

PREVENTING PUBLIC INCONVENIENCE

Preventing public inconvenience is a critical responsibility for both local authorities and individuals. It ensures smooth functioning of daily life, maintains public order, and safeguards the well-being of citizens. Several strategies and measures can be implemented to minimize inconvenience in urban and rural areas alike.

Traffic congestion is a major source of public inconvenience, particularly in cities. Ensuring proper traffic management through signal synchronization, lane discipline, and designated parking zones can greatly reduce delays. Authorities should also implement alternate routes during construction work or roadblock situations, keeping the public informed in advance through signs and announcements.

Clear and timely communication regarding public events, roadworks, or any disruptions is vital. Local authorities should use digital platforms, public announcements, and traditional media to inform the public well in advance. For instance, if there are road closures due to an event or a protest, notifying residents through apps, SMS alerts, or social media helps them plan their travel accordingly, preventing unnecessary delays.

One of the most significant sources of public inconvenience is unreliable or overcrowded public transport. Upgrading public transport systems, increasing the frequency of buses, trains, or subways during peak hours, and providing real-time tracking can improve mobility and reduce overcrowding. A well-maintained and easily accessible public transport network also ensures that people do not rely on private vehicles, thus alleviating traffic congestion.

Poor waste management and unclean surroundings can cause great inconvenience to the public. Local municipalities must ensure timely garbage collection, proper waste disposal systems, and sanitation measures in public spaces. Regular cleaning of streets, markets, and public toilets is essential to ensure hygiene and comfort.

Having a well-structured emergency response system is crucial in mitigating public inconvenience during crises such as natural disasters, accidents, or health emergencies. A rapid response system involving police, medical services, and fire departments helps in reducing the time taken to address emergencies and alleviate distress.

Simultaneous Polls will Usher Real Democracy

■ O.N KOUL

Simultaneous polls has come to the centre stage again thanks to the approval of ONOE proposal by the union cabinet more recently. If anything is more talked about in the political circles, intelligentsia and the public, it is the need for simultaneous elections. The subject of ONOE has hogged the limelight and it is the talk of the day. ONOE will soon be a reality. Now the two bills regarding one nation, one election has been introduced in the Lok Sabha. Besides the union territories amendment bill which seeks to align elections in the UT's of Puducherry, Delhi and Jammu & Kashmir with the Lok Sabha polls was also introduced. These bills were introduced by the union Law minister Arjun Ram Meghwal and he asserted that these legislations will not tamper the powers enjoyed by the states and UT's. The ONOE bill is the 129th constitutional amendment bill. Former president Ram Nath Kovind said that ONOE will galvanize election process and will lead to economic growth which is badly required in the country. ONOE or simultaneous polls will in fact be a boon for the Indian democracy and the passage of the two bills in this connection will be a triumph of the largest democracy of the country. It will bring in its bag multiple benefits and will usher in real democracy and good work culture. A good proportion of the precious time of the centre, state and UT governments will be saved and the administrative efficiency and acumen of the government will increase considerably. ONOE will ultimately result in good, efficient, transparent and quick governance and it will revolutionize and transform

our democracy and democratic governance. Good governance which is the slogan and catch word of PM Modi will find expression and reflection by switching over to ONOE. After all democracy is for good governance and for people's welfare and both these things will result from ONOE. Considerable time, energy and money will be saved by adopting the system of ONOE and the money thus saved can be used for economic and societal development of the country. People who are the real sovereigns in a democracy will also feel some relief as they will not have to go for voting every now and then as it is the practice these days in our democracy. Time, money and energy thus saved can be put to productive use in boosting economy and the administration's precious time will also be saved and put to use in attending to administrative and people oriented functions and above all good governance will accrue from introducing ONOE in the country. Election is the means and not an end in itself in a democracy and the aim and end is the public welfare. People's welfare can be ensured if we switch over to the progressive system of ONOE and this is the foregone conclusion. Work culture, administrative efficiency will be increased and all this will benefit the people. It has been seen that the voters are tired of participating in elections so often and they yearn for a change in the system and are in favor of simultaneous polls. People/voters will be saved from going to polling booths yearly, half yearly and so often as they feel tired and need some relief from this tiring process of elections so often. ONOE will also lead to increase in the GDP by 1.5% from 7.23 percent. There are many

