



THE TIMES OF INDIA

Date:02-01-21

Struggle For Choice

Argentinian women score a historic win

TOI Editorial

Argentina's legalisation of abortion up to the 14th week of pregnancy is a big win for women everywhere. Feminist groups had fought long and hard against the Catholic Church and evangelist outfits to convince enough lawmakers to support women's reproductive rights. Hitherto, pregnant Argentine women had to prove rape or medical complications. Ironically, theological dogma that set restrictive rules forced countless girls and women into unsafe, life-threatening abortions.

Argentina's shift, despite Pope Francis, the country's most influential personality, leaning against abortion can persuade the South American holdouts. Women in Ireland, which voted in 2018 to allow abortion, are increasingly turning against a restrictive clause allowing abortion only up to 12 weeks. Indian law allows abortions up to 20 weeks and an amendment extending this period to 24 weeks and no upper gestational limit for fetal abnormalities had just secured Cabinet approval when Covid struck.

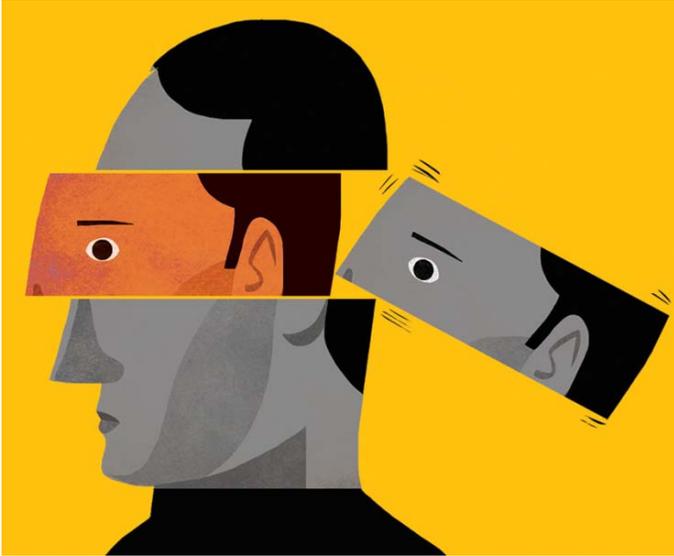
India is quite an oddity because here abortion laws progressed faster than society. The right of women to choose when to have babies or not still vests with menfolk. Just around 50% of women have access to modern methods of family planning according to NFHS 2019-20 initial data. Here too, women bear the brunt, forced to resort to female sterilisation or pills with condom use finding few takers. Health experts also flag unsafe abortions. On top of all this, last year saw the pandemic significantly reduce access to various reproductive care facilities. The struggle to get men to respect women's rights or even show empathy continues.

Date:02-01-21

Warping a great faith

Both 'hard' and 'soft' Hindutva are expedient uses of religion for political gains

Pavan K Varma, [The writer is an author and former diplomat]



As we step into a new decade, Hinduism, and its interpretation and practice, will play an increasingly pivotal role. We have seen the manifestation of 'hard' political Hindutva, wedded to the goal of a Hindu Rashtra. It stands discredited not for its evangelism, but for its lack of knowledge of the basics of Hinduism. Another label bandied about is 'soft' Hindutva, but with no real clarity about what it means. Since India is a deeply religious country, such notions need to be investigated before they distort the role religion plays in politics and, indeed, in our lives.

The pejorative phrase 'soft Hindutva' is an outcome of a curious – if unintended – collusion between the ultra-Hindu right and the ultra-liberal left. The

supporters of political Hindutva believe that they have a monopoly over public display of religion (PDR). They are overt in their passionate – and sometimes fanatical – belief in the need to project, promote and impose their warped view of Hinduism. Thus, they view PDR by any other section of the political class, as an attempt to usurp their ordained public space through a weak imitation, 'soft' as against their 'hard' religious commitment.

The ultra-liberal left is dismissive about religion per se, and believes that any public show of personal religious fealty by politicians is a betrayal of secularism. For its votaries, political Hindutva can be countered not by a saner practice of religion, but by not practising religion at all, least of all publicly.

I wonder what Mahatma Gandhi would have thought of these unseemly definitional shenanigans. He was, as Nehru said, 'a Hindu to the innermost depth of his being'. During his first jail term in South Africa (January 1908), he read Rajayoga, commentaries on the Gita. During his second incarceration (October-December 1908) he read the Bhagwad Gita almost every day.

During his third imprisonment (February-May 1909) he read the Veda-Shabda-Sangana, the Upanishads, the Manusmriti, Patanjali's Yoga Shastra, and re-read the Gita. One of the first books published by his International Press in Phoenix, Natal, was an abridged version of Tulsidas's Ramcharitmanas, which, as he wrote in his autobiography, was 'the greatest book in all devotional literature'.

He did not, therefore, see anything wrong in espousing the utopia of Ram Rajya. But – and this is critically important – he combined his staunch belief in Hinduism with the fullest respect for all religions.

Let us take another example. Madan Mohan Malviya (1861-1946) was four times the president of the Indian National Congress, a follower of Mahatma Gandhi, and like him a devout Hindu. When, as a member of the Congress, he founded the Akhil Bhartiya Hindu Mahasabha, for the welfare of Hindus and Hinduism, was he practising soft Hindutva or merely following his personal faith? He is credited for having begun the aarti puja at Har-ki-Pauri in Haridwar – which continues to this day – and the setting up of organisations for the protection of the cow, and for a cleaner Ganga.

He is also the iconic founder of the Banaras Hindu University, from where, as its vice-chancellor, he published a magazine called Sanatan Dharma to promote religious and dharmic interests. The national

slogan – Satyameva Jayate – taken from the Mundaka Upanishad, was also his contribution. Did all of this make him a proud Hindu immersed in his faith, or just a practitioner of soft Hindutva, uncritically emulating Savarkar and the RSS?

Our assessments need to get away from such knee-jerk categorisations and aspire to a more reflective inquiry. The truth is that when Hinduism is reduced to cynical tokenism for short-term political dividends, it is soft Hindutva. When it is devalued to illiterate aggression for long-term political gain, it is political Hindutva. Both these extremes are a deliberate ploy to make genuine Hindus lose agency of the way they wish to practice their religion in conformity with republican values, democratic principles and constitutional secularism.

Swami Vivekananda, the towering symbol of Hindu renaissance, would have been impatient of such categorisations of ‘soft’ or ‘hard’. His mission was to espouse an enlightened and inclusive form of Hinduism sans hatred, intolerance and violence. Once, when he was berated by conservative Hindu critics for staying with a Muslim lawyer in Mount Abu, he expostulated: ‘Sir, what do you mean? I am a sanyasin. I am above all your social conventions ... I am not afraid of God because he sanctions it. I am not afraid of the scriptures, because they allow it. But I am afraid of you people and your society. You know nothing of God and the scriptures. I see Brahman everywhere manifested through even the meanest creature. For me there is nothing high or low. Shiva, Shiva!’

