

PRISM

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The Policy Perspectives Foundation (PPF) is a non-profit, apolitical think tank on matters of national interest. PPF's activities focus on complex and inter-connected challenges to peace, stability and development in India in cognizance of the external dimension. PPF is committed to spreading awareness, building capacity and promoting resilience.

India is witnessing a continuous spike in corona virus infections during the ongoing festive season. The Home Ministry extended the unlock guidelines that it had put in place on September 30, and stated that lockdown will continue to be implemented in containment zones till November 30, 2020. As of October 31, the total number of COVID-19 fatalities in India stands at 1,21,641. Experts have raised concerns that alongside the unlock rules, the festival season may lead to a surge in infections. In a televised address to the nation on October 20, Prime Minister Narendra Modi reminded citizens that while the lockdown may have ended, the virus hasn't and urged citizens to continue taking COVID-19 specific precautions. Many European nations, which are seeing a second wave of cases, have all announced restrictions over the past week, especially keeping in mind the festive season. Coronavirus vaccines are under trial in India and three have reached the advanced stages of development. Out of these, two are already in the second phase of human clinical trials and the third one is in the third phase. As the nation continues to deal with the pandemic, we at PPF express our condolences to those amongst us who have lost their near and dear to COVID-19.

This issue of PPF's newsletter PRISM covers the U.S. elections, the impact of government tightening of FDI norms, an evaluation of the National Education policy 2020, an argument for export driven economic growth and a brief report of a discussion on the Hathras incident held at PPF.

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US Elections and India

— Vaishali Basu Sharma

The US elections are a phenomenon that is followed globally, and becomes an occasion to select favourite candidates or relate with their campaign ideologies. In India too the American elections are closely followed and widely commented upon. How will the re-election of Republican President Donald Trump or the victory of Democratic candidate Joe Biden affect India? Because of the maturing of Indo-US bilateral relations based on national interests, it is deemed that neither a continuation nor change in Presidency would affect US relations with India too profoundly. Even so, there may be variances in how either personality and their respective administrations transact with India.

Granting that President Donald Trump is quite popular among Indians, the appearance of Kamala Harris as the Democratic running mate for Joe Biden has caused a split among Indians as favorites potential administration. According to a recent pew research survey 56% of Indians polled believed that Trump would do the right thing on world affairs. During the four years of the Trump administration, India and US have made significant progress in their strategic relationship, especially in addressing concerns regarding a belligerent China. Mike Pompeo's recent visit included; the present American administration has been relatively more generous than some his predecessors in providing more access to

defence technology than any previous US government. Warm personal relations between President Trump and PM Modi has beyond doubt helped in resolving mutual trade concerns.

On the other hand, Presidential candidate Joe Biden as a senator backed the US-India nuclear deal in 2008. It is unlikely that the strategic relationship between the US & India would be affected even if the Biden team decides to take a more accommodative stance towards China.

Nimbleness of India's courting US President including gestures like invites to daughter Ivanka several times and matching 'Howdy Modi' rally with one grand rally to honour President Trump in Gujarat. These have also contributed towards strengthening personal bonds between the two leaders. Indian hospitality has, however, always been traditionally generous in hosting visiting world leaders. It may be recalled that former US President Obama had enjoyed an unusually affable relationship with PM Modi, prompting the media to dub it as 'bromance.' Even the people to people Indo-US relationship has remained consistently deep and friendly weathering many 'ups and downs' in its wake.

Taking the incumbent administration's position on China as reference, it may be noted that Donald Trump's position on China, verbally combatant, has failed to dent China's economic clout. For US consumers, the dispute has largely meant that they have had to pay higher prices for Chinese products. President Trump has



signed a preliminary trade deal with China that, if fully carried out, would increase American exports and prevent new tariffs, though it will not remove most duties already in place. China's economy has been able to bounce back since the second quarter of 2020 providing the US with essential products like face masks the supply of which has increased more than 10-fold. President Trump's tremendous popularity has taken a hit in the wake of his handling of the coronavirus pandemic. The outbreak of COVID-19 and Trump's ambivalent remarks made for a ludicrous approach towards one of the greatest pandemics the modern world has witnessed.

