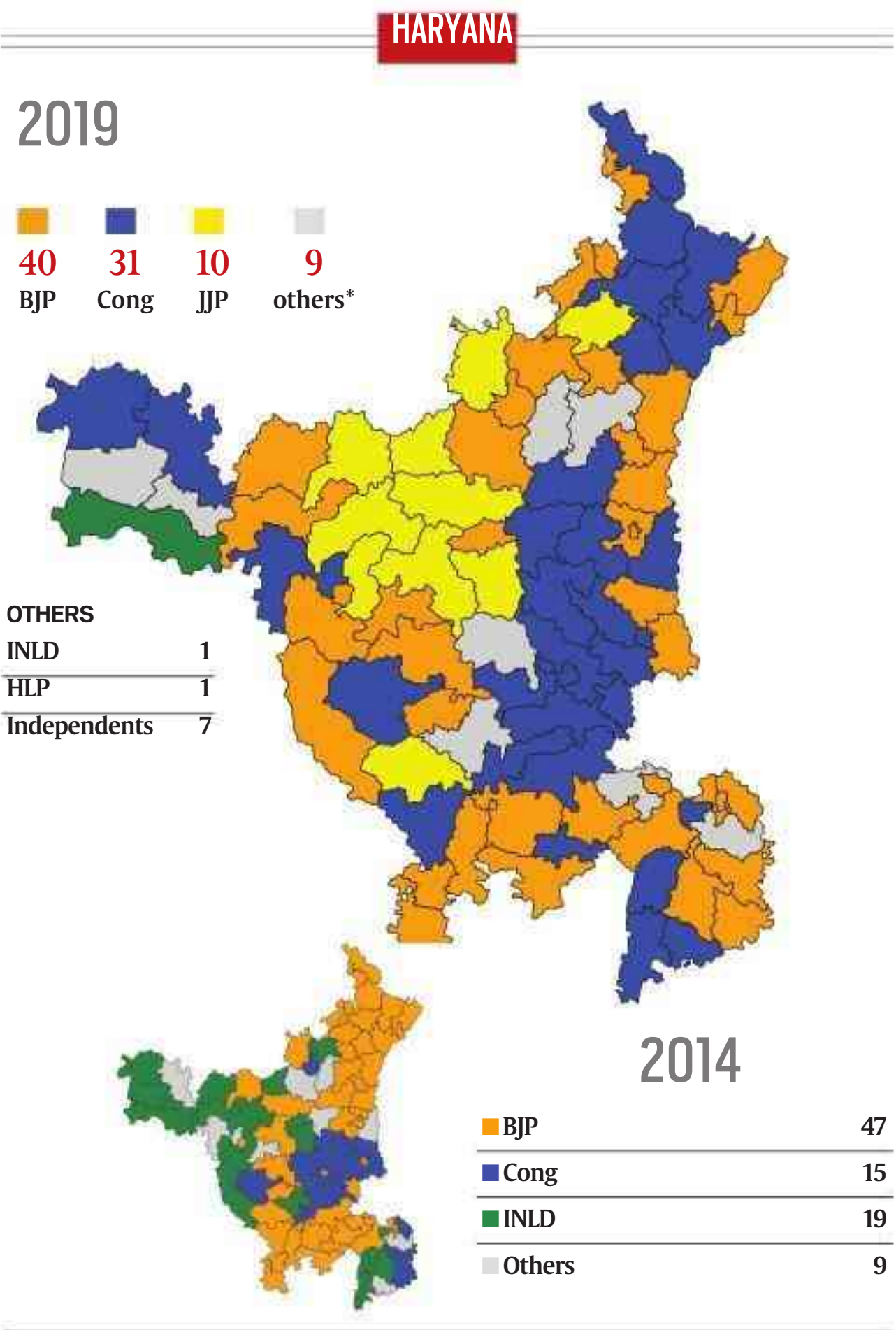
Gandhis out of limelight

This was one election where the Gandhi family of the Congress did not play a lead role in campaigning. Most of the canvassing was done by the candidates themselves, with some help from state Congress Legislature Party chief Bhupinder Singh Hooda and the new state Congress chief Kumari Selja. While Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed seven rallies in the state, Rahul Gandhi addressed only two.

The upswing in the fortunes of Congress, from 15 seats in 2014 to 31 now, indicates that the Gandhi star appeal did not matter. Two-time former Chief Minister Hooda, who is facing investigations in the Manesar land scam, emerged the clear leader of the Congress with his focus on local issues. The fear that former state Congress chief Ashok Tanwar's resignation from the party, and his support to both the JJP and the INLD, would affect the party's performance, too, was proved wrong. Hooda got the lion's share in the distribution of tickets, and the Congress swept his strongholds of Rohtak, Sonapat and Jhajjar. The Congress won 11 of the 15 seats in the Jat belt with the BJP taking three and one going to an independent.

Emergence of Dushyant

The JJP, formed out of a split in the INLD, has emerged as a third front by bagging 10 seats in its maiden elections. A new leader in has emerged in Dushyant Chautala, 31, great-grandson of Chaudhary Devi Lal. Known for his oratorical and organisational skills, he has demonstrated that the state is ready for a youthful leadership. Many of the cadre votes



While the BJP sought to highlight transparency in recruitment to Class IV posts, its rivals drummed home the rising joblessness in the state. It is estimated that there are 2.02 million unemployed young people in Haryana, and over half of them are matriculates and above.

that used to go to the INLD have shifted to Dushyant, showing discontent with a moribund leadership. That he also has the Chaudhary Devi Lal lineage also helps.

Interestingly, candidates from political families did reasonably well in elections regardless of their party affiliation. Kiran Chaudhry (Congress) was able to retain her seat, as was Kuldeep Bishnoi. Abhay Chautala was the only INLD winner, in results that spelt doom for the party. Founded in October 1996 as Haryana Lok Dal by Chaudhary Devi Lal, who served as Deputy Prime Minister and as Chief Minister twice, the INLD used to give the national parties a tough fight in Haryana. Even in 2014, it had won 19 seats, four more than Congress, to emerge as the principal opposition.

Hurt by over-confidence

The slogan 'Mano again' for Manohar Lal Khattar did not resonate with Haryanvis on the ground. CM Khattar's statements such

as "*Main anaadi nahin siyasat ka khiladi hoon*", backfired with the Opposition accusing him of being arrogant. There was an uproar on social media when, during his Jan Ashirwaad Yatra preceding the polls, Khattar threatened to behead a man who had crowned him (he later clarified it was because he believed in equality).

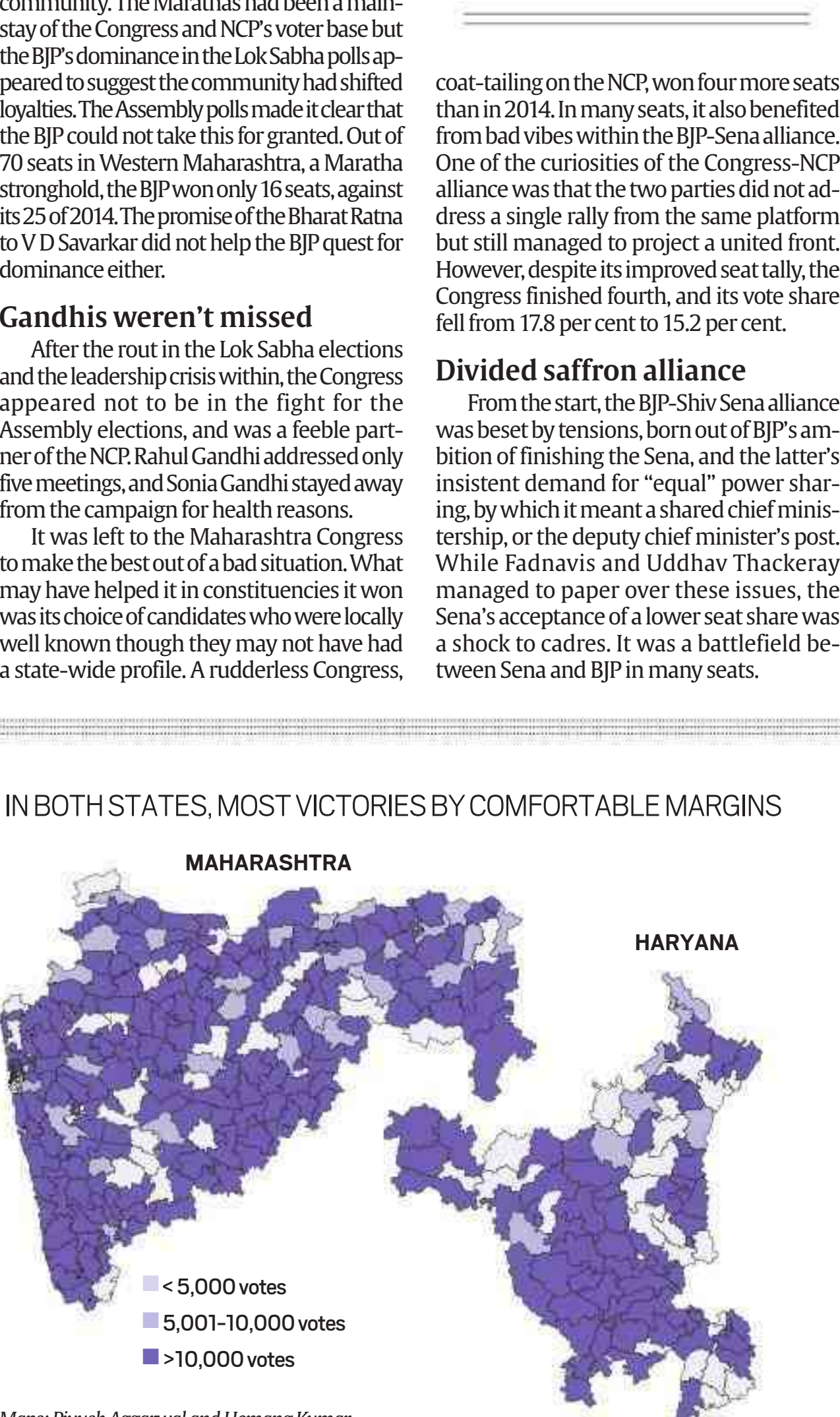
The fall of heavyweights in his ministry — those defeated included eight ministers and the BJP state chief — showed that the top echelons of the government had failed to connect with people despite the multitude of people-friendly initiatives. Bakshish Singh Virk, the BJP candidate from Assandh, who had bragged that no matter which button you press, the vote will go to BJP, also lost the seat he had won in 2014.

