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THE PROBE

**ATMANIRBHAR
BHARAT?**



PROGRESS

A conversation with Yashica Dutt

A conversation with
Adv J Sai Deepak

Expert article:
Why the Sea Matters?

Cover by Aman & Asna

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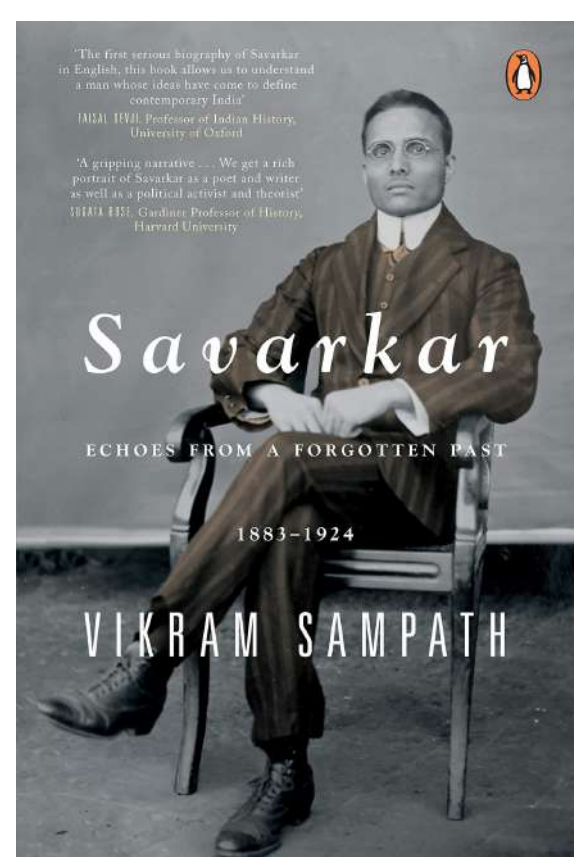
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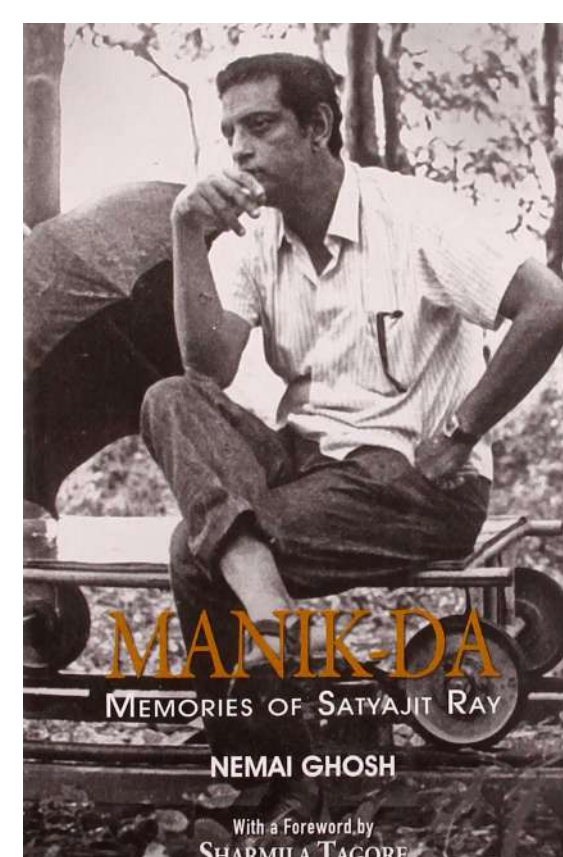
With immense pride, we present to you the 8th edition of The Probe. We have been successful in building a significant reader base who have strengthened our cause to provide a platform for budding writers to showcase their literary talents. We aspire to work with professionals and experts to enhance the learning outcomes of readers and writers alike.

Like all previous editions, we have received some well-articulated and meticulously researched articles on plethora of topics ranging from economics to society. We are delighted to see the intellectual vigour of our talented authors and we would like to see equal enthusiasm from our readers. Readers can share their feedback and critique with the editors at caucushindu@gmail.com.

Special thanks to Ms. YashicaDutt & Mr. J. Sai Deepak for gracing the August month edition with their respective interviews. We would like to wholeheartedly thank Dr. Rila Mukherjee for contributing the expert article. We would like to thank Caucus and the college for providing us with a platform wherein we can engage in a reading culture. The diversity of opinions that guest authors offer in their entries keep us motivated to improve with every edition.



Read the review of Vikram Sampath's biography of Savarkar, the most contested personality in Indian Political history.



Read the review of the biography of India's most revolutionary film-maker, Satyajit Ray.

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Rethinking our sense of morality and righteousness in light of the Cancel Culture



Statue of Socrates, the philosopher, with sky in distance - stock photo (469–399 BC), ancient Athenian philosopher. This is his statue, located before the Academy of Athens, Greece.

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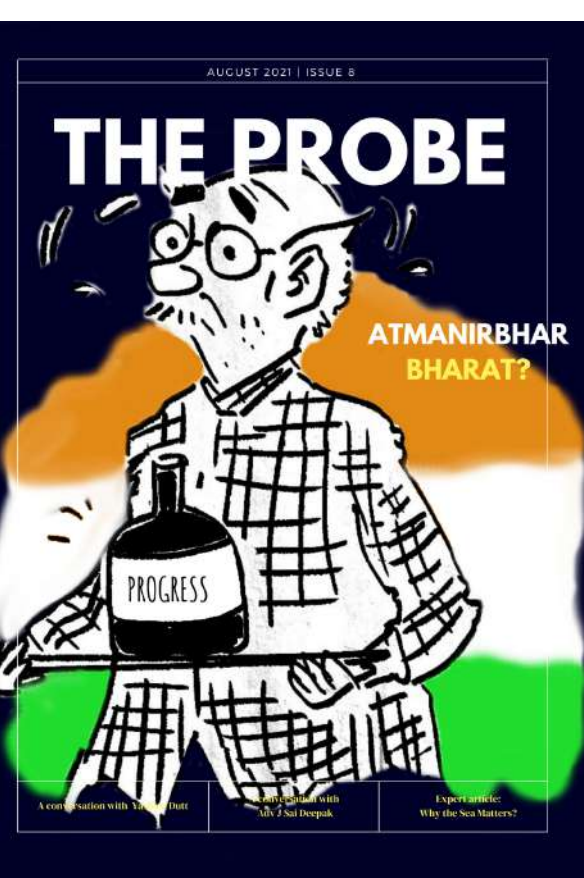
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The Probe is a non-profit, student-run, independent & non-partisan monthly magazine published by Caucus, a student organisation of Hindu College, University of Delhi. Caucus was founded in 2007, and The Probe in 2020. We exist to hold power to account 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

In the wake of 75th Independence Day, it's important for us to understand how far we have come and what are India's future prospects. Read this edition's cover story.

Read more Pg 6

By the students, for the world

The Limits of Social Media Activism

Today, the biggest dilemma of the 'Gen-z' is whether to put up a story pertaining to a specific cause or not. What if I do not sign the membership of the 'Hashtag Club'? Wouldn't I be granted the status of being 'socially inactive and unaware'?

more on Pg 53

Expert View



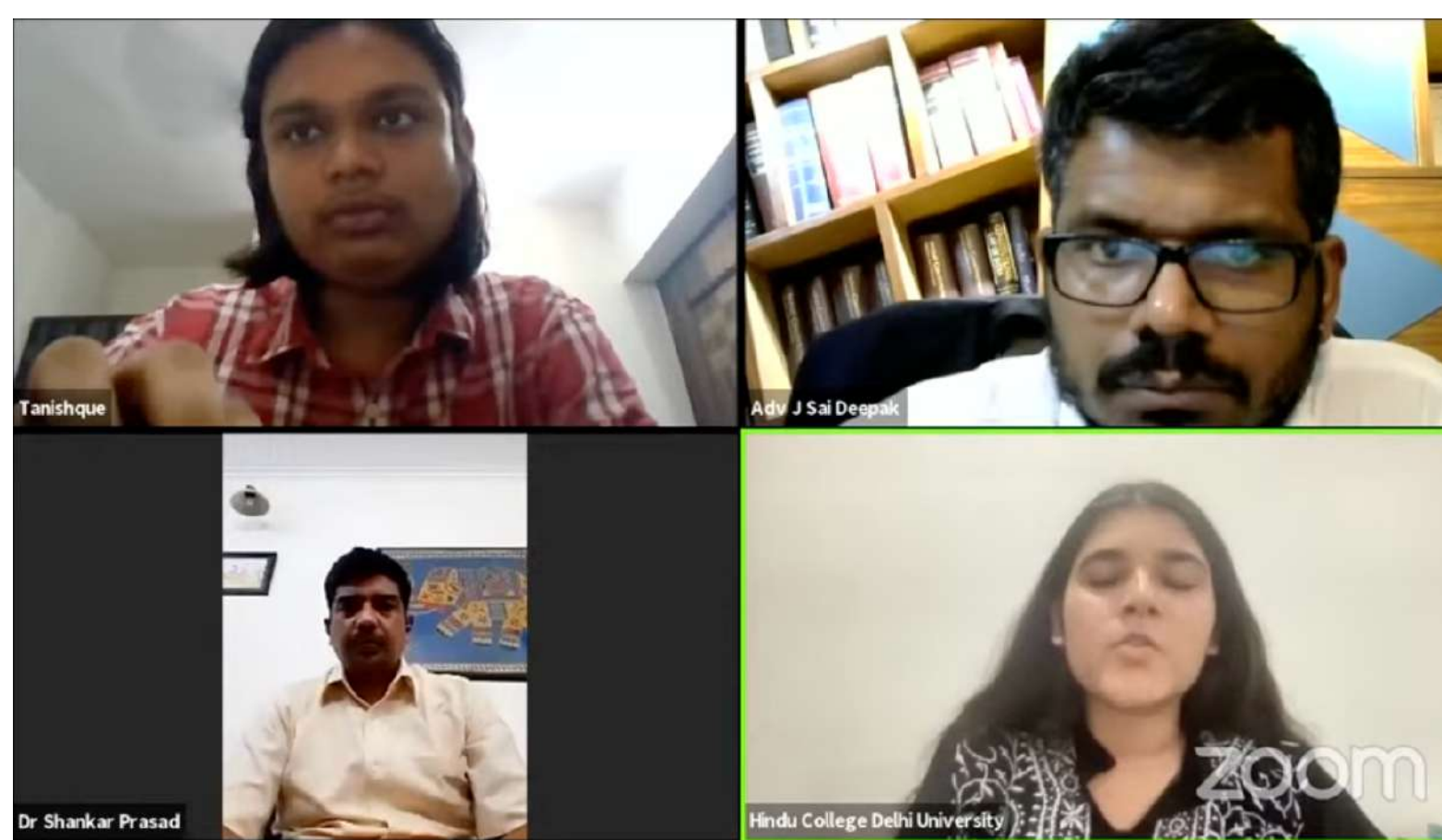
Dr Rila Mukherjee

Article on Why the Sea is Important



Author Yashica Dutt

In Conversation with The Probe



Adv J Sai Deepak

In Conversation with The Probe

On INDIA THAT IS BHARAT

Inside

The Probe Survey

What College Thinks:
Cancel Culture

Read Pg 62

Revisiting the Relevance of Chanakya Neeti

Bharat's foreign policy paradigm has its roots in the geriatric civilisational heritage throughout various epochs witnessed by the country...

Read Pg 77

Semiconductor Geopolitics

In a short span of one tumultuous year, the Covid-19 pandemic has exposed deep crevices in the global semiconductor supply chain which hitherto virtually seemed immune and recession-proof...

Read Pg 73

Indian Football: Alive or Dead?

Recently India defeated Bangladesh in the joint FIFA World Cup 2022 and AFC Asian Cup 2023 qualifiers on June 7, 2021, at the Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium, Doha...

Read Pg 94

Circular Economy- The Key To Transitioning Towards Economic Sustainability

the article explains how the Circular Economy appears as a powerful tool for initiating a process of long-term growth.

Read Pg 99

Obituary: Kalyan Singh

The former two times Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh and Governor of Rajasthan Kalyan Singh passed away aged 89...

Read Pg 88

Cover Story

Pranav Jha, Jeevesh Kumar, Vaibhav Vivek Sahi



India @ 74

How far we have come?
How far we have to go?





📹 Jawaharlal Nehru delivering his "Tryst with destiny" speech on August 15, 1947.

WHAT HAS INDIA ACHIEVED?

At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance...". These were the words of Pdt. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, on 14th August, 1947, just a few hours before India broke the shackles of British Raj and became an independent nation. His words

not only signal optimism but also a firm determination to transform India from a country with a shattered soul and a battered economy to a nation which takes pride in itself and has a robust economy. Many different administrations have been in power since then and all have contributed to making the India we see today.

The policymakers at that time realized the importance of being

"At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom."



© An unprivileged kid showing his love for India by holding the tricolour.
Source: Getty Images

At the time of independence, eight out of every ten people were below the poverty line, just 1 out of 10 people was literate

cognizant of the dilapidated state in which Indian people were in and became aware that India's economic development could never take place had the basic needs of the people not been met first. At the time of independence, eight out of every ten people were below the poverty line, just 1 out of 10 people was literate, and just 1 out of 100 people had access to sanitation; there was a mammoth problem in front of the policymakers.

Given the nascent state in which the country was in, both economically and politically, any step taken could change the fate of

India for the better or the worse, and it became crucial to decide the model of economic development India had to adopt. Socio-economic development became an important pillar for building a robust economy, and Nehru rightly chose the socialistic model of economic development – one that proved to be a pivotal decision in the history of India. He took the lessons from Russia to not have a planned economy but also made sure to give the state an important role, something which had to be done to ensure equity and upliftment of the people in the then poor India.

He chose to have a mixed economy in India-one in which the state-owned and controlled certain industries but also let the private sector operate.

Prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru's development model envisaged a dominant role of the state as an all-pervasive entrepreneur and financier of private businesses. "To import from abroad is to be slaves of foreign countries," the first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, once declared. With this in mind, industries producing basic and heavy goods were chosen for investment over consumer goods because the government wanted to reduce the country's reliance on imports of basic and heavy industrial goods in line with their belief in the goodness of national self-reliance. The economists at that time believed that rapid industrialization could help better resolve the problems of economic growth than just relying on agriculture, which then employed around 75 percent of the country's workforce. Post-independence India saw a magnificent growth in the steel industry with India alone producing 6,300 tons of steel. India has built historical public enterprises like the LIC, which accounts for over 71 percent market share of the insurance industry.

The Green Revolution in India, led by MS Swaminathan, helped revolutionise Indian agriculture. India used to produce just 55 million tons of food grain at the time of independence, which was insufficient to feed its 340 million

people. It was dependent on imports from the U.S.A to meet its food grain requirements which led to the depletion of its Forex reserves. The Green Revolution not only made India self-sufficient in food grain production but also made it capable of exporting food grains. Wheat production increased by more than three times between 1967-68 and 2003-04, and the overall increase in the production of cereals was only two times. India's foodgrain production has now increased fivefold and has jumped to 297.5 million tonnes from a meagre 55 million tonnes at the time of independence. The green revolution and operation flood have led to a severe reduction in malnourishment in India and have significantly helped in increasing the productivity and income of the farmers.

India has built historical public enterprises like the LIC, which accounts for over 71 percent market share of the insurance industry.

The 1991 reforms set a solid foundation for the economic boom in the country. The government had probably realised by then that it was the appropriate time to liberalise the business environment and bring in private players to propel India's growth story forward. It ushered in investment and competition, ensuring efficient and effective utilization of resources. Also, the rapid globalization connected India with the rest of the world and significantly increased the services sector in the country. India, which contributed just 1.78 percent to world

trade now contributes 12.4 percent. India has witnessed a sharp jump in Forex reserves from \$2161 million to \$612 billion. The confidence of the people in the private sector has tremendously risen, which can be seen in the Bombay Stock Exchange's Sensex rising from 100 in 1978 to now crossing 55,000.

The innovative and focused policies of GoI since the 2000s, aiming for growth and equity, have led to plausible improvements in the standard of living of the people. The percentage of people below the poverty line has decreased from 80 percent to 21.92 percent, life expectancy has risen by 28 years to 63.96 years, and Infant Mortality Rate has successfully decreased from 145.6/1000 to 32/1000 to name a few. India is now known as the pharmacy of the world, has played a major role in manufacturing Covid-19 vaccines for the world, and has carried out successful immunisation and inoculation programs. The MGNREGA has bolstered rural economic development. India has carried out successful space programs and now is even capable of launching the largest number of satellites in space, including the majority of satellites of international countries. PM Modi's Swachh Bharat Abhiyan has been a major success in increasing the country's sanitation coverage from 1 percent at the eve of independence to 94 percent today and reducing the spread

of readily transmissible diseases. The innovative mid-day meal scheme has not only decreased the malnourishment of children but has also increased Gross enrollment in elementary education to 96.6 percent from just 32.1 percent after the independence. The overall literacy rate has increased from 12 percent to 74 percent now. This significant improvement in the quality of life of people coupled with economic growth has increased the GDP from Rs 2,939 billion during 1950-51 to Rs 1,40,776 billion in 2018-2019 and India's share in the world's GDP has risen from 3 percent to 8.5 percent. There has been a 21 time Rise in Per capita income from Rs 1705 in 1950-1951 to Rs 1,14,530 in 2019-20.

Key Solutions

1. Focus on growth along with equity
2. Strong public provisioning of education & healthcare
3. Bring about a rise in HDI indicators
4. Social safety nets for informal sector
5. Removal of inefficiencies from manufacturing
6. Sustain a healthy level of fiscal deficit

WHAT HAS INDIA NOT ACHIEVED?

Amidst all the celebratory fanfare surrounding us, as we enter the 75th year of our independence, we must not lose track of the challenges we have overcome and the challenges still remaining in front of us. Despite the operating gargantuan poverty elimination schemes, 84 million Indian citizens reside in abject poverty. The pandemic has undone the efforts of many years by pushing millions into poverty, and large-scale income disparities have emerged. India's independence came along with scars of blood-stained partition, depletion of immense natural resources at the hands of colonial power, and an unstable political system consisting of several independent princely states. The public health and education system laid in shambles at the onset of independence. India had to face insurmountable challenges at the beginning of her journey as an independent nation. Given the scale of challenges, no one would have given India a chance to usher in development. However, the success of democratic processes coupled with the welfare initiatives taken by successive governments helped India to rise on socio-economic indicators. The pace of this rise, however, remains unsatisfactory. The delivery of education and health services has not kept pace with the rising population. We have witnessed skyrocketing enrolment rates in Indian primary schools. However, as we talk about this, half the students in 5th standard can't read a simple text of 2nd standard & 1/3rd of them can't do simple division. Learning outcomes are surprisingly missing at the primary levels of education. With

the usage of technology increasing in all facets of life, we are in a race against time to fix our education system. Female literacy has risen too, but we have not seen that translate into higher enrollment rates at tertiary levels of education. The state of public-funded schools remains pitiable, barring few exceptions. Indian universities still have a long way before they match their western counterparts in research and development.

