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HINDU COLLEGE GAZETTE

MARCH - APRIL 2021

Icarus's Lost Paradise

THE OBLIVION OF CARL SCHMITT

Vishesh Chaudhary / Pg 48

*The Lament for Icarus
by Herbert James Draper*

HINDU COLLEGE GAZETTE

MARCH - APRIL 2021

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ISSUED BY
THE SYMPOSIUM SOCIETY,
HINDU COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY OF DELHI

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Published on May 12, 2021

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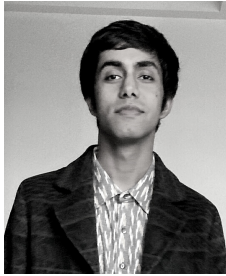
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COLUMNISTS



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Kunal Panda is a final year undergraduate majoring in Economics from Hindu College, University of Delhi. A Pushcart Prize nominee, he strives to pursue intersectionality in his research. His academic interests include Political Economy and Gender Studies, having recently reviewed the psychoanalytic façade of ideology and aesthetics, under a broad view of fetishism and gender performativity. He is also an ardent reader of epic literature. He aims to be an educator one day.



Nikhil Jois K.S. is a politics and philosophy enthusiast. He finds solace in Indian Classical Music, and is an aspiring civil servant.



Preet Sharma is a third-year student of Political Science at Hindu College. She is a simple girl who loves engaging with complicated political theories. She is also deeply passionate about cooking other than reading and writing.

GUEST WRITERS



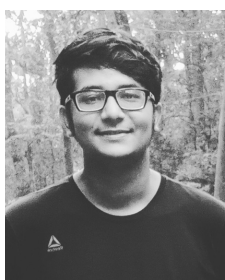
Shivangi Sharma is a 2nd year Political Science student at JMC, who is also a debater and advocate for Feminism and Gender Studies. She likes to spend her time reading feminist literature and continuously questioning society's construct. Besides academics and politics, she has an active interest in music and likes to spend most free days with her guitar or uke composing music. On other days, she likes to read Manto or Faiz, or watch political theater.



Souvik Biswas is a first-year student of History Department from Hindu College. He hails from Darjeeling known as Queen of Hills, West Bengal. He started writing articles in The Statesman newspaper in 2016. Currently, he is the coordinator of The Statesman. He also writes short stories for a website known as The Story Vault. Being marked as a bibliophile and cinephile, Souvik states that he hates billionaires and dreams of a casteless and classless society.



Abhigya Barthwal is a first-year Economics student at Hindu College. She is interested in poetry, world politics and the human community around us, she also likes to read independent news.



Naman Negi is a student of TISS. He is currently pursuing his bachelor's in Social Work. He likes to read and write on diverse topics in Polity, Society and Economy. He likes to watch web series and food blogs.



Mimansha is a first-year student from Hindu College, pursuing History Hons. Discussions on history, books, and art interest her.

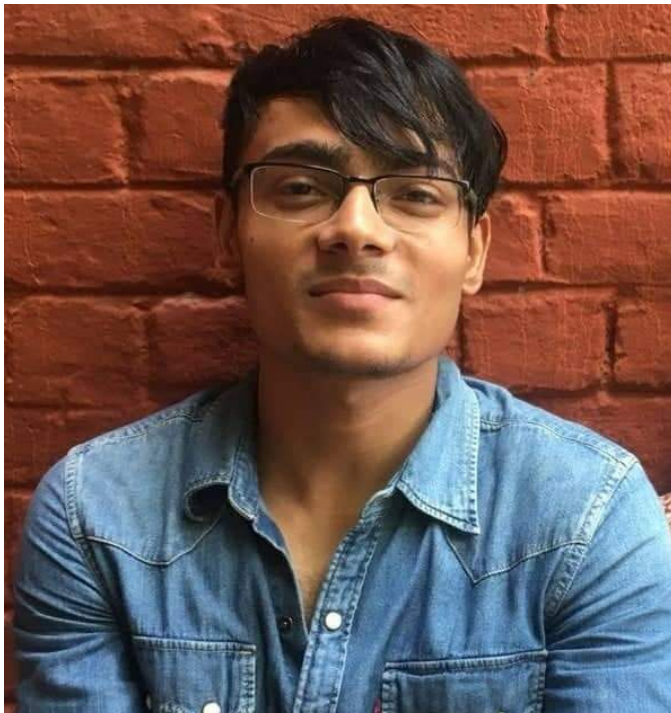
GUEST WRITERS



Richa Sinha is a student of Political Science at Hindu College. She believes in both the devastating and revolutionary potential of ideas.



Akankha Basu Roy is a second-year student pursuing her graduation in BA Performing Arts, English, and Psychology from Christ (Deemed-to-be-University), Bangalore. She originally hails from Kolkata and is an ardent literature lover and psychology enthusiast. However, books and dogs have always remained her first love.



FROM THE EDITOR IN CHIEF

This issue of the Hindu College Gazette marks a change of guard. This is the last issue supervised by the original head editorial team. Moving on, the reins will be taken over by a highly capable and enthusiastic team, with whom our readers are already familiar. This issue hence marks a moment of both reflection and hope, hindsight and foresight, past and future.

In just a few months the Gazette has come to occupy a position of value and eminence. This project was unique given that the circumstantial challenges were many. In face of that, we have been able to make large strides and establish a magazine that has been serving as a platform for intelligent discussion. This has of course been made possible by our team, guest contributors, and readers. In understanding these relationships, we've come to discover our strengths and weaknesses. This has also allowed us to create a vision for future possibilities and challenges for the same. We hope to continue the work we have done till now and I'm certain that the new team would take the Gazette to much greater heights.

Some of our plans for diversification and expansion already find place in this issue. We are in the process of instituting columns—regular spaces where excellent authors would present their views on a diverse range of themes. Our columnists have contributed to this issue as well. Thoughtful pieces by Abhinav Bhardwaj, Ananya Bhardwaj, Kunal Panda, Nikhil Jois, and Preet Sharma would serve to familiarise our readers with the columns they shall be writing in the upcoming future.

Besides that, our repertoire of other writings is also highly exciting. Our cover story by Vishesh Chaudhary looks at the layered and controversial life and thought of philosopher Carl Schmitt. Samya Verma looks at the histories of photographs captured during India's partition. From Anima Singh's eloquent piece on the complicated lives of sex workers and Anushka Pandey's article on political misogyny to Avni Goel's examination of the succession controversy in Japan's ruling family, various contributions to this issue uncover the multifaceted aspects of women's lives. We also look at two recent state elections, Bengal and Kerala, and what they mean for regional and national politics. Our perilous times are chronicled by Nandini Giri and Aryan Pandey's article on how India reached the stage of a disastrous second Covid wave.

We hope that this issue is able to contribute a meaningful discussion on problems around us today and offer critical perspectives on challenges that persist. From the founding editorial board, we also offer our sincere gratitude for being a part of this journey with us. We wish the best of luck to the upcoming editorial board. It has been a fun ride.

Farewell!

PRATEEK PANKAJ



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THE REFUGEE DISPUTE AND A CLASH OF GOVERNMENTS

BY NAMAN NEGI & VIBHUTI PATHAK

The Crisis in the Backyard

“Those people who came from Myanmar are our brothers and sisters. We have a family tie with them” said Zoramthanga, the chief minister of Mizoram in a recent interview with ANI. In a letter dated March 18 to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the state's incumbent Chief Minister reiterated, “India could not turn a blind eye to the humanitarian crisis unfolding in front of us in our own backyard”.

On February 1, the military in Myanmar had taken control over the civilian rule and seized the powers in a coup d'état, and declared a year-long state of emergency after Aung San Suu Kyi's party National League for Democracy (NLD) had a landslide victory in the general elections of 2020. The opposition, Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), backed by Myanmar's army in a press conference said that it did not approve the results of the elections while pointing out irregularities and flaws in the system. After the coup took place, the military arrested Aung Suu Kyi and took her to an unknown location.

There have been several peaceful and democratic protests against the military regime and the arrests of Ms. Suu Kyi and other pro-democratic leaders. The military responded with barbarian cruelty to the protesters by showering bullets on them. The ruling Generals marked the Armed Forces Day of March 27 (which historically commemorates the Burmese army's resistance to Japanese occupation in 1945) by killing over 100 people in one of the most terrifying days since independence. So far, the death toll has reached over 700. The military crackdown in Myanmar has resulted in the migration of refugees in large numbers to Indian states of Mizoram and-



Cathal McNaughton / Reuters

and Manipur. Myanmar, also called Burma, shares an unfenced frontier of 510 km with the Indian state of Mizoram. There exists a Free Movement Regime (FMR) between Myanmar and Mizoram by which residents on either side of the border can travel up to 16 km into another border and stay there for 14 days without visas. The FMR has been suspended since March 2020 on account of the Covid-19 pandemic. The refugees have taken the benefit of the situation to enter Mizoram. The Burmese police personnel and military soldiers who have refused to follow the orders to shoot their own people and the local people of Myanmar who have escaped military raids, are among the refugees who have migrated. There has been a conflict between the state government of Mizoram and the Home Ministry of India vis-à-vis providing shelter to the refugees from Myanmar. The government of Mizoram is providing shelter to the refugees from a humanitarian and ethnic perspective. On the other hand, the Home Ministry has written a letter to the chief secretaries of all the states sharing borders with Myanmar to halt the influx of the refugees and return them politely. In addition, it has also deployed additional forces along the border to stop the influx.

A HISTORY OF REFUGEES

On 4th October 1967, the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees defined a refugee as “a person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such a fear, is unwilling to avail himself the protection of that country.” Around 146 member countries are parties to the protocol. Although the above definition may seem very clear in its approach, many ambiguities, however, linger around the words ‘migration’ and ‘refugee’.

THE BURMESE
POLICE
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AND MILITARY
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WHO HAVE
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MYANMAR
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MILITARY
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AMONG THE
REFUGEES
WHO HAVE
MIGRATED.

The first step in addressing the rights and freedoms of migrant workers was taken in the 1930s and in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The ILO Migration for Employment Convention 1949 and the 1998 ILO Declaration of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work aimed to provide recognition and protection to migrant workers. However, these are not legally binding treaties. Moreover, the United Nations 1951 Refugee Convention sets out the rights of asylum seekers and the responsibilities of nations, but India is not a signatory to it. In 1994, the UNHCR also set up a five-member Eminent Persons Group (EPG) to assist South Asian nations in forging domestic refugee laws. But many argue that such endeavours take into account the activist's point of view, and fail to consider broader aspects of national security, economy and demography. Therefore, in the lacuna of a concrete law dealing with refugees and illegal immigrants separately, all foreigners in India are covered in the Foreigners Act, 1946, according to which a citizen is simply “a person who is not a citizen of India” without specifying a category requiring humanitarian protection. The notion of a refugee under this legislation, thus, stands in perilous antinomy to the 1967 Protocol definition and has resulted in the controversial Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 which grants citizenship to non-Muslim migrants belonging to Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Christian, Jain and Parsi communities who came to the country from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan; on or before December 31, 2014, purely on humanitarian grounds.

The absence of a specific law governing the administration of refugees, accompanied by the country's liberal democratic credentials and relatively sound economic status has lured millions

THE AD HOCISM OF THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK CONCERNING REFUGEES THUS ENABLES THE GOVERNMENT TO ADMIT CERTAIN GROUPS OF ASYLUM SEEKERS FOR WHATEVER POLITICAL OR GEOPOLITICAL REASONS. BUT, AT THE SAME TIME, IT TRICKLES THE WAY FOR FATUOUS DOMESTIC POLITICIZATION OF THE ISSUE, THE EPITOME OF WHICH ARE BANGLADESHI IMMIGRANTS IN INDIA.

of immigrants into India seeking protection from persecution, religious, racial and linguistic hegemony, looking towards brighter economic prospects. The issue has conspicuously remained contentious due to the socio-political conflicts it has brought in its wake. Along with an exodus of Hindus and Sikhs, a significant number of Muslims migrated during the Partition of 1947 from Pakistan and erstwhile East Pakistan, and the memories of the communal violence that followed are still afresh in many literary works. During such unprecedented times, the government of India gave people the freedom to choose the side people wanted to live in. Consequently, an estimated 16.7 million people crossed the border within four years of partition.

The ad hocism of the legal framework concerning refugees thus enables the government to admit certain groups of asylum seekers for whatever political or geopolitical reasons. But, at the same time, it trickles the way for fatuous domestic politicization of the issue, the epitome of which is the case of Bangladeshi immigrants in India. Many reports allegedly claim that around 10 million people fled Bangladesh during its war of independence in 1971. Similar cultural backgrounds and the ease of crossing a porous border have enabled them to merge with the local populations of Bengal and Assam and increase

copiously over the years.

Today, they even bear ration cards, voter ID cards and Aadhar cards, thus forming a turbid identity over the local population and making their identification a juggernaut task, something which the NRC confidently asserts to fulfill. From the formation of separatist groups demanding a 'Greater Bangladesh' in stark contrast to the nationalist identities favouring Hindu Bangladeshis over the "infiltrators", to the genesis of a clash in the political arena with the communist formations seeking tutelary of the refugees in the guise of securing the "vote banks"; the migratory Bangladeshi birds have not left any stone unturned in stirring a commotion in the already polluted skies of Indian politics.

The most recent waves of migration into India have been those of the Rohingya Muslims and the Chin. The Indian government has put the former in the category of illegal immigrants posing security threats and has, thus, urged Myanmar to summon back their people. The Burmese abhor the Rohingyas, stripping them of citizenship. Even their most favoured destination country, Bangladesh, opines that they are Burmese in origin and, hence, shall be protected in Myanmar. So every itinerary of these 'stateless' people ultimately appears to be a snake pit. Further

aggravating the problem, the China began to cross the borders into India seeking protection following the political alarms and excursions in Myanmar. The Indian scenario chivied by troubled people entering from all sides, therefore, presents the picture of a jumbled mess.

A HISTORY OF REFUGEES

Migration movements, mostly have been a bone of contention between the proponents of the open-door policy and those who are conscious about its social, political, and economic effects. The same has caused the status quo between the government of India and the state government of Mizoram.

The 'Outsider' population in Mizoram includes migrant workers from mainland India (known locally as vai), undocumented migrants from Bangladesh, and undocumented migrants and refugees from Myanmar (predominantly ethnic Chin). Mainland Indians are not considered belonging to Mizoram though they share Indian citizenship, as Mizo attitudes to mainland Indians are shaped by a total absence of cultural affinity and by the memory of cruelties inflicted during the insurgency. But the Mizo attitude towards Chin refugees changes as they consider them as brothers and sisters. Mizoram and Chin State are small and ethnically distinct

sub-states that have considerably more in common with each other than with their respective 'parent' nations of India and Myanmar. The strong strings of historical, cultural, and ethnic relations attached between the Mizo and the Chin hint that those who arrive will easily integrate into Mizoram. While this has been true to a particular extent, there are other perceptions about the Chin in Mizoram as well. They are also host to several social problems, which include their role in the production and sale of alcohol and drugs in the state. Crime and social problems are attributed to Burmese presence and influence. Resentment of the Chin appears to be driven by a variety of 'fears of the other', including fear of domination by an outsider population that is shared by other north-eastern territories and is acute in relation to Bangladeshi migrants, Indian mainland workers and Muslim migrants. Other fears include the risk of fostering disunity in Mizoram and weakening the society through moral and cultural deterioration.

The location of the Indo-Myanmar border makes it very difficult for the security forces to manage it effectively and, therefore, throws up many challenges. The internal dynamics of the region in terms of clan loyalties of the tribal people, inter-tribal clashes, insurgency and trans-border ethnic ties also adversely affect the security of border areas. The strong bonds between the tribes, such as Nagas, Kukis, Chin, who live astride the border, help insurgents in finding safe haven in Myanmar. Arms and ammunition, precious stones, and Chinese-made consumer products are smuggled into India illegally. Human trafficking is uncontrolled and widespread at the border. The FMR has also contributed to increased smuggling in the region. Status quo Assam rifles are deployed at the Myanmar border. The biggest foreign link of Northeast insurgents is believed to be with Myanmar. At a time when Mizoram and other north-eastern

states are witnessing a huge influx of refugees, there is a serious threat posed to the internal security of India.

There are positive and negative implications of the influx of migrant refugees on the economy, and the latter clearly outweighs the former. Refugee influx in large numbers may lead to conflict for resources such as land, water, housing, food, and healthcare facilities. Apart from this, it can affect the ecology and infrastructure of a state as well. For example, in Assam, a higher population growth rate has led to more spending by the government on basic infrastructure and healthcare. Migrants put tremendous pressure on land because migration causes average land-holding to decline. The debt burden of the government increases because of an increase in population as revenue from all sources as well as loans have to be pulled together to manage food supply for the growing population. Most of the migrant economy is run through informal channels, which encourages black market economy, riddled with corruption and without adequate revenue/tax collection. Migration has also resulted in various illegal trades flourishing at the borders. Unemployment among migrant refugees puts them into anti-social activities. Mizoram may face similar problems if the influx remains uncontrolled. Positive implications include the availability of labourers and a large workforce of women as domestic help. Money earned by the migrant workforces is circulated within the state in small businesses thus boosting the economy of the state.

CONCLUSION

Despite the freight of allegations pouring in from external as well as internal critiques concerning the provision of asylum to refugees, India has maintained a stellar record of the same. "New Delhi has been one of the largest recipients of refugees in the world in spite of not being a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol

'and most of this, evidently, has come at a huge cost.

Political luminaries and scholars propose dichotomous but equally propitious solutions to the problem of illegal migration. The first group emphasizes the completion of NPR/NRC to distinguish asylum seekers and illegal immigrants. Furthermore, it also sees India as a fair recipient of refugees as well as economic migrants and, thus, puts forth the alternative of seeking aid from international organizations like UNHCR and IOM to break down the complexities of such issues. In Tamil Nadu, for instance, the influence of UNHCR has largely proven positive in the voluntary repatriation of Sri Lankan Tamils. Moreover, the UNHCR's involvement may prevent further influx as it prioritises the creation of conditions to help refugees return to their country of origin. Similarly, the IOM could act as a neutral body in the verification mechanism for assessing the status of Bangladeshi immigrants.

The other group clearly stands opposed to the 1951 UNHCR convention that justifies asylum for reasons barring economic causes. This highlights "the West's lopsided obsession with civil and political rights at the cost of economic rights" which lacks a "moral backing". This also comes at a time when the West itself is violating the convention in full spirits. It is evident from their non-entrée (no-entry) regime characterized by visa restrictions, carrier sanctions, interdictions, third safe-country rule, restrictive interpretations of the definition of 'refugee', and widespread practices of detention. Apart from this, the group perceives the CAA-NRC as a highly discriminatory policy against already discriminated people as it yearns to achieve refugee avoidance rather than refugee protection.

Whatever path the country may choose, it is pivotal to legislate a domestic refugee law regularizing the stay of legal immigrants. At the same time, it should encourage refugees to voluntarily reveal their

identities by providing incentives like refugee status and work permits, permission to stay and work during the verification period, citizenship rights and some monetary allowances. This is vital, as in the absence of proper legal measures, refugee documentation, and work permit, refugees often tend to opt for illicit means of preventing repatriation and, hence, become illegal immigrants. Similarly, under the Foreigners Act, penal action should be taken against those harbouring a foreign national, concealing his presence, or facilitating illegal immigration. The absence of such legislation

may invite geopolitical considerations. In this regard, if we assume that India provides asylum to the Chins, which may exasperate the Generals in Naypyitaw, Beijing would spur into action harming the diplomatic relations of New Delhi with Myanmar. On the other hand, if we envisage a refugee law in place, it could temper the expectations of the Burmese government to return the fleeing Chins and curb a political conundrum in India. Thus, it is high tide that we replace this 'minatory slipshod' with antidotal legislation that serves the interests of the country and the refugees.



West Bengal Elections

POLITICS OF LANGUAGE & LEGACY

In the past few months West Bengal turned into a political hotbed, as it always does right before elections. This time around, there was a newer and fiercer contender in the arena: the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). This is not to say that BJP hasn't been around in the political scene of West Bengal before, but only recently they have gained an unprecedented momentum in the state. In the Lok Sabha elections of 2014, even when India was swept away by a pro-Modi wave, BJP managed to secure only 2 out of 42 Lok Sabha constituencies in West Bengal. Five years later, in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, to the surprise of many political analysts, BJP has won 18 seats and secured 40.25% of the vote share. The Trinamool Congress (TMC) was ahead in the race by just 3% at 43.3% vote share. In the days leading up to the D-day, many analysts discussed the disaffection of people against the TMC and how it would give a clear mandate to BJP to take over Mamta Banerjee in the 2021 state elections. This increased voter confidence was one of the reasons why the Union Home Minister believed that BJP would win 200 seats out of 294 in the upcoming state elections.

HINDI ALL DAYS, BENGALI ON ELECTION DAYS

At the surface level, these prophecies of victory might have seemed genuine, given the kind of aggressive campaigning that BJP indulged in over the past few months. What was particularly interesting about its campaign was the appropriation of Bengali cultural figures and organisations, whose views were often at odds with the core ideology of the party. Such a narrative was being spun -

by the BJP in order to counter TMC's allegations that it is an 'outsider party' or that it's a 'party of the Hindi heartland'. This had led to many BJP campaigners addressing large gatherings in Bengali, including PM Modi and Union Minister Smriti Irani. Behind this garb of embracing the Bengali language lies a long history of BJP trying to impose Hindi on all states of India. In 2019, on Hindi Diwas, Union Home Minister Amit Shah had sparked controversy by saying that Hindi is the most widely spoken language in India, and is thus capable of uniting the whole country. He appealed to the citizens to realise Gandhi and Sardar Patel's dream of 'one language for one country'. Amit Shah indeed faced severe backlash, not only from the non-Hindi speaking states, but also from the party's regional units in those states.

Mamata Banerjee, surprisingly, gave a lukewarm response in West Bengal, in a manner quite unlike her. She tweeted thus, "*My best wishes to all on Hindi Diwas. We should respect all languages and cultures equally. We may learn many languages but we should never forget our mother-language.*" It was expected that TMC would turn the language conflict into a real political issue, but clearly it did not do so. Nevertheless, about 50 eminent personalities issued a statement which asked the people of Bengal to give "due respect to all languages" and "resist attempts to impose just one". Further it said that, "a day may come in the foreseeable future when our own language, our mother tongue, our dearest Bengali language will become threatened", and beseeched the citizens to resist any such imposition. A few months before this controversy,

proposed recommendations for the National Education Policy drew similar criticism, since it sought to introduce a three language policy in non-Hindi speaking states which mandated education in Hindi, English, and the respective local language of the non-Hindi speaking states.

In appealing to the Bengali public, BJP frequently used Bengali slogans such as 'Asol Parivartan' and 'Sonar Bangla', meaning real development and Golden Bengal, respectively. Entire speeches were delivered in Bengali by Smriti Irani and Narendra Modi in order to counter the outsider tag. Prime Minister Modi, while addressing an East Midnapore crowd in Bengali, reiterated the legacy of Midnapore born icons like Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Khudiram Bose.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AND HINDUTVA POLITICS

Eminent figures such as Swami Vivekananda and Rabindranath Tagore also made an appearance in the speeches of BJP leaders. BJP, RSS, and ABVP have considered Swami Vivekananda as their icon for a long time. In November 2020, Prime Minister Modi unveiled a statue of the late Swami at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU). Many BJP leaders demanded that the University be renamed after Swami Vivekananda.

Swami Vivekananda's birth anniversary is celebrated on 12th January every year. This year was marked by fervent celebrations by both the BJP and the TMC to commemorate the Hindu monk. Road shows and foot marches were organised, and leaders of both the parties visited Swami Ji's



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee during a rally ahead of West Bengal Assembly polls 2021, at Bolpur in Birbhum district of West Bengal. Photo: PTI.



Hundreds of thousands of Indian Trinamool Congress Party (TMC) supporters attend a mass meeting addressed by West Bengal chief minister and TMC chief Mamata Banerjee in Kolkata on July 21, 2016. Dibyanshu Sarkar via Getty Images



A Mamata Banerjee supporter, wearing a face shield with her image on it, celebrates in Kolkata. Rupak De Chowdhuri/Reuters

Thus BJP, together with the promising implementation of CAA in its West Bengal election manifesto, has also been enthusiastically appropriating the legacy of the state's secular organisations and leaders.

ancestral house in Kolkata. During this time, TMC did not back down from pointing out the irony in BJP's appropriation of Swami Ji. Abhishek Banerjee, the youth wing President of TMC while addressing a rally that day commented that Swami Vivekananda never stood for communalism and divisive politics. State Minister Bratya Basu also lashed out at BJP saying that their party does not believe in the teachings of Swami Vivekananda or Ramakrishna.

It becomes all the more important in such a context to dive deeper into the teachings of Swami Vivekananda and his guru Ramakrishna to understand whether the accusations levelled by the TMC have any truth to them. Swami Vivekananda is considered to be a patriotic saint and credited with popularising Hinduism in the West. He was fiercely proud of Hinduism, but its regressive practices. He rather advocated that its goal is in self-realisation and in being and becoming. He was also one of the major faces of the Hindu reform movement which aimed to modernise and democratise the religion. The Hindu reform movement and Swami Vivekananda himself advocated for the Vedanta tradition which espoused liberation and knowledge.

His *guru*, Ramakrishna, had declared that all revealed religions such as Christianity and Islam were true and valid. Swami's own approach is considered to be that of religious pluralism. He is known for his contribution to the nationalist movement and his teachings focused on human development above all. These teachings influenced nationalist leaders of diverse ideologies and drew praise from B.R. Ambedkar, Subhash Chandra Bose, Mahatma Gandhi among others. When you contrast his contributions and philosophies to the Hindutva ideology of the ruling party, it becomes starkly clear that they are at odds. Ramakrishna Mission, a spiritual organisation founded by Swami Vivekananda in order to propagate his *guru's* teachings also calls itself a non-sectarian and non-political organization. A glance through Belur Math's website reveals that the organisation believes in the spirit of harmony and friendship among all faiths.

Even though BJP's own values might not align with that of the Mission, they have been making consistent efforts to build their relationship with the saffron-clad monks. In January 2021, on the occasion of

Swami Vivekananda's birth anniversary, PM Modi visited Belur Math and addressed the gathering there. He reiterated the government's decision to go ahead with the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) in the backdrop of anti-CAA protests of that time. Such political statements were unwelcome by the members of the mission. In fact, before the Prime Minister's visit, the disciples of the mission had sent a letter to Belur Math authorities requesting them to cancel his visit because they believed that the place of Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda "should not invite a person who created problem[s] for people". Nevertheless, the links between BJP and Ramakrishna Mission have only grown. For instance, soil from Belur Math was sent for the foundation laying ceremony of the Ram Ayodhya temple in August 2020.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE AND NARROW NATIONALISM

The BJP had also been trying to appropriate the legacy of eminent personalities such as Subhash Chandra Bose and Rabindranath Tagore. Prime Minister Modi was found quoting Rabindranath Tagore quite frequently in his speeches. Many local BJP leaders of Bengal were also talking about the similarity in appearance of our Prime Minister and the Nobel laureate. Yet again the party was trying to align itself with a Bengali icon whose ideology stands diametrically opposed to that of its own. Rabindranath Tagore is known for his criticism of narrow nationalism, which is also the reason why he left the Swadeshi Movement after his initial involvement. He was anti-imperialist, but at the same time, he believed patriotism could not rise above humanity. He believed in learning from different religions like Christianity, Islam, Judaism among others, instead of restricting to national identity and limiting our thought process. Thus BJP, together with the promising implementation of CAA in its West Bengal election manifesto, has also been enthusiastically appropriating the legacy of the state's secular organisations and leaders.

