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A wrong diagnosis

In post-mortem of secularism, we are hand wringing over religion, missing the real crisis

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Probing questions are being asked about the failures of secularism to get to the roots of India's current crisis. One characteristically introspective piece in this vein was by Yogendra Yadav, 'Secularism gave up language of religion. Ayodhya bhoomi puja is a result of that' (The Print, August 5). Yogendra and I agree about several things: The plutocracy of the old order, the reductive intellectual approaches of the Left that disabled any serious understanding of Indian culture. Secularism became synonymous with the politics of

opportunism, setting up a dynamic of competitive victimisation.

But Yogendra also writes, "Secularism was defeated because it disavowed our languages, because it failed to connect with the language of traditions, because it refused to learn or speak the language of our religions. Specifically, secularism was defeated because it chose to mock Hinduism instead of developing a new interpretation of Hinduism suitable for our times." This is a fashionable claim with surface plausibility. But, on reflection, this claim is historically problematic, philosophically dubious and culturally dangerous.

The Indian republic was born in the shadow of the violent catastrophe of Partition. Virtually every nationalist leader outside of the Marxist Left was crafting an idiom of politics that was suffused with religious language. They were creatively trying to craft a distinct Indian modernity within an Indian vocabulary, trying to transcend tradition without making tradition despicable. But as Gandhi recognised, that project was, in one sense, a failure: It did not prevent India's communalisation. Gandhi's example could exercise a residual moral force. But whenever religious themes were brought into politics, whether in the quotidian policies that were enacted after Congress governments were elected in 1935, or in the larger ideological project or idiom, they generated conflict. So the idea that taking religion seriously as a political matter will solve the communal problem is a historically dubious proposition. Modern religious politics is born in the crucible of democracy and nationalism, not theology.

The lesson in the wake of Partition was that to avoid violence, you need to lower the stakes of politics by keeping religion out of it. The animating impulse of Indian secularism was to produce peace by trying not

to make religion a matter of public contestation. And a lot of our compromises were a result of that. This was an impossible position to hold, because the reforms of the modern state require intervening in religion, to liberate individuals from oppressive and hierarchical religious hierarchies. Sometimes this intervention was asymmetrically applied to some groups more than others. But do these infirmities explain the legitimising of a whole-scale majoritarianism?

The current contest is hardly over traditional forms of religiosity; most Hindus have made their ideological peace with modernity and preserved religiosity. The current contest is over nationalism that has colonised both religion and secularism. Who gets to be a member of this political community, do its dominant narratives have space for its diverse histories? It is not primarily about the pieties of religion. Let us not beat around the bush over what defines the current moment. It is largely about marginalising Muslims from the Indian narrative.

Let us grant, as Yogendra and I always have, the political opportunism behind secular political parties. Let us grant that some communal bigots abound in any large religious community, Hindus or Muslims. Let us grant that the Left played fast and loose with historical narratives. Does this really license what we are witnessing today: The saturation and legitimation of venomous anti-Muslim prejudice? These causes that Yogendra cites, are not causes. They are, to use Edmund Burke's phrase, pretexts. Pretexts for prejudice across the religious-non religious binary.

To take religion seriously is to preserve the conditions of religious freedom for all, letting each person discover the law of their own Being. I tremble at the thought of a politicised public sphere taking religion seriously. It usually means someone else gets to define who you are, it usually means creating authoritative versions of religion that benchmark good or bad believers, it means sanitising religious histories of their pasts so that they become comforting narratives for people, and it means instrumentalising religion to political purposes. We do not need another version of what it means to be a good Hindu. Who can be presumptuous enough to define or benchmark that? What we need is a genuine commitment to freedom, with all its risks, self-doubts and fashioning and refashioning of identities.

There was a kind of reductive cultural crudeness in a lot of Left engagement with Indian culture. But let us get real. The Left may have the commanding heights of maybe half a dozen universities; but most universities were vernacularised in the Seventies. V D Mahajan was probably more widely read as a textbook than JNU historians. Doordarshan could rightly telecast Ramayana and Mahabharata, Delhi University's obtuseness over including them in its syllabus notwithstanding. In short, the cultural prestige and importance of the Left in shaping Indian culture has been hugely exaggerated. They played conformist academic politics. But the idea that Hindus have been culturally marginalised is a trope that feeds into the convenient victimology of some Hindus, more than it describes a reality.

