


**THE TIMES OF INDIA**
*Date: 18-10-18*

## Sabarimala For All

***SC allowed women to enter, now Kerala government must uphold law and order***

### TOI Editorials

Because of the climate of fear and intimidation created by those opposing the historic Sabarimala verdict, very few women ventured to the hill shrine on the day it opened for the first time since the historic Supreme Court judgment allowing women between 10 and 50 to pray there. As for the few who came, the gauntlet put up by belligerent bhakts, many ironically decked up in bermudas and bandanas, proved too much. Even journalists weren't spared, as the protesters took out their ire on several mediapersons, especially women reporters. But it's still early days. Depressing as it is, there is no reason that what happened on Wednesday should necessarily happen on Thursday or in the days to come.

More women are bound to come and some of them will definitely overcome the heckling, booing and even manhandling, to reach the sanctum and get darshan. When that happens – surely sooner than later – it will become a red letter moment in India's evolution as a modern and progressive society. This is because Sabarimala is unique in that it demands its devotees transcend the usual barriers of caste, class, creed and even religion – the trademark all black attire of Ayyappa pilgrims symbolises the renunciation of all such divisions.

That the only division which has persisted – and that too with all the force of a taboo – is that of gender, reveals the extent to which patriarchy is entrenched in Indian society. It is this patriarchy, and its ability to insinuate itself even in a modern context through dubious notions of 'purity' and 'pollution', that has now been struck a body blow.

While Kerala's LDF government has maintained that it is committed to women's rights and has resisted pressure to file a review petition in SC, it has not exactly been proactive. It has sought to open back channels with agitators, has not put in place special facilities for women that would make it easier for them to make the pilgrimage and, worse, has of late been taking an occasional 'soft Hindutva' line that sends confusing signals. Of course, those protesting against the entry of women are not an insignificant number, and the fanatic self-righteousness of ordinary bhakts in their hundreds and thousands cannot be underestimated. One calamitous incident is all it may take to turn the clock back.

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## Sowing Changes, Reaping Benefits

**Parkash Chander, [ The writer is professor, Bennett University]**



GoI recently announced an increase in the minimum support prices (MSPs) of major kharif crops for the 2018-19 marketing season to give farmers a fixed margin of 50-70% over their input costs and imputed labour cost. The median increase in the announced MSPs is 25%. While raising the MSPs, GoI has not announced the quantities it plans to procure.

Ideally, the quantities procured by GoI should be sufficient to push the market prices of the crops and equalise them to the MSPs. Procuring such quantities is optimal. The benefits of higher MSPs are then not restricted only to those farmers who manage to sell their crops to the government procurement agencies, but accrue also to those farmers who cannot.

Thus, GoI procuring optimal quantities of the crops can effectively address the long-standing farm distress, as all farmers, big or small, would significantly benefit from higher market prices or equivalently higher MSPs. Moreover, procuring optimal quantities can reduce, if not eliminate, corruption in procurement as the MSPs would no longer be higher than the market prices.

But procuring the optimal quantities of the crops may not be possible. GoI may not have the necessary infrastructure for procurement and storage and/or may have financial constraints. Then, the market prices of the crops with hiked MSPs may not rise despite government procurement if the private market players either believe that GoI, because of lack of infrastructure and/or funds, may procure only limited quantities, or fear that GoI, to reduce its excessive stocks, may release part of its existing stocks of the crops in the national market in the near future.

Like the US government in the 1960s-70s, GoI has recently decided to allow exports of dairy products (including milk powder) or give them away as aid to some friendly nations instead of funds. This is because the market prices of milk have fallen, but both public and private stocks of dairy products are already excessive. No similar policy for crops with hiked MSPs, however, seems to be on the cards, even though GoI seems to have accumulated excessive stocks of many crops with hiked MSPs.

While GoI has not announced the quantities of the crops it plans to procure, it has declared the cost of implementing the MSP hikes to be Rs 15,000 crore. The declared cost indicates that it intends to procure only limited quantities of the crops with hiked MSPs. This maybe because GoI is already burdened with excessive stocks of some crops and is facing financial constraints.

But this limited procurement of crops is not sufficient to push up their market prices. Only a limited number of farmers will be able to sell their crops to the government and benefit from the hiked MSPs. In fact, several studies show that at the limited level of procurement, only 7% farmers may manage to sell their crops to government at the hiked MSPs. The rest, especially small farmers, may have to sell their crops in the market at lower prices.

