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Bold Decisions, Strong Political Will

Economic reforms are sustained, deep and pronounced under PM Modi

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Economic reforms are a matter of continuing interest in India. Only recently, marking the birth anniversary of former PM Narasimha Rao, decisions taken during his time to open the Indian economy were recalled. They were bold decisions taken under compelling circumstances. Even from 1989, the brewing balance of payments crisis was getting noticed. India had to undertake higher levels of borrowing, and correspondence with the IMF and World Bank had commenced by late 1990. Without the borrowing, India would have had to default on its external payment obligations.

The IMF pegged the release of the credit tranches to our quarterly performances based on specified criteria. The World Bank provided the structural

adjustment loans linked to specified benchmarks. Their conditions were to work in tandem. India was to open its economy to be market driven and out of the licence quota raj. To dismantle the four-decade-old command and control model required immense political will, which despite running a minority government Rao had shown. After all, India had to be pulled out of a near bankruptcy.

However, several of the agreed conditions remained unfulfilled. A leadership and its vision for India adds strength to the required political will to undertake reforms which, post-Narasimha Rao, the Congress lacks. The finance minister of 1991 was the prime minister for a decade, but the Congress used its political will for itself rather than for India. Several observers called 2004-14 as India's lost decade. It doesn't take a crisis to reform, nor should a crisis be allowed to overwhelm India.

The first NDA government (1999-2004) under Atal Bihari Vajpayee took the reforms forward. India had made commitments in 1991 on fiscal consolidation, as a part of those quarterly benchmarks to be fulfilled. However, it was PM Vajpayee who enacted the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management law. Another promise left unfulfilled was the rationalisation of state excise rates. In 1999, PM Vajpayee cleared the idea of a single goods and services tax. However, it was in 2017 under PM Narendra Modi that the Goods and Services Act came into force.

Within a year after forming the government in 2014, PM Modi held a two-day Gyan Sangam with PSBs. He spoke about addressing the NPAs, changes to recovery laws and mergers of PSU banks. Importantly, he

spoke about giving operational freedom to PSBs. Keeping in mind India's aspirational needs, there were benefits to be drawn from expanding the size and scope of our banks. A set of mergers took place in 2017. And a leap forward happened in August 2019. Old India's 21 PSBs, after consolidation, today stand at 12. In addition we have a payments bank in the India Post Payments Bank.

In one of the volumes on RBI history, we find an interesting observation on the 1969 nationalisation of banks: "single most important economic decision taken by any government since 1947. Not even the reforms of 1991 are comparable in their consequences – political, social and of course economic." Post-nationalisation, several new branches of PSBs were opened in areas that were till then uncovered. Gross domestic savings doubled as a percentage of national income in the 1970s. However, political interference in banks was rampant in the 70s. It continued unabated through 'phone-banking' in 2008-14.

As a result, that 'single most important economic decision' couldn't achieve either financial inclusion or steady acceleration of growth even after four decades. The PM Jan Dhan Yojana launched in 2014 has provided over 39 crore poor people access to banks and their services. Together they have over Rs 1.32 lakh crore in these accounts. Over 10 crore farmers are beneficiaries of PM Kisan Yojana, which directly transfers monies into their accounts.

Equally, market access was critical to multiplying farmers' income. A major step of giving inter-state market access to all farmers was taken recently. Farmers shall no longer be compelled to sell only to licensees within their areas. Using the electronic National Agriculture Market he can seek the place and price for his product to be sold. The recent steps to energise agriculture have resulted in amending the Essential Commodities Act. Together with changes in land leasing and terms of farming, agriculture is seeing major reforms. Incidentally, removal of administrative export controls on agricultural commodities remains an unfulfilled commitment of 1991.

The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code and setting up of the National Company Law Tribunal in 2016 provide a major relief for companies looking for an exit policy. Long pending resolutions are happening now. The Code may be on insolvency but now resolutions most often are for going concerns. Speedy disposal also ensures reasonable value realisation.

Within one year of being re-elected in 2019, NDA brought in major reforms in taxation. Corporate tax was reduced to 15% for new manufacturing companies and for the old to 22%. Options were provided for those who wished to continue benefiting from accumulated exemptions to remain in the old scheme. So was personal income tax simplified and made exemption free. Here too, option to continue in existing/old scheme was provided. To remove any perception of harassment, tax assessment and scrutiny were made faceless. Using technology, every correspondence with the assessee has a centralised Document Identification Number.

Modi invited private players to be co-travellers in the Indian space sector. Also, to strengthen existing indigenous capacities in defence production he has invited greater investment in the sector. Reforms have continued even as the necessary stimulus is being provided for restarting the Covid-hit economy. Reforms are sustained, deep and pronounced under PM Modi.

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Google's Welcome Plans for India

ET Editorials

Google has announced it would invest \$10 billion in India over the next 5-7 years. Something less than \$2 billion a year is not a big amount in absolute terms. But that investment is going to be in broadening the base of digital access and in the overall digital ecosystem, including in equity and partnerships. The net result would be to drive in much larger investments and create new businesses, new jobs and incomes in a manner that is truly transformative. We welcome the development.

Cynics would say that Google is making a defensive play in multiple ways. For one, the tech giants are coming under increasing regulatory pressure around the world – on tax, on data privacy, data storage, cornering advertising revenue from the content they aggregate, instead of sharing it with the content creators, on hate speech and content moderation. It makes good sense to be on the good side of governments everywhere, at least for getting a decent hearing. For another, Google is facing mounting competition in its core search business — not so much from Microsoft's Bing or the likes of Yahoo! as from Amazon. It needs to make its salience felt. A third reason is to improve its product quality and marketing. A youngish Zoom has come out of virtually nowhere to dominate videoconferencing, whereas Google's offering in this area, Google Meet, is yet to find mass adoption. YouTube dominates video-sharing but not the short, funny kind that TikTok dominates (in India, dominated, till it was banned) and Facebook is trying hard to appropriate. There is good reason to invest in product quality enhancement and product marketing. India is the world's largest source of engineering talent, especially young talent that can be directed to the areas Google is most interested in. In rapidly evolving artificial intelligence, too, India is a good place to locate high-quality talent.