Yogendra is right that in North India there is a peculiar politics of resentment generated over the status of Hindi. But there is an implication here that secularists somehow disavowed Indian languages. This is odd because it seems to map secularism onto English. Every Indian language crafted a new vernacular version of secularism. The Hindi sphere had, for example, Ramdhari Singh Dinkar, Dharamvir Bharati, Hazari Prasad Dwivedi, Kunwar Narain and others. They constituted the sphere of religiously engaged but modernist public criticism. They were not sidelined by English but by the Hindiwallahs. The active secular, culturally nuanced Hindi public sphere was bowdlerised by the new generation of vernacular newspaper owners. The crisis is internal to Hindi and again feeds on the convenient trope the BJP uses that somehow a small cabal of metropolitan intellectuals is to blame for India's woes.

In a post-mortem of secularism, we are hand wringing over religion, not because we lost the key there, but because there seems to be light there. The deeper question is not these ideological debates; after all, differences are inevitable and can be managed. It is the growing tolerance for prejudice and the unleashing of a ferocious darkness. Let us name the beast for what it is and not hide behind the pieties of secularism or religion. Recovering the project will not mean a return to religion, but a confidence in the promise of a new freedom struggle to salvage individual dignity and rights, not continually play out resentments against the Other.

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After the harvest

New Agriculture Infrastructure Fund is welcome. But cold chains and agro-processing are no panacea.

Editorial

After having issued ordinances removing stockholding restrictions on major foodstuffs and dismantling the monopoly of regulated mandis in the trading of farm produce, the Narendra Modi government has launched a new Agriculture Infrastructure Fund. A financing facility for setting up warehousing, cold chain, processing and other post-harvest management infrastructure, it provides an interest subvention of 3 per cent on loans of up to Rs 2 crore for a maximum seven-year period. The borrowers are mainly to be farmer producer organisations and primary agricultural cooperative societies, with a targeted disbursement of Rs 1 lakh crore over the current and next three fiscals. In order to make it attractive for banks, the loans would also have government-backed credit coverage against defaults. All in all, a good scheme at least on paper. No one can doubt the need for investments in produce shelf life extension and value addition. Also, there can be nothing better than this infrastructure coming up closer to farms and established farmer-owned institutions, thereby complementing the recent reforms that essentially aim at improving producers' realisations and their share in the consumer's rupee.

But there's a need to temper expectations. To start with, organisations such as the National Horticultural Board are already providing credit-linked subsidy on capital investments in pre-cooling units, controlled/modified atmosphere cold stores, reefer vans, ripening/curing chambers and other such post-harvest infrastructure. There is no dearth today of cold stores in potatoes, just as a lot of storage capacity, including low-cost scientifically-built on-farm structures, has been created for onions under the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana. So why one more scheme, is a natural question to ask. If at all, it would make sense to merge all existing schemes with the new fund so as to better leverage government money.

Secondly, cold chains and agro-processing cannot be a panacea. More than three-fourths of India's sugarcane crop is "processed" by mills. Organised dairies, likewise, handle nearly a quarter of the officially-estimated milk production. Many have even installed bulk coolers allowing milk to be chilled "at source" in the village collection centres itself. But all that hasn't solved the problem of cane payment arrears or stopped the current crash in milk procurement prices. The same goes for onions and potatoes. Being able to store certainly enables farmers to harvest their crop, say, in March and make staggered sales till November to take advantage of higher off-season rates. But again, it has not ended price

volatility that ultimately benefits neither producers nor consumers. The focus of policymakers during the first 40 years after Independence was raising farm production. In the subsequent two decades, they started paying more attention to agro-processing. The next revolution, especially in today's age of surplus, should be in crop planning and information dissemination to help farmers better align their production decisions — what to grow and how much — to market demand.



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The whys of death by suicide

Society extends compassion and empathy on the one hand, but discriminates, bullies and segregates on the other

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It is not surprising that the unfortunate death by suicide of a young actor has stirred the nation, and with good reason. Sadly, the haranguing of disconcerted individuals on television and ugly exchanges on social media have evoked strong reactions in some of us who live and work with persons with experiences of distress and mental ill health. If foul play was indeed the reason behind the death of Sushant Singh Rajput, then justice must be served. However, the manner in which we see events unravel today are unsavoury and detrimental to many. Flippant associations between weakness and depression, erraticism and bipolar disorder are shame-inducing and counterproductive to the larger narrative of seeking help, ensuring justice and promoting social cohesion and well-being. More so, when these opinions are emphatically asserted by 'celebrities'.

