



THE TIMES OF INDIA

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## A Harsh lesson

*Five years after the Paris Agreement, the world gets serious again*

### TOI Editorial

This week marks the fifth anniversary of the Paris Agreement, where formidable climate diplomacy ushered 196 rich and poor countries into a legally binding treaty seeking to hold global heating below 2°C at this century's end. While the intervening years have dimmed the shining promise of that moment, the pandemic has reinforced how much the future of every country and the world is really tied to upholding that pledge. One estimate is that it would take just 2% of Covid's \$11 trillion toll to reduce chances of another pandemic of similar scale. Investments in overall climate change mitigation are worth their cost by an incalculably greater degree, especially as there is no luxury of vaccines here.

For example, if our generation cannot conserve the Amazon forest that is millions of years in the making, it will be lost forever. The 2015 pledge is about averting such irreversible devastation of the world's people and economy. Unfortunately its delivery has been woefully inadequate so far. A stark indicator is that the green climate fund, which was intended for rich countries to compensate for their historical emissions, has received just \$10 billion in total instead of \$100 billion a year.

An important part of this drift should get arrested when Joe Biden takes over the US presidency, because he has promised to rejoin the Paris Agreement on his first day of office. Meanwhile the EU, Japan, South Korea and China have upped the game by committing to net zero emissions by 2050-60. Biden is expected to climb aboard as well.

As for India, UN secretary-general Antonio Guterres has underlined that its nationally determined contribution is in line with 2°C warming, unlike many countries that are in the 2.5°C to 5°C zone. At the recent G20 summit Prime Minister Narendra Modi also said that the country has been taking concrete action to meet and even exceed its Paris Agreement targets. But quite apart from citizens' experiences of a deteriorating ecology underlining how much more needs to be done, as the global order begins to be increasingly configured by climate politics the burden will grow on India. What if US and EU trade policies seek to make imports meet their environmental obligations? We need to prepare for global competitiveness getting benchmarked to greener technologies and behaviours.

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## Who wants federalism

*Our misshapen federalism is not about Centre vs states, but co-produced by political culture in both*

**Pratap Bhanu Mehta, [ The writer is contributing editor ]**



Federalism in India reminds one of the grinning Cheshire cat in Alice in Wonderland. At one point the cat disappears and all that remains is the grin, an enigmatic trace of doubtful significance. Federalism is such a vanishing act. The truth, however, is that there never has been a serious principled constituency for federalism in India.

Let us examine the sources of federalism scepticism. The Indian Constitution was designed to be opportunistic about federalism. As BR Ambedkar had put it, “India’s Draft Constitution can be both unitary as well as federal according to the requirements of time and circumstances.” As he went on to say, “Such a power of converting itself into a unitary state, no federation possesses.” The ideological underpinnings of this flexible federalism are still the default common sense of Indian politics. The imperatives of security, state building, and economic development are always allowed to trump federal pieties.

Four things sustain federalism. But, in retrospect, they turned out to be very contingent political foundations for federalism. The first was a genuine concern about whether a centralised state could accommodate India’s linguistic and cultural diversity. The States Reorganisation Act and the compromises on the issue of languages was a victory for federalism. It allowed India to use federalism to accommodate linguistic diversity. But ironically, it is precisely because this issue got defused through intelligent compromise that it is no longer a potent force in Indian politics. All governments that have wanted to undermine federalism, including the BJP, are often careful about not undermining this compromise. Since only an identity-based politics in a state can be a genuine threat to the Centre, taking that off the political agenda actually gives the Centre a freer hand on other aspects of federalism. So long as regional linguistic identities are not threatened there is no natural source of resistance to centralisation.

The second underpinning of federalism is actual distribution of political power. The rise of coalition governments, economic liberalisation, regional parties, seemed to provide propitious ground for political federalism. But one must not overestimate the commitment to federalism in that period of fragmentation. Political federalism is quite compatible with financial, and administrative centralisation. But what fragmentation of power effectively meant was that each state could bargain for certain things; or very strong leaders could veto central proposals. It is striking that the period of fragmented power, strong chief ministers, did nothing to strengthen the institutions of federalism, for example, by making the council of chief ministers a more robust

forum. “Federalism for me but not for thee” — this can be evidenced in the bifurcation of erstwhile Andhra, which was done against the resolution of the state legislature, and in Kashmir which was stripped of statehood. No chivalrous federalism warriors reached for their swords to defend the principle that a state can’t be extinguished without its own consent. Regional parties do not necessarily imply a coalition for federalism.

