



**THE TIMES OF INDIA**

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## **Break Away**

### ***Cairn ruling shows why India must close the chapter on retrospective tax amendments***

#### **TOI Editorials**

Pranab Mukherjee, as finance minister in 2012, introduced a retrospective amendment to the Income Tax Act in the budget to overturn a Supreme Court ruling in favour of telecom firm Vodafone. The after-effect is still being felt. Current reports indicate the government could challenge an international arbitration tribunal award in September that went in favour of Vodafone, stating that the retrospective amendment was a breach of the India-Netherlands investment treaty. Independently, another arbitration tribunal this week concluded that the government's decision to tax Cairn Energy was a breach of the India-UK investment treaty. Consequently, Cairn was awarded \$1.2 billion in damages.

According to Mukherjee, his cabinet colleagues thought poorly of the retrospective tax. BJP, then in opposition, criticised it as a symptom of "tax terrorism". However no party, once in office, seems to want to move away from that damaging decision. After all, the arbitration award in September gave the government plenty of time to close the chapter on it. The outcome of maximum government and unthinking governance will be reputational damage, when there is an opportunity to attract investment from companies looking to relocate production lines out of China.

The story began when Vodafone indirectly acquired its Indian telecom assets from Hutchison Telecommunication in 2007. The tax department held Vodafone liable for not withholding tax in its payment. The matter wound its way to the apex court which ruled in favour of Vodafone. The subsequent retrospective amendment opened a can of worms. During the NDA regime, the tax department went after Cairn Energy and even sold its shares that had been attached. Consequently, the arbitration tribunal's award in this case will have a monetary impact on the exchequer.

It's incorrect to view this issue as a challenge to the sovereign power of Indian parliament. Instead, it's a case of companies that invest in India trying to enforce their rights as they feel the goalpost was changed retrospectively. Gaps in the tax law which allowed indirect transfer of Indian assets have been plugged. Therefore, any decision the government takes today in relation to issues from over a decade ago can only undermine investment and tax revenue. It's in India's best interest for the government to make a clean break from retrospective legislations. They only add to regulatory turbulence and policy unpredictability. A stable tax and regulatory environment is essential for sustained high economic growth.

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## Democracy Wins in Jammu and Kashmir

### ET Editorials

Democracy is the real winner in the first-ever District Development Council (DDC) polls in the Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir. People came out to vote in large numbers even in terror-affected districts. The eight-phase elections saw voter turnout of about 50% in all but one phase. Large number of independents, 50 in all, won. Claims of rigged elections made by regional satraps such as Farooq and Omar Abdullah, and Mehbooba Mufti ahead of the polls proved to be unfounded. The promise of free and fair elections so critical in a democracy has been redeemed.

The elections were for 280 seats — 140 in Jammu and 140 in Kashmir. The People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration, a seven-party pre-poll alliance including the Abdullahs' National Conference, Mufti's Peoples' Democratic Party, Sajjad Lone's People's Conference and CPI-M, secured the highest number of seats, 112. BJP is the single-largest party with 75 seats. Both the Gupkar Alliance and BJP can draw comfort from the results. BJP has won three seats in Kashmir, and it secured a total of 4,87,364 votes. That is more votes than National Conference, PDP and Congress put together (4,79,685). A total 50 independents won. Back-of-the-envelope calculations show that adding on support from other parties, the Gupkar Alliance will be marginally ahead of BJP and allies. The people of Jammu and Kashmir have spoken with their vote, reposed their faith in democracy and the Constitution, so as to improve their lives and create new opportunities.

