



Teachers and quotas

Bill on reservation in central academic cadre provides relief to disadvantaged sections

Legislation to overcome the effects of court verdicts is not always a good idea. However, sometimes an exception ought to be made in the larger public interest. One such law is the Centre's Bill to ensure that reservation for scheduled castes, tribes and other backward classes in appointments to central educational institutions is preserved. The Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Teachers' Cadre) Bill, 2019, passed by the Lok Sabha, replaces an ordinance promulgated in March. Its main object is to restore the system of treating an institution or a university as a single unit to apply the reservation roster, and thus help fill 7,000 teaching vacancies. It seeks to get around a 2017 judgment of the Allahabad High Court striking down University Grants Commission regulations that treated the institution as the unit for determining the roster, and directing that each department be the relevant unit. In short, reservation should be department-wise, and not institution-wise, the court ruled. The Supreme Court rejected the Centre's appeal against the order. But the narrower basis for applying quotas would mean fewer aspirants from OBC and SC/ST sections would be recruited as assistant professors. In the interest of social justice, it had to restore the system of having a wider pool of posts in which the quotas of 27% for OBC, 15% for SC and 7.5% ST could be effectively applied. From this perspective, the Bill provides welcome relief for aspirants from the disadvantaged sections of society.

It is not that the court was manifestly wrong in applying the roster based on a smaller unit, that is, a department in a university or institution. The High Court noted that having the whole institution as a unit would result in some departments having only reservation beneficiaries and others only those from the open category. But the counterpoint is equally valid. Having the department as the unit would mean smaller faculties would not have any reservation. In the roster system, it needs 14 posts to accommodate SC and ST candidates, as their turn would come only at the seventh and 14th vacancy. There may be no vacancies in many departments for many years, with none from the reserved categories for decades. On the other hand, taking the institution as the unit would give more opportunities for these sections. According to the UGC's annual report for 2017-18, nearly two-thirds of assistant professors in Central universities are from the general category. Their representation would go up further, as the present Bill also applies the 10% quota for the economically weak among those outside the reservation loop. Applying the court's department-wise roster norm would have deepened the sense of deprivation of the backward classes and SC/ST communities. To that extent, the new enactment will serve a vital social purpose.

Trump in North Korea

The U.S. President appears committed to diplomacy in dealing with North Korea

U.S. President Donald Trump made history on Sunday when he stepped on to North Korean soil from the demilitarised zone (DMZ) that separates the two Koreas. He is the only American President to have visited North Korea, the isolated, nuclear-armed dictatorship that is historically seen as an enemy in Washington's policy establishment. The President's surprise announcement, via Twitter, that he was ready to visit the DMZ to meet with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un was typical of Mr. Trump, who enjoys conducting off-the-cuff personal diplomacy. North Korea seized the opportunity, and both leaders met at the DMZ, held talks for nearly an hour and decided to resume parleys that have stalled since the two leaders' failed summit in Hanoi. Mr. Trump deserves credit for infusing fresh life into the nuclear negotiations. His intervention came at a time when North Koreans were growing impatient over lack of progress in the matter of ties. In recent weeks, they had personally attacked U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and targeted the South Korean leadership over the sanctions and the logjam in talks. Now that both Mr. Trump and Mr. Kim have met and decided to set up teams on both sides to hold negotiations, the impasse is broken. But key challenges remain.