What lies beneath?

Death by suicide is a public health challenge, a cause for social concern and a philosophical question. It is tethered, amongst other talking points, to existentialism, meaning-making and sociality, and is a cause of moral and social panic. The sociologist Emile Durkheim attributed 'anomie', or feelings of alienation and social isolation, to a breakdown in social equilibrium, which he theorised increased the propensity for one to die by suicide. Thomas Joiner's framework that places the experience of thwarted belongingness, perceived burdensomeness combined with an "acquired capability" to self-harm, owing to a range of factors that include childhood trauma, resonates with us.

Around the same time as Rajput's passing, a young client, Ms. Lakshmi (de-identified), who was accessing mental health services, also died by suicide. As she lay in hospital, she hoped she would be saved. She said she had taken a "drastic" step that she now regretted, as she felt "frustrated" by frequent interpersonal conflicts with family members and defeated for not feeling "understood" for her mood swings. She had dreams of marriage, gainful employment and stability. The scramble to make ends meet, to find meaning

in work and life, to experience comfort and kinship in social relationships — our pursuits vary. The cards that we are dealt with in life influence, and perhaps even limit, our choices largely. Undoubtedly, those who face systemic oppression, social disadvantage and discrimination have it harder, leading them to feel dispensable even.

Ethnographies of suicides explore intersections of historical perspectives, psychology, sociology, psychiatry, tradition, regional cultures, altruism, rituals, alienation, social decline and defeat, etc. So, what lies beneath? The conflict between individualism and a sense of community? The favouring of particular archetypes? Or loneliness, which, as Fay Bound Alberti discovers, is often shrouded “in shame” for reasons that relate “historical connections between loneliness and personal failing”? In June, an elderly couple died by suicide fearing an uncertain future, consequences of physical ill health and economic constraints, experiencing loneliness as their kin distanced themselves.

The danger of ‘othering’ people

Professor Lars Anderson defines loneliness as “an enduring condition of emotional distress that arises when a person feels estranged from, misunderstood, or rejected by others and/ or lacks appropriate social partners, for desired activities, particularly activities that provide a sense of social integration and opportunities for emotional intimacy”. Therefore, we argue that beneath the regrettable suicide of many is an emotional disposition that triggers feelings of alienation, loneliness, hopelessness, frustration and worthlessness. In a country of 1.3 billion, people can still be lonely, assailed by identity politics; gender, caste, class or status-based privilege or disprivilege; ascribed notions of appropriate versus inappropriate behaviour; and a dominant narrative that is ableist, neurotypical, pro-positivity, anti-grey and dissociated from the experience of mental flux. This desolation may be further accentuated when faced with ethical and social dilemmas. ‘Othering’ such persons, as a result, may pressure them into conforming, resulting in the loss of authenticity. Losing the ability to know oneself and act by one’s values, and suffering the inability to find and sustain connections that matter, takes away from the joy of a universal human existence.

Both state and society need a rethink and are culpable if losses around fearless self-expression, creative pursuits, individualistic mind journeys and diverse social relationships are all opposed for a singular narrative.

Our society extends compassion and empathy on the one hand, but discriminates, bullies and segregates on the other. Perhaps, humility could guide us through a collective soul-searching exercise. Let’s think twice before we treat anyone who doesn’t fit into a well-packaged treasure as marginal.

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The WHO’s relevance is fading

It has been reduced to a coordinating body, beholden to the interests of rich member states

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COVID-19 has infected more than 19 million people, claimed over 0.7 million lives and devastated economies. As the pandemic transcends geopolitical boundaries, one is forced to ruminate on a counterfactual with a series of timely global health interventions by the World Health Organization (WHO) duly supported by governments. An early warning and timely policy measures by the WHO would have forewarned countries and set their preparatory efforts in motion for mounting a decisive response strategy.

Slow response

With regional offices in six geographical regions and country offices across 150 countries, the WHO was expected to play the dual role of a think tank and oversee global responses to public health emergencies. It was reported that the earliest COVID-19 positive case in China was reported in November, but China informed the WHO about the disease only in January. With the WHO country representative stationed in Beijing, it is unlikely that widespread transmission went unnoticed.

