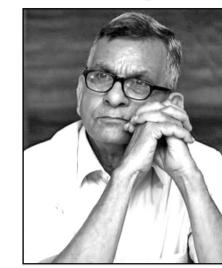


RISING INFLATION

At present hour, prices of essential commodities are increasing rapidly causing a number of hardships for common man with the prices of commodities of the daily use soaring high, making it hard for common man to survive. And the worst thing is when the food items get dearer; one is compelled to stretch oneself beyond one's capacity for fulfilling necessities of one's family. In such circumstances, poor continue in their state of poverty but the repercussions on middle class are high in the form of their meager saving or even incurring debts. The worst hit are fixed income group's like salaried people, labour class and the pensioners. For them even the commodities of basic necessities like wheat, pulses, grains, vegetables etc are getting out of reach. Every increase in price disturbs their budgets. Inflation of food prices directly impacts the quality of nutrition available and hence the health of the human resource of the nation with a major chunk of family income, being used to run the kitchen. There is a severe cut down on the fund available for other important functions like the education of the children. The government's efforts of opening of ration shops are grossly inadequate because the quality of grains available there is unfit for consumption and even those below the poverty line prefers not to access them. In such a scenario, substantial work needs to be done by the authorities in making food affordable and reducing taxes on the basic necessities to bring down the contrast between the wholesale and retail prices. As for the common man; he can do his bit by avoiding wastage. Every grain, every speck of food needs to be valued. This increase in price is causing anxiety amongst the people of India. Prices of everything are sky rocketing, even of the essential commodities like gas, pulses, sugar, edible oil, tea, food grains, petrol, etc. Price rise affects different people differently. It is pertinent to mention here that recently Govt reduce price on petrol by Rs 5 and Rs 10 on diesel as a Diwali gift for rich people who are moving here and there in their luxury vehicles but what for poor people who are unable to purchase even essential commodities due to sky rocketing rise of prices on festival occasion. In this connection, a comparative study on various items in 2014 and 2021 showing their prices can easily demonstrate price rise at an alarming rate. The prices of items like Petrol, Diesel, LPG, Dal, Atta, Ghee, Oil, Milk, Sugar and Egg were Rs 60, Rs 55, Rs 414, Rs 70, Rs 17, Rs 350, Rs 52, Rs 30, Rs 22 and Rs 2 respectively in 2014 while in 2021, these items reached to Rs 112, Rs 100, Rs 1000, Rs 190, Rs 30, Rs 650, Rs 210, Rs 56, Rs 50 and Rs 10 respectively. This data clearly show increase in prices on common essential commodities and hence reflect the tall claims of the Govt. Curbing problem of price rise is duty of the government. There should be more fair price shops where common man shop for quality goods at a nominal price. The government and banks must keep a check on hoarding and black marketing and also stop repayment of public debt until price rise is controlled within the economy. The policy-decision makers should always keep the layman in mind while making and executing policies. It is evident that price rise is a multi headed monster which must be defeated on time with proper measures to benefit not just the rich population but poor also.



■ PROF HARI OM

Ma har aaja a c e e d e d J&K to India on October 26, 1947. The immediate fallout was transfer of state power from Jammu to Sheikh Abdullah of Kashmir and his Valley-based National Conference (NC). The development upset and shocked the Dogras of Jammu. There appear potent reasons for that. One, they had remained at the helm of affairs in J&K since March 1846, when Kashmir became part of the Dogra Kingdom under the Treaty of Amritsar, signed between Raja Gulab Singh of Jammu and British Indian Government. Two, Sheikh Abdullah had consistently opposed the Treaty of Amritsar, demanded independence from what he called the 'oppressive Dogra rule' and had even gone to the extent of launching 'Quit Kashmir Movement' in 1946. The third fundamental reason was Sheikh's negative attitude towards Jammu and his well-known 'communal, separatist and Valley-centric ideology'.

Convinced that the transfer of the state power to Sheikh Abdullah would hurt the nation in J&K, hamper the process of integration and jeopardise the legitimate rights and interests of Dogras, visionary Pt Prem Nath Dogra, who had to retire prematurely in 1932 from the post of Wazir-e-Wazarat Muzaffarabad under pressure from the State Government, and many other concerned citizens founded J&K Praja Parishad on November 17, 1947 at Jammu with Hari Wazir as its president. Balraj Madhok was also behind the initiative. He wanted his associates to name the party as 'Jammu Praja Parishad' but his suggestion was not accepted on the ground that Maharaja Hari Singh had acceded the whole of J&K to India, and not just Jammu, and that if they were to provide an effective alternative to the policies, Sheikh-style, Praja Parishad had to be a pan J&K party. Maharaja Hari Singh gave his support to the idea of the Praja Parishad. The two basic objectives of the Praja Parishad were to integrate J&K fully into India and fight for the Jammu cause.