Some of the results showed substance can trump star appeal. Sports stars Babita Phogat and Yogeshwar lost, while Sonali Phogat, the Tik Tok star, was defeated from Adampur. Sandeep Singh, the former hockey captain who overcame a debilitating injury, managed to swing Pehowa because his story of grit resonated in a constituency populated by Partition refugees.

Jats remain a factor

Although the BJP sought to move beyond the dominance of Jats, the community did make a difference in 36 seats across four parliamentary constituencies. In the Lok Sabha polls, the BJP had secured more than 70 per cent of both non-Jat upper caste votes and OBC votes besides 50 per cent of Jat votes as per data from Lokniti-CSDS. But many Jats who had voted for the BJP's nationalist agenda in the Lok Sabha polls, cast their vote on local issues in the Assembly polls.

IN BOTH STATES, MOST VICTORIES BY COMFORTABLE MARGINS



HARIKISHAN SHARMA NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 24
THE BJP has finished six seats short of a majority in the 90-member Haryana Assembly, but is confident of getting the support that it needs. Its job though, might have become a little more difficult had three seats it has won by margins lower than 1,500 votes, gone the other way.
The BJP won Thanesar by a margin of 842 votes, and Ratia (SC) and Yamunanagar by 1,216 and 1,455 votes respectively. In all, nine seats saw victory margins smaller than 2,000. Five of these were won by the Congress; one by Gopal Kanda of the Haryana Lokhit Party.
Among the Congress victories, the closest was in Punahana in the Muslim-dominated Nuh district — Mohammad Ilyas defeated an Independent candidate by just 816 votes. The next smallest margin was in Rewari, where Chiranjeev Rao of the Congress defeated the BJP's Sunil Kumar by 1,371 votes. Rao is Lalu

WHAT THE NUMBERS SHOW			
SEAT	WINNER	DEFEATED	BY VOTES
Thanesar	Subhash Sudha (BJP)	Ashok Kumar Arora (INC)	842
Yamunanagar	Ghanshyam Dass (BJP)	Dilbagh Singh (INLD)	1,455
Assandh	Shamsher Singh Gogi (INC)	Narendra Singh (BSP)	1,703
Mulana (SC)	Varun Chaudhary (INC)	Rajbir Singh (BJP)	1,688
Rewari	Chiranjeev Rao (INC)	Sunil Kumar (BJP)	1,317
Punahana	Mohammad Ilyas (INC)	Rahish Khan (Ind)	816
Kharkhauda (SC)	Jaiveer Singh (INC)	Pawan Kumar (JJP)	1,544
Ratia (SC)	Lakshman Napa (BJP)	Jarnail Singh (INC)	1,216
Sirsa	Gopal Kanda (HLP)	Gokul Setia (Ind)	602

Prasad's son-in-law, and RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav campaigned for the Congress candidate.

In 2014, the BJP won Rewari by a massive 45,466 votes. But sitting MLA Randhir Kapriwas was denied the ticket this time — so he fought as an Independent and won 36,778 votes, ensuring Sunil Kumar's defeat.

The other seats the Congress won by nar-

row margins were Mulana (SC), Assandh, and Kharkhauda (SC).

The smallest victory margin in the state was at Sirsa, where Gopal Kanda defeated Independent candidate Gokul Setia by 602 votes. Sirsa was won by the INLD in 2014; this year, the party has got just one seat — Ellenabad, where Abhay Chautala has won.

RationalExpectations

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Testing taxpayer & investor patience

Taxpayers have to fund an unviable ₹70,000-cr BSNL-MTNL plan; govt not fixing rapacious levies & AGR has crippled telcos

FEW MERGERS REALLY work, and as the history of India's failed PSUs show, neither do revival packages—Air India is an example of both, UDAY of the latter—but, that hasn't stopped the government from trying yet another merger-cum-revival-package. BSNL that employs 165,000 people and whose losses almost doubled to ₹13,804 crore in FY19 is to be merged with MTNL that employs 22,000 people and whose ₹3,398 crore losses are 14% higher than in the previous year. But, even after a generous VRS package of around ₹30,000 crore and 4G spectrum worth ₹24,000 crore, along with a government-guaranteed bond of ₹15,000 crore, the projection sees BSNL-MTNL turning around only in FY24!

Should even this happen—with the taxpayer funding the increased losses in the interim period—it will be nothing short of a miracle; indeed, the similarly-ambitious Air India turnaround plan ended with FY19 losses rising 38% to ₹7,365 crore. While BSNL's revenues fell by a third over the last four years, the turnaround plan assumes they will rise by two-thirds over the next four! Right now, over three-fourths of BSNL's revenues go towards just paying wages. So, the turnaround plan is contingent on a large number of staffers taking the VRS—Airtel has three times BSNL's turnover, and less than a tenth the number of employees—and, at the same time, revenues soaring once BSNL gets 4G spectrum. Whether customers will flock to BSNL's 4G is not clear, but it is worth recalling that even though BSNL/MTNL got 3G spectrum a year and a half ahead of private sector players, they didn't make much of the advantage.

BSNL's revenues rising is difficult at the best of times, and a lot more so at a time when the industry's revenues continue to collapse due to the RJio onslaught. Industry revenues rose from ₹2.33 lakh crore in FY14 to ₹2.74 lakh crore in FY17, when RJio began operations and then fell to ₹2.33 lakh crore in FY19. Nor is it a given that large numbers will take the VRS since the government has made it clear the PSUs are not to be shut down; in which case, it may make sense for employees to stick on with BSNL since, in any case, the employees aren't going to find it easy to get alternate employment.

In a sense, then, prime minister Modi has taken a gamble—and probably a correct one given his popularity—that the taxpayer will continue to fund white elephants like BSNL and Air India. Of course, with FY20 tax revenues likely to fall short by at least ₹2 lakh crore, it is not clear how the government will fund all the losses, the VRS, the free spectrum, along with more spending on the poor and on capex; we're not even talking of the impact of cutting income tax rates across the board.

In the same way as the ₹33,000 crore package for Air India kept air fares artificially low, and contributed to the problems faced by other full-service carriers like Jet Airways, the huge package for BSNL-MTNL will push back the industry's revival; after all, if these PSUs had shut down, tariff levels would have risen gradually.

The government's reluctance to take on large trade unions at BSNL prevented it from shutting down the unviable BSNL; the same fear of Coal India's unions ensured no mines have been auctioned for private sector commercial mining. Similarly, the government's inability to tackle knotty issues in telecom resulted in another big blow for the sector in court on Thursday; while Bharti-Airtel needs to pay around ₹22,000 crore as a result of the court's verdict, Vodafone-Idea will have to pay around ₹27,000 crore.

The genesis of the dispute before the Supreme Court (SC) goes back to 1999, when telcos moved to a 'revenue-share' agreement for paying licence fee instead of the flat fee till then. At that time, however, the scope of what revenue comprised wasn't locked in. It would obviously include subscriber rentals and call/SMS charges, but the telcos said interest on bank deposits couldn't be added; the government, though, wanted this as well as some other items included. When TDSAT ruled in favour of the telcos, the government said it had decided what would be included in 'revenue'; so, this was a 'licence condition' and, hence, outside TDSAT's purview! The matter went from court to court. However, the discussion was no longer about what constituted revenues, but about regulatory turf. For a decade under Manmohan Singh and five years under Modi, the government didn't allow TDSAT to decide on this, nor did it sit down with the telcos and hammer out an agreement. Also, since it is only now that the SC has finalised the definition of 'revenue', the government shouldn't logically be charging penalties and interest on the so-called dues—in Airtel's case, just ₹5,500 crore are dues, the rest are penalties, interest, and interest-upon-penalties.

The government's role in bankrupting the industry is well-known, from Trai playing favourites—for reasons best known to the government, the Trai chief was reappointed despite Trai's shabby performance (*bit.ly/32MxkzC*)—to the government failing, and not just in the last five years, to correct rapacious levies. High levies made sense when spectrum was given out free, but when the spectrum was sold at (artificially) high rates, the licence fee should have been abolished; when you buy a house, you either pay the cost upfront or monthly EMIs, you don't pay both, right?

In FY15, when Modi came to power, Airtel's revenues were ₹9,039 crore and profits ₹5,183 crore; in FY19, its revenues fell to ₹80,780 crore and profits to ₹409 crore. Vodafone-Idea's revenues halved from ₹74,053 crore to ₹37,006 crore, and profits from ₹3,193 crore (Idea alone) to a loss of ₹14,604 crore. With telcos bleeding and shutting shop, even government revenues have been hit; the fact that telcos were too broke to participate in spectrum auctions for the last three years added to the problem. The industry losses have put at risk not just around ₹2.5 lakh crore owed to banks but also the ₹3 lakh crore of spectrum dues owed to the government. How the government hopes to fix this is not clear, but it is tragic that a once robust industry with large capex should be brought to its knees by unfriendly government policy.

HighlyIRREGULAR

Regularisation of unauthorised colonies helps governance, but also creates a moral hazard

GIVEN THAT THERE are over 40 lakh people in Delhi—one-fifth of the national capital's population—who reside in unauthorised colonies, regularisation was a carrot that any political party could dangle to elicit votes. The BJP-led Union government's announcement that 1,797 unauthorised colonies in Delhi will be regularised has to be read with this in mind, as should the state government's enthusiastic welcoming of the decision. The regularisation move will mean that those who had constructed houses illegally will now become the legitimate owners of the land.

