Post 370 Jammu & Kashmir – A new era - R. K. Pachnanda

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आत्मनिर्भर भारत का स्वप्न साकार कर सकेगी, नई राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा नीति 2020 - प्रो. निरंजन कुमार
“यह भी आवश्यक है कि हम आर्थिक क्षेत्र में आत्मनिर्भर बनें. यदि हमारे कार्यक्रमों की पूर्ति विदेशी सहायता पर निर्भर रही तो वह अवश्य ही हमारे उपर प्रत्यक्ष-अप्रत्यक्ष क्रम से बंधनकारक होगी. हम सहायता देने वाले देशों के आर्थिक प्रभाव में आ जायेंगे. अपनी आर्थिक योजनाओं की सफलता में संभव बाधाओं को बचाने की दृष्टि से हमें अनेक स्थानों पर मौन रहना पड़ेगा”

पं. दीनदयाल उपाध्याय,
पुस्तक ‘भारतीय अर्थ-नीति विकास की एक दिशा’ से
EDITORIAL
◆ India’s Political Opposition is Annihilating Itself - why blame others - Dr. Anirban Ganguly

PM MODI’S VISION
◆ PM’s address at seminar on Atmanirbhar Bharat in Defence manufacturing on 27 August 2020
◆ PM’s address to the Nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort on 15 August 2020
◆ PM’s speech at Higher Education Conclave on 07 August 2020

NEW JAMMU & KASHMIR
◆ Post 370 Jammu & Kashmir – A new era - R. K. Pachnanda
◆ One Year after August 2019 A Vision for Jammu and Kashmir - Dipankar Sengupta
◆ संवैधानिक बदलाव: जम्मू-कश्मीर में नई सुरुआत - सन्नी कुमार

NEW LADAKH
◆ Joyous celebrations in Ladakh as it completes a year as UT - P P Wangchuk

NEW EDUCATION POLICY
◆ आत्मनिर्भर भारत का स्वप्न साकार कर सकेगी, नई राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा नीति 2020 - प्रो. निरंजन कुमार
◆ Unleashing India’s Educational Potential: Understanding the NEP 2020 in 20 Points - Dr. Avishek A

AATMANIRBHAR BHARAT
◆ It is imperative that India wins the ‘Aatmanirbhar’ challenge - Pratim Ranjan Bose

ECONOMY
◆ केंद्र सरकार द्वारा किए जा रहे उपायों से भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था का बदलता स्वरूप - प्रद्युम्न सभानाथ

CULTURAL VIEW
◆ Sacred Geography of Mathura, Ayodhya, and Varanasi - Mahesh Gogate

EVENT @ SPMRF
A n article with the curious and misleading title, “The Annihilation of India’s Political Opposition is Almost Complete” appeared in a newspaper on 16th August. The piece was written by a disconnected Indian origin academic based out of Cambridge, U.K. who displayed a massive ignorance of the realities of present day India. She argued that India’s political opposition needed a new idea and indirectly blamed PM Modi and the BJP for decimating the Opposition. But who has annihilated the political opposition in India? It is India’s political opposition which has or is annihilating itself. While Prime Minister Narendra Modi is making history, India’s political opposition continues to remain confused, bitter about electoral defeat and rejection, incapable of reinventing itself, unable to articulate what it stands for except for a blind, personalised, often cheap opposition to Modi who has twice on a row won an overwhelming electoral mandate since 2014.

Not just by participating in Bhumi Pujan in Ayodhya for a new Ram Mandir did PM Modi make history, his speech on the occasion was historic, it was history itself. He looked at the event as a new beginning, a new dawn and awakening, and said that “the construction of Shree Ram Temple is a task to unite the entire nation and that “celebration is an occasion to unite the belief with the reality, man with Supreme God, mankind with conviction, present with past, and self with ethos.” The Bhumi Pujan symbolised the democratic ethos of the majority in India, it symbolised the unity of Indian society at all levels and displayed the robustness of India’s constitutional, legal and democratic systems. It has also ensured that India’s staggering diversity shall remain intact, since the faith of India’s majority is one that is based on a deeper civilizational philosophy and is not an intolerant ideological or political religion.

India’s opposition, mainly the Congress and communist parties had no word of solidarity with the majority on this occasion. They either kept silent, or criticised PM Modi, or the legal process, or cast aspersion on the Judiciary. Such an intolerant attitude, full of disregard and disdain for the sentiments and feelings of the vast majority has further marginalised these parties.

PM Narendra Modi also made history, to the chagrin of the opposition, especially the Congress, to become the longest serving non-Congress Prime Minister of India. Yes, it is hoped by millions and millions of Indians that Modi would also surpass Jawaharlal Nehru’s uninterrupted tenure of sixteen years in power. This hope
stems not from being fixated in trying to demolish Nehruvianism – which is in any case in its last throes – or in trying to “overturn” Nehru’s “political vision of India”, that vision was resoundingly overturned in the summer of 2014 when India voted Modi, a commoner risen up the ranks. It stems in the majority, from the realisation that PM Modi is one leader, who, in his record of governance, in his attempts at empowering India’s teeming and marginalised millions, has actually delivered on the fundamentals which Nehru’s political vision of India had omitted or forgotten to actualise.

Nehru’s political vision of India gave rise to unbridled cronyism, was obsessed with pitting communities against one another, was fanatical about promoting an irreverent and anti-religious secularism and was driven by a compulsive tendency to go overboard in appeasing a section and allowing the process of national decision making to be driven by that consideration.

Nehru’s political vision spoke of making India independent and self-reliant but kept her fixated on and tied to some power blocs or other. Fanatically secular which meant insensitive to the faith and aspirations of the majority, Nehru also neglected agriculture, infrastructure building, primary education and allowed the Indian entrepreneurial spirit to be subdued and controlled by an elaborate and intricate regime of licenses, permits and quotas.

His “Nehruvian Consensus” was essentially shaped and articulated by the Left which was obsessed in trying to deconstruct India and to turn her essentially into a satellite-state. The Left pushed through Nehru’s persona an outlandish and unsuited mix of economic and political theories that they wanted imposed on India. In fact Nehru’s Congress soon ceased to be the same party which spearheaded India’s freedom movement, and after 1969 when Nehru’s daughter Indira, split the party, the original Congress disappeared altogether.

Jan Bhagidari and Jan Shakti best describe PM Modi’ style of rule or functioning. Every fundamentally transformative initiative that he has undertaken, Modi has based them on these two driving dimensions. His ruling style is to directly engage with the people – he talks to them and they connect to him. They connect to him, because he has delivered on his promise made to them, his promises of fundamentally transforming their lives, of empowering them and of liberating them from a cycle of dole of and dependence.

Just to take one example, the Prime Minister’s National Mission for Financial Inclusion – Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana – a game-changing public initiative that PM Modi launched in August 2014, has seen an uninterrupted financial outreach at the grassroots in the last six years. It is the “foundation stone for the Modi Government’s people-centric economic initiative’ and has seen more than 40.35 beneficiaries banked under this transformative scheme, since 2014 and amount of 1.31 lakh crore being disbursed. Of the accounts opened 63.6% belong to rural India and 55.2% have been opened by women. When PM Modi talks of inclusive politics, politics of empowerment and of performance, he speaks of empowering and including the marginalised and India’s neglected and near forgotten, when he talks of the politics of development, of performance and of service, he speaks of working for these sections.

One of the most striking features of Indian
politics is that its opposition is leaderless and rudderless, that is, it has been unable to evolve a credible front, has failed to come up with an acceptable political narrative and has not succeeded in reaching out to the people by presenting an alternative to Modi. The last few days have revealed major cracks in the Congress, exposing the acute dissatisfaction and disaffection that is plaguing the party.

The opposition’s inability to re-group is not the BJP’s or PM Modi’s responsibility, it indicates their own ideological bankruptcy and incapacity. In fact, PM Modi’s continuing challenge is to undo the mess created by years of cronyism, of governance-lethargy and non-delivery, of the calcification of the system that decades of Congress rule has left behind. Opposition leaders have been unable to subsume their overweening ambitions while trying to take on Modi. The case of Mamata Banerjee is most striking, she spoke of and attempted to form a combined opposition in January 2019, months before the general elections, in order to unseat Narendra Modi, but her attempts collapsed under the weight of her own ambitions of becoming Prime Minister.

The opposition led by the Congress, communist parties and Mamata Banerjee’s TMC, tried to organise violent street protest against the constitutionally passed and Parliament legislated Citizenship Amendment Act which facilitated the granting of citizenship to beleaguered and religiously persecuted minorities from India’s neighbourhood. But these violent protests received no traction and soon petered out to a few small municipal pockets and localities. Subsequent revelations also exposed that a number of these were engineered from beyond Indian shores with active connivance of separatist elements and platforms linked with international terror groups inimical to India.

Congress’s decade in power is largely remembered for violent terror attacks and serial terror blasts, it is remembered for huge corruption scandals and is also remembered for how its Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was repeatedly overruled or insulted in full public view by members of the party’s controlling family. The decade is primarily remembered for the manner in which it had compromised and weakened India’s governance, decision-making process and her political and parliamentary and governance structures. The most positive aspect of PM Modi’s rule is that those democratic fundamentals have been restored, delivery and accountability is at an all-time high, cronyism, quid pro quoism and political patronage have taken a severe beating and the concept of rule of law and the sense that the Constitution and not a subversive secularism is paramount to national wellbeing is being re-instilled. Indian democracy is passing through one of its most robust phases.

What drives and inspires the majority of Indians, what attaches them to Prime Minister Modi, what they have definitely and intensely understood about him is that he has completely identified with and has internalised their travails and their aspirations, they realise that the manner in which their hopes have touched him, it has touched no other leader, they realise that the aspiration of seeing India new and great is intense in him like it is in no one else. This makes them choose him. Since the political opposition in India fails to understand this it is moving towards self-annihilation. Why fault Prime Minister Narendra Modi or BJP for its denouement.
PM's address at seminar on Atmanirbhar Bharat in Defence manufacturing on 27 August 2020

My cabinet colleague, Shri Rajnath ji, Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat ji, Chiefs of the three wings of the military, all senior officials of Government of India and friends in the industry. Namaskar.

I am very happy that all the important stakeholders associated with India’s defence production are present here. I congratulate Defence Minister Rajnathji and his entire team for organizing this seminar.