Mr. Trump appears to be committed to diplomacy in addressing the North Korean issue. Pyongyang, though often cryptic in its responses, has also shown interest in staying engaged with the U.S. Mr. Kim has, in principle, agreed to denuclearise the peninsula, which is the goal of the U.S. as well. But the critical question is when and how it should be done. The Hanoi summit collapsed chiefly as the U.S. considered the compromise that North Korea offered insufficient to warrant reciprocity with sanctions relief. North Korea had agreed to close down the Yongbyon facility, its main nuclear fuel production site, but the U.S. rejected the offer, saying the North's nuclear capability is now much more diversified and goes beyond that one plant. When they resume talks, the question of how much the North should compromise to get at least a partial reprieve from sanctions will be back. If the U.S. sticks to its maximalist demands such as complete denuclearisation, the talks are likely to run into trouble again. For Pyongyang, nuclear weapons are its insurance against potential external aggression, and it would accede to total denuclearisation only if its security concerns are ensured and sanctions are fully withdrawn. Both sides should learn from their failure in Hanoi. They can take small steps towards the final goal. The U.S. could demand a total freeze on North Korea's nuclear activities, besides shutting down Yongbyon, which the North has already agreed to, in return for providing partial reprieve from sanctions. Constructive and reciprocal confidence-building measures would mean that Mr. Trump's personal diplomatic outreach and the momentum it created won't be in vain.

Reclaiming the space of non-violence

Civil society must reinvent Gandhi as a political philosopher in the struggle against violence that has crushed solidarities



NEERA CHANDHOKE

The Bharatiya Janata Party government took over barely a month ago, and already a spate of attacks on the minority community, particularly the horrific incident in Jharkhand, have further scarred the body politic. Citizens who have some notion of what we owe other people merely because they are human, have protested in words, verse, and deed. I am not positing a causal relationship between this government and rising incidents of crime against minorities: merely pointing out a striking coincidence.

A handful of criminals hold the minorities to ransom. They hold our society to ransom. The poet Gulzar had written: '*Phir giri garden, sar katne lage/Log bat te hi, khuda batne lagey/Nam jo poochey koi...dar lagta hai/Ab kise poojhe koi... dar lagta hai/Kitni baar sooli par mujhe tangaa hai chand logon ne*'. Once again necks have fallen/once again heads are hacked off/People have been divided/now Gods are also divided/If someone asks my name I am petrified/Who shall I now worship? I am frightened/How many times will a handful of people string me up on a stake?

There was a time when beef politics was used as an excuse to target and murder. The ban on beef was satirised by the poet Saghar Khayami thus: '*Nafra-ton ki jung mein dekho to kya-kya hogaya/Sabziyan Hindu hain, bakra musalman ho gaya*'. Just see what has hap-

pened in this war of hate, vegetables have become Hindu and the goat is now Muslim. Today these vicious hoodlums do not need an excuse. They lynch, injure and murder at will.

Time for contemplation

It is time to reflect on what these everyday incidents of violence do to us. It is time to reclaim the space of non-violence that has been under relentless attack by murderers who take the name of lord Ram to kill, photograph and celebrate killings. It is time to ask this: What exactly does violence do to a society? Why is violence bad politics?

When the 'finger of violence' writes the alphabet of power in blood on peoples' bodies, the script is ineffaceable; the imprint it leaves on the body politic is indelible. Violence leaves stigmata much like the murder of Duncan left blood on Lady Macbeth's hands: 'Will these hands ne'er be clean?' The power of violence over human beings cannot be underrated. It is not a weapon that we pick up and discard at will. It is a 'quagmire that relentlessly sucks people into its murky depths. From here there is no escape. When violence holds individuals and groups in thrall, moral disintegration follows'. We, the people of India become helpless spectators of violent acts committed on our fellow citizens.

We are not the cowards that surround a vulnerable human being, bully and lynch him to death. Violence is the spectacle, we are the consumers of these nauseating acts even if we do not want to. These acts belong to the world of Marquis de Sade; the sexual impulse is indisputably connected to violence. Today these acts have become our world. And we have



become as defenceless as the victim.

Recreating Satyagraha

Some of us protest, write petitions, assemble, record our disgust, abhorrence, and pain. Does the government listen? It is time that we in civil society stand up and recreate Gandhi's notion of Satyagraha. Satyagraha differs from methods of violent action, because it emphasises self-suffering. The eyes of our people might be opened, as Gandhi suggested, by the suffering of the satyagrahi. Gandhi opts for self-suffering rather than make another person suffer, for many reasons. This mode of politics impacts the collective consciousness.