In the current farmers’ agitation, these contradictions are on full display. The federalism argument against the farm bills is the strongest legal argument. But you cannot both ask for a Central MSP guarantee and defend federalism at the same time. For its part, the central government itself allowed provisions that enable states to suspend labour laws if necessary, but is unwilling to do that in the case of agriculture.

The third thing that sustains federalism is the political and institutional culture. But alas, the culture of both the BJP and the Congress was, to put it mildly, committed to the most extreme interpretation of flexible federalism, including procedural impropriety to oust opponents. The only thing that might have changed significantly in the political culture is what Neelanjan Sircar and Yamini Aiyar call attribution effects in politics. Because of the increasing presidentialisation of national politics, a single-party dominance with powerful messaging power, and change in forms of communication, the attribution of policy successes or failures might change, diminishing the stature of chief ministers considerably. The other source of institutional culture might be the Supreme Court. But there is little in the Court’s conduct that allows us to predict where it might come down on federalism issues. To be fair, there was mostly a bi-partisan consensus on honouring the technical recommendations of institutions like the Finance Commission, and we will have to see if this last bastion of formal impartiality is eroded.

The fourth thing that sustained federalism was what Louise Tillin has brilliantly analysed as “asymmetrical federalism” — special exemptions given to various states. But asymmetrical federalism has always been subject to three pressures. For Kashmir, asymmetrical federalism came to be seen as the source, not the resolution, of the security threat. Even in the North-east, local conflicts within the scheme of asymmetrical federalism and a discourse of security allowed the Centre to step in. And increasingly, there will be pressure on the question: Which laws under asymmetrical federalism are compatible with Article 14 of the Indian Constitution?

Other ironies abound. The most far-reaching change in the Indian Constitution on federalism was GST. It does increase centralisation in the system. But no matter what one thinks of GST, warts and all, it is a product of the cooperation of the states, who still have a significant role in shaping it. The states did push back against the possibility of the Centre renegeing on its commitment on payments. But except in the case of financial meltdown at the Centre which seriously affects all states, there will not be much pushback.

So states will also use their autonomy selectively. Most states are reluctant to honour more decentralisation within, to rural and urban bodies. Again, ironically, BJP-ruled states like Haryana and Madhya Pradesh are jumping on the bandwagon for local domicile-based reservation in the private labour market. These are against the party’s own obsession of “one nation, one everything,” but also in contravention of basic constitutional principles. It is true that the Centre disproportionately controls resources in India; but very few states have shown a zeal to increase their own financial headroom by utilising whatever powers they might have on taxation.

So flexible federalism will be bent in all kinds of ways. But it is important to remember that this mess is not a product of Centre versus states. It has been co-produced by a political culture in both Centre and the states. Few are losing sleep over federalism, perhaps because there is only the mysterious grin, but no cat to bell.

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# The Smart Anganwadi

*A crucial element of public welfare, these centres must be recast in a new avatar*

**Binu Anand, Anumeha Verma, [ Anand is National Team Leader And Verma, Research, Content and Documentation Officer, We Collaborate for Nutrition — a nutrition coalition ]**

The economic fallout of COVID-19 makes the necessity of quality public welfare services more pressing than ever. The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) programme that caters to the nutrition, health and pre-education needs of children till six years of age as well as the health and nutrition of women and adolescent girls is one such scheme. It requires work on multiple fronts to be effective, given that recent reports have shown gaps in the utilisation of services. Anganwadi centres (AWCs) could become agents of improved delivery of ICDS's services. But for that, they need to be recast in a new avatar.

According to government data, the country has 13.77 lakh AWCs. These centres have undoubtedly expanded their reach, but they need to play a much larger role in anchoring community development. Nearly a fourth of the operational AWCs lack drinking water facilities and 36 per cent do not have toilets. In 2015, the NITI Aayog recommended better sanitation and drinking water facilities, improved power supply and basic medicines for the AWCs. It also suggested that these centres be provided with the required number of workers, whose skills should be upgraded through regular training.

ICDS beneficiaries do register for services but because the anganwadis lack adequate facilities, they turn to paid options. Privately-run centres come at a price, hitting low-income families the hardest. A study on utilisation of ICDS services in coastal Karnataka reported enrolment in private nursery schools as a major reason for non-adherence to ICDS services. It also reported the need for improvement in the quality of meals provided by the programme.