The outcome of the brainstorming session will give a fillip to our efforts for self-reliance in the field of defence sector.

The suggestions that you have given at this collective brainstorming session will be very useful in the coming days.

It also gives me pleasure that Defence Minister Rajnathji is determined on a mission mode. I have full faith that his relentless efforts will lead to very good results.
» Friends, it is not hidden from anybody that India has been one of the main defence importers in the world for the last several years.

» When India became independent, it had huge capabilities in defence production. There was a well-established 100-year-old ecosystem in defence production in India.

» Not many countries had the resources and potential of India. But it is unfortunate that not much attention was paid on this issue for several decades. In a way, it became a routine exercise.

» No serious attempts were made. And several countries which started much after us have raced ahead of us in the last 50 years. But, the situation is changing now.

» In the last few years, you must have experienced that we have been making concerted efforts to unshackle all the fetters in this sector.

» Our aim is to increase manufacturing, development of new technologies in India and the maximum growth of the private sector in this particular field.

» Therefore, several steps have been taken which include reforms in the licensing procedure, creation of level-playing fields, simplification of export process, reforms in offset provisions, etc.

» Friends, I believe that of all these steps, what is more important is the new mindset in the country regarding the defence sector. We can feel it, there is birth of a new mindset.

» The spirit of self-confidence in the defence sector is paramount for making a modern and self-reliant India.

» For long, the country was debating the appointment of Chief of Defence Staff, but no decision could be taken. This decision is the symbol of the self-confidence of a new India.

» There was no permission for foreign direct investment in the defence production for a long time. The government of revered Atalji took the first initiative. More reforms were carried out after our government came to power. Doors are being opened for 74 % automatic FDI in this sector for the first time. This is the outcome of the self-confidence of a new India.

» For decades, Ordnance factories were being run like government departments. Not only the country had to suffer because of the limited vision, the people who were working there, who had talent and commitment, who were hardworking, our hard and experienced labour class, suffered a lot.

» The ecosystem of the sector, which could create job opportunities for crores of people, remained very limited.

» Now, we are moving in the direction of corporatization of ordnance factories. Both the workers and the military will get a push. This is the proof of self-confidence of a new India.

» Friends, our commitment towards self-reliance in defence production is not limited to discussions or on papers. Several concrete steps have been taken for its implementation.
PM’s address to the Nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort on 15 August 2020

My dear countrymen, Congratulations and many best wishes to all the countrymen on this auspicious occasion of independence.

Today, we are able to live in an independent India because of the sacrifices of millions of sons and daughters of Mother India. This is an occasion to pay tribute to the freedom fighters, martyrs and brave souls and their spirit and dedication to free Mother India.

The valiant soldiers of our armed forces, our paramilitary forces, our police personnel and our security forces everyone is engaged in protecting Mother India.

They are engaged in safeguarding the common man. Today is the day to remember their sacrifices and penance sincerely and wholeheartedly.

There is another name: Aurobindo Ghose. Today is the birth anniversary of Aurobindo Ghose, who tread the path from being a revolutionary to spirituality. Let us seek his blessings so that we can fulfil his as well as our vision.

We are passing through an extraordinary situation. Today, children- the bright future of India- are not in front of me. Why?
It is because Corona has stopped everyone. In this period of corona, I salute millions of corona warriors—doctors, nurses, sanitation workers, ambulance drivers and so on—who all should I count.

I salute all the corona warriors, who for a long time have adhered to the mantra of ‘सेवा परमो धर्म’ e. service is the best religion and have served the children of Mother India with complete dedication.

In the period of corona, many of our brothers and sisters have been affected by this pandemic; many families have been affected; many have also lost their lives.

I express my condolences to all such families, and I believe the indomitable will power and determination of 130 crore countrymen will make us win over Corona and we shall definitely win.

I know that recently we have been passing through a number of crises. Floods, especially in the north-east, eastern India, south India and some parts of western India; landslides in many areas; people have had to face many problems. Many people have lost their lives. I also express my condolences to those families.

And the nation stands in solidarity with the state governments in these days of crisis. No stone is being left unturned by either the state or central government to provide relief measures to the needy.

My dear Countrymen, Independence Day is a festival to celebrate freedom. It is an occasion to enthuse new energy by remembering our freedom fighters.

This day is a harbinger of new inspirations. It reignites new fervour, exuberance and enthusiasm. And in times like now, it becomes even more imperative for us to be determined.

It is an auspicious day because when we meet again next year to celebrate, we shall be entering into the 75 years of our free existence. This is a momentous occasion.

Today, all of us 130 crores Indians have to make significant pledges for the coming two years. And when we complete the 75 years of our freedom, we will be able celebrate the redemption of those pledges.

My dear countrymen, our forefathers fought for this freedom with extreme commitment, utmost integrity, sincere penance, renunciation and sacrifice; we should never forget the way they laid their lives for Mother India.

We should never forget that during this long and dark ages of slavery, not even a moment was lost when they were not moved by the desire for freedom.

There isn’t a countryman who did not put his best foot forward aspiring to break free the nation from the shackles of slavery, by waging a war and making any sacrifice possible to bring this day.

Many sacrificed their youth in jails. Many left behind their life’s dreams and embraced the gallows. I salute these revered martyrs who offered themselves as an oblation.

Indeed amazing! On the one side, the country witnessed a phase of mass movements and on the other side the resounding voice of armed revolt.
नमस्कार! मत्रिमंडल में भरे सहयोगी जीवन रंग डॉ. कसुरी रंग की, जीवन संविधान दो ने नेशनल एजुकेशन पॉलिसी- राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा नीति में बहुत महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाने वाले देश के जनन- माने वैज्ञानिक दौ किशंक राम और उनकी टीम, इस समय में मायान लेने है वाइस चांसलर, अन्य सभी शिक्षाविद, सभी महानुभाव, आप सभी का बहुत-बहुत अभिनंदन.

National Education Policy- राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा नीति के संरचन में आज का ये event बहुत महत्वपूर्ण है।

जितनी ज्यादा जानकारी सथ होगी फिर उतना ही आसान है राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा नीति का Implementation भी होगा। साथियों, 3-4 साल के व्यापक विचार-विमर्श के बाद, लोकों सुझावों पर लेने मंथन के बाद राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा नीति को स्वीकृत किया गया है।

आज देश-भर में इतनी व्यापक चर्चा हो रही है, अलग-अलग क्षेत्र के लोग, अलग-अलग व्यक्ति द्वारा लोग, अपने views दे रहे हैं, राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा नीति को Review कर रहे हैं।

ये एक Healthy Debate है, ये जितनी ज्यादा होगी, उतना ही लाभ देश की शिक्षा व्यवस्था को मिलेगा। ये भी खुशी की बात है कि राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा नीति अनेक के बाद देश के किसी भी क्षेत्र से, किसी भी वर्ग से ये बात नहीं उठी कि इसमें किसी तरह का Bias है, या किसी एक ओर दुर्भाग्य हुई है।

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साथियों, आज गुरुवार रविवार के लोकों को सत्य सच्चाई में पहुंचाने के लिए, भारत के नागरिकों को और सशक्त करने के लिए, उन्हें ज्ञान के ज्ञान के अवसर के उपयुक्त बनाने के लिए, इस एजुकेशन पॉलिसी में खास जोर किया गया है।

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राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा नीति, 21वीं सदी के भारत की, नए भारत की Foundation बनाने की उपयोगी है। 21वीं सदी के भारत की, हमारे युवाओं की जिस तरह की Education चाहिए, जैसी Skills चाहिए, राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा नीति उस पर प्रभाव करती है।

भारत को तक्तकन बनाने के लिए, विकास की उसके उच्चाई पर पहुंचाने के लिए, भारत के नागरिकों को और सशक्त करने के लिए, उन्हें ज्ञान से ज्ञान के अवसर के उपयुक्त बनाने के लिए, इस एजुकेशन पॉलिसी में खास जोर दिया गया है।

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Post 370 Jammu & Kashmir – A new era

R. K. Pachnanda

It has been nearly a year since the red lettered day when the formation of the Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh, by Prime Minister Modi’s Government, took place – the most momentous achievement since independence, to rejuvenate and resurge Indian unity and development in J & K. Prior to that, terrorism had devastated the region leading to untold misery. Union Home Minister Amit Shah made a statement in Parliament in August 2019 that 41500 people were killed in J & K since 1989. Invisible enemies fighting unholy proxy wars, had attempted to threaten Indian democracy.

Post 370, PM Modi rightly expects Kashmir to lead from the front as it now stands integrated with India in the true sense of the term. The people of J & K have the same rights, benefits and prospects as those in the rest of the country. A historical wrong, perpetrated by successive state governments, has been rectified by the Modi Government and genuine Indian citizens living in the Valley for decades will be granted domicile. Domicile certificate is now the basic eligibility condition for recruitment. Recently thousands of refugees from Pakistan, members belonging to the Valmiki Samaj and Gurkha Jawans, living in J & K since three generations, after getting their domicile certificates, have now got their citizenship rights.

The Indian Constitution, with all its amendments, is now applicable to J&K. As a result of the application of 170 central laws, a number of progressive laws such as Right to Education, Maintenance & Welfare of Parents & Senior Citizens Act-2001, National Commission for Minority Act, Right to Fair Compensation of land acquired and acts for benefit of women and children have now become fully applicable to J&K. These laws guarantee justice and fairness to the underprivileged such as scheduled castes and tribes, women, children and senior citizens.

People were fed up with family Raj and family politics, which created a mess in the state and made corruption endemic to it. The repudiation of Articles 370 and 35A has heralded a new dawn of empowerment, equity and development. The rights of women marrying outside the union territory now stand fully protected and gender discrimination has ended.

The special status of Article 370 and 35A had insulated the state from the other parts of India leaving it backward while resources meant for the region’s development was being siphoned off into wrong hands and did not reach the ordinary people and the marginalised communities. On Nov 7, 2015, Prime Minister Modi announced a Reconstruction Plan of Rs. 80,068 crores for strengthening socio-economic infrastructure, humanitarian relief, crisis management and development of J&K. Accordingly, Post 370 has witnessed a new sunrise by reinforcing governance, accelerating development, building infrastructure, generating employment,
broadening social inclusion and promoting growth.