GoI may credibly commit to a policy of stabilising market prices of the crops at the same level as the MSPs by selling or procuring and storing away sufficient quantities of the crops until their market prices are equal to the MSPs. If implementing this price stabilising policy creates an imbalance between demand and supply, and leads over time to excessive accumulation of stocks, then GoI may export stocks (even if that requires subsidising the export) in excess of those needed to implement the policy or give them away as aid to friendly nations.

But, in the short run, if only limited procurement is possible, to give immediate relief to the most poor and distressed farmers, GoI could procure in the 2018-19 marketing season relatively higher amounts of bajra, jowar hybrid, ragi and tur dal, as these crops are grown on dry lands in droughtprone areas mostly by small and poor farmers who have not benefited from the Green Revolution. Moreover, three of these crops have been recently notified by GoI as nutricereals due to their very high nutrition value. Thus, higher procurement of these crops can also help reduce malnutrition.

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## Now Let's Turn the Volume Up

**Anil Agarwal , [ The writer is group chairman, Vedanta Resources Plc ]**

India has many things going in its favour. It holds the world's youngest populace. It's poised to have the largest workforce by 2027. It's blessed with abundant natural resources, not to mention coastlines, logistical advantage and strategic position of coal resources. Yet, India has failed to realise its full potential and is still punching below its weight. Banks continue to make huge losses due to indiscreet lending to various industries. Later, billions are spent in recapitalising banks — at the taxpayers' expense.

If all public sector utilities (PSUs) are freed from GoI ownership, production and employment will rise multiple times. GoI will continue receiving revenues and royalties in greater amounts. Indeed, if these principles are implemented in toto, GoI can earn at least \$1 trillion in revenues even as 100-150 million new employment opportunities are created.

The divestment of PSUs should be done with the condition of no retrenchment. When all the industries — public or private — are in one category, the government company should not have more access to the State and they should be treated on par. The divested companies' CEOs will make their own business plans, which will be approved by shareholders and the board. A growth-orientated production-centric philosophy that promotes job creation, rather than only focusing on near-term revenues, is essential.

Huge quantities of electronic items are imported, the value of which may soon touch \$200 billion. Almost 100% of these products can be made in India, while imports translate into employment loss and fewer entrepreneurial opportunities. It's time to not only promote 'Make in India' but also 'Process in India'.

India imported \$250 billion worth of minerals, fuel and metal products in FY2017-18. As per GoI's statistics, the nation's import bill jumped 21% from \$384 billion in FY2017 to \$466 billion in FY2018, while exports only grew 10% from \$276 billion (FY2017) to \$303 billion (FY2018). The skewed export-import figures exert a huge impact on the trade deficit, which soared 49% to \$162 billion in the same period. Is this not a strong enough wake-up call to review our exploration and mining, manufacturing and trade policies, to support domestic production and processing?

India's poor infrastructure is responsible for restricting GDP growth. Although the plan to establish 100 Smart Cities is truly visionary, world-class roads, highways, bridges, ports, airports, stadiums and power plants are also needed to complement Smart Cities. Every rupee spent on infrastructure development will pay great dividends socially, nationally and economically.

Unfortunately, many ministries are locked in fierce litigation with companies, thereby creating operational hurdles. No country can be antibusiness yet be pro-growth. The countries that truly recognise businesses as a national asset will be the ones to achieve inclusive growth faster. So, while working to improve the ease of doing business, progressive reforms should also be initiated, including single-window clearance.

The tendency to make midstream policy changes, as well as imposing retrospective levies, should be stopped completely as it creates high levels of uncertainty. Stability in policies and tax norms can act as a lightning rod in attracting companies and investors because long-term plans are impossible without these core pillars.

Sometimes, simple solutions such as empowering and treating the district collector like a CEO can work. He can become a nodal point for all necessary clearances, thereby boosting grassroots development. There are more than 700 districts in India. Each district collector can be treated as a business development officer. Once they receive clearance from the state and central authorities on specific development policies, the buck stops with them for developing various segments in the district. Finally, India can't develop if the natural resources remain untapped. The nation's interest to become a self-sufficient, inclusive economy, should be supreme.



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## बात पशुओं के अधिकारों की भी हो

विजय गोयल, केंद्रीय संसदीय कार्य राज्य मंत्री



कुछ समय पहले खबर आई कि इंदौर की पाँश कॉलोनी में एक तेंदुआ घुस आया, जिसने कई लोगों को घायल कर दिया। ऐसा कोई पहली बार नहीं हुआ, विभिन्न प्रकार के जंगली जानवरों द्वारा शहर में आकर उत्पात मचाने की खबरें आती रहती हैं। आखिर ऐसा क्यों हो रहा है? शेर, बाघ, तेंदुआ, भालू और हाथी जैसे जंगली जानवर शहरों में घुसकर उत्पात मचा रहे हैं और कई बार भीड़ के हाथों मारे जा रहे हैं। तो क्या हमें इन जानवरों को मारने का लाइसेंस मिल गया है? वे किसी को मारें, तो गलत और मनुष्य जानवरों को मारे, तो सही?