AWCs clearly do not seem to provide the environment that encourages parents to leave children at these centres. Only a limited number of AWCs have facilities like creche, and good quality recreational and learning facilities for pre-school education. Research has shown the significance of the playing-based learning approach in the cognitive development of children. An approach that combines an effective supplementary nutrition programme with pedagogic processes that make learning interesting is the need of the hour.

Effective implementation of the ICDS programme rests heavily on the combined efforts of the anganwadi workers (AWWs), ASHAs and ANMs. But not much has been done to improve the career prospects and service conditions of these frontline workers. Kerala, Telangana and Tamil Nadu are amongst the states that have done relatively better in this respect. The Centre's POSHAN Abhiyaan has taken important steps towards building capacities of AWWs. It is important that a more robust mechanism is now created to regularly assess and plug knowledge gaps.

Technology can also be used for augmenting the programme's quality. AWWs have been provided with smartphones and their supervisors with tablets, under the government schemes. Apps on these devices track the distribution of take-home rations and supplementary nutrition services. The data generated should inform decisions to improve the programme. In Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, anganwadi centres have been

geotagged to improve service delivery. Gujarat has digitised the supply chain of take-home rations and real-time data is being used to minimise stockouts at the anganwadi centres.

The Centre has acknowledged the need to improve anganwadi centres. Its Saksham Anganwadi Scheme aims to upgrade 2.5 lakh such centres across the country. It is up to the state governments to take up the baton.

Our analysis of ICDS shines a light on three imperatives. First, while infrastructure development and capacity building of the anganwadi remains the key to improving the programme, the standards of all its services need to be upscaled. Second, states have much to learn from each other's experiences. Third, anganwadi centres must cater to the needs of the community and the programme's workers.

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## The reality of an India at the crossroads

*Faced with the perception of the country becoming a 'diminishing democracy', policymakers must take note of the drift*

**M.K. Narayanan, [ Former National Security Adviser and and a former Governor of West Bengal ]**

Individual events are often an indicator of broader trends. Any vision of the future is again significantly linked to what is taking place in the present. For now, most if not all, of what is taking place does not seem to hold out any great promise for India.

Policymakers need not take public opinion as the sole indicator of what is likely to happen, but it is important to acknowledge public fears and reassure people, especially in periods of uncertainty. Increasingly, in recent weeks, India has begun to resemble a war zone, but neither any reassurance nor any attempt at building a 'consensus' addressing current concerns is taking place.

Meanwhile, the world press is replete with stories of India's 'diminishing democracy' in which, apart from the organs of state, even India's highly regarded criminal justice system and the courts have come in for a share of criticism. This is beginning to shake the confidence of even the most die-hard supporters of Indian democracy, who are beginning to look inward to try and ascertain if Indian democracy is more fragile than is apparent.

### State of economy, world ties

India cannot afford to ignore the reality of the situation in which it finds itself. The Indian economy is in recession, and is among the worst performing among major nations. Among key currencies, the Indian Rupee is one of the very few which is depreciating, while the Euro, the Australian and Canadian Dollars, the South Korean Won and the Swiss Franc have become much stronger recently. India also claims to be among the worst affected by ransomware attacks. Meanwhile, India is turning increasingly protectionist, coming up with banal explanations to explain this away, contrary to conventional wisdom.

In the meantime, the atmospherics surrounding India's external relations are quite depressing. China remains intransigent and has made known its unwillingness to reach a reasonable settlement of the Line of Actual

Control dispute. India-Pakistan relations could hardly be worse and China has chosen at this moment to sign a new Military Memorandum of Understanding to boost the China-Pakistan relationship. India's forays in its Near Abroad in West Asia are yet to yield results, even though, on the surface, relations with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia are better. The reality, nevertheless, is that India does not have enough traction to be able to manoeuvre between different power centres in West Asia which are at various times in conflict. Consequently, India will find it increasingly difficult to steer between the Scylla of Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt on the one hand and the Charybdis of Turkey, Qatar and Iran on the other.

### **Signs of rigid policies**

Far more serious, however, are concerns being voiced about India's democratic credentials both within the country and abroad. India might well claim that the numbers of terror attacks have reduced, levels of Maoist violence have come down, and the situation in India's Northeast is much better than before, but many people across India are seeking proper answers to the question as to whether India is forfeiting its democratic visage for a more doctrinaire and a more rigid set of policies. In August-September last year, this issue had briefly surfaced when Delhi decided to dilute Article 370 of the Constitution, and restructure Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) and Ladakh into two Union Territories. It possibly passed muster at the time as something that was already included in the ruling party's manifesto.