Long years of unrest had adversely affected the state's democratic institutions, particularly those at the grassroots level. The absence of elected local bodies not only deprived the people of the power to take their own decisions regarding development and other issues impacting their day to day lives, but also adversely impacted the flow of resources from the central and the state government to rural and urban local self-governing institutions.

Immediately after the formation of the UT of J&K, panchayati raj institutions were established and made functional and Rs. 366 crore was released directly to 4483 panchayats, which was always earlier diverted to vested pockets.

The Modi Government has religiously monitored and ensured progress on all fronts. Work on the 2273 languishing projects was started; 506 projects stand completed while 963 projects are scheduled for completion by March 2021. Some of the major projects completed are IIT Jammu and Srinagar-Leh transmission line while works on mega projects including the Z Morh, Zoji La and New Banihal tunnels and some major roads are being executed on a war footing.

Rs. 881 crores was earmarked for rebuilding health institutions and 60 out of the 144 projects have been completed. There has been a major progress in hydro-power generation and flood management of the river Jhelum. Work has been speeded up in the Jhelum–Tawi Recovery Project, Chenab Bridge (the highest railway bridge in the world), connectivity of Kashmir by rail, mega-multi projects line Ujh and ShahpurKandi as also the 330 MW Kishenganga project.

To promote transparency, Government of India has got instituted a portal namely the J & K Infrastructure Monitoring System (JKIMS) by which the progress of work on ground is being physically monitored on real-time basis. The system enables real time monitoring and has features like geo-tagging, project completion certificate, image uploading facility of finished projects as well as dashboard for monitoring of progress. A dashboard has been created on the portal for public so that the status of project implementation in each district can be accessed by any individual in order to encourage community participation for strengthening grass-root democracy and encourage social audit of the projects by the beneficiaries.

Prime Minister Modi has transformed the “Tasveer” of J & K and “Taqdeer” of the people by more than fulfilling their aspirations. After the new UT of J& K came into being, there was a creation of 45000 employment opportunities, vigorous road construction works, initiation and acceleration of several power generation and transmission projects, process of setting up of over 330 schools and colleges and a university, improved medical infrastructure including two AIIMS, beginning of a light rail and public transport system, welfare measures for all including housing, disposal of outcome based grievances, implementation of women and child welfare schemes, scholarships for the deserving, support to farmers, orchardists and unorganized

Abrogation of Article 370 has led to exasperation in the ranks of the terrorists; local recruitment of terrorists has dwindled. Pakistan is now encountering triple frustration – first, at the abrogation of Article 370; second, at the snub it has faced in all international fora where it has raised the Kashmir issue and, third, at the fact that all its efforts to initiate terrorist acts have only resulted in their constant decimation in every encounter.
workers, expansion of tourism facilities, sports infrastructure and border area development. To achieve 24 x 7 power for all, 60% of works i.e. (128 out of 213 projects) have been completed. J & K achieved 100% household electrification and, for the first time after Independence, grid power has reached the border areas of Keran and Mundian, located on the LoC. This has rekindled the hope of many who had never seen electricity in their lives. Household water connections have reached 43% of J & K rural households which is double the national average of 21%; a road map has been prepared to ensure 100% coverage of piped water supply to all 18.16 lakh rural households by December 2021.

Under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna, (PMGSY) J & K has embarked on constructing 5300 kms of road by 2020-21. The COVID-19 pandemic, which has attacked the world like a storm, has also presented challenges to the government's development efforts in J&K, which would, otherwise, have seen a great upsurge in the in-flow of investments, increase in industries (including the handicrafts industry), services, tourism and the concomitant employment as also educational and medical facilities.

The Modi government has rationalized reservation rules to give benefit to the marginalised sections who have remained either unrepresented or under represented. Kashmiri migrants have finally benefited from a series of welfare measures like employment, transit accommodation and monthly financial assistance.

All provisions of the Central RTI Act 2005 have been enforced in J & K. The Anti-Corruption Bureau has been brought in to control corruption. For the speedy resolution of service matters, a Central Administrative Tribunal has been set-up. Finally, terrorism and peoples’ miseries will certainly come to an end, despite Pakistan’s frustrated efforts to activate its “deep state” again to heat up the environment, even in this state of the COVID pandemic.

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The formation of the Union Territory of J&K has not only witnessed development but also evoked patriotism and restored confidence of the people in the constitution of India and our robust democratic system of a united sovereign India with Justice, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity assuring the dignity of the Indian and unity and integrity of the Nation.

The pro-active measures being taken by a determined government, under PM Modi are ushering in a new era of peace, tranquillity and development - which will soon blossom and finally deliver the long awaited smile on the face of the people of the region.

(The author is former DG ITBP. Views expressed are personal)
One Year after August 2019
A Vision for Jammu and Kashmir

Dipankar Sengupta

Introduction
When on 5th August 2019, Home Minister Amit Shah rose to table the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act as well as the Parliamentary Resolution that would make Article 370 operative in a manner to ensure that “all provisions of this (Indian) constitution as amended from time to time shall apply to Jammu and Kashmir,” he did so stating certain reasons as to why these steps had become necessary and inevitable. Jammu and Kashmir had been trapped in a vicious cycle by its Valley-centric polity into a morass of insecurity, subversion, corruption and low economic growth with each facet reinforcing the other. It suffered from some unique and perverse paradoxes! While the State Government enjoyed a degree of autonomy, its Panchayats and Municipal Bodies were deprived of power and resources, i.e. communities were dis-empowered; while the State Government received hundreds of thousands of crores as Central assistance, its per capita income remained low. The State Government on paper spent impressive amounts on infrastructure and yet on the ground there was nothing to show! The State Government was autonomous, its people “unfree”! Clearly, by 2018 it became clear to the Modi Government that the situation in Jammu and Kashmir required serious attention and some strong measures.

What the government did on August 5-6, 2019 went far beyond what many expected. It not only extended the entire Constitution of India to Jammu and Kashmir by reworking the operation of Article 370 to that effect, but also passed the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act 2019 reorganising the State into two Union Territories. The aim was a branch and root transformation of the entire region by rebooting the entire process of governance and administration with the central government constitutionally taking direct control and therefore responsibility.

A Vision for Jammu and Kashmir

How do we envision the political and economic trajectory of Jammu and Kashmir? A vision for Jammu and Kashmir can be constructed most easily by turning the flaws of the erstwhile State on their head. This means the visualisation of Jammu and Kashmir along with other parts of India commencing on the path to becoming a knowledge society in its broadest sense engaging fruitfully with the process of globalization in all its forms. This knowledge society thus not only has modern technology as one of its components but more importantly is a free, dynamic, cosmopolitan and liberal society aware of the geographical, social and political environment in which it exists and is able to use its knowledge and organizational skills optimally in this milieu and where freedom of the individual is only
limited by the equal rights of others.

Is this realistic? It can be argued that J&K has the necessary natural and human resources to move along this trajectory. What it requires is a re-setting of the manner in which it is governed and organised and in that sense, it can be shown that the developments of August 5-6 2019 were crucial in this regard.

J&K is well endowed with respect to natural resources. Its land-man ratio is lower than the national average, it is well watered by perennial rivers and has enormous hydel potential, it has enormous bio-resources and it is endowed with tremendous natural beauty and thus tremendous tourism potential. It grows a large variety of agricultural products that are much in demand in the rest of the country, it possesses an enormous treasure trove of traditional knowledge that manifests in its cuisine and handicrafts. Indeed, J&K should not be a net recipient of assistance and yet it is.

To make agriculture more dynamic, the State needs to invest in irrigation (especially in Jammu) as well as in technology for this sector so as to increase productivity. That in comparison to its southern neighbour, Punjab it has failed even after decades have elapsed to develop a network of canals to utilise the Ravi waters or India’s share of the Chenab waters indicates either deliberate neglect of Jammu or poor governance. Thus it was crucial that the Central Government take charge and remedy affairs. Micro-irrigation projects need to be planned and executed locally and here the role of Panchayati Raj institutions is vital. But Article 370 in its previous avatar was used by the State Government to ensure that the 73rd Amendment was not extended to J&K. This state of affairs no longer exists. Thus governance plus institutional changes made possible by the extension of the Constitution makes possible great developments in rural J&K. Even where technology is concerned, the Universities of Agricultural Science and Technology of the State have not rendered the kind of service that Panjab Agriculture University did for Punjab while individual scientists from the same institutions have contributed to significant private sector initiatives in Basmati Rice, Organic produce as well as high intensive apple orcharding. Here again governance is the issue which is sought to be tackled with the Central Government taking direct charge for a period that should be more than a short term which J&K’s reorganisation affords.

When it comes to industrial growth, J&K especially when compared with neighbouring Himachal Pradesh fares poorly and that is due to a poor business environment, poor infrastructure and the location and the terrain of the UT. The first two are again governance issues which are now being tackled on a war footing. Construction of roads had picked up momentum while power sector reforms too have been kicked off. Ease of doing business parameters too are being tackled. The third factor location and terrain which also affects HP makes J&K a high cost economy. Such economies when successful have generally specialised in those goods where they have an advantage either due to knowhow or due to climatic conditions which give them market power. The UT’s handicraft sector is a prime example. This sector has grown from strength to strength without financial assistance while industries that have received financial assistance cannot stay afloat without it which is another case of the J&K’s perverse paradoxes. The UT’s handicraft sector if modernised and made socially respectable can expand manifold. Agro-industries that add value to fruit that are grown in J&K can be another area. So can value added to medicinal plants. Industries such as
these will be in high value low volume goods where prices received more than compensate for higher costs.