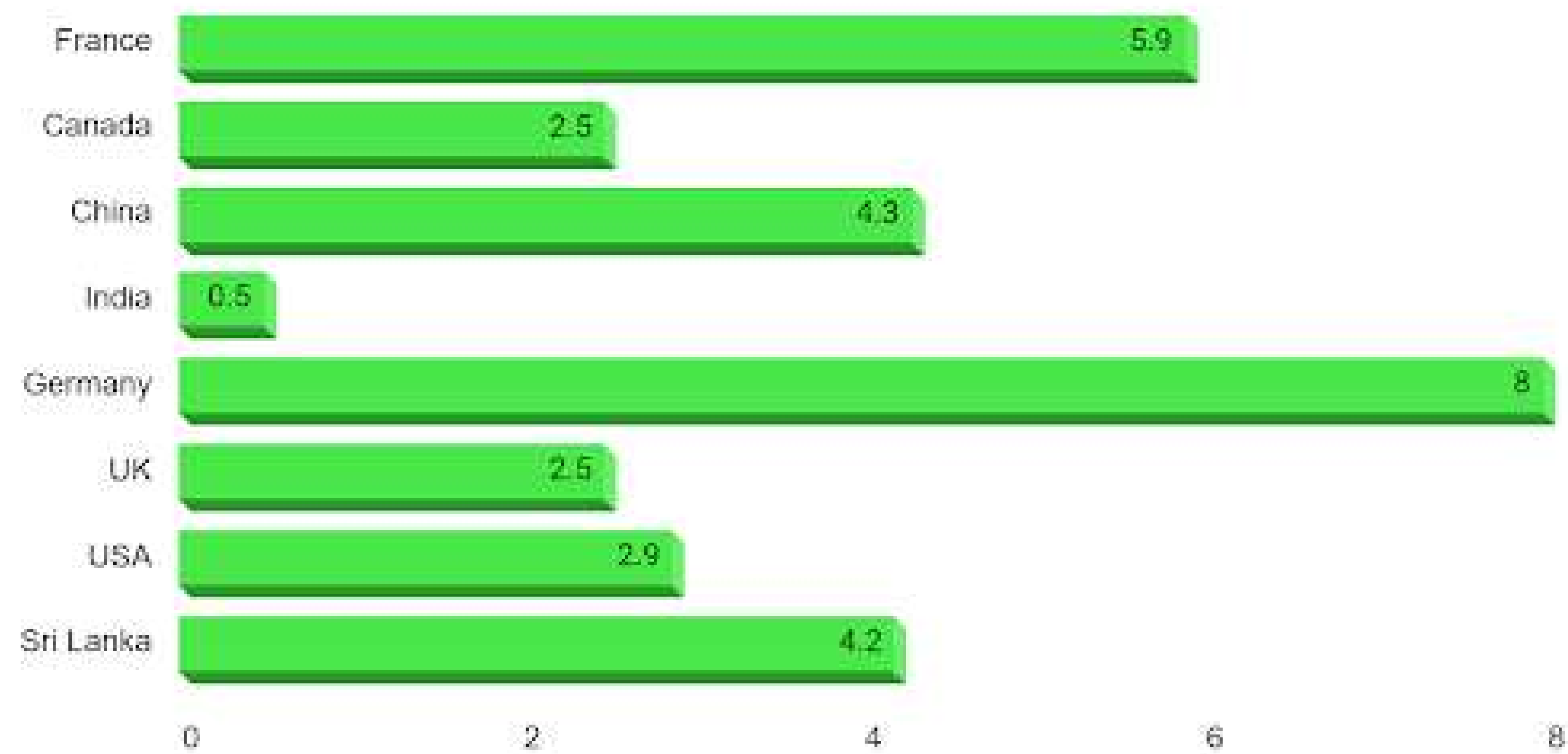
It is commendable that our public health system has emerged from where it was during independence. India has been highly successful in eliminating fatal diseases, and the extraordinary rise of life expectancy is a testament to this fact. Massive immunisation campaigns actively curtailed mortality rates among infants. The infant mortality rates have been reduced by 75 percent, which in itself is a commendable achievement. But there are caveats attached to these achievements. The primary health centres, which are considered to be the most basic units of public health, haven't delivered exactly on expected lines. India reports the highest number of tuberculosis patients. The COVID-19 pandemic that brought the nation to its knees had forced us to look at our priorities. The progress made in certain health indicators is dampened by the high levels of malnutrition amongst children



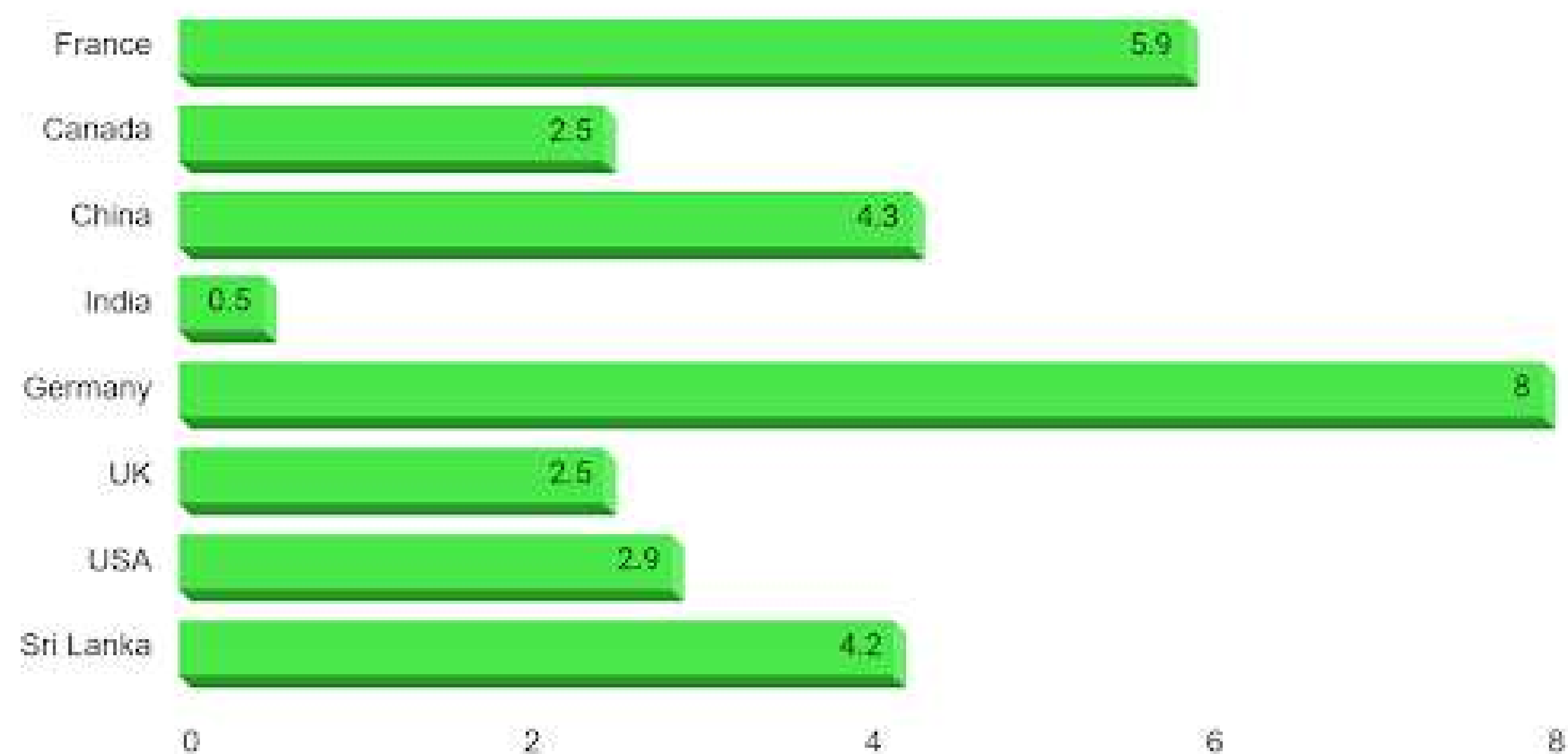
and women. Despite multiple policies ranging from the Food Security Act to the Mid Day Meal scheme, India's 94th rank out of 107 countries in the Global Hunger Index is more than a matter of concern. Efficacy of the programs combating malnutrition is a talking point even as India has the highest number of malnourished children in the world. The number of physicians (per 1,000 people) and the number of hospital beds (per 1,000 people) in India are 0.9 & 0.5 respectively. There is less than one physician per 1,000 beds in India & only half a bed per 1,000 people in India. Public health infrastructure is severely understaffed, especially in rural areas. The number of licensed blood banks in India is 3321, which is low according to the high populations. The economically weaker sections still do not have coverage for healthcare insurance. The majority of Indians don't have access to healthcare insurance. Poorest sections were most dependent on government schemes. Despite being one of the least expensive healthcare centres around the world, the Indian healthcare system suffers from low spending. Improved sanitation and universal availability & accessibility to piped drinking water remain a distant dream.

This largely explains India's ranking on the Human Development Index. India finds itself amongst the middle human development group after witnessing a subtle increase in HDI score from 0.429 in 1990 to 0.645 in 2020. While India has

Number of Hospital Beds (per 1,000 people) in Different Countries



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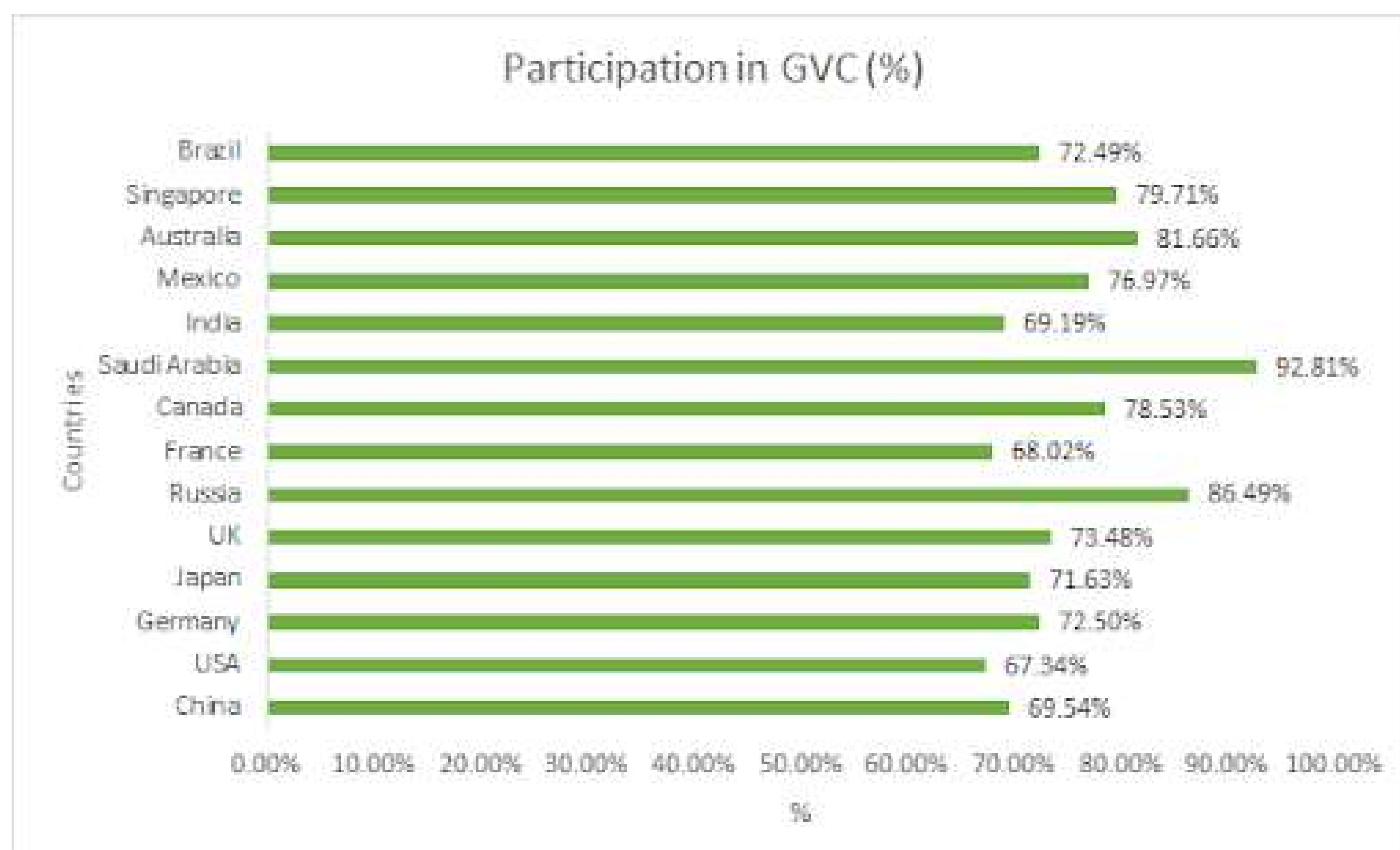
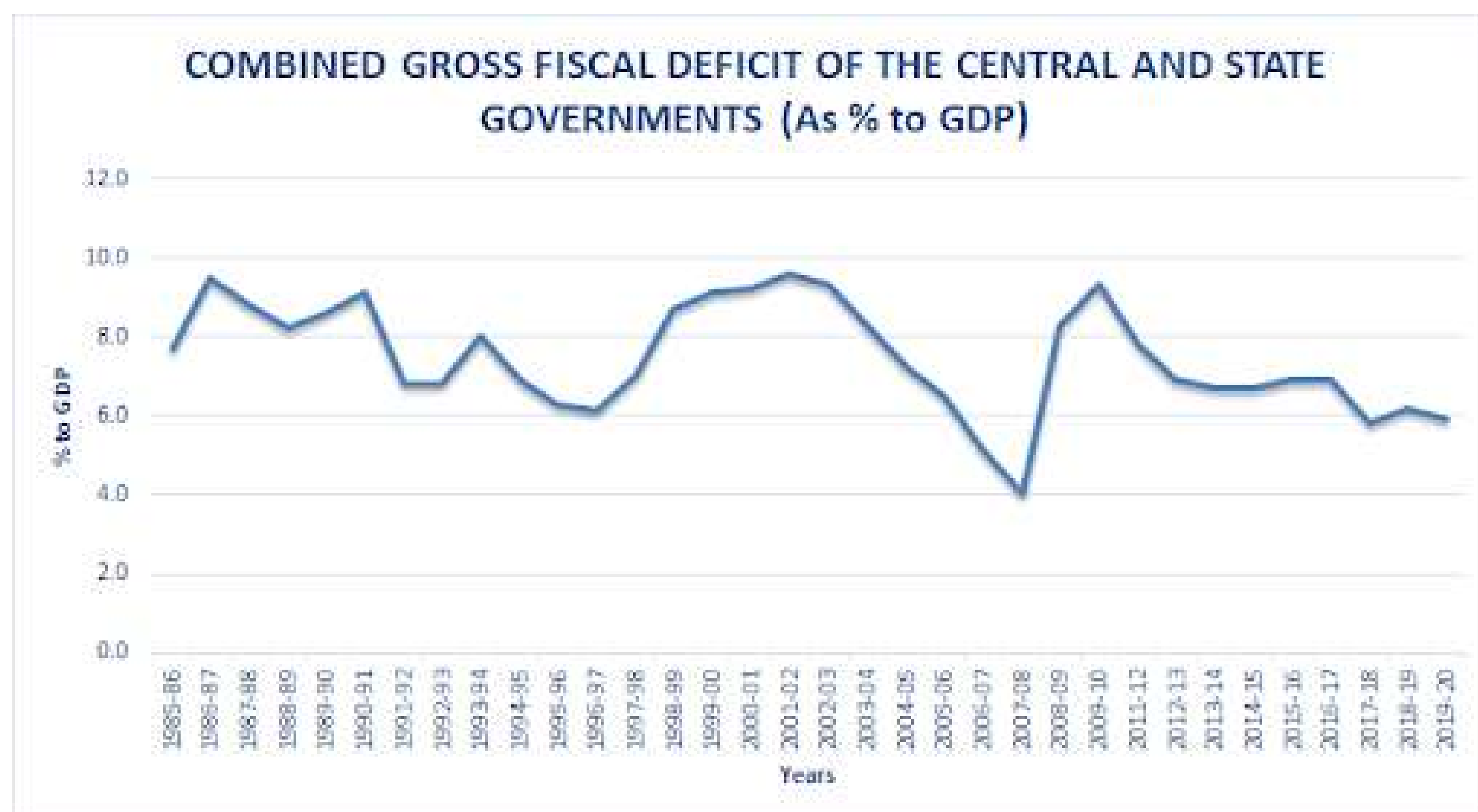
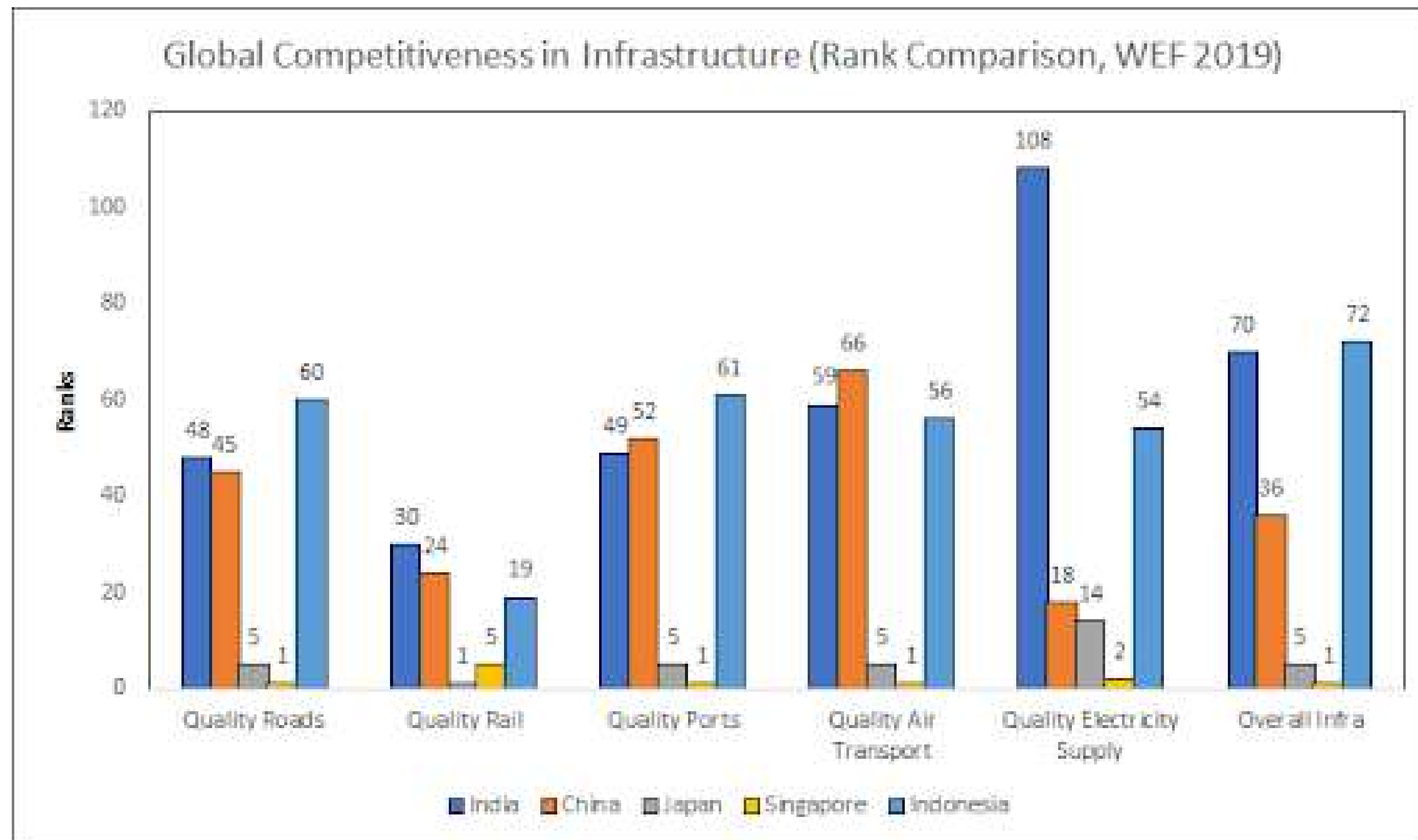


Current Health Expenditure (Per Capita) USD



seen meteoric growth in per capita incomes, the pace of development of living standards remains questionable. India is indeed on the right track in achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Growth but COVID induced disparities can play a spoiler in the long run. Improving the living standards of Indian citizens will remain a target for the state in this decade.

India's low ranking in the Economic Freedom Index indicates the inefficiencies that have emerged because of state control over businesses for a long time. Excessive regulations and delays in judicial processes have hampered the prospects of greater economic freedom for Indian citizens. Simplification of investment processes and tax codes have never been significantly on the government agenda for long. The complex structure of Goods & Services Taxes has not been that helpful in simplifying the archaic taxation process. The unwillingness of successive governments to take more bold economic decisions has hurt India a lot. India has so far not been successful in emerging as a society focusing on wealth creation. The interference of the state and bureaucracy in the economic lives of Indian citizens might reach a break-even point soon. The provisioning of public services by the Indian state has not been satisfactory enough. The liberalisation reforms had brought to the nation the benefits of wealth creation. A new burgeoning middle and upper-middle-class were a result of these reforms. There has been a



tendency observed in recent times with high net worth individuals leaving India for other countries.

The *Atmanirbhar Bharat* policy, though focussed on self-sufficiency rather than self-reliance (which was the principal goal in the Nehruvian socialist period), has been seen as inward-looking. Tariffs rates have been raised in recent times, reducing the chances of Indian consumers. Structural problems in manufacturing have not been solved at a large scale, as India has been losing its competitiveness in various industries, with the textile industry being a classical example. A liberal trade policy is the need of the hour given that India does not have very high shares in Global Value Chains. India's decision to not join the RCEP should be re-assessed. The role of the state in controlling the economy should be looked at through a different lens. The state needs to strengthen social safety nets especially in the aftermath of COVID-19. Another matter of concern is abysmally low female labour participation rates, and this has become worse during the COVID times. India fares poorer than most of its South Asian counterparts in this regard. The attention of state governments has been more towards doling out populist political measures more than strengthening the social safety nets. The performance of public-run institutions has been lackluster, barring a few. The simmering NPA crisis has the potential to blow out in proportion unless government attention is diverted towards it.