The assembly election results proved the inefficacy of the strategy adopted by the BJP, as it failed to cross even the double-digit mark in West Bengal, and TMC bagged a landslide victory. Mamata Banerjee spoke thus to the press, "This is a victory for the people of Bengal. I am proud to say that Bengal saved the country."



THE MODERN VITAMINS

Exploring Significance of Rare Earth

BY PREET SHARMA

Rare Earth' refers to a group of seventeen chemically similar elements sharing certain exceptional magnetic and conductive properties. Rare earth, in reality, is not rare, this name points more to scientific beginnings rather than actual qualities. In 1788, a mine dug up a dark rock that in 1794 was discerned as a *new kind of earth*. It was called rare because at that point of time it was unusual to find those metals in pure form and Earth is an old fashioned term for something you can dissolve in acid. Hence, the term rare-earth. Cerium, lanthanum, yttrium, and iron were the constituents of the new found mineral. The unburied rock of 1788 was labeled "gadolinite" after its founder Johan Gadolin.

When Dmitri Mendeleev, Julius Meyer and other chemists put together their drafts of the periodic table, most lanthanides were missing. These lanthanides consisted of 15 elements from lanthanum (atomic number 57) to lutetium (atomic number 71). So, at that time, the presence of some of these less known elements (lanthanum, cerium, terbium, and erbium) suggested the presence of a rare earth family because of their incredible chemical similarities which then came to be known as the Lanthanide series. The elements that are incorporated in the lanthanide series have been modified with time.

The rare-earth are found in abundance, but they are scattered throughout the earth's crust. Rare earths such as Promethium are used to manufacture batteries that power spacecraft, Thulium is of immense importance for the manufacturing of surgical lasers used to treat neurological conditions and is also stamped on Euro bank notes as an anti-counterfeiting measure. The magnetic and conductive properties of rare earth metals are essential for high technology applications. They are indispensable in producing the navigation constituent of ultra-modern remote warfare technologies, like in drones and smart bombs, green technologies -



Chalcopyrite, a copper and iron ore



such as solar panels, nanotechnologies, and are also used widely in the production of smartphones. They are consequential for the functioning of the Internet, satellite surveillance, and global finance. Most electronic devices have small quantities of rare earth in them. The process of adding rare-earth to other elements is called doping, which derives its name from performance-enhancing drugs used in sports. Rare earth due to its significance is called Vitamins by the United States Geological Survey, Spice Metals in Germany, MSG of industry in China, and Vitamin of the modern economy in Japan.

Small quantities of rare-earth are essential to achieving the required result. Before the 1980s, the use of rare earth in the electronic sector was not prominent, but with the advent of information technology and revolution in the sphere of consumer electronics, the rare earth element neodymium with its outstanding magnetic qualities became important for the miniaturization of computer hard drives and speakers. Neodymium is essential for renewable energy technologies and is fundamental to the hardware of militarism, drones, smart bombs, and -

cruise missiles. Rare earth in the age of technology is the material basis of the hardware of global technology.

THE POLITICS OF RARE-EARTH

With the beginning of the European hunt for raw material in imperialized lands around the twentieth century, the diplomatic life of rare earth began. British and German hunts for rare-earth started to brew in India and the Americas to nourish their domestic industry. During World War I, rare earth was used for infusions and explosives. Steel and iron alloys were used in the manufacture of weapons. The politics of rare earth in the twentieth century has been shaped by colonialism, the cold war, and neoliberalism. The nuclear arms race had its base in the rare-earth industry.

The United States and Germany both drew their rare earth and thorium from India and Brazil till World War II broke out in 1939. India restored its independence in 1947 and immediately worked on the Indian Atomic Energy Act of 1948 that identified Thorium as a strategic mineral and ceased the export of thorium-rich monazite. It disrupted the US strategic supply of Monazite. Meanwhile, a comprehensive Sino-Soviet mining program was transforming Bayan Obo rare earth mine in Inner Mongolia into steel, machinery weapons. Xu Guangxian, the father of China's rare earth chemistry left his teaching position at Peking University in China in 1956 to help China's effort to build a nuclear weapon.

GEOGRAPHY OF RARE-EARTH

Julie Michelle Klinger in her book "Rare Earth Frontiers" argues that the Global rare earth geography is defined by the fundamental tension of absolute necessity of these minerals and environmental and epidemiological costs generated by their extraction. First, during the mining process, radioactive elements like thorium pose a health risk to miners. Second, during the refining process, toxic chemicals used for the separation of rare-earth from ore can prove to be environmentally harmful, if they are not properly disposed of. Third, improper waste management poses the risk of the introduction of heavy metals and radioactive salts in the surrounding environment, and disposal of rare-earth-containing products most of which is e-waste has its own set of problems.

HOW DRAGON BECAME RARE?

The Bayan Obo mine is located in Inner Mongolia, China, and is known as the "Rare Earth Capital of the World". But the United States initially dominated the production and trading of rare earth. The discovery of rare earth was a significant event for the scientific community in the US when in 1949 rare earth was found at Mountain pass in California. By 1953, this mine was owned by Molybdenum Corporation of America (which is also known as Molycorp mine). This mine was extracting lanthanum, cerium and neodymium. Molycorp mine dominated world production till China realized its potential. The -

environmental cost of rare-earth mining was too high for the US to bear, as there were more than 60 radioactive wastewater spills in the US during 1984-1988. The New Environment Legislation, a sharp decline in prices, and the volatile market for some rare earth's led to the eclipse of rare earth production in the US.

A Chinese geologist, Ding Daoheng discovered the Bayan Obo Mine in 1927. The Chinese started building mines after the confirmation of the presence of monazite and bastnaesite. In Weishan County, Shandong, and Manning County, Sichuan, the Chinese went on to discover bastnaesite deposits. The Chinese were not hesitant to hire technical personnel to help and advance different methods of recovery. China invested heavily in the development of rare earth technologies and made it a policy priority by declaring rare earth as "protected strategic minerals" in 1990. After this move, rare earth did become very important for the Chinese state. The control over the rare earth industry was centralized, supply chains were built with the state helping create a higher value market for minerals by luring high-tech companies using rare-earth and then encouraging them to come and manufacture final products in China. Since China has declared rare-earth to be a strategically protected mineral, foreign firms can engage in smelting and separation of rare earth only in a joint venture with a Chinese firm.

The Chinese came to dominate the rare earth industry due to several factors. First, the Chinese central administration's unrelenting efforts to build native rare-earth industry to enhance technological restructuring in sectors of space, defence, and energy sectors. Second, China dominates the magnet market of the world by producing samarium cobalt magnets and the neodymium-iron-boron: two magnets that are relevant both commercially and militarily, and are also used in missile-guided systems. Third, China is working towards the strategy of monopolizing the resources of rare earth worldwide. It wanted to acquire the Molycorp mine and attempted to acquire a 51 percent stake in Lynas Corporation which possesses a Mount Weld Mine in Western Australia. Fourth, the process of obtaining rare earth is environmentally catastrophic and leads to the generation of radioactive waste. Thus, China's lax environmental laws and indirect ecological subsidy to the industry of rare earth also helped the rare earth industry blossom in China. Fifth, the deregulation in Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher's tenure and the presence of Deng Xiaoping's 1978 economic reforms made it easier to transfer environmentally dangerous industries and labor-intensive industries to China.

THE WORLD AWAKENS

In 2010, a Japanese coast guard detained a Chinese fisherman Zhan Qixiong, who sailed very close to Senkaku islands (which are disputed between China and Japan). These eight islands are geostrategic locations and -

their proximity to shipping lanes along with the presence of abundant petroleum and fish makes them significant. In response to the Chinese fisherman's detention, China unofficially halted Japan's rare earth exports. Local port workers and military personnel in the East China Sea, located close to Nanjing were crucial to informing this action. In Nanjing, the memory of Japanese imperialism and massacre is strongly cultivated in people, which prompted them to take action.

The local workers saw themselves as the frontline against the new Japanese aggression, as the fisherman was detained after a few days of the anniversary of full-scale Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931. The memory of the Century of Humiliation, lasting from 1839 to 1949 got reignited in the Chinese mind. After consultation with the central government in China, the rare earth export was resumed and the fisherman was released in September. But normal activity was restored only in November. This was the first rare earth crisis in sixty years.

TRACING THE GLOBAL PRODUCTION

This 2010 crisis led to market panic with prices rose to an unprecedented level, given that at that time Japan imported 40 percent of all rare earth produced globally and China supplied 97 percent of this to Japan. This awakened the world to its dependence on China for the supply of crucial rare earth on which modern life heavily depends. Following the crisis, the Euro-American powers scrambled to contain Chinese influence in this sector and emphasised on global rare-earth exploration.

Explorations began in Greenland, Afghanistan, and Brazil, and efforts are being made to revive the rare earth industry in the United States. Greenland saw rare earth mining as a ticket to prosperity, greater geopolitical independence, and diversifying Greenland's economy from fishing. But Chinese investors have shown considerable interest in mining rare earth in Greenland which has raised geopolitical concerns in the European Union and the world at large.

Following the 2010 fisherman crisis, some officials in the United States lobbied for the development of a federal industrial policy to revive the domestic rare earth industry. The Molycorp Mine on Mountain Pass, California was revived and upgraded but due to the fall of global prices of rare earth and other factors related to subcontracting and environmental issues, the company was declared bankrupt. Australia began producing rare earth in 2013 and has become the world's second-largest producer by 2019. In India, although a public sector enterprise named Indian Rare Earth Limited (IREL) was established in 1950, due to much cheaper Chinese imports, the mining was stopped between 2004 to 2011. However, mining of rare earth was restored in 2011 and India

currently accounts for 2 percent of global reserves and has about 6 percent known reserves of rare earth. India must tap on its potential in mining rare earth which, in our present world, is strategically significant. Vietnam has the third-largest reserves of rare earth and has received investments from Japan, South Korea, and Australia. Vietnam plans to expand investments and collaboration in the rare earth industry with Vietnam's Mineral Resources Strategy 2020.

THE QUAD AND THE RARE-EARTH DIPLOMACY

The Quad alliance consisting of India, the United States, Australia, and Japan plan to cooperate in funding new development projects and production technologies for rare earth. China's dominance in rare earth has been used by it as a diplomatic bargaining chip. Quad nations will emphasize developing low-cost refining technology which also produces low radioactive waste. They plan to arrange financial institutions to provide loans to miners and refining businesses. India accounts for 6 percent of reserves, Japan is one of the highest consumers of rare earth. As per US Geological Survey 2020, India accounted for 1 percent of production, Australia produced 7 percent of global rare earth supply, and the US produced 13 percent of rare earth globally. Thus, the Quad alliance is a significant entity in rare earth production and supply can help reduce the dominance of China in the critical rare-earth supply globally.

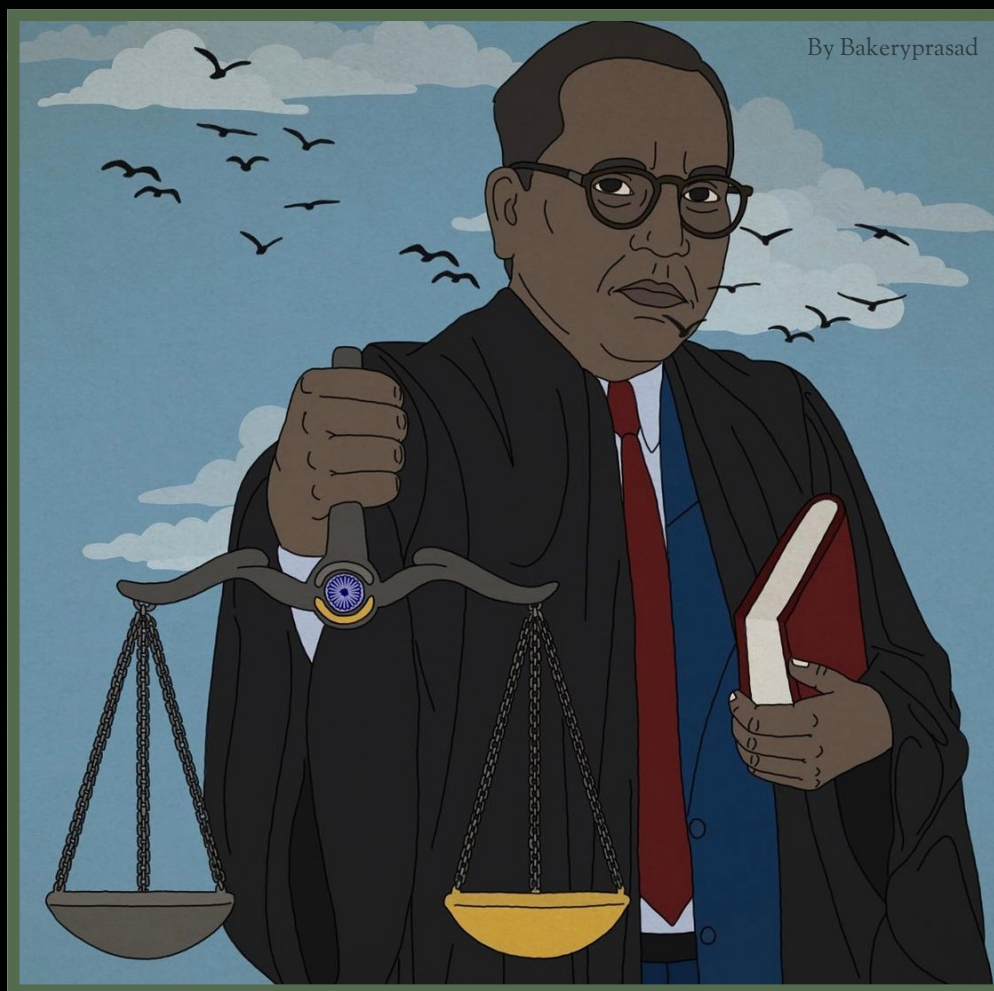
CONCLUSION

China has paid huge environmental costs for mining rare earth recklessly. The chemicals utilized in the separation process cause air pollution, erosion of soil, and the pools of wastewater in mines can dissolve or seep into local waters. The soil at some places is no more able to support crops and at places, water supplies have been contaminated. A rare-earth mine in Malaysia was opened and people of village Bukit Merah complained about birth defects in children and eight leukemia cases caused due to mining, the site was later cleaned up due to protests but effects persist there. Any country that wishes to enhance rare earth production must take into account the environmental aspect during policymaking. Efforts must be made for more sustainable extraction and some set of global rules of sustainable mining can be framed by an international institution that applies globally. China is working towards dealing with the environmental damage but the process is comparatively slow. Innovative clean methods must be prioritized to separate metals from the earth. Protection of the environment should be the priority along with the development of sustainable rare-earth production in India and other emerging destinations of rare earth production and supply.

CAMPUS ARENA: THE POLITICS OF DALIT IDENTITY IN INDIAN UNIVERSITIES

BY NIRMANYU CHOUHAN

Caste being the most integral part of Indian society, naturally has its roots entrenched within the education system and university spaces, giving a new perspective to the caste-class alliance. This article is an attempt in analyzing the complex issues of Dalit identity prevalent in the academic arenas.



The Indian framework of social justice has a direct aim of ensuring access to education for the Dalit masses who have faced systematic oppression and inequalities for centuries. The right to a dignified life includes the upliftment of people through provision of quality education. However, reducing the social effects of the caste system in the academic arena has primarily been a stark challenge for the Government. The Dalit masses suffer from low rates of literacy and primary education enrolment because they have been a target of oppressive framework throughout history, denying them equal access to material or social resources and opportunities such as education.

The responsibility of Social justice and upliftment of Dalit community, being parented by the Governments since the very Independence, has been rather politicised and derailed from the actual goals. Lack of large scale efforts to eliminate caste discrimination coupled with few attempts to increase the accessibility and appeal foreducation have contributed to the-

slow progression of Dalit education. Combined with the unchanging social norms and behavioral patterns, the impetus to pursue education as a Dalit student, is continuously marked with social harassment and mental trauma at every level.

CASTEISM IN INDIAN UNIVERSITIES:

The Indian Universities have indeed become a hotbed of caste discrimination, the higher education frameworks seem to be the worst perpetrators, according to a 2016 survey of 6,122 respondents in the 15-34 age group across India. Ashwini Deshpande, professor of economics at Ashoka University and author of Affirmative Action in India writes, "What is proposed as a remedy for caste-based inequalities and discrimination, viz., affirmative action (AA), is perceived in the popular imagination to cause inequalities and injustice in a world where, presumably, none existed before the introduction of AA."

Talking about the policy of reservation, it was made for the upliftment of the oppressed masses but rather it has produced a dual stigma for the Dalits; firstly as playing the caste card and another as giftees of state provisions. As per a report by The Hindu, more than 60% students enrolled in the DU UG course in the year 2019 belonged to the General Category while only about 3% of the students each have been admitted under the ST and EWS categories, which have an assigned proportion of 7.5% and 10% respectively. Among the SC students, though 15% reservation has been allotted to them, only 10.94% of students were given admission and the same goes for the OBC, admitting 20.96% rather than the assigned 27%. The ST and SC enrolment rates in higher education are substantially lower than their corresponding proportion in the population. The students are actively targeted in the classrooms, societies and other campus spaces. Souvik Biswas, a first-year student from Hindu College, pursuing History -

Illustration by Bakeryprasad



honours, alleges similar experience of exclusion faced by him during a society's interview. He added, "Though it was an online interaction, that particular incident made me feel very uncomfortable which was an unexpected blow for me. When I told them that I belong to the Bahujan community, their tone during the interview substantially changed and I was targeted and made uncomfortable by their deliberate questions around my identity and status quo."

The Bahujan students face hostility in the form of mockery; they're shamed for their grades, for lack of social capital and primarily targeted for their reservation status quo in the institution. A research paper by Rakesh Kumar Maurya portrays that majority of the college students belonging to the Dalit community faced caste based prejudice and discrimination from the upper caste students as well as faculty members.

The people interviewed through the course of this study state that these caste-based prejudices and discrimination increase as Dalit students move towards higher education degree programs, alleging that discrimination doesn't only exist in the form of mockery or mental segregation but in other forms as well. The report of the Thorat Committee following grave and widespread allegations of differential treatment and discrimination against students from Dalit and other marginalized sections of society in higher education institutions states that many students complain of active as well as passive discrimination in higher education institutes such as paying less or no attention to Dalit students in class, assigning lower marks/grades to Dalit students in practical examinations, and creating hurdles in PhD registration and completion. The report also stated the response to the caste bias by high caste teachers, with about 76 per cent of the respondents reporting that the examiner had asked the caste background, about 84 per cent mentioned that their caste background was asked either directly

"Though it was an online interaction, that particular incident made me feel very uncomfortable which was an unexpected blow for me. When I told them that I belong to the Bahujan community, their tone during the interview substantially changed and I was targeted and made uncomfortable by their deliberate questions around my identity and status quo."
- Souvik Biswas

or indirectly and about 84 per cent mentioned that their grades were affected because of their caste background.

SUICIDES OR INSTITUTIONAL MURDERS?

Another parable that needs to be connected is the caste composition of suicides in university spaces. The infamous case of Rohit Vemula is still alive in our memories, a 26-year-old PhD candidate at the University of Hyderabad, suspended from his education, fellowship, and hostel due to his involvement in the Ambedkar Students Association (ASA) with four other ASA members, eventually forcing him to commit suicide. Vemula wasn't the first individual to encounter such fatal oppression and institutionalised discrimination in the academic arena.

There is a documentary film under the name of Death of Merit that brings up the subject of Dalit students enrolled in reputed institutions of higher education across India, highlighting the paradigm of students who underwent extreme traumatic experiences of being victims of caste-based discrimination, amounting to extreme measure such as suicides. Out of 25 students who committed suicide between 2007 and 2013, 23 were Dalits. The allegations revolving around the aspects of discrimination, humiliation, and exclusion have been strongly denied by the higher education institutions, with a sublime line of argumentation that these suicides took place because those students were unable to adjust to the rigorous educational environment of the institution. On the part of the Government, there is a similar trend of deeming these suicides as isolated incidents. Ironically in all these cases, depression is cited as the main reason behind the suicides, the triggering social environment is ignored and the blame shifts with remarkable ease on the victim itself. Undeniably the institutions are aware of the discrimination framework, they also

possess official evidence to prove its existence but they simply fail to acknowledge it. The Universities have never struck a balance in enquiring about public reports and show laxity in following their recommendations. They have even failed to follow respective UGC directives on caste based discrimination. The UGC (Promotion of Equity in Higher Educational Institutions) Regulations of 2012, provide detailed guidelines against caste discrimination. The provisions include the creation of Equal Opportunity Cells, appointing Anti-Discrimination Officers and developing pages on websites to register complaints of caste-based discrimination.

Within two weeks of Vemula's death, UGC sent a letter to the vice-chancellors of all universities recapping the recommendations. A September 2016 letter, informed colleges that MHRD and the National Human Rights Commission were seeking vital feats. Between 2011 and 2018, the Commission sent seven commands to all universities to adopt various provisions and begin action. But notably the tone and language of these letters, nevertheless, do not require strict compliance; most universities do not follow the equity guidelines and these guidelines lack the spine to tack-

le non-adherence. Not surprisingly the UGC has taken no action against non-complying universities.

CONCLUSION:

Today, many Dalit students are sharing their understandings of casteism on numerous daises, several survivors have come up as leaders and their battle has found expression in a horde of ways—alliances to win university elections, organizing against fee hikes, fighting to celebrate Ambedkar Jayanti and Mahishasur Shahadat Diwas, and holding public discourses over caste. Despite being at the core of the movement, they have been made invisible- their contribution is not recognized or is parented by the privileged forces who push them into the domain of sympathy and ideal minorities. Politically, Dalits have often been directed by the people who turn in their Bahujan Cards only once in five years. Now the question isn't about what the Dalits want anymore, because that has been emphasised since the very beginning of a regretful birth. Ironically it is around the contradictory discourse of inclusion and exclusion, the purity and so-called pollution and the tensions between economic powers seeking to maintain the status quo.



In perspective: Kannur born, Berlin based contemporary artist Sajan Mani's award winning performance 'The Spectres Of Communism Caste Pital.' Colors and objects fill up the sound void, summing up Mani's personal experiences of caste and stigmatization, even as the letters on the wall mock Kerala's persistent casteism inspite of literacy.

CAPITAL HEGEMONY, AUTHORITARIANISM AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM

BY NIKHIL JOIS K. S.

The resignations of Pratap Bhanu Mehta and Arvind Subramaniam from Ashoka University have justifiably attracted global attention, particularly in academic circles. These letters of resignation raise a host of questions about the contemporary political moment under which societies are operating. Several thinkers have observed the larger spectre of authoritarianism as indicated in the letter by Mehta, and some have, albeit in limited sense, observed the incapability of capital in being a vanguard of liberal values which Ashoka purportedly aims to nurture on campus. The binary of academic freedom versus freedom of association does not explain the crisis at Ashoka in its entirety. The questions to be addressed are: one, what explains the breakdown of institutional culture at Ashoka, and two, how to define State and citizen relationship?

Arvind Subramanian observed in his resignation letter, "That even Ashoka—with its private capital and backing by private status—can no longer provide a -

space for academic expression and freedom is ominously disturbing". The nascent crisis of institutional culture at Ashoka is not merely an aberration or an anomaly as several thinkers would like to argue – because of its private nature. This crisis is entrenched into the hegemony of capital in the context of education as a social good, and the spectre of authoritarian rule which is brewing across India and the world.

At the heart of theorization of capital and its relationship with the ideal of "ultimate" human freedom, lies the hegemonic prerequisite of constant perpetuation of material power through accumulation of wealth. The dominant discourses surround principled assumption of capital – the human capital theory posits the instrumentality of education to perpetuate capital or profit in the market. The close conjunction between hegemony of capital and the authoritarian State exhibits a greater threat to the actualization of freedom and liberty. In a liberal democracy, there are essential prerequisites—

equality and autonomy. These foundational principles signify self-limitation on the part of the State and therefore the independence of the agents outside the State against unwarranted influences. Thus, public and private differentiation forms the bedrock of liberal existence. The combination of authoritarian State and capital hegemony transgresses the principle of self-limitation and autonomy signifying breakdown of public private distinction.

Within this hegemony lies the questions of accommodation and demobilization. Ralph Miliband, a British sociologist of the Laskin generation has argued that the cultural reality of capital hegemony is the illusion of accommodation of social democracy and justice while placing downward pressure to undermine social equality. In the words of economist Prabhat Patnaik, "spontaneous tendency of capitalism" is the upside-down version of the Kantian notion of the tendency which he argues is synonymous with



Photograph at Ashoka University
By Perkins Eastman

freedom. However, Patnaik argues that the tendency is rather synonymous with the power of capital which cannot be restrained by the mechanisms of the State. Ralph Miliband observes that capital hegemony is perpetuated by the spheres of education, media and churches – the ideological apparatus of the State. Therefore, commoditization of education in private universities essentialises the supply of cheap labour which involves the exclusion of several social categories.

The sustainability of capital order necessitates the State power to demobilize disadvantaged social categories and voices of

dissidence in order to fend off disruption or ‘inconvenience’. Exclusion and demobilization go hand in hand in any capitalist modern State system, as the coercive State apparatus serves the interests of the cultural and economic bourgeoisie to sustain capital hegemony. Bringing back Ralph Miliband, he argues that bourgeois elites possess no greater enterprise than to subordinate non-dominant classes of society to accept existing socio-economic order. As Marx argued, a corporate entity is akin to a capitalist State which enables the “bourgeoisie” and “master craftsmen” to sustain material interests.

Ashoka University was a unique and unprecedented experiment in Indian democracy to challenge historical consensus over the potentiality of private capital to be a vanguard for liberal values: capital hegemony would undo decades of Statist stint towards de-aligning caste and class relationship through the principle of social justice.