Hinduism deserves a true renaissance based on its great wisdoms. But this will require its followers to study their religious legacy, and prevent its distortion by ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ Hindutva-vadis.

Lord Ram in the Ramayana says: ‘Janani Janambhoomischa Swargadapi Gariyasi’ – Mother and motherland are superior to heaven. Today, our motherland requires social harmony and stability to realise her destiny of becoming one of the great nations of the world. If Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s call, ‘Sabka saath, sabka vikas, sabka vishwas’, is not to become just an expedient slogan, it must be based on Swami Vivekananda’s vision and on Mahatma Gandhi’s inclusiveness.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Date:02-01-21

Insurance in Need of Reform, 20 Years On

ET Editorial

India’s experience two decades after the opening up of the insurance industry to private players has been reassuring, but more reforms are needed to create a vibrant market that can attract long-term funds and help the economy grow. Greater competition has helped drive down costs, improved services and given consumers a wider choice. But life insurance towers over non-life insurance. And, the Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) continues to be a dominant player with assets under management of about Rs 31lakh crore. For its corpus to be deployed optimally, the government must act on this year’s budget promise to divest a part of its holding in LIC through an IPO.

Investors and the insured will benefit, considering that LIC still accounts for nearly two-thirds of the new business premium. Listing will bring in transparency and accountability, boosting corporate governance. Premium payments lie on the books of insurers, and prudential norms require insurance companies to provide for more capital as premium collections rise. The government should raise foreign direct investment from 49% to 74% in insurance to allow foreign partners majority control. More investment will flow into underinsured India (with insurance penetration at 3.69% of the GDP).

Despite the freedom from price controls in 2007, general insurance lags life insurance as a consumer who buys a non-life product perceives it as an expense. Non-life companies must improve their underwriting discipline and base their pricing on the assessment of risks. A market for catastrophe bonds must be created, to insure against natural calamities. Crop insurance must become market-oriented. Such reforms are essential to grow the non-life business and mitigate risk.



Date:02-01-21

Looks before you reform

NEP's regulatory architecture is too monolithic for higher education in a diverse country

Furqan Qamar and Krishna Kumar, [Qamar is secretary general of the Association of Indian Universities (AIU) and Kumar is a former director of NCERT and editor of the Routledge Handbook of Education in India.]

Concerned with the dubious effects of the multiplicity of regulatory bodies in higher education, nearly all advisory panels appointed since 2005 have been pitching for a single regulator. The National Education Policy (NEP 2020) announced a few months ago, too, has endorsed the idea by providing for a common single regulator for the entire higher education system, with the exception of medical and law education. If recent developments in the field of medical education are any indication, the number of regulatory bodies in higher education is only set to soar.

Regulatory bodies came up essentially in response to the rapid growth of private participation since the 1980s. Procedures of regulation became increasingly complex even as practices they were meant to control got bolder and brazen. Finding higher education “over-regulated and under-governed”, the National Knowledge Commission (NKC) concluded in 2007 that the plethora of agencies attempting to control entry, operation, intake, price, size, output and exit had rendered the regulation of higher education ineffectual. The NKC recommended the setting up of an overarching Independent Regulatory Authority in Higher Education (IRAHE). The Yash Pal Committee in its 2009 report also felt that the existence of multiple regulatory bodies had become an impediment to the pursuit of excellence. The committee’s key concern was compartmentalisation of academia, with little scope for dialogue across disciplines. To promote such a dialogue, the Yash Pal committee recommended the creation of an apex

body called the National Commission for Higher Education and Research (NCHER). It was meant to serve as a platform for academic exchange and dialogue across disciplines and professions rather than as a controlling machine.

In 2016, a committee chaired by TSR Subramanian proposed a National Higher Education Promotion and Management Act for setting up an Indian Regulatory Authority for Higher Education (IRAHE) to subsume all existing regulatory bodies in higher education. Media reports in 2017 hinted at the possibility of a new regulatory body, tentatively titled Higher Education Empowerment Regulation Agency (HEERA), to dissolve all existing regulatory bodies in higher education. The draft national policy presented by the Kasturirangan Committee in 2019 commended “a common regulatory regime for the entire higher education sector to eliminate isolation and disjunction” and proposed a National Higher Education Regulatory Authority (NHERA) as a sole regulator for all higher education. The existing regulatory bodies, including MCI, were to become professional standard setting bodies. Additionally, the committee also recommended the setting up of three other independent agencies to oversee accreditation by multiple accrediting institutions (AIs).

With so many independent institutions responsible for regulating various facets of higher education, the draft NEP 2020 proposed a Rashtriya Shiksha Aayog (RSA) to coordinate, direct and address inter-institutional overlaps and conflicts. The idea of a common single regulator had, thus, morphed into a complex regulatory structure comprising an authority, three councils and a national commission with existing regulatory bodies and professional councils to continue to exist, albeit as professional standard setting bodies.

While the draft policy was still being finalised, the National Medical Commission of India (NMCI) Bill originally introduced in 2017 was reintroduced and passed by the Parliament in 2019 thereby repealing the Indian Medical Council Act 1956, dissolving the Medical Council of India (MCI) and vesting the regulation of medical education in the newly created National Medical Commission of India (NMCI).

Reviling the regulatory regimes for being “too heavy-handed”, NEP 2020 has now posited for a “light but tight” system under a single regulator for all higher education barring medical and law education. It envisages an overarching Higher Education Commission of India (HECI), with four independent verticals comprising the National Higher Education Regulatory Council (NHERC), the National Accreditation Council (NAC), the Higher Education Grants Council (HEGC) and the General Education Council (GEC). Under the new schema of things, the University Grants Commission (UGC) is to become HEGC while the other regulatory bodies will become professional standard setters. Thankfully, the five independent institutions recommended in draft NEP 2019 now stand collapsed into one which will function with existing, re-defined bodies.

While NEP-2020 is content with separate regulation for medical education, it envisions healthcare education as an integrative system offering allopathic medicine students “a basic understanding of Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy (AYUSH) and vice versa”. The idea of making medical education inter-disciplinary might be easier to enforce if all medical education were to be regulated in a coordinated manner by a single regulatory body. With the enactment of the National Commission for Homoeopathy (NCH) and the National Commission for Indian System of Medicine (NCISM) and continuation of the Dental Council of India (DCI), Pharmacy Council of India (PCI) and the Indian Nursing Council (INC), it looks certain that medical education shall continue to be regulated in a fragmented manner.

It may well be argued that it is well nigh impossible to design a single regulatory framework to take care of the domain-specific needs of disparate disciplines and professions even within healthcare education. But if accepted as a principle, it has the potential to delay, if not derail, the idea of a single regulator to cater to the diverse disciplines of general, professional and technical higher education. And should that actually happen, the idea of reining in the regulators might mean drowning higher education under permanent heavy rain.