India has not taken up true reforms in the financial sector, and with technology emerging as disruptive in finance, reforms for making the financial sector resilient are due. Growth has to be efficient, and it has to minimize the inequalities present. The question is not how big the pie is but how it is being distributed. In current times of uncertainty, the need for an all-encompassing policy is more than ever before. While in our journey of 74 years, we have achieved more than expected in few areas, but we have underperformed too, which certainly needs serious introspection and immediate rectifications.

India has built historical public enterprises like the LIC, which accounts for over 71 percent market share of the insurance industry.

WHAT INDIA SHOULD DO?

With about 1.39 billion citizens nesting in the Indian homeland, our aims and aspirations for the future of the country in 2022-23 are very diverse and challenging. To catalyse the policy action initiatives, India targets an 8 percent steady GDP growth rate, with it further reaching 9 to 10 percent ensuring sustainability and inclusiveness. This becomes a challenging task for a nation whose investment lags at 29 percent of the GDP, which needs to be at least 36 percent for ushering a conducive environment for the investment relative to China's 43 percent. The tax to GDP ratio still stands at a low at 17 percent, lower when compared to other advancing

economies, with China at 22 and South Africa at 27 percent.

Rationalisation of subsidies which is less socio-economic but more political, undermines the fixed capital investment, which stands at only 4 percent of the GDP by the state players, which needs to be ramped up to at least 7 percent when compared to other developing economies. Archaic laws, undue bureaucratic interference further contribute to the deteriorated state of affairs in private and foreign investments as India receives only 10 percent of the USA's total FDI and 25 percent of China's.

By some estimates, India's informal sector employs approximately 85 percent of all workers. Also for the period 2015-16, there have been 6.34 crore unincorporated non-agricultural micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) within the country engaged in different economic activities employing 11.10 crore workers. A large majority of those firms are within the unorganized sector. Keeping in mind the state of the workforce in India, reforming labour laws, easing industrial relations, and ensuring fair wages, working conditions, and social security through significant productivity improvements are much needed in the economy. The employability of labour must be enhanced by improving health, education, and skilling outcomes and a huge expansion of the

apprenticeship scheme.

With an all-India installed power capacity of about 334 GW, including 62 GW of renewable energy, India is the world's third-largest energy consumer; targeting 175 GW of renewable energy capacity in 2022-23 and 450 GW in 2030 looks quite challenging, along with reducing imports of oil and gas by 10 percent by 2022-23 whose international price fluctuation has costed a fortune to India. It is so because the energy supply in the country is still dominated by petroleum wherein, we imported approximately 82 percent of crude oil and 45 percent of natural gas requirements during 2017. India's energy mix is dominated by coal with a 49.6 percent share, with only renewable and clean energy (2.2 percent) and atomic energy (1.2 percent). Indicating an efficiency increase of 22.8 percent, India's energy intensity declined from 0.158 koe/\$(kilogram oil equivalent per USD) in 2005 to 0.122 koe/\$ in 2016. The energy intensity of the UK (0.074 koe/\$) and Germany (0.101 koe/\$) were very low in the year 2016. It indicates that India still has the potential to improve energy efficiency and hence make power available to all.

In the transport sector, the roadways have accounted for the largest share in the movement of both passengers and railways. Aspiring for steady growth in the economy, improved road connectivity, and easy access to vehicle finance is the need of the hour. The current stretch of the NH network is 1.22 lakh km,

which still hits a low at 2.2 percent of the country's total road network of 56.03 lakh km. Ironically, national highways carry 40 percent of India's total road traffic. Road safety is a major issue in the country, with nearly an average of 400 road-related deaths being recorded daily. In 2013, India had an accident death rate of 18.9 for every 100,000 people, higher than other South Asian countries such as Bangladesh (11.6), Mauritius (12.2), and Sri Lanka (13.7).

The dilapidating state of the power sector is a cause for concern for every developmental activity. India aims to achieve 100 percent electrification of railways by 2022-23, which looks quite paradoxical. Clean energy contributes only 2.2 percent of the total energy produced.

The under-utilized aviation sector needs to ramp up its operations to accelerate growth. The private sector must be given a free hand when the aspiration tends to double the air cargo handled to 6.5 million from the previous 2017-18 levels.

A nation whose 90 percent of external trade by volume and 70 percent are facilitated by ports, its inland water transport carries less than 2 percent of the organized freight traffic. India aims to increase the port handling capacity to 2,500 million metric tonnes by 2022-23. Reducing the turnaround time at major ports, increasing the throughput of inland waterways from 55.20 MMT in 2016-17 to 60-70 MMT by 2022-23, along with augmenting the capacity of inland water transport are some key steps for ahead. Communication is an essential arm to promote growth and development. The minimization of the digital divide and digital literacy

to all is aimed as a vision for the future. Cyber security is also the onus of the state for its citizens.

India, in the area of universal access and retention of school education, wishes to achieve zero dropouts along with cent percent enrolment and retention ratios both at elementary and secondary education levels and a robust framework for promoting vocational education. Not only this, addressing the mental health issues becomes an exigent and an integral task with promoting education, as the National Crime Records Bureau shows that student suicides have increased from about 6,600 in 2012 to about 9,000 in 2015. The quality of education is still a challenge, where only China has at least three universities among the top 50 in the QS world rankings while India has none. It has to be complemented with at least 15 percent formally skilled workforce, which was 5.4 percent in 2018.

An estimate by the World Bank indicates that reducing stunting can raise India's GDP by 4-11 percent. Also, a 10 percent rise in income per capita translates into a 7.4 percent fall in wasting. Thus, increasing per capita incomes through rapid and equitable economic growth is a necessary condition for improving nutrition outcomes. NFHS 4 points that 50 percent of India's children are anemic at the same time. Ironically, the

country is also grappling with the menace of overnutrition, with nearly one-fifth of India's adult population is either obese or overweight. The challenge is to reduce the prevalence of stunting to less than or equal to 25 percent, underweight to 25 percent, anaemia to 43 percent in children by 2022-23.

India owes her indomitable spirit to her citizens and their unwavering contributions towards nation-building. Despite having faced and still facing multiple challenges collectively, the nation has stood tall. We, as a nation, are striving to ensure all citizens enjoy political, social, and economic freedom in the truest sense, thus fulfilling the dreams of our founding fathers and mothers. We have to build on our past accolades and strive towards ensuring better living conditions for our citizens. 🇮🇳

Key Solutions

7. Liberalisation of trade

8. Strengthening household & public savings

9. Focus on revitalising fiscal federalism

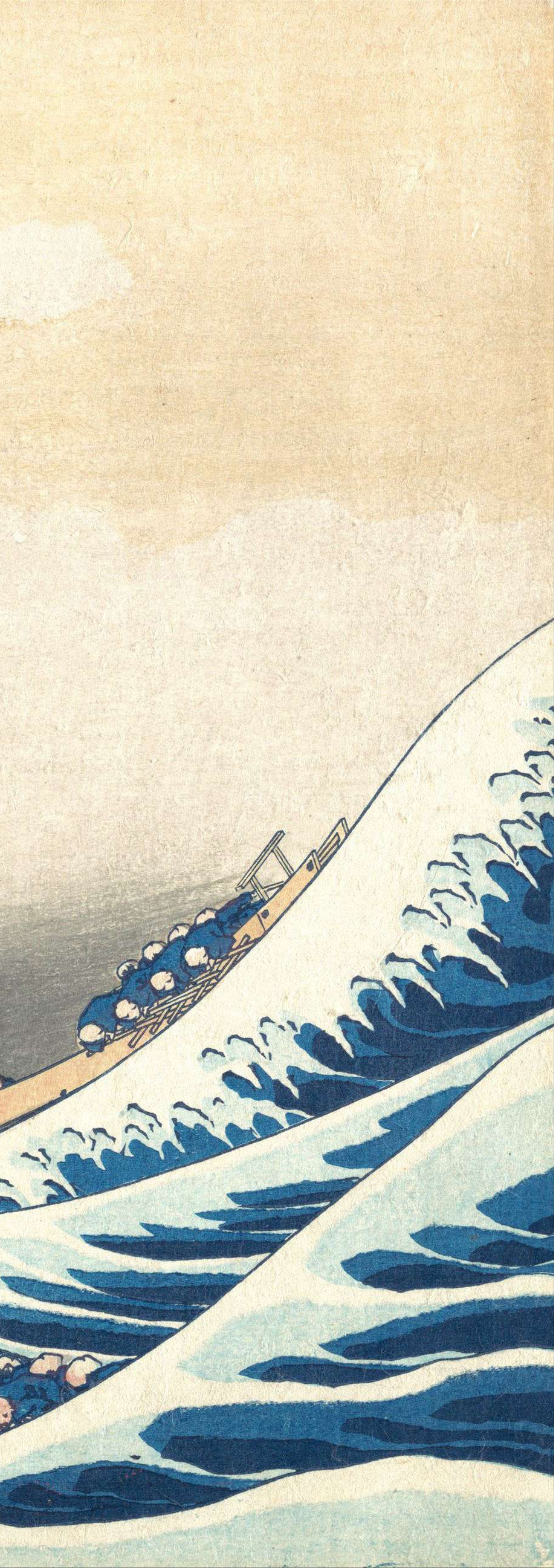
10. Taxation structure simplification



WHY THE SEA MATTERS?

By Dr Rila Mukherjee





Although not immediately apparent, water surrounds our lives. It covers 70% of the earth's surface, the rest followed by islands and continents. Places located far inland are influenced by water. Most landlocked Central Asia used a marine product (cowrie shells or cypria moneta) as money for two millennia despite possessing gold and silver. Hyderabad, laying at the heart of peninsular India is 'Pearl City', a name evoking its long-forgotten link to the sea through the Qutb Shahi port of Masulipatnam. Rome seems like an inland city, but it is also a seaport. Rome's harbour was constructed by Emperor Trajan at the beginning of the second century CE. Today its thriving port (Civitavecchia) is a major cruise and ferry terminal, the main starting point for sea connections from central Italy across the Mediterranean. Yet unlike the train, airplane, or automobile, rafts, boats, ships, and the sea occupy only the edges of our consciousness. They are largely invisible and seemingly irrelevant in our everyday lives (Peters 2010).

So look around the room you are sitting in. Many of the items surrounding you would likely have travelled at one stage or another of their life in a ship, across the oceans. UNCTAD's maritime trade statistics for 2020 (with data prior to the slowdown caused by COVID-19 which reached the lowest point since the global

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So look around the room you are sitting in. Many of the items surrounding you would likely have travelled at one stage or another of their life in a ship, across the oceans.

"

financial crisis of 2008–2009) see Asia as the largest seaborne trading region. In 2019 developing economies from around the world accounted for the largest share of global seaborne trade in terms of exports and imports, loading 58% and unloading 65% of the world total. With a volume of 4.3 billion tons loaded and 6.1 billion tons unloaded, Asia's and Oceania's developing economies contributed the most to that share.

I. The Sea as Memory

Maritime history is not just about maritime economics. It is also about people, nostalgia, remembrance, and commemoration. A 2016 United Nations press release, citing Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, announced on the occasion of World Maritime Day (29 September): 'we ship food, technology, medicines, and memories'. Memories are particularly important because the ocean's reach once extended far inland and drew people into diverse circuits and exchanges

through port-cities into the hinterland maritime city, and from the maritime city into the capital city which was usually located even further from the shore.

Water has traditionally been associated with a history of rejuvenation (the Nile, the Ganga); it is conversely associated with a memory of loss (Atlantis). The holy Ganga waters form an integral part of rituals from birth to death. The unknown quality of the sea captivates writers who see it as 'unfathomable' and 'deep'. Think of Ernest Hemingway's novella of fishing for marlin in *The Old Man and the Sea*. And consider a completely different genre: Clive Cussler's best selling underwater adventures where the sea and history are active voices.

II. An Intangible Heritage

If you look at a map of the Indian Ocean, you will immediately notice India's locational centrality. Maritime archaeology has generated new spatialities across the Indian Ocean (Africa, the China seas, and even the eastern Mediterranean world), and so the East African and Southern

Chinese worlds have now been included within the ambit of 'Indian Ocean studies'. Mythologies and folk beliefs define this maritime space. The shore temples stretching in an arc from Somnath and Mahabalipuram in India to Tanah Lot and Uluwatu in Bali were not just places of worship, but also navigational aides in a spiritual waterscape. Similarly, a study of Badr Maqam shrines from Chittagong to Mergui reveals maritime circuits dotting the upper Bay of Bengal littoral, inscribed by nameless, faceless people who are now lost in history. There is presently a scramble to include such facets of tangible and intangible maritime cultural heritage within UNESCO's world heritage tag. The Indian Ocean is a harsh mistress; deities such as the Chinese Mazu, Buddhist Tara, Indian Velankanni, Javanese Nyayi Lara Kidul, and African Mami Wata (water mother) are not only powerful but vengeful. However, they can also be benign, associated with

healing, solace at sea, and asylum from storms and shipwrecks.

III. The Sea as Commons

Sea and ocean basins have figured historically as some of the principal avenues of cultural, commercial, and biological exchanges, and so the deployment of maritime categories has strong potential to highlight these processes and their effects. Maritime optics bring focus to processes such as the Columbian exchange, slave traffic, spread of disease, organisation of plantation societies, formation of diasporic communities, and the construction of global networks of trade, communication, and exchange (Bentley 1999).

But the sea is not just a theatre for imperial history. Perception of the sea as an intrinsic part of lives and livelihoods, and its use as commons, prevails despite attempts at state-regulation of maritime space (Pearson 1985; Pearson 2006). Malays see themselves as living not on land but in a waterscape called the 'Sea of Melayu' which is an imagined seascape of shared connections and a common history. Philippines' islanders view land as chaotic and the sea as peaceful; they see their coastal waters as manageable and friendly while the deep sea is considered to be the abode of malign spirits. These contradictory perceptions of ocean-space resonate in their notion of 'Olympu', a deep-sea site of mysterious events and dangerous spirits, similar to the Bengali 'Kalidaha', which denotes not just the turmoil encountered

at deep sea, but variously a crossroads, a point of passage, and a state of transition between the known and unknown.

Maritime exchange can be gleaned from various beliefs and practices that were affirmed through circulations of *objects* (for trade, diplomacy, as religious icons and gifts of power), *beliefs* (law, justice, religion, community), *peoples* (from ancient Sogdians and Palmyrenes to Europeans) and *languages* (Arabic, Creole, Portuguese, Malay, Chinese, or the later Cape Town Dutch which took words from Malay, Indo-Portuguese, and eastern African and Khoisan languages, to make a new language: Afrikaans). Maritime influences are visible in songs, rituals (for example, those celebrating Darya Lal or Darya Pir in Kutch and Khwaja Khizr in Gujarat and Bengal), cuisine (the Baba Nonya dish Chicken Kapitan of the Straits Chinese and the ubiquitous beef rendang of Indian Ocean societies are markers of identity), music (think of zanzibari *taraab* that fuses Swahili and Arab airs), and in post-colonial literature's maritime modernities that reveal the traumas of identity, loss, and displacement. It is not surprising that West Indian poet Derek Walcott saw the 'gray vault' of the sea as History.

IV. A Maritime Cosmopolitanism

The Indian Ocean fascinates writers. The earliest fables are the seven sea-borne travels of Sinbad the sailor. He is rich as opposed to his *alter ego* the poor, land-based porter Sinbad. The sea here is a metaphor for wealth, while land represents poverty and changelessness. More recently, writers have explored the sea in

different ways. Abdulrazak Gurnah's *By the Sea* contrasts two very different waterscapes and two forms of spatial effectiveness and belonging: the vast, colourful space of the Indian Ocean and the smaller, grey, restrictive space of the English Channel. Kunal Basu situates *The Opium Clerk*, *The Japanese Wife* and *The Yellow Emperor's Cure* within connective waterscapes which are vehicles of memory, desire, awakening, longing, and loss. And a definite 'littoral cosmopolitanism' permeates Amitav Ghosh's novels. *In an Antique Land*, *Glass Palace*, *Hungry Tide*, *Gun Island*, and the *Ibis trilogy* are intensely pelagic, showing connections between port-towns (Cairo, Cochin, Venice, Calcutta, Madagascar, Rangoon) and people (African, European, Creole, Arab, Indian, Bangladeshi, Burmese, Chinese). Action often takes place on boats (Ibis, Mariamma), suggesting that people need a model of belonging that goes beyond national frames. In Ghosh's novels, reconstructions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries on sea demonstrate the fluid line between legal and illegal situations. Ghosh emphasizes the clash of civilisations, the interminable languages of the Tower of Babel, and always displacement—the intermediate zone in which people from all places come together with different goals in mind (Chambers 2011).

V. Now for Some Statistics

Although maritime history is not just about global trade, we must now look at the centrality of maritime traffic in our globalized economy. Around 80% of global trade by volume and over 70% of global trade by value are carried by sea and are handled by ports worldwide. Out of which 60% of maritime trade passes through Asia, with the South China Sea (SCS) carrying an estimated one-third of global shipping. The SCS's waters are critical for China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Philippines, Japan, and South Korea, all of which rely on the Melaka Straits which connect the South China Sea and, by extension, the Pacific Ocean with the Indian Ocean. China has over 60% of its trade in value, travelling by sea, and its economic security is closely tied to this sea, which explains its policy toward neighbouring nations and attempts to dominate global supply chains. This hegemony explains the anxieties that led to the formation of the QUAD grouping (USA, India, Australia, Japan) to combat China's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific. 70% of India's trade by value is handled by maritime transport. The Government of India launched the Sagarmala Programme in March 2017, with a vision of port-led development and growth of logistics-intensive industries, but the pace is much slower than that of China which does not just dominate trade in the Indo-Pacific, but world trade in general.

VI. So, What is Maritime History?

It is now time to ask ourselves: can sea and ocean basins be valid categories of historical analysis? The issue hinges on the degree of social and economic integration between human communities over the waters. Basins have tremendous value as constructs bringing large-scale historical processes into clear focus. Alternative frameworks, including continents, civilizations, areas, and most especially national states, have such structured conceptions of the world that scholars often do not even recognize the depth of basin influence. Such received constructs make limited provision for processes of commercial, biological, and cultural exchange that have

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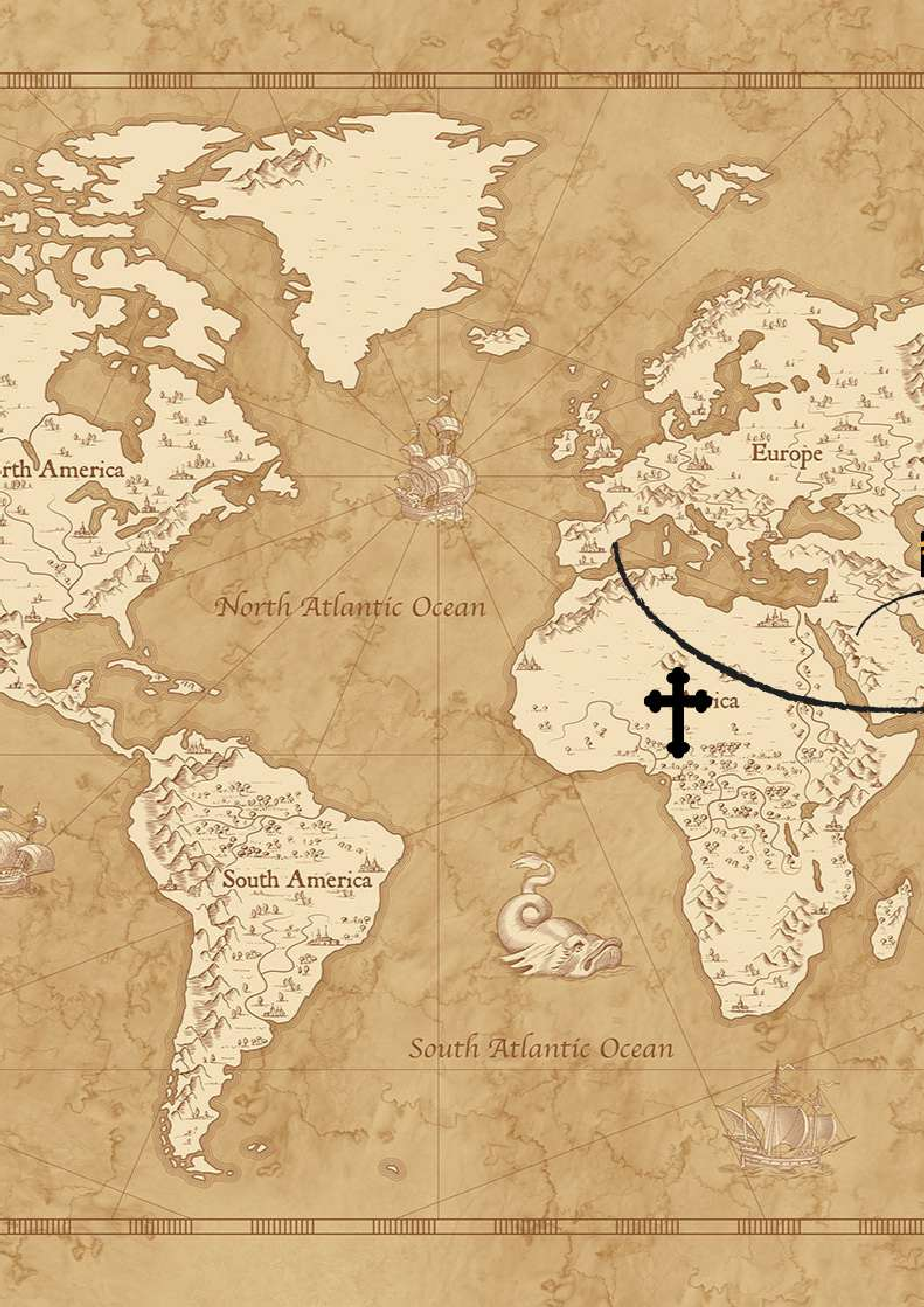
profoundly influenced the development of human societies—or at least scholars who employ these frameworks have not usually preferred to examine processes of exchange (Bentley 1999).