The significant difference between the Democratic and Republican administrations would be their attitudes towards allegations of human rights abuses in Jammu & Kashmir of which India is accused. India's performance on addressing communal issues will also come into focus under a Democratic Presidential regime. While the Republican presidency has largely disregarded Modi government's changes to Kashmir's constitutional status and its refugee policies, merely offering these domestic issues some lip-service. A democratic regime might feel obligated to take these allegations more seriously on international forums.

The Indian American community comprise slightly more than 1 percent of the total U.S. population-and less than 1 percent of all registered voters. Yet both parties have tried to win over that vote bank. Because

not only are Indian Americans the second-largest immigrant group in America today, their high levels of educational qualifications and incomes make them valuable campaign contributors and potential mobilizers. During the current primary season, Indian Americans contributed \$3 million to presidential campaigns. Joe Biden's campaign issued a manifesto specifically aimed at Indian American voters. The Republican campaign, shared an online advertisement with images of Trump and Indian Narendra Modi sharing the stage at the Howdy Modi rally in Houston. Historically the Indian community in the United States has been a strong supporter of the Democratic Party, but recent polls indicate that this time round the community exhibits signs of significant political polarization. While there was enthusiasm among the community over the Joe Biden's selection of Kamala Harris as his vice-presidential nominee, her position on Indian domestic policy and the suppressing of her Indian identity relative to her Black identity caused concern among Indians. Many Indian Americans are troubled with the Democratic Party's disparaging foreign policy positions on India, including that of Harris.

The November 3, 2020 US elections on could witness the expansion of the so called "Samosa Caucus", a term coined by American Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi, referring to lawmakers of Indian-American origin. In the House of Representatives apart from Krishnamoorthi himself this samosa

caucus comprises of Dr. Ami Bera, Ro Khanna, Pramila Jayapal, and Senator and Democratic vice-presidential nominee Kamala Harris. This is unlikely to influence the Democratic party's position on India positively. She skipped the Howdy Modi event in Houston last September. So, despite much enthusiasm about Kamala Harris's vice-presidential nomination, her posturing is likely to remain traditionally Democratic, without capitulating much benevolence for India.

Successive American administrations, however, view India as a regional counterweight to China. Issues like Climate change, over which Obama and Modi fused well may receive renewed attention. So regardless of whether the Red party continues or the Blue takes over, India's status in US policy circles is unlikely to see any drastic change.

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Rising Government Scrutiny and Red Tape Triggers FDI Uncertainties

— Sonia Mata

As strategic competition between the two superpowers, US and China, heats up they find each other's markets closed or closing, and chances of returning to the previous circumstances slim. In contrast, India's internet users continued to grow at a rapid pace and the country remained relatively

open to investment. Washington and Beijing have, therefore, shown a great zeal for investing in the Indian tech sector, where they see enormous potential.

India received a flood of Chinese investment in recent years that allowed many Indian start-ups to scale up successfully, through infusion of capital as well as internet industry experience and knowhow. As per China Global Investment Tracker (CGIT) from the American Enterprise Institute and Heritage Foundation, which tracks \$100mn+ deals, Chinese investors made a total cumulative direct investment of \$14.1 billion over 2015-19, including \$11.25 billion over the last three years (2017-19). And BBC reports that data from Bengaluru-based start-up research platform Tracxn shows that 35 Chinese companies and 85 VC and PE firms invested over \$4 billion in major Indian start-ups including Paytm, Snapdeal and Swiggy since 2010. In fact, according to Economic Times, last year China overtook the US and became the largest funding source for start-ups.

China's Alibaba has established itself as a crucial force in Indian digital payments, acquiring almost half of Paytm, India's most highly valued start-up, in several rounds of investments since 2015. It has also invested in at least five other Indian start-ups, four of which have also become unicorns. Global retail major Walmart acquired PhonePe last year, shelling out \$16 billion for an 82% share in parent company Flipkart. Tencent, China's other tech behemoth, and American hedge fund,

Tiger Global own 10% and the remaining 8% is held by Flipkart Co-founder Binny Bansal, along with investors such as Microsoft and UBS. Tencent has also invested in 11 other start-ups, of which seven have reached unicorn status, according to Quartz.