But Google's self-interest melds perfectly well with India's public interest, too. The digital ecosystem can spawn millions of high-quality jobs and other ancillary occupations that India needs. Welcome aboard, Google.



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Seva in a pandemic

Guru ka Langar is an exemplary institution of the moral economy

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The COVID-19 pandemic has brought unprecedented life and livelihood challenges in almost every corner of the world. The depredations of the virus have led to the loss of millions of jobs and unleashed a humanitarian crisis that is exacerbated by hunger and starvation. To mitigate the crisis, governments all over the world have come out with economic packages to provide interim relief to their citizens. Remedying the economy by state intervention has been widely discussed but there are many instances of non-market interventions through which individuals and communities have extended a helping hand, based solely on the principles of compassion. The exceptional role of civil society, NGOs and religious organisations during these challenging times has become a fine example of what we can call a moral economy — relations that are sustained over time following a moral principle. One such institution is the practice of Guru Ka Langar in gurdwaras all over the globe.

In Delhi, since the start of the COVID-19 lockdown, one lakh meals have been cooked every day at the Gurdwara Bangla Sahib alone, with the sevadars working 18-hour shifts. This helped in feeding the migrant workers who were rendered jobless in the early days of the lockdown. Recently, the gurdwara has also started an initiative called “Meals on Wheels Langar” to take food to the remote corners of the city. As a gesture of appreciation of the gurdwara’s role during the crisis, the Delhi Police performed a parikrama of Bangla Sahib. A recent New York Times article has highlighted the American experience of langar, highlighting both how Sikhs ran kitchens to help the COVID-19-affected as well as how they have fed the protesters of the Black Lives Matter movement. The article notes that people often get surprised when they are offered food for free. Indeed, the dimensions and spectacle of this large-scale consumption, which is outside the exchange economy, have surprised many people even when one is not in the midst of extraordinary events. One example among many is the TV show, John Torode’s Asia, where we see the host being visibly moved by the langar at the Golden Temple in Amritsar. This emotion endorses the understanding that this Sikh practice is something exceptional.

In the Sikh religion, the notion of “seva” (service) is particularly manifest in Guru ka Langar. This is perhaps best described in terms of a gift economy, following the sociologist David Cheal, who sees gift-giving as “institutionalisation of social ties within a moral economy”. The langar is a key institution that puts into operation the act of seva – with the gurdwara forming the backbone on which such seva becomes operative. Seva is one of the main principles of Sikhism. Ever since Sikhism was founded by Guru Nanak in the 15th century, the principles of this relatively new religion have emphasised selfless service to God as well as humanity. The practice of a free community kitchen serving food to everyone without any discrimination was established by Guru Nanak and since then, the tradition has become well-known all over the globe. This practice derives its meaning from the touchstone of Nanak’s three pillars of philosophy – “kirat karo” (earn with labour), “naam japo” (contemplate the various names of God), and “vand chako” (share with others). As is well known, caste and religious divides are well entrenched in Indian society and often characterise it. The sharing of meals by people sitting together on the floor irrespective of their social background was a one-of-its-kind taboo-breaking practice. Selfless service is seen as a ladder to get closer to God. The gifts to others, whether they be in the form of bodily, mental, and material gestures, require a platform to become operational. This has generated institutions such as the round-the-clock langar, which in turn, can be sustained only with a material base. Such a material base is provided by a large number of daily offerings in the form of money and other goods. The offering in cash and kind can be thought of as a redistribution which allows a progressive transfer of resources to make society more equitable. It is perhaps akin to a progressive tax in spirit, only that it is a transfer by voluntary contribution based on faith and compassion made in a setting which is outside the exchange economy.

The challenges posed by the pandemic have exposed many fault lines in our society. The negligence of healthcare and lack of adequate social safety nets have made millions of people vulnerable. In such times, the institution of langar, based on the Guru's philosophy of equality and progressiveness, provides a glimmer of hope that strong institutions whether they are created in the societal, economic, or religious sphere can stand any storm. Langar is one such practice based on the principle of inclusion and unity in the religious sphere that helps everyone and anyone in times of hunger. The choice is for mankind whether it creates institutions that divide and carve out exclusionary spaces or builds strong and protean institutions, like the practice of langar, that bring the human race together in trying times without any discrimination.



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Enabling people to govern themselves

With the pandemic showing up flaws in governance institutions, this is a better way for humanity to face new challenges

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Governance systems at all levels, i.e. global, national, and local, have experienced stress as a fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic. Architectural flaws have been revealed in their design. Breakdowns in many subsystems had to be managed at the same time — in health care, logistics, business, finance, and administration. The complexity of handling so many subsystems at the same time have overwhelmed governance. Solutions for one subsystem backfired on other subsystems. For example, lockdowns to make it easier to manage the health crisis have made it harder to manage economic distress simultaneously. In fact, the diversion of resources to focus on the threat to life posed by COVID-19 has increased vulnerabilities to death from other diseases, and even from malnutrition

in many parts of India.

A mismatch is evident

Human civilisation advances with the evolution of better institutions to manage public affairs. Institutions of parliamentary democracy, for example, and the limited liability business corporation, did not exist 400 years ago. Institutions of global governance, such as the United Nations and the World Trade Organization, did not exist even 100 years ago. These institutions were invented to enable human

societies to produce better outcomes for their citizens. They have been put through a severe stress test now by the global health and economic crises. The test has revealed a fundamental flaw in their design. There is a mismatch in the design of governance institutions at the global level (and also in India) with the challenges they are required to manage. Designed like machines for efficiency, they are trying to fit themselves into an organic system of the natural environment coupled with human society. It seems that government institutions are square pegs forcing themselves into round holes.

