

JULY 2021 | ISSUE 7

THE PROBE

The right
STAND?

ARE WE
HUMAN

All about Draconian laws

Cover by Asna Ali

A polyphiloprogenitive theist

A conversation with
Dr Arvind Mohan

Deconstructing Grief:
Everything behind the Blues

The Team



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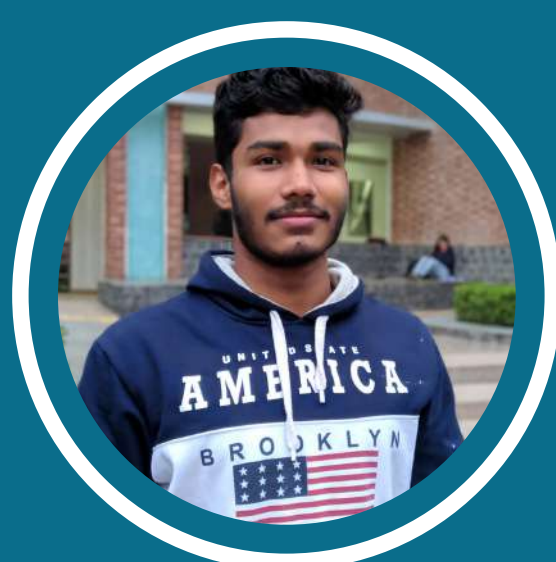
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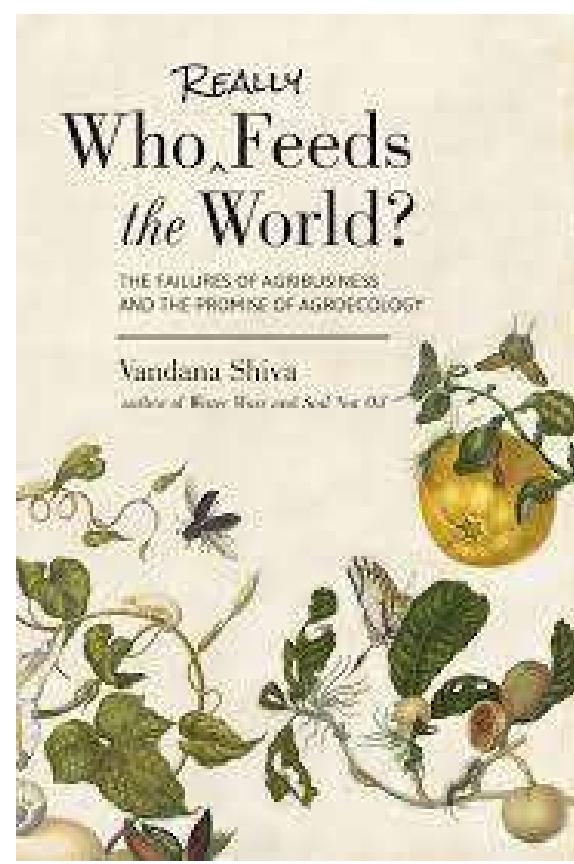
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Message From the Team

With immense pride, we bring to you the seventh edition of The Probe. Over the last few months, we have garnered a considerable readership that has strengthened our cause of providing a platform to students who produce powerful and creative pieces. Owing to the same support, we would also like to take the opportunity to announce our publication's new social media page on [Instagram](#). We aspire to work with experts and professionals to enhance learning outcomes for readers and writers alike to create an unprecedented chain of learning.

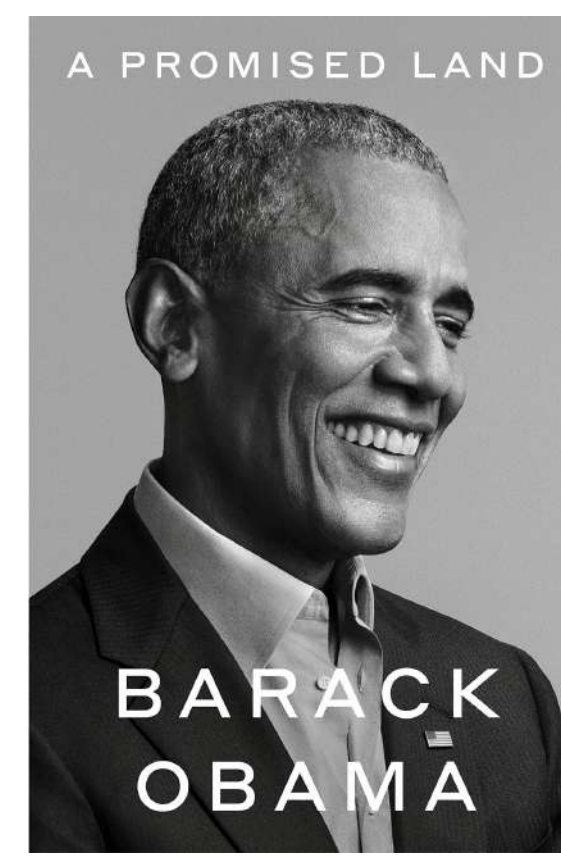
Like the editions preceding this one, we have received through-provoking and well-researched entries on topics ranging from Religion to the Economic rise of Bangladesh. We were delighted to see the intellectual vigour of the writers and would love to receive the same enthusiasm from our readers. Readers can share their feedback and critique with the editors at 'caucushinducollege@gmail.com'.

Special thanks to Dr Arvind Mohan, Professor of Economics, Lucknow University for gracing the July Month edition with his interview. 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. The diversity of opinion that guest writers offer in their entries keep us motivated to improve with every edition.



Book Review

Read the review of Vandana Shiva's book on agroecology and what we must not do when it comes to food production



Book Review

Read the review of Barack Obama's autobiography, "A Promised Land"

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Paying Homage to the photographer of the common Indian

📷 Butter lamps lit by Nepali photographers burn in front of a portrait of Reuters journalist Danish Siddiqui during a candlelight vigil to pay tribute to Reuters photojournalist Danish Siddiqui, in front of the Swyambhunath Stupa in Kathmandu. Pulitzer Prize winner photojournalist Danish Siddiqui was killed on 16 July 2021 in crossfire while covering a clash between Afghan security forces and Taliban fighters in Afghanistan. (Photo by Prabin Ranabhat/SOPA Images/LightRocket via Getty Images)

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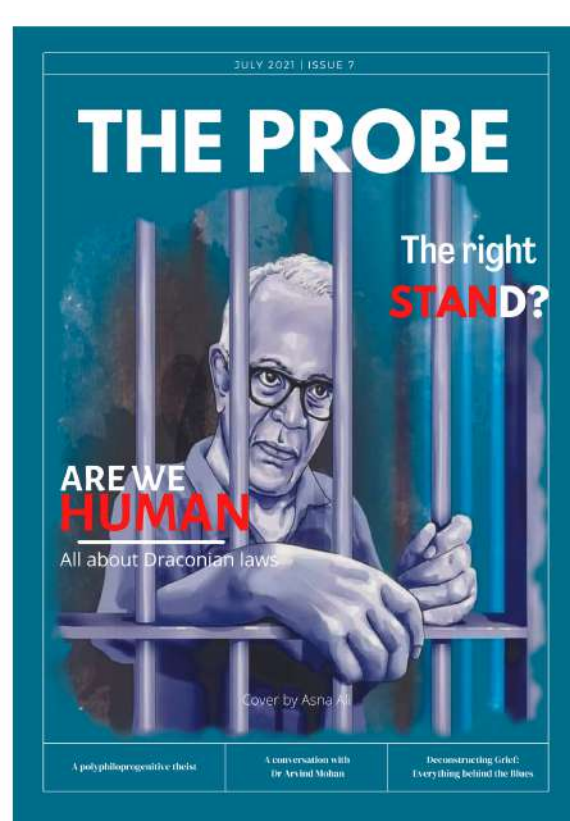
 **Proudly Made in India**

The Probe is a non-profit, student-run, independent & non-partisan monthly magazine published by Caucus, a student organisation of Hindu College, University of Delhi. Caucus was founded in 2007, and The Probe in 2020. We exist to hold power to account in the name of the public interest, to uphold liberal and progressive values, to fight for the common good, and to build hope. Our ambition lies in creating a platform that promotes writing & reporting among the students and enables them to engage in a learning experience with experts & working professionals



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Cover Story

The recent statement by SC on UAPA, deeming it a colonial law, raises the question of its relevance and constitutionality. Read this edition's cover story.

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By the students, for the world

Global Tax Deal and its Implications on India

Most of the MNCs including famous digital companies artificially lower their tax outgo through complex intra-group arrangements using which they pin down their tax base in countries of low tax jurisdiction like Ireland, Cayman Islands, **more on Pg 73**

Expert View



Mr Mayur Bora

Article on Human Attitude and Development



Dr Arvind Mohan

In Conversation with The Probe

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COLONIAL

UMAR KHALID

STAN SWAMY

NATASHA

HANY BABU

PREVENTIVE DETENTION

TADA

UAPA

BHIMA KOREGAON

NIA

DEVANGANA

ELGAR PARISHAD

URBAN NAXAL

MISA

**A
F
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A Probe into **Terror Laws**

Shreya Shukla, Shubham Kumar, Saberi Mallick and Jeevesh

HISTORY

Preventive detention laws have lurked in the crevices of the Indian Constitution since its inception owing to the turmoil the newly emerging state found itself in with demands of secession trending throughout, and even ravaging in some places. The brunt of wars added insult to injury of a starving nation struggling to keep its organs intact and thus, sought shelter in laws like PDA, AFSPA, MISA, TADA, POTA and continue to this day as UAPA.

Preventive Detention Act 1950-69 was brought in to tackle the violence that partition wreaked. It came with a sunset provision that subjected it to annual review and renewal for 19 years.

The secessionist movements in Nagaland led to the infamous Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act in 1958, a reflection of the Armed Forces Special Powers Ordinance of 1942 used by the British to suppress the Quit India Movement. AFSPA was also used to combat

separatist movements in Punjab in 1983, rolled back

The institutional murder of Stan Swamy has reignited heated debate surrounding preventative detention laws.

only in 1997. Under this law, the central government can

declare any state or region a “disturbed area” if they threaten the integrity or sovereignty of India and deploy armed forces to assist the police. Since 1990, AFSPA is in force in Jammu and Kashmir to keep a check on terrorism and militancy in the region.

When India was caught off-guard by the Chinese and humiliated in 1962, the government also faced a challenge internally of C.N Annadurai’s demand for a separate state for Dravidians. This domestic crisis prompted the promulgation of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act in 1967 which placed reasonable restrictions on the fundamental rights of freedom of speech and expression, freedom of assembly and freedom of association as a necessary evil for national security. An anti-terror legislation enforced by the National Investigation Agency (NIA), UAPA is similar to its predecessor in its motive of preventing individuals or people from questioning or disrupting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of India with the intent of secession.

Less than two years following the expiration of PDA in 1969, it came in new packaging as the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (1971-77) which was immensely misused (or used exactly the way it was intended) to muzzle voices of dissent be it the opposition or common people. With the national emergency ending in 1977, MISA was repealed too.

In 1980, the Indira Gandhi

government implemented the National Security Act. A person can be detained without being informed of the reason for arrest and deprived of legal aid. Interestingly, even the Crime Report Bureau seems uninformed about the arrests made under this act.

Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Act (1985-1995) was enacted keeping in mind the separatist movements in Punjab and the rest of the country. Safeguards and rights of the accused under this law shrunk as powers of the police increased many times over, overriding the Criminal Procedure Code and the constitution. For instance, confessions were made admissible as evidence in the court of a law increasing the incidence of police brutality, torture, abuse and misconduct. It is said that between 1985 and 1995, around 70,000 people were arrested under this act.

A series of blows starting from the Kandahar hijack in 1999, the September 11 attacks in 2000 and the Indian Parliament Attack of 2001 led to the Prevention of Terrorism Act in 2002 which suffered from the same flaws as its cousins and lapsed in 2004.

Following the 26/11 attacks in Mumbai of 2008, the government presented two new counterterrorism laws in the parliament that were adopted within a day of debate, expressing the nation's strong will to avenge the attacks and prevent such attacks in the future. With this amendment of UAPA, the most brutish provisions of TADA and POTA were brought to life.

2019 AMENDMENT UAPA


Mr. Amit Shah (Minister of Home Affairs), on July 8, 2019, introduced the Unlawful Activities Prevention Amendment Bill, 2019 in Lok Sabha. The house passed it on July 24, 2019, and it moved to Rajya Sabha. Rajya Sabha on August 2, 2019, then passed it, and finally president, on 8 August 2019, gave their assent to this bill.

The UAPA has been amended several times throughout the years, to make it immune to the changing techniques of terrorism and making extra-territorial arrests.

The most recent amendment that it witnessed was the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Act, 2019 (UAPA, 2019). It empowers the government to even categorize individuals involved in terrorism and not just organizations. An individual can now be designated as a terrorist if they are found involved in an act of terror, which was previously restricted to organisations only.

Section 15 of the UAPA bill defined terrorism as an act committed to threaten the unity, integrity, security, and sovereignty of India or with intent to strike terror in the people or any section of the people in India or any foreign country.



 C.N. Annadurai

Section 15 of the UAPA bill defined terrorism as an act committed to threaten the unity, integrity, security, and sovereignty of India or with intent to strike terror in the people or any section of the people in India or any foreign country.

Previously, an investigating officer was required to obtain the prior approval of the Director-General of Police to seize the property of the terrorist. But, the new provisions also empower the Director-General (NIA) to grant approval of occupation of the property when the case is investigated by the agency.

The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act 2019 empowers the officers of the NIA, of the rank of Inspector or above, to investigate cases. Whereas previously, the investigation was conducted by officers of the rank of Deputy Superintendent or Assistant Commissioner of Police

or above.

On July 24, Lok Sabha cleared the changes to the existing law, but there has been staunch opposition to this since then. It has been argued that it could be used to target dissent against the government and that it would violate citizens' civil rights. Whereas, supporters have viewed it as a very scrutinised Act that was needed, as it will now prevent individuals from floating to different terrorist organisations when one is banned.

THREAT TO CIVIL LIBERTIES AND DEMOCRACY

Just governance demands those who hold power shoulder the burden of criticism. Insofar as tolerance for dissent can be adopted as a metric to analyse the strength of a democracy, it is imperative to examine the ways in which the space for dialogue has been gradually shrinking in India. Identified by Reporters Without Borders as one of the most dangerous countries for journalists, press freedom in India received a particularly low rating of 142 in 2020, with PM Modi being recognised as a global press freedom predator. The present socio-political climate allows for the relatively easy criminalisation of any dissent whatsoever. The conceptualization of patriotism as unflinching vacuous loyalty to the state is routinely used to brand people as 'anti-national' in a disingenuous conflation of the nation and the state. The impacts of the UAPA on civil liberties and political discourse must be

analysed in light of these contemporary realities.

The UAPA employs the concept of preventive detention to arrest individuals before a crime is committed, making it particularly vulnerable to tyrannical misuse. The act is formally aimed at curbing 'terrorism' and the spread of 'terrorist propaganda.' However, it provides a loose definition of what terrorism entails, giving the government and concerned bodies unfettered discretionary authority. This makes it especially viable for the aforementioned authorities to impose the terrorist label on those who do not conform to state-sanctioned lines of thought and behaviour. The UAPA can be used to bypass certain fundamental rights as it allows for a 180 day incarceration period until a formal charge sheet is filed. Additionally, it entails the reversal of the burden of proof in what is a violation of an internationally recognised principle of justice: the accused stands guilty until proven innocent, rather than the other way around. While the UAPA has been in place since 1967, the number of arrests under this act increased by 72% from 2015 to 2019. These cases only have a 2% conviction rate as a result of which many individuals spend years in prison awaiting trial.

Numerous examples are available to demonstrate the extent of repression made possible by the

draconian sedition act. The editor of the Frontier Manipur, Paojel Chaoba, was arrested in early 2021 for publishing articles against the AFSPA on the ground of 'endorsing revolutionary ideologies.' The UP Police violated Supreme Court orders in order to arrest Siddique Kappan for attempting to report the Hathras sexual assault case. Masrat Zahra, an internationally recognised Kashmiri photojournalist was arrested for the alleged glorification of 'anti national' activities while attempting to chronicle human rights violations in Kashmir. These are only a fraction of the total number of journalists booked for voicing dissent. Each of the three journalists were in the midst of exposing the state's failings, soon after which they were promptly branded with a series of tags ranging from 'urban naxal' to 'anti national' which in turn raises a number of questions surrounding the actual beneficiaries of government imposed censorship.

The anti CAA protests of 2019 saw sedition charges against many of the protestors. Natasha Narwal, Safoora Zargar, Asif Iqbal Tanha and Sharjeel Imam were just some of the few protestors arrested for voicing their discontent with a law that was widely viewed as being polarising and exclusionary. The subsequent Delhi riots of 2019 saw the arrest of Umar Khalid for allegedly inciting the riot. However, the same treatment was not meted to Kapil Mishra, Anurag Thakur and Komal Sharma wherein there was clear visual evidence to suggest that the

three were involved in inciting violence against protestors. Within the context of a communally polarised political environment, the biased treatment is a clear indication of how the arbitrary categorisation of 'terrorist' remains largely subjective, ambiguous and subject to communal bias held by law enforcement.

The misuse of the UAPA is also evident in the Bhima Koregaon - Elgar Parishad case. The celebration commemorating the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Bhima Koregaon was marred by violence when those gathered were attacked by fundamentalists opposed to the anti-caste character of the event. The arrest of certain prominent activists and lawyers for allegedly funding Maoist activities drew attention to the case. In 2020, father Stan Swamy, an elderly Jesuit priest and tribal rights activist, was also arrested on account of an alleged Maoist link. He was subsequently denied bail and passed away in July 2021 due to cardiac arrest. The Washington Post had previously reported that Arsenal Consulting, an independent American analysis firm, had unearthed massive evidence proving that the evidence used to arrest certain activists had been planted in their devices via malware.

The institutional murder of Stan Swamy has reignited heated debate surrounding preventative detention laws. How justified is it for the state to deprive an individual of their liberty and autonomy without due process? Is



Siddique Kappan is a Malyalam journalist, arrested with three others under the UAPA in October 2020 while he was on his way to report the Hathras case.



Devangana Kalita is an activist and a founder member of the Pinjra Tod Movement. She was arrested under the stringent UAPA in May 2020 connection with the north-east Delhi riots. Recently, she has been granted bail by the Delhi High Court along with activists Natasha Narwal and Asif Iqbal Tanha.



Paojel Chaoba is a senior journalist and the editor of a Manipuri News Portal. He was detained on January 17, 2021 citing sedition and terror-related charges. He was released the very next day after all the charges against him were dropped.



Masrat Zahra was booked under the UAPA for "uploading anti-national posts with criminal intention to induce the youth and promote offence against public tranquillity."



Umar Khalid is an activist, former student of JNU. He was allegedly involved in the JNU sedition row and was arrested on Sept. 13, 2020 under the UAPA.



Natasha Narwal is a student and a women human rights activist. One of the founding members of the Pinjra Tod movement, she was accused in the 2020 Delhi riots "conspiracy" case. She has been granted bail by the Delhi High Court on June 15.



Akhil Gogoi is an Indian Peasant leader, RTI activist, and MLA from Sibsagar, Assam. Nearly 19 months after being arrested for allegedly inciting violence during the anti-CAA agitation, he walked out of judicial custody on June 22 after a special NIA court cleared him of all charges under the UAPA.



Father Stan Swamy was a Jesuit priest and a tribal rights activist. He was arrested in October 2020 by the NIA under the UAPA, charged with conspiracy in the Bhima Koregaon case.

the criminalisation of divergent thought and dissent to punish the 'creation of disaffection' a clear descent into authoritarianism? Some of the moral dilemmas posed by the UAPA have led the Delhi High Court to denounce the rampant misuse of the act and a call for judicious application of the same.

With the apex court expressing anguish over the investigation agencies' handling of the Akshardham Temple Attack Case of 2002, and acquitting all those framed after 12 years of rigorous incarceration, is the most horrendous tact played with POTA. UAPA, having resemblance of POTA, has supplied unfettered powers managing to suppress dissent, curb civil liberties with the outcry of preventive detention, in the most liberalized way and no or little resort to bail. Along with a whooping surge of about 72% increase in the arrests made under the draconian UAPA, the conviction rate hits a low at 2% between 2015-19, which conclusively delves into two aspects, firstly the denial of the constitutional right to fair and speedy trial, the other points critically to the indiscriminate and arbitrary use of law and the weaponization of state machinery against thousands of the innocents. Michelle Bachelet, Chief UNHRC, urged India to release Bhima Koregaon activists "at the very least on bail" and has been on the forefront of criticism for arbitrary detention. Others include the classification of arrests as to simply muzzle the voice of dissent, highlighted by the US State Deptt. 2020.

Human Rights Report. Section 43D(5) which is the sole metric for

negating the bail or for wholesale breach of right to speedy trial has ensured numerous deplorable incidents of prolonged detention without due recourse for the pregnant CAA activist Safoora Zargar, acquitted Akhil Gogoi or Late Father Stan Swamy. The whisking of Gautam Navlakha to Maharashtra with an impending interim bail application which Delhi High Court described as an act done in "unseemly haste" in removing him "from the very jurisdiction of this Court" points to the alleged "witch hunting of students and activists", a statement from a

Is the criminalisation of divergent thought and dissent to punish the 'creation of disaffection' a clear descent into authoritarianism?

group of 90 eminent scholars from the United Kingdom, stressed. The crackdown on the voices of dissent is evident from the discretionary use of UAPA whilst slapping terrorism charges on Akhil Gogoi, CAA activist from Assam who was acquitted of the two cases under several sections of UAPA Act whereby NIA argued that Bittu Sonowal, a close aide of Assam farmers' leader Akhil Gogoi, is a Maoist by the use of phrases like 'lal salam' and 'comrade' as proof.

The ambiguity is distinctly visible when Manish Sirohi, found in the possession of

Protest for the release of Father Stan Swamy



illegal arms during the NE Delhi riots case was not booked under UAPA and later released on bail , while the affidavits to be filed for straw and sipper, for Parkinson's ridden Swamy or spectacles for Navlakha where NIA and the jail authorities delayed the request to the tune of about 50 days. The unbridled powers conferred to the state under the nebulous act of terrorism as proposed by UAPA , has not even left the 'Fourth Pillar of Democracy' with Masrat Zahra , a photo journalist booked for her alleged 'anti national' content on social media. The world freedom Index placed India at 142 among the 180 countries citing "Criminal prosecutions are meanwhile often used to gag journalists critical of the authorities, with some prosecutors invoking Section 124a of the penal code, under which "sedition" is punishable by life imprisonment." PM Modi was reported by RSF as a predator to press freedom.

With a recording low conviction rate and less than 50% chargesheets filed in the 180 day

time frame for the arrestees between 2016-18, the prolonged denial for the right to bail, nebulous interpretation of terrorism by the executive. The adjudication of justice remains a privilege for the most , contrary to that they are regularly tried by media and other self proclaimed vigilante groups. The sword of 'alleged terrorism' swindling over thousands of those incriminated under UAPA, the Act seems to be deviating from its primary area to curb terrorism. The balance shifts more on the side to curb civil liberties than on ensuring security , on the weighing scale of natural justice looks malevolent both in letter and spirit.

Worldwide the wrath/chagrin of the anti terror laws , have been widely criticised for being misused as weapons of the state. The disguised motive of defining terrorism vaguely has several ulterior strings attached. The Emirati government classifying 'stirring panic among the group of people and antagonizing the state' as 'terrorist outcome' is one such example of horrendous legislation. Enacting the Penal Law of Crimes of

Terrorism & its Financing , has so far been successful in curbing the dissident's voice by defining the 'disruption of public order' as terrorism , by the Saudi Arabian government. The Malaysian POTA has every other provision from preventive detention to the denial of bail.

From a brief history of the preventive detention laws, it isn't hard to fathom how the state continues to fall back to these draconian laws in the face of any threats precisely because they turn the principles of natural justice on its head and confer the state with power with no consequences.

Draconian laws such as the UAPA, when viewed in conjunction with India's dismal press freedom standing and the declining space for the expression of dissent, signal a steep descent into authoritarianism. As concerned authorities like the Supreme Court are beginning to take cognizance of this glaring stain on human rights, it is hoped that those unfairly incarcerated under these laws are acquitted in the near future. ■

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A CONVERSATION WITH DR ARVIND MOHAN

Sectoral Analysis of Indian Economy

Interviewed by Avanindra Yadav



[Click the link to watch the interview](#)

Avanindra – So sir to begin with the first question, I would like to begin with the fact that there has always been a temperament of introducing reforms in the Indian economy by the policymakers. If we trace from the independence to this day, we recently completed 30 years of the liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation reforms in India. So, I would like to ask you what is your assessment of these changes that were brought into the Indian economy?

Dr Arvind Mohan – See, let me first reflect on the situation in 1991. 1991 was the worst economic crisis of the 20th century that India faced. Or you can say after independence, this was the worst economic crisis. So, the key indicators when you are looking at an economic crisis, they include your GDP which had plummeted to extremely low levels, variety of other indicators including inflation, your fiscal deficit- everything was beyond the nation’s capacity to manage. That’s where we are starting from, and that is when a university professor who used to teach students like you called Manmohan Singh, who’s called upon to take up the reins. And, for example, if I’m asked to do a similar thing the first thing that would come to my mind is this is what I have been telling my students all my life, so should I do anything else,? I am sure that is what Manmohan Singh must have thought. So, he just picked out those books, and whatever he was teaching the students exactly that was what he implemented in India and that has been the most



momentous reforms that this country has seen till date. The transformation was phenomenal and we often refer to them as first-generation reforms as I remember Manmohan Singh was on record in parliament when he says that India has to do so much but everything cannot be done given our capacities and needs. So we are initiating first-generation reforms and these are, truly speaking, industrial in nature and urban. And so phenomenal was its impact that these reforms, allowed a crisis-ridden economy to catapult suddenly into a big leap. So, we jumped into the big leap by the end of the 90s itself. Look at any critical indicator which Manmohan Singh as a finance minister of the nation was looking at, whether it was fiscal deficit, whether it was international trade, whether it was industrial policy- everything we were able to bring down on track. So, that is why these reforms are considered to be phenomenal and that is the first part of the story. The second part of the story is that again during those days itself the finance minister and prime minister of India, everybody else who mattered, they did mention in the parliament, Manmohan Singh in particular, that these are first-generation reforms and sooner rather than later we want to bring in the second-generation reforms and these second-generation reforms will introduce the human phase to the entire reforms story. In my understanding, the second generation reforms of India will and should have two major pillars or two major planks- one of them has to be rural development which will include agriculture, allied activities, as well as rural industry and small scale industry and the second pillar of second-generation reforms has to be human development where there are primarily two constituents along with few other minor, but two major constituents, which are health and education. And I have always believed that India's truly a three-engine aircraft- first engine we ignited in 1991, that is the industrial reforms , that was the first engine be ignited, of the remaining two engines human development and rural development, each one of them has at least as much capacity as the first engine had and if you are able to ignite it what we are calling the second generation

reforms, I am of the belief that irrespective of what happens in the world whether the world sinks or floats India will grow. And that is the path that we have to move forward.

Avanindra - Sir, as you mentioned about the agriculture sector which should be one of the priority sectors, my next question would be related to that concerned sector. Sir the agriculture sector has been facing a crisis perpetually. Despite that, the government had proposed certain reforms but they are also been opposed substantially. So sir what according to you are the reasons for the agrarian crisis of India and what can be different short and long term policy measures to improve it?

Dr. Arvind Mohan – See, India is a very interesting story. Sometimes, when you make a rapid growth that is what India did in, say the nineties and the first decade of this century, such phenomenal growth, for example between 2003 to 2010 India was able to double its GDP, and when your GDP doubles in such a short span there are very few stories which can be compared to India across the world. So when you are able to bring such phenomenal growth to the economy, one interesting thing that happens is you guys those who are part of economics in some way you must be knowing what we have been calling Giffen goods. You have been reading the indifference curve and all those kinds of things. When your income rises you are in a position to consume those things which were beyond your reach till that point in time and that is what exactly happened in India. Certainly, your income rises particularly for the middle classes income rose like anything and when your income rose, we as a community started asking for those commodities which we were not able to consume. There is a 2007 report from the government of India which indicates that, in India, consumption for wheat and rice actually declined, not in absolute terms but in relative sense. Consumption or the demand for wheat and rice declined during that period and demand for few critical things like oilseeds, pulses, vegetables and fruits-particularly these four items- it rises significantly. So these are the things which were beyond the capacity of large sections of the population but suddenly because of rising income

this became possible. So during this period and beyond till date, what we are noticing is that demand for these four commodities is rising and depending on looking at India's growth story earlier than 2007 or before 2000 what we are finding is that whatever we are trying to do in agriculture, for example, Green Revolution, it is all wheat-centric and rice-centric and these are critical crops or commodities which we haven't focused on even today. As far as oilseeds and pulses are concerned, a major chunk has to be imported because we don't produce enough to feed this nation so we import from the global markets and India is such a big buyer. When the message spreads that India is come to buy something prices in the global markets rise. This is the significance of India in the global market as far as consumption is concerned. Now, when you are looking at, say the vegetables and fruits, another challenge exists and that challenge is- rough estimates suggest that India loses close to around 2 lakh crore worth of Agri produce every year and 2 lakh crore of Agri produce goes rotten and is wasted annually and these are low line foods. My understanding is that our second-generation reforms, particularly agrarian and rural sector reforms, should start if you are able to pluck this loss. Look at the advantages- Number one is, this will be the finest and the fastest growth injection because you will be adding two lakh crore to the GDP suddenly, merely by plugging this leakage or loss so advantage. This is the easiest and fastest growth injection, which is possible at the moment in the economy. Reserve Bank reports starting 2010 onwards, clearly indicate that when you are looking at India's inflation there are three major constituents, rather four and two most important constituents happen to be imported inflation, that is petroleum related inflation and, Agri prices or primary commodity prices and roughly the weight comes around 0.3 for each one of them, which means around 30% rate is petroleum and close to 30% rate is primary commodities. So if you are able to plug this loss of 2 lakh crore this will be the finest anti-inflation measure. Third, whose crop this loss is for? It is primarily the poorest of the poor because their power is low, their capacity



 Former P.M. Manmohan Singh

to carry commodities to the market is again extremely limited so it is the poorest of the poor who are losing the bus and so this will be the finest and anti-poverty intervention, at the same time. I have been hearing many policymakers and others saying, "when you try to push growth inflation, it becomes a casualty". I think there is an opportunity where everything is converging so by one intervention we are able to handle everything possible. So if you are able to plug it, I think, the kind of transformation which is possible, is phenomenal. Agriculture, in my understanding and this is the estimation of most of the international organizations, that 21st century would be ruled by few critical engines, one of them is going to be agriculture as an industry, another is food processing, third is textiles and another one is going to be knowledge. So these are the key drivers which will drive the economy across the world during this entire century and India has the critical advantage here. So second-generation reforms are not only due but also the ideal time has come.