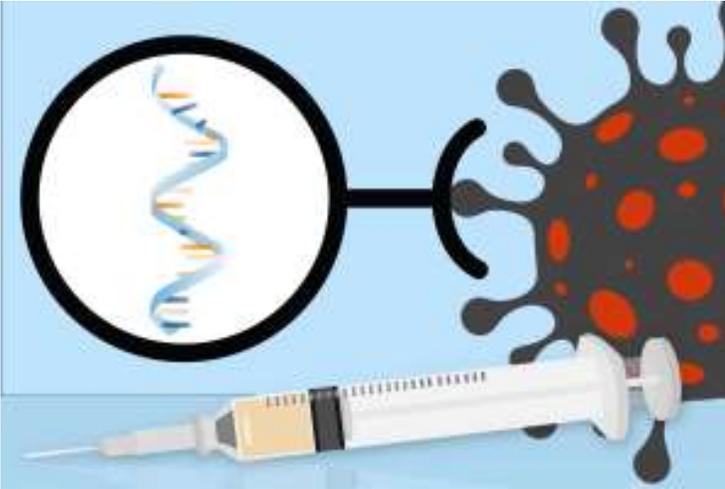
Rather than furthering the interests of a few, politicians across the spectrum would do well to work together to strengthen democracy and all it has to offer. And not let down the faith reposed in democracy by the voters.

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## We Need a Growth Vaccine

**Kaushik Basu , [ The writer is Carl Marks Professor at Cornell University,US. He was senior vice president and chief economist, orld Bank and chief economic advisor to GoI ]**



As the year draws to a close, and the world sees a glimmer of hope in the Covid vaccines, all countries have begun work to get their economies back to some kind of normalcy. India's economy is doing badly. This is a puzzle, because the nation has many fundamental strengths, and has also made some good policy moves, such as the implementation of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), 2016, and taking various steps to ease business processes. Why then has the economy stalled?

For anybody who cares about India, it is essential to examine the statistics. At first sight, it seems as

though the Covid-19 pandemic is the cause. The whole world is suffering, India cannot be an exception. But once we look at the data, it is clear that India has not just slowed down, it has lost rank.

### Slowing down

In July-September, the third quarter of this calendar year, we have GDP data for 63 countries (not all countries collect quarterly GDP data). Of these 51 countries are growing GDP data). Of these, 51 countries are growing faster than India. Only 11 are trailing us.

We have not seen a scenario like this in the last 30 years. India's growth first picked up in 1993, soon after the big reforms. Then in 2003, it picked up further, and India was among the three fastest growing nations in the world for several years from 2005. How did we drop from top 1% of the world to the bottom 20% in terms of growth?

Some of this was caused by the nature of the lockdown. When India locked down from March 25, this was widely described as the strictest lockdown in the world. But it soon became clear that this policy had been adopted with no supporting plans for the poor and for migrant workers. This led anywhere from 23 to 40 million poor workers to spill out on to the streets, walking hundreds of miles home, which was the very opposite of a lockdown. This great unlocking had a large negative impact.

In India, it is often pointed out how the number of Covid deaths per million population is about 10 times higher in the US than in India. This is true. But this is true for virtually all nations in America and Europe compared to Africa and Asia. This has little to do with policy. It is now realised that Asia and Africa have higher natural immunity to this virus. So, we need within-region comparisons to understand the effects of policy.

Regionally, India's record is poor. India's score of 106 Covid deaths per 1 million population is the absolute highest among all the countries of South Asia, South-East Asia and East Asia. The next worst performing country is the Philippines with 82 deaths per million. Bangladesh is at 44, Pakistan 43, China 3, all the way to countries like Vietnam and Taiwan with less than 1 death per million. This is a direct outcome of the lockdown failure.

This effect will, however, wear off after a while. India's long-run worry comes from the realisation that India's growth slowdown did not start with the pandemic. In 2016-17, India had a GDP growth of 8.2%.

After that, each year's growth rate has been lower than the previous year's, all the way up to 2020-21. A five-year downward stepwell of growth has never before happened in independent India.

Given that the nation's big corporations and some nancial indicators are doing well, who is paying the price of the downward stepwell? The new data released last week by the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) for 17 Indian states and ve union territories are revealing.

Children have, on average, lost weight and height, controlled for age, over the last 5 years. We have not seen a reversal in these critical malnutrition indicators since 1998. Since malnutrition is not a problem of the well-o, this shows that the urban poor and the farmers are suering disproportionately because of the economic slide over the last five years.

### Grow again

All this is tragic because India has deep strengths. Since the early 1990s India has been a global leader in the information technology (IT) sector. Its pharmaceutical, higher education and research sectors also have immense potential. So, what should be done?

First, too little professionalism is going into policymaking in India. To treat the use of statistics on GDP, inequality and malnutrition as 'anti-national' and to look away is a mistake.

