

THE PROBE



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Waves of Privatisation in Education



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REVISITING HUNTINGTON'S THESIS

An attempt at analysing Huntington's thesis in the context of modern world and its immoral implications on global politics.

THE SPRING THAT BLEW DICTATORS

About the Arab Spring and how it changed the democratic landscape in Arabic countries, resulting in unprecedented changes.

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Analysis of the importance of culture, art-forms and Kabir Kala Manch as vanguards of struggle in Indian democracy.





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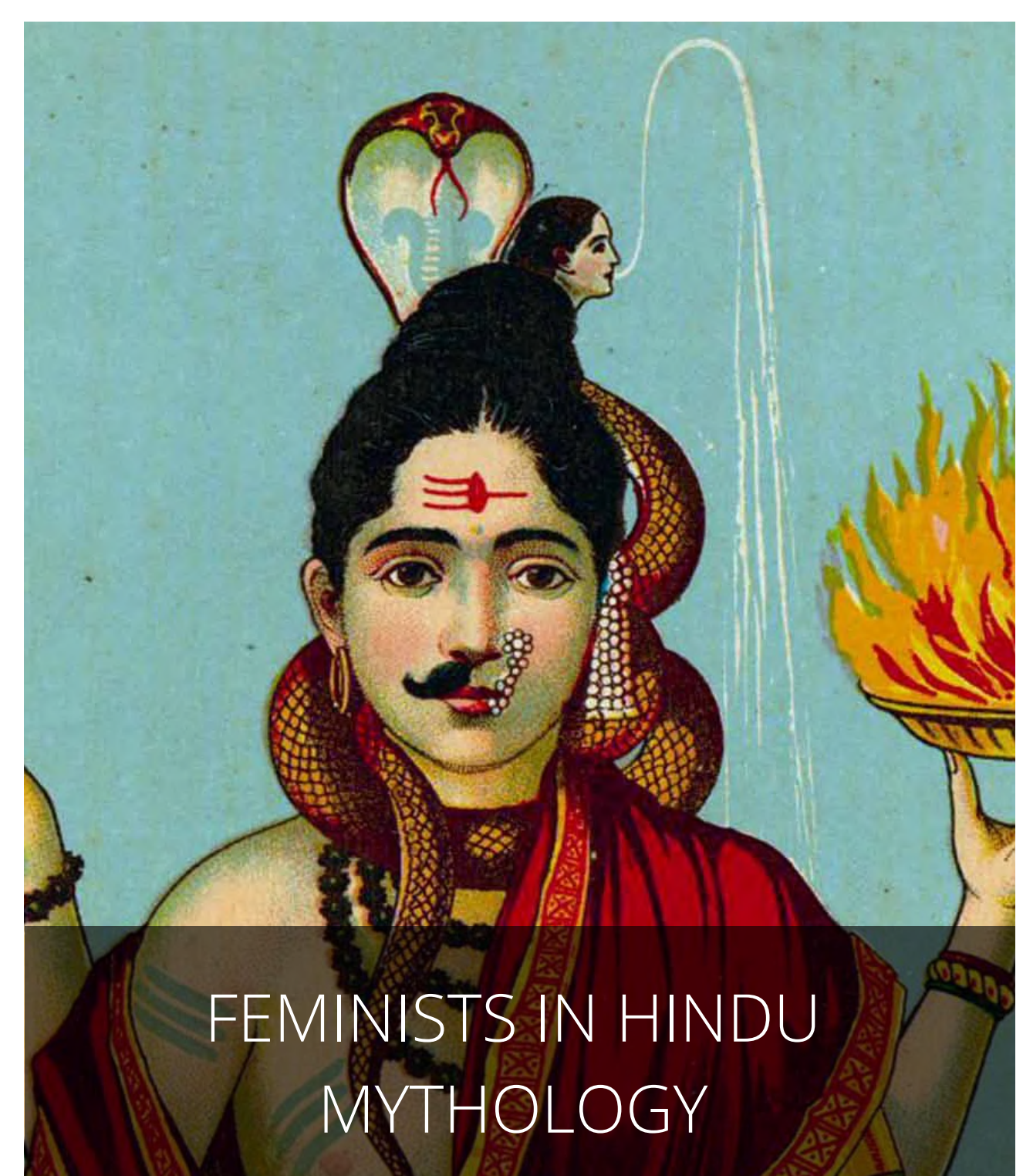
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Message from the team

Humbled by the overwhelming response to the pilot edition of The Probe, we bring to you the second edition of our newsletter. 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 the 1975 Emergency to the 2010 Arab Spring. 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 our 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.

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Waves of privatisation in **EDUCATION**



India has remained a centre of higher learning, an amalgamation of global intellect since ages. Today, the nation boasts of the largest student community anywhere in the world. **How has the entry of private players impacted the Indian Education scene?**

BY PRANAV JHA



India has remained a centre of higher learning, an amalgamation of global intellect since ages. Today, the nation boasts of the largest student community anywhere in the world. Investment in human resource has always been one of the core concerns of the policy-makers. It ranks amongst the top-three in the world in terms of the sheer number of educational institutes. The educational institutes could be grouped into institutions of national importance, central universities, state universities, state private universities, and deemed universities. All of them have diverse functioning styles & different modes of financing. The first three are public-funded, whereas the latter two are self-financed institutes. There has been a phenomenal increase in the number of enrollments in educational institutes. There has been an unprecedented growth in the number of educational institutes in India. This can be attributed to the vast demand-supply mismatch in the education sector. Private institutes now account for around fourth-fifths of enrollments in higher educational institutes. A sectoral wise decomposition of the private educational sphere according to EY & FICCI (2012) shows that in higher education 91% engineering schools, 95% pharmacy, 64% business and 50% medical schools in India are non-government. The Indian economy has opened up a lot since the 1991 reforms.

The educational sector has not remained untouched by these reforms. Education is considered one of the most important components of governments' social safety nets. However, India's public institutions face stiff competition from privately funded institutes of higher learning in the educational space. While it is true that competition often scales up efficiency, ruling out government intervention in the educational spheres could have some profound implications. While we aim to focus this discussion on higher education, ergo one of the recent phenomena in Indian politics should attract our attention. The spectacular return of AAP in the state elections of Delhi was majorly based on the plank of its successful reforms in the government schools of Delhi. The fact stands out: education never fails to capture the imagination of the world's largest democracy's franchise exercisers. The Indian higher education might have been not that good on various fronts: the research & development, failing to tickle the entrepreneurial spirits of a young population in a huge manner, lack of space beyond conventional courses. Albeit, the same setup has produced a significant number of scientists, social scientists, policy-makers along with a multitude of other professionals who have in their very own way made a dent for themselves.

Why shouldn't these institutions bask in the glory of having produced some top-notch talent? Yes, they should, but wearing the badge of honour shouldn't refrain them from constantly adapting to new times. The public institutions' reluctance to take up timely reforms has created a space for other institutes who promise to deliver on many fronts. The former has been unable to perform.

It is indeed true that many private universities' infrastructural facilities are a notch above many of their public counterparts. The offerings in research in private universities are getting upscaled exponentially. They are attracting students from other countries from the developing world, significantly enhancing India's image abroad. They have attracted some of the very best resource persons available in our nation, considerably boosting education quality. The flexibility in choosing courses, ICT enabled curriculums, relaxed modes of assessments, and low teacher-student ratios have been chief features of at least some of India's best private universities. The freedom in designing curriculums in private universities has given the academia a greater degree of autonomy. Industry-academia linkages have not been strengthened despite the efforts put in by the private players.

The admission process in private institutions is based on merit through entrances & other application processes. The private institutes are solely dependent on fees to fund themselves & the trustee board is empowered to take admission decisions. This might enhance the scope of admission malpractices in these institutes. The attempts to bring in a single entrance test at the national level have failed many times. Exorbitantly high tuition charges further exacerbate the situation. The loopholes in the legal agreements that have mentioned education as a non-profit venture depict the Indian education system's grey areas. According to one of the Supreme Court's judgements, private institutions are allowed to generate a reasonable amount of surplus, but the 'reasonable' has not been quantified. Adding to that over-regulation of educational institutes has led to under-governance. The present tax laws, especially in non-profits, have also acted as a disincentive for educational institutes. Indian higher educational institutes have been seen as tickets to better living standards by Indian middle-class families. The enormous trust in the quality of education of public institutes associated with low financial costs has

made it an attractive proposition for a considerable Indian population.

These institutes of higher learning have been viewed as emancipators from deprivation by the under-privileged sections of the society. And now, the aspirational middle class is gradually looking towards institutions apart from the public ones. Right to choice remains supreme in a democratic setup and so it shouldn't matter much. However, there arise several challenges. Firstly, the enormous financial costs of private universities have been burning a hole in many pockets. There is a deep inherent problem here. We could look up to the American education system for example.

Student education loan debts have been tipping meteorological heights in the US. They have reached a high of US \$1.6 trillion, much more than the gross domestic products of most countries of the world. They become one of the focal points of discussion during the American presidential election primaries. Financing the university costs is becoming difficult day by day, and it is now no different for India. The students' protests against the fees hike in the Jawaharlal Nehru University attracted the global educational community's attention. Educational loans have been existing in India for a while because governments who had fiscally crunched budgets couldn't extend the benefits of higher education beyond subsidies. The looming student debt crisis in the United States has a lesson for us- the higher costs of education could disincentivize underprivileged sections from gaining higher education and put enormous stress on the younger working force in an economy. The economy has been failing recently to add up employment opportunities.



Case in point: Ashoka University boasts a sprawling campus, academic autonomy & students from the economic elite.

The educational loans are based on the underlying assumption that recipients of these loans will be taking up high-earning jobs in future. If this underlying assumption doesn't hold, this might result in an economic crisis.

The loans contingent on future incomes run a greater risk of turning into a bad loan. The longevity of the current financial crisis is further reducing the scope of getting well-paying jobs for the aspirational youth.

The STEM subjects seen as a gateway to prosperity by the aspirational Indian middle class are slowly losing that status quo. Recent layoffs in the IT sector and the disruptive AI trends are depicting other trends. Instruments like student loans often finance the costs of attending private universities. The increasing financial costs of higher education implies a higher reliance on private sources of educational financing. However, empirical evidence presents another story; the number of educational loans that have been disbursed in the past four years has reduced by 25%. This is related to the problem of rising NPAs. This is a stark indicator that high-quality jobs have not been produced in our ecosystem despite the diversification of the education system. Non-addition to public institutes' capacity, coupled with the high costs of private universities, stress our educational system. The average ticket size of loans has also increased in this period, indicating acts of inflationary pressures on the students' fee bills. This brings us to a question: are the increasing financial costs reducing the accessibility to higher education in the long run?

There is another facet to the problem: the low levels of employability across certain courses. The most prominent of them is engineering. While Indian engineering colleges have produced some of the topmost CEOs and executives of most valued companies, the engineering degree is gradually losing its sheen. Many private engineering colleges do not fall under the purview of AICTE- the apex regulating body of engineering colleges. The high demand for an engineering undergrad degree coupled with an IT boom in the Indian market led to private engineering colleges' mushrooming. According to a report by Aspiring Minds, 80% of the engineering graduates are unemployable for a job in the knowledge economy. This is putting up a significant amount of financial stress on Indian families who barely meet their ends. The supply side has not matched up with the aggressively increasing demand in the Indian education market. This is resulting in a significant chunk of Indian population being left out of the formal job market. One of the most expensive courses in the private higher educational institutes is that of medicine

New legislation in the year 2019, the National Medical Commission Bill, 2019 faced a significant backlash from the medical fraternity. One of the major reasons behind the backlash was giving the commission the right to fix fees of about 50% of the seats in private medical colleges. The medical fraternity was afraid of the fact this could lead to malpractices and auctioning of seats. The problem of the lack of medical staff exploded during this pandemic. This comes despite large growth in the numbers of medical institutes which remains highly skewed in certain geographical regions. This is an apt reflection of the paradoxical situation of education-industry linkages in our country.

REFLECTION OF REALITY?

To some extent, public universities reflect the ground realities of our society which their private counterparts don't seem to do. The affirmative actions of the late 1980s have ensured that public institutes have better representation from diverse sections of society. We might be mistaken if we take this point up to validate that the students from socially and economically underprivileged sections fare well academically within the public institutes. However, this might be related to a larger systematic problem- linguistic barriers, lack of access to private coaching etc. The higher education system couldn't be successful if the basic education system remains plagued from inefficiencies. At the same time, we might tend to feel that private universities cater to economically homogeneous crowds. Do the happier bubbles of private college might seem quite far away from the harsh reality? Class background plays an essential role in campus involvement for, e.g. college societies, campus hours etc. in the USA. Unfortunately, we don't have empirical evidence to look up for in the case of Indian universities. Undoubtedly, education is the tool of empowerment for those who have been deprived socially & economically. A sensitive education system needs to consider these social factors while preparing candidates for the employment market. Here, do we see private institutions as a solution to the problems already in the system, or are they creating a new set of problems independently? We must also note that private universities start coming up to plug in the demand-supply mismatch.



