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Unseal And Pause

NDMA finding that Joshimath has overshot carrying capacity was expected. There's a huge lesson here

TOI Editorials

The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has formally confirmed what residents of Joshimath and geologists have been saying. The town's carrying capacity has long crossed acceptable limits. Consequently, there shouldn't be new constructions there. Unfortunately, even this confirmation wasn't shared with people by the Uttarakhand government. It took a TOI report for everyone to know what NDMA's conclusions were as they were given to the Uttarakhand HC in a sealed envelope. The HC bench questioned the need for secrecy.

NDMA's post-disaster report needs to be read alongside other developments that indicate we are at a crossroads when it comes to development in Himalayan states. Joshimath's problem with land subsidence brought the development strategy into focus. Given the importance of tourism and the attendant need for supporting infrastructure, reducing the issue to development versus environment is a false argument. Instead, it needs to be framed as a question on the carrying capacity of each Himalayan state in view of the risks involved. That's precisely what GOI did earlier in the month in response to a PIL in the Supreme Court when it proposed Himalayan hill states assess the carrying capacity and file their reports to court.

Joshimath's trajectory encapsulates the challenges involved. Almost 50 years ago, a committee under then commissioner of Garhwal studied the issue of land subsidence and said the construction activity be linked to the soil's load-bearing capacity. In addition to local geological characteristics, there are also macro risks in the Himalayan region. Northern districts of Garhwal, for instance, are categorised as zone V for seismic activity, indicating the highest level of seismic activity. Moreover, they are marked as areas where there's a high incidence of landslides in the state disaster management authority's map. The combination of factors should make governments re-visit the risk assessment of infrastructure projects.

Uttarakhand's state emergency operation centre, for example, put out data for 2023 that listed 1,100-plus landslides till mid-September. The figures for 2021 and 2022 were 354 and 245, respectively. The scale of the difference needs a closer examination to ensure carrying capacity hasn't been grossly exceeded. Finally, governments need to be transparent with people, the most important stakeholders here. There's no place for sealed envelopes. One of the most important lessons of the pandemic is that open scientific collaboration is the most effective way to find solutions.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

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Unis World Over, Set Up Shop Up Here!

Education should follow the globalisation course

ET Editorials

Foreign universities draw just about 2% of Indian students receiving tertiary education in the country. This tiny segment, however, spends an amount equivalent to what the rest of college students spend in India. This makes for a compelling argument to provide the education closer to home, and the University Grants Commission (UGC) earlier this year issued a set of guidelines to encourage foreign universities to set up local campuses. It may be too early to assess whether the scheme becomes popular. But the cost advantage of offshore campuses using local teaching and research talent is pretty much obvious. Besides, they are being offered a degree of functional autonomy not available to Indian universities. It could also help elevate the overall quality of tertiary education in the country.

The median age in OECD countries — which are the top draw for Indian college students — is above 40. Universities in these countries need a steady intake of students from across the world in order to keep themselves adequately funded and ensure maintenance of academic standards. China, the other source of students seeking foreign education, has begun to age. That leaves South Asia, Latin America and Africa to fill up Western college classrooms. Ageing Asian economies are also facing a glut in higher education. India is on the right course in asking top-tier universities to set up shop here.

Offshore campuses help destination countries secure supply of students who may be otherwise affected by economic and political disturbances, such as pandemic shutdowns, foreign exchange restrictions or diplomatic rows, like the ongoing one with Canada. Universities serve ageing economies as gatekeepers for selective addition to their shrinking labour pool and it is a competitive market as Canada must realise. White-collar emigration affects the host country less — it keeps remittances stable during an economic downturn — so long as domestic growth is robust. Globalisation is shifting jobs to where the workers are. Education needs to follow that course.