However, this trend has since slowed as growing anti-China sentiment during the pandemic and concerns about state-backed Chinese companies opportunistically acquiring distressed firms or controlling stakes in Indian firms in newly emerging sensitive sectors like fintech has led the government to tighten FDI norms in April. India's actions followed similar steps taken by some Western nations. Military escalation between the two countries along the line of actual control in Ladakh has since triggered additional trade and investment tightening by India targeted towards the country - for instance, India banned more than 200 China-owned apps (in the ban order, India pointed to issues in data sharing that violate the rights of Indian users and impact sovereignty and didn't mention China specifically). The economic disengagement steps coupled with rhetoric on both sides may further contribute to Chinese funding for Indian start-ups drying up.

According to S&P Global, the first quarter of calendar 2020 saw India seizing 43% of fintech investments in APAC. But in the second quarter fintech investments in India fell 38% to \$339 million, as investors shifted their bets to other regions. Southeast Asian and Australian fintechs attracted \$455 million and \$371 million, roughly thrice

and twice the amount raised in Q1, respectively. Payment companies continued to be the most prolific in drawing in venture capital of the six industry segments monitored by the tracker.

It may be prudent to re-examine the FDI regime once the Indian economy shows credible signs of recovery and the government looks for new ways to re-engage with China in the long-term and starts the ball rolling on a new stage in the relationship. In doing so, singling out investment from any particular country or overemphasizing security risks may be self-defeating, given India's long-term investment needs. Rather the emphasis should be on building a transparent, stable, and predictable regulatory and administrative framework for foreign investors across the board, while simultaneously protecting security and privacy in the long-term.

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नई शिक्षा नीति का आलोचनात्मक मूल्यांकन

— सीता

भारत की नई शिक्षा नीति 2020 का लक्ष्य 'भारत को वैश्विक ज्ञान महाशक्ति' बनाना है। भारत में इससे पहले 1968 व 1986 में दो शिक्षा नीतियां आ चुकी हैं। इसके अलावा समय-समय पर, कई शिक्षाविदों, कमेटियों, कानूनों व आयोगों द्वारा शिक्षा में सुधार एवं विकास में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाई है।

नई शिक्षा नीति के निर्माण के लिए जून 2017 में ISRO के पूर्व प्रमुख के कस्तूरीरंगन की अध्यक्षता में एक समिति का गठन किया गया था।

इस नीति में कई लक्ष्य बनाए हैं। जिनमें से कुछ लक्ष्य निम्नलिखित हैं : 2030 तक 50% बच्चों की उच्च शिक्षा तक पहुंच हो सके, जो अभी 26.3% है। 2025 तक 100% बच्चों की माध्यमिक शिक्षा तक पहुंच हो सके, जो अभी 56.5% है। 2035 तक कुल नामांकन अनुपात 100% तथा GDP का 6% शिक्षा में खर्च करने का लक्ष्य आदि प्रमुख हैं।

इस नीति के प्रमुख कुछ बदलावों के सुझावों की बात करें तो, वह निम्नलिखित हैं: 5+3+3+4 की व्यवस्था, प्रारंभिक बचपन की देखभाल एवं शिक्षा (Early Childhood Care & Education-ECCE) का सार्वभौमिकरण, त्रि-भाषा सूत्र, 18 वर्ष तक मुफ्त शिक्षा, स्कूली पाठ्यक्रम को कम किया जायेगा, व्यवसायी शिक्षा, रटने की जगह गहन सोच, खोज विधि व अनुभव को बढ़ावा दिया जायेगा, विषयों के चयन में लचीलापन, 360 डिग्री समग्र प्रगति रिपोर्ट कार्ड, ई-लर्निंग बल, मल्टीपल एंट्री एंड एग्जिट, अकादमिक क्रेडिट ऑफ बैंक, प्रौद्योगिकी, राष्ट्रीय अनुसन्धान संस्थान आदि हैं।