The mass proliferation of private institutes though, has widened the choice for the booming high-income groups and the growing Indian middle class. Is it true for the economically disenfranchised sections of our country? With the disbursement of certain scholarships getting delayed or curtailed during this pandemic, the stark inequalities came out in the open. The issue of equitable access to centres of higher learning remains unaddressed. Could this result in higher education turning into a subject of blatant commercialization? The swanky private universities seem to be clustered in and around some of the country's very high-income zones representing a heavily skewed distribution of private universities. They have further added to the income-disparity between the states.

The quality of education in private higher educational institutes has generated mixed responses. Research culture has not been ingrained systematically in our higher institutes & private institutes are no different. Many private engineering colleges had been shut down some time back in terms of degraded quality. AICTE further blocked any applications for approval of any new institutes for the next two years. Quality has not reached the desired level, something which rankings by various agencies reflect. The system's main aim should not be developing degree vending machines that produce degrees without any value attached to it. The weakening of public institutes doesn't seem to be a good indicator for the nation. The socialist model of economy envisioned universalization of education so that it reaches the masses of the country. Education remains the most

powerful tool in the hands of the populace that determines the nation's future.

The national institutes set up during the pre-independence period aimed to provide a centre of intellectual discussions for the youth. The post-Independent India witnessed the emergence of highly prestigious learning centres that would immensely contribute towards nation-building. They built the destiny of modern India. We should not let education be treated as an economic commodity that can be bought or sold. The proposition attached to education is much beyond the monetary value attached to it. The commoditization of education will have severe implications, most prominently reducing accessibility.

India's first Prime Minister Pt. J.L. Nehru once said- "A university stands for humanism. For tolerance, for a reason, for adventure of ideas and for the search of the truth. It stands for the onward march of the human race towards ever higher objectives. If the universities discharge their duties adequately, then it is well with the nation and the people".

The COVID-19 pandemic brought in a digital divide: the inaccessibility to digital education posed a question on the education system. The National Education Policy aims to bring in sweeping reforms within the current set up. This is happening amidst an expansion of educational institutes across the state to meet the demands of the growing population. The role of the state in higher education cannot be diminished. The success of the system lies in the satiety of millions of the students who are the most important stakeholders. We need to realize the cooperative coexistence of public & private players will vitalize our system.



REVISITING HUNTINGTON'S
THESIS

Revisiting Huntington's Thesis: Analysing Limitations of the *Clash of Civilizations*

BY PREET SHARMA

In the backdrop of Teacher Samuel Paty's beheading and heinous murder on 16 October 2020 and the death of three more people due to the stabbing attack in Nice, France on 29th October, there has been a new resurgence in invoking and revisiting Samuel Huntington's Clash of Civilizations thesis. Though it never went out of vogue, it first appeared in the 1993 issue of Foreign Affairs. This thesis gained immense attention from people around the world as it proclaimed a prophecy about the politics of conflicts in the post-cold war era. Huntington's view, that in the post-cold war era the nature of conflict will be civilizational, in its basis has proved

to be incorrect, and highly mistaken. Invoking the thesis of the clash of civilizations without recognizing its limitations in the middle of a worldwide pandemic that is about to claim almost 2 million lives is not only minacious but also self-defeating. Huntington throughout his thesis has tried to present the narrative of "us" versus "them" by creating and projecting Islamic civilization as the "other." This thesis authorizes the division of people who belong to the same human race into West vs the Rest.

I have tried to analyze conceptual criticisms of Huntington's thesis and its immoral implications



on world politics. He also takes a primordial view of civilization and fails to recognize the importance of dialogues that take place across civilizations. The ingrained islamophobia and orientalist tendencies have also been brought to light. The spread of the COVID-19 pandemic worldwide in months staunchly argues that we are moving towards globalism which is already leading to increased civilizational dialogues and greater interdependence among people of the great human race.

Kiron Skinner and John Bolton both illustrate and depict the United States' relationship with China in terms of a clash of civilizations. The phrase "clash of civilization" was first used by scholar Bernard Lewis most famously in the article titled "The Roots of Muslim Rage" but this term is now associated with a 1993 article by Samuel Huntington. Huntington argued that the conflicts in the post-cold war world order will be cultural. The battle lines of the coming decades will be demarcated by the fault lines of civilizations. Civilizational borders will divide and encompass existing political borders. The attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York or the 9/11 attacks were hailed as instances of clash of civilizations. Many thought that the clash of civilizations' thesis was prophetic. However, Huntington's argument is highly incoherent and reductive. The decades since Huntington's thesis have been more peaceful than the previous decades.

Invoking the Narrative of Us Versus Them :

The narrative of "us versus them" is predominant in the thesis of the clash of civilizations. Huntington constantly invokes the narrative of West versus the Rest and presents a detailed account of animosity between Islamic civilization and the western civilization. Scholars argue that powerful nations always need an enemy to justify their huge military budgets and arms acquisition and to make their arms lobby and military-industrial complexes prosper. After the end of the cold war, the people who benefited from war and enmity in the United States were in ardent need of an "other" and the clash of civilization thesis provided them with a "new enemy" in the form of the Islamic world by classifying it as the Islamic civilization.

Taking cues from psychology, there are two ways to invoke the "us versus them" narrative. First, perceiving that our group is in confrontation with

other groups and especially over a limited resource, makes us experience hostility towards that group. Second, the "us versus them" mentality can even arise, without the perception of competition, the mere categorization of people into "us versus them" is sufficient to produce hostilities. Such narratives reduce cordiality and produce hatred among people. This narrative is prevalent throughout Huntington's book. He considers western civilization or more specifically the US to be a nation of rule of law, democracy, women's rights, peace, and development and has pitted Islamic civilization against it by projecting it as being everything that the West is not. He attacks Islamic civilization as having bloody borders. It has been argued that rationality when exercised in terms of group thinking makes us act irrationally and makes us more unaccommodating because when we think in terms of the group, we are unable to think for ourselves intelligently and fail to recognize other people's interest outside our group. This narrative creates unnecessary tension and antagonism between the people who belong to the same great human race.

Incoherence and Islamophobia

Huntington has defined civilization as the highest cultural grouping of people who share fundamental traits. Cultural racism was used as the basis of differentiation and hostility. Huntington takes the monolithic view of civilization and ignores the polycentric structures of both worlds. Huntington has a very rigid view of civilizations. He looks up to civilization as being a static entity that will not change. But in reality, civilizations are ever-evolving and changing. The categorization of the world in seven civilizations is also problematic because he often ignores the people who are indigenous and may not fit in any of the above civilizations. He also ignores the internal dynamics of each civilization. As per Fred Halliday, the clash of civilizations fails to recognize the internal dynamics and complexities of the Arab world. There is no one Islamic or Hindu or even one coherent western culture. His thesis becomes more problematic as he uses the word culture, religion, and civilization interchangeably. The islamophobia ingrained in the clash of civilizations thesis is less about Islam and more about western societies' unsureness and insecurity. Islam for the west is a new enemy of choice which will justify the extension of the religious, cultural, military, and economic surveillance and dominance

of western states over its citizens. The oversimplified claim of Huntington that “Islamic culture explains in large part the failure of democracy to emerge in much of the Muslim world” fails to recognize the complexities that have contributed to the failure of democracy in the Middle East.

Rebranding Old Thesis

Huntington does not come up with anything new and his paradigm nearly fits into political realism. In the post-second world war era, Michael Dunn has concluded that a clash of civilizations is essentially a form of discourse of two powerful groups of elites: the western policymaker and the leaders of Al-Qaeda network. Huntington has provided the terrorist with the language of inflicting terror. Terrorists often justify their attacks across the world by taking solace to a clash of civilizations' thesis proclaiming incompatibility and animosity between the West and the Islamic civilization.

Huntington's thesis of the clash of civilizations is a biased and distorted view of world politics. Fouad Ajami concludes that the Gulf war was a clash of state interests and not a clash of civilizations. Huntington reduces the multiple clashes of the inter and intra state conflict to civilizational reasons and reduces the identity of an individual to his religion and civilization. An individual has multiple identities on various levels. Here, Amartya Sen argues that the clash of civilization ignores the multiple dimensions of identity that overlaps across the so-called civilization boundaries. Sen argues that single attention is paid to the “civilizational aspect which is conceptually parasitic on the commodity power of a unique categorization.” Individuals cannot be placed into rigid boxes of their civilizational identity by surpassing their nationalities, locations, language, and politics.

Orientalist

Orientalism the great work of Edward Said has in itself a landmark critique of Samuel Huntington's clash of civilizations which presents a highly occidental view of the superiority of the west. Huntington's study is highly orientalist in its approach. Orientalism stands for vision, study, and writings dominated by perspectives and ideological biases of the west towards the orient. The orient in such a way exists for the west and is created for it. The Orient is presented as something inferior to

the west and bizarre to it. It involves seeing Arab culture as exotic, backward, uncivilized, and dangerous. Huntington perceives Islam as according to what he sees it to be and not according to what Islamic civilization is for the people who belong to it, who have experienced it internally as part of their day to day lives. He does not try to evaluate the differences that are present within the Islamic civilization. Thus, he presents a highly occidental picture colored with an orientalist lens and fails to give a comprehensive theory on the nature of conflicts.

Creation of Global Civilization

In today's highly globalized world the clash of civilizations thesis is largely redundant. Globalization is the reality of today's world. The nations and civilizations are highly interdependent. We are moving towards globalism and civilizational differences are increasingly being overpowered by our economic, political, social, and even cultural relations. China is one of the largest partners of the United States in terms of trade as of November 2020, which according to Huntington should alliance with the Islamic civilization in fighting the West. So is India which is home to a large Muslim population, one of the United States' biggest trade partners and hub of outsourcing. Saudi Arabia, a strong theocratic nation and the flagbearer of Islamic civilization remain a strong ally of America. Saudi Arabia is important to America, it possesses 16.2% percent of the world's oil reserves and is one of the world's biggest oil exporters. It has military contracts worth more than 110 billion dollars with America.

Observation is the key to unravel the world. Several small things have become almost common across all civilizations. The way we get treated through the same doctors who have studied the same procedures and methods to cure patients in hospitals no matter in which part of the world we live, the way we can consume MC Donald's burger sitting in any part of the world, the way a khadi kurta goes well with blue jeans or the way COVID -19 having originated in a small city of Wuhan in China and then became a worldwide pandemic all point towards the great alignment of the world into one big global village. According to Yuval Noah Harari, we may belong to different religions but when it comes to how to build a state, an economy, or a hospital all of us belong to



the same global civilization. We have disagreements but then all civilizations do have internal disputes. Peter Thiel in his book Zero to One rightly points out that Globalization along with technology matters more in today's world. Spreading old ways to create wealth would lead to devastation, not riches. If every Indian starts living the way Americans do it would be environmentally catastrophic. Thus, globalization along with sustainable development will lead to prosperity. The kind of problems that we encounter today like climate change, nuclear proliferation, and terrorism, global warming, ozone layer depletion, or coronavirus are global in nature. Taking a native example, the supply of Hydroxychloroquine from Indian to several countries in the middle of the pandemic signifies that people do care about humanity and not just civilizational affinities. This proves that in today's world there is no clash of civilizations but that we are moving towards the amalgamation of various civilizations into each

other and the creation of a heterogeneous civilization based on inter-civilizational dialogue.

Conclusion

Samuel Huntington's clash of civilizations thesis is incoherent and highly mistaken. His view of conflicts in the post-cold war world is misleading and presents the primordial view of civilization as concrete, macro-cultural-entities with long and continuous histories and boundaries. His thesis has failed to recognize the dialogue between civilizations. His thesis presents a one-sided and mistaken view of civilizational dialogues and interactions. The essence of every civilization, culture, religion, and society is peace. Humans at heart are peaceful creatures. They are very much capable of peaceful coexistence and of having productive dialogues with other humans irrespective of diversities of religion and ideologies.

BEHIND THE PUN!





BY EKAKASH HANDA

What is humour? What goes on in humour? What's behind it? What purpose does it serve? How has the purpose changed? These are the questions we need to ask ourselves.

Humour has been a part of our lives since the longest time; it'd not be an exaggeration to call it the elixir of life. Imagine living a day without cracking a joke or listening to one. Life would become meaningless and depressing if there is no humour. I'd like to clarify that I'm not talking about the literary genre called comedy, which is a whole other face of humour. I'm talking about the day-to-day conversational humour, the lack of which makes one yearn for it, even more.

At its heart, humour is nothing but cheap entertainment. A kind of entertainment that no one needs to buy, except if you attend stand-up specials. But at the same time, the people who are not witty or humorous are generally assumed to be lonesome

or boring. It affects our social thinking in different ways. We are not easily attracted to unfunny or socially awkward people. These people become social outcasts since society has proclaimed them not cool enough, to hang out with. They are too occupied with solving problems in their minds, which is not wrong but remains an unworthy pursuit, in society's eyes.

Logically speaking, humour distracts us. It serves no purpose other than entertainment of our kind. But at the same time, it reflects our society's ideologies. It is a perfect mirror for our society. Your humour describes your generation or age and your class in the social hierarchy and thought process. You might not be able to impress a villager with the same joke that you used to impress the CEO of a large firm. Humour serves a higher purpose, which is the formation and classification of cultures. It helps in the formation and division of our society, as we know it. It's not like it is an essential element of our

community, but it is a massive foundation.