Although, from a governance perspective, regularising colonies might seem sensible—the Delhi Jal Board had announced an amnesty scheme for these colonies last year to cork rampant pilferage of water—periodic drives create a moral hazard. Most of the colonies that are being regularised house people in the lower income brackets, so, there is no capture of land by the well-heeled, like regularising a Sainik Farms would have meant. But such regularisation encourages the development of more unauthorised colonies by builders. The government norms for construction are quite limiting, leading to very high real estate prices in legal colonies; housing thus has become unaffordable for lakhs of people. Regularisation without any penalties deters people from buying authorised land, and paying taxes. Past regularisation efforts show that government record as far as the collection of taxes is concerned has been low. While the Centre has done well to leave out those built on forest land, it also needs to ensure that it can bring all the landowners within the tax net.

● RANDOM WALK

FISCAL POLICY HAS ITS LIMIT AND GOVERNMENT SPENDING NEEDS TO BE PRUDENT. THE UPWARD PATH WILL BE DRIVEN BY STATISTICAL BIASES THAN REAL POLICY IMPULSES

Expectations, not policy, key to recovery

MADAN SABNAVIS

Chief Economist, CARE Ratings
Views are personal



securities (ABSS) from banks to provide liquidity in the system. This has been the main driver of policy; even today, president Trump is severe on the Fed for not lowering rates further, and the ECB has gone in for a fresh round of quantitative easing. This was invoked as a panacea for all ailments, but has had limited success.

Let us look at the US, where the Fed rate came down from 4.75% in September 2007 to a range of 0-0.25% in December 2008, and increased only in December 2015 to 0.25-0.5%. Growth has been between 0-2.8% post a negative growth rate in 2009. The eye has always been on containing inflation at less than 2%. But, this has not really helped to push up the economy, and with unemployment rate really low, one does not know if rate cuts will increase spending. The Euro region has been struggling for almost a decade, and growth impulses seem to be muted; the ECB has kept the deposit rate at nil since 2012 from a high of 3.25% in October 2008, pre-financial-crisis. Growth has crossed 2% only twice since 2011.

These developments prove ex post that monetary policy has not worked, and that the solution lies elsewhere. Maybe fiscal policy where government spends more to create demand, or, if the issue is structural, there can be no quick fix and change will only occur gradually.

Let us look internally too. The repo rate is now down by 135 bps, and the impact has been quite timid. While the pro-rate-cut economists have badgered banks for not transmitting the cuts, the fact remains that no one borrows money because it is cheap. There needs

to be a reason to borrow money—an investment that is not commensurate with pickup in demand for the relevant goods will carry a fixed capital cost with low return. Similarly, individuals do not borrow if they do not have purchasing power; this is where income matters. This, in turn, means that more people need to be employed. The government's view, going by EPFO data, has been that job creation has been rapid, in which case, if they are not spending, there is an issue.

Now, interest rates at the policy level have been decreased substantially, and probably will continue to be lowered as the RBI projection of growth has been scaled down, which means that logically, to be consistent, the MPC has to lower rates if inflation is less than 4%. This is the challenge when the relentless lowering of rates losing its bite in case of a real recession, a concern raised in the west, holds for India too.

In the Eurozone, for example, the rate is already negative for banks which keep deposits with the ECB. In case the economy slips further, the rates cannot go down further, and that will make monetary policy impotent. The same holds in India as the repo rate is now close to 5%, and it looks likely to go below this mark in the remaining months of the calendar year.

One normally tends to look at interest rates from the borrowers' perspec-

tive, never the lenders'. As rates drop, the returns earned on savings fall, and, if used for consumption, brings the overall spending level down, creating a ratchet effect. Therefore, it is necessary for monetary policy to also weigh this effect. Curiously, none of the MPC statements or discussions mention this factor that has contributed to muted demand and affected growth. While the mandate has been to address inflation, the Committee, in its deliberations, has extended the brief to growth, but never to impact on savings, which influences growth through the consumption route.

World growth accelerated at a time when globalisation was at its zenith, and cross-border trade and investment flour-

ished. Post the financial crisis and Euro region imbroglio, things have changed. No longer does the invisible hand work towards countries automatically supporting other nations symbiotically. Protectionism has increased, and trade treaties have been placed on the side-table. Now, growth has to be internal, and the US is talking of 'US first', just as we are propagating the 'Make in India' dogma. In such a situation, it will be

hard to break the barrier to growth. Fiscal policy, too, has its limit as while we can ask the government to spend more, it has to be within limits set by prudence.

Therefore, it does appear that there are limits set to economic theories, and we need to follow the path of Rational Expectations, where the market should be left alone. As long as companies and other growth agents keep expecting rates to come down further, or government to take more fiscal measures, there will be deferment of decisions. This is why the upward path will be slow, and more driven by statistical biases than real policy impulses.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Loss of faith in BJP

The results of assembly elections in Maharashtra and Haryana speak loudly to the fact that people are losing their faith in the BJP. They have started to realise their folly of giving such a massive mandate to the BJP in the last parliamentary elections. People have also realised that the religious polarisation and the neo-nationalist overtures of the ruling dispensation are only to divert their attention from the economic chaos created by it—resulting in severe unemployment problems and many small and medium industries shutting down. People have also realised that this government is not for the *Aam Aadmi* but only for the the wealthy. As far as the Congress party is concerned, though they have improved their tally, there is still a long way for them to regain their political hold. It is time the party took some bold steps to revamp their party and inject new blood in the cadres to surge forward. The first step towards this would be to handover the baton of leadership to a young and vibrant leader with assurance of undiluted support to him/her from the top rank leaders and others.

— Tharcius S Fernando, Chennai

NRC in Assam

Supreme Court last week ordered the transfer of Prateek Hajela, project coordinator of Assam's National Register of Citizens (NRC) to his home state Madhya Pradesh. This is significant as Hajela has been blamed for the outcome of NRC exercise with about 19 lakh people's failure to prove their citizenship. NRC exercise seemed defective from the beginning because of the poor documentation. Even for people with documents, the NRC exercise wasn't easy. The way forward is to stop illegal immigration than to disrupt the entire country.

— Farooque, Bengaluru

● Write to us at feletters@expressindia.com

E-commerce needs greater certainty

Govt's intentions seem good to ensure a level playing field for the brick-and-mortar retail shops, but the impact that this may have on foreign entities is concerning

ARGUABLY, IF THERE is any sector with FDI that is looked upon with suspicion and scepticism, it is e-commerce. In yet another blow to the FDI funded e-commerce global entities operating in India, the government, in order to check that FDI rules have not been flouted, has sought some critical information from these entities. The government wants to know the names of top five vendors selling goods on these entities' e-commerce platform, the price at which the goods are offered by the vendors, their capital structure, business model and inventory management system. It is not the first time that the government has moved against these e-commerce entities. Whenever any complaint is filed by retailer associations; the government acts swiftly against these entities.

To be sure, the FDI rules clearly permit FDI up to 100% under automatic route in the marketplace model of e-commerce. The rule allowing 100% FDI comes with strings attached that the e-commerce entities need to comply with. The last major tweak to the FDI rules (seemingly at the behest of the traders' association!) was made in February earlier this year. A critical condition was added to the policy that debarred e-commerce entities from exercising any ownership and control on the inventory sold on their platforms. To give teeth to this stringent rule, the policy provides that a vendor's inventory that is sold on the e-commerce platform will mean to be under the e-commerce entity's control if that vendor procures its inventory in excess of 25% from either that e-commerce entity or any of its group companies. This policy change was needed to ensure that the e-commerce entity should not, through a controlled vendor, indirectly sell its own goods on its

own platform and thus circumvent the FDI law on marketplace model of e-commerce. A separate condition in the rules prohibits a vendor from selling any product on the e-commerce platform of an entity which has any equity stake in that vendor. Further, the e-commerce entities are not allowed to influence the sale price of the goods such that a level playing field is ensured for all the vendors. This means that e-commerce entities cannot encourage giving discounts unless the discounts are offered by the vendors themselves.

The government now, on the complaint of traders' association, wants to test if these rules have been violated. Something may or may not come out of this. The government's intentions seem good to ensure a level playing field for the brick-and-mortar retail shops and these entities may emerge clean, but what is concerning is the impact that this action may have on foreign entities doing business in India. We must not forget that India has impressively climbed several places up in the latest World Bank's Ease of Doing Business 2020 survey and now stands at rank 63 (a remarkable climb of 14 rungs over the last year and 79 over the last five years). The government is determined to improve this further and bring India's rank to top 50. But, such signals could prove to be retrogressive for any serious attempts at improving the ranking. The parameters that are used for the rankings do not take into account the effects of investigative actions of the

If the year gone by is any basis for this, then clearly the outlook doesn't seem to be optimistic. Constant tweaking of law for this sector will add to the uncertainty

government, but the global perception that India is becoming an easy place to do business could get a big blow. So, such actions are best avoided, particularly at a time when the government itself has promised to make India a better place to do business. Considerable efforts are being made to attract more FDI at the time of a slowing economy, and also at a time when India wants to project itself as an alternative to China after the US-China trade rift. Therefore, the approach should be

of welcoming foreign capital, and not of looking at business operations with an eye of suspicion.

If the year gone by is any basis for this, then clearly, the outlook doesn't seem to be optimistic. Constant tweaking of law for this sector will add to the uncertainty. This could result in flight of capital from India being considered as an unfriendly business environment. Several large global online e-commerce players planning their India entry would be closely monitoring these developments in India. The giant multinationals, not only in e-commerce space but across sectors that are looking to set up or expand operations in India, should not get any impression that India is becoming a tough place to do business.

Although the World Bank's report does not consider such situations of government action fuelled by some traders' lobby in its ranking and hence this issue is not reflected in India's latest ranking, still business entities on the ground could get severely affected.

To climb up in rankings, a greater certainty is needed for doing business.

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● FUTURE OF TOURISM

Is India ready to supply quality talent?