We can define maritime history as: 'the study of human interaction with and activity at sea. It covers a broad sub-field of history that often uses a global approach, although national and regional histories remain predominant. As an academic subject, it crosses the boundaries of standard disciplines, focusing on understanding humankind's various relationships to the oceans, seas, and major waterways of the globe. Nautical history records and interprets events involving ships,

shipping, navigation, and seafarers. Maritime history is a broad overarching subject that includes fishing, whaling, international maritime law, naval history, history of shipping, ship design, shipbuilding, history of navigation, history of various maritime-related sciences (oceanography, cartography, hydrography, climatology, etc.), sea exploration, maritime economics and trade, shipping, leisure (yachting, seaside tourism), history of lighthouses and aids to navigation, cultural contacts by sea, maritime themes in literature and art, the social worlds of sailors, passengers and sea-related communities' (after Wikipedia).

VII. The Sea and India

Despite the ubiquity of water and the maritime domain's importance, the relation between humans and water is inadequately studied, given that capitalism's spatiality, along with social perception and regulation of the sea, underwent a transformation in mid-eighteenth-century Europe. The new spatiality influenced maritime perceptions and fiscal policies worldwide. At the root of this change in political economy lay new opportunities for investing in land. The industrial era's rationalist 'development discourse' justified the reification of developable places i.e. land, and denigrated the spaces in-between. The



North America

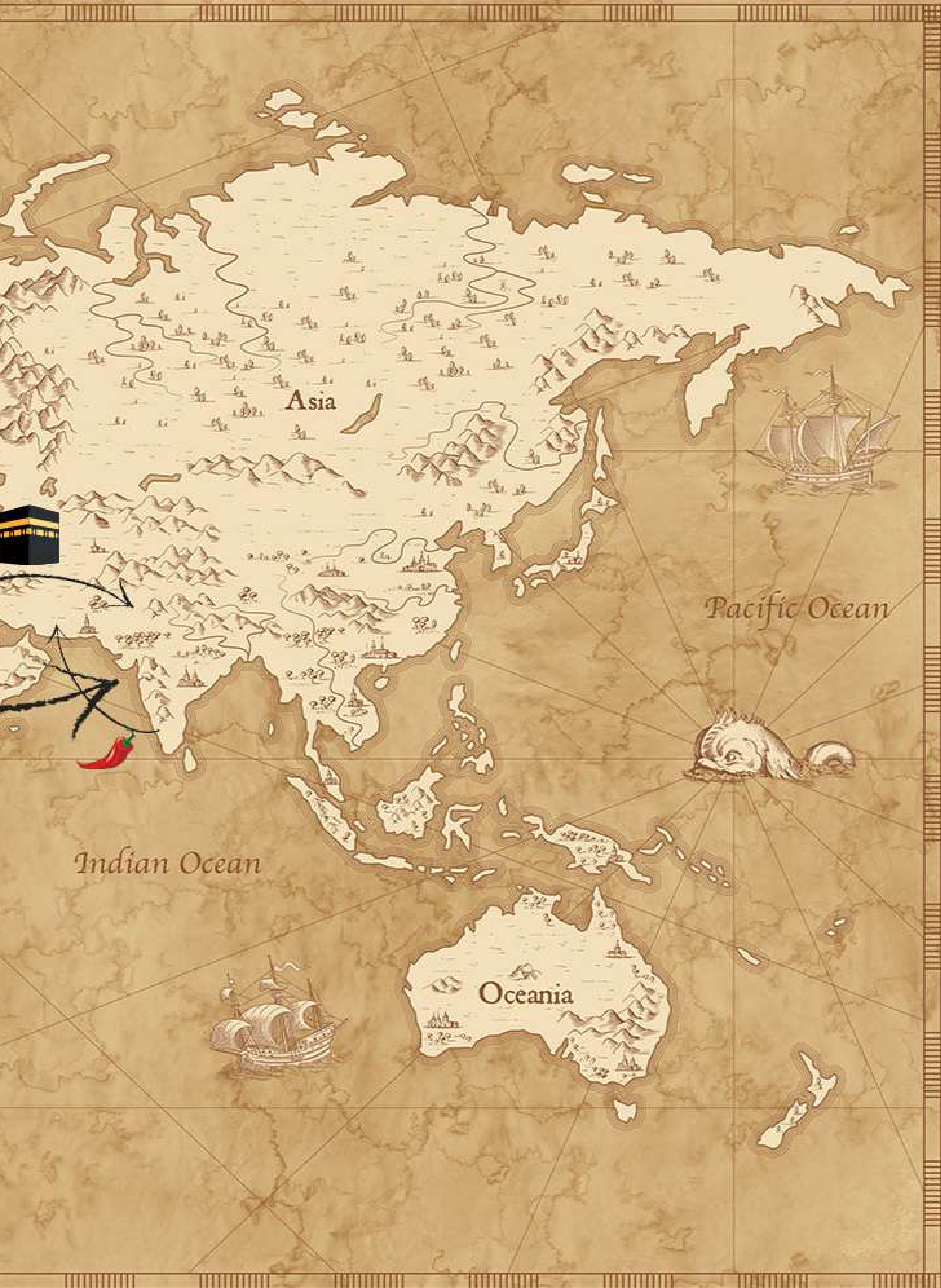
Europe

North Atlantic Ocean



South America

South Atlantic Ocean



Asia

Pacific Ocean

Indian Ocean

Oceania



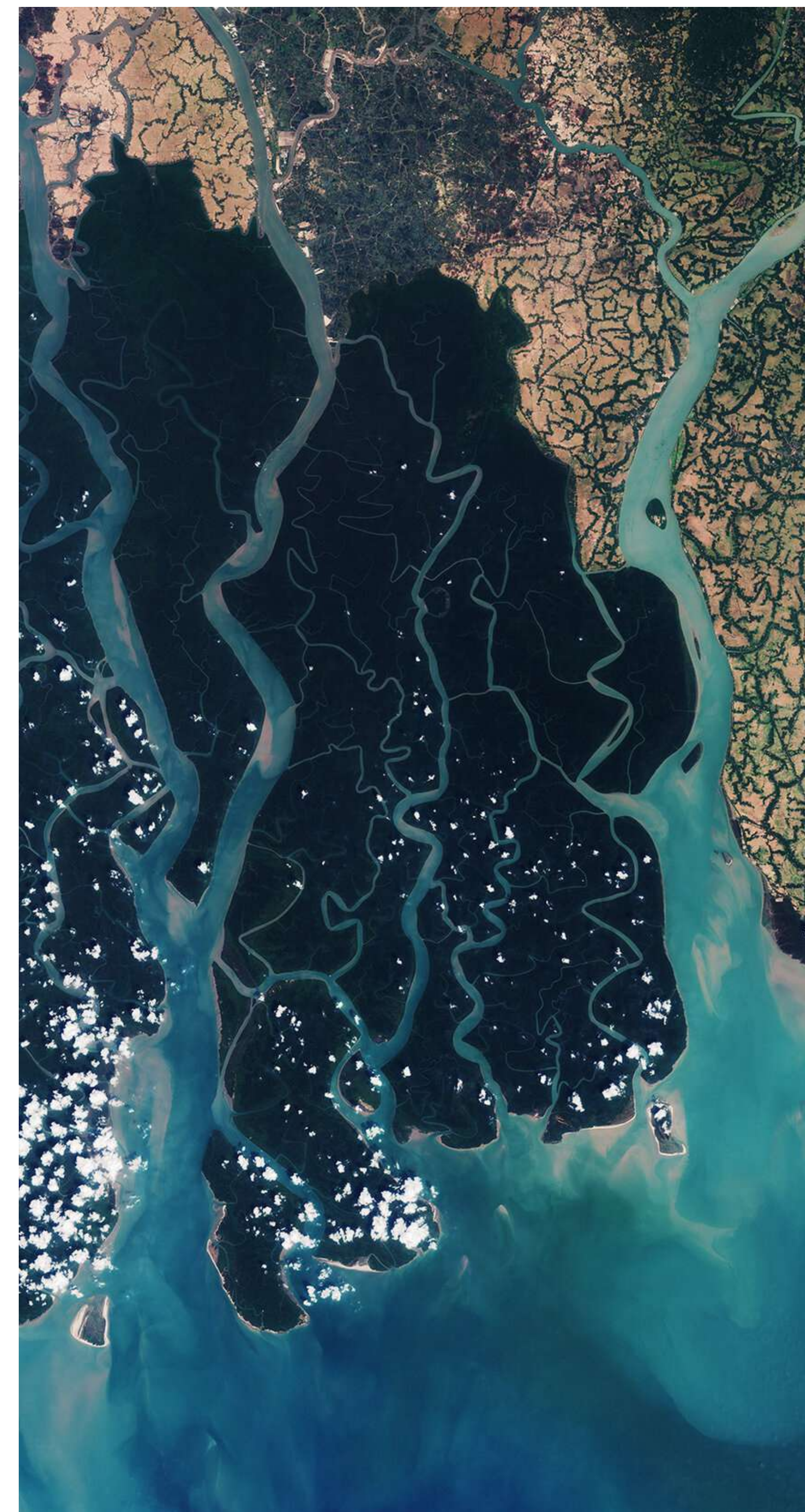
ocean became discursively constructed as an empty space, far removed from terrestrial society's progress, civilization, and development. Rather than the sea being central to landed life, it became separated. Emphasis was placed on the terrestrial sphere and the development of land pockets within the capitalist enterprise (Steinberg 2001).

Growing European power in India gave Europeans a growing share of the region's trade and led to greater integration with the Atlantic and the Pacific oceans. A death knell was rung by the steamship's arrival, which made the monsoonal patterns of Indian Ocean sailings irrelevant. Railways, connecting the interior to port-towns, altered the movement of goods and generated new mobilities and spatialities. The old Indian Ocean disappeared. Historians of the nineteenth century turned elsewhere, above all to the great land empire making up the British Raj. Sailing ships and trading voyages were replaced in the archive, and in history books, by discussions of land revenue, property rights, and the organisation of Indian society. So far as the ocean did engage historians, it was simply as an arena in which Britain demonstrated its imperial hegemony over other European powers, and at the expense of millennia-old indigenous maritime activities that had crumbled.

Continuing this tradition, independent India's obsession with its 15,000 km of land frontiers resulted in further

neglect of its rich maritime tradition. Land frontiers legalize control over mobility; herding people inside is easy, and frontier control can keep invaders out (this was never successful, as students of history know). The absence of India's coastline of a little over 7,500 km (more than half of its land frontier) from university curricula is the product of a deliberate 'maritime blindness'. Refusal to accept maritime history as a valid component of historical inquiry rises from the fact that it crosses national frames. This sub-field is considered subversive and seen to be detrimental to the history of the nation, which is of course written from the nation's point of view. This attitude makes it possible to marginalize outsiders as 'invaders' and dismiss practices not conforming to a sastric framework as 'foreign'.

Given this denial, India's external reach in historical time can be viewed, not in terms of inhabiting a shared space whose meaning has radically changed over time, but as a 'civilizational' history that is uniquely 'Indian'. History-writing betrays an acute fear of cross-cultural exchanges and 'foreign' influence, although Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, and Islam—seemingly terracentric religions—had pronounced maritime facets (we now talk of a maritime Buddhism and a maritime Islam) across the Bay of Bengal and the South China Sea. Furthermore, sea and ocean basins can sometimes serve as a context in which experiences of local maritime regions take on greater clarity and deeper significance. A region such as the Indian Ocean retains a very immediate reality for most of the peoples who inhabit its littoral and port-cities. The challenge for basin



studies is to probe the connections and dynamics fueling processes of integration in individual maritime regions without losing sight either of local experiences or global interactions, in all their spatial and temporal dimensions.

VIII. The New Indian Ocean

The Indian Ocean region was once a matrix of connectivities. Because of its cultural coherence, the ocean was a heuristic device, one that allowed us to consider human experience beyond the boundaries of continent and nation. However, developments



over the past half-century have affected the integrity of the Indian Ocean as a field of maritime-linked social systems. In a postcolonial epoch marked by petroleum production, the container ship, and air travel, port-cities that once defined the rim's human geography have lost their central roles as nodes of a trans-oceanic interface (Prestholdt 2015).

But seas and oceans continue to enthrall jurists, scholars, poets, and political theorists. Deleuze and Guattari (and Foucault, although he never completed that particular work) saw ocean-space as one resisting regulation. But in the seventeenth century, Hugo Grotius and John Selden moved

international law from land to sea and debated maritime rights. Oceans and seas provided a foundational grounding for twentieth-century configurations such as NATO and the Pacific Rim.

At present, much of the challenge to forces of contemporary globalization comes from communities dislocated by policies. The piracy that is denounced in international law is too often a case of fisherfolk displaced by large-scale trawler-fishing and the extension of the 22 kms (12 nautical mi) territorial maritime limit permitted by UNCLOS (United Nations Conferences on the Law of the Sea, 1982) to some 370 kms (200 nautical mi) in the case of SEZs of a sovereign state, giving the state special rights regarding the exploration and use of marine resources, including energy production from water and wind. Given this encroachment into maritime space, political imperatives (and geography) have become a formidable barrier to imaginings of historical relationships across the oceanic rim.

Maritime studies open up new ways of seeing and understanding the new spatialities that have emerged. The Sundarban delta islands which are geopolitically partitioned between India and Bangladesh lie in a borderless, constantly mutating zone between land and sea where the freshwater of the Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Meghna rivers deposit their silt and mix with the saline water of the Bay of Bengal. Neither liquid nor solid, the organization of this fluid archipelago is an anti-pattern, what Lindsay Bremner characterizes as 'undifferentiated, oozy, squelchy,

materialising and dematerialising in an on-going process of deposition, accumulation, stabilisation, erosion, ebb and flow'. This anti-pattern results in a fragile economy that provides a sludgy protective barrier to the intensely cultivated and populated lands of Kolkata and Dhaka. Its amphibious, muddy logic are both threatened by and offer a strategy of resistance to forces of globalization. Attempts to reclaim the delta islands as 'national' territory are evidence of current cartographic and juridical instruments that recuperate sea as land, and run counter to the old idea of shared maritime space as a complex, incremental, multi-scaled assemblage of relational economies and networks. Such sites are not discrete entities with singular, stable identities, something usually associated with architecture, cities, and territory; they only exist as components in the circuit boards of complex global circulations and flows, none of which are linear, certain, or predictable (Bremner 2014)

The absence of India's coastline of a little over 7,500 km (more than half of its land frontier) from university curricula is the product of a deliberate 'maritime blindness'.

Concluding Remarks

Maritime studies contribute to an emergent and important sub-field of History. They are also subversive as they enable the student to grapple with the chaos, disorder, ruptures, and discontinuities that seas bring in their tow to enable them to engage with both the particular and the universal. Maritime history challenges traditional models of linear and totalizable historiography and reveals tensions between scales of historical inquiry—macro and micro—along with their spatial and temporal expansiveness and/or contractions. This is global or even world history at its best, approaches that are very much in vogue and currently on the academic agenda worldwide. ■

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SANJEEV SANYAL

THE OCEAN OF CHURN

HOW THE INDIAN OCEAN SHAPED HUMAN HISTORY

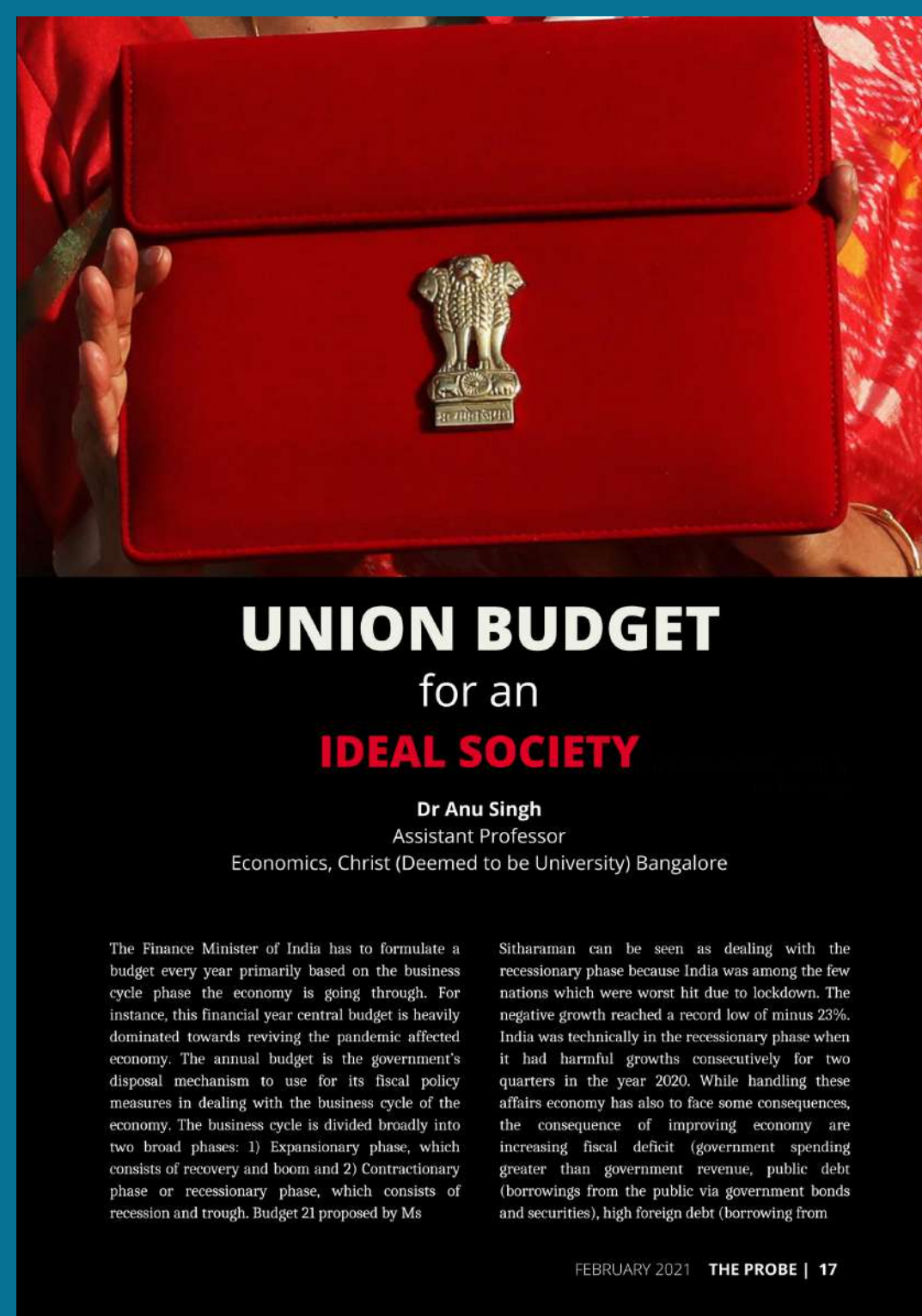


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A Conversation with Yashica Dutt On Caste in India@74

Interviewed by Riya Jeph and
Shubodh HM



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

Riya: When you were a kid back in school when did it exactly hit you that your caste is something that needs to be hidden, that needs to be concealed? It will be wonderful for the sake of our audience if you could share some anecdotes from your childhood that gave you the impression that you would be better off in this world if you do not reveal your caste. The risk of holding up to your true identity is not something worth taking, so tell us about it.