Second, in the coming Union budget, the finance minister needs to draw on the enormous amount of talent in India to design a big fiscal stimulus to the economy. This should be entirely focused on direct support to the urban poor, the unemployed, small businesses and agriculturists, cutting all nonessential expenditures. Even then the fiscal decit will rise. That is only to be expected in a crisis. We should have a plan of rolling it back over the next two years.

Thereafter, all eort should focus on raising the nation's investment rate and boosting the country's creative sectors -- research, higher education, science and technology. But I empathise with the nance minister here. Much of this is beyond her reach. Investment, especially creative investment, in a nation depends on something that goes beyond scal and monetary policy. It depends on trust. From laboratory tests to cross-country studies, there is a growing literature showing the relation between trust and growth.

In India, the rise of divisiveness and hate, and the marginalisation of minority religious groups and backward castes is not only doing damage the moral bre of the nation, it is eating into our economic strengths. We owe it to the nation to correct this.

## ***Government should abide by arbitration panel verdicts in Vodafone and Cairn case and end retrospective taxation.***

### **Editorial**

Reform, as per Mr KantConsidering that changes to labour laws are often viewed with suspicion, as the debate has often been framed in terms of empowering managements, the current crisis may well heighten such fears. In its 2014 election manifesto, the BJP had attacked the then Congress-led UPA government for unleashing “tax terrorism” and “uncertainty” in the country, which not only “negatively impacts the investment climate”, but also “dents the image of the country”. Six years later, the signals that emanate suggest that rather than ushering in a “non adversarial and conducive tax environment”, the Narendra Modi government is continuing with the highly contentious policies of the UPA government. On Thursday, it was reported that the government has filed an appeal at the Singapore seat of the permanent court of arbitration challenging the judgment in the Vodafone retrospective taxation case. The government’s move comes a day after it lost the arbitration case to Cairn Energy over the retrospective levy of taxes and was asked to pay damages to the tune of \$1.2 billion. While the government has said it is studying the award, applying the principle of uniformity of approach suggests that it is likely to appeal the verdict in the Cairn case as well. This would be a mistake, and would send the wrong signal to the investor community. The government should accept the orders, and ensure a proper burial to the issue of retrospective taxation.

The Cairn issue pertains to tax demand on capital gains made by the company in the reorganisation of its business. The Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) at The Hague has maintained that the issue was not a tax dispute, but a tax-related investment dispute, and hence it fell under its jurisdiction. The court noted that the demand was in breach of fair treatment under the UK-India bilateral investment treaty. Ironically, the tribunal order also took note of arguments made by BJP leaders on retrospective amendments and international disputes — former finance minister Arun Jaitely had likened them to tax terrorism. In the case of Vodafone, the Singapore seat of the PCA has held that India’s retrospective demand of capital gains and withholding tax from the firm was “in breach of the guarantee of fair and equitable treatment”. In fact, in the Vodafone case, the Supreme Court held in 2012 that Vodafone’s interpretation of the Income Tax Act, 1961 was correct. The then finance minister, Pranab Mukherjee, circumvented the ruling proposing an amendment to the Finance Act, giving the tax department the power to retrospectively tax such deals.

Hoping that domestic courts will overturn the arbitration award would be unwise, and will be treated as a warning by investors. The approach has to be one of compliance with the verdict, rather than finding ways to bypass it. The government must distance itself from the issue of retrospective taxation that has caused much damage to India’s reputation.

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## **Fallacy of central model**

## *Curricula model at national-level doesn't do justice to state or local-level problems, issue*

**Milind Sohoni , [ The writer a faculty at IIT Bombay is currently on deputation to IIT Goa. ]**



Recently, the AICTE, an agency of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, which regulates engineering education in the country, came up with a new scheme to support the writing and production of engineering textbooks in 21 regional languages. There is the usual downloadable application form and scoring sheet to be filled by active or retired professors from AICTE-approved institutions. The support offered is about Rs 2 lakh.