The story of regulation is nicely captured by the saying, “marz barhata gaya jyon jyon dava ki (the disease got worse with the medication)”. The regulatory architecture proposed in the NEP is far too monolithic for a system of higher education serving a geographically, culturally and politically diverse country like ours. Even in the matter of privatisation, one notices enormous diversity of players and practices. Historically too, private participation in the running of colleges has not followed a single pattern. To imagine that a uniform structure called Board of Governors can serve all different kinds of institutions across the country is to entertain a fantasy in place of a serious vision of reform. Such a vision calls for better appreciation of what exists, no matter how worrisome a condition it is in.

Date:02-01-21

When the Arctic warms

It will affect sea levels and precipitation patterns globally. India will be affected

Navtej Sarna, [The writer is the former Ambassador of India to the US. He also served as India's High Commissioner to the UK.]



In my school geography books, the Arctic was a frozen fastness, the distant domain of polar bears and fur-clad tribes, or the occasional intrepid explorer. But that was half a century ago. Today the mysteries of the Arctic are literally melting away: The top of the world is falling into the sea in huge blocks, bringing with it challenges that are global in nature.

It is in the Arctic that global warming presents its most dramatic face; the region is warming up twice as fast as the global average. The ice cap is shrinking fast — since 1980, the volume of Arctic sea ice has declined by as much as 75 per cent. The Northern Sea Route (NSR) which would connect the North Atlantic to the North Pacific through a short polar arc was once the stuff of fantasy. The melting ice has now made it a reality and a trickle of commercial cargo vessels has been going through every summer since the last decade. Models predict that this route could be ice free in summer by 2050, if not earlier.

These developments will have a critical impact in several sectors, most fundamentally on climate. The loss of ice and the warming waters will affect sea levels, salinity levels, and current and precipitation patterns. Already, the Tundra is returning to swamp, the permafrost is thawing, sudden storms are ravaging coastlines and wildfires are devastating interior Canada and Russia. The phenomenally rich biodiversity of the Arctic region is under serious threat. Habitat loss and degradation, the absence of year-long ice and higher temperatures are making the survival of Arctic marine life, plants and birds difficult while encouraging species from lower latitudes to move north. The Arctic is also home to about 40 different indigenous groups, whose culture, economy and way of life is in danger of being swept away. Increasing human encroachment with its attendant stresses will only aggravate this impact and upset a fragile balance.

Yet there is a flip side: The opening of the Arctic presents huge commercial and economic opportunities, particularly in shipping, energy, fisheries and mineral resources. Commercial navigation through the NSR is the most tempting: The distance from Rotterdam to Yokohama will be cut by 40 per cent compared to the Suez route. Oil and natural gas deposits, estimated to be 22 per cent of the world's unexplored resources, mostly in the Arctic ocean, will be open to access along with mineral deposits including 25 per cent of the global reserves of rare earths, buried in Greenland.

Fortunately, none of this is easy. Navigation conditions are dangerous and restricted to the summer. Lack of deep-water ports, a need for ice-breakers, shortage of workers trained for polar conditions, and high insurance costs add to the difficulties. Mining and deep-sea drilling carry massive costs and environmental risks. These difficulties may provide the crucial window to work out norms that are focussed on balanced and sustainable development, before human greed overtakes everything. The complication is that, unlike Antarctica, the Arctic is not a global common and there is no overarching treaty that governs it, only the UN Convention of Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Large parts of it are under the sovereignty of the five littoral states — Russia, Canada, Norway, Denmark (Greenland) and the US — and exploitation of the new resources is well within their rights.

Inevitably, given the high stakes, strategic games are afoot. Russia, Canada, Norway and Denmark have put in overlapping claims for extended continental shelves, and the right to sea-bed resources; in 2007, Russia embedded a flag on the seabed below the North Pole to bolster its claim. The US, not a party to UNCLOS, is unable to put in a formal claim but is under pressure to strengthen its Arctic presence.

For the present, Russia is the dominant power, with the longest Arctic coastline, half the Arctic population, and a full-fledged strategic policy. Claiming that the NSR falls within its territorial waters (the US believes the passage lies in international waters), Russia anticipates huge dividends from commercial traffic including through the use of its ports, pilots and ice-breakers. Russia has also activated its northern military bases, refurbished its nuclear armed submarine fleet and demonstrated its capabilities, including through an exercise with China in the eastern Arctic. China, playing for economic advantage, has moved in fast, projecting the Polar Silk Road as an extension of the BRI, and has invested heavily in ports, energy, undersea infrastructure and mining projects. This limbering up of strategic postures is only the tip of the proverbial iceberg.

India's interests in these developments, though distant, are not peripheral. Our extensive coastline makes us vulnerable to the impact of Arctic warming on ocean currents, weather patterns, fisheries and most importantly, our monsoon. Scientific research in Arctic developments, in which India has a good record, will contribute to our understanding of climatic changes in the Third Pole — the Himalayas. The strategic implications of an active China in the Arctic and its growing economic and strategic relationship with

Russia are self-evident and need close monitoring. Fortunately, since 2013, India has had a toehold in the region. It has observer status in the Arctic Council, which is the predominant inter-governmental forum for cooperation on the environmental and development (though not the security) aspects of the Arctic. It is high time that our presence on the Arctic Council was underpinned by a strategic policy that encompassed economic, environmental, scientific and political aspects.



Date:02-01-21

An ill-conceived, overbroad and vague ordinance

The U.P. religious conversion ordinance is unconstitutional, vilifies inter-faith marriages and violates key rights

Madan B. Lokur, [Former judge of the Supreme Court of India]

Article 213 (1) of the Constitution of India provides: “If at any time, except when the Legislative Assembly of a State is in session, or where there is a Legislative Council in a State, except when both Houses of the Legislature are in session, the Governor is satisfied that circumstances exist which render it necessary for him to take immediate action, he may promulgate such Ordinances as the circumstances appear to him to require: ...” There are, therefore, three pre-conditions to be satisfied before the Governor promulgates an ordinance: first, the State Legislature should not be in session; circumstances should exist for promulgating an ordinance and importantly, those circumstances must warrant immediate action.

Circumstances, urgency

There is no established practice requiring the Governor (or the President under Article 123 of the Constitution) to state the circumstances for immediate action. Therefore, while the recent Commission for Air Quality Management Ordinance (<https://bit.ly/3rEj4WJ>) gave a four page justification for immediate action, the Farmer’s Produce Trade and Commerce Ordinance (<https://bit.ly/3rK24OH>) merely stated in the preamble what the ordinance provides for, but did not disclose the circumstances and urgency for immediate action. I believe a healthy convention should develop and the preamble to any ordinance should state the immediacy for promulgating it when the Legislature is not in session. This would greatly enhance transparency in legislation, but, more importantly, enable legislators to understand why they are, in a sense, by-passed and why a debate and discussion in the Legislature could not be awaited.