Interconnected issues

The global challenges listed in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations, which humanity must urgently address now, are systemic challenges. All these systemic problems are interconnected with each other. Environmental, economic, and social issues cannot be separated from each other and solved by experts in silos or by agencies focused only on their own problems. A good solution to one can create more problems for others, as government responses to the novel coronavirus pandemic have revealed.

Even if experts in different disciplines could combine their perspectives and their silo-ed solutions at the global level, they will not be able to solve the systemic problems of the SDGs. Because, their solutions must fit the specific conditions of each country, and of each locality within countries too, to fit the shape of the environment and the condition of society there. Solutions for environmental sustainability along with sustainable livelihoods cannot be the same in Kerala and Ladakh, or in Wisconsin and Tokyo. Solutions must be local. Moreover, for the local people to support the implementation of solutions, they must believe the solution is the right one for them, and not a solution thrust upon them by outside experts. Therefore, they must be active contributors of knowledge for, and active participants in, the creation of the solutions. Moreover, the knowledge of different experts — about the environment, the society, and the economy — must come together to fit realities on the ground.

A case for local systems

Governance of the people must be not only for the people. It must be by the people too. Gandhiji and his economic advisers, J.C. Kumarappa and others, developed their solutions of local enterprises through observations and experiments on the ground (and not in theoretical seminars in capital cities). E.F. Schumacher, founding editor of the journal, *Resurgence*, and author of *Small is Beautiful*, had pointed out by the 1970s, the flaws in the economics theories that were driving public policy in capitalist as well as communist countries. He had proposed a new economics, founded on local enterprise, very consistent with Gandhiji's ideas. Elinor Ostrom, the first woman to win the Nobel Prize in Economics, in 2009, had developed the principles for self-governing communities from research on the ground in many countries, including India.

When there are scientific explanations for why local systems solutions are the best, if not the only way to solve complex systemic problems, and when the Indian Constitution requires this too, then why does not the government devolve power to citizens in villages and towns in India for them to govern their own affairs?

An Indian anthropologist gave me an insight. She said she had observed that several Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officers she knew, who seemed to have more compassion for communities than their colleagues had, were involved at some time in their careers with the evolution of community-based public health and the self-help group movements in Andhra Pradesh. She contrasted their views

about how change is brought about with the views of IAS officers who have implemented the Swachh Bharat programme recently. The latter, also very fine officers, saw their role as 'deliverers of good government'. Whereas the former, through their experience, had begun to see that the role of government is perhaps to 'enable governance'.

The district Collector

The key IAS functionary in India's governance is the District 'Collector' — the role his forebears in the Indian Civil Services set up by the British, were expected to perform. Which was to collect revenues and to maintain law and order. When, after Independence, the Indian state took up a large welfare role, he also became the District 'Deliverer' of government largesse. It strengthened the image of a paternalist government taking care of its wards. The District Deliverer's task became complicated when the numbers of government schemes multiplied — some designed by the central government, and others by State government. The schemes were managed by their own ministries and departments in the capitals, with local functionaries of those departments as the points of contact with citizens. At a meeting of IAS officers in Shimla with the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG), sometime in 2013, to understand why government schemes were not producing enough benefits for people on the ground, an officer presented a list of over 300 schemes that were operational in her district. The citizens did not know how many schemes there were and what they were entitled to. And even she found it hard to disentangle the schemes.

The pandemic has not passed yet, but evidence is emerging that some States in India, such as Kerala, have weathered the storm better than others. And some countries, such as Vietnam and Taiwan, better than others too. A hypothesis is that those States and countries in which local governance was stronger have done much better than others. This is worthy of research by social and political scientists looking for insights now into design principles for good governance systems that can solve problems that the dominant theory of government is not able to solve.

The dominant theory in practice of good government is 'government of the people, by the government, for the people'. Which slips easily into 'government of the people, by the government, for the political party in power'. This has been the prevalent theory in most States of India for too long. Even when government is for the people, as a deliverer of services, money into their bank accounts, (and money for building toilets), it is not good enough. The government has to support and enable people to govern themselves, to realise the vision of 'government of the people, for the people, by the people'. Which is also the only way humanity will be able to meet the ecological and humanitarian challenges looming over it in the 21st century.

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The politics of nepotism

The discourse is a salvo in a battle between two elites: the Nehruvian 'ancien regime' and the new faction

G. Sampath

In recent weeks, nepotism has become centre stage in mainstream public discourse. Triggered by speculations over the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput, the debate was initially confined to the film industry. But it has since spread to other domains. What began as a hashtag about a tragic death has acquired a life of its own. How do we understand this sudden upsurge, given that nepotism is not a new phenomenon?

In India, whichever field one may consider, there is no denying the prevalence of influential families that wield nepotistic influence. But does this mean we make peace with nepotism? Certainly not. But a lot depends on how the debate is framed, and the nature of the contingent politics around the nepotism discourse.

The current debate

What is now derisively described as ‘nepotism’ is how things were traditionally done. In pre-modern societies, the realms of domesticity and work were merged, with the family playing a central role in determining an individual’s entry not only into an occupation, but also the public sphere. In insufficiently modernised societies such as India, this tendency remains strong. Second, traditional social norms still dictate that family comes first, caste/clan second, and everything else, including merit, last.