Concerns, however, began to be felt soon after, in the wake of the clampdown in Kashmir, and the incarceration of almost the entire top leadership of the Peoples Democratic Party and the National Conference party. The anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act protests across the country thereafter seemed to confirm such fears. Compounding this situation lately has been the attempt to impose a sort of 'guided democracy' in J&K, through the instrument of elections to the District Development Council, in the course of which the Opposition Alliance has been smeared with epithets such as "unholy global gathbandhan" working against the national interest, etc.

### **Electoral wins at any cost**

What is evident today is that every election — whether to State Assemblies, District Councils, or even local panchayats — are turning into conflict zones, leading to extremely tense situations. In many instances, they have become tinderboxes for communal, caste, political and other forms of violence. Winning at any cost has become the sole motif of certain parties, especially India's principal political party. While States such as West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh feature prominently in the media in relation to cases of communal and political violence, the reality today is that no State is exempt from this pattern of aggressive electioneering.

Apart from political polarisation, arousing feelings of majority versus the minority have become the stock-in-trade of some parties in elections. Encouraging majoritarian attitudes obscuring ground realities, has hence, become a pernicious trend. The recently conducted elections to the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation was a classic example. Employing majoritarianism as a tactic, incidentally leading to a polarisation of votes, did produce electoral dividends — but it comes at a high cost. Such tactics cannot but have serious consequences for India as a secular democratic republic.

The coarsening of India's democratic fabric is again well-evident in several other areas. Constitutional protection and principles of natural justice as also freedom of the individual, all seem to be coming under strain lately. One bizarre aspect is the current campaign against 'Love Jihad', a term which finds no mention in any lexicon. On the pretext that 'Love Jihad' is a euphemism for conversion, and some States have taken legal steps to prevent it. New laws have also been enacted to enforce this diktat. All this despite the existence of judicial pronouncements declaring the inherent right of any individual to choose whom to marry, irrespective of caste, religion or creed.

Equally worrisome is the extent to which India seems to be regressing when it comes to the treatment of political prisoners in jails. The plight of Jesuit priest, Father Stan Swamy, a victim of Parkinson's disease, which made the headlines is only one instance. Many other cases have come to light, demonstrating an increasingly indifferent and disdainful approach towards political prisoners, especially those perceived to oppose the prevailing order. Labelling dissenters as urban naxals and the like, and being indifferent to their plight when in custody, marks a sharp decline from past democratic practices.

### **Social media clampdown**

India may not be the leading country when it comes to disinformation threats, but under the label of fighting fake news and the social media's pernicious use of fake news, India is beginning to clampdown on social media platforms and enact draconian laws towards this end. Kerala, a Left bastion, even sought to introduce an ordinance mandating a jail term for any offensive social media post, making the police the arbiter to determine the nature of social media abuse. Fortunately, this has been withdrawn, but the genie is out of the bottle and quite a few States appear to be contemplating similar measures against fake news.

### **Farmers' protest**

If the perception that India is becoming an illiberal democracy where dissent is at a discount needs any reinforcement, one has only to look to the groundswell of protests against the new Farmers' Bills. This has galvanised a very substantial segment of farmers across the country and also provided an opportunity to Opposition parties to combine and back the nationwide Bharat Bandh by farmers on December 8. This is yet another instance of imposing a measure without due discussion and acceptance by those affected. The most vivid images flashed across India today are those of farmers from the Punjab and nearby environs, laying a near siege to the National Capital.

The farmers' protest has become a cause célèbre today. Initially, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau expressed sympathy with the Punjab farmers, but adding further grist to this was the joint letter signed by 36 British Members of Parliament to the U.K. Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab and the comment by Stéphane Dujarric, Spokesperson for the Secretary General of the United Nations that "people have a right to demonstrate peacefully, and authorities need to let them do so". The Indian diaspora in the West is currently backing the farmers' movement. Far more than how matters turn out is the impression this conveys of an India that is intent in pursuing its pre-determined course of action, paying little heed to peoples' demands and protests, much in the nature of autocratic and dictatorial regimes rather than a democracy.

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## Thousand days of nutrition, and a billion dreams

*The single greatest threat that blocks the promise of India at a foundational level is malnutrition*

**Arjan De Wagt, [ Chief, Nutrition, UNICEF India ]**



How far India goes in realising its billion plus dreams over the next decade or two will be determined by how well it nourishes the physical well-being and mental potential of its people, particularly its children. If one has to pick the single gravest threat that blocks the promise of this young nation at the foundational level, it has to be arguably malnutrition.