Yashica: Absolutely, so I think this is an experience that is common to a lot of Dalits like you mentioned initially, where we are forced to hide our caste and we are often told by our families to hide our caste not because they want us to not be ourselves but because they fully understand that the cost of revealing what our caste is, is far greater than us being able to fully express our true identities. As far as I am concerned, for me this goes back to when I was really young, in fact, my earliest memories are of my mom and dad telling me that if somebody asks in school what your caste is, make sure you tell them you are a Brahmin or make sure you tell them you are a Parachar which is some middle name that my mother's family assumed, and I didn't quite understand why it was so important for me to do that, but I remember coming from school when I had just started going to school and one of the questions along with "how was the day", "what homework did you get" my mom would often ask me "did someone ask about your caste", and invariably, I was in the school in the 90s, early 90s and even then-thankfully this question wasn't being posed to kindergartners in a very direct and obvious way but there was this sense that if you were not from a certain caste then that was something to be ashamed of. I remember that even at that age there would be this idea that the kids would discuss I am from so and so caste and associate a certain sense of pride with it. Psychologically, how that affects a young child is that when you see someone else associating pride with a certain identity and you are being told to hide who you are and you are being told to lie about it, it inherently makes you feel that you are inferior, it inherently makes you feel that you have something to hide, something that is shameful, something you cannot change about yourself but

that is something the society is not going to accept about you, so you are better off lying about it, you are better off transforming yourself or being like somebody else and the psychic cost of that, the psychological cost of that burden from a young age is extremely high. And it is something that we fairly don't discuss, especially in Indian societies, we don't talk about the mental burden of being Dalit especially from a caste-like mine which is a manual scavenging caste and I am from the "bhangi" caste, "Bhangi", "chamar", "chudas", "kameenas" from the Muslim community, these are words that are used as slurs, so when you understand that your identity is a slur and when you realise that at a very young age, it is an extremely difficult thing to contend with and it makes it very difficult for you to feel really good about yourself. To feel like you are like everybody else around you if always you are always concerned with the fact that you have to make up for something. If you don't try to be like somebody else then you are going to be rejected and that's a really brutal thing for somebody to go through when you are very young.

Riya: You started hiding your caste because you saw the kind of toxic environment that was around you, people using casteist slurs, so that automatically gave you the impression that your caste is something that needs to be hidden, but was there any instance when someone came to know about your caste and eventually the communication was broken?

Yashica: Absolutely, this is something I think you are referring to the incident I have mentioned in the book and I have talked about it at other places. So, you know, I grew up with this idea that this was something to be ashamed of but thankfully because I was protected by my class barrier, even though I grew up with a lot of economic hardship because my father was in government service, we were able to sort of pretend that we were different from the "Bhangis" who lived in the "Bastis". That there was that particular difference that we could tell ourselves even though it wasn't really true, we could at least make ourselves feel a little better without realising that the differences are really created by the caste system and that they are not really real. So I grew up wondering whether it was really worth hiding my caste, whether all these restrictions and all these instructions that have come from my family about being very protective, being very secretive about my caste, whether it is really worth it and I also grew up in the time of the 90s-2000s when was this sense, this false hope that we had that India is changing, that India is becoming more progressive, that we are heading towards liberal ideals that things like caste are something that exist in the past. We were sort of fooling ourselves into believing that we are a post-caste society, and shielded by my relative middle-class privilege, even though it was completely hollow from inside, I foolishly sort of and naively believed that my caste wouldn't matter especially among my friends and I remember there was a particular friend of mine, this is something I have talked about before, who I wasn't very close with but who was somebody I shared the bus with and came back from school with. I

was 15 years old and this was a well-educated "Doctor" Family. They just moved into the neighbourhood and her parents wanted to sort of vet me out, they wanted to see if I were a nice kid for the daughter to be hanging with and they called me over for tea one day and I didn't know that it was an ambush, I didn't know what I was walking into. What I was walking into was a litmus test of where I stood on the hierarchy of the caste ladder. They were trying to figure out if I was high enough for their daughter to be speaking with and I walked into that ambush, they offered me tea and asked "So, beta, we are very progressive but what caste are you from?" and I knew at that moment- it was like a bomb had detonated in the middle of a room, it was a silent bomb and that question for the first time in my young adult life, I was forced to weigh it very carefully because as a teenager I could sort of tell myself that I have this false choice, why don't I defy what my mother has been telling me, maybe this liberal doctor family will not care what my caste is. I remember that moment so clearly, we were around a round table, I was looking at the floor, I could feel their eyes looking at me, I could feel their eyes burning into my head and without looking up, I said "Hum S.C. hai", the English translation is that "I am from schedule caste". I was so ashamed of being "Bhangi" that I could not even say the word "Bhangi", I could not

even say manual scavenging, I could just say that I am from the broader category of schedule caste. As all of us who live in India know that schedule caste is just not one monolith, it is also a descending scale of contempt as Ambedkar calls it. So if you are a “Bhangi” or a “Chamar” or one of the lower castes, then you lie at the bottom, so even within the schedule castes, being “Bhangi” is at the absolute bottom and of course, I couldn’t even tell them that. And I just told them that I am S.C. and it felt like something shattered at that moment and it felt like this illusion that I had created for myself was broken. And they said “Oh yeah, we don’t mind that, that’s great, we believe in the equality of everybody” and I knew, I left very quickly from there, I knew that something had fundamentally changed, completely in my life that day and that I had made this choice to tell them who I was and I was going to be rejected for it and the next day when I saw my friend, my alleged friend in the bus, I remember, I went up to her and I was like “hey, how is it going, how is your day?” and she just looked through me, she looked through me like I was not even a person like I didn’t exist because I had told her that I was SC, not even Bhangi, that I was somebody who was not worth talking to. And that was really my first experience with sort of recognising the cost of telling people what my caste was.

Riya: Yes, And the very fact that when people from lower caste are asked about their caste identity and when they

have to tell their caste, they usually use the category name, they would say “Oh I am from SC, Oh I am from ST”, they would not directly say the name of their caste, but if people from the general category have to tell their caste, they would say “Oh I am this Brahmin, Oh I am that Rajput, I am this...”

Yashica: Right, but there is a reason for that because, for the upper castes, there is a sense of pride, when somebody says that I am Gaur Brahmin or I am this and that Rajput or I am this Marwadi or this Baniya, they are saying that because they want you to know that they are better than you, they think that they are superior to you. When we hide our caste, when we say the broader category name, it’s because we don’t want them to know just exactly how low we are, so that itself, the language and words matter, how we communicate really matters, and what this interaction shows us is that Upper Caste people are allowed to have caste pride, they are allowed to feel superior, whereas we have been told all our lives that we are inferior and this is something we should be ashamed of.

Riya: Yeah, so as someone who has experienced caste-based bias and discrimination when you were growing up and as someone who understands the kind of pressure that Dalit students go through, what do you think about the psychological trauma and the mental pressure that these students go through when they study at these elite and upper-caste dominated schools. More importantly what do you think how should these

people and these students from reserved category deal with the constant nagging that they receive from their teachers, from their peers, from their friends, when they are out there in the open. They are always told that they are meritless and they are always under this pressure to hide or perform, prove themselves in front upper caste people. With this amount of hurt and rejection and frustration that they receive from the world all the time for being a “Quota” Student, what should be the ideal response, how should they deal with it? Especially kids at school.

Yashica: Absolutely. So I definitely don’t want to be in a position where I tell people what to do with their lives because this is a very difficult and delicate decision to make. When you are 14 years old, when you are 15 years old, even if you are a so-called “Quota” student, which is by the way of reservation, a constitutional right enshrined in the constitution. And I know that there is a debate going on but let’s not forget that, and I don’t even want to get into the whole reservation debate because every time I have an interview, I speak about it, and that issue is just never going to die, so for people who want to know more, read the book and there is enough, more than enough literature available supporting reservation, that is

just not a conversation we should even be having. But for people, for students who are sometimes first-generation college students or they are second-generation college students and they feel the extreme pressure and burden of living and surviving in an elite space that doesn't want them, it's extremely debilitating and it breaks you from inside. And for all those people who come and tell you "Oh but you should be strong" or "Don't allow that to break you", they are really ignoring the trauma that brings to be in a space that doesn't want you. And this is very different from being from an economically impoverished background or being from a so-called poor background. It's very different because that can change when you have money, you understand that you are a poor person today and when you graduate from college you might be able to get a job where you earn a salary and suddenly all of that would melt away, nobody will really remember you as a poor college kid but if you are somebody who is a so-called quota student, who is a Dalit student, who is an Adivasi student, you will always be made to feel that you don't belong in that space. That shame and stigma that is attached to you are not going to go away just because you have a little money and this is also the argument that is used against kids who are from middle-class Dalit families, that why do they need a reservation or what do they have to worry about now that they have money. It's like making an argument that if you are a Black person, you will not be discriminated against just

because you have money or just because you have a certain amount of wealth accumulation, a certain amount of capital. So the trauma that these kids go through not only with their friends who constantly tell them that they don't belong here but also with their teachers who give them deliberately low scores because they see that they have availed the quota and they feel that they don't deserve to be there. College itself is a very hard experience, but you are also a young adult, you are preparing for the rest of your life, on top of that, you have to overcome this stigma and bias that you belong there, and you have to prove everyone wrong and in case you fall short of that; if you are general category student, you are allowed to fail, you are allowed to do badly in an exam, you can say "Oh I stayed out, I partied, I didn't do well this semester" but if you are a Dalit student, if you are an Adivasi student, you are taking reservations, you don't have that cushion, you do badly once, for whatever reason that is, the label will be given to you that you are talentless, you are meritless and you didn't belong there in the first place. And those are realities that we should be talking about more than we are already talking about, this is the kind of trauma that leads students to commit suicide. Dalit students committing suicide has been a new story for several years now and thankfully a lot of us are paying attention to it. So coming back to your question of how should students deal with it, I would say the best thing you can do if you are a Dalit student, an Adivasi Student is to empower yourself and empower the idea of who you are. Read Ambedkar, read these ideas about merit and reservation and constitutional rights. Educate yourself. Ambedkar always

says educate, agitate, organize. Those are words that we use but really understand what he is trying to say is what you need is the power of knowledge on your side. When somebody tells you that you are meritless, you are talentless, and you don't belong here, you can counter them and be like- "explain yourself, what do you mean I am meritless", and then hit them with arguments, make them look like the stupid bumbling fools that they are. For even having that idea that reservation is some kind of false myth. These are just perpetuated ideas, people have never even made an attempt to explore them, nobody understands what they are talking about, show them why they are wrong and when you make them look like absolute fools then you will understand that there is really nothing to the basis of what they are saying. Now, of course, there will still be systemic casteism, there will still be teachers who are out to get you, there will still be professors and school administrators who will discriminate against you, in order to safeguard yourself, make sure you organise yourself. There are so many examples of wonderful student societies, much like yourself, in IIT we have different student societies where Dalit and Adivasis students have banded together, in JNU we have seen examples. So join, seek out people like yourself. There is strength in numbers. And make sure that you have the protection that you need. Make

sure that you don't think that you are alone because you are not. And first of all, it's very important to remember that this is not your fault. This is a lie that has been told to you by the society that wants to keep you inferior so that it can keep its hold on the power that they have held for thousands of years. So, it's really not your fault. Don't believe that lie.

Shubodh: Your mother is a very important part of the books and the struggle you went through to attain a good education. She also played an important role in hiding your identity. Do you think she was right in her choice of hiding your identity? Had you not concealed it, how different your life would have been?

Yashica: That's an excellent question Shubodh and I really appreciate you asking that because this is something that many people have asked me. Some people have tried to but really this is a delicate question. It's also a difficult question because I'm having to sort of look back at the choices that my elders made, that my parents made, that my mum made. And I'm having to sort of understand whether that was the right decision. But here is what we know about history, here is what we know about culture; Women and Dalit women in particular really don't have many choices. In our societies, Dalit women have no power. So, the only way that we operate is through survival strategies. One of the survival strategies for a lot of Dalit women, for a lot of Dalit mothers across the country, is to

do whatever it takes to empower their children, especially their daughters, for them to have a shot at an equal life. And that's exactly what my mother did. For example, her situation would be very different if she grew up in a place where the ideals of Ambedkar are very cherished. For example, in Maharashtra, where this idea that you're an Ambedkarite, you're somebody who believes in the ideals of Ambedkar, you say 'Jai Bheem', those ideas are very common. Let's understand where my mother came from. She came from a really small place, next to Moradabad, which is as we know a contested district in Uttar Pradesh. And she got married in Rajasthan, which is arguably one of the most regressive states on all indicators, and was in the 80s and 90s. She literally had no power. The only power that she had was to protect her children from the kind of discrimination and sort of oppression that she had felt herself. And the way for her to do that was to shield us. And her shielding involved asking us to hide our identities. And that's not just her, a lot of Dalit parents in those years made those decisions. And frankly, it's because of her decisions that I'm relatively unscarred right now. I don't have many horrible instances of caste discrimination that left me completely traumatised is because I was hiding my caste. We can go back in time and debate whether that was the right decision or the wrong decision. But the fact is, it's the only decision she had and she took it. As a result, I'm sitting here and I'm able to have a voice and I'm able to speak to you and explain my point of view. So, I think it's important to look at the decisions women, and in particular Dalit women, take to protect their kids in

the right context. Where we are in 2021 with the Dalit discourse is very different from where we were in 1991. We were in the middle of the Mandal Commission riots. Anybody who even was a 'pro-reservationist' was being discarded, discriminated against, being called out, being abused. In an environment like that in Rajasthan, where already even sending your girl child to school is such a contested issue, the only choice my mother had was to tell me to protect myself. And that's exactly what she did. So I would say, in my opinion, it was the right decision to make, given the time and the place she was in and the choices that she had.

Shubodh: Then do you think so that even in the current time, current situation, the parents should protect their child's identity so that they do well in their lives?

Yashica: Shubodh see, that is a very personal decision. That is a very sort of difficult decision that only an individual can make. We cannot sit here and tell people what they should do or shouldn't do with their lives. If somebody has to make a difficult decision, to make their life even 1 per cent easier, they should do that. If they feel that they are empowered enough to not hide their identity; and they are able to support themselves, they are able to support their family, they live in an environment that allows

them to exist and survive, then they should talk about who they are. But if that's not the case, then it's a valid argument to hide who you are. I mean this is not a black and white issue; this is not like telling somebody what life choices that they can make. What we can do is empower them. Create an environment of support, create conversations and create awareness around caste. But it is I feel, not my place to tell somebody what they should do with their lives. If they feel safer hiding their identity, if the environment around them is so unsafe and insecure, then they should hide their caste. But if not, then they should go ahead and live their truth. But that's a choice only they can make.

Shubodh: Do you think our education system is doing a good job when it comes to teaching students about caste? And also tell us what do you think about UCs teaching about caste at schools and universities?

Yashica: That's such a great question because if we look at the curriculum and the debate around the curriculum, in some ways it has become even more regressive than it was 20 years ago. We are now playing with history, we are now changing history, we are now removing mentions of certain historical events. So suffice to say the narrative that a lot of students, who are reading government-issued textbooks, who are reading CBSE board or state boards, are reading the government's version of history.

They are not necessarily reading the truth. That's one of the reasons that when we grew up, especially when I grew up, I really didn't read much about Ambedkar. Ambedkar is a towering figure. As we all know, he played such an important role in shaping India's current history, in shaping our lives. We barely read about him. The way we read about Gandhi, the way we read about Nehru, we didn't read about Ambedkar in the same way. And the way we read about and understood caste – I remember in my Civics textbook in the eighth standard, there was a little photograph of these deeply impoverished people, who maybe were in a rural setting, who didn't have any clothes on their body. It was a black and white and grainy photo and that small paragraph accompanying that, described the caste system as something that happened in the past. So, if we are telling students that the caste system exists in the past, whereas there is somebody around them in the same class, who is experiencing it in real-time, there is a definite disconnect. So, it's an understatement to say that our education system is deeply failing Dalit students, deeply failing Dalit history. This is not changing. In fact, it has gotten worse under the current government, under the various governments, because they have all tried to create their own version of history. But having said that, I think there is a lot of credit that should be given to Dalit students and Dalit folks in general, who have been raising their voices and who have been talking about the need to discuss and analyse caste. Like for example, I just learned that DU for the first time is now going to offer a course on caste studies. I don't know if that's accurate information but that is something

that I've lately heard. And if that is true, then it's a really heartening step. But think about where we are, we are in 2021, we have to convince people that caste exists. So first, we have to let them know that this is a reality and then we can talk about reform. So, there is such a long way to go there. But the education system falls extremely short because, as you mentioned, there are upper-caste teachers, there are upper-caste professors, who have this inherent hatred for Dalit students. They have an inherent hatred for quota students. They think they don't deserve to be in an education system like that. So they give us low marks, they try their best to get us out of there. So even beyond what's taught in the books is the attitude of the teachers themselves. And there is reservation and discrimination even among teachers. We know there are instances where Dalit professors are not given promotions, Dalit professors are not hired, they are not allowed to rise to certain ranks. There is so much discrimination in universities in India within teachers, that it's hard for Dalit teachers, Dalit professors, Adivasi teachers and professors to even make themselves heard. Like I have been saying, this is a systemic issue that needs to be highlighted in a really big way.

Shubodh: We have seen Upper Caste celebrities like Ravindra Jadeja and Kangana Ranaut making ill-

informed remarks and flaunting their caste, they have been called out for their problematic opinions on social media. How do you view the role of social media in building awareness about the caste struggle? Has it helped to make us more aware, educated and harmonious OR has it aggravated the social fabric of India?

Yashica: Shubodh, you asked a great question because I want to address the last part of what you said – harmony and social fabric and bringing Indians together. I think this is an argument that a lot of upper-caste people use, a lot of casteist people use in order to stop us from speaking about our issues, from speaking about our rights. This is a very classic, tried and tested, a textbook case where people who are in power, when they don't want to let go of that power, when they don't want equality in the society, they use this argument to say, 'Oh! By talking about your differences, by talking about how we are hurting you, by talking about how we have harmed you for thousands of years, you are creating disharmony and discord in the society,' which I think is a completely hypocritical statement. I mean if you're in a situation where you're being hurt, you are supposed to talk about it. If it creates disharmony then the disharmony was already there. You talking about it is not creating disharmony, you talking about it is calling attention to the pain that you are suffering so you can create support around it. And that's what social media has done.

In fact, social media has been very instrumental for Dalits in creating a voice of our own. Pre-social media, in the early 2000s, in the 90s, the whole media circuit, the bureaucracy circuit, justice system, everything was controlled by upper-caste people. So when the reservation debates happened, the only point of view that we saw was what upper-caste editors thought. We didn't see a Dalit point of view because there were no Dalit journalists who were operating at that level at that time. Now, the difference is that we have visibly vocal Dalit people who are there and raising their voice and educating people about issues. The fact that Jadeja or Kangana Ranaut have made these statements and the fact that they are being held accountable is a positive step. Because 10 years ago, they would have made these statements and everybody would just agree with them and say, 'Yeah, they're right. There is nothing wrong in what they said.' Now there is a conscious awareness where we can hold them accountable and say, 'Hold on, that's not right. You just cannot say that and get away with it.' Now the Dalit public is empowered because they have a voice that we didn't have for such a long time. Like for example, take my opinion, the reason I had a book deal is because I wrote a Facebook note that went viral online. The reason I wrote a Facebook note is because I read Rohit Vemula's wonderful last letter. And I would have never read that if there was no Internet because I wouldn't even know that a bright, brilliant, talented person like that existed, fought for his rights and was forced to give up his life. The reason that we have this ecosystem is because of this Internet. And of course, like any other technological advancement, there are

drawbacks. But let's not say that it is creating discord in the Indian society. What it is doing is giving Dalit people a voice to talk about their problems, to talk about their issues and to talk about our rights, to talk about equal rights. That's what social media has given to us, and it is an extremely powerful tool in my opinion.

Riya: So for the final question, I had previously decided that I would ask the question that always ends up occurring and is unavoidable whenever we discuss caste, that is about economically privileged and well-off Dalits in reserved-category students getting a reservation. But I would not ask this question because you have already mentioned previously that that is something you do not want to address and there is enough literature...

Yashica: I want to say, not that I don't want to address, I've addressed it so many times that in my opinion, it's a conversation not even worth having anymore. How many times do we have to tell people that we exist and our humanity matters and that our discrimination matters? How many times do we have to convince them that I'm a human being who is suffering discrimination whether I have a little money in my pocket or not and that my caste didn't simply go away just because I got a decently paying job. That's not something that we



The value of a man was reduced to his immediate identity and nearest possibility. To a vote. To a number. To a thing. Never was a man treated as a mind. As a glorious thing made up of star dust. In every field, in studies, in streets, in politics, and in dying and living.

Rohith Vemula

1989-2016



need to constantly keep talking about, at least in this forum. I think it's time for us to discuss something a little above and beyond that. I'm not saying it's an irrelevant conversation because this is something that's being discussed right now. But personally, I've spoken so often about it, I've been speaking about it for three years constantly, I would like to speak about something else. So, people who want to know what my opinions are on this, you are welcome to check my previous interviews, you are welcome to read 'Coming Out As Dalit', whole chapter on that...