Where did it all originate from? When did humans get so bored that they decided to satirise everything? The first joke cannot be traced, but the first satire can, which is usually described as the prototype of what humour was going to become. The eleven surviving plays of Aristophanes represent the earliest extant body of comic drama. Whatever is known of Greek Old Comedy, is derived from these plays, the earliest of which, The Acharnians, was produced in 425 BCE. In ancient times, humour was generally associated with the Roman Republic's satirical approach to generate votes from their humble countrymen. They put up shows, satirising and joking about the political opposition; traces of such satires could also be found in the modern world in the form of skits and nukkad natak performed on the streets in India. That is the earliest form of humour recognisable. It was an election campaign, the leaders were the humorists, and the voters were the audience. They didn't base their results on which joke was the best, but it was a huge factor in bringing down the opposition to its knees. Also, political shams can sometimes become a headache for the general public to understand, so they invented a language that the people understood. The language of satires was invented. They joked about how impotent the government was, and how better it could have been. It was allowed too because they had free speech. But then philosophers like Plato started questioning these inventive steps. In his book, The Republic, the great philosopher Plato stated that "the guards of the state should avoid laughter" and called it "the destruction of self".

On the contrary, his contemporary, Aristotle, another great philosopher talked about humour in his book Poetics and called it positive, as it brought happiness, which according to him was the goal of any activity, the result we strive for, and ever since then, humour has been both praised and criticised.

We could classify periods of history based on their humorous approach. The tragic comedies are from the early ages, which further developed into satires and comedy which developed into parodies by the end of the medieval period. Then, by the 19th century, the most popular form of comedy became mimicry. By the end of the 20th century, with the emergence of wars and cultural revolutions, comedy developed in films and stand-ups and became widely recognised by the common mass. It was only recently when it transformed into dark comedy. People started to make jokes about death, life and the first world problems and then even started picking taboo topics like racial comedy, sexual comedy, etc. A learned intellectual today understands the importance of such comedies, enjoys them and doesn't give much thought to the edgy topics they are based on, but at the same time, some other learned intellectuals criticise them for looking at the world more lightly. Some people would accept particular "types" of jokes to be funny while discarding the rest as edgy or dank.

Now, no one who accepts humour raises a question about its existence. But it gets controversial sometimes, just like any other form of art or literature.

It has become a whole new subject, yet to be discovered by the man, just like art or literature. One could argue that it is not as important as it sounds, but the same arguments could be placed for every other subject except science. If we talk about academics in a strictly rational way, then science is the only real subject, that should be studied if we are to prosper, but we all know that's not the case. If the humans had been born machines, we might not have these subjects that we study, but since we aren't, we have to keep digging, discovering, and re-discovering things that make our physical world and the emotional and mental world. And humour, whether a person likes it or not, is a massive part of that world.

Now, no one who accepts humour raises a question about its existence. But it gets controversial sometimes, just like any other form of art or literature. For example, the most recent incident involving the arrest of Munawar Faruqi, a stand-up comedian, who mostly makes political jokes, made a joke on the current Home Minister. If Aristotle were born today, he would be put on trial along with Munawar for having modernist thoughts and satirising the political systems, which wouldn't have been a crime if people realised what humour is. This is a phase that every culture goes through. The same thing happened in the USA a few decades ago. In the late 60s, joking about drugs, wars and the political system wasn't much appreciated, but everything changed just a decade later. "Family Hour" was invented and comedy for everyone became a popular concept on television. It broke barriers. Ellen DeGeneres became the first woman to perform stand-up on The Tonight Show

starring Jimmy Carson. And In 1997, she came out as a lesbian in an interview on The Oprah Winfrey Show. She talked about homophobia and sex, which would reach a wider audience because of her popularity. As a result, people started addressing these things, which were considered a taboo before that. That is why it needs to be taught to people. People need to be taught about edgy and subtle comedy so that they can have better conversational skills and a better understanding of the world. Somewhere, along the way, while evolving further and further, we kept breaking every known barrier and kept creating new obstacles for subjects like comedy. Comedy has evolved too, just like every other thing that man has invented. When before it was only used as a genre for the epics, now it is used in film, radio, media and literally in every aspect of the society. It has spread everywhere, like wildfire. It is divided into several genres now and has become suitable for each generation's man; there is a comedy for kids and older people. There is a comedy for black and white people. There is a comedy for an Asian or American. The most popular form of humour today is memes. Those little images with small to no context, serving a purpose of entertaining you, depending on your definition of it, circulating in a number of hundreds of thousands using the internet. There are whole subcultures

related to memes, for example, the dank memes. Images with jokes or strange, surreal remarks on the world. It is described as "jokes that are so overused that they are funny". This strange irony was discussed in the Washington Post article "Why is millennial humour so weird?" to show the disconnect from how millennials and other generations conceive of humour, the article itself also became a meme where people photoshopped examples of deep-fried and surreal memes onto the article to make fun of the point of the article and the abstraction of meme culture. This shows the millennial humour's mentality; little things like dog slipping on ice can amuse us. This type of humour reflects society and our state of mind, which is continuously evolving and developing and paying less and less attention to the content we laugh at until the day comes when the context would become nothing and would still bring a smile on our face. That is the fate of humour.

But as far as that day is, we still should understand why such little things make us laugh or why humour evolves or why we feel the urge to make a pun in an exciting situation. We are an intelligent species, yet there are things within us or our minds that we still don't have any idea about and the day we do, we would completely understand everything. That is why humour should be studied.





Artists in Rebellion

BY RAHUL GARG

In a developing and diverse country like India, conveying the message of social welfare through cultural activities is both important and efficient. A great example of this is Kabir Kala Manch. Kabir Kala Manch uses art to denounce injustice, mobilise the oppressed, prepare them for struggle, in order to bring about positive change. Kabir Kala Manch with its asset of engaging entertainment brings forth sensitive issues of the society such as farmers' suicides, backward class atrocities, violence against women, casteism, Hindu-Muslim riots, terrorism, students issues, regional issues etc. Kabir Kala Manch envisages strengthening the democratic foundation of India by reminding everyone of justice, freedom and equality through its art. The organisation uses songs, poetry, nukkad-natak and many other means to spread awareness.

It was established in the backdrop of the 1992 Gujarat riots, by Amarnath Chautaliya in Pune, Maharashtra. Various like-minded artists were

anguished to see the unfortunate state of India's democratic fabric and joined hands to fight against communalism, hate speech and the politics of hooliganism. Named after Kabir, the famous poet of Hindi literature, who opposed orthodoxy and slavery of mind through his 'dohas', this organisation is joined by many university professors and students working towards the same goal. Sagar Gorkha, who is a member of this manch, says in this context, "People like Kabir, Pablo Picasso and others who used their art for bringing in revolutionary changes are our idols."

It is a well-acknowledged fact that information and awareness are best expressed in a creative fashion. The society at large is more receptive to the lighthearted and straightforward medium of entertainment than the lacklustre and mundane words in a book. Even debates between two parties is not an effective manner; it does not bring about any change in society. The urgent whim of competition

and superimposing one sects' interests over another, fails the idea of creating change. Therefore, art is the only supreme measure to clear the conscience of society, at large.

Unfortunately, the artist is always attacked for rebellion, and there's no escape even for Kabir Kala Manch. In recent years, its members and the organisation itself, has come under several attacks from the government for 'harming the peaceful setup of the society.'

Sheetal Sathe is a folk singer, poet, and dalit rights activist from Pune, Maharashtra. She is also one of the lead singers of Kabir Kala Manch. Many activists including Deepak Dengle, Siddharth, Sagar Gorkha, Ramesh Ghaichor, Sheetal Sathe and her husband, Sachin Mali, who is also a member of the KKM, were arrested under Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act by the Maharashtra government for encouraging and spreading Maoist or Naxalite ideology. They are being attacked, especially because their agenda includes the upliftment of the Dalit community and other minorities, which the establishment sees as an attack on their interests. Out of fifteen, seven members of the KKM were arrested in 2010 by the Anti-Terrorism Squad. Sathe, Mali and six others had gone underground. In 2011, Sheetal Sathe and her husband Sachin Mali emerged from hiding. They maintained that they were innocent, but they nonetheless were arrested while Sheetal was pregnant. Deepak Dengle and Siddharth, two members of KKM, were granted bail by the Bombay High Court on April 2, 2013. But Sheetal, who was pregnant, along with her husband, were denied bail immediately. She was finally granted bail by the Bombay High Court on June 28, 2013, on humanitarian grounds. On January 3 2017, the remaining arrested members of the group — Sachin Mali, Sagar Gorkha and Ramesh Ghaichor — were granted bail by the Supreme Court of India.

But the matter did not settle down here. In the previous year, Gaichor and his Kabir Kala Manch colleague Sagar Gorkha were arrested by the National Investigation Agency again in connection with the Bhima Koregaon violence. The next day, Jyoti Jagtap, member of KKM, was taken into the custody of NIA. Two days before arresting, these vocalists of KKM, Sagar Gorkha and Ramesh Gaichor had alleged, in a Facebook video, that the NIA was

forcing them to give statements to implicate those arrested in the case. They alleged that during interrogation, they were threatened with arrest if they did not agree to be witnesses." The National Testing Agency concluded that they had sung songs in which they criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi and several government policies of the Bharatiya Janata Party. The NIA produced translations of these songs in court, which encouraged people to drink cow urine. The NIA used these translations as proof of violent activities and conspiracies of KKM.

It is sad to see that the state has become so insecure that it can no longer tolerate humour, satire as a creative form of freedom of expression and critique. Every creative sceptic is a potential terrorist, in the eyes of the ruling lords. We must keep in mind that an attack on KKM is not merely an attack on leftist ideologues, but a massive crackdown on the dalit and human rights activism in the nation. Organisations which are anti-status-quo are always easy targets in the wake of totalitarianism.

Anand Patwardhan, who is an Indian documentary filmmaker known for his socio-political, human rights-oriented films, also made a film "Jai Bhim Comrade" based on the activities of Kabir Kala Manch and the 1997 killings by the police in Ramabai Nagar, Mumbai. It took him 14 years to make this 200-minute film which was released on the ninth day of January 2011. When a reporter asked the reason for this, he said, "I wanted to continue filming till all the false cases against the people in the colony were removed, or until the police officers who had ordered the firing were sent to jail,"

When asked about the purpose of the film, he said, "That's when I realised that I have to start showing this film. I want this country to understand who these singers and poets are so that people like Sheetal can come out in the open again and prove that they hadn't done anything wrong, anything more than speak up for the powerless."

After reading this incident it can be concluded that opposing the government and social evils is to become a terrorist. If an attempt is made to expose the failures of the government, then the opponent is a terrorist and jail is the right place for that. A society which considers the government supreme over the constitution will be catastrophic and regressive.



The Spring that Blew Dictators: Analysing Impact of Arab Spring

BY PREET SHARMA

In 2010, there was a breeze that blew in the Arab region which walloped and vanquished some high-octane dictators. This was the Arab spring, an amalgamation of popular pro-democracy protests by ordinary citizens across the middle east and north Africa(MENA). On 17 December 2010, a fruit seller named Mohammad Bouazizi, self-immolated himself as some local policemen seized his fruit cart. He was tired of the rampant corruption & poverty and reached his tipping point when policemen seized his fruit cart. This exhaustion from poverty and corruption that led to Mohammad Bouazizi's death on 4 January 2011, was faced by people across Tunisia, who were equally tired of the authoritarian dictatorship in their country. This incident of self-immolation not only shook Tunisia to the roots but also sent shock waves across the Arab world where dictatorial rulers fell one after another due to popular protests around the MENA region.

Last month, the act of defiance by a fruit seller, which later changed the history of the Arab world forever, completed 10 years. The present state of nations where pro-democracy protests erupted in 2010 is unpleasant and harsh.

In Tunisia people are still grappling with poverty and unemployment. Egypt has fallen prey to authoritarian rule again. Yemen is facing the world's worst humanitarian crises. Syria and Libya are in the middle of a civil war.

TUNISIA

Zine El Abedine Ben Ali, who fled the country that he ruled for 23 years in January 2011, was the first dictator whose tyrannical rule bogged-down to popular protests of the people. The people's will had won against the dictator's military might. Then on 23rd October 2011, Tunisia due to the success of its iron-willed people went to polls and these free democratic elections were won by the Ennahda movement. The country wrote a new constitution and Tunisia's first democratically elected head was Beji Caid Essebsi. There were a lot of factors that led to Tunisian success in sustaining democracy till now, it had a tradition of republicanism; its political figures had emphasised on pragmatic approach instead of ideology in the functioning of the state for a long time. The presence of a strong civil society and diaspora helped the cause.

