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Dream of Greater India

Forget Akhand Bharat or Hindu Rashtra, Bharat Mahasangh of like-minded nations is a more feasible goal

Bhanu Dhamija, [The writer is Chairman, Divya Himachal Prakashan.]

Hindu nationalists have long dreamt of a Greater India. They aspire to rebuild a nation matching the size and glory of ancient India – Akhand Bharat (Undivided India) and Hindu Rashtra (Hindu Nation). RSS and BJP leaders have often pushed for these aims much to the chagrin of India’s secularists. There is no doubt both projects are daring and excite many Hindus. But both are doomed to failure. Recreating Akhand Bharat is unrealistic, and establishing a Hindu Rashtra is ultimately self-defeating. However, the ambition of creating a Greater India has some chance of success by forming a federation of like-minded nations, a Bharat Mahasangh.

Akhand Bharat, in its most expansive version, is envisioned to include territories that constituted the third century BC empire of Chandragupta Maurya. This would incorporate the modern day nations of Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Burma, Tibet, Bhutan and Bangladesh. One can immediately see that such an ambitious project is a chimera. But RSS and BJP leaders have often spoken about reunifying India with Pakistan and Bangladesh. In 1965, Jansangh passed a resolution that “Akhand Bharat will be a reality, unifying India and Pakistan.” In 2012, before coming to office Prime Minister Narendra Modi clarified his party’s thinking, that Akhand Bharat “does not mean we wage war on any country ... without war, through popular consent, it can happen ... We call this Sanskritik Bharat (Cultural Bharat).”

As recently as December 2015, the issue turned into a major controversy. During Modi’s surprise visit to Pakistan, BJP national secretary Ram Madhav declared that “RSS still believes that one day [Pakistan and Bangladesh] will again, through popular goodwill, come together and Akhand Bharat will be created.” BJP quickly distanced itself from Madhav’s statement. Today, remarkably, both BJP and RSS have abandoned the goal altogether. Akhand Bharat finds no mention in the mission statements of either group. A clue as to why was provided by Modi in his 2012 interview: “It will only be good for Pakistan when they become a part of united India ... if Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Hindustan become one, then the Muslim majority will increase and it will be easier for Hindustan to become an Islamic country.”

Now, making India a Hindu Rashtra is the nationalists’ limited new objective. “Our one supreme goal is to bring to life the all-round glory and greatness of our Hindu Rashtra,” says the current RSS mission statement. Last year 150 Hindu outfits met in Goa to discuss plans for a Hindu Rashtra by 2023. Hindu Rashtra is easy to declare but its pitfalls are menacing. The chief danger is that it would turn India into a theocratic state similar to Pakistan. It would weaken our national unity, encourage fissiparous tendencies, cause greater internal strife, and hurt India’s image. Ironically, it would damage the spirit, practice and reputation of Hinduism, the one thing the move’s proponents want to showcase the most.

Even more importantly, Hindu Rashtra would forever kill the dream of establishing India as Vishwa Guru, a world leader. No sovereign nation would enter a union or follow India on a principle other than genuine

secularism. Hindu nationalists are going by two theories behind their push for Hindu Rashtra. One, Hinduism is inherently secular, hence India won't become another Pakistan. And two, when Indian Muslims realise they must cower before the wishes of the majority, communal strife would end. But religious fervour is a terribly slippery slope, as we have seen recently in mob lynchings by cow vigilantes and open murders in the name of checking love jihad. We must remember how religious hatred took over Indians' sanity during Partition.

Surely, Hindu nationalists don't wish to create an India where a segment of the population lives in constant fear, as aliens. To a Muslim, or a Parsi, or a Christian, a Hindu Rashtra would never be his nation. Also, do we want an India, an age-old civilisation famous for its diversity and tolerance, to have to explain to the world how it is different from other religion-based countries, such as Pakistan, Iran, or Saudi Arabia? Hindu nationalists can turn blue in their face trying to tell the world that Hindu Rashtra is based on Hindutva and hence not Hindu. But nobody is going to buy it. Hindutva is too intertwined with the religion of the majority. And on the ground, it has become just as fanatical as other religions.

Building a Greater India requires a more innovative approach. It would have to be envisioned along the lines of the European Union or United States of America, as a federation of sovereign states coming together voluntarily for greater common welfare. Such a Bharat Mahasangh would have to be based on principles of liberty, egalitarianism, individualism and laissez-faire. Its structure must provide local autonomy with federal administration of specific duties delegated by member states.

Bharat Mahasangh would have to be rooted in genuine secularism. Not today's pseudo variety that allows governments to freely interfere and engage with religions. But one that provides for full freedom of religion with strict separation of church and state. Granted, at first Bharat Mahasangh may attract only Hindu-minded states, say Nepal and Bhutan. But if structured and pursued properly, it could interest neighbouring Buddhist-minded states of Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. In its full glory, Mahasangh could even attract Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh. If Greater India is our dream we must take realistic steps towards it.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

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Needed, independent prosecution agencies

ET Editorials



India's criminal justice system is increasingly looking bereft of teeth. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) recently failed to secure conviction in its case that Tamil Nadu's Maran brothers used public sector telco BSNL's facilities, while one of them was the telecom minister, to run their television and cable business. The Karnataka police failed to convict Sri Ram Sene leader Pramod Muthalik and his followers, whose violent defence, in 2009, of Indian culture by thrashing young men and women in a pub were caught on video and viewed by the world at large. Witnesses steadily turn hostile in a series of CBI cases on encounter killings. A key testimony of a principal

accused in the Mecca Masjid blast case goes missing from court records.