But there are two catches. The first is that the textbooks should preferably be for a course in the AICTE national model curriculum. Now, it is well-known that the model curriculum is not very relevant. In fact, it has no place at all for any regional content. Thus, the nuances of irrigation in Maharashtra, for example, the basic planning framework, the schedule of the patkaris (canal operators) and the workings of the paani wapar sanstha (water user associations) are all lost. The same story repeats itself in other areas of engineering. This perpetuates the disconnect between what is taught and what is practiced and has led to the employability crisis in the Indian economy. The scheme could have been an opportunity to address this lacuna if it were to relax the adherence to the model curriculum. That would allow the inclusion of regional content, and that too in the local language, the use of local formats and documents, and linkages with practitioners and local agencies. This would achieve a closer connection with the practice of engineering.

The second problem is that higher education departments of the states are nowhere in the picture. This jeopardises the success of the scheme, even if good textbooks do come out. Firstly, universities have their own curricula which affiliated colleges follow. These are usually vetted by peers within the system. Most universities and state higher education departments would welcome a systematic development of textbooks in the regional language for a selected set of basic courses. The current scheme does not ensure that this will happen. Thus, a better strategy for AICTE would have been to request the states to make a proposal, to set the guidelines and to monitor their progress. A sum of Rs 1 crore per year, for five years, would have allowed the states to come up with a rotating panel of writers, supported by a professional team which works to a plan.

So why did AICTE not think of this? The fact is that such obduracy is routine for MHRD, and also the Department of Science and Technology (DST). Grants are made to individual faculty members and sometimes, institutions. The state departments, from education to industries, cannot convey their priorities or interests. Moreover, most of the open-ended funds are available at the Centre. For example, the annual funds with DST exceed Rs 4,000 crore while Maharashtra operates an S&T budget of about Rs 60 crore. Thus, the agenda for higher education and science is set at the Centre and has little to do with problems which the states face or the innovations needed there. Moreover, many grants go to faculty members in the elite centrally funded institutions who have little understanding of or interest in the

regional problems. As a result, professional practices in most state departments such as irrigation, transport, or public health have been stagnant for decades. The people in the states, which is most of us, continue to suffer. And yet we continue with this regime.

Perhaps, the seed of this was sown at the time of the birth of India as an independent nation. It was then that science was cast as a national project and not as the living practice of a community. It created a dichotomy — the centralised state, its scientists and professors working in elite institutions on the one side, and the people on the other, as recipients of the benefits of science but not as participants. But there also was a social narrative. Science was but one part of the broader project of modernising India which was to be guided by a well-intentioned, internationally connected elite situated in Delhi. The states were seen as swamps of vested interests, parochial in thinking and highly unequal and exploitative in social relations. They could not be trusted with the welfare of their own people, let alone deliver the benefits of science. This logic permeates many central programmes as they find ways to reach the so-called ultimate beneficiary while bypassing the state apparatus. Such bulldozer thinking is also evident in the National Education Policy 2020.

The fact is that several states have proved themselves to be quite capable of delivering welfare to their people. Most developmental innovations such as the anganwadi, mid-day meals, water management, consumer and producer cooperatives, have come from the states. And they have done this through their own political, social and cultural institutions, without the big-ticket investments in science from the Centre or the support of its elite higher education institutions.

It is the elite central institutions and scientific agencies which have uniformly become the centres of mediocrity and decay. Bolstering them is a moribund bureaucracy and a narrow intellectual class incapable of honest work. Witness the absence of any study of most public aspects of the pandemic — from the number of hospital beds required, or the safety of rail travel to counting the actual number of deaths. The lack of study has led to chronic informality, poor wages and widespread hardship. What has emerged is a regressive politics of centralisation of good intentions and handouts for an ever-increasing number of projected beneficiaries. The AICTE scheme is merely an illustration of this overall decrepitude.

What is to be done? We must accept that states were neither born equal, nor are their developmental trajectories similar. Next, the centralised system of science is broken. It has been a severe drag on the development of many states while providing little systematic guidance to the others. The embedded hierarchy is sucking out the creativity of our youth and causing stress and disaffection. We need a more accountable and decentralised system. An immediate first step would be to devolve much of the powers of MHRD and its institutions and the funds available with DST to the states. This would actually be in line with the spirit and intent of our original Constitution.