Avanindra - As you spoke about balancing inflation and growth together and that's what we currently are looking for after the pandemic so but the rising prices of fuel if you take in particular

fuel sir, it affects both the domestic consumption and as well as the agriculture sector. What are your views on the same

Dr. Arvind Mohan – See there are two sides to the story. One that as far as prices of imported petroleum are concerned, almost 80% of the petroleum needs of the country is met by imports and nearly 20% is what we are producing for ourselves. So that when is the critical challenge, we have as far as the story ever since so this certainly is our challenge and we need to address it, but we also need to understand that globally the world has moved in a different direction. Non-conventional energy resources are a huge opportunity for a country like India and many experts believe that solar photovoltaic cell is going to be the future oil and one of the basic ingredients for photovoltaic cells happens to be your sand and the silicon, and those kinds of things are India's opportunity also so China, for some time, has been preparing itself significantly. So gradually as your prices begin to rise, many non-conventional sources of energy will become extremely viable, already we have been observing that over a period of time solar energy has become viable. The kind of cost it is coming from there are particular examples from Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and many good places. They have been able to buy solar energy at a cheap price and that is the story of the cross-country economy. Gradually as this R&D investment rose, I think India

has to rise itself to two things- petroleum as an energy source, as at the end of the day it is a limited resource and similarly polluting, and now there are opportunities like solar photovoltaic cells. Not only that we should produce it for ourselves we need to understand the kind of importance that oil today has which has given importance to countries like OPEC plus. The kind of importance we have been able to give them, we need to understand that we have to prepare for the future oil and future oil, at least photovoltaic cells is going to be critical here. That is the major area we should move on. But one interesting development that has been recent, I think Reliance industries are in their last GDM, have made an extremely significant intervention that their main businesses in future will be

Key Lessons

Growth is important

Aiming to increase the size of the economy over the next 10-20 years with a double digit growth rate

Bringing in second generation reforms

Reforms should focus on transforming lives of the masses by focusing on rural development and human capital formation by investing in health and education

photovoltaic cells, batteries, and other related things. I think 100 Gigawatt, they are planning to produce in one location itself. I think, these are very encouraging developments and when the private sector takes a leading initiative it becomes even more encouraging. So I think that is where India needs to move forward. This is one area we need to prepare otherwise China and other countries will take up this. This is an opportunity for our future and for our current challenges also. I think petroleum is beyond our control but the other part of the story is why petroleum prices are rising? One of the reasons is that production was brought down because of the pandemic. The OPEC plus countries brought down production by 10 lakh barrels or something. Now they have not been increasing to those levels. Two, demand is rising. So I think that's a very healthy development. The prices are rising because the economic recovery is there. So we are finding significant recovery in the US. We are finding significant recovery in China and also in India. These are three major drivers as far as noble consumption is concerned. So I think in some way it is a healthy development as recovery is happening but in current inflation, we cannot do much. This is always an opportunity that India should grab with both hands.

Avanindra - As you mentioned about the solar cells, in the recent budget we saw that the government of India has

increased the duties for the solar panels so in order to link the production incentive scheme to work and India becomes a leading producer of solar cells, do you think it is a right move of the government because there is a debate going on between economists and thinkers, that India might not become a producer in that way we are hurting the private sector by not importing the solar cells?

Dr. Arvind Mohan - The challenges are difficult. If you look at the last budget of India, we left 9.5% of GDP as fiscal deficit which means 12 lakh crore of fiscal deficit, which in many ways a huge challenge. Why is the gap in fiscal deficit rising? One of the key reasons is tax mobilisation because of the pandemic. We have not been able to mobilise most of the taxes because of GST, and other taxes. This is the story at the national level. State level is also similar. States are finding it difficult. When you find the state budget the deficit is rising like anything. We have to do something to check that deficit. One of the options is that taxing things like toll tax. Whenever you are taxing you have to look at number of things like few things you have to exempt for national interest and few things you have to raise it. Taxing like toll tax has been advantage. If they become expensive it might incentivise local production. Long term it won't be loss. Both your current need of more revenue as well as your long-term need of incentivising maybe focus for toll tax and production is not a big issue. If you don't tax this, you have to tax something else. And the options are extremely limited.

Avanindra: The Government has recently increased the 140% subsidy on fertilisers to the farmers. There has been a huge debate over the efficiency of such subsidy mechanisms and certain allegations of malpractices in the machinery itself. Can there be any better or more efficient way of supporting the farmers other than producing the subsidy?

Prof. Mohan: See, subsidy is the most inefficient way of supporting the farmers because the problem with a vehicle like subsidy is that it often or normally doesn't reach the intended beneficiary. It is normally the big farmers whom the State doesn't want to support on the expense of the taxpayer. So, we are

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wanting to support the poorest of the poor farmer, particularly. We are wanting to support maybe to increase production, but more importantly to support the poorest there. Unfortunately, it doesn't happen. Another important thing is, ever since 1950 and till date, we have only been providing subsidies to the Farm Sector. So, the Farm Sector has been put on crutches. This is not empowerment; this is only putting the Farming Sector on crutches and by putting crutches you do not empower any sector. There has been a debate since long that Agriculture has to be treated as an industry, treat them at par with everything else. For long, and I have been a part of some of the committees which have been focusing on maybe doubling farmers' income and many other kind of things. The experience is otherwise. Ever since, and whatever policy framework I have been a part of, I have always observed that the nation, whether it is at the national level or the state level, we have always been focusing on the supply side in Agriculture. We have been focusing on irrigation, we have been focusing on fertilisers, etc. I think there is a need for a Paradigm Shift, and the shift has to be to start looking at it from the other side, the market side – the demand side. Connect our farmers with the local, national and the global markets. The moment you are able to connect them to the market, forget everything else, because if there is an opportunity, if there is a buyer standing for your crop, everything else will fall in place. There will be banks which will be happy to provide you with credit, everything else, any kind of input will find its way because there is an economic opportunity. I think that is what we have to look at. Paradigm Shift for agriculture is need of the hour. Stop looking at this sector as something which needs subsidy. This is



a sector which has allowed you to remain afloat during the Pandemic, it is Agriculture which has allowed us to remain afloat. It is that important and that strong. Allow it to become stronger, allow it to empower itself, connect it with the market. And that is what we have not done till date. As a matter of fact, when the WTO Agreement was being signed in 1995, if you go to the WTO deliberations, you'll find that one of the major understandings at that point of time was bringing down agriculture subsidy, agricultural production subsidy, from a level of 30 percent points to 10. And this meant that the European countries, because 30% subsidy was being provided by European countries. Countries like India, we don't realise, our subsidy was close to 8% or something which means that if it was brought down to 10, India could have increased its subsidy. Although after that we brought down subsidy, but the reasons were domestic not global. But if European countries were forced, and at some point of time it might happen, they had to do it by 2005 and they haven't till date, whenever they're forced to do this as per the Agreement, if their subsidy comes down from 30 to 10, European farmer will not be able to sell a single piece of grain to their people, meaning it'll become so expensive. And two countries – two of the biggest agricultural producers – the U.S. and India were expected to capture this. Our challenge is that India certainly is one of the biggest producers but look at India's producing bowl, we call it the food bowl of India. It consists of few states, most importantly, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and to some extent, Andhra Pradesh and few others, but primarily these. And whatever Haryana produces, Punjab produces twice and much. Whatever Punjab produces, Uttar Pradesh produces twice as much. But the challenge is that look at the biggest producer, Uttar Pradesh – close to around 80 to 85% of the farmers, their land-size is non-economic holding, meaning they are marginal or very small farmers. They are not able to produce enough to meet their basic needs. Many of them have surpluses, but the size of surplus is very small – 20 Kgs, 50 Kgs, 100 Kg. Now, this is so small that carrying it to the local mandi becomes inefficient. So, carrying it to the global market is extremely impossible. Individually, these are small but if they are collected, it is enough to feed the entire Europe. So, we had to create that conduit that aggregation should have become

possible, and we should have been able to create that conduit that would connect these farmers to the global markets. We have not done it till date. As a matter of fact, in 1995, WTO provided ten years for countries to make adjustments, to fill those gaps. We haven't done it till date. So, I think time has come. We need to start looking at opportunities that how our farmers, small and big, can be connected to the local market, state market, national market and the global market. If we are able to do that, trust me, the kind of opportunity there is, the kind of potential it has is bigger than the value addition that'll happen, maybe bigger than what Green Revolution could do for the farming community. It can be another revolution, much bigger than the Green Revolution – connected with the markets.



Avanindra: That was an insightful answer. Moving forward, we saw that the Pandemic induced lockdowns led to a gigantic turbulence in the lives of millions of migrant workers. The government has responded over the same by ensuring work guarantee under MGNREGA, ration distribution free of cost, and direct transfer among other initiatives. What are your opinions on the working of schemes such as the PDS and the MGNREGA? And what are the major issues you find in them?

Prof Mohan: See, we saw this kind of situation during the 2008 global meltdown also, and immediately after that India was a huge beneficiary of MGNREGA. It allowed increased consumption. For a short term intervention one needs increased consumption because the demand has gone down. Even during the pandemic the demand has gone

down and I think a MGNREGA kind of intervention that you mentioned is extremely necessary as it is also a social intervention and a lot of people are suffering. They need temporary relief and I think these are needed. But also, this enhances your demand which will help in growing your industry and other sectors of the economy. It actually becomes an impetus for your rising growth story. What the govt. did at this moment is most welcome but at the same time we also need to understand that we have to look at a large and longer-term story. For example, at the moment there is another great opportunity in the MSME sector. It is in great distress and many are on the verge of closure finding it extremely difficult to survive. Now,



I think we can merge MGNREGA and MSME sector. Why can't we find a policy framework where MGNREGA labour be made available to the MSME sector? So, instead of that labour digging and making the same road again, they can be sent to our MSME. There are two advantages, some of them will get long-term sustainable employment, your employment will rise and this will also make the MSME survive. In the medium and long-term, it might enable the MSME to be a large industry. This kind of public policy, we are looking at a public-private partnership in a very parochial way. I think this is one great opportunity for public-private partnership where we are not looking at partnering with some large industry but a large number of MSMEs. We need to understand that these MSMEs are individually small but, small is beautiful. They together constitute India's biggest story. When they change India,

changes. I am just mentioning just one opportunity and we need to look at many other. When we are talking about innovation, at the policy level also we need to innovate.

Avanindra: Yes sir, that answer explained the situation very well. Moving on to our next question. As we know, sir, you have been closely associated with policy making institutions at different levels and unemployment has been central problem to the economy. What according to you is the correct plan of action to deal with the extremely high rates of the unemployment rates and ensuring optimal utilisation of the workforce by eliminating disguised unemployment?

Prof. Mohan: See the answer is simple! Complete the reform process we started in 1991. We have completed the first-generation reforms and the second generation is pending. As I mentioned earlier, the policy makers of that time have already mentioned in the Parliament that the 'second-generation' reforms will bring the human face to the reform process. So, interestingly, the content of the first-generation reform was all large industry entry or only those locations which had some kind of international connection and ports et cetera. The mainland India and the industry located there they were all deprived of the opportunity. The second-generation reform will actually complete the reform process and transform the complete story. Look at industrial transformation in India, we have been observing from 1991 to 2005 the successive economic survey reports suggest that industrial growth is falling. So, till 2003-04 the industrial growth was going up and after that it started following year after year. The reason is simple, unidirectional process of change as we say it in economics, always needs some kind of bottlenecks. If you want industry to grow, one needs demand for it. Even in normal circumstances, irrespective of the pandemic or the global meltdown, one needs demand. Demand can come from other sectors like rural sector. I can recall an interesting story when President Obama visited India during Dr. Singh's time as the PM. As a customary process, he was interacting with some media persons and one of them asked him that why was he visiting India. He said that he was going to India to gain market access. This was

immediately after the global meltdown. Everything the US kind of economy could do they had already tried and the truth was if they need to revive, they need market. It was India's rural economy which has the market. But before we open it for the world, we should make it available to our businesses and our people. So, opening up the agriculture sector will help the sector and the economy. Economics is about two things – Supply and demand. Supply is very important but demand is as important so one should realise it. India has demand and one should use it. Don't lose this opportunity. If some other country has advantage over us in production and supply then we have this advantage which no other country has except China. So, the path is very simple – do the second-generation reforms and this will one, complete your growth story by increasing your growth rate to a double digit. Now because this will focus on the rural sector, small scale industry and human development, this is going to benefit the larger section of the population. Any growth story or reform story is not for the fewer people but for the almost 140 crore people of this country. Close to 140 crore of this country, the growth story has to be scripted that way that it enables every segment of the population. That can only happen if you complete this process. This completion of the process will certainly bring in more employment, equity and opportunity for the entire population including both the big and small. It is easier said than done but it is doable.

Avanindra: Certainly sir! I think that it is an accurate analysis. Moving on to our next question. The banking sector has been in distress for a long time now. The NPA mess and liquidity crisis are unprecedented. What are your views on the recent policy measure such as mergers, creation of the National Asset Reconstruction Company and funding of the PSBs taken up by the Central Govt? What are the other actions that can be taken?

Prof. Mohan: See, this is another extremely important challenge that the economy of the country is facing. In much of the Banking Sector, we have been seeing higher NPA, and this has been the story for some time now. As a matter of fact, towards the end of the last century also India faced a similar situation. And we found two interesting instruments

used by the banking industry. One of them was one time settlement. So, Reserve Bank of India came out with critical guidelines for one time settlement policies, so many of the lending institutions made use of that. Another important thing was hiving off where in 2002, nation promulgated an act called SARFAISI ACT. SARFAISI Act made it possible to hive off – hive off meaning, suppose there is a *(39:23) Industry. They have boiler and few other machines. As time passes by, it'll go rotten and whatever little value remains even that will be lost. So, sometimes it becomes important that whatever your * enterprises have, whatever assets they have, some value has to be found in that. So, that is where you hand it over to some other buyer. *(39:52, translated) It is exactly the work of a junk-dealer, and junk has lots of value. That is where this idea of SARFAISI Act came in. Many of the banking institutions themselves came up with appropriate institutions for creating opportunities for hiving off. The Banking Industry made use of both these tools, and thus enabled us significantly. India was, by 2005/2006 or 2007, able to bring down its NPA significantly. And in many of the banks, I think the NPA level was less than 1.5% or even lower. So, from around 4.5% or 6%, many of the institutions were able to bring it down to 2%, 1% and 1.5%. So, that was a complete transformation. Here again, we are observing that for some time, our NPAs have risen much beyond what we saw in those days. I think it is a historic rise where we are finding both your Net NPA as well as Gross NPA levels extremely high. Now, when your NPAs begin to rise, your sustainability or survival of the banking institution becomes a challenge. A country like India for that matter no country can even think of allowing a crisis in their banking sector because of non-viability of the institution. That is what we have to look at. That is what we have been trying to do. I think here again we have been discussing about a bad bank, creation of a bad bank. I think a time has come when a bad bank has to be created. The advantage of the bad bank is that all your bad debts will be transferred to this one bank, and when they're brought under one umbrella, the idea or principle of the law of large numbers as we call in economics, it creates lots of opportunity there. So, there will be some opportunities in the bad bank, and all other banks will become free of the bad loans. That is one critical thing which needs to be

looked at. Also, current pandemic has also further created more compromises. Some of them are not visible at the moment. I think over a period of time due to the delays and moratoriums which the RBI has allowed, many of the assets have not been called NPA at the moment. The level of NPA is much higher than what we are witnessing at the moment. So, one interesting thing is that the RBI has been a great monitor. When you look at other monitors like Federal Reserve in the United States, the kind of mistakes that they committed in 2008-2009, I think RBI has been much smarter than Federal Reserve and many other institutions. So, one interesting thing that the RBI has been trying to do over a period of time is Advanced Capital Adequacy norms to ensure that all kinds of bank, whether domestic or foreign or private or public, all of whom have been trying to enhance their capacities, they have been trying to enhance their capital adequacy. I think that this process has to continue. Plus, I have also been observing that some of the private sector banks have been performing better than the public sector banks, ICICI Bank and HDFC Bank particularly. These two are critical examples. So, we are finding lesser inefficiencies in these banks as compared to some of the public sector banks. I think some of the learning has to be taken from the private sector banks. And of late, we have also seen that some of the weak banks have been merged with the larger, smarter banks. I think this will also be a great enabler. So, on the whole we are on track as far as the process of correcting the NPA challenges is concerned. But now there is an additional challenge. If you look at the Budgets of last 2-3 years, you will notice that the Government of India has been making provisions of providing capital support to the Banking Sector. Generally, it has not been less than 25 thousand Crores per annum, and the hope was that we might be able to provide several times larger support from the budget itself. Given the pandemic and given the fiscal deficit kind of situation, GOI also can find its hands completely tied in supporting the Banking Industry, so those are other challenges. But certainly, we have to find a blueprint and a roadmap for ensuring that the Banking Industry moves towards improved NPA situation, and creation of a bad bank is certainly one

critical idea which needs to be implemented as soon as possible.

Avanindra: Right, sir! Coming to the last question for today's session, I would like to bring the second wave of the pandemic which is usually acknowledged as a demand side shock rather than a supply side shock for the economy. What are your views on it and what steps would you suggest to the policy-makers to improve the situation?

Prof. Mohan: See, I think it has been both a supply and demand shock. We have been talking about a 5 trillion dollar economy. So, when you are trying to create a 5 trillion dollar economy, and if you start understanding where it'll come from, one of the key issues is that since 1950, when we started planned development in India, most important driver of transformation has been investment. So, given your capital-output ratio which has ranged between 4-4.5% roughly, we have been able to mobilise for example, our current investment levels around 30% of the GDP, which means around 7.5% kind of growth is what is possible with your investment potential. Now, if you are wanting to take it to 5 trillion, the kind of growth that you need is much higher – more than double of what we are looking at today. So, for a country like India it might be around 18-19% kind of growth we need in our economy. Now, where will it come from? So, enhancing investment much beyond 30% of GDP will not be that easy. What are other areas that we need to look at? See, when you are looking at a Covid impacted economy, sometimes your short-term areas will not help. That is what we did in 1991 also. We merely did not look at the crisis, we converted that crisis into an opportunity in 1991 and that is exactly what we need to do now. So, this is a crisis and let's look at how this can be converted into an opportunity. When you are looking at these various challenges, you need to look at the interventions that are possible. This is what India needs to look at. As I have been saying time and again, start looking at your second generation reform story. When you are particularly looking at the rural segment, one key thing is that it will be a short-term



intervention. So, it will bring lots of relief to large sections of the population, and it will also be enabling us to the long-term story. Another thing is that the kind of focus that we have been observing earlier, for example, health and education – health in particular – has not been getting the kind of focus it deserves. I think much of this crisis may not have happened had we been investing in human development the way we have been wanting to. So, human development is another idea which cannot be ignored any longer for many reasons. I was just mentioning about that for a 5 trillion dollar economy, investment is one driver which will bring around 7.5% growth. Total Factor Productivity can make a maximum contribution of around 4% which also means that your current TFP is contributing around 1.5%, which means around 2.5-3% odd contribution can easily be gathered from interventions which enable us in enhancing TFP. Human Capital is another critical idea, and when you say Human Capital it includes human development interventions and health. Because see, health has been a huge compromise for India. It is one of the biggest reasons for bringing families and people below poverty line. When hospitalisation circumstances happen, many families enter into poverty, merely because of the hospitalisation expenses. And here what we have been observing across India. There could be slight variations. In our country, close to around 70% of total health expenditure is being incurred by people, often referred

to as out-of-pocket expenses. And often it is the poorest of the poor who is spending the most. So, when somebody falls sick in the family, in rural setting in particular, there is no support available, no adequate facilities available. So, these people end up landing with the quacks. Some studies suggest that around 56.6% of the population actually goes to quack for treatment, that is their first preference. And sometimes this happens that this person might be in a position to provide you ORS, might have the capacity to provide you paracetamol, but they might end up with some kidney or hernia surgery

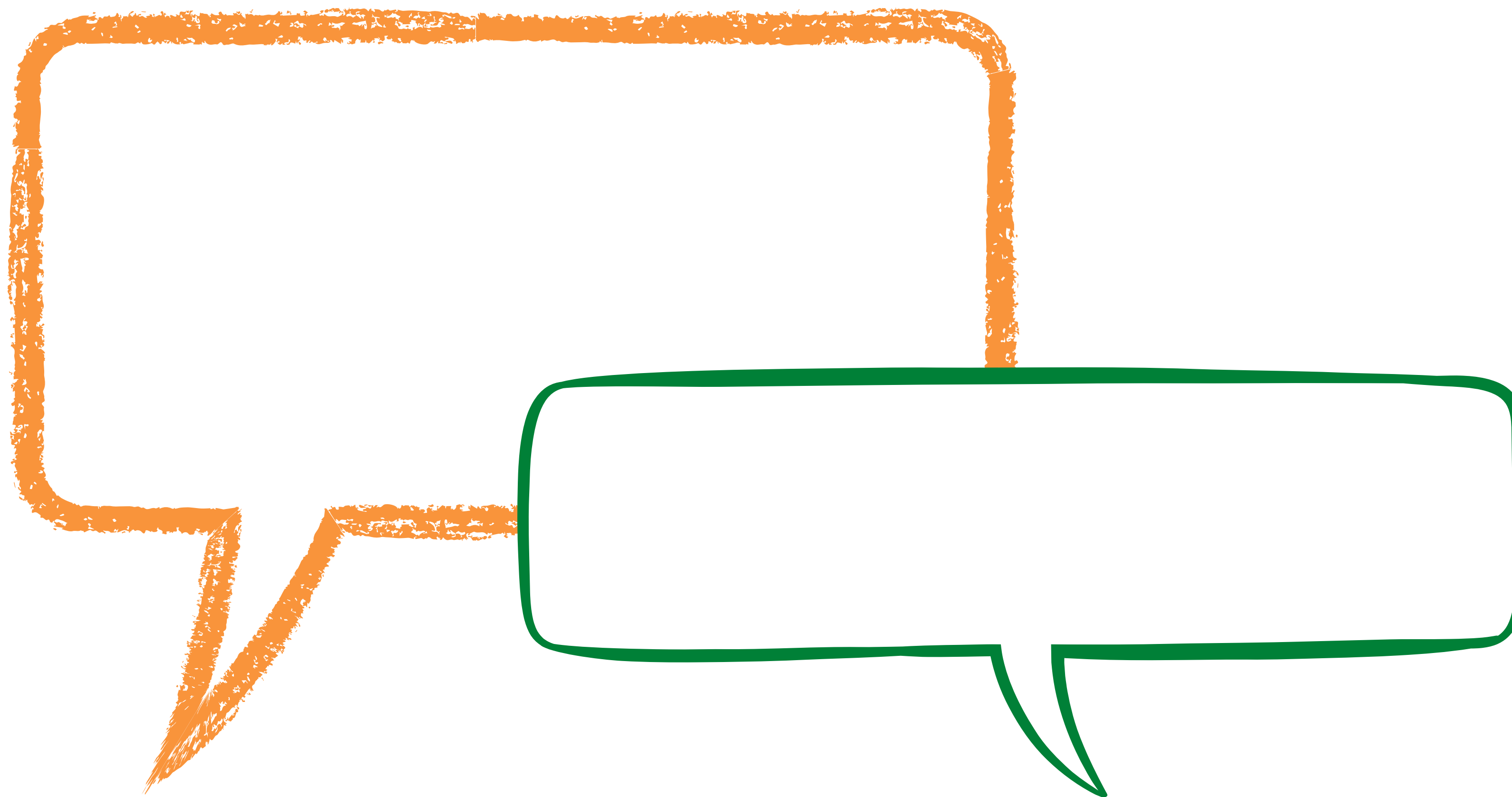
Total Factor Productivity can make a maximum contribution of around 4% which also means that your current TFP is contributing around 1.5%, which means around 2.5-3% odd contribution can easily be gathered from interventions which enable us in enhancing TFP.

and that is where the problem begins. And when the complications arise, the people start running to adequate care in cities. By that time, it is late and your cost rises. That is where sometimes you end up selling your land or seeking all kind of high-interest debts, etc. So, large number of families enter into debts. Health has been a critical challenge which we have not been able to address. This is one area where investments have to rise, where state level and national level expenditures have to rise. If we are able to rationalise our expenditure in these segments, and when I say this expenditure has to rise, the truth is that expenditure is

already happening. If State is spending 13 thousand crore rupees, people or what we are calling out-of-pocket expense money, that expenditure might be in lakhs. So, major chunk of expenditure is happening going to inappropriate providence, not contributing to Health transformation. So, we have to find ways of institutionalising those out-of-pocket expenses. Unless and until you start focusing on that segment of expenditure, merely focusing on what some state or union government is spending or what financial institutions are providing are peanuts. Don't miss the dollar for the penny. Focus on this. So, if we are able to institutionalise this, if we are able to rationalise that and if it can be converted into investment in real sector, I think lots of transformation can happen. So, I think India is a land of opportunity. States like Uttar Pradesh claim that irrigated agriculture is more than 80%. But unfortunately, a large section of that 80% of irrigated land has got blunted because of silting, etc. So, use your MGNREGA labour for cleaning or clearing those irrigation capacities which have blocked. Irrigation is again a huge contributor to your fight for a trillion dollar economy. And there again, capacities like irrigation which can be revived or retrieved in very little effort like using MGNREGA. I think that kind of synergy and convergence is something which India has to look at. ■

The Probe Debate

UP POPULATION BILL



The Proposition by Hardik Narayan Shukla

India has been witnessing several conferences and debates on how the growing population of the country led to an increase in poverty, unemployment, environmental degradation, in addition to putting excessive pressure on the limited resources. All these debates usually conclude by urging the government to bring an effective policy to check this population explosion. Hence, criticism of the recent drafts in Assam and Uttar Pradesh, aimed at population stabilisation through a robust framework of birth control, seems unusual and counterintuitive.

Let us have a brief idea about these policies to understand the

government's approach. Both these bills focus on enforcing the 'two-child policy' and further propose disincentives to those couples who have more than two children after the bills come into effect. Uttar Pradesh's population control draft debars such couples from applying for government jobs, receiving any state government subsidies, and contesting local body elections. On the other hand, people conforming to the law will get several attractive incentives like increments (in case of public servants), health insurance, concessions on house loans and property purchase, maternity/paternity leave with salary, tax rebates, etc. In the case of a single child, the incentives go ahead to include free education till graduation level and preference in admissions,

etc. The draft also contains some reasonable exceptions like multiple births in second pregnancy and disability of children, etc. Also, comments of the citizens on the draft legislation were invited till 19 July to take them into account and refine the provisions further. This also promoted a healthy discourse on the subject. Assam's legislation will also be on the same lines as indicated by its chief minister.

The 'two-child policy' is not a new experiment. Several major Indian states like Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Gujarat, and Maharashtra have already



been practising this since the early 2000s in some form or the other, especially concerning eligibility for contesting in local body elections. The only innovation Uttar Pradesh has introduced is to make the incentive-disincentive system more defined and strict, to make birth control an attractive and healthy step to take – in personal as well as the interest of the state. Is it fair to completely dismiss this positive step taken by the most populous state of the country, with more than 166 million people?

In the case of Assam, the demographic dividend in the state is disturbing. The chief minister has expressed concern over the haphazard rise in population in a few pockets of the state. Similar legislation is therefore essential there to check the overpopulating areas and generate awareness towards responsible use of contraceptives. The Assam Government has also formed a team of 1000 young people, which will visit the vulnerable areas and give impetus to the awareness drive by supplying contraceptives and informing the natives about the benefits of birth control.

The draft clearly defines how the state government will directly play a role in supporting and monitoring the stabilisation of the population. A special fund will be maintained to provide for all the incentives and provisions stated in the bill. The government will also ensure the supply of contraceptives to every couple. The delivery system of health services will be strengthened to

prevent all maternal and infant mortality deaths. All these measures will empower women with better access to healthcare and the availability of a wide number of contraceptives to choose from.

As already mentioned, the major focus of these bills is to curb the fertility rate (the average number of children that a woman can bear throughout her reproductive years at a given age). With the effective implementation of this act, Uttar Pradesh targets to reduce the fertility rate to 2.1 by 2026 from the current fertility rate (2.7). This will enable UP to attain the replacement level fertility (where the population remains more or less constant). While Assam already has a fertility rate closer to the national average (2.3), it aims to check the rapid growth in a few regions to maintain even demography in the state. The success of these legislations will help the country as a whole to achieve the Sustainable Development Agendas 2030.

The fact that limited economic and ecological resources cannot sustain a large population is widely accepted. In the case of states like Uttar Pradesh, overpopulation is the root cause of a variety of social problems. A significant section of the population is deprived of the necessities to ensure survival like food, water, shelter, and electricity. They are engulfed in the vicious cycle of poverty which leads to an increase in a wide range of interrelated problems like malnutrition, unemployment, diseases, crime rates, and domestic abuse and lays the foundation of an under-developed state.

Thus, putting pause over the rapid and unorganised growth of

 *Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath*



population is crucial for the development of any state. The population control legislation has the broad aim of bringing the growth rate to a level where all the resources can be



equitably distributed to support the needs of every individual. This will enable greater prosperity among a large section of people, eventually making the state prosperous and developed.

In addition to this, environmental degradation and exploitation will also decrease considerably as there will be no unnecessary pressure on the resources.

Lastly, we must see this population control legislation as a positive step towards addressing a grave issue. Mere debates on population explosion are pointless if they are not followed by actionable laws with achievable goals. As the success of any law is determined by public participation, it is our responsibility to cooperate with the state in the effective implementation of these laws.

The Opposition by Tanishque Gedam

The Draft Uttar Pradesh Population Control Bill in a way is a list of incentives and disincentives targeted at controlling the population of the state. Multiple experts have claimed that the bill is coercive and does not rely on modern methods of controlling the population, rather it creates restrictions and negative implications for people who breach the limit on the number of children a couple can bear. Proponents of the bill claim that it is a much-needed step since an extremely large population has become a perennial problem for India, impeding its growth, creating competition for resources, and making it difficult for the state to dispense its duties. While this argument cannot be disputed on its own, however, it shall be erroneous to view it in isolation. A closer examination reveals that the Indian population growth is stabilising. Multiple National Health and Family Surveys have objectively concluded that the Total Fertility Rate(TFR) has

been declining almost in all Indian states. This was corroborated by Former Union Health Minister Mr. Harsh Vardhan, last year. He said. "Even though India's population has increased from 36 crores in 1951 to 121.02 crores in 2011, the country has witnessed a significant decline in both fertility and mortality. The crude birth rate which was recorded at 40.8 per 1000 in 1951, has declined to 20.0 in 2018, and the TFR has declined from 6.0 in 1951 to 2.2 in 2015-16. This is indeed a remarkable decline. So many states in India have attained replacement level TFR without coercive restrictions like the ones in the bill. Proponents of the bill claim that the bill is a solution to an impending "population explosion," however, several experts have refuted such assertions. Ms. Poonam Muttreja, Executive Director of the Population Foundation of India, recently clarified that concern of a population explosion is a popular conjecture, without any dedicated evidence at the global, national, or state level. This gives us an understanding of the problem at hand, one, that population control can be undertaken effectively without imposing restrictions on the number of children a couple can bear, and two, that India has made significant progress in stabilising its population, thereby abetting the risk of a population explosion, meaning that a policymaker cannot justify his or her actions by citing a non-existent threat.

Restrictive measures themselves have proved to be catastrophic, as in the case of China. Years after rescinding the birth control measures, the fertility rate remained very low, the workforce of the country shrank and the overall population was rapidly aging. India must learn from the Chinese experience and adopt its learning as hindsight in population control. Such policies manifest cruelly for girl-children. In China, the orthodox preference for a male child, coupled with the restrictions resulted in a high number of girl infants being abandoned or killed. This worsened the sex ratio. India is plagued with similar problems. Uttar Pradesh's child sex ratio as per the 2011 census is only 899 as compared to Kerala's 964 and Meghalaya's 970. The anticipation that a birth-restrictive policy will lead to the perpetuation of the vice of female infanticide is trepidation that the bill completely ignores.