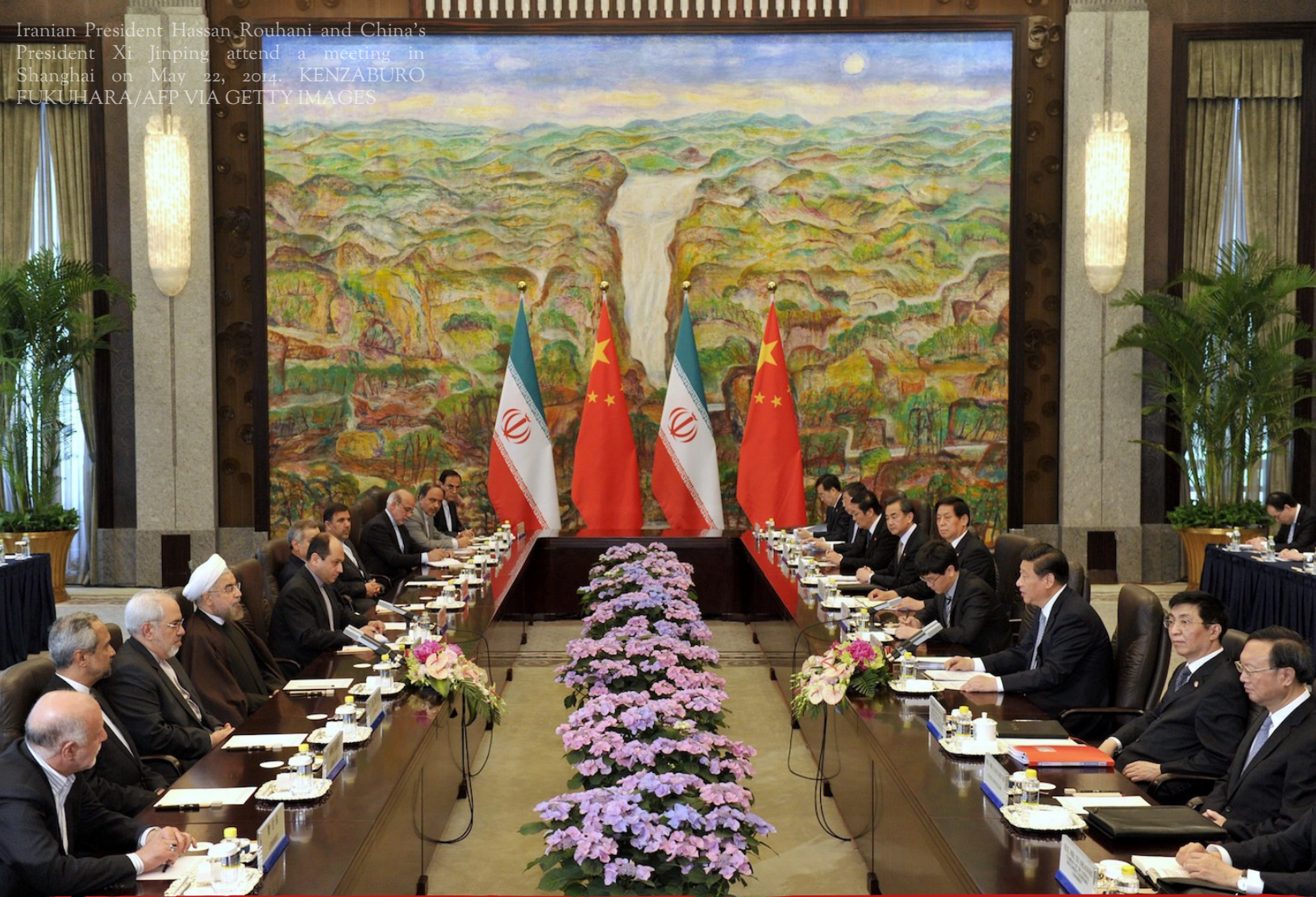
In this regard therefore the experiment sought to align freedom of expression as a cardinal principle of academic freedom with freedom of association. Then what seems to be the crisis of the moment? How do we define the State (public-political) and citizen (private) relationship in an increasingly illiberal democracy? The post-colonial Indian experiment with liberalism and democracy has been marred by complications and popular scepticism. It has often been chastised as a bourgeois imposition on the masses. The State has historically captured disproportionate influence in our collective social and political existence with certain justifications - In terms of State-led social reform efforts for Hindus, regulated civil liberties and asserted intrusive political sovereignty over economic activities.

Perpetual politics of nationalism and social fragmentation has an unfortunate casualty: civil liberties of the citizenry in the demos. Yes, “national interest” has been de-contextualised and re-contextualised simulta-

neously. But the current cultural moment seems to be significant, for, nature and the logic of the State has been subverted and colonised by the forces of cultural majoritarianism.

The political existence of citizenry in India for one has been defined by tone and substance of condescension where the State seems to be exercising its whims by suspension of civil liberties while claiming that our democracy is and has always been too fragile to withstand acts of individual or collective dissidence.

As democracy is deepening and the crisis of liberalism looms large, the threats to every aspect of liberal existence are stark. The State or the polity must shed its gesture of condescension towards collective political existence by ushering in a new charter of freedom which promises unabashedly, the primacy of majesty of the law in conjunction with unrestrained civil liberties. Let us not dwell upon false distinctions between equality and freedom, for in the absence of equal access to liberties, equality seems to be on a fragile footing. Precisely because the State is a reflection and a result of the collective will, it entails itself with its plural and political nature. But in our quest for realising collective will, individual will should not be disregarded, for, the essence of liberal democracy lies in; one, voluntary compliance and two, freedom of expression.



A NEW MEAL FOR THE DRAGON: Iran-China Strategic Partnership

BY YASHOVARDHAN SINGH

"The 'Comprehensive Strategic Partnership', between Islamic Republic of Iran and People's Republic of China, is a symbolic unfolding on the 50th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Iran."

The Iran-China strategic project or 'Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between Islamic Republic of Iran and People's Republic of China'

as it is formally known, is a 25 year cooperation agreement signed in Tehran on March 27, 2021, between Iran and China. The final and formal details of the deal are yet to be announced, however, it covers a variety of economic activity, from oil and mining to promoting industrialisation, transportation as well as agricultural collaborations in Iran. The deal also supports tourism and cultural exchanges. It is a symbolic unfolding on the 50th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Iran. What is ironic is the deal's arrival at a time when bipartisan consensus in the USA to reduce engagement with the Middle East has greatly strengthened. Undoubtedly, this deal is a strong signal in itself that the Middle East is going to become a potential hotspot of conflict and competition between the USA and China.

BENEFITS FOR THE TWO STAKEHOLDERS

The deal could never have come at a better time for Iran. The country is desperate for cash in the aftermath of a series of US imposed sanctions that have crippled its economy. The deal will help Iran dodge those American sanctions while cash inflow simultaneously provides economic aid to the rulers of the country. At the same time, Iran will have a long time buyer for the oil it exports (which is a major source of its income) in the form of China. It is important to note that buyers for Iran's oil had significantly reduced and this was a major cause of concern for it.

Apart from this, there are also talks about creating a China-Iranian Bank as it would help Iran evade from the sanctions of the USA. This is a matter of grave concern as an Iran with a new lifeline and continuous cash flow possesses potential to alter the current world order.

The deal has been attacked by Iranian Opposition that dubbing it as "Selling Iran's Sovereignty". It is unclear whether China will be establishing a permanent military base in Iran or not.

However, if those who are against the deal are to be believed, China will be placing 5000 security and military personnel on Iranian Soil which will significantly change the military dynamics of the region.

On the other hand the deal is obviously of significant benefit to China. This is because it helps China essentially take control over another country outside the US led alliance. Also, this deal would mean that China gains continuous access to oil to fuel its rapidly growing economy and at the same time, develops good relations with a country that also aspires to crucify the United States' global dominance.

It would also provide China with a new participant in its silk road initiative. However, there is a downside as well: Iran has a mission called 'bleeding of the Saudis' which it aims to unfold through Houthi proxies in Yemen, primarily because Saudi Arabia is a premier Sunni power in the Middle East and also because it is an ally of the USA. China is Saudi Arabia's largest trade partner and Israel's second largest partner, both of whom, for obvious reasons, consider Iran their major geopolitical threat. As a result, openly supporting Iran in this manner can be an impediment for China to deepen its ties with Saudi Arabia. Therefore, China will have to find alternative foreign policy measures to resolve this issue.

Also, this deal would mean that China gains continuous access to oil to fuel its rapidly growing economy and at the same time, develops good relations with a country that also aspires to crucify the United States' global dominance.

GEOPOLITICAL EFFECTS OF THE DEAL

Immediately following the news, the quickest reaction was from the Iraqi public and intellectuals who now face more threat than ever. They came out in the media asking the government to make public and enforce the "secret agreement" which Iraq had signed with China during the reign of Adel Abdul Mahdi. It is important to understand that these measures are great examples of how soft power comes into play in international relations. International commentators are of the view that after the China Iran deal, China could contribute to internal settlements in Iraq and also take initiatives to develop Iraqi-Arab peace settlements, something that the USA's diplomatic model is heavily investing in, and hence, project China as a strong competitor in diplomacy terms in the Middle East.

The deal comes at a time when China and India are intensely fighting for regional dominance. This means that for India, this agreement is an obvious source of worry. It is also important to understand the geopolitical context in which the deal has been signed. India's relations with Nepal are not as good as they have been in the past. China is also bettering its relations with Myanmar and has developed relatively stronger ties with Sri Lanka, the Hambantota port being a good example of the same. Neither is China-Pakistan camaraderie hidden from Indian diplomats. One of the significant harms this deal is going to have on India is the extremely crucial Chabahar port strategic project which gives India direct access to Afghanistan through Iran as this access was rejected by Pakistan. The project was already delayed due to US Sanctions on Iran after which India has to obtain a waiver from the United States. Now, with this deal being signed, and the blatantly uncomfortable situation India and China have, it is difficult to predict the fate of this project. For the United States Of America, this deal is a cause of immense worry and is being dubbed as a 'major soft power victory' for China by several commentators. It is important to understand that the threat being faced by the US is not a loss of the Middle East, rather China gaining traction in

the region. As the USA has already decided to diplomatically back out of the region and focus on other areas, the way the Dragon is pouncing on whatever the USA deems fit to leave is fast becoming a major cause of concern. For the USA this deal is troublesome because though it has other sources of oil, China remains heavily dependent on the Middle East for its oil consumption. As a result, securing a viable source of oil for its consumption is

going to make China a more troublesome player in international apolitics as seen from the US viewpoint. Therefore, this deal is not a loss for the United States but a gain for China. Since the details and text of the deal are not yet public, the USA has not initiated a strong comment or response to it. However, it does not take a rocket scientist to understand that foreign policy strategists of the US are all over the deal to decipher a way forward.



Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and China's President Xi Jinping attend a meeting in Shanghai on May 22, 2014. KENZABURO FUKUHARA/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

CONCLUSION

To conclude, China, unlike the USA, is heavily dependent on the Middle East to satisfy its oil demands. Therefore its interaction with the region is only going to grow from now on. The Iran-China deal is one issue addressed by the Chinese foreign minister during his tour of the Middle East, besides the formation of a regional security plan with Saudi Arabia, a meeting in Istanbul with his Turkish counterpart, and an announcement that the UAE will produce two hundred million doses of China's Sinopharm vaccine. Meanwhile, Chinese state-owned companies are expanding investments in Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates as part of the Belt and Road initiative. China has claimed that the deal is not going to affect its

relations with Saudi Arabia or other Middle Eastern countries. Also, the countries in this region will be under pressure from the USA not to engage with China and as a result, the region might get entangled in a cold war with China and Russia on one side and the USA and the other European allies on the other side.

In the end, it is important to note that all the concerns and possibilities of threat/clash/conflict mentioned above are just predictions and estimates that political scientists are making on the basis of whatever information is available at their disposal. The details of the deal are not public yet and most probably they would never be. It is therefore very difficult to ascertain the future of conflict in the region or possible future geopolitical situation.

THE POLITICS OF POLITICAL CORRECTNESS IN INDIA

Identity Politics and Snares of Capitalism

Political correctness is a term as beleaguered as currency in today's day and age. The phrase began as an in-joke among leftists to satirize people whose rigid adherence to principle exceeded their compassion. In contemporary India, political correctness has been endorsed and attacked by people of different political orientations and affiliations and is deployed variously to validate different standpoints. The right, the left, and the liberal viewpoints have been inconsistent about what it means to be politically correct and about the validity of a politically correct approach, thus fashioning diverse employments of the same.

A politically correct articulation notes how authentic knowledge can only be provided by the experiencing subject who speaks for herself; one might be a sympathetic outsider, but lived experience provides greater weight to the understanding of a specific situation. Accordingly, in a multicultural society, disadvantaged groups are supposed to have proprietary rights over their representation. The political right in India has often critiqued this 'liberal' mandate by noting that policies of apparent multiculturalism have been discriminatory towards the majority community. Demands for inclusivity and pro-underprivileged and pro-minority regimes have met with unequivocal opposition from representatives of the rightist perspective. When a demand for an inquiry into the suicide of Rohith Vemula was made with insistence on including Dalit and Bahujan representatives and judges in the proceedings, Smriti Irani, the erstwhile Human Resource-

Development minister, thundered in the Parliament, "I looked at the case as the death of a child and not as a death of a Dalit. My name is Smriti Irani. I challenge you to identify my caste."

A speech like this obfuscates the reality of caste while deceptively making the case for a larger humanity to be considered without identity markers. However, the same government has often been declamatory in bringing in legislation for protection of disadvantaged groups. While Irani has been a vocal supporter of women's rights, Meenakshi Lekhi, the BJP Member of Parliament from New Delhi, waxed eloquent about the protection of Muslim women while defending the Triple Talaq Bill. While in the previous stance, identity was supposed to be a non-considerable referent, in the latter, identity became the basis of law itself. In fact, the ruling party often turns the idea of social justice on its head, by identifying the majority community as unfavourably placed and engages in a pro-majority mobilisation of identity. The political right in India, thus, has had a contradictory brush with political correctness and acknowledgement of discrimination.

However, contradictions continue to run amok across the political spectrum. On the left, while there has been a fervent insistence on identities, there has also been a move away from identity politics to forge solidarities. Prakash Karat, member of the politburo of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), noted how identity politics negates the idea of a working class and rules out any common goals of emancipation. Accordingly, in a 2012

CPI(M) draft document, identity politics was rejected in favour of class struggle being the dominant principle for political endeavour.

Ruptures within left discourse and political alliances have also occurred along similar lines, as evident in the Ambedkar Students' Association's (ASA) often articulated divergence from a "savarna leftist" Students' Federation of India (SFI), the student wing of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) in the University of Hyderabad. The two parties, however, came together as part of a grand alliance that swept the university elections in 2016. Thus, the political left has also had a contentious and inconsistent relationship with identity politics.

While these two oppositional strands seem to operate within the field of when and how to privilege identity while tussling in what can be called a liberal democratic context, the non-affiliated provide another variant of how identitarianism and political correctness can be articulated. Social media, which has enabled people to participate in the making of politico-cultural consciousness in direct ways, has ushered in a flood of opinions and proclamations by individuals and a significant chunk of the same is populated by 'woke' articulations. The woke social media individual usually promotes social justice and awareness, speaking of sensitively using language, engaging in debates with people who differ, and circulating counter-discourses to propagandist narratives. The liberal-woke politically correct individual, interestingly, might vocally point out problems in the narratives of the political left as well as the political



right and situate their divergences from doctrine. The complication, however, lies in wokeness as a cultural phenomenon rooted in a capitalist ethos and its shape-shifting detachment from embodied experience and its tautological, self-validating nature.

Wokeness, no matter, how well-intentioned has a political economy of its own. The woke mandate apparent on Instagram is often marred by concerns of popularity and approval. Resources are used to create visually appealing posts on difficult issues, including politics over identity, and the same is poised to garner big quantities of endorsements through likes, comments, and shares. On one hand, this derives from a privileged detachment from immediate experience of a certain situation. On the other hand, politically correct content that enjoys substantial presence on social media might have less to do with relevance and more with crafting and promotion. It is noteworthy how when *The Wire* and *LiveWire.In* posts were widely shared on Instagram by the liberal populace, a media portal like *TheTatvaIndia* presented its reportage in a similar format and fashion, and enjoyed similar popularity. While the two sources in question vary vastly in terms of posturing and presentation of

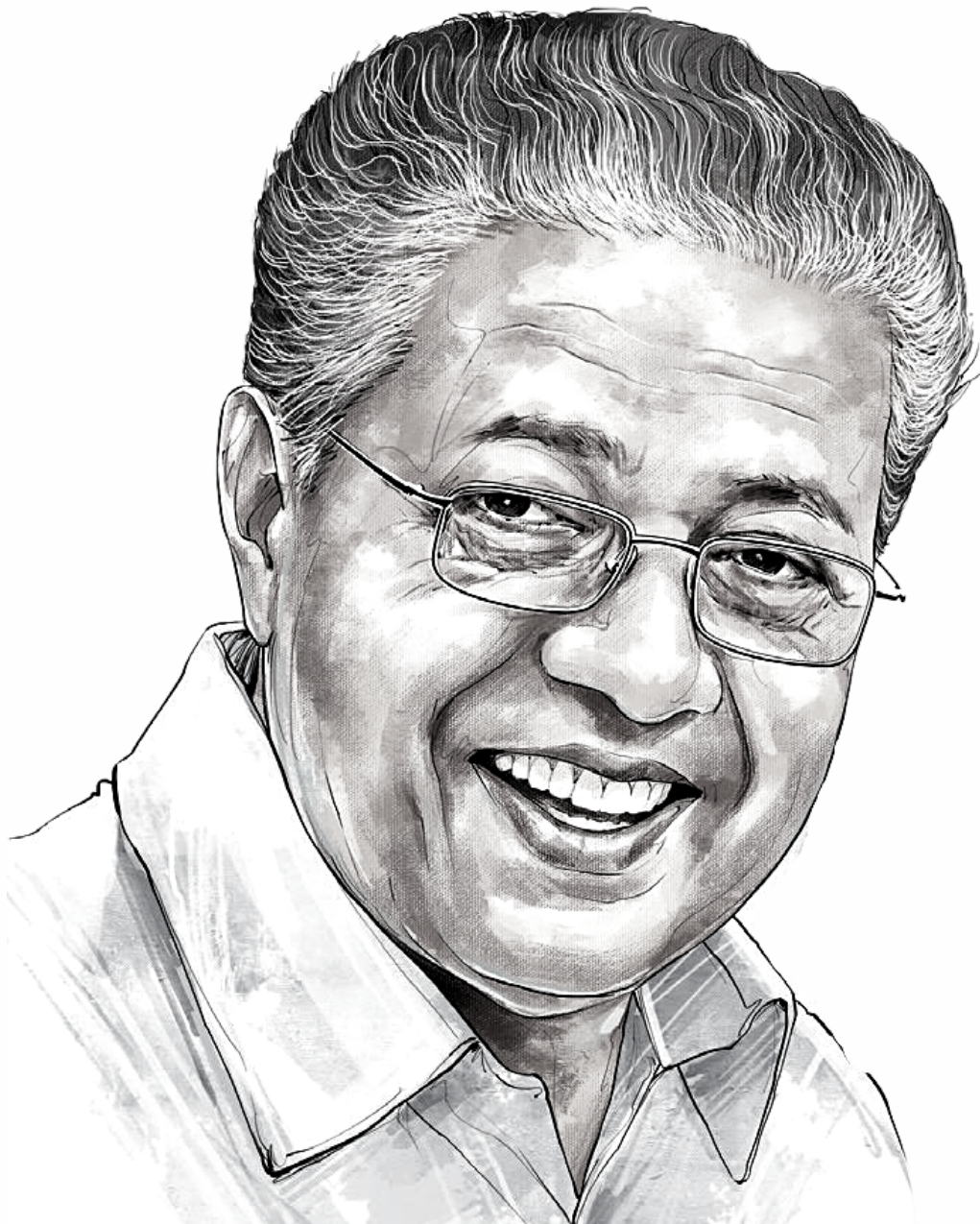
authenticity, the appearance itself pitted them as parallels. *TheTatvaIndia*, often noted for its right-leaning, right-of-center journalism has a substantial liberal base and had over 295,000 followers on Instagram in April 2021. With a spin on politics around identity, the portal covers stories on racism, homophobia, and misogyny alongside some other contested majoritarian terms. The notably older portals, *The Wire* and its publication for the youth, *LiveWire.In*, noted for a liberal-left orientation, had 882,000 and 201,000 followers respectively.

To conclude, it can safely be said that 'political correctness' as an absolute does not exist and has become a diversely weaponised concept in the armouries of people with varied affiliations and intentions. Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek famously criticised the term itself—for assuming that problems like racism have been overcome, when the best 'correctness' can offer us is a disguised, controlled, and significantly, in the Indian context, a modified version of the problem where the tools of social justice can be cannibalised by the privileged. Where do we go from a culture of political correctness, then? Political sensitivity? That will arguably make for several 'incorrect' debates.

HISTORY WRITTEN BY RED STORM

The Left retains Kerala

BY SEETHALAKSHMI K S



The results of state legislative assembly elections of 2021 in Kerala proved a watershed movement in the state's electoral history. They broke the familiar cycle of alternative governments since 1982. For the first time in decades, the incumbent government of CPI(M) led Left Democratic Front managed to obtain a stunning victory with 99 seats out of a total of 140. Pinarayi Vijayan became only the third chief minister in Kerala's history to be reelected and the first to continue in office after completing a full term.

However, this outcome was not altogether unexpected. Various exit and pre-polls already suggested the return of the left government to power, but not many expected such a clean sweep. The results caught the Congress leadership by surprise because the United Democratic Front led by it managed to capture only 41 seats. As for NDA, they lost their one sitting seat in Nemom constituency, Thiruvananthapuram, thus completely being banished from all electoral prospects of Kerala.

EXIT LEFT

This unconventional left turn was a consequence of a multitude of factors. Amongst many others, the 'Vijayan' factor remains most important since LDF's entire campaign revolved around the incumbent Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan. He has been called by the supporters of his party as the 'Captain Comrade' who led Kerala in crisis. His tenure as Chief Minister was not easy at all.

Since its very inception in 2016 Vijayan's government has faced a number of crises back-to-back, starting with Cyclone Ockhi of 2017 to the Nipah outbreak, and mega floods to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. He has been lauded for handling these challenges effectively.

During his tenure, Kerala became the first state in the country to become fully digital in public education thus reviving the sector from its misery. Welfare pension schemes were increased, free housing provided through the LIFE mission and an increased investment in health, education, and infrastructure increased the support of the government. The steady and bold stand of his party against the contro-

campaign 'Urappanu LDF' (Its LDF for sure).

THE FAILED 'HAND'

The election result is a complete backlash to INC, the grand party of the old. Kerala was crucial to the Congress for rebuilding its lost prosperity in the country. But with the result it became quite clear that they are unable to manage a victory

even in such familiar and secular soil as that of Kerala, thereby raising questions over the very existence of the party at national level. Its top leaders, including Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi, extensively campaigned in the state to rejuvenate the party, but all went in vain.

The inability of the party to project a strong leadership backfired as evidenced by its electoral performance. Unlike UDF, the left had its much celebrated Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan as well as its Health minister K K Shailaja, who received international acclaim for her effective leadership during the Nipah outbreak and Covid first wave. Her wide recognition and massive support from people led to a magnificent victory for her with a record margin of 61,305 votes.

Even though Congress had its popular former Chief Minister Oommen Chandy, he could not create a state wide impact this time. The Opposition leader Ramesh Chennithala fought relentlessly against the left government by bringing number of allegations against the government but yet failed to be a leader of the masses. Group-

ism in Kerala unit further weakened its campaign in the earlier stages of election.

The Congress used all kinds of allegations against the ruling party to capture the power. They criticized the government for the gold smuggling scandal which alleged to involve the

"The incumbent LDF government deserved my vote in Kerala elections 2021 as per the actions they performed to serve humanity. This was a government that had to deal with several emergency situations but managed to sail through with stunning efficacy. It proved that people can live without starvation through any degree of severity of crisis, if there is an able and people centric government in power. Also it is important to support a communist government in this disruptive age.

The strong decisions of the government at the time of CAA protest and all showed explicitly the anti fascist stance of the government. To fight against religious bigotry and fascism I choose this government to be in power once again."

-Krishnapriya P Sajith, a young voter from Kerala

ertial CAA and Farmers's bill reinstated support from the youth. But it was the effective handling of the economic crisis during lockdown that drew most attention. All this gave the left front enough confidence in winning the election which was reflected in their catchphrase for the -

Chief Minister's Office and various other ministers and also for other corruption allegations against the funding board KIIFB and LIFE mission to create an anti-incumbency sentiments in the state.

Both UDF and NDA tried to resurface the long-drawn debate of Sabarimala into the mainstream discussion. But it turned out that, people of Kerala gave importance to welfarism and effective crisis management over this allegations and communal narratives.

THE 'ACCOUNT CLOSING'

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) opened its account in the State with Congress support. But the Left Democratic Front would close that account this election, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has said this on 3rd April. It seems that he was accurate in this judgement.

The hopes of the saffron party to become a crucial player in the state politics is sabotaged by the electoral debacle with no seats at all. The party was unable to get any new seats and at the same time lost its one and only sitting seat in Nemam. Even though it put up a strong fight in Nemam, Palakkad and Thrissur, none of them turned out to be a victorious constituency for them. The technocrat E. Sreedharan, who contested in Palakkad had gained a clear lead over his main opponent UDF's Shafi Parambil in the initial hours of counting but lost it over the time. In fact, the sitting MLA Mr. Shafi got enough praise from across the state as his victory contained BJP's hope to win at least one seat. The former Mizoram Governor Kummanam Rajashekharan was given the responsibility to retain their lone seat at Nemam but failed to repeat the victory of O. Rajagopal in 2016. The party chief K Surendran, who contested in two constituencies failed to secure both seats which explicitly is a 'No' to BJP as a party.

This election once again proved that Kerala is not a place for BJP's communal politics. Anti-BJP sentiment is strong as ever in the state.

"Even though there were 20 more allegations against the government and most of them were proven right, due to the low performance of congress workers in the booth level, it did not reach the common people. Common people were not aware of the corruption behind the food kits and the truth behind the pension. But it's not an end. In 1967 Karunakaran was the opposition leader, with 9 MLAs, and media mocked him as the leader of just 9 MLAs. But we have seen in 1977 that the same man formed the government with 111 MLAs. Definitely UDF will come back."
-Dilsa Saithun Beegum, another voter from Kerala

Many of its national leaders including the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and many other ministers and top-leaders organised multiple visits to the state during the campaign. They also had many popular figures like Metro Man E. Sreedharan in Palakkad, one of the most famous actor Suresh Gopi in Thrissur. But none of these helped the party to open account in the state. "We have closed the account that the BJP opened in the Kerala Assembly in 2016 election. Kerala has become the only Assembly in India that has no representative from the BJP. Kerala will remain the citadel of secularism in the country," said CPI(M) leader Thomas Isaac on Twitter. However, BJP state president K. Surendran said that communal polarisation affected the BJP's prospects in the state. But this does not mean that BJP is completely out of the picture since its support in the ground level is increasing gradually.

THE FUTURE

"The historic victory is a recognition of the LDF government's five year rule. It is the people's victory. They trusted us and we trusted them. The election was a big political fight for us," Vijayan said in Kannur.

The people of Kerala decided to take a different road this time. They chose an incumbent government after many years of alternative governments between LDF and UDF. Their choice was predictable because the left government had done remarkably well in their tenure and the UDF did not put up a strong competition for them in the election. And their choice made it loud and clear that they do not aspire for a 'Hindu Rashtra'.

Anyhow, the journey for the new government would not be easy. The state is witnessing a fresh surge in Covid cases and it would require a lot of effort in order to manage the troubled economy and finances. Most importantly, the people chose them breaking their regular habit with a lot of aspirations. So fulfilling them would be the greatest challenge in front of Mr. Vijayan and his government.