If the situation is to be salvaged, the investigating and prosecuting arm of the government must be recast as an independent and professional agency that reports to the executive but is accountable to a committee of the legislature, besides to the Human Rights Commission. The CBI is staffed by members of the Indian Police Service, for whom a posting to the Centre is a coveted one and to secure which officers seek to ingratiate themselves with the state's ruling dispensation. To avoid this situation, the CBI must recruit and train its personnel independently. It should report to the law and justice ministry, rather than to the department of personnel and training and the Prime Minister's Office. Finally, the agency must be brought under parliamentary oversight through the standing committee on law and justice.

States can decide which of the cases falling in their jurisdiction should go to the CBI, but all interstate and international crimes should automatically go to it. Clear mandates will help minimise tampering with evidence and witnesses.

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India needs to trim the size of its public sector banks

Ajay Chhibber, (Chhibber is distinguished visiting professor at NIPFP)



Our banking regulatory system is operating with Eyes Wide Shut. That India was able to avoid the Asian financial crisis and the global economic crisis is often cited as a sign that our financial system is solid. But the slow spreading malaise of non-performing loans (NPL) and scams if not dealt with could prove damaging to India's ambitions to be a global economic power. So far, we have dealt with our banking crisis with palliatives: the weak Indradhanush scheme, a non-functional Banks Board Bureau, a promising but complicated to implement Insolvency and

Bankruptcy Code, and a missed reform opportunity with the bank recapitalisation scheme. Now, the blame game between RBI and the finance ministry, after the recent banking scam, is a signal that the financial mess is bigger and that the regulatory system itself needs a major overhaul.

The irony is that the hit on the taxpayer is massive even without a full-blown crisis. When the \$30-billion recapitalisation plan was announced, it was clear that it was insufficient to address the NPL problem that exceeded \$150 billion. But it was hoped that if the bulk of the funds would be used to recapitalise the better performing banks first, and these banks could also raise private financing, the credit cycle could be quickly revived. Instead, the money was dribbled out to all the PSU banks with a greater share going to the weaker banks.

Now, with the revelation of scams, even more capital will be needed, and the ability to raise funds from the equity markets is dwindling as PSU banks shares take a hit. Moreover, with potentially huge criminal liabilities, banks will become even more risk averse and slow down lending further, just as the economy shows signs of a rebound. The RBI blames the finance ministry for giving it too little powers over the

regulation of PSU banks — but it has taken its eyes off the ball. Instead of public warfare, disentangling the nested and overlapping relationships between RBI and the finance ministry is needed to modernise the financial regulatory system. RBI officials continue to sit on the boards of PSU banks that makes it complicit in the internal decision-making. Its post of Deputy Governor for Regulation has inexplicably been vacant for a long time. It needs to step up to its responsibility.

The RBI has had its hands full dealing with demonetisation — which it also managed poorly. The regulator has been much too focused on its independence in running monetary policy and its role as inflation fighter, at the expense of the real economy. It has also resisted giving up its role as the public debt manager that can create huge conflict of interest, to the functioning of independent monetary policy. The debt management function should be either in the finance ministry or under an independent public debt management agency. But such a move would also need to be accompanied by eliminating the Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR) for the banks and by reducing public ownership in the banking system.

For now, it would be better to establish an independent department in the finance ministry to handle both internal and external debt reporting directly to the finance minister. The recapitalisation plan should have led to a reduction in the number of PSU banks — either through privatisation or through merger. But unfortunately this did not happen. The clamour for privatisation has increased after the latest scam in Punjab National Bank and at Bank of Baroda BSE 1.69 %. The argument made is that India should not privatise PSU banks because they provide a social function: lend to rural sector and provide banking in remote areas.

It is also argued that banking crises occur even in countries that do not have state-owned banks. But when a crisis is systemic, and the financial system freezes, the bailout hits the taxpayer whether the problem is caused by public or private banks. But these are still not good arguments for keeping 21 PSU banks — which are hard to regulate, lack adequate managerial competency and are gamed by cronyism. It may be better to have at best two PSU banks for meeting ‘so-called’ social functions and free up the rest to do professional commercial banking. In any case, the bulk of the NPL problem is due to cronyism towards well-connected ‘wilful defaulters’. India needs a banking regulator that can, like ‘the proverbial Owl’, sleep with Eyes Wide Open, and serious reforms in the PSU banks if it wants to become a \$5-trillion economy by 2025.



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Patchy green

Draft forest policy recognises the challenge of climate change but persists with the outdated approach on plantations.