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War in the Caucasus

Azerbaijan should respect the autonomy of the Armenian population

Editorial

Azerbaijan's brisk military recapture of Nagorno-Karabakh, an Armenian-populated enclave within its borders, shows the changing power dynamics in the Caucasus, where American, Russian and Turkish interests collide. The roots of the conflict go back to the final days of the Soviet Union when the enclave's majority Armenian-Christian population held a referendum to break away from the Shia majority Azerbaijan. Nagorno-Karabakh was then run by Armenian separatists, backed by the Republic of Armenia, until recently. In 2020, Azerbaijan, backed by Turkey, fought Armenia, a Russian treaty ally, and captured much of Nagorno-Karabakh. The Russians then did little to help Armenia, but brokered a ceasefire that left Stepanakert, Nagorno-Karabakh's biggest city, in the hands of the locals. The peace did not hold. Azerbaijan blockaded the Lachin Corridor, the main road connecting Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia, leaving the 1,20,000 population of the enclave to face mounting economic miseries. Facing international criticism for the blockade, Azerbaijan promised to lift it, but established a checkpoint, continuing to control the flow of goods and medicines. Last week, it attacked Stepanakert, forcing the separatists to hand over full control to Baku.

In effect, Azerbaijan achieved in a day what it had failed to do in three decades. Two major geopolitical shifts seem to have helped Baku. First, Turkey, keen to play a bigger role in the Caucasus region, the former periphery of the Ottoman Turks, threw its weight behind Azerbaijan, with political and military support. Second, Russia's Ukraine invasion, which tied Moscow to its western front, has led to a substantial erosion of Russian power in the Caucasus. Armenia had often expressed displeasure with Russia's lack of action. Moscow did nothing besides issuing statements when Azerbaijan gradually dismantled the ceasefire agreement. Baku realised that the geopolitical situation favoured it and then moved in to take over the enclave. It is widely recognised that Nagorno-Karabakh is a part of Azerbaijan. But there is a history of mistrust and violence. Armenians in the region, having gone through a genocide and several conflicts, have a sharp historical memory and remain wary of any change in the status quo. Azerbaijan's takeover has triggered a massive refugee outflow to Armenia. There are already allegations that Baku is committing genocidal crimes. For Azerbaijan, this can be an opportunity to integrate Nagorno-Karabakh without further bloodshed. But for that, Baku should ensure equal rights for the Armenian population and respect its autonomy. If not, Azerbaijan could face prolonged local resistance, which could not only deny it a clean victory but also turn its quest to control the enclave ugly.

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G-20 diplomacy and a shifting world order

Euphoria about the G-20 outcome under India's presidency needs to be tempered given the many dark clouds on the global horizon

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India scripted amazing success at the G-20 meeting in Delhi on September 9 and 10 and, despite the odds, succeeded in producing a consensus Declaration worthy of an event of this magnitude. Securing an agreement on almost a hundred issues on the agenda, apart from that on the Russia-Ukraine war, was no mean achievement. All told, the G-20 outcomes seemed to mirror the hopes and the wishes of the wider global community. India, as the host, could rightfully take a large measure of credit for this result. The New Delhi Declaration does indeed seem to have something for everyone. From condemnation of terrorism to climate issues, from trebling of renewable energy capacity to matters such as lifestyle

for sustainable development and reform of multi-lateral development banks, apart from highlighting India's contributions such as digital public infrastructure and Unified Payments Interface, the Declaration seemed to echo the prevailing mood in the G-20 of favouring compromise over conflict and fully endorsing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's dictum of "One Earth, One Family, One Future".

Consensus on the Ukraine conflict became possible with the West agreeing to 'climb down' from its demand not to point fingers at Russia for the Ukraine conflict, and giving up on the insistence to proclaim Russia as guilty. The New Delhi Declaration thus sharply differs from the Bali Declaration of November 2022 where, by a majority vote, the Russian Federation was condemned for its aggression in Ukraine. The difference between two Declarations is that while Bali was accusatory in tone, New Delhi sought a resolution to the conflict. Russia and China have since hailed the New Delhi Declaration in sharp contrast to their criticism of the Bali Declaration.

For India, which is a founder-member of the G-20, formed in 1999 as a grouping of Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors (it was upgraded to summit level in 2008), and which hosted the G-20 meeting in 2002 (of Finance Ministers and central bank governors), the world has come full circle. Today, India is amongst the leaders whose word counts. A better outcome could not have been wished for.