The reason for immediate action is, as yet, not justiciable and it is unlikely that any court will delve into this arena. But the Supreme Court of India has held that the existence of circumstances leading to the satisfaction of the Governor can be inquired into. In other words, the court can inquire whether circumstances existed that enabled the Governor to be satisfied of the necessity of promulgating an

ordinance. However, the court will not delve into the sufficiency of circumstances. Therefore, why not disclose the circumstances and reason for immediate action in the first instance rather than require people to go to court to find out? In the normal course, these are unlikely to be a state secret.

The U.P. ordinance

The preamble to the The Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance (<https://bit.ly/3n943bH>), commonly called the anti-love jihad ordinance, merely indicates what it provides for, namely, unlawful conversion from one religion to another by coercion, misrepresentation and so on “or by marriage”. It then proceeds to record the satisfaction of the Governor of the existence of circumstances and the necessity for “him/her to take immediate action”.

Let us try and imagine the circumstances requiring promulgation of the ordinance as far as marriage is concerned. If one fraudulent or coercive inter-faith marriage is taking place, the police can certainly prevent it, as they supposedly do in child marriages. An ordinance is not required for it. However, if more than one such fraudulent or coercive inter-faith marriage is expected to take place, the State government would have information of mass conversions for the purpose of marriage.

In the normal course, it is unlikely that these mass conversions would be in secret and almost simultaneous. A more realistic expectation would be specific information of some or many unwilling religious conversions likely to take place. Surely, these can also be prevented by an alert police force by invoking existing legal provisions. Assuming a somewhat unbelievable scenario does exist, how does one justify immediate action for promulgating an ordinance? It is not as if dozens or hundreds of inter-faith marriages were expected virtually overnight. However hard one might think about it, the need for immediate action is very difficult to understand.

Provisions and impact

Consider the consequences of some provisions of the ordinance, and we are actually witness to them. Section 3 prohibits conversion or attempt to convert any person from one religion to another by coercion or fraud etc. or by marriage. To the extent of conversion by coercion or fraud, etc. there is no problem and nobody supports it. What is conversion by marriage? Nobody gets converted by marriage. If a Hindu marries a Christian, who gets converted — the husband or wife or both or neither? One can understand conversion for marriage, but if an adult person desires to get converted to the religion of the other before marriage, what objection can anybody have?

Rights issues

The offence of attempting to convert poses a bigger rights issue. Section 7 provides that upon receiving information (it may be fake news) that a religious conversion is designed to take place, a police officer is authorised under the Criminal Procedure Code without orders from a Magistrate and without a warrant, to arrest the person so designing, if it appears that the commission of the offence cannot be otherwise prevented. The nature of information includes an allegation of allurement which includes an offer of any temptation in the form of a gift or gratification. So, if a boy and girl of different religions are seen talking together or eating out, it is easy for a so-called aggrieved person (who could be any stranger) to complain to the police that he overheard a conversation in which a temptation was offered to the girl, including a pizza, as has been recently reported. This could trigger the arrest of the boy offering the allurement, his

friends and family (as conspirators) with no questions asked. Shotgun weddings were always an offence, but now even pizza-induced weddings are an offence.

Should someone genuinely desire to convert but not get married, that person would have to inform the District Magistrate (DM) two months in advance of the plan through a declaration, under Section 8. The DM requires the police to inquire the real purpose of conversion and file a report (in a sealed cover?) with the DM. What is the true purpose of the police inquiry? If the report concludes that the desire to convert is not for a good enough reason, can the DM refuse permission to convert? Is a pre-crime scenario contemplated?

Assuming conversion is not objected to, even thereafter the DM must be informed by the converted through a declaration under Section 9. Interestingly, the DM is expected to exhibit the declaration on the notice board of the office till the contents of the declaration are confirmed. Meanwhile, the ubiquitous aggrieved person has an opportunity to object to the conversion. What next — does the DM ‘cancel’ the bona fide conversion and have the converted arrested?

Finally, the burden of proof — Section 12 provides that the burden to prove the conversion was not on account of coercion, fraud, etc. or by marriage will be on the person who has caused the conversion. How is that person expected to know the mind of the converted? It is only the person converted who can answer that question and nobody else, as in Hadiya’s case.

A danger

The ordinance is prone to abuse and we have seen its consequences — of intimidation, bullying, arbitrary arrests and the loss of a foetus. It is ill-conceived, overbroad and vague in many respects. It vilifies all inter-faith marriages and places unreasonable obstacles on consenting adults in exercising their personal choice of a partner, mocks the right to privacy and violates the right to life, liberty and dignity. In short, it is unconstitutional.

Date:02-01-21

Taking note of farmer welfare, the Kerala way

The political allegations levelled against the State in the context of the farmers’ protest are far removed from the facts

Binoy Viswam, [Secretary, CPI National Council, and leader of the party in Parliament.]

For more than a month now, farmers are writing a new history, camping at the borders of Delhi. The concrete barricades, thorny iron fences and powerful water cannons have not been able to prevent their tractor trollies from reaching the vicinity of the national capital. They have been so determined and prepared that the Delhi winter has failed before them. Assembled in their thousands, they have established a new way of life at Singhu, Tikri, Ghazipur, Noida and Shahjahanpur. In some manner, the upsurge by these farmers resembles the ‘Occupy Wallstreet Movement’ in the United States, in 2011, whose slogan reverberates even today across the world: “We are the 99 percent”.

Unflinching willpower

The government might have thought that the farmers would retreat to their villages after a couple of days or a week at the most, but this is not the mood at all among the farmers. As a frequent visitor to one or the other centres of struggle, this writer would definitely say that this farmers' struggle is unique in the history of free India. A self-contained lifestyle with all necessary arrangements for food, shelter, clothing, and sanitation are in place. Scores of them, young and old, with whom this writer could interact with, represent the unflinching will of a people who consider agriculture as their culture. Their utmost proximity to soil and nature has tempered them as steel, while helping them remain calm and cool at the same time.

The firefighters in the government who talk in different terms (may be purposefully), might have prepared their own strategy to face this struggle of the annadatas. Some of them say that the doors of dialogue are always kept open. There are certain others who are stubborn in saying that there can be no compromise on the implementation of the three Farm Bills. There are also those who still promise to take a relook if necessary, but only after two years. There is no need to ponder on this as most of these officials have been trained in a certain ideological school. As part of their campaign of malignment, the propaganda managers have labelled the farmers 'Khalistanis' and 'urban naxalites'.