When it comes to tourism, the UT’s providential endowments are underutilised. The carrying capacity of the Valley which does receive tourists can easily be increased considerably with proper planning, regulation and infrastructure. This again is being taken up with renewed vigour as the Central Government has taken charge. Participative Urban governance (certainly of Srinagar) which is key to the success of this strategy or indeed any economic strategy given the rapid urbanisation that is taking place was throttled earlier as the 74th Amendment was not extended to the State. After August 5-6, 2019 it now is. In the same vein while the Shrine of Shree Mata Vaishno Devi at Katra draws millions of devotees there has been no concerted effort to ensure that tourists visit other parts of Jammu whose beauty rivals that of the Valley and H.P. If this is done while ensuring the preservation of the fragile environment of this region, tourism can turn out to be a major revenue and employment generator for the UT. Again it must be mentioned that the infrastructure and rules that govern the shrine at Katra which transformed the region completely was put in place under Governor’s Rule by Governor Jagmohan. This infrastructure ensures that this spot that is located in the fragile Shiwaliks has the carrying capacity to host millions of pilgrims. Thus if the same exercise is to be repeated for the Hills of Jammu and the Valley, it would be wise to do it now when the Central Government has both the power and responsibility where the UT is concerned. This transformation combined with the UT’s traditional skills and knowledge in the culinary arts can make it an attraction for tourists who would be willing to pay a premium for this experience. The addition of adventure sports, wellness etc. can create a spectrum of niches each with its special clientele.

Similarly given its bio-resources and the research carried out in its Universities on the same bio-resources, the UT can conceivably become the hub for biotechnology start-ups. This requires a change in mind-sets, the entry of venture and angel capital and a host of legal changes concerning acquisition/leasing of immovable property land etc. These are issues of governance as well as laws which prior to the extension of the Constitution to the State was extremely difficult. The extension of the Constitution and its reorganisation affords us the opportunity to make it a reality.

Conclusion

The UT’s treasure trove of traditional and local knowledge and its proven ability in modern research (attested by national accreditation agencies), its natural resources, its diverse and polyglot population is a solid base to strive towards a knowledge society. That it has not done so for so many decades is due to sustained misgovernance shielded by a combination of political factors and a provision of the Constitution which shielded it from progressive legislation and accountability. On August 5-6, 2019 this was dealt a serious blow with the Central Government assuming direct control and the UT finally receiving the full bounty of the India’s Constitution. Already there is enough evidence on the ground that the sloth that characterised administration has long gone. Now is the time to put the UT of J&K on a trajectory of development which enables to contribute its part to making India a knowledge society.

(The author is Professor of Economics, University of Jammu. Views expressed are his own.)
सन्नी कुमार

ज के आधुनिक समय में जब कानूनी मान्यता किसी भी अन्य वैधता उपकरणों से अधिक शक्तिशाली हो गया है, ऐसे में Jammu एवं Kashmir की कानूनी स्थिति में आया परिवर्त-निष्ठित ही निर्णायक है। यह परिवर्तन नए किस्म के बदलाव को प्राप्तसाहित कर रहा है और विकास के समक्ष आ रही संवैधानिक दुरियाँ को भी दूर कर रहा है। व्यावस्था है कि 5 अगस्त 2019 को भारतीय संसद द्वारा अनुसूच-370 में ऐसे परिवर्तन किया गया, जिसने Jammu एवं Kashmir से संबंधित विशिष् प्रावधान समाप्त हो गया और यह भी नए नागरिक की तरह समान अवस्था में आ गया। यह एक क्रांतिकारी बदलाव था जिसे कलंक समय से इस बात को लेकर कश्मीर की राजनीति उलझी हुई थी। आज जब इस परिवर्तन के एक वर्ष पूरा हो गया, तो यह जानना दिलचस्प होगा कि इन बदलावों से Kashmir में क्या फर्क आया और यह कितने तरह से Jammu-कश्मीर की बेहतरी में सहायक हो रहा है।

अलगाववादी मान्यताओं का अंत

सबसे पहले इस बात को देखते हैं कि वर्तमान संरचना से पूर्व Jammu एवं Kashmir शेष भारत से किस प्रकार अलग संवैधानिक स्थिति में था और यह कैसे राष्ट्रीय एकता और संवैधानिक संगठन व्यवस्था के बिना था। Jammu एवं Kashmir में यह विशिष् हैसियत अनुसूच-370 तथा अनुसूच-35A के विविध प्रावधानों से प्राप्त होती थी। यहाँ हम कुछ महत्वपूर्ण प्रावधानों की ही सूची करेंगे। हम सब जानते हैं कि भारतीय संवैधानिक एकता नागरिकता की स्थिति को स्वीकार करता है किसी कश्मीर में न केवल दोहरी नागरिकता का प्रावधान था बल्कि यहाँ के लिए अलग ध्वज और अलग संवैधानिक भी था। जाहिर सी बात है कि ऐसी स्थिति में किसी भी राज्य का शेष राष्ट्र के साथ एकीकरण असंभव है, कश्मीर भी इसका अवसर नहीं था। वहाँ, आई, निस अलगाववादी विचार को इसी ‘कानूनी प्रावधानों’ की आड़ में ठीक ठहराने की कोशिश की जाती थी।

इसी प्रकार हमारे देश का संवैधानिक सभी नागरिकों को यह अधिकार देता है कि वो देश के किसी भी हिस्से में जमीन खरीद सके और वहाँ बस सके। यह एक मौलिक अधिकार है। इस अधिकार के मूल में यह बात है कि सभी नागरिक बराबर ही तथा उनमें राज्य के आधार पर भेदभाव नहीं किया जा सकता है, किंतु दुर्भाग्य से Jammu एवं Kashmir में यह अधिकार लागू ही नहीं होता था। यहाँ दूसरे राज्य के विवादों न तो Jammu खरीद सकते थे, न सरकारी नौकरी पा सकते थे और न ही यहाँ की किसी संस्था में दाखिला ही ले सकते थे। ऐसी विभिन्नताएं पुरातत्व को प्राप्तसाहित करती थी।

इसी निरंतरता में देखे तो भारतीय संसद को संघीय व समस्ती सूची पर कानून बनाने का अधिकार है और वो सभी राज्यों पर लागू होता है किंतु Jammu एवं Kashmir पर लागू नहीं होता है। रक्षा, विदेश मामले तथा संचार के अलावा किसी भी अन्य कानून को लागू करने के लिए राज्य सरकार की जंगिका अधिकारी होती है। जाहिर सी बात है कि यह अतिरिक्त शक्ति Jammu एवं Kashmir का शेष भारत से एकीकरण को होता संवैधानिक करता था। इतना ही नहीं भारतीय दंड सहिता जो देश में समाप्त कानून की व्यवस्थाकर्ता है वो भी यहाँ लागू नहीं था। साथ ही सुनना का अधिकार तथा शिक्षा का अधिकार जैसे प्राधिकृत और आगम जन मानस को सशक्त करने वाले कानूनों को भी Jammu एवं Kashmir में लागू नहीं किया जा सकता था। यहाँ तक कि सर्वनाच्च न्यायालय भी यहाँ समाप्तशक्ति के साथ ही यहाँ न्यायिक हक्कों का सकर स्वीकार करते। इस सब का असर यह होता है कि इस मान्यता को बल मिलता था कि Jammu एवं Kashmir एक अलग कानूनी इकाई है।

इसके अलावा Jammu एवं Kashmir को जनाकृति की रूप से अलग बनाए रखने के लिए ऐसे कानून बनाए गए थे कि वृद्ध अर्थात में एकता कभी स्वीकार की न खाई हुईं और उदाहरण के लिए Jammu एवं Kashmir की कोई महिला यदि भारत के किसी अन्य राज्य के व्यक्ति से विवाह करती थी तो उस महिला की Jammu एवं Kashmir की नागरिकता खाली हो जाती थी। यह प्रावधान Jammu एवं Kashmir को किसी अलग राष्ट्र की तरह व्यवहार करने के लिए प्रेरित करता था।
उपरोक्त उदाहरणों से इतना तो रूप है कि जम्मू एवं कश्मीर की प्रामाण्यता विश्वासार्थ एवं इनके विकास में कोई संबंधना नहीं होकर करते थे बल्की अलग-अलग मान्यताओं को खुदकुश महसूस करते थे। इसलिए भिन्न-भिन्न बच्चों को संवैधानिक व नागरिक रूप से शेष भारत की दूसरी भारतीय रूप से संबंधित बनाना यहां संभव हो गया। हां, इसी एकीकरण की संवैधानिक पुष्टि हुई। वहां से एकीकरण की एक नई शुरुआत चिंतित की जा सकती है।

एक नया नागरिक प्रवास

उपरोक्त उदाहरणों से इतना तो रूप है कि जम्मू एवं कश्मीर को जनांकूरत्र रूप से अलग बनाए रखने के लिए ऐसे कार्य किये गए थे कि वृहद अंतर्गत में एकता कभी स्थापित हो नहीं पाई। उदाहरण के लिए जम्मू एवं कश्मीर की जीवन महत्त्व के संबंध में इसके व्यवहार करती थी तो उस महत्त्व का जम्मू एवं कश्मीर की नागरिकता खत्म हो जाती थी। वह प्राधान्य जम्मू एवं कश्मीर को इसिसे अलग राष्ट्र की तरह व्यवहार करने के लिए प्रेरित करता था।

उपरोक्त उदाहरणों से इतना तो रूप है कि जम्मू एवं कश्मीर की प्रामाण्यता विश्वासार्थ एवं इनके विकास में कोई संबंधना नहीं होकर करते थे बल्की अलग-अलग मान्यताओं को खुदकुश महसूस करते थे। इसलिए भिन्न-भिन्न बच्चों को संवैधानिक व नागरिक रूप से शेष भारत की दूसरी भारतीय रूप से संबंधित बनाना यहां संभव हो गया। हां, इसी एकीकरण की संवैधानिक पुष्टि हुई। वहां से एकीकरण की एक नई शुरुआत चिंतित की जा सकती है।
Joyous celebrations in Ladakh as it completes a year as UT

The 5th of August, 2020, saw Ladakh in a highly celebratory mood. Different regions of the twin districts of Leh and Kargil organised cultural functions to celebrate the completion of one year as a Union Territory (UT). Never before such joyous functions were held in every nook and corner of Ladakh.

What was the change that made Ladakh hopeful of a new dawn of freedom from the suppressive and oppressive leadership in Srinagar? For 70 years, funds only trickled, and that was not enough even to carry out the smallest of projects in the backward region of Ladakh. Most of the infrastructure that one can see in Ladakh today have been built mainly by the Army. Soon after Ladakh was given UT status, the Central government announced the setting up of several institutions and grant of funds.

Ladakhis are happy and grateful to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for granting UT status, and also looking towards having the 6th Schedule along with legislature. What is 6th Schedule and what purpose does it serve? In a very simplified way, one can say that the 6th Schedule of the Indian Constitution, under Article 244, gives safeguards for a particular tribal/ethnic area, and gives protection to its land, jobs, language, culture etc. such as in much of India’s northeast.

