THE PROBE

Cover Story

The Lost Year

A STORY OF STUDENTS OFF CAMPUS, ON SCREENS

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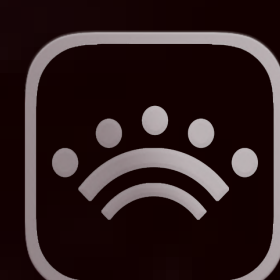
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THE LOST YEAR

When thousands of students were leaving the many old red brick structures spread across Delhi University, we promised a hasty return. Who knew that a week long sojourn would turn into four weeks, then two months, and eventually an unanticipated "till further notice" circle.

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message from the team

It is with excitement and honour but also a degree of trepidation that with this issue we launch "The Probe", a monthly newsletter of Caucus, the Discussion Forum of Hindu College, University of Delhi. As we take on this mammoth task of establishing this publication, we have before us the challenge of maintaining and enhancing the impact that this 120-year old institution is characterised with. We, at Caucus, have always believed that given the right platform, students can produce powerful and creative pieces with unique voices. Not restricting this platform to students, we endeavour to engage with experts and working professionals to create an unprecedented chain of learning.

Cutting across academic disciplines, this edition of the Probe received entries on topics ranging from Pirates to Pop Culture. We were delighted to see the intellectual vigour of the writers and would love to receive the same enthusiasm from our readers. Readers can share their feedback and critique with the editors at 'theprobenewsletter@gmail.com.'

We want to extend our gratitude to Caucus and the college for providing us with a platform where we can engage in a reading culture. It is with the entries we received from guest writers that our newsletter is studded with a diverse range of articles.

meet the team

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जीवराज दहिया
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जीवराज हिन्दू महाविद्यालय के स्नातक द्वितीय वर्ष राजनीति विज्ञान (आनर्स) का विद्यार्थी है। कॉकस सोसायटी हिन्दू महाविद्यालय का सदस्य हैं।

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Article : Of pirates:
A look into life during the golden age of Piracy

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Cover Story : The Lost Year

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THE PROBE

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A monthly newsletter

Caucus, the discussion forum of Hindu College

University of Delhi
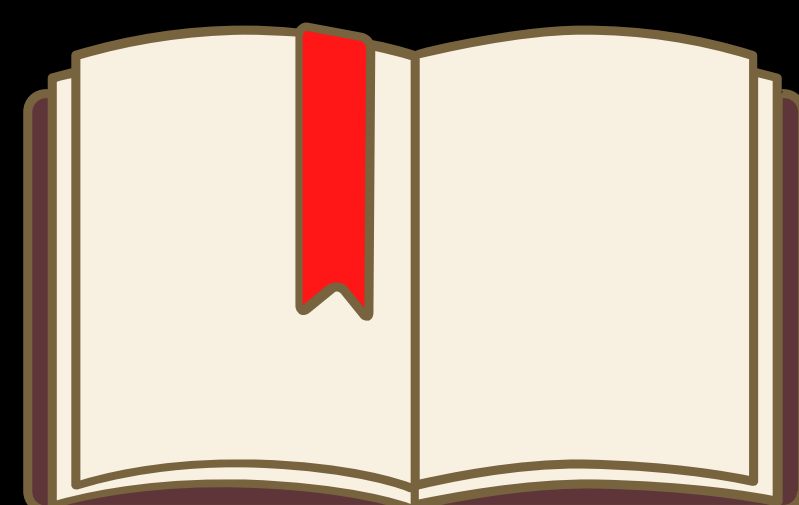
The Lost Year

THE IMPACT OF THE CORONAVIRUS LOCKDOWN ON STUDENTS.

BY

RIYA JEPH, NISHI UPADHYAY & MEGHNA RATHORE

This edition's cover story, as the title suggests, is a recollection of everything the student community lost this year. In an attempt to weave together the discarded episodes of struggles, we talked to students and tried to gauge the impact of lockdown education on their overall well-being.

A Coerced Trade-off

> "When thousands of students were leaving the many old red brick structures spread across Delhi University, we promised a hasty return. Who knew that a week long sojourn would turn into four weeks, then two months, and eventually an unanticipated "till further notice" circle."

Before we delve any further, let us conduct a thought experiment. In a thought experiment called Mary's Room, Frank Jackson challenges physicalism's claim that everything that there is to the world can be perceived through an objective-physical lens. Physicalism postulates that it is possible to understand everything through information and facts because life is material and physical things can be perceived with physical information and facts without the need of experience. It goes something like this, Mary spends all her life in a black and white room-her books, gadgets, she, everything around her is black and white. There is no colour, and she has never seen any. However, she is a brilliant neurophysiologist. She knows everything there is to know about colours and sight. She knows about the science of perceiving colour: VIBGYOR, cones; everything related to the biology and physics of colour, light and perception. She has learned in the sciences using books and information.

One day, Mary suddenly comes across a bright red apple and sees colour for the first time in her life. Will this experiential aspect of seeing colour add any new knowledge to her already acquired reserve of scientific factual understanding? Or she can already experience what it is like to see colour owing to her vast factual knowledge? This experiment raises various questions about our conscientiousness and practical knowledge. We can imagine ourselves slithering up and down a tree trunk, but we cannot know what it is like to be a snake. The point of citing this experiment here is to make sense of the question- Why do students feel disengaged in an online setup of education? Afterall, just like Mary, most of us (barring economically disadvantaged) have everything required. We are being taught the same syllabus by the same professors with the same batch of students; we are all Mary(s) with all the information.

However, as we are used to seeing the metaphorical red apple, we no longer derive satisfaction from the black and white lacklustre version of it, i.e. we now know, what is the fundamental difference between being in a university and accessing it through a computer screen. The question posed by Mary's room experiment seems even more relevant today. UNESCO's study on COVID19 and its impact on education shows that 130 countries have closed their educational institutions as a mitigation strategy, and the virus has impacted 56.65% of total enrolled learners across the world. Schools and Universities have shut their gates, and communication and learning have resumed via applications like Zoom, Google-Meet and Microsoft Teams. Online educators have always talked about the benefit of remote e-learning, and that it has its advantages. Once the infrastructure is taken care of, it is much cheaper-students do not have to travel across states and countries and live there to pursue different courses, once it is available online. The system is faster, and the students can learn at their own pace. This seemed only accurate in our imagination and theory. The experience of online classes revealed before us the practical lesson. The complete shift to an online model of communication has been detrimental at multiple levels- psychological, emotional, physical, educational, economical, practical, etc. Apart from the daily regime of sitting for 6 hours in front of a screen for classes, everything else also takes place through an online mode these days- the college societies' work, staying connected with friends and family.

Online education is not compatible with students' health requirements. It is hard to create an environment free of distractions. According to Dr Himanshu Chauhan, long sitting hours weaken students' eyesight, ruins their posture and strains mental capacity; it causes problems like fatigue, muscle spasm, stress, tingling sensations, headache, and decreased performance. The lack of infrastructure has put a lot of strain on the Indian student. The online setup

requires a lot of pre-requisites- a stable internet connection, a vacant mobile phone/laptop, a data package which suffices for the whole day's tasks, and seeing the economic disparities in India, not every student is privileged enough to have all these prerequisites. This lack of resources puts them under a lot of stress and anxiety. India witnessed many such cases of student anxiety which will be addressed further. The experience of online learning has also not been very generous. Universities allow for cultural exchange, and the knowledge which one gets engaging in an intellectually driven environment stimulates growth and learning. Computer screens can remotely match that experience. Ironically, it is hard for this social media generation to keep their concentration glued to computer screens; they cannot help but open a new tab or check their social media. When they multitask the quality of work and learning depreciates.

Remote online learning cannot be a substitute for the intellectually rich atmosphere which campuses provide. It fails to create enthusiasm, attention and communication required for learning. As education is not just about textbooks, online learning cannot be a replacement to the traditional method of education;

we cannot afford to raise a generation whose communication is only restricted to a virtual setup. The conventional method equips learners with communication techniques and speaking skills, whereas online mode fails to do so. Today, online education is not a choice but a mere alternative, and the experience we have had so far makes us all the more averse to the idea of remote e-learning, without the virus, as well. Let's take a look at everything that is problematic with the online year.

Requiem
for the
Underprivileged

The recent death of 19-year-old Aishwarya Reddy, a second-year student of Lady Sri Ram college, was not a random poverty-stricken student suicide case, but a pang of the growing discontentment of the whole student community. The grievance of digital divide is well-acknowledged, but we also need to acknowledge the lack of will to narrow the divide. Even in Aishwarya Reddy's case, the Student Union of LSR has publicly claimed that there was a lack of response from the side of the administration. According to a survey conducted by the Students' Union in September, 40% of the respondents did not have a steady internet connection and 27% did not have a laptop.

As soon as the lockdown started, PGs started demanding full rent to keep the belongings of the students, who were stuck in their hometowns outside Delhi. "When I was leaving for my home that day, deciding which books and clothes to take, I didn't have the faintest idea that the bundle of books and a couple of pairs of clothes that I was leaving behind will cost me thousands for the month to come", said a second-year student of Hindu college who continued to pay full rent till June. On the other hand, hostlers were being charged an unfair amount for the belongings kept in the hostel room: in a circular released by St Stephen's College, a "modest" room rent of Rs. 100 per day was to be charged from hostlers if they didn't move out by specified date.

To call 100 rupees a "modest "charge during a pandemic that led to a loss of 14 crore jobs and billions of dollars of the economy shows an insensitive and unhelpful attitude of the system. Similarly, many private universities continued to charge hostel and transport fees, despite classes being conducted online and none of the services being used. Private institutions might defend themselves by arguing that the amount being charged is justified on the basis of their significant investment in the IT facilities and virtual labs to conduct online classes. However, the question is- Are those online services equivalent to real-life campus facilities in terms of quality and investment?

And who decides what should be the exact proportion of fee hike? Since there is no clear answer to either of these questions, educational institutions are left at their own whim, and the obvious outcome is the economic struggle of students, who, torn between the uncertainty of future and necessity of their unsettled degree, are left with nothing but silent adherence. As the online classes kicked in around August, further pressure was created on the students, equipped with their limited means, to keep up with the arduous day-long schedule, with some classes happening around five in the evening. Poor connectivity, erratic power supply, digital divide, expensive data plans were some of the most common problems students faced.

Furthermore, some people, belonging to socially and economically disadvantaged groups and often living in confined spaces, had to face continuous domestic hindrance. One of the students commented, "My father lost his job due to the pandemic, so we are five people, including my mother and siblings, at home all day. I have to continuously hush them during my lectures, and sometimes I am not able to answer even though I want to. It feels like missing something so important to me because of these mundane trivialities." However, some students do not even get this privilege of partial attention in online classes as they are forced to work part-time to support their family financially. At the other end of the world, Indian students were homeless and hungry in foreign land caught in the crossborder frenzy to fly back home. Education in these

foreign countries can cost up to $40,000 for tuition alone, and students rely on part-time jobs, scholarships, loans and other sponsors to cover those expenses. Students on J-1 visas in the US were hard hit by the sudden lockdown who lost their jobs and other financial means. The US government shifted the onus of providing appropriate support on the universities, but they were unprepared to handle the whole situation. The evacuation flights under Vande Bharat Mission charged exorbitant prices which only a few students could afford. Those who were left behind were immediately asked to move out of their dorms and relieved from their on-campus jobs. What followed was months of financial distress,

"My father lost his job due to the pandemic, so we are 5 people, including my mother and siblings, at home all day. I have to continuously hush them during my lectures, and sometimes I don't answer even though I want to. It feels like missing something so important to me. However, some students do not even get this privilege of partial attention in online classes as they are forced to work part-time to support their family financially.
-One of the students

mass displacement, daily struggle for sustenance accompanied by an unresponsive Indian Embassy. Similarly, in the UK, students had to rely on food donations and charities to survive. The plight of these international migrants could have been reduced if the governments cooperated better at the international level, and if the issue was not sidelined from the mainstream view. The generalisation that someone studying abroad must be "rich" deprived the cause of these international students of the attention that they deserved.

An unmitigated disaster :

Students' Mental Health during the Pandemic

Around the world, the COVID19 pandemic has hit communities hard and especially those who are vulnerable and were already in a stage of turmoil. Cases of physical distress and discomfort can offer an opening to a broad scope of issues and conditions which holds the ability to ruin our emotional wellbeing and mental health. It might influence the wellbeing, security, and prosperity of individuals, causing uncertainty and disarray. Shame in communities attributable to financial misfortune, work and school terminations, insufficient assets for clinical reaction, and inadequate dissemination of necessities can further worsen people's mental health. A survey done by the government of India's

National Health Survey three years ago showed that 10% of India's adult population, which comprises around 70-100 million people, met the clinical criteria for a mental health disorder. And around 1.9% of them have a severe mental disorder. This was the situation before the COVID-19 pandemic hit us, which led us to the second wave of crisis, which is the financial crisis. Vikram Patel, a member of Laxmi Mittal and Family, a South Asian institute of Harvard University which very closely studies the mental health status of the South Asian countries, states that uncertainty in times like this is a huge stressor, the intensity of this stressor, however, is different for people of different strata. A financial

crisis like an increase in unemployment, people losing jobs, pay-cut, lack or no support given by government schemes in the lockdown has made people really anxious about their future. "I have an abusive household.

My father doesn't live with us, and my mother doesn't like me and always favours my brother. I only attend my classes so that I don't have to talk to them. I rarely unmute myself."

-Prisha Mishra, DU

Like the many communities that are faced with many stressors during the pandemic, the student community has been one of the worst affected. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) statistics, more than one student commits

Her family was struggling financially, given the circumstances, she wanted a laptop to continue her online classes which added expenses to her means of education which eventually led her to consider herself as a burden to her family. In her death note she wrote, 'If I can't study, I can't live'. The amount of weight this statement carries is inexplicable.

The long isolation from university campuses has depressed the economically disadvantaged section of the student community. The disappointment at the buffering video, patchy audio and mounting academic pressure amid lack of resources, brings such a sense of hopelessness that a lost year results in some lost lives...

Another incident of a 16-year-old boy in Goa, who

> **"Online classes trigger my anxiety. Listening to the teacher's voice sometimes gives me headaches. I take my breaks, but it also gets difficult because then the fear of lagging behind sets in"**
> **A student from the Hindu college**

> **"I want to speak and convey my points during classes, but I fear what other people will think of me because, in online classes, everyone's attention is on the person who is speaking. I become very restless, sometimes."**
> **Jhanvi Singh, DU**

suicide in India every hour, with about 28 cases reported every day. A lot of behavioural issues are noted in children, lately students are getting aggressive, and the target of anxiety about the virus and performance in their studies. According to the World Health Organisation, each year India contributes to around 2.2 lakh suicides. India is dubbed the capital of suicides in Southeast Asia. Teen suicides are on the rise each year, indicating the acuteness of this problem in our society. Depression is one of the leading causes of deaths by suicide. On an average, every 40 seconds, one individual dies by suicide somewhere around the world. We have an ample amount of examples, witnessed in our daily lives to back these studies- the recent case of suicide of a 19-year-old girl from Telangana who was a second-year student of Lady Shri Ram College, Mathematics Honors.

who died of asphyxia, due to hanging, just because his parents could not afford to get his phone repaired, horrifies us. Here, the point worth noting is that the problem does not only lie in the family's financial status and their inability to get any help from the authorities, but also in how the boy's mental health should have been given more importance when he started showing symptoms of his distress in the first place. Here one should note the lack of awareness and understanding towards the wide spectrum of mental health and how our society approaches mental health in a callous manner, ignoring many of the early warnings and stressors.

His father says he would not ever forget what his son said when he left his home for his work, he said, "Hit me now if you want, you may not get a chance in the evening." His father said he knows of several families who are going through a similar situation. In

a statement, he said, "The government says, study online, but can poor people afford phones? The government should pause schooling for a year if they cannot help the poor." When in conversation with Hindu College's Mental Health and Counselling cell, the Friend's Corner, we got to discuss some of these issues. They discussed the type of complaints they receive from students in times like these, which majorly included a sense of disconnection which could be triggered because of network or connectivity issues or uncertainty about the future or simply because they can not get back to a space like a college which serves as an escape for those who are not completely accepted in their homes, for instance, the LGBTQIA+ community, it becomes really difficult for them especially when they are not accepted by their families for who they are, and especially when college serves as a place where they can express themselves freely. Many times it has been seen that students trying to fill the void of fulfilment in them tend to overcompensate, which adversely affects their mental health; increase in screen time because of social media, an obsession for being productive or trying very hard to get back on the 'track' poses a threat to a student's mental health without them realising it. In times when our social lives do not have much to offer, we become too attached to our gadgets, and any harm done to it accidentally or intentionally also, may also affect us. Students who have come to college with various aspirations of joining societies, meeting new people, making new friends, attending various cultural events are struggling to keep up with reality. The dejection of not being able to live their campus lives the way they had planned, along with the distance from friends have led them to feel isolated and lonely. Death of a family member due to COVID or otherwise or loss of job of a parent makes it difficult for students to deal with the gloomy family environment given the fact that they are ordered to stay indoors. However, we need to understand that parents aren't always the ones who know what is the right thing to do every time students face any adversity. Psychiatrist Dr Anjali Chhabria from Mumbai says "Kids are perceptive and they will learn to be in despair if we as adults show how awful this situation is. Instead, help them transition into this process by making it less stressful for both your kid and yourself." It's even difficult for them to make sense of the situation.

Nelson Vinod Moses, Founder of SPIF (Suicide Prevention India Foundation), Bengaluru states, "The Indian government has stated that there has been no study conducted to evaluate the mental health effects of COVID. We pay mere lip service to mental health in a country where there are 150-million plus Indians who suffer from common and mental health illnesses pre-COVID. The post-COVID world has resulted in this increasing manifold." India spends less than 2% of its health budget on mental health which is very less as compared to what our governments have been spending on diseases like polio ad tuberculosis, which we have been able to eradicate with our continuous efforts. Countries like the UK, USA, Australia and Canada have realised the need of the hour and are doing the needful. Australia has announced more than half a billion (AUD) dollars to deal with the mental health fallout unleashed by COVID, including an AUD$ 48.1 million National Mental Health and Wellbeing Pandemic Response Plan. The US has announced $425 million for Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) programs. The funding will go towards crisis response, mental health support, suicide prevention, monitoring, research and community health centres. Provided the mental health fallout due to COVID has been huge, it is pertinent we focus on spreading awareness about mental health not only in urban but also in rural settings where it is relatively obscure and is treated as a taboo. Although many NGOs are taking steps in this direction, the need of the hour is to expand our scope. Schools and colleges, after the pandemic wanes out, must conduct weekly counselling or mental health tests and assure their follow-ups to help us deal with COVID19's aftermaths with ease. We need to apply a multi-pronged approach.