But these sons and daughters of the soil, who sow the seeds of hope to feed their fellow beings, have maintained inimitable self-restraint. Their struggle, their unity, their patience, and the massive nature of their battle are having an impact on the cohesive nature of the ruling alliance, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). Following in the footsteps of NDA ally, the Shiromani Akali Dal that walked out of the NDA in support of the farmers, the Rashtriya Loktantrik Party has also snapped its ties with the alliance. Another important party that shares power with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Haryana continues to remain unhappy with the central government's approach to the farmers' issues.

The Narendra Modi government expected the farmers to tire out and slowly retreat from the battlefield. But it is mistaken. The determination by the farmers to go on with the struggle is only strengthening by the day. The Prime Minister himself has come forward to lead a frontal attack on the annadatas. Recently, he minced no words in expressing his disappointment while accusing the struggle of being a politically motivated one. The thrust of his attack was evident when he criticised the Opposition as misleading the farmers and shooting from their shoulders to target the government. In this tirade, the Prime Minister pointed a finger against the Left-led government in Kerala.

The situation in Kerala

All the allegations that he has levelled against the Kerala government are unfounded, and far from truth. In his exhortation that there are no Agricultural Produce Market Committees (APMCs) and mandis in Kerala, he presumed that the concept of the Minimum Support Price is not prevalent in the State. He has shut his eyes to the basic truth about the agricultural scenario in Kerala.

It is true that mandis regulated by an APMC are not in existence in Kerala. But it does not mean that the interests of farmers are not taken care of in the State. In fact, Kerala is the State where farmers' rights are being protected by the government itself, and much more effectively than any other Indian State.

While the government of India has fixed the procurement rate for rice at ₹18 a kg, the Left Democratic Front government in Kerala is procuring rice from cultivators at ₹27.48 a kg. In the same manner copra

(dried coconut) is also procured at a much higher rate in Kerala than the price announced by the central government. Kerala is the State where increased basic price is ensured not only for paddy but also vegetables and fruits. Sixteen such items are enlisted by the government where the basic prices (per kg) are guaranteed. To cite some of them, tapioca (₹12), banana (₹30), garlic (₹139), pineapple (₹15), tomato (₹8), string beans (₹34), ladies' fingers (₹20), cabbage (₹11) and potato (₹20).

Apart from crop insurance, paddy cultivators will get the royalty in Kerala at the rate of ₹2,000 per hectare. They have a pension too, which is something unique in India. In 2006, when farmers' suicides became the order of the day across the country, the Left Front government introduced a debt relief commission that extended a helping hand to the farmers, thereby saving them.

There is basis for a counter

No BJP-led government in the country can even imagine the measures that the Left government in Kerala has initiated for the welfare of farmers. Instead of understanding those measures, the Prime Minister has chosen to train his political guns on the Kerala government and the farmers. The influence of corporates on his allegations is clear. The Left has the moral and political authority to engage in any polemics with the BJP-led central government in this regard.

It is intriguing why the Prime Minister has never said a word about the experience of Bihar where mandis were abolished in 2006 and the plight of farmers that only worsened after this measure was initiated. After the three farm ordinances of June 2020, 40% of mandis in Madhya Pradesh have registered only zero transactions.

The corporate stamp

This is the reality of the farm Bills. Though they claim 'to enable' the protection and the empowerment of farmers, the truth is just the opposite. The purpose of these laws is the enabling of the corporatisation of Indian agriculture and the introduction of contract farming. When Ministers continue to assure the continuance of mandis they are practically pushed out of the scene, as it happened in Madhya Pradesh and elsewhere. The annadatas have been able to foresee the evil in the three farm laws that would eventually find them at the mercy of corporate profit mongers. They know that these laws would ruin the backbone of the agricultural economy and badly affect the food security of India.

The farmers are in the struggle in order to prevent such a calamity from happening. It is high time that the Prime Minister and his government understand the patriotic and selfless role being played by the food providers of the country and the genuine nature and cause of their struggle.



उद्यमशीलता पर खतरनाक प्रहार

विकास सारस्वत, (लेखक इंडिक अकादमी के सदस्य एवं स्तंभकार हैं)

नए साल में जब लगभग हर तरफ सकारात्मकता और नई उम्मीदों की रोशनी दिख रही तब राजनीतिक बिरादरी में एक वर्ग अभी भी नकारात्मकता का दामन छोड़ने को तैयार नहीं दिखता। वह देश में उद्यमियों के खिलाफ माहौल बनाने में जुटा है। वैसे तो राजनीति में गौरव, आकांक्षा और हताशा जैसे भावों की अभिव्यक्ति नारों और जुमलों के माध्यम से होती रही है। ये अभिव्यक्तियां उस दौर की राजनीति को परिभाषित भी करती रही हैं। जैसे इंदिरा गांधी का 'गरीबी हटाओ' नारा निराशा के माहौल में आशा की किरण दिखता था या फिर एक समय 'गर्व से कहो हम हिंदू हैं' छद्म धर्मनिरपेक्षता से त्रस्त हिंदुओं का विप्लव घोष बना। लोकनायक जेपी का 'इंदिरा हटाओ देश बचाओ' आपातकाल के बाद सत्ता परिवर्तन का मंत्र बना। हालांकि ऐसा नहीं है कि सभी नारों या जुमलों को जन स्वीकार्यता मिली हो। वर्ष 2004 में भाजपा के 'इंडिया शाइनिंग' को जनता ने ठुकरा दिया। कुछ जुमलों को तो जनता ने न सिर्फ नकारा, बल्कि जवाबी नारा देकर पुरजोर विरोध भी किया। जैसे 2019 के आम चुनाव में राहुल गांधी द्वारा दिए गए नारे 'चौकीदार चोर है' का प्रतिकार 'मैं भी चौकीदार' रूपी प्रचंड गर्जना में मिला। फिर भी ऐसी जन फटकार से बेफिक्र कांग्रेस के युवराज राहुल नए नए जुमले गढ़ते रहे। इसी कड़ी में उन्होंने पिछले कुछ समय से 'अंबानी और अदाणी' को अपशब्द के रूप में उपयोग कर अपनी राजनीति का केंद्र बिंदु बना लिया है। यह दुस्साहस ही है कि जिस गांधी परिवार के सदस्यों पर तमाम घोटालों के आरोप लगते रहे और जो भ्रष्टाचार के मामलों में जमानत पर बाहर हैं वे उन कारोबारी घरानों को क्यों निशाना बना रहे हैं जिन्होंने उद्योग लगाकर, रोजगार देकर बड़ी मात्रा में राष्ट्र के लिए संपदा सृजन किया है। यही नहीं कांग्रेस ने इन्हीं अंबानी और अदाणी से चुनावी चंदा और यात्रा के लिए चार्टर्ड विमान जैसी सुविधाएं भी बेहिचक ली हैं। साथ ही अंबानी और अदाणी को अपने शासनकाल में विभिन्न उद्योगों के लाइसेंस व स्वीकृति भी दी हैं। ऐसी विसंगतियों और प्रकट पाखंड के बावजूद राहुल गांधी द्वारा बार-बार की जा रही इस जुमलेबाजी के बाद 'अंबानी-अदाणी' का मसला आज चर्चा के केंद्र में है। यहां तक कि दिल्ली में जारी किसान आंदोलन में भी दोनों उद्योगपति निशाने पर हैं। जहां राहुल ने कृषि कानूनों को 'अंबानी अदाणी कानून' बताया वहीं कुछ प्रदर्शनकारियों ने उनके उत्पादों के बहिष्कार की मुहिम शुरू कर दी।