China's perception, need for caution

Euphoria about the G-20 outcome under India's presidency, however, needs to be tempered, given the many dark clouds that exist on the horizon. China might have welcomed the Delhi Declaration, but there is inherent foreboding in its affirmation that the G-20 was intended to be a 'forum for economic cooperation' and 'not a platform for resolving geo-political and security issues'. Also, while welcoming the establishment of an India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor Plan (announced during the G-20), China has sent an implicit warning that it should 'not become a geo-political tool'. It is evident that China's perception is that the G-20 was being used by the West solely to try and impose its world view. A few other world leaders also do not seem to have given the Delhi G-20 a 'thumbs up', with some observing that hardly any of the geo-strategic and geo-economic issues had been sorted out. The South Korean President, for instance, warned that the world is in a 'period of poly-crisis encompassing geo-political competition, spiralling inflation and continuation of the protracted war with Ukraine'.

India, for its own sake, has to be wary, given the fluid situation across the globe. China remains a hegemon in Asia, notwithstanding China's economy becoming embroiled in an extended stalemate. While many in the West view China's situation of 'debt deflation and demographic decline' as an opportunity, they remain oblivious to the reality of China's known capacity to resort to various means to overcome its problems. India, however, cannot afford to do so.

India remains an obvious target for China and is in its 'cross-hairs'. While the West can possibly live with a situation in which several of its strategies to contain China have failed, India cannot. Two aspects — the West's acknowledgment of India's' growing economic strength, and India's membership of the Quad (which is now openly accepted as a key grouping in the anti-China phalanx) — call for abundant caution on India's part, since China is unlikely to take kindly to either.

The return of two blocs

Ineluctably, the character of G-20 has been changing in recent years. Contrast the role of G-20 during the 2008-09 economic crisis, (when leading economies tried to find ways and means to prevent the world from plunging into a prolonged economic crisis) with its role in recent years, where the main focus of the G-20 has been on global political conflicts and less on the nature of the global economic landscape. Many analysts hew to the view that under the rubric of the G-20, a subterranean conflict is being waged today by two opposing blocs to alter the balance of power. The two camps (one led by the West and the other by China-Russia) have already earned the sobriquet of 'enduring rivals', engaged in a battle for global supremacy.

The 'rules-based world order', meanwhile, has become a 'catch-all phrase' of merely one segment. The reality is that the world faces 'emerging world disorder', the return of two antagonistic blocs, and shrinking space for the non-aligned. The stalemate in the Ukraine conflict and the eclipse of Russia's hope of a quick walkover in Ukraine seem to have encouraged the U.S. to strengthen and expand the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) under its leadership.

A new NATO is set to become even more dependent on the U.S. for military supplies and capabilities, to be able to act as a bulwark against 'Russian expansionism'. It has, in turn, raised the prospect of a U.S.-equipped 'territorial force' emerging in Ukraine. Outside Europe, a number of non-NATO allies are being inveigled to join a U.S.-led alliance to counter 'authoritarianism' (represented by Russia and China) which is proceeding apace. Japan and South Korea have already capitulated to the West's wooing. Australia has become a key partner in the U.S.-led alliance in the Southern Hemisphere.

Russia and China, in turn, are deepening their 'strategic alignment'. Countries such as North Korea are cementing their relations with this bloc. The recent meeting in Moscow between Russian President Vladimir Putin and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has further deepened their relationship. China is exploiting its frontage in the Pacific Ocean to openly challenge U.S. naval power here. Russia and Türkiye have deepened their relationship based on shared interests and the personal friendship between Mr. Putin and the Turkish leader, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Russia is once again seeking to expand its footprint in Africa, and Russia's recent agreement to supply food grains to African States at subsidised prices, or even for free, is aimed towards this end.

Fading non-alignment

The many new alignments are set to deal a death blow to the concept of non-alignment. It is proving increasingly difficult for countries to remain non-aligned in the truest sense of the word. Even existing formations such as BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) are tending to find the situation untenable. Given the multiplicity of relationships and the 'lattice work' of security agreements that have emerged, the space for non-alignment has dramatically shrunk.