The magnanimous participation of women along with the presence of strong trade unions played an important role in Tunisian success. It can also be attributed to the absence of external foreign factors and military interference in the country. The amalgamation of Tunisian human rights organization, its lawyers, largest trade union, and business organisation together formed the National Dialogue Quartet, to broker talks successfully between rival political factions in Tunisian political landscape, conducting historic elections and helping in drafting a new constitution for the country. It was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2015. Tunisia is a country that gained something substantial from the Arab Spring- democratic tradition and governance. Though people of Tunisia are no longer under dictatorship, their aspirations of a good and happy life are far from fulfilled. People in Tunisia still have to battle corruption and poverty, which ignited the protests in the first place. Democracy must base itself on economic prosperity and development in order to remain stable in the long run. The people of Tunisia and their government must work towards strengthening the foundations of their economy in order to deliver what Arab spring promised- peace and prosperity.

EGYPT

On 25 December 2010, the Arab Spring arrived in Egypt. People protested on the streets against dictator Hosni Mubarak who was ruling Egypt for almost 30 years. Popular protests continued for 18 days and finally on 11 February 2011 when millions of people marched in Cairo, Hosni Mubarak was forced to resign and hand over control to the military. Mohammad Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood was elected as the head of state in 2012, this democratic government came to a halt when in 2013 the military General, Abdel Fattah El-Sisi captured power. Egypt lost its democracy to a military coup in 2013. Mass repression and poverty are the “normal” in Egypt. There have been a number of factors at work that led to Egypt’s backsliding from democracy to authoritarianism. The most important factor has been the absence of strong institutions that could have survived democracy. The hollowing out of institutions under Hosni Mubarak’s rule, the loyalty of government bureaucrats to the former authoritarian regime and their refusal to implement the democratically elected government’s policy, absence of intervention by foreign governments, cynical political opposition

ready to use any tactics to dismantle democratic government, the strong intervention of the military in the political landscape and the absence of civil society have contributed to Egypt’s one step forward, but two steps back. Hosni Mubarak resigned and lost control of the government in 2011 but the democratic government that Morsi Mohammad formed was based on the same hollow institutions of dictatorship that Hosni Mubarak created to propagate authoritarian rule. Thus, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi became the president in 2013 and has been ruling since then. From the Egyptian experience we can learn that strong institutions are foundations of democratic polity. Weak institutions whether economic or political only bring ruin to nations and communities. Only inclusive and strong institutions can develop robust democracy.

YEMEN

Yemen is facing the world’s worst humanitarian crisis. It was once illuminated with hope, when Arab Spring knocked down the dictator Ali Abdullah Saleh in February 2011. Saleh ruled Yemen for 33 years but then he was forced to hand over power to his deputy in 2012. His deputy, Abdrabuh Mansur Hadi became the new head of state after Saleh’s resignation. Mr. Hadi was confronted with a long list of obstacles like the loyalty of security persons to Saleh, attacks by jihadists, a movement for separation gaining strength in south Yemen, food insecurity, poverty, and unemployment. The Houthi movement champions the Zaidi Muslim minority in Yemen. It took control of Saada province in northern Yemen. People including Sunnis supported Houthi rebels as they were not satisfied with the regime headed by Mr. Hadi. In 2015, the Houthi rebels took over Sanaa, the Yemeni capital. The Houthis wanted to control the entire country and Mr. Hadi fled abroad. This event made Yemen the centre of regional contestations where multiple countries got embroiled in the conflict. Since Saudi Arabia (Sunni) and other regional powers thought that Houthis are backed by Iran (Shia dominated country), they started a military campaign to defeat the Houthis. The Saudi Arabia coalition received support from France, the United States, and the United Kingdom. The coalition between Saleh and Houthis collapsed in 2017 when Ali Abdullah Saleh was assassinated. In July 2019, the United Arab Emirates withdrew forces from Yemen but in August 2019 hostilities broke out between the Southern Transitional Council, backed by UAE, and the Saudi-backed government forces.

The war has left 3.65 million people as refugees and 85,000 children have died due to malnutrition between 2015 and 2018. Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) has recorded more than 1,00,000 civilian deaths as of 2019. Thus, the Arab spring that promised optimism, faith, trust, and cheerfulness culminated in despair and death.

SYRIA

The toppling of dictators due to the Arab Spring in Egypt and Tunisia gave hope to pro-democracy people in Syria. The peaceful protests also erupted in Syria. Bashar-al-Assad who belongs to the Shia Alawite sect and runs the Sunni majoritarian Syria, led the Syrian government then. Hundreds of protestors lost their lives in pro-democracy protests in Syria. In 2011, the formation of the Free Syrian Army was announced aiming to overthrow the government by defectors of the army. This led to the beginning of the Syrian civil war. Global warming, social unrest, and poverty led to protests of 2011. The Syrian civil war also involves many actors, both regional and international. Russia got involved in the Syrian civil war and supported Bashar al-Assad's government. Then Iraq, Hezbollah, have supported Assad's government, and Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar have supported the anti-government rebels. The United States provides arms to rebels in Syria and is continuously targeting the end of the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIS) in Syria. Israel in order to target Hezbollah emphasised on carrying out massive airstrikes in Syria. Russia stands with the Assad government while America's support is for the anti-Assad rebel group. Syrian Kurds who are fighting for self-government have culminated into Syrian Democratic Forces from which Turkey is fighting, as it identifies it with extension of the banned Kurdish group in Turkey.

There have been constant negotiations in order to end the civil war and facilitate some political arrangement but the fate of Assad has been a sticking point. Syrian civil war is destructive and heart-wrenching stories of children killed in chemical attacks in Ghouta in 2013 can move anyone to tears. All six world heritage sites in Syria have been obliterated and 5.7 million people have turned into refugees. Syria has become a battleground for power contestation, where each actor wants to gain its best interest. Whoever wins the civil war, humanity has already lost. The Arab spring that hoped to replace the Assad government in Syria has descended into a humanitarian and refugee crisis.

LIBYA

Libya has found it extremely difficult to stabilise after Arab spring and the death and overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi by NATO backed forces in 2011, putting an end to his 42 years rule. Libya was once a country which had highest living standards in Africa but now is ravaged by a kind of civil war due to existence of two opposing governments: the Tripoli administration headed by Fayed al-Sarraj of Government of National Accord recognised by United Nations and Tobruk administration led by General Khalifa Haftar who runs the Libyan National Army, a powerful force. Egypt's president General Abdul Fattah al-Sisi is a backer of Haftar and people often see him as someone who wants to be the "Sisi of Libya." Stephanie Williams the United Nations envoy to Libya has recently announced that the Libyan warring factions have agreed to hold parliamentary and presidential elections on 24 December 2021 during talks brokered by the UN in Tunisia. Though, people remain sceptical if it will lead to establishment of peace after decade of civil war, torture, despair and death. Hundreds of people have perished and millions have been thrown into disarray since the Arab spring and killing of Muammar Gaddafi. Sanity and humanity to the Libyan leaders and peace for Libya is all that we can hope for at this point.

Legacy of Arab Spring:

Talking about other countries that experienced popular protest, Bahrain on 14 February 2011, experienced protests by the Shite minority against suppression by the Sunni Royal Family. Security forces arrested thousands of protestors. In Algeria on December 28, 2010, demonstrations were held against poverty, unemployment, corruption, and lack of rights which ultimately forced president Abdelaziz Bouteflika to lift the national emergency. In Jordan on February 10, 2011, King Abdullah due to popular protest against corruption and unemployment replaced the government and ordered political reforms.

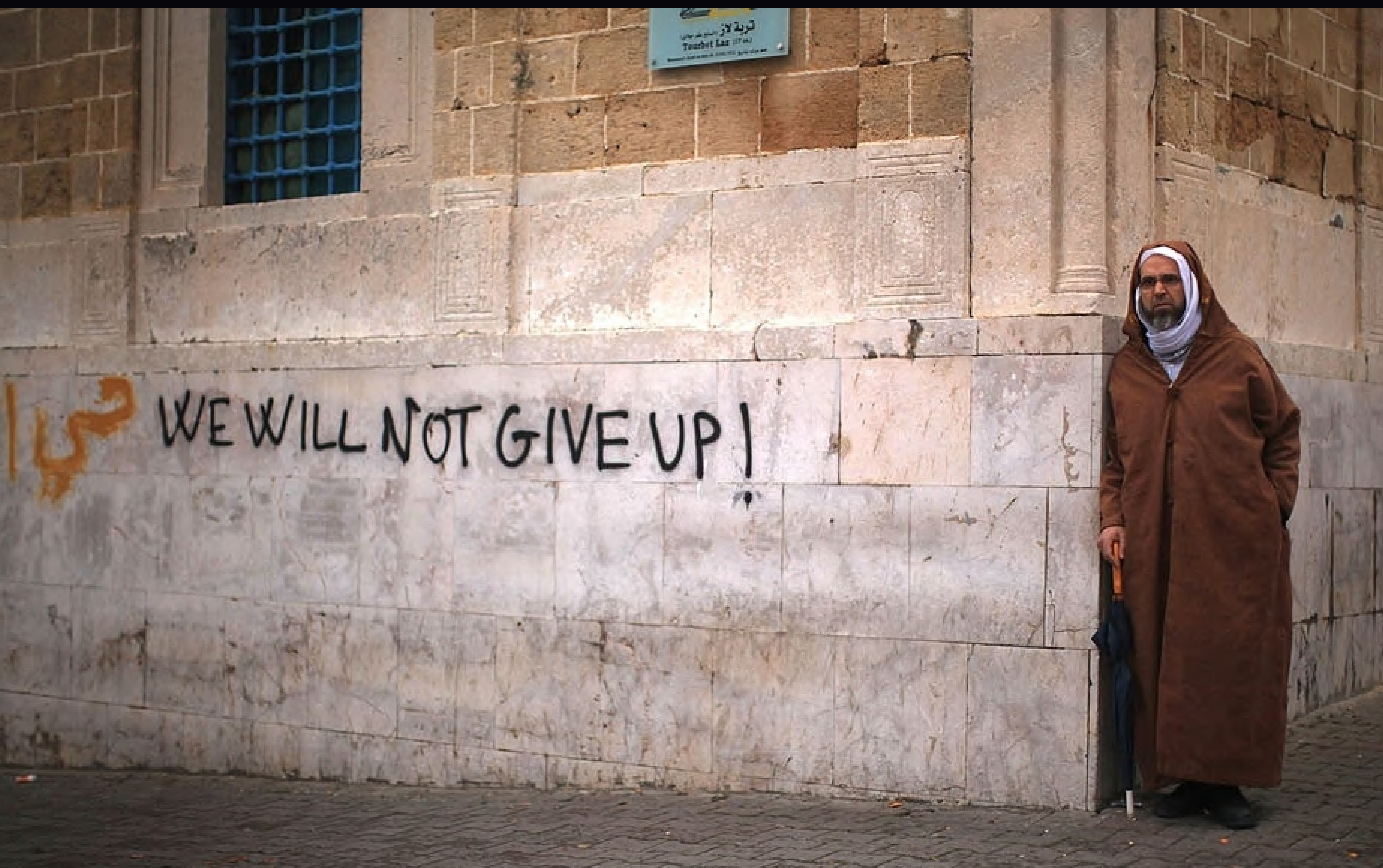
The YouGov poll conducted by The Guardian recently reveals that 75% of people in Syria, 73% in Yemen, and 60% in Libya felt that they are worse-off than before the revolutions of 2011. In the same survey, more than 50 % of the people thought that their child's future has been worse than before the protest, countries include Yemen, Syria, Sudan, Libya, and Iraq.

The younger Arabs aged between 18 and 24 were less pessimistic about their lives after the Arab spring as they do not have experience of life before the revolution, and thus are more optimistic. The social contract on which the institution of the state is based has been torn apart in the Middle East, where there is a kind of kleptocracy where some are enriched at the misery and despair of the majority. In our only success story, Tunisia 27% of the people agreed that they were better off than before the revolution, their disillusionment with democracy is due to unemployment, poverty and this has been exuberated due to Covid -19 as well. The rise of populist leaders in Europe according to some experts is due to massive refugee-immigration in Europe due to civil war in Middle Eastern countries which has made the European natives panic and has made some of them support populist leaders as most of the populists are anti-immigrants. Thus, the Arab spring that has culminated into civil war has also in some ways contributed to the rise of populism in Europe.

Conclusion:

The Arab uprising was prompted by corrupt and

inefficient rulers, suppression of human rights, oppression due to lack of free speech, and economic policies that were profound failures. It is true that most countries that experimented with democracy during the Arab spring backslid into either dictatorship or got embroiled in factional wars. But we must also recognise that the fear of uprising led to many changes and some liberty for people especially women in Arab countries. For example, strong laws were passed against sexual harassment in Egypt and the president allowed the construction of churches. Similarly, in Saudi Arabia which though did not experience mass protest, the Right to drive, and the Right to work in some professions earlier restricted to men, was granted to women after the Arab Spring. These revolutions have done one thing magnanimously right, it did away with the “Occidental” notion that the west is superior and the middle-east incapable of democracy or of upholding liberal values, the “Orient” has been highly successful in breaking the stereotype, the time is to shatter it. The hope that Arab Spring ignited is here to stay and it will keep illuminating in the hearts and minds of liberals and pro-democracy people around the world.