The 1994 Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (UN 1994) provided us with two key lessons: one, that restrictive birth control measures are counterproductive for the demography; and two, that the rational policy consensus holds the view that "education is the best contraceptive." It is well known that education enables women to have more autonomy over their reproductive health. Educated women are likely to have lesser children as compared to uneducated women. Naturally, the focus of the bill should have been to improve the condition of education in the state. The Yogi

government's financial allocation to the education sector is a positive move, however, much more is needed. Sex education must be given additional importance in the curriculum. India must devise plans to empower women in family planning & decision making. Increased penetration of education over time will lead to a natural decrease in TFR, avoiding undesirable ramifications.

Finally, abortion, which is a key component of population control finds little mention in the bill. A population planning legislation for India must contain provisions to decrease TFR, Infant Mortality Rate

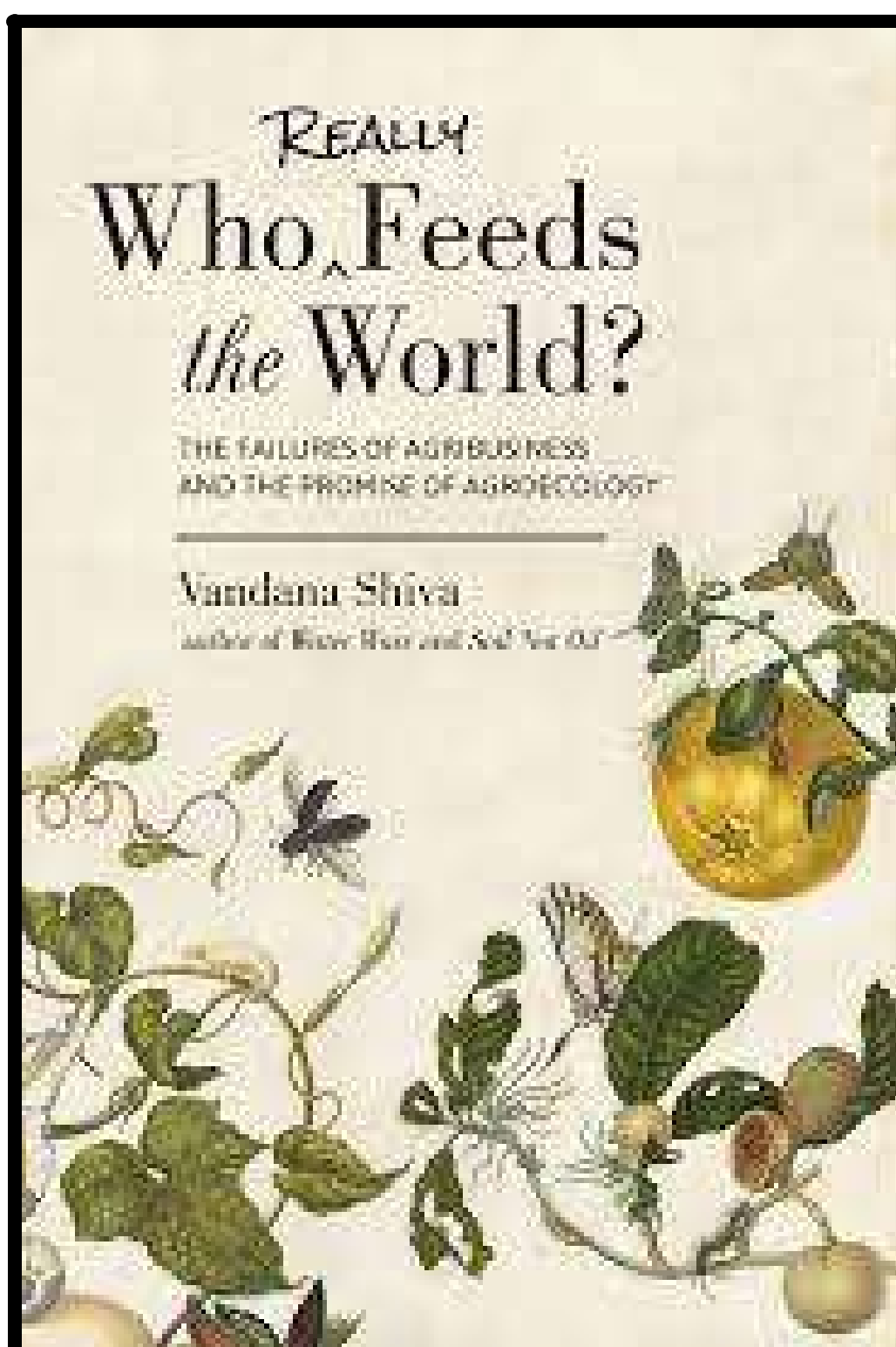
The anticipation that a birth-restrictive policy will lead to the perpetuation of the vice of female infanticide is trepidation that the bill completely ignores.

(IMR), and Maternal Mortality Rate(MMR). The UP bill mentions reducing these rates as a key aspiration, however, it does little to tackle unintended pregnancies which significantly contribute to IMR & MMR. In times when contraception proves to be inadequate, abortion is the safe harbour that a family can and must use to avoid unintended pregnancies. The Abortion policy in India has several lacunae some of them are lack of reliable statistics, the social stigma involved in abortion that prevents couples from undergoing the procedure, uninformed medical practitioners/volunteers, high cost, inadequate state intervention in the dispensation of the procedure, etc. Such obstructions must be dealt with

on a priority basis to tackle IMR and MMR. While India has registered a steep decline in both IMR and MMR, a large part of the problem remains untackled. Improved ease of access to abortion shall be a major step in the right direction. This was rightly affirmed in the National Population Policy of 2000. ■

Key Facts about the Bill

- **Focus on 'two-child policy'** through a stringent system of incentives and disincentives.
- Aims to bring down the Total Fertility Rate(TFR) to replacement level(2.1) till 2026.
- **Creation of State Population Fund** to implement all the provisions of this Act.
- **Underlines the obligations of State Government** to establish maternity centres, distribute contraceptives through Healthcare Centres and encourage it's use, spread awareness about family planning
- Introduction of Population Control in School Curriculum



Who Really Feeds the World? by Vandana Shiva

Kushagra Kulshrestha

★★★★☆
(3.5/5 star rating)

Vandana Shiva's conceptualised notions on everything in an economy associated with agriculture and an ecology nurturing agriculture questions its foundations.

A class 9 NCERT on Green Revolution introduces the students with an unexplored conclusion, "a dramatic example of how the input of greater knowledge in the form of improved production technologies can rapidly increase the productivity of scarce land resources". If the Green Revolution was able to feed the country, why do we still import food and a question eluded in the current farm bill debates, to what extent do we need private players in agriculture. The discourse, "Who Really Feeds the World" is not a question, but a conclusion, laudably a very different conclusion from the NCERT. This difference has been given space in the book itself, "as different paradigms of knowledge" exist and cease to exist in shaping agriculture.

But the champion of green justice for food, Vandana Shiva's paradigm is much more diverse, non-violent and reciprocating back to nature, she uses the term agroecology for it. The text written in a free hand starts with an introduction, describing these

different narratives, the barriers for eco-friendly agriculture and what is costing humanity with the "militarized, reductionist and mechanistic" industrial agriculture on Earth's expenses. These are chemical intensive and can be simply called slow poisons enjoying a paid and voluntary usage. She introduces her idea that all in all, biodiversity, in the form of living soil, pollinators, living seeds and localised small scale farming feeds us as opposed to monocultures requiring high intensity of agricultural inputs. These inputs then become the recipe of hunger and poverty, with a wealth flow to the big corporations. All these means of agroecology in detail, form the better part of the book. At two points the book becomes more captivating, one, when she derails the successes credited to the Green Revolution, not just in India, but takes the case studies of Mexico and Kenya and the other, when the Genetically Modified (GM) seeds and their corporate control through patents are vehemently mortified. How Agent Orange is served on your plates with the virtue of institutionalised funding for "development" is an eye-opener. There is also a shade of ecofeminism in the book emphasising women's role

and their indigenous handling of the farm, common negligence.

The book's syntax is reasonable, considering Vandana Shiva's decades of environmental activism and fight against transnational corporations' vicious ambitions. But some factual claims lack references and there is a repetition of the idea delivered earlier, possibly due to the interconnectedness of the topic at hand, food connected with agriculture with industry with the consumer and then with food again.

Vandana Shiva's conceptualised notions on everything in an economy associated with agriculture and an ecology nurturing agriculture questions its foundations. They might be contentious, but her narrative of cooperation and not colonisation, of celebration of the planet's multifarious treasures and a greater focus on parochial efforts, compels us to reevaluate our approach so far, at a time when agriculture in India has proved its resilience when every other sector of the economy has convulsed in the pandemic times.

The book encompasses various facets of agriculture and food production-economy, organic farming, industry, etc.

The book filled with lots of insights will surely be a good read.

POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE



Human Attitude and
Development

Mr Mayur Bohra

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An Ethiopian Maze
Varsha Valsan

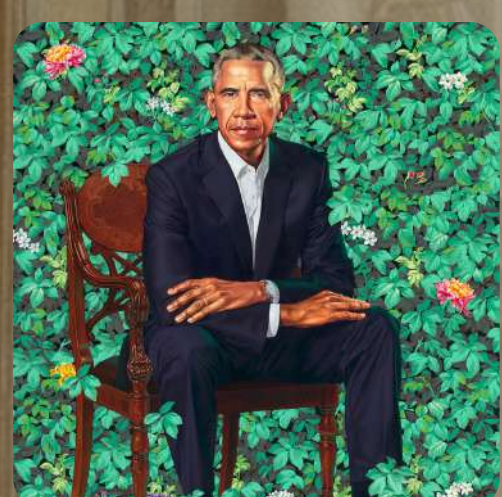
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The Spyware
Infecting the World

Shreya Shukla

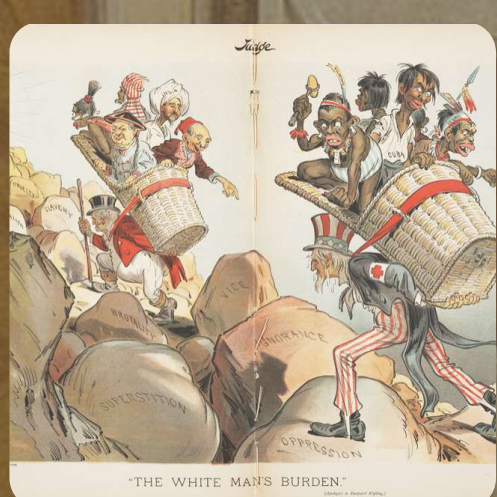
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Book Review: A
Promised Land

Preet Sharma

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Colonialism: Curse
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In Memorium:
Danish Siddiqui

Sumit Singh

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Human Attitude and Development

Mayur Bora



Mr Mayur Bora is a well-known author, social commentator and motivational speaker. He took voluntary retirement from a senior position in NABARD recently in order to devote more time for his passion of reading and writing.

Academics and policymakers sometimes find it difficult to restrain themselves from slipping into the restrictive straitjacket of theory. As a result, their analysis of the impact of human attitude on the process of state-induced development from a practical perspective remains somewhat infirm and indirect. Their difficulty clearly underscores the ease with which subtleties of this ticklish relationship between human attitude and development get foregrounded. This apparent intricacy or messiness in the connection does not indicate its lack of importance or tenuousness. Rather, even at the risk of being branded as a prisoner of platitude, I would prefer to stick my neck out and state in unequivocal terms that both, to a large extent, are inextricably intertwined. At least, many watershed historical events of human civilization from time immemorial go a long way in buttressing that fact. The relationship between people's attitude and developmental

process spanned over millennia as well as across the continents.

Any dispassionate observer of human behaviour would agree that the positive or negative effect of human attitude on development is increasingly getting sharpened with the passage of time. As a result, in modern times, no one, either directly or remotely connected with development can afford to undermine the importance of an attitude of the people, for whom those developmental initiatives have been undertaken. Needless to say, if those development initiatives pertain to rural areas, different attitudinal responses of the people can make that pendulum of performance oscillate more vigorously between the two extremities of spectacular success and disquieting defeat. As life can't be described only in black and white due to the preponderance of shades of grey in between, similarly, the developmental process gets stuck in the midst of success and failure most of the time. Of late, in the Indian context, it has turned out to be a colossal challenge for scholars,

academics, politicians, government officials, bankers and social activists to tilt that pendulum towards the common goal of public welfare. As far as the results of many developmental initiatives are concerned, the writing on the wall as well as on the consciousness of the educated and enlightened class is loud and clear. It is mixed, to say the least.

Although the mixed nature of results is due to several commonly known factors bedeviling the whole process of development, our efforts here would be limited to the study of the attitude of the common people towards different developmental endeavours of the State. In any democratic welfare state, the government plays the most important role in ushering in various developmental programmes with the ultimate objective of ensuring the livelihood security of its disadvantaged and

marginalised citizens. Moreover, other agencies of the State like the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA), District Industries & Commerce Centre (DI & CC) and financing banks also play their roles in bringing about development in the lives of the people at the district level. But one must try to observe it from the perspective of the rural people to be able to objectively analyse their responses towards different developmental initiatives. At the same time, one has to be extremely careful not to be swept off the feet by the obvious overtones of shrill demands emanating from the have-nots in all the cases. But this challenge of being firmly grounded and impartial in examining the whole issue is easier said than done.

It is quite natural that people have huge expectations from the State. Although the degree varies widely across the regions in the country or across the districts in any state, the role of the State as the giver of some benefits for the betterment of the people has remained singularly unassailable so far. Even the liberalized economic regime of the country with a strong emphasis on the interplay of market forces has not been able to undermine the prime importance of the State in the minds of the people. On the other hand, owing to the regular announcement of a plethora of new poverty alleviation schemes and other welfare measures often with a hidden political motive, its importance has increased exponentially in recent times. In the backdrop of this phenomenon, it is becoming increasingly

difficult for the government to satisfy the aspirations of the people. It is extremely interesting to note that the aspiration of the people is directly proportional to the number of schemes announced by the government.

Ironically, nowadays, people's aspirations have reached such a level that it has become extremely tough for any government to adequately address their genuine and perceived needs. The extraordinarily inflated domain of the perceived needs of people has brought in so much emotional rhetoric in the whole process of development that genuine analysis has often proved to be either elusive or ephemeral. Another disheartening fact is the growing disconnect between people's rights with their bounden duties. The majority of the rural people are so bogged down by the 'rights' syndrome that any serious attempt to talk about their duties is either summarily dismissed or disdainfully dislodged to the periphery. Various rights groups have successfully usurped this powerful feeling to unite the people in order to fight for their rights. There is no denying the fact that in any democracy, the fight for people's rights is a legitimate way of finding a way out for addressing their

needs. But those fights or agitations should not degenerate to an extent, where it may raise doubt about their very necessity in the minds of sensible and educated citizens. Unfortunately, some movements in the country have taken such a shape, due to which, the actual objectives of many government schemes have turned out to be a mirage for a sizeable section of the population.

Today, anyone going to a village for a programme is invariably greeted with a common question. What can you offer to us? It is quite natural for people to give vent their pent-up feelings by asking such questions which apparently seem to be rude and crude. In some cases, the non-delivery of earlier promises makes people cynical and they prefer to ask direct questions about what they can expect to get from the programmes. But in many other cases, people irrespective of their previous experiences, either positive or negative, prefer to extract maximum to satisfy their own vested interests without trying to have



 Women working in a wheat field

a holistic view of the programme for its overall success. For example, it is a common sight when people clamour for early payment of their wages in MGNREGA schemes with absolute unconcern for the success of the scheme in which they are working. Various agencies of the State should also try to go an extra mile in clarifying the doubts so that a judicious synthesis between the rights and duties of the people can be ensured. We have come across some occasions when a section of the educated people of a rural area itself is somewhat sceptical about the efficacy of this kind of initiative, as it leads to a feeling of complacency among the common masses. It is more or less a common human tendency that when the incidence of anything is a *fait accompli*, complacency takes a sinister turn and ultimately results in laziness and idleness. Whenever someone visits a rural area, the laziness of our people involved in some common physical work is too palpable to miss. Of course, there are a few good examples here and there where people accomplish their jobs with discipline, diligence and dignity. But the challenge lies for everyone to translate those isolated instances into a more common phenomenon in the larger interest of the success of the schemes.

However, while trying to have a critical look at the attitudinal role of the rural people regarding the whole paradigm of development, other important challenges hindering the process must also be addressed simultaneously in order to have the desired effect.

In the absence of that, there is a danger that the whole process of critical analysis of people's role in the development process may be branded as a blatantly disingenuous exercise. It has been observed that people have broadly two delivery channels from the State's side. One of them is directly from the government departments and very often, it takes the shape of some assistance or subsidy. The other delivery channel is from the financial institutions, which have an obligation as well as a sense of duty to help any project by way of providing credit at the right time subject to the fulfilment of certain terms and conditions. People often have a feeling that there is great room for improvement in respect of both the channels. Due to the presence of a large number of poor people in rural areas, the process of doling out subsidies tends to get slightly off the mark. Moreover, the credit delivery channel appears to be somewhat more susceptible to get clogged in certain parts of the country because of many bad experiences of the past in that region, which also adversely affects any project with room for bank credit. So 'the tyranny of geography' matters substantially in the development sector also.

All said and done, if we can bring about the much-needed synergy between various government departments and banks on the one hand and sincerity and dedication of the common people, on the other hand, the process of development would have fewer obstacles in its road ahead. The more obstacles we can successfully overcome, the more sustainable smiles can be ensured on the face of rural India. The task ahead is undoubtedly tough, but not insurmountable. ■

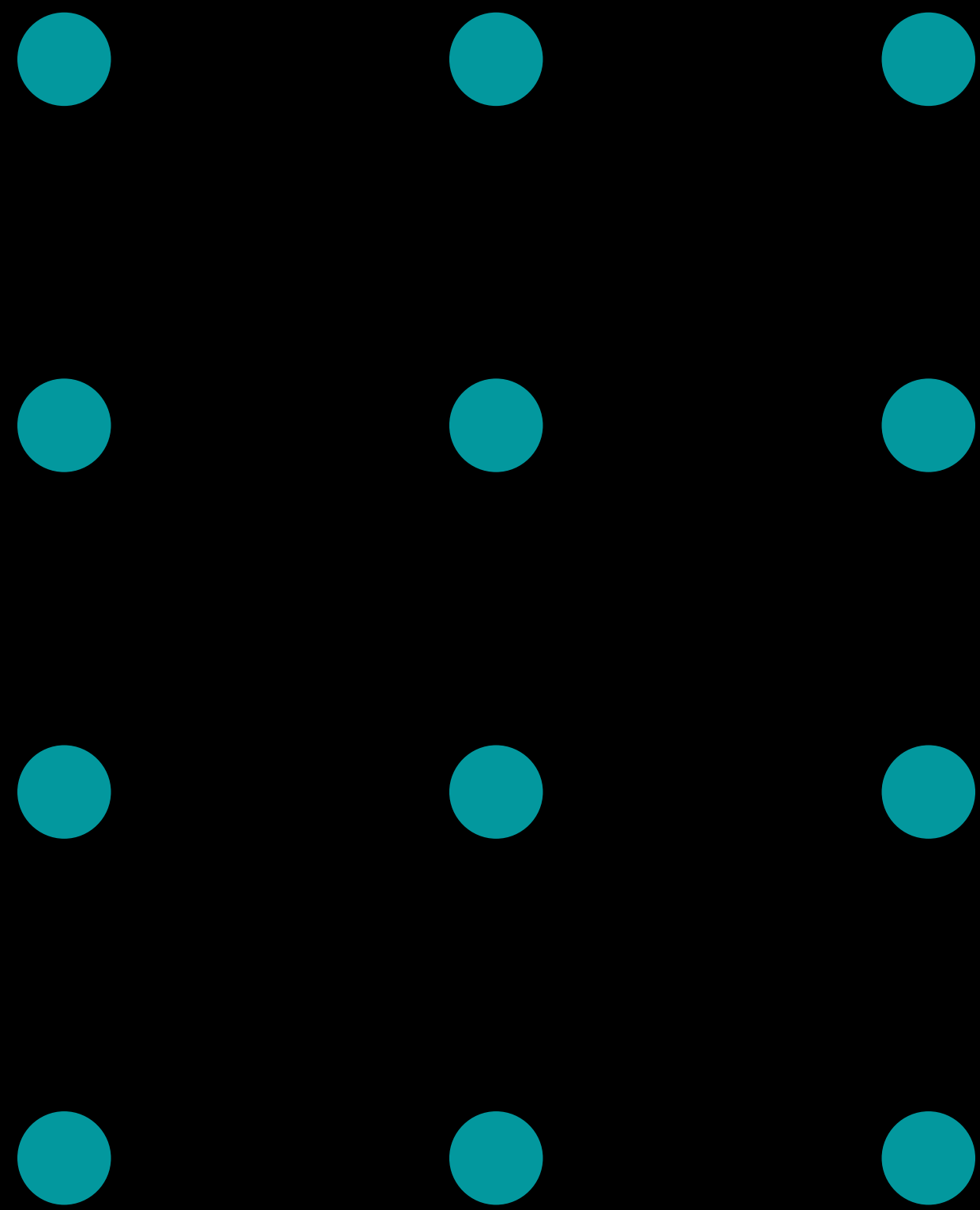
An Ethiopian Maze

Varsha Valsan

Something of a massive enormity is happening in Ethiopia. Something which has accumulated over time has finally burst out. Ethiopia is now at war with its own territory of Tigray unleashing a malevolent phase. Since the magnitude of the humanitarian crisis happening there is inescapable, the predicament never loses its significance.

The Genesis of Conflict

Ethiopia is situated in the horn of the African region and its strategic importance is more or less neglected in the international community. By annexing neighbouring territories, Ethiopia, whose administration was done by the Amhara people, got away from the colonization process. But this resulted in present-day Ethiopia with its extensive diversity. Ethiopia is a mosaic of ethnicities and diverse languages. Since the Amhara people dominated the demography, the other minorities were never at the forefront. In this scenario, the neighbouring region of Eritrea was absorbed and the Eritreans became inferior citizens just like the Ethiopian minorities. This created tensions and for liberating the Eritrean people Eritrean people's Liberation Front (EPLF) was found. Then



came the dark era for Ethiopia.

In the late 1970s Col. Mengistu Haile Mariam took up the baton and launched what he dubbed as 'red terror'. In response to that, multiple militias were formed in the region apart from the EPLF. The most prominent among them was the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF). The malignancy of the Mengistu epoch is unveiled in an Africa Rights Watch report 'Evil Days: Thirty Years of War and Famine in Ethiopia'. The militias formed a coalition to topple Mengistu's regime. This was a big deal creating an independent country of Eritrea and leaving behind TPLF in the saddle.

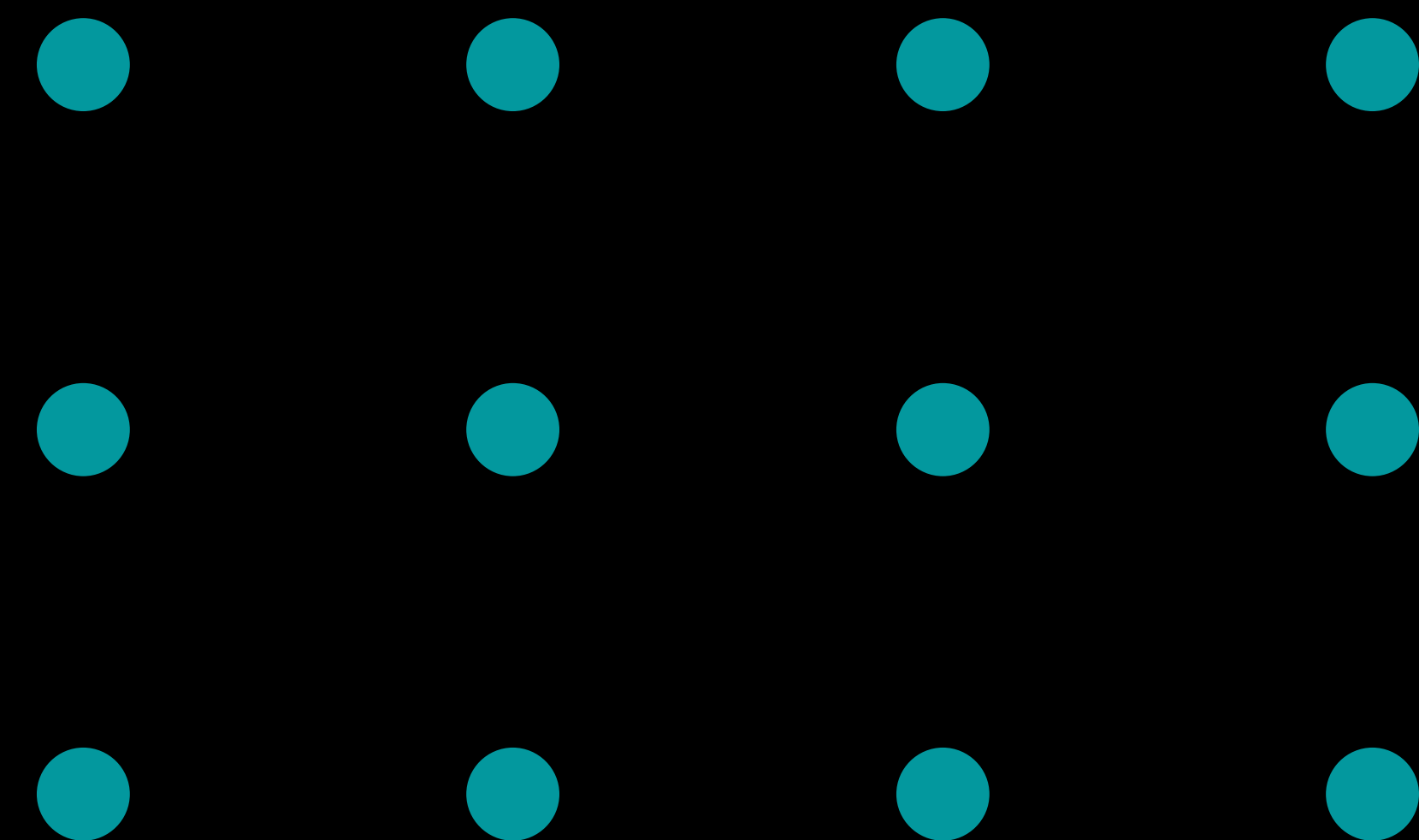
Even though the Tigrayan people made only 6% of the country's population they remained dominant in Ethiopian politics. Meles Zenawi from the TPLF became the first prime minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and formed states based on ethnicities with some autonomy. Even Though TPLF and EPLF were together to fight against Mengistu, after the



formation of independent states of Ethiopia and Eritrea, TPLF entered into a war with Eritrea and this continued for years as a perplexing political reality. The domineering character of TPLF in politics was no longer tolerated by other Ethiopian minorities. The TPLF pre-eminence was entitled to a disproportionate distribution of power and an illegitimate form of governance. Moreover, Oromos, the largest ethnic group, was unfailingly kept out of influence in the government. These all led to a serious unacceptance towards TPLF.

Peace Zest to War Zeal

In the wake of anti-government feelings and massive protests Abiy Ahmed, a peace enthusiast from the Oromo ethnic group assumed power. This made the TPLF upset. Abiy is best known for his reforms. His fiat ended the war with Eritrea, by entering into a peace treaty. By 2018, he improved the country with substantial reforms including the emending of uneven power



distribution and placing Ethiopian interest over the diversified ethnic aspirations. The country was entering into a state of peace during this time. This vivacity for peace and unity brought Abiy the Nobel Peace Prize and he became the beloved of the international community.

But the paradigm shift from TPLF to Abiy was never a smooth process in the internals of Ethiopia. The army chief of Ethiopia was shot dead at Addis Ababa, while he was preventing a coup trying to break down Abiy's administration in the Northern Amhara region. Ethiopian singer Hachalu

Hundessa, a member of the Oromo ethnic group was also killed. Just like that, the country dropped into a morass of atrocities and ethnic rivalries from the verge of peace. In addition to this Abiy formed a coalition named the prosperity party and removed TPLF members from some of the official posts. But TPLF kept hope in elections to be held to regain power. But Abiy postponed the elections due to the pandemic. This made the situation even worse. TPLF responded with a regional election which left both the federal government of Abiy and the regional government of TPLF as illegitimate for each other and serious tensions began there. Following this, Tigray was accused of attacking a federal government's military base. On November 4th 2020 Abiy commanded a military confrontation in the region of Tigray and Ethiopia's ally is Eritre !

The Civil Unrest

Tigray lies with Eritrea on the north and the rest of Ethiopia on the south making it vulnerable to attacks. Tigray's capital Mekelle was seized by Ethiopian forces in November of 2020. The eight-month-long war is still going on with vigour and territorial gains. There are strong allegations of mass rape, famine, attack on civilians and extrajudicial killings in both Tigray and Ethiopia. Two million people got displaced from their homeland and this indubitably signals a full-fledged migration crisis. People migrate in thousands to neighbouring Sudan.

Refugees are now awfully facing the insufficiency of nutritious food and other aids. The UN had warned northern Ethiopia of a potential famine which is now a true story. Telecommunications have been blacked out baffling the aid groups. It's almost impossible to get true information about the condition of civilians and provide them assistance. But with blaming each other for communication blackouts and other complications, what gets destroyed is the common lives.

Tigray recaptured the capital on June 28th of 2021. In response to the aggravated military manoeuvres of Tigray, Ethiopia declared a unilateral ceasefire which Tigray dubbed as a 'Joke'. Albeit it disagreed at first, Tigray then put forward a list of conditions to be met for formalizing the ceasefire. These included the withdrawal of Amharan and Eritrean forces from Tigray, provisions for humanitarian aid, restoring telecommunications and establishing an independent body for investigating war crimes. After three weeks Abiy backed off from the ceasefire making it a thwarted attempt. Since Tigray's fertile lands are held by Amhara, Tigray is colossally planning to retake all of its territories tempting Amhara to respond in a more detrimental manner. Eritrean interference exacerbated the situation but Eritrea denied the allegation that they had deployed forces in Tigray. But there was enough evidence of military support by Eritrea. There are accusations on Tigray that they are training child soldiers. Recently the United Nations Human Rights Council adopted a resolution urging the withdrawal of Eritrean troops but Ethiopia rejected the resolution calling it 'premature'. Lately, Ethiopia

has decided to deploy more troops in the disputed border territories. Something which demands heed in this scenario is the depleting military resources and arsenals of both parties. Tigray is never ready to give up even when Abiy is ready for a talk.

Conclusion

It's definitely a setback for Abiy and it is how the west wants to detail it. But the historical background of why the TPLF is thrown out of power and why the whole of Ethiopia is united against the TPLF is abandoned. But this is where we can find a description of the conflict different from mainstream political analysis. With the media reports, the number of Tigray sympathizers are escalating. But the atrocities done by Tigray are lurking far behind the daily reports of the situation. Lately, Abiy Ahmed has won a landslide victory in the federal elections confuting the assumption of a potential backlash against him. This indicates what Ethiopia truly wants.

A group of analysts shows a new side questioning the cause of conflict. According to them, it's not a mere query about regional autonomy or ideological differences between TPLF and Abiy. It's more about the dominance over Ethiopia's economy and resources: potential imperial aggression by Tigray. But since the atrocities began the country's economy is cracking. In this




situation, Ethiopia has decided to focus more on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance dam which is a cynosure for Africa. It will be the biggest hydroelectric dam in Africa once it is finished and the dam is to be built right at the Sudan-Ethiopia border on the Blue Nile River. Since Ethiopia's economy is in its declining phase such a massive project can revitalize the growth rate making the dam prime focus. But this isn't the case for Egypt because the dam can destroy 18% of its farmlands, making the Nile sharing countries at stake. There are threats to the ongoing construction of the dam and at the respective border. The negotiations are leaving Ethiopia in a bustling state. Thus Ethiopia is now running through a maze getting more rolls of issues from every side.