With the strengthening of rival camps holding divergent visions of the international order, the world confronts a dismal future. It may not be too far wrong to surmise, that notwithstanding all the glitz surrounding the 18th G-20 in New Delhi and the obligatory references to the importance of the Global South among its priorities, countries such as India (despite all the hard work they put in), will still remain notional pieces on the checkerboard of international politics, with hardly any decisive voice in determining the course of world events.

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It's a long road to women's equality

It is imperative that the reservations policy for women recognises the multiple and unequal forms that patriarchy takes in excluding women from public life

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After almost a decade of silence, the Modi government's sudden announcement took everyone by surprise: a Bill in favour of women's reservation, now renamed Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam (roughly, Statute Revering Women's Power), was to be presented in Parliament. It has since been passed in both Houses without much ado, with just two votes against it in the Lok Sabha.

While voting in its favour, Opposition groups have rightly pointed out that the Bill has been presented late in the day, and that too with various conditionalities attached, which make actual implementation vague. There is no question of its playing a direct role in the 2024 general elections. Some even wonder whether arrangements for implementation will be in place by 2029. Thus, the future of women's reservations remains uncertain even though it is now the law. How do we take stock of this turn of events? One way is to revisit the history of the issue, which spans a century of campaigns over women's rights.

Colonial beginnings

The possibility of women entering political life took shape in the early 20th century when the colonial state responded to Indian nationalism in the form of political devolution, by offering Indians a greater role in governance through various means of nomination, reservation, and election. It was in this context that the first women's organisations were born. They sought to take forward agendas of social reform by expanding women's voting rights as well as by standing for elections. Women leaders, though, took different positions. While some did not want any form of reservation, others believed that structural disadvantages such as lack of economic autonomy, dependency, and the constraints of marriage laws meant that women required reservations to ensure that the 'women's point of view' was represented in legislatures. These were also the years when the rights of the depressed classes, the Dravidian movement, and the fears of Muslims of turning into a minority were occupying public space, all of which had significant implications for women's groups. Women's organisations not only opposed the idea of separate electorates for different groups in the name of women's unity, but came to be persuaded after 1930 (and especially after the Poona Pact) to drop their demand for any special treatment in the form of

nominations or reservations. 'Equality and no privileges' and 'a fair field and no favour' were common slogans. Differing views were sought to be suppressed, even at the cost of loss of membership, especially for Muslim women.

What changed?

Not enough is known about a subsequent critical time in this history, namely the years of preparation for the Constitution. No voices were raised in favour of reservations for women. No change in attitude was visible until the 1970s and the shocking findings of the 1974 'Towards Equality' report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India, which declared that women were turning into a minority. However, even this committee opposed by a majority vote the idea that political reservations for women were needed to counter the appallingly low presence of women in electoral politics. The rebirth of the women's movement in the late 1970s and '80s, which for the first time saw political campaigns on issues such as custodial rape and dowry deaths, also did not express concern over the absence of women in State Assemblies or Parliament.

It is only in the 1990s that a change in orientation was visible, though opinions differed then too. While there was general agreement for the need to revive moribund village panchayats with one-third reservations for women, few groups came out openly in favour of the 1996 women's reservation Bill proposing a similar quota at the State and national levels. Equally noteworthy was the form of opposition. The Samajwadi Party and the Rashtriya Janata Dal demanded a sub-quota for women from Other Backward Classes (OBC), stating that a blanket reservation for women would disproportionately favour upper caste women. The call for sub-quotas for OBC women and Muslim women did not find many backers. Even in 2010, when the Bill was passed in the Rajya Sabha, there was little appreciation of the complex forms that patriarchal exclusion takes. While there was growing support for women's reservations as an idea, questions such as the electoral disadvantages of OBC women pitted against upper caste women did not find resonance.