As people begin to reflect on and analyse the injustice to which they and their fellow citizens have been subjected to, an injustice that needs to be battled, they also come to think about the methods that should be used to battle these injustices. In the process, they are politicised and motivated to act. And this Gandhi felt was revolutionary because public opinion becomes a vital force, challenges injustice, and challenges the government for its acts of omission.

This course of action demands courage. Distinguishing satyagra-

ha from passive resistance and other forms of civil disobedience, Gandhi suggested that the philosophy is not a weapon of the weak. It demands tremendous moral strength and fortitude because it commands that we relentlessly battle with injustice with steadfastness, commitment, fearlessness, and willingness to accept punishment.

The philosophy of satyagraha enlightens the mind, but, more importantly, it gives to us a theory of action. In the process, the agent becomes aware of the distinction between what is right and what is wrong, gets sensitised to injustice and the need to fight for justice against the abuse of power. She becomes aware of the virtues of non-violence. She makes the transition from an audience that consumes violence to an agent of change. It is only then that the Indian people will come into their own, and we will recreate the freedom struggle as a second freedom struggle.

For this we must realise that if we wish to lead a good life, we can only do so in a good society, a society that understands the value of the human being irrespective of her religion. But violence diminishes us in many ways; it reduces our humanity. Violence befuddles and reduces us to inaction. Non-violence illumines our minds. It is only then that we the people of India can transit from being spectators to participants in the second freedom struggle.

Gandhi rejects violence for two reasons. Violence stems from the conviction that the perpetrators of violence are right, or that they know the truth. Their truth – whether this truth is what the world is about, or what the position of different individuals in this world should be, or how the world

should be organised, or how relationships in this world should be patterned, or how the world should be perceived – has to be imposed on others. The logical corollary of this premise is that the other appears before them as a lesser human being, or as not fully human.

Search for truth

But we can never know what the truth is. We have to search for the truth, because truth or in Hindi, *sat*, is not an object, it is a state of being. Since none of us know the truth, we have to search together. None of us has the competence to punish other people through violent words, deeds, or even thoughts.

There is a stronger argument that Gandhi makes for negating violence. In the western tradition, we ought to treat others in the same way as we would like to be treated. According to the Hindu doctrine of Advaita or non-dualism, Gandhi argued that those who hurt others assault their own integrity. Others are ourselves in a different form. Let us reflect on this.

Gandhi negated violence, because he saw it as reducing citizens to consumers, because it presupposes a flawed conception of the truth, and because it ultimately harms the perpetrator. Civil society has to reinvent Gandhi, we have to make him relevant not as the Mahatma but as a political philosopher who guides us in our struggle against the senseless violence that has crushed our sentiments and our solidarities. This is the objective of the second freedom struggle.

Neera Chandhoke is a former Professor of Political Science at Delhi University

Not by wishful thinking

A \$5 trillion Indian economy may be attainable if domestic saving and investment are stepped up



R. NAGARAJ

In early June, at a NITI Aayog meeting, Prime Minister Narendra Modi set a clear and bold economic target – to grow India into a \$5 trillion economy by 2024. It is now for 'Team India', as the meeting was bannered, to translate this target into a plan and policies and programmes. Historically, such goals by popularly elected leaders have voiced the aspiration of voters and energised nations to realise their potential.

How realistic?

What does the targeted \$5 trillion economy mean in familiar economic terms? It is ₹350,00,000 crore of gross domestic product (GDP) at current prices, at ₹70 to a U.S. dollar exchange rate. India's (provisional) GDP in 2018-19 at current prices is ₹190,10,164 crore (or \$2.7 trillion), which means the annual per capita income is ₹1,42,719, or about ₹11,900 per month.