The Minister of Tribal Affairs, Mr Arjun Munda, had recommended, on Jan.24, 2020, to the Ministry of Home Affairs, that Ladakh be granted 6th Schedule in order to protect its rich legacy. Perhaps the right moment might come when, in the next 2-3 months, Ladakh goes to the polls for its Hill Councils, both in Leh and Kargil.

What is a matter of great joy and satisfaction is that Ladakh as a UT has got its first share of Central funds amounting to Rs 5,958 crore for the year 2020-21. This is a huge jump in contrast to the ‘trickling funds’ it used to get from the J&K government. As a result, no big project/s could be taken up even if those were crucial for Ladakh’s welfare and progress. But with the Central funds pouring in, Ladakhis can now dream of fulfilling their decades-long aspirations of development with absolutely necessary projects, as well as completing many a pending crucial project immediately.

The setting up of Ladakh University has already been completed, and there was, recently, an announcement of a Central University that will, apart from several subjects in art and science, also have a centre for the study of Buddhist philosophy. The idea is to attract students also from the nearby Himalayan states to study and do research work on Buddhism and its relevance in today’s competitive and materialistic world.

Another big decision was about the expansion of Leh airport at a cost of Rs 480 crore, and work
on it is on a fast track. The idea is to make it big enough to attract more flights so that airfares don’t skyrocket every summer.

Prime Minister Modi, during his visit to Ladakh after it became a UT, had also promised several institutions for Ladakh, including medical and engineering colleges. The Sowa Rigpa (traditional medicinal system) centre in Leh has been accorded a ‘national status’ for research in traditional medicinal system.

Ladakh has a literacy rate of 77.48%, which is among the highest in the country; and Leh city is also among the fastest-growing cities. There are many reasons for this, but it is mainly because of its Hill Councils and its progressive women who enjoy equal status with men in all spheres of life.

The MP factor: Ladakh has a young, energetic and dynamic Member of Parliament in Mr Jamyang Tsering Namgyal. Popularly known as JTN, he won the Ladakh parliament seat a year ago with a record margin of votes. A fiery speaker, his first Parliament speech had gone viral. Wherever I go, the first question I am asked, always, is: Do you know your fiery MP? That clearly shows how much he has won the affection of the people of the country.

In the last one year, JTN has worked very hard. He has visited even the remotest nooks and corners of the Ladakh region, particularly those in Changthang, Nubra and Zanskar valleys where free India’s ‘democratic fruits’ are yet to reach. JTN has already redressed some of their decades-long grievances, and has promised them that the rest of their aspirations too would be taken care of in the coming years.

It was mainly because of his efforts that the years-old unfinished crucial road project of Leh-Nimu-Padum was made ready and thrown open to public recently. And that is a huge achievement in addressing the isolated Zanskari’s long-time demand. The new 269-km road will reduce the distance between Leh and Padum by at least
200kms, thereby making travel easier and less time-consuming. The existing route via Kargil is 463-km long and is difficult to cover within a day, mainly because of bad-road conditions at several places. Moreover, this route remains closed for over six months and the Zanskaris are completely ‘isolated’ from the rest of the world.

This new road is also strategically very important for Ladakh to remain connected with the rest of the world. The highway via Kargil is not without any risk because of the Pakistan border factor. Recall the Kargil war of 1999 when this highway and the town came under heavy attack. Therefore, the new road via Nimu to Padum, and to Manali thereafter, gives strategic safety for any kind of Army movement and transportation.

Another big project to be completed recently at a cost of Rs7.5 crore was the Choklamsar double-lane bridge across the river Sindh, with separate footpaths on either side. This replaces the decades-old bridge, in a shambles for lack of funds.

And, in the coming months, 5,000 jobs will be available in Ladakh, out of which 1,000 jobs are for the post of gazetted officers. This will come as a big moralebooster for the thousands of jobless youths of Ladakh, many of whom have been waiting for jobs for years. Though there is no official figure of jobless youths, 20,000 is a conservative figure one can come out with.

Conclusion: As Prime Minister Narendra Modi said from the ramparts of the Red Fort recently, in his Independence Day speech: “Ladakh today, as a UT, is on a progressive path with several big projects to be completed soon” after years of neglect and stagnation. He has vowed to turn Ladakh into a carbon-neutral region, a model in the country.

A grateful Ladakh thanks Prime Minister Narendra Modi as it enters its 2nd year as UT; the hopes of having the 6th Schedule with legislature are there and faith in Prime Minister Narendra Modi among the people continue to be strong.

(The writer is a New Delhi-based editor-at-large, columnist and professional speaker. Views expressed are his own)
राष्ट्रीय कवरास् सषे युक्त, महात्मा गांधी कषे  कवजि सषे अिुप्राकर्, डॉ. आमबषे डकर कषे  किए संकवधाि कषे  प्रक् प्रक्बद्ध िई राष्ट्ीय कशक्ा िीक्

2020 प्रधािम ंत्री िरेंद्र मोिी कषे  आतमकिभथिर भार् कषे  सवपि को साकार करिषे की किशा में एक ठोस किम है. िषेर आयि पर िुरुस् आयि इस िई राष्ट्ीय कशक्ा िीक् (एिईपी) में एक ओर जहाँ कशक्ा वयवस्ा की व्थिमाि खाकमयों को िूर करिषे कषे  प्रावधाि हैं, सो िूसरी ओर 21वीं सिी कषे  बिल्षे हुए भार् की आं्ररक और वैकविक चुिौक्यों का सामिषे करिषे की ्ैयारी भी.

िई राष्ट्ीय कशक्ा िीक् (एिईपी)  की एक बड़ी कवशषेष्ा है कक यह सचचषे मायिषे में एक राष्ट्ीय िीक् है. िुकिया कषे  इक्हास में शायि पहली बार ऐसा हुआ है कक कशक्ा िीक् बिािषे कषे  कलए िषेश की चारों किशाओं सषे 2.5 लाख ग्ाम पंचाय्ों और 676 कजलों कषे कशक्कों, कशक्ाकविों, जिप्रक्किकधयों, उद्ोगपक्यों, अकभभावकों और छात्रों सषे सुझाव और मं्ि कर जि आकांक्ाओं कषे  अिुरूप यह एिईपी साकार हुई है. इस रूप में यह एक लोक्ांकत्रक रीक् सषे ्ैयार हुई कशक्ा िीक् है.

एक अनय िया पररव्थिि है कक एिईपी 2020 की घोषरा सा् ही मािव स ंसाधि प्रब ंधि म ंत्रालय का िाम ब िलकर ‘कशक्ा मंत्रालय’ कर किया गया है,जो सवथि्ा उकच् है. ‘मािव स ंसाधि’ सषे धवकि् हो्ा है कक मािवीय भावों-संसकारों सषे रकह् इंसाि जैसषे एक भौक्क संसाधि मात्र हो, जो पकचिम कषे  भौक्कवािी कचन्ि सषे प्रषेरर् है. जबकक ‘कशक्ा’ अकभधाि मिुष्य कषे  भौक्कवािी पहलु कषे  सा्-सा् सांसकतृ क्क, चाररकत्रक और मिोवैज्ाकिक सभी पक्ों को समाकह् कर्ा है, जो भार्ीय कचं्ि-पद्धक् का प्रक्कबमबि है.

भार्ीय भाषाओँ पर जोर एिईपी की एक बड़ी कवशषेष्ा है.

सकू ली कशक्ा सषे लषेकर उचच कशक्ा ्क में ‘भार्ीय भाषाओँ कषे  आत्निर्भर रारत का सवप्न साकार कर सकेगमी, िई राष्ट्मीय नशक्ा िमीनत 2020 अधयापि’कषे  सा्- सा् ‘भार ्ीय भाषाओँ में अध यापि’पर बल किया गया है. एक महतवप ूरथि अिुशंसा है कक मा् तृभाषा या क्षेत्रीय भाषा में पाँचवी ग्षेड ्क की प़िाई होगी, कजसषे आठवीं ्क भी ब़िाया जा सक्ा है.अंग्षेजी होगी अब भी, लेककन अब सिर्फ एक विषय के रूप में पढ़ाई जाएगी,सूचकस्के रिपोर्ट अथवा शीक्षणिक मनोविज्ञान के अनुसार मातृभाषा में सीखना आसान होता है क्योंकि इसमें सम्प्रेषण व संज्ञन सहज व शीघ्र होता है. मातृभाषा या स्वास्थीय भाषा में बन्ध नहीं है जबकक इतने भाषाओं में उसे रटना पड़ता है.यह अनयाय नहीं कि संसार के हर विकसित देश में स्कूली शिक्षा मातृभाषा या स्वास्थीय भाषा में ही होती है, यहाँ तक की उच्च शिक्षा का माध्यम भी समान्यतया उनके देश की भाषा होती है, एनईपी का यह विदु भारतीय भाषाओं और संस्कृत दोनो िूसी िूसी की दिशा में मील का पपत्य साबि होगा.

एनईपी का एक अनय महतवप ूरथि है ‘सवका साथ, सवका विकास’ को साकार करने के लिए ‘सवकी शिक्षा’ देने वर्तमान के मैकॉले मॉडल पर आधारित शिक्षा किताबी ज्ञान व शीक्षणिक पाठ्यक्रम पर जोर देंगे, जो पढ़ाई के बाद नौकरी ढूँढने वालों बेरोजगारों की बड़ी खेप तैयार कर रही है. लेककन एनईपी पाठ्येतर क्रियाकलापों और वोकेशनल शिक्षा पर भी बल देंगे हैं महामां गांधी के अभ्याप्न और समान्य िूसी िूसी की दिशा में मील का पपत्य साबि होगा. एनईपी का एक अनय महतवप ूरथि है ‘नए संसार, सवका साथ, सवका विकास’ को साकार करने के लिए ‘सवकी शिक्षा’ देने
नई राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा नीति (एनएसई) की एक बड़ी विषयता है कि यह सच्चे मानवों में एक राष्ट्रीय नीति है। दुनिया के इतिहास में शायद ऐसा बार ऐसा हुआ है कि शिक्षा नीति बनाने के लिए देश के चारों दिशाओं से प्रवासियों और 676 जिलों के शिक्षकों, शिक्षाविदों, जनप्रतिनिधियों, उद्योगपतियों, अभिभाषकों और छात्रों से सुझाव और मंडन कर जाना आकांक्षाओं के अनुसार यह एनएसई साक्षर हुई है। इस रूप में यह एक लोकतांत्रिक रीति से तैयार हुई शिक्षा नीति है।

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One might have to look back 34 years. It was 1986, not long after Ms. P. T. Usha ran in the Los Angeles Olympics that India’s Education Ministry was renamed as the Ministry of Human Resources and Development (MHRD). It was also the year when India saw her last national education policy. And that’s that. Since then, we have had a few eras pass by, we have seen ‘progressive’ and ‘revolutionary’ thinkers leading the nation, yet, there was no revision, no progress, no revolution in our education policy until recently.