If India is to become the third-largest tourism economy by 2028, the country must focus on offering opportunities that allow talent to work on new and innovative projects—with a promise of continued learning and growth

THIS YEAR, FOR the first time in the history of India's travel and tourism sector, we were named the host country for the official celebration of the World Tourism Day on September 27. Themed 'Tourism and Jobs: A Better Future for All', the honour is well-timed as the sector's contributions to the country's economy get recognised. Benefiting the larger ecosystem with its direct and indirect advantages, the sector today enjoys the status of being one of the key generators of employment in the country. In 2017-18, over 81.1 million Indians, accounting to 12.38% of the total workforce, were employed by the sector, and this number is expected to grow manifold in the coming years.

As tourism diversifies, it has opened

new avenues for employment for the skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled talent across the length and breadth of the country. Currently, while a large percentage of the talent comes from the urban areas, there has been a definite increase in the number of talent from the rural areas joining the workforce. In parallel, as growth flows in from new sub-sectors such as alternate accommodations, experiences, intracity cabs and more, new off-beat jobs are being created every day—with many finding opportunities as wine connoisseurs in the vineyards of Nashik, adventure sports trainers in Leh and Ladakh, entertainers and performers in Rann of Kutch, among others. Some of these opportunities, up until the past few years, were unheard of—and if there were, they

existed in meagre counts.

With a sea of employment opportunities on one side, the industry, unfortunately, faces a talent supply-and-demand mismatch, on the other side. And if we are to unleash the potential of the sector as a 'job creator', we must focus on creating a talent pool that meets the requirements of 40 million new jobs that will be created in the next five years (according to PHD Chamber Report, March 2019).

One of the major factors contributing to the growth of employment in the sector is rapid adoption of technology—which has resulted into an increase in the demand for tech-skilled talent. From programming, machine learning, data science, Internet of Things, robotics, security analysts, blockchain, middleware technology to design and user interface—new tech-centric jobs are now available for the 3.7 million tech-rich Indian workforce. While there is a definite promise of growth in the technology domain, the hard reality is that the tech-talent supply-and-demand gap remains wide. This gap prevails due to the magnitude of difference between theoretical and practical technology and domain knowledge, which, often, our educational institutions fail to offer our tech graduates. And this demands immediate correction in the curriculum—if we are to prepare our next-in-line talent for the jobs that shall become available in the next three to five years. What is also important is the need for instilling a culture that focuses on applied learning—moving away from the practice of rote learning. Futuristic technologies demand 'practical knowledge of using intelligent tech applications and problem-solving capabilities', which can only be imparted by introducing students to practical problems relevant to the industry.

On the other hand, as upgrades to technology stacks become more frequent, there is a quintessential need for employers to upskill their talent—through on-the-job training modules and access to global professional certifications (which are usually exorbitantly priced for an average salaried employee). Specific to the travel and tourism industry, upskilling talent on advanced technologies can train them to work in tandem and in harmony with intelligent tech solutions deployed at the company level. For instance, practical know-how of the functionalities of machine learning can help talent predict seasonal demand for services based on previous buying

behaviours of travellers, develop pricing strategies through predictive models, and classifying and extending personalised services through deep learning applications, among others. Globally, travel companies have recognised the need for steadily moving towards upskilling their talent and are already moving in that direction—we must do so in India, too.

Another area that can help bridge the talent gap is by driving inclusivity within the sector in India. Globally, travel and tourism stands out with a strong representation of women than the labour market as whole. Whereas, in India, going by the numbers, only 12% of women are employed by the sector. A recent survey by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) indicates that countries which have witnessed consistent growth in travel and tourism, over the years, have also seen higher employment of female workers (vis-a-vis others) in the sector. However, unfortunately, in India, despite the growth in the sector, we have shown up

poorly in employing the women force (as against the global pattern). What is needed is a holistic initiative that brings together the entire ecosystem in driving gender mainstreaming across levels. Some of these measures could focus on improving access to professional training for mid-level jobs, promoting women entrepreneurship and equal access to start-up grants and more.

While the sector grapples with matching talent supply with the demand, there is another challenge that the industry faces today, i.e. retaining existing, skilled and trained talent. Globally, countries are fighting with high attrition in the travel and tourism sector, with many choosing to opt out of the sector within the first decade of their career. And if India is on its way to becoming the third-largest tourism economy by 2028, it's time we focus on offering opportunities that allow talent to work on new and innovative projects—with a promise of continued learning and growth. It is an area that the country can definitely address, given the pace at which the sector is diversifying.

India's travel and tourism industry is undergoing rapid transformation, and if we are to capitalise on the sector's growth to stimulate job creation, we must invest in building an ecosystem that provides opportunities for specialised training and education, gender inclusivity, entrepreneurship—with a focus on helping talent succeed in the ever-evolving travel world.

While the sector grapples with matching talent supply with demand, there is another challenge it faces—retaining existing, skilled and trained talent

Tough times for managers?

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Promoters, managers have to be in sync for an institution/corporate to succeed

INDIAN CORPORATE WORLD, which till a decade ago was well-ensconced as overtly owner-driven with absolute powers, had to change tack as aspirations grew to go global. Many large Indian conglomerates packed their leadership team with professionals backed by varied experience in India and abroad. The combination worked successfully during transformative times despite executive powers lying with owners. Global ambitions, capital accessibility, collaboration and operational competence aided Indian conglomerates to expand footprints outside India through organic and inorganic ways. Corporates have bolstered global corporate governance practices by inducting independent directories and appointment of global auditors. Global capital raising was smoother and foreign institutional investors flocked. Times seem to be good for all.

But good times do not last forever. As tide turned against them, situation became hot to handle. Boardrooms became uneasy settings. Someone had to bite the bullet for all strategic decisions that turned against the corporates. First it was professional CEOs, followed by independent directors and auditors. In majority cases, owners with executive powers remained unscathed. On the other hand, shareholder value and owners' wealth witnessed a downward spiral. Instances are Infosys, Tata, Indigo, Religare Group, Fortis, etc.

In the Infosys saga, the promoter was able to demoralise the CEO enough to call it quits. Then there was the Tata versus Mistry story—the saga was played in NCLT and business deals with the Tata Group issuing a diktat to all group companies to sever ties with the Shapoorji Pallonji group, breaking away from a century-old association.

In the Indigo dispute, both promoters put out things in the open and it also involved regulatory bodies and the government. Not only do such incidents impact stocks, but also affect the morale of employees. In the Religare saga, the dirty linen is being so publicly washed that all have become fed of the story itself. But the worst part is promoters blaming the former management for it. Management prudence towards professionals has been cast aside and professional managers have been wronged for all ill of owner's misdeeds.

The debate over management powers with promoters versus those with professionals may be as old as corporate entities came into being. While it may be a worldwide phenomenon, it is much bigger an issue in India.

The issue that is being raised in boardrooms is whether the Indian promoter's mindset has developed to co-opt professional managers as one of their own. Promoters only take professional managers as employees, or subservient. We have seen the best of professional managers belittled, humiliated in most unprofessional manners in Indian corporates. Promoters tend to have a big say in making all critical calls for a company, while professionals are there to be blamed for everything that goes wrong. It may be a professional's mandate to turn around a dud project or infuse energy in a dead atmosphere; if he succeeds, the credit goes to the visionary promoter. A professional is as good as his last assignment and as long as he can manage to be subservient of the promoter. We have seen so many competent and experienced professionals in cross hairs of regulatory authorities.

Despite promoters controlling 15-20% stake in listed companies, several promoters continue to wield power even if they are proven to be inefficient, selfish. Today, the quality of management and key management persons at the helm are among the investment criteria for serious investors. The name of promoters is not enough any more to drive valuations. We are witnessing many promoters (particularly in the real estate development sector) queuing up before courts.

Investors, in many cases, want the company to run in clean, open, transparent, professional ways. However, their pleas fall on deaf ears, and promoters carry on undeterred.

While the role of promoters or founders cannot be undermined in a corporate entity, professional managers have an equal or a bigger stake in operations. They are professionally qualified and trained to run and turnaround business, which promoters may be lacking. Unless given a free hand, a professional cannot optimise the resources made available by promoters. If there is insecurity, distrust, oneupmanship playing in the minds of promoters, it does not translate into a conducive atmosphere for the management team.

Promoters and managers have to be in sync for any institution or corporate to succeed. Beyond a level, promoters' engagement should be limited and the management should be best left to professional managers.

AT THE START of year 2018, commodities held out much promise building up on the strong gains that had set in during second half of 2017. Metal and energy prices touched multi-year highs and so were most global equity markets. But then the markets were hit by the abrupt assault of 'sanction & tariff bombs' amidst domestic protectionism ruling the day. In late March 2018, the US President signed a memorandum imposing tariffs of 25% on steel and 10% on aluminium imports. China retaliated by imposing tariffs on 128 US products (worth \$3 billion). The development sowed a seed of endless imposition of tariffs and retaliation that spread to other countries.

On the sanctions front, in early April, the US imposed sanctions on Russian company Rusal, the biggest aluminium producer outside of China, and one of the biggest suppliers to US, from accessing the global markets for its aluminium, firing up aluminium market. Volatility was abrupt during April-May last year; aluminium prices sky-rocketed by 30% in two weeks while these fell by around 14% in the next week as the market came to the grips of its impact. In another measure of protectionism, by end of May 2018, the US said there will be a 10% tariff on imports of aluminium from Canada, Mexico and the EU.

The trade war with multiple goalposts between the US and China remained the mother of all disputes that declined to die down, causing episodes of volatility in

Commodities in trade war crossfire

The trade war can unsettle the equilibrium of commodity-based economies

**V SHUNMUGAM
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financial markets, including commodity markets. In July 2018, the US imposed tariffs on \$250 billion worth of goods imported from China, with Beijing retaliating with duties on \$110 billion worth of US products. The tug of war between the top two economies left global commodity and equity markets bleeding. Chinese markets tumbled near three-year lows bringing down commodities along with it.