Editorial

India’s forest policy dates back to the times when climate change was a fuzzy concept, even in environmentalist circles. It had come into effect when the liberalisation of the country’s economy had not

begun and the Forest Rights Act was about 18 years away. The government's decision to replace The National Forest Policy, 1988 with protocols that are in tune with the changed realities was, therefore, long overdue. Last week, the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change placed the Draft National Forest Policy, 2018 on its website and invited comments from "all stakeholders". The draft ticks quite a few boxes.

It emphasises that "climate change concerns will be factored in forest and wildlife areas, working and management plans". It also talks of "safeguarding the livelihood security of people". It envisages raising the country's forest cover from 25 per cent to 30 per cent of its land area. Herein lies the draft's main weakness: It persists with the methodological weakness of the Indian Forest Survey Reports of the past 30 years that conflate plantations with forest cover.

"Productivity of forest plantations are poor in most states. This will be addressed by the intensive scientific management of forest plantations of commercially important species," the draft notes. It does mention native plants like bamboo but stresses the need for plantations of exotics like eucalyptus and casuarina. There is now compelling evidence that plantations are no substitute for biodiverse ecosystems comprising indigenous species when it comes to climate change mitigation. A study in Nature in May 2015, for example, cautioned against "promoting intensive forestry for maximum timber yield under the flag of climate change". "Forestry practices that preserve natural ecosystem processes are likely to be more effective in the resilience against climate change," it said.

It is, however, not just a matter of exotics versus indigenous species. A growing body of literature now shows that regenerating forests is not enough to check global warming. Global bodies like the FAO stress that the carbon cycle in forests — this varies from forest to forest — is a key factor in their role as climate change mitigating agents. India has been an outlier to such nuanced studies. The draft forest policy does not offer a roadmap to overcome this shortcoming. The government should take care of such concerns while finalising the new forest policy.

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Writing our own exit lines

Supreme Court's endorsement to the validity of the living will was much needed

K Srinath Reddy

A few years ago, a Canadian social scientist asked a large gathering of doctors in Asia how many of them would wish to die in a hospital, like their patients. A hush fell over the audience and no hand went up. Doctors do take pride in their profession and firmly believe that hospitals can save lives and restore or improve the state of health in many seriously ill patients. However, they have also often seen the sad spectacle of terminally ill and comatose patients being tethered to tubes and run by machines in a state that offends human dignity. Little wonder, then, that doctors cannot visualise their own final passing as captives to the technological tyranny of intensive but insensitive care.

My mother was an obstetrician of repute who helped to bring many a new life into the world. As she approached death at 90, she was very clear she wanted her passing to be at home. Gentle but firm, as always, she said “no tubes, no wires and no ventilator”. I, and a large extended family of many doctors, honoured her wishes even as we provided end of life nursing care with all the love that we wanted her to feel and all the sadness we wished to hide. She died in peace. However, that choice is mostly denied to persons who die in a hospital. There, the decisions on treatment are taken by doctors who have been trained never to give up and are psychologically conditioned to see every death as a professional defeat. Doctors in hospitals feel duty bound to try every device and drug available to them to prolong life as much as possible. Even if it violates the body and damages the dignity of the dying patient for whom there is no hope of revival.

Under those circumstances, the close family too feels helpless. Can they tell the doctors to give up those futile efforts, without experiencing guilt that they are hastening the death of a person they cannot bear to lose? Even if they steel themselves to do so, how will they overcome the doctors’ refusal? So the distressing saga of medical assault continues, with a misplaced sense of duty that defies sensibility and defiles human dignity. The only escape from this torturous trap is to write a “living will” when one is of legal age for independent decision-making, fully conscious and in sound mind, clearly stating one’s wish to avoid resuscitative procedures and life support systems that cause protracted physical suffering or prolong a life of irredeemable pain. Such a will must, however, have legal sanction to liberate both the doctors and the family members from the obligation to continue intrusive terminal care.

The Supreme Court of India has now provided that much needed legal endorsement to the validity of a living will, in an erudite, eloquent and impassioned judgement. The court was careful to distinguish it from suicide, physician assisted suicide or euthanasia. The patient’s right to refuse unwanted treatment is recognised and respected, when that decision is made in advance, anticipating a grave medical situation wherein volitional consent can neither be given nor withheld. Safeguards against misuse are to be provided, through medical boards which will examine the relevance of the living will in the context of the clinical profile and prognosis. Judicial review is also a potential avenue for appeal.

The issue of “passive euthanasia” poignantly came to the fore for judicial scrutiny in the case of Aruna Shanbaug who lived in a vegetative state for 42 years in a Mumbai hospital after a violent sexual assault. In a landmark judgement of 2011, the Supreme Court issued guidelines for permissible “passive euthanasia” which involves withdrawal of life support (treatment, nutrition or water). The court averred that the decision must rest with parents, spouse or a close relative, in whose absence a “next friend” is empowered to take that decision in the patient’s interest. That decision must be upheld by a high court.

In Aruna’s case, there was obviously no living will as that young nurse could have scarcely foreseen that horrible future. However, each of us who is alive and in a state to decide on how we wish to navigate the final passage can now write a “living will” to assert our right to depart with dignity. The Supreme Court has affirmed that the right rests with the individual, provided it is a rational decision stated in advance. We cannot decide when and how we will die but we can decide on how not to die. Apart from dealing with the inevitability of death through stoicism, the court also invites us to see death as a “celebration” of a life well lived without the avoidable agony of terminal traction clouding those memories.