In India, where upper caste dominance across domains is well documented, nepotism extends beyond the family and operates along the axis of caste as well. Deep historical inequalities and a dwindling welfare state have made India one of the most unequal societies in the world, with the richest 1% holding more than four times the wealth of the bottom 70%. It stands to reason, therefore, that anyone concerned about nepotism would want to attack the cause of which nepotism is the symptom: the reproduction of inequality. After all, the more unequal a society, the greater the scope and incentive for nepotism. In a hypothetical society of perfect socio-economic equality, each individual’s nepotistic reserves would cancel out that of everyone else’s. So, tackling nepotism calls for political mobilisation against socio-economic inequality. The most effective means of reducing such inequality are social justice measures such as affirmative action, universal access to public health and education, and redistributive policies such as an inheritance tax.

But the theme of inequality is conspicuously absent in the nepotism discourse. Its preferred binary is not ‘privileged’ versus ‘non-privileged’ but ‘outsider’ versus ‘insider’, with all the outrage reserved for the insiders. The idea is not to call for a level playing field but to stoke the so-called outsider’s desire to displace the ‘insider’ as the new ‘insider’, without dismantling the insider-outsider structure as such.

The key to understanding the nepotism discourse lies in the parallels it shares with the Anna Hazare-led anti-corruption movement. First, beneath the hood of moral righteousness, the nepotism discourse is also powered by right-wing majoritarian elements. As was the case with the anti-corruption movement, this aspect remains understated, if not hidden, thereby enabling the discourse to get traction across the political spectrum, including from liberals.

Second, the nepotism discourse is right-wing populist in precisely the same way that the anti-corruption movement was, with both having the same objective: to consolidate the base of Hindutva politics by channelling public resentment against traditional elites. In politics, where the old elite, symbolically and literally, is the Nehru-Gandhi family and its allies, the strategy worked brilliantly – giving the illusion of authentic change while one faction of upper caste elites displaced another to become the ruling elite.

The contours of this factional war are clear in the Bollywood context. Since 2013, several notables at the periphery of the Bollywood power structure have chosen to ally with majoritarian politics. But six years down the line, their strategic alliance with the new power elite in Delhi is yet to yield a meaningful change in their status vis-à-vis their own industry's power centres, which continue to be the same old families. As these families continue to monopolise lucrative opportunities for those disinclined to challenge their supremacy, life could get tough for anyone who has fallen out of favour.

Understandably, there is genuine cause for resentment here. Also, since many of these ambitious 'outsiders' to Bollywood themselves come from bubbles of privilege in terms of their class and caste origins, they are not easily silenced, unlike, say, an Adivasi or Dalit summarily displaced from her home in the rural hinterland. In a society where a feudal sense of entitlement simmers beneath a veneer of economic modernity, aspirational upper castes with bottled up resentments are legion in every domain. They represent a political resource waiting to be mobilised. The 2011 Anna Hazare movement showed how it's done.

From the same old toolkit

Corruption did not peak in 2011, when the movement began. But a media-supported public campaign made it seem like it had, helping foment resentment against the UPA regime, which became synonymous with a venal elite that owed everything to the nepotistic influence of the Nehru-Gandhis. Corruption did not disappear after 2014. But the anti-corruption mobilisation had done its job — as a Trojan horse that enabled the forces of Hindu majoritarianism to capture power at the Centre.

The increasing sophistication of right-wing propaganda and its layered execution through social media campaigns has meant that it rarely registers early enough on liberal radars. Nepotism is the latest instrument from the right-wing populist toolkit. As an ideological weapon, it is a missile with multiple warheads. At one level, it does what populism always does: fuel rage against an elite in the name of "the people". At another level, Hindutva forces are using it to achieve three objectives: consolidate their upper caste base by appearing to empathise with their frustrations; translate status anxieties into resentments against sections of the elite that are yet to make a break with the Nehruvian consensus and embrace Hindutva; and, finally, communicate to recalcitrant sections of the liberal-Nehruvian elite the same message that goes out to some MLAs whenever a non-BJP government needs toppling: switch sides or face the consequences.

Fomenting new social antagonisms along the axis of 'the people'/outsider versus the elite/insider is a proven political strategy of right-wing authoritarian populists. The nepotism rhetoric is a similar operation where the resentments and frustrations of the less privileged, aspirational, upper and middle castes are sought to be weaponised against older, relatively more privileged upper caste factions, now 'othered' as the Nehruvian elite.

The nepotism discourse, then, is another salvo in a battle between two elites: the Nehruvian 'ancien regime' with its pluralistic instincts, and the brash new aspirational faction that wants its share of the spoils of power. This is a share it feels entitled to on the basis of its political commitment to Hindutva. But given the heavy competition and the small size of the pie, a great many feel deprived and resentful as they see the old liberal elites continuing in their privileged perches, as they always have. It remains to be seen whether deepening this social antagonism through polarising rhetoric offers enough fuel for a propaganda campaign capable of insulating the ruling party from the political costs of governance failures and economic headwinds.

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Yet another challenge to the Dalit movement

The language of mobilisation needs to change

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The pandemic is forcing us to understand the changing nature of society. In north India, specifically, it has also reshaped the discourse on marginalisation. Dalit issues are part of this discourse but are submerged in the broader discussions on economic vulnerabilities highlighted by COVID-19.

This pandemic has brought about two important shifts in the political discourse on the marginalised. As the lockdown caused untold suffering to poor, migrant labourers, it brought them from the margins to the centre of deliberations. Second, discussions on the space for the marginalised in the public health system and their safety are in focus. However, the concerns of Dalits remain hidden under the broader categories of poor, vulnerable, marginal, etc.

Changing vocabulary

In contemporary debates, there is a reappearance of class-based vocabulary. Caste-based issues have either become invisible or are only visible as part of the wider discourse. Leaders such as Bahujan Samaj Party supremo Mayawati and Bhim Army chief Chandrashekhar Azad have not been able to engage effectively with these new shifts. They have not been able to carve out a location in these new debates for their own politics. They have to reorient their exclusively caste-based language and reshape their political discourse to be in tune with the times. There are a large number of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes among the migrant labourers. But Dalit leaders in north India have not been able to represent their concerns. Their dilemma is how to address their constituencies using class terminology such as 'labourer' and 'poor' even as a majority of the migrant poor are Dalits and OBCs. This dilemma has made Dalit leaders non-assertive. It is possible that these shifts in political debates may continue in the post-pandemic phase at least for a few years as vulnerabilities of the marginalised will increase.