Then, even though confirmed cases were reported from Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and the U.S. in January, the WHO continued to downplay the severity of the virus. It took some inexplicable decisions and actions such as declaring the pandemic as a public health emergency of international concern only on January 30 and ignoring Taiwan's hints of human-to-human transmission and requests on sharing "relevant information". Further, the WHO went on to praise China's response to the pandemic.

WHO was severely criticised for its poor handling of the Ebola outbreak in 2014 as well. Incontrovertibly, the relevance of the health agency has been fading. The WHO has been reduced to a coordinating body, beholden to the interests of rich member states. Its functional efficiency has been disadvantaged with organisational lethargy, absence of decisive leadership, bureaucratic indolence, underfunded programmes, and inability to evolve to meet the needs of the 21st century.

Director General Tedros Adhanom has been criticised for his leadership abilities during this pandemic. In contrast, Gro Harlem Brundtland, former Director General of the WHO (1998-2003), spearheaded the global health response with a host of significant policy decisions. She focused on projecting WHO as one entity and publicly reproached the Chinese leadership for its response to the 2003 SARS pandemic. The timely containment of SARS despite an unfavourable response from China bears the stamp of her decisive leadership.

Relying on rich member states

WHO is funded through assessed contributions made by the member states and voluntary contributions from member states and private donors. While assessed contributions can be spent as per the organisation's priorities approved at the World Health Assembly, the irregular voluntary contributions are allocated in consultation with the donors. While voluntary contributions accounted for nearly 80% of the budget in 2018-19, assessed contributions merely constituted 17% of the total budgetary support. The challenges owing to constrained finances encumber autonomy in decision-making by favouring a donor-driven agenda.

While the WHO has failed in arresting the pandemic, governments across the globe are equally responsible for their inept handling and ill-preparedness. However, that does not vindicate WHO's

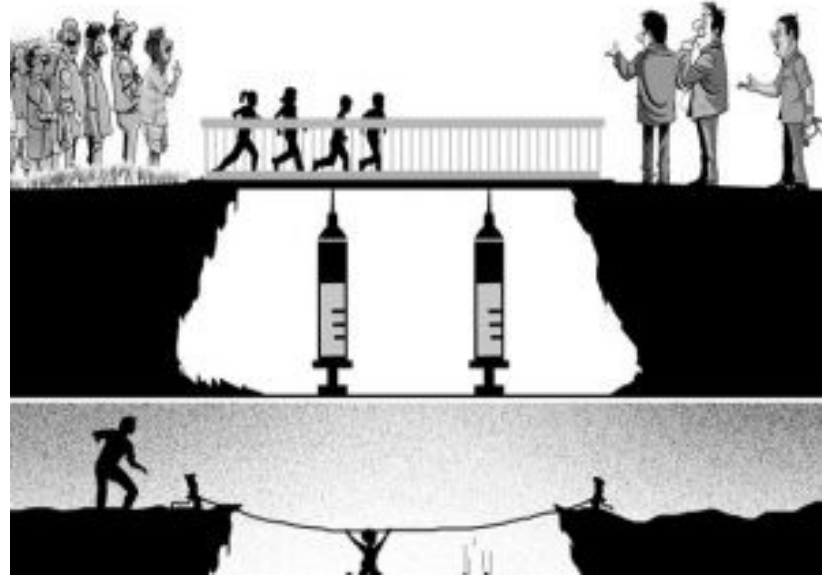
tardiness in handling the crisis. Many countries, especially in Africa and Asia, rely predominantly on the WHO for enforcing policy decisions governing public health. Political leanings and financial compulsions of WHO cannot betray that trust. The burden of their expectations must weigh heavily on every policy decision taken by the global health agency, for when the WHO fails, many innocent lives are lost.



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बदलनी होंगी स्वास्थ्य क्षेत्र की प्राथमिकताएं

भरत झुनझुनवाला , (लेखक आर्थिक मामलों के विशेषज्ञ हैं)



कोविड-19 महामारी का असर कम होता नहीं दिख रहा है। पिछले कुछ दिनों से देश भर में करीब साठ हजार कोरोना मरीज प्रतिदिन सामने आ रहे हैं। नमन है उन डॉक्टरों को जो महामारी का रूप धारण कर चुकी इस बीमारी से लड़ने में लगे हुए हैं। इस बीमारी को फैलाने वाले कोरोना वायरस का टीका और साथ ही कोई सटीक दवा उपलब्ध न होने के कारण समस्या बढ़ रही है। चूंकि इस महामारी के खिलाफ लोगों की रोग प्रतिरोधक क्षमता ही कारगर साबित हो रही है इसलिए उसे बढ़ाने वाले उपायों पर जोर दिया जाना चाहिए। कोई रोग और खासकर संचारी रोग फैलने के बाद उसका उपचार करने से बेहतर है कि रोग को फैलने ही न दिया जाए। यह तब संभव होगा जब जनता की रोग प्रतिरोधक क्षमता में सुधार किया