MARXISM AND BUDDHISM



BY SHAGUN DUBEY

Marxism is a materialist theory and Buddhism, a spiritual philosophy. Marx's theory lacked spirituality, morals and ethics while Buddha did not discuss in detail the socio-economic concerns of the day. The paper explains the basic creeds of Buddhism and Marxism, compares their similarities and differences and finally discusses how both the doctrines complement each other. A comparison between Buddhism and Marxism seems odd and unexpected. One is an ancient religious doctrine and another, a modern socio-economic theory. Both the doctrines, however, adopt a scientific and materialistic approach in tracing their respective troubles, its causes and ways to approach it. Buddha never considered his religion as a revelation but a discovery, the result of an inquiry and investigation into the conditions of human life on earth, moulding of his instincts and dispositions which man has formed as a result of history and tradition and what are working as their detriment. Buddha discussed political and social authority in great detail; however, much emphasis was

on spirituality and the eradication of suffering through mental awareness. In Buddhism the cause of suffering is desire or craving or expectations which can be removed by the eight fold path provided by Buddha.

Marx's socio-economic theory is completely scientific and based on historical materialism. For him the major cause of suffering and inequality is the capitalist mode of production based on profit and labour exploitation. This can be ended only through the forceful overthrow of the capitalist regime by a social revolution brought about by the working class also known as proletariat. In Buddhism and Marxism there is nothing as self but the community. For Marx, self is influenced by the surroundings and social relations. The combination of Buddha's moral philosophy and Marx's socio-economic theory can be a perfect combination. Even though both these doctrines have differences and shortcomings but their potential principles can be combined to form a near perfect set of principles.

THE APPROPRIATE CREDOS OF BUDDHISM

Buddha denied the existence of any form of God and preached that Man and Morality should be the Centre of a religion. He didn't call for a central place for himself in his religion or Dhamma unlike Jesus Christ and Mohammad who claimed to be the messengers of God who must be accepted as the prophets to attain salvation. He considered himself as a Marga Data (path finder) who could not guarantee moksha (salvation) since it had to be attained by individual's own effort. He emphasized that his religion is not a revelation but a discovery after an inquiry and investigation into the conditions of human life. The gist of Buddha's teachings can be found in his Four Noble Truths comprising of truth, cause, end and the path leading to the end of suffering in human life.

The first noble truth is suffering. Suffering or dukkha is intrinsic to human world. Everyone suffers anxiety, discontent, pain, agony of the loss of loved ones, of non-fulfillment of desire, infirmity of old age etc.

The second noble truth is the cause or trsna which can be translated into desire or craving for something. This desire compels man to get indulged in sins like killing, stealing, lying etc. which gives birth to objectionable traits like hatred, greed, ignorance etc. Desire is basically the craving of a human to have good or beneficiary things to happen and avoid bad things.

The third truth describes the end of suffering which is the stage of Nibbana. The aim of Buddhism is to attain nibbana i.e. extinguish the ego and desire and escape the cycle of Rebirth. Attainment of nibbana is the death of the fire of greed, lust, anger, lie, delusion etc. However this doesn't mean extinction and Buddha was against the idea of non-existence.

The fourth truth is the way or path (marga) to end sufferings. For this, one needs to follow the Eight fold path. This can be divided into three groups:

Cognitive: right view, right intention

Ethical: Right speech, Right action, Right livelihood

Mental: Right effort, Right mindfulness, Right concentration

Buddhism believes that the world is anicca (impermanent) and anatta (soulless). According to Buddhism, things which are capable of objective action are only real. What is the proof of the existence of an inactive thing which is beyond the reach of senses, since it is not an object of direct perception or interference based on it?

The soul is unknown and unseen. Buddha's doctrine on soul is called an-atta or anatman meaning no soul as opposed to the Brahmanic concept of eternal atman or atma. Through cross-examination, he proved that the concept of soul was vague and confusing. Buddha argued that the discussion on existence of soul is as futile, unprofitable and superstitious as the belief in God is. All the functions assigned to the soul, according to Buddha, are performed by Consciousness (cognitive, emotional and volitional) and a soul without any functions is an absurdity and hence not a part of the Dhamma.

According to Buddhism, this world and human beings living within it are ever-changing. The Buddhist concept of sunnyata does not mean nihilism but perpetual changes occurring every moment in this world. Everything in this world is possible because of sunnyata or the impermanent nature of all things. If this world or human race was unchangeable or permanent, the process of evolution would not have taken place and human progress would have come to a dead pause. Sunnya does not mean void but a substance which has neither length nor breadth. This principle of impermanence comes with a moral that everything and everyone in this world is impermanent, so build detachment from friends, family, property etc.

THE APPROPRIATE CREDOS OF MARXISM

Marxism, at very basic, is a socio-economic theory which examines how class struggles throughout history have brought about social-political-economic changes. Marx studied capitalism extensively, assessed 'the law of motion' of the capitalist society, how it gradually replaced feudalism, how it evolved and how is it supposed to change in the near future. In a capitalist society, there always exist two classes – the industrialist class which owns the mode of production and the working class. The sole aim of capitalism is to make profit which is done in two ways. First, the capitalist class tries to exploit as much labour from the workers as possible by speeding up the work or increasing the working hours which amounts to surplus labour (labour beyond earning). Second, reduce wages of the workers. The workers respond to this, by demanding fair wage and specified reasonable working hours. The class struggle is an intrinsic feature of the capitalist mode of production. It will continue till the end of capitalism.

Marx wanted the working class to get united against the oppressive capitalist regime. The surplus value accumulated is kept not only by the person owning the production but distributed among different capitalist groups (landowner, banker, middleman etc). Hence, despite the competition to claim on more profit, all these groups get united to extract the maximum amount of labour from the working class.

As his theory stands on the principle of historical materialism, Karl Marx goes back in history to understand the distribution of capital. He claims that the early accumulation of wealth came from looting the far-off (so-called primitive societies) and the “Enclosure Acts” implemented within Britain- a step further towards the destruction of public property. This resulted in the accumulation of capital in the hands of a few and turned the rest of the peasantry into Proletarians with no option but to work on the land taken away for the benefit of its owner.

In capitalist societies, economic crisis happens due to over production. As competition gives way to large amount of capital accumulation, over production happens because of which new production declines. This causes widespread unemployment which leads to a further decrease in the market demand. However, stocks are used up and production begins again. Marx argues that the cause of this crisis is the disproportion between the expansion of capital and non-fulfillment of the workers’ demand.

Additionally, according to Marxism, capitalism digs its own grave. A big company would buy most of the small and medium enterprises leading to monopoly. Poverty becomes widespread and people don’t have money to buy the production. A new mode of production comes into existence only when there has been a successful revolution. Marx maintains that the State has never been a representative institution but one dominated by class interests. In disguise of maintaining law and order, it primarily defends the existing socio-economic and political structure of the society. Democracy and right to vote doesn’t solve the problem because power ultimately rests in the hand of the dominant class. Hence, to alter the mode of production, the only solution is to overthrow the current regime by force. Marx was a believer of democracy but felt that it is always in danger under capitalist mode of production and hence the working class needs to

establish their own state machinery to defend this new mode of production from inside out. “Dictatorship of the proletariat” would follow the overthrow of the oppressive capitalist regime. What was established in the early twentieth century in the USSR was the dictatorship of a party, not the working class. The socialist mode of production means public ownership of resources, means of production and focus on use-value as opposed to exchange-value. The Marxists believe that the state’s power should be minimized to creation of laws, managing production process and scientific administration once the state gets hold of all the property after the establishment of proletarian dictatorship. The example of USSR showed that, Marxism isn’t a foolproof theory and prone to miserable failure. It can adopt some of the relevant ideas of Buddhism to produce a near perfect socio-economic theory with ethical values.

COMPARING THE TWO THEORIES

“Of all the modern economic theories, the economic system of Marxism is founded on moral principles; while capitalism is concerned only with gain and profitability. The failure of the regime in the former Soviet Union was, for me, not the failure of Marxism but the failure of totalitarianism. For this reason, I still think of myself as half-Marxist, half-Buddhist.”

Tenzin Gyatso, 14th Dalai Lama

Both Marxism and Buddhism promote equality. Buddhism promoted equality in opposition of the Brahmanic conception of ideal society – Chaturvarna. Buddha was a staunch opponent of caste-based inequality and believed that the worth and not the birth of a human should decide a man’s destiny. Marx challenged the socio-economic inequality in the society created by the capitalist mode of production. According to Marx, the never-ending lust of capitalists for profit comes from the extraction of surplus labour of the working class and which is converted into extra-capital giving way to greater accumulation of capital and the process goes on, leading to exploitation. According to Marx, the theory of “to each according to his abilities” should be changed into “to each according to his needs”. The book, *The German Ideology* authored by Marx and Engels, talks about the apparent distinction between physical and mental labour:

“that the difference of brain and of intellectual capacity do not imply any difference, whatsoever, in the nature of stomach and of physical need”

According to Marx, historically, there has been a conflict of interests between two classes in a society. On realization of collective interests and exploitation, people get organized and wage a class struggle against the dominant or exploiting section of society. According to his own doctrine in Ashtanga Marga, Buddha recognizes that class struggle exists and is the cause of misery. Marxists believe in the establishment of the dictatorship of proletariat which necessitates the overthrow of the oppressive and exploiting capitalist regime by force. This justification of violence seems to stand against the ideals of Buddhism. Though Buddhism advocates for ahimsa or non-violence, Buddha believes in justice and for this he allows the use of force. In his dialogue with Sinha Senapati, he says:

“An offender must be punished ... it is not the fault of the Magistrate if he punishes an offender... he does not become stained with himsa. A man who fights for justice and safety cannot be accused of himsa. If all means of maintaining peace have failed then the responsibility for himsa falls on him who starts the war... war there may be. But it must not be for selfish ends.”

We can say that the ahimsa preached by Buddha was not as absolute as in Jainism but the justification of himsa is definitely not as absolute as that of Communists.

Marxists' belief in the overthrow of the capitalist regime through force and establishment of the dictatorship of proletariat is explicit and absolute. However, Buddha had always been a democrat who did not give any socio-economic or political theory but believed that the state should be a moral entity with Dhamma held as supreme. Being born in a republic, he preferred democracy and negotiations over monarchy or dictatorship. In his Sangha, he did not consider himself but the Dhamma supreme which was the constitution of the Sangha. In the volume 1 of his book, Das Capital, Marx has mentioned:

“The slave owner buys labourer (slave) as he buys his horse. If he loses his slave, he loses the capital.”

Marx argued that in slavery a slave is treated as a fixed capital. Labour is inhumanely and brutally extracted till he is alive. The slave is not even considered a human or alive. Buddha shares the same concern (based on humanitarian and ethical grounds). Sutta Pitaka contains Buddha's advice to a wealthy household owner named Sigala:

“In five ways should a master look after his servants and employees ... by assigning them work according to their strength, by supplying them with food and wages, by tending them in sickness; by sharing delicacies with them and granting leaves at times...”

In Sermon on the Mount in Bible, poverty has been justified by the phrase “the poor are with you always” and “blessed are the poor in spirit”. Ambedkar argues that Marx called religion, opium of the masses, taking in view this part of the Bible. However, Buddha doesn't celebrate poverty or promises the poor (or anyone for that matter) salvation or heaven. His teaching is to acquire wealth lawfully. Marx believed that religion was an illusion while Buddhists find religion necessary for a free society (though not any but the one having certain virtues listed as a part of the Buddhist philosophy).

Buddhism introduced communism in some sort though it was limited to his commune or Sangha. The bikkhus and bikkhunis, the members of the commune, were not allowed to possess anything except the eight items of personal use (such as three pieces of clothings, an alms bowl, a razor, a needle, a water strainer, a girdle for loins). Everything else from land to beddings belonged to the Sangha and were considered community property.

Buddha considered possession as the primary cause of suffering. To get rid of gap between rich and poor, an unbiased member of the intelligentsia is appointed as Maha Sammata or the great elect. Here also, we get a reflection of the democratic feature of Buddhism. Marx was also a firm opponent of the ownership of property and considered it as the root of economic inequality, exploitation of the labour for hoarding more property and class conflict in the society.

The Buddhist conception of self is quite different from other religions. Buddhists believe in an-atman as opposed to Brahmanic notion of atma (soul). Marxism, being a completely materialistic theory, rejects the idea of human body having an unseen eternal entity called soul (Christian version of atma).

Buddhism was evolved during a period of the dominance of Brahmanic idealism. However, Buddha believed that the best way to be sought is the middle path (madhyam marga) between idealism and materialism. Buddha gave his own concept of Karma and denied the existence of soul and God; both signs of materialism. However his conception of Karma gradually pushes him towards the concept of rebirth - a reflection of idealism.

As far as question of women is concerned, Marxism seems to be a better alternative than Buddhism. It might be because of the time difference between both the theories. Though Buddhism allowed the induction of women in the Sanghas as Bikkhunis, there were additional requirements attached to it listed in the form of Garudhammas. Marx considering the labour exploitation of women, analyzed their socio-economic oppression. He also evaluated the familial condition and identified that the family under the 'paternal power' was characterized by the incorporation of members in

servile and dependent relations, unknown before that time. Marx spoke against slavery and domestic labour of women and believed that this could begin only with striking a hammer at patriarchy.