The international community is cautious about the increasing magnitude of the conflict. The role of international organizations is crucial in creating a significant turn. But as of now it is more or less stumbling on its way to resolve. The United States is limiting its assistance to Ethiopia alleging it of mishandling the situation. According to Ethiopia, the European Union has misinterpreted the situation as an ethnic genocide or ethnic cleansing. African Union is urging both sides to pursue peace and uphold their responsibilities for the protection of civilians. Ethiopia initiated a peace process aiming at the disarming of TPLF and dialogue with them. The prerequisites for a peace talk are leadership respected by both sides

and a non-coercion approach. In this scenario of the country getting more divided, civilians are at risk and an endgame is essential. ■

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SPACEFARING

EXPLAINED

By Kinjal Moyal



 Jeff Bezos' space tourism company, Blue Origin, launched its New Shepard rocket



What is Spacefaring?

Spacefaring is a niche segment that provides tourists with a facility to go to space for recreational, leisure and business activities. As of now, space tourism is very expensive, and only the richest of the richest people can afford it. People will travel to space to feel zero gravity. There are three private companies, Virgin Galactic, Blue Origin and SpaceX, which will help people in exploring space. As per the auction of June 2020, tickets for Virgin Galactic cost 20-25 million, Blue Origin - \$28 million and for SpaceX, it will be \$55 million. These include the cost of accommodation and basic training in the field, for instance, what we should do in case of an emergency and the likes.

Why is Jeff Bezos in the news?

On 20 July 2021, Jeff Bezos took a land off towards space with his 3 crew members, Mark Bezos, Wally

Funk and an 18-year old Oliver Daeman. This endeavour was achieved with the help of New Shepard which was designed by Blue Origin. They claimed that their rocket will not have an environmental impact because they used the environment itself- a friendly fuel: water. In other words, when the rocket takes off to the sky, only water will be exhausted. It was planned to launch that rocket at 9:00 A.M. EDT, but they took off at 9:12 A.M. After some time, Jeff Bezos crossed the Karman line with his mates, which is proof that these 4 people actually went into space. This whole journey was of 11 minutes in total. After returning from this, Jeff Bezos exclaimed- "Best day ever!". This spaceflight is such a great success that it created history all over the world.

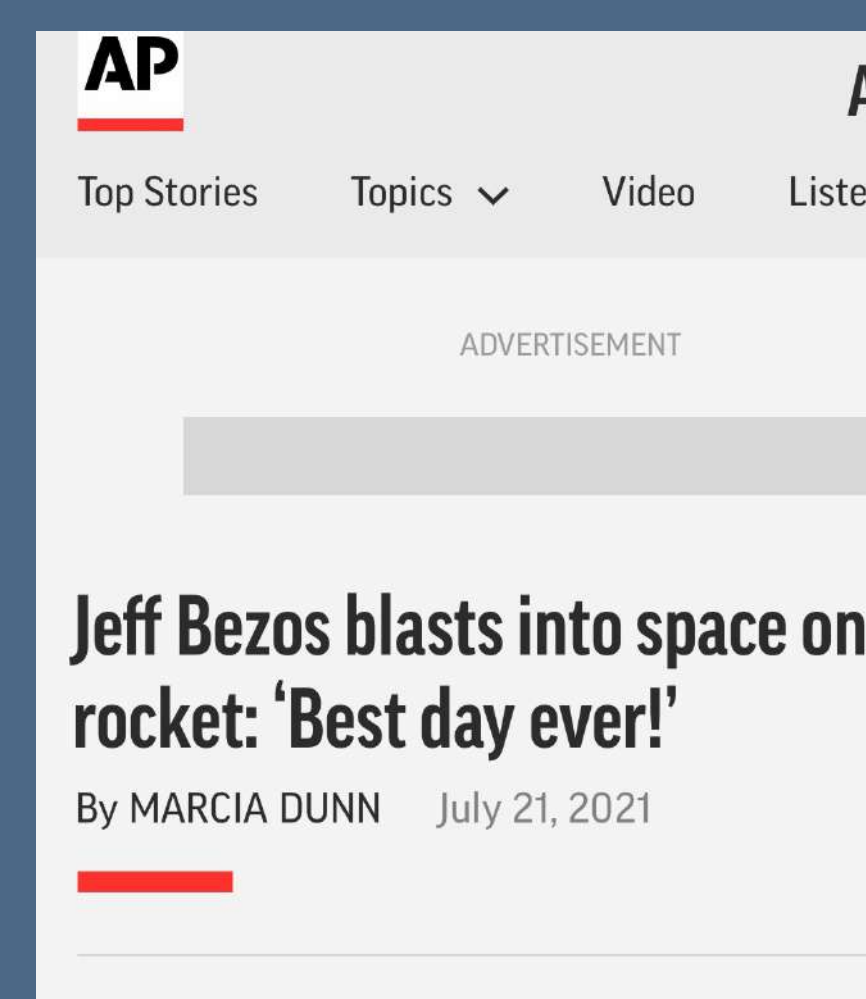
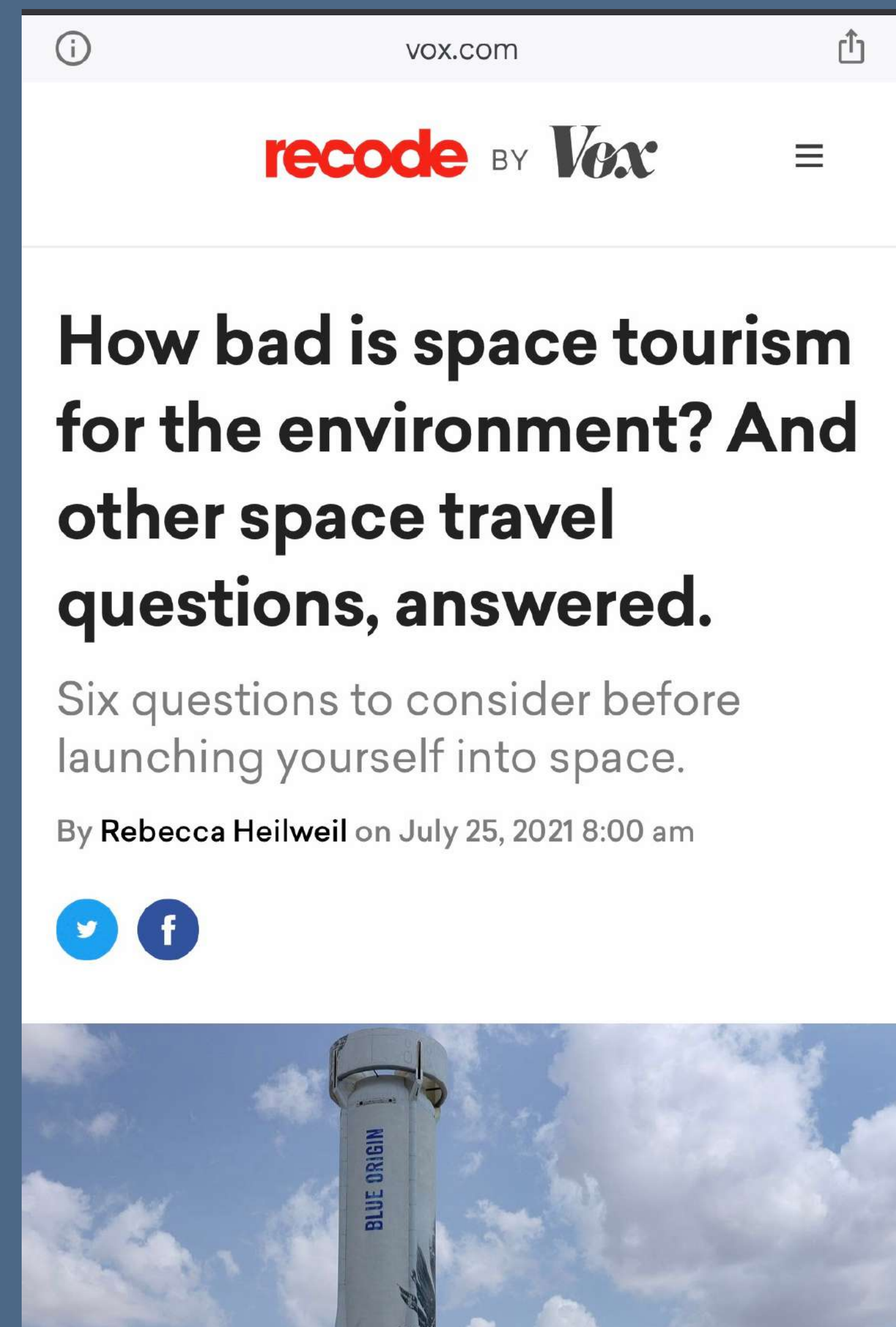
The amazing fact of this whole journey was that Funk was the oldest astronaut and was the eldest one amongst others, with 82 years of age while Daeman was the youngest, with 18 years of age.

What are the advantages of this expensive activity?

- **A step towards technological advancement:-** With the starting of space tourism, the whole economy of the world will get a hold of progress towards technology. Youngsters will also get attracted to science and technology because of spaceflight.
- **Can collect important research data:-** Through space tourism, researchers can collect some important data from space. For instance, what are the serious threats that hinder the growth of our mother planet, Earth? There are so many facts that are yet to be discovered by our research teams.
- **Challenge of Adventure:-** Spacefaring provides people with a chance to undertake the adventure. It supplies them with some thriller experience. This whole journey can be completed in 1 hour.

What are the disadvantages?

- **Impacts Environment:-** Space exploration can affect our environment badly because, at the time of take-off, spacecraft release some harmful gases such as nitrous oxide, ozone, etc. As per our scientists, ozone gas is not good for terrestrial life.
- **Expenditure:-** Space exploring journey is very expensive as a whole. Virgin Galactic costs- 20-25 million, Blue Origin costs- \$28 million and SpaceX costs- \$55million. So, we can easily conclude that only rich people can afford this huge amount.
- **Will create a wide gap in society:-** Space tourism will create inequality on a massive scale. Again, people will get divided on the basis of their income. Also, poverty will be at the same pace in underdeveloped countries. ■



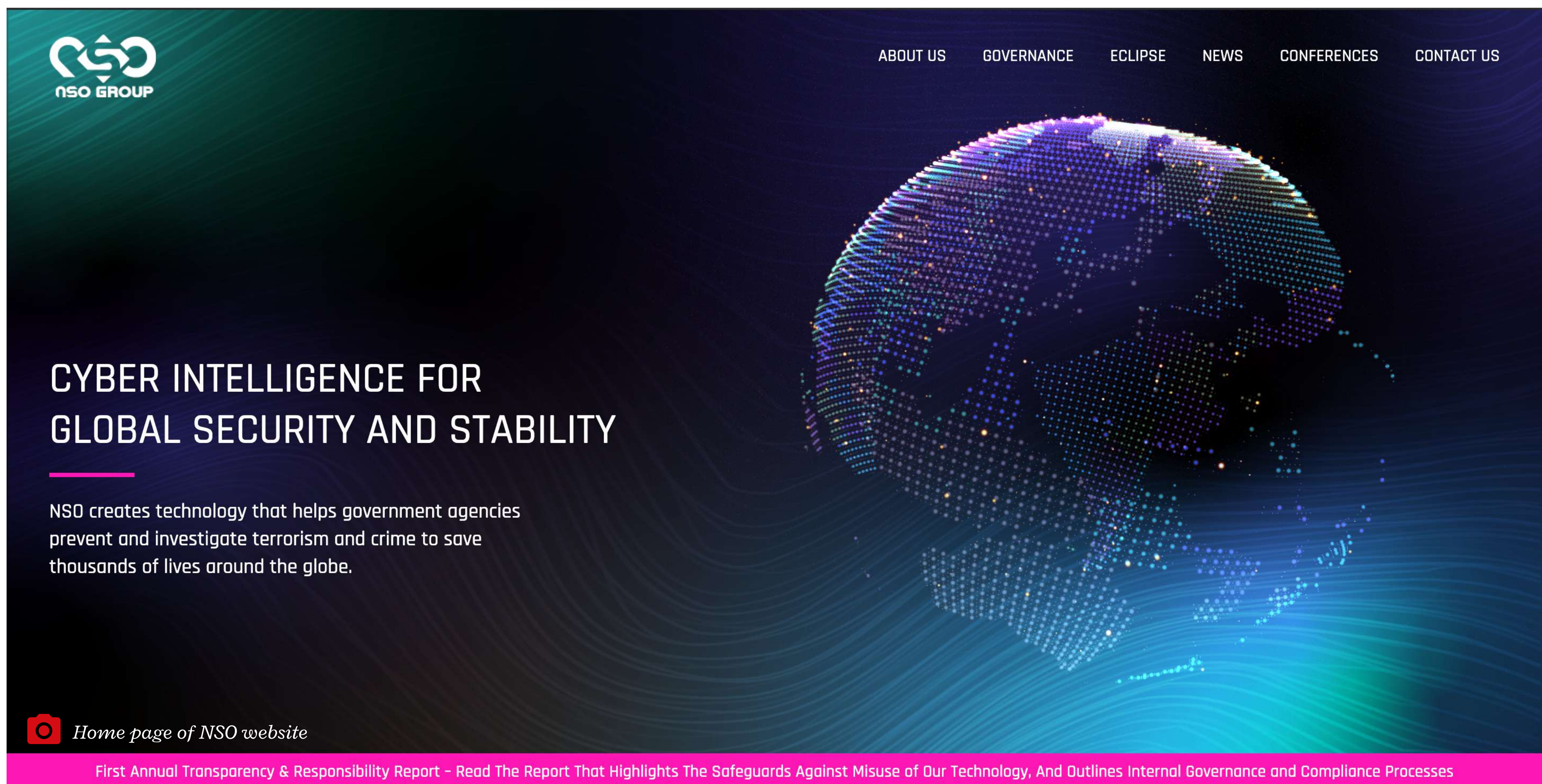


THE NEWFACE OF TECH SURVEILLANCE

Like the arrogant tamer of Pegasus, governments are ruthless in their pursuit for power in the name of security. The program turned on its head in the recent revelation by the gadfly-like collaboration of 80 journalists.

Pegasus- The Spyware Infecting the World

Shreya Shukla



The same country that boasts of the largest cybersecurity industry worth \$82 Billion also sells the highly sophisticated and discrete spyware called Pegasus. Since its birth in 1948, Israel has found itself in a precarious position surrounded by adversaries that refuse to accept its very existence, forcing it to develop an advanced hypersensitive defence. Israel was quick to transform its military into a startup incubator and subsequently a profit-making business. NSO Group Technologies is one such creation founded by Niv, Shalev and Omri, ex-members of Unit 8200, a signal intelligence (SIGINT) and code decryption unit of the Israeli Intelligence Corps.

Pegasus is a spear-phishing software, a resemblance it shares with the Greek spearman rider of the winged horse Pegasus, Bellerophon. Spear-phishing is

personalised phishing attacks disguised as familiar emails that the target is more likely to click on, infecting the device and creating an up-to-date clone of it. It is even capable of doing the same more insidiously through a missed call on WhatsApp using a security bug, getting access to everything the phone is capable of and thus, total surveillance. Be it access to the photos of the target, discreetly switching on the microphone or the camera even when not in use, access to fingerprints used to unlock the device, the end-to-end encrypted Whatsapp chats, or even the supposedly more secure Signal or Telegram chats- the entirety of a phone's internal space is susceptible to its reach. What this software is capable of makes the scariest of Black Mirror episodes look like a fairy tale. NSO says it only sells to 'vetted governments' which raises the question- Who is the Big Brother here- the governments NSO sold the

software to, NSO Group, or the Israeli government?

Double-edge Sword

Right in the early days of NSO, the technology was purchased by the Mexican government which proved successful in the capture of the infamous and the most wanted El Chapo through surveillance of the people he was most in contact with following the 2015 prison escape, his lawyers, and Kate del Castillo.

On the other hand, just two hours after Cecilio Pineda, a Mexican journalist, posted a video on Facebook talking about shady ties of local officials with gang leaders, he was murdered. His phone was infected by the software a few weeks earlier. NSO denied involvement.

Despite having categorically

denied any role, there is evidence to suggest Pegasus was also used on Jamal Khashoggi's family before and after his death. Once it was sold, the cyberweapons firm denied having anything to do with the use of the software with regard to the data collected on the targets.

India does not find itself in the best of company with autocracies and semi-democracies like Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Morocco, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Togo, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on the list of NSO's clients. Reportedly, Azerbaijan has the same number of journalists potentially targeted by the spyware as India at around 40 and is suspected to be more.

What the NSO makes is a virus, not a vaccine, the use of which substantially helps the cause of national security or political gains but at the cost of gross violation of privacy, a stunt which is convoluted to comprehend and now compromised as well.

The best of intelligence operations are the ones you and I will never learn of as secrecy is safety in the modern war-zone that is present everywhere. This makes us the hapless victims of war, subjected to the whims of temperamental governments more so than perhaps even criminals, having their way with our information unless we make it stop before it is too late.

The Sword of Damocles

The government's curiosity in people's personal lives kills

privacy, chokes liberty and threatens democracy. In many ways, a mobile phone has become a window to one's thoughts and reflection of what they believe in, making a spyware like Pegasus a radar for thoughtcrime, recording everything someone does, waiting for them to make the smallest of mistakes in the choice of words, people they meet or places they go to, to be coloured by law, framed for a serious crime and a premeditated capture.

As attractive and unsurprising it is for governments to keep an eye on people, sometimes for valid reasons that NSO speaks of, it is just as unacceptable. One way to combat this is by raising the costs of such projects for the end-user. This can be done by demanding stricter laws but how do you get the criminal to put themselves in jail? By trapping them in the trap of their own making, now this is not a case to snoop on the government as that the other governments have taken care of, which has increasingly become a Mexican standoff of intelligence gathering that makes intelligence intercepted by each just as inconsequential. The list of countries Pegasus was sold to shows that NSO helped bridge the gap between the rich and poor governments in the dirty surveillance business. If most governments engage in surveillance which isn't a new phenomenon, and has a history that predates mobile phones, computers and world wars that popularised it, there will be little to gain and a deadlock would ensue as most governments will also use highly sophisticated alternate modes for communication, and another specially planted mode for interception.

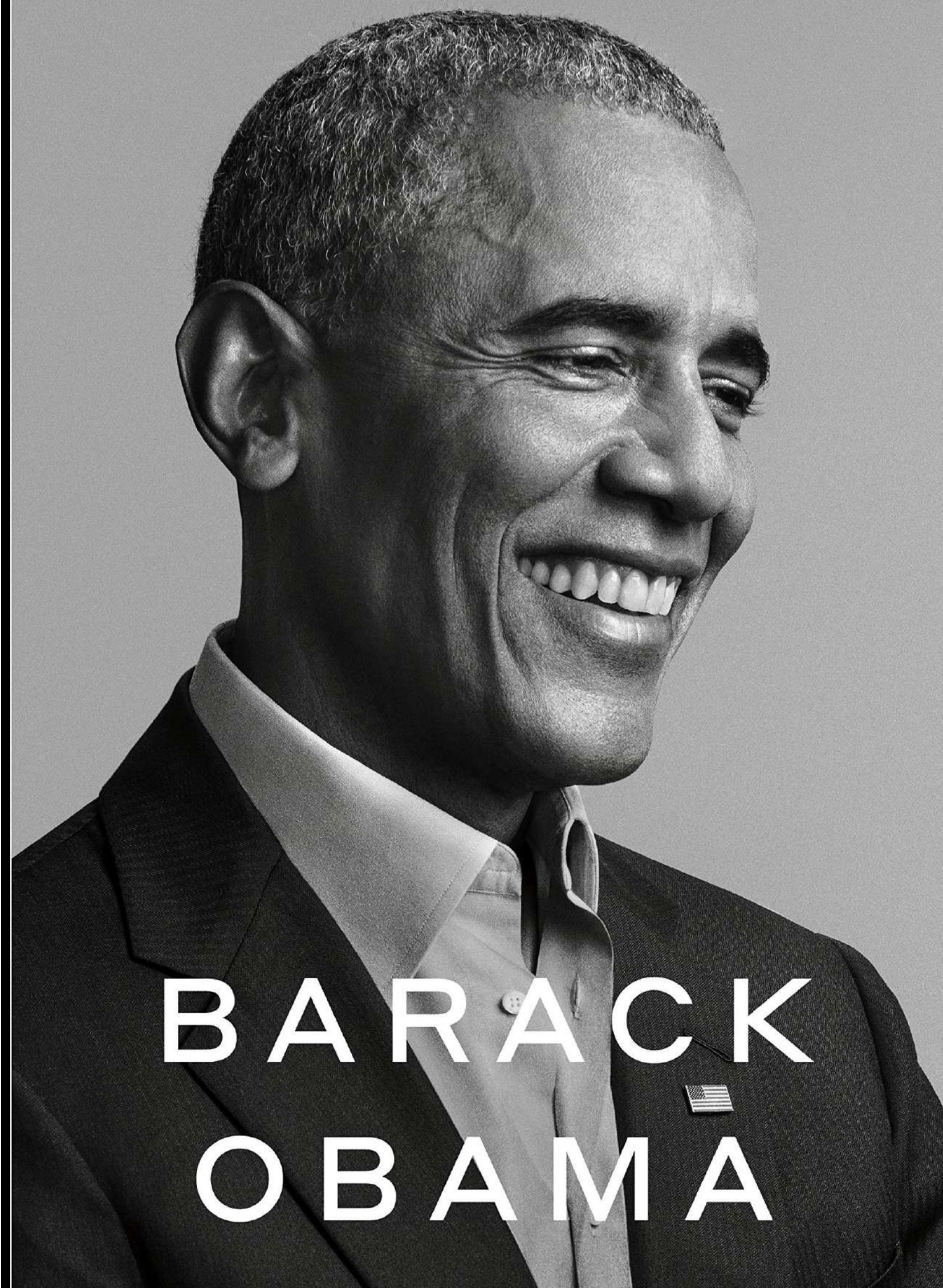
To put into perspective what it looks like for a person who cares about their privacy and has reason to believe they are being spied on is Mr. Chellam from *The Family Man* and if you are not that paranoid, Edward Snowden as played by Joseph Gordon-Levitt in *Snowden*. It is ugly but it is true. It is naïve to think that our demands will be met by an industry that lives in darkness and thrives on secrecy and stealth of which we know only the tip of the iceberg exposed in recent years. It took the coordinated efforts of 80 journalists from 17 media organisations in 10 countries brought together by Forbidden Stories and the support of Amnesty International to present a list of 50,000 people targeted by the spyware. Of these, some are heads of state, journalists and activists. A king, three presidents, including Emmanuel Macron, and ten prime ministers, including Imran Khan, who most likely have dedicated cybersecurity units tasked primarily with preventing such attacks, shows the accuracy of the spyware and the flaws in the operating system of the purportedly safer iOS.

As governments grow impetuous in their pursuit of power, distracted by the gains, much like the Greek hero Bellerophon and his hubris, both powered by Pegasus, their overambition inescapably leads to their fall from grace akin to exposés by Edward Snowden or the Pegasus Project. ■



Kehinde Wiley's near life-size portrait celebrates Barack Obama, the 44th president of the United States of America. (Source: National Portrait Gallery site)

A PROMISED LAND



A Promised Land

by Barack Obama

Preet Sharma

★★★★☆
(3.5/5 star rating)

“Glory and tragedy, courage and stupidity - one set of truths didn't negate the other. For war was contradiction, as was the history of America.”
- Barack Obama, *A Promised Land*

Barack Obama's book "A Promised Land" is exactly how a presidential autobiography should be- personal, honest, and at the same time, inspiring and didactic. It is a mesmerizing historical account of Barack Obama's time in office as the 44th President of the United States of America. The book illuminates the policy decisions of his presidency ranging from decisions regarding the 2008 financial crisis, affordable health care and the climate change legislation. What is striking about this exuberating book is that it is not only an account of the presidential years but also introspects the president, the man, the human that Barack Obama is. The personal and the political are beautifully entangled in this book. 'A Promised Land' is the first of two volumes about Barack Obama's presidency.

In fact, Mr. Obama in his

interaction with the New York Times talks about how the internet has helped him in getting access to articles of the issues that he dealt with during his presidency, his speeches, and appearances during his presidency just by typing his name on the search. The title "A Promised Land" points to the fact that there is a promised land out there that Mr. Obama believes in- it is his belief in the American idea, a land where someone with sheer determination and courage can rise to the top and achieve whatever one dreams of. Hope is the constant theme that runs through 701 pages of "A Promised Land."

It starts with a small description of Mr. Obama's family, his mother Ann Dunham, a strong opinionated woman, and his maternal grandparents, Midwesterners and liberals with whom he spent most of his childhood, and he also briefly discusses about his father who

worked for the Kenyan government and about his constant absence in Mr. Obama's life. He talks about his political campaigns and about his decision to run for the presidential race in 2008, his presidential campaigns and the burden he placed on his family, his wife **Michelle Obama**, who had to bring up their two daughters alone while Mr. Obama was indulged in campaigning for two years. The love he has for his daughters, Malia and Sasha is immense and he talks about how he celebrated Malia's tenth birthday in a windowless conference room during his campaign. He discusses how **Joe Biden**, now the President of the United States, whom Mr. Obama describes as a brother, in 2008, Senator from Delaware, became his running mate as the vice-presidential

candidate. He argues that Mr. Biden was the best choice for the Vice President in 2008. He is honest, loyal and his foreign policy experience was necessary as the United States at the time was embroiled in the middle of two major wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Among many anecdotes, Mr. Obama describes the first time he sat in the Black Limousine which he describes as “the beast”. He talks about heading towards his inauguration ceremony with George W Bush. While heading towards the inauguration he saw some people with posters protesting against George Bush and felt anguished . To him it made no sense to protest against someone in the last moments of his presidency. He writes that that incident made him think about the beginning of erosion of decorum that once regulated politics.

The looming financial crises that shook the economic system of the United States and whose shockwaves reverberated around the world was the first major challenge that Mr. Obama’s administration had to deal with. He provides the rationale behind the steps he took to mitigate the impact of financial crises: the fiscal stimulus, the Recovery Act, the housing plan, and finally the Stress test. He talks about Michelle Obama , the First Lady, and her struggle to reconcile her identity as a woman who is independent, strong, ambitious, and professional at the same time her desire to mother her two children. Michelle’s mother

Marina Robinson accompanied her daughter to the White House. Mr. Obama describes her presence in the white house as a “keeper of values that were rare.” Michelle Obama as the First Lady gave special attention to growing child obesity rates in the US and the lack of support for military families in America.

Mr. Obama writes that early in his presidency, he realized that no problem had a 100 percent clean solution. Problems in life are also similar that dealing with them is like dealing with probabilities. Narrating the experience of attending the G-20 Summit in London, he gives us a glimpse of the personalities of various world leaders he encountered during the summit. He describes Angela Merkel, the Chancellor of Germany as someone who reflected analytical sensibility and was suspicious of emotional rhetoric in contrast to the then French President Nicolas Sarkozy who was all about emotional outbursts. He describes **Dr. Manmohan Singh**, the Indian prime minister as someone who gave an air of holy men and as the man who engineered the modernization of the Indian economy. The G-20 Summit ended with a communique declaring an additional commitment to stimulus in the backdrop of financial crises and measures to eliminate tax havens, etc.

Mr. Obama talks about meeting Turkey’s Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan (2003-2014) and how financial crises caused an uptick in nationalism and anti-immigrant sentiment in Europe and the world at large. Mr. Obama also recollects his visit to Buchenwald Concentration Camp in Germany with Angela Merkel and Nobel laureate Elie

Wiesel. He recalls how Angela Merkel spoke about the necessity of Germany to remember its past and recognize special responsibility to fight against bigotry of all kinds that prevails in the world. Mr. Obama has an incredible ability to weave personal moments in the political narrative. He talks about the arrival of Bo, the puppy, in the White House that Malia and Sasha, his daughters , were long lobbying for. Bo, the puppy came as a gift from Ted and Vickie Kennedy.

Reforming healthcare was one of the top priorities of the Obama administration. The quest for universal healthcare in the US dates back to 1912. He talks about the negotiations and the hard work that went into getting the Affordable Healthcare Act passed and describes the night of the day the healthcare legislation got passed as the “**night of a promise fulfilled.**” The Affordable Care Act was passed on 21 March 2010 which made healthcare insurance affordable for a larger section of Americans.

The affection and love that Mr. Obama had for his inner circle – Valerie Jarrett, David Plouffe, Robert Gibbs, Rahm Emanuel, David Axelrod is remarkable. The biographical sketches of each one of them is interesting. He writes that whenever anything went wrong, the work culture was accommodating and open enough to avoid finding scapegoats to blame.



Mr. Obama during his presidency recognised the work of people in his staff whose work was without recognition and glamour. He followed the dictum of being generous in praise and measured in criticism. He recalls having dinner with a dozen women of the staff at the White House and how those women though not subjected to overtly sexist remarks, were uncomfortable with men shouting and cursing during policy debates and men interrupting women mid-sentence. Mr. Obama advised the women to be more assertive during the debates and talked to some senior members of the staff who regretted their behaviour and pledged to do better. Mr. Obama worked towards creating an inclusive workspace in the true sense of the term. His respect for **Hillary Clinton** is immense and appears true and straight from the heart even when Mr. Obama and Hillary Clinton were contesting against each other in the presidential race for the Democratic nomination. When Mr. Obama had a chance to fill a vacancy in the Supreme Court, he nominated **Sonia Sotomayor**, who ticked both boxes of eligibility as per Mr. Obama: legal qualifications and empathy. She became the first Latino and the only third woman to serve in the Supreme Court as Justice.

Mr. Obama comes out as being very cautious about the engagement of the American military on foreign lands. Mr. Obama writes that as far as Iraq was concerned the prospects of withdrawing appeared near in 2010, with commanders reporting

improvement in the performance of Iraqi security forces and declining Al-Qaeda sponsored attacks. The situation in Afghanistan seemed more severe as General Stanley McCrystal proposed a counterinsurgency strategy, aimed at not only countering

appropriate. The proposal treated the infusion of new troops as a surge that will accelerate the arrival of troops to come back home, setting a timetable of eighteen months for them to start coming home.



Obama with German Vice Chancellor Angela Merkel.
Source: AP News



Obama with President Joe Biden
Source: The New York Times

terrorists but also increasing stability for the country's wider population, trying to address issues that made terrorists take up arms. To Mr. Obama, the proposal of Robert Gates, Secretary of Defence, appeared more

Mr. Obama had to sanction 40,000 additional troops to Afghanistan.

Reflective of his persisting candidness, he talks about the



surprise at receiving the Nobel Peace Prize and the irony of receiving a peace prize when he was weighing the prospects of sending more troops to Afghanistan. He also regularly visited military hospitals during

hospital after he was severely injured by an improvised explosive device. Mr. Obama discusses how being a president is different from being a part of the military establishment as a President's duty is not only to defeat the enemy but to make sure that the

Michiko at the Imperial palace in Japan. Mr. Obama goes on to discuss his meeting with Wen Jiabao, the Chinese premier in China. Wen Jiabao at that time made a point that despite the charm of big cities like Beijing and Shanghai, China was still a developing country with one-third of Chinese people still below the poverty line. He argued that the rules that apply to the developed world cannot apply to China. Mr. Obama understood the essence of the argument but insisted that the United States can no longer overlook China's trade practices that the US considers to be unfair. He talks about his visit to India and describes the dinner with Sonia and Rahul Gandhi, describing Sonia Gandhi as a striking woman in her sixties, dressed in a traditional saree.