वैसे तो इस नीति में कई बुनियादी व सकारात्मक बदलावों के सुझाव दिए गए हैं, जो 21वीं शताब्दी के अनुसार बहुत आवश्यक हैं। पर सबसे जरूरी है इस नीति का ऊपर से लेकर नीचे तक सही क्रियान्वयन। क्योंकि इनमें से बहुत से ऐसे सुझाव हैं जो पहले भी दिए जा चुके हैं। उदाहरण के तौर पर, यह पहली बार नहीं है कि GDP का 6% शिक्षा में खर्च किया जाये। वर्तमान में यह खर्च में 4.43% ही है। इससे पहले भी ऐसी बातें कही गयी हैं, परन्तु अभी तक ऐसा नहीं हो पाया और अगर ध्यान से देखा जाये तो, इसमें दिए गए कुछ बदलावों के सुझाव अपने आप में ही चुनौती हो सकते हैं।

यह नीति व्यावहारिक कम और सैद्धांतिक ज्यादा है क्योंकि इस नीति में भविष्य के कार्यान्वयन के लिए स्पष्ट दिशा निर्देश दिए तो गए हैं। परन्तु साथ ही इसे कैसे लागू किया जाएगा, इसका अभाव भी साफ झलकता है। इस नीति में दिए गए कई बदलाव, दूसरे देशों में पहले से लागू हैं, पर भारत के सन्दर्भ में

इसे लागू करना एक बड़ी चुनौती हो सकती है, इसका कारण इसकी सामाजिक-आर्थिक-राजनीतिक व सांस्कृतिक विविधता, भ्रष्टाचार और जनसंख्या विस्फोट, गरीबी आदि जैसे मुद्दे हैं। साथ ही, देश में अध्यापकों, शिक्षा के साधनों, शिक्षा की गुणवत्ता की कमी पहले से ही मौजूद है। नीति में कई मुद्दों को लेकर आलोचना की गई है, जिनमें से कुछ मुद्दे निम्नलिखित हैं :

5+3+3+4 व्यवस्था 10+ 2 से बेहतर व्यवस्था है। क्योंकि 6 वर्ष तक बच्चे के मस्तिष्क का 85% विकास हो जाता है। और इस उम्र के लिए प्रारंभिक बचपन की देखभाल एवं शिक्षा (ECCE) एक अच्छा कदम है। इससे बच्चे का एक ओर समाजीकरण होता है तो वही दूसरी ओर शिक्षा भी ग्रहण करता है। परन्तु आंगनवाड़ी और स्कूल किस तरह से मिलकर, इसे अपनाएंगे इसे स्पष्ट नहीं किया गया। साथ ही स्कूल व आंगनवाड़ी कार्यकर्ताओं के प्रशिक्षण, नौकरी, वेतन, उपयुक्त जगह व शिक्षा के साधनों, जैसे मुद्दे बिना सुलझाए इस व्यवस्था को लागू करना एक सपने जैसा हो सकता है। इसके साथ ही इसमें स्पेशल टीचर का भी प्रावधान होना चाहिए। क्योंकि लर्निंग डिसेबिलिटी जैसी अक्षमता स्कूल जाने के बाद ही पता लग पाती हैं। यदि 3 से 8 वर्ष के बीच में, बच्चे में व्याप्त किसी भी प्रकार की मानसिक समस्या का वक्त पर पता लगाया जा सके तो, प्रारंभिक हस्तक्षेप की प्रक्रिया को समय रहते लागू किया जा सकता है। जिसकी भारत में व्यापक तौर पर आवश्यकता भी है।

ई-लर्निंग व कंप्यूटर शिक्षा की बात करें तो, बच्चों तक उसकी पहुंच कैसे हो? ये ज्यादा महत्वपूर्ण है, क्योंकि अभी भी कई गांव/लोग हैं, जिनके पास साधन ही नहीं हैं। जहां फोन, बिजली, इंटरनेट, नेटवर्क का अभाव है, इस समस्या का निवारण अति आवश्यक है।

मातृभाषा में शिक्षा, बच्चों की पढ़ाई के प्रति समझ को आसानी से विकसित करती है व अनुसन्धान इस बात

को साबित भी करते हैं। परन्तु आगे की पढ़ाई के लिए यदि किसी कारणवश उसे अपनी स्थानीय भाषा में पाठ्यक्रम या अध्यापक ही न मिला तो उसे मातृभाषा सम्बन्धी समस्या हो सकती है। क्योंकि नीति में जहाँ तक हो सके, मातृभाषा में शिक्षा की बात कही गयी है। साथ ही साथ इसमें अंग्रेजी भाषा के वर्चस्व, अध्यापकों के स्थानान्तरण, प्रवासियों, अल्पसंख्यक वर्ग को भी मातृभाषा सम्बन्धी समस्या का सामना करना पड़ सकता है।