In writing such a living will, we can state the conditions under which we do not wish to have life support instituted or prolonged. By doing so, we spare ourselves the indignity of being traumatised by unhelpful medical interventions that doctors resort to from compulsion rather than conviction when dealing with a terminally ill person in a vegetative state. Equally important, we can spare our loved ones the agony of

helplessly watching us painfully waste away while being plagued by doubts on what they should do for us in that situation. Perhaps that is the best parting gift we can give them, even as we ease ourselves out of a life that is not worth being stretched further at the cost of prolonged suffering. A graceful exit is now possible, thanks to the Supreme Court. I salute the judgement — as a doctor, caring family person and one who is about to write a “living will”.



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In a plastics world

The presence of plastics in drinking water must compel drastic action

EDITORIAL

Plastics are now widely present in the environment, as visible waste along coastlines, in lakes and rivers, and even in the soil. The recent finding that microplastic particles are found even in ‘safe’ bottled water indicates the magnitude of the crisis. There is little doubt that the global production of plastics, at over 300 million tonnes a year according to the UN Environment Programme, has overwhelmed the capacity of governments to handle what is thrown away as waste. Microplastics are particles of less than 5 mm that enter the environment either as primary industrial products, such as those used in scrubbers and cosmetics, or via urban waste water and broken-down elements of articles discarded by consumers. Washing of clothes releases synthetic microfibrils into water bodies and the sea. The health impact of the presence of polypropylene, polyethylene terephthalate and other chemicals in drinking water, food and even inhaled air may not yet be clear, but indisputably these are contaminants. Research evidence from complementary fields indicates that accumulation of these chemicals can induce or aggravate immune responses in the body. More studies, as a globally coordinated effort, are necessary to assess the impact on health. It is heartening that the WHO has come forward to commission a review of the health impact of plastics in water.

Last December in Nairobi, UN member-countries resolved to produce a binding agreement in 18 months to deal with the release of plastics into the marine environment. The problem is staggering: eight million tonnes of waste, including bottles and packaging, make their way into the sea each year. There is now even the Great Pacific Garbage Patch of plastic debris. India has a major problem dealing with plastics, particularly single-use shopping bags that reach dumping sites, rivers and wetlands along with other waste. The most efficient way to deal with the pollution is to control the production and distribution of plastics. Banning single-use bags and making consumers pay a significant amount for the more durable ones is a feasible solution. Enforcing the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016, which require segregation of waste from April 8 this year, will retrieve materials and greatly reduce the burden on the environment. Waste separation can be achieved in partnership with the community, and presents a major employment opportunity. The goal, however, has to be long term. As the European Union’s vision 2030 document on creating a circular plastic economy explains, the answer lies in changing the very nature of plastics, from cheap and disposable to durable, reusable and fully recyclable. There is consensus that this is the way

forward. Now that the presence of plastics in drinking water, including the bottled variety, has been documented, governments should realise it cannot be business as usual.

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The virtual other

Where do we draw the line between personal and professional writing on social media?

A.S. Panneerselvan

The critical distance between a journalist and those in power is often explained this way: as in the case of fire, don't get too close as you may get burnt, but don't be too far as you may not notice what is happening. Is it possible to quantify the distance between journalists and their social media engagements? Major media organisations have a social media policy that defines how their journalists should behave on these platforms, where the focus is more on protecting the reputation of the organisations. Some journalists see these policy measures as an infringement of their individual right to freedom of expression.

A grey area

As a media ombudsman, I have always batted for self-regulation. I prefer a broad advisory to a binding policy for issues that have a large grey band rather than the obvious hues of black and white. Journalists may like to believe that there is a clear line between their professional writing for their respective publications and their personal opinions on social media. However, the virtual space does not see any distinction between professional writing and personal opinion; it always conflates the two. It fails to understand that journalism represents the written tradition; that what is carefully researched is meant for the public sphere, unlike social media posts that mimic oral exchanges in private domains. The point to remember is that none of the usual caveats are spelt out when we speak among our friends. Social media platforms are not a closed circuit. There is toxicity in these fora that defies our understanding of civil conversation and has the potential to harm journalists more than our Teflon-coated politicians.

I have been attempting to come up with a formula for journalists to engage on social media for nearly four years, but in vain. A suggestion for self-restraint is viewed as self-censorship, and proposals to ignore obnoxious posts is seen as lacking in courage to expose banality. Absolute yardsticks like freedom of expression and the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution have been invoked to sidestep the crucial idea of keeping social media platforms free of vituperative attacks.

I am forced to revisit this issue because of a recent incident. There was an obvious contradiction between a column by a journalist and some of his posts on Twitter. Farhad Manjoo, a tech columnist for the New York Times, wrote a piece on March 7, "For Two Months, I Got My News From Print Newspapers. Here's What I Learned." It dealt with the problems of information overload, false claims on social media, and the right way to consume news.