Free Mental Health Counselling!

Manas Organisation
011-41708517
foundation.manas@gmail.com
Mind piper
8383887084
support@mindpiper.in
Anjali Mental Health Organisation
033 4004 5438
info@anjalimentallhealth.or

Open Book Examinations

Open Book Examination (OBE) has always been a debatable issue in a setting where there is an involvement of students as huge as the entire Delhi University. After the sudden closing of universities and colleges due to the outbreak, students have been left astray regarding their exams and consequently, their future. For final year graduate and postgraduate students fighting off the anxiety of postponement between July and August was not enough. They also had to deal with the uncertainty of how the exams will be carried on, given the decades-old infrastructure that Delhi University continues to make use of.After continued anticipation, the University Grants Commission issued guidelines on 6th July 2020, which allowed students to write the exam for the given two-hour duration and an extra one hour for submitting the paper. It also said that those who lack internet and infrastructural facilities, DU would engage common service centres under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology. Students who are unable to give the exams online are allowed to appear for the offline mode when the situation normalises, and the norms for social distancing are eased

"I have a 2G network in my area and thus I wasn't able to either download question paper or upload answer sheets and that is why I chose to get wi-fi installed at my place. In the first exam, I couldn't upload my answers and at the last minute had to mail them on the id we were given. Even if I talk about the online classes before OBE, it was highly unsystematic. Teachers hardly took 6-7 classes and given my network conditions I could only attend one or two of them."-Simran Bali, Political Science Graduate, Hindu college.

OBE, an examination where students will be able to refer to books, notes and other study materials to answer questions, is opposed by the left, right and centre parties. There are two reasons for this strong opposition. One is procedural. It is mandatory to discuss and deliberate such important matters in a statutory body, in this case, the Academic Council (AC) and the Executive Council (EC). The matter was, however, not brought to these statutory bodies, where such decisions are mandatorily taken. A senior official confirmed to The Indian Express on 30 May that the decision was "final" and would not go to the AC and EC for ratification.The second is its discriminatory nature. As Delhi University is an amalgamation of students from different socio-economic backgrounds, some do not have access to good internet connection or have devices like laptops to give such examinations. Some people cannot afford to buy laptops or to even think of getting a wi-fi connection at their home. Thus it can be rightfully said that mental health status for such students will be a lot worse than those who have access to such facilities. The data revealed by the Indian Express states that as against 1,83,376 students who have registered for OBE, which took place in August, in the first phase, 1,86,184 had registered themselves for the second phase. However, the total number of the students who had logged in the first phase were 93,185, whereas 75,539 had logged in the second phase. The total number of papers attempted by the students in the first phase were 60,181 whereas, in the second phase the total number of papers attempted were 51,176. The data also revealed that the total number of papers submitted in the first phase were 33,162, whereas, in the second phase, the total number of papers submitted were 23,693, which clearly shows how students suffered

"OBE was one of the most ineffective ways of conducting an examination, it was also very insensitive keeping in mind the students who come from far off places where connectivity is an issue. I had to face problems while I was uploading my answers due to last-minute wi-fi fluctuations, all this happened given the fact that I live in Delhi, can't even fathom about those who live on the margins of these big cities. I also want to add that teachers are also highly incapable and have a very laid back attitude towards us, they could have done so much to help us, but they chose not to." -Kavya, Political Science graduate, Hindu colleg,eMoreover, even if we exclude the possibility of not getting proper infrastructural facilities, what is the guarantee that students are healthy and in a decent mental state to give exams? For those who have an abusive family or have small houses where everyone lives in a single room, this examination becomes very unfair. Some students are unable to study or attend classes due to network issues, so how are we exactly expecting them to give exams when teachers were unable to teach? All these factors add to the existing pressure of exams."I didn't have most of my materials available on my devices so I had to resort to google to study"-Kavita Banerjee, Geography Graduate, Miranda House

Students who will be giving their semester exams in December have apprehension regarding the process. "We do not have the infrastructure for carrying out exams with ease, on such a huge level. Our syllabus isn't even complete yet. I couldn't attend many of my classes because online classes give me anxiety.", says a second-year Delhi university student. Many final year students faced problems with regards to their results as well. Some

of them complained over not getting results for their OBE exams. They say that the exam portal didn't show their results while others were marked absent or were marked zero on their mark sheets. Many students complained that solving these discrepancies didn't seem to be on the priority list of the varsity. Final year students who were aiming for admissions in postgraduate degrees in colleges, both in India and abroad, became very anxious as their future seemed blurred by delay and uncertainty.

"The varsity kept saying that the portal would work smoothly, but we had to resort to sending an email in the end. The paper was quite lengthy. Some students even contacted the nodal officer for doubts, but they only got vague answers like 'no specific guidelines'. It was a disappointing experience for most of the students,"

-Kanchana Roy, Graduate, Kirori Mal College

RESUMPTION OR RESTART?

Coronavirus is not even a dent if we look at the shattering history of mankind but the panacea of time lulled us to the deep slumber to wake in the envisioned modern world. A virus threatening the whole of mankind always seemed like an excellent video game concept rather than a future possibility. The next time we will get back to the new "normal", our fake sense of security and silly conceit will disappear, creating a vacuum which will take a couple of years to fill. Every "thing" will be the same; but we, as a species, we will definitely be changed more than ever. If we go by the recent UGC guidelines for the reopening of the colleges, the first image that comes to mind is half-covered scattered faces on sprawling campuses, vacant and echoing classes, and a six by six feet invisible, permanent safe space between students. The reopening will be scheduled, methodical and regulated. The classes are likely to be continued remotely, or a hybrid model might be introduced to minimise social contact. But the future of societies, social gatherings and seminars remain uncertain. Spontaneous handshakes and hugs, weekend parties, and the sheer joy of being surrounded by people who form an inseparable part of college experience seems like a distant possibility. The year that the young generation has lost will cause irreversible damage in their overall learning, higher education, employment, and to speak from a broader perspective, cultural, political and economic sphere of our society. Moreover, the unfathomable fear the pandemic plunged us into will haunt us and might be a remnant in our social interactions and individual mannerism for the years to come.

On the bright side, the pandemic has forced us, maybe a little hard, to adapt to the new environment and revamp our supposed infallible institutions. And as a species, it reminded us of our flaws and laid them naked for us to see: the immeasurable divide that exists between rich and poor, the fragility of the healthcare system, the shameful unpreparedness of

of education institutions and utter nonsensicality of the governmental cliche "stay put, be calm". The most interesting question is: was the virus a "real" threat or was it just the starter of a chain effect with one leading to another? For example, more people died of starvation than the supposed threat; millions of people lost their livelihood because of economic breakdown rather than virus infection. This taught us an important lesson- society is a complex whole of so many direct and indirect forces that nothing is predictable and since the threat is complex, it requires more than simple unidimensional solutions, an extraordinary solution for an abnormal situation. Apart from nudging the society to reconsider its presuppositions, as individuals it has forced us to rethink about our lives and its meaning by almost halting the time for us to see ourselves better in the mirror of our humaneness: to remember our intrinsic nature, our core values, reorganise our everyday priorities and goals, and, most importantly, to strive for the overarching meaning to keep us going as Nietzche puts it, "Those who have a 'why' to live, can bear almost any 'how'.

King Midas's golden touch and his greed made him lose everything he had.

Similarly, "mighty" human's dogmatic faith in his abilities brought him so close to his end forcing him to see the value of the small things which he had hitherto ignored. Intellectuals call it a revolution, the break which will divide timelines when the future generations will look back upon us.

However, there was no break because the civilisation never stopped. Under the seeming veil of stoppage, if you look closely— it was crawling, it still is, the entire time which is the reason why we are able to survive.

Hopefully, we will never forget what it was like "before" as those animals of Orwell's Animal Farm did.

Hopefully, we will take the memories of the pre-COVID era to map out the way to the future. And hopefully, the world that we will carve out as a more mature and evolved species after this life-changing revolution will be better than the world we inherited from our ancestors.

"Hi, I am writing my (GE) assignment. Do we need to add references?"

That was how our conversation began on the 30th of October. When we were discussing assignments, never could I imagine this was the last time I was talking to her—knowing Aishwarya since first semester days made her a close friend of mine. I am too devastated by her demise. I got the message at 5 a.m on 3rd Nov. I couldn't concentrate on anything, ever since. I have come across news and public comments. To my surprise, many comments were about how insensitive she was to take this step; she could study in a nearby college; why go to Delhi?..etc.

No one wants to die. I can assure you that a brilliant student like her had everything planned. And things were going on pretty well until this lockdown and consequent curtailment of scholarship happened.
There are times we tend to take many things for granted; we hardly think about what others are going through. I urge everyone to look at it from different lens before passing judgements on a grieved, deceased soul.

- Iptisha, Aishwarya's GE classmate.

Nehruvian Socialism and Indian Economic History

# The Saviour of India's Infant Economy: Nehruvian Socialism

BY PRANAV JHA

In these times, socialism has become a more redundant concept. There have been nationalistic calls to undo the wrongs of the past- which are perceived to be the cause behind the 'lackadaisical' economic growth. The realization of neo-liberal economic policies is being celebrated with grandeur. India's Aramco movement might arrive sometime soon with the listing of state-owned LIC. India would finally get rid of the inefficiencies that have plagued the state-owned banks after their privatization. The liberalized economic framework would indeed quell the hindrances and unleash the magnanimous economic growth we had aspired for. Had India not been strangled in the socialist quagmire, we would have been much better off!

We can often find these verses in our public discourse reflecting disdain for post-independence and pre-liberalization economic policies. A fair share of this anger is particularly directed towards the Nehruvian socialist model. It is here, we really miss the plot. Time series analysis is one of the most important components of econometric analysis However, we often analyze economic policies in different eras without taking into account the factors that shaped policies. The evaluation by different metrics which have not been adjusted according to the different circumstances in different eras would lead to a wrong outcome

In the course of the article, I'll be trying to point out why there was really no feasible and tangible alternative to the Nehruvian socialistic model at that point in time. In no way, we can choose to ignore the immense benefits of the laissez-faire economy. Still, we very easily net out the importance of stable political machinery in economic growth. We don't realize how political rights are interspersed with economic ones and without the latter, the former has no meaning. The socialist model might not have been sufficient enough to accelerate growth rapidly but without an iota of doubt, it was necessary for the Indian nation to become self-reliant. It was the mixed economic model tilting towards state control, that became necessary at the time of Independence.

Questions have been put on the efficiency of state-owned companies and to a fair extent, they are justified. In recent years, there has been a growing tendency to discredit the socialistic economic labyrinth for economic lapses. India would have been much better off if it did not find itself entrapped in the socialist mire. Critics point out the overwhelming role of the state in policy-making proved detrimental for the prospects of free markets. They have pointed out how early years of lacklustre growth would be a lag on the country's high economic growths in recent decades.
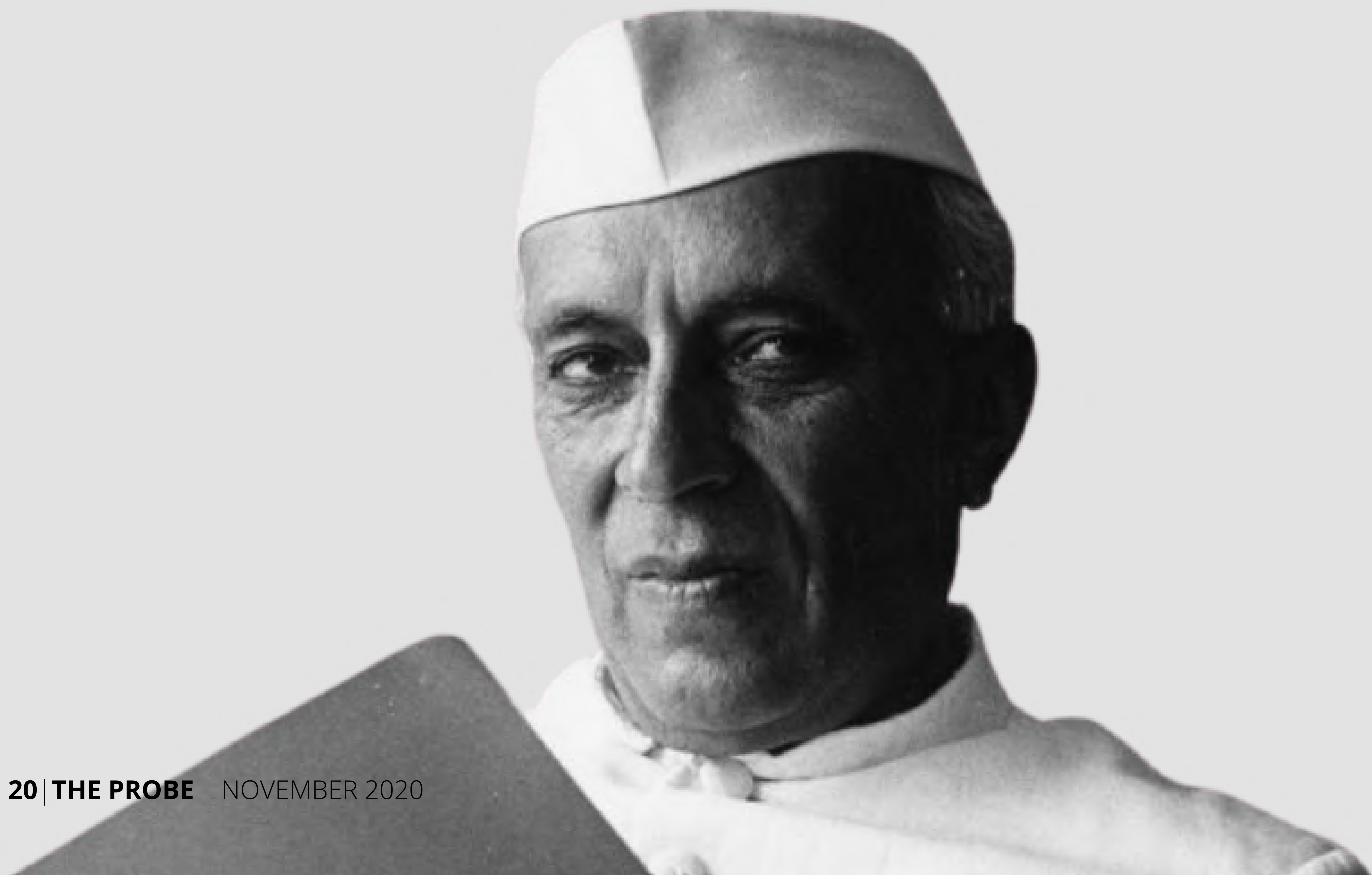
Hardly, they realize the impact of independent and credible institutions that would propel economic growth. Nehruvian economic policies played a significant role in 'Recovery of India'- of a country that had been squeezed of resources by the avaricious colonial policies, a country that had to bear the brunt of the division of resources by the hands of partition, a nation impoverished to a large extent. However, economic deprivation wasn't the only challenge, newly independent India faced- rehabilitation after the world's largest exodus, integration of more than 500 princely states into Indian union and more importantly establishment of stable democracy. All the macroeconomic indicators pointed out the abysmal state of development. The average life expectancy of below 30 years, towering illiteracy rates, abysmally low per capita incomes, high infant mortality rate prevented the growth of human capital.

The below 1 per cent growth rate of GDP, agricultural productivity, industrial growth was the malaise left behind by the long colonial rule. Adding to the woes, Indian agriculture had suffered a lot at the hands of the colonial power. Grave inequality stemmed through the agricultural system that had perpetuated a land-owning class that enjoyed political power. Colonial policies had made India a net exporter of raw material and cash crops and an importer of finished products. These policies had led to a fatal blow to indigenous industries. The state had really no option left other than to lend a helping hand to the disenfranchised in the country. All the infrastructural establishments at the time of Independence were designed to suit the colonial needs. Experts at that point would have expected India to land off in the notorious basket case with an unstable political system. But post-Independent India spectacularly turned around all the speculations. Not only this, the strong economic foundations and the liberal democracy would help India gain position amongst major emerging economies in the 21st century. Much of the credit goes to the post-independent socialist policies. The socialistic policies of Congress were crystallized in the Karachi Resolution. Nehru had decided to implement the Soviet-style of planning to be driven by Five-Years Plans. The world had witnessed the Great Depression of the 1930s which pointed out how the absence of the state in the market could be detrimental. The Indian model of socialism derived its legitimacy from the non-violent freedom struggle and democratic idealization. Thus, the abolition of the Zamindari system was by far peaceful and led to a significant change in political matrix.

Industrialization

Critics have directed towards the intensive industrialization plan. The foundation of the industrial base never took place during the British period. Nehru and PC Mahalanobis- the chief architect of the 2nd five-year plan focused on the development of heavy basic industries that would propel economic growth. Capital goods are basically those complex machines and equipment that help in further production of goods and services- electricity, iron & steel etc. Let's not forget, Indian industry was feeble at that stage, it needed protection, it needed support to compete against the predator firms. The Mahalanobis plan emphasized that massive and disproportionate investment in capital goods in a closed economy would propel the growth in the consumer goods industry thus helping the middle class raise its income. Empirical evidence concurs that import of capital equipment fell from 90% to 43% in 1960 and subsequently below double-digits in the 1970s. The rate of return in investment would have been higher in the capital goods industry. The consumer goods industry did increase by 70%. The first five-year plans were instrumental in bringing about an industrial growth rate of 7%.

The contribution to GDP from manufacturing increased from 9% to 16% after the first two Five Year Plans. SAIL, BHEL, HMT had way back created an aspirational middle class that would spend heavily in turn creating more demand. Prof. Mahalanobis argued that the remedy to malice of massive unemployment was the capital good industry that would aid in equilibrium reaching around that full employment level. The creation of an organized workforce with efficient purchasing parity could have been attributed to these five-year plans.

The scientific temper Nehru pursued was channelized to the Indian public.