यथा राजा तथा प्रजा दास्तान – ऐ – COVID 2.0

आर्यन पांडे और नंदिनी गिरी

हिं

हिंदुस्तान के अंदर कोरोना की दूसरी लहर ने अनेक कड़वे सच हमारे सामने लाकर रख दिए हैं। एक अधिनायकवादी सत्ता की तरफ बढ़ रहे, और अपने लोकतांत्रिक व्यवस्था पर सवाल उठाने के बाद, अब हिंदुस्तान के सामने कई सारे और सवाल खड़े हो गए हैं। वर्तमान में सैद्धांतिक नहीं तो कम से कम व्यावहारिक सत्य तो यही है कि भारत में सत्ता ही संविधान है। व्यक्तिपूजा की पराकाष्ठा है कि आज सत्ता की अनुचित नीतियों के कारण हो रही हत्याओं को कोरोना से मौत करार दिया जा रहा है। देश में कोरोना की दूसरी लहर ने हाहाकार मचा दिया है। हर दिन कोरोना संक्रमित मरीजों की संख्या अपना ही रिकॉर्ड तोड़ रही है और देश की स्वास्थ्य सेवाओं की सांस फूलने लगी है।

ऐसे में सवाल यह है की बीते एक साल में केंद्र व राज्य सरकारों ने इससे निपटने के लिए क्या किया? जवाब है कि माननीय प्रधानमंत्री जी तो भूटान भ्रमण, चुनाव प्रचार, हिंदुत्व प्रचार आदि में अति व्यस्त थे। उनके बाकी मंत्री भी कुछ इसी तरह के कार्यों में व्यस्त थे। शायद ये सब हमारी आपकी जानों से बहुत ज्यादा महत्वपूर्ण थे। पिछले साल देश की सवा सौ करोड़ की जनता को तालाबंद कर दिया गया और कहा गया कि इस दौरान सरकार स्वास्थ्य संरचना को सुदृढ़ करेगी।

सरकार की तत्परता का अंदाज़ा इस बात से लगाया जा सकता है कि पिछली तालाबंदी के बाद सरकार को ऑक्सीजन प्लांट लगाने के लिए कंपनियों से सौदा करने के लिए 8 महीनों का वक़्त लगा। जो थोड़ी बहुत ऑक्सीजन बन पायी, उसे भी बाहर भेज दिया गया। आज एक वर्ष से अधिक हो गए, और हालात अब भी ज्यादा बदले नहीं लगते। उनके कठिन परिश्रम के परिणामस्वरूप हालात ये हैं कि दूसरी लहर ने जब अपना असर दिखाना शुरू किया तो देश की स्थिति ने भयावह रूप धारण कर लिया। एक कहावत है कि समझदार

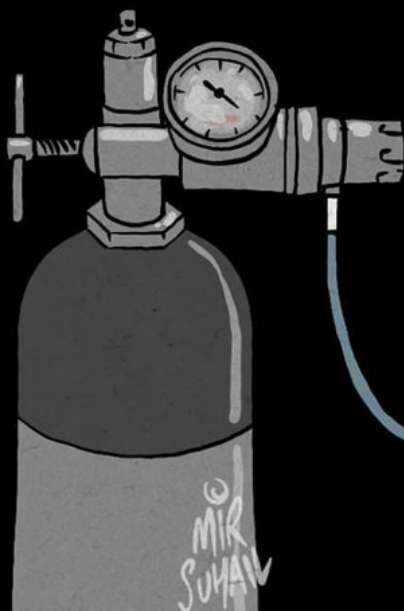
अपने अतीत से शिक्षा लेते हैं, लेकिन हिंदुस्तान के अंदर समझदारी नामक वस्तु का अस्तित्व संकट में दिख रहा है। ये वाला वाइरस, पिछले साल के मुकाबले बहुत अधिक संक्रामक है। इस संक्रमण के सामने पिछले साल का संक्रमण बच्चों के खेल जैसा लगता है। इस ग्राफ़ को देख कर हालात का अंदाज़ा लगाया जा सकता है।

29 जनवरी 2021 को डेविस फ़ोरम में बोलते हुए माननीय प्रधानमंत्री श्री नरेंद्र मोदी जी ने ये एलान किया कि हिंदुस्तान ने कोरोना के विरुद्ध जंग को जीत लिया है। ताज्जुब की बात ये है कि जिस वक़्त उन्होंने ये बात कही, उस समय भारत में लगभग 11,000 केस प्रतिदिन आ रहे थे और देश में कुल सक्रिय मामलों की संख्या लगभग 3 लाख थी।

इसके लगभग एक हफ़्ते बाद, उन्होंने यही बात देश की संसद में भी दोहरायी। दोनों ही जगहों पर भरपूर तालियों से इस बात का स्वागत किया गया। इसके लगभग एक महीने बाद, मार्च के आरम्भ में माननीय केंद्रीय स्वास्थ्य मंत्री श्री हर्षवर्धन ने एलान किया कि भारत में कोविड-19 महामारी 'अब खात्मे की ओर' बढ़ रही है। माननीय प्रधानमंत्री जी और स्वास्थ्य मंत्री जी के इस दावे की सच्चाई आज हमारे सामने है। प्रधानमंत्री का ये बयान अपने आप में इस बात का द्योतक है कि उन्होंने ये मान लिया था कि कोरोना अब भारत से जा चुका है!

सुनने में अजीब लगेगा, लेकिन भारत में कोरोना की दूसरी लहर को न्योता देकर बुलाया गया। मामलों में गिरावट होने पर देश के लोगों ने खुद को पूर्ण रूप से कोरोना के नियमों से अलग कर लिया, और कोरोना के मामले धीरे धीरे फिर बढ़ने लगे। इन बढ़ते मामलों के बावजूद, मध्य मार्च में गुजरात के नरेंद्र मोदी स्टेडियम में भारत और इंग्लैंड के मध्य क्रिकेट मैच खेले गए।

"Tum Mujhe Vote
Do Mai Tumhe
Oxygen Dunga"



Art by Mir Suhail

स्टेडियम में लगभग 57 हज़ार लोगों को जाने की इजाज़त दे दी गयी । इसके कुछ ही दिनों बाद गुजरात में हालात बिगड़ने लगे । इसके बाद भी सरकार और लोगों को होश नहीं आया । कोरोना की दूसरी लहर के भयंकर रूप को सबसे पहले महाराष्ट्र ने देखा । महाराष्ट्र में कोरोना दोबारा फ़ैलने की दो मुख्य कारण हैं । पहला है आम लोगों के लिए लोकल ट्रेन का संचालन , जिसने की मुम्बई और पुणे जैसे शहरों में कोरोना को बढ़ावा देने का काम किया । दूसरा कारण है ग्राम पंचायत चुनाव , जिसने की विदर्भ और मराठवाड़ा जैसी जगहों पर कोरोना संक्रमण को गति प्रदान की । फ़रवरी के मध्य से ही हालात बिगड़ने शुरू हो गए थे , इसके बावजूद भी पूरे फ़रवरी और मार्च के महीने में कोरोना से लड़ने के लिए बनाई गई कोविड

टास्क फ़ोर्स ने एक भी बैठक नहीं की । शायद उन्हें सुध ही नहीं थी । यदि उस वक़्त तक भी हम संभल जाते तो शायद हालात इतने ना बिगड़ते, लेकिन ऐसा हुआ नहीं । दो ऐसी घटनाएं हुईं, जिसने दुनिया भर के बुद्धिजीवियों के होश उड़ा दिए । यह दो घटनाएं थी चुनाव और कुंभ मेले का आयोजन । सोचने की बात है कि क्या सरकार के जानकार सलाहकारों, स्वास्थ्य विशेषज्ञों आदि ने प्रधानमंत्री को चेतावनी नहीं दी होगी? लेकिन लोगों की जान से मज़ाक़ करके चुनाव और कुंभ दोनों कराए गए । फ़रवरी के आखिर में चुनाव आयोग ने पाँच राज्यों में विधानसभा चुनावों का ऐलान कर दिया । कुल मिलाकर 824 सीटों पर चुनाव का ऐलान हुआ जिनमें कुल मिलाकर 18.60 करोड़ मतदाताओं को मतदान करना था ।





जब चुनाव आयोग को ये नज़र आ रहा था कि कोरोना से लोगों की जानें जा रही हैं, इसके बाद भी चुनाव क्यों नहीं रोके गए? लोकतंत्र का उत्सव 'लोकहत्या' कर रहा था, लेकिन कुछ नहीं रुका। तमाशा चलता रहा और कठपुतलियाँ नाचती रहीं। चुनावी सभाओं में कोरोना के नियमों का धड़ल्ले से उल्लंघन होता रहा। सारे नेता रैलियाँ करने में जुट गए। देश के प्रधानमंत्री, गृहमंत्री, विपक्ष के नेता सब प्रचार में जुट गए। एक बात ध्यान देने लायक है कि संक्रमण होने के लगभग डेढ़-दो हफ़्तों बाद कोरोना के लक्षण सामने आते हैं। इसलिए, अप्रैल के शुरुआत में की गयी रैलियों का नतीजा अप्रैल के आखिर में दिखना शुरू हुआ और कोरोना ने सारी हदें पार कर दी। आने वाली पीढ़ियाँ ये देख कर हैरान हो जाएँगी की जिस वक़्त हिंदुस्तान के लोग एक-एक साँस के लिए संघर्ष कर रहे थे, जहाँ एक तरफ़ एक गरीब आदमी को मास्क ना लगाने के लिए 2000 रुपयों का जुर्माना और पुलिस के डंडे खाने पड़ रहे थे, उसी वक़्त देश के प्रधानमंत्री और अन्य नेतागण

लाखों की भीड़ संबोधित कर रहे थे और अपने राजनैतिक स्वार्थ के लिए लाखों लोगों की जान को संकट में डाला जा रहा था। इन चुनावों ने कोरोना की दूसरी लहर को एक तेज़ गति प्रदान करने का काम किया। लेकिन ये नरसंहार यहीं नहीं रुका। इस संहार की गति को कई गुना बढ़ाने का काम किया हरिद्वार में आयोजित कुंभ ने। लगभग 40 लाख लोगों ने इस वर्ष कुंभ मेले में हिस्सा लिया। 10-15 अप्रैल के बीच कुंभ में लगभग 2,000 लोग रैपिड टेस्ट और RT-PCR टेस्ट के माध्यम से कोरोना संक्रमित पाए गए। ध्यान रहे कि इस नए कोरोना की जाँच में रैपिड टेस्ट सिर्फ़ 50% कारगर है। मतलब ये कि कई हज़ार ऐसे होंगे जिनकी जाँच नहीं हुई, और हज़ारों ऐसे जो संक्रमित होने के बाद भी जाँच में नहीं आ पाए। अब सोचिए की कुम्भ में मौजूद कितने लोगों तक ये संक्रमण पहुँचा होगा, और उन लोगों ने इसे देश के कोने कोने में ले जाने का कार्य किया होगा।

पिछले साल एक राहत की बात थी कि कोरोना गाँवों में ज्यादा भयंकर रूप से नहीं फैला था। चूँकि कुंभ मेले में लाखों श्रद्धालु उत्तर प्रदेश, मध्य प्रदेश, राजस्थान इत्यादि के गाँवों और छोटे शहरों से आते हैं, इस प्रकार उनके वापस लौटने से कोरोना के संक्रमण का गाँवों में भी फैलना निश्चित था। आज ये भयावह महामारी देश के कोने कोने में अपनी जड़े जमा चुकी है। वास्तविकता में संक्रमण और मौतें सरकारी आँकड़ों से लगभग बीस गुना अधिक हैं। अप्रैल के आरम्भ में जब महामारी अपनी जड़ें जमा रही थी, उस वक़्त सरकार ने वैक्सीन और ऑक्सीजन की बजाय 325 करोड़ रुपये हरिद्वार में कुंभ के लिए "विशेष सहायता" के रूप में आवंटित किये। भारतेन्दु हरिश्चंद्र के एक नाटक का कथन याद आता है, "अंधेर नगरी, अनबूझ राजा। टके सेर भाजी, टके सेर खाजा"। 17 अप्रैल को माननीय प्रधानमंत्री ने ट्वीट करके कोरोना के बढ़ते मामलों के कारण कुंभ को 'प्रतीकात्मक' ही रखने की अपील की। लेकिन तब तक बहुत देर हो चुकी थी। इसके बाद श्रद्धालु अपने-अपने घरों को लौट गए, जिसके कुछ ही दिनों बाद देश ने एक दिन में 3,50,000 मरीजों का आँकड़ा पार किया।

कोरोना की दूसरी लहर ने भारत को जकड़ लिया है और चारों तरफ़ मातम छाया है। मानवीय संबंध टूट रहे हैं, उनके रुदन से आत्मा तक कराह उठी है। क्योंकि अस्पतालों में बेड नहीं हैं, ऑक्सीजन की आस में लोग दम तोड़ रहे हैं। लोग कोरोना की वजह से कम और ऑक्सीजन की कमी से ज्यादा मर रहे हैं। मरीजों को अस्पतालों में भर्ती नहीं मिल रही है, और अगर मिल भी जाए तो उनके परिजनों से एक फ़ॉर्म पर दस्तखत कराए जा रहे हैं। फ़ॉर्म में ये लिखा होता है कि यदि मरीज की मृत्यु हो जाए तो हॉस्पिटल की कोई ज़िम्मेदारी नहीं है क्योंकि ना ऑक्सीजन है ना वेंटिलेटर। यदि बिना ऑक्सीजन के कोई मर जाता है तो ये सरासर हत्या है और कुछ नहीं।

कोरोना की दूसरी लहर ने भारत की स्वास्थ्य संरचना के परखच्चे उड़ा के रख दिए हैं। इस बात में कोई शक नहीं कि हिंदुस्तान के लोगों ने कभी भी स्वास्थ्य सेवाओं के लिए मतदान नहीं किया है, लेकिन फिर भी भारत जैसे देश में हालात इतने भी बदतर नहीं होने चाहिए थे, जितने इस समय हैं।

बीते कुछ महीनों में भारत ने अपने देश में बनी वैक्सीन का भरपूर निर्यात किया। सवाल ये है कि ऐसा क्यों किया गया? स्वास्थ्य विशेषज्ञों ने कोरोना की दूसरी लहर की आशंका बहुत बार जतायी थी। हालांकि इस बात का शायद उन्हें भी अंदाज़ा नहीं था कि ये दूसरी लहर इतनी ज्यादा खतरनाक होगी। ऐसे में, जब वैक्सीन अभी एक-चौथाई हिंदुस्तान के लिए भी तैयार नहीं थी, तो ऐसे में उसे दूसरे देशों में भेजना एक सही फैसला नहीं लगता। खैर, इसके बहुत सारे कूटनीतिक पक्ष हैं, जो हमारी समझ से बाहर हैं। हो सकता है सरकार की कुछ नैतिक मजबूरियाँ रहीं हों। पूर्णतः तो नहीं लेकिन कुछ हद तक सत्यापित किए जा सकते हैं। वैक्सीन के साथ साथ ऑक्सीजन का भी भरपूर निर्यात किया गया। वाणिज्य मंत्रालय की एक रिपोर्ट के अनुसार, अप्रैल 2020 और जनवरी 2021 के बीच भारत ने 9000 मेट्रिक टन ऑक्सीजन विदेश भेजा। जनवरी 2020 में भारत ने 352 मेट्रिक टन ऑक्सीजन निर्यात किया था। ध्यान देने वाली बात ये है कि कोरोना महामारी के बीच जनवरी 2021 में पिछले साल की तुलना में भारत का ऑक्सीजन निर्यात 734% बढ़ गया। सरकार की तरफ़ से कई बार ये कहा गया कि निर्यात की गयी ऑक्सीजन दरअसल औद्योगिक ऑक्सीजन थी और इसका स्वास्थ्य सुविधाओं में प्रयोग की जाने वाली ऑक्सीजन से कोई लेना देना नहीं है। लेकिन अभी हाल के दिनों में हमने देखा कि कई सारी औद्योगिक गतिविधियों को रोक के औद्योगिक ऑक्सीजन को ही अस्पतालों तक पहुँचाया गया और हज़ारों मरीजों को इसी ऑक्सीजन से साँसें मिली।

सुप्रसिद्ध पर्यावरणविद श्री अनुपम मिश्र जी कहा करते थे कि "अकाल कभी चुपचाप नहीं आता। वह बिना तिथि बताए आने वाला अतिथि नहीं है। अकाल से बहुत पहले अच्छे कामों का, अच्छे विचारों का अकाल आता है।" ऑक्सीजन का अकाल भी अपने आप नहीं आया है। सरकारी अहंकार, अति-राष्ट्रवाद और नाकाम ब्यूरोक्रेसी ही आज लोगों के रोने-बिलखने का कारण है। यह कहना ग़लत नहीं होगा कि यह सब सिर्फ़ लापरवाही का नतीजा है। यह लापरवाही जितनी सरकारों की है उतनी ही जनता की भी है। जब लोगों ने यह देखा कि उनके प्रधानमंत्री

तिनके तिनके में बिखर कर हम बसाएँगे उजड़ कर एक खुशियों का नया घर उस प्रलय के आते आते तय हुआ है जाते जाते

लाखों लोगों की भीड़ जुटा कर सभा सम्बोधित कर रहे हैं, और इधर कुंभ में कई लाख लोग स्नान कर रहे हैं और उन्हें कोई नहीं रोक रहा है, तो उन्हें लगने लगा कि अब हालात सामान्य हो चुके हैं। उन्होंने अपनी बुद्धि का प्रयोग करना अनुचित समझा और इस प्रकार 'यथा राजा तथा प्रजा' को चरितार्थ किया गया।

इस संकट से निकलना कैसे है, यह बताने के लिए देश में कई सारे विद्वान मौजूद हैं। सरकार को दलगत राजनीति छोड़कर तत्काल उनसे संपर्क करके सलाह लेना चाहिए। इसके अलावा सभी विपक्षी दलों और सरकार को मिलकर काम करना होगा। यदि अभी भी राजनीति की गयी तो हिंदुस्तान अपनी गरिमा से हाथ धो बैठेगा। जो हज़ारों करोड़ रुपये, लोगों ने 'PM केयर' फंड में दान किए हैं उसका सदुपयोग करना चाहिए। जनता के उस पैसे को RTI से बाहर तो कर दिया आपने, लेकिन अब कम से कम उस पैसे से लोगों की ज़िंदगी तो बचाइए। सबसे ज़रूरी बात यह कि भारत को इस वायरस पर समय से पहले जीत के ऐलान से परहेज़ करना सीखना होगा। इसी जीत की भावना और अति-उत्साह की प्रवृत्ति ने आज हमें संकट में ला खड़ा किया है। इस कठिन समय में कई लोग मानवता की मिसाल बनकर सामने आए हैं, जो ज़रूरतमंद लोगों को दवा, ऑक्सीजन, भोजन इत्यादि मुहैया करा रहे हैं। इस मुसीबत से उभरने के लिए, कई सारे दूसरे देशों ने भी भारत की ओर मदद का हाथ बढ़ाया है। कहते हैं न "साथ रोना, साथ हंसने से बड़ी चीज है"। एक अच्छे कल की उम्मीद करते हुए, यह पंक्तियाँ ज़हन में आती हैं,



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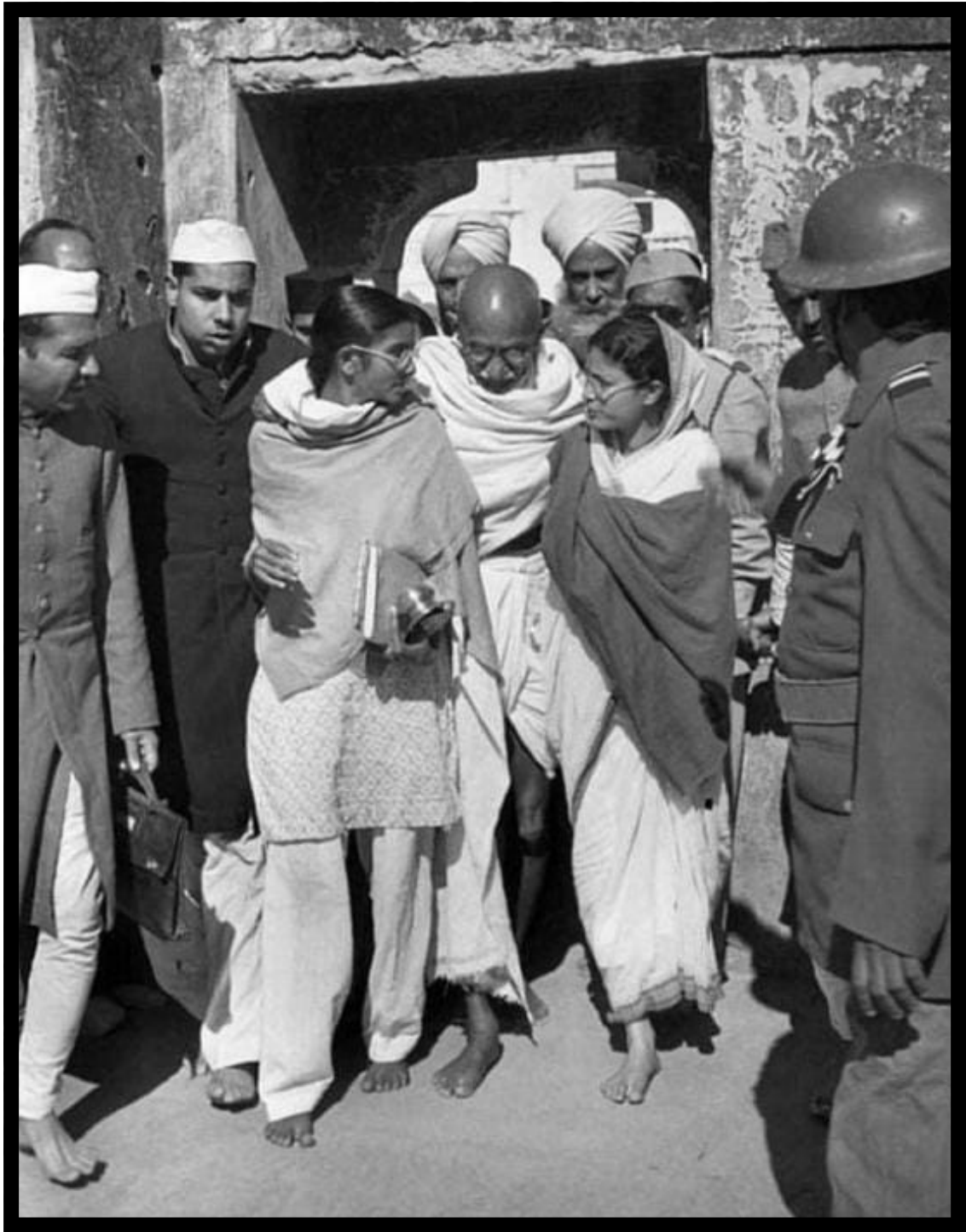
AZAADI THROUGH THE APERTURE: Immortalising A Nation's Awakening

History dissolves: ashes to ashes, dust to dust. What salves our regret over taking birth without the confines of a particular period of time are tangible artefacts. Fortunately for old souls who feel outcast in modernity, time travel exists as polaroids: frozen friezes of public memory.

BY SAMYA VERMA

In the final moments of India's strife for emancipation, the bloodlined streets and drawn faces of a people shedding shackles of centuries, were all recorded for posterity by three stalwarts of the lens. They painted the many moods of a nation on the move through space, separation, and history. Their unparalleled role in driving India towards its destiny comes alive in snaps of black and white.

That a day would come, when their life's work would evoke deeper veins of passion in a country steadily moving away from its history, was little realized by them. But here we are: tracing the birth of our nation through the finer sensibilities of Roy, Cartier, and Vyarawalla. Let us recount the poignant moments in which India was conceived and revisit the turbulent life and times of these passionate photographers.



Gandhi leaving Mehrauli, snapped by Kulwant Roy, Source: Livemint

KULWANT ROY: ONWARDS TO FREEDOM!

As the demand for freedom reached a crescendo in the years leading up to 1947, one man wandered station after station, awaiting the Mahatma's arrival; a young photojournalist from the would-be Nation, playing his part in shaping the vision and ethos in which the new-born country would be rooted. This was Kulwant Roy, and often do we find ourselves accompanying him from the side-lines, for his photos are a regular feature in our History textbooks.

Roy's camera-clad figure, and singleness of purpose, soon acquired limelight within the Nationalist circles- "Oh! There's the man! He who has determined to immortalize these years of light, sound, and fury. Here is the man who will remind the coming generations of our exploits, for years henceforth-" was a reverberating sentiment. However, for all his insight, and a knack for historicity, much of Roy's work lounged in obscurity until very recently. India Photo Archive Foundation has worked with photographer Aditya Arya to recover the negatives that Roy left behind.

The memories thus salvaged, as well as the better known snapshots, are a treasure trove for history aficionados. From Nehru's placid resolve at conferences, to the Mahatma's stature and command descending trains before him, Roy's artistry leaps out of the lens and across the bounds of time. This wistful poetry of pre-independence years wrought by him is a marvellous legacy of where We, as a nation, are coming from.

Roy began his career as an employee of the Royal Indian Air Force, snapping lush views of his Lahore hometown for the Company, before his lifelong romance with photos drew him to the North of modern day India. There he set up 'Associate Press Photographs', the company that singlehandedly produced much of what survives as our collective memory of the Delhi of 1940's: Congressmen flocking the streets as future beckoned, the Mahatma greeted by throngs at Nizamuddin Railway Station, of elations, elegies and heartburns that coloured our Movement for Independence.

The focal point of Roy's vision was the radiance of intellect and devotion to Motherland exuded by the Mahatma. Year after year he would be drawn to the station at Nizamuddin to

watch the Mahatma alight, as a place of worship draws the pious. These photographs reflect the artist's reverence for the towering persona of the Mahatma.

Nevertheless, he didn't shy away from recording other leaders on their daily quest for freedom. Moments suspended in time, conversations muted within the folds of Roy's camera, and leaders enroute to history, or even the famous 'signing of the Constitution of India', are mere shades in the spectrum of Roy's body of work. The immensity of an artist is comprehended naught but in the larger passing of time, perhaps why We, after almost 80 years, have finally begun to express awe at Kulwant Roy's expertise.

HENRI CARTIER BRESSON: INTERLUDES OF BLOODSHED

Frenchman Henri Cartier Bresson propounded the street photography genre, an art he perfected during the Indian partition of 1947. His candid stills captured the raw, unsuspecting moods of his subjects. Shortly after reaching India in September of 1947, he began recording the jubilant, yet sepulchral nature of that fateful year. Most of his work has no one subject, shedding light, instead, on the mass character of India's struggle for independence with its coverage of crowds.

After founding the Magnum Photos Studio in 1947, Bresson set off to record the socio-political turmoil in a newly de-colonized Asia.

The dream of independence, once realized, revealed itself a miscarriage of expectations conceived: in the blink of an eye the red of partition unfurled, a horrific rose blooming against a new dawn. As rivers ran crimson with the blood of communal violence, Bresson captured the deathly silence hovering over the countryside betwixt the uproars of insanity. These pictures that bespoke of unsettled normalcy, calcified Bresson within the tomes of Indian history.

Other pictures by Bresson deal exclusively with the Mahatma as the subject. There are snaps where Gandhi isn't even visible in the frame, but the reverence on the faces of people evokes his essence. Most of these works date to the days following the Mahatma's demise. On 30th of January, 1948, Bresson recorded Gandhi's final

hours. What lay ahead was the farthest from anyone's imagination. These became some of Bresson's most powerful works; on display are his finesse in bringing alive the subject even in its absence.

Hours later, the Mahatma was assassinated. In documenting the aftermath of the mishap, Bresson beautifully captured the mood of a nation in mourning. His 14 photos of the funeral, particularly 'Train Carrying Gandhi's Ashes', bared the essence of the country's loss and brought him worldwide acclaim. These photos are some gems from the Nationalist Movement that are on display at the Rubin Museum in New York.

Bresson's ideas influenced a new crop of Indian photo-journalists like Raghu Rai and Raghubir Singh. Interestingly, Bresson's vision even impacted the famous filmmaker Satyajit Ray's widely acclaimed 'Apu Trilogy' of films! While critics argue that Bresson was 'putting the East to use as a career', the candour of his art is undeniable: he put his heart and soul into capturing one of the most moving periods in India's recent memory. In capturing the rawness of 1947-48, he shaped an everlasting vision of modern Indian history.