The Deepwater oil spill from the Macondo well also finds a mention and the immense efforts to stop the oil leak that the Obama administration made. His efforts at closing Guantanamo Bay Prison were not successful. The book ends with the chapter, describing the raiding of terrorist Osama bin Laden's compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan. He recalls Operation Neptune's Spear, aimed at hunting terrorist Osama Bin Laden who was involved in brutal 9/11 attacks on the twin towers of the World Trade Centre. Mr. Obama talks about the experience of watching a military operation unfold in real-time as the Navy SEALs raided terrorist Osama

Obama with his family in the White House.
Source: The White House Archives



Obama announcing Osama Bin Laden's death.
Credits: The White House

his tenure, and remembers meeting **Cory Remsburg**, the first-class Sergeant in Normandy when he was leaving for his deployment in Afghanistan and then again at Bethesda Naval is

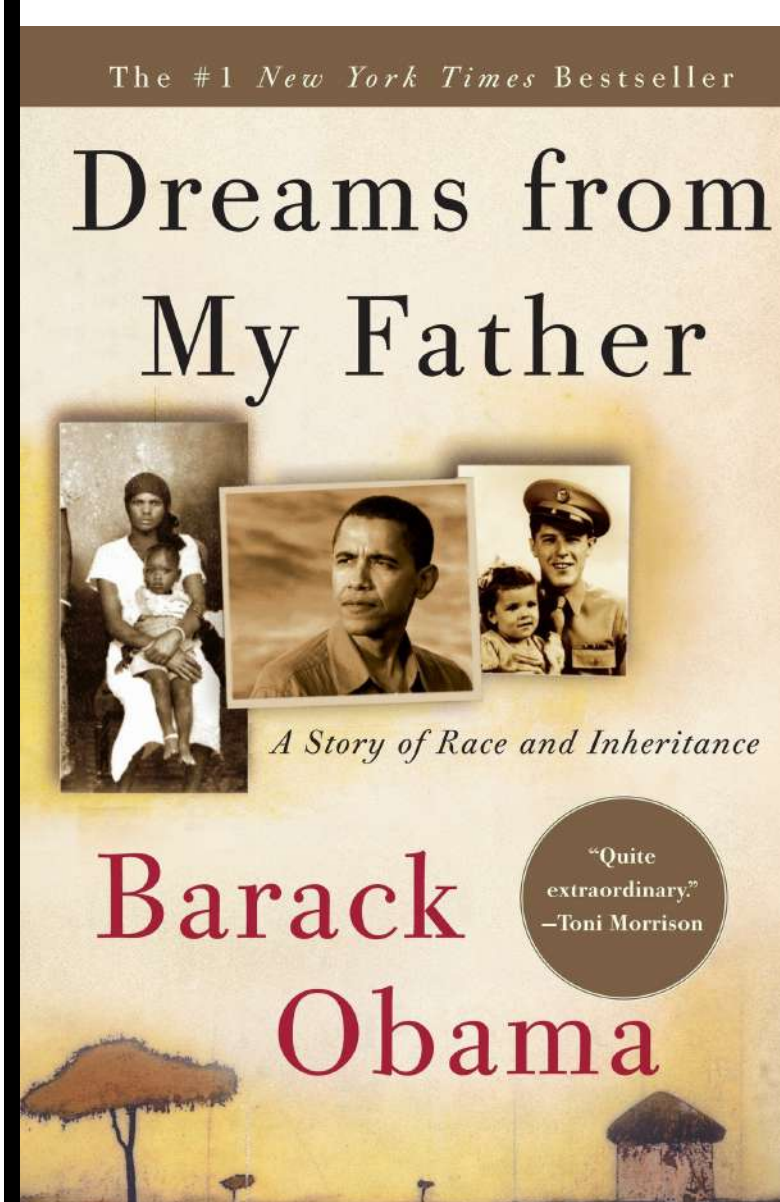
country does not bleed dry in the process.

Mr. Obama talks about his visit to China, Japan, and ASEAN leaders. He describes the meeting with Emperor

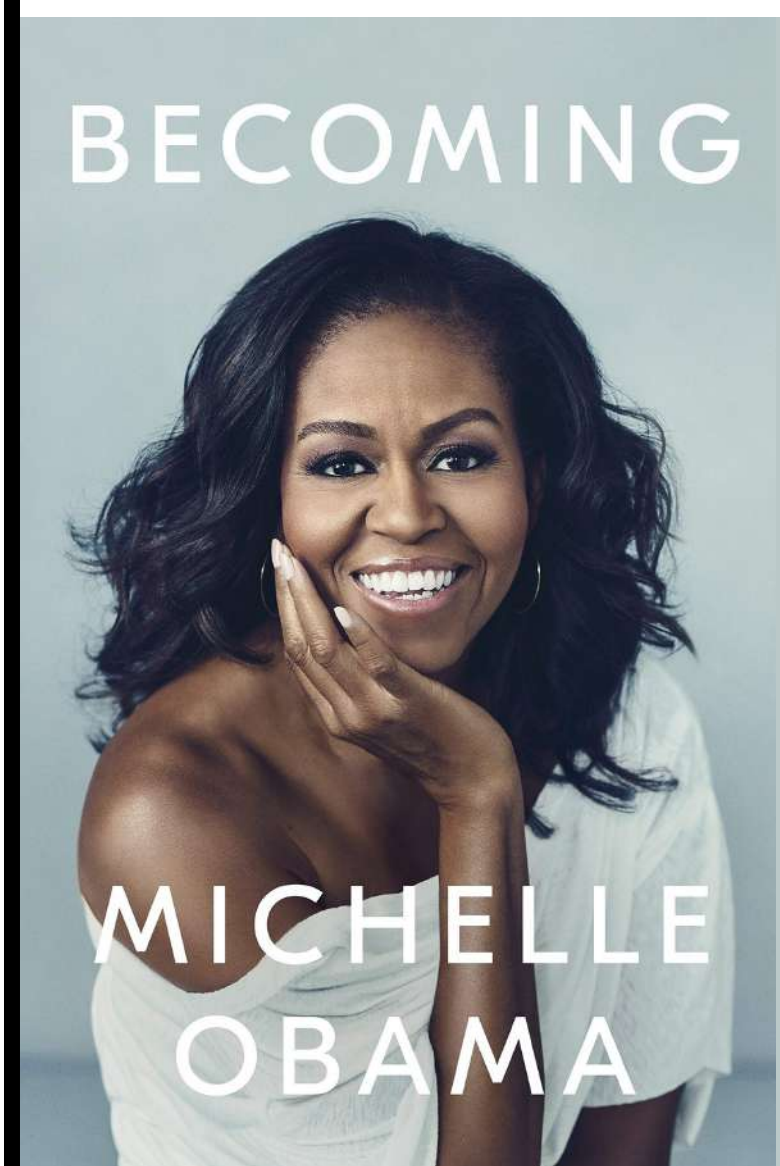


Barack Obama’s Twitter profile describes him as “Dad, husband, President, citizen.” After reading “A Promised Land” one can say that he does appear equally graceful in all these roles and also donning the role of an excellent writer. It's a wonderful book but a little extensive with 701 pages, and the details regarding the intricacies of getting legislation passed can get overwhelming at times. Though it could have been more compact, this book with all 701 pages in its present form is worth reading. ‘A Promised Land’ is indeed an inspiring book, beautifully written and it candidly presents an honest account by President Barack Obama of his Presidential years. For now, one can hope that the impending second volume matches the first. ■

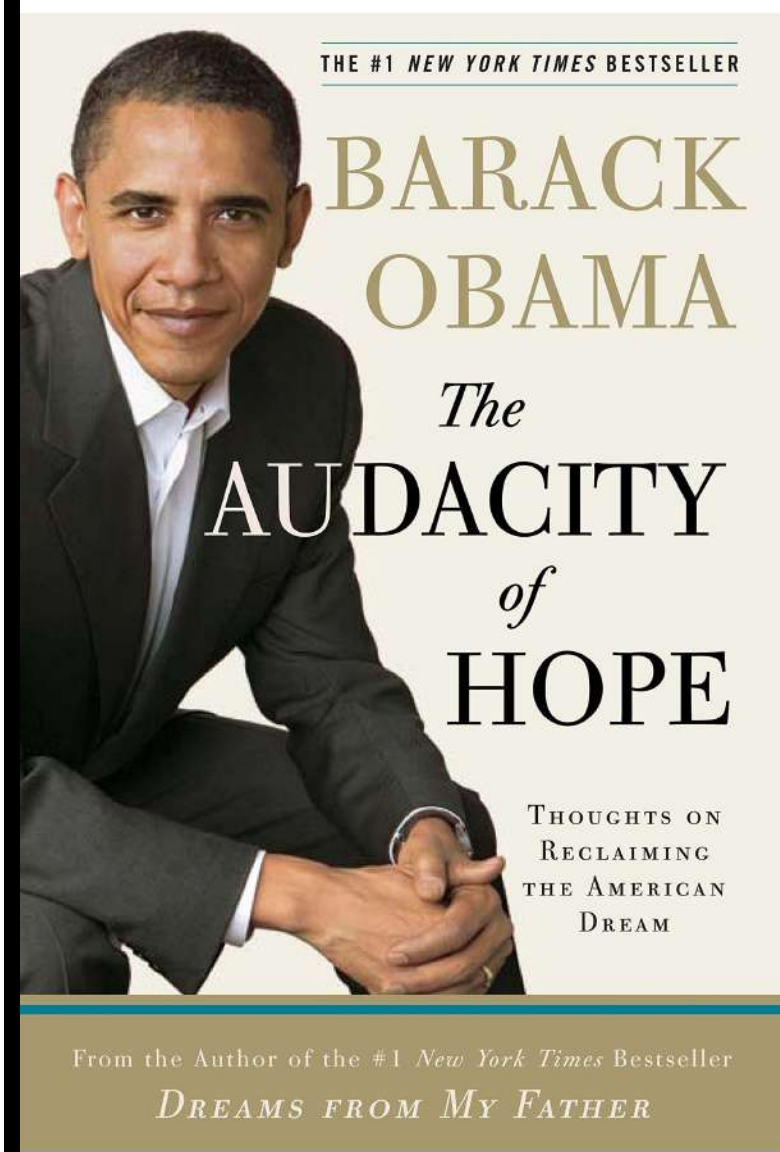
From the Edboard



This book written by Barack Obama covers the early years of lives before his entry into Harvard Law School. This extraordinary book covers his life in Indonesia and Hawaii. He was born in 1961 to a white American mother & a black Kenyan father The book covers his experience of racial identity while he was growing up. The iconic memoir can leave the reader spellbound.



The book traces the life of one of the most charismatic First Lady the United States ever had by none other but the woman herself. In the book, she covers her journeys in both her private and public lives. The book shares the journey of an extraordinary public figure reminiscing about her life in an utmost gracious way leaving the reader inspired to the core. This extraordinary journey is made of grit, passion, love and dignity. This powerful and compelling memoir is a must-read for everyone.



The book written by erstwhile Senator Barack Obama is a subtle commentary on American polity and society. The book, which was released a few months before the erstwhile Senator decided to run for office, talks about a brand new form of politics centred around hope. The book infuses the reader with hope about emerging from the partisan style of politics. It is also a strong vision as to how they can address the pressing problems in American society. The book was surely a prelude to a successful presidency ahead.



Colonialism: A Curse to Modern Day Politics

Varun Raj Wahane and Aranya Chatterjee

The great English philosopher and political economist J.S. Mill, also known as the father of classical liberalism once argued that the British are more civilised and thus have the right to civilise the colonies they conquered. Unfortunately, it is evident that even the most liberal thinker of the colonial era supported the colonialism and ideology of superior and inferior races.

The colonial era of the 18th and 19th centuries has shaped the 21st-century world. It is evident that modern political tensions have their roots in colonial times. The devastation and destruction to extract out of the colonies have

left them in an epiphany. The Imperial powers of the 19th century abandoned the colonies in a vulnerable situation, some sustained others shifted to dictators.

To question modern political crises, the article sheds light on the specific domain of delinquencies being done by imperialists, for example, the Israel and Palestine relations, the India and Pakistan relation and political tensions, the economic crisis of South Africa. The territorial conflicts of the Middle East, the problems in the 3rd world countries, these political problems have their roots in the colonial era.

Not only western imperialism but

also Asian imperialism affects today's modern world. The terror and slavery of colonial Korea have their socio-political implication on the modern countries of South and North Korea. Imperial Japan decolonised Korea and abandoned it in an economic crisis, to which the U.S.A and late U.S.S.R. used as North Korea and South Korea and later led to the dictatorial regime of North Korea. Thus, the link to the contemporary political problem is through imperialism.

Imperialism is an ideology of superior race and power, to rule

others. The colonists claimed ownership overland through force and rule over the others for self-benefits. In world war II, The same superior powers were converted to the League of Nations and then to the leading countries of the United Nations. The common factor is that the same Imperial powers converted to the leading nations of the world, raising two major questions:

- (1) Has imperialism ended in the modern world?;
- (2) Do the ex-colonies have any command to determine their perspective in modern world politics?

The significant change after the second world war was the decolonisation of the colonies by the Imperial powers. After decades of Imperial rule, many colonies and Imperial powers shifted to become democratic and republic.

The privileges of the first world countries cannot be ignored because of their Imperial past, they acquired a significant position in international politics. The dominated colonies bear the burden of the economic, social, and political suppression done in the past, this certainly puts the first world countries in a privileged position. It creates an imbalance of political influence and significance in international politics.

This is similar to the Marxist theory of communism which emphasises that the rich are getting richer and the poor are

irrelevant. There has not been any significant change in the socio-economic status of the ex-Imperial powers and the ex-colonies in the international perspective since the decolonisation, even though the ex-British colonies have advanced in many matters. However, they are still socio-economically backward as compared to today's U.K because of the implications of socio-political policies on the ex-colonies. The social tensions were created within the colonies so that the rebellion against the imperial power could be controlled.

The great English philosopher and political economist J.S. Mill, also known as the father of classical liberalism once argued that the British are more civilised and thus have the right to civilise the colonies they conquered.

The decolonisation happened so drastically that it destabilised the colonies for decades. On the other hand, the economic standard of the imperialist countries did not face such economic backwardness, the standard of living in the first world countries reverted and stabilised over the period. However, the ex-colonies had to struggle to provide people with basic necessities or didn't have the economic infrastructure to build. Many ex-colonies continue to suffer the consequences of the effects of decolonisation in contemporary world politics and domestic policymaking. Therefore, the above argument justifies the theory of the

rich getting richer and the poor being poorer referring to ex-imperialist and ex-colonies in contemporary world politics.

Effects of colonialism on third world countries

It is undeniable that the imperial past has untouched the modern world, imperialism still affects the ex-colonies in domestic as well as international politics. Countries have diplomatic relations based on past historical relations. Even after the decolonisation. There are prejudiced relations between the ex-colonisers and ex-colonies, as the former still possess a superior position in international politics.

It brings a rational feeling to the third world countries that the U.N. is built and structured by the powerful influence of ex-imperialist nations who dominate the world to maintain their significance in the international community. This unequal distribution of power creates prejudice among the world nations and divides the world on important decisions for the betterment of the humankind such as environmental crisis like global warming and extremist forces like terrorism. They have their origin in the 18th-century industrialisation which was imposed by the colonisers and political tensions created to suppress the anti-imperialist movement. Terrorism and global warming are collectively recognised by the UN as threat



THE CHICAGO LIBERTY MEETING

HELD AT
CENTRAL MUSIC HALL
APRIL 30. 1899

"No man is good enough to govern another man without that other's consent. When the white man governs himself, that is self-government; but when he governs himself and also governs another man, that is more than self-government—that is despotism."—*Abraham Lincoln, Speech of October 16, 1854.*

"Our reliance is in the love of liberty which God has planted in us. Our defense is in the spirit which prizes liberty as the heritage of all men in all lands, everywhere. Those who deny freedom to others, deserve it not for themselves, and under a just God cannot long retain it."—*Abraham Lincoln, Letter to H. L. Pierce, April 6, 1859.*

"IF THIS BE TREASON, MAKE THE MOST OF IT."—*Patrick Henry.*

PUBLISHED BY
CENTRAL ANTI-IMPERIALIST LEAGUE
TACOMA BUILDING, CHICAGO
1899

to humanity. However, many countries are not on the same side of the argument. Many first-world nations have their prejudices to bear the burden and make a firm stand, ignoring the fact that it is their creation, whereas second and third world countries have taken their stands irrespective of the economic and social conditions bearing an unjust distribution form of humanitarian perspective.

We must deny the Colonial Legacy

The world must move on from the colonial past, but it won't until prejudice with the ex-colonies are removed, the imperial legacy is full of bloodshed & cruelty that still haunts the people. The United Nation was built to bring peace and stability, promote human values and equality, and give voice to the suppressed. However, it has become the voice of the powerful ones to

dictate to others. The objective of the United Nation for 'equity' and 'oneness' of the world has become nothing but hollow noise in the international community; countries are not cooperating with the equal burden for the cause of preservation of humanity and humanitarian values.

The legacy of imperialism cannot be erased or compensated with any amount. Compensating reparation will be a defamatory remark to the heroes of the anti-imperialist movement who preached freedom and liberty for the nations with their blood. It is just to be accepted that the legacy of imperialism is a boon to some and a curse to many.

There is a need for better representation of the third and second world countries in the U.N, a voice of equal importance and contribution has to be uplifted for the collective greater betterment of the international community. Today, the world stands in a catastrophe of medical health crises of the pandemic. There is a strong need of sharing an equal burden for a humanitarian cause as there cannot be unity until the burdens of political prejudices of the past are removed. This shall be done through acceptance of misuse of power done in the colonial time by the ex-imperialist power and condemn them as acts of oppression. ■





"I shoot for the common man"

Danish Siddiqui was killed in Kandahar in Afghanistan in a "Taliban crossfire". Afghan forces had been fighting with the Taliban to retake the area of Spin Boldak when Siddiqui along with a senior Afghan officer was killed. Danish was embedded as a journalist with Afghan special forces and was reporting on the tussle between Afghan commandos and Taliban. His mortal remains were brought back to India and he was laid to rest at Jamia Millia Islamia graveyard, which also happens to be his alma mater.

A resident of New Delhi, Ahmad Danish Siddiqui was born on May 19, 1983. He graduated with a degree in Economics from Jamia Millia Islamia. He then went on to pursue Masters in Mass Communication from Jamia's AJK Mass Communication Research Centre. Initially, Danish worked as a correspondent with the Hindustan Times newspaper and then shifted to India Today Group. Having spent a few years of his career in TV journalism, Danish relinquished his well-paying job to join International Media Agency Reuters as an intern in 2010.

His close friends say that he was so passionate about his profession and loved photographing so much that he had cut his vacation short in 2017 to embark on a special journey and become a part of Reuters' series which documented the misery, pain and plight of the Rohingyas of Myanmar following their mass exodus to Bangladesh. Just after a year in 2018,

In Memorium Danish Siddiqui

1983-2021

By Sumit Singh

Danish Siddiqui along with his colleague Adnan Abidi won the Pulitzer Prize for Feature Photography for documenting the Rohingya Refugee Crisis as part of the Reuters team. The image showed an exhausted Rohingya refugee woman who was touching the shore after crossing the Bangladesh-Myanmar border by boat via the Bay of Bengal. This photograph captured by Danish was described as "shocking photographs that exposed the world to the violence Rohingyas refugees faced in fleeing Myanmar" by the judging committee.

Apart from this, Danish had covered a lot of significant events that shaped global history, polity and society. Some of his exemplary work includes his coverage of the earthquake that hit Nepal in 2015, the 2016 Battle of Mosul, the Hong Kong protests in 2019, the Delhi riots in 2020, the COVID crisis in 2020-21 and the migrant exodus in India in 2020.

His hard-hitting photographs of the agony and pain of the people in the first Covid wave and the helplessness and suffering of many in the second wave have shaken people from inside who saw them. Whether it was the people who were gasping for breath due to oxygen shortage or burning pyres with long queues of bodies waiting outside the crematoriums and graveyards or the drone footages of blazing pyres that ran in hundreds and funeral sites that were set on blaze 24/7, Danish has captured it all. His photographs exposed the horrifying situation in India during the second COVID wave in the country and brought to light the inadequacies in the infrastructure and system. Migrant crisis; the resultant of the first wave of Covid-19 in India amid a COVID-induced lockdown was also captured in his camera that broke a million hearts both nationally and globally.

Danish is not with us anymore. He's not here to speak with us via his stunning photographs. Photography for him was his true love, his first language, through which he communicated with millions of people around the globe. But what he has left behind is a rich legacy that is full of memories, people, places and significant developments that will serve as the 'first book of photography' for many budding photographers and for future generations and will be preserved in the reams of history.

Danish's has covered events globally but his photograph reflected his gaze that remained firmly rooted on the oppressed and the less privileged. As Danish said that his role was as a mirror, he stood true to his words and held a mirror so powerful that it was impossible to avert one's eyes from his photographs which also turned out to be a thorn in the establishment's side.

The news of Danish's departure shook the world following which many of his admirers started sending in condolence messages to his friends and family. The United States State Department released a statement to mourn his departure. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani tweeted saying he was "deeply saddened with the shocking reports" of Siddiqui's death and extended condolences to his family in India. Vice President of Afghanistan too condoled his death. "Danish was an outstanding journalist, a devoted husband and father, and a much-loved colleague. Our thoughts are with his family at this terrible time", Reuters President Michael Friedenberg and Editor-in-Chief Alessandra Galloni said in a statement. The messages didn't stop here. From press unions around the world to media organisations and several journalists and civil society members mourned his death and remembered him for his outstanding work. Above all, Taliban's spokesperson Zabiullah Mujahid said in an interview, "We are sorry for Indian journalist Danish Siddiqui's death."

The most striking thing that happened post-Danish Siddiqui's death was the deafening silence of the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. As right-wing trolls from the ruling party celebrated Danish's death with utmost shamelessness, PM Narendra Modi and EAM S. Jaishankar are yet to send out a

condolence message to mourn the death of Danish Siddiqui. Danish was an Indian but his death was celebrated in his own country by a large chunk of Indians for mainly two reasons; for his work and his religion. For the Prime Minister, it's a situation pretty much like an eye in the storm; if he condoles his death- his voter base and particularly the right-wing trolls will get offended. If he doesn't, he will be questioned on his conspicuous silence. The most shameful part is that the Prime Minister took out time on one of his busiest days; the day of Cabinet Reshuffle, to send out birthday wishes to a random Twitter user but hasn't tweeted out a condolence message for Siddiqui for obvious reasons which are known to all and not surprising.

Just three days before his death, Danish shared a small clip that showed he was travelling with the Afghan forces and suddenly a rocket hit the armour plate overhead. Siddiqui had escaped death that day and wrote on his Twitter account that he "was lucky to be safe." He didn't return and continued his reportage in Afghanistan. Unfortunately, he was unable to complete his assignment and return home safely like he always did. Danish is now survived by his wife Rike and two young children; Sarah and Yunus. Danish will always be remembered for his stellar professionalism and a short but glorious career.

END.



HISTORY AND CULTURE



Paintings, Papacy
and Politics

Ekaksh Handa

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Paintings, Papacy and Politics



By Ekaksh Handa

The front foot of an art revolution was actually political and profit-oriented and backed by political conspiracies, philosophies and inventions that changed the world.

Renaissance was a period of art, culture, politics, economic revival and rebirth in 15th century Europe. Several factors led to this rebirth, such as the interaction of different cultures and the rediscovery of ancient Roman and Greek texts. It was a beautiful time blossoming with creativity and sparked by curiosity.

Among all the European countries, the Italian Renaissance is perhaps the most prominent. It was because of the emergence of renowned painters, physicians and philosophers like Leonardo Da Vinci, Galileo Galilei, Michaelangelo, Nicolas Copernicus and more. It was the time when the term 'Renaissance man' was coined which Leon Battista Alberti described as "a man can do all things if he wills." This period is mostly known for its contribution to the conversion of art from abstract and raw to realistic and religious. The picking of cultural and mythological themes to make lifelike artworks and sculptures so as to give them life is the foundation of this period. Politically, Italy was not a united nation. It was a collection of city-states that consisted of the Papal States (with Rome and St. Peter's Basilica), the Republic of Venice, the Florentine Republic, the Duchy of Milan, and the Kingdom of Naples. So, the Renaissance was not only an art revolution but also a cultural competition of sorts between these states. What people often do not realize is what went into the Renaissance. The front foot of an art revolution was actually political and profit-oriented,

backed by political conspiracies, philosophies and inventions that changed the world. Niccolò Machiavelli, often known as the father of modern political philosophy, has best described it using the Republic of Florence as a benchmark and the families which ruled it in his work *Istorie Florentine* (1520-1525). At the end of the 14th century, Italian Giovanni Di Bicci De Medici established a banking system that soon became the most powerful banking system in the history of Florence. Although Giovanni didn't hold any political office, he became quite popular when he introduced the proportional taxation system in Italy. This new form of taxation was even adopted by the Papal states in their region. The Medici family profited and soon became the richest family in Florence. It gave Giovanni's son, Cosimo De Medici enough popularity to become gran maestro (unofficial head of the Florentine Republic). This is how the House of Medici started to rule Florence, de facto.

But this also posed a lot of threats. The Pazzi Conspiracy was a plot to remove the Medici family from power by killing off its members in which many people were involved, including Pope Sixtus IV to an extent, as he had a rivalry with the family as well. But the plot failed and the conspirators who were caught were sentenced to death, about which Leonardo also made a rough sketch.

Cosimo was ambitious. He was a patron of arts, education, philosophy and architecture and was also an artist and poet himself. He supported artists such as Ghiberti, Brunelleschi and Fra Angelico. He started funding artworks, built libraries and helped painters to set up their own workshops and establish painting little schools.

The painting schools and workshops were actually most important in bringing form in the works of its students, which consisted of people like Da Vinci, Botticelli, Raphael, Michaelangelo. The life in such painting workshops is described delicately in the works of art historians like Vasari, and biographers like Isaacson. The greatest artworks of the Renaissance like Donatello's David were being funded by the house of Medici. That is how the Renaissance, as we know it, was born. After that, due to their extreme popularity, two other successive generations of the Medici, Piero and Lorenzo ruled Florence in the 15th century. The period is normally known as the high Renaissance.

But the Medici did not stop there. Soon after the short rule of Piero the Gouty which had the Medici who had ruled Florence for about 60 years now expelled from Florence from 1494 till about 1512. Lorenzo di Piero De Medici also known as Lorenzo the Magnificent took over the House who was even more ambitious than his grandfather. He continued with the patronage of arts, literature, philosophy and architecture while grooming his son, Piero II to take over his civil rule, while his second son, Giovanni was placed in the church at a very young age and his daughter Maddalena was provided for marriage with a lot of dowry to a son of the Pope Innocent VIII. This cemented his relationships

with the Pope's family which got the House of Medici to an even bigger status.

During this expulsion of the Medici, Niccolo Machiavelli, who had become popular in Florence for his work with the Papacy, and his rumoured plans in drying up Pisa's water supply with his friend Leonardo Da Vinci had made him people's favourite. He had decided to make an army of his own, consisting of the people of Florence themselves. By February 1506 he was able to create a militia, four hundred farmers armed with small firearms. Under his command, Florentine citizens/soldiers defeated Pisa in 1509. But this success did not last. In August 1512, the Medici backed by Pope Julius II used Spanish troops to defeat the Florentines thus regaining control of the Florentine Republic. Lorenzo adopted his brother's illegitimate son, Guilio. Giovanni, the son of Lorenzo who was elected Pope Leo X guided and trained Guilio, who soon became a cardinal. He was recorded by his contemporary Marco Minio in a letter to the Venetian State in 1519 as "having great power with the Pope" and "a man of great competence and authority". He became the Cardinal Protector of England and France to which there were some problems but he refused to give up the title anyway. This problem became dominant when a personal rivalry between the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V who wanted to combat the growing Lutheranism in Germany and King Francis I, who supported it boiled into a war in Northern



Italy where Guilio refused to support France as it was a threat to the Church's independence. Nonetheless, Pope Leo X made him the archbishop of Florence in 1519. After the death of Leo X in 1521, Adrian VI became Pope and Guilio advised him as well.

Machiavelli had always disliked the House of Medici for this

particular reason. Their hunger for power had converted a Republic like Florence into an obvious Monarchy. And the Medici did not like him either. Lorenzo saw Machiavelli as an enemy because he had written a work, 'The Discourses,' which argued for a republican government

Major Renaissance Artists

instead of a monarchy. After defeating his army and reconquering Florence, Machiavelli was imprisoned on charges of conspiracy. This is why he wrote the book "The Prince" loosely based on Lorenzo to get on his good side but was overlooked.