राहुल को लगता है कि बड़े उद्यमियों से ईर्ष्या भाव का राजनीतिक दोहन करने के साथ ही वह उनकी गुजराती पृष्ठभूमि के कारण जनता के मन में प्रधानमंत्री मोदी के प्रति शंका के बीज रोपित कर पाएंगे। जबकि तथ्य यही है कि पिछले चुनाव में राफेल जैसे आरोपों को सिरे से खारिज कर जनता ने मोदी की ईमानदारी पर अपनी मुहर लगाई। यदि राहुल ने पिछले कुछ जनमतों को ठीक से समझा होता तो वह जानते कि भारतीय समाज अब जाति, भाषा और क्षेत्रीयता की बेड़ियों को तोड़कर आकांक्षी समाज बन रहा है जिसमें अंबानी और अदाणी ईर्ष्या के पात्र न होकर युवाओं के लिये प्रेरणास्त्रोत हैं। नए भारत को वर्ग संघर्ष, धन-संपन्नता से द्वेष और उस द्वेष को बौद्धिक प्रपंचों द्वारा गढ़े गए विचारधारा रूपी ढकोसलों में कोई रुचि नहीं है। मार्क्स और उनके देसी चेले अब भारतीय युवाओं को आकर्षित नहीं करते। इसके उलट वॉरेन बफे, स्टीव जॉब्स और इंदिरा नूई नए आदर्श हैं। यदि फिल्मों को लोक संस्कृति का बिंब माना जाए तो वहां भी कथानक बदल रहे हैं। उनमें कभी उद्यमियों का खलनायक के रूप में चित्रण हुआ करता, परंतु आज उनके नायकत्व पर फिल्में बनती हैं। मणिरत्नम जैसे दिग्गज फिल्मकार खुद धीरूभाई अंबानी के जीवन पर 'गुरु' फिल्म बना चुके हैं। तमिल फिल्म 'अंबासमुद्रम अंबानी' में उद्यमी बने नायक शंकरनारायणन ने रिलीज के बाद अपना नाम ही अंबानी शंकर रख लिया।

देर से ही सही, पर भारतीय अब समझने लगे हैं कि उसका भविष्य समाजवादी नारों में नहीं, बल्कि उद्यम और संपदा सृजन में है। इस बोध से आगे बढ़कर वैश्विक स्पर्धा में संपन्नता के संबंध में अमेरिकी विचारक पीटर जेक ओ रूक के विचार उल्लेखनीय हैं। अपनी पुस्तक 'ईट द रिच'(1998) में उन्होंने लिखा कि 'क्यों कुछ स्थान अन्य जगहों से अधिक संपन्न होते हैं?' वह जवाब देते हैं कि इसकी वजह बुद्धि तो नहीं हो सकती, क्योंकि 'कोई भी जगह बेवर्ली हिल्स से ज्यादा मूढ़ नहीं, परंतु वहां के नागरिक पैसों में लोट रहे हैं जबकि शतरंज की लोकप्रियता वाले रूस में लोग सूप बनाने के लिए पत्थर उबाल रहे हैं।' तब रूस की वित्तीय हालत बहुत खस्ता थी। इस प्रकार ओ रूक कहते हैं कि 'यदि खनिज संपदाएं संपन्नता तय करतीं तो कई अफ्रीकी देश स्कैंडेनेवियाई देशों से अमीर होते' और यदि शिक्षा संपन्नता का कारण होती तो 99 प्रतिशत साक्षरता दर वाले उत्तर कोरिया की प्रति व्यक्ति आय 44 प्रतिशत साक्षरता दर वाले मोरक्को से एक चौथाई न होती। कई पहलुओं पर विचार के बाद ओ रूक का निष्कर्ष यही रहा कि संपदा सृजन और उद्यमियों का सम्मान करने वाले समाज ही संपन्न बनते हैं। अमेरिका इसका जीवंत उदाहरण है जहां हेनरी फोर्ड से लेकर बिल गेट्स अमेरिकी समाज के हीरो रहे हैं। दूसरी ओर राहुल और उनके जैसी उद्योग विरोधी मानसिकता के लोग हमारे उद्यमियों को अपशब्द का पर्याय बनाकर हमें वापस उस समाजवादी खुमारी में वापस धकेलना चाहते हैं जिससे देश बड़ी मुश्किल से उबरा है। यदि 'अदाणी-अंबानी' की राहुल की निंदा का आशय 'क्रोनी कैपिटलिज्म' यानी साठगांठ वाले पूंजीवाद से है तो भी वह मोदी सरकार के किसी नीतिगत फैसले पर वाजिब सवाल उठाने में भी नाकाम रहे हैं।

संप्रग शासन जरूर कई घोटालों का गवाह रहा। उसमें खास लोगों को लाभ पहुंचाया गया। कोयले से लेकर 2जी स्पेक्ट्रम की बंदरबांट हुई। नेशनल हेराल्ड की जांच तो गांधी परिवार तक पहुंच गई। यानी क्रोनी कैपिटलिज्म के लिए 'अदाणी-अंबानी' के बजाय 'वाड्रा-गांधी' अधिक उपयुक्त जुमला था। 'द राइज एंड फॉल ऑफ नेशंस' में रुचिर शर्मा ने लिखा कि यह भारत का वह दौर था जिसमें छतरपुर (दिल्ली) की फार्म हाऊस पार्टियों में अधिकांश अतिथि या तो जमानत पर होते थे या जेल जाने की तैयारी में। ऐसे में जब राहुल 'अदाणी-अंबानी' जैसे जुमले फेंकते हैं तो वह न सिर्फ भ्रम फैलाते हैं, बल्कि संप्रग के शासकीय अपराधों का ठीकरा भी मोदी शासन पर ही फोड़ते दिखते हैं।

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड

Date:02-01-21

कृषि सुधार: तीन कदमों वाली आपदा की कहानी

देवाशिष बसु, (लेखक मनीलाइफ डॉट इन के संपादक हैं)