The Bharatiya Janata Party’s Manifesto for the 2014 LokSabha elections was the first one to promise a new education policy. In January 2015, a committee under former Cabinet Secretary T. S. R. Subramanian started the consultation process for the New Education Policy. Based on the committee’s report, in June 2017, the draft NEP was submitted in 2019 by a panel led by former Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) chief K. Kasturirangan. The Draft New Education Policy (DNEP) 2019, was later released by Ministry of Human Resource Development, and was followed by a number of public consultations. The Draft NEP, a four hundred and eighty four pages document placed in the MHRD portal for next one year. During this period, the Ministry undertook a rigorous consultation process in formulating the draft policy. It considered, “Over two lakh suggestions from 2.5 lakh gram panchayats, 6,600 blocks, 6,000 Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) and 676 districts” and held wide and intense consultations with various stakeholders, experts and practitioners in the field of education, including lawmakers. On 29th July 2020, the Union Cabinet approved the National Education Policy 20202 (NEP 2020).

The last few weeks has seen a wide debate across the spectrum on NEP 2020. With many questioning the policy and many others welcoming it as a heralding a new educational era for India: The question is however what the highlights of NEP 2020 are:

1. First of all it announces a paradigm shift in school education. The traditional 10+2 system is now going to be changed to the 5+3+3+4 system. Well, it is a restructuring, from where have these extra three years come? Yes, it is those three years of pre-primary, the nursery classes. Not uncommon for our fast-paced metro toddlers whose education start from the age of three. But, for our village children, whose education mainly rely on public schools usually starts from 6-7 years. This means general education system in village area were lagging almost 3 years as compared to its counterparts in cities. New Education Policy is successfully removing this imbalance making everyone at par from the very beginning.

2. The New Education Policy has a very positive
implication. Hitherto Right to Education in the Indian Constitution (Art. 21A) covered children aged 6 years to 14 years, i.e., from class 1 to 8. The protection exists for a period of 8 years only. It seems that the new policy aims at extending it up to 18 years of age (i.e., class 12) from the tender age of 3. Thus not only pre-school students, till now excluded from the formal education system, would now be included, the very crucial four years for stepping into the roads of higher education (age 14 to 18) would also be covered benefitting thousands of poor students and leading to a reduction in the number of dropouts. This is revolutionary and thus seeks to provide quality education as a right to all the citizens for a period of total 15 years. (3 years to 18 years of age). We may well imagine how much the marginal people will be benefited from it

3. In this new education policy, special importance has been given to our mother tongues. Trying to make the mother tongue/local language as the medium of instruction for both private and public schools, is the main focus area of this policy. The policy says that wherever possible, the mother tongue will be the medium at least up to the second grade (i.e. pre-primary 3 years plus primary 5 years), and is preferable even after that.

4. Learning English is also clearly emphasized besides mother tongue. The Modi Government is bringing new tri-language policy. English is given importance next to mother tongue or local language. Students must be able to read, write and communicate on any topic in English by the final stage of fourth grade, as opined by the policy.

5. Debunking all rumors and speculations, the Union Government has clearly indicated that Hindi will not be mandatory as the third language. Rather the NEP-2020 proposes to promote Sanskrit as third language. Several centres of excellence will be established to teach, learn, practice and research Sanskrit. To facilitate the learning of Sanskrit learning opportunities at higher level, Sanskrit Universities will collaborate with other Higher Educational Institutes. More to this, other national and international classical languages and literatures can also be learned as third language.

6. Massive structural changes are about to come in learning and teaching. Students will be imparted and encouraged to undertake vocational training from 6th standard. Although, educated unemployment has been a center point concerns for many, yet, no visionary measures have ever been taken to encourage skills enhancement or professional education to generate employment opportunity. It has been already proved that 6-9 months of vocational training after 11-12th standard is not at all beneficial. On the other side, education limited to academics, ignoring the development of skills, marginalizing the need for vocational training cannot be a holistic education. This has been emphasized by our thinkers, Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma
Gandhi and many others have referred to this imbalance and called for its rectification and have demonstrated it in their respective educational frameworks and experiments. In the Indic systems of knowledge, young people used to learn about their ancestral profession from their parents from an early age. Independent India’s educational policies have often ignored this aspect. Denying our own heritage and blindly following the foreign notions of development has only led to this crisis. The NEP 2020 addressed this omission of the past and aims to encourage the growth of skillful self-reliant citizens, not merely educated job seeker.

7. To ensure that Indian languages flourish and learners attain greater proficiency in it, not only text books but various instruction manual of appliances and machines, workbook, apps, magazines, and plays will be written in Indian languages. For better accessibility, e-versions and videos will also be prepared. To modernize languages, more colloquial terms will be amalgamated, vocabulary will be updated and Dictionaries in Indian languages will be revised by continuous practice.

8. Special focus will be given to engage students in ‘extra-curricular activities’ like drawing, crafting, playing and writing poems. Local prodigies in several such fields will be invited and attached to schools to nurture our young generations. Students will also be introduced to our heritage and culture via summer trips to different locations in India.

9. A new organization namely National Curricular and Pedagogical Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education (NCPFECCE) will be formed to monitor improvements of all children up to 8 years of age. This is going to be revolutionary step, a path directly leading us from a ‘developing nation’ to the ‘developed’ one. The country is now taking full responsibility of its own future.

10. A complete makeover of the evaluation system has also been proposed. A novel 360° holistic evaluation will be introduced instead of the number based examination. Not only languages, science or arts but vocational training, skills, passions, attitudes and conducts of students will also be considered at the time of evaluation. In short, there will be no compartmentalization in curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular activities. The evaluation will not be one dimensional either, rather students will do self-evaluation/appraisal, they will express their choices, likes and dislikes. Teachers-trainer-supervisors’ feedback will also be taken into account. A central A.I system will do the evaluation based on these two dimensional
inputs. Yes, the final exam standard 10 will not exist anymore.

11. Major-minor concepts will be introduced in place of science, commerce, and arts. There will be no stream division in colleges and high schools. Just imagine the impact of this one decision. The day when there will be no “my son is studying in the science stream”, will be the day when Ram Shankar Nikunj will no longer be for an Ishan Awasti! Your child can study physics with fashion designing, chemistry with cooking. I would surely opt for a combination of chemistry, history, literature, physics, statistics and drawing.

12. NEP proposes to bring in revolutionary changes in higher studies as well. In 2014 the gross enrolment ratio was 24% which rose to 26% in the next 4 years. The Modi Government is aiming at making this 50% by the year 2035. It is trying ensure that half of the total students become graduates by the year 2035 and for this purpose 1.5 crore new seat will be generated in higher studies.

13. Not only this, a centralized entrance system will be there for all colleges and universities and this will be conducted in as many local languages as possible unlike previous the policy where only English and Hindi were medium for this kind of exam.

14. Even after this, if anyone has any doubt regarding language imposition, for them, the NEP aims to build more than a thousand translation centres which will be devoted for all Indian languages including Sanskrit, so that, anyone can go for any level of higher studies in their preferred language. Besides these center will also work for restoring and preserving the science, arts, literature and philosophical works that were once written in our classical languages and shall make them widely available.

15. There will be only one regulatory body for Higher Education Institute (HEI). Multiple parallel regulatory bodies not only slow down the development but also induce corruption. NEP 2020 took a hard decision on this and brings every HEI except law and medical colleges, under one umbrella.

16. The concept of major minor shall also be introduced in the higher education too and also with more versatility. All engineering institutes including IITs and NITs have been instructed to include literatures, languages and liberal arts; at the same time traditional non-engineering universities like JNU shall also include various curriculum on science and engineering. Everything will be interdisciplinary, there will be special inter disciplinary institutes as well. The exchange of students and faculty members in two different genre of colleges will be promoted. History students will be able to take computer coding as a minor subject. From now onwards the subject of history will not be merely remembering the tax policy of Raja Todarmal, it will also include reinventing the our past – structures, cities, architectural wonders that once existed – using satellite images and data analytics.

17. A very important aspect of NEP 2020 is the separation of language from literature. Many don’t speak good English because we were not taught English language in the right manner. We were often taught only English literature. Learning language is a necessity for all, but studying literature is not. Unfortunately, such a simple thing was beyond the comprehension of Macaulay followers and later Nehruvian educationists.
So there were times when we saw a surge in spoken English classes which has now converted to an outbreak of English medium schools everywhere. NEP will teach English language to everyone. After that it will solely be their choice if they want to study English literature.

18. Another great aspect of NEP 2020 is the multiple entry exit system that it proposes. There are many occasions when we have to leave our study in between, with no scope of returning. We lose many a potential researcher and inventor in this way. But when the competing neighbour is a techno super power, we too also need to give full scope to develop the full potential of each of our aspiring researchers. Keeping that in mind NEP 2020 offers a great scope of a Multiple Entry –Exit System. One need not complete at a time all 3 or four years of courses. The learner shall be eligible to receive a certificate after one year, a diploma after two, a degree after three and degree with research after four. But on top of that the learner will be able to hold her/his study at any point of time and again come back and join later. The student need not start afresh, she/he will just resume her/his study.

19. But how will that be possible? For that the NEP 2020 proposes to bring in a Central Credit Bank system. Whenever you study a subject at any level, a credit will be deposited to this bank and this credit shall remain there till you earn the degree certificate. If you match the total credit necessary for obtaining degree certificate, then it will be given to you. You will study the subjects of your choice at your free will and a time preferable to you. If you are a keen learner, you must know that the new education system is going to support you in every manner.