त्रि-भाषा सूत्र इस नीति का सबसे विवादित मुद्दा रहा है। भारत में ज्यादातर राज्य द्वि-भाषा सूत्र को ही अपनाते हैं। उनके लिए त्रि-भाषा सूत्र बच्चों के लिए बोझ बढ़ाता है व गैर जरूरी कदम है। साथ ही वह इसलिए भी शंकित है कि, यह नीति परोक्ष रूप से हिंदी व संस्कृत भाषा को बढ़ावा दे रही है।

इस नीति में अध्यापकों की भूमिका पर भी काफी बल दिया गया है, जिसके लिए उनके चयन, प्रशिक्षण, स्थानान्तरण सम्बन्धी बात की गयी है, परन्तु समस्या यह है कि जब तक अध्यापक की नौकरी के प्रति सम्मान, उच्च वेतन व काम के घंटे की ओर सुधारात्मक परिवर्तन नहीं होंगे, तब तक अध्यापक अपना अच्छा परिणाम कैसे दे पाएंगे।

इस नीति में पाठ्यक्रम व नौकरी के लिए जरूरी कौशल को विकसित करने की बात नहीं की गयी। जिससे कि बच्चे को भविष्य में पाठ्यक्रम से बिलकुल अलग जमीनी हकीकत का सामना करना पड़ता है, जो समस्या अब भी है। खासकर वह क्षेत्र, जो वर्तमान व भविष्य में भी नौकरियों के अवसर को बढ़ाते हैं।

नीति में बच्चों को गहन सोच, तार्किक क्षमता, प्रयोग व अनुभव गतिविधियों के आधार पर सिखाया जाएगा, परन्तु कक्षा में इस तरह की बातें बेमानी साबित हो सकती हैं, जहाँ अभी भी जाति व वर्ग की समस्या, आधारिक संरचना, अध्यापक की कमी, कक्षा में बच्चों की अत्याधिक संख्या, साधन व तकनीक व गुणवत्ता का अभाव, देखने को मिलता है।

विदेशी विश्वविद्यालयों का खुलना जहाँ एक ओर भारत के छात्रों को बाहर जाने की संख्या में कमी लाएगा व बाहरी विश्वविद्यालयों के साथ स्वस्थ प्रतियोगिता को बढ़ाएगा। तो वहीं दूसरी ओर, यह अमीर व गरीब की शिक्षा गुणवत्ता के अंतर को बढ़ाएगा व शिक्षा भी महंगी हो सकती है। बजाय इसके कि शिक्षा के स्तर को बाहरी विश्वविद्यालयों के स्तर जितना अच्छा किया जाये, सरकार उच्च वर्ग की आकांक्षाओं की पूर्ति पर बल दे रही है।

सामान्य प्रवेश परीक्षा (CEE) जहाँ बच्चों को दोबारा से अपनी पसंद की विश्वविद्यालयों में दाखिला लेने का मौका देता है, वहीं परोक्ष रूप से भविष्य में, प्रशिक्षण केंद्रों व रूट को बढ़ावा दे सकता है।

बहुविषयक पाठ्यक्रम के तहत विषय चुनाव बदलाव का एक अच्छा सुझाव है। यह विषयों का चयनकर जहाँ बच्चों को अपनी पसंद के अनुसार पढ़ने का मौका देता है, वहीं परामर्श का प्रावधान अनिवार्य होना चाहिए।

व्यवसायी शिक्षा, जहाँ बच्चे को भविष्य में आत्मनिर्भर बनाती है, वहीं अलग-अलग मंत्रालयों द्वारा इसके क्रियान्वयन के लिए आपसी सहयोग की आवश्यकता होगी। खासकर यह नीति विभिन्न विभागों, परिषदों के साथ मिलकर काम करने पर टिका है। जो भविष्य में इसके क्रियान्वयन के लिए चुनौतीपूर्ण हो सकता है।