सिर्फ छत्तीसगढ़ में साल 2015 से 2017 के बीच करीब 175 लोग हाथियों के हमले में मारे गए, वहीं हाथियों ने 43 हजार से अधिक घरों को उजाड़ दिया और फसलों को भी नुकसान पहुंचाया। इस दौरान लोगों ने बड़ी संख्या में हाथियों को भी मार डाला। उधर झारखंड में ऐसी ही घटनाओं में पिछले साल 56 लोगों और 13 हाथियों की जान चली गई। यहां पिछले पांच साल में ऐसी घटनाओं में करीब 285 लोग और 45 हाथी मारे जा चुके हैं। ये आंकड़े भयभीत करने वाले हैं। झारखंड, ओडिशा, पश्चिम बंगाल, तमिलनाडु, केरल सहित कई राज्यों में बड़ी संख्या में हाथी रहते हैं।

इस समस्या का एक कारण यह भी है कि मनुष्य जंगलों में घुसकर जंगलों को खत्म कर रहा है और वहां के संसाधनों को अपने स्वार्थ के लिए बरबाद कर रहा है। जंगली जानवरों के प्राकृतिक पर्यावास, भोजन और जल पर आदमी कब्जा करता जा रहा है। जंगल सिमटते जा रहे हैं, इसीलिए जानवर जंगलों से भागकर भोजन और पानी की तलाश में शहर में आ जाते हैं। हम जंगलों पर कब्जा कर रहे हैं और जब जंगली जानवर मजबूरी में शहर में घुसता है, तो कहते हैं कि जानवरों ने इतने लोगों को मार दिया। लेकिन जब आदमी जानवरों को मारते हैं तो कोई हल्ला नहीं होता। क्या पशुओं को जीने का अधिकार नहीं है?

मनुष्य की प्रवृत्ति और प्रदूषण से वैसे भी कई प्रजातियां समाप्ति की ओर हैं। मनुष्य कई बार केवल और केवल अपने स्वाद के लिए जंगली जानवरों को भी मार देता है, जबकि अधिकांश जंगली जानवर स्वभाव से मांसाहारी होते हैं। यदि जंगल में जानवरों के लिए भोजन यानी शिकार खत्म हो जाएंगे, तो वे शहर की तरफ आएंगे और गाय-बकरी और कछु खास स्थितियों में आदमी तक को शिकार बनाएंगे ही। जानवरों के अंदर भी आत्मा है और उन्हें भी जीने का पूरा अधिकार है। स्वार्थ, सुविधा, लाभ या मनोरंजन, किसी भी कारण से पशुओं के साथ अत्याचार या उनकी हत्या गलत है। हमारे हिंदू धर्म में जानवरों को भी पूरा-पूरा सम्मान दिया गया है। विभिन्न जीव-जंतुओं को देवी-देवताओं के साथ इसीलिए जोड़ा गया है, ताकि कम से कम धर्म के कारण ही लोग इनका सम्मान करें, इनकी रक्षा करें। जैसे, मां दुर्गा के साथ सिंह, भगवान विष्णु के साथ गरुड़, भोले शंकर के साथ सर्प और नंदी, गणेश के साथ मूषक, श्रीकृष्ण के साथ गाय आदि।

‘दया धर्म का मूल है’ और हिंदू धर्म इसी मूल पर स्थित है। बाकी धर्मों में भी जीवों पर दया की शिक्षा दी गई है। यहां तक कि स्कूलों में भी इस बात की शिक्षा दी जाती है, फिर भी लोग अपने स्वार्थ के लिए जानवरों को मार रहे हैं। तो क्यों न पाठ्यक्रम में ही यह भी बता दिया जाए कि किसे मारना है और किसे नहीं? पहले हमारे घरों में गांवों की रसोई में पहली रोटी गाय और आखिरी रोटी कुत्ते के लिए अलग से बनाकर रखी जाती थी। बदले में वे गांव के लिए उपयोगी होते थे। अब यह चलन करीब-करीब खत्म हो गया है। आजकल केवल गाय को मारने की बात हो रही है, पर बाकी जानवरों को भी तो मारा जा रहा है। देखा जाए तो सारे जानवरों का जीने का अधिकार एक समान है। जिस प्रकार फर्जी मुठभेड़ के मामले में मानव अधिकार आयोग तुरंत संज्ञान लेता है, ऐसा ही जानवरों की हत्या या शिकार के मामलों में भी होना चाहिए। हम मनोरंजन के नाम पर सर्कस में 10-15 प्रजाति के जीवों पर होने वाली ज्यादती या माल ढुलाई या खेलों में इस्तेमाल किए जाने वाले जानवरों और पक्षियों की बात ही क्यों करते हैं? सभी पशु-पक्षियों के अधिकारों के बारे में समान रूप से चर्चा होनी चाहिए।