जाए। इसके लिए स्वास्थ्य पर होने वाले खर्च की विषमता पर ध्यान दिया जाना आवश्यक है।

केंद्रीय स्वास्थ्य मंत्रालय द्वारा जारी एक आंकड़े के अनुसार वर्ष 2015-16 में सरकारी कर्मियों के उपचार पर 9,134 करोड़ रुपये खर्च किए गए, जिससे 31 लाख कर्मी लाभान्वित हुए। उनके परिवार को भी गिन लें तो 1.5 करोड़ लोग लाभान्वित हुए। इन पर 61,007 रुपये प्रति व्यक्ति सरकार ने खर्च किए। इसकी तुलना में आम जनता पर सरकार द्वारा 38,794 करोड़ रुपये खर्च किए गए। इस हिसाब से प्रति व्यक्ति केवल 296 रुपये का खर्च किया गया। सरकार द्वारा किए गए स्वास्थ्य खर्च में आम आदमी की तुलना में सरकारी कर्मियों पर अधिक खर्च किया जा रहा है। विचारणीय प्रश्न यह है कि सेवक पर अधिक और सेवित पर न्यून खर्च क्यों?

वर्ष 2020-21 के बजट में एलोपैथी के लिए केंद्र सरकार द्वारा 63,000 करोड़ रुपये आवंटित किए गए, जबकि आयुर्वेद, यूनानी, होम्योपैथी आदि आयुष पद्धतियों के लिए केवल 2,100 करोड़ रुपये दिए गए। ये पद्धतियां उपचार कम और संपूर्ण स्वास्थ्य पर अधिक ध्यान देती हैं जबकि एलोपैथी उपचार पर केंद्रित रहती है। उच्च तकनीक के उपचार जैसे हृदय में स्टेंट डालना इत्यादि पर कहीं अधिक पैसा खर्च हो रहा है।

नेशनल इंस्टीट्यूट ऑफ पब्लिक फाइनेंस एंड पॉलिसी के एम गोविंद राव द्वारा प्रकाशित एक पत्र के अनुसार उच्च तकनीक वाले उपचार पर सरकार का 28 प्रतिशत खर्च होता है, जबकि सरकार द्वारा ही प्रकाशित राष्ट्रीय स्वास्थ्य नीति के अनुसार यह मात्र दस प्रतिशत होना था। इन दोनों विसंगतियों यानी एलोपैथी और उच्च तकनीक वाले उपचार में अधिक खर्च किए जाने के पीछे ऐसा लगता है कि बहुराष्ट्रीय कंपनियों के स्वार्थ इन खर्चों से पोषित होते हैं। एक धारणा है कि बहुराष्ट्रीय कंपनियों के हितों को साधने के लिए एलोपैथी में और उसमें भी उच्च तकनीक वाले उपचार पर ज्यादा पैसे खर्च किए जा रहे हैं। जो भी हो, यह एक समस्या तो है ही कि बजट का एक बड़ा हिस्सा सरकारी कर्मियों के वेतन में खप जाता है।

गोविंद राव के अनुसार मध्य प्रदेश और ओडिशा में बजट का 83 प्रतिशत कर्मियों के वेतन में व्यय हो जाता है, जबकि स्वास्थ्य कर्मियों के पास दवा नहीं रहती और स्वास्थ्य व्यवस्था निष्प्रभावी नजर आती है। इन समस्याओं के निवारण के लिए सरकार को तीन कार्य करने चाहिए। नीति आयोग के सलाहकार राकेश सरवाल के अनुसार केंद्र सरकार के कर्मियों के लिए चलाई जा रही सेंट्रल गवर्नमेंट हेल्थ सर्विस को सर्वव्यापी स्वास्थ्य सेवा में परिवर्तित कर देना चाहिए, ताकि आम जनता को केंद्र सरकार के कर्मियों जैसी स्वास्थ्य सेवा उपलब्ध हो। दूसरा काम यह किया जाना चाहिए कि एलोपैथी एवं उच्च तकनीक वाले उपचार के आवंटन में कटौती करके सामान्य उपचार पर खर्च बढ़ाना चाहिए। तीसरा कार्य यह होना चाहिए कि सरकारी कर्मियों के वेतन और दवा के खर्च में एक अनुपात निर्धारित कर देना चाहिए।