नीति में, दिव्यांग, लैंगिक, अनुसूचित जाति, अनुसूचित जनजाति व अन्य पिछड़ा वर्ग के अनुसंधान कोष की बात की गयी है, पहले भी इनके विकास के लिए कोष दिया जा चुका है, परन्तु सभी राज्य में इसका इस्तेमाल व इन्हें पहुंचे लाभ का फर्क साफ देखा जा सकता है तथा कुछ राज्यों को छोड़कर दिव्यांग लोगों के लिए उठाये गए कदम भी अपर्याप्त हैं।

भारत में शिक्षा जहाँ मूल अधिकार है, वहीं इसके हितधारकों के द्वारा इसका क्रियान्वयन उनकी राजनीतिक इच्छा पर निर्भर करता है।

कोरोना काल में शिक्षा के नुकसान को हम सभी देख रहे हैं, जिसमें सबसे ज्यादा गरीब परिवार इसकी चपेट में हैं। जिनके पास नौकरी नहीं है, घर में मूलभूत चीजों की कमी है, वह मोबाइल, नेट कनेक्शन, स्कूल फीस और स्कूली सामग्री को खरीदने में असमर्थ हैं। इन सब समस्याओं के कारण कई बच्चों का साल बर्बाद हो गया है। बात सिर्फ कोरोना काल की नहीं है, भारत में गरीब लोगों की यह स्थिति आम बात है, जो बच्चों के स्कूल छोड़ने और बाल मजदूरी का कारण भी है।

दिल्ली में, शिक्षा के क्षेत्र में किये बदलाव व सुधार से काफी सकारात्मक परिणाम सामने आये हैं, अन्य राज्यों को भी भविष्य में, इस नीति क्रियान्वयन के लिए इसी तरह ही राजनीतिक इच्छा को लेकर काम करने की आवश्यकता होगी।

नीति में कुछ ही लक्ष्यों को समय सीमा में प्राप्त करने की बात कही गयी है, परन्तु शिक्षा से जुड़े कई ऐसे मुद्दे हैं, जिन पर कदम उठाना अति आवश्यक है। उदाहरण के लिए बाल मजदूरी, कुपोषण, अध्यापकों और शिक्षा के साधनों की कमी, गाँवों व शहरों में शिक्षा का असंतुलन, निजी व सार्वजनिक शिक्षा की गुणवत्ता में बड़ा अंतर आदि।

इस नीति में काफी हद तक सुझावों पर बल दिया गया है, जिससे जमीनी स्तर पर जाते-जाते इसका क्रियान्वयन भिन्न होना लाजिमी है। साथ ही साथ भ्रष्टाचार और संसाधनों की कमी शिक्षा नीति को लागू करने में बाधा बन सकती है। अभी तक की कोई भी नीति देख ली जाये, सभी में क्रियान्वयन करने का अंतर साफ दिखता है। इसके लिए जरूरी है कि नीति के क्रियान्वयन में सही दिशा, व्यवस्था की कार्यकुशलता, राजनीतिक इच्छा, हितधारकों व राज्यों का आपसी सहयोग हो।

लेखिका पीपीएफ के साथ एक शोधकर्ता है।

Exports and Economic Growth: Recipe for Revival

— Manika Malhotra

The IMF Global Economic Outlook report 2020 projected a contraction of the Indian economy by a massive 10.3 percent this year. It further noted that Bangladesh, whose economy is projected to grow by 4% this year, is set to surpass India's annual per capita income in 2020.

The Indian economy, severely hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, has been undoubtedly slowing down and the economic impact of the same has been largely disruptive. However, besides the pandemic induced-exogenous factors contributing to this shrink, several other dynamics of the pre-COVID-19 period, have also contributed towards the persisting problem. Several strategic themes are being looked at to ensure stronger recovery in the new normal. One of the crucial aspects in this path to recovery has been the emphasis on 'import substitution' and strengthening the Indian domestic market, an intended policy approach to reverse the negative economic impact of the pandemic. It is also well understood that the nature of this decline has been largely structural due to extreme volatility in the GDP components and one such fundamental element being the disruption in the 'export momentum'.