Malnourished children tend to fall short of their real potential — physically as well as mentally. That is because malnutrition leaves their bodies weaker and more susceptible to illnesses. In 2017, a staggering 68% of 1.04 million deaths

of children under five years in India was attributable to malnutrition, reckoned a Lancet study last year (<https://bit.ly/3m1rT8P>).

### **Heavy burden**

Children who survive malnutrition do not do as well as they could. Without necessary nutrients, their brains do not develop to the fullest. No wonder then, they end up performing poorly at school than they otherwise would. Malnutrition places a burden heavy enough for India, to make it a top national priority. About half of all children under five years in the country were found to be stunted (too short) or wasted (too thin) for their height, estimated the Comprehensive National Nutrition Survey, carried out by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare with support of UNICEF three years ago (<https://bit.ly/33ZQdl1>).

The country has been making progress on nutrition for the last two decades, but it was after the Prime Minister launched the Prime Minister's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nutrition (POSHAN) Abhiyaan in 2018, that a holistic approach to tackle malnutrition started gathering momentum. Under it, the government strengthened the delivery of essential nutrition interventions so that more children have the right start in life for optimum growth, health, development and a prosperous future.

### **Post-COVID challenges**



As the flagship programme (POSHAN Abhiyaan) completes 1,000 days this week, it is time to renew our commitment to nutrition for two reasons. First, because it conveys the deeply symbolic value of the first 1,000 days from conception of a child till the child turns two years old, marking the most crucial period for nutrition interventions in a lifecycle, which once missed could result in irreversible damage to the child's physical and mental well-being. Second, focus on nutrition is critical as COVID-19 threatens to derail the gains India has made in nutrition in more than one way.

For one, COVID-19 is pushing millions into poverty, reducing incomes of many more and disproportionately affecting the economically disadvantaged, who are also most vulnerable to malnutrition and food insecurities. Second, pandemic-prompted lockdowns disrupted essential services — such as supplementary feeding under anganwadi centres, mid-day meals, immunisation, and micro-nutrient supplementation which can exacerbate malnutrition.

It is in this challenging backdrop, leaders from academia, civil society, development partners, community advocates and the private sector have come together as part of 'commitment to action' to seek and support the government in a six-pronged action that can save and build on the advances India has made in nutrition. These clear action points include commitments around sustained leadership, dedicated finances, multi-sectoral approach and increased uninterrupted coverage of a vulnerable population under programmes enhancing nutrition.

One reason POSHAN Abhiyaan succeeded in galvanising action so fast was because it was led by the Prime Minister himself. That example must be sustained so that leadership of food and nutrition security rests with the Prime Minister at the national level, a Chief Minister at the State level, a district magistrate at the district and panchayat at the village level. This was already imperative for POSHAN Abhiyaan to succeed, but it has now become critical as COVID-19 compounds an already complex challenge.

In terms of policies, vision, strategies, India already has some of the world's biggest early childhood public intervention schemes such as the Integrated Child Development Scheme, the mid-day meal programme, and Public Distribution System. India needs to ensure coverage of every single child and mother, along with 12 months of Poshan Maah (Nutrition Month), 52 weeks of breastfeeding weeks and 365 days of take-home ration.

### **Financial commitments**

To ensure this, the country needs to retain its financial commitments for the nutrition schemes it already runs and earmark additional funds to preserve nutritional security in vulnerable communities, particularly women and children in slum areas, migrants, the population in tribal areas and districts with malnutrition rates.

Pandemic spurred challenges have also negatively hit other proven underlying drivers of malnutrition. For instance, economic insecurities often force girls into early marriage, early motherhood, discontinue their schooling, and reduce institutional deliveries, cut access to micronutrient supplements, and nutritious food which largely tend to be perishable, all of which may worsen malnutrition. Accelerating efforts to address these will be needed to stop the regression into the deeper recesses of malnutrition.

However, to truly grasp the depth and breadth of the COVID-19-caused nutrition crisis, the country must track nutrition indices through data systems. Evidence generated through data will also serve well to track the positive impact of POSHAN Abhiyaan, and course correct on the long journey to a well-nourished India. It takes time for nutrition interventions to yield dividends, but once those accrue, they can bring transformative generational shifts. Filling in the nutrition gaps will guarantee a level-playing field for all children and strengthen the foundations for the making of a future super-power.