Technological prowess remains firmly etched in the Nehruvian socialist economic model. Technological role in economic development has been empirically proven by Kuznets, Solow, Cobb and Douglas. The multi-purpose hydroelectricity projects, which he called the temples of modern India proved to be beneficial in the long-term. Bhakra Nangal Dam, Hirakud Dam, Nagarjuna Sagar Project and Damodar Valley Corporation all exemplified the tenacious modern Indian spirit to transform rapidly. India had to present a picture of herself away from the grim past of famines and starvation. Nehru focused on establishment of a wide range of technical institutes like Defense Research & Development Organization, Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, Indian Space and Research Organization, Indian Council of Medical Research etc. Technological development was laying groundwork for the upcoming Green Revolution. The White Revolution or AMUL reflected the emergence of aspirational rural India driven by technology. Nehru did not believe even in the Gandhian economic model that was aimed to create employment opportunities in villages itself. Nehru strived for scientific excellence and today, we can see the immense value of these imminent scientific institutions.

Sector	1900-01 to 1946-47	1946-47 to 1999-00	1950-51 to 1964-65
Primary	0.4	2.5	2.6
Secondary	1.5	5.5	6.8
Tertiary	1.7	5	4.5
GDP	0.9	4.1	4
GDP per Capita	0.1	0.9	0.9

Data are annual average compound growth rates
Source: Sivasubramanian (2005) These figures actually show that the Nehruvian period was as good as if not better off than the later periods of economic growth.

It would have been so risky and visionary to think about the Space Program at a time, when indicators pointed towards the impoverished state of the nation. Yet, today we bask in the glory of our glorious space program.

The External Sector and Economic Diplomacy

It would be totally correct of critics to point out that the import substitution would have left the Indian consumers bereft of the advantages of a competitive market. Developing countries often relish the concessional international trade. The 2nd Five Year Plan prioritized investment in the domestic capital good industry over incomes from exports. The times in which India got independence were difficult. The world had been polarized into two camps. The opportunity cost of an unregulated competitive market was the self-reliance of a nation that had been clutched by colonial powers for two centuries. The economic policies were in total sync with the Non-Aligned Movement. Had India not opted for building its capital good industry, it would never have broken the shackles of foreign dependence. In Nehru's years, foreign aid from both East and West paved the way for development in critical sectors. Much before the lucrative investment summits, technology transfer was the real deal.

The steel plants in Bokaro and Bhilai stand testament to Indo-Soviet's flourishing relationships. The Durgapur Steel Plant was established with the help of the UK. The import substitution strategy ensured no foreign power would dictate terms to India. Foreign assistance was required but at the same time curtailed to such an extent that development won't suffer. Massive foreign role would have imperiled India's sovereignty. Development of the capital goods industry led to the building of a self-reliant India in the truest sense. The inflexion point in the above graphs of countries other than India came around in the late 1970s. We had failed to capitalize on a strong groundwork. Mahalanobis strategy provided India at least some of the much-needed industrial capacity and human capital to become competitive in the global market.
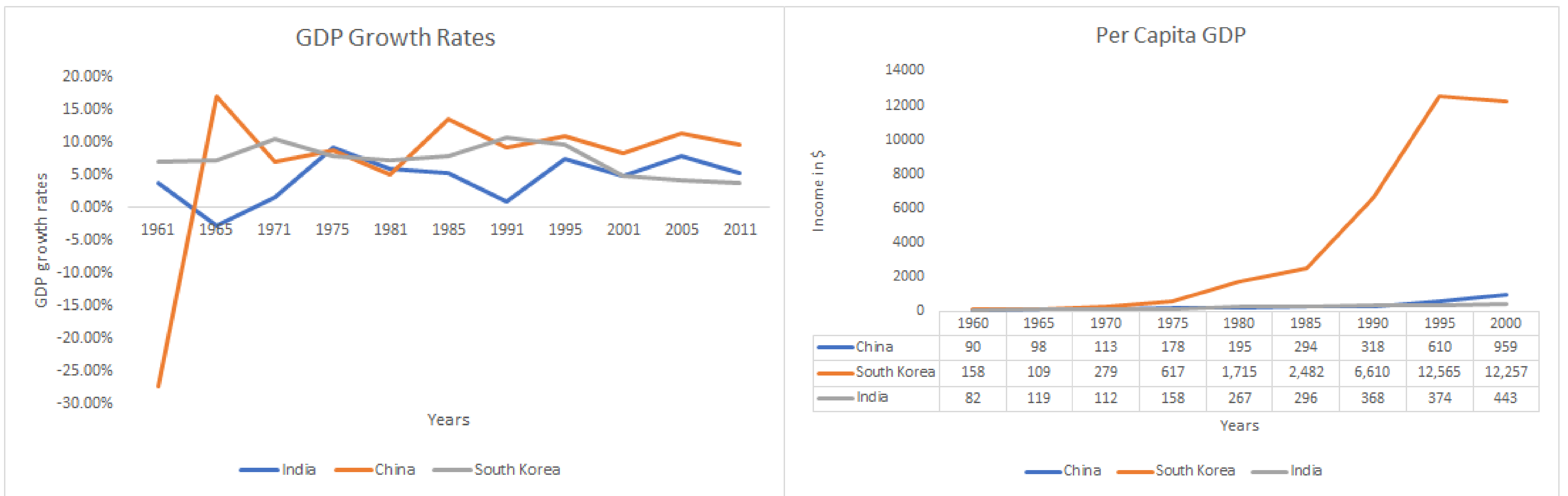
Indian industry in her infancy, needed protection and support to compete against the world's best. Indian economy at independence needed some support before it could set its flight soaring high. Mixed economic planning did that!

Despite this, we had seen Balance of Payment crises precipitating more than once. Inflation too touched double digits. However, these problems are particular in the foundational stages of economic growth in developing countries. It was however clear that the focus on industrialization had lost steam in the early 1960s. It can be attributed to geopolitical instability. The manufacturing process became stagnant and never after that received a major philip. Thus, we could witness a direct shift from the agricultural sector to services sector. This was not seen in the Asian economies of China, Vietnam, Taiwan etc. India ran into budgetary deficits in the early years of economic growth inhibiting the state's capability to expand manufacturing. The agricultural sector also never seems to have been freed of inequality. Agricultural sector, which is still the largest employer, did not go through massive transformation. Now we will look at how agricultural and service sectors fared under the socialist model. We will also see how this model had a humanitarian shade to it and also how PM Nehru was a true institution-builder. Towards the end, we will see how the mixed economy model proved insufficient to rake up growth after a certain point.

Agricultural Sector

Food security in a large country like India, where poverty rates were skyrocketing post-independence, was perhaps the gargantuan economic challenge faced ever. Mahalanobis model is said to be heavily inclined towards the industrial sector rather than the agricultural sector. Land reforms did take place to abolish the well-entrenched Zamindari system. The Agrarian sector wasn't the real focus of government-critics have often raked up this point.

GDP Growth Rates

(chart: GDP growth rates of India, China, South Korea from 1961 to 2011; y-axis "GDP growth rates" from -30.00% to 20.00%, x-axis "Years")

Per Capita GDP

(chart: y-axis "Income in $" from 0 to 14000, x-axis "Years")

	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000
China	90	98	113	178	195	294	318	610	959
South Korea	158	109	279	617	1,715	2,482	6,610	12,565	12,257
India	82	119	112	158	267	296	368	374	443

If we look at the GDP growth rates of India, China and South Korea (miracle economy), India had by far maintained a GDP growth rate of around 5%. We shouldn't ignore that the political systems of China & South Korea were totally in contrast to India's.

This line graph picks up the trend of per capita income till 2000 of the three countries: India, China and South Korea. Surprisingly, till the 1970s, the three countries had nearly the same per capita income. South Korea went through rapid reforms then, and India & China had nearly the same per capita incomes till the 90s. We can conclude that big bang reforms should have taken place once political stability had been deeply entrenched.

The inflexion point in the above graphs of countries other than India came around in the late 1970s. We had failed to capitalize on a strong groundwork. Mahalanobis strategy provided India at least some of the much-needed industrial capacity and human capital to become competitive in the global market. Indian industry in her infancy, needed protection and support to compete against the world's best. Indian economy at independence needed some support before it could set its flight soaring high. Mixed economic planning did that!

Durgapur Steel Project, India, circa 1940-1970.

However, the government remained dependent on foreign countries for food grains. The trend continued until; Green Revolution ushered in. According to Prof. Vakil and Prof. Brahmanand of Bombay University, emphasis on heavy machinery led to rise in price of food grains and that perpetuated poverty. Unlike the Communist regime in China, land reform did not hinge upon democratic rights. These reforms were successful in very few pockets of the whole country. Despite that, agricultural production increased by 16% after the 2nd Five Year Plan.

Agricultural production increased by 1/3rd amount. Cooperative and institutional loans to farmers surged indicative of an elaborative farm credit network that was going to be built. Cooperative farming did not show the level of success as cooperative commodity production like AMUL did. States like Punjab which built upon scientific models of agriculture- like electricity, canals became harbinger of change during the Green Revolution. The last years of Nehru witnessed multiple food shortages emerging in different parts due to successive failures of monsoons. Despite the snags, groundwork had been done to face challenges. Multiple inefficiencies still plague Indian agriculture but still we have expanded our agricultural production massively like no other nation.

Yet, neglect of agriculture led to 60% of the working force contributing to less than 20% of output- something that would perpetuate inequality for a long time. However, despite the massive agricultural production hasn't made India self-sufficient to fulfill the hunger of millions still in poverty- reflected in rankings on countries on the basis of hunger index. Per capita food grain availability remained low in colonial and neo-liberal policy times, then in the Nehruvian period; speaking much for itself!

Human Capital

In the early stages of nation-building, the Five-Year Plans had established Indian Institute of Technology, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Indian Institute of Management, National School of Drama Indian Institute of Sciences, National Institute of Design, Delhi School of Economics amongst others. These institutions were going to be the drivers of big-ticket reforms of later years. Nehru's investment in human capital formation undoubtedly deserves our admiration. The highly skilled workforce who had their education in these institutions contribute to the global economy significantly. IITs and IIMs roles in India emerging as an IT hub could not be challenged. These institutions have unleashed the real animal spirits in our economy. Public education system was strengthened massively.

Service Sector

Some of the monumental achievements of the socialist model were the creation of institutions at the nascent stage of economic growth. Several development institutions like IDBI and ICICI had been established to channel credit to the industrial sector. The tight monetary policy during those years meant that the savings of the populace could be utilized for industrial growth. Private sector would have been the biggest beneficiary of these institutions. The Employment Provident Fund established during that period is a resilient economic device in the hands of the salaried middle class. Life Insurance Corporation remains one of the most monumental achievements of the socialist planning.

The nationalization of insurance remained a landmark moment that ensured financial cover reaches every individual. The insurance giant might become the largest Indian firm by market capitalization. A very interesting anecdote about LIC goes as such, Mundhra Scam- the first biggest financial embezzlement brought major embarrassment to the Nehru government. However, what followed was an immediate judicial investigation that was speedy and transparent, something which we randomly see in recent times.

Indian Oil Corporation, one of the largest oil companies, had been nurtured in that era. Vividh Bharati and Lalit Kala Akademy were also nurtured- the socialist model had that humane touch.Surprisingly, Air India which today symbolizes the financial mismanagement It so happened, JRD Tata, the chairman of Tata Airlines was disappointed at the nationalization of airlines and he contacted Nehru. Nehru offered JRD Tata, the chairmanship of Indian Airlines and it was Tata who micromanaged all the nuances of aviation. It was indeed, a glowing model of private-public partnership. The aspirational middle class was an outcome of the people-centric policies. It was true that the economic strategy had been successful in building an industrial base which was however, smaller as compared to those of Japan, Taiwan and Korea. These nations too had implemented state planning in early years but they had exposed the domestic market to foreign competition much earlier than India did. Chinese and Korean comparative advantages in the steel and automobile industry developed gradually because of the collusion between state powers and industrial forces. In India, the entire responsibility of building the industrial base fell squarely on the public sector driven by state machinery. Domestic capitalists had become wary of the license raj. This strategy could not have been stretched for long, given that the state was going to face a fiscal crunch sometime later. Asian nations had put a plethora of strict restrictions on its domestic industry driven by private players which would have not been successful in a liberal democracy like India. The Balance of Payment crisis was bound to explode given that domestic investments were replacing export earnings. Later on, during the successive Congress governments, state led domestic industries had diminishing returns to investment. A political turmoil followed that robbed the Indian economy of an opportunity to reform. Undue licensing regime for a long period clamped down the private sector's zeal for profit maximization. To counter this, we can rely on the argument that it was politically correct and various countries had done the same. State intervention was the much-needed nudge to feeble, non-existent private industry. The development of the private sector was only possible through the public sector.
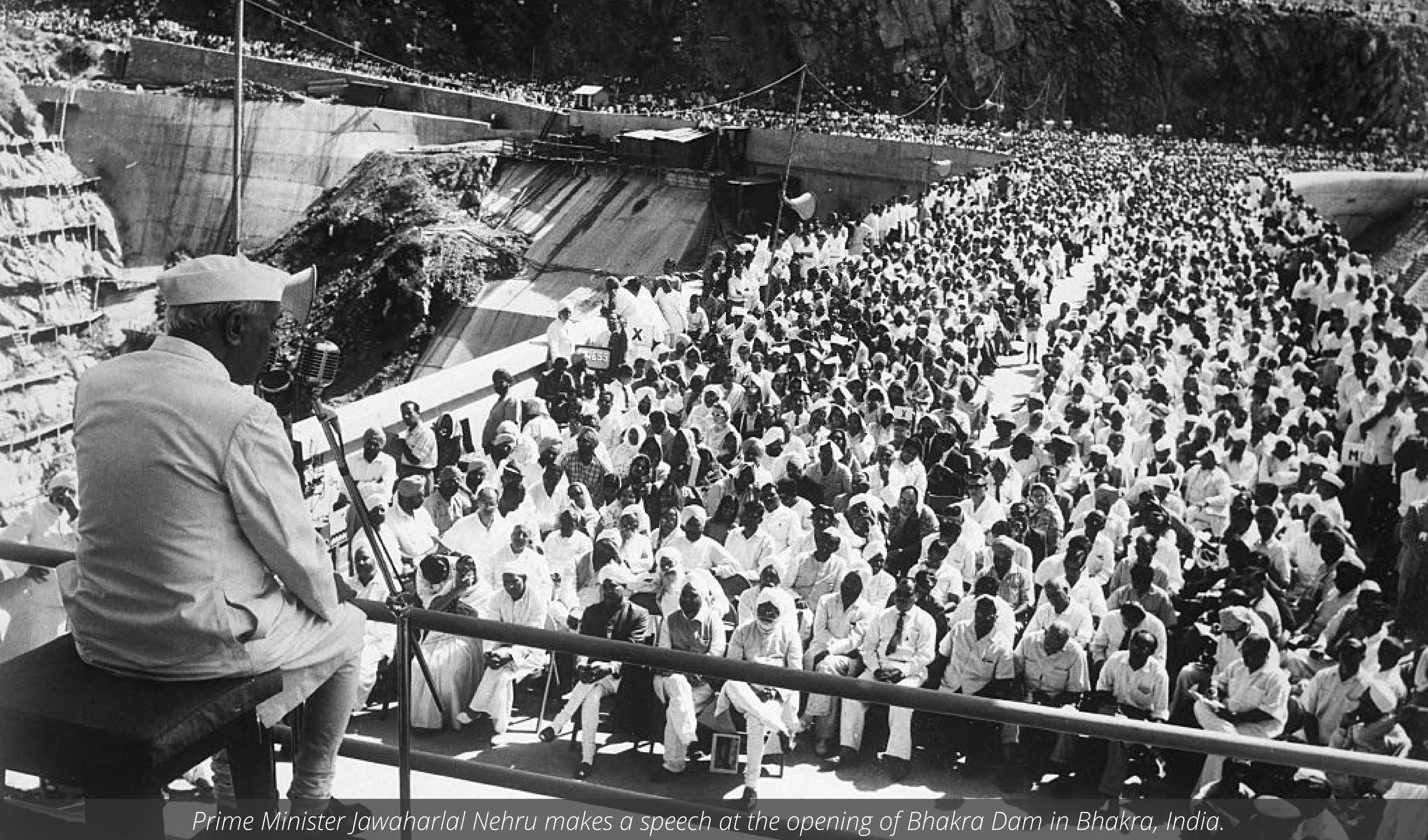
Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru makes a speech at the opening of Bhakra Dam in Bhakra, India.

Leading industrialists had realized it and the Bombay Plan reflected the combined aspirations of both the public and private sector for India's economic growth story. The only substitute to foreign capital whose opportunity cost was economic sovereignty, was an indigenous public sector. India had felt the pangs of pain accrued from free trade in the colonial era when finished products had been dumped into the sub-continent. There has been a tendency to blame the socialist model for India failing to catch up with the West. We easily tend to forget that democratic rights came later when industrialization had set in. Nehru never had the liberty to side step individual liberties as in case of China, South Korea or Vietnam to increase growth drastically. Opening up the economy at that point would have meant that possibility existed, of India turning into an economic protectorate of foreign powers like certain African nations.

The famous Bolivian case of privatization accentuates that liberal approach to the economy after years of political instability would wreak havoc on the economically weaker sections. Given the mess plaguing the Indian banking system, one might be forced to think that lack of regulations can become a lag on economic growth.

Given the mess plaguing the Indian banking system, one might be forced to think that lack of regulations can become a lag on economic growth. The manufacturing base remains uncompetitive, with liberalization having not done that much to help India gain a superlative comparative advantage in certain industries. Indian economy remainshighly consumption-driven, something which had been envisaged in the Five-Year Plans. The Nehruvian model envisioned a strong state that would pave the way for a flourishing market economy.

Liberalization would not have been that successful if not for years of state protection. Countries like Japan and Korea have reached inflection points in their growth curves. Acute inaccuracies of these models have been highlighted. We can agree on the fact that the shift from unregulated to regulated economy should have taken place before the economic instability crept in.

The strong independent institutions Nehru built continue to embellish his legacy. The man himself left an indelible impression on Indian economy- that economy had been nurtured and protected enough so that it could take high flights to compete with the world's very best!