benefits accruing when ONOE will be a reality in India and it will be beneficial to the rulers as well the ruled and so Modi wanted it to become a reality soon. Modi has the determination, will power and the grit to bring innovations in the political system and democracy of the country and the bill regarding ONOE is a step in this direction and it will be beneficial to the country as it will give enough time, energy to the government to attend to the pressing needs, concerns and problems of the people. Precious, valuable and scarce money will be saved which can be put to more productive and efficient use, thus it may result not only in provision of goods and services and efficient governance but will also result in the growth of the economy. Voters will also be saved from visiting the polling booths off and on and so they their precious time will also be saved and the people can apportion their time to more useful activities. The biggest benefit of simultaneous polls is that it is economical and cost effective as enormous money will be automatically be saved which the government coffers will be full of finances and it can be expended to fruitful activities which may result in economic and social development. Cost effectiveness and economical is the dominating merit of simultaneous polls and the money so saved can be put to productive use which will ultimately result in social and economic development. Neither autonomy nor federalism will be impacted by simultaneous polls as the opposition including congress argue and this criticism of the opposition fails when we weigh the merits of ONOE. One fails to understand as to how is the ONOE dictatori-

al. The opposition parties should not oppose the ONOE bill for the sake of opposition and instead see the merits of these bills and cooperate with the treasury benches so that these bills will be passed. As of now there were 269 MP's in favor of the bills introduced and they voted in favor of these bills and at the same time 198 MP's opposed these bills and so voted against the bills regarding ONOE. The opposition parties should see the reason and writing on the wall and in near future vote in favor of this important legislation. One of the merits of simultaneous polls is that it will lead to national unity and integration and it is also a characteristic benefit which will accrue from implementing one nation, one election. Government has referred the two bills regarding ONOE to the select committee of the parliamentarians for detailed deliberation, debate and discussion on the advice of PM Modi and HM Amit Shah as both wanted a detailed deliberations on ONOE legislations before passing these. BJP's national general secretary Tarun Chugh has said that ONOE bill will usher new era in celebration of constitution. He also said it is an epoch making step by the prime minister Narendra Modi. To conclude it can be said that the merits of ONOE far more weight its limitations. It can be said that in Modi's scheme of things nothing is impossible as it is rightly said that Modi Hai Tu Munkin Hai. May simultaneous polls shine our democracy and give it more strength so that it will flourish and spread its fragrance all around.

(The author is a columnist, social and KP activist)

The Spiritual/Religious Significance of Chanting Om Namah Shivaya

■ OMKAR DATTATRAY

The spiritual and religious importance of the cosmic mantra Om Namah Shivaya cannot be exaggerated as this mahamantra forms the core of Hinduism which sanatan Dharma is referred. It is the mantra recited at the birth and death of an individual and it is rightly called Aadi ta Annt. Every Sanatan ritual begins and ends with the chanting of Aum Namah Shivaya or Hari Om and it clearly shows the significance of this great and miraculous mantra. Chanting of Aum Namah Shivaya in fact leads to the salvation of the human beings and it is believed that this mantra liberates the man/women and one is destined to navigate the ocean of samsara and reach the safe and divine destination. Thus the chanting of this cosmic mantra results in the liberation of the human soul and therefore this mantra is the base, core and essence of sanatan Dharma. It is the primal, basic and root mantra and has utmost significance in Hinduism meaning thereby in Sanatan Dharma as any religious ritual is incomplete without the chanting of this principle mantra. Om Namah Shivaya symbolizes, signifies and reflects four Vedas and all the three guna's in Sanatan Dharma. The chanting of Om has great cosmic and spiritual value and its vibration is full of spiritual content and meaning. Every religious ceremony and rituals starts and comes to close with this Vedic mantra. The ancient mantra 'Om Namah Shivaya' rooted in the Vedas, is dedicated to Lord Shiva and represents the five elements of which human body is formed and which also is the cause of the universe. Chanting it purifies the mind, reduces the stress. 'Om Namah Shivaya' is one of the oldest and most revered mantras in



Hinduism, and it is believed to have been first mentioned in the ancient Vedic texts, particularly the Rigveda and Yajurveda. "Om" is regarded as the primal sound of the universe, representing the cosmic vibration that sustains all of existence. The five syllables Na, Ma, Shi, Va, and Ya, are said to represent the five elements earth, water, fire, air, and ether. It is commonly dedicated to Lord Shiva and is widely chanted during religious ceremonies, festivals like Maha Shivaratri, and daily prayers or meditation to remove obstacles and struggles from life and attain peace. In fact it also symbolizes the Sanatan Trinity of Bhrama, Vishnu and Mahesh/Rudra/Shiva. Shaivism was one of the earliest organized forms of Hinduism, and it found deep expression in the Tamil tradition, where the mantra became an integral part of religious practices. In Kashmir also, Shaivism flourished in ancient past and Kashmir was a seat of