Today, we are in the strange situation where everyone is in favour of women's reservations, as though patriarchy has disappeared. The ruling party seems to believe that it has successfully domesticated women's issues. It sees this Bill "revering woman power" as just another welfare scheme rather than a historic law allowing women to participate in the shaping of state policy. We must be vigilant against this mood of self-congratulation. It is imperative that the reservations policy for women recognises the multiple and unequal forms that patriarchy takes in excluding women from public life. It is equally important to guard against the idea that the mere presence of women in electoral politics will translate into women's equality and freedom. Given the current ideological climate, the new law is not an achievement but a challenge. The long waiting period before it takes effect should be a time for re-examining our ideas and beliefs about how the electoral presence of women might translate into a more egalitarian and less hate-filled ethos.

बिज़नेस स्टैंडर्ड

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लोकतंत्र में विपक्ष के विचारों का हो सम्मान

नितिन देसाई

यह 2011 की बात है जब विश्व बैंक की एक रिपोर्ट में प्रकाशित तथ्यों के आलोक में मुझे भारतीय लोकतंत्र के उस बिंदु पर संक्षिप्त बयान देने के लिए कहा गया था जो मेरी नजर में सर्वाधिक महत्वपूर्ण था। उस समय मैंने कुछ पंक्तियां लिखी थी, जिनका मैं दोबारा उल्लेख करने जा रहा हूं। इसके बाद मैं यह प्रश्न भी रखूंगा कि क्या भारतीय लोकतंत्र की वह खासियत अब भी दिखती है जिसका मैंने जिक्र किया था।

संविधान और चुनाव एक क्रियाशील लोकतंत्र के लिए महज शुरुआत भर हैं। काफी कुछ उन कार्य व्यवहारों पर निर्भर करता है, जिनमें विपक्ष के अधिकारों के प्रति सम्मान झलकता है। इन राजनीतिक व्यवहारों से कुछ मानदंड भी निश्चित होते हैं जो कालांतर में परंपरा का रूप ले लेते हैं। यहां तक कि संवैधानिक प्रावधानों जैसे स्वतंत्र चुनाव आयोग की स्वतंत्रता सही अर्थ में प्रभावी बनाने के लिए अघोषित कार्य व्यवहारों की आवश्यकता होती है। भारत में कुछ इसी तरह का अनुभव रहा है। देश में पंडित नेहरू और कांग्रेस के शुरुआती नेतृत्व द्वारा तय किए गए मानक महत्वपूर्ण हैं और जब लोकतांत्रिक व्यवस्था पर खतरा मंडराता है तब भी ये अपना अस्तित्व बनाए रखते हैं। नेता प्रतिपक्ष को सत्ता पक्ष के नेता की तरह ही सम्मान दिया जाता है और उन्हें वे सारी सुविधाएं दी जाती हैं जो उन्हें प्रभावी ढंग से उत्तरदायित्व का निर्वहन करने में मदद करती हैं।

मगर अब मुझे यह कहते हुए अफसोस हो रहा है कि उस समय मैंने जितनी बातें कही थीं वे भारत के परिप्रेक्ष्य में महत्वहीन हो गई हैं। संवैधानिक सरकार की स्थापना के पहले दशक में देश की राजनीति संसद के महत्व और विपक्ष के साथ नेहरू के आत्मीय संबंधों की बुनियाद पर आधारित थी। एक और विशेष बात यह थी कि कार्यपालिका चुनाव आयोग और न्यायापालिका की स्वतंत्रता एवं स्वायत्तता का सम्मान करती थी। संविधान सभा में इस व्यवस्था पर विशेष जोर दिया गया था और उस समय नेहरू और सत्ताधारी कांग्रेस ने भी इसका समर्थन किया था।

स्वतंत्र भारत के पहले छह दशकों (1975 से 1977 के दौरान आपातकाल की अवधि को छोड़कर) में विपक्ष के प्रति सहिष्णुता का भाव दिखा। इसका एक स्पष्ट उदाहरण पूर्व प्रधानमंत्री अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी का प्रसंग है। पंडित नेहरू ने अमेरिका में भारतीय दूतावास को कुछ विशिष्ट लोगों से वाजपेयी का परिचय कराने के लिए पत्र लिखा था। नेहरू ने ऐसा इसलिए किया कि उन्हें वाजपेयी में संभावनाएं दिखी थीं। पूर्व प्रधानमंत्री नरसिंह राव और वाजपेयी के बीच भी अच्छे संबंध थे और इस बात की सभी सराहना भी किया करते थे। विपक्ष के प्रति मनमोहन सिंह का व्यवहार भी दोस्ताना रहा था।