Race to the **White House**

"This is the most important presidential election in the modern history of this nation".
Senator Bernie Sanders

The original article was written a week before the commencement of the elections.
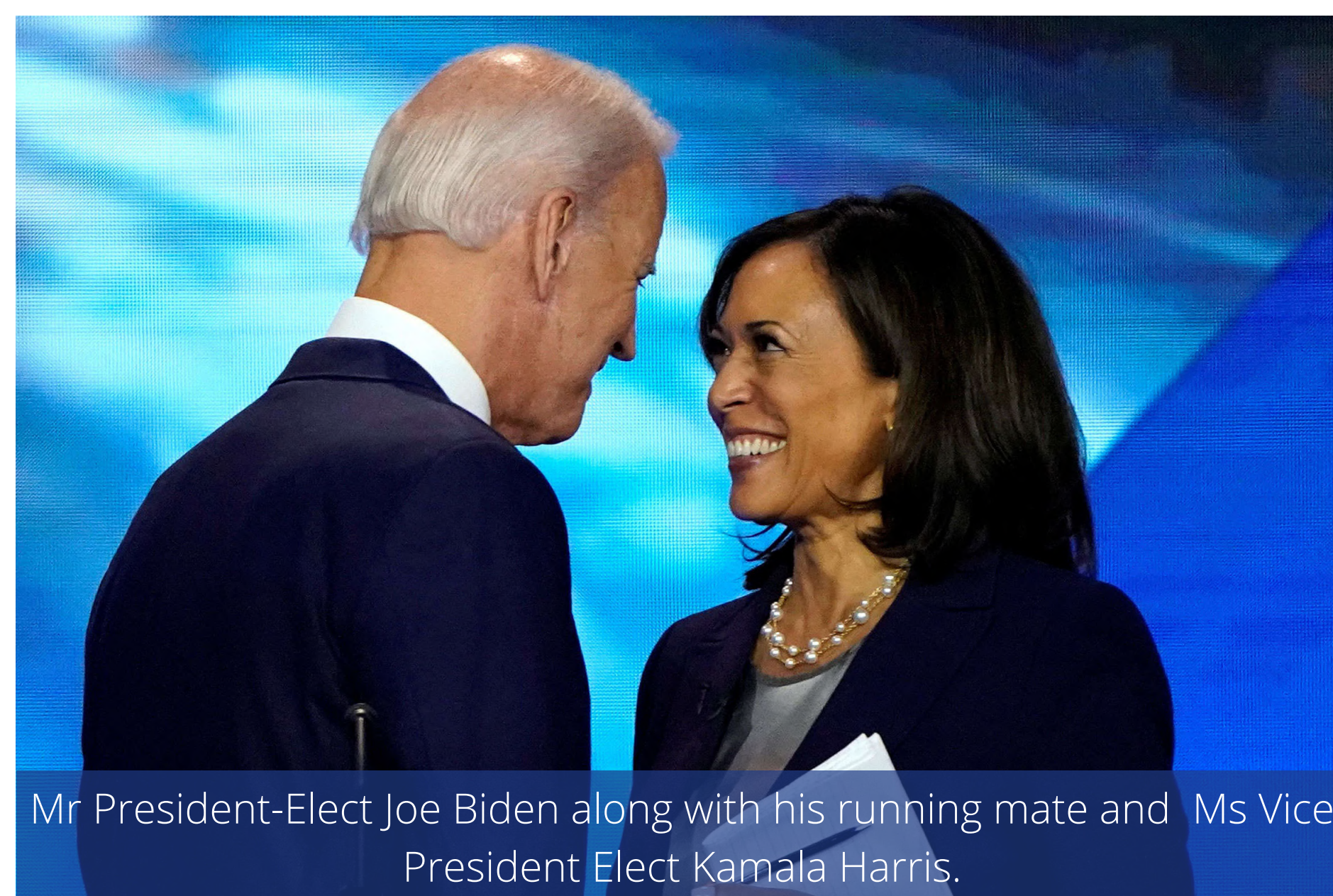
BY SIDDHARTH KAUSHIK

During the Democratic National Convention held in August this year, Senator Bernie Sanders said, "This is the most important presidential election in the modern history of this nation." I thought to myself that that is a bold statement to make. I backtracked a little in time and looked for similar statements during other presidential elections. Much to my surprise, such statements have been made almost every time with different pretexts. In 2016, Trump acted as the messiah of the American people saying that this election will decide whether America will become 'great' again or turn into a socialist state.

Similarly, Obama in 2012 and 2008, appealed to the cause of economic stability. Bush and Clinton before him, all have had their own reasons as to why that particular election is the most important in the modern history of America. But, this time, even though I was surprised at Sanders's statement, I did not dispute it for a single second.

My understanding of this particular elections' importance arises from the concern for the democratic institutions that have acted as key features of American democracy and have in some form or the other, influenced democratic institutions all over the world. There is no refuting the fact that the race for the oval office is the most important democratic election across the globe, simply because it is the election of the most powerful leader of the free world. This time, however, there is an air of bizarreness around everything.

The factors behind this particular situation are varied. For an overview, things like the COVID crisis, the social unrest over the Black Lives Matter movement and the subsequent debate on policing reforms and lastly the economic slowdown also begs for change.The 2020 US Presidential election has been as unsettling as the year itself, but I firmly believe that is not because of the strange nature of the year but the two candidates. I look back at some of the

previous elections that I have studied and never have both the candidates been as incompetent, incapable and remarkably unworthy of taking up the Oval office. And to be honest, it is the candidates themselves who, in the presidential debates, have convinced me so. Let's take an example. Biden, in one of the debates, said that Trump is a racist, non-believer of climate change and a radical protector of the billionaires. And I couldn't find a way to disagree with him. Then, Trump said that Biden is a corrupt, racist politician and I found it hard to argue against

Mr President-Elect Joe Biden along with his running mate and Ms Vice President Elect Kamala Harris.

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TO SUMMARISE, THE TWO DEBATES WERE FILLED WITH USELESS REHTORIC, UNSUBSTATIATED ALLEGATIONS AND COUNTER-ALLEGATIONS IN EVERY PHASE OF THE DEBATE.

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that as well. On that note, let us briefly look at the presidential debates.

The first one was filled with utter chaos. Futile interruptions and a lack of coherence in the debate made it difficult for me as well as countless others to get through the entirety of it. A key highlight was Trump refusing to denounce white supremacists. Even though I do feel that Trump is a racist, it can easily be argued that this particular point has been used in a manipulative manner by the media.

If one goes through the official transcripts, it clearly states that Trump asks the Proud Boys(a far-right white supremacist group) to stand down. The question that lingers is- Is such a muffled statement coming from the US President at a time when the whole of America is raging in protests enough? He denounces them for half a second and goes back to slandering the Black Lives Matters movement. Even though the issue has been falsely worked upon by the media, I still feel they are not far away from the point.

Going to the second debate, which was much more civil but still lacked any coherence. The questions being asked were mundane and only facilitated both the candidates' objective of rhetoric. Nonetheless, strong points for corruption cases were made against Biden, and the issue of Trump's tax returns was raised, both which might have had more potential than what was used in the debate. Also, an awkward minute where Trump compared himself to Lincoln saying that with the possible exception

of Lincoln no other president had done more for the Black community than Trump. I laughed at that point but was instantly reminded of Biden's incompetence when he decided to make a joke out of such an absurd statement instead of taking the debate to Trump from that point onwards.

To summarise, the two debates were filled with useless rhetoric, unsubstantiated allegations and counter-allegations in every phase/section of the debate. The cherry on the top is both accusing each other of taking money from Russia. I don't think there has ever been a series of debates as futile as these without any proper discussion on any policy whatsoever. Now, I will try to better understand the two candidates before moving into the more technical part of the election, including the polls.

First, for Joe Biden. I'll acknowledge the elephant in the room. Yes, Joe Biden has been a racist for the majority of his political career with the exception of the last 15-17 years. In 1993, when passing the crime bill, he said that there were 'predators on the street' who are 'beyond the pale'. He even called Obama the first clean-cut American African candidate; however, I feel it is taken out of context nearly every time. Still, historical precedence suggests that Biden has been a racist. But it seems that he is trying to make amends. During the Obama administration, he oversaw economic growth for the Black community, and he has Kamala Harris,

an Indian African as his Vice President.
And I do feel that Harris will help shift marginal votes on Biden's side, but not enough to win him the presidency on her own. Biden however, has played smart coming into the last few weeks of the elections. Another Democratic candidate would have surrounded their campaign on slandering Trump. He did it only when it served him. He reluctantly agreed to work on the Green New Deal with the Sanders and AOC camp of the democratic party. He even made a commitment by assuring that the COVID vaccine will be provided to everyone at concessional rates. He has been able to win over the Hispanic, American African and other non-white communities and that is visible in major states like California and New York. If the Democrats can win the Senate and maintain the majority in the house, I can see Biden being a much stronger president than I had given him credit for. I still, however, don't see him as a president who can bring bipartisan deals.

Moving on, Donald Trump has been a consequential individual ever since he first chose to run in 2016. However, comparing what he is today to what he was in 2016 against Clinton, I don't see much difference in terms of campaigning, to say the least. But if it worked last time, what is it to say that he won't win this time? Well, I do admit he was an underdog coming into the 2016 election, and it seems like he still is. But the critical difference is that the portion of the US population which was on the fence last time has now starkly shifted to the Democrats' side. I won't call it Biden's side because it is more to the malicious acts of Trump which have played into his favour rather than his positive. Now, destructive actions; a lot to cover but let's get started. The rudimentary detriment of his presidency has been the deterioration of the democratic institutions. The most prominent example being the media. Trump has made facts look like opinions,

and therefore anyone who provides facts which don't align with his are by order of Trump, fake news. This has had a negative impact on Trump more than he would have initially thought.
Next, the issue of race; Trump will never admit it but he has handled the BLM issue in the worst possible manner and it is without a doubt, the manner of a racist. Trump retweeted white supremacists time and again and labelled the protestors as terrorists. From a President, I would have expected some initiative. If not legislative, at least deliberative. This has nearly put the majority of the African Americans

on Biden's side. He has not even been able to maintain good relations with Republicans despite being a Republican himself. Mitt Romney, the former Republican presidential nominee, voted to convict Trump during his impeachment trial. At this point, a lot of Republicans support Trump only because he's a republican and because they would rather have him instead of a Democrat. There are so many more negative aspects of his presidency
Even though I feel the economy was something he could have built his campaign on, the corona virus and the inevitable economic slowdown that came along has proven to be his Achilles' heel instead of his one few positives. And yes, Trump has poorly handled the pandemic.

There was a much bigger need for stricter lockdown and health measures like mandatory usage of masks. India was able to better manage the pandemic than America and seeing introspectively, how many times are we able to say something like that. The handling of a pandemic should and will play as a negative against him.
I will bring back Bernie Sanders at this point. He has claimed that this November it shouldn't be Trump v Biden, but rather Trump v America. I will turn it a notch higher and say it is Trump v Democracy at this point. I will also admit, and at this point, I have made it quite clear up that I am not a fan of Biden whatsoever but what Trump offers at this point is not just a threat to American democracy. It has become a wave which has affected Britain across the pond, Brazil and all over to India. As much as we try to move away from the facade of Western control on our lives, we have to admit that the west plays a considerable role in our lives. And that remains true even for our political systems. America has been a pioneer of democratic ideals for years and today as much as the democratic institutions face a threat, an equally more significant risk is to the very ideals of democracy

> "The economy was something Trump could have campaigned on. But COVID-19 and the inevitable economic slowdown that came along has proven to be his Achilles' heel instead of his one few positives."

The US Presidential elections have been an extravaganza for the better part of this century. However, as much of a spectacle it might be, no one can deny the importance of these elections. The land where the ideals of democracy took birth and 200 years on precedents set by the first President are still being upheld.

However, these very ideals which have been the bedrock of not just the American democracy but democracies all over the world, have been intensely questioned in the build-up to the 2020 elections. As much as a fiery and rhetoric based depiction of the polls is needed, there is also a dire need of some academic overview which might facilitate a return to normalcy during a period which can only be described as abnormal.

Before I go into the intricacies of this political drama, I would establish a background, assuming that not each one of us is aware of the system along the lines of which this game of thrones work. The nominations from each party (Democrats and Republicans) is done through a series of state-wise conventions. Once both the parties have their nominees, the race to the oval office begins

Campaigning is pretty much consistent with what we see in other democracies. However, it is on the election date that things start to get messy. In America, an electoral college is formed to elect the President. This college merely is nominal in its functioning and has no power as such. The electoral college and its composition, however, are something which some people consider to be undemocratic even though it falls in line with the federal spirit. There are a total of 538 seats in the electoral college up for grabs, and therefore a president needs to have 270 seats in their favour. These 538 seats or electors are nominated from the 50 states. Each state has a different number of electors based on varying factors but primarily population. California has the most number of electors at 55, followed by Texas and New York. Now, the controversial part. So these 55 electors are divided into various districts.

Like in India we have a constituency, similar is the case with America. So, California has 55 constituencies from which 55 electors are elected. Now, hypothetically, in California, if Trump wins 20 seats or constituencies and if Biden wins the remaining 35, then all of the 55 electoral votes will go to Biden instead of the 35 he won. This makes the whole process much different than what we see in India.

Now coming to the polls which are conducted by different news networks to understand the situation in various states, taking a sample of different groups of people and forming a point-based system. The latest CNN polls show a national 10 points lead for Biden with the points standing at 52-42. At this stage in 2016, CNN polls showed a 5 point lead for Clinton standing at 47-42 ahead of Trump. So yes, there is a chance that Trump might overturn the current election as well. The situation of the swing states has to be noted since it is in these states that the election can be won or lost. Usually, there are eight swing states which include Florida, Iowa, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Michigan, North Carolina, Arizona and Wisconsin.

This year even Texas seems to be closer than ever; however, I still feel Trump will win it. Now, Biden is leading in 6 of these states with only Florida being less than 2 points. Trump's lead in both of the remaining states is less than 2 points. If Biden can manage to win Florida and Pennsylvania, he will practically win the Presidency as they have 49 electoral votes put together. In the NY/ Sienna poll, Biden has a lead of 74, 39 and 34 points with American African, Hispanic and young voters (18-29) respectively. At this point, it seems at the outset that it is Biden's race to lose. He is in a commanding lead and

he needs to assure that he wins the swing states which he leads in at this point. Now, going onto the more controversial part of elections. It is necessary to state here that Trump has time and again claimed that if he loses the election, the transfer of power will not be peaceful, and he will challenge the election result. This notion stems from the fact that a lot of people will be
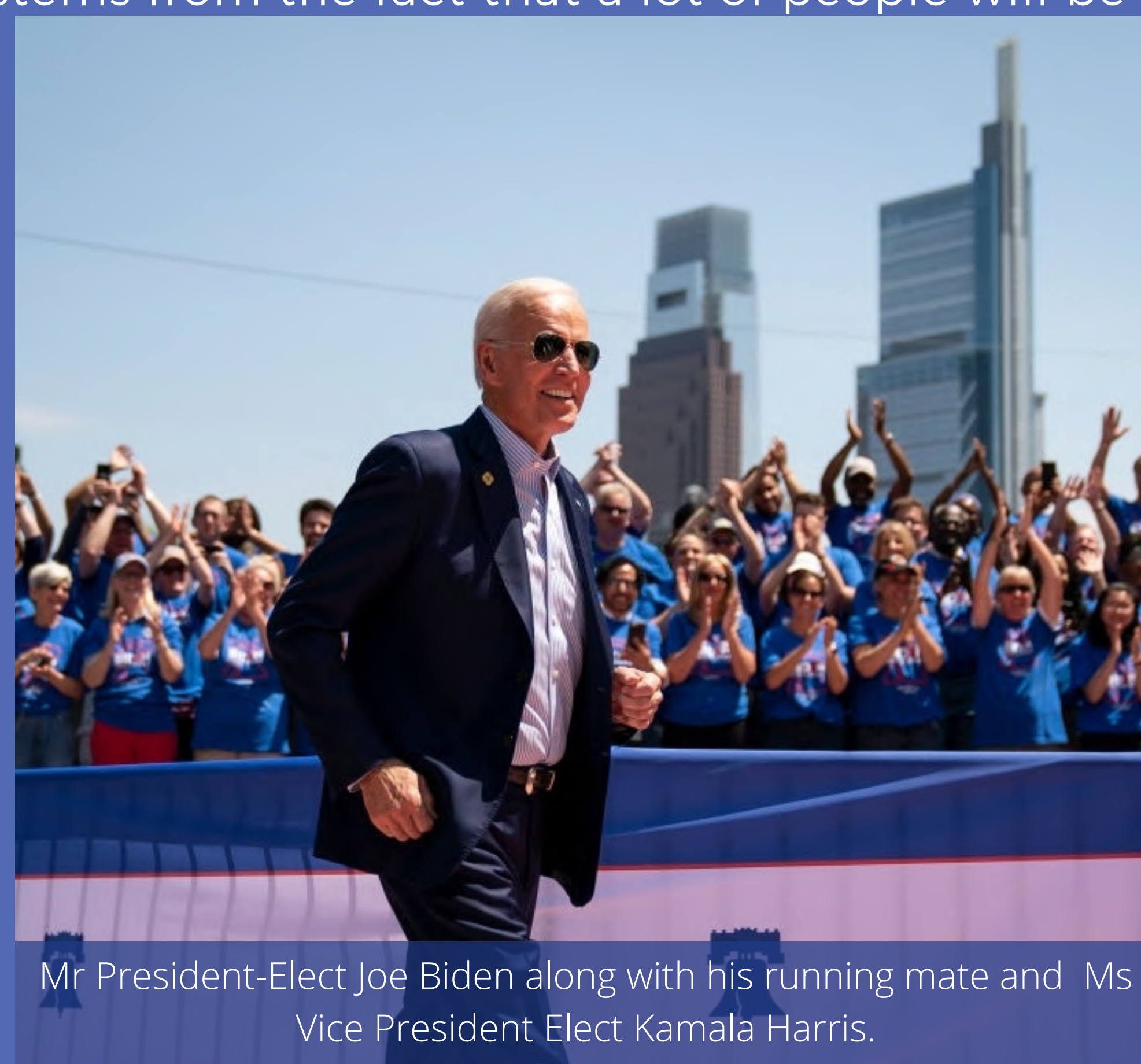
Mr President-Elect Joe Biden along with his running mate and Ms Vice President Elect Kamala Harris.

voting from mail-in ballots. Trump has complained that mail-in votes can easily be tampered. For mail-in voting, upon an early request, a ballot is sent to the one who makes the request and they are supposed to fill necessary details like name, address and who they are voting for. Now, it is to be noted that after initial checking of the details, it is on the election day that the total counting is done. This provides a check against voter fraud. And this is not something which started this year. It has been happening for a lot of years with the military. A lot of election experts say that there are less chances of fraud in the mail-in voting. There is no study to corroborate it, but there is absolutely zero evidence to prove that mail-in voting does, in fact lead to electoral fraud.