**दैनिक भास्कर**

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## इन 6 मुद्दों के जवाब में है किसान आंदोलन का हल

**विराग गुप्ता, ( सुप्रीम कोर्ट के वकील )**

दुल्हन ना ही घराती, पर आ गए बाराती। किसान कानून अधर में लटका है लेकिन फसल लूटने डिजिटल बिचौलिए आ गए। खबरों के अनुसार हिमाचल प्रदेश के मार्केटिंग बोर्ड ने कृषि विपणन में निवेश के लिए बिग मार्केट, अमेज़न और वालमार्ट जैसी कंपनियों को पीपीपी मॉडल पर काम देने की पेशकश की है।

प्रधानमंत्री मोदी ने कहा कि पिछली सदी में उपयोगी रहे कानून अगली शताब्दी के लिए बोझ बन गए हैं इसलिए नई सुविधाओं और व्यवस्थाओं के लिए समग्रता में कानूनी सुधार जरूरी हैं। इन तीन कानूनों पर हां या ना की बजाय, सरकार 6 मुद्दों पर समुचित निराकरण करे तो देशव्यापी किसान आंदोलन के अंत के साथ गांवों को समृद्ध बनाने का राष्ट्रीय संकल्प भी पूरा हो सकता है-

1. संविधान की सातवीं अनुसूची के अनुसार भूमि, पानी, कृषि शिक्षा, पशुपालन, मछली पालन, कृषि लोन, मनी लेंडिंग, एस्टेट, टैक्स, ग्रामीण कर्जग्रस्तता और भू राजस्व जैसे सभी मामले राज्यों के अधीन आते हैं। इन नए कानूनों के अधिकांश प्रावधानों को राज्य सरकारों की सहमति के बगैर लागू नहीं किया जा सकता। स्वामीनाथन रिपोर्ट और विपक्ष के घोषणापत्र पर जोर देने की बजाय, इस बड़े फैसले से पहले राज्य सरकारों के साथ परामर्श होता तो पूरे देश को इस संकट से नहीं गुजरना पड़ता।

2. आनंद मठ, गोदान व मदर इंडिया के समय से ही ग्रामीण भारत व किसान संकट से जूझ रहे हैं। मई 2.14 के पिछले कार्यकाल में भूमि अधिग्रहण कानून में बदलाव के लिए अध्यादेश पर भी भारी विवाद हुआ था, जिसे एक साल बाद रद्द करना पड़ा। सुप्रीम कोर्ट के नौ जजों के फैसले के बावजूद अब तक डाटा सुरक्षा पर कानून नहीं बना तो फिर इस विषय पर संसदीय समिति के माध्यम से कानून बनाने की बजाय अध्यादेश की आपातकालीन शक्तियों का एकतरफा इस्तेमाल क्यों किया गया?

3. 55 साल पहले लाल बहादुर शास्त्री के प्रयासों से भारतीय खाद्य निगम और एमएसपी व्यवस्था की शुरुआत हुई। सन 2015 में शांता कुमार कमेटी की रिपोर्ट के अनुसार सिर्फ 6% किसानों को ही एमएसपी का लाभ मिलता है। केंद्र सरकार के लिखित आश्वासन को लागू करने के लिए 23 फसलों पर एमएसपी को यदि खरीद पर पूरी तरह से लागू किया जाए तो 15 लाख करोड़ का बोझ कौन उठाएगा? इंस्टीट्यूट आफ इंटरनेशनल फाइनेंस (आईआईएफ) की रिपोर्ट के अनुसार विकसित देशों पर उनकी जीडीपी का 432 गुना कर्ज है। भारत में निजी क्षेत्र की कंपनियों ने कर्ज को पीकर सरकारी

बैंकों को खोखला कर दिया है। लाभ के लिए बेचैन निजी कंपनियां और कॉर्पोरेट्स सस्ते मूल्य पर आयात करने की बजाय, एमएसपी पर कैसे और क्यों खरीदेंगी?