Several factors helped PRAJA PARISHAD leaders, including Sher-e-Duggar Pt Prem Nath Dogra, expand their support-base and spread their ideology. These, inter-alia, included (1) the unilateral ceasefire on December 31, 1948 that enabled Pakistan to swallow J&K's strategic Gilgit-Baltistan region and what we call Pakistan-occupied-J&K (PoJK); (2) the forced exile of Maharaja Hari Singh on April 23, 1949; (3) the adoption by the Indian Constituent Assembly (ICA) of a motion on September 27, 1949 which

read 'notwithstanding anything contained in paragraph 4 (of the Schedule to the INA rules), all the four seats in the ICA allotted to J&K may be filled by the ruler of J&K on the advice of his PM Sheikh Abdullah' (paragraph 4 provided for 50 per cent nominated and 50 per cent elected representatives as far as princely states were concerned); (5) adoption by the ICA of Article 306 (Article 370) on October 19, 1949 under which J&K was to get separate status on the 'score of religion'; (6) lop-sided delimitation and unfair, excessive and preponderant representation to small Kashmir Valley in the assembly (43 out of 75 seats to Kashmir, 30 to Jammu and 2 to Ladakh) and (7) the wholesale rejection of nomination papers of the Praja Parishad candidates for the J&K Constituent-cum-Legislative Assembly elections in 1951.

However, it was the Wazir-e-Azam Sheikh Abdullah's April 10, 1952 highly 'seditious' speech at Jammu's R S Pura; his insistence on 'hoisting the NC flag in Science College Jammu' on January 15, 1952 and the June 14-July 24, 1952 parleys between the Prime Minister Nehru and Sheikh on the political future of J&K vis-a-vis India, which provoked political explosions not only across Jammu province but also in others parts of India, especially Delhi and the neighbouring Punjab, leading to the arrest of the Sheikh and collapse of his government on August 9, 1953.

To be more precise, things changed dramatically in Jammu after January 15, 1952, when the Sheikh hoisted the NC flag in the Science College. Students, including girl students, held massive protest demonstrations across Jammu province hoisting national flags and many sat on hunger strike against the NC, which continued for 38 days. Such was the nature and magnitude of the students' protests that the police and the army swung into action and brutally attacked them between January 15 and February 7. Many were sent to jail. 16 youths lost their lives. Angered by the reign of senseless brutalities unleashed by the administration, integrationists also took the plunge and held massive demonstrations. The state police treated them like they treated innocent protesting students. It didn't even spare the press. It invoked section 75 of J&K Constitutional Act of 1939, under which the final interpreter of the constitution was the State Council of Ministers, and not the J&K High Court of Judicature, and the Press and Publication Act of 1932, under which the Government could declare any article 'seditious' and seize the press which published the article. What provoked the Sheikh Administration to act against the Press was an article 'Kansa rule and atrocities on children a good omen', published by The Kashmir Mail on February 5, 1952. The said article

was declared seditious. The father of journalism in J&K, Mulkh Raj Saraf, was confronted with a choice between a fine of Rs 1,000 and closure of his Press. The matter went to the Full Bench of the High Court. Disposing of the case, the Bench said, "The court has to construe the Act as it is and it is bound to give effect to the language of the Act as long as it is in existence even though it thinks that the provisions of the Act have not kept pace with the changed time".

In the meantime, the Praja Parishad under the effective and skilful leadership of its new president P N Dogra intensified its struggle against the Sheikh and his government. On June 19, 1952, President Rajendra Prasad visited Jammu and the Praja Parishad delegation led by P N Dogra submitted a memorandum against separatist moves of the Sheikh government. On June 26, 1952, the Praja Parishad held a huge demonstration outside the Parliament to urge PM Nehru to reject outright the Sheikh's divisive demand seeking the creation of 'J&K Republic within the Indian Republic', but with no result.

Finally, on August 8, 1952, the PRAJA PARISHAD leadership in a convention held at Jammu chalked out its course of action against the 'policies of separatism' which were tending to make J&K an independent state with separate flag, separate constitution and separate head'. The Jan Sangh president Shyama Prasad Mookerjee was present. It was on November 17, 1952 that the Praja Parishad launched Satyagrah with 'Ek Nishan, Ek Vidhan aur Ek Vidhan' as its slogan. The Satyagrah continued till July 7, 1953. It was a massive affair all across Jammu province. The women participation was on an unprecedented scale.