Now, if Donald Trump decides to challenge the result, there are quite a lot of directions the scenario could go into. I will look into the one that looks most likely to occur. There has been a lot of controversy regarding the state of Pennsylvania during this particular election. Trump has targeted the state where Biden has a marginal lead, calling it 'a place where bad things happen.' And yes, if Pennsylvania isn't able to bring forward a decision regarding its electoral college or if the decision is challenged, then it is highly possible that neither candidate gets the required 270 electoral college seats. The 20 EC votes of Pennsylvania are highly crucial if the race is tightly contested. A lot of experts, who initially indicated a Biden landslide have come to claim that it will come down to the state of Pennsylvania to decide the new President. Now, if Trump does contest the decision, the decision falls in the lap of the House of Representatives. The Democrats' majority in the House does them no good as all delegates of each state get only one vote (50 votes instead of 435) and more states have Republican representatives. There is a twist here as well. The House elections will also be conducted this year, and the new House will be sworn in before the decision on the Presidency. So it will be the new House which decides the President and even though it looks like the control of more states will remain with the Republicans, nothing can be said about that either. If it goes to that, I still feel that the new President will be Donald Trump unless there's a blue wave during the House elections. Next, the Senate chooses the Vice President.

Republicans have the majority there as well, so Mike Pence seems to be poised to retain his position. However, and again a blue wave is a condition, if the Democrats do turn the Senate upside down, having Kamala Harris as the VP to Trump's Presidency, does no one any good. Ironically, the most apparent thing about this particular election is the solution to if the elections go into disarray. But it seems that recently, this is the kind of thing we expect from America.Now, for my understanding from all of this, I still feel that despite a commendable comeback from Trump, Joe Biden will be the next US President. The recent scandals, the pandemic, racial issues, and the impeachment, all have played a massive role in this election. Trump does not admit it, and a lot of his ardent followers don't either, but it remains the truth, and it will be the deciding factor. Still, I will admit that nothing can be said with surety until we have the President confirmed; nothing whatsoever. Whatever happens, I can say this with a lot of confidence that this particular election will be highly controversial. There is almost a definite chance that if Trump loses, the decision will be challenged. It is not a far fetched idea that the American political system will go into disarray. There is a lot of chance that the decision might as well go into the hands of the Supreme Court. A Republican majority in the Supreme Court will almost ensure that whatever decision comes, whether of an executive nature or not, will be in favour of Trump. An inevitable question comes up about how these democratic ideals which the Americans have been proud of for centuries are slowly falling into an endless void of deterioration. The clock of the demise of these democratic institutions seems to resonate with the ticking of a new Doomsday clock. This is a question, which I feel should not be just restricted to democracy but can be extended to democracies and more importantly, the tenet of democracies all over the world.

The results of the US elections have been apparent now for the last week or two. However, there was a partisan reaction to the delay in the counting of votes and the announcement of results. We saw the Democrats being insistent on having all the votes counted no matter how long it took. The Trump loyalists on the other hand rejected the idea of counting votes past

election date and they even called these votes illegal, the phrase obviously being amplified by Donald Trump. I personally havent been able to put my finger on what exactly these illegal votes are. Is it new that the counting has gone past the election date? No, obviously not. Is it the first time that we have seen mail in voting? No, as I said before mail in voting has been going on for a long time. This is simple political desperation on Trump's part. Nonetheless, Joe Biden is the President elect with 306 electoral votes to his name. However, Trump has still not given his concession speech which had become a norm or a convention over the years. Trump's denial of the election result might not work this time around but it still remains a highly consequential act which might prove to be dangerous for American democracy in the future. However, there seems to be hope at the end of a very very dark tunnel as we might see a restoration of democratic institutions in America and one can hope that the trend might follow into other parts of the world as well.

'NON-COOPERATION' IN COOPERATIVE FEDERALISM: THE CENTRE-STATE TUSSLE OF GST

Abhinav K Shukla & Jinendra Parakh

Cooperative federalism is a system which promotes synchronization and minimises the friction between the centre and states for achieving certain national goals. According to E.S. CORWIN, the centre and states are regarded as mutually complementary parts of a single government mechanism. But what do we really mean by cooperative federalism in the Quasi Federal India? Let's analyze this in the context of the recent controversy regarding GST.

GST council has proved to be a successful model of cooperation as all the decisions taken in the initial 37 meetings were based on consensus and no voting had to be conducted. The council as a constitutional body is exercising powers under the pooled indirect taxation sovereignty of both the centre and the states, in accordance with which uniform indirect tax laws and rates are implemented nation-wide. Since the fundamental operation of GST has substantially departed from the Sales and Value Added Tax(VAT) regime, it created genuine concerns for the manufacturing states as their revenue was to be impacted severely. In order to incentivise the states losing revenue, the GST Compensation Cess Act, 2017 was enacted to impose compensation cess on luxury goods and the collection to be transferred to a non-lapsable Fund (GST Compensation Cess Fund).

The aforementioned cooperative model was smoothly operational, hitherto COVID-19 pandemic hitting the backbone of Indian Economy, substantially reducing GST collections. In July 2020, the Union Finance Secretary informed the parliamentary committee on finance that the centre cannot pay the promised 14% GST compensation to states due to low tax collections amidst COVID-19. As an out-turn, the states had claimed a shortfall of Rs. 3 Lakh crore, being calculated on the growth rate of 14% per annum from its base level in 2015-16. Out of 3 lakh crore, Rs. 65,000 crore is the expected revenue through compensation cess after which the deficit remains to be Rs. 2,35,000 crore. In centre's opinion, out of total deficit of Rs. 2.35 Lakh crore, Rs. 97,000 crore is the loss suffered by the states due to their transition in the GST system, meaning had the states continued in the pre-GST setup with their own taxing power, they wouldn't have suffered this humongous Rs. 97,000 crore loss.

The remaining Rs. 1,38,000 crore is the loss due to the unprecedented economic jolt caused by COVID-19 and the lockdown measures, which the states would have lost anyway even in the non-GST regime as the aftermath of pandemic isn't region specific, it has drowned the national economy.

Thus the union government accepted their responsibility to pay Rs. 97,000 crore to the states in the form of a debt free borrowing option from RBI's special window, wherein the states are not even required to pay back the principal amount being generated by the union through compensation cess in the upcoming financial years. In case the states emphasize on getting the whole sum of Rs. 2.35 lakh crore, they'll have to choose the 2nd option of borrowing an interest based debt of Rs. 2.35 trillion. In case the states don't opt for any of the 2 options, they'll have to wait till June 2022 for getting their dues. Looking into the present condition, 21 states have already agreed to choose the 1st option whereas states such as Chhattisgarh, Punjab, Kerala, etc. have alleged the centre of imposing the majority view on the remaining states.

It is indeed the centre's responsibility and they should pay it. But we need to see the centre's side as well. Are they voluntarily violating the promise due to their policy flaws? Definitely not. The reason being the lockdown in view of a pandemic, which was definitely perceived as the need of the hour as even before the central lockdown, most of the states had already imposed lockdown in their respective zones.

The assertions drawn against the centre are based on the notion that the states very much agreed to surrender their indirect taxing autonomy largely based on the centre's assurance of compensation to meet the 14% mark, on which the centre has now betrayed the states. The counter to this can be substantiated by the rationale that the 14% compensation formula was decided on a fundamental premise i.e. the gradual growth of the economy with the implementation of GST. Now since the very premise has mutated due to the crumbling of the economy, it is fallacious to anticipate the whole-sum in accordance with the pre-decided modus operandi. It must be contemplated that if this loss of revenue had been due to any accustomed economic slowdown, as happened in the quarters of 2019-20, the centre would have absolutely been accountable. But this obscuring state of affairs due to the pandemic calls for a prodigious cooperation between the states and the centre as tough times require tough measures.

We often come across various arguments that cooperative federalism calls for the centre's responsibility. But the model of cooperative federalism calls for a mutual synergy. Centre undeniably is the big boss with 1/3rd voting rights in the GST council and vast taxing powers but it cannot be understood as if cooperative federalism can only be jolted by the centre. The states being an integral part of this federal setup must also cooperate with the centre with a bona fide approach and must understand the irrefutable fact that even had they stayed out of the GST, this pandemic would have still hit causing a loss of these 1.38 lakh crore. So rather than playing the blame game as to who is responsible for this massive economic breakdown, both union and the states have to come on board with the cooperation of the highest extent.

It is noteworthy that even though the centre has extensive borrowing and taxing powers, but considering the present state of emergency and future course of action, the centre can neither burden the public with over-taxation, nor can it impose huge borrowings, as it would create unmatched fiscal deficits for the upcoming financial years.

So the states viewing 2.35 trillion in isolation as a promise is wrong ab-initio as this amount is meaningless without underscoring the point that it is the pandemic as the exclusive reason making the centre incapable of paying the whole-sum.

Though the centre has denied the recent CAG report claiming violation of GST laws by the centre through the misuse of compensation cess amounting Rs. 47,000 crore, however believing the reports, the act of centre is not in consonance with the constitutional ethicality. This certainly contributes to distrust and such an activity is detrimental to the centre-states cooperation, broadening trust deficits within the federal structure.

Centre-State cooperation is the very fundamental aspect of the Indian constitution and it shall play a pivotal role in all the future constitutional aspects and national crises. Any sort of trust deficit is likely to affect the political and socio-economic development of the country as once the trust-deficit is established; the states wouldn't come on-board to support the centre and they'll always be skeptical. Considering this aspect, both the Centre and all the States must arrive at a consensus on the most economically viable solution to the GST crisis. The states exhibited utmost cooperation during the lockdown phases. Similar cooperation is expected from the states to tackle such unprecedented economic jolts as for the first time, 24% contraction has happened in the first quarter of FY 20-21. But at the same time, the centre having more borrowing and taxing powers, must also assure the same to the states. At this hour, the centre may pass over but must not shrug-off its responsibility to ensure that the trust of entities continues. Furthermore, it is suggested that a GST Adjudication Body and permanent Inter-State Body must be constituted to ensure the very sanctity of cooperative federalism.

Pop Philosophy

BY EKAKSH HANDA

"I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship", is a famous quote given by Humphrey Bogart, the legendary American actor at the end of the movie, Casablanca which can quite describe our relationship with pop culture. Pop culture, unlike any other culture, is the one universal, artificial culture that binds us all together. It is quite a liquid culture, as in you don't need to be born in this culture to be a part of it, you could just choose to be in it. Pop culture is everything ranging from Citizen Kane to The Godfather, Beethoven to The Beatles, Vincent Van Gogh to Stan Lee, Ulysses to Superman and everything that falls in between. It is, like a religion, and works and spreads just like one. You seek happiness in an artificial deity through various sources and once you start worshipping it, you become a believer. It is a way of life. But where there is a religion, there are questions revolving around it, as to where did it come from? How did it spread? Will it continue to spread? Would it be recognized as a potential religion by the people of the future?

Popular culture started as an art movement, and just like any other art movement, it was hidden for quite sometime. It arrived with the emergence of the blending of art forms, for example, when modernist ideas blended with shapes and form, it gave way for the abstract art,

but it was still defined as art until someone came along with the bright idea of blending art with literature, mass media and everyday life giving rise to this culture. Things like comic strips combined fine humour with rough artwork for the entertainment of the common men in the corners and sides of newspapers.

The arrival of comic strips and advertisements was the first time the media was used for the propagation of ideas and it kept growing. The comic strips and ads were almost invisible, yet people loved them. This was the time of the industrial revolution, so the gap between the higher class of people and the lower-working class kept dividing which strengthened the propagation of pop culture. People started earning money but consumerism spread and they consequently started spending more and more of their money on leisure activities, like films and books, which because of the emergence of pop culture, they had a better hold of.

Then came the era of wars and poverty. The government needed young men to serve their countries so they devised a plan and used this outstanding style of combining little cartoons with dialogue to spread nationalism and patriotism. Uncle Sam, of America is a good example. Such comic strips started motivating people to join wars and serve their country.

They further used this trick by starting publishing things like comic books. Most of the earliest comic books were based on soldiers and the acts of their bravery, just like the films and books of that time, most of which were documentations. They were separate art forms, yet due to the growing literacy rates due to the industrialization period, it spread like wildfire. They used art forms to spread nationalist ideas.

The wars ended but the art forms stayed. After the end of World War II, the new big thing was the spread of anti-war principles. They developed further into the Golden Age of both cinema and popular art, which mostly was comic books.

Thousands of publishers and producers started investing in the ideas of the popular culture which soon developed by an outstanding margin andbecame the part of the everyday lives of people after the economy stabilized and the people had enough money to buy leisure activities like watching television and cinema, and listening to records, which, just a century ago was only accessible to the higher classes.

Just in a matter of years, sitcoms and record albums became part of everyday life until came along another technological breakthrough with the computer. Now, everyone was able to access the screens that they could only watch. Now, they were able to control it. Meanwhile, the popular art further developed and started blending yet again with the films and literature. It was the golden age for an artist, it didn't matter if you wrote a book or drew cartoons, you could become the next big thing in this amazing 'blending of art' era. Popular art soon diminished but popular culture remained. People started watching superhero, action and thriller films which until recently, they could only have read and imagined. Soon came other technological inventions like the internet and personal computer, which created an art movement so powerful that it took the world by storm. Now, technology completely blended with art. People could have a look at the idea of a person, whom they do not know, who is in the other corner of the world and give their views on it. It was the last straw. It resulted in the blending of culture. The adapting of the non-violent Hindu ideas to spread anti-war propaganda by the infamous American hipster culture, the emergence of goth loving biker culture, the rock and metal lovers, and the film go-ers. The emergence of internet also nulled the barriers of an art form. An American could now

Original Picture: klawe rzeczy

better understand the Japanese mangas while an Indian kid could study the exploits of Sherlock Holmes and Popeye. Pop art completely diminished but pop culture stayed.

It didn't stop there, it still doesn't. With the emergence of social media, we had a better grasp of the art form we'd want to study. We could learn about the makeup products Kylie Jenner uses, without really knowing her. We could even learn about Miley Cyrus' favourite colour without really listening to her songs. Everything came to us, once we really gave ourselves to this culture. You'd fall prey to it, quite incidentally. Maybe, a friend recommended you a film or sitcom, or maybe you read a book by Agatha Christie or you recently listened to that outstanding piece of music of an American rock band and now you are a fan of their work. It affects your lifestyle too. Maybe you read that Steve Jobs was a vegan so you decided to change your diet as well or maybe you read that Leonardo Da Vinci had a polyphasic sleep cycle so now you are trying your best to imitate him. Most of us are affected by this culture so much and we don't even know about it. Why do we be a part of it, then? Isn't one culture enough for us to follow? The truth is, "you can never really tell". We spend hours of our day, not loathing but studying, being a part of a larger world and we are consistent at it. Just like any other subject, you could study the culture you are a part of. We are, in some way, sociologists. For example,

the Indians touch people's feet as a show of respect, which comes to them quite naturally. They observe the people around them, and start talking like them, dressing like them and acting like them. So, how did westernization reach us? Through popular culture. It has bended in our life so much that we don't even know it's there. In a working class home, the jeans are now a usual, common thing, which it wasn't 30 years ago. They arrived to us through observation and adaptation of popular ideas. Why do we adapt them? It could have various definitions. Maybe we like to be a part of the community that we think we belong to, this was something our forager ancestors did, so we start following their ideas and lifestyle. Or maybe it is psychoanalytic. An urge to be the part of the pop culture. An urge to hang out with your friends, watch a film with them, share songs with them, click selfies with them and upload them to your Instagram feed accordingly to tell the people that you are a part of their community. Think about it. You read your favourite Harry Potter quote, and you share it on your Instagram feed, but for what purpose? If you wanted to be entertained, you'd watch the funny cat videos on YouTube, or maybe watch a movie or listen to a song, what made you share that quote with the world? It is a psychological approach to understand why we like pop culture so much. The answer can differ for all of us. But even if that happens, we have become a part of this large world so much so, that we cannot really fall back now.

Original Picture: klawe rzeczy on pintrest

Malabar Exercise: A Win Without a Fight

By Supriya Singh

Presently, India surely understands how to give a befitting reply to its rival nations; entry of Australia in Malabar is the best example of this.

Malabar is an annual maritime exercise that rotates between the Indian Ocean and the Western Pacific. This exercise comprises multiple drills related to submarine familiarisation, high-esteem unit defence, air defence exercises, anti-submarine warfare, surface warfare exercises and communication exercises. Malabar started as a bilateral exercise between the US and India in 1992, which later became a trilateral format after Japan joined in 2015, which became a permanent partner of the Malabar. Still, recently Australia joined the Malabar 2020 exercise. Indian, Japanese, American and Australian navies took part in the naval exercises, and these four major Indo-Pacific democracies vowed to work together on common security interests. Usually, The Malabar exercise is conducted in two phases. It includes the harbour phase and the sea phase featuring both ashore and at-sea training. The first phase of the Malabar exercise took place in the Bay of Bengal which saw navies of four countries performing several complex drills. The second phase of the high-intensity Malabar

naval exercise was in the Northern Arabian Sea. Earlier also Indian Navy has led various passage exercises (PASSEX) with maritime forces from Japan, Australia and the US. However, those were essential activities to expand operability between the naval forces, while Malabar includes mimicked war games.

The primary device of international strategy is diplomacy, the conventional technique to consistently oil the wheels of relations with different nations. The essential undertaking of India's global strategy is to ensure the nation's security and regional integrity and a peaceful external climate for India.

Malabar aims to enhance operational coordination and jointly tackle maritime threats. "As India seeks to increase cooperation with other countries in the maritime security domain and the light of increased defence cooperation with Australia, Malabar 2020 will see the participation of the Australian Navy," the Ministry said in a statement. In 2018, the exercise was conducted off the coast of Guam in the Philippine Sea, off the coast of Japan in 2019. This time, the activity was planned in a 'non-contact-at sea' format due to the ongoing pandemic.

The exercise will reinforce the coordination between the navies of the participating countries. The US cementing a multilateral association with Australia, India and Japan unites similar naval forces, with the triangle-shaped between the three accomplices incorporating the most challenging water space in a developing rivalry with China.