According to World Bank Data, Indian economy witnessed a positive export-led growth until the global financial crisis of 2008 (24%); however, the share of exports

(as per cent of GDP) declined thereafter, especially post 2013-14 (23%) - the estimated share being approximately 18% in 2018-19. India's exports had stagnated in the pre COVID-19 period but the pandemic further accentuated the inevitable crisis. Major export commodities such as petroleum products, leather, jewelry, and garments amongst other have witnessed a decline during the COVID-19 phase. As per RBI data, India's service sector exports have also dipped by 10.76% in July 2020. The global market indeed is facing a tail spin. Global supply chains and investments have been disrupted causing instability as well as uncertainty and many countries are now leading the movement of 'self-sufficiency'. India too has joined the movement and is striving towards strengthening its domestic industry whilst substituting the import requirements. But is India losing its focus on augmenting one of the important drivers of past growth? 'Exports' has been one of the key ingredients of India's growth in past and it is believed that country's increased international engagement if supplemented with an export boost shall aid in reversing the unfavorable trends.

A joint study, authored by former Chief Economic Advisor, Aravind Subramanian and Prof. Chatterjee, Pennsylvania University, focuses upon the misleading allures or 'myths' that are resisting India to improve its international engagement. It dismisses the three misconceptions about the size of India's domestic market, the role of exports in shaping India's growth in past and the underlying export prospects. The paper mentions that India's actual market

size, after accounting the purchasing power of the consumers, is small and much smaller than the china's market. Moreover, there lie significant unexploited opportunities in low-skill manufacturing and service which India can benefit from. India's competitive advantage due to its less-skilled working age population, which if absorbed, will help in diversifying the supply chains. At present, India's share of low-skilled labor force does not match its level of unskilled production activities (unmatched endowments and production) and it in fact exceeds the country's level of low-skilled exports as well. Realising this opportunity assumes additional importance as China is vacating the export space and this is coupled with projections of high demand for low-skilled consumer goods. Unlike the rich business nations, protectionism shall not work as an effective export strategy for India at this time. The study, therefore, concludes that an emerging economy like India will not be able to sustain robust and rapid growth without ensuring an export boost as the local demand is too small to reverse the economic decline.

Trade has worked for India in the past and conscious changes in its composition may therefore assist India in managing its post COVID-19 recovery. Till a few years ago, India's GDP was significantly above Bangladesh and the latter's rapidly rising exports, accounting for an increase of 44% (2015-2019), aided its per capita growth. Similarly, despite the prevalent misbelief claiming that the exports prospects are ambiguous (because the global market is not faring well), countries like Veitnam and

Comobdia have still recorded rapid export growth during this period.

India must also avail the arising opportunities, framing adequate export oriented policies especially for employment-intensive sectors will also have a positive impact in terms of jobs creation and training. Moreover, industries such as garments and textiles account for maximum women labour force participation and hence, promoting exports in these sectors may also narrow down the gender gap in employment, which has been exacerbated due to pandemic. Designing and implementing an 'outward' looking policy may also indirectly generate domestic consumption demand and strengthen domestic manufacturing. Hence, post-COVID-19 recovery demands for an integrated approach, a judicious composition of self-sufficiency and trade oriented policies to break the loop of substituting the domestic demand and export supply chain (based on foreign demand). India must leverage this window of opportunity to access, expand and re-establish its trade connections in the global market.

The author is a researcher with PPF.

Brief Report on 'Hathras: An Occasion for Introspection'

A Roundtable discussion on the Hathras rape case was organised by PPF on October 16, 2020. It was chaired by Dr. Mrs. Nazima Parveen and mainly encouraged female speakers, with male

colleagues observing the proceedings as audience members.

As the nation reeled with the shocking details of the Hathras rape case - be it the gruesome nature of the crime or the lax response of the police force and state government - it became imperative to have honest conversations about gender, safety, and security and explore different prevention and protection frameworks. The purpose of the discussion was thus to deliberate on the above-mentioned issues and formulate ideas.

Discussion

The first Speaker initiated the discussion by bringing up how this case has illuminated the different issues troubling India society, be it caste discrimination, hurdles in getting justice, and political blame games. She said that, according to the National Crime Bureau of India, crime against women increased by 7.3% from 2018, with the majority of cases being registered relating to abuse by families or husbands, detailing assault, kidnapping, and dowry demands. There has also been an increase in caste-based organized crimes against women. Other than this, 88 cases of rapes were reported daily and the amount of unregistered cases has yet to be revealed.