The Dalit movement in north India is habituated in using caste-based binaries in its mobilisational language but has failed to respond to the changing political diction. In fact, leaders have not changed their political diction for 30 years, since the time of the Kanshi Ram-led Bahujan movement. The movement is facing a crisis of agendas and social programmes. The constant repetition of unfulfilled claims and commitments and slogans and promises create disillusionment among a section of their support base.

Another issue is that the Dalit movement in north India is grappling with a leadership crisis. This crisis has appeared due to a break in the umbilical cord tying the movement with the party. In States such as U.P., Bihar, Punjab and Rajasthan, Dalit assertions are mostly centred around the electoral politics of Dalit-Bahujan political groups and parties. Even alternative social movements led by Jignesh Mevani and Mr. Azad seem to be caught in the logic of electoral politics.

Leadership crisis

During the Bahujan movement in the 1990s, the idea was that the movement and the party could facilitate each other. But the BSP, which emerged from the Bahujan social movement, developed gradually as a party structured like a pyramid. Under Ms. Mayawati, it has stopped its reciprocal relationship with the Dalit movement. In the BSP, the emergence of political leaders of various Dalit-Bahujan castes at different levels became frozen. This caused erosion in the broader social base and ultimately weakened the Dalit movement. So, while on the one hand, the Bahujan movement allowed numerically important Dalit-Bahujan communities to have political aspirations, on the other, the freeze on the emergence of leaders at various levels smashed political ambitions, destroyed the initiatives of the cadre and hampered the natural growth of the party and movement. The Dalit movement is constantly facing new challenges but its leaders are not able to change their strategies and grammar of politics to respond to them.

Under the influences of the Ambedkarite ideology and the Dalit-Bahujan movements, an assertive and politically aware Dalit consciousness was being formed among a section of Dalit groups. In the meantime, interventions by Hindutva leaders among Dalits mobilised a section of the most marginalised Dalits under the Hindutva flag. Now the pandemic has posed a new challenge for the Dalit movement. Caste-based identities formed the ideological resource base, but now concerns have gone beyond caste and religion, thus posing a different challenge. The challenge may be temporary but it may lead to a paradigm shift for Dalit politics.

The Dalit movement has to evolve new social strategies for its expansion in order to keep up with the changing times.

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड

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भारतीय सेना से हासिल सामुदायिकता के सबक

श्याम पोन्प्पा

अर्थव्यवस्था से जुड़ी नीतियों और प्रक्रियाओं पर बहुत अधिक ध्यान दिया जाता है। भले ही उन्हें किनारे कर दिया जाए। एक पहलू जिसे या तो हल्के में लिया जाता है या फिर जिसकी अनदेखी कर दी जाती है वह है सामाजिक समरसता। सच तो यह है कि अच्छी नीतियों को सामाजिक सहमति पर आधारित सुसंगत क्रियान्वयन की आवश्यकता होती है।

इसके बावजूद जब बात सामाजिक संगठनों की आती है तो हमें यह स्वीकार करना होगा कि हम थोड़ा ढीले हैं। इसके विपरीत हमारे सशस्त्र बल बहुत प्रभावी ढंग से प्रबंधन कर रहे हैं। एक ओर जहां हर व्यक्ति उनके साहस की सराहना करता है वहीं ज्यादा अच्छा यही होगा कि हम सशस्त्र बलों के संगठनात्मक और काम करने के तरीकों को अपनाएं। क्या उनके सिद्धांतों और व्यवहार के सिद्धांतों को सामाजिक संगठनों और नागरिक प्रशासन में आजमाया जा सकता है? भारतीय सेना अपनी क्षेत्रीय, जातीय और सांस्कृतिक विविधता के साथ भारतीय समाज का ही प्रतिबिंब नजर आती है। इसके बावजूद यह नागरिक समाज से इस लिहाज से अलग है कि यह अत्यधिक संगठित, सुसंगत, अनुशासित और

सोद्देश्य काम करती है। सतही तौर पर तो यही नजर आता है कि सैन्य इकाइयों में एकरूपता है लेकिन अगर गहराई से पड़ताल की जाए तो अन्य जटिल कारक नजर आते हैं।

एकरूपता की शुरुआत पुरानी रेजिमेंट्स मसलन डोगरा, गढ़वाल, गोरखा, जाट, कुमाऊं और सिख रेजिमेंट में भर्ती के साथ शुरू हुई। इन रेजिमेंट में इन्हीं जातीय धार्मिक समूहों के लोग होते हैं, हालांकि इनके अधिकारी देश के किसी भी हिस्से से हो सकते हैं। यह क्षेत्रीय सुसंगतता क्षेत्रीय रेजिमेंट मसलन असम, बिहार अथवा मद्रास रेजिमेंट तक विस्तारित है जिनमें इन इलाकों के लोग भर्ती होते हैं। कुछ तयशुदा वर्ग की यूनिट भी हैं जिनमें दो या तीन सब यूनिट वाली बटालियन या रेजिमेंट होती हैं। मिलेजुले जवानों की बात करें तो पंजाब रेजिमेंट में पंजाबी और डोगरा दोनों पाए जाते हैं। वहीं अखिल भारतीय श्रेणी की यूनिट में देश भर के जवान होते हैं। इस श्रेणी में आर्टिलरी, इंजीनियर, सिग्नल, आर्मी सर्विस कोर, मेडिकल कोर, ऑर्डनेंस कोर आदि आते हैं। व्यावहारिक तौर पर देखें तो मिलेजुले जवानों वाली यूनिट भी अपनी विविधता के साथ पर्याप्त सक्षम और मजबूत साबित हुई हैं।