Riya: Yeah, but I want to ask something that is related to this topic. If we believe that even economically privileged Dalits face discrimination, which is a reality. But tell me, if we continue to have reservations for economically privileged SC/ST students, then don't we believe in a notion that castes in India are inherently antagonistic and this is never going to end? We will never be able to achieve the dream of Ambedkar of annihilating caste in India, because the fact that we insist that we have to have reservations even after Dalits get money in their hands, we have to have reservations for proper representation goes on to say that, we believe that there is no future of a casteless society in India. And also, you might have also experienced it personally in your life that now you are a well-known journalist, you

have authored a book and I'm sure- this is something that I speak from a personal level being an ST student myself, so I hope that you won't misinterpret my intention anywhere...

Yashica: Absolutely not.

Riya: So, now that you have attained a certain level of success, I'm sure you are not being discriminated as much as back when you were in school. And moreover, if a casteist person makes some remarks or says something, how does it stop us from studying or scoring well or doing what we want? So if this policy is going to continue and if we are going to staunchly believe that caste is not going to go away, then how are we going to achieve Ambedkar's dream of annihilating caste? Isn't it a hopeless future?

Yashica: This is a really complex question and bear with me while I unpack everything you asked. So, first what you are saying is Ambedkar's vision of achieving a casteless society by continuing reservation we are not achieving that because of this remedy that has been given to us. So, I just want to ask a question- imagine yourself in the middle of a battlefield, we are being hacked left, right and centre and there are people coming and bandaging us. And is it right that we ask people to stop bandaging us because by treating me, by making me feel better you are continuing to hurt me, you are continuing this war? If you keep treating me then there is no way of us ending this war. That's the same analogy that we are looking at.

If you are on a battlefield, if we are in the middle of a place where we are being hacked, where our legs are being cut, where our arms are being cut, where our fingers and heads are being chopped and there is a little hope or a sliver, there is a little hospital, if you want to damage that hospital because that hospital is the symbol of war then we are not really looking at the entire picture. That is the analogy that we are thinking about. Reservation is a remedy; reservation is not the cause. The cause is the power that is disproportionately held by upper caste people. Look at me Riya, look at bureaucracy, look at judiciary, we have one token president who is from an SC category, who we all know, let's be very honest, Mr President does not have a lot of power. Where are the Dalits in the judiciary? Who are the Dalit editors who are making decisions about what the narrative on India should look like? Who are the Dalit Judges who are making decisions about laws that concern Dalits? Let's first talk about having Dalits in positions of power and then we can look at the remedy. Let's understand it's been 70-75 years of reservation continuing. The reservation that the upper castes have had has gone for thousands of years. The reservation of owning land; the land has been passed down for centuries and family. Maybe they should give up the land reservation and then equality in society can be

achieved. Maybe they should give up their cultural reservation; there have been families who exist in Delhi; whose forefathers, whose great grandfathers studied in London, whose great grandfathers went to South Africa to study. They already have that cultural capital; they already have that culture of privilege. Maybe we should ask them to give that up before we attack this small and only may I add remedy that 25% of 1.2 billion people have. All Dalits have in this country is the constitutional reservation and the untouchability law and of course, the SC and ST POA act, we really have no other ways to raise awareness about caste discrimination and casteism. Why is reservation in public schools, in public universities, in public government jobs? Such a big issue that we are willing to ignore the absence of Dalits from every other sector in society. Why is this small constitutional reservation the flashpoint of Dalit rights when Dalits are still being killed? When Dalits are still being harmed? When Dalit men are actively hacked to death for daring to marry somebody outside their caste? When Dalit women are continuously raped for their caste because they are considered more sexually available? How is this issue more important than the life and death of Dalit people, the life and death of Adivasi people? ? So, let's be real and understand what is being made into an issue and what really is important. Is economic and constitutional reservation which, let's be very clear, is a very small part of the

pie, more important than the ongoing atrocities against Dalits. We're still at the stage where we are convincing people that casteism exists and on the same level we want to take away the reservation, you know, we have to be on one side, either you believe that there is casteism and then take away reservation or you just leave the reservation intact and do something to change the way things are. Give power to Dalit people, we will not need reservations anymore. Until then, there is only one way that we have to get into schools and colleges and universities which is the constitutional reservation. Until we don't have any power that's the only way for us to thrive and survive. Even now that Dalit students, Dalit professors, people who are first-generation and second-generation college-goers face an immense mark of discrimination. The only protection that they have is the constitutional reservation, you take that away, forget the Dalit students being in any schools and universities. Their numbers are already dwindling, so let's focus on what's really important, let's see why this one issue is the only issue that 25% of this country's population can talk about. Why is it that when there is a really tiny number of economically privileged Dalits, they become the poster children for everything, whereas the whole other population is really can be ignored? Just because one Dalit person is relatively well off, why does that bother the caste pride of people so much that they want to attack them and take that away from them and say, "Oh! now you don't face any discrimination", when at the same time the struggles that they have had and everything that they have to do to get to that point is completely invalidated. Speaking about me, of

course, I don't face any discrimination now, because I live in the US. If I went to an Indian community within the United States, I will not be allowed to enter a temple. Do you think if I went to an upper-caste Brahmin's house they will allow me to come and sit at the table and have dinner with them? Do you think they will give me the same kind of respect? Do you think they will not say that do you bathe enough? Are you clean enough? Did you wash your hands enough? Do you think they're going to give me the same kind of crockery, pots and pans, tables, plates that they give to the other upper caste students? Absolutely not. I will still face discrimination and that is a human rights issue, that is an equality issue. Just because I have this class privilege that everybody can see, because I live in York doesn't mean that it is okay for me to be discriminated against and I will be; the reason I'm not is because I'm not friends with many Indians, I only hang out with Ambedkarite people and non-Indians. So, discrimination looks different because casteism evolves, that doesn't mean it goes away and that's what we need to address. Instead of saying, oh! you have one bandage, let's take it away and keep suffering because we want the casteless stream. I don't think that's what Ambedkar envisioned. He really believed, maybe, that with more Dalits converting to Buddhism, with more Dalits leaving Hinduism

we would be able to achieve some sort of equality. As we have seen societies don't evolve that way, societies take their time to evolve and what's important is to question these fundamental ideas of who is controlling the entire power in the country, who is making constitutional reservation the only topic to talk about, why is that the only topic we want to talk about and not Dalit atrocities and rapes.

Riya - Yeah, and one important thing that you have pointed out during the whole answer is the fact that whenever upper caste people talk about caste their only sole concern is the reservation, they rarely ever care to talk about atrocities that Dalit people go through. So that's really important.

Yashica: For them, atrocities do not even exist. For them, the only issue that exists is the reservation and they still continue to call us talentless and meritless. That is not a problem to them, they will say, we are grabbing reservations but at the same time, we are also meritless. So, you know, make it make sense, it really doesn't make any sense. This argument is hory and hollow and shallow and stupid but it keeps coming up because that's the only way to beat Dalit people down with a stick, to beat Adivasi people down and make them feel inferior and that's why we only talk about the reservation and nothing else.

Riya - You also mentioned earlier that we have to

constantly make them realise that caste is something that still exists and has not gone away and I feel very sorry to tell you that there are discourses developing in the right-wing intellectual arena which claim that caste is not really Indian, it is a British invention which was gradually invented during the lordship of Lord Weasley when he was the Viceroy of India. This is something that is not being said by Twitter trolls, it is something that is being done in proper seminars with upper-caste professors, who have studied from foreign universities and they impart this education that they are trying to break India, caste is not our thing it is a British invention.

Yashica: I mean this is not news to me because I live in the USA, and I do roam in these circuits and I'm fully aware of how this complex has gone out. Think about it, there are so many upper-caste professors who are in the US, in the UK, in Germany, South Africa, all across the world, why is it that the rest of the world doesn't know about caste, why is it that the rest of the world which is aware of racism as the subject of brutality does not consider caste important because these people have made them believe that caste is not important, that's what the issue is; they've made them believe. This is the whole industry, this is the whole complex where upper caste professors have created this theory that caste is a British invention which, of course, is patently false. Of course, the British had a huge role in the way caste is seen today but did they bring caste to this subcontinent? Absolutely not. My ancestors were Bhangi even before

the British came in and they are Bhangi since. In fact, one could argue that British intervention was the only way somebody from my caste had the opportunity to go to a school because if this was left to the caste, power lords and overlords that existed in India somebody like me or my family would never have an opportunity to set foot inside a school. So, this is the whole industrial complex that exists where all over the world, where the so-called professors are deeply casteist, who are deeply wrong and who are deeply flawed in their argument and ideology go around and say that the British invented caste but, of course, that's a completely biased point of view and let's be very clear, right-wing and intellectual doesn't really go together anymore, does it? So, let's not give credence or importance to what they're saying, of course, they still have a platform but we have more than enough Dalit professors, Dalit intellectuals who are now abroad, who are now in these places, who are challenging that argument and saying "what the hell are you talking about?" This is not even the reality; you constructed and created this web of lies for 70 years and people have bought this but it's time to break that and it's time for you to shut the hell up!

Riya - So, Yashica ma'am, this brings us to the end of this wonderful interview and we actually had a very

enriching conversation with you and we definitely hope that our readers and viewers of this interview will learn a lot from what you said today and from your experience being Dalit and finally coming out as one. And thank you so much for adding strength to the cause that Rohit Vemula died for. And I would also like to thank you on behalf of every Dalit student for amplifying their voice and extending the discourse regarding discrimination and targeting every subtle form of discrimination that exists in this country no matter how small, no matter how subtle. So thank you so much!

Yashica: I really appreciate it. Thank you for your excellent questions and I am always happy to speak to Dalit students and Adivasi students. I think the real conversations come out from there. Real conversations don't come out of us talking to upper caste people and trying to convince them what our issues are. The real conversations happen here and I'm so fortunate and deeply honoured to be a part of this and thank you Shubodh and Riya, both of you, for bringing these wonderful questions. It was such a great time talking to you and I'm really hoping we can do this again. Thank you! ■

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About the Author

J Sai Deepak is an engineer-turned-litigator, practising as an arguing counsel primarily before the Supreme Court of India and the High Court of Delhi. A mechanical engineer from Anna University, he graduated with a bachelor's degree in law from IIT Kharagpur's Law School in 2009, and has carved a niche for himself as a litigator in civil commercial and constitutional matters. Over the years, he has been part of several landmark matters, such as the ones relating to the Sabarimala Ayyappa Temple, the Sri Padmanabhaswamy Temple and Basmati Geographical Indications. In 2019, he was awarded the Young Alumni Achiever's Award by his alma mater IIT Kharagpur. Apart from delivering lectures on constitutional issues, he is a prolific writer for leading newspapers and magazines.

Sir , my first question is neral question. We will get into the specifics of the book after that question. So we know your book is about Indic civilization and how colonialism transformed it. Colonialism and the impact of European civilisation on the native minds and institutions of India is something that you talk about in the book. However, we noticed that it is a relatively underexplored area if you look into indian academia. So what is the factor that motivated you to write this book and you know choose this area which is so underexplored in Indian academia today and then come up with not just one book but hopefully in future, , two more books about the same subject .

Right, so thank you for this question which I think is... it po to the fact that you keenly observed what are the voids that the book is trying to fill in. So, let me clarify by first of all stating the fact that , I don't think mine is the first book on this particular subject, in fact, there is this fantastic book called 'Talking Back' written by a professor of JNU on a similar subject , and others have also written on this , it just so happens that the discussion has largely revolved on the effects of colonialism as opposed to its continuing presence in terms of its mindset. It just so happens that this particular issue has been discussed in significant detail by scholars such as professor S. N. Balagangadhara

who I have heavily relied upon in the book. However, it so happens these works have been largely limited to the academic discourse making it perhaps slightly difficult for lets say, an advanced audience or beginner plus audience or beginner audience to relate to their work, because they are extremely deep and they touch on the meta aspects of colonialism, in ways perhaps, even I can't wrap my head around. So there was a need for a book which not only made it possible for this issue to be accessible to the general public as well as students; that was one need that I certainly wanted to fill because I felt that several of our discussions on a lot of issues in national interest or cultural interest happen to take place within a certain framework which is not exactly a native framework and the fact that we don't seek to realize that we are operating under a foreign framework was something that bothered me, having experienced this particular phenomenon in, let's say, matters of civilisational importance and constitutional importance in courts. I wanted to specifically apply this particular construct of framework to a legal discussion also, so that was one of the reasons I wanted to touch upon this. In fact, if you look at professor S. N. Balagangadhara's work, he is very clear that Indian academic scholarship on the question of coloniality and colonial consciousness is yet to scratch the surface and a significant amount of work in this regard has been done by Heyman and his entire team from University of Kent. So one of the things that I wanted to do was to use this book partly as, let's say, a vehicle of administering that

scholarship and introducing much more lucid form, not to say that their works are not lucid, in fact my own works suffers from handicaps of me being a litigator, simply because I understand that my writing has been extremely rigid in this book so I am trying to loosen it up. There was an idea to try and make it much more accessible to a relatively lay audience as opposed to simply limping it to specialists and since colonial consciousness directly impacts our discussions surrounding the constitution which is something I get on a regular basis. I wanted to connect all three, which is coloniality, civilisation and constitution. So as far as the second and the third books of this particular trinity is concerned I will not be focusing extensively on lets say colonialism but having distilled the essence of colonialism in the first book , I will try and apply those distilled frameworks to the development of a constitutional consciousness in contemporary constitutionalism, so I keep it much more focussed on the legal aspects, on the political-economic aspects as opposed to the historical aspects. This book in several ways is a preferratory work in nature which is it lays a conceptual foundation so that once the discussion begins on the constitution the lessons of this particular book can guide the discussions on the origin of Bharat's contemporary constitutionalism, so that is

the nature of this book. I don't think I should take credit for having thought about this idea. Because because I had discussions with several people who are better informed than me on this particular subject of coloniality and I've specifically asked to take up this particular scholarship seriously because they felt while I was perhaps unaware of the the conceptual framework of reality, the work that was doing with respect to certain issues therefore, they wanted me to seriously consider the concept and built on it perhaps a master template which people can apply in different realms of history, in the realm of education, in the realm of sciences, in the realm of knowledge, in the realm of culture, in the realm of art so this is perhaps to put it in the language of physics, Grand Unified Theory of sorts which encapsulates the mindset of the coloniser. And which continues today, in several institutions even after the coloniser has left. So that's one of the voids that I think I was trying to fill in.

So let's talk a bit about religion so in your book you write that European colonisers view Hinduism through a Christian lens, you mentioned the use of colonial linguistics and language to define Hinduism. Now, I go back a few steps to also talk about Ambedkar who wrote in his book *Riddles On Hinduism* he asked essential questions on Hinduism. Whether to as

Hinduism is a religion in itself or Hinduism is more about traditions given the number of differences and a lack of uniformity in practices, the number of idols, as well as the differences in rituals; so the question that one naturally thinks of is what exactly is Hinduism and what would a decolonized version of Hinduism/brahmanism look like ?

This is a question that should be posed to someone who is a trained scholar of *dharma* and who understands etymology and theology much better. So one of the things that I tried to not to do in the book is to pass on as an expert on every subject. I have very clearly said that my limited contribution as far as the book is concerned is to highlight and underscore neon signs so as to speak colonial consciousness in all our discussions including our discussions surrounding religion or what we understand as religion. Now what would be the decolonial version of Hinduism would look like itself is perhaps a problematic question because then I would not use the word Hinduism. Then, I would use the word *Sanatan Dharma* and I would try and understand how all the various Sampradayas use Indic languages, say Indiac semantics so as to speak how they would rise to a civilisation, or give rise to a culture without necessarily falling within the basket of religion. In this particular regard what I have done is that in significant portions of the book, in fact I think chapter five or chapter

six. I think it's chapter six in the second section of the book which deals with civilisation. I have dealt with the Supreme court's treatment of the distinction between the Abrahamic faith system and the sanatan dharma or the concept of dharma where I specifically come out with the position that for the purposes of the constitution, Hinduism may be treated as religion but from the standpoint of the philosophy and the standpoint of epistemology it must not be compared with the Islamic view of religion or the Christian view of religion that is something that the court has come up. Now if you were to ask me with my very limited training in this particular department I will come up with a simple position that Sanatan dharma can effectively be seen as an agglomeration of several panths and let's say *Sampradayas* or schools of thought, which have two things in common- one that they have originated from the philosophies of this land in one way or the other and by the social movements and the cultural dynamics of this land that's one which is why it is impossible to break the territorial nexus between those philosophies and this particular land, which is why if somebody wants to make the statement that Bharat is the homeland of certain schools of thoughts and certain philosophies and certain ways of life that is not a statement which is

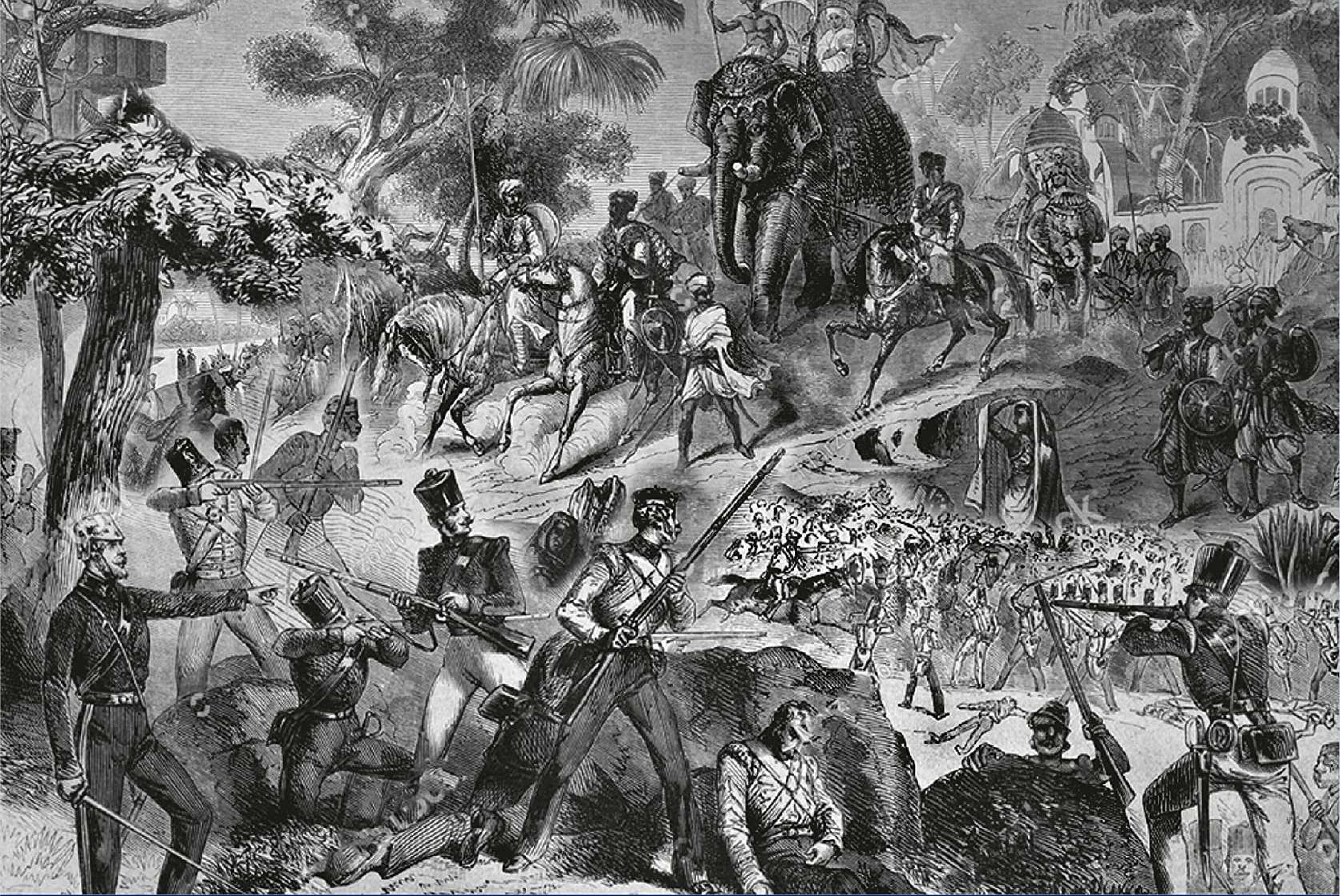
made or from a standpoint of xenophobia or ethnocentrism, it is a factual statement based on the nexus between the origins of a way of life and where it is born so to speak that's one. Second, the other factor that connects these schools of thought is the belief in the concept of dharma. The definitions of dharma may vary but their belief in the centrality of dharma so to speak unifying strand or a unifying trait. Therefore I will limit my answer to the fact that since religion is not synonymous with dharma and dharma is certainly not synonymous with religion, there is a certain commonality which ties all these Indic traditions and Indic Sampradayas therefore assuming for a moment if we were to create a counter fact so to speak there was no Christian colonization and there was no Islamic invasion or Islam-Arabic invasion and Central Asian invasion Bharat may see itself primarily as a civilisational unit where multiple Sampradayas co-exist. Without necessarily subscribing to the notion as understood by Christian colonisers so that would be my limited response. For a better answer in this particular regard, I think you should read S. N. Balagangadhara's *Heathen in his Blindness*, a book I would certainly request people to read. There are several works written by him and as well as Dr. Jacob and Prof. M.D. Srinivas. All these people have written on how we survive as a civilisational unit and what are the strands that connected us prior to the imposition of the concept of

religion as understood by the Christian coloniser. So what I can do and what I have done in the book itself, I have pointed readers to the right sources if they want to dig deep into each of these aspects. So one thing that I am confident that the book has done is opened up a repository of books that students and anyone interested can actually access and read and ask themselves the right questions without actually saying that I have all the answers. I'm saying that if you want further answers please read these books both in the content of the book and as well as in the appendix of the book and list of books, I have made sure that those references which I felt were helpful in my journey so to say those readings must be passed on to the reader and that's what I have done.