HOMAI VYARAWALLA: OUT OF THE LONG NIGHT

The nation resuscitated, was shot in its fledgling moments by the genius of none other than Homai Vyarawalla. Operating in an epoch suspended so precariously in time that Indian women could finally dream of becoming prime ministers, while being largely confined by chains of domesticity, Homai flouted all conventions to perfect her art. The distinction of being a Padma Vibushan awardee, and India's first female photojournalist, were perhaps trivial compensations for the odds that she fought.

Homai's lens was focused on the events and figureheads who would define the nation we became post-1947. The funerary elements of an era gone by- the final rites of Gandhi, or penultimate salute of the last Viceroy- were the ashes in which the phoenix of Vyarawalla's art was born. Where Bresson's frame of Indian-ness ended, there Vyarawalla's investigation into the minutiae of nation building began.



Train Carrying Gandhi's Ashes, Bresson

It was at the age of 13 that Vyarawalla ran into her future husband. It is a story well remembered in the world of Indian photography: the young couple strolling the streets of Bombay, recording the nitty-gritties of a City coming to life under the gaze of their lens. Photojournalism was fast becoming a viable career option and Vyarawalla promptly took to it, graduating from the prestigious JJ School Of Art a decade later. The constraints of the time induced Homai to release her initial work under her husband's name, for even the idea of a woman photographer was mocked in news circles of the day.

Soon enough, though, the genius shone through, and to say that artistic minds of the country were impressed with her, will be an understatement.

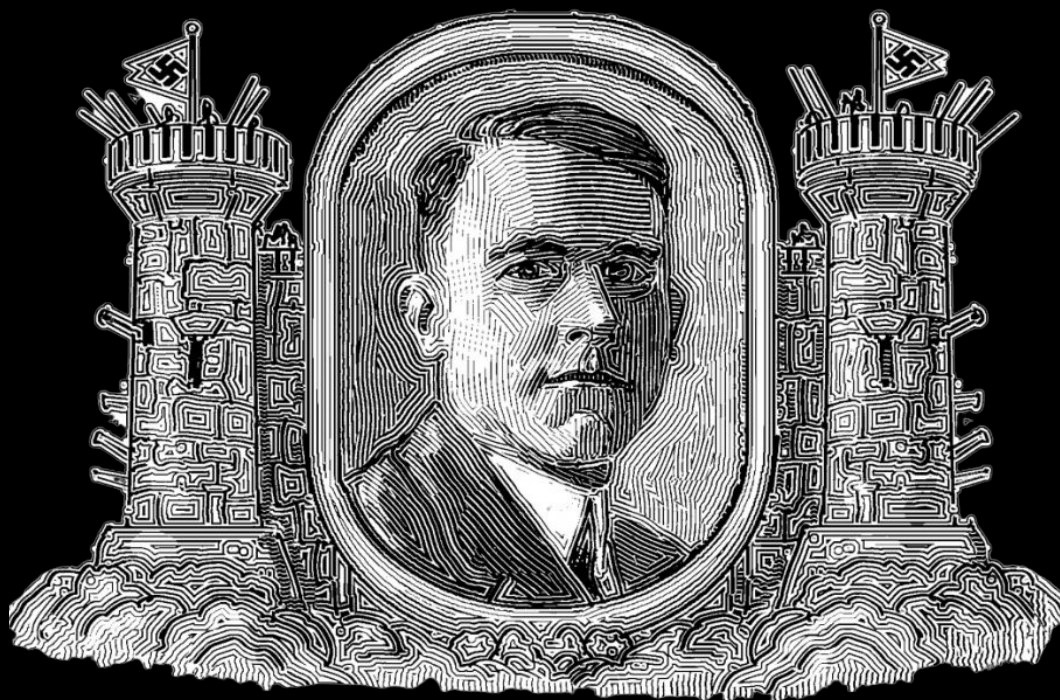
Homai's records drew awe: the nation under construction was her canvas and every moment pivotal to describing 'India of the 20th Century', passed through her scrutiny. From the first Republic Day, to the arrival of the Dalai Lama, she captured it all.

Homai was self-confessedly extremely fond of clicking candid shots of Pt. Nehru whom she described as an extremely photogenic person. The charisma of the first prime minister is quite evident in her snaps from the 50's. While she did enjoy recording famous personalities of the 60's and 70's period too, she chose to retire in the aftermath of her husband's demise. Hers is a coveted contribution, not only to the sphere of photography, but also to the demand for emancipation of Indian women- the true freedom.



Independent India's First Republic Day Parade, Vyarawalla

ON THE COVER



Icarus's Lost Paradise: THE OBLIVION OF CARL SCHMITT

BY VISHESH CHAUDHARY

When you think of political philosophy in the early half of the twentieth century, three famous schools of thought from that period come to mind: Liberalism, Marxism, and Fascism. All of these ideas were about to shape the coming century, but none proved to be more controversial and revolutionary than the twin tides of Nazism and Fascism besieging Germany and Italy, respectively. One, anti-democratic, and the other, anti-parliamentary.

Discussing these subjects is somewhat of a taboo in today's day and age, as these ideologies were responsible for the deaths of millions of innocent people all around the world. Today, we see such ideas being followed, mostly, by skinheads wearing leather jackets and riding motorcycles. So how did we come to this?

As Walter Benjamin once said, “behind every fascism, there is a failed revolution.”

Amongst the creators of this revolution was a man, whose ideas still work as an undercurrent of the extreme right and left-wing politics. Owing to his past, he is not fully appreciated, but nevertheless, cannot be entirely ignored in modern-day philosophy. Carl Schmitt, the German-born philosopher and professor, was a card-carrying member of the Nazi party. He supported the Jewish book burnings, concentration camps, and until his death in 1985, refused to go through denazification. This is the reason for his loss to the depths of oblivion. A powerful mind coupled with erroneous morality is the perfect recipe for obscurity and censure, after all.

Schmitt's ideas were an amalgamation of theology, philosophy, and political theory. He is considered to represent both the thesis and antithesis of western thought; like his preached ideology, he is seen as a mixture of the Roman legend of Icarus who, with his wings of wax, flew too close to the sun and died, and the embodiment of Satan from John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. The fallen angel who would not accept the creation of man and thus was banished to the depths of Tartarus. Only here, his pandemonium is not built of glass, but of ideas.

Here arises an important question: was Schmitt an angel, like Lucifer, who thought he was wronged and hence, it is valid to completely overlook this problem-child of philosophy and leave him lounging in the shadows of history? Or, should his tale be a lesson for all of us, an aid to understanding the good, bad, and ugly inherent to any ideology.



The contention is whether, as in the tale of Icarus, the lesson is not to go too close to the sun, or if it is to make your wings so strong that they don't get burned.

SCHMITT AND POLITICAL THEOLOGY

At the beginning of the twentieth century, people started finding alternatives to liberal politics that was the most famous school of thought during the period of the Enlightenment. In many of his lectures after the Great War, Schmitt started to see the impotency of liberal discourse and criticised it from multiple viewpoints. He had started identifying the flaws of this idea in his book on *Political Romanticism* and explained it further in his book, *Political Theology*, which was published after the Second World War. This was a kind of prefix for his work but showed his leanings.



He said that liberalism 'is a political theatre which is played for gaining the trust of people but, in truth, is not effective'. The reason why he believed that more radical action needed to be taken was that after the first War, Schmitt's German homeland was under huge debt and had lost large amounts of its land and wealth. This is where we can clearly discern the emergence of disdain towards the liberal school of thought amongst the common people as well.

Many thought that a radical approach was required, and Liberalism, in Schmitt's eye, did not give a sufficient solution to the problem at hand. It was merely fooling people into believing that everything was okay when the entire country was on fire.

His worldview was very similar to Thomas Hobbes's, who is considered one of the founding fathers of modern philosophy and civil society. Hobbes faced a similar problem after the British civil war in 1639 and later, in his book *Leviathan*, he famously said, "life in its natural state is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short". He believed that civil society, and a stable, organised authority, can hold together the wearing down tendencies of the catholic society.

This is the pessimistic worldview that helped Schmitt to build on his ideas which he discussed in his book *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes*.



Satan exulting over Eve by William Blake

Therein he coined the term “Political Theology”. According to him, all political judgments were merely theology pretending to be a solution to all the problems in society.

This is the reason he is seen as a post-liberal intellectual. As he started creating an ideology that was heavily influenced by the ideas and structures wrought by the likes of Saint Augustine and other missionaries of the Christian churches. He thought that in the new philosophy of the Western Canon, there was no clear division of sin and purity, both of which would be suspended in a perpetual state of limbo. As In the biblical Book of Genesis, Cain and Abel are the first two sons of Adam and Eve. Cain, the firstborn, was a farmer, and his brother Abel was a shepherd. The brothers made sacrifices to God, each of his own produce, but God favoured Abel’s sacrifice instead of Cain’s. Cain then murdered Abel, whereupon Yahweh punished Cain by condemning him to a life of wandering. One needs to be reminded about crime and punishment.

This made him divide his theology into two parts: the first was called Public Theology, which is the basic doctrine one is about to preach; the second, Political Theology, where people from all parts of society- trade unions, activists and politicians- needed to join hands to spread one message and give definition to what they are battling against.

For him, liberalism was just putting a false mask of democracy on people and preaching fallacious universal equality, twin vices because of which people got completely cut off from and disinterested in the political process; people grew relaxed without having a sense of distrust against the government, which Schmitt considered necessary. Even after the French Revolution, there was a rise of a dictatorship under Napoleon to create stability. When Schmitt wrote this during that time, the majority of countries were under some form of dictatorship and he thought that this was the way to go. But his ideas were also seen by many as an antithesis of Christian philosophy as they tended to scapegoat other people rather than welcome them into the community.



THE CONCEPT OF THE POLITICAL

Till now, all these ideas that Schmitt talked about the foundation on which his pandemonium was built, and from here on they turn into the kind of monster that we know today. Schmitt realised that there are three major components that help a country grow and all three of them are a part of the Political spectrum: conflict and inequality; the distinction between friends and enemies; and sovereignty.

First, he talked about how humans are inherently evil. He completely agreed with Thomas Hobbes’s analysis that without social structures, society would collapse. Many Liberals and Marxists also agreed with this analysis, but the difference arose when Marxists suggested that these class structures needed to be broken down for the creation of a just utopia or liberalism with the

government improving the daily lives of citizens step-by-step. Schmitt argued that it would be foolish to even attempt this as things will always remain the same and it would miss the whole point of the politics. A government's job is not to change these situations but to use them to fill people up with what is necessary which, in his eyes, is nationalism and survival instincts, so they can create much stronger nations and identities. As British poet Alfred Tennyson wrote in *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, 'Theirs not to reason why, Theirs but to do and die'.

The second part of this inferno, for Schmitt, was the clear distinction between friends and enemies. According to him, if there is no rivalry, it would lead the society to the brink of a civil war, and to maintain this social order a scapegoat was needed. It was through this scapegoat that people would be able to show a sense of necessary comradeship. As he once remarked, "Show me your enemies and I will tell you the kind of person you are". Think of this image which Cervantes wove about in his epic *Don Quixote*: when Don and his sidekick Sancho were riding on a horse towards the windmills thinking that they were giant monsters, they wanted to show their chivalry but made a ludicrous mockery out of themselves with this false bravado. When this idea takes a darker turn, we are able to see how scapegoating spread amongst the most erudite Germans. More than half of all the German physicians became early joiners of the Nazi Party, surpassing the party enrollments of all other professions.

In an article by Ashley K. Fernandes on *Why did doctors become Nazis?* she says, "*The German Medical Society played the most instrumental role in the Nazi medical program. A key component of Nazi thought was to rid Germany of those deemed economic drains on the State, a fear that rooted itself in the bitter economic experience after the First World War, having little to do with contemporary debates about science, medicine, or technology. Nazi ideological and historical rationalizations (beliefs about Social Darwinism, eugenics, and the social organism as sacred)*". Everything was up for grabs and nobody wanted to miss this tectonic shift which was being driven by the concept of the Other. Even poets like T.S Eliot in *The Waste Land* showed sympathy for this cause. Ezra Pound in his epic collection of -



Don Quixote and Sancho Panza riding their mounts in an engraving based on a scene from Miguel de Cervantes' "*Don Quixote*." /Getty Images

Cantos poems mentioned in cantos 81, "pull down my vanity", about a capitalist system being controlled by a Jewish upper class.

Now, one might think, how did people not realise how harmful and evil this idea was and why did they still follow it?

To solve this problem, we can look at the famous theory given by Hannah Arendt after seeing the trial of Adolf Eichmann for being a part of the "final solution". She said that he was being unoriginal, and if we follow Eichmann's defence, he confesses to merely have followed orders in the spirit of the laws he carried out, as the legislator would approve. In Kant's formulation of the Categorical Imperative, the legislator is the moral self, and all people are legislators; in Eichmann's formulation, the legislator was Hitler. Eichmann claimed that this changed when he was charged with carrying out the Final Solution, at which point Arendt claims "he had ceased to live according to Kantian principles, that he had known it, and that



he had consoled himself with the thoughts that he no longer 'was master of his own deeds,' that he was unable 'to change anything'. Arendt in her thesis says that Eichmann was not really a fanatic or a sociopath, but instead, an extremely average and mundane person who relied on clichéd defences rather than thinking for himself was motivated by professional promotion rather than ideology and believed in success which he considered the chief standard of "good society". It does not suggest that he wasn't evil, but he got used to the situation so much that he didn't think too much into the morality of it. This is called "the banality of evil" and later, Stanley Milgram, in his famous The Milgram Experiment, proved again that once the subjects got used to following orders and were ready to do what is asked of them, it showed that ordinary people could commit horrible acts of causing pain to others.

Finally, all this was being done to achieve the goal of sovereignty in which ultimate

power would lie in the hands of authorities or a figure which would lead the ideas of the political, so there is a strong sense of stability and unity in the society. He writes in broad strokes but makes quite clear his fondness for dictatorships. He believed that even the biggest democratic institutions use special powers to take complete control in a state of emergency and it is necessary to take control of a country that is on the brink of extinction like Germany.

EPITAPH

In the classic Russian novel, *The Brothers Karamazov* by Fyodor Dostoevsky, there is a chapter called 'The Grand Inquisitor' where Christ comes back to Earth, in Seville, at the time of the Inquisition. He performs a number of miracles (echoing miracles from the Gospel). The people recognize him and adore him at the Seville Cathedral, but he is arrested by Inquisition leaders and sentenced to be burnt to death the next day. The Grand inquisitor visits him in his cell to tell him that the Church no longer needs him. The main portion of the text is devoted to the Inquisitor explaining to Jesus why his return would interfere with the mission of the Church. The Inquisitor thus implies that Jesus, in giving humans the freedom to choose for themselves, has excluded the majority of humanity from redemption and doomed it to suffer. This is the kind of social structure Schmitt claimed he was trying to break and yet, in his work, he criticised the liberal discourse for being nothing but a fantasy. In turn, he created an ideology where the main mission was based on the division of authority which has one mission- to always create the factor of the "other" in the minds of the people, no matter what happens, so the wheels keep turning.

It almost reminds one of Shakespeare's play *Coriolanus*, which incidentally was taught in literature classes in nazi Germany, about a Roman general who united Italy in battle and helped as a chief architect of the Roman Empire but hated democracy. The people he protects tell the senate that they are allowing 'crows to peck the eagles'.

So, I see his ideology as a fugu fish (a very poisonous Japanese dish). One needs a bit of training to eat it but is very nutritious if eaten in a proper manner. We can see the bad that Schmitt's ideas brought upon the world, but must also look at the various factors he touched upon in a world becoming more sectarian. It is important to study the works which form the undercurrents of modern day politics.



In pictures: Carl Schmitt





The Shah Burj Gate, principal entrance to the
Lahore Fort complex, after restoration.
AKTC / Hussain Sheikh



THE WALL THAT SPEAKS

BY SOUVIK BISWAS

The Fort at Lahore is a marvellous tribute to the sub-continent's history, standing tall against the ravages of time. Read along for an account of its opulent masonry and architectural feats unmatched.

Lahore Fort, the grandest of all the Mughal citadels ever built in Pakistan, isn't just about another incredibly opulent fortification that was raised up to symbolise the erstwhile empire's grandeur and wealth. Rather, the significance that Lahore Fort boasts of today is mostly about the architectural designs and patterns of structures followed in building it.

Unlike the other super extravagant forts commissioned by the Mughals back in Shahjahanabad (the Red Fort) and Agra (the Agra Fort), the fort complex at Lahore isn't made up of red sandstone. It is primarily built up of burnt bricks with lime mortar, as has been observed by Muhammad Kamran, in his research paper 'Masonry Walls Analysis from Shish Mahal Lahore-Pakistan' for the Engineering Design Bureau, uploaded in digitalised version to Research-Gate.

In the opinions of the Directorate General of Archaeology, Pakistan, the "early history of the fort is shrouded in mystery and nothing definite is known about it..."

However, it is widely believed that the various structures present in the fort were commissioned by the Mughal Emperor Akbar (way back in the 16th century) though Mughal historian and author Dede Fairchild Ruggles, in his book, "Islamic Gardens and Landscapes" states that most of this fort complex was rebuilt in the seventeenth century, which is, if we note the timeline of the Mughal succession of Kings, during the hegemonies of Jahangir, Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb.

In "International Council of Monuments and Sites", UNESCO notes that the fort is also regarded one of a kind because of the amalgamation of the various Hindu and Islamic motifs used to build its basic foundations, probably by Akbar himself.

Besides monumental structures that include the Shahi Hammam, the Badshahi Mosque, the iconic Alamgiri Gate, Diwan-i-Aam and Diwan-i-Khas, two typically unique structures make Lahore Fort a worthwhile visit.

The Naulakha Pavilion (called Naulakha [English for nine lacs] because of the gargantuan amount of nine lac Mughal rupaiyaas spent on building it to completion), located to the west of the Sheesh Mahal, in the northern Shah Burj Quadrangle section of the fort, was commissioned by Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan, at a time when architecture of the empire was at its zenith. The pavilion, built to serve as the imperial personal chamber of the emperor, was originally constructed with features that correspond to the Bengali, the European and the Mughal style of architecture.

A unique Bengali style of architecture, something that is mostly observed in the terracotta temples of Bishnupur, caught the emperor's attention. Specifically, it was the sloping roof above the main premises of the Jor Bangla temple and the Raas Mancha that incited an interest in Shah Jahan to create a marvel with a sloping roof. Built in the seventeenth century, this partially completed structure was then inlaid with innumerable precious and semi precious stones (brought from far and wide) that were symbolic of the pavilion being used as an imperial Mughal residence. Further, as Asher states, a baldachin in the European

standards, (baldachin or in Italian: baldacchino) was placed above the seat of the Emperor, denoting the height of the cross cultural interactions between the Mughals and the early Europeans. Shah Jahan was an emperor recognised for his taste of massive architectural glory and grandeur, and it is this desire of his that resulted in the construction of the many Mughal forts and palaces seen and hailed praises at, today.

However, this taste of his did not evolve all out of nowhere. Shah Jahan's father, the fourth Mughal Emperor Jahangir had a taste of his own. He is widely known to have promulgated the use of pietra dura in place of an all calligraphy Mughal mausoleum.

Amongst the very little but significant contributions of this emperor to the field of art and culture is the one-of-a-kind Picture Wall at the Lahore Fort.

Considered to be the greatest and the most magnificent mural of its kind in the world, the Picture Wall, commissioned by Jahangir in 1624 and completed by his son, Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan in 1632, extends over 1,450 feet (440 m) by 50 feet (15 m) with almost 116 paintings that detail various tales and narratives associated with the Mughal Empire. Precisely, it is a wall in faraway Lahore that depicts scenes of the history of the then Hindustan and still smells Indian.

A congregation of 116 isolated panels, the wall, built in the nearly extinct Kashi Kari style of mosaic art (Tribune calls it a form of decorative art that involves ceramic assortment on tiles, faience and fabric), depicts everything, ranging from "elephant fights, angels, and polo games that do not form a cohesive narrative" to

azdahas or winged dragons from ancient Persian mythology, cup-bearing angel figures herons, cranes and other flying birds."

Nevertheless, the wall doesn't falter to highlight the life and customs followed by the court sovereign, his nobles and his courtesans. One panel that highlights four men at a game of chaughan (now referred to as polo) is considered a masterpiece in itself. There are also panels, as aforementioned, that depict elephant fights and taming wild beasts, which were usually part of the hugely popular recreations for the daredevil Mughal royals. In 'Civilisations: The Triumph of Art', a show for the BBC, historian Simon Schama quotes, "There are angels from Europe. Chinese dragons even make an appearance. There are royal hunts and epic battles. History, mythology, birds and beasts – the whole world as Jahangir understood it is on display." With time however, Mughal grandeur faded away into uncertainty and what was once theirs, now became a property of the Afghan Durranis. After changing hands for a couple of times since the Durrani claim, the fort was identified as the official residence of the Sikh King Ranjit Singh. With his death and Maharani Jindan being taken away by the British with interior conflicts crumbling the Khalsa Empire, the fort fell into the hands of the English East India company Sahibs in 1849.

Centuries of neglect towards the marvellous Wall of Pictures rendered it dilapidated, its paintings in an almost faded out state, until the present day Agha Khan Trust for Culture, through a detailed investigation, revealed a bewitching wall mural that once was!



Photo by Marcia Chambers



Lahore Fort, Pakistan. AKDN / AKCS-P

BHAGAVAN MACARONI, CIA, & THE VIMOCHANA SAMARAM IN KERALA

God's own country, Kerala, is known for its rich culture, great food, and realistic movies.

It is also well known for its Left movement as it remains the only Communist-ruled state in India. As the BJP is uprooting communism and arresting all its dissenters, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) is putting up a strong fight against the "fascist" rule. Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has time and again criticised the Central Government and announced that the State would not implement many of the BJP government's policies.

The two main communist parties, Communist Party of India and Communist party of India(Marxist) are the largest political parties in Kerala. The Left Democratic Front (LDF) is the major coalition of the Left-Wing parties that have come to power alternatively over the last two decades. It is also the ruling coalition right now. The State had gone to elections on the 2nd of April and is awaiting results. The opposition coalitions of United Democratic Front (UDF) and National Demoratic Alliance (NDA) have promised to crush the LDF and win over power in the elections that have just been held. Though there have been several drawbacks, the LDF has been appreciated for its commendable handling of floods, Nipah Virus outbreak and CoronaVirus pandemic. Exit poll results also indicate a second term for the Left Democratic Front coalition. However, the attempts of the opposition alliances cannot be ignored as they are gaining strength after pointing out several misgivings of the ruling coalition. This endeavour to eliminate communist parties in Kerala is not anything new. The Vimorcha Samaram (Liberation Struggle) of 1959

which ousted the first democratically elected communist government in the world was the first attempt at this.

In the 1957 elections, the Communist Party of India won sixty seats to become the single largest party in the Legislative Assembly. On 5 April 1957, the first non-Congress Chief Minister EMS Namboothiripad formed his eleven-member ministry in Kerala. From the day it assumed power, the ministry was in a hurry to implement land reforms and pass a new education bill. However, twenty seven months after it came to power the government was dismissed and the President's rule was imposed on the state.

Rajan was a labourer at a Coir factory in Alappuzha. Like most of his coworkers he was also a Communist. But soon after the Communist government rose to power, Rajan lost his hope in communism and he produced and directed a kathaprasangam (lyrical narrative or story-telling performance) called Bhagavan Macaroni. This play became widely popular and competed against the play Ningal Enne Communist Aaki (You made me a communist) on several stages. Bhagavan Macaroni mocked the government's suggestion to consume macaroni during food shortages. This play was among the building stones of protests against the newly formed government and paved the way for Vimochana Samaram.

The main reason for contention was the Education Bill introduced by the Namboothiripad government. The Education Bill aimed at providing better wages and a working environment for the teachers in private and government schools and colleges.



These private schools and colleges were mainly run by the Church, Nair Service Society and similar Muslim organisations. Thus, these groups led by Congress started agitating against the new Education Bill. Students also seemed dissatisfied as promises made to them were not kept. Now, all student organisations gathered to conduct a protest which resembled the Orana Samaram, which was also organised by student organisations to make boat charges free. As the other organisations came together, left student organisations were isolated and unable to take a proper stance.

Similarly, an agrarian relations bill was to be passed which aimed to confer ownership rights to tenant cultivators, to grant permanent ownership of land for agricultural labourers, and to put a ceiling on individual landholdings so as to distribute the surplus among the landless. This naturally left the land-owning communities in opposition to the government. The famous Ooty conspiracy happened where Congress members met to find ways to oust the EMS government. Soon, with the support of the NSS, IUML (Indian Union Muslim League), PSP (Praja Socialist Party) and the Catholic Church, Congress observed the Vimochanasamara Dinam (Liberation Day) on 12th of June, 1959. This marked the beginning of the struggle against the communist government. EMS Namboothiripad invited Nehru, the Prime Minister, to explain the government's stance and himself analyse the situation.

Nehru was welcomed by the Chief Minister at the airport, but, on the roads on his way to the Raj Bhavan (the Governor's office), he was greeted by protestors holding banners that asked for repealing the Communist government.



Picture By Onmanorama News

Nehru then asked for help from the Governor and talked to all stakeholders. While returning he explained to the media that it was a Bahujan Munnettam (popular uprising), thus showing that he was in support of the protests. The Governor was asked to submit a report on the condition of the state. In his report, the governor to his own dismay had to elucidate that the law and order situation had gotten out of the control of the government. On 31 July 1959, the Communist government was dismissed. Interestingly, there are arguments that indicate the CIA's role in the Vimochanasamaram. As Dennis Kux (retired State Department South Asia specialist) had pointed out, the election results "rang alarm bells in Washington", where "preventing additional Keralas became an important argument for augmenting US assistance to India". It is said that the CIA funded the political protests and helped in creating a mass uprising. It was apparently a move to prevent "additional keralas" said Ellsworth Bunker, the American ambassador to India during the 1956-61 period.

Daniel Patrick Moynihan who was ambassador to India in the early 1970s admitted that financial assistance was provided by the CIA in his 1978 book *A Dangerous Place*. This became a controversy as he accused the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to be the receiver of these funds.

The recent Sabarimala protests also saw the Congress and BJP turn against the Communist government, and both of them separately campaigned against the government. There were articles written on how the Sabarimala protests could be seen as BJP's liberation struggle in Kerala. However, the Namajapa Samaram lacks momentum, unlike the Vimochana samaram. The situation today seems to resemble 1959 as the present Central government is also keen to oust the Communist government and bring an end to the left movement in Kerala as was the aim of the supposedly CIA funded Vimochana samaram. Nevertheless, the Communist government in Kerala seems strong in fighting against what the Chief Minister calls 'fascist' measures.

EMS Namboodiripad receiving PM Nehru at airport. By Revisiting India



WAVES OF CHANGE:

Primogeniture Succession in Japan

BY AVNI GOEL

It is said that the imperial family of Japan was so enamoured with chrysanthemum that they named their official seal and even their throne after it. Since then, the word chrysanthemum has been used to refer to both the real throne and the emperor himself. The word may also apply to a very unique seating arrangement, such as the Takamikura throne in Kyoto Imperial Palace's Shishin-den.