Earlier in 2007, the activity likewise observed support from Australia and Singapore. However, Australia pulled out of it the following day given China's pressure as China was the leading importer of coal from Australia, at that time. Still, for the last two to three years, Australia seemed eager to join Malabar, however, India was reluctant to do so. Prior plans of incorporating Australia were dropped after genuine complaints were raised by Beijing that even given a conventional démarche insinuated a military front coordinated towards it. But Japan and the US always favoured Australia's inclusion in Malabar.

However, presently India's decision to head to Australia's solicitation will be necessary for the mega maritime drill coming amidst developing strain with China over the borderline in eastern Ladakh. Now India is no more reluctant to China's insecurity relating to the Australian Navy in Malabar as this new India knows how to look its enemies in the eyes. Quad is taking more shape, and with the Australian navy, Malabar is currently a solid message for China. As for now, the more clearly they articulate their core interests, the costlier it becomes for China to cross them.

Surprisingly, Malabar Exercise incorporated Australia as well even as border tension continues with China in Ladakh and are required to see a response from Beijing, which has been stressed over the development of a quadrilateral military partnership in the area. The fact that Australia was once seen in India as the least reliable and least significant individual from the gathering. However, in recent years, Canberra and New Delhi have found a way to upgrade their association, and this Quad won't just improve their relationship; together they can remain as a solid establishment against China. Australian Defence Minister Linda Reynolds said, "High-end military exercises like Malabar are key to enhancing Australia's maritime capabilities, building interoperability with our close partners, and demonstrating our collective resolve to support an open and prosperous Indo-Pacific". It showcased the "deep trust" between four major Indo-Pacific democracies and their "shared will" to work together on common security interests.

In Canberra, Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne said that "It will bolster the ability of India, Australia, Japan and the United States to work together to uphold peace and stability across our region".

The real value of the group lies in its potential, the foundations being laid, and the ability to restructure the scope and agenda because of changing danger appraisals. This gathering remains on firmer ground today since India has gotten a substantially more dedicated and excited accomplice, and because the reason for collaboration among the four nations is more compelling this year than it was ten years prior. India should now focus more on its security and defence mechanisms by synergizing ties with countries that have a converging Indo- Pacific outlook, namely its Quad partners and participate and promote more intently in the Quad framework without stressing over China's opposition.

India's developing economy, strategic location, a blend of neighbourly and political international strategy and huge and lively diaspora has won it a more significant number of partners than foes. India has friendly relations with several nations in the developing world. It has a close strategic and military relationship with most of the significant forces. Growth and connectivity are today very central to India's international strategic thinking. The methodology of 'sabka saath, sabka vikas' (collective action, inclusive growth) is as much a belief in international relations as it is in domestic development. Creation of an external environment which is conducive to all-inclusive growth in the country is one of the integral components of India's foreign policy. In recent decades, India has pursued a more expansive foreign policy that encompasses the neighbourhood first policy embodied by SAARC as well as the Look East policy to forge more extensive economic and strategic relationships with other East Asian countries.

India wields enormous influence in global affairs and can be classified as an emerging superpower and also a signal to the world that India is willing to play the role it perceives for itself in both the worldwide and regional stage and will take every action which will uplift it's foreign relationship. India's invitation to Australia to take an interest in the Quad is prominent as it breaks down one of the dividers that has isolated two enormous forces in the Indo-Pacific area. It additionally solidifies the Quad, which has just observed heights in the degree of collaboration between the four States. As for now, we hope that welcoming Australia to the Malabar, gives this exercise a more robust and sustainable infrastructure. In my view, Quad should be best viewed as a symbolically and meaningfully significant expansion to an existing network of strategic and defence cooperation among four highly capable democracies. It's perfectly fine if the Quad is moving in a deliberative manner and not causing a threat to national security because if China aggressively responds to this, it will lead to one more reason for Indo-China conflict. Quad should focus more on their future challenges and work on building their strong foundation and maintain peace at the global level. After all, the objective should always be to win without fighting

Of pirates:
A look into life during the golden age of Piracy

BY TRIDIP PATIR

In the modern-day, "pirates" have often become synonymous with the idea of 'sea terrorists'. Now, of course, that term is not far from the truth. But it's not the whole truth. Present-day notwithstanding, the term "pirates" has existed since ancient times but they became so popular in the late 17th-early 18th century, at the height of the so-called "golden age of piracy". It was a time of ship trading and exploring. People were discovering new lands, new continents and the world was getting less and less mysterious as time passed on. We have all seen the movie, "Pirates of the Caribbean" and might have some sort of familiarity with the whole world of the pirates, but if one is not, one ought to be. For the story of the Caribbean Pirates of the late 1600s and early 1700s is one of rebellion and adventure.

Pirates are so romanticized, perhaps because of what they stood for. They were not always mere savages who killed or looted without discrimination. This is, in the context of the golden age. True, some of them did and were merciless, but a deeper look will reveal a life led by a sense of conduct and certain morals. In fact, France back then, legalised piracy so that they may prove to be obstacles to other rival countries' tradings. These legalised pirates were called Privateers. They would conduct raids on rival countries' trading ships of commerce. Interestingly, many pirates of the Caribbeans called "Buccaneers" were fed up with their own Empire and sought to create their own pirate republic in the Caribbean islands. Despite their "looting" nature, surprisingly, the pirates had their own codes.

They followed a democracy system amongst themselves. Ships were commandeered by "Captains", which would be elected by the crewmen. Equal to the captain was the "Quartermaster" who had veto powers to overturn a captain's decision. Then came other "hands" such as "Guns Captain", "Boatswain" etc. If they didn't favour the captain enough, they could bring him down via "mutiny" and elect themselves a new captain. The Buccaneers of the Caribbean often had "progressive" ideals (for the time being). Homosexuality was outlawed in England back then, of course. But not in the Caribbean! The pirates followed a concept called "Matelotage" whereby they legally entered into a sexual relationship with their male crewmates. It is assumed that modern-day usage of the word "mate" as in "Hello, mate" is derived from the practice of the "Matelotage," whereby one's sexual partners were called "Matelots". This, in turn, infested daily usage to mean "friend" and thus, transferred onto, "buddy/mate". Despite what pictures the word "pirate" may bring up, they had honour among them. Perhaps the phrase, "honour amongst thieves" is most apt for them. Edward Teach was one such pirate, who has become an icon in this modern day. He was a pirate who was known for his fearsome appearance, tall and imposing with a dark, long beard (which earned him the iconic nickname "Blackbeard"); he would often light fuses in his hat to scare hisenemies. He captained his ship, the famous "Queen Anne's Revenge". Blackbeard operated in the late 1600s, engaging in piracy. He was later killed in a ship-raid. When he was cut with

a broad-sword, he simply replied, "Well done, lad" before being cut a second time and dying off. Legend has it, he received 20 musket-ball wounds and 20 lacerations before dying! It is interesting to note that many pirates operating during this Golden Age of Piracy were former sailors themselves, mostly belonging to the British Navy. What led these men to leave behind their military life and engaging in a life of plunder and raiding? Perhaps noone can know for sure. Was it the money or the idea of going against an Empire which had left them behind? Perhaps a mix of both. Crewmen on a ship had to take oaths to

as a terrifying pirate but a well-respected seaman. Such contrasts make Long John Silver a well-constructed character.

He has one wooden leg and uses a crutch to hop on around. A parrot sits on his shoulders, uttering phrases that have become popular: "Pieces of eight!". It is said that this is what led to the iconic image of the one-legged pirate with a parrot on his shoulders. "There is more treasure in books than in all the pirates' loot on Treasure Island. Even Pirates, before they attack another ship, hoist a black flag. When the pirate grows rich enough, they make him a prince. Let's jump on board, and cut

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MANY SUCH PIRATES BECAME LEGENDS. THE FAMOUS NAMES LIKE CAPTAIN CHARLES VANE, CAPTAIN JACK RACKHAM, CAPTAIN BENJAMIN HORNIGOLD ETC. ARE WELL-KNOWN TODAY.

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abide by the rules of a ship, they had to maintain a sort of harmony amongst their crewmates. It was clear that they had order amongst themselves. They weren't merely barbarians bent on plundering every ship. Many such pirates became legends. The famous names like Captain Charles Vane, Captain Jack Rackham, Captain Benjamin Hornigold etc. are well-known today. One needs to remove any value-judgements here and just marvel at these men, who had the courage enough to fight off against empires by their ragtag group of crewmen and go on plundering adventures in the seas.

And not just men, even women were part of these activities. The famous female pirates include ones such as Anne Bonny and Mary Read, the latter often dressed up as a boy, calling herself "Mark Read". These women were not mere pushovers, they stood their ground. They were feared and respected, something which couldn't be said for the so-called "civilised" countries back then (Spain, England, France etc.), where women often took a backseat. (Bonny and Read; the two lady-pirates.)

These men and women were immortalised in plenty of literature. Perhaps the most famous one is "Treasure Island" by R.L. Stevenson. . There, the story revolves around a young boy called Jim Hawkins who seeks to uncover the treasure buried somewhere mysteriously by an evil pirate by the name of Captain Flint. The star of the story, however, is Long John Silver. The most complex and colourful character in the novel, he was the former quartermaster of Captain Flint's ship. Silver is depicted

them to pieces". Literature has often depicted these seafaring looters as men of honour. What fed such stories was the conception of pirates themselves. Ruthless landowners back in England took over the land of poor farmers and forced them out. Young men had to work earning low wages and job opportunities were far and few between. They resorted to piracy. Many of them denounced their English life and citizenship and no longer considered themselves "English".
They had resorted to a new life of plundering ships of the very same empire that turned their backs on them.
Ships that they controlled, had names and artwork on them, to display their banners. Most of their banners were skull-based and were drawn on black flags, which they raised to signal others that they were pirates and that they were about to be raided. And hence, the iconic image of the "Jolly Roger" and the symbol of a "black flag" is synonymous with the Buccaneers of the Caribbean islands. Ship battles, as history tells us, were sights to see. The explosion of cannons, muskets, sword fighting were a daily sight with the act of piracy.

The story of these Buccaneers is now a thing of the past, monsterised sometimes, romanticised often. Perhaps both of them have their foundations. But it is quite clear that these buccaneers followed a very progressive cultural life, as compared to their home countries in Europe back then. If one analysis, these bunch of men, who sought to fight off against an Empire, all with their skills and codes of conduct, maybe they were the progenitors of the American revolutionaries who fought off their British overlords, thus leading to the independence of the USA. Although their stories have faded into history, the ideals some of them sought of achieving
- freedom from an empire's wrath, creation of their own republic; no matter what they were as people, it is to be admired that they left home to fight off their own flawed country and probably, it is to be a bit envied, too, for they got to travel the high seas and see the world while doing so.

बिहार में बहार बा... नीतीश कुमार बा...

- जीवराज दहिया

कोरोना के प्रकोप के बीच बिहार में चुनाव सम्पन्न हुआ और पिछले चुनाव से ज्यादा मतदान हुआ। बिहार में विधानसभा की 243 सीटों पर चुनाव हुए। चुनाव कराना कितना जरूरी था। इसका तो खैर सरकार और चुनाव आयोग ही जाने परन्तु चुनाव आयोग अपने प्रबंधन के कारण बधाई का पात्र अवश्य है। इस बीच कोरोना काल में दूसरे प्रदेशों में रह रहे बिहारियों का पैदल पलायन चर्चा का विषय रहा, वो भी बिना बिहार सरकार के किसी सहायता के। फिर भी एनडीए गठबंधन को पूर्ण बहुमत हासिल हुआ। देश की राजनीति में अहम भूमिका रखने वाले बिहार में विधानसभा चुनाव की मतगणना 10 नवंबर को सुबह से शुरू हुई और देर रात्रि तक पूरी हुई। नीतीश कुमार के नेतृत्व वाले एनडीए गठबंधन को 125 सीटें हासिल हुई और महागठबंधन ने करारी टक्कर देते हुए 110 सीटें ही पाई। अन्य को सिर्फ 8 सीटें मिल सकीं। एनडीए से अलग होकर चुनाव लड़े लोजपा के चिराग पासवान अपना खुद का चिराग़ जलाने में असफल रहे, लेकिन जेडीयू को अवश्य ही भारी नुकसान पहुंचाया। बिहार की जनता ने मोदी-नीतीश गठबंधन को पूर्ण बहुमत देकर अपने भाग्य का निर्धारण कर लिया कि सत्ता अगले पांच वर्षों में किसके हाथो में होगी। नीतीश कुमार का "सोशल इंजीनियरिंग" वाला फार्मूला कारगर रहा। 2005 से नीतीश कुमार बिहार में मुख्यमंत्री पद पर बने हुए हैं।

हजारी प्रसाद द्विवेदी ने अपने लेख शिरीष के फूल में भारतीय नेताओं के सन्दर्भ में बहुत महत्वपूर्ण पंक्ति लिखी हैं: "जो नेता समय को नहीं पहचानते तथा धक्का देने पर ही पद को छोड़ते हैं। पुराने की यह अधिकार-लिप्सा क्यों नहीं समय रहते सावधान हो जाती। जब तक कोई युवा नेता आकर उसको पद से नहीं हटा दें तब तक वह पद नहीं छोड़ते है।"नीतीश कुमार भी 15 वर्षों से मुख्यमंत्री पद पर बने हुए हैं लेकिन अब भी यह लिप्सा है कि वो पद पर बने रहे। तेजस्वी यादव ने जरूर जनमत के बलबूते उन्हें हटाने की कोशिश की परन्तु यह कोशिश नाकामयाब रही। नीतीश कुमार ने जरूर इस चुनाव में 'यह मेरा अंतिम चुनाव हैं' कहकर जनता से भावुक अपील की और जीत भी गए लेकिन देखना यह होगा कि वो जनता की उम्मीदों पर खरा उतरेंगे या नहीं।अगर हम बिहार के चुनावी इतिहास की बात करें तो 1951 से ही बिहार में विधानसभा चुनाव की शुरुआत हुई थी। इसके बाद से 2020 तक बिहार में 17 बार विधानसभा चुनाव हो चुके हैं। साल 2005 की फ़रवरी में हुए चुनाव में सरकार नहीं बन पाने के कारण अक्टूबर में फिर से चुनाव आयोजित करने पड़े थे।

बात करते हैं अक्टूबर-नवंबर 2015 में हुए पिछले विधानसभा चुनावों की। ये चुनाव पांच चरणों में पूरा हुआ था। इन चुनावों में सत्ताधारी जनता दल यूनाइटेड (जदयू), राष्ट्रीय जनता दल (राजद), कांग्रेस, जनता दल, समाजवादी पार्टी, राष्ट्रवादी कांग्रेस पार्टी, इंडियन नेशनल लोक दल और समाजवादी जनता पार्टी (राष्ट्रीय) ने महागठबंधन बनाकर चुनाव लड़ा था। वहीं, भारतीय जनता पार्टी ने लोक जनशक्ति पार्टी, राष्ट्रीय लोक समता पार्टी और हिंदुस्तानी अवाम मोर्चा के साथ चुनावी मैदान में कदम रखा था। 2015 का चुनाव कुल 243 सीटों पर हुआ था जिसमें सरकार बनाने के लिए 122 सीटों की ज़रूरत थी। चुनाव के नतीजे आने पर राजद 80 सीटों के साथ सबसे बड़ी पार्टी बनकर उभरी थी। इसके बाद जदयू को 71 सीटें और भाजपा को 53 सीटें मिली थीं। इन चुनावों में कांग्रेस को 27 सीटें मिली थीं। इस चुनाव में महागठबंधन की सरकार बनी और नीतीश कुमार को मुख्यमंत्री बनाया गया। हालांकि, 2017 में जेडी(यू) महागठबंधन से अलग हो गई और नीतीश कुमार ने भाजपा के साथ मिलकर सरकार बनाया।अगर इससे पहले के इतिहास को देखें तो पाएंगे कि 1990 से बिहार में मंडल-कमंडल व जेपी आंदोलन से राजनीति में प्रवेश करने वाले लालू प्रसाद यादव मुख्यमंत्री बने थे और उसके बाद उनकी पत्नी

> बिहार की जनता को नयी सरकार से बहुत सी उम्मीदें हैं। बिहारियों को अब शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य और विकास की चाह है और नयी सरकार को आने वाले पाँच वर्षों में ऐसा काम करना चाहिए जिससे मजबूत बिहार का निर्माण हो।

राबड़ी देवी ने मुख्यमंत्री पद संभाला। लगभग पन्द्रह साल (1990-2005) तक लालू परिवार ने राज किया। "सोशल इंजीनियरिंग" का फार्मूला लेकर आए नीतीश कुमार ने अपने पहले कार्यकाल में खूब काम किया इसका लाभ उनको आने वाले चुनावों में मिला और लगभग पन्द्रह साल शासन करने के बाद 2020 के विधानसभा चुनाव में उनकी पार्टी तीसरे नंबर पर आ चुकी है। इसके पीछे की सबसे बड़ी वजह सरकार के खिलाफ जनाक्रोश है। जिसे कई वरिष्ठ पत्रकार सत्ता विरोधी लहर भी कहते है। और इसी वजह से इस बार डबल इंजन की सरकार में नीतीश अब छोटे भाई की भूमिका में आ गए हैं क्योंकि चिराग ने बीजेपी की मदद के साथ ही नीतीश की पार्टी को भारी नुकसान पहुंचाया है। एक बात तो साफ है कि बिहार की राजनीति में अकेले चुनाव जीतना बहुत मुश्किल है इसलिए तो इतने सारे गठबंधनों का निर्माण होता है, गठबंधन के बिना बिहार में कोई भी सरकार नहीं बना सकता है। गठबंधन की राजनीति बिहार चुनाव के रग-रग में बस चुकी है।

अगर हम इस बार के चुनाव परिणामों पर गौर करें तो पाएंगे कि तीन चरणों में सम्पन्न हुए इस चुनाव में अनेक पार्टियों ने हिस्सा लिया है जिनमें मुकाबला दो गठबंधनों में था: महागठबंधन (राजद, कांग्रेस, लेफ्ट) और एनडीए (जदयू, भाजपा, हम, वीआईपी)। कड़े मुकाबले से पहले आए एग्जिट पोल में लगभग सभी में तेजस्वी यादव के नेतृत्व में महागठबंधन की सरकार बहुमत से बनती दिख रही थी। लेकिन चुनाव के नतीजों ने सारे एग्जिट पोल को गलत साबित कर दिया। अगर वोट प्रतिशत की बात करें तो आरजेडी को सर्वाधिक 23.1 प्रतिशत वोट, बीजेपी को 19.5 प्रतिशत, जेडीयू को 15.4 प्रतिशत, कांग्रेस को 9.48 प्रतिशत, एलजेपी को 5.66%, आरएलएसपी को 1.77%, एआईएमआईएम को 1.24%, बसपा को 1.49%, सीपीआई को 0.83%, सीपीआई-एम को 0.65% और अन्य को 18.85% वोट हासिल हुए।