अधिकारी देश के विभिन्न हिस्सों से आते हैं और उनसे यह अपेक्षा की जाती है कि वे अपने जवानों की भाषा और संस्कृति से जल्दी ही तालमेल बिठा लेंगे और उनके साथ व्यक्तिगत स्तर पर रिश्ता बनाएं। इसमें सभी धर्मों की साझी प्रार्थना शामिल है जिसमें बटालियन के धार्मिक गुरु शामिल होते हैं।

सवाल यह है कि भारतीय सेना के संगठनात्मक सिद्धांत क्या हैं और नागरिक समाज में उनका किस हद तक अनुकरण हो सकता है? कैलिफोर्निया विश्वविद्यालय के एसोसिएट प्रोफेसर अमित आहूजा ने सन 2009 से 2011 के बीच भारतीय सेना में धर्म को लेकर एक अध्ययन किया जो इस विषय में कुछ जानकारी प्रदान करता है। भारतीय सेना विविध धर्मानुयायियों वाली संस्था है। इसमें व्यापक तौर पर विभिन्न पंथों को मानने वाले शामिल होते हैं। इसमें आस्था और सांस्कृतिक संबद्धता वाले धार्मिक व्यवहार शामिल होते हैं। इस दौरान संस्थागत प्राधिकार, धार्मिक प्राधिकार से ऊपर रहता है। समाज को इस दृष्टि से देखें तो उसमें भी तमाम धर्म हैं लेकिन संस्थागत धर्मनिरपेक्षता उसमें भी उच्चतम है।

सेना के दो सिद्धांत ध्यान देने वाले हैं। पहला, यह एक यूनिट के स्तर पर काम करते हुए रेजिमेंट, सेना और देश के प्रति वफादारी की भावना के साथ सामुदायिकता की भावना भरती है। दूसरी बात, यह धर्म के प्रभावों को सीमित रखते हुए भी उसका लाभ लेने के लिए धर्म को पर्याप्त रियायत देती है और इसका इस्तेमाल जवानों को प्रेरित करने के लिए करती है। इस लक्ष्य को हासिल करने के लिए रेजिमेंट की पहचान और राष्ट्रीय पहचान के इर्दगिर्द श्रेष्ठता की भावना विकसित की जाती है।

ऐसे में दो सिद्धांत हैं। पहला, रेजिमेंट और राष्ट्रीय पहचान को लेकर वफादारी का भाव भरना और दूसरा ऐसी धार्मिक मान्यताओं और व्यवहार को अपनाना जो हर धर्म के लिए मान्य हो। एक दूसरे के धर्म के प्रति आस्था, जातीयता के इर्दगिर्द सांस्थानिक भावना आदि उत्पन्न करने का यह संस्थागत तरीका है।

इसमें समग्र पहचान और वफादारी राष्ट्रीय और रेजिमेंट यानी समुदाय के प्रति होती है। यह भावना काम करती है कि हमारा और हमारी रेजिमेंट का मान दांव पर है।

हमें इस बात पर विचार करना चाहिए कि अपने साथियों और देश के प्रति सामुदायिकता और प्रतिबद्धता की यह भावना नागरिक समाज में कैसे भरी जाए। शुरुआती स्कूली शिक्षा और प्रशिक्षण से शुरू करके इसे काफी आगे तक ले जाया जा

सकता है। नैशनल कैडेट कोर या स्काउट्स एंड गाइड्स जैसी गतिविधियां शैक्षणिक संस्थानों में अलग-अलग रूप में अपनाई जाती हैं लेकिन अक्सर इनमें सुसंगतता नहीं होती।

इन्हें व्यापक प्रोत्साहन देने तथा इंस्टीट्यूट ऑफ नैशनल इंटीग्रेशन जैसे विचारों के साथ जोड़ने और डिजिटल प्लेटफॉर्मों की मदद से शुरुआती और व्यापक प्रचार करने की आवश्यकता है। युवा वयस्कों के लिए अनिवार्य सैन्य सेवा पर भी विचार किया जा सकता है।

वफादारी के बाद आता है अंतरधार्मिक सम्मान, और सशस्त्र बल इसके लिए पूरी तरह प्रशिक्षित हैं। वहां कई धार्मिक अवकाश और क्षेत्रीय त्योहार मनाए जाते हैं जिनमें अधिकारी भी भाग लेते हैं। यूनिट में सभी प्रमुख धर्मों के शिक्षकों की भर्ती की जाती है और इंस्टीट्यूट ऑफ नैशनल इंटीग्रेशन द्वारा प्रशिक्षण दिया जाता है। इस संस्थान की परिकल्पना जनरल ओपी मेहरान ने सन 1980 में पेश की थी और यह सन 1985 में अस्तित्व में आया। इसका ध्यान धार्मिक सौहार्द और यूनिट में सहयोग की भावना विकसित करने पर केंद्रित है। चुनिंदा सैन्य कर्मियों को व्यवहार और सामाजिक विज्ञान का प्रशिक्षण भी दिया जाता है।

क्या लोकतांत्रिक समाज में ऐसे सिद्धांतों का पालन हो सकता है? इसके लिए यह आवश्यक है कि पंथ आधारित व्यवहार को तिलांजलि दी जाए। इसके लिए नेतृत्व और सामूहिक इच्छाशक्ति की आवश्यकता होगी। यदि यह काम केवल मजबूत नेतृत्व से हो पाता तो निरंतर प्रशिक्षण और प्रदर्शन से अहम लाभ मिलते।