A simple way to put the effect of tariff-based trade war is that tariffs between economies can precipitate a fall in global trade, disrupting the global supply chain through higher costs, lower investment

and confidence, while farmers and producers of producing countries also get hit hard by retaliatory measures. Many developing countries have a resource-intensive economy, which tends to improve and worsen with commodity prices.

The current fall in commodity prices arising out of growth concerns as fallout of trade disputes has hit the economies of commodity-intensive countries hard. Australia stands clearly impacted. Particularly so as China is the biggest export market for Australia and it accounts for roughly one dollar for three export dollars earned. Minerals make up 60% of exports with the



country being one of the biggest exporters of iron ore, coal and liquefied natural gas. Declining commodity prices and softening raw material demand from China had a cascading effect on the Australian economy. Its quarterly growth dipped to a decade low of 0.5%, the slowest since the Global Financial Crisis.

In a few cases, to deter the impact of the escalating trade dispute, commodity-based economies have actively managed their currencies to make them depreciate to remain competitive in the export markets—the reported action of China in depreciating its currency is a clear case in

point that countries may attempt to gain the lost trade competitiveness through active currency management.

India is a net import-based economy wherein commodities comprise more than 80% of total imports. India should gain from the fall in prices of commodities including that of crude oil. Alas, India was also dragged in the bilateral trade dispute early this year after the US withdrew favourable treatment to India under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP), as India runs a surplus in its trade with the US. In retaliation, India imposed tariffs on select products that the US exports to

India, including apples and walnuts. The irony is that the top two global economies engaged in fierce trade dispute have an Indian connection—while the US is the largest export destination for India with 16% of total exports, China is the largest source of imports accounting for 14% spread over a diverse basket of goods. India can benefit in terms of low commodity prices but for the weak rupee that will potentially offset some gains, apart from weak sentiments in the economy. Additionally, the global economic slowdown may, in turn, hit India's exports very hard, of which services contribute about 40%.

Commodity-based economies are vulnerable to price shocks and price volatility. The current trade disputes clearly have an uneven but negative impact in the global economies fuelled largely by the economic slowdown. The longer the trade war continues, the more profound its effect will be; new trade relationships will be formed and global commodity flows will be rerouted to other nations, unsettling the equilibrium of commodity-based economies and, at times, challenging the economic efficiency that the commodity supply chains would have built into. Unlike other trade wars, the current one is fortified with geopolitical tensions, falling economic growth of nations, rising risks to economic stakeholders, and risks to investment. Unless this rift is resolved in an efficient manner by the stakeholders, measures by central banks and nations towards economic upliftment will prove to be futile.

The discovery of dark matter

This could eventually lead to better understanding of places where life is most likely to exist



QUANTUM LEAP

DEVANGSHU DATTA

The 2019 Nobel honours the discovery of dark matter and the creation of techniques for discovering exoplanets. It is split three ways. Canadian cosmologist, James Peebles gets half the monetary award of Kronor 900,000 (about US \$ 909,000). Swiss scientists, Michel Mayor and Didier Queloz shared half. The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences said the three “transformed our ideas about the cosmos”.

Dark matter became a speculative

“solution” to problems in astrophysical calculations in the 1960s. In 1916, when Einstein released his general theory of relativity, he inserted a “cosmological constant” to adjust for his belief the universe was static in size. But by the 1920s, it was known that the universe was expanding. Einstein regarded the cosmological constant as a blunder and removed it from his equations.

In 1964, a breakthrough occurred, by accident. The 1978 Nobel Laureates Arno Penzias and Robert Wilson were examining microwave radiation. They kept picking up “noise”, which they initially assumed to be instrument error. James Peebles made theoretical calculations when he realised the “noise” provided information about the amount of matter created in the Big Bang. The uneven noise showed minute differences in temperatures in different regions and indicated how matter clustered to form galaxies.

That led to another puzzle: most of that matter was undetectable by other means. Hence, the name “dark mat-

ter”. Measurements of cosmic background radiation and the resultant theory showed the matter we can detect is only about 31 per cent of what should be there. About 5 per cent is ordinary matter and 26 per cent is dark matter, inferred via calculations matching observations.

About 69 per cent is absolutely undetectable. In 1984, Peebles was one of those who revived Einstein’s cosmological constant, using it to represent undetectable energy. This is called dark energy and assumed to account for the “missing” 69 per cent, which was somehow converted to energy.

In April 1992, John Mather and George Smoot presented an image of the first light in the universe (Nobel Prize in Physics 2006). This helped refine calculations and suggested Peebles was correct. In 1998, Saul Perlmutter, Brian Schmidt and Adam Riess showed that the universe’s expansion was accelerating (Nobel Prize in Physics 2011). That indicated an unknown, undetectable dark energy was indeed, responsible for pushing the expansion and Peebles’ the-

oretical calculations were confirmed. This leaves a big mystery of course, since almost nothing is known of dark matter and dark energy.

Michel Mayor and Didier Queloz developed methods to observe what we have long known to be true. Other stars must have planetary systems orbiting them, like our own. But planets are very small objects on a galactic scale. Nor do they have their own light source, only reflecting light from their parent star, or stars.

The radial velocity method is used to find exoplanets. This measures small changes in the velocity of a star (velocity is a measure of both speed and direction) caused by the gravity of its planets.

Radial velocity is measured using Doppler effects. Light from an object moving towards us tends towards the blue end of the spectrum, while objects moving away from us, tend towards red. By measuring apparent changes in wavelength, it is possible to calculate velocity of a star.

But even a planet as large as Jupiter (1300x Earth volume and 300x Earth

mass) causes the sun (a relatively small star) to shift just 12m/s. Earth itself causes just about 0.09 m/s shift. Scientists measure thousands of wavelengths to work out radial velocity shifts and then look for the planet, or planets, causing perturbation.

Mayor mounted his first spectro-scope in 1977 but it could only detect gross changes of about 300m/s which wasn’t enough to detect planets in far-away stars. In the 1990s, his doctoral student, Queloz, worked with his research group to refine the technology and the calculation techniques.

In October 1995, they revealed the first exoplanet, a huge gas giant like Jupiter, orbiting very close to its star, 51 Pegasi. Since then, using similar techniques, over 4,000 planets have been discovered, including many that are Earth-like. This has helped astronomers improve their models for planetary development since some of the results, including the very first, showed the earlier understanding of planet formation was wrong.

These discoveries open up new areas of research. There are many scientists working to get to grips with dark matter and dark energy. Others are examining data about exoplanets. This could eventually lead to better understanding of, among other things, places where life is most likely to develop.

integrated reporting is the first step towards this. And as firms change their time horizon, investors need to do so too. They will need shift focus away from quarterly results, but the need to look beyond numbers is critical for the long term. Finally, regulations need to recognise this change. Interestingly, the Companies Act 2013 spoke of a stakeholder engagement committee, rather than a shareholder grievance committee, but the committee is floundering to find a meaningful role for itself.

This shift from shareholder to stakeholder is easier said than done. A recent survey by Stanford Business School of the CEOs and CFOs of S&P 1500 companies finds just 5 per cent saying that stakeholders are more important than shareholders. The rest believe shareholder interests are significantly more important (23 per cent), only slightly more (32 per cent), or equally important (40 per cent). Opinion was even divided on who or what the company needs to focus on — community, employees, trade unions etc.

This last is an area where one of the few criticisms has come from. The powerful US based Council of Institutional Investors has said that accountability to everyone means accountability to no one. This is what will trouble academia — maximising many functions rarely has an elegant solution. But this is not about variables. Repurposing the role of the corporation is more than just about sustainable production — ensuring that the area around the factory has emissions well within standards, water is cleaned before it is discharged, raw materials used are biodegradable. That suppliers and employees are respected and rightfully rewarded. It is about companies taking into account the social order in which they operate.

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CHINESE WHISPERS

Media connect



Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Adityanath, after expanding his cabinet, has decided to broaden the scope of the media connect of his two-and-a-half-year-old government. While two cabinet ministers Shrikant Sharma and Sidharth Nath Singh were designated official spokespersons of the government after the BJP came to power in UP in March 2017, the chief minister feels the need to empanel more spokespersons to keep the official version of the government’s viewpoint in the media, in view of the volume of fake news circulating all around. The new media panel includes the two deputy chief ministers, Keshav Prasad Maurya and Dinesh Sharma, apart from two other ministers Mahendra Singh and Anil Rajbhar, who would field media queries ahead of the Assembly polls in 2022.

Colonial hangover

The Madhya Pradesh government, run by the Congress, has sought suggestions from public intellectuals and common people to help it come up with sobriquets for the post of “collector”. Public Relations Minister P C Sharma recently said the term collector gained currency during British rule and was used for a person who used to collect revenue for the erstwhile British rulers. Now that collectors’ work is different, the designation has become redundant, he said. Sources in the government said most officers agreed that the term “district administrator” was more appropriate. In December last year, just after assuming office, Chief Minister Kamal Nath had declared that he wanted to change the designation because it was a colonial hangover.

No English for Fadnavis



Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis (pictured) has a penchant for local languages. At a media gathering, after the announcement of the Assembly election results, which pointed at a Bharatiya Janata Party victory, Fadnavis began speaking in Marathi to local reporters. He then switched to Hindi and remarked the Hindi channels also needed to survive. However, later when he was asked to comment in English, he declined, saying he spoke the language only when the audience did not understand Marathi or Hindi, or when he travelled abroad.

Corporates 2.0: Profit with a purpose

The corporation is more than just about sustainable production. It is about companies taking into account the social order in which they operate



OCCASIONAL ASIDE

AMIT TANDON

The line it is drawn/the curse it is cast./The slow one now/will later be fast./As the present now/will later be past./The order is rapidly fadin./And the first one now/will later be last./For the times they are a-changin’.