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## **Saving the public university**

## *The first step is governance reform for more autonomy and accountability*

**Shailendra Raj Mehta , [ The writer is president and director of MICA, Ahmedabad. Views are personal. ]**

There are 55 central universities, the crown jewels of the Indian academic system. They are endowed with prime land, extensive funding from the central government and there is a long line of students waiting to get in. Here, faculty have security of tenure, and their job fully protects free speech, so they are the most vocal among academics. Among them are the handful of real universities in the country — vishwavidyalayas or universitas, that focus on all the major branches of learning, where cross-disciplinary research, so necessary to solve complex modern problems, can genuinely take place.

Yet, they are in turmoil. In recent years, six vice-chancellors (VCs) of central universities have been sacked. Another five have been charge-sheeted. Some of these institutions have seen their glory days, yet increasingly, the energy is going out of the system. The locus of innovation has switched to new and innovative private universities. However, not a single new private university has so far been able to create a true broad-based viswavidyalaya with the full range of humanities, social and natural sciences and the professional disciplines. Therefore, to save academia in India, central universities must be saved.

It is tempting to blame the problems on a few bad apples in the leadership. But if the problems are so pervasive, then the challenges must be systemic. The response of academics who are witness to this decline is to blame a lack of autonomy. But in reality, it is a crisis of accountability.

Each of the 55 central universities is governed by a separate Act. While there are differences, the broad structure is as follows. The Visitor of the university is the President of India. On his behalf, the Ministry of Education recommends an eminent citizen as the chancellor, whose role is mostly ceremonial. The Ministry also constitutes a search committee that typically interviews multiple candidates and comes up with a list of three candidates. From this list, the government picks a VC. Separately, and through a different process, a senate or court is chosen. Technically, this is the governing council (GC) of the university, which will usually have nominees from various stakeholders, including the government, faculty, students, and citizens. The university's work is carried out by the executive council chaired by the VC, who also appoints the registrar. A separate finance committee is constituted, headed by a chief finance officer, who is often a civil servant on secondment to the university. This arrangement is designed to maintain financial checks and balances.

But this is where the major problems begin. The GC has no say in the selection of the VC. Further, the GC typically meets only once a year. If any work gets done in this meeting, it is a miracle, since the GC of Delhi University, called the Senate, for example, has 475 members, probably a world record. In theory, the VC presents and gets approval for the annual plan of the university from the GC. In practice, after much grandstanding on both sides, the plan is rubberstamped. After that, throughout the year, there is minimal direction or monitoring from the GC, which may or may not meet again. There are typically no quarterly updates, and there is little oversight. Under the circumstances, the high number of failures should not come as a surprise, since effectively, there is minimal governance.

By contrast, the new IIM Bill very sensibly limits the GC to at most 19 members. They are expected to be eminent citizens, with broad social representation and an emphasis on alumni. This GC chooses the director, provides overall strategic direction, raises resources, and continuously monitors his or her

performance. Within the guidelines provided by the GC, the director has full autonomy but also full accountability.

This arrangement is based on the best global examples, including Harvard. Today, most people do not know that Harvard too was a sarkari university until 150 years ago, that was dying a slow death. It is a fascinating story that I have documented elsewhere. When its governance was reformed by creating an empowered board comprising its most successful alumni, this small provincial university soon became world-class. The reason was simple: No one knew or cared more about the university than its alumni board members. They brought dynamism, oversight, and resources. The creation of a journey to world-class status began with the governance reform.

Accordingly, the governing councils of all central universities, IITs, and all other central institutions, need to be restructured by an Act of Parliament. The most eminent alumni of these institutions must be brought on their boards. IIT Delhi has just announced a billion-dollar endowment campaign. This campaign is being spearheaded by its most successful alumni, over a dozen of whom have created Unicorns, or billion-dollar companies. If these individuals are cordially invited to join its GC, not only will this money be raised quickly, but it will also be spent well. The dynamism and exposure that these alumni will bring to the table will promptly lead to world-class innovations.

The warrior-poet Rahim, who knew a lot about administration, famously said — ek saadhe sab sadhai, sab saadhe pat jaaya, Rahiman mool hi seenchiye, phoole phale aghai. If you accomplish one big thing, everything gets accomplished, but if you try and fix everything at once, then nothing gets fixed; as in plants, water the roots, and the whole plant prospers and yields flowers and fruits. To allow central universities, the IITs and other public institutions to truly blossom, we need to reform their Governance. There is no time to waste.