The target implies an output expansion by 84% in five years, or at 13% compound annual growth

rate. Assuming an annual price rise of 4%, in line with the Reserve Bank of India's inflation target, the required growth rate in real, or inflation-adjusted, terms is 9% per year. To get a perspective, India officially grew at 7.1% per year over the last five years, but the annual growth rate never touched 9%. Hence, the target seems ambitious. Is it doable?

How Asia fared

How does the target compare with the Asian experience? China, with a historically unprecedented growth record in its best five years, during 2003-07, grew at 11.7%; South Korea, between 1983 and 1987, grew at 11%. So, Mr. Modi's target is smaller than the best historical records and may seem realistic.

What would it take to grow at 9%? No country grew at such a pace without mobilising domestic saving and raising fixed investment rates.

In the last five years, on average, the domestic saving rate was 30.8% of gross national domestic income (GNDI), and the investment rate (gross capital formation to GDP ratio) was 32.5%. Assuming the underlying technical coefficients remain constant, a 9% annual growth rate calls for 39% of domestic saving rate and 41.2% of investment rate. Correspondingly,



shares of private consumption need to shrink to about 50% of GDP from the current level of 59% of GDP at current prices, assuming foreign capital inflow remains at 1.7% of GDP.

In other words, India will have to turn into an investment-led economy as it happened during the boom last decade (2003-08) before the financial crisis, or like China since the 1980s. Granting that rapid technical progress or changes in output composition could reduce the required incremental capital-output ratio (ICOR), it nevertheless will call for a nearly 8-9 percentage point boost to saving and investment rates.

If, however, the economy has grown at a much slower pace than the officially claimed rate – as the on-going GDP debate suggests and at 4.5% as the former Chief Economic Adviser Arvind Subramanian has pegged it – then Mr. Mo-

di's growth target would become even more daunting.

Low domestic saving rate

These stark facts call for a re-thinking in the ruling dispensation that seems to hail India as a consumption-led growth story. There is a belief that greater foreign capital (FDI) inflow would fill in the investment gap, as evident from the NITI Aayog Vice-Chairman's various pronouncements. History shows that no country has succeeded in accelerating its growth rate without raising the domestic saving rate to close to 40% of GDP. Foreign capital can fill in some vital gaps but is not a substitute for domestic resources. Even in China, FDI inflows as a proportion of GDP never exceeded 5-6%, most of which was in fact round-tripped capital through Hong Kong for securing better property rights at home.

Gross FDI inflow into India peaked in 2008-09 at 2.7% of GDP, decelerating thereafter. As it increasingly consists of private equity (PE) with a three- to five-year tenure, mostly acquiring capital assets (contrary to the textbook FDI definition as fixed capital formation for the long term) net FDI rate is lower than the gross inflows, standing at 1.5% of GDP in 2017-18. Hence, there is a need for caution against the exuberance (or

opportunistic bias) that FDI will help to get to the \$5 trillion GDP target.

What is serious is that the economy has slowed down for a while now. The domestic saving rate has declined from 31.4% in 2013-14 to 29.6% in 2016-17; and gross capital formation rate from 33.8% to 30.6% during the same period. The banking sector's ability to boost credit growth is limited by non-performing assets (NPAs) and the governance crisis in the financial sector. Export to GDP ratio has declined rapidly, with a looming global trade war on the horizon, as has been indicated by the Baltic Dry Index. The highly regarded leading indicator of global trade, currently trading at 1354 is forecasted to decline to less than 1,000 index points by the year-end (a decline from its historic high of 11,793 points in May 2008, just before the financial crisis set in).

Given the foregoing, the \$5 trillion target appears daunting. It may yet be doable, provided policymakers begin with a realistic assessment, by willing to step up domestic saving and investment, and not by the wishful thinking of FDI-led growth accelerations in uncertain economic times.