Bob Dylan

Twenty-two years after first committing itself to Milton Friedman’s mantra that the principal objective of a business enterprise is to generate economic returns to its owners, the US Business Roundtable has now given corporations a new purpose. In a statement in August, the Roundtable stated that purpose of the corporation is no longer maximising returns to shareholders, rather it is a commitment to all shareholders. This puts shareholders on par with employees, customers, suppliers and communities in which businesses operate. It is useful to remember this is how it was till the Business Roundtable exhorted corporates to embrace the profit motive.

The reason to bring this up is that the Business Roundtable has an oversized influence on US businesses — close to 200 US CEOs from Jamie Dimon at JP Morgan to Tim Cook at Apple are members — and therefore on companies across the globe. This statement has the potential to upend the roles and responsibilities of the board and what roles corporates see for themselves. Issues that are placed on the board agenda and the basis of decision making, is all set to change. Will the duty of care be revisited? Will the Revlon Rules be jettisoned, and the board charged with preserving the company, post its sale and not just selling it to the highest bidder? It’s too early to say, but change you can expect.

The US Business Roundtable statement on the purpose of a corporation: While each of our individual companies serves its own corporate purpose, we share a fundamental commitment to all of our stakeholders. We commit to:

- Delivering value to our customers. We will further the tradition of American companies leading the way in meeting or exceeding customer expectations.
- Investing in our employees. This starts with compensating them fairly and providing important benefits. It also includes supporting them through training and education that help develop new skills for a rapidly changing world. We foster diversity and inclusion, dignity and respect.
- Dealing fairly and ethically with our suppliers. We are dedicated to serving as good partners to the other compa-



nies, large and small, that help us meet our missions.

■ Supporting the communities in which we work. We respect the people in our communities and protect the environment by embracing sustainable practices across our businesses.

■ Generating long-term value for shareholders, who provide the capital that allows companies to invest, grow and innovate. We are committed to transparency and effective engagement with shareholders. Each of our stakeholders is essential. We commit to deliver value to all of them, for the future success of our companies, our communities and our country.

It is probably just a coincidence, but still noteworthy, that just around the time the Business Roundtable first painted shareholders sitting at the high

table, the UN adopted its Millennial Development Goals, which in 2015 gave way to Sustainable Development Goals. These asked that the corporate sector walk lockstep with governments and broaden their agenda by focussing on hunger, health, gender, sustainability and 13 other goals. Clearly, the pressure to redefine the purpose of a corporation began almost as soon as it was first enunciated.

In parallel, capitalism too tried to soften itself around the edge, and there was talk of shared value capitalism, conscious capitalism, share value capitalism or development with a human face. And with this, the shift to corporates larger role in society.

How might the firms change? Clearly, how they report on their activities will change. The thrust towards

INSIGHT

How the RBI can get its act together

In the concluding part of the series, the author draws attention to the central bank’s problems that need urgent fixing



J N GUPTA

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) framed regulations for credit rating agencies (CRAs) way back in 1999. Indeed, India was the first jurisdiction in the world to do so. The idea behind such regulation was to protect investors. However, the more frequent users of credit ratings are banks and non-banking financial companies (NBFCs), which are regulated by the RBI. Has the RBI taken a single step to make CRAs more effective and efficient? Has any back-testing been done by the RBI? Or has it asked banks or the Indian Banks’ Association to assess the efficacy of credit ratings? Banks and NBFCs followed the system blindly without ever questioning the ratings. When one asks questions, one gets the response that CRAs do not rate an entity but only the instrument. How can you rate an instrument issued by an entity in isolation unless cash flows are in escrow? The RBI has been a silent spectator to the mess.

Single-point banking: The present banking system — with multiple banking arrangements in multiple locations with cross-flows among various entities and banks — makes the job of a bank officer more complicated than that of an air traffic controller (ATC). An ATC can at least

see everything on a radar. The complicated banking arrangement suits a delinquent borrower who conducts transactions in such a manner that detection becomes next to impossible. The RBI has aided such an unruly banking system by remaining a silent spectator.

Pressure and demands from banks have taken precedence over prudence. Has the RBI analysed why an entity needs dozens of bankers? IL&FS had banking arrangements with 22 banks. Does anyone need any more proof of the mess? The digital era is the era of single-point banking. Should the RBI bother about the stability of the financial system and protect people at large or consider the privacy of borrowers and competition amongst banks? The RBI must make a choice and communicate that to stakeholders.

Multiplicity of laws: The RBI has separate laws for the State Bank of India, three different laws for PSU banks, besides the Banking Regulation (BR) Act, 1949. Some banks are companies; hence Companies Act is applicable. Some are listed, so SEBI LODR (Listing Obligations and Disclosure. Requirements Amendment Regulations, 2018) regulations are applicable. As a result, it has to follow different yardsticks for different banks. How can a regulator maintain market integrity when it has different rules based on who the parent is and how and when the entity came into existence? Till date, the RBI has not reconciled the BR Act with the Companies Act 2013; it continues to refer to the Companies Act, 1956. The Companies Act, 2013, was a game-changer for governance; but the RBI seems oblivious of the development. It does not even have a universal governance code. Bank licensing is another area that

establishes the fact that the central bank probably doesn’t know what makes a bank strong. For some banks, it recommends high promoter equity; for some it wants to reduce equity and for PSUs it is agnostic. One doesn’t understand how for similar businesses in same environment, three different ownership levels will result in agnostic risk management. If high promoter equity is bad, why is it not bad for PSUs or new private banks? If low equity is bad, why is it not bad for older private banks? The rationale for such measures is known only to the RBI just like the secret formula of Coca-Cola is known only to the company that owns it.

Big Brother syndrome: Other regulators that are younger than the RBI are expected to take cues from the latter and its experience. Unfortunately, this learning is one-sided. The RBI doesn’t believe that it has anything to learn from regulators who might have better systems. How else can one explain its failure on LOUs (Letters of Undertaking), causing huge losses to Punjab National Bank? LOUs were an unknown banking product, untested and didn’t have international acceptance. The RBI, in its master circular, had clubbed LOUs and LOCs (Letters of Undertaking/Comfort) with Letter of Credits (LCs) and Bank Guarantees (BGs), giving the impression that all these instruments are on a par with each other. This was a cardinal mistake, as LCs and BGs are more than a century old, with globally accepted standards and uniform laws. On the other hand, LOUs and LOCs were home-grown products, untested on their behaviour and attendant risks. Clubbing them with LCs and BGs gave them respectability that they did not deserve. This could have been avoided if the RBI adopted the

practice of its fellow regulator SEBI.

The RBI has been part of the SEBI committee for products in the forex derivative market. It participated in the product design, assessing risks and in their introduction. And even after the introduction of some products, it was involved in their monitoring to ensure there was no risk to the system. Could the RBI have done the same with LOUs?

PMC Bank stress: Do we still need co-operative banks? This question should have been part of the RBI’s internal debate long back as the structure of co-operative banks has nothing co-operative about it. Over a period of time these banks, with a few exceptions, have become fiefdoms of strong-armed people, allowing political patronage to prosper. These are a new system of princely states so to speak, with checks and balances only on paper.

India Bulls and LVB merger: Once again, the issue of ownership of banks is in focus. Who is fit and proper to own a bank? Does skin in the game (equity ownership) carry more risk or is it the other way round? Barring PSUs that are in financial mess despite higher promoter equity, it appears that risk is associated more with low promoter equity. Most private banks with low promoter equity, excepting a few, are currently facing problems. Is curbing voting rights a better solution than curbing their economic interest?

The RBI needs to go back to the drawing board and look for rationality in all its regulations.

The time has come for the RBI to overhaul its internal systems, open itself up to a consultative process, scout for feedback and accept criticism as a tool of improvement. It must realise that it can also make mistakes and be ready to make amends. It must change the archaic laws to suit the demands of the new millennium. This must be done on a war footing to ensure that its prestige is not lost.

(Concluded)

The writer is founder and managing director of Stakeholders Empowerment Services

LETTERS

Stem the rot in banking

This refers to the deposit insurance limit enhancement in the light of the upcoming Financial Resolution and Deposit Insurance (FRDI) Bill that will be introduced in the next Parliament session. As the name suggests, the insurance coverage should be enhanced to 80 per cent of the total deposit made by each customer. Like other insurance policies, 80 per cent of the sum assured should be returned on maturity or if claimed.

This way the customer won’t lose a substantial amount of investment if the bank performs poorly and thereby the remaining 20 per cent can be utilised in restructuring the assets of the non-performing banks. The age-old regulatory measures need to be revisited and new rules introduced to prevent any potentially fraudulent activities arising from the loopholes in the existing banking system.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) as the central bank should tighten banking regulations for the staff and any deviation should be reported to the regulatory committee at the earliest. The central should introduce a rating system for all banks based on their non-performing assets and bad loans along with their financial performance every year so that every customer is aware of the risks.

Every bank should publish online and offline newsletters about their financial performance and financial setbacks every quarter, so that a customer can make

investment decision wisely. A vigilance committee should check the ratings from time to time.

Sunanda Mukherjee Mumbai

Setting a new tone

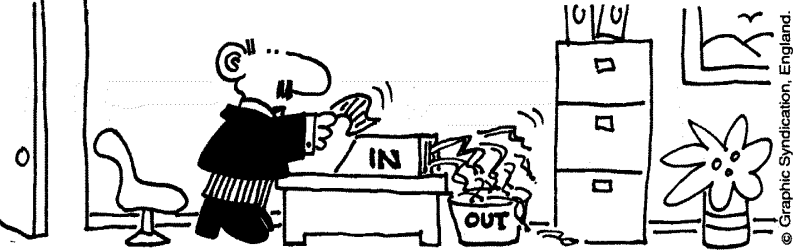
This refers to “BSNL, MTNL to merge, get ₹70k cr push” (October 24). The new policy direction of the government should not come as a surprise. Considering the government has gone in for an amalgamated public telecom, it must be taken as an acid test for the acumen of the government and its bureaucracy. This might set a new tone and direction in the emancipated governance of public sector undertakings in future.

The entire exercise for installing a model commercial entity, with many differing components of finance, HR, marketing would need a lead minister and a capable team to shape a competitive and progressive company. This team should not only be able to win back the lost clientele but also leverage changing technology to attract new adherents. There has to be an independent and professional board at the helm with technology and marketing as its main remit.