यह माहौल अब नहीं दिखता है। सार्वजनिक राजनीतिक परिचर्चा का हास हुआ है और राजनीतिज्ञ एक दूसरे के ऊपर कीचड़ उछाल रहे हैं। विपक्ष या इसके नेताओं के विचारों एवं बयानों को 'वंशवादी', 'भ्रष्ट' और यहां तक कि 'राष्ट्र विरोधी' जैसे विशेषणों से नवाजा जा रहा है। विरोध करने वाले लोगों के प्रति सहिष्णुता लोकतांत्रिक राजनीति का अहम हिस्सा

होना चाहिए। मगर अब विपक्ष के नेताओं के खिलाफ असम्मानजनक शब्दों का इस्तेमाल हो रहा है और सरकार में बैठे लोग जांच-पड़ताल आदि की आड़ में राजनीतिक शक्तियों का दुरुपयोग कर रहे हैं। केंद्र एवं राज्य दोनों स्तरों पर यह चलन देखा जा रहा है।

न्यायपालिका की स्वतंत्रता को नुकसान पहुंचाने की कोशिश भी हुई, खासकर आपातकाल के दौरान ऐसा हुआ था मगर 1993 में उच्चतम न्यायालय के एक आदेश के बाद इसे दुरुस्त कर लिया गया। न्यायालय ने एक आदेश के तहत कॉलेजियम सिस्टम की व्यवस्था दी और इसमें कानून बनाकर किसी संशोधन की संभावना को भी निरस्त कर दिया। चुनाव आयुक्तों की नियुक्ति सत्तारूढ़ दल का विशेषाधिकार हुआ करता था मगर उच्चतम न्यायालय के हाल के आदेश के बाद इसमें भी संशोधन किया गया है। हालांकि, सरकार एक नए कानून का प्रस्ताव देकर इसे बदल रही है। यह प्रस्ताव सत्ताधारी का विशेषाधिकार बहाल कर देगा, जो संविधान सभा में तय सिद्धांतों के खिलाफ जाता है।

भारत में राजनीतिक नेतृत्व काफी बदल गया है। संविधान की स्थापना के बाद पहले दशक में राजनीतिक नेतृत्व पर आर्थिक एवं जातीय संभ्रांत लोगों का दबदबा हुआ करता था। कदाचित, सबसे महत्वपूर्ण बदलाव यह आया है कि जाति के आधार पर राजनीतिक निष्ठा और मतदान का चलन बढ़ रहा है और कुछ राजनीतिक दलों की विचारधारा भी इसका समर्थन करती है। भारत में जाति केवल इसलिए मायने नहीं रखती कि यहां सामाजिक भेदभाव है बल्कि इसलिए भी इसका वजूद है क्योंकि जाति एवं आर्थिक असमानता में गहरा संबंध है।

यह बात आसानी से समझी जा सकती है कि मतदान के संवैधानिक अधिकार वाले लोकतंत्र में कभी न कभी संभ्रांत लोगों के नेतृत्व को समाज एवं आर्थिक व्यवस्था में मध्यम वर्ग के एवं निम्न आय से ताल्लुक रखने वाले मतदाता चुनौती देंगे। अमेरिका में कुछ ऐसा ही हुआ जब एंड्रयू जैक्सन ने स्वतंत्रता के बाद शुरुआती नेतृत्व को चुनौती दी और ब्रिटेन में लेबर पार्टी ने भी ऐसा ही किया। भारत में उच्च वर्ग के नेतृत्व को तब चुनौती मिलनी शुरू हो गई जब 1960 के दशक के मध्य में अन्य पिछड़ी जातियां (ओबीसी) एक राजनीतिक बल के रूप में सामने आईं। यह सिलसिला जारी रहेगा और जल्द ही एक उभरते राजनीतिक शक्ति को जन्म देगा। यह राजनीतिक शक्ति न केवल मध्यम वर्ग के अधिकारों की बात करेगी, बल्कि आर्थिक एवं सामाजिक व्यवस्था के निचले स्तरों के हितों की भी बात करेगी। इसका कारण यह है कि दलित एवं आदिवासी समूह सामाजिक एवं आर्थिक व्यवस्था के मध्य एवं उच्च स्तरों से ताल्लुक रखने वाले राजनीतिक नेतृत्व से मुट्ठी भर अनाज या मामूली आर्थिक लाभ से संतुष्ट नहीं रहेंगे। हिंदुओं का लोकतंत्रीकरण कहकर इस बदलाव का बचाव किया जा सकता है।