As for Uttar Pradesh specifically, last year, 3486 cases were registered. The state showed a 15% increase in crime in the past three years. These troubling statistics show that we need to work towards institutions and policies which are not biased by caste and gender.



The subsequent speaker shed light on the nitty-gritties of judicial response, and the hurdles women in rural areas face when accessing the same. She talked about various cases that illustrated the deeply entrenched biases against women in rural societies, and the fact that urban society doesn't fare too well either.

The slow-pace of the judiciary in India is often remarked upon. In the Nirbhaya case, justice was served after 8 years, whereas in the Disha case justice was served almost immediately by, what some might call, by passing the judiciary.

In the Hathras case, relevant samples were taken after 11 days due to negligence and inadequate facilities, even after the victim said that a similar incident by the same perpetrators was faced by her a month ago. In rural societies, women are deprived of basic freedoms to supposedly protect them, yet get failed by the larger system anyway. In a recent case where a Muslim man proposed to an Adivasi woman, the man was punished by way of a fine. While punishment based on an inter-religious marriage is fundamentally wrong, here we again show how women from minority communities in rural areas, and in India at large, bear the brunt of gender, class, caste, and religious identities. The speaker ended her talk by pointing out that there are also 7,000 'dark spots' in Delhi that needed to be illuminated, thereby illustrating how the lack of even basic infrastructural issues make women in the cities unsafe.

The next speaker stressed how the Hathras case demonstrated complete failure on the part of both the society and the state. She also detailed how the judiciary demeans women and fails at appropriately handling their trauma by talking about how when the victim in the Araria case broke down in court while giving her testimony, she was sent to remand for misconduct. This is only one in a series of ways in which organs of the state deny justice.

As the floor was opened to all speakers, it was contemplated on how all levels of society had failed the victim. The first speaker talked about how she was denied necessary healthcare, and the victim was ultimately not able to give a proper statement due to lack of care. Meanwhile, the media also plays a major role but has a major drawback to micro analyse each aspect. Thus, every institution needed to work on its drawbacks. The second speaker reiterated the same and said that every institution tried to push the matter under the carpet. He also added that while we have acts and policies in place to ensure justice, their implementation is nil. The level of judicial failure is also such that the victims and their families have to suffer through endless delays. An important aspect he noted was that in this particular case, as it occurred in a rural area, the Panchayati Raj was the most important institution.

Researchers reflected upon how women are viewed by men. Double standards and

sexism are also observed in familial setups. One speaker questioned whether demanding capital punishment in such cases, as usually happens, was necessary.

The next speaker remarked on the broader sexism that paints women's experiences, as every woman has experienced some form of harassment or objectification. She also brought up a much-derided Facebook post by ex-Supreme Court judge Markandey Katju, wherein he tried to justify the crime by saying that 'Men have their urges.' The speaker remarked that while it was true that everyone has urges how this connected with harassing and raping women was unclear. She added that, according to data, women were dependent on humanitarian aid due to the barriers faced in accessing rights, the barriers are created by the society itself, not simply the Constitution. In the Hathras case, the victim's brother was given a job in lieu of a compensation of sorts yet this act did not provide justice to the victim and only empowered the male member of the family.

Another view from among the researchers was that the caste identity of the victim cannot become a secondary aspect. It is a focal point of the kind of treatment apportioned to the underprivileged, especially in many parts of rural India.

A countervailing view was that the victim's caste had become central to the crime and its introspection. The speaker was pointed out that it was indeed troubling that political and caste-oriented groups were supporting the accused openly. The role of the police in rushing to cremate the victim cremation and in failing to provide any emotional support to her family were symptomatic of a society that has failed a female Dalit rape victim. It was introspected that gender violence aspect of the issue saying that caste and identity politics had reduced the attention the former should receive. The normalisation of the former in India needed to be addressed and that we had failed the women in our country. The panel was marked by an air of introspection and severity, given the magnitude of the crime. It should be noted that the details pointed out by the last speaker tie into the victim's caste identity as well, illustrating the intersections of identities. Ultimately, despite the disdain for identity politics, Dalit women in India face a specific kind of discrimination that upper-caste women don't. A change at the grassroots level and a reckoning of institutions seem to be the only way to safeguard the rights of women from all sections of society in India.


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