Guilio De Medici became Pope Clement VII in 1523, often known as "the most unfortunate of Popes". He could be considered as the one person who ended the period of the high renaissance. Once independent city-states and kingdoms, most of the Italian powers, such as the Republic of Florence, the Duchy of Milan, and the Kingdom of Naples, had come under the control and influence of Charles V. Victory over the French at Pavia in 1525 left the forces of the Roman Emperor, Charles V, dominant in Italy. Resentful of Charles's power in the peninsula, Pope Clement VII organized the League of Cognac in 1526 with France, Venice, Milan, and Florence to counterbalance the influence of Emperor Charles V in Italy. This alliance between the papacy, France, and many Italian city-states opened a new phase of the Italian Wars called the War of the League of Cognac (1526–30). During this war, because of the growing uncertainty of the Pope's loyalty towards its subjects, as in his support during the rivalry between France and the Roman Empire. His army grew fearful of him. The Pope now feared attacks from the troops of Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, German and Spanish Protestant soldiers who were unhappy over unpaid salaries for fighting the Roman army in the battle. Together, they

all entered the city of Rome on 6 May 1527 and began looting, slaying, raping and holding citizens for ransom. This is what came to be known as the Sack of Rome. Besides a contingent of Swiss guards, the city's defenders could only muster 5,000 militiamen, composed of artisans, artists, and priests. In a bold move, the Duke of Bourbon, often credited as the leader of the Imperial army, personally led his men as they scaled the walls of Rome at the district of Trastevere. Wearing his popular white cloak, Bourbon was shot dead early in the attack. Pope Clement VII took refuge in Castel Sant'Angelo

“Hell was a more beautiful sight to behold” so said Marin Sanuto, describing the destruction the imperial army brought to the eternal city. Meanwhile, in Florence, the Republican enemies of the Medici broke out in riots to expel the family from the city once again.

after the Swiss Guard got annihilated while he was protecting him in an event known as the Stand of Swiss Guard, where he remained until he paid the ransom to the pillagers. “Hell was a more beautiful sight to behold” so said Marin Sanuto, describing the destruction, the imperial army brought to the eternal city. Meanwhile, in Florence, the Republican enemies of the Medici broke out in riots to expel the family from the city once again. Though they came back many years later, the Sack of Rome marked the metaphorical and literal end of the mighty Roman Empire, the Medici and the High Renaissance all at once. ■



LEONARDO DA VINCI
1452- 1519

Nationality: Italian



**Michelangelo di Lodovico
Buonarroti Simoni**
1475-1564

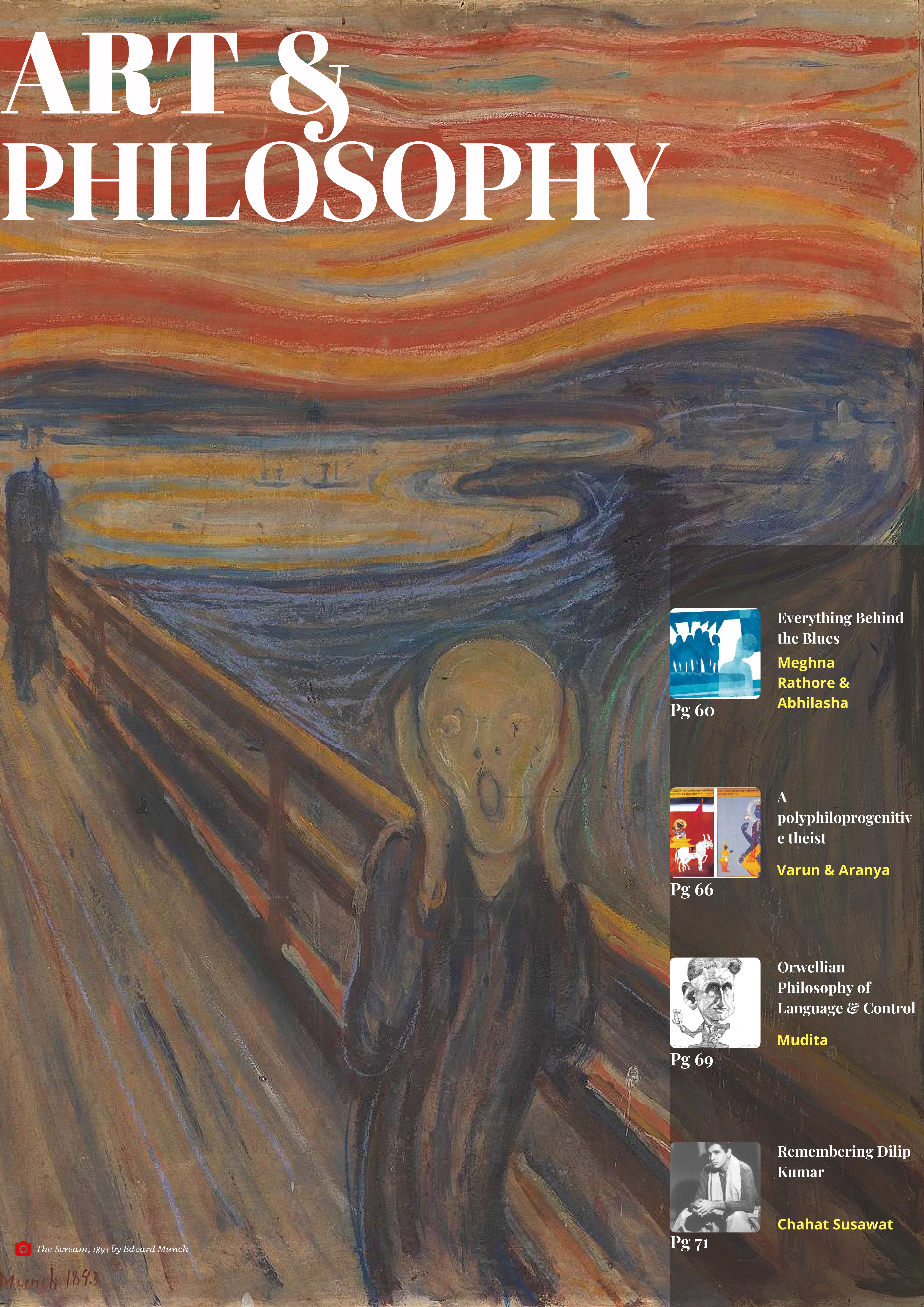
Nationality: Italian



Titian
1488/90-1576

Nationality: Italian

ART & PHILOSOPHY



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Everything Behind
the Blues

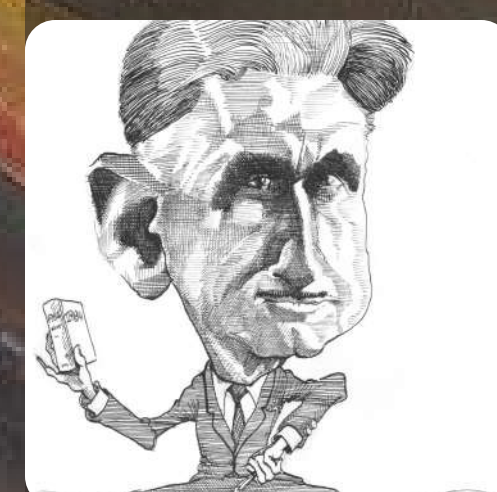
**Meghna
Rathore &
Abhilasha**



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A
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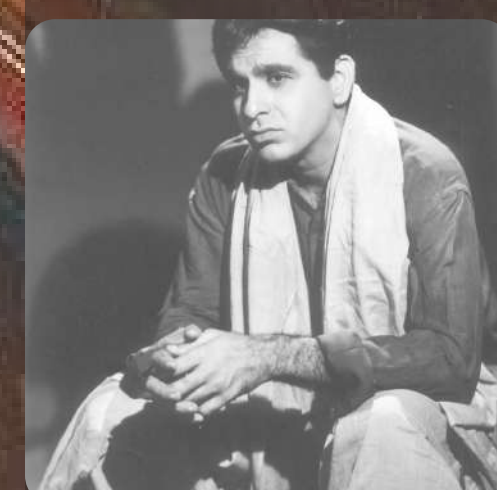
Varun & Aranya



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Orwellian
Philosophy of
Language & Control

Mudita



Pg 71

Remembering Dilip
Kumar

Chahat Susawat

GRIEF

deconstructed.

**Grief is like poetry, you read it, recite
it and keep it with you until the day
you die.** —



EVERYTHING BEHIND THE BLUES

Meghna Rathore and Abhilasha Rawat

We asked our readers how they handle grief.

Umm...I am kinda spritual person when it comes to talking care of mental health coz my mental health is "fragile", I like to call it this way.

To handle pain/stress/grief - I am doing yoga (stress releasing yoga) during those days. Sitting alone and reading/ watching is helpful sometimes. Music is also a temporary savior sometimes. Traveling or just going out with frenzzzz is helpful. Stand-up comedy is always the best lol

Ways- i write things down and talk to myself

I think what worse could've been
I think what can be done about it
And if nothing, I don't handle it
Don't think about it

And after a while it passes

I don't deal hi. I just avoid it and avoid thinking about it. Sometimes it hits me butttt then I cry thoda bahut but then repress it again. I am kinda good at repressing it

Its a feeling, first I try to ESCAPE, then it doesn't work well,doesn't alleviate the sufferings lol so in the end i have to freaking deal with it like an adult

Oh yes toxic behavioural traits

Dump the emo trauma on someone else

Sharing is caring

Indulge in other cishet activities

Intoxicants and being up all night

The process of grieving has in one way or the other familiarized itself with us. As much as art, be it cinema, poetry or music, romanticise the attainment of the 'love of the life,' the loss is equally pure and certain, even if not romanticised. We have all experienced the loss of a family member, a friend or even a pet and therefore know what it feels like to be left into the loneliest and the darkest corners of ourselves. But, if it is this distressing in nature, why do we feel it? Why is grieving a very intact and integral part of every being's life? We, in this article, have tried to find the answers to these questions and have placed grief in accordance with its psychological, physical, cultural, religious and social background.

The Psychology of Grief

An English writer who became profoundly famous on grief, Robert Burton wrote in his book, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, "Every perturbation is a misery, but grief is a cruel torment, a domineering passion." Today, people might recognise grieving as an absolutely natural and human part of living, but studies from the past (largely western dominated) treated grief more like a psychiatric disorder and a disease process. During the seventeenth century, many physicians listed grief among their patient's symptoms and believed that it could make people mad. Burton referred to examples of historical figures who died of grief, such as the Roman Emperor Severus. The nineteenth-physician Benjamin Rush even

recommended bleeding, purges, and opium for grief. The present-day relation of grief to psychiatry is quite different but equally ambivalent. Grief hasn't been classified as a psychiatric disorder unless in extreme forms like PTSD or severe depression. Moreover, it is now perceived as an umbrella term with wide variations like 'complicated,' 'traumatic' and 'pathological.' The direct relation between death and deterioration in health, and grief is also ambiguous and subjected to various other factors.

On the other hand, later psychologists viewed grief from an evolutionary perspective in order to grasp its essentiality as a product of natural selection. John Bowlby worked extensively on the attachment theory and later extended it to understand grief as a response when the bond breaks. He proposed that this psychologically distressing reaction to separation is a biologically useful trait as it motivates individuals to seek reunion, thus ensuring better adaptability. Parkes was devoted to this model, and classified the process into four emotional phases: shock and numbness; yearning and searching; disorganisation and disdain; reorganisation and recovery. His view on understanding the strength of relationships became a key to measuring the intensity of grief. According to him, the emotional and motivating responses crucial to maintaining a relationship (labelled as 'love') remain operational even when the loved one is lost, causing the pain (labelled as 'grief'). 'Grief, then, is the cost we pay for being able to love in the way we do.'

Even from the ethological aspect, it has been witnessed that animals

mourn the death of their loved ones as well. Elephants pay homage to the deceased ones, like humans. Many animals like monkeys carry the bodies of their dead babies, often for weeks, screaming in despair. Why is this grief inevitable across species? Simply, because all organisms have certain complex mental representations, known as 'working models' or 'schema' of their loved ones which generates a specific perception of the world around them. When the loved one is no more, effective feedback is absent. This incongruence sets off an alarm reaction, aimed at regaining the familiarity but it renders continuously futile which ultimately is the grief we feel. One another aspect to comprehend this is in terms of loss of identity. Through our lived experiences, we formulate our self-identity. This identity gets intimately tied up to different aspects of life, like our relationships, our job, our home etc. These links become emotionally charged, highly central to our self-esteem, and resistant to changes. At a point in time, when there is a detachment from any of these bonds, the feeling of stability is lost, generating grief as a response. Amusing enough, the entire life pattern that we create is to maintain comfort and familiarity in life, despite knowing the fact that highly unpredictable and inevitable events like death, accident or illness can disrupt those patterns in seconds, leaving impacts that may take ages to



recover. This makes the development of feelings, nothing but a mere illusion, and grief, the predestined bubble burst. Still. Who in the world doesn't love bubbles?

Sigmund Freud has also contributed immensely in studying grief through his psychoanalytic lenses, with his book "Mourning and Melancholia". One of the critical views that he brought into the picture was appreciation of grief as an active process, rather a passive reaction. To withdraw the libido i.e. the emotional attachment from the loved one, one has to do the 'grief work' which requires both time and cathartic energy.

These previously held models on grief are not outrightly accepted by modern psychologists. Grief can not necessarily guide one through the process of 'letting go' of the once held bond, but can depict the continuation of attachment. The recent most popular study is the Kübler-Ross Five stage cycle of grief. Take an example of a person who recently heard the news about their friend's death. The first and foremost stage is denial where the person refuses to accept reality. Their defence mechanism kicks in, and they pretend that the news is false, living in a preferred reality. But after some time, the truth becomes inescapable, raising the second stage of grief: anger. They start getting infuriated towards the hospital where their friend was diagnosed, start complaining to God or even the deceased friend. They further

start blaming themselves and creating 'what if' scenarios, reminiscing their previous decisions with the deceased or wonder if they can change anything. This is the third stage: bargaining. Sooner, they realise its futility and might feel numb and lifeless without the missing friend, initiating the fourth stage: depression. The last stage is acceptance where they still miss

their friend but also start growing into the reality, accommodating themselves in the present. Grief is greatly subjective and no two individuals share the same feeling of grief, thus this model isn't a universal map for any individual. Although the model came under major criticism, it is widely popular and an essential work on

PSYCHOLOGISTS W

Elisabeth Kubler Ross



John Bowlby

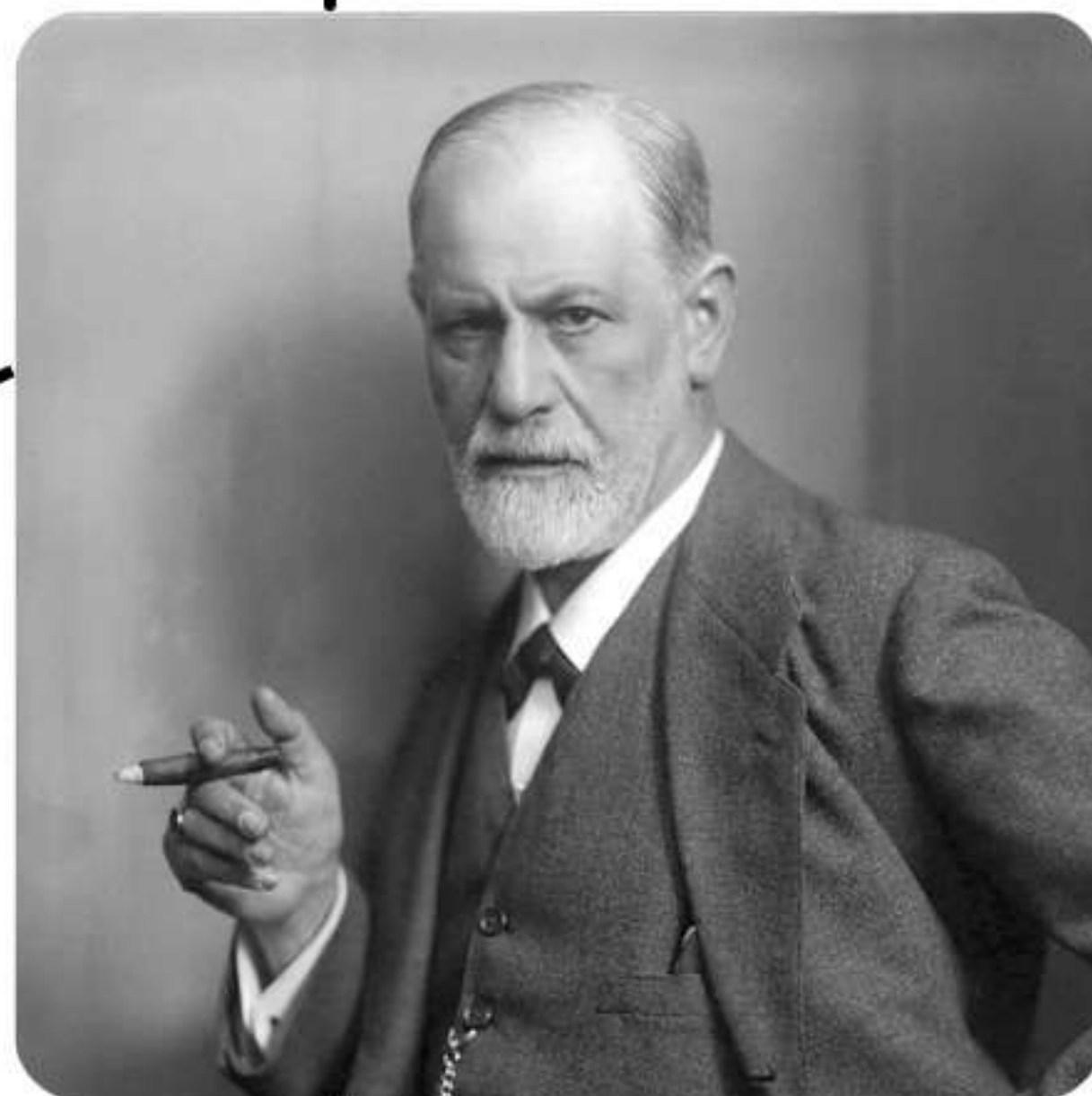


Colin Murray Parks

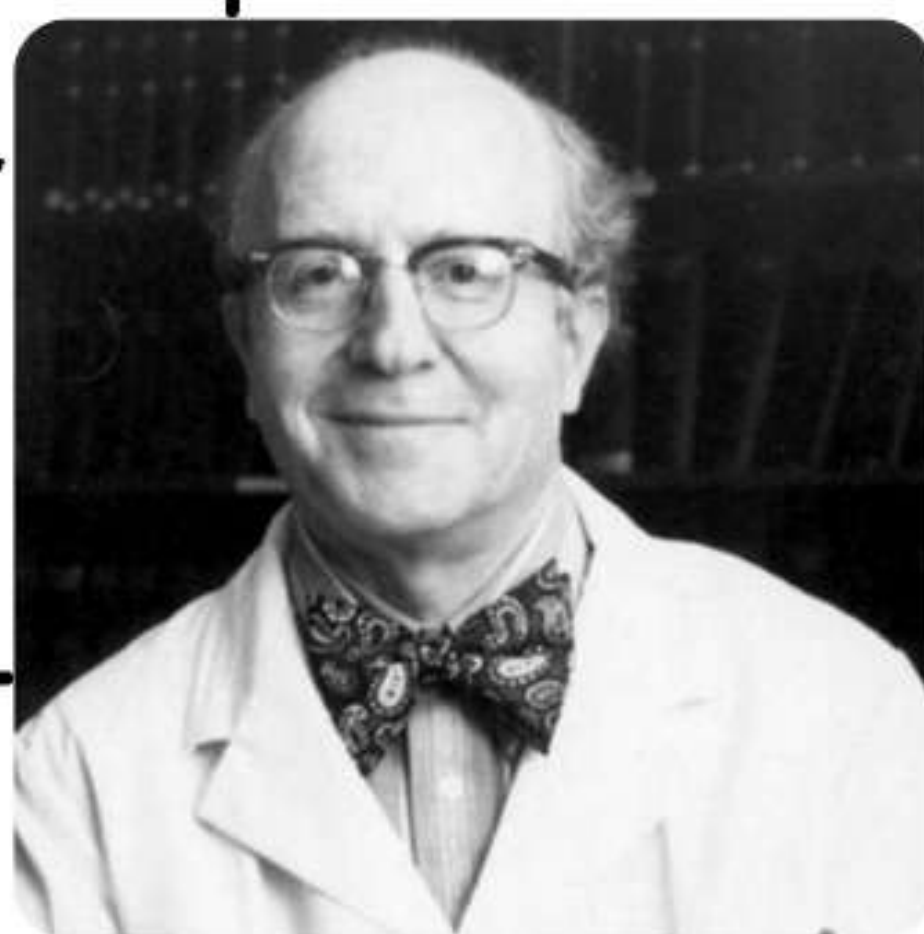
Robert Burton



WHO STUDIED GRIEF



Sigmund Freud



George Engel

generalisation of grief.

What does religion tell us about Grief?

When looked closely, humans have very traditionally built a support system for themselves in the form of religion. Religious communities act as a support circle where a person is expected to let their private self become

public while they are grieving. Religious rituals give people a time period, more of a transitory one, where they abandon the normal social rules imposed on them by the society and do the bare minimum as a member of a collective.

In Hinduism, believers cremate the deceased as fire is believed to be a

very pure entity, and thus, despite the sins committed in the course of their life, would become pure and attain moksha when they are given to the holy god of fire, the *Agni Devata*. After a family member has died, people perform rituals for 13 days where they pay respect to the deceased and pray for their easy departure from this body to the other. In this time no entertainment of any sort is taken to. These 13 days are followed by rituals performed on death anniversaries; *Punya tithi* and *shraddas*.

On the other hand, Islam buries the dead as cremation is forbidden. They believe in the concept of the resurrection of the dead from the grave. There is no viewing, wake or visitation in a Muslim funeral since the body is buried as soon as possible. The mourning period is determined to be of 40 days but can vary depending on the religiousness and the connection of the person with the deceased, for in cases of widows the period is as long as 4 months and 10 days.

Furthermore, every religion, from Buddhism which holds ceremonies every 7th, 49th, 100th days from the death, to Judaism; allows 7 days of the grieving period to its mourners, has systems in place to help the family in these times. Just as the birth of an individual brings responsibilities to the family members and the society,



similarly, the death of a being also demands those responsibilities in the form of rituals to keep the deceased connected with this world in a transcendental reality. In this relation, sociologists have also observed that a positive perspective towards death draws on the belief in the *afterlife*. It becomes fundamental to promote human hopefulness and that it is just a matter of a lifetime when they will see them again.

Religion, through these mourning days, allows us to take our time and delve deeper into the sufferings and pain the death has brought on to us. In some cultures, crying for a prolonged period is seen as selfish, as it pains the soul of the deceased and proves to be a hindrance in the dead's post-death activities. Researches, conducted by the NCBI by Michael King, have shown that religious beliefs affect the outcome of bereavement. The higher the intensity of the beliefs, the easier it becomes to let go of the dead.

With grief comes change. The process of grieving is itself very confusing, not only for the person who is grieving but also for the others around them. The bereaved person might cry inconsolably for hours in front of you but starts laughing and becomes very cheerful once you leave. This is natural, just a human dealing with their misery as they see fit. However, this and many similar responses have a lot to do with culture.

Culture and its Urbanisation

With grief comes change. The process of grieving is itself very confusing, not only for the person who is grieving but also for the others around them. The bereaved person might cry inconsolably for hours in front of you but starts laughing and becomes very cheerful once you leave. This is natural, just a human dealing with their misery as they see fit. However, this and many similar responses have a lot to do with culture. Definitely factors like genetic makeup play a significant role but so do relative vulnerability and stress-bearing capacity of members of the same

culture. In the East, people have adapted a collective culture that makes them stand in solidarity with the bereaved. For instance, the Japanese company Toyota gives its employees an indefinite leave for such purposes, not putting themselves through the insensitivity of limiting a person's grieving process with the number of days. The co-workers for the time being distribute the work without complaining as their culture has taught them.

Whereas Western culture places more importance on individuality. Most of the companies based in this culture allow their employees a very acute mourning period. Such policies become uniformly restrictive on people's mental health. Studies have shown that increasing urbanization among people has led to weak community bonds and thereof made grief a private matter. A research conducted by the Institute of Medicine (US) Committee for the Study of Health Consequences of the Stress of Bereavement concluded that culture provides for the sanctioned public articulation of private distress; the reordering of disrupted social relationships; the re-moralization of those demoralized and made desperate by loss; and both the reincorporation of the bereaved into the social fabric and reaffirmation of their solidarity with the group. This isolation becomes grave when it is experienced by refugees or the marginalised communities who were forced to leave their everything and step into the unknown, all alone.

How do we grieve?

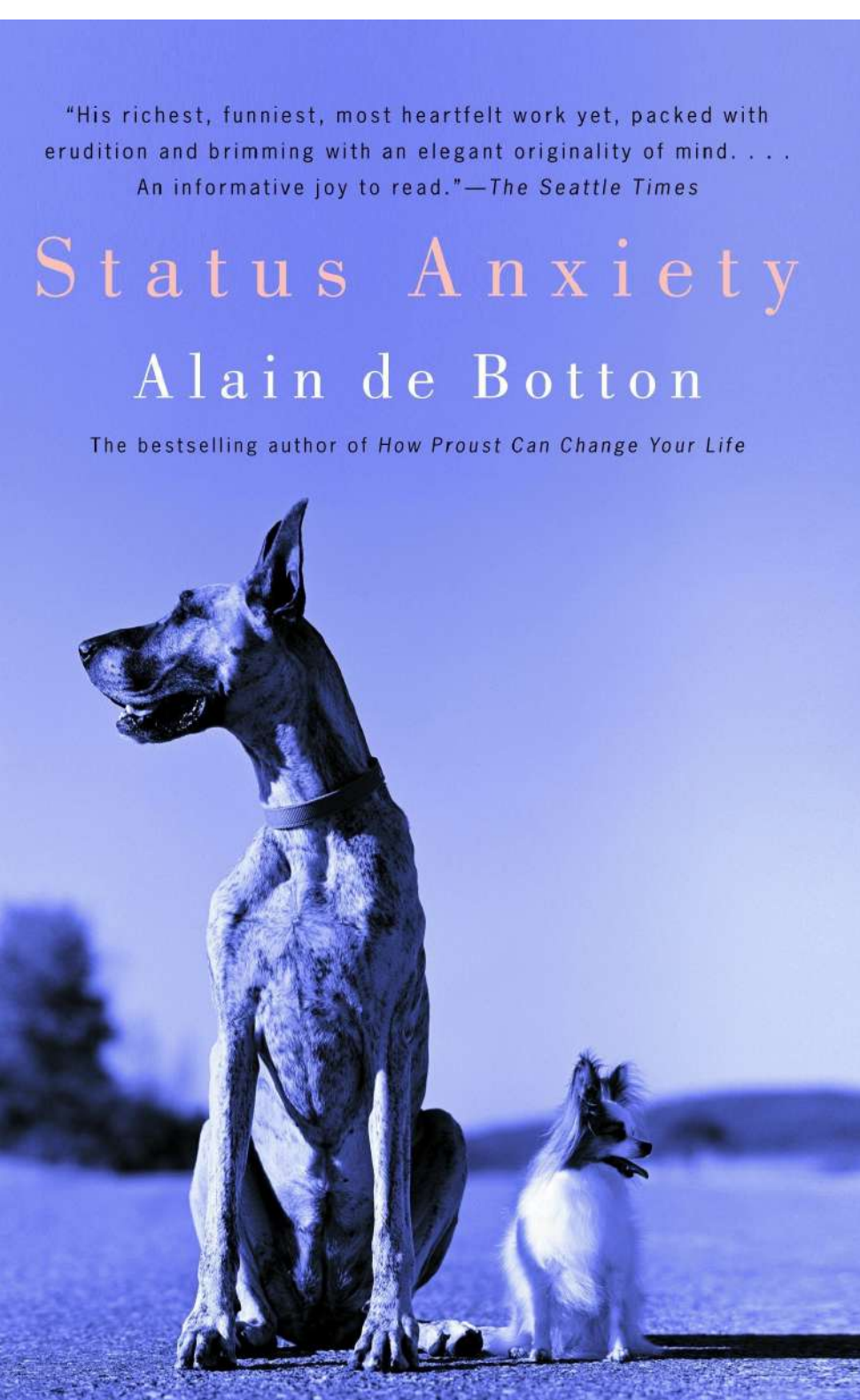
In broad generalised form, there is a dual reflection of grief: in the inner world and in the outer world for an individual. In the inner world, a person gets occupied with the memories and thoughts of the loss they have suffered. It includes not just happy times, but also regrets, guilt, resentment, even fantasy. The largely un-romanticised aspect of emotional expression, crying helps release the over fulfilled emotions while one's grieving. This, however, is not necessarily enlightening, such intense emotions, overburdened with despair and gloom, might even cause hallucinations, loss of self and other disorders. Grieving often gets closely linked with isolation. Despite the fact that the emptiness that gets created during a loss or separation leads to certain disconnection with the surrounding, isolation is

neither mandatory nor ideal. Many scholars believe that healing takes place from within. However, the idea of "Laugh and the world laughs with you; Weep, and you weep alone" might be a genius Ella Wheeler's poetry, but not that great of a psychological advice. Studies have shown that even when people while grieving have hated to be around others. After four burdensome dinners, the fifth dinner with friends has sparked some joy in them. In terms of the outer world, grief also gets associated with materialistic things like holding possessions of the deceased, anniversaries, looking for closure and sometimes, desperately compensating the lack of it with food, alcohol, drugs and sex. Dogs have been seen visiting the grave of their owner, days after death, as a part of their grieving. People often turn into sex addicts or smokers after suffering a great loss. Many interviews with sex workers have revealed some form of lack or loss of attachment in childhood.

The negative connotation attached to grief has made it something to despise, to disdain. The truth being that despite the beauty of the good ol' days, we all can neither escape from grief, nor grieving.

P.S. It's okay to cry, we don't judge. ■

Want to read more about grief?



Read Allain De Botton's book on how to fight the grief and anxiety caused by a lack of society's validation.

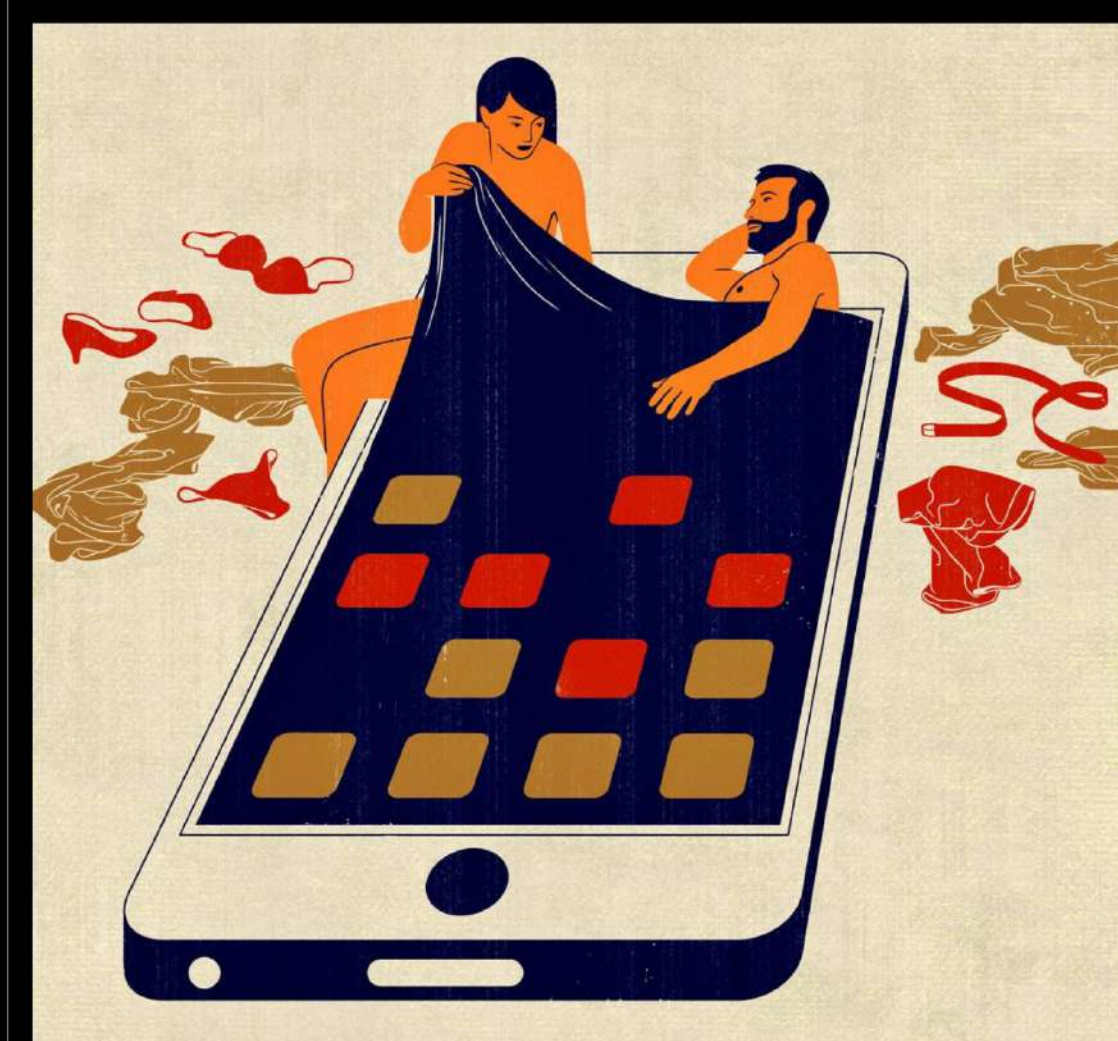
From the Edboard

Previous article in the Deconstruction Series May Edition

Crossing Lines:

A perspective on Infidelity

by Meghna Rathore & Abhilasha Rawat



Evolutionary psychologists have made efforts over the decades to understand why humans do what they do. Their thoughts, emotions and behavioural patterns are carefully observed to form the history of human evolution. It is well noted that not every activity performed by humans is well thought out and involves their 'rational' self; instead, more than some of our instincts and 'gut feelings' stem from the way our ancestors lived and adapted to their surroundings, they evolved psychological mechanisms. Infidelity too can be viewed through the lens of evolution.