भारत जैसे लोकतंत्र में बहुसंख्यकों की तानाशाही से नुकसान होगा। भारत जैसे देश में धार्मिक, भाषाई, सामाजिक एवं सांस्कृतिक स्तरों पर काफी विविधता है और क्षेत्रीय और पारिवारिक स्तरों पर आर्थिक असमानता काफी अधिक है। चुनावों में सबसे अधिक सीटें जीतने वाला दल या गठबंधन संपूर्ण मतदाताओं का प्रतिनिधित्व नहीं कर सकता है। लोकतंत्र में उन लोगों के विचारों एवं अधिकारों का सम्मान करना जरूरी होता है, जो चुनाव जीतने वाले दल के समर्थक नहीं होते हैं।

इसके लिए लोकतंत्र में एक ऐसी कार्य संस्कृति की जरूरत होती है, जो सार्वजनिक तौर पर विपक्ष के नेताओं के साथ व्यवहार में औपचारिकता को बढ़ावा देती है। इसके अलावा नीतिगत विषयों पर भिन्न विचार रखने वाले लोगों की बातें भी ध्यान से सुनी जाती हैं। राजनीतिक स्तर पर संबंधों में औपचारिकता राजनीतिक हिंसा कम करने में मदद करती है।

किसी विषय पर भिन्न विचार रखने वाले लोगों की बात सुनने से नीतिगत विषयों पर जुड़ी खामियों को दूर करने में मदद मिल सकती है। 1991 में बजट का उदारीकरण इसका एक उदाहरण है। देश में भुगतान संकट पैदा होने के बाद लाइसेंस राज का खात्मा हो पाया था। इसके बाद व्यापार का उदारीकरण हो गया और शेयर बाजार में भी काफी बदलाव हुए। इन घटनाक्रम से एक दशक पहले आए सुझावों ने भी ऐसे बदलाव लाने में भूमिका निभाई थी। विनियमन का समर्थन करने वाले एल के झा, एम नरसिम्हन, आबिद हुसैन और वाडीलाल दगली द्वारा तैयार की गई प्रभावी रिपोर्ट का इसमें महत्वपूर्ण योगदान रहा था। संयोग से जो लोग अफसरशाही को दोष देते हैं उन्हें इस पर ध्यान देना चाहिए कि इनमें पहले तीन सिविल सर्वेंट थे और वे दगली की तुलना में अपनी बातें रखने में अधिक मुखर थे। दगली कारोबार समर्थक एक पाक्षिक के संपादक थे!

राजनीतिक स्तर पर सौहार्द्रपूर्ण माहौल कानून की मदद से तैयार नहीं किया जा सकता है। यह लोकतांत्रिक क्रियाकलापों का अभिन्न हिस्सा होना चाहिए। राजनीतिक विरोधियों के बीच औपचारिकता एवं एक दूसरे के विचारों के सम्मान से यह संभव है। हमें उसी तरह के राजनीतिक सौहार्द्र की जरूरत है जो हमें स्वतंत्रता प्राप्ति के बाद शुरूआती वर्षों में देखने को मिली थी। मगर नीतिगत मामलों पर विरोध दर्ज कराने वाले लोगों की अभिव्यक्ति की स्वतंत्रता की रक्षा संवैधानिक प्रावधान से की जा सकती है। एक और महत्वपूर्ण पहलू यह है कि मीडिया को सत्ता पार्टी के प्रत्यक्ष या अप्रत्यक्ष नियंत्रण से मुक्त रखा जाए। हमें आशा करनी चाहिए कि संसदीय कानून के 75 वर्ष पूरे पर हमें इन लक्ष्यों की प्राप्ति की दिशा में तेजी से कदम बढ़ाने चाहिए।