Conclusion

The dictatorship that took over the power in USSR in the early twentieth century can definitely be not be called a successful experiment. Power was at the hands of a few people at the highest rungs of the party. Marx felt that the advent of a new mode of production is completely a result of socio-economic and historical processes and didn't consider the individual and his psyche. Society as a whole can be altered if individuals make effort or try to rework on their psychological parts. The 14th Dalai Lama rightly pointed out that external disarmament begins with internal disarmament. Similarly, some might be skeptical about Buddha's concept of rebirth or some form of apparent misogyny (though it depends on the context of Buddha's existence). Hence, it is not that both theories are foolproof. However, their complementary natures and fundamental similarities render the foundation for a better doctrine more compatible and relevant to the present times.



The Case from Which We Still Don't Learn: **The Emergency**

BY NIRMANYU CHOUHAN

In the present times, we have nearly forgotten the lessons taught by the Emergency during the 1970s and have taken democracy for granted; a privilege rather than a gift. The infamous case of Indira Nehru Gandhi vs. Shri Raj Narain & Anr on 7 November, 1975, shook the Indian democracy to a level which was termed as Autocratic and Despotism by many international journals.

Between 25 June, 1975 and 21 March, 1977, the government of the Republic of India functioned within the bounds of the constitution and the laws of the land and yet outside the framework of a parliamentary democracy, or in simpler words as termed by Gyan Prakash "Lawful Suspension of Law". The government suspended liberties granted to the

citizens as fundamental rights of citizenship, the leaders of the opposition political parties, pressure groups and civil societies were incarcerated in jails across the nation. The judiciary was sought to be suborned. The student leaders at the leading Universities like JNU were illegally detained. Numerous cases popped up like mushrooms in the monsoons, except for the fact that they were marked with horrors, cries and the taint of tyranny. After the Indira Gandhi government was toppled down by the voters, marking the chivalrous victory of "democracy" and The Janata Party, the autocratic amendments were legally brought down, changes were made in the constitution and importantly Indira Gandhi was brought to answer for her actions.



The Emergency was a valuable experience that steeled as well as steered the resolution to remain committed to the liberal values of our Constitution and the pluralism of our parliamentary democracy. The pledges of “never again” were taken up by the masses, promising zero tolerance towards arbitrariness of authoritarianism.

Ironically speaking, we as Indians have not learnt from the past and have been casual about the fact that the times are over but personally, I feel that time has a cyclic pattern to itself and does repeat in the not-so-distant future. On 16th of May, 2014, the Congress got a “tight slap” from its voters and The Bharatiya Janata Party (of the NDA) achieved an absolute majority with 282 seats out of 543, 166 seats more than in the previous 15th Lok Sabha. This period was marked as an end to the “70 Year Despotism” of Congress and The Prime Minister Narendra Modi achieved a god-like structure with a pompous personality and the ‘chest’ of a warrior; claiming himself to be the savior of the common folks. The Indian one-party domination officially came to an end in the respective year. The same year was marked by the uprising of Regional and new state parties; the significant amongst these was The Aam Aadmi Party led by Arvind Kejriwal. The rise of the BJP was supported by similar characteristics to that of “Congress Syndicate” in the year 1971, such as leadership, organizational skills and effective ground work. The BJP hailed the arrival of “A New India” with the strona

headline of “Ek Bharat, Shrestha Bharat”. Things were normal in the first year but on 9 February 2016, some students of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) held a protest on their campus against the capital punishment meted out to the 2001 Indian Parliament attack convict Afzal Guru, and Kashmiri separatist Maqbool Bhat. To be very clear I respect the due process of law and the final results of associates. The organizers of the event were former members of the Democratic Students' Union (DSU). The event was held despite the University administration withdrawing permission for the event shortly before it was due to begin, due to protests by members of the student union of ABVP. The event saw clashes between various student groups.

A video was circulated by Indian news channel, Zee News, in which a small group of individuals, whom a later investigation described as outsiders to the University wearing masks, shouted “anti-India” slogans. The slogans were criticized by many individuals, including political leaders and students of JNU. Four days after the event, JNU Students' Union President Kanhaiya Kumar was arrested by the Delhi police and charged with sedition. Two other students were arrested soon afterwards, including Umar Khalid. The arrests drew heavy criticism from many sections of society, on the grounds that the Bharatiya Janata Party government was attempting to silence political dissent.





Thousands of students, faculty, and staff protested the arrest at JNU, and classes at the University were stopped for several days. The arrest was also criticized by a number of prominent scholars internationally. Protests against the arrests were held in the DU, AMU and PU subsequently. Investigations into the incident were carried out by the Delhi government and the University administration. Both found that the controversial slogans had been shouted by outsiders to the University. The arrested students were all granted bail, with the judge noting in one case that there was some evidence of the accused shouting slogans. However, the University inquiry found a number of students to have violated University rules and enacted sanctions, varying from fines to rustication, on 21 students. In response, the students went on an indefinite hunger strike. The Delhi H.C. suspended the enactment of the University sanctions on the condition that the students end their strike. Overall, this incident created a rift in the Indian-Polity and society with factions supporting and opposing this; also leaving the media divided and the popular coinage of the infamous term "Tukde-Tukde Gang".

The latter years, mainly from 2016 showed a development of bigotry on the part of the government as well as the media unfortunately. Cow-Vigilantism, communal lynching cases and the infamous term 'Jihad' were coming into the limelight. Unfortunately, the media cannot also be blamed for their acts of embeddedness and propaganda news. I believe the media is guided by a principle of self-interest which is in fact based upon the question of what we as consumers like to see and want to see. So, indirectly it is

our fault for the downgrading of the Indian Media; because either we do want to watch the specific patterns or simply, we cannot raise our 'mere-voices'. The opposition did play a passive role by shifting their public character, ironically like wearing "Janeus" and visiting the shrines more religiously; rather than improving their structural frameworks.

Talking about the Left political front they indeed have played a crucial role as an opposition force but the mere fact is that they are solely guided by the notions which aren't applicable or relatable to the Indian society; to be summed up as "the left front in India idolizes Lenin more than Bhagat Singh". In short, the opposition in India is doomed because of the fact they are following the same rhetorical que rather than creating and improving their own structural frameworks. It has to be realized that the BJP has a strong workforce-party member working and dedicated to the respective party with a binding factor of successful leadership and clear foresight. The BJP indeed has a proliferated ground stronghold with effective management. For example the IT-Cell of the BJP has a storming and humongous hold over the Social Media, which in fact is good for connecting and encompassing the new-genera. The BJP in fact is the new Congress(S) and Modi is in fact Indira, maybe a better one in terms of autocracy

Talking about the Left political front they indeed have played a crucial role as an opposition force but the mere fact is that they are solely guided by the notions which aren't applicable or relatable to the Indian society; to be summed up as "the left front in India idolizes Lenin more than Bhagat Singh"

H.V Kamnath, an Indian politician and a member of Lok Sabha, among others, had warned against this Emergency provision in the Constituent Assembly, citing the cautionary example of Hitler's abuse of article 48 of the Weimar Constitution. Kamnath feared the extraordinary powers normalized as the paradigm of the government, he argued that if India had survived the crises in Kashmir and Hyderabad without emergency provisions, it could indeed outlive the further adversities too. Considering the year 1975, the Emergency was imposed at mid-night, this late-night concern for constitutional propriety is revealing. The political will behind the act goes unmentioned, but there was no mistake in realizing that the force major behind it was under the 'velvet glove' of the government. Speaking of the Prime Minister then, wished to sheath politics in law. Talking about the present, as per the World Press Freedom Index, India had a rank of 142 in the Press Freedom list which is actually very drastic for a democracy. I'm not specifically trying to blame a single government but emphasizing on the fact that media has always been used as a tool by the government to embed their own interests, for example during the Anti-Sikh riots in the year 1984 the one and only television channel Door-darshan telecasted the Film Bobby. This unexpected bend towards the cinematography, portrays the fact that our watching and consuming patterns are indeed shaped by the government. As mentioned earlier we as the consumers play a dominant part in it, it does reflect the voice of our unconscious and conscious selves. The media in the contemporary times not only plays as the propaganda crusade of the government but also acts as a fuel

of spreading bigotry & hate sentiments. There are certain exceptions however but the 'exceptional news channels' are acting more on the opposition framework than acting as prudential journalists, not imposing any kind of ideology or patterns of belief but unveiling the facts and letting the audience decide what is good and bad for them; maintaining the element of profanity and Sacramento structuring the principle of Democracy. The various student, interest group or health worker protests are being crumbled by the government, ironically by misusing the legal frameworks; students, leaders and protesters are being detained for spreading the so called 'Misguided-Unrests', being regarded as anti-nationals in the social dogma. We do need to understand the gamut of the past experiences associated with the democratic experience of our nation. One thing that we do not realize is the importance of our own selves and the ideas of belief which make us a unique entity, guided by the father of understanding on the principle "Nothing is true everything is permitted", meaning, we are the final fruiterers or pallbearers of our own actions. We do need to realize the fact that we as the citizens have a salient duty to maintain the democratic spirit of our nation, our vibrancy and stimulus decide the

spirit of democracy. The media also needs to realize that it forms the 4th pillar of democracy and it doesn't need to take sides but be a guardian of free opinions and facts, delivering it to the citizens for their consumption and latter formulation. The civil societies do need to play a more vibrant role by encompassing social interests rather than political lobbying for the mere power fact. The clandestine resistance and a brooding disapproval of the regime in the nation brought the nightmare to an end. Indeed, it was a heroic and solitary one, with the Supreme Court bludgeoned and hamstrung under suspended law, the police hunting insurrection leaders like rats, the power which was cunning and unrestrained, poised to control the citizenry and reshape the country; was in fact ended by a combined effort of the media, civil societies, opposition and by the people themselves. We do need to emphasize upon the fact that we need to be active and never have our guard down, we do need to ponder upon the question of democracy formulated by us, the citizens as its priority and realize the words as promulgated by Marquis de Lafayette, "Insurrection is the most sacred of the rights and the most indispensable of duties".

From Mein Fuhrer to Mein Zsarnok- The Resurgence

BY ADHRISH CHAKRABORTY

The Corona Virus has proved to be a great boon to the world's authoritarian leaders who have used the pandemic as an instrument to strategically dismantle human rights and democracy. From the issuance of border closures, physical distancing to implementing digital surveillance is now being implemented as necessary steps to curb the pandemic. But there must be a palpable line of restriction between emergency provisions and outright authoritarianism as in Hungary which has totally debilitated and annihilated its democracy and human rights.

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has seized the COVID-19 pandemic to undermine fundamental principles of democracy and rule of law in a way that is hard to reconcile.

The State Of Emergency Law or the draconian "anti coronavirus defence law" adopted by the Hungarian Parliament on March 30th of the last year (the law has been relaxed post-June 2020), signed by the President shortly afterwards and entered into force at midnight the same day. The law gave Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and his executive branch extraordinary powers to rule by decree for an unlimited period of time. The law sidestepped the parliamentary process and gave Orbán means to exercise arbitrary and unlimited power.

The Parliament would only be able to lift the state of emergency by a two-thirds majority, exactly the majority held by the ruling party 'Fidesz', meaning ultimately its malefactor Orbán's decision.

According to the draft law during the state of emergency no elections, including by-elections, local elections or referendums can be held. The law criminalizes any action the government considers a hindrance to its anti-virus efforts and a jail term up to five years for anyone spreading "falsehoods" about the virus or any "anti-government" news by any news channel or media outlet.

Hungary's liberal armchair opposition had said that although it had concerns over a number of elements

of the law it was willing to overlook them in the spirit of compromise as long as a sunset clause was introduced. Orbán's Justice Minister, Judit Varga, told reporters that the opposition was "fighting imaginary demons" and not dealing with reality. He said that the parliament could revoke the decrees at any time. However, the irony is that 50% of the seats are occupied by Fidesz who, thus, have the complete authority in this matter.



In the past 10 years, the Hungarian Government has spared no efforts to curb the independence of the judiciary, constitutional freedom of the press and other atrocities. Hungary was hardly a beacon of democracy before this pandemic started. Since resuming his demagogue premiership a decade ago, Viktor Orbán has overseen the steady and strategic dismantling of the Country's democratic institutions, eroding its education and migration policies in the name of patriotism and abnegate media freedom; this raises genuine fears that the 'State Of Emergency Law' might decimate Hungary's last critical pillar of democracy i.e the press. Fidesz largely controls and manipulates Hungary's media. In 2018, the organization merged 480 media outlets into one conglomerate loyal to the government, essentially putting an end to media pluralism. The few remaining media outlets are portrayed as an 'egregious ignoble Lutyens entity', essentially curbing their rights and limiting their outreach. It's no surprise that Austria's far-right leader Heinz-Christian Strache sought to emulate Orban's approach.