As expected, the Sheikh Administration used brutal force to crush the Praja Parishad and its Satyagrah. Section 50 (later changed to section 144) and curfew were imposed again and again to control the situation. About 2,500 Satyagrahis were arrested and put in jails for months. P N Dogra, many other Praja Parishad leaders and about 100 prominent personalities sympathetic towards One Flag, One Constitution and One President movement, were also put behind bars for months without trial. Many, including P N Dogra, were kept in Kashmir jails during winter. The nature of brutal force used by the Sheikh administration could be gauged from the fact that 'more than 30 Satyagrahis were shot dead' at different places in Jammu province. Leave aside thousands of others, including women, who got fatal injuries during indiscriminate police firing.

S P Mookerjee, who was in constant touch with the PN Dogra, took up the issues of J&K integration and its political future, the Sheikh's politics of separatism,

discrimination with Jammu and Ladakh and atrocities on the Jammu students and Satyagrahis with PM Nehru and urged him to concede the demands of the Praja Parishad but he came out of all these exercises minus everything. Instead of appreciating the integrationists, Nehru dismissed them as 'communal' and anti-Kashmir and remained on side of the Sheikh.

Ultimately, on May 11, 1953, S P Mookerjee, who had virtually made the Praja Parishad movement an all-India one, entered J&K through its gateway, Lakhnur, breaking the permit system to tell the nation that J&K was legitimately Indian and all had the right to come to J&K. His whole objective was to give further impetus to the ongoing EK Nishan, Ek Vidhan aur Ek Pradhan' movement in Jammu and make the Nehru Government to integrate J&K fully into India by abrogating Article 370. Mookerjee died in Srinagar on June 23 in 'mysterious' circumstances. Many say that he was 'killed by the Sheikh administration'.

The martyrdom of S P Mookerjee in Kashmir for the national cause further aggravated the situation for the Sheikh, who also left no stone unturned to unsettle the settled in Kashmir. His hobnobbing with the US and his ambition to create a 'Switzerland-type' independent Kashmir' with himself as its 'Sultan' all left PM Nehru with no other option but to have him dismissed and arrested on the charge of 'sedition' on August 9, 1953.

The fall of the Sheikh led to the virtual collapse of the Praja Parishad movement. Thereafter, the Praja Parishad functioned like the chapter of the Jan Sangh in J&K. P N Dogra, who had become the president of the Jan Sangh in 1953, along with four other Praja Parishad leaders, entered the J&K Assembly as an elected MLA. His interventions and speeches in the assembly were just superb, nation-centric and against the cult of separatism based on religious fanaticism.

In 1964, the Praja Parishad officially merged with the Jan Sangh at an Ekta Sammelan. P N Dogra facilitated the said merger. The last agitation led by PN Dogra was for the removal of regional disparities in the supply of food grains, both in terms of rates and scales. It happened in 1967-68. P N Dogra was the first ever person from J&K to become president of a national party. He died in Jammu on March 21, 1972. Ever since then, the people of Jammu province are struggling to get a leader like PN Dogra so that they could also have a real and effective say in the governance of the state and get political status they and Jammu deserve in the Indian polity. It bears recalling that Kashmiri politicians would invariably visit his residence at Jammu's Kacchi Chawni to seek his support before the reopening of the durbar move offices in Jammu every November. Such was his leadership.

Why Jammu needs a leader like Pt Prem Nath Dogra?

Modern-day armour of the Bhagwad Gita

Seeing the world fall apart, and all endearing bonds wither away like blossoms hitting their age of senescence in the autumn's fall, you have witnessed the brutality of death. You never knew how fragile life is until the pandemic swung you like a pendulum, compelling you to oscillate between life and death. This must have certainly raised questions like: 'Does God even exist?' 'Who am I?' 'What is beyond life and death and if at all will I be liberated from this vicious loop?'

The entire journey of spirituality has been condensed in this one verse. Through the practice of yog, the subconscious mind becomes still and is in total repose, with neither passion nor dispasion of the material world. This stillness and total repose of the subconscious mind will be attained through the practice of yog. There are several well-defined paths: Bhakti Yog, Jnana Yog, Hath Yog, Raj Yog, Kundalini Yog, Laya Yog, and Mantra Yog. Practice judiciously under the guidance of a master. Once the subconscious mind is stilled and in complete repose, then the experience of the pure Self will happen through the refined and purified intellect. Jnana cannot be comprehended by an impure intellect, and it is only the purified intellect that has transcended the senses which absorb the boundless bliss.