Shaivism as the Kashmiri Pandits were the worshippers of Lord Shiva and even in the present times KP's worship Lord Shiva and propitiate Rudra to please the great Lord of destruction and also to attain peace of mind and relief from the miseries and sufferings of temporal life. The Shiva Purana and other religious texts dedicated to Lord Shiva elaborate on the power of this mantra and talk very high of the mantra. Chanting this mantra is said to purify the mind of negative thoughts, emotions, and attachments. Thus positivity among human beings is ensured by reciting this Vedic mantra. In Hinduism, the mind is often the source of distractions and confusion. Regular chanting helps calm the mind, reduce stress, and foster clarity, creating space for spiritual practices and higher awareness. The sound frequencies of this mantra create resonant vibrations that can heal and realign the body's energies. Studies also reveal that particular frequencies can stimulate healing responses in the body, providing emotional and psychological benefits. From a spiritual perspective, chanting Om Namah Shivaya is believed to cleanse the mind of negative emotions, distractions, and attachments. By repeating these mantras daily devotees can foster a sense of inner peace and harmony, allowing for a deeper connection with the divine also. It results in emotional and psychological benefits. As the body and mind come into harmony through vibrations of the mantra, practitioners may experience a reduction in anxiety, improved focus, and enhanced emotional well-being. In addition to its psychological benefits, the spiritual effects of chanting this mantra are wonderful. It is believed to elevate consciousness, helping individuals attain higher states of awareness and connect with

the divine presence of Lord Shiva. The mantra, in its simplicity and power, serves as a bridge between the material and spiritual realms, guiding practitioners towards liberation, peace and self-realization. This mantra not only removes stress but promotes healing by aligning body and mind. It gives you a sense of direction and purpose in life. There are nine planets and 27 constellations in the world and this mantra integrates all these. Shiva is that nothingness, the dark empty void of space, from which all creation - the stars, planets, galaxies, mountains, oceans, all living beings, etc. manifest and into which all creation disintegrates. Shiva is not a person but a principle. It is called the Shiva Tattva, which is an all-pervading consciousness that fills up this nothingness. Today, even astronomy tells us that 99.99% of this dark matter and dark energy, so called because they do not reflect, absorb or emit light and hence cannot be seen - ever. Shiva means that which is innocent, benevolent, beautiful, transcendental, and absolute. There is a certain correlation between the five elements, seven layers of our being, and our consciousness. Shiva energy permeates through the universe and you will find that it is possible to experience the Shiva Tattva - absolute nothingness - within us. This mantra brings you back to your source. Chanting or listening to mantra produce vibrations, positive, life uplifting energy, and are universal. Om Namah Shivaya is one of the most powerful mantras. Chanting this mantra builds the energy in your system and also clears the environment. People have been chanting this mantra for thousands of years. Na Ma Shi Va Ya - these five syllables indicate the five elements (Known as Pancha Maha Bhoot in Sanskrit) - Earth, Water, Fire, Air, and Ether

The five elements are the building blocks of everything in creation, including the human body, and Lord Shiva is the master of these five elements. Whereas, Om is the sound of the universe. Om means peace and love. So the 'Om Namah Shivaya' chanting is done to harmonize the five elements in the environment. Where there is peace, love and harmony in all the five elements, then there is bliss and there is joy not just within you, but also around you. Chanting Om Namah Shivaya helps us to master the five elements within us, leading the mind to silence. Silence leads to the experience of Shiva Tattva. In this way, everyone can access Shiva through this mantra. The chanting of this mantra unites the different koshas or layers of our being and elevates the qualities of Shiva within us. It has the effect of quieting the mind and so is also a good way to prepare for meditation. This mantra infuses positive energy and removes negative energy. It is also a stress-buster helping you to relax and unwind. A restless mind becomes stable and peaceful with regular chanting. Om Namah Shivaya helps you to gain control over your senses. This helps you govern your mind eventually. It gives you a sense of direction and purpose in life. There are nine planets and 27 constellations. Since the Shiva Tattva is the presiding energy and governs the planets as well, chanting this mantra can help nullify the effects of malefic planets to a certain extent. In short Om Namah shivaya and its chanting transforms the human beings spiritually and helps in meditation as well as elevates the practitioners. There is no exaggeration in saying that this Vedic mantra is chanted in all religious ceremonies, festivals and rituals.

(The author is a columnist, social and KP activist)

RBI's own Shaktimaan

Tenure of Shaktikanta Das as RBI governor will always be remembered for his proactive measures to neutralize the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on the country's financial sector. His contribution makes him a distinguished governor in the history of the apex bank

■ SAJJAD BAZAZ

Even as the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) welcomed Sanjay Malhotra as its new (26th) Governor, it is Shaktikanta Das who is still dominating media headlines. A breed of experts have engaged themselves in doing post-mortem of his six years' tenure as the 25th Governor of the Apex Bank after he demitted the office on December 10. His hits and misses are currently being discussed and mostly his ability to navigate the RBI through turbulent phases is winning praises for him despite being a non-banker in the context of his qualification. Remarkably, a few days back Congress MP Shashi Tharoor landed him for leaving behind an "outstanding record of service to the nation." Tharoor admitted he too had initially doubted whether someone with an MA in History could successfully lead the RBI.