R. Nagaraj is with the Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research, Mumbai

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

By a thread

Karnataka is in for a political crisis. The manner in which the Indian National Congress is crumbling in Karnataka also sends an ominous signal to the dwindling strength of the JD(S) coalition in the Legislative Assembly. It appears as if the Congress is obsessed in convincing its president to withdraw his resignation threat rather than being concerned about the political crisis that is slowly enveloping the State, a political development that the Bharatiya Janata Party is sure to take full advantage of (Page 1, "Coalition govt. shaken as two Cong. MLAs quit in Karnataka", July 2). N. VISVESWARAN, Chennai

Free Metro rides

Why should women alone reap the benefits of what seems to be an appeasement tactic by the Delhi government? What about students, senior

citizens and the differently abled? Don't they deserve a free ride too? Government subsidies and discounts on tickets to women might be a better way to go about it (OpEd page, July 2). KSHITIJ MANI TRIPATHI, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh

Path to progress

The plight of Muslims has no relation with the issues projected in the article, "Taking firm steps to emancipation" (Editorial page, June 27). The issues that Muslims face are the same as that of any marginalised community in India. On the hijab, wearing it cannot be called a negative freedom as it harms none. As far as the All India Muslim Personal Law Board is concerned, not even 1% of the Muslim community is aware of its existence. The needs of Muslims pertain to security, education, employment and health care. NADIRA KHAN, Koraput, Odisha

■ I am in complete agreement with the point that the cause of backwardness is the lack of education and opportunities. No one is forced to wear the hijab; it does not cause any harm to others, nor does it influence others towards any evil action. On the inheritance law, Islam is the only religion which allows a double share for women. It is not Sharia laws that come in the way of progress of Muslims but their lack of academic opportunities. Dr. THAHIRA IQBAL, Chennai

■ The article rightly argues about Muslims being victims of 'vote bank politics', but offers no solution for the present condition of the community. Abandoning the Sharia law or banning the burqa may not provide substantial changes in underlying concerns such as a lack of representation in legislative-executive bodies, rising numbers in incarceration and the high

level of poverty. These are issues that need to be addressed through education and community level programmes. Muslims in southern India are in a better position than those in the north. It is to be noted that in South India, though labelled as being conservative, there is much better progress than the rest of India in terms of literacy, community efforts and political awareness. The community faces many challenges, but banning the burqa is not a solution. AHMAD HUSSAIN, Mangaluru

■ The writer's appeal to the Muslim community to stop conflating regressive practices as an essential component of its faith cannot be brushed aside as unsolicited advice or unwarranted interference in its internal matters. What he leaves unstated, however, holds the key to the Muslim community's emancipation from its sense of victimhood which appears to be more

self-inflicted than the result of state oppression. Muslims don't need opportunistic political patrons who have a vested interest in keeping them backward. The community badly needs responsible interlocutors from within its fold who can responsibly articulate the community's aspirations and empower it to tap into the opportunities provided by a democratic secular society without falling into the entitlement trap. The 'Kerala model' with its focus on the educational advancement of the community, especially of women, is the gateway to the community's socio-economic progress. V.N. MUKUNDARAJAN, Thiruvananthapuram

No thought

There is water scarcity and there is scant common sense too as far as city planning is concerned. This is evident following the short bursts of rain that Chennai has had since June-end. Exponential

amounts of money are being spent on storm water drains, pavement makeovers, concrete road medians and flyovers with absolutely no attention being paid to the possibility of using these facilities to channelise rainwater run-off. The newly laid storm water drains seem to have been executed in great haste. The pits are now filled with tar and bitumen after the roads have been relaid, preventing percolation. Pavements and concrete medians have been laid on all arterial roads without ensuring the harvesting of rainwater. No facility seems to exist to harvest the large volume of rainwater that runs off these ugly concrete structures. Spirited public opinion must be mobilised before the government embarks on projects with blinkered vision. ANAND ARAVAMUDHAN, Chennai

MORE LETTERS ONLINE: www.hindu.co.in/opinion/letters/