कोविड-19 के साथ-साथ अन्य रोगों का सामना करने में पहला विषय टीकाकरण का है। समस्या यह है कि कोरोना वायरस अपना रूप शीघ्र बदल रहा है। यदि इसे रोकने के लिए हमने टीका बना भी लिया तो कल वह उपयोगी होगा, इसकी गारंटी नहीं है। एक समस्या यह भी है कि हमारी स्वास्थ्य व्यवस्था टीकाकरण में लचर है। गोविंद राव के अनुसार दक्षिण अमेरिका में चेचक के टीके से केवल 7 फीसद बच्चे वंचित रहते हैं, जबकि भारत में करीब 30 फीसद वंचित रह जाते हैं। इसलिए टीकाकरण से हम कोविड जैसे संक्रामक रोगों को रोक सकेंगे, इस पर संदेह है।

प्रतिरोधक क्षमता का संबंध लोगों की जीवनशैली से है। यदि लोग रोग प्रतिरोधक क्षमता में वृद्धि करने वाले खाद्य पदार्थों का सेवन करें और इसके साथ ही ध्यान, योग, व्यायाम करें तो हालात बदल सकते हैं। सरकार ने आयोडीन युक्त नमक और नवजात शिशुओं को माताओं द्वारा स्तनपान कराए जाने के सफल अभियान चलाए हैं। इसी प्रकार उसे बेहतर जीवन शैली अपनाने का अभियान चलाना चाहिए।

तीसरा विषय सामाजिक है। उत्तर प्रदेश सरकार की वेबसाइट पर वैद्य वाचस्पति त्रिपाठी के हवाले से बताया गया है कि नदी में तमाम श्रद्धालुओं के स्नान करने से उनके शरीर में विद्यमान विभिन्न रोगों के बैक्टीरिया एवं वायरस नदी के पानी में सूक्ष्म मात्रा में फैल जाते हैं। दूसरे स्वस्थ व्यक्ति जब उसी पानी में स्नान करते हैं तो ये बैक्टीरिया और वायरस उनके शरीर में प्रवेश करते हैं और रोगों के प्रति उनकी प्रतिरोधक क्षमता को बढ़ाते हैं। चूंकि कोरोना वायरस के सामुदायिक फैलाव की आशंका बढ़ रही है इसलिए प्रतिरोधक क्षमता बढ़ाने के उपायों पर ध्यान दिया ही जाना चाहिए।

आयुष मंत्रालय की सहमति से सरकार उन उपायों की व्यवस्था कर सकती है जो रोग प्रतिरोधक क्षमता मजबूत करने में सहायक हों। जैसा कि ऊपर बताया गया कि 2015-16 में केंद्र सरकार द्वारा आम जनता पर 38,794 करोड़ रुपये खर्च किए गए। टीकाकरण, जांच इत्यादि में मात्र 12 हजार करोड़ रुपये खर्च किए गए।

इसका मतलब है कि रोग प्रतिरोधक क्षमता बढ़ाने वाले उपायों पर लगभग 30 प्रतिशत खर्च किया जा रहा है। इसे बढ़ाकर 50 प्रतिशत करना चाहिए। ऐसा करने से जनता की सभी रोगों से लड़ने की क्षमता का विस्तार होगा। इस सुझाव को लागू करने में समस्या बहुराष्ट्रीय कंपनियों का स्वार्थ है। सरकार को सोचना होगा कि वह बहुराष्ट्रीय कंपनियों के मेडिकल उत्पादों की बिक्री से जीडीपी बढ़ाएगी अथवा जनता को रोगमुक्त बनाकर? उसे अपनी प्राथमिकता तय करनी चाहिए, क्योंकि सेहत का सीधा संबंध आर्थिक विकास से है।