मनुष्य को समस्त प्राणी-जगत में सर्वश्रेष्ठ कहा जाता है। ऐसे में उसके द्वारा पशुओं के साथ क्रूरता का व्यवहार शोभा नहीं देता। पशु-पक्षियों से रहित दुनिया की हम कल्पना भी नहीं कर सकते। वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम के दर्शन वाली संस्कृति में इन प्राणियों का भी उतना ही महत्व है जितना मनुष्य का। ये भी प्रकृति के सौंदर्य का हिस्सा हैं। इसीलिये जरूरी है कि मानव इनके प्राकृतिक आवास और जीवन को सुरक्षित रखे और उसमें दखल न दे। अन्यथा प्रकृति की फूड चेन गड़बड़ाने का पूरा असर मनुष्य पर भी पड़ना तय है। ऐसे में इस चेन को बचाए रखना इंसानों के लिए भी उतना ही जरूरी है, जितना जानवरों के लिए।

वक्त आ गया है कि सरकार को एक उच्च स्तरीय समिति बनाकर नए कानून बनाने चाहिए कि जीव हत्या में क्या गलत है और क्या ठीक? आखिर क्या कारण है कि ज्यादा से ज्यादा लोग अब शाकाहार की तरफ मुड़ रहे हैं? उन्हीं

कारणों पर सरकार अन्य लोगों को प्रेरित कर सकती है। इंसान और जानवर, दोनों में आत्मा समान है। फिर भेदभाव क्यों? क्या सिर्फ हमें ही उन्हें मारने का लाइसेंस मिला है?


**THE HINDU**
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## Slippery Slope

***India must diversify its energy basket more proactively.***

### EDITORIAL

India's economic fortunes continue to be tied to the sharply fluctuating price of oil. At a gathering of prominent oil ministers in New Delhi on Monday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged oil-producing countries to reduce the cost of energy in order to aid the global economy in its path towards recovery. Mr. Modi also called for a review of payment terms, demanding the partial use of the rupee instead of the U.S. dollar to pay for oil, in order to ease the burden on oil-importing countries in the wake of the strengthening of the dollar. With well over 80% of its oil demand being met through imports, India clearly has a lot at stake as oil prices have risen by as much as 70% in rupee terms in the last one year. Notably, speaking at the same event, Saudi Arabian Energy Minister Khalid A. Al-Falih refused to openly commit to lower oil prices, opting instead to say that the price of oil could have been much higher but for the efforts taken by his country to boost supply. This is not surprising given the absence of significant rival suppliers in the global oil market willing to help out India.

India's policymakers now face the difficult task of safely steering the economy in the midst of multiple external headwinds. For one, the current account deficit widened to 2.4% of gross domestic product in the first quarter of 2018-19 and is expected to reach 3% for the full year. The rupee, which is down about 16% since the beginning of the year, doesn't seem to be showing any signs of recovery either. Further, the growth in the sales of petrol and diesel has already been affected adversely as their prices have shot through the roof. All this will likely weigh negatively on the prospects of the Indian economy, the world's fastest-growing, in the coming quarters. In this scenario, the decision to marginally cut taxes imposed on domestic fuels is unlikely to be of any significant help to consumers. What is required is a steep cut in Central and State taxes for the benefit to carry through to the consumers, which, of course, is unlikely given the government's fiscal needs. Another long-term solution to the oil problem will be to increasingly tap into domestic sources of energy supply while simultaneously encouraging consumers to switch to green alternatives. This will require a stronger policy framework and implementation. In the short term, the government could look to diversifying its international supplier base to manage shocks better. But such a choice carries geopolitical risks, such as in the case of Iran. Since it will take a length of time to wean the economy off oil imports, policymakers should also be willing to think beyond just the next election if India's over-reliance on oil is to come to an end for good.