ABOUT THE JAPANESE MONARCHY

The legendary emperor Jimmu is said to have established the Japanese monarchy in 660 B.C. With Naruhito as the 126th king to sit on the chrysanthemum throne, Japan is the world's oldest ongoing monarchy. According to Japan's new constitution, the emperor is "the emblem of the state and the unity of the people" (Article 1 of the constitution of Japan). The republican dictator is the modern ruler. The Takamikura throne, which can be found in the Royal Palace of Kyoto, is the monarchy's oldest living throne.

SUCCESSION TO THE THRONE

The imperial family was streamlined to Emperor Taisho's heirs under the terms of the imperial household law. In Japan, the rules of descent prohibit inheritance by or by female lineage.

SHOWA PERIOD SUCCESSION DEBATES

Since the accession of the Showa emperor in the late 1920s, there has been a debate over the imperial succession. For the first eight years of their marriage, the Emperor and the Empress had only girls. Before the birth of Crown Prince Akihito in December 1933, the emperor's younger brother, Prince Chichibu, was first in line and heir presumptive to the throne.





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The birth of Princess Aiko (2001) ignited a controversy in Japan about whether the imperial household rule of 1947 should be modified from agnatic primogeniture (the law that allows only males to succeed) to full primogeniture (the law that allows the eldest child of the sovereign to ascend regardless of the gender), allowing the firstborn daughter to inherit the

Chrysanthemum throne instead of a younger brother or male cousin.

On October 25, 2005, a government-appointed panel of experts issued a report proposing that the imperial succession law be changed to allow absolute primogeniture. Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi addressed the controversy in part of his annual keynote speech on January 20, 2006, when he promised to send a bill to the Diet allowing women to rise to the throne so that the imperial throne could be maintained in a peaceful manner in the future although he was vague on what the law would include.

BIRTH OF A MALE COUSIN

After it was announced that the Crown Prince's younger brother, Prince Akishino, and his wife Princess Akishino, were expecting their third child, proposals to reform the ascension guidelines were briefly shelved. Princess Kiko gave birth to a son, Hisahito, on September 6, 2006, who was third in line to the chrysanthemum throne under current law at the time of his birth, after his uncle, the then-crown prince, and his aunt, Prince Akishino. The prince's birth was the first time in 41 years that the royal family had a male heir. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe declared on January 3, 2007, that he would withdraw his plan to change the Imperial Household Rule. As a result, it appears that the succession laws will not be modified to enable princess Aiko to ascend the throne. The degree to which the new imperial household law code of succession can be revised is a source of debate. The right call for a reform, retaining prussian-style agnatic primogeniture while reintroducing previously removed male relatives into the imperial household. Liberals call for full primogeniture to be implemented. Moderates call for the restoration of older, indigenous succession traditions, which state that a female can ascend to the throne if she has seniority or proximity to the patrilineal kinship.

Adopting full primogeniture would allow unmarried or widowed female heirs of the Imperial House's male line to inherit the Chrysanthemum throne, as has happened in the past, but it would also allow something unprecedented: It will encourage married princesses and princesses' children whose fathers are not male-line descendants of previous emperors to rise to the throne. Since dynasties are historically characterised patrilineally, this scenario may be viewed as a new dynasty assuming control of the Chrysanthemum Throne.

BELOW IS A TIMELINE OF NUMEROUS DEBATES ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS.

2005: In order to avert an "heir crisis," the Japanese government declared on January 24, 2005, that it would

propose allowing the Crown Prince and Princess to adopt a male infant. Adoption by other male-line branches of the Imperial Line is a centuries-old imperial Japanese practice for dynastic reasons, made illegal only by Western influence in modern times.

2006: Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi addressed the controversy in part of his annual keynote speech on January 20, 2006, when he promised to send a bill to the Japanese Diet allowing women to rise to the throne so that imperial succession could be continued in a peaceful manner in the future. Princess Kiko gave birth to a baby boy named Prince Hisahito on September 6, 2006. He is second in line to the throne under current succession rule, but if the law is changed, Princess Aiko, who now has no right of succession, will take precedence over him and her uncle.

2007: Prime Minister Shinzo Abe declared on January 3, 2007, that he would withdraw his plan to amend the Imperial Household Act, which was proposed by the government of Shigeru Yoshida.

2009: Emperor Akihito refrained from making his own comments on the succession debate in a speech commemorating his 20th anniversary after ascending the Chrysanthemum Throne in November 2009.

2011: Shingo Haketa, Grand Steward of the Imperial Household Agency, visited Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda in his office on October 5, 2011, and told him that enabling female members of the imperial family to establish family branches was a matter of urgency. The imperial family, according to the Grand Steward, is unable to maintain its affairs in a stable manner. Twelve members of the royal family were under the age of 60, with half of them being single princesses aged 20 to 30. The imperial family's ability to fulfil its duties would become more problematic when the princesses left the family by marriage. The agency also stated that since Prince Hisahito was Emperor Akihito's only grandchild eligible to inherit the throne, a mechanism to ensure stable succession to the imperial throne would be needed.

2012: The government acknowledged "that sustaining the continuity of the Imperial Household's operations and lessening the pressure of official duties levied on Their Majesties, the Emperor and Empress are major issues of a high degree of urgency," Chief Cabinet Secretary Fujimura said at a press conference on January 6, 2012. A Kyodo News poll conducted on January 7 and 8, 2012 found that 65.5 percent of Japanese citizens favoured the concept of allowing female members of the imperial family to maintain their imperial title after marriage.

2014: Princess Noriko announced her engagement to Kunimaro civilian Senge on May 27, 2014. She left the imperial family after her marriage on October 5, 2014.

2016: Prince Mikasa, one of the only five family members entitled to inherit the throne, died on October 27, 2016, at the age of 100. Just two children were born into the Imperial family in the preceding 15 years, while seven members died or married, bringing the total to 19.

2017: Only male Imperial Family members were able to attend the main accession ceremony where Naruhito will collect the sacred regalia, the Japanese government announced in January 2019. Satsuki Katayama, Japan's first female cabinet minister, was permitted to participate because government ministers are deemed observers rather than members.

2019: The Japanese government declared in April 2019 that internal negotiations on the succession crisis will begin after May 1.

2020: In August 2020, then-Defense Minister Tar Kno defended matrilineal emperors, whose fathers had no bloodline relation to previous emperors, in an online programme, arguing that they should be considered to ensure a smooth succession to the Imperial Throne. He also said that "Imperial princesses (emperor's children or grandchildren), including Princess Aiko (Emperor Naruhito's daughter), could be accepted as the next emperor. Under the new succession laws, the Defense Minister concluded, it would be difficult to entice any future wife for the male heir, who would be under tremendous psychological pressure to become pregnant with a child.

Only "a male offspring in the male line belonging to the Imperial Lineage" may succeed to the throne of Japan, according to the Imperial House Law.

If Hisahito becomes Emperor without having a son, there will be no successor to the throne under the current regime. As a result, after Crown Prince Fumihito's ceremonial investiture on April 19, the government was expected to begin discussions on the succession issue. The COVID-19 pandemic, however, caused the ceremony to be postponed, leaving the succession issue unanswered.

Although Japan doesn't allow women to ascend the Imperial throne, still eight women were able to ascend it when there was a sudden death of the emperor and the next male in the line to the throne was too young.

JAPAN'S FEMALE EMPERORS

Even if it was not often used previously, the Japanese term

Tenn for an imperial leader or "emperor" is still used retrospectively for all those who have ascended the throne. It is used for both male and female officials, unlike the English term "emperor."

Empress Suiko (r. 592–628)

Emperor Kinmei's daughter ascended to the throne after the assassination of Emperor Sushun by a member of the powerful Soga clan. Suiko's appointment was seen as offering national unity in the absence of an imminent decision over who will prevail. She presided over a period in which Buddhism flourished and the temple Hryji in Nara was constructed. During her rule, Japan established diplomatic missions in China.

Empress Kōgyoku (r. 642–645)/Saimei (r. 655–661)

When there was no consensus on succession after the death of her husband, Emperor Bidatsu's great-granddaughter, Kgyoku, ascended to the throne. After a few years, she abdicated, and her younger brother, Emperor Ktoku, ascended to the throne. When he died and there was no definite successor, she reverted to the name Saimei and ruled once more.

Empress Jitō (r. 690–697)

She rose to the throne as the daughter of Emperor Tenji and the wife of her predecessor, Emperor Tenmu, since her son Prince Kusakabe had a powerful competitor for the throne at the time. Jit ruled until her grandson, Emperor Monmu, was old enough to succeed her. Kusakabe died soon after.

Empress Genmei (r. 707–715)

She was Empress Jit's younger half-sister and Emperor Tenji's daughter, as well as the wife of Prince Kusakabe and mother of Emperor Monmu. Her grandson (later Emperor Shmu) was too young to replace Monmu at the time of his death, so she succeeded to the throne.

Empress Genshō (r. 715–724)

She was the daughter of Empress Genmei and the first woman to succeed a woman in the imperial succession. She was in the male imperial line since her father was Prince Kusakabe, Emperor Tenmu's uncle. When Emperor Genmei abdicated after nine years, and the future Emperor Shmu was then considered too young to succeed, she ascended the throne.

Empress Kōken (r. 749–758)/Shōtoku (r. 764–770)

She was Emperor Shmu's daughter, and when her son died young, she became the first woman to be formally designated as the first in line to the throne. She ascended



to the throne as Kken, but later abdicated in favour of her nephew, Emperor Junnin. During his rule, a power struggle erupted between him and retired Kken, who was supported by Buddhist monk Dōkyō, who became one of her most powerful allies. When Junnin's supporter Fujiwara Nakamaro tried to raise a revolt in order to reclaim power, her forces were defeated. She dethroned Junnin and reclaimed the throne as Shtoku, ruling for another six years.

Empress Meishō (r. 1629–43).

Emperor Go-Mizunoo, who had no sons when he abdicated due to a conflict between the Tokugawa shogunate and the imperial court, was succeeded by her. However, after his abdication, he had a son, and when the boy was old enough to become Emperor Go-Kmy, she abdicated the throne herself.

Empress Go-Sakuramachi (r. 1762–70).

Emperor Momozono's chosen heir was already too young to become emperor, so she ascended the throne as Emperor Sakuramachi's daughter. She then abdicated, and Go-Momozono became Emperor.

We see that Japan only allowed women to rule when either the next male in the line of throne was too small or they didn't have any option. Japan is one of the most advanced countries in terms of technology, Japanese people are highly educated but still, Japan is a prime example of patriarchy. Japan's conservative patriarchal culture is highly influenced by Buddhist and Confucian values on which the country was built. They are not ready to leave their age-old customs which discriminate on the basis of gender and show Japan is a paradigm of misogynistic and patriarchal culture.

A Castrated Oedipus

A MANIFESTO OF DESIRING NOTHING

BY KUNAL PANDA



Nude Descending a Staircase (No. 2) by Marcel Duchamp

Round One, the Platonic Ideal. Then arises a whole cluster of posh copies – of God and Divine Intervention (The Renaissance). Faith and Images here require a real representation. And now God dies. Forgiving sin becomes political propaganda as Jesus becomes real via his portraits. There is only the hyper-real, the Simulacrum is Latin for glorified copies.

Such is the plight of politics and state philosophy – the consummation of signifiers and a signified in the name of establishing logos – among the subject, a concept, and an exterior object. The thinking subject creates concepts onto exteriorities that create representational reality. Policing these analogical simulacra is internally structured judgement. The rational order operates on negation: $a = a \neq b$. Plato has been an orgasmic favourite of the State and its propagandists. State philosophy is false consciousness. The insidious form of this consciousness is the State-form burgeoning into a reproduction of institutions. The University and Government propagating representational thinking in curricula, nationalism as the propagation of the perfect spiritual State. Institutional logic is also devoid of regulated extension (liberalism and citizenship).

Herein lies the crux of this column – desiring idealism. The quest to achieve ideal societies, efficient market equilibria, perfect freedom. It is heretic and repressive to think ideally, that is in itself a sacrilegious hyper-reality with no strings attached. It is this desire for repression that is Oedipal. Desire, as it is known, is a definition and acquisition of a lack. The lack of representation creates a desire to produce. Production for the sake of a lack is inherently nihilistic and asocial, a phenomenon that cannot constitute social production. This lack is the representation of something unattainable and hence reality constraints and thwarts itself in fantasy. Representational fantasy represses the social into a hypnotic trance. Fetishizing repression through idealism is what makes us fascists, it creates an Oedipal neurosis.

“If desire is repressed, it is because every position of desire, no matter how small, is capable of calling into question the established order of a society: not that desire is asocial; on the contrary. But it is explosive; there is no desiring-machine capable of being assembled without demolishing entire social sectors.”

–Mark Seem, Introduction to Anti-Oedipus (Deleuze and Guattari)

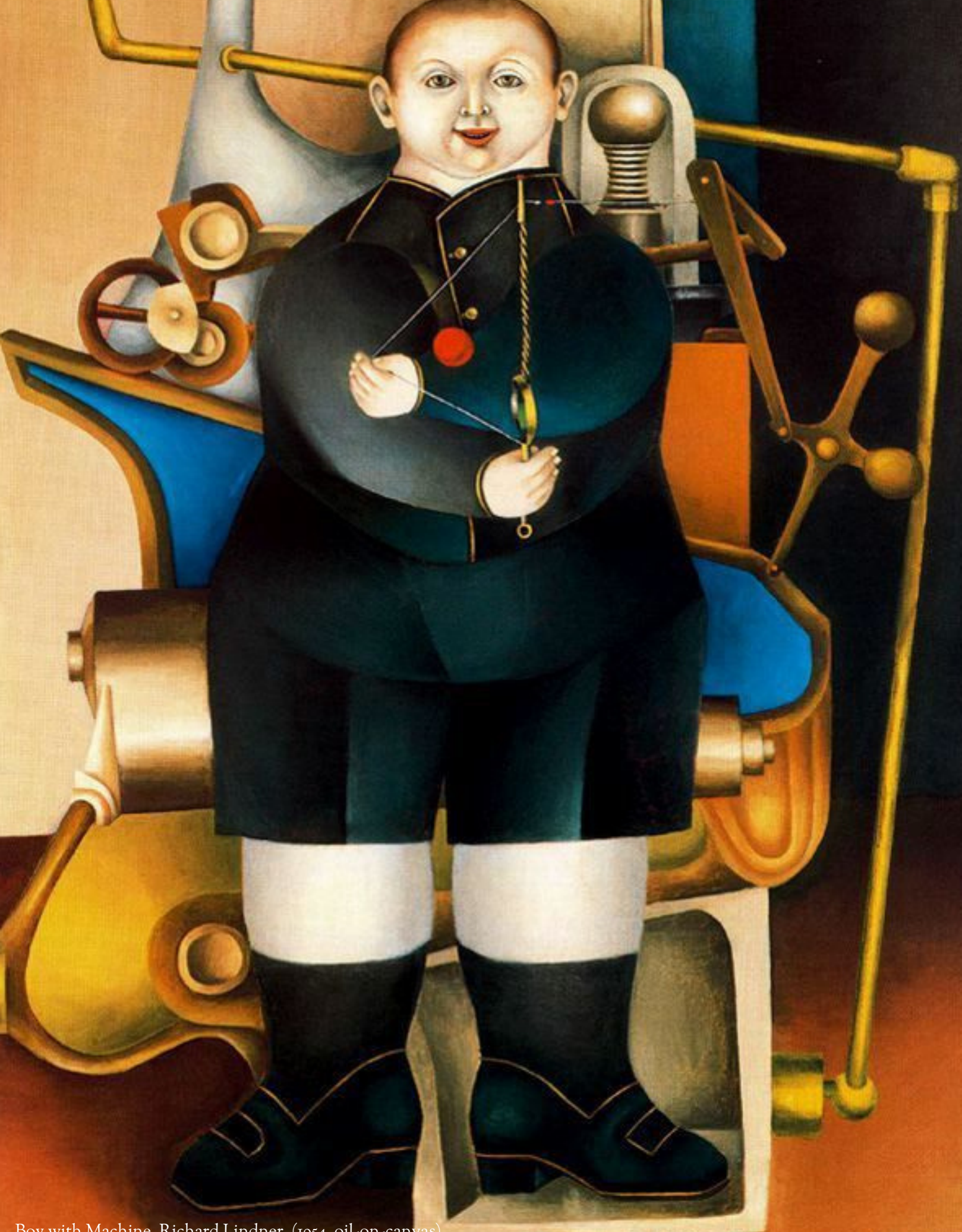
Round Two, a militant ego-loss. The id is a machine – ubiquitous machines at work, an oral machine, an anal machine. Machines as partial objects that obstruct the flow of the circuit – the oral machine grafted onto the breastfeeding rib machine. Desiring-production is thus a binary-linear network of partial breakdowns that interact and produce desire. Desiring-production creates us as an organism whose predicament is such a “dehumanised” organisation. This third product of a binary system is non-productive in itself. This is the death instinct, for “desire desires death”, a tendency to be sterile and inorganic. It is in desiring-production and a body without organs where we find the perfect break for idealist transactions. Here, man and nature subsume each other. The natural instincts of man and the humane persona of nature coagulate into a frenzy of production and consumption which are the same sphere.

What Nietzsche called “gay science” and Artaud called “crowned anarchy” is what Foucault calls “outside thought”. This is the perverted mimesis of this column. Instead of analysing discrete pockets of disjoint concepts ($x = x \neq y$), I sum an open equation ($\dots + x + y + \dots$). Hence, one can take a marble and either sculpt reason or fling it across a window. What is the subject of this marble? The

hand throwing it? The body grafted to it? The mind that ignites the hand? All and none of the above. What is the object of the marble? The window? The building of reason? The society of carpenters that made the window? All and none of the above. The extant concept is the circumstance that matters. It needs no subject or object: it is an act in itself.

It is here that the circuit of capital shall play some relevance to schizophrenia. Fredric Jameson’s articulation of schizophrenia parallels Lacan when it is defined as “the failure of the infant to subsume to speech and language.” The inability to subsume into cultural and ideological signifiers leads to the absence of ego and hence, the schizophrenic stays external to the oedipal triad (daddy-mommy-me). For Freud’s horror, reinforcing the oedipal circuit is a solution to normalise the patient, which is seen as terrorism for Deleuze and Guattari. Jameson compares schizophrenia with late capitalism. The post-Fordist experience of diversified and unsaturated commodities creates discontinuous, unharmonized and isolated signifiers that fail to form coherence.

It is a schizophrenic that fails to perceive the lack that represents desire. For Freud’s unconscious, the schizoid is a nightmare. The ability of the schizoid to override normalised signifiers is -



Boy with Machine, Richard Lindner, (1954, oil-on-canvas)



what is likened to capitalism, for capital creates its logic within each nation's cultural fabric – it lacks an intrinsic I. However, as Deleuze and Guattari opine, schizophrenia is not a mirror to capitalism – it is its exterior limit. As capital deterritorialises a cultural milieu, it reaches a limit after which it must re-emphasise the state apparatus. The schizophrenic never reaches such a limit, just as they resist symbolic re-territorialization of an oedipal psychiatrist.

A Castrated Oedipus is thus, an attempt to capture anti-fascism. It attempts to capture the subaltern, oeuvres that need resonance. For the schizoid in all of us is the subversive desiring-machine that can resist despotism and oedipal oppression. Postmodern politics needs a new yoke which is radical, revolutionary, and nomadic.



Protesters as they inch closer to the border fence separating Israel and Gaza in a camp east of Gaza City, Gaza. (Marcus Yam/Getty Images)

BY RICHA SINHA

A HUMANIST APPROACH TO THE ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT

When the State itself turns its back on a certain group or community, and defines and demarcates its enemies, nothing but State-sponsored violence can ensue.

Reading about the perceptions of historicists and various theories that go on and on about the inevitability of history, has made me vulnerable to losing faith in the actors which shape the present while simultaneously building my incorruptibility of criticism against them. Simply put, it has always been a panoptical world we have lived in, where the 'subject of history' itself has shaped us into being 'subjects' rather than actors in the world which has been actively constructed. Therefore, it becomes important to torture you with what has been disturbing me, for power to me

means having to think about what we read through newspapers and not forgetting or hopefully regretting things, the moment we engross ourselves into this atomistic society we mercilessly built.

The question of Palestine, is mostly regarded as a question of 'nationalities' by scholars and a question of 'religion' by religious fanatics. In this tussle we commit the mistake of ignoring what is the most obvious, the question of 'people', on one side given hope of identity and nationhood, and on the other side whose graveyards were built at the very moment of Balfour Declaration. This article is

about them, the people we started with, before society constructed their identities. My stress on 'people' and the 'politics of care' in a realist world we live in that justifies 'just wars', would be categorized as 'feminist' and unrealistic given the anarcho-centric world, but cautious we all should be, for we all suffer from homogenizing anarchy into 'survival of the fittest'. This social Darwinism is a social construct that now is a faceless anarchical essentialism of human nature, a justification of those who massacred, those who were massacred and the lost humanity we all proudly call realism.



A Palestinian woman argues with an Israeli border policeman in the West Bank. Mohamad Torokman/Reuters

It is my faith in empathy with which I write, the faith in goodness that I know exists, call it as utopian as you may but we can't deny it as it remains the only beacon of light behind all the progress we have had, and all the progress we are to see.

When we say "we don't have a solution for Palestine", we mean we don't have a solution for the rigidity against cooperation of the self-interested parties, but whose interest? Who decides? The problem with group representation is that it takes away individual representation, concerns and worries; and the public realm does not have space to adjust 'empathy, tears and losses' into the materialistic nationalistic garbage of identities. The problem of group representation is that it has a sense of 'power' attached to it, power which blindfolds us to vulnerabilities, because it seeks to dominate over vulnerabilities. Complicated as it may sound, realists are 'satanic' because they don't want to be in a situation of vulnerability. The question lies in whether this alone is the solution, or can power be gathered through confiding in each other, by showing one's vulnerability and hence avoiding what scares us the most, loss and death.

Let us understand the power of empathy. I was not born in Palestine, but by the virtue of being human I can empathize to a situation where people have lost homes, neighborhoods, their dear ones; and that loss paralyzes my thoughts. I was also not born during the Balfour declaration, as a result of which the once historically persecuted and stateless Jewish community, were promised home, neighborhood and an assurance that their miseries would end and they would with dignity live amongst themselves; but it fills me with hope of change, my only strength moving forward. None of these accounts can be represented as evil, as aggressor, as about the realist notion of 'power'; but the irony lies in how we make it about 'power', and fight until we register our guilt into history. This alone is the biggest failure of group representation; it comes into existence to forego vulnerabilities and ends up losing even when it wins.

The next question is, how do we straighten up what we mercilessly complicated? There is no one answer to it, but underlying every solution there has to be a basic principle

which the leaders today have comfortably ignored. The basic principle of empathy, understanding and recognition of power, not as address of vulnerabilities but as confiding in each other through them. The realistic notion of power backfires, it shifts; one day it might be with you, the other day it might be somewhere else, this keeps you on your toes. Simply put, when dealing with power, we have to deal with a 'security dilemma', because power makes enemies not friends and then you engage in the politics of 'relative gains' and forego your 'absolute gains'. On the other hand, the feministic power I talk about makes friends, not enemies, it balances vulnerabilities and in that balance lies the power of confidence, which does not expose you to security dilemma, there are no 'relative gains' here but only collective systems of understanding and confidence-building.

The assumption that man/woman is egoistic, is just that, an assumption, a construction. Man/woman is made egoistic, and therefore the group behaviour stands as egoistic. The recognition of this construction also brings forth the solution wherein lies a possibility that we 'construct' a society where we build power in confidence and trust, empathy and understanding, we change the narrative and construct man/woman as empathetic, the group behaviour as empathetic, rethinking Hobbes' 'state of nature' from the feminist perspective of 'shared power' and only then will there be a solution to Palestine, hinging on the notion of 'perpetual peace' dreamt by Kant.

Every reality was a construct before it became reality, it was a utopia, which later became common sense. Politics is about building that 'commonsense', and contrary to what Machiavelli will believe, it does not have to be 'uninspiring', it has to be about hope and building more utopias until they become common sense; so that we don't say "we don't have a solution for Palestine", we don't take away lives and hopes and don't stand as bystanders in this history in making, and don't surrender to this guilt of history, like our spokespersons today have. There is no win for all, until we make a situation where there can be.

GENDER ROLES AND DEVELOPMENT OF INDIVIDUALS

A Cross Cultural Comparison
by Akankha Basu Roy

What an individual thinks at a particular moment is not a reaction to a situation alone, but includes years of constant moulding and remoulding, in conscious and unconscious ways, of thinking, ideologies and growth. Vygotsky's theory stands apt when he insists that a child's all-round development is secured through their social-cultural interactions with the social environment.

As a student of psychology, I have come to realise that gender is an essential aspect of the society of which an individual is only one miniscule part. The era, including the socio-politico-economic and historical happenings of a particular territory, establishes the way of living; unspoken rules and conventions that one must follow in order to be socially acceptable, better known as gender roles in formal English. With conformity on board, these conventions and traditions are passed on from generation to generation with its own inclusions and exclusions to fit the flow of time. I feel this is what makes gender roles an interesting concept to study. How can a concept, so evolving and debatable, influence the society into conformity? Debatable because of the dubious basis which the concept is based on? Who established the colour blue and pink for a boy or a girl, respectively? Why was it stated that girls needed to play with dolls and boys are supposed to play with army toys or solve smart puzzles?

But instead of focusing on these nearly tabooed questions, this article intends to focus on the differences between gender roles in two different cultures from the same continent and the influence of socio-cultural expectations on the citizens, with special focus on the women.

INDIA

Being a woman in this still-a-developing nation, Indian culture has been a primary choice, even though the state of women is still extremely disappointing. We might come to agree that the urban cities, hand in hand with various organisations, are making some efforts towards the path of women upliftment, the rural borders are still very much in tatters.

However, what unites women of every state, strata, class and caste is the oppression through the societal expectations that are imposed on one's upbringing right from the beginning- men are brought up to be the oppressor and the women are moulded to be the oppressed. It starts right from the birth of a baby girl.

In a personal narrative of a foreigner working in an orphanage in India, as a part of her assignment, she mentions how "most of the orphans dumped on the home's doorstep are baby girls....." due to the deep-rooted concept of a baby boy being more profitable than a girl, as he is "destined" to grow up to be the earning member of the family- earn a wife and a handsome fortune as dowry and father more children, sons preferably (Bradley, 2010). The cycle continues. Girl are expected to mature way earlier than they should, while being encouraged or rather pushed towards household chores like cooking, cleaning, serving, looking after the members of the household, etc. and are punished if they try to deviate from the traditional values of "being submissive to elders, not 'fighting like boys', being sacrificial...." (Srichand, undated). In the same personal narrative as the above one, Bradley notices how girls, even of five years old, have to take care of the younger orphans- bathe them, feed them, tend to their needs; they are reprimanded if they do not abide by their roles. However, the same isn't the case for the boys. Though they're expected of the same, they're not forced to follow it. In another survey conducted in the state of Jharkhand by a senior research and programme associate at International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW), 90% girls accepted that their primary role revolves around being a caregiver, where they're expected to be part of the household chores from a very young age and by the age of 15 drop out of school to focus on their domesticity skills. (Shukla, 2020). The same article reports that after a certain age, their movements in the outer world are restricted and they are required to acquire permissions before even going over to their friend's house as "74% of the girls felt that a family's honour lies in the girl's hand, and 33% felt that 'good girls' do not roam in public spaces." In an Indian family, there is a head who takes all the final decisions involving every member in the family. The head is usually the eldest male member; post his death, it would be his son.

The male members have the power to command over the female subordinates but have to follow the orders of their senior male members.