20. And to implement these visionary policies, 6% of total GDP will be allocated for education. For years it was only 2%. Not only that the policy says that within next 10 years the Government of India and all State Governments are also instructed to use their 20% of public expenditure for education. Yes, a similar demand has been made from the early years of independence, however, it is only the Modi Government which hugely focused on education and has conferred on it great priority. A true and visionary education policy is what removes poverty and creates a strong nation, a convoluted and ill-conceived, irrational policy like NYAY can never be a substitute for a comprehensive, far-seeing and visionary educational policy.

A true nation never emerges from blood-soaked revolutions. Education without a vision is only a tool for making cadres clamouring for lockouts and chaos. The NEP 2020 directly has overturned an outdated education system and understanding of education. Yes, it will require time to implement this comprehensive and path-breaking policy, but at least the NEP 2020 can now enable the common Indian to think of and envisage an India of twenty first century, a true super power in techno-innovation and entrepreneurship. The common Indian can aspire to be an active part and stakeholder in the creation of that twenty first century India. It has unleashed India’s educational potential, it has introduced a new energy and dynamism in the education sector. It is an important driver for a “New India” as envisaged by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

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It is imperative that India wins the ‘Aatmanirbhar’ challenge

Pratim Ranjan Bose

In a market economy, perceptions matter. In economic terms this is called ‘rational expectations’ and are linked to the past performances. Highlighted by Keynes, in the 1930’s, barely a decade after the last pandemic, the medicine found ample use worldwide to survive odds, maintain order and ensure growth.

Over the last few decades, China used this tool most efficiently to be perceived as the ‘growth engine’ of the world. In comparison, the perception about India suffered, arguably due to the wide gap between promises and action. India was referred to as a ‘nation that talks’.

Creating fresh expectations

Over the last six years, the Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid maximum attention to bridge this gap.

From implementing long pending reforms like Goods and Services Tax (GST) or Bankruptcy Code to Balakot airstrike and abrogation of Article 370 from Kashmir – he was consistent in challenging the status quo.

His attempts were relentless and there is little doubt that the government has been highly successful in creating an air of positivity about India - both domestically and internationally. It is no longer taken as a benign force.

In the face of unprecedented disruption caused by COVID; this ‘waves of optimism’, as Keynes had put it, was India’s biggest bet not only to survive the pandemic but also to make it an opportunity to take the country to the next level of competition.

The Prime Minister did just that in his Independence Day speech.

From reference of sanitary pads to mocking the prevailing pattern of exporting raw materials and importing finished goods, and warning silos within the administration – he upped the ante against status quo with a clear goal to make a far stronger and confident India.

Managing expectations

Realizing this dream will not be easy. If the share of manufacturing is as low as 23 percent (CIA Factbook) in India as against 40 percent in China, there must be wider reasons behind it.

MSMEs attracted maximum attention as the Centre offered guaranteed loan finance even to the sick. If we combine the two, the government is forcing a complete shift from the closed economy principles where the government went for micro planning and ended up creating silos of inefficiency.
If we haven’t built adequate roads connecting ports, neglected creation of strategic infrastructure on the Northern border, delayed rail connectivity to North East India and kept Arunachal Pradesh outside the civil aviation map for so long; it must not be an omission.

But, if it were an easy task, who needed Modi? His historic win in 2014 reflected the strong dissent of the Indian electorate against the status quo. His re-election in 2019 by a wider margin indicated, Mr Modi didn’t fail them.

Looking back, it is unbelievable that in merely six years, coal mining was denationalized; the endless debates on GST, that required change in federal structure, was put to rest; public sector banks, which were experts in hiding bad assets by evergreening, were sent to the cleaners.

The scale and speed of change is mind blowing. Most Indians families now have cooking gas and electricity. Social benefits are transferred directly to bank accounts. Digital transactions are not a luxury. Even roadside ‘panipuri’ sellers accept ‘google pay’. E-commerce is booming.

It is not easy to match expectations of common Indians as well as the international community. The Modi government did it with ease.

Dirt-cheap life (PMJJBY) and medical insurance (Ayushman Bharat) for the underprivileged; and ‘Housing for all’ (PMAY for the poor and sharp cut in home loans for the middle class) benefitted millions.

Global investors were convinced by futuristic steps like fast expansion in digital and renewable space, big bang reforms and rapid improvement in ease-of-doing-business and logistics efficiency. FDI inflow peaked.

Military logistics deal with the US and aggressive push in neighbourhood connectivity projects consolidated Indian position in the region. Regional trade grew at a fast pace. Relationship with the Islamic power centre, Saudi Arabia is at a historic high.

**Fighting from the front**

The world is not run on static principles. Opportunities come and go. Global growth was suffering in the post-2008 (meltdown) period. COVID had shaken up the global economy right from its root. Everyone is suffering. As fear grips the human mind, all theories are failing.

Despite giving huge cash handouts, unemployment is at record high in the US, as businesses are increasing automation. Huge State-sponsored construction activities failed to stop closure of steel plans in China. Beijing restricted withdrawals to prevent bank runs. The UK’s economy shrunk by 20 percent in the June quarter.

The mayhem has gripped Indian economy as well. With services contributing 60 percent of GDP, India is in a particularly weak spot. Because all studies indicate the services sector will take too long a time to recover.

The fear of infection impacted consumer behaviour. Hair clippers are selling like hotcakes. Barber Shops will not find as many customers again. Opportunities may shrink even for domestic helps as robot house cleaners started arriving in the marketplace.

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From implementing long pending reforms like Goods and Services Tax (GST) or Bankruptcy Code to Balakot airstrike and abrogation of Article 370 from Kashmir – he was consistent in challenging the status quo.
It was useless trying to protect the prevailing model of the economy, from this mayhem. No amount of money will take people back to brick and mortar shops now. India needed to shift gear to tap future value addition opportunities.

The Prime Minister is leading the country in that direction through his call for Atmanirbhar Bharat.

Towards a more competitive economy

Beginning with schemes or programmes rolled out since March, India has clearly taken a protective stance with regard to rural economy.

The reasons are simple. Rising automation will reduce the need for unskilled or semi-skilled labour in cities. A healthy rural economy including both farm and non-farm opportunities can offer the perfect income cushion, as people will go back to their villages.

However, to translate that into better living and higher demand for industrial goods, the rural economy must be unleashed. Farm practices should be more productive and output should get the best price. A series of reform measures are trying to reach that goal.

On the industrial and services segment, the government rightly denied to give sector-wise assistance. It focused on removing the regulatory obstacles and ensured availability of finance. The rest is left to market innovation.

MSMEs attracted maximum attention as the Centre offered guaranteed loan finance even to the sick. If we combine the two, the government is forcing a complete shift from the closed economy principles where the government went for micro planning and ended up creating silos of inefficiency.

As the final push, the government wants to ensure play of capital by reducing the role of the public sector to bare minimum. The BPCL privatization marks the beginning of the end of politics-PSU nexus. India is now inviting the private sector to take companies to global scale.

The aim is clear, the government wants competition to intensify in Indian manufacturing. There is no protection, excepting the restrictions imposed on unfair State-backed competition from China. The impact will be felt on every sphere of economy and policy making.

United we stand

COVID forced a shift from the usual practices to the entire world. The Modi government is aligning India to the new realities. It decided to face short term problems so as to optimize the country’s long-term gains of the country and its people.

The question is no more if they will be successful. In a democracy, it is people who chose their leader. The success of the leader is the success of the nation. India gained immensely from PV Narasimha Rao’s liberalization programme in 1991.

It is imperative that India should win the unprecedented challenge thrown in by COVID.

(The writer is an independent columnist and researcher and a public policy expert. Views expressed are his own)

Despite giving huge cash handouts, unemployment is at record high in the US, as businesses are increasing automation. Huge State-sponsored construction activities failed to stop closure of steel plans in China. Beijing restricted withdrawals to prevent bank runs. The UK’s economy shrunk by 20 percent in the June quarter.
रोिा वायरस महामारी का अं्गथि् आ्ा है. अभी बाि भार्ीय अथिवयवस्ा में कतृ कष का ऊगिाि काफी कम रह्ा आया है एवं सषेवा क्षेत्र का ऊगिाि सबसे अकधक रह्ा है. परं्ु बिली हुई पररकस्क्यों में कतृ कष का ऊगिाि कु छ ब़ि्ा िज़र आ रहा है एवं सषेवा क्षेत्र का ऊगिाि कम हो सक्ा है, ्कयोंकक पयथिटि एवं होटल उद्ोग कोरोिा वायरस महामारी में सबसे जयािा प्रभाकव् हुए हैं और यषे िोिों उद्ोग सषेवा क्षेत्र कषे  अं्गथि् आ्षे हैं.

भार् में कु ल आबािी का लगभग 60 प्रक्श् सषे अकधक कहससा ग्ामीर इलाक़ों में रह्ा है एवं अपिषे रोज़गार कषे  कलए मुखय्ः कतृ कष क्षेत्र पर ही किभथिर हैं. इस प्रकार भार ् में कतृ कष का क्षेत्र एक कस्वर लाइंग कषे  ्ौर पर िषेखा जा रहा है. भार् में आम ्ौर पर हम लोग कतृ कष क्षेत्र में चावल, िाल, गषेहूँ, ्षेल-विसपक्, आकि कु छ चीज़ों कषे उतपािि पर ही अपिा ध याि क ेंकद्र् कर्षे हैं. परं्ु, िषेश में एक और महतवपूरथि क्षेत्र है, जो कतृ कष क्षेत्र कषे  अं्गथि् आ्ा है और जो बड़ी ्षेज़ी सषे कवककस् हो रहा है. वह क्षेत्र है बाग़वािी (हॉकटथिक्चर) का.

बाग़वािी क्षेत्र पर पहले तो हमारे किसानों का कम ध्यान रहता है एवं अपने रोज़गार के लिए मुख्यतः कृषि क्षेत्र पर ही निर्भर हैं. इस प्रकार भारत में कृषि का क्षेत्र एक सिल्वर लाइंग के तौर पर देखा जा रहा है. भारत में आम तौर पर हम लोग कृषि क्षेत्र में चावल, दाल, गेहूँ, तेल-वनसपति, आदि कुछ चीजों के उपयोग पर ही अपना ध्यान केंद्रित करते हैं. परं्ु, देश में एक और महत्वपूरथि क्षेत्र है, जो कृषि क्षेत्र के अंतर्गत आता है और जो बड़ी तेज़ी से विकसित हो रहा है. वह क्षेत्र है बाग़वािी (हॉकटथिक्चर) का.