आर्थिक और सामाजिक बेहतरी के लिए हमें भारतीय सेना के मूल्यों का अनुकरण करना होगा। आने वाले समय में देश को नई गति देने के लिए हमें अमेरिका के पूर्व राष्ट्रपति बिल क्लिंटन का प्रचार अभियान का वक्तव्य ध्यान में रखना होगा जिसमें अर्थव्यवस्था को सबसे महत्वपूर्ण बताया गया था।

आर्थिक दिक्कतों को हल करने की दिशा में पहला कदम है जमीनी हकीकतों को समझना। उसके बाद ही आगे के कदम उठाए जा सकते हैं। इस मामले में भारतीय सेना कुछ मदद कर सकती है।



Date: 14-07-20

आतंक का वित्त

संपादकीय

भारत की ओर से जब भी पाकिस्तान पर ऐसे आरोप लगाए जाते हैं कि वह आतंकवादियों और उनके संगठनों को संरक्षण दे रहा है, तो वह ऐसे आरोपों को खारिज कर देता है। लेकिन फिर कुछ ही दिनों बाद उसकी कोई न कोई ऐसी गतिविधि सामने आ जाती है, जिससे यह साफ होता है कि पाकिस्तान वहां मौजूद आतंकवादियों पर मेहरबान रहता है। हैरानी की बात यह है कि वैश्विक स्तर पर जिस व्यक्ति को एक खतरनाक आतंकवादी के रूप में चिह्नित किया गया है और उस

पर कई तरह के प्रतिबंध लगाए गए हैं, उसकी मदद करने में भी पाकिस्तान को हिचक नहीं होती है। ताजा खबर के मुताबिक उसने वहां आतंकवाद के जाने-माने चेहरे हाफिज सईद और उसके शीर्ष चार सहयोगियों के बैंक खातों पर रोक हटा कर एक बार फिर यही बताना चाहा है कि उसका असली चेहरा क्या है! जिन लोगों को यह राहत दी गई है, वे सभी पाकिस्तान स्थित पंजाब आतंकवाद निरोधी विभाग की ओर से उनके खिलाफ दायर आतंकी वित्त पोषण के मामले में अभी जेल में कैद की सजा काट रहे हैं। यानी वहां के कानूनों के मुताबिक भी महज आरोपी नहीं हैं, बल्कि सजायाफ्ता हैं। इसके बावजूद उनके प्रति नरमी दिखा कर आखिर पाकिस्तान दुनिया को क्या बताना चाहता है?

यों कहने को जमात-उद-दावा के सरगना हाफिज सईद ने संयुक्त राष्ट्र से बैंक खातों से लेनदेन पर लगी रोक को हटाने का इसलिए अनुरोध किया था कि उसे घर चलाने तक में दिक्कत हो रही है। इसके बाद संयुक्त राष्ट्र सुरक्षा परिषद की प्रतिबंध समिति ने इसकी स्वीकृति दे दी थी। लेकिन यह समझना मुश्किल नहीं है कि जो व्यक्ति और उसका संगठन परदे के पीछे से आतंक और आतंकी संगठनों का वित्त पोषण करता रहा है और उसे इन्हीं हरकतों की वजह से प्रतिबंधित किया गया, वह अब एक बार फिर मिली आर्थिक सुविधा का इस्तेमाल कैसे और किन कामों के लिए कर सकता है। एक अहम तथ्य यह है कि संयुक्त राष्ट्र ने हाफिज सईद को आतंकवादी घोषित किया हुआ है और अमेरिका ने उस पर एक करोड़ अमेरिकी डॉलर का इनाम रखा हुआ है। सवाल है कि इस तरह की सख्ती के बावजूद पाकिस्तान उसे किस वजह से घोषित-अघोषित तौर पर संरक्षण मुहैया कराता रहा है!

गौरतलब है कि हाफिज सईद को मुंबई में 2008 में हुए आतंकी हमलों का मुख्य साजिशकर्ता माना जाता है। भारत की ओर उसके खिलाफ सख्त कार्रवाई करने की मांग लंबे समय से उठाई जाती रही है। लेकिन अब तक हाफिज सईद को पाकिस्तान के भीतर किसी ऐसी बड़ी मुश्किल का सामना नहीं करना पड़ा है, जिससे उसकी गतिविधियां बंद हो जाएं। आज वह जिस जमात-उद-दावा का मुखिया है, वह दरअसल पुराने लश्कर-ए-तैयबा का मुखौटा संगठन है, जो अपने आतंकी वारदात के लिए कुख्यात रहा है। इस तरह पाकिस्तान इन सबको प्रत्यक्ष या परोक्ष रूप से संरक्षण देने की वजह से अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तर पर अक्सर फजीहत झेलता रहता है। इसके बावजूद वह हर बार कार्रवाई के नाम पर इनके प्रति नरम रवैया अख्तियार करता है। जबकि सच यह है कि लश्कर-ए-तैयबा और जैश-ए-मोहम्मद जैसे कई संगठनों की आतंकी गतिविधियों की वजह से न केवल भारत को नुकसान उठाना पड़ा है, बल्कि खुद पाकिस्तान के आम लोग भी इसके पीड़ित रहे हैं। यह ध्यान रखने की जरूरत है कि आतंकवाद में विश्वास रखने वाले संगठन और उसके नेता अगर दूसरे देशों पर कहर बरपाते हैं तो इसका खमियाजा खुद उन्हें शह देने वाले देश को भी उठाना पड़ता है।