The Gita should not be mistaken as a mere read, it is a classic piece of Vedantic philosophy that bestows each reader with the discriminating wisdom of right and wrong. If confusion, depression, anxiety, or loneliness corner you in your weakest moments, grab your divine armour and let Krishan's sword of knowledge vanquish your illusory demons to dust.

Anandmurti Gurumaa

■ KR SWARN KISHORE SINGH

The fresh bureaucratic set up of Jammu & Kashmir and its infatuation to straw man fallacy makes me remember a dialogue from British sitcom 'Yes, Minister' wherein two bureaucrats are in a conversation and the senior one while illuminating the junior with the modus operandi of bureaucracy says 'Private Secretaries who can't occupy their Ministers are a threatened species'. This is the way bureaucracy really functions. When a Sarpanch in the terrains of Pir Panjal range (Reasi) is freed forcibly from police custody by an unruly mob, some very disparaging signals are emitted. And then when the same guy addresses media and reveals the whole fiasco, names each official who had demanding bribes from him for disposal of a criminal matter, whose investigations were pending for last so many years, the police is caught with their pants down. That guy was clearly naming the officials and the respective sum of money demanded by each one of them. The FIR pending investigation was lodged under those sections of Indian Penal Code which include offences against women and this type of cases are gold mines for corrupt police officials. That Sarpanch was threatening the police to even try arresting him where the police failed again.

Why? Is it because the police wasn't having their own house in order? Is it because what that guy said was right and police feared getting more exposed if they follow the rule book? If that guy had really committed some crime, why isn't police arresting him? And if he hasn't then why was police harassing him? The most interesting question remains;

YOUR COLUMN

Woes of PM package employees

Dear Editor,

The recent killing incidents of minority community members have created fear, suspicion and uncertainty in Kashmir valley. The conditions are very sensitive and they resemble the hay days of militancy of 1990s so there is all round fear and mistrust in Kashmir after the dastardly act of the gunning down of the members of the minority communities. Now the migrant PM package

employees are working under threat to their lives. These minority killings have created an unprecedented situation in Kashmir where it has become impossible to work in such an atmosphere. The conditions in the valley are not conducive for the working of the PM package employees and there is all likelihood of further threat to their lives. Most of the PM package employees are living in rented accommodation so there is huge risk involved as in rented accommodation there is no safety and security. We are in favour of the return and rehabilitation but all talk of return is humbug till the conditions in the valley are not normalized. Therefore the PM package employees should be adjusted in Jammu province till the accommo-

ration with security be provided to them if the government is really interested in the welfare of the migrants.

The ground conditions in Kashmir are not feasible for the return of the Kashmiri Pandits yet and the migrant PM package employees should not be made sacrificial goats at the altar of the secular democracy of the country. Therefore, it is impressed upon the LG to kindly intervene and order the temporary adjustment of the PM package migrant employees outside Kashmir valley till proper accommodation with security be provided to them.

Kashmir Police is arranging a farewell rally, by which authority the same uniformed chap can come later to impose a fine on a person not wearing a face mask.

When the restrictions under section 144 CrPC were imposed and hence restrictions muscled in, the senior most police officials of the district instead of arranging patrols arrange public parties, it can be anything but governance. And then if the concerned District Magistrate is reluctant to take action and subsequently direct for lodging of FIR against the delinquent officers, then something is rotten in the state of Denmark!

When a toll plaza is made functional without its formal inauguration and within a couple of days, a bridge for which the toll is charged gets major cracks, then something is rotten in the state of Denmark! (Banihal-Qazigund Tunnel) These questions are ostensibly uncomfortable but they hold relevance when the contents of newspapers are more of a source of fright of governmental agencies than trust, the polar opposite. LG, don't get occupied by lip service of these bureaucrats instead put them to work.

Since lethargy is their strategy, therefore disturbing them from inertia is dire need of the hour but a tough nut to crack.

To put it short just a couplet from Urdu poetry will sum up fiasco and the subsequent redressal sought from your office; 'To Idhar Udhbar Ki Na Bat Kar, Yeh Bta Ki Qafila Kyun Luta?' Mujhe Rah-Zanoon Se Gila Nahi Teri Rehbari Ka Sawal Hai.'

(The author is an Advocate & legal and political analyst).

Vivek Koul,
Gole Gujral Jammu.