राष्ट्रीय
सहारा

Date: 26-09-23

संपत्ति जब्ती सही

संपादकीय



गुरपतवंत सिंह पन्नू की संपत्तियों को राष्ट्रीय जांच एजेंसी (एनआई) द्वारा जब्त करने के बाद विदेशों में बैठे अन्य आतंकवादियों की संपत्ति की पहचान करने को कहा है। सरकार ने जांच एजेंसियों से अमेरिका, ब्रिटेन, कनाडा व आस्ट्रेलिया में बसे खालिस्तानी आतंकियों की पहचान करने और उनकी विदेशी नागरिकता रद्द करने को भी कहा है। राजद्रोह के तीन मामलों समेत बाइस आपराधिक मामलों में लिप्त पन्नू ने भारतीय कनाडाई हिंदुओं को देश छोड़ने व भारत लौट जाने की धमकी बीते दिनों दी थी। पंजाब में सरकार द्वारा उन्नीस फरार खालिस्तानी आतंकवादियों की पहचान कर, उनकी सूची भी जारी की गयी है। सुरक्षा एजेंसियां वर्षों से इनकी तलाश कर रही हैं। पन्नू के बारे में एजेंसियों ने बताया है कि उसका संगठन सिख फॉर जस्टिस, भोले-भाले युवाओं को कट्टरपंथी बनाने व

अपराधों के लिए उकसाने के लिए साइबर स्पेस का दुरुपयोग कर रहा था। वह कई बार सोशल मीडिया के माध्यम से देश विरोधी उन्माद फैलाने का दोषी पाया गया है। इन आतंकियों पर विदेशों में बैठ कर भारत विरोधी एजेंडा चलाने का भी आरोप है। 2020 में भी पन्नू की संपत्तियां कुर्क की गयी थीं। जिसका उस पर कोई असर नहीं नजर आया। इस बार उसका मकान व पैतृक गांव की कृषि समेत करोड़ों की संपत्ति अब भारत सरकार की है। सरकार के इस कड़े कदम से वह बौखला गया है। उसने बयान जारी किया कि वह चुप नहीं रहने वाला । पन्नू अमेरिका में बसा एक वांछित आतंकवादी है। जिस पर 2020 में ही आतंकवादी गतिविधियों के चलते राजद्रोह का मामला दर्ज किया गया था। पाकिस्तान की खुफिया एजेंसी आईएसआई का प्यादा कहलाने वाले पन्नू ने ऐलान किया था कि स्वतंत्रता दिवस पर लाल किले पर जो खालिस्तानी झंडा फहरायेगा, उसे पांच लाख डॉलर का इनाम दिया जाएगा। तभी से सरकार का रुख खालिस्तानी आतंकवादियों को लेकर काफी सख्त हो गया। उसे दहशतगर्दी और मार-काट की आशंका के साथ ही अपनी साख की फिक्र भी सताने लगी है। पंजाव के युवाओं को भटकाने, उन्हें खतरनाक नशे मुहैया कराने और झूठे सपने दिखाकर आतंक की तरफ ढकेलने का काम नया तो नहीं है। मगर इसे रोकने के प्रति पूर्व में सरकारी रवैया कई बार लचीला साबित हुआ है। खतरनाक आतंकवादियों से सारी दुनिया त्रस्त है। विश्व मंच से बार-बार इनसे निपटने की बातें करने के बावजूद कड़ा रुख न अख्तियार करने का लाभ उठाते हुए ये देश की छवि पर दाग लगाने में नहीं चूकते। सही वक्त पर की गयी सख्ती और कड़े निर्णय ही शांति कायम रखने में महती भूमिका निभा सकते हैं।