4. किसान पहले ही उपज को मंडी से बाहर देश में कहीं भी भेजने के लिए स्वतंत्र थे तो फिर इन नए कानूनों की जरूरत क्यों पड़ी? एनएसएस की रिपोर्ट के अनुसार सिर्फ 25% परिवारों ने ही एपीएमसी यानी मंडी में माल बेचा और बकाया 65% परिवारों ने निजी व्यापारियों को फसल बेची। नए कानूनों से निजी क्षेत्र व डिजिटल कंपनियों को बेरोकटोक फसल भंडारण के साथ टैक्स फ्री कारोबार की सुविधा मिलेगी। रिटेल, दवा, मनोरंजन, सूचना, जैसे सभी क्षेत्रों पर अंतर्राष्ट्रीय डिजिटल कंपनियों के निर्बाध कब्जे के बाद यदि कृषि क्षेत्र को भी मुक्त कर दिया गया तो पूरी अर्थव्यवस्था के अस्थिर होने का खतरा है।

5. भारत में खेती किसानों का जीडीपी में 16% योगदान है, लेकिन इससे 41% लोगों को रोजगार मिलता है। यूएनडीपी की रिपोर्ट के अनुसार कोविड महामारी के चलते अगले 10 सालों में, दुनिया में बेहद गरीब लोगों की संख्या एक अरब के पार हो जाएगी। भारत में खाद्य सुरक्षा कानून के तहत लगभग 80 करोड़ गरीब लोगों को राशन और पीएम किसान निधि के तहत 14.5 करोड़ परिवारों को 6000 रुपए की सालाना मदद दी जा रही है। बिचौलिया खत्म करने के नाम पर लागू जा रहे इन नए कानूनों से परंपरागत रोजगार खत्म होंगे, जिससे असमानता और गरीबी और ज्यादा बढ़ेगी।

6. किसान आंदोलन के नेताओं की विश्वसनीयता पर सोशल मीडिया पर अनेक सवाल उठ रहे हैं? आंकड़ों के अनुसार वर्तमान लोकसभा के लगभग 136 सांसदों ने खेती को अपना पेशा बताया है। गुजरात के लगभग 192 विधायकों ने किसानों को अपना पेशा बताया। विधानसभा व संसद में बैठने वाले नेता यदि किसान होने का दावा कर सकते हैं तो फिर किसान आंदोलन से जुड़े नेताओं की साख पर सवाल उठाना कितना सही है? जेपी और अन्ना आंदोलनों के दुखांत से जाहिर है कि राजनीति प्रेरित धरना, बंद और प्रदर्शन से सरकारों का चेहरा भले ही बदले पर सिस्टम नहीं बदलता। दो साल बाद आज़ादी की 75वीं सालगिरह का पर्व नए संसद भवन में मनाने का सरकार ने संकल्प लिया है। सरकार के एक अन्य संकल्प के अनुसार वर्ष 2022 तक किसानों की आमदनी दुगुनी करने का लक्ष्य है।

इस संकल्प को सफल बनाने के लिए किसानों को बहुराष्ट्रीय कंपनियों के नागपाश में बांधने की बजाय, बापू के पंचायती राज के स्वप्न को साकार करने की दिशा में कदम बढ़ाने होंगे।

## पश्चिम एशिया में भारत की नई सक्रियता के मायने

कबीर तनेजा, ( प्रमुख, वेस्ट एशिया इनीशिएटिव, ऑब्जर्वर रिसर्च फाउंडेशन )

पिछले महीने से नई दिल्ली ने खाड़ी के देशों के साथ संबंधों को मजबूत बनाने के लिए उल्लेखनीय प्रयास किए हैं। विदेश मंत्री एस जयशंकर की बहरीन व संयुक्त अरब अमीरात की यात्रा के बाद सेना प्रमुख जनरल एमएम नरवणे सऊदी अरब और अमीरात के दौर पर हैं। आने वाले दिनों में हमारे कई शीर्ष अधिकारी कतर, ओमान और कुवैत भी जाने वाले हैं।