R Narayanan Mumbai

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HAMBONE



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Message from the states

Time for economy to be the focus of politics

Voters of Haryana and Maharashtra have surprised both the incumbent Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and political pundits. The results of the Assembly elections have turned out to be significantly different from what most exit polls had predicted, and the BJP has underperformed in both the states. While it should be able to form the next government in Maharashtra with its alliance partner, Shiv Sena, the result is unlikely to please the leadership of the party. The BJP has managed to hold on to only 105 seats compared to the expectation of reaching the halfway mark on its own in the 288-member Assembly. The story in Haryana is more unfavourable for the BJP where it has failed to cross the halfway mark and has got 40 seats in the 90-member Assembly. On the other hand, the Congress, despite all its weakness and factionalism, has gained 16 seats in Haryana compared with the 2014 elections (till the time of going to press). While in terms of vote share the BJP has gained, improvement in the Congress' performance is more significant because of the consolidation of anti-BJP votes. The Indian National Lok Dal, for instance, has completely collapsed. In Maharashtra, the BJP is likely to be on the back foot because it has to depend heavily on a more assertive Shiv Sena this time.

At a broader level, these results have several takeaways. First, even if elections since December last year are taken into account, it is clear that voters vote differently in national and state elections. The BJP lost power in three important states — Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Rajasthan — in December last year, but went on to sweep these states in the Lok Sabha polls. But its vote share has dropped significantly in the Assembly elections. Second, state elections are more about local issues. The BJP campaigned in Haryana and Maharashtra largely on nationalist issues, including the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution. It doesn't seem to have worked despite the opposition being in complete disarray. This perhaps also shows that economics and politics cannot be kept separate for too long. The Indian economy has slowed considerably in the last few quarters and there is distress in rural India, which is reflected in the way parts of rural Maharashtra have voted.

Third, the remarkable showing put up by the Congress in Haryana underlines that all is not lost for the party. Though in Maharashtra the Sharad Pawar-led Nationalist Congress Party has performed better, the Congress has managed to hold its ground. It is fair to argue that there is still goodwill for the party in different parts of the country. Had it sorted out its leadership issues in time and backed its local leaders, the results could have looked very different in both the states.

Finally, the results indicate that both the BJP and Congress need to get their act together. The BJP-led governments, both at the Centre and states, would do well to deal with the economic slowdown more seriously. The party has the required political capital and credibility to pursue an aggressive reforms agenda, which will help revive the investment and growth necessary to tackle widespread distress in the economy. Meanwhile, the Congress should swiftly address its leadership issue at the top and empower state leaders. It should, along with other parties, aim to play the role of a constructive opposition, which has a credible story to tell rather than only Modi-bashing. Let the economy be the focus of politics.

Another blow to telecom

Govt needs to decide what it wants to do with the sector

The Supreme Court has pronounced on a long-running dispute between the legacy telecommunications companies, including Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea, and the government about the nature of fees the companies must pay. The court upheld the position of the government, saying that the companies must pay ₹2,461 crore (about \$13 billion) to the government. The telecom companies had argued that revenue sharing with the government as part of the spectrum fee should be limited only to their earnings from the use of the spectrum; the government insisted that other revenue, such as from interest or rents, should also be counted. The additional dues were, in fact, only about ₹23,000 crore. The government is also demanding interest, penalty, and interest on the penalty, which takes it above ₹2,000 crore. The government will be pleased and relieved, since the additional bonanza will be available to cover its straitened finances — in fact, it can be partially used to fund the revival plan for the state-owned rival to Airtel and Vodafone Idea, BSNL-MTNL.

Differently put, this is a death blow to the telecom market if the government chooses to exercise the option given to it by the court judgment. At the end of 2018-19, Bharti Airtel had a debt burden of ₹1.06 trillion, excluding some deferred spectrum payments. Almost half of that was short-term liabilities. Vodafone Idea had a net debt in the same ballpark, of ₹1.2 trillion at the end of 2018-19. This additional burden comes at a time when they are in a price war with Reliance Jio, which is willing to run services at a loss, thanks to money pouring in from a war chest built out of steady revenue from the group's petrochemicals business. The government must now take a call on how it intends to continue. The mess it has made of the airline sector must not be repeated in telecom because the impact will have a domino effect on the larger digital chain. Further, an increase in stress in the sector could affect its debt servicing capability with implications for the banking system.

The government should re-evaluate what it expects from the telecom sector. Is it to be an engine of growth and productivity, as it was in the 2000s, or is it simply a cash cow for the government to fund its welfare spending? If it is the latter, then certainly the government can demand its full dues and at least one of the companies will probably exit the market. But if the government recognises that healthy competition and investment in telecom are priority for productivity-enhancing growth, it will have to think very differently. In a short while, companies will have to start investing in 5G infrastructure if Prime Minister Narendra Modi is to achieve his aim of a Digital India. Innovation ecosystems will have to be built around cutting-edge communications infrastructure. A sector hollowed out by the state's demands will not be able to put this infrastructure in place. The government will now have to decide how it wants to deal with the sector. It can perhaps waive the penalty and interest, in the furtherance of the broader national agenda.

The power of words



BOOK REVIEW

RAJIV SHIRALI

Several books on history's "great" speeches have been published in recent years — *The Chambers Book of Great Speeches*, *Lend Me Your Ears: Great Speeches in History* edited by the late William Safire, an American presidential speechwriter, and *The Penguin Book of Historic Speeches*, to cite only three. The latest is by Simon Sebag Montefiore, a British television presenter, sometime war

correspondent and author of popular history books.

The 78 speeches in *Voices of History* span two millennia, from ancient times to the 21st century, and are arranged into 19 subjects — resistance (to an enemy), dreamers, freedom, rise and fall, decency, battlefields, defiance, terror, trials, follies, power, peace-makers, revolution, warmongers, genocide, good vs evil, prophets, warnings and good-byes. There is an overall introduction, and each speech is also prefaced by a short introduction by Mr Montefiore, in which he sets out the historical context of the speech, and explains why it stands out.

Notable speeches include Winston Churchill's "blood, toil, tears and sweat"; Martin Luther King Jr's "I have a dream"; Jawaharlal Nehru's "tryst with destiny"; Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address

("government of the people, by the people, for the people"; Mahatma Gandhi's address on the eve of the Salt March; Nelson Mandela's victory speech on becoming South Africa's president; Barack Obama's first inaugural address as well as his speech to Americans announcing the killing of Osama bin Laden; Hitler's triumphant speech after the German conquest of large chunks of Europe; and Donald Trump's announcement of his decision to run for president in June 2015.

Words are powerful tools of communication, as great orators well know; they can sway people and mould public opinion. Mr Montefiore has included lofty, noble speeches couched in lyrical prose (Lincoln, Nehru, Kennedy, King, Mandela), as well as others full of hatred (Hitler, Heinrich Himmler, Josef Stalin, bin Laden). The power of language was brilliantly encapsulated by CBS reporter Edward Murrow during World War II, when he famously said of Churchill that he "mobilised the

English language and sent it into battle".

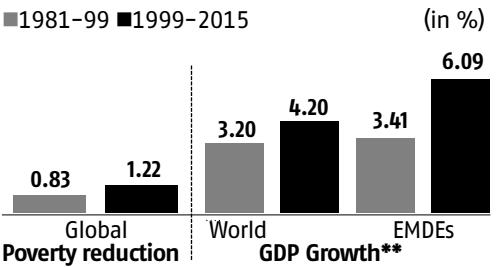
The speakers' styles vary from the brief to the preposterously long. Lincoln's Gettysburg Address was a mere 278 words long, while Churchill's three speeches featured here are short and punchy. Britain's war-time prime minister believed that subtlety was of little use in making a point; he preferred, in his own words, to "use a pile-driver". By contrast, Hitler's speech in December 1941 announcing German dominance over all of Europe is the longest in the book. But both Churchill and Hitler were similar in one respect: They re-wrote and polished their speeches several times.

The strength of the book lies in Mr Montefiore's masterful 12-page overall introduction that precedes each speech. The brilliance of Churchill's speeches lay in the care with which he wrote them, his mastery of the English language, and the manner in which he used his voice as a theatrical device. Nehru's "tryst with destiny" speech

is elegant, graceful and a superb piece of rhetoric. King's "I have a dream" speech of August 1963, in which he advocates a more inclusive version of the white American Dream, is full of "evangelical cadences, Biblical references and spiritual echoes". Mandela's May 1994 speech pleads for national reconciliation in a nation torn by the black-white divide. The appeal of Kennedy's inaugural address lay in its promise of a new dawn, and the idealism that underlay his exhortation to Americans to "ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country". Mr Montefiore describes President Trump as an unconventional but astute communicator, with a "discursive, bombastic, brazen" style that effectively expresses the anger of his support base.

Elizabeth I, Hitler, Churchill, Lincoln and Nehru wrote their own speeches, while Kennedy worked on his with speechwriter Ted Sorensen, who was much more than a brilliant wordsmith. Reagan's speechwriter

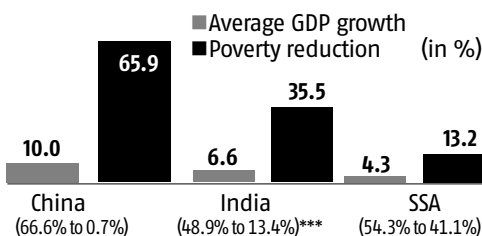
TABLE 1: EXTREME POVERTY* TRENDS



** 2009 excluded on account of the steep fall in growth

* Below \$1.9 per capita per day based on 2011 PPP

CHINA, INDIA AND SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA (1990-2015)



*** 1987-1990; Based on IMF and World Bank data

TABLE 2: EXTREME POVERTY AND INCOME

	High income		Upper-middle income		Lower-middle income		Low income	
	USA	S.KOREA	CHINA	BRAZIL	INDIA	VIETNAM	ETHIOPIA	NEPAL
Extreme poverty 2015 (%)	1.2	0.2	0.7	3.4	13.8	2.0	26.7	7.0
Per capita GDP 2018 (\$)	62,850	30,600	9,470	9,140	2,020	2,400	790	960
Average growth 2011-15 (%)	2.2	3.1	7.9	1.2	6.8	5.9	10.1	4.3

Based on World Bank and IMF data

Growth, income, poverty and the Nobel

There is good reason for caution in applying the results of randomised control trials across space and time

The 2019 Nobel Prize in economics has been jointly awarded to Abhijit Banerjee, Esther Duflo, and Michael Kremer, for "their experimental work, involving controlled randomised trials.... (which) has considerably improved our ability to fight global poverty. In just two decades, their new experiment-based approach has transformed development economics, which is now a flourishing field of research".