The columnist claimed that he had been unplugged from social media for two months and his three-pronged suggestion (“Get news. Not too quickly. Avoid social”) was a result of his abstinence. However, the problem was that Mr. Manjoo did not unplug himself from social media. A report in Columbia Journalism Review (CJR) points out that he “remained a daily, active Twitter user throughout the two months he claims to have gone cold turkey, tweeting many hundreds of times, perhaps more than 1,000.”

Perils of social media

The CJR story explains the perils of social media. What Mr. Manjoo meant by unplugging from Twitter was this: “I think it’s clear that I meant I ‘unplugged’ from Twitter as a source of news, not that I didn’t tweet at all.” However, many on social media platforms were not willing to buy his definition and only saw a massive contradiction. Mr. Manjoo got a major reprieve when a New York Times spokesperson said the paper doesn’t view his assertion as a falsehood, and won’t be issuing a correction. If the paper had retained the office of Public Editor, an internal ombudsman post that it abolished nearly a year ago, the reaction may have been different.

The Public Editor too may have come to the conclusion that Mr. Manjoo was not deliberately lying. But as a news ombudsman, she would also have pointed out that what he wrote was not a fact, and issued a correction, probably with a clarification. There is no private meaning or special understanding between the writer and reader in the social media space. It is surprising that journalists who write and talk extensively about Cambridge Analytica fail to see their own undermining role in social media.

 **जनसत्ता**

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पर्यावरण की सुध

संपादकीय

पर्यावरण संरक्षण की दिशा में सराहनीय कदम उठाते हुए महाराष्ट्र सरकार ने राज्य में प्लास्टिक और थर्मोकोल के इस्तेमाल पर पाबंदी लगा दी है। इस फैसले के तहत अब प्लास्टिक की थैलियां, बैग, पाउच, कप-प्लेट-चम्मच जैसी चीजों के उत्पादन पर पूरी तरह से मनाही होगी। अगर कोई इन्हें बेचता या लाता-ले जाता नजर आया तो उसे सजा भुगतनी होगी। सरकार ने पाबंदी का उल्लंघन करने वालों पर पच्चीस हजार रुपए का जुर्माना और तीन साल जेल की सजा तय की है। हालांकि कुछ मामलों, मसलन दवाइयों और प्रसंस्करित उत्पादों की पैकिंग, बागवानी उत्पादों और पौधों को लपेटने, ठोस कचरे के निपटान और निर्यात के लिए प्लास्टिक का इस्तेमाल होता रहेगा। इसके अलावा, विशेष आर्थिक क्षेत्रों को भी इस प्रतिबंध से अलग रखा गया है। सवाल है कि अगर पाबंदी की ताजा घोषणा रोजमर्रा की जिंदगी में प्लास्टिक के इस्तेमाल को बंद करने की है तो विशेष आर्थिक क्षेत्र में या कुछ अन्य जगहों पर इसके प्रयोग में छूट से इसे कैसे नियंत्रित किया जा सकेगा? हालांकि पर्यावरण संरक्षण के लिहाज से बेहद अहम सरकार का यह फैसला इसलिए भी जरूरी था कि पिछले कुछ सालों से बारिश के मौसम में मुंबई को बाढ़ जैसी गंभीर समस्या का सामना करना पड़ रहा है और उसमें प्लास्टिक कचरे की भूमिका बड़ी मानी गई। बारिश के दिनों में सारे नाले कचरे से जाम हो जाते हैं और इसका बड़ा हिस्सा प्लास्टिक की थैलियां ही होती हैं।

इससे पहले पोलिथिन या प्लास्टिक की थैलियों पर जम्मू-कश्मीर, हिमाचल प्रदेश, उत्तराखंड, उत्तर प्रदेश, झारखंड जैसे राज्य भी प्रतिबंध लगा चुके हैं। लेकिन घोषणा के बरक्स व्यवहार में इसका कोई ठोस नतीजा नहीं निकला। जिन राज्यों ने पाबंदी लगाई, वहां आज भी धड़ल्ले से प्लास्टिक की थैलियों का इस्तेमाल हो रहा है। सरकार की ओर से ऐसा कोई पुख्ता बंदोबस्त नजर नहीं आता जो प्रतिबंध पर अमल को सुनिश्चित कराए। सरकारों को प्लास्टिक के इस्तेमाल पर सख्ती बरतने की जरूरत तब लगती है जब इस मसले पर एनजीटी यानी राष्ट्रीय हरित पंचाट और कुछ अदालतें साफ दिशा-निर्देशों जारी करती हैं और उससे दबाव बनता है। खासतौर पर हिमालय क्षेत्र और गंगा-यमुना जैसी नदियों में बढ़ते प्रदूषण को लेकर एनजीटी ने सख्ती दिखाई और कचरा और अपशिष्ट प्रबंधन को लेकर सरकारों को फटकार लगाई। फिर भी सरकारों की ओर से व्यवहार में ऐसी पहलकदमी नहीं देखी गई जो इस मसले पर उनकी गंभीरता को दर्शाती हो।