साफ है, वे दिन अब लद चुके हैं, जब इस क्षेत्र में भारतीय राजनयिकों की नियुक्ति को ज्यादा अहमियत नहीं मिलती थी, क्योंकि यहां बहुतायत में भारतीय प्रवासी श्रमिकों के काम करने के कारण इसे कमतर माना जाता था। मगर आज भारत न सिर्फ एशिया की आर्थिक व भू-राजनीतिक विमर्श का, बल्कि वैश्विक अर्थव्यवस्था व राजनीति का भी केंद्र बन गया है। कोविड-19 संकट में भी यह साफ-साफ दिखा, जब नई दिल्ली ने कुवैत में अपनी मेडिकल टीम व अमीरात में नर्स भेजे, और स्वास्थ्य कूटनीति जैसे मुद्दों पर पहले डिजिटल तरीके से और बाद में वैयक्तिक रूप से उच्चस्तरीय बातचीत की। बेशक ये सब पिछले कुछ वर्षों के रुझानों का ही सिलसिला हो, मगर इन क्षेत्रों के बीच जो नई कूटनीतिक पहल की गई है, उसके मुख्यतः दो निहितार्थ हैं। पहला तो कोरोना वैक्सीन को लेकर दुनिया भर से आ रही सुखद खबरें हैं, जिसका अर्थ है कि वैश्विक अर्थव्यवस्था, वाणिज्य, प्रवास जैसी चीजें अब सामान्य बनने की राह पर हैं। खाड़ी क्षेत्र करीब 70 लाख भारतीय कामगारों का घर है, और भारत का एक बड़ा काम अपनी भौगोलिक सीमाओं के बाहर एक छोटे देश जैसी इस आबादी को अनिवार्य रूप से संभालना भी है। माना जाता है कि मई से तीन लाख से अधिक भारतीय श्रमिकों ने खाड़ी देशों से वापस लौटने की अर्जी दी है, क्योंकि महामारी की वजह से वैश्विक अर्थव्यवस्था व व्यापार तबाह हो गए हैं और अभूतपूर्व संख्या में नौकरियां खत्म हुई हैं।

भारत ने घर लौटने वाले श्रमिकों के लिए पुनर्वास नीति बनाई है, उनके कौशल का अपने हित में इस्तेमाल की रूपरेखा भी तय कर ली है, पर खाड़ी के श्रमिकों की नियोजित वापसी और वहां उनके लिए हालात सामान्य बनाना कहीं ज्यादा महत्वपूर्ण है। ऐसा इसलिए, क्योंकि ये लोग हर साल अपने परिजनों को करीब 80 अरब डॉलर भेजकर भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था में खासा योगदान करते हैं। और, यह तभी जारी रह सकता है, जब खाड़ी में उनके लिए रोजगार का माहौल सामान्य बनेगा।

दूसरी वजह यह है कि संयुक्त अरब अमीरात जैसे देशों में भारत के रुख को आगे बढ़ाना आज कहीं ज्यादा जरूरी है, क्योंकि अमीरात ने हाल में 13 देशों के लिए नया वीजा जारी करने पर रोक लगा दी है। इस सूची में पाकिस्तान भी शामिल है। इस प्रतिबंध का ठीक-ठीक कारण तो अबू धाबी ने नहीं बताया है, लेकिन विश्लेषकों का मानना है कि सुरक्षा कारणों से ऐसा किया गया है। खाड़ी के अधिकारीगण निजी तौर पर कहते भी रहे हैं कि भारत जैसे देशों के श्रमिकों को ज्यादा काम मिलता है, क्योंकि उनमें योग्यता ज्यादा होती है और उनमें कट्टरता भी अपेक्षाकृत कम होती है। वे वैचारिक रूप से अपने देश से भी जुड़े होते हैं और खाड़ी के समाज का हिस्सा बनने की भी कोशिश करते हैं। ऐसे में, पाकिस्तान और सऊदी अरब के बीच चल रही मौजूदा तनातनी भी नई दिल्ली को कूटनीतिक मदद दे सकती है।

पश्चिम एशिया को लेकर भारत ने यह कूटनीतिक पहल तब शुरू की है, जब अमीरात, बहरीन व इजरायल के बीच अब्राहम समझौते पर हस्ताक्षर हुए हैं, और भू-राजनीतिक तौर पर हालात सामान्य होने की उम्मीद बढ़ गई है। खाड़ी में स्थिरता आती है, तो भारत के आर्थिक हित भी सधेंगे व प्रवासियों को हितों को भी गति मिलेगी। इजरायल, ईरान और सऊदी अरब के बीच संबंधों को सफलतापूर्वक संतुलित करते हुए खाड़ी के लिए नई दिल्ली के आकर्षण की वजह भू-राजनीतिक और भू-आर्थिकी भी है। बेशक खाड़ी देशों द्वारा प्रवासी श्रमिकों के बारे में भारतीय चिंताओं के प्रति अलग

रुख और भारत में अल्पसंख्यकों के अधिकारों के मसलों पर यहां के कुछ राष्ट्रों द्वारा चिंता जताना हमें खल सकता है, पर दोनों पक्षों ने बड़ी चिंताओं के मददेनजर छोटे मसलों को नजरअंदाज करना शुरू कर दिया है। जाहिर है, यह आपसी संबंधों के नए दरवाजे के खुलने का संकेत है।

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