पड़ोसी की त्रिशूल नीति के जवाब में हमारी रणनीति

महेंद्र पी लामा, वरिष्ठ प्रोफेसर, जेएनयू

चौदह पड़ोसी देशों से घिरा चीन बिना किसी क्षेत्रीय नीति के लंबे समय तक एक क्षेत्रीय ताकत बना रहा है। पर हाल के वर्षों में नए चीन ने स्थानीय, राष्ट्रीय और क्षेत्रीय स्तर पर, विशेषकर दक्षिण एशिया में 'त्रिशूल' नीति अपनाई है। स्थानीय स्तर की बात करें, तो पाकिस्तान में काराकोरम राजमार्ग पर खुंजराब दर्रा, नेपाल में तातोपानी व केरुंग-रसुवागढ़ी, अफगानिस्तान के पूर्वोत्तर में वखन गलियारा, और भारत में नाथू ला, शिपकी ला व लिपुलेख को जोड़ने के संकेत मिल रहे हैं। इनको मुख्यधारा में लाया जा सकता है। जैसे, खुंजराब दर्रा से होकर पिछले साल एक अरब डॉलर का व्यापार हुआ, और यह पहले से ही काराकोरम राजमार्ग द्वारा चीन-पाकिस्तान आर्थिक गलियारे का हिस्सा है। इसी तरह, शिगात्से-ल्हासा-शंघाई रेलवे लाइन का विस्तार सिक्किम में नाथू ला और नेपाल के केरुंग-रसुवागढ़ी तक किए जाने का प्रस्ताव है। व्यापार के अलावा चीनी रेनमिन्बी (चीन की मुद्रा) में ही विदेशी मुद्रा भंडार को बढ़ावा दिया जा रहा है।

राष्ट्रीय स्तर की बात करें, तो चीन पहले ही दक्षिण एशिया के व्यापार पर कब्जा कर चुका है। चीन व दक्षिण एशिया के बीच 1990 में महज 1.18 अरब डॉलर का कारोबार होता था, जो 2000 में पांच गुना बढ़कर 5.57 अरब डॉलर और 2018 तक 23 गुना की वृद्धि के साथ 127.36 अरब डॉलर का हो गया। बांग्लादेश के कुल वैश्विक आयात का 23 प्रतिशत, भारत का 15 प्रतिशत, पाकिस्तान का 24 प्रतिशत और श्रीलंका का 19 प्रतिशत चीन से ही आता है। अब तो सभी दक्षिण एशियाई देशों का चीन के साथ अच्छा-खासा व्यापार घाटा है। भूटान ही अकेला देश है, जो डोका ला विवाद और चीन के अन्य दावों के बावजूद दृढ़तापूर्वक खुद को इस त्रिशूल से बाहर रखे हुए है। श्रीलंका में हंबनटोटा और कोलंबो पोर्ट सिटी से लेकर बांग्लादेश में पायरा बिजली परियोजना और ढाका-चटगांव रेलवे में तीन-तीन अरब डॉलर निवेश करने तक, और पाकिस्तान में सीपीईसी के तहत आठ ऊर्जा परियोजनाओं को पूरा करने के लिए 8.62 अरब डॉलर मुहैया कराने से लेकर भारत व नेपाल के सीमावर्ती इलाकों में रेलवे लाइन बिछाने की योजना बनाने तक बीजिंग ने नई दिल्ली के लिए मुश्किलें खड़ी की हैं। भारत के लिए यह संकट दोतरफा है- पारंपरिक रूप से करीबी पड़ोसी देशों पर पकड़ के मामले में भी और आर्थिक-लोकतांत्रिक व सैन्य ताकत के मामले में भी।

रही बात क्षेत्रीय स्तर की, तो इस मामले में चीन ने चार कदम उठाए हैं। सबसे पहले, वह दक्षेस की प्रक्रिया में शामिल हुआ, और उसने बांग्लादेश, चीन, भारत व म्यांमार आर्थिक गलियारे को बढ़ावा देना शुरू किया। दूसरा, जिन संगठनों का वह नेतृत्व करता है, उनसे बेजा फायदा उठाने लगा है। जैसे, बेल्ट एंड रोड इनीशिएटिव, ब्रिक्स, शंघाई सहयोग संगठन और बोआओ फोरम का इस्तेमाल वह दक्षिण एशियाई देशों को अपने शीशे में उतारने के लिए करता है। तीसरा, एशियन इंफ्रास्ट्रक्चर इन्वेस्टमेंट बैंक और सिल्क रोड फंड जैसी नव-निर्मित विकास एजेंसियों के धन का इस्तेमाल दक्षिण एशियाई देशों की परियोजनाओं में करना और चौथा, दक्षिण एशिया के क्षेत्रीय और उप-क्षेत्रीय समूहों के साथ क्षेत्रीय व्यापक आर्थिक भागीदारी (आरसीईपी) जैसी क्षेत्रव्यापी परियोजनाओं को आगे बढ़ाना।

भारत ने भी त्रिशूल नीति के खिलाफ चार तरह के कदम उठाए हैं। एक, 'पड़ोस-पहले' की नीति बनाई गई, और पड़ोसियों के साथ उदार रवैया अपनाया गया। नई दिल्ली ने पड़ोसियों के साथ संबंधों को विस्तार दिया, जैसे नेपाल में जलमार्ग, रेलवे व गैस पाइपलाइन की व्यवस्था करना और बांग्लादेश के साथ बिजली ग्रिड कनेक्शन बनाना। फिर भी, भारत त्रिशूल का प्रभावी तोड़ अब तक नहीं निकाल सका है।

हमारे पड़ोसी देशों की एक अन्य दुविधा भी सामने खड़ी है। ये देश खुद को गुटनिरपेक्ष दिखाने के कूटनीतिक प्रयास कर रहे हैं। इन्हें डर है कि भारत और चीन का प्रतिस्पर्धी व संघर्षपूर्ण रवैया उनके लिए फायदेमंद तो है, पर इससे उनके अंदरूनी मामलों में दखलंदाजी बढ़ सकती है। ऐसी सूरत में, चीन की त्रिशूल नीति, भारत द्वारा इसे निष्प्रभावी बनाने के

प्रयास और छोटे पड़ोसी देशों द्वारा संतुलन बनाने के लिए किए जा रहे उपाय दक्षिण एशिया में बदलाव के कारक बन गए हैं।