After the last general election in Hungary which was allegedly infected with vote-rigging and other scams, one thing is clear that the famously stated line by Joseph Stalin, "It doesn't matter who votes, it only matters who counts those votes", is absolutely undeniable in a semi-autocratic state like Hungary.

After the 'ethically corrupted' Orbán government banished the Central European University and banned academic subjects it disagreed with; the authorities now had set their sight on another independent body - The Hungarian Academy Of Science and stripped it of its ability to do independent research.

Institutions such as the Council Of Europe's Constitution body have repeatedly called on Hungary to amend its problematic legislation but Budapest ignored them. UN human right experts have time and again criticised Hungary's repressive action but Hungary's Foreign Minister has offered an aggressive and dismissive response.

As an open advocate of 'illiberal democracy,' Orbán's country is the first and only EU member state to be considered just "partly free" by the think tank Freedom House - "Orban has never tried to sugarcoat his autocratic aims and has justified them by invoking national sovereignty and national security".

Hungary's democratic jeopardy and misanthropic policies demand a European Union response but it seems that the EU watches while Hungary slaughters democracy. The bloc's failure to solve the country's deadlock shows how paralyzed and inoperable the EU has been. The European Union has also been silent when, last month, amid the coronavirus crisis, Hungary sought to ban legal gender recognition for transgender people in the name of forming a "Christian State".

Hungary was also the first EU member state to violate the union's policy of immigration. It has totally locked out its country for the refugees. Amnesty International's report shows that after Fidesz took over in Hungary, the number of immigrants reduced from 4,00,000 in 2010 to only 3500 in 2019.

Brussels has already sued Hungary for breaching EU values- a charge denied by Budapest. On the other hand, Orbán has accused the critics of 'alarmism' and appealing to the "European nitpickers" to let Hungary defend itself against COVID-19.

This is high time for the EU to act. The EU commission should fully back Article 7 proceedings and launch urgent sanctions against Hungary to challenge the 'State Of Emergency' law and other violations before the EU Court Of Justice. The EU must also suspend Hungary and cut its aid and grants until the rectification is done on its part.

Philippe Dam(Advisor Director, Europe And Central Asia for Human Rights Watch) has rightly said: "Hungary's new law is a carte blanche for authoritarianism. If Europe doesn't stand up for democracy and rule of law in Hungary now, the damage will be felt across the continent".

In the face of a global crisis in which all the nation-states are leading a joint and multinational response to breaking the chain, it is the duty of Hungary to collaborate with its fellow European nations to take radical steps to contain and control the spread of the virus. All nation-states must instil the virtue of magnanimity as rightly portrayed in the Maha Upanishad "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" which means "the world is one family". If we don't put aside our differences now, the world will have to pay a heavy price which is a probable extinction of the constitutional values in Budapest.



The Trail of Tears and Tyranny

BY DEVADATH K REJI AND BHAVYA

Once there was a group of people who lived peacefully and happily, they were 30% of the total population of their region in 1947 and within mere 3 decades, they became 13.05%. They were massacred, their life's wealth plundered, their lands burned, their women were declared as "public property", they were gang-raped, their kids slaughtered and their daughters' gang-raped in front of the whole family. Rivers there turned red with their blood and barren lands were filled with corpses, their last resort was to run away with life. It's the story of violence against Hindu minorities in East Pakistan.

THE BLOODBATH; Most Haunting Episodes

August 1947 witnessed the birth of Pakistan, the homeland for the Muslims of former British India with a majority Muslim population. The province of Bengal with a marginal Muslim majority was also partitioned with the Muslim-majority East Bengal going to Pakistan and Hindu-majority West Bengal going to India. The census of 1941 recorded 28% of the non-Muslim population in East Bengal, Bengali Hindus being the majority among them. The area comprising East Bengal, especially the Dhaka and Chittagong Divisions were becoming the stage of



numerous instances of ethnic violence and a 'bloodbath' in the decades preceding the Partition. In the 1940s, the frequency and intensity of the riots increased as the movement for Pakistan gained momentum. In the last quarter of 1946, the Bengali Hindus of Noakhali and Tippera districts were subjected to a series of massacres, loot, arson, rape, abduction, and forced conversion to Islam, which came to be known as the Noakhali riots.

These riots were a series of semi-organized massacres, rapes, abductions and forced conversions of Hindus to Islam, and looting and arson of Hindu properties perpetrated by the Muslim community in the districts of Noakhali in the Chittagong Division of Bengal (now in Bangladesh) in October–November 1946. More than 50,000 people were erased from the face of the earth, hundreds of Hindu women were raped by rioters and thousands of Hindus were forcibly converted to Islam. Around 50,000 Hindus remained marooned in the affected areas under the strict surveillance of the Muslims, where the administration had no say. The life of the survivors was not easy; many of them migrated to India. This horrible episode of riots was only a signal of upcoming evilness.

There was no time of peace for the Bengali Hindus. The 1950 riots are the massacre of Bengali Hindus by the Bengali Muslims, the Pakistani police, and the para-military, accompanied by arson. Dhaka became a graveyard of Hindus and other minorities. Houses and shops were burned. Rioters were waiting at airports and railway stations to attack people who tried to migrate to India to save their lives. An estimated 50,000 Hindus were displaced within just seven hours of the murder, loot, and arson. Barisal district witnessed one of the heinous incidents of mass murders, 200-300 Hindus were made to squat in a row and their heads were chopped off one by one in the police station. The Hindu passengers on the water route between Dhaka and Barisal were killed within the steamer and were thrown in the river. The very same story of murders, rapes, loots, and arson continued.

1964 was another year drained in the blood of minorities, infamous riot of 1964 was the massacre and ethnic cleansing of Bengali Hindus from what was believed to be the Prophet's hair from the Hazratbal shrine in Jammu and Kashmir in India. This time killings and arson were more urban-based

and selectively targeted Bengali Hindu owned industries and merchant establishments in Dhaka, the capital city.

In 1963, December 27 was born with the news of the hair of Muhammad went missing from the Hazratbal Shrine in Srinagar in India. This resulted in the outbreak of mass protests in Jammu and Kashmir. Abdul Hai, a member of the Advisory Committee of the Islamic Board declared jihad against Hindus and other non-Muslims of East Pakistan. 'Kashmir Day' on 3 January 1964 was declared by Pakistan Convention Muslim League. On the next day, the relic was discovered and the miscreants were arrested. However, Pakistan Radio described the discovered relic as not a real one but only a fake. This triggered the attacks. At all places, Hindus were attacked, murdered, raped, and assaulted. Hundreds of villages all around Dhaka city were burnt to ashes. The Daily Ittefaq reported that 95% of the ruined houses belong to the Hindus in old Dhaka and about 100,000 Hindus were becoming homeless in Dhaka city. About 200–300 Bengali Hindus were massacred at the Khulna Launch Ghat.

Thousands of Hindus fled to India as refugees. Indian Embassy of Dhaka witnessed a long queue of about 5,000 to 6,000 Hindus every day to emigrate to India. But only 300 to 400 used to get the permit. As a result of this migration, Khulna, the only Hindu-majority district in East Pakistan became a Muslim-majority district.

Operation Searchlight launched on 26th March 1971 was the beginning of another episode of unimaginable violence and genocide. During the nine-month-long Bangladesh War for Liberation, members of the Pakistani military and supporting Islamist militias from Jamaat-e-Islami killed between 300,000 and 3,000,000 people and raped between 200,000 and 400,000 Bengali women.

Chuknagar massacre which took place on 20 May 1971 at Dumuria in Khulna was one of the largest massacres during the war. The exact number of persons killed by the bloodthirsty communalists are still unknown. Academic Sarmila Bose dismisses claims that 10,000 were killed. The number of people who were injured was several times higher than this number.

It has been come to the light through various

sources that Bengali Hindus were the main targets of the 1971 genocide. Some of them are following.

An article in Time magazine dated 2 August 1971, stated: "The Hindus, who account for three-fourths of the refugees and a majority of the dead, have borne the brunt of the Muslim military hatred."

Colonel Naim said about Hindus "We have to sort them out to restore the land to the people."

In a report that was part of United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations testimony, dated 1 November 1971, Senator Edward Kennedy wrote, "Hardest hit have been members of the Hindu community who have been robbed of their lands and shops, systematically slaughtered, and in some places, painted with yellow patches marked "H". All of this has been officially sanctioned, ordered and implemented under martial law from Islamabad".

Major Rathore said to Anthony Mascarenhas on

Hindus in April 1971 "Now under the cover of fighting we have an excellent opportunity of finishing them off...Of course, we are only killing the Hindu men. We are soldiers, not cowards like the rebels."

The Unremitting Nightmares

All of these atrocities and bloodshed of the Hindu minority in erstwhile East Pakistan led to their decline there. These events wiped out the Hindus from the boundaries of East Pakistan. The most saddening part is that the attempts to banish them completely from Bangladesh are continuing. Even the mention of the brutality of the atrocities of which they were regular recipients is enough to make someone tremble from head to toe. Of Course, it should not be forgotten but its memories must not lead to another episode of that kind. Instead, it must be a regular reminder to us that nothing of that sort be done to the minorities in India and the entire world as a whole.





FEMINISTS IN HINDU
MYTHOLOGY



BY SANYA SETHI

Since the beginning of time, India has been an extremely stratified society, when looked at through the lens of caste, class and most importantly, gender. All these notions that promote caste and gender-based hierarchy draw their authority from cultural, mythological and ritualistic texts, which serve as a source of validation for such structural oppression. But it is paradoxical for Hindu culture to have texts like Manusmriti, which serve the sole purpose of controlling a woman's autonomy and downgrading her function to only servitude of upper-caste men, with conditions over her freedom and sexual autonomy and expression of will. On the other hand, mention concepts of Shiva-Shakti, which is seen in the iconography of Ardhanarishvara, a Hindu deity who is half male and half female, when taken into metaphysical consideration, is the epitome of how both masculine and feminine energy are co-existent and complementary to each other, and responsible for creation and destruction both. Shakti, here manifests itself as Kali or Durga, representing the feminine aspect of the divine force, and actively participating in creation which is an exclusive feature identified with women.

Thus, the portrayal of women in Hindu mythology has not been consistent. Narratives of women have been ignored and excluded from the mainstream viewpoint, and those of Dalit, tribal, forest dwellers or lower caste women have never been represented or even taken into account. Be it Ram, Shiva or Krishna, all mythological stories and anecdotes we grew up listening, had a man as the central character, accompanied by the glorified tales of his greatness and power asserted by different versions of the same story. Women as goddesses were merely represented, and only seen in polar terms, either they were subordinates to their husbands, obeying and honouring them and only a mere extension to their husbands with no individuality at all, or otherwise those women who lived an eccentric far away from the conventional style of living and played problematic roles of witches or monsters, probably a way for people to reduce those women who dared to have an individual and independent identity. Here, we talk about those women who dared to differ, who denied their traditional roles and who, in some way, broke the cycle of continued oppression and laid the foundation of rebellion

Talking about one of the most monumental epics of the time, Ramayana tells us the adventurous stories of Ram and mentions many female characters like Sita, who is an inspiration to us, even today. Though Ramayana is full of valiant performances of Ram, it also encompasses the journey of princess Janaki to queen Sita. Sita, who was the wife to Ram 'the perfect human' was the one with most multivalent roles and perfect at all roles expected out of her. According to patriarchal standards, she was the perfect, obeying and subordinate wife who went along with her husband and bore the obligations that came with being the wife of a king. A perfect mother, who was single-handedly responsible for parenting her children after being abandoned by Ram, disappeared only after uniting the family. However, her protest was about passive resistance. Even after announcing her virtue bypassing the Agni Pariksha, unharmed, she was banished by Ram based on his doubts of her unfaithfulness. Thus, she chose to go back to where she belonged, the Earth instead of going back to her husband, who disowned her and their children. This, however, has not been glorified but continues to be a sign of non-violent protest against what she was subjected to. This was silent yet a powerful non-agreement, highlighting the right to her individual opinion. She is the country's most popular single mother, who was exiled and took care of both her children in an ashram, a narrative which has been ignored for far too long, owing to the patriarchal nature of storytelling. She chose to give up on a happy life with Ram and her beloved children because she believed in doing what is right.

Other examples from Ramayana include Kaikeyi, who has been vilified over the years and is viewed as a mean and hateful character, whenever she is talked about in Ramayana. However, what we fail to notice is how she was a true trend-setter. She was one of the first women to go to combat with her husband, and not only ceremonially, but as the charioteer of her husband. If this is not what heroic is, then I don't know what is!