इसमें कोई शक नहीं कि प्लास्टिक से बने सामान हमारे रोजमर्रा के जीवन का अभिन्न हिस्सा बन चुके हैं। रोजाना हम जितनी भी चीजों का इस्तेमाल करते हैं, उनमें काफी सामान प्लास्टिक के बने होते हैं या उनके निर्माण में प्लास्टिक की भूमिका होती है। इसलिए प्लास्टिक के इस्तेमाल को पूरी तरह खत्म कर पाना मुश्किल है। लेकिन इसका असर यह पड़ता है कि प्लास्टिक की वजह से हमारे आसपास के पर्यावरण को व्यापक नुकसान पहुंचता है। इसलिए जरूरत इस बात की है कि कानूनी पाबंदी से इतर भी हम अपने जीवन में प्लास्टिक के इस्तेमाल को न्यूनतम स्तर तक लाएं। इसके लिए कानून से भी बड़ी जरूरत लोगों को इस बारे में जागरूक बनाने की है। लोगों को इस बारे में बताना होगा कि प्लास्टिक का प्रयोग इंसान के लिए किस तरह जानलेवा होता जा रहा है। आज प्लास्टिक से पैदा होने वाला कचरा इस धरती के लिए एक बड़ा संकट बन चुका है। इसके इस्तेमाल को घटाने के लिए ऐसे विकल्पों को बढ़ावा दिया जाना चाहिए जो पर्यावरण के अनुकूल हों।

कड़वे रिश्तों में कूटनीति

शशांक, पूर्व विदेश सचिव

किसी भी देश द्वारा अपने उच्चायुक्त को सलाह-मशविरे के लिए वापस बुलाना कोई नई बात नहीं है। यह एक सामान्य प्रक्रिया मानी जाती है। द्विपक्षीय रिश्तों की समीक्षा करने या उसे धार देने के लिए ऐसा अमूमन किया जाता है। मगर जब यह कवायद मीडिया में प्रचारित करके की जाती है, तो उसका एक संकेत अवश्य होता है। इसीलिए पाकिस्तानी विदेश मंत्रालय के प्रवक्ता का खबरनवीसों को यह बताना कि नई दिल्ली में अपने उच्चायुक्त को इस्लामाबाद आने को कहा गया है, उसका एक खास अर्थ है। संभवतः पाकिस्तान भारत के खिलाफ एक 'माहौल' बनाना चाहता है।

ऐसा करने के लिए उसके पास कई वजहें हैं। असल में, अमेरिका के नए विदेश मंत्री माइक पोम्पियो ने पाकिस्तान को फटकार लगाते हुए कहा है कि अगर उसने अब भी आतंकवाद को खत्म नहीं किया, तो अमेरिका उसके खिलाफ सख्त कदम उठाने के लिए बाध्य होगा। चीन ने भी फरवरी में संयुक्त राष्ट्र की संस्था 'फाइनेंशियल एक्शन टास्क फोर्स' यानी एफएटीएफ के उस फैसले का विरोध नहीं किया था, जिसने आतंकी फंडिंग करने के कारण पाकिस्तान को अपनी

प्रतिबंधित सूची यानी ग्रे लिस्ट में शामिल किया था, जबकि चीन हमेशा से पाकिस्तान का साथ देता रहा है। इन सबसे स्वाभाविक तौर पर पाकिस्तान दबाव में है। उसे कहीं न कहीं बचाव का रास्ता ढूंढना था, लिहाजा उसने भारत पर निशाना साधा है। हालांकि संभव यह भी है कि भारत के साथ अपने द्विपक्षीय रिश्ते में किसी तीसरे देश को बतौर मध्यस्थ लाने की कोशिश वह कर रहा हो।

इस सूरत में हमारी नीति क्या होनी चाहिए? कुछ लोग तर्क देंगे कि हमें भी अपने उच्चायुक्त को वापस बुला लेना चाहिए। राजनयिकों को भी तय समय तक वतन लौटने को कहा जाना चाहिए। मगर द्विपक्षीय रिश्ते की गंभीरता को देखें, तो यह वक्त संयम बरतने का है। भारत की सरकार ने भी पाकिस्तान के रवैये पर हैरानी जताई है, पर कोई जवाबी कार्रवाई नहीं की है। हम हमेशा से आम जनता के लिए काम करते रहे हैं। आतंकवाद को खत्म करना हमारी प्रतिबद्धता रही है। इसलिए जरूरी है कि पाकिस्तान के अंदर से इस काम के लिए हमें जो भी मदद मिल सकती है, वह मिलती रहे। वैसे भी, इस मसले पर पाकिस्तान खुद बेपरदा हो चुका है। उत्पीड़न का जो आरोप वह हम पर थोप रहा है, हमारे राजनयिकों ने पहले ही उसकी शिकायत कर रखी है। भारतीय राजनयिकों ने साफ शब्दों में बताया है कि किस तरह उन्हें वहां प्रताड़ित किया जा रहा है। सख्त निगरानी किए जाने और घरों के बिजली-पानी तक रोक दिए जाने के आरोप भी हमारे राजनयिक लगा रहे हैं। बुनियादी राजनयिक विशेषाधिकारों को भी उनसे छीना जा रहा है।