Infidelity with the lens of evolution

Humans follow the most basic instincts that come to them as naturally as they would to any animal, procreation is one of the most important results of such instincts; and the only rule of procreation is, the more, the better. This is why we shall try to base our theories on this

one overarching truth.

In many theories on evolution including Darwin's theory of evolution and natural selection, it is stated that the males in our ancestral society used to look for females to reproduce with as someone they could provide for since women were busy taking care of their young ones, who in return would take their lineage ahead. To ensure that their resources like food, shelter, protection from other males and surroundings are in safe hands they used to look for females with long-term mating intentions like themselves.

Similarly, females had the same intentions apart from the fact that their reasons were rooted in their biology. Women, in general, are more involved in the birth process, starting from conceiving to the nine-month-long gestation period to lactating for years until the newborn is all grown up and ready. This investment is relatively a lot more as compared to a valuable but only investment made by the male members,

ejaculation. Thus, females were incentivised to find long term mates who were supposed to be true to their partners and would only and only provide for their females and their offsprings.

"(Women's) investment is relatively a lot more as compared to a valuable but only investment made by the male members, ejaculation."

If humans were made to procreate then why do we see infidelity as a blasphemous condition in a monogamous relationship? Plus, from an evolutionary perspective, surely more people having sex would mean more people. So why do we get so upset over what someone else does with their lives?

A series by
Meghna Rathore &
Abhilasha Rawat



A polyphiloprogenitive theist

Varun Raj Wahane and Aranya Chatterjee



It is not the existence of God that creates the magic but the acceptance and belief in the idea of God which does the magic

In this Brobdingnagian globalised world of capitalism, no one has any time to sit and to have devotional self-realisation of truth or to know one's categorical self. One gathers an idea of self-realisation or rather discovers self in the meantime of likes and dislikes or in the time of self-struggle.

The search for self is always filled with a chaos of ideas to a grand

success or a devastating failure. Success leads to the discovery of self and failure to one's weaknesses. However, in this idea of discovering self, what role does God play?! Irrespective of the wonders of the idea of God and how he changes a person's life. The article analyses the concept of acceptance of the idea of *Almighty* which is defined as theism, and does it change a person's imagination? Or perspective to

look at the world rather than as an atheist. To analyse further, one needs to understand the roots of the upbringing of a person and find out whether the idea of self-discovery is connected to the belief or non-belief of God?

The idea of theism is categorised as a troglodyte, which compels us to ask numerous questions to one's self, but if one observes

the kinds of concepts within theism and analyse that there is a large amount of difference among all the theists. How they look at God and admire the existence of God? That gives a conclusion that the categorisation is false because the belief in God is the quintessential part of every theist and that is itself different. Therefore, making every theist have a different belief system.

In this nexus of ideas, it has to be emphasised that imagination is the most uncontrollable thing of the human mind and therefore makes humans special among the other breeds of nature. It is the imagination of humans and their curious minds that has led to great discoveries of the time. Eventually, what one gathers in this web of ideas is that a theist has a much more optimistic view of the world as compared to an atheist. It's also observed that there is some kind of magical influence on the perspective of a theist that makes them imagine differently out of the world, a theist's imagination is rather a pizzazz which may be mythical but full of illustrations, this gives a lot of criticism by the school of atheists. But what is to be observed irrespective is the flabbergasting optimism of theists in a world full of vehement people.

The epiphany is that there is a symphony of imagination to the theist, which drives different ideas to blossom without any limitation. This could seem illogical or irrational to many philosophers but it has greater existence in theism. It is not the

existence of God that creates the magic but the acceptance and belief in the idea of God which does the magic. Theism is about letting the final decision be of the majestic power of God which the Bible describes as "*in his majesty the king of heaven*", theism believes in surrendering the self to the supreme power. It is not the technicality of it that needs to be explored but its synthesis that needs to be understood.

Further, a question arises, what creation of such an irrational kind of imagination leads to if it does not involve rationality and technicality?

The creation of poems, literature, music, cooking, meditating, and way of life, etc. are all gifts of theism. It is argued that theism has no rationality.

A pure and simple answer is *Art*, a simple creation of 'art' which can be in any form, justified in any way. Any kind of work that is passionately done can be defined as art, it is the fluidity of art that can take any shape to express ideas and emotion. This is the glamour of theism that leads to the unconditional beauty of imagination. The Japanese word *komorebi* means a description of the scene when sunlight filters through the trees (an interplay between light and the leaves) such as the relation between a man and his imagination.

The creation of poems, literature,

music, cooking, meditating, and way of life, etc. are all gifts of theism. It is argued that theism has no rationality. However, it does not need rationality, it is the imperfection that gives it the identity of a philosophy.

In German, there is a word *waldeisanmkeit* which means the feeling of being alone in the woods but not in a bad way. Everyone needs to experience *waldeinsamkeit* to explore and understand one's self, there are many layers to a person's character. One needs to find out the blend which defines the self-synthesising perspective and use them properly at appropriate times.

This gives many definitions and many different views of theism. But what is life in view of theism is nothing but *Vacilando* (Italian: -travelling when the experience itself is more important rather than destruction)

Many intellectual philosophers have criticised the optimism and duality of theism. There is more to be offered by theism than morality, duty, discipline and to give society the 'we feeling'. It is the polyphiloprogenitive optimism that leads to infinite ideas and infinite possibilities. Theism also leads to idealism, an ideal view of life which in moderation will give its effects. But if imbalanced, then might be leading to praise a totalitarian philosophy of jingoism.



Irrespective of the idea of 'God' as a living entity or as the supreme power somewhere around the world, there are hundreds of merits that can be discussed but just with theoretical and philosophical viewpoints, there is no technicality to be proven.

Theism in this 21st century has changed many spectrums of human life differently with commonality in adapting flexibility in ideas within the belief system of God. Leaving behind its orthodox bindings, the flag bearers realised that to maintain significance as the centre of the life of the masses they need to open the doors of other ideologies to merge within. To make it adaptable to the new age of human civilisation. So to sustain it makes changes periodically, for change is inevitable. This Inevitability of change is not only a concept but a rule of nature which, if not honoured will lead to removing its existence of those ideas that did not honour nature.

A vital example of an extinct concept from the time is the monarchy and the way people perceive monarchy in the contemporary era has changed. In ancient times monarchy represented God on earth, it was a pure form of a godly figure ruling upon his subjects and giving an example of nobility and duty. Monarchy was God's sacred mission to grace and dignify the earth, to give ordinary people an example of nobility and duty to raise in their wretched lives, therefore it was believed that

monarchy is a calling from God. With time, the status changed to head of State and to just a decorative symbol. Eventually, today that school of idea has vanished and has been replaced by democracy.

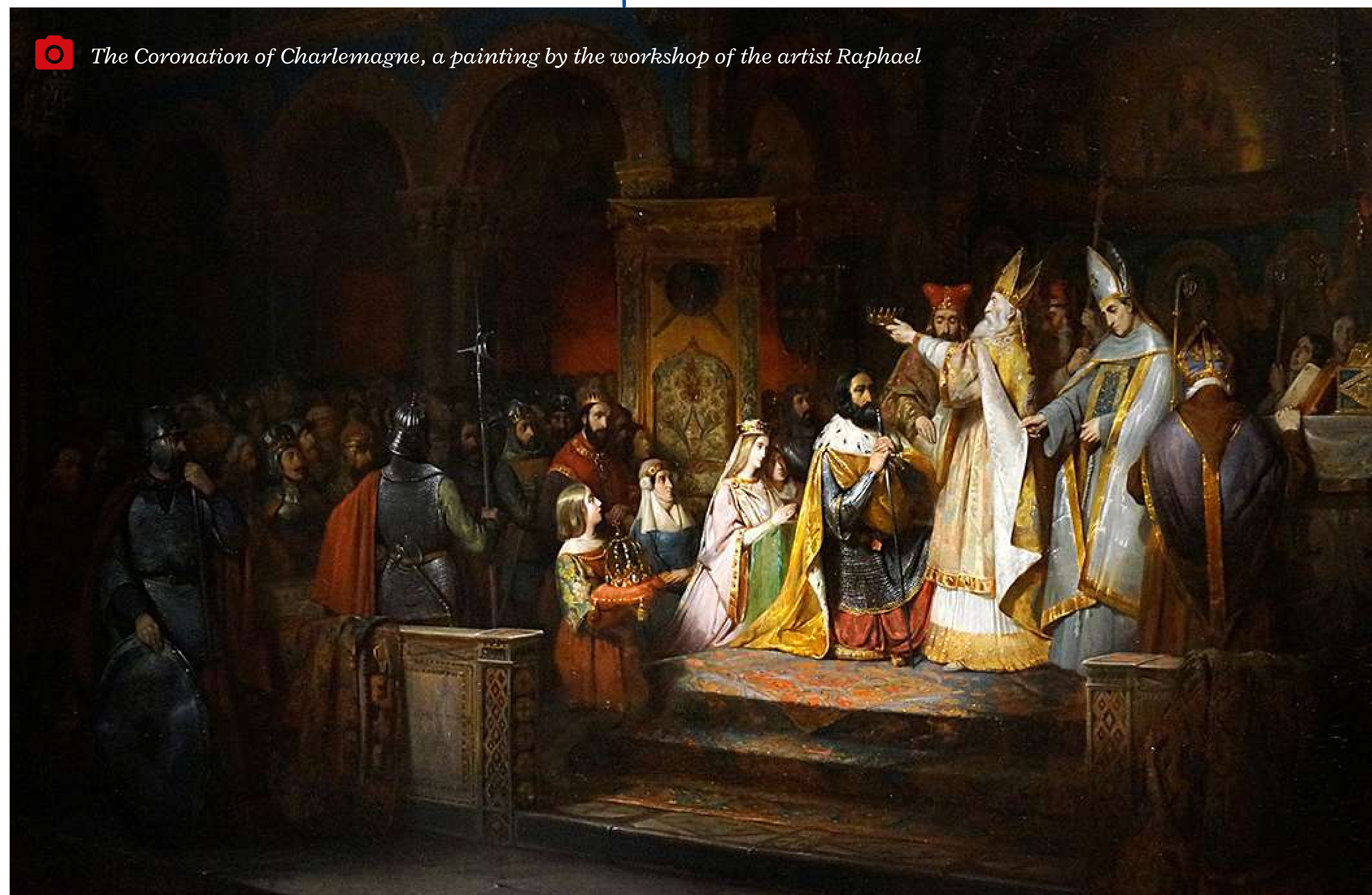
According to theism, when a person imagines and devotes a belief in God, it does not deteriorate his personality or block his freedom but strengthens him. Further, this idea of God as the supreme power will not change a person's destiny but will push him to chase it further aggressively.

The idea of theism enlightens a person with a realisation that his destined destiny has always been there since the beginning. Theist believes in a mythological belief system that events will necessarily happen to a particular person or situation in its destined period. It is kind of a promised place for a mythological believer, like heaven or hell. It gives a notion that all will make sense eventually, the mistakes, the failure, and the struggle all will be put in one place and be part of the journey, thus referring to *Vacilando*.

The above example may relate to feudal concepts, but it has a deeper meaning in the contemporary era. . Metaphorically, monarchy is observed as derivative of "*the divine right theory*". A monarch is anointed not appointed, that's why he is granted an abbey, not a government building, it is an archbishop that puts the crown on the head of the monarch, not a minister or public servant. This means that he is answerable to God in his duty, not the public.

According to the divine right theory, responsibility and duty are referred under the umbrella of the crown, which decorates and dignifies a personality. The crown is the duty or responsibility of a person rather than a decorative piece of art. Rather than limiting a personality, it glorifies the personality with the aim of life and so that the destined duty of one should be carried with grace. With such self-confidence as such that, no one

 *The Coronation of Charlemagne, a painting by the workshop of the artist Raphael*



other women had experienced similar things. Farley testified in front of the New York City Human Rights Commission on Women and Work and for the first time in public coined the term “sexual harassment”. Until Farley’s testimony, survivors of sexual harassment had no words to understand what happened to them or even explain the experience to someone else.

George Orwell has also exploited the concept of epistemic injustice and linguistic determinism in his renowned book 1984.

Is there freedom if its ideas and concepts vanish? A word has as much weight as its meaning.

How to have absolute control over people? Have absolute control over their mind. How to have absolute control over minds? Have absolute control over their thoughts. How to have absolute control over thoughts? Have absolute control over language.

The book 1984 is a futuristic dystopian novel set in Britain referred to as Oceania under a totalitarian regime. The party controls every aspect of the country from media to people. One way of controlling people is that the regime tried to devise a new language called Newspeak which contains only nouns and words with very concrete meanings.

Newspeak simplified people’s language so that they could not articulate themselves in a more complex and abstract way and had to use the most reductionist form of language.

To give an example from the book. The term ‘free’ was used in Newspeak, but only in phrases like “the field is free from weeds”. It couldn’t be used in the traditional sense of “politically free” or “intellectually free,” because these ideas didn’t exist and didn’t serve the party. Words were used not to convey the meaning but to undermine it, which distorted the very ideas they refer to. Labour camps are termed as joy camps, prisoners are tortured in the ministry of love and propaganda and distorted facts are published in the ministry of truth.

The entire purpose of newspeak is to confine the field of thought to make thoughtcrime impossible.

**WAR IS PEACE
FREEDOM IS SLAVERY
IGNORANCE IS
STRENGTH**

Thoughtcrime was merely fantasising about overturning the state, maintaining a journal, or having a love affair. The only reverence or love a person could have should be towards the party.

The regime sanctioned and propagated the concept of doublethink, in which a person might have two utterly conflicting beliefs while thinking both to be true. The individual chose to deliberately forget memories and lose the ability to form independent thought. It leaves the individual completely dependent on the state’s definition of society and the world (reality).

The regime is not content with negative obedience, not even with the most abject surrender of an offender. When finally the offender surrenders

it must be of their own free will. The regime does not destroy the heretic because he resists, so long as he resists they never destroy him. They convert him, capture his inner mind and reshape him. It is unacceptable for erroneous thinking to exist anywhere in the world, no matter how secret or powerless it may be. Even in the event of death, they cannot allow any deviation.

During the 20th century, the Nazis wore the offenders down by torture and solitude until they were despicable, admitting to whatever fed into their mouths. The dead men had become martyrs because the confession that they had made was known to be extorted and untrue. The infamous phrase ‘Work will set you free’ outside Auschwitz concentration camps provides an example of manipulative linguistic determinism.

Language is a currency and a political tool. Words can define how we think in very subtle and nuanced ways.

As George Orwell rightly said, “Political language is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable.” The term Orwellian does not mean authoritarian or totalitarian. It refers to the process of not being able to think deeply or questioning your assumptions and the deceptive and manipulative use of language that is possible even in a democracy. ■



Dilip Kumar

1922-2021

By Chahat Susawat

There are many shooting stars that come and go, some blaze brightly and then fade away. While others shine on. Dilip Kumar, the last of a triumvirate of actors who ruled the Hindi film industry in the 1950s and '60s, died on July 7th, aged 98. Starting off in the pre-independence period with his film *Jwar Bhata* in 1944, Dilip Kumar, along with his two illustrious contemporaries, Raj Kapoor and Dev Anand set about defining the Hindi film hero in post-independence India. Turning the tide against the early acting traditions, Dilip Kumar developed a style of acting that was natural, minimalistic and meditative. Ranging over characters and genres with nary a mannerism in sight, he became the pioneer of method acting in Bollywood.

It was merely by his presence, his way of speaking conversationally and not throwing his voice theatrically, that he commanded instant and total attention. He did not throw his hands about. Rather, he made stillness a virtue. And more than anything else, he made it relatable and real.

Though the “Tragedy King” label did him a great disservice, he was as adept at making his audience laugh as getting them to shed a tear.

In *Devdas* (1955), he portrayed his character’s unrequited love, morosely stoking in the memories of his childhood love. Equally unforgettable is his double role in *Ram Aur Shyam* (1967), with a two brothers separated-at-birth trope. And in the film he is best remembered for, *Mughal-e-Azam* (1960), he played the hapless Salim, whose love for the beautiful Anarkali led to a war between father and son. In one of his last successful films, Ramesh Sippy’s *Shakti* (1982), he was paired with Amitabh Bachan.

The actor who by the bollywood standards was not prolific, acting in 60 or so films over the course of half a century, managed to extensively influence the successive bollywood actors’ generation.

Both, Amitabh Bachan and Shah Rukh Khan, actors who reigned the subsequent decades in the industry, acknowledged Dilip Sahab’s influence, with Shah Rukh Khan acting in the remake of his hit, *Devdas*.

Muhammad Yusuf Khan, aka Dilip Kumar, wasn’t just the emperor on silver screen but of silver screen and his passing away marks the end of an era.



The Global Tax Deal and its Implications for India

Vaibhav Sahi

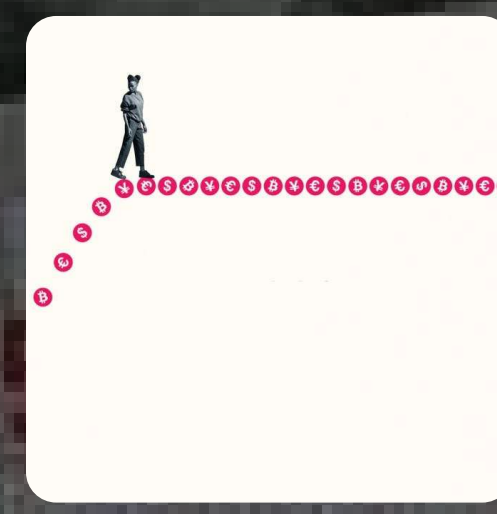
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From Rags to Stitches: The Rise of Bangladesh

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ECONOMY



The Global Tax Deal & Its Implications for India

Vaibhav Vivek Sahi

What was the last time you used Google, Instagram, or Netflix? Could you ever imagine that the entire world loses taxes worth a whopping \$427 Billion every year due to the unjustified tax avoidance by MNCs including many digital companies, with India alone losing \$10.3 billion from global tax abuse? To crack down on this huge financial issue, the G20 has given a green signal to the Paris-based Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Global Tax Plan, the ink of which has dried just a few days ago.

Why is the Global Tax Plan required?

Most of the MNCs including famous digital companies artificially lower their tax outgo through complex intra-group arrangements using which they pin down their tax base in countries of low tax jurisdiction like Ireland, Cayman Islands,

Panama etc. in order to reap the benefits of extremely low taxes on profits. These MNCs also use various profit shifting tricks, some of which got exposed in the famously leaked 'Panama Papers'.

This comes as a huge blow to the exchequer of both the developing and the developed nations and causes them to forgo tax revenue which they could otherwise have collected. In the last 40 years, the average global tax has fallen from approx. 40% to 24%. This is especially economically catastrophic for the developing countries like India which provide a huge base of customers to these digital companies and make up for a majority of their sales but are unable to tax a fair share of their profits. Revenue shortfalls hinder the financial condition of the developing countries, reduce their economic development, and increase economic inequality among the developing and developed nations.

What is the Global Tax Plan?

The Global Tax Plan is an international corporate tax proposal under the auspices of the Paris-based OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) which is being proactively supported by the United States and has been endorsed by the G20. Out of the 139 countries which took part in the talks, 130 of them- including giants like India, China, and Russia- have agreed to it in principle.

The deal aims to ensure all the nations in which digital MNCs are operating and selling their products get a fair share of their profits as tax and end the regime of MNCs hiding behind low-tax jurisdiction countries, popularly known as "Tax Havens", to safeguard their profits. The deal is expected to cover the top 100 digital companies including Google, Facebook, and Netflix.

The deal is open for negotiations and talks from different countries and the final draft will be prepared in October 2021 which will be signed in 2022 and will come in effect from 2023.

The framework comprises of two pillars:

- MNCs should be taxed on their supernormal profits** which will then be shared to all other countries in which the MNCs operate. Companies with profits above €20 billion and profit margins above 10% will be taxed 20-30% on their profits above 10%. The details have still to be worked out. After a review period of 7 years, the €20 billion thresholds may be reduced to €10 billion. It also aims to devise simpler methods for companies to calculate taxes on foreign operations such as marketing and distributions. However, companies in extractives (oil, gas, and mining) and financial services will be excluded from the ambit of this pillar.
- A global minimum corporate tax** should be set at 15% which will act like an anti-tax haven device. This will apply only to companies with more than €750 M in revenue

The Implications

The OECD/G20 tax deal aims to have some positive implications for the nations throughout the globe, which is the reason why it was brought in the first place. Being fuelled and promoted by the United States of America, it is one of President Joe Biden's most ambitious economic policies. It is seen as a game-changer to end companies' "Race to the bottom" to make tax bases in countries with the lowest income tax rates. It will not only help tackle international tax rate competition but also raise revenues for countries to fight the pandemic and revive them from the pandemic's aftermath. It will also yield \$150 Billion globally, which is roughly 7.5% of the \$2 Trillion profits of Fortune 500 MNCs in 2019. The deal will force companies to pay the justified share of taxes irrespective of their physical presence in a country or not and will shift authority to tax profits worth \$100 Billion to other countries. It will incentivize MNCs to devise investment structures not on tax-driven factors but on the commercial and economic conditions of a country.

What does it mean for India?

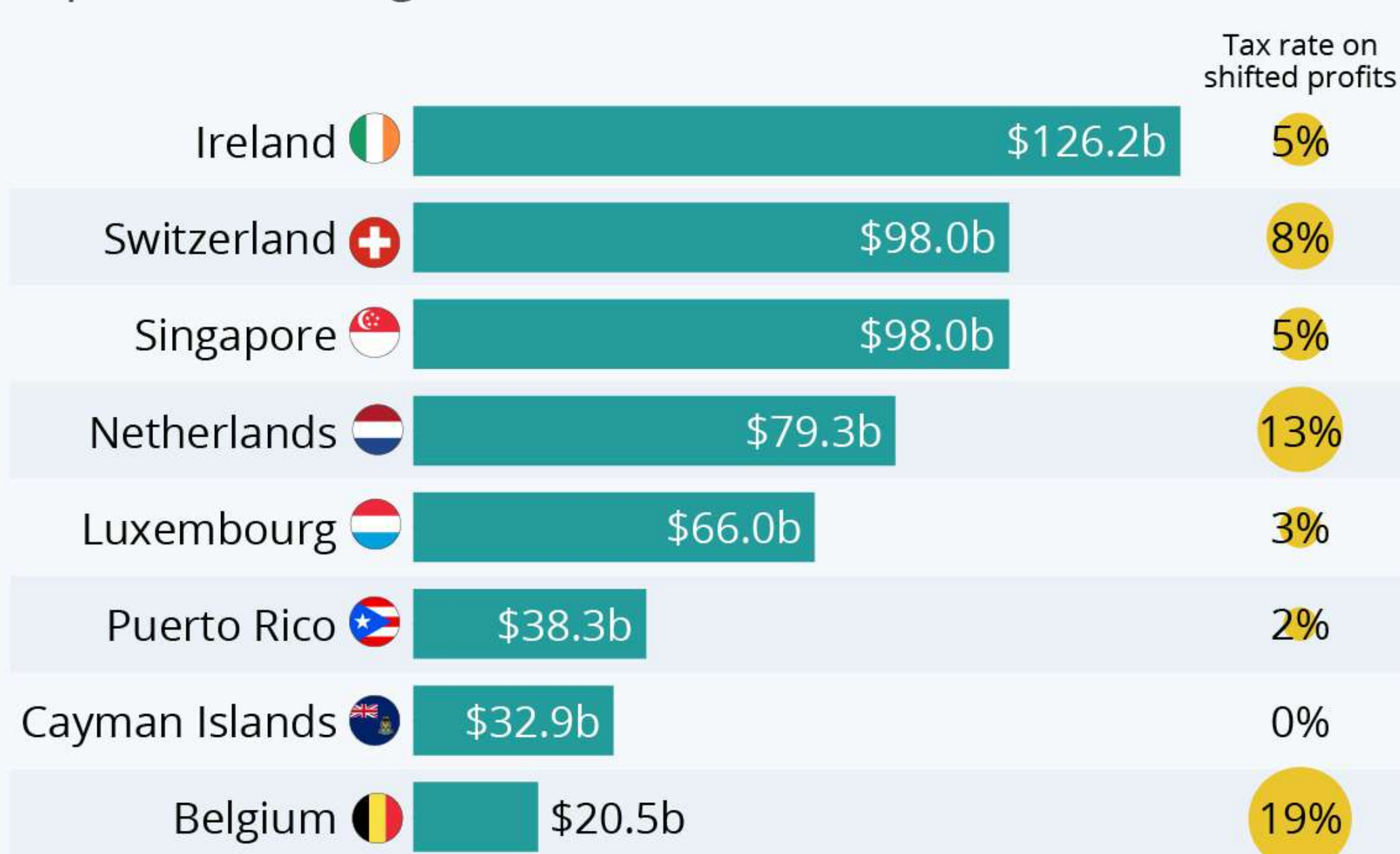
Before the global tax plan was introduced, India itself introduced an Equalisation Levy (EL) in 2016 to solve the problem of tax abuse and avoidance by digital companies which made millions out of their consumer base in India. The EL collected ₹2057 Crore in 2020-21, an 85% increase in EL collection from ₹1136 Cr in 2019-20. India's revenue collection from EL has been increasing since its inception in 2016 and has cumulatively generated ₹4000 Cr revenue to date.

It is being anticipated that when the framework will be implemented, India will be forced to give up its EL. The EL has an extremely low threshold of just ₹2 Cr (€ 0.2 Million) as compared to the proposed threshold of €20 billion by the OECD. It is also unclear whether removing the EL and abiding by the OECD/G20 tax deal will increase India's revenue by taxes on MNCs or not. Many experts worry that India's tax revenue will be less than the one before when India levied the EL.

India need not worry about pillar 2 of the agreement as the corporate tax rate in India is already 15%- the minimum global tax prescribed by the OECD.

The Tax Havens Attracting the Most Foreign Profits

Countries with the most artificially shifted profits from high-tax countries in 2017



In current USD
Some notable tax havens such as British Virgin Islands are not included due to insufficient data.
Source: missingprofits.world

"Tax Havens" are popular for their extremely low corporate tax rates as compared to other countries.

What should be India's stance now?

Now that one has come to know about the basic aspects of the Global Tax Plan, it is also crucial to get acquainted with the fact that the tax plan is not just a financial one but also a highly geopolitical one. As iterated earlier, it is one of President Biden's most ambitious economic policies to end the long unfair tax regime. India, being a strategic partner of the US on various fronts, was obliged to be a part of the deal. Nevertheless, India should aggressively raise the issue of Equalisation Levy in the negotiation talks. It should try to ensure that it also enjoys a right to impose EL even after the deal is implemented. The complete details of the framework should be asked for and scrutinized, leaving no loopholes. India should persuade the OECD to reduce the threshold on taxation of the supernormal profits of companies to €1 Billion, which will help bring 5000 global companies under the ambit of this framework. India should vouch for a sustainable and easy legal framework for implementation.

Flaws in the plan

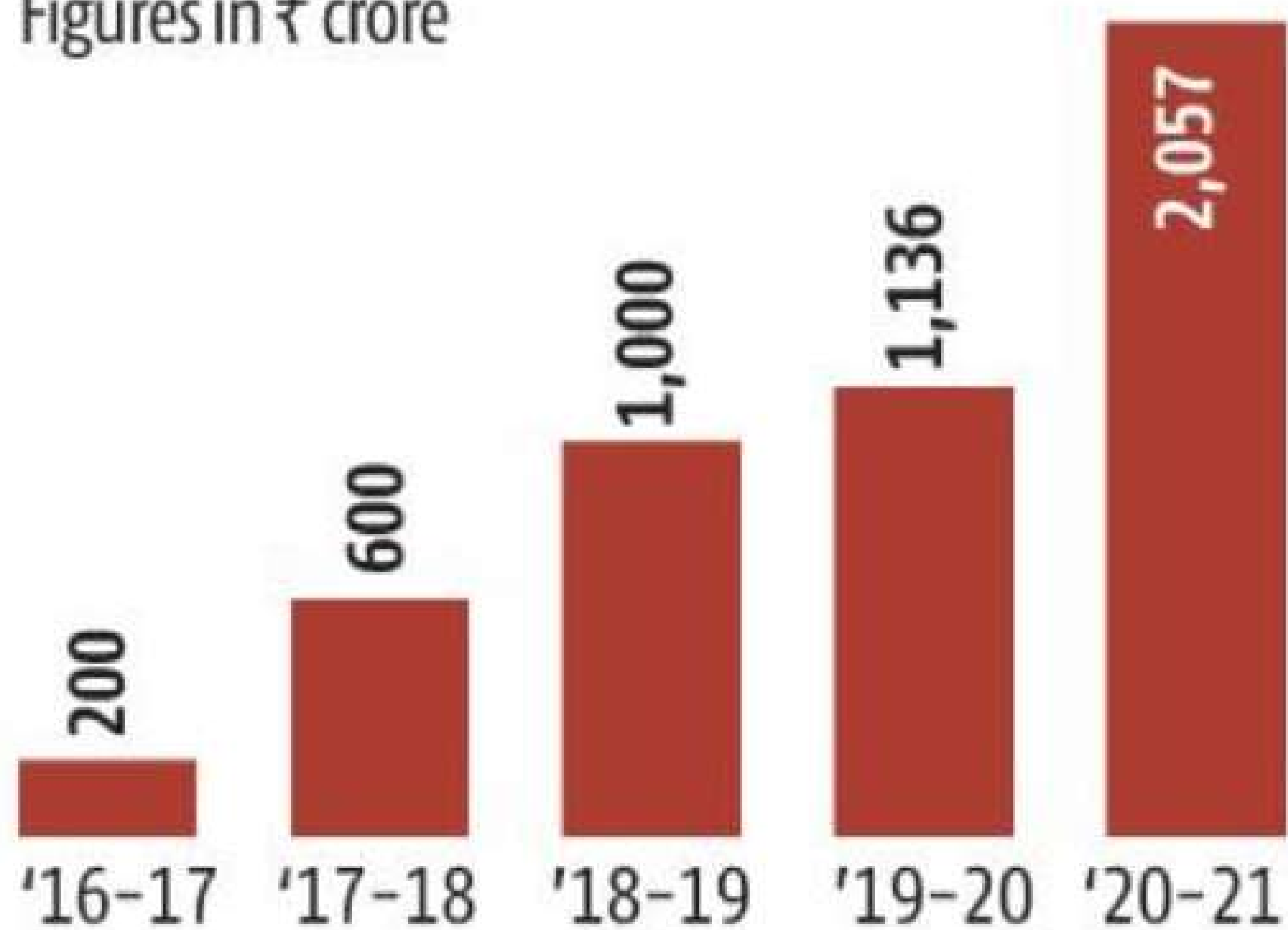
The plan without a doubt is a step in the right direction but also comes with some flaws. If everything is worked out as it is presented right now, Alphabet, the parent company of Google, will pay under just 1% of its total profit to the Asia Pacific. Also, there is no clarity whether super-rich companies like Amazon, which don't operate on supernormal profits, will also come under the ambit of the agreement. Exclusion of companies in extractives and financial services, which include JP Morgan- having 905 tax haven subsidiaries and Morgan Stanley with 619 tax haven subsidiaries, compromises on the main intent of the plan itself.