Indeed I think the practice of, you know, mentioning references and giving the advice to the readers, as to the reader if wants to learn better about a certain subject can go and refer to this book I think that was quite helpful for me to understand the subject better as well and I am pretty sure that other readers will find it insightful and helpful. But just a quick followup to that sir and my question might not be one of the best ones that we have today but do you think with the rise of Hindutva and the rise of certain idea of Hinduism or Hindutva which says, you know, in my opinion it equates Hinduism to the frameworks of other religions . So do you think the rise of Hindutva in that way is detrimental to the understanding of Sanatan Dharma? Before you answer sir, I might be wrong in

my evaluation so please correct if I am wrong .

I am grateful for the tone in which you have put the question, as well as the politeness with which you have put this question because typically whenever a question of Hindutva comes up , it's almost as if people have very rigid notions of what they think they know. So I am happy that at least you are open to certain corrections so let me try and answer this question on two levels. This is an extremely important question, from pages from 162 to 166 of the book, I have specifically addressed this particular question where I have said that Hindutva should be seen less as a political project and more as a civilisational awakening project and I have said that the decolonial movements that have taken place in Latin America are replicated in Bharat in their own ways so, if it is possible for us to embrace the decolonial movements which happened in other continents and cultures why are we struggling to embrace an indigenous awakening movement? So I have clearly said that what is seen as Hindu Nationalism, first of all I would not call it as Hindu Nationalism; I would call it Dharmik Civilisationism that is my distinction, and I am very clearly making the statement that the Dharmik



India *that is* Bharat

Coloniality, Civilisation, Constitution

J S A I D E E P A K

Civilizationism which is totally dubbed as Hindu Nationalism is nothing but a decolonial movement where people are trying to access and reclaim their past, and we are being told that if you try and reclaim your past or your identity or your history you are a bigot, you are xenophobe, and you are someone who has a hatred for the religious minorities. That is the accusation that typically comes. My point is, if you believe that accessing my past is detrimental to the minorities then I am sorry to say you are the one who is pitting the minorities against my past, I am not doing that. If I am merely trying to access my identity and I am trying to ask myself where do I come from; what are my origins; what is the core identity of this particular culture, and you are telling me that the exercise translates to exclusion of certain religious communities or exclusion of certain religious minorities then by default you accept that there is a serious problem between the identities of the religious minority and my core religious identity. That is the problem inherent in the particular question itself. Now secondly, if as a community or as a group or as a society, I am being told that I am the only culture that cannot access its past, I think that's an extremely unreasonable position and I think it's a grave injustice to a community which is being told to sever all its relations with its past, either in the name of social harmony or in the name of secularism or whatever it is. This is one thing I have specifically addressed. Three, I will tell you

where you and I agree and where there is a common ground; the common ground to be met is- every societal discussion when it is elevated to a political discussion becomes a crude discussion, because politics understands only crude language and it's very very difficult to expect any degree of nuance or sanctity in a political discussion. So if you read the book, I have been very very clear about saying that the decolonial exercise, that the society must carry out, must first happen in the heart of the society and must not start from the state, in fact, I have clearly said, schools, communities, colleges, religious institutions must start this particular journey as opposed to state undertaking this particular journey. And which is precisely what scholars in other jurisdictions are also saying, that when you decide to make it say solely apolitical project it will have the direct effect of excluding a lot of people from the vision of your country therefore, you started it as a societal project so that there is a certain degree of calmness associated with it. Because, you see, politics is almost a zero sum game for somebody to gain, somebody else has to lose therefore, the moment you escalate such a serious discussion in the realm of politics and if it starts in the realm of politics, it is bound to have a serious divisive effect. However, if it starts in the realm of the society there is a significant hope that it will translate to truth and reconciliation. More people will understand what has happened in this country and more people will be able to accept the mistakes of the past and hope not to repeat those mistakes. So frankly speaking I am not averse to the word Hindutva, I dare say that I am not averse to the concept of it (Hindutva). I am merely going to make the

statement that as far as Hindutva is concerned, it must start in the realm of the society first. I don't even have a problem with the concept of political Hindutva because I think it's extremely relevant and it's extremely necessary. The problem is, the mischaracterisation of political Hindutva as a xenophobic, ethnocentric, anti minority position, that is where the problem starts. So if people want to have a serious rigorous discussion on what is the nature of Hindutva what are the elements of Hindutva, this is something that I have addressed in significant portions in the book itself, but in the next book I will try and make sense of it even better; because the question that you have just posed to me is a question that I have got from others saying, "Is there a possibility of understanding Hindutva without reference to Savarkar so to speak?" That is one of the questions that I have been asked. Is it possible for us to think of and conceptualise a framework of Hindutva without necessarily referring to Savarkar? I have been asked this question so I will try and answer the question in the next book but without running away from your question, I am 100 percent clear that the manner in which Hindutva has been understood and projected in popular discourse is a gross and deliberate misinterpretation of what it actually stands for, because the people of this particular

country, at least the majority of this country is basically saying, "please don't deny our roots, please don't negate or reject our culture and please don't tell us that any exercise or attempt to reclaim our culture is nothing but, let's say, commitment of atrocities on the minorities". That can not be the position because I am being told that I must forget my past in order to maintain, let's say peace in the present, which I don't think is right. If I am being told that the only way to maintain peace is by not only forgetting my past but also accepting all the untruths that have been taught to me in the name of history, that is something I will certainly not accept under any circumstances. Any peace or any relationship or any equation which is built on the foundations of untruths and on the basis of distortion of history is ephemeral and is temporary and is bound to crumble and shatter at some point.

Thank you for that answer sir, I think you adequately answered my question. Although a more informed version of myself would tend to disagree at some places, obviously. I think that is something that is the general advancement of academia. So, sir I wanted to ask the next question and I think since it is in connection with your answer so I think I will ask that, Firstly I will just give a reference to one of the quotes that I read in "Pakistan And Partition of India" by Dr Ambedkar, it said that the

first step to nation building is forgetfulness, I go back to your book and I also want to mention this excerpt from your book, so you write- Bharata's institutions whether executive, legislative or judiciary too should wear decolonial hats each time they preside over Indian traditions and faith systems, institutions so that they are not tempted to push Bharat further into the arms of coloniality, in the name of constitutional morality but of constitution. That said, sir we still know that there are certain problematic practices in our country, they might be overt such as madesnana, or they might be very... you know and the meaning is not known to the larger public, for example saptapati, the meaning of which is greatly explained in Dr Ambedkar's book 'Revolution and Counter Revolution', and how it has very problematic aspects so, that being said my question is, where do we draw the line? Where do we exactly draw the line between protecting the Indic traditions and protecting the rights of minorities, be that religious minorities or of more concerning nature- the caste minorities in India .

I will pose a few questions and I would like you to give me answers to those questions before I respond to your question. So, assume for a moment that someone were to propose specific steps to be undertaken with respect to reform in history text. Let's assume that this person is neither a trained historian nor has an understanding of how history curriculum is formulated but merely

has an opinion. Would you not at the very least tell the person to familiarize himself with the process of formulation of history curricula and please understand how this works before you comment on reform. Wouldn't you say that? You agree with that? Yes! ok, now I will take that logic further. One of the things that Dr Ambedkar's knowledge of Indic traditions and Indic history suffers from very seriously is his lack of training in those subjects. Dr Ambedkar's strengths are primarily two subjects- Law and Economics, ok! these are the two subjects that he excelled in, without a doubt, but even then as a product of the colonial period's primary strength is the education system or legal system as imparted to him by the European colonizers which was the case with Gandhi, which was the case with Nehru and all those people because they were not experts of Dharmashastras; they were experts of European laws and colonial legal systems. That's one, therefore one of my disagreements with Dr Ambedkar's position is in that nobody should be denying the discrimination that Dr Ambedkar and his groups and similar groups have suffered, because that is a lived experience they have suffered. Discrimination which must be absolutely acknowledged. Don't deny it, don't negate it! But the question from there would be, if you assume your situation or your experience is

is reflective of the experience of last seven thousand years or five thousand years then that is too much of a leap....which has very little basis in evidence, which is to say if Dr Ambedkar or anybody else were to make a statement that this group has suffered this particular discrimination from the last 5000 years then you are basically saying history has not changed. Everybody has remained in the same place and you don't take into account the fact that the colonisers own records record the fact that they were responsible for the ausification of caste identities for making it very very rigid. The caste identities as an administrative structure and as a legal identity was introduced specifically by the colonisers which is what Nicolas talks about in his books, records and I have cited him particularly in this regard as to how they created an ethnographic stateok therefore my disagreement and general disagreement and respectful disagreement with Dr Ambedkar has been that in his discussions he has proceeded on the basis that had it not been for the coloniser the Hindu society would have been incapable and fundamentally incapable of giving up those practices, unless there was european colonists educating, colonising, civilising citizens from the outside, Hindus fundamentally lacked the ability to give up something that is nasty as a practise. I am sorry to say this but this particular position has two serious flaws- one, as far as the smritis themselves are concerned Dr Ambedkar proceeded on the assumption

that the smriti is the equivalent of a rigid law, and scholars during his period and subsequently have said a smriti is not a law in the sense that Europeans understand it. It is the codification of customs as it exists therefore, it is always possible to give up a certain practice as time evolves and you don't need to be piped down by a certain practice, is one of the fundamental learning lessons you are supposed to understand when you read a smriti which means, I will give you a simple example assume for a moment that there were a certain practice which were followed let's say 500 years ago, you ask any standard traditional dharmashastra how would you justify the relevance of the practice today, he will simply ask one question. Are there any reasons to justify the existence of the practices today? Are the circumstances conducive to it? If the answer is a no then you don't need to constantly keep it alive in the name of tradition. Therefore, when Dr Ambedkar proceeds on the basis that hinduism as a ...religion or as a societal structure is incapable of forward movement and it requires an external stimulus to actually do this therefore I would say his inability to understand the vast literature actually comes out very clearly in fact I wouldn't treat Dr Ambedkar as the touchstone of all these discussions and merely because he happened to represent a certain depressed community, I wouldn't really hold him as the beacon of knowledge on all these subjects. I won't give him the benefit of the doubt when it comes to specific facts and history. I will give you a very clear example, when you enter the realm of let's say religion, it is not just a general anecdotal experience that counts, it is also a question of whether you are trained

in that particular scriptural reading: Are you in a possession to at least understand the primary sources? Assume for a moment that I were to actually say this is what was said in the old testament without understanding the language of the old testament which is Aramic, not even Latin, so to speak, won't you actually say how did you actually arrive at this particular conclusion without knowing the language? If I were to actually arrive at a certain position with respect to Quran, without understanding either Arabic or without understanding any of the works of Syed Bukhari, so to speak, who is treated as the go to reference for the purposes of commentaries on Quran and Sunna and tradition, wouldn't you say, on what basis did you have this opinion on Quran without even actually being trained in the subject? The same logic should be extended at the very least, to knowledge of scripture, to the knowledge of Sanskrit because if you say that this is bad, the question is, what is your in terms of training? What is your authority in terms of qualification? Therefore, there are two ways of addressing Dr Ambedkar's position: 100 percent accept that the discrimination that the community has suffered and do not deny that lived experience, however at the same time please keep your mind and eyes open to the fact that Dr Ambedkar was not

trained in areas beyond the law and economics therefore, both his analysis his diagnosis as well as his prescriptions with respect to the institution, so to speak, will have to be approached with a certain degree of circumspection. I am not saying deny it, I am not saying reject it, but please don't make him the final authority in this particular subject because there are equally other people who have taken a different position. I will ask you a different question and let's see if you have heard of this particular gentleman. Please name the other prominent dalit voices who were contemporaries of Dr Ambedkar and let's see if you can name someone who comes from the South. Someone who participated in Dr Ambedkar's movement?

Have you heard of M.C. Rajah? Please read his works, his writings are extensively available. Please read his books see one of the positions that defines Dr Ambedkar's approach was that the only way to eradicate casteism was to eradicate caste and since Hinduism cannot survive without caste the only way to demolish caste was to demolish Hinduism, that was his approach in *Annihilation of Caste*. In stark contrast, his contemporaries who were all also fighting for the rights of Dalit, M.C. Rajah in particular who was a Dalit activist from Trichy specifically said, "I am not fighting for giving up my right as a Hindu or my identity as a Hindu, I am asking for treatment with respect for all other Hindus and therefore, when he was approached by several

Evangelical groups to convert to another religion he said if you believe that my anger is directed towards Hinduism, no it is not my anger is directed at Savarna groups who were telling me that my respect in this particular community should be lower than the respect they get so when I die I only die as a Hindu." These are also the voices that existed alongside Dr Ambedkar. When you read the Poona pact and when you read the literature surrounding it you will see significant references of the discussion between M.C. Rajah and Ambedkar because at that time several Evangelical groups were approaching all these Dalit activists and actively asked them to convert to Christianity one of the foremost voices who refused to convert and said, "Please don't use this opportunity to proselytize us" was mc raja who said, "I was born a Hindu I will die a Hindu, my fight is to preserve my dignity as a Hindu not to convert out of my religion." Unfortunately, the entire Dalit discourse revolves only around Dr Ambedkar which I don't think he would have appreciated because he had several people whom he spoke to who also gave a lot of inputs and who have come through the same shared experience of discrimination and you had different points of views which he was open to listening to unfortunately our entire discourse not only revolves around Dr Ambedkar for someone who had led a life of an iconoclast, it is a shame that we resort to the deification of that particular individual who believed in actually questioning facts and premises. If you see the portion in which I referred to Dr Ambedkar in the book with reference to the Pakistan and the Partition of India, I clearly say that I am placing limited

reliance on Dr Ambedkar concerning his views on Middle-Eastern coloniality and its impact on Bharat insofar his dues on caste are concerned, I clearly said without denying his lived experience and those of others it is important to ask us how much of the education that he received concerning the caste system comes from the English education system which was a product of colonial consciousness. I have said this in categorical terms without actually saying deny Ambedkar and use him to selectively push a certain agenda forward. I have said (that one should) be balanced because you can't use, pick and choose somebody's positions to push a certain agenda. You have to understand that Dr Ambedkar had a certain position with respect to Hinduism. Dr Ambedkar, had a certain position with respect to Sanskrit, Dr Ambedkar had a certain position with respect to Muslims and Islam so let's consider everything is all I am trying to say so it's not as if I use Dr Ambedkar as a convenience, a shoulder to fire my bullets against a certain community from.

Sir with all due respect I don't think I have got my answer, maybe you could just clarify to us. So sir where do we draw the line as in where do we draw the line between preserving Indic tradition and protecting the oppressed?

Now, I will try and answer this question in as straightforward a manner as possible.

Sir, just a clarification from my side, when I mean protecting the oppressed, I mean practices such as made snana.

Fair enough. Now the reason I will not answer the question of made snana is because I will start throwing a couple of questions, and then I will ask you, what do you know about the practice. The position about made snana is out in the public domain without people understanding what the practice is. But let me address the principle behind the question, and if you believe I am trying to evade, you can stop me then and there saying sir I think you are running away from the question, I will give you the freedom. One, within the Indic traditions, there is a concept of reform and forward movement staying within the bounds of tradition. For instance, at some stage, assume for a moment that the males of an entire community were to die and if inter-caste marriage were to be completely prohibited does it mean that the women of that community of that particular group will never get married. Not possible, right? Assume for a moment that the males of a particular caste group are completely wiped out, and only the females remain and if you proceed on the assumption that inter-caste marriage is prohibited by the shastras, would it mean that the females of that particular community are meant to live single all their lives.

That can't be a reasonable argument, right? Therefore, the first point that you must try and understand is that the Hindu architecture functions on two portions- one is the immutable portion and another is the mutable portion, the transient portion which changes with time and is meant to be fluid and dynamic in nature. Whenever the relevance of a particular practice is to be questioned, typically you would ask what is it that this practice is trying to preserve? Is it trying to preserve something? If it is trying to preserve something that has no bearing on the present times? Should that practice continue? So assume for a moment if someone were to ask me, "Mr Sai Deepak, you have defended the practice of Sabarimala, are you going to apply the same trick and same logic to the made snana case as well?" If someone were to ask me that, I would say please don't compare both these practices.

So, I expect a lot of detractors to ask me this question if you're going to cite tradition in every place to defend every abomination. That is effectively the argument often put to me. Therefore, I tell them no, that is not the case. I was able to understand the logic behind the Sabarimala case, and the reason why it must survive. If someone had to tell me, made snana resorts or let's say, is a direct consequence of caste discrimination, caste hierarchy and caste supremacy, I would clearly say that today, no body is living by the rules of their so-called caste. It is merely a paper identity, nothing else is being followed. There is no reason for made snana, that will be the argument I will come out with. Assume for a moment if someone asks you what your caste identity is useful for? It is

for educational reservation, not anything else. And in certain places, marriage but particularly, no value. Tell me where caste was meant to...

Sir, just a small interruption. Don't you think certain institutions like Khap Panchayats, and those in power manufacture consent of those who are not in power. I'm talking about social power and by that manufactured consent practices like Khap Panchayats, social boycott which is also very prevalent in India wherein Dalits of a region don't necessarily abide by the code set by Khaps are essentially boycotted. I don't think that caste is irrelevant. Caste is very much relevant in those regards. Through this beyond the law process wherein you know.. Yeah please

I completely agree with the situations you have cited. In those situations, one of the things that I would certainly want to do is it possible to retain the structure of a Khap Panchayat, a local governance body without actually retaining the casteist element in it.

Sir, unconstitutional local governance body

No. First of all, hold on. Here's a question you should ask yourself when there are



specific provisions that actually speak of local self governance, and when community dispute resolution mechanism has not been rendered unconstitutional by the government or by the Supreme Court in any judgement, Panchayati Raj for all practical purposes is nothing but codification of an existing dispute resolution mechanism. So it is not as if it is in a different league altogether. The problem with Khap Panchayat is that it has received a certain degree of vitriol in the public domain, primarily because of its casteist bent which is why I made the statement that 'if you retain the structure, and remove the caste element or the casteist element, is there a problem to it being treated as a self-governing structure, or the local self-governance structure.' That is why I cavitated the example by saying that if you retain Khap Panchayat as a system and

remove the element where there is only representation from one community, and other communities are a passive recipient of the dispute resolution mechanism, then there is a problem. I'll take this discussion a step further. One in the discussion that is happening in several jurisdictions is the recognition that state based resolution is fundamentally failing in most places because the state is unable to give the necessary infrastructure needed to deal with the problem, and the scale of the problem. So community based resolution mechanisms are being discussed in the West as well. Today, we might do away with Khap, and tomorrow the West will come back saying that outside of judiciary, we must have some community based resolution mechanisms, and then we will accept it simply because it has been given a completely different language altogether. But for all practical purposes, it is a restatement of the Khap Panchayat. Wherever possible where a structure

has an inequity based on caste, it should be done away with but if you make the argument that let us throw away the baby out with the bathwater, and destroy the structure as it exists. Do you expect all these people to line-up in courts? It is not as if courts have been doing a fantastic job of delivering justice. Do middle class and lower classes have faith in the courts and the pace at which courts deliver justice? They simply don't. So, I have zero problem with a community based resolution mechanism provided it does not become another way of reinforcing or perpetuating a caste hierarchy. I am not going to deny the existence of a caste hierarchy, or the existence of a certain power structure. But look for ways to negate it while retaining the benefits of the Khap Panchayat system. ■

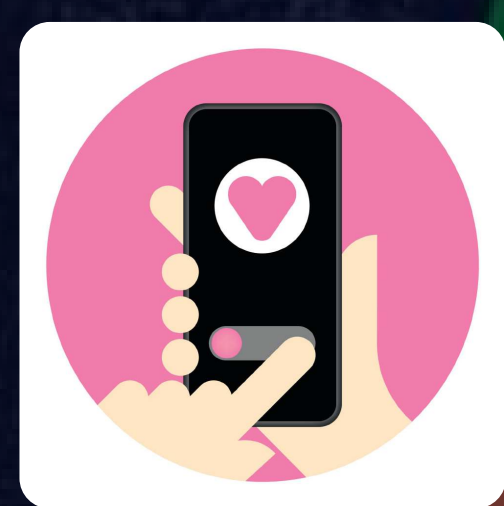
SOCIETY & CULTURE



The Limits of Social
Media Activism

Shreyansh
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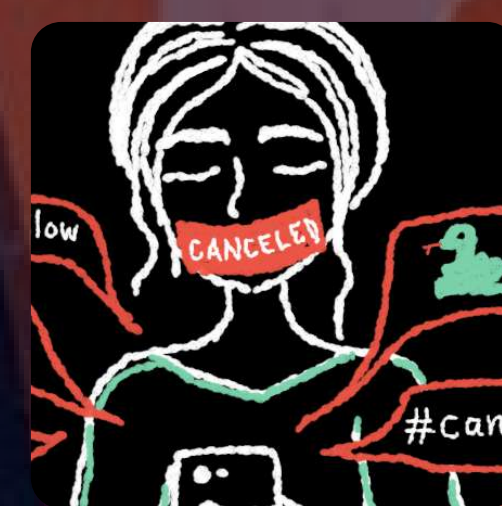
Pg 53



Deconstructing
Dating Apps

Meghna & Abhilasha

Pg 56



Survey on Cancel
Culture

Kumar Harsh & Shreya

Pg 58



The Limits of Social Media Activism

Shreyansh Kushwaha

Today, the biggest dilemma of the Gen-Z is whether to put up a story pertaining to a specific cause or not. What if I do not sign the membership of the 'Hashtag Club'? Wouldn't I be labelled 'socially inactive and unaware'? My peers have taken this Herculean task of social media activism upon their shoulders, thus, will my silence amount to their criticism? These questions often troubling for today's 'social generation' while they are busy scrolling their profile's feed.