**दैनिक भास्कर**

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## देश के सांस्कृतिक संघर्ष को हमारे दिलों में जीतना होगा

**शशि थरूर , पूर्व केंद्रीय मंत्री और सांसद**

मानो बढ़ती कोविड महामारी, गड़बड़ाती अर्थव्यवस्था, उच्च बेरोजगारी और बड़ा किसान आंदोलन काफी नहीं था, जो हिन्दूवादी भारतीय जनता पार्टी (BJP) ने नया संकट ला दिया है: सांस्कृतिक युद्ध। नवंबर में BJP शासित उत्तर प्रदेश मुख्य रूप से काल्पनिक अपराध लव जिहाद के खिलाफ कानून लाया। उप्र विधि विरुद्ध धर्म परिवर्तन प्रतिषेध अध्यादेश कहता है कि अगर एक महिला केवल शादी के लिए इस्लाम अपनाती है, तो शादी 'शून्य' घोषित कर दी जाएगी। शादी के बाद धर्म बदलने की इच्छुक महिलाओं को अनुमति के लिए डिस्ट्रिक्ट मजिस्ट्रेट को आवेदन देना होगा। यह व्यक्तिगत आजादी पर हमला है, जिसमें स्त्री-द्वेष, पितृसत्ता और धर्मांधता का मिश्रण है।

यह उपाय उप्र के मुख्यमंत्री योगी आदित्यनाथ के दिमाग की उपज है, जिनके भड़काऊ भाषणों ने उन्हें BJP की चर्चित शख्सियत बना दिया। यह कानून देश के संविधान के तहत प्रदान की गई पूजा की आजादी पर प्रहार है। दिसंबर के पहले हफ्ते में ही राज्य पुलिस ने सात लोगों को इसके तहत गिरफ्तार कर लिया। हिन्दू-मुस्लिम संवाद से उपजी भारत की गंगा-जमुनी तहजीब पर अब आधिकारिक रूप से भड़काई गई धर्मांधता का हमला हो रहा है। BJP को राजनीतिक शक्ति हठधर्मी हिन्दू समुदाय के वाहक के रूप में आक्रामक प्रचार से मिलती है और मुस्लिम-विरोधी भावनाओं को उकसाने को वह वोट पाने का साधन मानती है। BJP पहले भी सफलतापूर्वक ट्रिपल तलाक को अपराध बना चुकी है, मुस्लिम बहुल राज्य जम्मू-कश्मीर से विशेष राज्य का दर्जा छीन चुकी है और ऐसा कानून लागू कर चुकी है, जो मुस्लिम शरणार्थियों को जल्द भारतीय नागरिकता पाने से रोकता है। इन कदमों ने पार्टी की मुस्लिमों पर सख्त छवि को मजबूत किया है और उप्र का नया कानून भी ऐसा ही है। हाल के हफ्तों में अन्य BJP शासित राज्यों ने भी 'लव जिहाद' पर उन्माद दिखाया है, जो पार्टी की जड़ों में मौजूद इस्मालोफोबिया को दर्शाता है। मध्य प्रदेश और हरियाणा की राज्य सरकारें भी ऐसा कानून बनाने की घोषणा कर चुकी हैं।

मध्य प्रदेश के एक BJP नेता ने हाल ही में नेटफ्लिक्स पर हिन्दुओं की धार्मिक भावनाएं भड़काने का आरोप लगाते हुए मामला दर्ज करवाया, क्योंकि उसकी एक सीरीज में मुस्लिम अभिनेता व हिन्दू अभिनेत्री के बीच मंदिर के सामने चुंबन दृश्य था। नेता गौरव तिवारी ने आपत्तिजनक दृश्य हटाने की मांग की। इस मामले में मप्र के गृहमंत्री नरोत्तम मिश्रा ने जांच के आदेश दिए थे।

यहां तक कि इन खबरों से कि उप्र में पुलिस ने सबूतों के अभाव में लव जिहाद के 14 मामलों में से 8 बंद कर दिए, BJP का सांप्रदायिक उत्साह ठंडा नहीं पड़ेगा। कुछ महीने पहले एक ज्वेलरी ब्रांड को भी विज्ञापन में अंतर धार्मिक विवाह दिखाने पर हिंसा की धमकियां मिली थीं।