Jeffrey Hays (2008) highlights that a daughter-in-law holds the least amount of respect at her in-laws'. He writes, "Women are strongly socialized to accept a position subservient to males, to control their sexual impulses, and to subordinate their personal preferences to the needs of the family and kin group." A married woman in India is expected to worship her husband as a God- Pati Parmeshwar, as known in Sanskrit. She is expected to wear bangles, bindi and vermilion to show respect to her in-laws and is supposed to be the last one to have her meals. Her position only improves once she produces son, the more the better.

However, it is to be noted that the times are changing and Women are getting more and more opportunities to flourish. As a paper aptly concludes, how "As compared with the past, women in modern times have become powerful in various fields and have achieved a lot but in reality they have to still travel a long way." (Mainwal, 2014)

JAPAN

Another Asian culture aligned on the same lines of a patriarchal mindset. The women in Japan suffered a lot during the scheme of "comfort girls" where they were encouraged to provide unpaid sexual services to the Japanese soldiers during world war II. Similar to gender roles in India, women are expected to primarily take care of their husbands and their families- a caregiver. In his paper, Yamaguchi (2000) notes down the gender roles that still persist including associating women with all the household chores while men are meant to manage the earning aspect of the family in the outer world. In their family life, a woman's role is defined by the concept of "three submissions"- first to their fathers, second to their husbands and lastly to their sons. (Cooper, 2013). Women, from their early childhood,

are trained in femininity including tidiness, compliance, self-reliance and courtesy; along with participating in household chores and entertaining guests. (DeBlasio, 1985). Similar to India, married women would project their mark of wedding by blackening their teeth and shaving their eyebrows off. In schools, girls and boys are put in separate classes indicating the priority of the boys' education over the girls'. In student organisations, the girls were required to look after the needs of the boys while the latter had a fun time participating in various events. (Belarmino & Roberts, 2019). Till date, women, even if given the opportunities to have a professional life, are expected to juggle between their roles as a mother and wife of a house and a professional in a workspace. (Kitagawa, 2010). In a study of 10 adult women from different backgrounds studying in a university, the vast majority felt that their inherent responsibility was to serve the men and rear children, maintain "...their appearances to portray feminine traits, i.e, looking cute or beautiful." (Belarmino & Roberts, 2019). The same subjects confess how they are expected to wear make-up and wear heels in a professional setting, otherwise, it comes off as a rude, disrespecting gesture towards authority.

Nonetheless, times are changing and so are gender roles. According to the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Technology, 98.1% of female students reached high school in, 2012 and 45.8% continued with under-graduate studies. In 2019, Japan secured the 19th rank in the Gender Inequality Index (GII) released by the United Nations in their Human Development Report, indicating lessening inequalities between the genders. Nowadays, even men are equally participating in household chores including looking after a newborn. They're called Ikumen, literally meaning men who raise children but the ratio gap still has a huge distance to cover. (Kaise, 2018).

PERSONAL REFLECTION DEVELOPMENTAL IMPACT OF THE CONCEPT

Rao et al., in their paper (2015) highlights the Ericksonian stages of socio-cultural approach to the development of an individual. It, aptly, fits the concept in choice and their implications on the development of an individual. In the second, third and fourth stages, the importance of the external environment is what pushes the child towards a healthy development of the self and unfortunately, in these very stages, young girls are imposed with the responsibilities of managing and pleasing members of the family. Constant upon straying from the expectations of the society, blatant discrimination, lack of affection, curb their

self-confidence and trap them in the endless loop of subservience to their male counter-parts, owing to the feelings of inferiority. Rao et al., also mentions the Gender Scheme theory which explains the science behind the phenomena. Children are not only aware of their gender at a very early age but also realise the roles that the society expects from these gender prototypes. When they start identifying with one of them, they automatically start following or trying to abide by these expectations to have a place of their own, mainly to earn the appreciation of being a "good" child. In cases of girls belonging to the two aforementioned cultures, they realise that cooking or taking care of the household is a feminine characteristic and they must follow it to fit within the society. But even though it helps them to "fit in", it also teaches them to ignore their own well-being which is detrimental to their individualistic development. This brings us to the type of culture. India and Japan both have collectivistic culture where placing self over others is highly discouraged; members are asked to be more group-oriented. This itself has its own shortcomings but the worst sufferers are the women who have to place everyone else on planet earth before their well-being. It affects their physical well-being as well as India reports 53% anaemia among women alone. Statistics show "20% of maternal deaths are directly related to anemia and another 50% of maternal deaths are associated with it." (Anand et al., 2013).

The entire patriarchal approach to these cultures are like vicious death traps with zero routes out. Passed on from generation to generation, women themselves have accepted their defeat and have turned their backs to each other. Mothers chide their daughters to be obedient while mother-in-laws, having faced the same humiliations and desperate to hold an authoritative ground, drags their daughter-in-laws down. Their development, unfortunately, is measured by the amount of sacrifices in their life; the more a woman sacrifices, the higher is the false pedestal they're placed upon. Set up as role models, it leaves their self-esteem in tatters and increases their feeling of inadequacy. It feels as though their entire existence is regulated by everyone else but their own.

As a woman of an urban city, I'm blessed to have a family that supports me and my dreams. It is easy for me to talk about this oppression and injustice with bitter words and extreme empathy because I'm in a privileged position, with proper mental, physical, biological development, outside the death trap. But I'm still a woman of this culture; am I really, then, exempted from the expectations?



SOCIETY

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RIGHTING THE WRONGS

Human Rights in 'The White Tiger'

BY SHIVANGI SHARMA

The White Tiger, the recently released Netflix film by Rahmin Bahrani, is a gripping adaptation of Aravind Adiga's Man-Booker Prize-winning novel of the same name, published in the year 2008. The irony is that the movie was released on one of the most expensive streaming platforms in the country when the central theme revolves around emancipation from class divide and inequality.

The movie's protagonist, Balram Halwai, played by Adarsh Gourav, is a classic example of the rags to riches tale of modern India. Halwai belongs to an underprivileged class of the society and lives in the village of Laxmangarh, where his father works as a rickshaw puller, his brother works at a tea stall, and he is forced to give up his educational scholarship at a very young age in order to contribute -



more to his family-owned tea stall. Nevertheless, Halwai misses no opportunity to break out of Laxmangarh and secure a job as a chauffeur with the 'Stork's son', Mr Ashok.

In 'Righting Wrongs', Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak contends "Human Rights is not only about having or claiming a right, but it is also about dispensing these rights. The idea of human rights, in other words, may carry within itself the agenda of a kind of social Darwinism—the fittest must shoulder the burden of righting the wrongs of the unfit—and the possibility of an alibi."

A close reading of this contention would suggest that the one who claims human rights, here the underprivileged, can be the dispenser of rights; and if they are the dispenser of human rights, then it gives them a chance to easily work towards their emancipation. This is not to misunderstand, and think that the 'underprivileged' must shoulder the responsibility of claiming and dispensing rights for themselves and others, but to analyse how these rights might be dispensed by them while also re-imagining their course of development. In the course of this analysis, Halwai represents the weaker class.

Thus, this article questions the means and ways by which Halwai attempts to right the wrongs for himself, and if it was ethical to do so. It also analyses the questions of Halwai's character being influenced by the virtues of modernisation and globalisation and the ways he adopts to break out of underdevelopment, but is modernisation really a way out of poverty, or is it a road to another form of impoverishment?

THE CENTRAL PREMISE

Balram's narrative in the movie begins with him writing an email to

the then Premier of China, Wen Jiabao, where he contrasts the two Indias - the India of 'light' and the India of 'darkness'. Presently, he's a successful entrepreneur of a taxi firm in Bangalore, but the story goes way past; tracing his oppression, his experiences with class divide and inequality, the inexplicable servitude towards his Master Ashok and Pinky Madam, and finally his roguish criminal acts.

Being an opportunist, Balram leaves no stone unturned to secure a job as a chauffeur and thus begins to identify the nuances of class divide and inequality in the Stork's family. He explains how he was earlier held back from going against his masters and his only 'dharma' was to serve them, but he soon learns that his master only cares for himself. This is made apparent in many incidents, one of which involves gaslighting and forcing Halwai to confess to a crime that he was not guilty of.

He soon finds the opportunity to make his own moves towards breaking out of the shackles of the class divide. He decides to kill his master Ashok, steal money from him, and use it as capital to establish his new firm in Bangalore. Finally, he bribes policemen to clean his image for the murder.

It is this morally questionable act that elevates him to a 'higher class' and helps him break out of the shackles of the class divide. Thus, the questions that arise from the course of his actions towards his master are; one, is it ethical for a subaltern to commit an act of rigorous violence to achieve emancipation and two, was this his only viable option to climb the social ladder?

To answer these questions, one should turn towards the ideas of underdevelopment that Bahrani tries to portray in the film.

THE ROOSTER COOP- A METAPHOR FOR THE CLASS DIVIDE

To explain the class inequality between the rich and the poor in our country, Halwai uses the metaphor of the 'Rooster Coop'.

"The greatest thing to come out of this country... is the Rooster Coop. The roosters in the coop smell the blood from above. They see the organs of their brothers... They know they're next. Yet they do not rebel. They do not try to get out of the coop. The very same thing is done with human beings in this country."

He explains to us how the coop is a symbol of two forms of underdevelopment for the poor—one in which the rich try to torture and profit from the poor and the other in which the poor trample on each other in order to get to the top.

In an extended metaphor, one can understand from this analogy that the butcher, who slaughters the hens, is described as the 'richer class', and the hens in the coop as the 'subaltern class'. In this divide, the 'butcher' is profiting from the situation as he serves them with food and later kills them, the second idea of the poor walking over one another emerges from the roosters feeding on the others, yet not rebelling because they know that there is no way out of this cycle of oppression.

While describing this divide, one can relate it to the theories of global inequality and underdevelopment. This argument holds that Third World countries were deeply exploited and corrupted by Western countries through colonisation. They were politically and economically stagnated for profits, which has led to the current state of the underdeveloped economies of the Third World. This is also suitable to Halwai's theme of the 'brown man' and the 'yellow man', which he

further describes as the Indian and the Chinese respectively, trying to uplift themselves over the 'white man'- whom he describes as the leaders of the Western countries. He remarks how the low levels of development in South Asia were deep-rooted in the oppression by the Western nations, but the present emergence of China and other South Asian economies has challenged the hegemony of the Western states. More intrinsically, the divide between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' can be associated with his ideas of local inequalities between the rich and the poor.

In Halwai's discourse of the rich oppressing the poor, the sounds of the Global North and Global South divide echo equivalently. The scene where the Stork and the Mongoose force Halwai to sign a legal document reverberates a massive class divide. A representation of privilege also adequately seeps in through the educated and learned wife-Pinky Madam, when she explains the importance of breaking away from the shackles of the class divide to Balram, but throws him under the bus to take the blame for a crime she committed. Her hypocrisy is also reflected when she ignores Balram's emotions and escapes from the scenes where he is held accountable for her crime. Therefore, in some shape and form, characters like Ashok and Pinky become the upholders of the very system that they are trying to stand up against.

In the second discourse of the poor exploiting the poor, Bahrani looks at a more complex aspect 'the Indian family'. He recognises that a form of ethic, moral understanding stands for the community and the one who is able to go against this norm, that is, someone 'who is able to see his family destroyed', will be able to break out of the rooster coop. In doing so, Halwai goes against the ethics and morality which ascertain his ways of following 'modernised ways' to lead towards development.

HALWAI'S WAYS OF BREAKING THE COOP-TOWARDS MODERNIZATION

According to Sankaran Krishna, the modernisation theory offers a different explanation for global inequality and underdevelopment. It suggests that the Western countries are richer than the non-West because of their 'rational, self-interested ways to better their own life'. This can be shown through Halwai's many actions in the movie. The first attribute according to the modernisation theory, is to act in scientific, rather than religious ways. Halwai's character in the movie portrays a disinterested take on Gods and religion in Indian society. By referring to them as "wealthy politicians", it is clear that he's not into religion as much as the others.

Simultaneously, one also notices the ways and means by which he perceives the structural orientation of religion in the country, and leaves no opportunity to benefit from it. He's reasonable enough to 'pray in front of more gods than the other driver, so as to secure his job with the Hindu boss'. More than his pragmatic takes on religion, Balram also tries to profit out of most situations, thus acting as a rational man displaying -



business acumen, another popular characteristic of modernisation. He also hides petrol bills from his employer and even picks up paying customers to secure capital for himself. When he's summoned by Ashok, at first, he feels guilty about his wrongdoings, but soon realises how his Master stole so much from him. His rage lies in the sense of injustices committed against him by his Master, and also in the ideas of the rich getting richer day by day. Based on Halwai's embodiment of his modernised actions, he also begins to manifest specific physical attributes, while taking the path of development. The film attaches a visual symbolism to Halwai's ideas of modernization. He begins to follow the ideas of a Westernised entrepreneur, by wearing shirts and pants to his job, along with formal, black, polished shoes. With all of these actions, Halwai benefits by rising from an impoverished, subaltern individual to a taxi-firm owning entrepreneur. However, this kind of development also comes at a price for him. This brings us to the last question to be examined, did Halwai fairly break from the shackles of the rooster coop, or did he get trapped in the perils of modernisation to become another Ashok?

THE QUESTION OF ETHICS

Halwai's character saw huge development- through his 'modernised practices' and 'entrepreneurial acumen', but all of this came at the cost of sacrificing his family and his morality.

Within this purview of development, Halwai then finds that he has 'the choice to do something better



"THE GREATEST THING TO COME OUT OF THIS COUNTRY... IS THE ROOSTER COOP. THE ROOSTERS IN THE COOP SMELL THE BLOOD FROM ABOVE. THEY SEE THE ORGANS OF THEIR BROTHERS...THEY KNOW THEY'RE NEXT. YET THEY DO NOT REBEL. THEY DO NOT TRY TO GET OUT OF THE COOP. THE VERY SAME THING IS DONE WITH HUMAN BEINGS IN THIS COUNTRY"

than his master', which is justified through his so-called actions of benevolence: when he bribes a victim's family and capitalizes on their emotions to hire the younger brother of the victim for the self-interest of his own business. This makes him believe that he is ethically much superior in a master-servant relationship, by saving his employees out of a criminal offence through acts of bribery.

However, when one examines such an act of 'kindness and benevolence', one can easily interpret how it is a product of structural capitalism. The act of monetising human emotions and profiting off of them is a new form of suppressing the voice of the oppressed. One can easily predict how Halwai's motives lead to a form of economic upliftment, dictated by the norms of a free-market system. He reduces the victim's family to the status of 'labour and services', something he can easily profit from. This action not only makes him a perpetrator of the same system that he is trying to break out of, but also makes all his actions towards development null and void.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE WHITE TIGER

Unlike the theory of modernisation, a human rights approach takes a more comprehensive view of development. This approach believes that enhancing one's civil and political, social and economic, cultural and environmental freedom will help them achieve a level of emancipation. Therefore, Halwai's narrative of achieving development would not be supported by the Human Rights contenders, as this has resulted in his family's and Master Ashok's suffering- through the indirect torture of the former and direct killing of the latter.

However, another question that arises from this debate is the 'possession of the agency of human rights'. It is only those who have greater power and wealth that typically dominate the basis of human rights, therefore, prescribing to the rich man's idea of ethics and morality. One can thus justify Halwai's actions towards his master, as one for his own development through the ethics defined by the

poor, that are not controlled by the rich.

Although Halwai's sense of ethics seems uneasy from the perspectives of human rights and development, they make significant sense when looked at from an egalitarian point of view. He tries to secure his socio-economic, civil and political rights, by adopting his own praxis of ethics. Thus, one can conclude that human rights and theories of development may not overlap with each other, but they surely recognize one community developing at the cost of the other. Such a form of development can be described as development 'from below' and thus an 'active agency of the oppressed'. Halwai's narrative of development stems from breaking out of the oppression that he faced because of his masters. In the course of the movie, he decides to let go of all his respect and admiration and recognizes the discrimination that he is subjected to by his masters. Therefore, Halwai's ways of righting the wrongs were not only valid but also ethical.

NEELAKURINJI

Fathoming The Opaque Identities Of Sex Workers

BY ANIMA SINGH

"Oh Sunflower, the sun's chum, can I not be envious of you?", sighs Neelakurinji. "Oh Rose, the quintessence of affection, can I dare call you my sister?", whines Neelakurinji. "Oh Chrysanthemum, the all-weather queen, can I ever emulate your timeless blooms?", groans Neelakurinji.

This brief and dramatic monologue is intended to address not only the hypocrisy of our society, but also the superfluous and fallacious shame that we carry under the façade of morality. I would have conveniently resorted to a voluptuous description, undressing your imagination to the dark vestibules of forbidden abodes, but then I do not want to attest to popularised illustrations and legitimize the discomfiture that the people in general face when the question about sex workers is ignited.

Rather than the names given to them, which are more often than not unabashed abuses, I choose to metaphorically refer to them as flowers with a sublime, bluish-purple hue, which bloom slyly once every twelve years, swathing abandoned places: the Neelakurinji. Unable to propagate their beauty and tantamount to a Rose, a Sunflower, or a Chrysanthemum, these blossoms wilt away in drudgery and anonymity. Oh Neelakurinji, I cannot envisage how long the precarious red lights shall define your existence.



A street scene in Kamathipura in 2007. Police and the courts have been arresting and convicting sex workers' clients, even though they are not criminalised in Indian law. Image by SUDHARAK OLWE and description by The Caravan.

DRAGOONED INTO DESOLATION

As per news reports, sex workers of Asia's largest red-light area Sonagachi had expressed their discontent towards political representatives of the area and were inclined to vote for NOTA before the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. I could feel an adrenaline rush in my nerves while pondering how these women and also some men mustered courage to walk the streets in daylight exercising their constitutional rights without being judged? Did they encounter a client stealing eyes wearing the garb of civil chauvinism?

This inquisitiveness, however, has no pertinence as such a sight is an exception in India. When the government records about people in this profession are paltry, it is but natural for the elected officials to forget about ensuring their rights. It has been more than a decade since the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare gave an underestimated reply to an RTI on the number of sex workers in India. It would be nothing but an exaggerated presupposition to think of sex workers going to press the ballot button, considering the stigma around their clandestine work coupled with the encumbrance of getting essential reliefs and rights in the form of voter ID cards and ration cards due to bureaucratic paperwork. The demand for adequate documents, which these workers fail to supply, keeps the entrenched inequalities in the system intact.

Laws and statutes in paper and in practice are like chalk and cheese, and this is painstaking and traumatizing for the ones who are already shackled. Prostitution is not a criminal offence per se, but what about the de facto criminalization which is implied by the laws? The laws seek to eliminate prostitution instead of checking traffickers without realizing that legislations around the world have not been able to do so up till the present date. Section 8 of the Immoral Practices (Prevention) Act is criticised for being discriminatory as it prescribes a lesser punishment to men than women for the same offence.

It is a fallacious and selective presumption that society can be immunised against obscenity if sex workers are kept in demeaning isolation from the mundane moral business and 'righteousness' of the larger society. The dignity of a sex worker becomes unbecoming and their existence ignominious by the vice of such fallacies.

A number of sex workers and their children inhabit red light areas across India, with the most infamous one being Sonagachi in Kolkata, which may remind you of the Oscar-winning documentary 'Born in Brothels'. In Mumbai, there is Kamathipura red light area and if the trailer of Alia Bhatt starrer movie Gangubai Kathiawadi has had the attention of your eyes, you must -



be aware of this place. Budhwar Peth in Pune is an ironical place with electronic goods and books existing along with brothels. Meeraganj in Allahabad is infamous for its most precarious nature. GB road (now Swami Shradhananda Marg) in Delhi has a ground floor with markets and brothels above them, thus inviting a sense of peculiarity. Chaturbhuj Sthan in Muzaffarpur reminisces the high social space concubines of olden times and Shivdaspur in Varanasi has its sheen lost and lives in oblivion.

Neither is Article 23 (dealing with trafficking in human beings, begar, and other forms of forced labour) being ensured, nor are Articles 14 and 19 of the Constitution being safeguarded from infringement during the course of a dire indignity inflicted upon sex workers. Pragmatically, this is an informal sector business with gargantuan revenue that barely reaches the hands of its employees. Dolefully, the law targets those people in the profession who have given their consent to be a sex worker. It has been accepted that this consent in most cases is coerced with time in light of no alternative. However, if the focal point of statutes will be on saving the new entrants and children of the sex workers, they will no more be fodder for the exploitative corners.



IT IS A FALLACIOUS AND SELECTIVE PRESUMPTION THAT THE SOCIETY CAN BE IMMUNISED AGAINST OBSCENITY IF SEX WORKERS ARE KEPT IN DEMEANING ISOLATION FROM THE MUNDANE MORAL BUSINESS AND 'RIGHTEOUSNESS' OF THE LARGER SOCIETY. THE DIGNITY OF A SEX WORKER BECOMES UNBECOMING AND THEIR EXISTENCE IGNOMINIOUS BY VICE OF SUCH FALLACIES.

CHOKING IN QUAGMIRE

The dialogue around the fons et origo and ramifications has already been comprehensive and somewhat trite, but it must be noted that in the backdrop of legalization, decriminalization, and provision of reliefs and protection to sex workers, there lie certain fundamental hassles and societal hypocrisy at work. Conscientiously, the history student in me urges to briefly trace down the memory lane just to analyse historiography's revelation about this profession.

An apsara in heaven, a devadasi in temple, and a tawaif in Mughal court, all charmed the onlookers by virtue of their exquisite dance moves and euphonic presentations. However, the altering social fabric in each of the aforementioned versions transformed the denotation of customs and artistry into something equivalent to the exploitation of the acquiescent by the powerful.

Patriarchy did exacerbate the system bringing it to the current form. However, the augmentation in the number of male sex workers, transgenders, and high-end prostitutes, emanates the overbearance of multilayered factors. A blanket perception about the people in the profession leads to harrowing ignorance towards the women and children cajoled or confined in the murky shackles.

While the pandemic conferred tremendous tribulations upon the lives of sex workers, it opened an avenue for virtual technology to be utilized in the profession. However, given the regulations around such practices, its sustenance is anything but smooth

The saddening part is that there is still an uneasiness in recognising and reaching out to the sex workers directly by the government authorities prior to the enunciation by NGOs and civil societies. The questions hovering in the labyrinth of



Sex workers in Delhi veil themselves to protect their identities at a protest against their eviction. India does not criminalise the selling of sex by willing adults, yet makes it impossible for sex workers to practice their profession without breaking the law.

GURINDER OSAN / AP PHOTO

Description by The Caravan

the social dilemma are well-known and herein I present my answers to them. Selling sex for money is not unethical. If anything is breaking the moral norms, then it is the egocentrism and unscrupulousness of the person who tortures the one in this profession.

It would be erroneous to believe that sex workers cannot be raped, because they are molested even by a group of people unabashedly howling against the work done by the prostitute everyday. With all maidenly modesty, sex workers imagine about marriage and get emotionally attached, but their dreams never materialize to the extent of providing life-long happiness. Accentuating the caste-based struggle, the lower caste women by virtue of their economic conditions and redundant social norms suffer the most in the profession. So, even if Neelakurinji musters up the courage to bloom, there is no one to embrace her in their flourishing lives. Alas! she remains just an alluring piece in a sultry afternoon.

Oh! liberate me if I want to be free and leave me if I so desire. Let my children be not besmirched for life. Let your eyes be opened to penetrate through my blurry face to read my emotions and let your ears be pardoned for my groaning silence.”, calls Neelakurinji with an oblivious identity. Feel it if you can without adjudicating, or else I shall think what Manto said was right : “अगर आप इन अफ़सानों को बर्दाश्त नहीं कर सकते तो ये ज़माना नाक़ाबिल-ए-बर्दाश्त है” (If you cannot bear these stories then the society is unbearable. Who am I to remove the clothes of this society, which itself is naked. I don't even try to cover it, because it is not my job, that's the job of dressmake

GAMESTOP AND THE STOCK MARKET FIASCO THROUGH THE EYES OF CLASS DIVIDE

BY ABHIGYA BARTH WAL

You can't expect to understand the movie if you started watching it after the intermission, so here, let me rewind it for you. In fact, consider what I'm about to tell you as the prequel to our major movie.

THE PREQUEL

In the year 2000, investors all over the world were looking to generate big profits, but of course, something that had less opportunity to fail. Something called 'mortgage-backed securities' checked both boxes. In layperson terms, this was basically mortgages of many people bundled together as one. This was a safe option for two reasons. First, this produced high returns from the interest rates homeowners paid and had a low risk because who didn't pay their mortgage? Defaulters were not a problem because in the early 2000s banks were extremely selective and gave mortgages only to people with good credit.

As the housing market seemed so lucrative, more and more investors wanted to buy more of these securities. Hence, we come back to the basics of economics- as demand for these securities rose, lenders raised their supply to match this rise in demand. Or at least tried to do so. To increase the supply, lenders now started making mortgages without verifying income and started offering mortgages to people in such a way that they could afford the initial payments but could not keep up with the future payments. This was new and was called subprime mortgages. What adds depth to our story is that investors were completely unaware of this. So inevitability in 2007, when buyers couldn't keep up with the mortgage prices and started defaulting- Case two of demand and supply came into action,

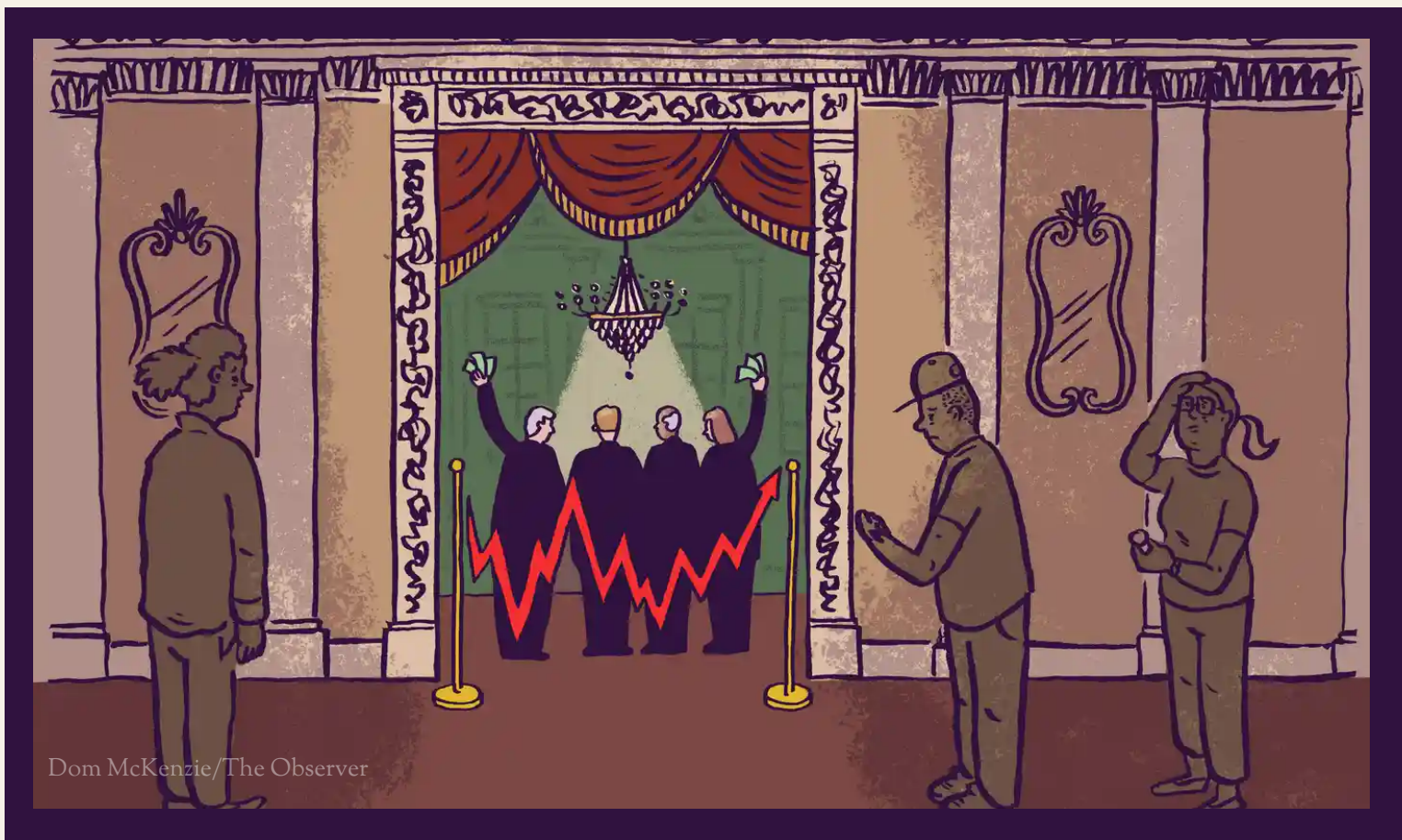
now houses were back in the market. As supply started increasing and demand fell down. Acting quickly, investors stopped buying these subprime mortgages. The stock market crashed, those bundles of mortgage became worthless, but here is where things get interesting.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Traders for the first time had made bets 'against' mortgages, meaning, they would make money, only if the housing market crashed. So yes, while the entire world thought the housing market was omnipotent. Some people were already betting on its downfall. The stock market crashed and all this led to the recession of 2008. The rich got richer and of course, the poor suffered. Our economic pie struggled to keep the poor fed, while the rich owned most of it. But although unethical all of this was completely legal, it didn't matter if it shook up the whole economy, we operate under a 'free' and 'unregulated market' and anyone can do this completely legally, well... the rich can, the same can't be said for the poor. This leads us back to our major movie of the GameStop stocks.