The focus of their work is on modest, low-cost interventions, derived from experimental field research that demonstrate what interventions work, and what do not. Whether free distribution of lentils significantly improves attendance at child immunisation clinics, or whether the incidence of malaria declines more when mosquito nets are distributed free, or when they are subsidised, are representative examples of their research. Their work can give a bigger bang for each buck spent on aid, and government programmes, targeted at the poor.

The claim that their work has transformed development economics, however, needs closer scrutiny, on at least three counts.

First, the 2015 Nobel for economics was awarded to Angus Deaton for similar work in development economics, focussed on poverty, consumption and welfare. It is by no means clear that experimental random controlled trials are superior to Deaton's methodology relying on detailed observation-based analysis.

Second, there are good philosophical reasons for caution in applying the scientific method used in natural sciences to social sciences. The physical world is amenable to natural laws in ways that human sciences,



ALOK SHEEL

such as economics, are not. It takes a single apple to disprove the theory of gravity. In human affairs, unlike those of apples, people may react differently in similar circumstances.

There is much in common between the research methodology of Banerjee, Duflo and Kremer and that of the behavioural economists Cass Sunstein, Richard Thaler and Steven Levitt of Freakonomics and Nudge fame. They use a similar experimental approach, grounded in clinical psychology, to nudge people in desired directions, such as slowing down vehicles outside schools, or reducing urine spillage in men's toilets. Behavioural economics, however, failed in improving fiscal multipliers during the GFC. Richard Thaler, awarded the Nobel in 2017, recommended staggering the payout of tax cuts to create the illusion of a permanent increase in income to overcome Ricardian equivalence. A Federal Reserve study later found that the fiscal multiplier of a single lumpsum check was actually higher.

The credit card and consumption oriented American housewife, and the thrifty Swabian housewife, may respond differently to increases in income on account of cultural differences. The former was moreover known to shred her credit card during the last financial crisis. Human responses to the same intervention may thus vary sharply across time and space. To use an analogy from a popular fable, not only are there both grasshoppers and ants amongst humans, but a grasshopper may well start behaving like an ant in adverse circumstances. It matters hugely

The clouds over 2020

The world economy, according to the official declarations at the IMF and the World Bank's annual meetings in Washington early this week, is not getting into a recession. Yes, the 3 per cent global growth this year is the lowest since the 2007 financial crisis but 2020 is expected to be better with overall growth rising to 3.4 per cent. However, the fact is that since the beginning of the year, we have seen a steady deterioration of economic prospects all over the globe. The last few months have brought us an avalanche of downgraded forecasts from all international and private sector financial institutions and think tanks.

In fact, there are some good reasons to consider that we may see an additional deterioration of the economic environment in the next few months: Germany's Bundesbank has now officially recognised that the country — the largest European economy — has slumped into recession, its export industries being badly hit by the slowdown in China and by the uncertainties over Brexit. In the US, economic growth has decreased from 2.9 per cent in 2018 to something around 2.2 per cent this year, and many analysts expect that 2020 could see some periods of contraction in activity. China, which has been a key driver of global growth over the last 20 years, is now struggling to sustain growth at 6 per cent — its lowest performance in the last 25 years — as it continues to reduce financial risks created by shadow banking and mitigate the impact of the trade war with the US. Japan, which had seen earlier this year a burst of activity, is now slowing down as its exports have been declining over the last 11 months.

Ask any analyst or policy-maker about the reasons for this global synchronised economic slowdown, and the first answer will be: The impact of the trade war launched by the Trump administration against China



CLAUDE SMADJA

Airbus, and the EU will be entitled to raise tariffs on some American exports. And then, of course, there are the risks of new disruptions of oil production in the Gulf, after the drone attacks that cut the Saudi oil output by half in September.

However, there are some basic economic reasons to the present downturn: We are obviously seeing in the US the end of the longest cycle of expansion in modern history, which was prolonged by the tax reform of the Trump administration, acting as a fiscal stimulus whose impact is now fading away. China, for its part, has reached a stage in its economic rise where double-digit growth cannot be expected anymore. As the country shifts to a new economic model based more on technological innovation, domestic consumption and environment preservation, real growth rates of

where the randomised trials were done, and when, before they can be successfully applied.

Third, at the macro-level the fastest and quickest way out of poverty is still through higher growth, investment and productive employment on a large scale. According to World Bank data, there was a sharp fall in extreme poverty (under \$1.9 per capita PPP) over the last two decades from nearly 30 per cent to under 10 per cent. This was also the period when growth in emerging markets and developing economies (EMDEs), where most of the extreme poverty lived, accelerated. Table 1 shows that the reduction in extreme poverty was much sharper between 1999 and 2015 than between 1981 and 1999. The sharply differential rates of reduction in China, India and Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) can be largely explained by the differential in growth rates. The much maligned "trickle down" theory, therefore, contains a solid substratum of truth.

This is also evident in the strong correlation between per capita incomes — the lagged effect of past growth — and the incidence of extreme poverty, which stood at 43.9 per cent in low income, 13.9 per cent in lower middle, and just 1.7 per cent and 0.7 per cent, respectively, in upper-middle income and high-income countries in 2015.

Table 2, however, indicates that the evidence for "trickle down" is stronger for high income and upper-middle income countries than it is for lower-middle income and low-income countries. Although Vietnam and India are not very far apart in per capita income, extreme poverty in Vietnam is not only far lower, but is also lower than in upper-middle-income Brazil. Indeed, even low-income Nepal has a lower incidence of extreme poverty than lower-middle-income India.

Such large variations in the incidence of extreme poverty indicate that the linkage between growth/per capita incomes and extreme poverty breaks down in lower-middle income and low-income countries. Policy interventions, including those of the kind attempted by the Nobel laureates, can make a big difference in such countries.

The focus in high-income and upper-middle income countries shifts from extreme poverty to social poverty and inequality. While extreme poverty globally declined from 35.9 per cent in 1990 to 10 per cent in 2015, social poverty defined as \$5.5 per capita (World Bank) declined far more modestly from 67 per cent to 46 per cent. Half the world therefore remains poor in the commonsensical meaning of the term. A rising tide of growth lifts all boats, but unequally. Since the bar for extreme poverty is low, it falls sharply with sustained levels of high growth and increase in per capita incomes. Rapid growth, however, has the potential to sharply increase inequality. Since targeted policy interventions are required in such countries for the alleviation of social poverty and inequality, is there a case for extending the randomised control trial (experimental work) to such countries as well?

The three caveats discussed above in no manner diminish the pioneering work done by Banerjee, Duflo and Kremer. It is non-trivial, and their recognition as pioneers by the Nobel Committee is richly merited. These caveats have, moreover, been directly or indirectly acknowledged by the researchers themselves. Such interventions can significantly improve the lives of the poorest, and a case can be made for similar interventions for the social poor, but they do not constitute a silver bullet that can eradicate poverty. We need to remain circumspect in applying the results of randomised control trials across space and time and continue the focus on macro-level policy interventions that improve the overall environment for rapid growth, investment and productive employment.

The writer is RBI Chair Professor in Macroeconomics, ICRIER

around 5 per cent might become the norm. So, don't count on China to play the role it has played over the last 20 years as the global growth driver of last resort. Or, at least, not to the same extent.

Germany is confronted with the need to review an economic model that has been relying too much on exports, on an automotive industry now struggling to move away from fossil fuels and on wage compression. There is now a belated wake-up on the urgency to revisit the concept of mandatory balanced budgets to update an infrastructure which is crumbling not only when it comes to roads and bridges but also with respect to IT, and to devote more resources to fighting climate change. Germany is way behind in terms of meeting its stated objectives of CO2 emissions reduction.

So, it is not surprising that the possibility of a recession in 2020 is part of the scenarios developed in many corporations, financial institutions and ministries around the world. A major concern is that if such a possibility were to materialise, we will be, globally, in a much weaker position to address it. The fact is that the margin of maneuver for using monetary policy to stimulate activity is now extremely thin as quantitative easing for the euro-zone and for Japan is definitely in a phase of fast diminishing returns, and in other countries very low — or even negative — interest rates do not allow for much of an impact in using them as a tool. Add to that the fact that low interest rates in the last few years have led to a high increase in corporate and national debt all over the world.

The last lever left will be fiscal policy measures to stimulate economic activity. But then the challenge will be to calibrate these measures to avoid the excesses of the past, and to select initiatives that will be able to bring quick results.

The writer is president of Smadja & Smadja, a Strategic Advisory Firm@ClaudeSmadja

was the CBS journalist Peggy Noonan, whose speech written to mourn the seven astronauts who died when the Challenger space shuttle exploded in January 1986 is ranked among the most admired in the 20th century. Mr Montefiore describes the best speechwriters as "literary ventriloquists" who can mould themselves to suit the requirements of the speaker, but are also able to invent a new persona if needed.

As with any anthology, this selection represents Mr Montefiore's subjective choice. As many as 58 of the 78 speeches are by Westerners speaking in English. Is this a case of author's bias? Or has the non-Western world lacked good orators through history?

VOICES OF HISTORY: Speeches That Changed The World
Simon Sebag Montefiore
Hachette India; Pages 259, Price ₹699