केंद्र सरकार ने गत जून में कृषि क्षेत्र के सुधार के लिए तीन कानून लाने के प्रस्ताव को स्वीकृति दी। पहला कानून अनाज, दालों, तिलहन, खाद्य तेल, प्याज एवं आलू की कीमतों भंडारण सीमा से मुक्त करने वाला था। दूसरा कानून किसानों को कहीं भी और किसी को भी अपनी उपज बेचने की छूट देता है। तीसरा कानून किसानों को अनुबंध खेती में शामिल होने की मंजूरी देता है। इन कानूनों से किसी परी-कथा जैसा नतीजा बेहतर कृषि ढांचे एवं बाजार पहुंच के रूप में निकलने की बात कही गई जो ग्रामीण अर्थव्यवस्था को नई उंचाई देगा। अभी लागू कृषि कानूनों के तहत किसान केवल

कृषि उपज विपणन समिति (एपीएमसी) की मंडियों में लाइसेंसधारक कारोबारियों को ही अपनी उपज बेच सकते हैं। इन मंडियों पर स्थानीय नेताओं का ही कब्जा होता है जो इस कारोबार श्रृंखला से होने वाले अधिकतम लाभ को गटक जाते हैं। अब उम्मीद है कि नई व्यवस्था में कीमतों पर लगी तमाम बंदिशें हटने से किसानों को फायदा होगा। वहीं यह सपना देखा गया है कि अनुबंध खेती के जरिये किसानों को पूंजी एवं नई तकनीकें मिल पाएंगी। अथक दुष्प्रचार ने इस खुशनुमा तस्वीर में यकीन करने के लिए करोड़ों लोगों को भरमाने का काम किया है।

लेकिन सुधारों के नाम पर लाए गए इन कानूनों ने किसानों को संघर्ष की राह पर चलने के लिए उकसाया है। सत्तारूढ़ पार्टी की तरफ से प्रदर्शनकारियों को बदनाम करने के लिए सोशल मीडिया के जरिये लगाए गए तमाम आरोप, खंडन एवं स्पष्टीकरणों के बीच किसी को भी नहीं मालूम है कि कौन सा पक्ष सही है या किस पक्ष की दलीलें विवेकपूर्ण हैं। मुझे पता नहीं है कि मोदी सरकार ने किसानों के प्रदर्शन की तीव्रता का अंदाजा लगाया था या नहीं।

इन विरोध प्रदर्शनों से चाहे जिस तरह निपटा जाए, सरकार को इन कानूनों के क्रियान्वयन से जुड़े मुद्दों का निपटारा करना होगा। अगर इन कानूनों को राज्य सरकारों की गर्दन पर दबाव डालकर लागू कराया जाएगा तो किसानों को अधिक वाजिब भाव देने के लिए एक अधिक भरोसेमंद कारोबारी एवं भाव शिनाख्त व्यवस्था लागू करने के लिए मौजूदा समय की शोषणकारी एवं बाधक मंडी व्यवस्था से कहीं अधिक गंभीर कोशिश की जरूरत पड़ेगी। लेकिन कृषि उपजों का भाव इस मुद्दे का केवल एक पहलू है। किसानों को अपनी उपज की आपूर्ति करनी होगी और ऑर्डर पूरे करने के लिए उन्हें शुरु से अंत तक भौतिक वितरण की एक व्यवस्था बनानी होगी। कीमत एवं आपूर्ति दोनों को समर्थन देने के लिए हमें सख्त प्रावधानों वाले अनुबंधों की जरूरत होगी। ऐसे अनुबंधों को तेजी से, आसानी से एवं सस्ते में कौन लागू कराएगा? यह इस परी-कथा का वह हिस्सा है जो सबसे ज्यादा काल्पनिक नजर आता है और इसकी वजह से जबरदस्त तनाव पैदा हो सकता है। वित्तीय क्षेत्र में बनी स्थिति पर फौरी नजर डालने से ही पता चल जाएगा कि यह कितनी आपाधापी वाली स्थिति हो सकती है।

मनीलाइफ में हम उपभोक्ता वित्तीय क्षेत्र (म्युचुअल फंड, स्टॉक, बीमा, फिक्स्ड आय, ऋण) में 15 वर्षों से सेवाएं दे रहे हैं। इनमें से हरेक क्षेत्र का कड़ा नियमन होता है। हरेक फर्म को संबंधित नियामक के पास अपना पंजीकरण कराना होता है। हरेक पक्ष का आचरण अच्छी तरह से परिभाषित है। लगभग पूरा कारोबार ही तकनीक से संचालित होता है जिससे इसमें पूर्ण पारदर्शिता बरतना एवं घटनाक्रम का ब्योरा रख पाना संभव हो जाता है। इसमें प्रतिस्पर्धा बेहद कड़ी है। गलत काम करने वालों पर जुर्माने एवं हर्जाने के प्रावधान नियमों में ही वर्णित हैं। सभी फर्मों को आंतरिक शिकायत निपटान व्यवस्था बनाने के लिए कहने के साथ ही हरेक नियामक ने अपने स्तर पर भी बहुस्तरीय शिकायत निपटान व्यवस्था बनाई हुई है।

इसके बावजूद एक अंदरूनी शख्स होने के नाते हासिल जानकारी के आधार पर मैं पूरे भरोसे से कह सकता हूं कि जमीनी स्तर पर हालात भयानक रूप से उपभोक्ता के खिलाफ हैं। मैंने इन मुद्दों के बारे में अनगिनत बार लिखा है। आम तौर पर ताकतवर फर्में सरेआम नुकसानदायक उत्पाद बेच रही हैं और वे उन्हें खरीदने के लिए उपभोक्ताओं को लुभाने के वास्ते वितरकों को प्रोत्साहन भी दे रही हैं। या फिर वे उपभोक्ताओं से मनमाने शुल्क लेती हैं जिनमें से कुछ तो खराब नियमन की वजह से कानूनी दायरे में भी होती हैं। पकड़े जाने पर वे या तो बेदाग छूट जाते हैं या फिर उन्हें मामूली जुर्माना ही भरना पड़ता है। इंसफ का मतलब यह नहीं होता है कि हम कितने कानून एवं नियम बना सकते हैं। इसका मतलब यह है कि ताकत का गलत इस्तेमाल करने वाले लोगों को इसका भारी खमियाजा भुगतना पड़े। इसका इकलौता

तरीका यही है कि त्वरित एवं कठोर सजा दी जाए जो दूसरों के लिए याद रखने लायक सबक हो और वे उससे सीख लें। लेकिन रसूखदार कंपनियों के दबदबे वाले नियामक उपभोक्ताओं को उनका पैसा वापस दिलाने के तरीके अपनाए या कठोर सजा देने के बारे में सोच भी नहीं पाते हैं। इस बात को परखने का माकूल तरीका यह है कि व्यवस्था बेचारे गरीब को इंसाफ दे पा रही है या नहीं। आज तो ऐसा नहीं हो पा रहा है।