भारत के किसी भी राजनयिक के लिए पाकिस्तान में काम करना आसान नहीं होता। उन पर तमाम तरह की बंदिशें आयद होती हैं। अगर हमारे राजनयिकों को कहीं जाना होता है, तो यात्रा की पूर्व अनुमति उन्हें पाकिस्तान के संबंधित अधिकारियों से लेनी पड़ती है। जबकि दूसरे देशों के राजनयिकों के लिए ऐसी कोई बाध्यता नहीं है। वे पाकिस्तानी अधिकारियों को सूचना भर दे देते हैं; कुछ देशों के राजनयिक तो ऐसा भी नहीं करते। फिर भी हमारे राजनयिक ऐतराज नहीं जताते, क्योंकि उन्हें पता है कि भारत और पाकिस्तान के रिश्ते कितने संवेदनशील हैं।

वहां आलम यह है कि देर रात भी हमारे अधिकारियों को बुला लिया जाता है। अगर वे किसी पार्टी में जाते हैं, तो उन पर कड़ी निगरानी रखी जाती है। वरिष्ठ अधिकारियों के साथ तो नहीं, पर जूनियर अधिकारियों के साथ मारपीट तक की जाती है। यानी हमारे राजनयिकों को दबाव में रखने की हरसंभव कोशिश की जाती है। दिक्कत यह भी है कि जब इसकी शिकायत की जाती है, तो पाकिस्तान अपनी जिम्मेदारी से पल्ला झाड़ लेता है। अमूमन उसका जवाब यही होता है कि वह खुद इन सबसे पीड़ित है। मुझे याद है कि पहले कराची में अपना एक वाणिज्य दूतावास हुआ करता था। अब वह बंद हो चुका है। इसके बंद होने की एक बड़ी वजह यही थी कि कांसुलेट जनरल व कर्मचारियों के साथ वहां मारपीट हुई थी। साफ है, भारत और पाकिस्तान, दोनों की नीतियों में जमीन-आसमान का फर्क है। हम 'पीपुल-टु-पीपुल कॉन्टेक्ट' यानी आम जनता के बीच आपसी जुड़ाव की वकालत करते हैं, तो वह आतंकवाद की।

मैं चार साल तक इस्लामाबाद में तैनात रहा। 1982 से लेकर 1986 तक। उस दौरान भी हालात अच्छे नहीं थे, पर इतने बुरे नहीं थे, जितने आज हैं। उन दिनों ऐसे लोगों की संख्या अच्छी-खासी थी, जिन्होंने बंटवारे का दंश सहा था। वे मानते थे कि विभाजन होने से उनका एक हाथ कट गया है। निगरानी उन दिनों भी होती थी, मगर आज की तरह तंग नहीं किया जाता था। भारतीय महिलाओं के समूहों से जुड़ी होने के बाद भी कभी मेरी पत्नी के साथ किसी तरह का कोई दुर्व्यवहार नहीं किया गया। हां, मुझ पर उनकी पूरी निगाह रहती थी। अगर कभी मेरे घर पर कोई जलसा होता, तो आखिरी मेहमान की जब तक विदाई नहीं हो जाती, कोई पाकिस्तानी अधिकारी पार्टी पर नजरें जमाए रहता। दबाव बनाने के लिए मेहमानों के बच्चों को स्कूल से निकलवा दिया जाता या नौकरी से हटा दिया जाता।

उन दिनों पाकिस्तान की कमान जिया उल हक के हाथों में थी। वह भारत के साथ दोस्ताना संबंध की हिमायत किया करते थे। वह तो अजमेर शरीफ जाने या भारत-पाकिस्तान के बीच मैच देखने के लिए बिना बताए भी आ जाते थे। भारतीय अधिकारियों को उनके आने का पता तब चलता, जब उनका विमान भारत की सीमा में दाखिल होता। इतना ही नहीं, उन दिनों हमारे खाने-पीने को लेकर भी कभी कोई बंदिश नहीं रखी गई। मगर आज रिश्ते बहुत कड़वे हो चुके हैं। सब कुछ बदल गया है। हम पर दबाव बनाने के लिए पाकिस्तान वह सब कर रहा है, जिसकी इजाजत अंतरराष्ट्रीय नियम नहीं देते। ऐसे में, पाकिस्तान के लिए खास रणनीति बनाने की जरूरत है। हमारी सरकार इसी दिशा में काम करती दिख रही है।