"A word of tribute to @DasShaktikanta as he demits office as Governor of @RBI," Tharoor said. "Shakti was my junior in College, but I too had wondered whether an MA in History could take on such onerous financial and economic responsibilities."

Of course, Shaktikanta Das surprised one and all, firstly, by being thrust into the hot seat after his predecessor Urjit Patel's sudden resignation owing to his rift with the central government and secondly, through his sheer performance during his six-year tenure as

head of the Apex Bank.

His efficient dealing with the matters related to banking, financial and economic sectors is what he was supposed to do as governor of the RBI. But, maintaining calm while dealing with systemic shocks and keeping his staff at the RBI woven into a well coordinated network and dealing as a tough regulator were some of the parameters adding grace to his tenure.

However, his distinguished services during the unprecedented Covid-19 crisis makes him different from a routine RBI governor. He took a walk on the razor's edge and fine-tuned the operations of the RBI during the pandemic, to keep the engine of the country's banking and financial system running.

When the financial system in various countries was derailed owing to the pandemic, the RBI through a series of stimulus and other packages kept the bruised economy afloat. In other words, the measures taken by the Apex Bank during the peak of Covid-19 crisis kept the common household budgets afloat and helped different segments of populations to negotiate the pandemic-induced economic crisis.

Let us revisit Shaktikanta Das's acts of wisdom and power of Shaktimaan to take Covid-19 head-on to neutralise its onslaught on the banking and financial sector. He was proactive in his approach while declaring a



war on COVID-19. Within six days of the World Health Organization's (WHO's) declaration of COVID-19 as a pandemic, the RBI under his leadership immediately created a business continuity bio-bubble.

Bio-bubble is a safe and secure environment that can only be accessed by a certain set of people who tested negative for COVID-19 to minimize the risk of transmission of the coronavirus from one person to another during the course of the event.

Almost 150 selected officers, staff and service providers were kept in isolation in the bubble to work 24X7 in order to keep

essential RBI services such as currency issue, retail and wholesale payment and settlement systems, financial markets regulation, supervision and liquidity management, and other noticeable services that impact the lives of people, businesses and financial institutions on a regular basis. This turned out to be visionary. Within days of the pandemic-induced lockdown being announced, financial markets in the country seized to operate, banking and financial institutions were gripped by liquidity evaporation, and finances that lubricate the wheels of the economy, dried up.

It was from March 27, 2020

that the RBI rolled out an array of measures, conventional as well as out-of-the-box, to address pandemic-induced dislocations and constraints, system level as well as also specific to sectors, institutions and financial instruments.

Notably, the pandemic brought to the fore solvency concerns among individuals and businesses following dislocations in everyday activity and access to finance. We also observed raised fears of imminent asset quality stress among banks and financial institutions. Accordingly, to address these concerns, the RBI launched a series of regulatory measures such as loan

moratorium; asset classification standstill; easing of working capital financing and deferment of interest; increasing of group exposure norms; restructuring of advances to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs); and reduction of the liquidity coverage ratio (LCR) requirements, etc. These concessions not only provided a reprieve to borrowers affected by the pandemic-induced lockdowns, but also shored up the health of lending institutions. At the end, these initiatives proved a foundation stone to preserve the resilience of the financial system.

Rationalization of risk weights for individual housing loans; revised risk weights for banks' regulatory retail portfolio; and restrictions on banks from paying out dividends were some more reactions of wisdom exhibited by the RBI, technically termed as countercyclical regulatory measures. These initiatives eased stress on both borrowers and the banking system.

In the context of technology solutions, the RBI adopted a proactive approach by leveraging the power of technology to facilitate digital penetration, innovative payment options and consumer awareness on the path to a "less cash" reliant society. A few initiatives were customised inline with the pandemic protocols. For example, it was ensured digital banking channels, ATMs, internet/mobile banking facili-

ties remain available; cyber security strengthened; mechanisms for faster redressal of customer grievances put in place; and financial literacy campaigns meticulously tailored and run in a sustained and focused manner through RBI Kehta Hai.

To be precise, the RBI's measures under the leadership of Shaktikanta Das have contributed significantly in engineering the turnaround in the Indian economy, supported by rising financial inclusion and digitalisation. That is why India is today on the cusp of becoming one among the fastest growing economies of the world. During his tenure, he cultivated a healthy culture of continuously evaluating highly volatile and uncertain conditions and remaining always ready to protect the country's economy from shocks. He committed all instruments, using conventional measures and tailoring new ones, not only to lessen the impact of the pandemic on the financial sector, but also to set the situation to emerge stronger and more resilient than before, keeping in mind the objective of growth.

Now, over to his successor Sanjay Malhotra. It is fervently hoped that he will capitalize on the strengths achieved during Das's tenure to make his own mark as governor of the RBI.

(The author is a veteran journalist/columnist)