धोखाधड़ी में अपने पैसे गंवाने के बाद उसकी वापसी के लिए मनीलाइफ फाउंडेशन की मदद लेने वाले लोगों में एक अक्वल गायक एवं अभिनेत्री, एक बड़ी विज्ञापन एजेंसी के प्रमुख, रिलायंस उत्पादों के एक बड़े वितरक, डॉक्टर एवं कुछ बैंकर भी शामिल रहे हैं। अब मुक्त बाजार की इस परी-कथा में एपीएमसी मंडी के बाहर ग्रामीण भारत में हुए एक लेनदेन के बारे में थोड़ा सोचिए जिसमें एक तरफ एक छोटा किसान है तो दूसरी तरफ बड़ा कृषि कारोबारी या कंपनी का ठेकेदार है। एक ऐसी व्यवस्था जिसमें न तो सुरक्षा का कोई उपाय है, न नियंत्रण एवं संतुलन के इंतजाम हैं और न ही बड़ी एवं ताकतवर पक्ष की गलत हरकत को साबित करने का कोई तरीका ही है। इससे भी बुरा यह है कि ऐसे लेनदेन के विवादित होने पर किसान अदालत भी नहीं जा पाएगा क्योंकि यह कानून इसकी इजाजत ही नहीं देता है। आम लोगों की नजरों से दूर जबरदस्त एवं एकतरफा शोषण होगा। मैं पहले भी इसका जिक्र कर चुका हूँ कि भारतीय जनता पार्टी (भाजपा) के शासन वाले किसी राज्य में एक प्रायोगिक परियोजना चलाकर इन कानूनों के बारे में फीडबैक लिया जाए और उस आंकड़े का इस्तेमाल व्यवस्था को बेहतर बनाने के लिए किया जाए। लेकिन कुछ अजीब कारणों से यह सरकार इस तरीके को नहीं अपनाना चाहती है, भले ही इसके अपने बुद्धिजीवी यह दावा करते हैं कि फीडबैक लेकर क्रियान्वयन से जुड़े भूल-सुधार करना असल में शासन का एक नया तरीका है।

वास्तव में, मुझे अक्सर अचरज होता है कि यह सरकार आर्थिक मुद्दों पर क्या किसी भी तौर-तरीके का पालन करती भी है? आखिर ऐसा क्यों है कि अपने राजनीतिक उद्देश्यों के प्रति इतनी प्रतिबद्ध, समर्पित एवं व्यवस्थित तरीके से आगे बढ़ने वाली वही टीम आर्थिक सुधारों पर इस कदर लडखड़ाने क्यों लगती है? रातोंरात सियासी खेल के नियम बदल देने की काबिलियत रखने वाली एक टीम को कांग्रेस के आर्थिक विचार क्यों उधार लेने पड़ते हैं और नए-चमकदार नारों की चाशनी में लपेटकर उन्हें अपना बनाकर पेश करना पड़ता है? मैंने इस अजीब अवधारणा के बारे में कोई भी व्याख्या नहीं देखी है। मैंने तो सिर्फ कमजोर अफसरों और वित्त मंत्रियों को इसके लिए जिम्मेदार ठहराकर ही इस सरकार के लिए खेद जताने की स्थिति देखी है। पिछले जून में मैंने इस बात पर कौतूहल जताया था कि तीन नए कृषि कानून क्या अब तक के सबसे बड़े सुधार साबित होंगे या महज दिखावा ही रह जाएंगे। अभी तो ये सुधार तीन कदमों वाली विपदा ही साबित हो रहे हैं।

राष्ट्रीय
सहारा

Date:02-01-21

प्रत्यक्ष विदेशी निवेश के मायने

संपादकीय

साल के शुरू में ही एक सकारात्मक आर्थिक समाचार यह है कि चालू वित्त वर्ष यानी 2020-21 के अप्रैल से अक्टूबर 2020 तक की अवधि यानी सात महीनों में भारत में प्रत्यक्ष विदेशी निवेश यानी फारेन डाइरेक्ट इनवेस्टमेंट या एफडीआई अंशधारिता के जरिये 35.33 अरब डालर का आया। महत्वपूर्ण यह है कि 2019-20 की समान अवधि में इस तरह का 29.31 अरब डालर का विदेशी निवेश आया था, यानी गत वर्ष की समान अवधि में आये निवेश के मुकाबले यह 21 प्रतिशत ज्यादा है। प्रत्यक्ष विदेशी निवेश की महत्ता यह है कि इसमें स्थायित्व ज्यादा होता है। यानी इसके जरिये भारत में प्लांट फैक्टरी वगैरह की स्थापना होती है और लोगों को रोजगार आदि मिलता है। सरकारी आंकड़ों के अनुसार जिन क्षेत्रों में अधिकतम पूंजी प्रवाह आया, वो हैं-कंप्यूटर साफ्टवेयर-हार्डवेयर क्षेत्र, रसायन, वाहन आदि। सिंगापुर, अमेरिका, मॉरीशस, नीदरलैंड, ब्रिटेन और फ्रांस भारत में निवेश करनेवाले प्रमुख देशों में हैं। कोरोना काल में अर्थव्यवस्था के तमाम संकेतक जहां नकारात्मक रुख दिखा रहे हैं, वहीं पर विदेशी निवेश का 21 प्रतिशत बढ़ जाना कुछ गंभीर संकेत देता है। एक संकेत तो यह है कि दुनिया भर के निवेशकों को भारत में भविष्य दिख रहा है। भारतीय बाजार दुनिया भर के निवेशकों को आकर्षित कर रहे हैं। इसके अलावा एक संकेत और है कि भारत में ऑटोमोबाइल कंपनियों की रुचि इसलिए भी है कि यहां से निर्यात करने के अलावा यहां का घरेलू बाजार ही बड़ा बाजार है। हाल में कोरोना प्रकोप के बाद ऑटोमोबाइल उद्योग में तेजी इसलिए देखी गई है कि लोगों को अब सार्वजनिक वाहन के बजाय अपने वाहन ज्यादा सुरक्षित लगने लगे हैं। प्रत्यक्ष विदेशी निवेश से घरेलू रोजगार बढ़ता है। सोचने की जरूरत है कि जब कोरोना काल में संकट के दौर में भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था इतना विदेशी निवेश हासिल कर सकती है, तो सामान्य हालात में तो और बेहतर प्रयास हो सकते हैं। तमाम राज्य सरकारों और केंद्र सरकार को विचार करना चाहिए कि किस तरह से भारत में विदेशी निवेश को और आसान बनाया जा सकता है, क्योंकि भारत में कारोबार करने की प्रक्रिया को और आसान बनाकर ही ज्यादा विदेशी निवेश आकर्षित किया जा सकता है। कोरोना काल से उबरती भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था को विदेशी निवेश से संबल मिल सकता है।