The hurdles ahead

With the European Union being the world's biggest trading block in terms of consumer wealth, the best way to validate this deal is to pass a law in the EU. The 9 countries from the 139 countries not accepting this proposal are Barbados, Estonia, Ireland, Hungary, Kenya, Nigeria, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Sri Lanka. Out of them; Estonia, Hungary, Ireland, and Cyprus- which didn't take part in the talks; would oppose and prevent a unanimous agreement in the EU. Also, the European Commission aims to present a plan this month for a

EQUALISATION LEVY MOP-UP

Figures in ₹ crore



Source: Government

levy on digital services to finance post-pandemic recovery, which the US is against. Enacting the OECD deal may mean changing its bilateral tax treaty by the U.S., for which it will have to get a bill passed in the Senate with at least a two-thirds majority. With the republicans opposing this, it will pose a challenge for the Biden administration. At last, formulating a legal framework and making sure it is properly implemented across 130 countries is a tough task in itself.

The OECD/G20 tax agreement is an effort worth making to ensure both tax equity & tax efficiency but calls for aggressive diplomacy from India's side to help ensure it gains out of the deal. ■



From Rags to Stitches: The Meteoric Rise of Bangladesh

Yashovardhan Singh

March 26, 1971, a new sovereign state emerged from erstwhile East Pakistan after years of struggle, resistance, and turmoil. It came to be known as Bangladesh, because of the aspirations of its people, to live and prosper in a "Land of the Bangla People". Critics like Henry Kissinger, the then Secretary of the State of USA, mockingly called it a 'basketcase', convinced that like any other country with an illiterate population and high levels of poverty (with India being an exception) democracy and economic growth would not survive for long in Bangladesh. Soon enough, they were proven right when in August 1975, Bangladesh faced its first coup and the golden dream of democracy and prosperity were blown to smithereens. Since then, political instability had become a major part of Bangladesh's history, and so had people's miseries. However, with the onset of stable governance, something else changed in Bangladesh. From being mocked as a "basketcase of miseries" to being lauded as a "Miracle on Meghna", the 50 years post-independence, Bangladesh has proved to be an example of non-pareil development and hence, it becomes crucial to understand the political economy of its development and the lessons it gives to the rest of the world.

Three Pillars of Bangladeshi Model of Deveopment

The Bangladeshi model rests on three important pillars: exports, social progress and fiscal prudence. While the rest of the world exports were growing at an average rate of 0.4%, Bangladesh registered an average growth of 8.9% in exports between 2011 and 2019.

One of the main reasons behind this exceptional growth in exports is Bangladesh's comparative advantage in RMG (Ready Made Garments), which is globally recognised. The country, in its initial years, realised this comparative advantage and made extreme efforts to capitalise on it, such as letting low wages prevail to attract firms by not passing

One of the main reasons behind this exceptional growth in exports is Bangladesh's comparative advantage in RMG (Ready Made Garments), which is globally recognised.



 Poverty stricken Bangladesh in 1971

strict labour laws and signing strategic treaties such as SAARC Preferential Trading Agreement, Asia-Pacific Trading Agreement, etc. which offer Bangladeshi exports preferential treatment. An added advantage is its LDC (Least Developing Country) status that provides it access to raw materials from the international market at almost no cost. Moreover, the Bangladeshi manufacturers have improved their capacities phenomenally with better technology and adopting the most sophisticated management methods to cater to the international brands as it ensures better transparency in their

global supply chains. These proactive measures transformed Bangladesh from a 'wasteland' to the second-largest garment manufacturer in the world, right after China.

The second pillar of development-social progress, is a paradoxical aspect of Bangladesh's economic growth. Despite a significant section of the population working as labourers in the garment sector with minimal wages (An Oxfam report suggests that for every garment manufactured in Bangladesh and sold in Australia, only 2% of its price goes to the workers), Bangladesh has shown remarkable social progress. The share of Bangladeshi women in

the workforce has continued to increase whereas in India and Pakistan, it has decreased. Between 1990 and 2019, Bangladesh's HDI increased from 0.394 to 0.692, a growth of 60%, which has not been witnessed in any other country with demography and history like Bangladesh. From a comparison perspective, UNDP reports usually compare Bangladesh's growth with Nepal and Pakistan in South Asia, and it is startling to know that Bangladesh's HDI value is better than both Pakistan and Nepal. It is rapidly rising up the ranks from a position of 136 in 2017 to 133 in 2019 in the HDI report published by UNDP. This kind of exponential growth is unheard of, especially for a country like Bangladesh, whose majority of the population lives on a daily wage, struggling to make two ends meet.

The third pillar of fiscal prudence plays an equally important role in analysing Bangladesh's rise. It has been acclaimed in the developing world for its sagacious macroeconomic management for the past 30 years. Because of its strategy, Bangladesh has been able to maintain both internal (fiscal deficit) and external (BOP deficit) stability. Since the 1990s, it has maintained a fiscal deficit of not more than 5% of GDP, again a rare feat for a developing country as they usually focus on reckless capital expenditure to initiate development and thereby not maintaining a manageable

 Dhaka, capital of Bangladesh after 50 years of independence



From being mocked as a "basketcase of miseries" to being lauded as a "Miracle on Meghna", the 50 years post-independence, Bangladesh has proved to be an example of non-pareil development and hence, it becomes crucial to understand the political economy of its development and the lessons it gives to the rest of the world.

fiscal deficit. Even after the inclusion of Covid-19 stimulus packages, Bangladesh's fiscal deficit remains at 6%. This suggests that Bangladesh follows a serious fiscal policy of avoiding profligate spending, yet increasing the capital stock of the country, which is one of the prime reasons for its rapid economic growth. For a country like Bangladesh, which has a history of natural calamities and other negative exogenous shocks to its economy, striking such a balance must not only be difficult but is also highly praiseworthy. Similarly, Bangladesh's debt to GDP ratio from 1991 to 2019 declined continuously from 45% in 1991 to 35% in 2019. Public Finance literature suggests that maintaining such low levels of fiscal deficit and reducing the debt to GDP ratio at the same time means that the deficit maintained by Bangladesh was not only sustainable, they were better than the deficits of other developing countries, as they were well below 5% and also led to a decline in public debt. Since its GDP is growing continuously, even the 6% fiscal deficit caused due to the pandemic remains within the sustainable bracket for Bangladesh without harming the macroeconomic stability. Macroeconomic data of Bangladesh is evidence that it has opted an unconventional path for a developing country by practising fiscal discipline over profligate spending and this decision by its leaders have resulted in great economic returns to the country.

NGOs in Bangladesh: From Relief to Development

In the case of any welfare state, the State takes up the sole responsibility of ensuring the welfare of its people. For this purpose, it has a monopoly on providing public goods to its citizens. While this notion of a Welfare State is true for every other country, yet again, the Bangladesh model defies the norms. The NGOs in Bangladesh play the central role in this defiance from the mainstream conception of a welfare state and can be seen as the potential response to the previously mentioned 'paradox of social progress'.

Since the 1990s, it has maintained a fiscal deficit of not more than 5% of GDP, again a rare feat for a developing country as they usually focus on reckless capital expenditure to initiate development and thereby not maintaining a manageable fiscal deficit.

In Bangladesh, the state has voluntarily withdrawn from the area of public welfare. Since its independence, several civil society organisations filled the vacuum created by the state's withdrawal. NGOs like Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) have become an indispensable part of healthcare and schooling structures. They have also led the governments in immunisation drives, and other public health emergencies. When the immunisation drive against polio in the 1980s took place, the government gave a majority role to the NGOs. At the start of the decade, the immunisation rate was 2% and by the end of it, it reached 80%- all because of the active role played by NGOs.

Another startling aspect of their increasing role in public welfare is that it has not threatened political leadership. Bangladesh's history shows that the government becomes increasingly hostile when it sees other organisations filling the government's shoes. However, in this case, the government is not only complacent by the virtual control of public welfare by these NGOs, but it is also providing means to further foster their role in these areas. It allowed organisations like BRAC to run more than 64,000 schools, educating girls and providing employment opportunities to women as teachers, though it violated the orthodox social norms and even made the clergy upset. Hence, the government has actively supported NGOs to increase welfare, and this has happened not only by the means of 'non-interference' in their work but also by creating a legal system that was conducive to their growth.

Initially, the legal rules for the NGOs were highly relaxed which created the impetus for them to take the centre stage in enacting such social impact plans. After a few years, laws were passed which made the NGOs accountable for their foreign funding, accompanied by full disclosure of the amount. However, these laws were extremely flexible, to the extent that the World Bank categorised them as 'obsolete'. Several economists argue that the main reason for the growth of these NGOs despite such laws

THREE PILLARS OF DEVELOPMENT

■ EXPORTS

■ SOCIAL PROGRESS

■ FISCAL PRUDENCE

was because they were not so rigid in the first place.

The Grameen Bank, which originated in 1983 by Prof. Mohammad Yunus, has become a model of microfinancing worth emulating as well as the epitome of what the NGOs in Bangladesh can achieve. Though it continues to be a bank, in many ways it operates as an NGO and is even counted as one in Bangladesh. Starting with 46,955 members in 1983, it reached a membership of 6 million within 10 years of its inception with a revenue of 50.5 Million USD in 2006. Out of this revenue, 82% came from interest on its loans and 94% of these loans were credited to women. This is an example of the kind of role NGOs have played in Bangladesh and the social impact their work has created on Bangladeshi citizens.

***Future of Bangladesh:
Bright, but not a Bed Of
Roses***

While Bangladesh has proven to be more than just a small country in South Asia, the road ahead is uncertain. It is currently facing an impending ecological crisis, and though the government is aware of it, no tangible changes have been made in that direction. Much of Bangladesh is just 10 metres above sea level with 10% of the population just a metre above. This makes this population extremely susceptible to high tides. The human cost of this environmental change in Bangladesh is huge. The maximum impact is being borne by the urban poor who live in slums and squatter settlements due to the fragility of infrastructure and lack of social security and formal employment. These urban poor also make the majority of Bangladesh's garment manufacturing labour force and thus, there is an implied negative impact on its future economic growth. The impact of such floods is borne more by women as a case study of 1991 shows. When there were floods in Bangladesh, the death of women was five times that of men, primarily because men were able to communicate with each other and the information never reached the household and the women were not allowed to leave the house in the absence of a male. Therefore, the ecological crisis in Bangladesh will impact it in the worst way possible, unless there is a formal action to tackle the situation by the government.

Another problem facing the Bangladeshi people is the education system. While there are a large number of schools spread across Bangladesh and the student attendance is also high (because of the active role of the NGOs), the quality of education is disturbing. While the literacy rate are high, the

students graduating from schools and colleges are not efficient enough to enter into the skilled workforce and increase the capital stock of the country. Therefore, these students return to doing menial and low skilled jobs. This suggests that Bangladesh is in dire need of a robust and efficient education system and vocational training courses. Every year in the garment sector, where Bangladesh has a comparative advantage, it costs about \$2-3 Billion due to reliance on foreign technicians. The betterment of the education system will not only enhance social capital, but will also cover these losses faced by the Bangladeshi economy.

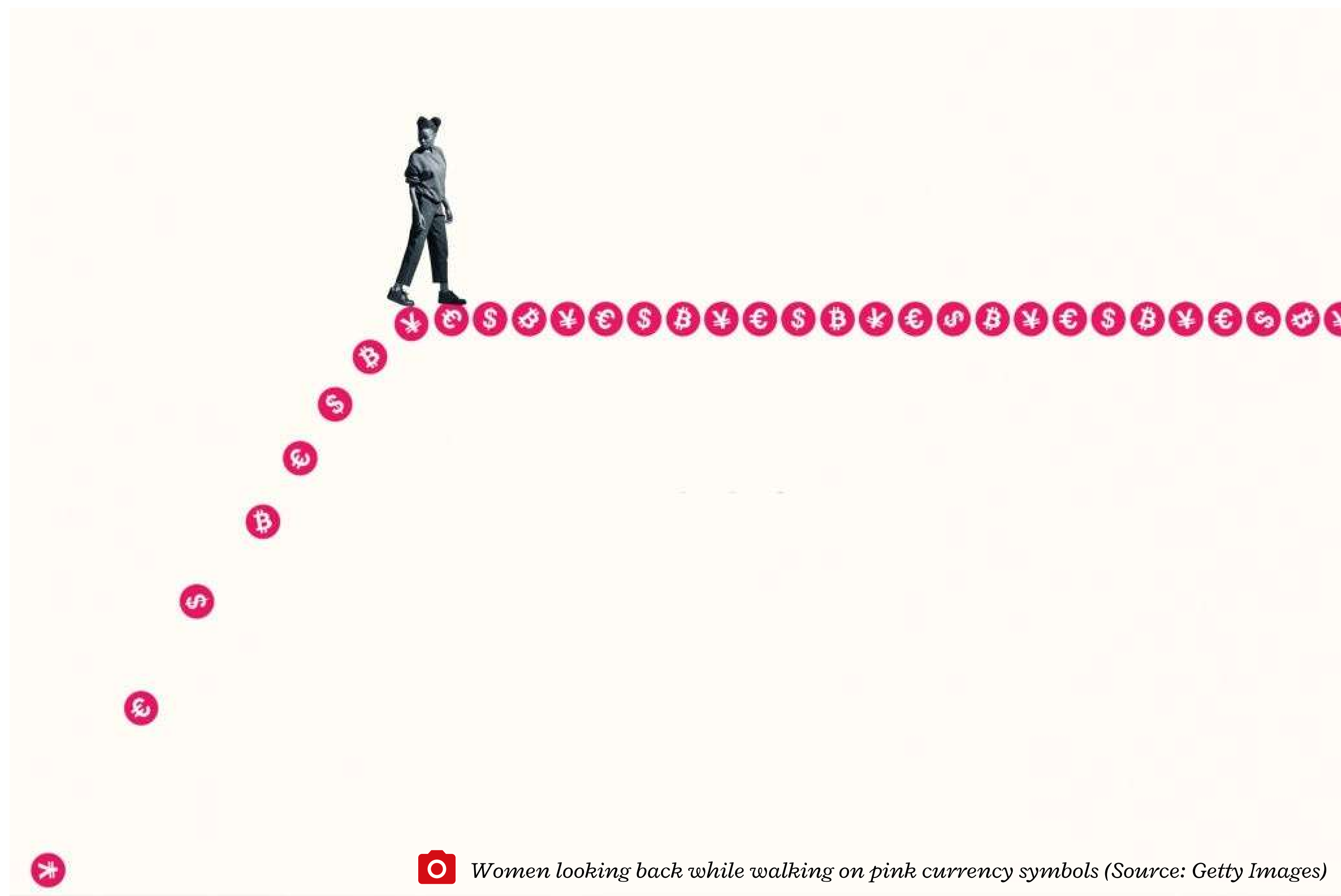
The politics of Bangladesh remains another pressing issue. While the NGOs have been giving enough space to thrive, it is only because the political leadership does not perceive them as a threat. If and when these NGO leaders, who enjoy massive support among the population, try to enter into politics, the current equilibrium will be disturbed. This would mean that the state would take over its monopoly on providing public goods and the entire social welfare system (currently entirely dependent on the NGOs) would collapse. And even if it were to sustain, the State would have to impose high levels of taxation to support the structure, and that would hurt the labour supply thereby severely impacting the labour-intensive economy of Bangladesh.

Finally, the biggest harm to the Bangladeshi economy is going to be because of the way it is currently organised. It does not incur any significant cost of purchasing raw materials due to its LDC status. However, if this economic growth continues, this status would soon be taken away along with the privileges that come with it. Likewise, Bangladesh is a major garment manufacturing hub because of its extremely cheap labour but increasing awareness of labour malpractices and stricter conventions of labour standards by organisations like ILO will mean that in the future, the labour will become more expensive than it is today. Therefore, to continue capitalising on its comparative advantage, Bangladesh needs to undergo radical organisational changes in the way its economy is oriented to ensure that it keeps up with these impending challenges.

Bangladesh was carved out of both India and Pakistan on religious grounds and has been a witness to condescending attitudes by both countries for decades, but now, it has risen to become a glowing model of development which offers both lessons and inspirations worth implementing. **Whether Bangladesh continues this golden run or not will depend majorly on its political leadership, but what this twice-dismembered country has achieved, offers major lessons to the countries from which it was born. ■**

Cryptocurrency: The Latest Financial Avatar

Abhilasha Rawat



Women looking back while walking on pink currency symbols (Source: Getty Images)

A currency that surges and slumps based on China’s crackdown on crypto usage and mining, Elon Musk’s tweets and social media speculative battles, cryptocurrency is being popularised as the ‘future of money.’ While Warren Buffet described them of zero value, and termed Bitcoin as a “rat poison squared”, El Salvador became the first country in the world to officially classify Bitcoin as legal currency.

Before understanding the basis for such highly diversified opinions on cryptocurrency, it is essential to answer the question that haunts every young booming investor-how does cryptocurrency actually work?

Cryptocurrency, fundamentally a digital currency, acts like a token and works on a publicly distributed ledger

called blockchain technology. It can be used to purchase goods and services or to invest. This medium of exchange is encrypted and decentralized owing to a peer to peer currency system. Unlike how RBI regulates Indian rupees, this currency is beyond the management and maintenance of any central authority. Instead, these tasks are broadly distributed among cryptocurrency’s users via the internet. The transactions are verified and regulated in a form of programme called the blockchain. This is a simple database system where as soon as a user requests a transaction, the network of computers verifies the information and records it as a ‘block’ on a

'chain' of previously made exchanges. This completes the transaction, further making it permanent and irreversible. Simply, "Imagine a book where you write down everything you spend money on each day. Each page is similar to a block, and the entire book, a group of pages, is a blockchain" says Buchi Okoro, CEO and co-founder of African cryptocurrency exchange Quidax. The two different validation techniques that are used in the technology are 'Proof of Work' in which an algorithm provides a mathematical problem that computers race to solve, and 'Proof of Stake' in which verification depends on the amount of cryptocurrency a person is willing to temporarily lock up as a collateral in chance of participation. In this, each individual user's verified transaction must be checked and approved by the majority of ledger holders, providing a sense of security to this payment system.

At present, there has been a tidal wave of new digital currencies with more than 4000 cryptocurrencies in existence. However, Bitcoin (BTC) has grabbed the highest attention amongst the users. Regarded as the 'original cryptocurrency,' Bitcoin was founded in 2009 by a programmer (or, possibly, a group of programmers) under the pseudonym Satoshi Nakamoto. Satoshi's whitepaper outlining bitcoin described the concept of blockchain technology for the first time.

However, attempts at creating a cryptocurrency have been made

20 years before the bitcoin creation. Interestingly, there were increasing cases of night-time threats in petrol stations in the Netherlands which stimulated a group of developers to try to link money with newly designed smart cards. This was the earliest example of digital currency. American cryptographer David Chaum experimented with electronic cash as well, and conceptualised a token currency for transactions known as 'blinded cash.' He then, founded DigiCash based on this model, which went bankrupt in 1998 but his encryption tools and formulas are significant developments for the cryptocurrency space. In this pre-Bitcoin era, B-Money, Bit Gold, Hashcash were some of the major developments, but they couldn't achieve any substantive success. In 2009, the Bitcoin software entered the public arena and the process of mining, by which new Bitcoins are created and transactions are recorded and verified on the blockchain, began.

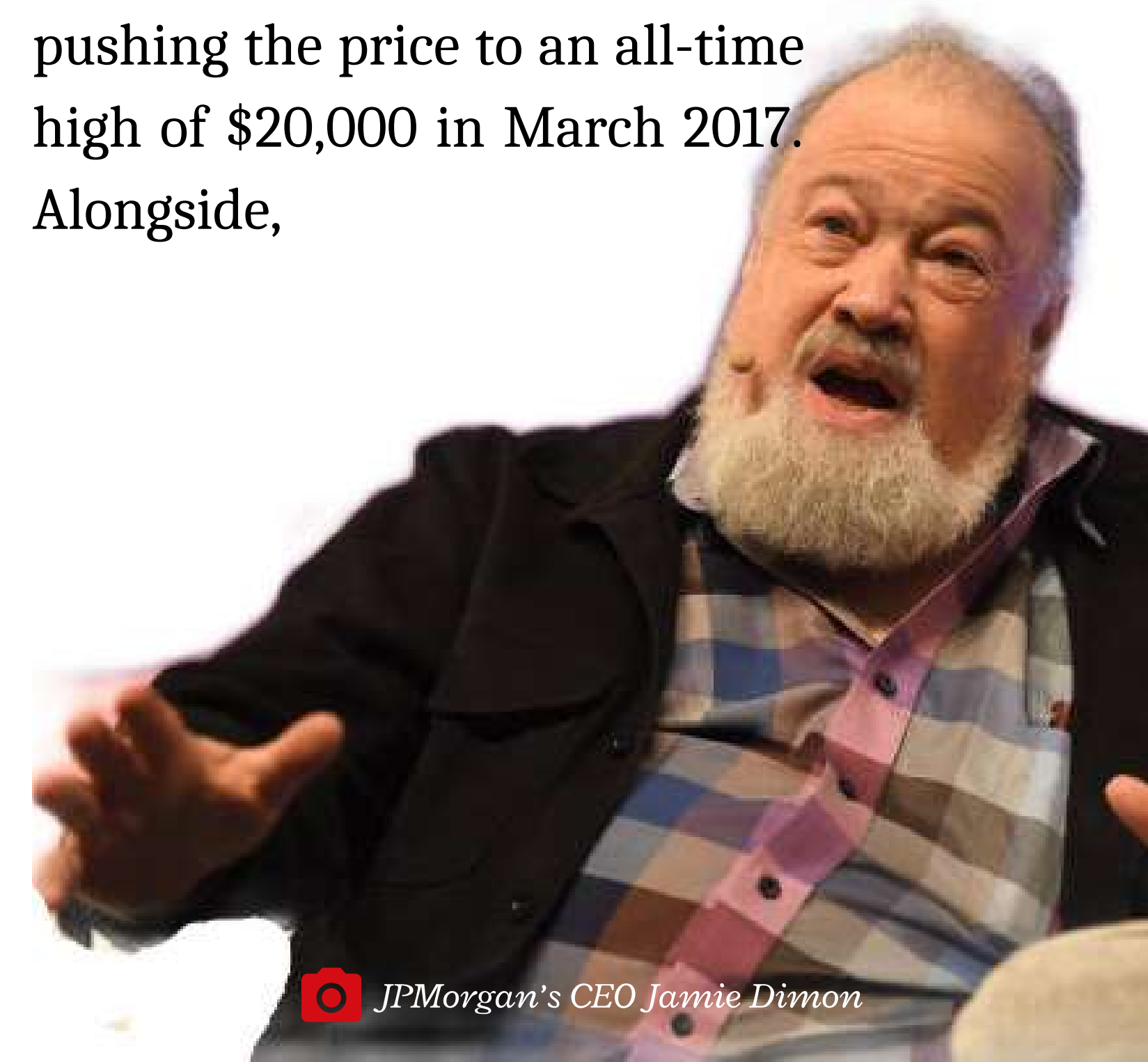
In 2010, a Florida man named Laszlo Hanyecz exchanged 10,000 BTC at Papa John's pizza for two pizzas, the first ever official trade in bitcoins which assigned a monetary value to these coins. The first official stock exchange called 'Bitcoin Market' was launched the same year. It witnessed the first rise in its price from US\$0 to US\$ 0.0008 (In today's rupees, the price was 5 paise) and then, to US\$ 0.83. With the skyrocketing popularity of these decentralised and encrypted coins, there came alternative cryptocurrencies in the market, also referred as altcoin such as Namecoin, Litecoin.

The thriving success was marked with the introduction of the new measurement system called milliBitcoins (mBTC), microBitcoins

(uBTC) and Satoshis. By December 2013, it touched a high of \$1,164. However, the currency being highly volatile, crashed for the first time to a low of \$760 in 2014 and further to \$315 in the subsequent year.

There was a total loss of 241%, raising the apprehensions over the stability of this greatly fluctuating currency. More so, it also became a lucrative target for criminals. In 2014, the world's largest Bitcoin exchange in Tokyo, Mt.Gox went offline, and the owners of 850,000 BTC never saw them again. Investigations are still trying to get to the bottom of exactly what happened but it exposed the theft of currency valued at \$450 million dollars at that time. At today's prices, those missing coins would be worth \$4.4 billion.

Despite these backdrops, the growth revived quickly, raising the price to \$959 by the end of 2016. In absence of any regulatory body, news headlines and market speculations largely drive these prices. JPMorgan's CEO Jamie Dimon called the cryptocurrency a "fraud" and said bitcoin mania is reminiscent of the tulip bulb craze in the 17th century. He later took the statement back pushing the price to an all-time high of \$20,000 in March 2017. Alongside,




other cryptocurrencies like Ether also grew, especially through ICOs. The Initial Coin Offerings (ICOs) are fundraising platforms which offer investors the chance to trade mostly stocks or shares in start-up ventures using these crypto tokens.

They are one of the major causes for the boom of the cryptocurrencies between 2017-18. The frenzy for investment in cryptocurrency became widespread especially in developed nations. From the next door neighbour to the biggest hedge fund managers, everyone joined the bandwagon. In the US, the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) warned investors that, due to the lack of oversight, ICOs could easily be scams or ponzi schemes disguised as legitimate investments. ICOs, owing to its anonymity, were reckoned as vulnerable to money laundering and terrorist financing, impelling the Chinese government to further ban them outright. Several analysts believed the upward growth of cryptocurrency as a 'bubble' soon to burst.

In 2018, the bubble did burst with the crash of the price of Bitcoin to \$3200, facing a 625% loss. Amidst rumors that South Korea could be preparing to ban trading in

“JPMorgan’s CEO Jamie Dimon called the cryptocurrency a “fraud” and said bitcoin mania is reminiscent of the tulip bulb craze in the 17th century.”



 Kolin Burges, a Mt. Gox customer, holds a placard in front of the Mt. Gox building in Tokyo after its collapse
(Photo by The Asahi Shimbun/Getty Images)

cryptocurrency, the price of Bitcoin first depreciated by 12 percent.

Later In 2018, Coincheck, Japan's largest cryptocurrency OTC market, was hacked. This is the largest loss ever by an accident of theft and cost US\$ 530 million. This caused Coincheck to indefinitely suspend trading. Hacks have a chilling effect on crypto, filling consumers with concerns that their money can go missing. Facebook, Google, and Twitter banned advertisements for initial coin offerings (ICO) and token sales. There were several speculations that the rise of bitcoin is a product of a pump and dump scheme and thus, is bound to burst. The U.S. Justice Department looked into one such theory about the digital coin Tether, pegged with the US dollar. The theory believes that Tether was used to manipulate the Bitcoin market and cause a run up in price. Another hit for bitcoin was the refusal of the SEC for a bitcoin exchange traded fund which would have allowed users to dabble with blockchain without owning the actual assets, making Bitcoin available on the actual financial markets. The refusal set

precedence for the norm of absence of institutional faith in the system, causing the downfall of prices. In addition to the outside pessimism, the democratic nature of the system made the currency more volatile. In case of lack of consensus amongst the users, all hell breaks loose. Disagreements over the fundamentals of the bitcoin system compelled a few users to fork a new blockchain, initiating a civil war between two new bitcoin cash sects. With this, participants had to choose between them leading the entire cryptocurrency market to drop. Gradually, hopes were reassured as prices began to hike and a relatively 'mature' market developed. The COVID19 pandemic brought a fall in prices which was swiftly refuelled. In 2021, the cryptocurrency market is majorly handled by Elon Musk's twitter account. After Tesla announced its investment worth US\$ 1.5 billion in Bitcoin, there was a stark rise in price.

Musk later tweeted that Tesla will be accepting payments for their cars in Bitcoin. This made the prices jump to an all-time high of \$64,829.14 on April 14. Soon after this, Elon dropped the idea due to the high energy consumption of Bitcoin in the mining process. The breakup meme resulted in Bitcoin crashing by nearly 50 percent. He again went to toy with crypto and took to Twitter to indicate his support to help miners make their processes greener. Following the tweets, Bitcoin jumped 19% to trade at \$39,944. The impact of these tweets aren't a unilateral force for these price fluctuations, rather a catalyst to spur certain speculations in the market. The more beloved crypto of this billionaire is in fact a parody currency, Dogecoin, which has witnessed an upsurge in prices on several occasions with his tweets.

The meme-fuelled crypto community guided by the self-proclaimed 'Dogefather' has attracted investors and scammers equally. In May 2021, cryptocurrency scammers earned US\$2 million over the past six months by faking as Elon Musk.

Cryptocurrency is subjected to government regulations that vary with countries. Some countries which have outright or de facto bans on cryptocurrency drastically curtail its viability. For example, China has directed financial institutions not to support cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin. It has also ordered a halt to mining, and an estimated 90 percent of miners there have closed as of mid-2021. In addition, because the Internal Revenue Service in the US has labelled

Bitcoin an asset and not a currency, every transaction with Bitcoin has the potential to create a taxable capital gain meaning that spending Bitcoins at a price higher than its cost requires tax payment.

The system has also gained increased legitimacy among users, investors and tech developers in developing nations like India. Earlier in 2018, the Indian government put it off by introducing a blanket ban on banks to prevent them from facilitating crypto transactions. In May 2020, the Supreme Court quashed the ban. India has seen a nearly 612% growth in the number of cryptocurrency users. The largest Indian crypto platform, CoinSwitch Kuber, has boarded almost 6 million active users since its inception in June 2020. There lies a remarkable potential in cryptocurrency to have a global payment system beyond geographical barriers, and restrictions created by a lack of credit history or bank account. In recent times, several tech developers have devoted their efforts to cryptocurrency mining, while others have focused on more entrepreneurial pursuits such as developing exchanges, wallet services and alternative cryptocurrencies. The advantages of reduced transaction fees due to elimination of a middleman, and higher security with the use of public and private keys has made the medium user friendly for consumers and corporations.

The major leverage it has over the fiat currency is that it shifts the power and responsibility to the currency holders' hands.

This might portray a romantic picture for its future but in reality, the volatile and unstable nature Of cryptocurrency and consequent

government regulations are the challenges that cannot be overlooked. Mining requires a substantial amount of energy adding to the carbon emission. Researchers from MIT and the Technical University of Munich concluded that Bitcoin mining alone accounted for 0.2 percent of global electricity consumption. Besides these environmental concerns, the supply of certain currencies is fixed and thus, cannot be devalued. The reason why countries have opted out of the gold standard is because they expose the economy to potentially destructive deflationary spirals. With fiat currency, central banks often increase the money supply during financial crises in the market to induce inflation and prevent the economy from seizing up. However, cryptocurrencies would act just like the gold standard. The wavering nature of cryptocurrency further makes it unusable for consumers. As the price of the currency sways, all the goods and services will have a different price every day. Due to the instability in the purchasing power of the virtual currency along with the lack of security in digital wallets, and the associated crimes, it is unlikely for most countries to officially adopt cryptocurrencies in the near future. ■



Elon Musk
@elonmusk

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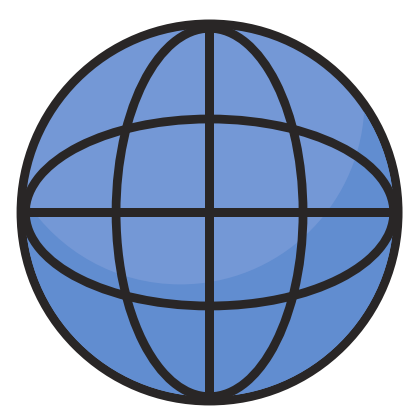
About Caucus

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.

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