केंद्र सरकार द्वारा किए जा रहे उपायों से भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था का बदलता स्वरूप
पाई जा रही हैं। प्रयास कर रहा है। क्योंकक अब यह िषेखा जा रहा है कक एक शया कषे  कु छ चैि एक ऐसा महतवपूरथि क्षेत्र है, कजसमें भार् आगषे ब ़ििषे का कर सक्ा है. हाँ, उस उतपाि की गुरवत्ा का धयाि ज़रूर उसषे रखिा बषेचिा है उससषे अगलषे वषथि होिषे वाली फसल की क़ीम् आज ही अपिी सोसायटी कषे  माधयम सषे, भकवष्य में उसकषे  उतपाि की क़ीम् खषे्ी प्रराली को प्रारमभ ककया गया है. कजसकषे  अं्गथि् ककसाि, मात्रा अकधक होिषे कषे  कारर बाज़ार में पयाज़ कषे  िाम कम हो जा्षे ्षे, इस वषथि पयाज़ कषे  बाज़ार िाम अकधक ्षे ्ो अकधक ककसाि बाज़ारू क़ीम् को आधार मािकर, लषे्ा ्ा. उिाहरर कषे  ्ौर पर यकि फसल पैिा कर िा है इस समब नध में किरथिय, इस वषथि  उस उतपाि की वस्ु अकधकियम को हटा किया गया है.

अभी तक किसान, सामान्यतः: अगले वर्ष किस कृषि उत्पाद की फसल पैदा करना है इस समय में निषेध, इस वर्ष उस उत्पाद की बाजारू कीम्त को आधार मानकर, लेता था. उत्पादन के तरी यदि इस वर्ष याज़ के बाजार दाम अधिक थे तो अधिक से अधिक किसान याज़ की बेचने करने का प्रयास करते थे, अगले वर्ष फसल की मात्रा अधिक होने के कारण बाजार में याज़ के दाम कम हो जाते थे, जिसके चलते किसानों को भारी मात्रा में तुराने होला पड़ा था.

किसानों की इस पंशानी को दूसरे के उद्देश्य से अब अनुवंध खेती प्राकृति को प्रस्तुत किया गया है. जिसके अंगतर किसान, अपनी सोसायटी के माध्यम से, भविष्य में उसके उत्पाद की किम्त आज ही तय तक कर लेता है एवं जिस भी संस्थाप को उसे अपनी फसल बेचना है उससे अगले वर्ष होने वाली फसल की किम्त आज ही तय कर उस संस्था से अनुबंध तय कर लेता है और उसी उत्पाद की खेती कर सकता है. हां, उस उत्पाद की गुणवत्ता का धाम जरूर उसे रखना होता है. इस प्रकार के निर्देश से देश में किसानों को उसकी उपज का उचित बाजार मूल्य प्राप्त होने लगेगा.

कोरोना वायरस महामारी में कृषि क्षेत्र के बाद ग्लोबल सल्टाई चैन एक ऐसा दूसरा महत्वपूर्ण क्षेत्र है, जिसमें भारत आगे बढ़ने का प्रयास कर रहा है. क्योंकक अब यह देश जा रहा है कक एशिया के कुछ दूसरे देशों में निर्माण केंद्र में गतिविधियों बढ़ती दिखाई दे रही है एवं इसके बीच में ग्लोबल सल्टाई चैन की गतिविधियां आपस में समकक्ष पाई जा रही है.

उदाहरण के तौर पर, स्वास्थ्य वाहनों के लिए उसके एक अंग का निर्माण एक देश में हो रहा है तो किसी दूसरे अंग का निर्माण किसी अन्य देश में हो रहा है. परंतु आपस में इतनी एक समकक्ष
Sacred Geography of Mathura, Ayodhya, and Varanasi

Mahesh Gogate

Renowned scholar, Narayan Bhatta composed his treatise titled “Tristhalisetu” in the mid-16th century. In the chapter dedicated to Varanasi, Bhatta discusses the continuous demolition of the Vishwanath temple of Varanasi. Bhatta mentions that if invaders have razed the temple, then the vacant place should be properly worshipped. Bhatta highlights that demolition of the temple shall not distract and reduce the relevance and sanctity of the place. His work reiterates that the sanctity of a sacred site ‘tirtha’ remains eternal despite the external intrusions and destruction of the physical structures and forms. Thus, the sanctity is inherent to the sacred territory.

In her incredible scholarly work titled “Flight of Deities and Rebirth of Temples” (2019), historian scholar Meenakshi Jain has meticulously recorded how ordinary devotees sheltered and carried the images of deities enshrined in the numerous temples throughout the subcontinent; how several destroyed temples were reconstructed time and time again by unnamed patrons, and finally how the devotion and affection for the deities were well preserved through bhajan, kirtan and katha. The age-old pilgrimage practices to these sacred sites have also kept numerous sacred places thriving during a troubled time.

Nearly two centuries ago, Varanasi witnessed the reclaiming of several sacred temple sites aided and expedited prominently by Peshwa-s and other Marathas. Maharani Ahilyabai Holkar of Indore rebuilt the Kashi Vishwanath Temple at its present location in 1775-1777. In the early 1950s, president Dr Rajendra Prasad was invited to perform the reinstallation ceremony of Somnath temple. In his speech, Dr Rajendra Prasad invoked the notions of faith and devotion. He asserted that the demolition of our temples was an assault on the external icons of nations faith; however, it did not shake the fountainhead of our eternal faith. The Krishna temple at Mathura was completed shortly after that, in 1956.

Since then, after six decades, on 8 March 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation....

The peninsular landscape is the most common geographical feature noticeable in these three sacred cities. The presence of pure running water in various forms allowed the traditions and rituals to survive and also reveals the spatial dynamics of the sacred sites. The Yamuna river flows down from north to south and has a meandering course at Mathura which is located on the eastern bank. The Braja mandala pilgrimage covers groves, hills, rivers, lakes, and water tanks.
As a research student studying the ancient city, Varanasi, Ayodhya and Mathura are not distant places. Therefore, when Prime Minister invoked various prominent and revered geographical sites not only from the city of Ayodhya but from the different parts of the subcontinent, I thought, let us revisit Mathura, Ayodhya and Varanasi to understand another dimension of a unique and familiar topography that has sustained the sanctity of these prominent sites.

**Unique geographical features of three sacred cities**

KashiKhanda of SkandaPurana narrates the story that while answering questions of his wife Lopamudra Sage Agastya describes to her about various sacred tīrtha-s for getting the ultimate liberation, i.e. moksha. Sage Agastya first mentions about the city of Prayag, located on the confluence of three rivers and then refers to the seven sacred cities called as ‘Saptapuri’: Ayodhya, Mathura, Maya (Haridwar), Kanchi (Kanchipuram), Avantika (Ujjain), Kashi (Varanasi) and Dvaravati (Dwarka) that bestow ultimate liberation and called as Mokshadayini.

Mathura is the birthplace of Krishna; Rama, an
epitome of a virtuous king born in Ayodhya, and Varanasi is renowned as a place never forsaken by Siva, are from the state of Uttar Pradesh. These three cities were heavily suffered iconoclastic wrath of foreign invaders. The prominent temples were targeted and ravaged. However, with the resilience of deep devotion, footprints of pilgrims and seekers, and also the unique landscape full of groves, hills, rivers, streams, water pools, and temple tanks preserved the sanctity of these ancient sites.

Mathura is located on river Yamuna and Ayodhya located on Sarayu (Ghaghra) river are significant tributaries of river Ganga. Varanasi is situated on the concave bank of river Ganga and almost in the centre of the Ganga valley.

The peninsular landscape is the most common geographical feature noticeable in these three sacred cities. The presence of pure running water in various forms allowed the traditions and rituals to survive and also reveals the spatial dynamics of the sacred sites. The Yamuna river flows down from north to south and has a meandering course at Mathura which is located on the eastern bank. The Braja mandala pilgrimage covers groves, hills, rivers, lakes, and water tanks.

Lakshmidhara Bhatta, who was the royal counsellor in the court of king Govindacandra (1114-1154) of Gahadavala dynasty composed the remarkable volume entitled “Tirtha Vivechana Kanda”. The scholarly work of Lakshmidhara eulogises the sacred sites of Vrindavan and Mathura in the ninth chapter titled Mathura Mahatmya. Lakshmidhara mentions Mathura as a renowned site for ultimate liberation. He describes the detailed landscape and of the sacred site and mentions the water pools. British district officer Growse in his memoir on Mathura district mentions about the plenty masonry water tanks with stunning architecture work. The riverfront of Mathura, Ayodhya, and Varanasi has a number of magnificently built masonry steps on the riverbank called ghataare associated with temples of various deities. Like Mathura and Varanasi, Ayodhya also had numerous water pools and tanks associated with Ramayana such as Rama kunda Sitakunda and Agni kunda. Along with the celestial rivers and other streams, these three cities have sacred water pools that are deeply interwoven with the historical past of the sacred sites and frequently appear in the various texts.

The spatial texts like Purana-s and Tirtha Mahatmyahave subtly recorded the geography, its distinct features and the symbiosis of nature and the culture of devotion. I have briefly discussed the sacred landscape of Mathura, Ayodhya and Varanasi as a part of a larger pilgrimage network that are deeply rooted with India’s geography. The process of reclaiming and restoring of temples will markedly celebrate the notions of preserving and valuing the nature and divinity.

(The Writer is PhD/JSPS Research Fellow at Graduate School of Asian and African Area Studies, Kyoto University, Kyoto. Japan. Views are Personal)
“Let us not forget that the Hindus of East Bengal are entitled to the protecton of India, not on humanitarian consideration alone, but by virtue of their sufferings and sacrifices, made cheerfully for generations, not for advancing their own parochial interests, but for laying the foundations of India’s political freedom and intellectual progress. It is the united voice of the leaders that are dead and of the youth that smilingly walked upto the gallows for India’s cause that calls for justice and fairplay at the hands of Free India of today.”

-Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee
in Parliament on his resignation as Minister of Industry and Supply, 19th April, 1950