Date: 11-08-20

स्वदेशी हथियार

संपादकीय

भारत ने एक सौ एक सैन्य हथियारों और उपकरणों के आयात को चरणबद्ध बंद कर इन्हें देश में ही बनाने का जो फैसला किया है, वह रक्षा क्षेत्र में आत्मनिर्भरता हासिल करने की दिशा में महत्वपूर्ण कदम है। संभवत यह पहला मौका है जब घरेलू रक्षा उद्योग के विकास के लिए इस तरह की बड़ी पहल हुई। वैसे तो अब भारत कई तरह के हथियार, टैंक, मिसाइलें आदि बनाने में सक्षम हो चुका है। लेकिन फिर भी कई छोटे सैन्य हथियार और उपकरण, कलपुर्जे ऐसे हैं जो हम देश में बना सकते हैं, पर अभी तक इसकी शुरुआत नहीं कर पाए हैं और इनके लिए दूसरे देशों पर निर्भर हैं। इनमें तोप, छोटी मिसाइलें, उड़ान प्रशिक्षण के लिए इस्तेमाल होने वाले विमान, मालवाहक विमान, बुलेट प्रूफ जैकेट, राकेट लांचर, हल्की मशीन गन जैसे हथियार शामिल हैं। करगिल युद्ध के बाद से ही यह जरूरत महसूस की जा रही थी कि भारत के रक्षा उद्योग को खड़ा किया जाए और ज्यादातर हथियार देश में ही बनाए जाएं। लेकिन यह हैरानी और अफसोस की बात है कि इस जरूरत को समझते हुए भी लंबे समय तक इस अति महत्वपूर्ण और गंभीर मुद्दे पर कोई कदम नहीं बढ़ाया गया और हम हथियारों के लिए दूसरे देशों पर निर्भर बने रहे। साल 2014 में मेक इन इंडिया के अभियान के तहत घरेलू रक्षा उद्योग का विकास प्राथमिकता पर रखा तो गया, लेकिन पिछले छह सालों में इसके अपेक्षित नतीजे देखने को नहीं मिले। इसमें कोई संदेह नहीं कि भारत की रक्षा जरूरतें तेजी से बढ़ रही हैं। एक ओर पाकिस्तान की लंबी सीमा है, तो दूसरी ओर चार हजार किलोमीटर से भी ज्यादा चीन से लगती सीमा है। ये दोनों देश भारत की सुरक्षा के लिए बड़ा खतरा बने हुए हैं। इसके अलावा भारत तीन तरफ से समुद्रों से घिरा है। ऐसे में नौ सेना की जिम्मेदारियां भी कम नहीं हैं। इसलिए देश की सामरिक चुनौतियों को देखते हुए यह अपरिहार्य हो गया है कि ज्यादा से ज्यादा हथियार देश में ही बनें। सरकार ने चार साल का वक्त तय किया है, जिसमें चरणबद्ध तरीके से हथियारों के आयात को पूरी तरह से बंद कर दिया जाएगा। इसलिए इन चार वर्षों के भीतर घरेलू रक्षा उद्योग को पूरी तरह से सक्षम बनाना होगा। देश में रक्षा उत्पादन इकाइयां शुरू होने से रोजगार के अवसर भी पैदा होंगे, हथियार खरीद पर खर्च होने

वाली विदेशी मुद्रा बचेगी और हथियारों की खरीद में लगने वाले लंबे समय से बचा सकेगा। आज भारत में किसी भी स्तर पर संसाधनों और विशेषज्ञों की कमी नहीं है। लेकिन फिर भी हम रक्षा उद्योग में दुनिया के कई देशों से पीछे हैं। इसकी बड़ी वजह आत्मनिर्भरता के मामले में हमारे नीति-निर्माताओं की उदासीनता और दूसरे देशों पर निर्भर रहने की प्रवृत्ति मूल रूप से रही है। जबकि देश की सीमा पर जवानों को पुराने और घटिया हथियारों के साथ दुश्मन का मुकाबला करने को मजबूर होना पड़ा है। अगर ये हथियार देश में ही बनने लगेंगे, तो सेना को तत्काल मिल सकेंगे और हथियारों की खरीद में होने वाले भ्रष्टाचार जैसी समस्या से भी काफी हद तक निजात मिल सकेगी और गुणवत्तापूर्ण हथियार भी मिल सकेंगे। रक्षा शोध और विकास के मामले में भारत अब काफी आगे है। हम अत्याधुनिक मिसाइलों और उपग्रहों का विकास कर चुके हैं। अंतरिक्ष में उपग्रह मार गिराने की क्षमता हासिल कर चुके हैं। तो फिर हथियारों, जरूरी सैन्य उपकरणों और कलपुर्जों के आयात के लिए दूसरों का मुंह ताकने की क्या जरूरत है ?