An essential epic of India, the Mahabharata comprises legends and stories revolving around the contentions between Kauravas and Pandavas. The plot of Mahabharata is set in Kurukshetra, with one of the major epics being the contest to win the hand of Draupadi, a contest which was won by Arjuna, and then Draupadi became the wife of all the

Pandavas, an arrangement which has been misunderstood by people throughout the history. Draupadi is traditionally frowned at for being the opposite of pure since she was in a polyandrous relationship. However, people fail to take into account how Draupadi was not voluntarily into such an arrangement, and was forced into the same by Kunti's declaration that the Pandavas must share whatever was brought into the house equally. Draupadi was neither the perpetrator of this social transgression, nor did she enter into this polyandrous contract out of her own accord. One of the most shocking incidents mentioned, wherein Draupadi was dragged into the assembly, while she was menstruating only to be objectified, degraded and stripped off her garments in front of everyone, and later to be ameliorated by the divine intervention later remains as the highlight of the epic. Draupadi then takes up to ask the noblemen present in the court, how could they? This was not only a plea from a helpless woman but a way by which her outraged modesty found an outlet when she questioned all the learned men sitting there, about how they could be silent spectators to such degradation. Whenever provoked, she challenged the male ego without the typical cause and effect analysis, something which was a hindrance for women in her time, those who wanted to raise their voice against male atrocities. After the incident at the court of Kurus, Draupadi emerged as more powerful than ever, with her individuality and voice stronger than ever, becoming a paragon of gender and resistance.

Other accounts from Mahabharata talk about Hidimba, who has been classified as a rakshasi, which is synonymous with a person who practices cannibalism and leads an eccentric non-Brahmanical way of life. Hidimba fell in love the first time she met Bhima and took it upon herself to marry Bhima. But, the union could only be together for some time since Bhima chose to live with Hidimba, only till she procreates. Thus, Ghatotkach was born, and Hidimba, took care of their child all alone, another case of single parenting. She later sent Ghatotkach to help his father, who was in the middle of waging war. She can be seen as a parallel to a modern-day single mother, who raised her son with all the great qualities without the influence of any patriarch-figure in his life. She was a good wife to Bhima, but her residence in the forest makes her untrustworthy. She, however, has not been given

any special mention for the same, but the fact that she could survive the onslaught of such a society which looked down upon her, without the support of a man needs to be talked about more.

Satyavati was another wise and smart woman, to whom the Kuru lineage owes their existence to. Often looked at as an opportunist, she was the wife of emperor Santanu and the mother to Vyasa before she married Santanu, the king, only on the condition that her sons would only inherit the throne. After the death of Santanu, Satyavati's two sons from Santanu died young and left behind two wives. This was a problem, to which Satyavati suggested to bring his son, Vyasa who was sage Parashar and Satyavati's child. Thus, Vyasa fathered two children, Pandu and Dhritarashtra. Thus, this could not have been possible without Satyavati's intervention. Her image has been sexualised historically, with her ultimate aim being to get what she wants; however, she wants. Although, she was a wise and strategic woman who knew how to use things to her advantage, and went on to create a place and identity of her own, and is responsible for the whole Kuru clan existence. Women like these exist in every realm and at the heart of every story but are often villainised and ignored.

Apart from these two main epics, we find parallels across cultures, like the Tamil literature with the best example being the Silappadikaram, the tale of the anklet, that is

centred around a woman named Kannagi, who confronts the King of Madurai in what is described as a miscarriage of justice. The work is divided into three main parts, with the second part talking about how Kannagi's husband Kovalam attempts to sell her anklet and is then wrongly accused and convicted of stealing the queen's anklet. He is executed by the state for the same. This is where Kannagi comes into play, and makes a connection with a justice-seeking woman who moves Agni, and ends up burning down the whole city of Madurai, proving that her husband was wrongly convicted and the anklet was hers and not the queen's. Thus, she is seen as a symbol of seeking justice and standing up against an unjust and structurally unequal system in those times.

Lastly, talking about Savitri here, who finds mention in the term 'Sati-Savitri' usually as an epitome of being subordinate, obeying and all the things an ideal woman in a patriarchal society should be. This is an example of how people have been ignorant and choose to highlight only certain characteristics which promote the image of a chaste-ideal wife. Both Sati and Savitri were contrary characters, but were independent, had a mind of their own and were assertive. Here, I talk about Savitri, a wise and smart woman who, with her wisdom, was able to reclaim her husband from death. Savitri was a beautiful woman, who exercised the right over her sexual agency and chose Satyavan as her husband even after knowing that he will die in a year. She was an assertive, independent and a woman who honoured her word. After a year, when Yama came for her husband, she did not argue with him but followed Yama and her husband to death and impressed by her determination, Yama granted her three boons, and with her and with her presence of mind, she fooled Yama, the God of death due to

which she got her husband back. Thus, the mythology talks about so many women, whose stories have been systematically excluded, ignored and in case of inclusion, misinterpreted. Tracing the existence and importance of women, we can look at how during the period of Indus Valley Civilisation, the Mother Goddess was the central figurine and historians believe that she was worshipped and deified by locals. There have been cases where strong women characters have been ignored, not mentioned or given a different moral stage. Strong woman characters have been subjugated, ignored and vilified. The same is reiterated when we continue to share these narratives to people around us, especially children without a thought. Efforts to reinterpret and provide alternatives where women are showcased as important as men are necessary in order to unlearn the narratives we have been subjected to. Be it Ahalya who was turned into a stone, but was able to mitigate her curse with her charm and seduction or Shakuntala who bore the first Emperor of Indian Mythology as a single parent or Chitrangada, who is clearly mentioned as the son her dad never had; all these women have been a rebellion in more than one way, some by adopting inherently masculine functions and some by resistance against a system which is inherently patriarchal, actively or passively. It is time these narratives are brought into the mainstream viewpoint and form an important part of discussions and contributions made by women in the world that we live in today.

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 our 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

JANUARY 2021

INDUCTION OF
FIRST YEAR
MEMBERS

15/1/2021

*Orientation &
Introduction of*
FIRST YEAR
MEMBERS

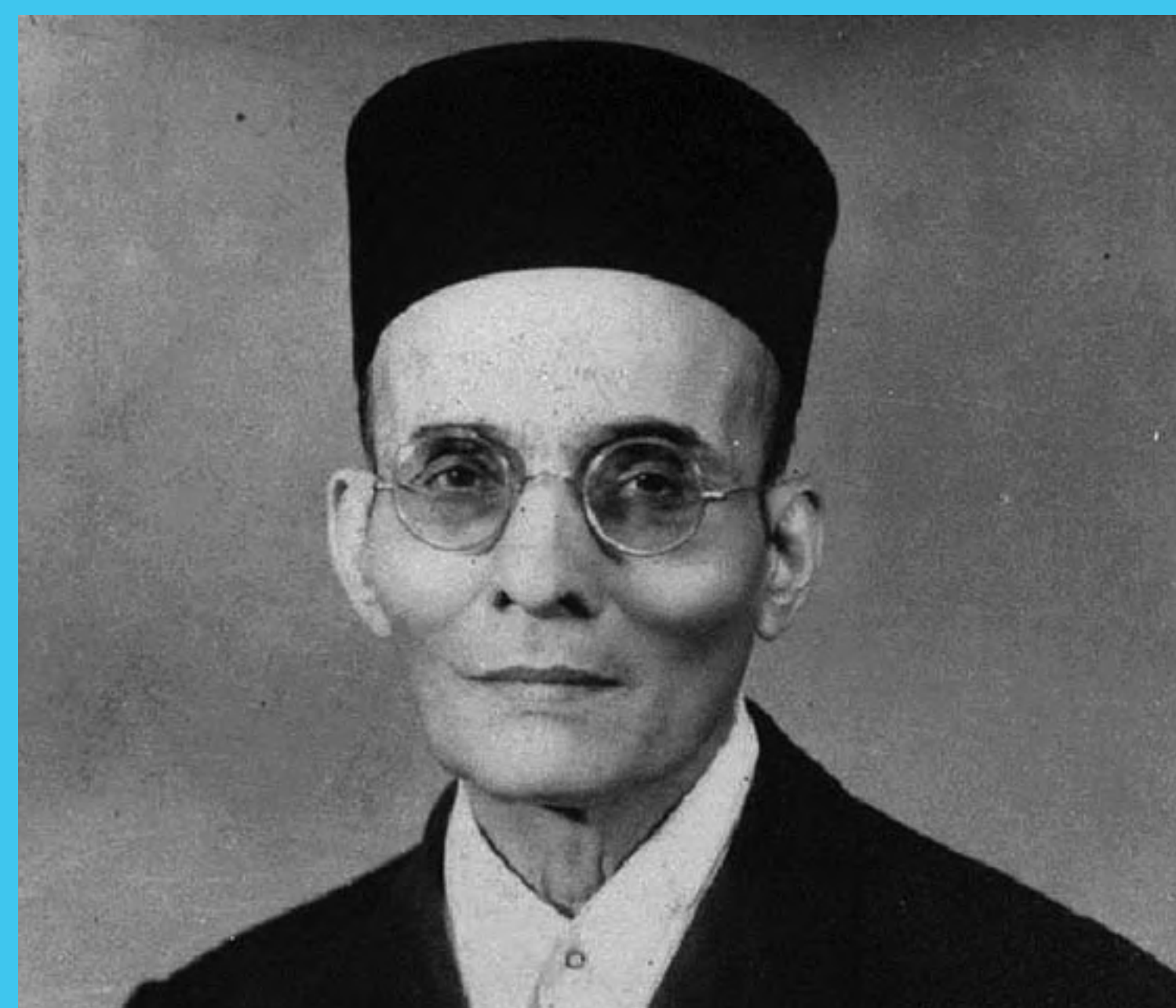
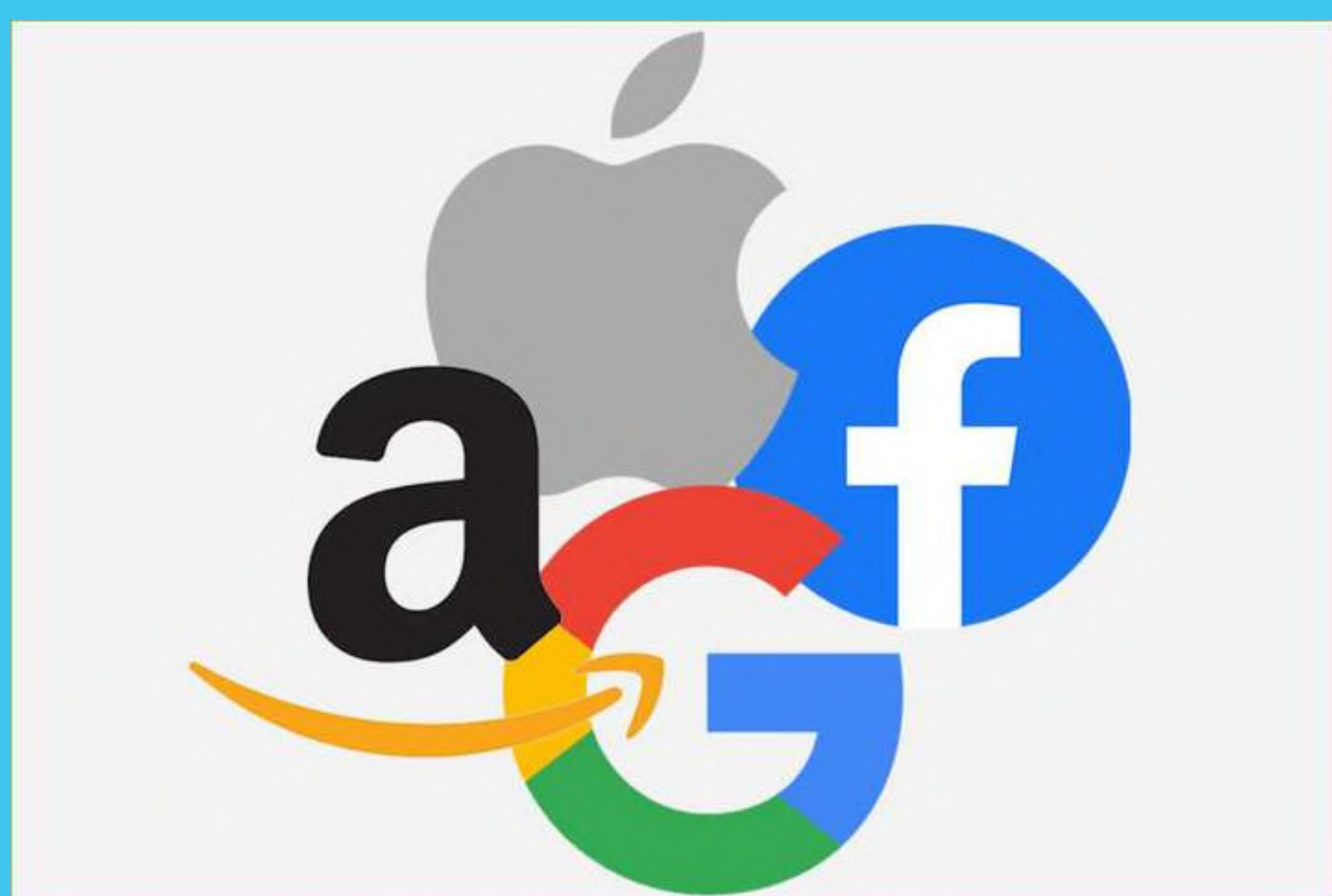
16/1/2021

Group Discussion on
BIG TECH; SHORT
REGULATION

23/1/2021

Socratic Seminar on
"ESSENTIALS OF
HINDUTVA" BY V
SAVARKAR

30/1/2021



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