एनडीए गठबंधन की जीत में प्रधानमंत्री मोदी की छवि का महत्वपूर्ण योगदान रहा है। जंगलराज के मुद्दे पर राजद को उन्होंने खूब घेरा। चिराग पासवान ने अपने उम्मीदवार सिर्फ जदयू के खिलाफ उतारे थे जिसका सीधा लाभ भाजपा को मिला। हिन्दुस्तानी आवाम मोर्चा के जीतन राम मांझी और विकासशील इंसान पार्टी क्रमशः 4-4 सीटें जीतने में सफल रही। चिराग अकेलेपन के चक्कर में पिछले चुनाव के मुकाबले सिर्फ 1 ही सीट जीत पाए। इस चुनाव में तेजस्वी यादव युवा चेहरा बनकर उभरे। अपनी खुद की छवि जनता के समक्ष प्रस्तुत की। उनके नेतृत्व में राजद (75 सीटें) सबसे बड़ी पार्टी बनकर उभरी। कांग्रेस को 70 सीटों पर चुनाव लड़ने का फैसला तेजस्वी को भारी जरूर पड़ा इसके मुकाबले लेफ्ट पार्टियों ने 29 पर चुनाव लड़ने के बाद भी 16 सीटें (भाकपा-2, भाकपा/मार्क्सवादी-2, भाकपा/माले-12) जीतने में सक्षम हुई। कांग्रेस सिर्फ 19 सीटों पर ही सिमट गई। महागठबंधन को सबसे ज्यादा नुकसान ओवैसी की एआईएमआईएम ने पहुंचकर 5 सीटें अपने खाते में जमा की। महागठबंधन के सारे मुस्लिम वोट ओवैसी की पार्टी को चले गये। बसपा ने भी खासा वोट

काटा किंतु 1 ही सीट पर जीत दर्ज की। सुर्खियो में आई प्लुरल्स पार्टी की पुष्पम प्रिया चौधरी भी कोई कमाल नहीं कर पाई। उनकी पार्टी एक भी सीट नहीं जीत पाई। पुष्पम प्रिया को खुद अपनी सीटों पर भी हार का सामना करना पड़ा।

बिहार विधानसभा चुनाव में इस बार रोजगार का मुद्दा गरमाया रहा। महागठबंधन की ओर से सीएम पद के उम्मीदवार तेजस्वी यादव ने इस मुद्दे को उठाते हुए नीतीश कुमार सरकार पर जमकर निशाना साधा। यही नहीं आरजेडी नेता ने अपने चुनावी घोषणा पत्र में वादा किया कि उनकी सरकार बनते ही पहली कैबिनेट बैठक में 10 लाख नौकरियों के फैसले पर मुहर लगाएंगे। भाजपा ने बिहार विधानसभा चुनाव के अपने घोषणापत्र में शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य, आईटी समेत विभिन्न क्षेत्रों में 19 लाख रोजगार देने का वादा किया। हर बिहारवासी को फ्री कोरोना वैक्सीन का वादा भी पार्टी ने किया। चुनावी पंडितों का मानना है कि रोजगार इस बार के चुनाव का सबसे बड़ा मुद्दा बनकर उभरा है।

पहले बीजेपी को जदयू पर पूरी तरह निर्भर रहना पड़ता था परन्तु अब बीजेपी खुद मजबूत हैं तो इसका प्रभाव बनने वाली सरकार पर जरूर पड़ेगा। देखना दिलचस्प होगा कि कैसे डबल इंजन की सरकार बिहार में बदलाव लाकर उसे नए आयाम दिलाने में सक्षम होगी या नाकाम। यह तो खैर भविष्य में ही पता चलेगा। गृहमंत्री अमित शाह ने पहले कहा था कि सीटें चाहे कितनी भी आएं, एनडीए में मुख्यमंत्री नीतीश कुमार ही बनेंगे। अब जबकि, एनडीए को निर्णायक बढ़त के बीच जेडीयू को बीजेपी से कम सीटें मिलती दिख रहीं हैं तो अटकलें ये भी है कि नीतीश कुमार को दिल्ली भेज कर भाजपा अपना खुद का मुख्यमंत्री बिहार में बना सकती है। हालांकि प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने तमाम अटकलों को खारिज कर दिया और कहा कि बिहार में एक बार फिर नीतीश कुमार के नेतृत्व में विकास के संकल्प को सिद्ध करेंगे।

हालांकि नीतीश कुमार ने मीडिया से बात करते हुए कहा कि बीजेपी को उन लोगों के भविष्य के बारे में फैसला करना चाहिए जो वोट काटने का काम करते हैं। यह पूछे जाने पर कि मुख्यमंत्री कौन होगा, नीतीश ने कहा, "इस बारे में एनडीए फैसला करेगा"। उन्होंने कहा, "मैंने कभी इस बारे में दावा नहीं किया। एनडीए कीबैठक होगी, उसमें इस बारे में फैसला होगा"।लेकिन महागठबंधन को अभी भी उम्मीद है कि एनडीए में सबकुछ ठीक नहीं हो रहा है और वो इस बात का इंतजार करेंगे कि मंत्रिमंडल में जीतन राम मांझी, मुकेश सहनी की पार्टियों को कितनी हिस्सेदारी मिलती है। क्योंकि अगर एनडीए में कुछ खटपट होती है तो महागठबंधन उसका फायदा उठा सकता है। महागठबंधन की बैठक में तेजस्वी यादव ने दावा किया है कि सरकार महागठबंधन की ही बनेगी, सभी विधायकों को पूरे महीने पटना में रहने को भी कहा गया है। महागठबंधन की बैठक के बाद तेजस्वी यादव ने कहा कि जनता का समर्थन महागठबंधन के साथ है, हमें करीब 130 सीटें मिली हैं। लेकिन नीतीश कुमार ने छल-कपट से सरकार बना ली है। तेजस्वी ने कई सीटों पर काउंटिंग में धांधली का आरोप लगाया।फिलहाल नीतीश कुमार 16 नवंबर को भाई दूज के दिन बिहार के मुख्यमंत्री के तौर पर शपथ ले सकते हैं। भी मंत्रिमंडल पर कोई फैसला नहीं हुआ है।लेकिन बात करते हैं बिहार की जहाँ का इतिहास अति गौरवशाली

रहा है।अ नालंदा विश्वविद्यालय, पाटलिपुत्र, बोधगया, मधुबनी, जेपी आंदोलन, बुद्ध की धरती, चम्पारण सत्याग्रह आदि का स्थान जहाँ हो उस राज्य की इतनी दुर्गति कैसे हो सकती है? चुनाव आते ही नेता जनता के पैरों को पकड़ने लगते हैं और अपना पांच वर्ष का बंदोबस्त कर लेते हैं। आज बिहार को ऐसी राजनीति की जरूरत है जो बिहार में स्वास्थ्य, शिक्षा और रोजगार की संभावनाएं पैदा कर बिहार को गरीबी के टैग से बाहर निकालें, राजनीति में बिहार फर्स्ट बिहारी फर्स्ट का सिर्फ नारा ही पर्याप्त नहीं है उसको सही साबित करने का प्रयास भी करना होगा जिससे बिहार फर्स्ट बन सकें। बिहार की जनता से राजनेता खेलते हैं, जनता को खेलने का मौका नहीं मिलता है। वर्तमान में बिहार और राजनीति एक दूसरे के नकारात्मक पर्याय के रूप में इस्तेमाल किए जाते हैं, राजनीति में से नीति शब्द गायब हो गया है ऐसा दिखाई देता है। लेकिन हमें जरूरत है कि बिहार भी उसी तरह से आगे बढ़ें जैसे भारत के दूसरे राज्य बढ़ रहे हैं जिससे कि सारे बिहारियों को गर्व हो।बिहार की जनता को नयी सरकार से बहुत सी उम्मीदें हैं। बिहारियों को अब शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य और विकास की चाह है और नयी सरकार को आने वाले पाँच वर्षों में ऐसा काम करना चाहिए जिससे मजबूत बिहार का निर्माण हो।

WINNER OF THE
JOSEPH W. ELDER
PRIZE IN THE
INDIAN SOCIAL
SCIENCES

WHERE INDIA GOES

ABANDONED
TOILETS

DIANE
COFFEY

STUNTED
DEVELOPMENT

AND

AND THE
COSTS OF CASTE

DEAN
SPEARS

FOREWORD BY NOBEL PRIZE-WINNING ECONOMIST ANGUS DEATON

By Shanmukha Aditya

This review is peppered with excerpts from an email conversation with the author. All such bits are placed under inverted commas.

If there are three problems one would like to ask you to point out, without which India would be a better place to live, a chunk of us would need to apologize and ask for a fourth-place to accommodate sanitation. This is not coincidental. Stringently embedded in our psyche is a delicacy for the urbane and a disregard for the rural. Part of it is economic - well, urban spaces serve us better; but most of it is social. Sanitation in India is a secret. A secret no Indian is unfamiliar with.

Into this silence lands *Where India Goes*, not with a whisper, but with a bang. The book, authored by Dean Spears and Dianne Coffey, is a stinging reminder of where India lies in the spiral of sanitation. The book takes a sledgehammer to the *fallacies* that blind us with respect to sanitation in India. "The Poverty fallacy", "The Water fallacy", "The Education fallacy", and "The Access Fallacy" demolish the current bias among people that low sanitation coverage is in correlation with widespread poverty, lack of access to water, or lack of awareness. Countries that square with India on these parameters fare surprisingly well on the sanitation count - the book documents Bangladesh as an example. As the book notes, "Sanitation is increasingly an Indian problem."

Drawing on a massive research survey aptly named 'SQUAT' (Sanitation Quality, Use, Access, and Trend), the book tries to answer the question of why India features at the bottom of sanitation indicators.

For Spears and Coffey, the problem is social. The caste system defined the social dynamics of Indian culture. It also casts its shadow on the sanitation sphere - caste distinctions undergo metamorphosis to determine who is "less pure", and who is "impure". Consolidating their analysis with a string of interviews, the authors drive home the analysis that social cleavages inhibit India from being the sanitation juggernaut. Beyond the book, it raises a curious irony: for a nation which was mobilised by the likes of Mahatma Gandhi and for their emphasis on *Swachchta*, Sanitation in India has come to such a sorry pass.

Speaking of *Swachchta*, the book devotes a great space to the *Swachh Bharat scheme*. While the book admires the toilet construction drive of the Government, it points out to the low utilisation rates. Put simply, in many houses, toilets built by the Government are left as they are - unused.

Dean Spears an

For the authors, the problem again is social. Why would somebody not choose a free-of-cost toilet? The answer is attributed to a theory by the noted sociologist M N Srinivas. "Sanskritization", is the process of imitation by the people of lower castes of the rituals, practises, and customs of the upper castes. This is done in the pursuit of social status which the upper castes enjoy. Juxtaposing this theory with interviews and statistics, the authors arrive at the conclusion that disadvantaged people - the beneficiaries of *Swachh Bharat*, usually discard the spartan toilets built for them by the Government, and spend their savings to construct a lavish, well-built toilet used by the credentialled. "

Ostensibly, this gives them a resemblance of status with members of the upper caste. As the book sharply asks, "In a society where social mobility depends on adopting the value systems of the caste elite, why would lower-caste people set themselves apart as different and worse by installing a latrine, when the only benefit they see is, perhaps, convenience?"

This leads to what the book calls, "Missing middle rungs on the sanitation ladder." In rural India, the range of toilets is a case-study in extremes, with the upper-caste sporting lavish latrines, and those on the lower rungs of the social hierarchy defecating in the open.

The book goes on to document the consequences of defecating in the open: faecal germs are transmitted by flies and cause ailments including diarrhoea, enteropathy, and many other infections. Furthermore, the authors demonstrate that long-term exposure to open-defecation can cause stunting and malnutrition. And more worryingly, these also serve as externalities that feed into the community level. Hence, only a community-based initiative could tackle the issue of sanitation.

Written in elegant prose and studded with beautiful anecdotes, the book makes for a wonderful reading - and a disturbing one too, since time is not our ally this time. If open defection is not fought against time, we stand to lose a generation of youngsters to malnutrition. Countering this requires no vaccine. What we need is a pure non-pharmaceutical intervention: a social change.

Having said that, the book leaves us with a lot of questions. As Mr. Spears pointed to me, sanitation is a more crucial question for seasonal migrants. Moreover, with the fragmentation of landholdings and nuclear families expanding to rural India, we need to observe what effect that would have on sanitation in general.

In all, the book is a significant diversion from the conversations on sanitation in India. A must-read for all enthusiasts in the policy space, it gives us a fascinating insight into the convergence of economics, politics, and society.

On the right are some excerpts from: Diane Coffey. "Where India Goes: Abandoned Toilets, Stunted Development and the Costs of Caste".

" Are the social costs of manual pit emptying, in the special case of rural India, ethically justified by the health and human development benefits of latrine use?"

" It is precisely rural voters' behaviour that must change if open defecation is to end. As useful as it would be, there is no reason to expect the large majority of rural Indians who defecate in the open to rise up at the polls and demand that the government figure out some way to make them stop."

"Indian children are born into a poisonous environment. Faecal germs threaten their survival and their physical and cognitive development. Caste hierarchies make what would otherwise be an ordinary project of sanitary engineering into an enduring drain on human development and well-being. Even if a quick fix emerged today, open defecation's effects will be with us at least until people who were exposed to open defecation in infancy age through their lives."

TERROR OUT OF ZION

IRGUN: The Forgotten Tale of Terror

By Bhavya Bhatia & Devadath K Reji

ORIGIN

Irgun is a forgotten tale, the tale of terror which had its tentacles spread over people's mind for decades, and reached the Akko prison, a medieval fortress, that not even the mighty Napoleon had succeeded in capturing. Irgun is a Jewish paramilitary organization that was an offshoot of Haganah, a larger and older organization whose leadership was under criticism for not defending the Jewish interests. Founded in 1931, it was based on the Revisionist Zionism advocating the use of force for setting up of Eretz Israel (Land of Israel), and operated in Mandate Palestine between 1931-1948. Being concerned with Jewish interests, it started the rain of death over both Arabs and British, who were considered as the enemies of Jews. It worked for the establishment of the Land of Israel, which according to Irgun propaganda, should not only encompass the territory covered by the League of Nations Mandate of Palestine but also the Emirate of Transjordan, and the Jewish right to sovereignty over the whole territory. Irgun accompanied its armed operations with massive public-relations campaigns aiming to convince the public of Irgun's ways and the problems with the official political leadership. It put out numerous advertisements, an underground newspaper, and even ran the first independent Hebrew radio station – Kol Zion HaLochemet.

THE GAME OF GUNS: RECRUITMENT AND GROWTH OF IRGUN

The members of Irgun came mostly from Betar and the Revisionist Party both in Palestine and abroad. Ze'ev Jabotinsky, the founder of Revisionist Zionism, was the Supreme Commander of the Irgun until he died in 1940. Abraham Tehomi and Menachem Begin were other notable commanders of Irgun.

The number of members of the Irgun varied from a few hundred to a few thousand and most of them were ordinary people, who held regular jobs, and only a few dozen being full-time workers in the Irgun. Irgun gradually evolved from its humble origins into a serious and well-organized and deadly paramilitary organization developing a hierarchy of ranks and a sophisticated command-structure, demanding serious military training and strict discipline from its members.

Joining Irgun was not a cakewalk. Irgun operated through sophisticated recruitment and military-training regime and only those who personally knew a member or were persistent could find their way in.

During the interview and training, the romantics, adventurers, impatient and the ones not having seriously contemplated the potential sacrifices were weeded out and the selected ones were taught the Irgun's ideology and the code of conduct. They were introduced to other members, given military training, taught the locations of safe houses, given courses on arms handling and tactics, the most rigorous course being the explosives course for bomb makers, lasting a year. With the development of clandestine networks of hidden arms-caches and weapons-production workshops, safe-houses, training camps, a secret printing facility for propaganda posters,and strict attention was given to discipline, formal ceremonies, and military relationships between the various ranks. The Irgun put out professional publications on combat doctrine, weaponry, leadership, drill exercises, etc.

Until World War II, the group armed itself with weapons purchased in Europe, primarily Italy and Poland, and smuggled these to Palestine. It also got into the manufacturing of spare parts, attachments for the weapons, land mines and simple hand grenades. It was also engaged in the theft of weapons from British Police and military to arm itself. Following World War II, underground Irgun cells composed of local Jews were established in Europe which were earlier in Palestine only. Home to many European-Jewish refugees, an Irgun cell was also established in Shanghai. It also set up a Swiss bank account. Eli Tavin, the former head of Irgun intelligence, was appointed Commander of the Irgun abroad.

THE IRGUN WAY: EPISODES OF VIOLENCE

There had been many notable episodes of infamous violence and the use of force by Irgun. Irgun participated in organizing illegal immigration into Palestine after the British Government issued a "White Paper" banning Jewish immigration to Palestine in 1939. This was named by Jabotinsky the "National Sport". Two of the operations for which it is best known are the bombing of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem on 22 July 1946 and the Deir Yassin massacre carried out together with Lehi(another far-right wing Zionist paramilitary group) on 9 April 1948.

On July 22, 1946, Irgun blew up a wing of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, killing 91 soldiers and civilians including British, Arab and Jewish. This attack was in response to Operation Agatha, known in Israel as "Black Saturday" in which British troops had searched the Jewish Agency on June 29 and confiscated large quantities of documents directly implicating the Haganah in the Jewish insurgency against Britain and Intelligence information was taken to the King David Hotel where it was initially kept in the southern wing. To destroy those documents, the Irgun, therefore, determined to destroy that wing of the hotel.

The Acre Prison break was an operation undertaken by the Irgun on May 4, 1947, in the British Mandate of Palestine. The Irgun broke through the walls of the Central Prison in Acre and freed 27 incarcerated members of Irgun and Lehi, and shocked the entire world. Acre prison was the most highly-guarded fortress in the country. It was surrounded by walls and encircled to the east and north by a deep moat and the sea to the west. It was located in the heart of an Arab town with no Jewish inhabitants.