हालांकि इस्लाम BJP का पसंदीदा लक्ष्य रहा है, लेकिन उसने भारतीय ईसाई अल्पसंख्यकों के सांस्कृतिक क्रियाकलापों पर भी नाराजगी जताई है। BJP से जुड़े बजरंग दल ने हाल ही में उन हिन्दुओं के खिलाफ हिंसा की धमकी दी थी, जो क्रिसमस पर चर्च जाएंगे। जहां हिंदू धर्म अन्य धर्मों का सम्मान करना सिखता है, वहीं जो इसके योद्धा होने का दावा करते हैं, वे ऐसी सार्वभौमिकता को नहीं मानते। विडंबना यह है कि हिन्दुत्व ब्रिगेड को हिन्दू परंपरा की समझ नहीं है। भारतीय मूल्यों की उनकी समझ न सिर्फ प्राचीन और संकीर्ण मानसिकता वाली है, बल्कि पूर्णतः अनैतिहासिक है। भारतीय संस्कृति हमेशा ही नए व विभिन्न विचारों को स्वीकारने वाली रही है।

आज भारतीय सभ्यता में मुख्य युद्ध इन दो के बीच है.. पहले वे, जो मानते हैं कि हमारी संस्कृति विविध और व्यापक है और दूसरे जिन्होंने खुद अपनी संकीर्ण सोच के साथ ठान लिया है कि वे ही सच्चा भारतीय होने को परिभाषित करेंगे। आधुनिक हिन्दू धर्म को हमेशा मतभेदों के प्रति सहिष्णु होने पर गर्व रहा है। आधुनिक युग के सबसे प्रसिद्ध हिन्दू संत स्वामी विवेकानंद ने सिखाया था कि हिन्दू सभ्यता सिर्फ सहिष्णु नहीं है, बल्कि यह स्वीकारती भी है। आज के धर्मांध मूल रूप से अपने ही धर्म को धोखा दे रहे हैं, साथ ही संविधान को चोट पहुंचा रहे हैं। यह मुद्दा छोटा नहीं है। अगर असहिष्णु गुंडों को उनकी असहिष्णुता और कानूनी भय दिखाने पर भी बचने दिया गया, तो बतौर सभ्यता और आजाद लोकतंत्र, भारत के अस्तित्व के लिए जरूरी चरित्र को हिंसा का सामना करना पड़ेगा।

बहुलतावदी और लोकतांत्रिक भारत को अपनी विभिन्न पहचानों की बहुलतापूर्ण अभिव्यक्ति को सहना होगा। अगर हम हिन्दू संस्कृति के स्व-घोषित पंचों को अपना पाखंड और दोहरे मापदंड थोपने देंगे, तो वे भारतीयता को तब तक परिभाषित करते रहेंगे, जब तक वह भारतीय ही न रह जाए। BJP के नेतृत्व में चल रहे इस सांस्कृतिक युद्ध से अदालतों में लड़ना चाहिए, लेकिन इसे सभी भारतीयों के दिलों में जीतना होगा।

## बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड

Date:25-12-20

### कृषक समस्या का हल

#### संपादकीय

राजधानी के बाहरी इलाकों में किसानों के विरोध प्रदर्शन की शुरुआत हुए करीब एक महीना हो चुका है लेकिन कोई हल नजर नहीं आ रहा। किसानों की मांग है कि तीनों कृषि कानूनों को वापस लिया जाए। केंद्र सरकार ने कुछ संशोधनों का प्रस्ताव भी रखा जिनमें न्यूनतम समर्थन मूल्य (एमएसपी) प्रणाली को जारी रखने का लिखित आश्वासन देने की बात शामिल है, परंतु किसानों ने इन्हें ठुकरा दिया। प्रदर्शनकारी किसानों की मांग है कि एमएसपी की कानूनी गारंटी दी जाए। यह गतिरोध ऐसा कड़ा रुख रखने से समाप्त नहीं होगा। उधर सरकार ने किसानों को एक बार फिर चर्चा के लिए आमंत्रित किया है।