THE SEQUEL

Technically, it all started in 2019 when a \$53,000 investment was made in GameStop (which you might have guessed from the name is basically a video game retailer), now this might not have been



suspicious but since GameStops works on a brick and mortar business model (which basically means that it does not sell its products online but, in a store) which is considered as “outdated” it is indeed suspicious why anyone would invest this heavily in it. Many other Redditors noticed that 84% of GameStop stocks were shorted (history mimicking its pattern) all this happened around mid-January 2021. Now the hedge fund (basically a group of people who make profits by short selling) who had invested the \$53,000 was, Melvin Capital. Remember this name because it will come up again.

Now, it became quite clear to the members of the subreddit “wallstreetbets” what was happening. So to prevent this the whole community of small investors of Reddit came together, rallied everyone they could and spread the word- to buy as much GameStop stocks as every small investor could, it didn’t matter if it was for \$4 or \$1500 as long as the entire amateur investor community was together, aggressively buying stocks. So yes naturally the share prices increased and all the people who were betting against GameStops that is, the short-sellers, lost

\$23.6 billion. Melvin Capital who had invested before, lost 30% of the \$12.5 billion, all this to a united subreddit community.

Now to understand the way this works is, let’s assume the example of Melvin Capital. Melvin Capital “borrows” stocks from a broker and sells them in the market for \$100, now as they sold these stocks the price of these stocks WILL fall as their supply would increase, demand would decrease (so basically manipulating and exploiting the market, because well, it is indeed unregulated), people under their influence will sell their stocks as well and hence the price will fall. We already know that the price is going to decrease (shorting) so let us say they are successful, the price falls to \$70 so they buy back their stocks that they had originally sold, and make a profit of \$30, they then pay the broker a small interest of let’s say \$5 and keeps the rest \$25 to themselves, quite neat, but what happens if someone already knew what Melvin Capital was up-to.

So with GameStops when Redditors began buying the same stocks Melvin Capital had put in the market, to short. There weren’t many

stocks left for them to return to the broker. This means the demand went up and hence the prices went up too. Now Melvin Capital would have to buy these stocks back from Redditors at a high price, but the Redditors weren't ready to sell.

Now here is where things get interesting, the rich hedge funds have been manipulating the market for decades treating it like their own little casino, getting away with it because well again, it is legal. But here is where things contradict themselves, after these hedge funds lost money, they demanded- That short selling be made illegal. Something that they themselves have been doing for decades, something that is common practice in the market, illegal.

Anyone who has heard of stocks knows what a risk is and they still took that 'risk' until they, didn't. Now you might think that well just because the hedge-funds demanded it to stop, it wouldn't actually happen right? But by now

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TO SELL.

you must have understood how everything favours those in power, so yes it was in fact made illegal.

"Robinhood" which is basically an app that makes stock trading and investing accessible to everyone suspended buying of GameStop stocks, only buying not selling. Robinhood went against the very essence of its name. The ideals of modern-day Robinhood lie somewhere else.

The freeze made little sense, scratch that, it made absolutely zero sense at all. This move faced a lot of heat from politicians from both parties in America. The terms 'free market' 'unregulated market' applicability depends on the toss of a coin either way if it holds true then only for the poor, if it doesn't then only for the rich, as we saw in 2008. So what's the takeaway from this? Is it that the rich will remain rich, or is it showing the power of community rebellion and resistance all of it while sitting in front of your respective screens? I'll leave that for you to decide.



THE WHITEWASHED INTERNATIONAL MEDIA

BY ANANYA BHARDWAJ

The murder of 46 year old George Floyd, on May 26, 2020, in Minneapolis, at the hands of a white cop has raised certain important questions we need to think about when we talk of the stagnant ideologies of separation. The United States saw continuous days of protests despite the rapid spread of COVID-19. Protestors had been marching on the streets, shouting slogans, while gathering outside the house of the cop who was responsible, to mark him with the sign 'murderer'. The cases of racial police brutality, in numerous regions around the globe, are raising an alarm lately. In times like these, it becomes imperative to look back to the deeds and achievements of black and coloured people which have been erased by whitewashed media channels. It is through this that we would understand the nuances within hegemonic concepts which exists to stabilise white supremacy within the folds of popular imagination and establish it as the realist model of life. Jacinda Arden, the 40th Prime Minister of New Zealand and the -

leader of the Labour Party since 2017, is one of the most popular women politicians in international news these days commemorated for her progressive and inclusive politics. Applauded for having birthed a child while holding office, Arden has been heralded for opening offices of governance to blacks, queer people, people of indigenous ethnicities, to name a few. She led New Zealand through three tumultuous years which saw a volcanic eruption, terror attacks, and a global pandemic. While all this is worth appreciating, what we do forget in this whitewashing is that women at power in the Global South, especially in nations comprising South Asia, have done the same, and sometimes, even more. Out of 25 women who are head of state in the world today, 11 are women of colour. For instance, the first woman to give birth while holding the office of Prime Minister was Benazir Bhutto, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, in 1993, and not Jacinda Arden. In fact, the first female prime minister in the world was Sirimavo Bandaranaike of Sri Lanka, elected in 1960.



A recent Instagram post of the news and media website Au Fait, garnered huge traction among people from non-white geographical areas. The headline of the post read, 'New Zealand is not the first country to provide paid miscarriage leave. They're just the first white country.' If we look at the data, we realise that India was the first country to legalise miscarriage leave and had passed the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act in 1961, which grants 6 weeks of fully paid leave for women who undergo a miscarriage at any point during their pregnancy. Mauritius grants 3 weeks of fully paid leave for a miscarriage and 14 weeks for stillbirth. Likewise, Philippines provides 60 days fully paid leave, Indonesia, 6 weeks, and Taiwan, between 5 days to 4 weeks. In comparison to all these nations, New Zealand has miles to go since it has sanctioned only 3 days of paid leave, as of yet. In fact, according to the data of 41 countries compiled by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the United States ranks last in government mandated paid leave for new parents.

This is just one incident where white media has ignored the efforts and accomplishments of women of colour. New Zealand is still considered 'white' by the Western media and therefore, fits in their notions of a liberal democracy which can become an example to lead other 'backward' nations. This constant attempt at showcasing the

Why have we never pondered over the fact that the first Indian female Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, is known as the Iron Lady of India, in reference to Margaret Thatcher, the Iron Lady? Isn't this title baffling since Indira Gandhi assumed office in 1966, almost 12 years before Margaret Thatcher, who was elected in 1979?

white world as advanced and superior adds to the inherent stereotypes against people of colour as not being civilised or educated enough. Why have we never pondered over the fact that the first Indian female Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, is known as the Iron Lady of India, in reference to Margaret Thatcher, the Iron Lady? Isn't this title baffling since Indira Gandhi assumed office in 1966, almost 12 years before Margaret Thatcher, who was elected in 1979?

We live in a world where the justice to a black man is celebrated as victory of the oppressed, and not something taken for granted. In the aftermath of former Minneapolis Officer Derek Chauvin being convicted on Tuesday of murder and manslaughter for 'pinning George Floyd to the pavement with his knee on the Black man's neck', The Indian Express stated, 'The verdict was read in a courthouse ringed with concrete barriers and razor wire and patrolled by National Guard troops, in a city on edge against another round of unrest — not just because of the Chauvin case but because of the deadly police shooting of a young Black man, Daunte Wright, in a Minneapolis suburb April 11.'

It is time for us to understand that these crimes do not take place in vacuum. The whitewashing of media and news channels is a very significant way to aid the already existing notions the world has of black and coloured people.

SERRATED PLATITUDES *of* POLITICAL MISOGYNY

BY ANUSHKA PANDEY

“Jahaaj me baitha tha, mere bagal me ek behenji baithi thi (In the plane a woman was sitting besides me).. Baatchit hui, jab maine unko dekha to neeche gum boots the (when we talked, i looked at her, she was wearing gumboots), jab aur upar dekha to ghutne fatey the (when i looked a bit upwards she was wearing ripped jeans), aur haath me dekhiye kahi kade they. (also she was wearing bangles). Jab unke ghutney fatey dekhey, bachey do sath me they, maine poocha kaha jana hai, husband kaha hai, kya karti hain.. (when I saw her ripped jeans with two kids along I enquired regarding her personal life).”

The real problem began, when the newly appointed chief minister of Uttarakhand said, “ghutney fate dikhte hai, samaaj ke beech me jaati ho, kya sansskaar dogi? (with your ripped jeans, and public work with kids along, what kind of example will you set?)”

Early mornings usually involve discussing the front page news, especially with state elections right around the corner. Amidst steady chaos, Tirath Singh Rawat, the newly appointed chief minister of Uttarakhand gathered headlines for days after his misogynistic and sexist comments questioning the parenting and profession of a woman sitting next to him in ripped jeans, came to light.

Female politicians, across parties, are censured for their physical appearances and choice of clothing, while sexist comments about them hardly evoke any response. The same discrimination goes around in workplaces, from corporates to hotels, which make them even more toxic. Studies show that younger women face appearance based discrimination the most which overshadows their merit and talent. This being said this is not the first or the last time that a politician has indulged in sexist and misogynistic rants against women, but it is definitely a rare instance of them being called out for it by the general public. The problem is far more deep-rooted than it appears to be at a cursory glance. It is not simply about the audacity that these “male” politicians possess to make such remarks about colleagues and strangers alike, but also about their essential nature and ego getting bruised when they see women rise to power, equalling or even bettering them. This shattering of set patriarchal notions, where they believe that ‘equality is not the way how society functions, and for a balanced world women have to be at least a level below’, is trodden underfoot by educated and strong female role models. Unsurprisingly, they get disturbed when they see independent women challenge them.

WHAT DO POLITICIANS THINK?

Here are some sexist, shameful, saddening, and scornful comments that give an insight into what politicians think.

In 2014, Mulayam Singh Yadav spoke against capital punishment for rape and trivialised it by saying, “*Ladke ladke hain, galti ho jati hai. (Boys are boys they tend to make mistakes)*” “*Ladkiyan pehle dosti karti hain. Ladke-ladki mein matbhed ho jata hai. Matbhed hone key baad usey rape ka naam dey deti hain. Ladko sey galti ho jati hai. Kya rape case mein phasi di jayegi?*” (Girls go ahead and make friends with boys and then, when they fight them, charge them of rape)

The former chief minister of Uttar Pradesh dared and had the grit to come back to power even after making such disrespectful comments against rape survivors and victims in a country where statistically every 22 minutes a girl is raped. Yadav is not -

the only one with such opinions. Back in 2012 after Nirbhaya’s rape, Botsa Satyanarayana, Andhra Congress Chief said that India being independent doesn’t mean women have the right to stroll free in the dark. Though the rape was a condemnable act, the girl should have been more careful and should have thought twice before boarding the suspicious private bus.

Another solution for preventing sexual harassment was provided by Om Prakash Chautala from Indian National Lok Dal who asked to get girls to married off sooner as in Mughal times.

BJP’s Gopal Bhargava on hearing of Deepika Padukone’s visit to JNU, asked her to go back to Mumbai and ‘dance’ as she is a heroine.

The list can go on and on, with good “sanskara” being an oft-cited platitude imparted to girls in order that they may ‘avoid rape’, and suggestions rife that a ‘woman should commit suicide if she is raped more than once.’

WHAT DO WE INFER?

Through all this and through more that cannot be mentioned due to the paucity of time, we can conclude that sexism and misogyny lie at the root of gender inequality in Indian politics. It begins in our childhood when boys are encouraged to play, run, jump and be active, but girls are socialised to be ‘ladylike’, passive, and pleasing. It is rife in homes where women still perform more unpaid work, in workplaces where women are silenced, ignored, or commented upon, and everywhere when women are defined to be mothers or wives before their individuals with achievements. Before it’s too late, we need to realise that sexism and misogyny takes a toll on everyone, and create unsafe societies with no space for diverse voices, talents, and leadership. Stating facts will help us acknowledge the reality: 63% of women journalists have been confronted with verbal abuse, women spend almost twice as much time as men on unpaid housework, 80% of women stated that they have been confronted with the phenomenon of “mansplaining” and “maninterrupting” at work. According to a survey conducted by Pew Research Centre, 42% women face gender based discrimination at work.

McKinsey and Company’s report suggests that while the ratio of women at entry level is above 40% but it reduces to merely 18-20% at higher levels, like vice president, C-suite etc. Women comprise about 50% of the world’s population, and their inclusion will help in the economic and social prosperity, still only 6 countries give women equal legal work rights as men.

WHAT FEMALE POLITICIANS THINK?

Female politicians have been the easiest targets of chauvinistic ideas prevailing in India. From Mayavati being called a Vaishya, the public of Uttar Pradesh ‘being hailed’ for ‘tolerating’ her for five years, and remarks asking if ‘she was actually a he’, jibes against Mayawati’s appearance and ‘womanliness’ were a regular brand of campaigning resorted to by the opposition.

From Jayalalitha being alleged to be a ‘temptress’, to her political mentor MG Ramachandran being called a lesbian (with negative and derogatory connotations) involved in a relationship with her aide Sasikala, it takes a special kind of endurance to be a woman involved in politics in India.

Not too far gone are the days when Smriti Irani was attacked upon her appointment as Textile Minister with the jibe that ‘it will help her cover her body’. In a male-dominated India, women are expected to abide and follow serrated and parochial platitudes of ‘modest presentation’. Indian politics is not about intelligence, opinions, and policies, but about charisma and personality.

The solution to this raging misogyny lies in greater participation in politics as well as other domains. When it comes to female political representation, we as a nation are far behind our neighbours Bangladesh, Nepal, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. The condition of involvement worsens as we go down to the state levels, and some relief is encountered only at the level of local bodies.

Also, we see that the female leaders that we do have, like Indira Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi, Harsimrat Kaur Badal or Poonam Mahajan, come from politically influential families which brings us the question: why not common -



women? First, because politics doesn't provide livelihood until elected, so one needs to have financial backing; second, in a patriarchal society where home is considered to be a woman's primary domain, to get involved in a full-fledged profession, the women require their spouses' or family's support; and third, Indian political scenario is extremely sexist. This is one domain where political parties across the spectrum are united. The way out from this slap of gender inequality is more participation. Male politicians are afraid of women leaders like Mayawati, and Jayalalitha gaining power, hence instead of appreciating them, they try to smash them down. Unless women come forward to fight the male-dominated political system and make their presence felt in the Parliament by having a say in the policies that impact them, no real and lasting momentum can be achieved in the social-economic and political empowerment of women.

WAY AHEAD

We see a fresh change in the air, where women are speaking up and against age-old customs and norms, and aren't ready to accept everything in the name of a "joke". Etiquette expert Susie Wilson says, "Shutting down these comments isn't just about standing up for yourself, but for all women. Everyone who takes a

stance against sexism not only promotes gender equality but also helps women of this and future generations to lead more empowered lives." For a more equitable environment, we should not dictate what women should do, and instead, correct the ones being chauvinist and sexist. We should raise our voice against every wrong: be it female politicians being called out on their appearances, marital or sexual status, or females being insulted for wearing ripped jeans and not adhering to the stereotypical notions of womanhood.

We look forward to the day when women will be respected and criticised based on their work, will be accepted for being themselves in this male-dominated world and still great leaders, not berated for not being "feminine" enough, and won't be expected to be Iron ladies, Goddesses, and the epitome of righteousness as defined by patriarchy. We look forward to a gender-equal political domain, and India at large, where female politicians won't have to take up the title of "amma, or didi" to be accepted into the fabric of our society and clash against the male gaze.

We look forward to an India where everyone rises for any woman of any or every sexuality, race, colour, occupation etc. to support her rage against patriarchy, sexism, and misogyny.

THE INCREASING RATE OF JUVENILE SEX OFFENDERS IN INDIA

BY MIMANSHA AND SOUVIK BISWAS



The Indian masses tend to ignore or remain silent over juvenile rape cases in India. We are wont to let go of the cases by deeming the acts as child's play or by indulging the rhetoric of mistake, without even giving a thought to the victim who has suffered irreversible damage from the heinous crime.

Rape has become a common word for everyday news. According to Statista Research Department, in 2018, over 33 thousand cases of rape were filed in India, not taking into account the number of cases that go unreported in the country due to social stigmatization of rape victims. The report by Statista also highlighted that ninety-three percent of these reported cases were filed against someone known to the victim. Rape is one of the most atrocious crimes and steady growth in reported rape cases is a matter of great concern, especially when victims are defamed and/or told to protect themselves with restrictive measures instead of being provided timely justice.

Rape, by definition, means a crime where a person is forced to have intercourse with the offender against their consent or when their consent is acquired through fraud or force. Statutory Rape is when the consent given is considered invalid as the victim is below the required age to legally consent for such behaviour. The age to legally consent for sexual activities in India is 18 years old. Statutory Rape is generally used to define the sexual exploitation of minors by adults. But what happens when rape is committed by a minor on a minor? This is where the term 'juvenile' comes into play. A juvenile, here, is a person who is not old enough to be regarded as an adult or held responsible for criminal acts committed by them. The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, defines a juvenile as a person who is under the age of 18 and is found to have committed an offence.

STATISTICS AND FACTORS BEHIND THE RISE IN JUVENILE RAPE CASES

The 'Crime in India' report, published by NCRB for the year 2018, shows that 'Offences affecting human body' committed by juveniles accounted for 37.7%, of which rape conviction for a juvenile was 13% and assault on a woman to outrage her modesty was 12%, among many other crimes. According to the child rights activist, Yamini Abde, "The urge to do something different, daring, extraordinary filled with thrill is one of the driving forces behind the minors getting involved in heinous crimes like rape and murder."

In this essence, it is important to ask why these rape cases against minors by minors are increasing so much and so rapidly. While there may be many causes at play, the first and most important aspect to consider is the absolute world of information at the tip of fingers, easily available to the children. The essentiality of mobile phones and the internet, television, articles, and all the other media cannot be denied in a minor's life, especially when they are at an age of effective learning, but

the unmonitored usage can be potentially dangerous when age-inappropriate content is freely available. It goes on to become more problematic when parents and mentors either diffuse the subject of sexuality or try to instil a warped perspective of male machismo and female submissiveness among small children. There is very little vocality upon these matters and thus, a sound sexual education with regards to human emotions and sensibility is greatly compromised. Coupled with the lack of education, children also adapt certain belligerent actions from the adults to prove authority and power, ultimately leading to abominable acts of sexual harassment and rape.

CAUSE(S) FOR THE RISE IN JUVENILE SEX OFFENSES

Pornography is one of the major causes for the steady growth in such malicious crimes. In this era of free internet, juveniles come across various pornographic content like inappropriate images, videos, and other media, and sadly they tend to imitate the same thing in real life, thus, the result being Rape. Indians consider discussing sex a taboo and Indian parents tend to ignore the questions of their children regarding this issue. The lockdown imposed due to Covid 19 has boosted Pornography consumption. As per India Today, India reports a high 95% spike in traffic to adult sites.

There can also be lots of other factors affecting these minors like substance abuse, poverty, illiteracy, familial abuse, violence and aggression, coercive peer groups, etc. Peer pressure and familial abuse, either physical or emotional, often results in violent, aggressive, or manipulative behavior which is oftentimes targeted towards victims of such rape cases. Peer pressure is also identified as a primary cause for substance abuse, most commonly including tobacco and alcohol. Clubbed with other substances that can be used as intoxicants, like paint, glue, cleaning fuel, etc., the magnitude of the problem increases. It is not unusual for addicted juveniles to steal, fight or indulge in sexual activities. The web of these comp-

lex problems makes the situation more abhorrent and dire.

RECENT JUVENILE RAPE INCIDENTS

Quite recently, an FIR was lodged against two minor boys aged between 10 and 11 years old, accused of gang-raping a 5 years old girl, at a village in the Siwan district of Bihar. To safeguard the accused from legal actions, the male family members had shifted elsewhere and had sent the two accused to different locations. Following this, they were prompted to produce the accused before the police but only the older minor was brought forth. A similar incident occurred in East Champaran, Bihar, when a 3 years old girl was gang-raped by three juveniles, all under 11 years of age. The girl who had gone for a merry playtime was lured to a secluded hutment where she was raped and then later hospitalized. Another incident comes to light when a minor boy shy of being 7 years old was produced before the Juvenile Justice Board, accused of raping a 6 years old girl who had gone to fetch her ball from his house while playing. The Juvenile Justice Board acquitted the accused on the grounds of immature understanding, under Sections 82 and 83 of IPC.

WHAT DOES THE LAW SAY

While there are numerous such cases to write upon, a similar trend of minors under the age of 7 or between the age of 7 to 12 years old are accused of raping a small girl, which is distinctly noticeable. What are the legal consequences for a minor accused of such rape charges? Under Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act, 2015, the maximum

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punishment that can be given to a 'juvenile in a conflict with law' is three years, but Section 82 and 83 of IPC exempts children from legal liability due to their immature age. Section 82 of the IPC, 1860, says that 'nothing is an offense which is done by a child under the age of seven' and presumed them to be 'Doli Incapax'. Doli Incapax is a Latin term which means "incapable of evil". Legally this is used for minors who are deemed incapable of forming the intent to commit a crime due to insufficient intelligence to distinguish right from wrong. Section 83 of IPC, 1860, similarly says that 'Nothing is an offense which is done by a child above seven years of age and under twelve, who has not attained sufficient maturity of understanding to judge the nature and consequences of his conduct on that occasion. While Section 82 of IPC, 1860 is irrebuttable, Section 83 of IPC, 1860 can be rebutted by providing strong evidence of mischievous behavior.

The notion of presuming children under the age of seven and between the age of seven to twelve years old as incapable of understanding the nature of their action and consequences of those actions is far-fetched, especially when it is clear that the majority of the accused had carefully chosen secluded places to conduct such heinous crimes. By this, it is evident that the children do acquire knowledge before the age that is legally prescribed, which is perfectly fine as long as the source from which they learn is effective in teaching them proper and moral behavior regarding such activities. It is only in such cases where children are unable to grasp the proper concept of these acts that they commit such horrendous crimes.

That being said, it is also important to acknowledge crimes by these small children individually with regards to their level of maturity, their circumstances, and the consequences that they were expecting. Protection of children from the legal repercussions will only encourage them to undertake such acts in the name of doing something different, daring, and extraordinary. It is known that by the age of five, the human brain develops almost 80% of an individual's personality, skill, and intellectual capacities – 80% of these developments should consist of proper education and understanding instead of distorted information and out of place curiosity to practice the concepts in real life.

SOLUTIONS

Now, the most important question of what measures should be taken to reduce these juvenile rape cases arises. One vital thing that can be done from the part of the parents is to enable the Parental mode in their child's phone and monitor them without disrupting their privacy and giving them enough space to grow and learn. Parents should also try to satiate the child's curiosity by holding effective conversations. On the part of the school, they should be given a period of sexual education at least once a week so that they can be taught important topics like good touch and bad touch and safety circle. Recently Uttar Pradesh brought a new system that states that users who will search pornographic content will get an alert message and similarly the police will also get the information, and it will be stored in the database of police.

But this has been handled inefficiently and is not feasible because it breaches the Right to Privacy. To study the analytics of the internet, a company named 'Oomuph' has been hired, which will keep an eye on what is being searched on the internet through data. If a person sees pornography, the analytics team will get the information. However, many also browse through porn in a very ethical and moral sense, so keeping a-

tab on one's browsing history is an invasion of privacy. While the move by the police department is lauded, people are failing to look at the invasion of privacy in this case. This also contradicts the 2015 Supreme Court judgment in which it said that it cannot stop an adult from exercising his fundamental right to personal liberty to watch porn within the privacy of his room. "Somebody may come to the court and say look I am above 18 and how can you stop me from watching it within the four walls of my room. It is a violation of Article 21 [right to personal liberty]," Chief Justice H.L. Dattu observed orally.

CONCLUSION

Children are precious and seeing them enact such horrific crimes is disheartening, if put lightly. They are the future and if they have come to such vicious paths, then we as a society have failed them. Victim shaming, and propagating a twisted form of society to these children is not the way to lead them out of this darkness. No form of superficial talks and inarticulate ideas of these matters helps eradicate such maliciousness. Education is the need of the hour and we have the responsibility of teaching the children to distinguish what is right and what is wrong. Sexual education has positive effects including increasing young people's knowledge and improving their attitudes related to sexual and reproductive health.

Contrary to conservative beliefs, sexual education does not increase sexual activity, rather it decreases the STD/HIV infection rates, decreases teenage pregnancies, and more importantly reduces the chances of occurrence of juvenile rape cases. The notion that sex education harms a child's mind and conscience is wrong. Sex education aids people to get the information and abilities to make the right decisions about sex and sexuality. Teenagers need this kind of information to make the right choices and protect themselves against a host of problems like sexually transmitted diseases, sexual manipulation and harassment, and non-consensual sex.

HINDU COLLEGE GAZETTE

MARCH - APRIL 2021 • VOLUME 1 ISSUE 3

Published by The Symposium Society - Hindu College, University of Delhi

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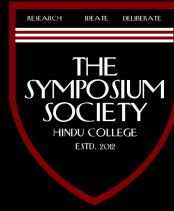
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Hindu College Gazette accepts opinion editorials, long-forms, and illustrations at a rolling basis. We encourage prospective authors to follow HCG's "Submission Guidelines" before sending submissions. Submissions can be emailed at hinducollegegazette@gmail.com.



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