JOINING IRGUN WAS NOT A CAKEWALK. IRGUN OPERATED THROUGH SOPHISTICATED RECRUITMENT AND MILITARY-TRAINING REGIME AND ONLY THOSE WHO PERSONALLY KNEW A MEMBER OR WERE PERSISTENT COULD FIND THEIR WAY IN.

The citadel in the old city of Acre was used as a prison at the time of the British Mandate. In total, the prison contained 700 Arab prisoners and 90 Jewish prisoners, the latter mainly members of the Jewish underground groups Haganah, Lehi, and Irgun, who had been captured by the British. One of those prisoners was Eitan Livni, the Irgun operations officer. The Lehi and Irgun prisoners concluded that escape would not be possible without outside assistance. Therefore, they contacted Irgun headquarters with a plan. Dov Cohen, AKA "Shimshon", a former member of the British Special Interrogation Group, was selected to lead the operation and the plan was facilitated by Peres Etkes, an American of Russian Jewish origins, who worked for the Mandatory authorities as an engineer and had built the prison. The Irgun's reconnaissance efforts discovered a weak spot in the citadel: the southern wall right above a Turkish bath.

The break-in was originally planned for April, but was eventually planned for Sunday, May 4, 1947, at 4 p.m., the day the United Nations General Assembly convened to discuss the Palestine issue. The logistic preparations were complicated: The Irgun purchased a truck, a jeep, two military pickup trucks, and civil vehicles, all disguised as British. British army uniforms were also acquired. A stock of civil clothing was also arranged to help the escapees assimilate into the population. The Irgun smuggled into the prison TNST which was used to make 30 hand grenades and 2 bombs, each weighing one kilogram, to blast the prison walls open. On Sunday 4 May 1947, at 14:00 a Military Engineering unit of the Irgun, under the command of Dov Salomon and Yehuda Apiryon, was on its way to the nearby Turkish bath, disguised as telephone technicians and carrying ladders, TNT, ropes, and other necessary incursion equipment. Meanwhile, other Irgun strike and escape forces were spread around the prison, disguised as British military convoys. The incursion occurred at 16:22 with a massive explosion that shocked the prison. One of the prisoners, Michael Eshbal, blew up the grill at the corridor, while another group of prisoners delayed the British jailor with hand grenades and burning barricades. 34 Fighters attacked the prison. In the course of the retreat, the operation commander and two other fighters from the attacking forces were killed. The Jewish Agency called the break "an irresponsible suicidal act", while the Irgun commander Menachem Began as an act of heroism. The Deir Yassin massacre took place on

April 9, 1948. Fighters from Irgun and another far-right wing Zionist paramilitary group Lehi slaughtered at least 107 Palestinian Arabs, including women and children, in Deir Yassin, a village of roughly 600 people near Jerusalem. After the United Nations proposal of the division of Palestine into an Arab state and a Jewish one, the Arabs rejected the proposal, and civil war broke out. The assault occurred as Jewish militia sought to relieve the blockade of Jerusalem during the civil war that preceded the end of British rule in Palestine. Apart from these, thousands of people were hunted down during its history.

CURTAIN FALLS: THE END OF IRGUN

In April 1937, the Irgun split after a referendum was held among Irgun members regarding its continued independent existence, and about half of the Irgun's membership along with most of the Irgun's weapons returned to the Haganah. The second split in the organization took place in July 1940 due to rampant suspicion and distrust among the members. Out of the Irgun, a new organization was created on July 17, 1940, which was first named "The National Military Organization in Israel" and later on changed its name to Lehi. With the proclamation of the establishment of the State of Israel in May 1948 and the declaration of independence, the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) was established and the process of absorbing all military organizations into the IDF started. On June 1, an agreement had been made for the absorption of the Irgun into the IDF.

One of the clauses stated that the Irgun had to stop smuggling arms. Before that, however, the Irgun attempted to land a ship renamed Altalena, laden with arms on the beach in Tel Aviv. David Ben-Gurion, the head of the Israeli government, was afraid the Irgun would be a threat to the new government and ordered the cargo to be confiscated. However, Menachem Begin objected and Ben-Gurion ordered the ship to be taken by force. Irgun members were forced to abandon the ship as in the course of shelling it, it caught fire. Sixteen Irgun fighters and three IDF soldiers were killed in the confrontation. Afterward, Ben-Gurion ordered the arrest of 200 Irgun fighters which were released later. Following a public campaign on their behalf, they were released on August 27, 1948. Shortly thereafter, the Irgun was fully integrated into the IDF.

Irgun's tactics appealed to many Jews who believed that any action taken in the cause of the creation of a Jewish state was justified, including terrorism. It started from a very humble background and grew to a dreadful paramilitary organization at an astonishing speed. Irgun is an episode or terror which is a classic example of how terrorist organizations work in disguise, the mass support prevailed for them and the activities undertaken by Irgun is a textbook example of the terrorist phenomenon.

The Elephant in the Room

BY RIYA JEPH

There are numerous factors which add on to the overall excellence of any university- good faculty, excellent students, research facilities, to name a few. Delhi University hailed as one of the leading destinations of higher education in India is famous for its notoriously high cut-offs, and to make it to the best of its colleges, students work hard to achieve the highest score in exams. It goes uncontested that exams prove to be too narrow a framework to mark anyone's intelligence or calibre, nonetheless, Delhi University, owing to its name and fame, manages to attract the most hard-working, ambitious and driven lot of students to its fold.

Needless to say that a University's work only begins here, but for some reason, over the last few years, it seems like the University has entered into lethargy. The only time there's a hoo-ha centred around DU is when it releases its cut-off(s),

and that's not too good a sign for a university which carries skyrocketing dreams of thousands of its students on its shoulders. Having spent one

> **I couldn't help but wonder, the students offer the University with excellent scores and a lot more but what does the university offer, in return?**

year studying at one of the best colleges of DU, and sharing similar experiences with students across the University, I couldn't help but wonder, the students offer the University with excellent scores and a lot

more but what does the university offer, in return? Having said that I'd firstly acknowledge that DU's reputation is well-earned, and its alumni network is one of the finest in the world. However, the real test is holding onto the glory, and DU seems to be faltering due to many reasons. So, let's have a fresh look from a student's perspective.

Despite having well-qualified professors, the learning experience isn't always great for the students. Being a professor in a public university comes with job security and several other perks; the resultant lax attitude associated with government jobs and the lack of incentives to improve result into a poor quality learning experience for students. Several times some professors take the liberty not to take classes, and then rush with the syllabus in the end or leave it upon the students to handle. On paper, it might be complete, but in reality,

it is far from it, and it must be specified that the classes cancelled because of DUTA strikes are not even being counted in the problem mentioned above. The rolling HOD title where everyone gets to be the HOD is also a major culprit. When a post is shared amongst everyone and overlooks merit and leadership qualities, it is no surprise that the quality of departments suffers. The absence of competition leaves no incentives for professors to be more serious and passionate about their jobs. The faculty to student ratio is also a big concern. For instance, the batch of 2022, Political Science department, Hindu College has a strength of over ninety students, and that affects the quality of interaction.

> *"DU in its entirety is the apex example of a paradox. After meeting the unrealistically high cut-offs and going through an intense screening process during admission (which severely lacks organisation on the part of the admin), the students expect the university to be at least equipped with a good faculty and a responsive administration. The reality, on the other hand, is very disappointing. The admin takes ages to listen to the demands of the student. It responds to the students only when its "image" is being questioned in the media or the outer circle. The research/ miscellaneous facilities barely exist and even if they do then it's always in the dire need of maintenance. The faculty is also intimidated and faces creative restriction by the administration"*
> -Ujasha Tripathi, Graduate, Delhi University

If the casual attitude is the issue with permanent faculty, the case is entirely opposite with the non-permanent staff, i.e. the ad-hoc faculty and the guest faculty. The precarious and exploitative nature of their jobs hampers their quality of teaching, which, in turn, affects our learning experience. Ad-hoc professors constitute a large share of over forty per cent even when there are unfilled vacancies, and there is a growing trend of outstanding professors leaving their jobs for offers in private universities. After all, how can we expect these professors to invest in their teaching and professional development when the administration expects them to work just as hard as a regular professor, and then apply fresh after every four months. Sometimes they don't become permanent even after being in the service for as long as ten years which is outright exploitation of the teaching staff, and in turn, the student community.

The OBE crisis and the blunders made while conducting these exams have exposed the numerous shortcomings of the DU admin and the University Grants Commission, and this calls for a closer examination of many things. A good Vice-Chancellor plays a very crucial role in a university's growth; however, there are many issues regarding the appointment of VCs.

> *"There is a graded hierarchy of implicit teaching and learning process in public universities like Delhi University. The ad-hoc and guest teachers are taken for granted and seen simply as 'cog in the machine'. While creative liberty is the essence of teaching and learning. Independent initiatives are largely discouraged in such a setup.The precarious conditions of such teachers are rarely taken 'centrally' by even the teacher associations. The issues of Ad-hoc and guest teachers are seen as appendages. Without participatory parity the issues of working conditions and vulnerabilities of exploitation results in a situation of perpetual 'voicelessness'. The only way out of this loop is permanent recruitment, a strong and democratic teachers union."*
> -An Ad-Hoc Professor at Delhi University (anonymous)

To exemplify this better I'd like to quote a judgement by Madras High Court- "The heads of universities and the most visible symbols of the university system are these days appointed not because they are distinguished academicians, but because they have the right political connections in the Ministry of Human Resource Development in the case of central universities, or appropriate political or caste affiliations in the concerned state – in many cases, they pay huge amounts of money with rates varying from one crore to three crores [INR10 million to INR30 million or US$140,000 to US$421,000] in some states."

Every other concern is secondary to the top leadership of a university but if that too is flawed, and more than often is in the wrong hands then little can be said about the prospective growth of any university with certainty. The problem with the Indian higher education system is very complex, and it has many stakeholders; no one factor can be put to blame. These problems pose a dire consequence to the potential development of this country, and we must realise the importance of education and the value of the young, raw talent. The number of resources and money spent on education is deficient; we have no good research facilities; the teaching faculty is unhappy; the education sector still doesn't get enough share of the government budget; there are not enough classrooms; economically weaker students struggle to find a place of accommodation for themselves, and most surprising of all, the National University cannot even develop a well-functioning website-portal which doesn't crash all the time because of traffic.

The Research and Development expenditure constitutes a meagre of 0.65% of our GDP, which is one of the lowest amongst emerging economies. Many students realise the incompetence of the Indian higher education system and those who can afford to leave India after an undergraduate

degree, go abroad for better prospects. According to various studies and sources, there are over 1,00,000 India-born PhDs in universities around the world, kept away by paltry salaries and inadequate funding. China managed to solve this problem of brain-drain by attracting Chinese-origin PhDs back home with dollar salaries and monetary incentives for published research. Tsinghua University, for example, designed on the Western model of teaching and research and is even ahead of MIT in terms of published papers. It is no wonder we don't hear of Indian Universities paving a way to solve the corona crisis. How can we expect the youth of this country to be of service to the nation when we spend exceedingly more on defence than on education.

I remember reading an article by Professor Dinesh Singh, former Vice-Chancellor of Delhi University, titled "University of the Future" and it caught my fancy. At last, I'd end it here- How can we expect a university working with outdated policies of the past to be a university of the future when it is struggling to cope up with the challenging needs of the present?

Tashi Dorjay

About Caucus

We, at Caucus, value academic discussions and discourse. It is through these conversations that we can tickle the intellect of our members and invoke opinions from across the spectrum. We make humble efforts towards the development and intellectual growth of our members. Through this process, we are able to produce scholars who are articulate and opinionated. We are an active society in Hindu College, University of Delhi. Given the competitive environment of Delhi University, it is our prerogative to stride further ahead and give our members an edge over their fellow companions. It is in this direction that we encourage our members to express their opinions on issues of policy, international relations, domestic and international developments among others in the form of the written word. The blog is meant to provide a platform to our members as well as serve to the wider prospective audience by providing perspectives on various subjects. Caucus – the discussion forum is a place where we discuss, debate and share our thoughts and ideas. Caucus was formed in 2007 in Hindu College, University of Delhi. We at Caucus not only discuss and deliberate, we also provide our members avenues to grow and explore through the various events that we organise. We organise group discussions on a weekly basis where we discuss current events. Some of our annual events include the "International Hindu Model United Nations" where we host various institutions for a two day long immersive and competitive MUN experience. We try out best to provide delegates with an immersive and holistic experience the best hospitality. This year, we also started an educational lecture series called "Compass" where we invited various industry experts. This not only encouraged us to look at issues from a different viewpoint but it also gave our members a chance to interact with these experts on a one-on-one basis. Moreover, we also train and send delegations to various MUNs. We also have a blog and encourage our members to contribute to our online blog with their opinions on trending topics. This helps them express their creativity and thoughts. We also encourage members to indulge in research and provide them all the necessary support regarding research and publication. Last but not the least, we at Caucus do not forget to have fun. We often discuss films and pop culture and we love playing pictionary. Do follow us on social media to stay updated on our events.

CAUCUS MONTHLY OVERVIEW

NOVEMBER 2020

Socratic Seminar on
"RIDDLES OF RAMA AND KRISHNA, BY BR AMBEDKAR"
7/11/2020

Presentation on
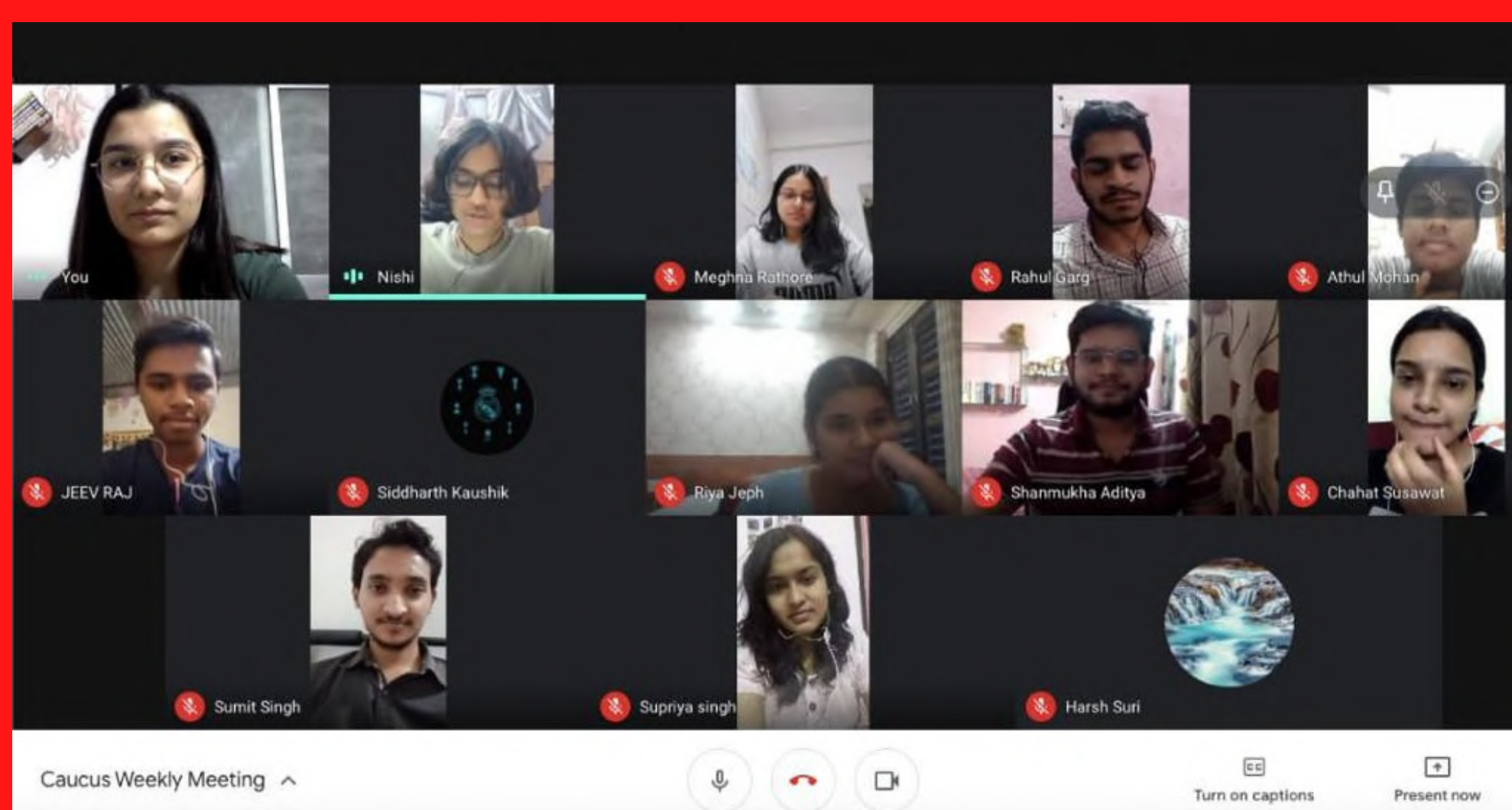## SOCRATES' & DEMOCRACY
By Jeevraj Dahiya & Meghana Rathore
17/11/2020

Group Discussion on
THE FALL OF INC; TO REPENT OR REMEDY
21/11/2020

Orientation Session
INTERACTIVE SESSION WITH FRESHERS
27/11/2020

Caucus Weekly Meeting

Today we had a productive discussion on B R Ambedkar's text 'The Riddles of Rama and Krishna'. In critically analysing the text, we observed the importance of weaving mythological ideas and their public perception.

Caucus Weekly Meeting

Today, our members Jeevraj & Meghna made a presentation on "Socrates' view on democracy".
The presentation was followed by a QnA and an elaborated discussion. We dwelled upon the intricacies of voter qualification, voter suppression, and voting patters in the landscape of India and the world.
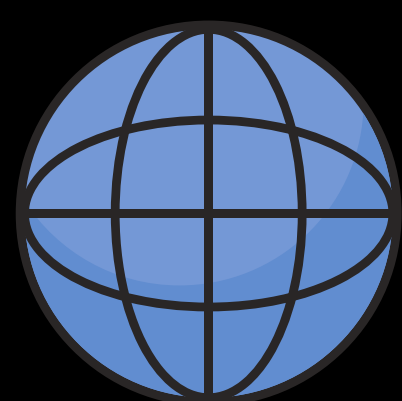
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