किसानों की चिंताएं दूर करने के तरीके हैं, बशर्ते किसान भी बातचीत के लिए तैयार हों। चाहे जो भी हो, निजी मंडियों के लिए कारोबार शुरू हो जाने के बाद भी सरकार एमएसपी की व्यवस्था खत्म नहीं कर सकेगी। राष्ट्रीय खाद्य सुरक्षा अधिनियम के तहत जरूरतों को पूरा करने के लिए उसे 5.5 करोड़ टन अनाज खरीदने की आवश्यकता होगी। सरकार देश की 67 फीसदी आबादी को सब्सिडी वाला खाद्यान्न मुहैया कराती है और अधिकांश सरकारी खरीद पंजाब और हरियाणा में की जाती है। यकीनन सरकार को कृषि कानून पारित करने में इतनी जल्दबाजी नहीं करनी थी। परंतु अब जबकि वह ऐसा कर चुकी है तो कानून वापस लेना समस्या का हल नहीं है। केंद्र सरकार को उन राज्यों से भी बात करनी चाहिए जो उसके साथ नहीं हैं। ऐसे राज्यों को यह विकल्प दिया जाना चाहिए कि वे चाहें तो फिलहाल इन कानूनों को लागू न करें। केवल कुछ ही राज्य हैं जो इसका विरोध कर रहे हैं। यह भी संभव है कि आगे चलकर वे इन कानूनों को लागू करें क्योंकि सरकारी खरीद उन राज्यों में स्थानांतरित हो जाएगी जहां लेनदेन की लागत कम है। इसके अलावा ऐसी कोई वजह नहीं है जिसके चलते राज्य किसानों को अनुबंधित कृषि के विकल्प से वंचित करें। राजनीतिक रूप से देखा जाए तो राज्य सरकारें खेती के मुद्दों को लेकर अधिक संवेदनशील हैं और एक बार इन कानूनों का नफा नुकसान स्पष्ट हो जाने के बाद वे अपना रुख बदल सकती हैं। राज्य सरकारें किसानों की मदद के लिए खाद्यान्न खरीद कर उन्हें कमी वाले राज्यों को बेच भी सकती हैं।

बुनियादी मुद्दा कृषि से होने वाली आय का है और समर्थन मूल्य किसानों को कुछ हद तक निश्चितता प्रदान करता है। हालांकि सरकार एमएसपी नीति जारी रखेगी लेकिन यह स्पष्ट है कि वह खुली खरीद हमेशा जारी नहीं रख सकती। साथ

ही पंजाब और हरियाणा के किसान हमेशा गेहूं और चावल नहीं उपजा सकते। यह चक्र व्यवहार्य नहीं है, भले ही इसे किसी नजरिये से देखा जाए। बहरहाल, विविधता लाने की अलग कीमत है और इसमें जोखिम भी हैं। ऐसे में राज्य सरकारों को सहायता उपलब्ध कराने के क्षेत्र में अधिक पहल करनी होगी। चूंकि कृषि राज्य का विषय है इसलिए उन्हें इसे स्थायी बनाने की राह तलाशनी होगी। यह क्षेत्र पूरी तरह केंद्र सरकार की खरीद पर निर्भर नहीं रह सकता। हरियाणा सरकार ने धान की जगह दूसरी फसल की खेती पर नकद पुरस्कार घोषित कर सही किया है। किसानों की मदद के लिए राज्य सरकार एमएसपी पर दालों की खरीद भी शुरू करेगी। ऐसी योजनाएं पंजाब जैसे पानी की कमी वाले राज्यों में भी शुरू की जानी चाहिए। केंद्र ऐसी योजनाओं के व्यापक क्रियान्वयन में राज्यों की मदद कर सकता है। यदि वह ऐसा न करे तो भी राज्यों को किसानों की जरूरतों पर ध्यान देना होगा। उत्तर प्रदेश गन्ना खरीदने वालों पर जो कीमत लागू करता है वह इसका उदाहरण है। ये कीमतें हमेशा केंद्र की अनुशंसा से अधिक रहती हैं। राज्य सरकारें किसानों की अनदेखी नहीं कर सकतीं, और वह एक अप्रत्यक्ष सुरक्षा ढांचा है।

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