Date: 19-03-18

रोजगार की बदलती दुनिया में हमारे लिए अवसर

जयंतीलाल भंडारी, अर्थशास्त्री

जापान के उद्योग और व्यापार को बढ़ावा देने वाली सरकारी एजेंसी जापान विदेश व्यापार संगठन (जेईटीआरओ) ने कहा है कि जापान की औद्योगिक और कारोबार आवश्यकताओं में तकनीक व इनोवेशन का इस्तेमाल तेज होने से जापान में आईटी के साथ ही हेल्थकेयर, कृषि, अनुसंधान और विकास, सेवा व वित्त आदि क्षेत्रों में कौशल प्रशिक्षित कार्यबल की भारी कमी अनुभव की जा रही है। खासतौर से जापान की बुजुर्ग होती जनसंख्या और जापान में जन्म दर के गिरने की वजह से आईटी पेशेवरों की सबसे अधिक जरूरत है। यह कहा गया कि ऐसे में भारत जापान में अपने आईटी प्रोफेशनल्स भेजकर इस कमी को दूर कर सकता है। जापान में अभी 9.20 लाख आईटी पेशेवर हैं और अब भारत से दो लाख आईटी पेशेवरों को लेने की कार्ययोजना बनाई गई है। अनुमान है कि 2030 तक जापान में आठ लाख पेशेवरों को नौकरी दी जाएगी। जापान ने इसी जनवरी से भारतीय लोगों के लिए वीजा नियमों को आसान कर दिया है। यह सब तब हो रहा है, जब अमेरिका, ऑस्ट्रेलिया, ब्रिटेन और सिंगापुर जैसे देश वीजा-संबंधी नियमों को कठोर बनाकर भारत के प्रोफेशनल्स के बढ़ते कदमों को रोकना चाह रहे हैं।

इस बीच वैश्विक रोजगार पर विश्व बैंक की एक महत्वपूर्ण रिपोर्ट में कहा गया है कि दुनिया के अधिकांश विकसित देशों में कामकाजी आबादी कम हो रही है। वह भी तब, जब भारत की जनसंख्या में करीब 50 प्रतिशत से ज्यादा वे लोग हैं, जिनकी उम्र 25 साल से कम है। भारत की 65 प्रतिशत आबादी 35 साल से कम आयु की है। ऐसे में, भारत की युवा आबादी को अगर कुशल बनाया जाए, तो वह दुनिया के लिए काफी उपयोगी सिद्ध हो सकती है। वैश्विक शोध अध्ययन संगठन 'टॉवर्स वॉटसन' की भारतीय श्रम की आर्थिक उपयोगिता की रिपोर्ट का जिक्र यहां जरूरी है। इस रिपोर्ट में बताया गया है कि चीन की तुलना में भारत में श्रम ज्यादा सस्ता है। इस शोध अध्ययन में भारत व चीन में इस समय मिल रही मजदूरी की तुलना की गई है और निष्कर्ष निकाला गया है कि भारत की तुलना में चीन में श्रमिकों और कर्मचारियों को औसतन दोगुना वेतन मिलता है। विशेषज्ञों का कहना है कि अब चीन अपने उद्योगों में उत्पादकता बढ़ाने के चाहे जितने प्रयास करे, वह अपनी जनसंख्या नीति में परिवर्तन करने के बाद भी कई वर्षों तक श्रमबल के घटने और श्रम लागत के बढ़ने से होने वाले नुकसान से बच नहीं सकेगा। अभी अपने सस्ते व प्रशिक्षित श्रमबल के कारण चीन लगातार

विकास के मोर्चे पर दमदार प्रदर्शन कर रहा है, पर उसकी यह बढ़त ज्यादा वक्त तक नहीं रहेगी। वॉटसन की रिपोर्ट के मुताबिक, सस्ते भारतीय श्रम को देश-दुनिया की रोजगार जरूरतों के मुताबिक तैयार किया जाना जरूरी है।

अभी हमारी दिक्कत यह है कि भारत में करीब 20 फीसदी लोग ही ठीक से प्रशिक्षित हैं, जबकि चीन में ऐसे लोगों की संख्या 91 प्रतिशत है। जाहिर है, इस सूरत को बदलने के लिए हमें कई बड़े कदम उठाने होंगे। एक ओर हमें शिक्षित युवाओं को कौशल विकास से प्रशिक्षित करना होगा, तो वहीं दूसरी ओर गांवों में काफी संख्या में जो गरीब, अशिक्षित और अर्धशिक्षित लोग हैं, उन्हें निम्न तकनीक वाले उत्पादन कार्यक्रमों में लगाना होगा। यह जरूरी है कि सरकार द्वारा कौशल प्रशिक्षण को दी जा रही प्राथमिकता के नतीजे धरातल पर दिखाई दें। और साथ ही नौजवानों को नए दौर के कौशल प्रशिक्षण से लैस किया जाए। पिछले दिनों इलेक्ट्रॉनिक व सूचना-प्रौद्योगिकी मंत्रालय ने तकनीकी क्षेत्र की कंपनियों के संगठन नैस्काम के साथ आर्टिफिशियल इंटेलिजेंस, वर्चुअल रियल्टी, रोबोटिक प्रॉसेस ऑटोमेशन इंटरनेट ऑफ थिंग्स, बिग डाटा एनालिसिस, 3डी प्रिंटिंग, क्लाउड कंप्यूटिंग, सोशल मीडिया-मोबाइल जैसे आठ नए क्षेत्रों में 55 नई भूमिकाओं में 90 लाख युवाओं को अगले तीन साल में प्रशिक्षित करने का जो अनुबंध किया है, उसे कारगर तरीके से क्रियान्वित करना होगा। ऐसा होने पर ही अगले एक दशक में भारत विश्व को बड़े पैमाने पर पेशवर व कौशल प्रशिक्षित युवा मुहैया कराने वाले देश के रूप में उभर सकेगा।