In modern times when the entire

world is literally at one's fingertips, what goes around in the US Capitol is also opined in New Delhi, within hours the hashtag of #Blacklivesmatter becomes a word of mouth and the Israel-Palestine conflict gains so much heat that the virtual world itself is divided into two blocs, it is hard to filter out the unnecessary content.

The conundrum of 'social media activism' has deployed a huge army of extremely vigilant and opinionated soldiers who do not fail an inch to voice out their strong

opinion on every possible contemporary issue, if issues fall short, they are ready to create novel ones. But often these soldiers tend to cross the 'Line of Control' and attack the very sanity of social media, transforming it into a virtual battleground. Social media is undoubtedly the best platform to reach out to the masses and mobilize support for a genuine cause with just a click, but as rightly said, with great power comes great responsibility and sadly we

very conveniently let go of this responsibility, thus creating havoc, an echo-chamber being the foremost.

An Echo Chamber?

Humans naturally have the tendency to agree with a particular news piece or a statement that is in accordance with their belief and ideology and this subservient human tendency gets exponentially amplified when a large pool of people with the same ideological inclination virtually join hands and collectively provide gravitas to an issue/cause/movement, regardless of morality, authenticity and need!

This turns out to be even more disastrous when such 'intellectuals' refuse to absorb any information that differs from their stance even by a whisker. Largely, online platforms become the breeding ground for such echo chambers where like-minded people easily find each other, which not only creates a hindrance for the propagation of authentic news but also acts as a loophole in democracy.

How does one identify an echo chamber?

The answer is quite simple in fact if a website or a social media group is projecting every issue under one light, if it is showcasing just one perspective on an issue, if it lacks the foundation of facts and evidence and most importantly, if the facts are conveniently being ignored

whenever they go against their stance, voila! This is without a doubt an echo chamber.

How does one avoid becoming a member of such an echo chamber?

The answer to this question is also quite easy - in order to make sure that a particular news piece is authentic and has not been tampered with one should refer to multiple credible news websites to absorb the complete information, in addition to this one should not confine oneself with just one perspective, interacting with people having contrasting opinions can help one in widening one's mental horizon and thus, by following such simple steps one can avoid falling prey to these echo-chambers and would ultimately make proper use of social media activism.

Is Hashtag Activism Enough?

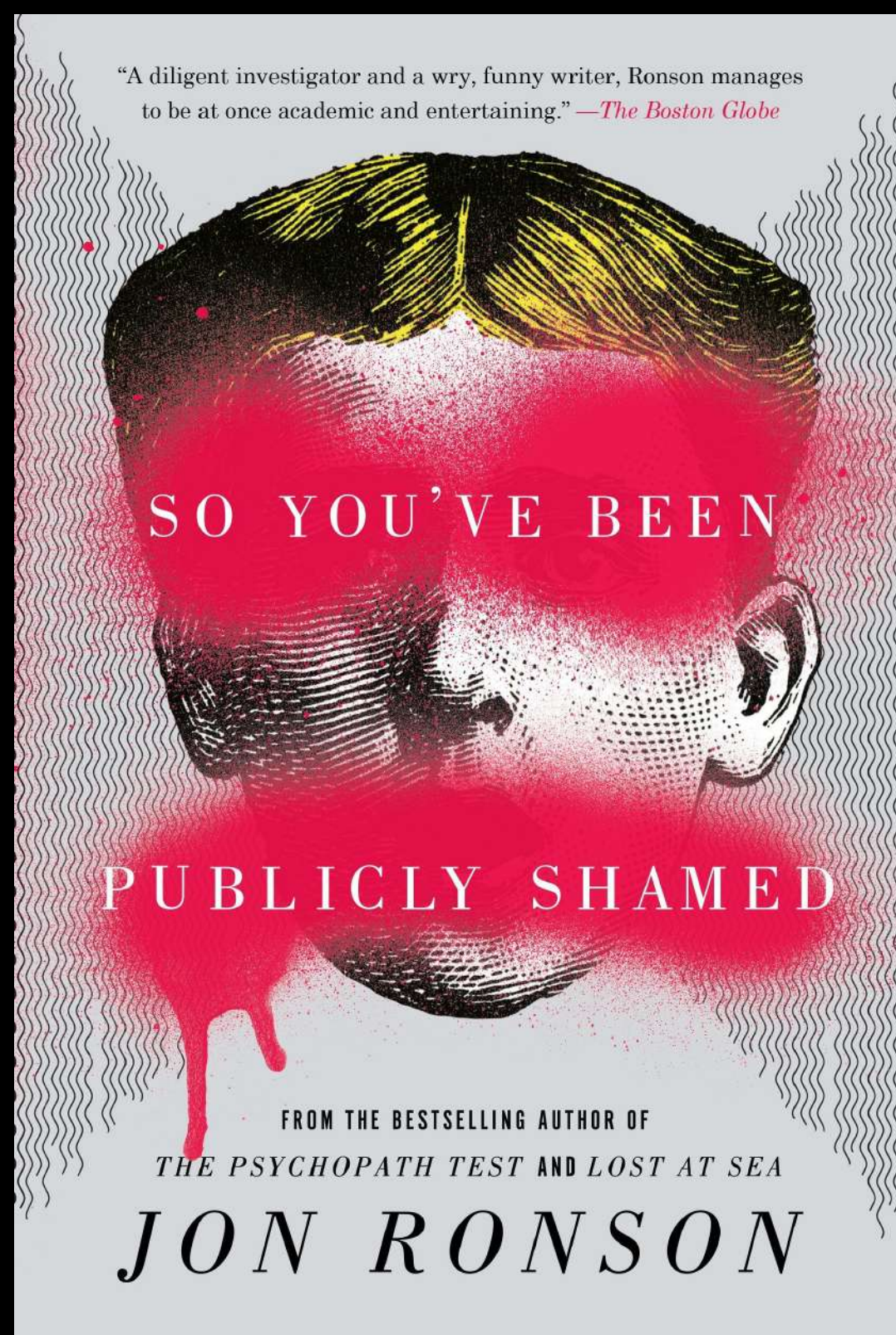
Like, comment, repost and share. Regardless of the magnitude of an issue/cause, the soldiers of social media respond to it with four of the aforementioned weapons. Today, it takes an almost negligible amount of time to give birth to a new hashtag and circulate it among millions, but the question that arises here is whether this 'collective' virtual effort is of some actual use or not? Are we not confining the graveness of such problems which affect billions of people to our 4*4 inches world? The most underlying answer would be that under no circumstances one can afford to let go of the host of opportunities offered by social media with open arms which might not be considered sufficient but

undoubtedly have the power to lay the initial bricks of the foundation of change.

Nevertheless, social media is such a two-faced platform which on one hand is very easily accessible to the masses where they can voice their opinion, but this freedom of uncontrolled and untamed expression becomes a lacuna, for it brings with itself a flood of unverified and unauthorized information from those who lack the conviction and temperament.

Moreover, another aspect where social media lacks is the inability to judge one's intentions. Some individuals are undoubtedly inherently motivated to work for the betterment of society but, one cannot be sure of the fact that the second person intends to spread propaganda or not. This propaganda can be fueled by the ruling regime, the leaders of the opposition or by the launch pads of communalism.

In the last few decades, the virtual world of profiles and posts has experienced an exponential boom in terms of usage and frequency wherein users with time felt comfortable to share their personal experiences, the mental trauma they've been through and resultantly the fairly unnoticed and overlooked face of our **'civilised community' is.**



John Ronson's book *'So You've Been Publicly Shamed'* deals with the implications of Cancel Culture on people. The author traces the life of real people who were cancelled by the society for their opinions. Jon Ronson writes in detail about the philosophy behind cancelling and its psychological impact on the people who are at its receiving end.

The author observes that more often than not, the reasons for cancelling are vague, misinformed and rooted in ideological bias.

The book offers a unique perspective on the drawbacks of cancel culture activism, and teaches us about the consequences of an uninformed retweet.

Does Social Media Represent 'Society'?

exposed. Social media became voices of those innumerable women who at some point in time were sexually harassed but their voices couldn't reach the ears of the masses, the 'Me Too Movement' which even today rings the bell in the minds of those who aspire to inflict more of such heinous acts. This one of a kind movement commenced with certain high profile cases and gradually gave thousands of women, the push to break their heavy shackles of the past and the power to say, "Yes! Me too" thereof amplifying the actual 'society'.

But nonetheless, social media activism is criticised for being 'an elite phenomenon' for its accessibility is limited to those who do not face the struggle for resources, have a certain amount of social, political and economic privilege vis-à-vis the marginalised and discriminated section for whom actually the change is being demanded. The unavailability and limited knowledge of the digital platform often restrict the actual stakeholders to effectively voice out their opinion here. This restriction opens the door of misinterpretation and misrepresentation of an ongoing issue, thus projecting the demands under a negative hue.

Why Aren't We Talking About This?

The quest for putting out one's opinion aloud on literally every issue without confirming the facts and supporting one's arguments with authentic figures has made the phrase "why aren't we talking about this?" the talk of the town. Is it necessary for us to form an opinion and tweet about every issue possible? Is it justified to force others to talk

about a particular issue? Does one not have the authority to choose whether to speak up or remain silent? The most underlying answer to the aforementioned questions is that it is absolutely right to take one's time to absorb what is happening around oneself and then adequately reacting to those actions. With the little steps of research and patience, one can actually reiterate the phrase "social media is a boon" into reality.

Do We Remain Silent Then?

Absolutely not! We do worship our fundamental right of freedom of speech and expression and it does empower the citizens to raise their voices either on the ground or on the digital media seeking change in multiple aspects and criticising the existing order but this by no way encourages the recklessness of being factually flawed, being entirely consumed by one perspective, being there because why not? And believing in, what one 'wants' to be the reality. Being silent has never been considered a wise option but in today's world when there are innumerable perspectives, motives and sources of information, it is our duty as an informed citizen to be backed by concrete facts supplemented with the rationale to observe both sides of the coin.

Time and again it has been observed that with the instrument of social media activism, the authorities, willingly or unwillingly have been pestered to look into those aspects of the ongoing crisis which certainly they wished to overlook. One cannot forget the virtual storm brought on social media when the state failed to deliver to the problems faced by millions of migrant labourers who were forced to walk back to their hometowns keeping their life at stake, during the pandemic. When thousands of online petitions were signed and dissent was outpoured on social media platforms, the state was forced to reallocate funds for the emancipation of these workers, thus becoming a testimony of the utility of social media activism.

It might not be a substitute for what actual on-ground activism is, but undoubtedly social media activism is its potential supplement, which may not have the capacity to organise rallies of hundreds but has the power to unite millions. ■

The conundrum of ‘social media activism’ has deployed a huge army of extremely vigilant and opinionated soldiers who do not fail an inch to voice out their strong and unbiased opinion on every possible contemporary issue



I magine the time of your parent’s generation and how dating, as a culture, prevailed. Dating, rather than being a separate entity, was a ladder to marriage, the ultimate goal. In simpler words, people didn’t date, rather looked for companions to get married to. This coincided with limited socialisation, restricting their options to a few neighbourhood fellows. In Turkish tradition, it used to be very common for people to meet at weddings which lent themselves to the ideal conditions for a romantic encounter. For others, the activity of finding a partner meant either newspaper advertisements or mutuals be it

friends, priests or marriage bureaus. These dating apps are nothing but an app version of those mutuals. A pool of people interested in dating are clubbed together, and the rest relies on your choice and connection.

The New Dating Culture

When technology shapes human life, it doesn’t leave the heart alone. From the extra cheesy valentine’s advertisements in newspapers to the rom-com cults, humans have been a consumer of the



DECONSTRUCTING DATING APPS

A Series by

Meghna Rathore and Abhilasha
Rawat

romantic trope the society sold us. From the emergence of telephones to social media, who we love and how we love is very intrinsically influenced by technology.

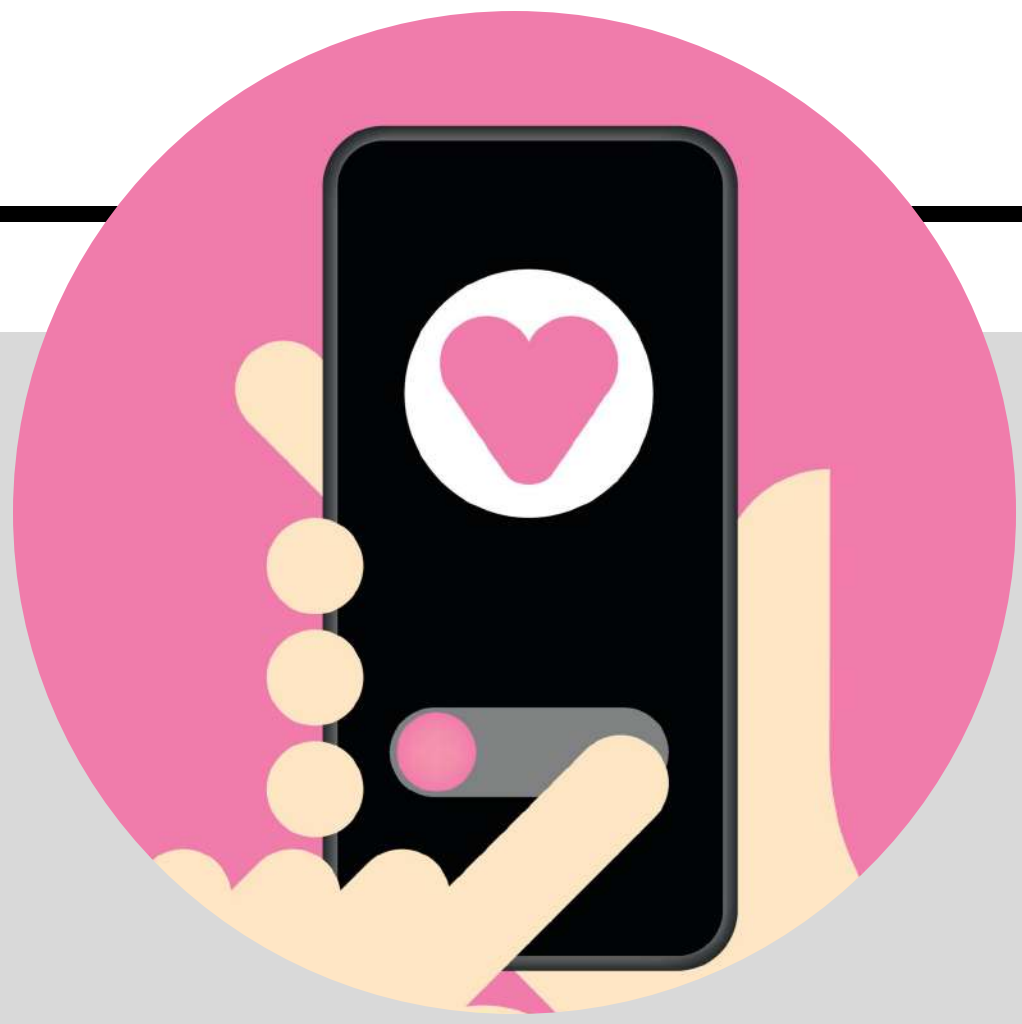
Often people argue that the entire dating app culture is excessively superficial and a façade. Even though how successful a dating app is in an individual's life, in its impact over one's interpersonal relationships is highly debatable, it cannot be regarded as absolutely 'unrealistic' options. Just like the quality of communication doesn't get impoverished with the shift in

the medium of communication from face to face, to mobile phones, to video chats, similarly, the quality of relationships cannot entirely rely upon their source of generation. Daniel Miller, a famous anthropologist, argues on the similar lines, saying that a telephone call cannot be deemed as not a part of "real life". Thus, talking to people via email, instant message, social media and dating apps are all just different aspects of our broader sphere of communication.

The online dating culture started with the coming up of Match.com in 1995 and later, JDate in 1997 with a limited user base in the USA. The apps to gain

the higher traction were Grindr and Scruff launched in 2009 and 2010 for the gay community who find offline dating far more difficult than the heterosexuals, the 'conventionally popular' relationship kind.

The revolution in dating culture, however, came with the addictive "swipe" of Tinder in 2013 that made dating 'free for all' and, with the availability of enormous options. Since then, there hasn't been a left swipe on the use of dating apps, making it a multi-billionaire avenue, with



Divya Yadav

"Waste of time.. People use it for fun.. Lack of seriousness"

Riya Jeph

"I don't think they are a good way to establish a relationship of any kind. V expedient. "

Anonymous Reader 1

"Dating apps are a platform to socialise with those whose personalities resonate with yours. With the short prompts and photos you decide if the person might be fun to talk to. They enable communication without the 'going up to a stranger to strike a conversation' fear. Rather few people use them for the purpose they're meant for, but overall good technology. 8/10 must try."

Anushka Jain

"Honestly, dating apps were really helpful for me. They helped me grow and boosted my confidence."

Tanishque Gedam

"They perpetuate objectification of attractiveness and sexualisation of relationships "

Navika Singh

"Yess, you meet lots of great people(shit ones also but you can just unmatched woohoo)"

Anonymous Reader 3

"No, they are v draining"

What do you think about Online Dating?

Anonymous Reader 2

I feel that people who earlier might have never thought of downloading a dating app must have done it during the pandemic, the idea of putting your profile out there for everyone to see is a little daunting? even more awkward if you see someone you know in real life there. As alienation from the outside world increased during the pandemic, when you download a dating app you look at it as a means of escape from loneliness or a distraction which it is for a while. This might not be true for everyone who is there, but I do think it applies to a lot of us.

millions of active users.

According to a survey of 2017 conducted by eHarmony, around 14000 people met the love of their lives online. It has also been predicted that by 2040, 70% of relationships will begin online. Especially the Covid 19 pandemic which has made everyone closer to their phone screens, has resulted in an increase in the users of dating apps from 185 million in 2015 to 270 million in 2020. Not only in terms of usage, but with premium and paid memberships, these apps have raised revenues from \$1.69 billion in 2015 to \$3.08 billion in 2020.

People are undeniably hooked to the speed dating format, enjoying its ease and effectiveness. However, for one's better judgement about the real impact of these apps, it is essential to look at several psychological and socio-cultural factors that play a role in the sphere of dating apps.

The Psychology of Dating Apps

Tinder has over 50 million online users with an average spending of 90 minutes every day on the app; it could be more for some and less for others. But regardless of this subjectivity, it doesn't always work, right? Hinge reports less than 1 in 500 swipes leads to just a phone number exchange. Even though there is no significant research that shows a direct correlation between the usage of swipe-based dating apps (SBDM) and mental health, the former has surely served as a factor in

degrading levels of the latter. A study published in BMC psychology mentioned that the chances of a person being depressed crystallizes with the number of visits they make to the SBDMs. While others have correlated the factorial significance of the number of apps a person has a profile on with psychological depression and other elements of mental health issues. Contrary to such claims there are studies that do not correspond to any such connections. On an individual level, SBDMs have given myriad experiences to people. Women are seen to develop higher self-esteem after using dating apps. Men, on the contrary, are seen to develop lower self-esteem and higher levels of addiction to the apps.

The above correlations between dating app usage and mental health should not be generalized to the extent where conclusions lie in the commonsensical notions. Social media, for instance, isn't toxic inherently to its core rather it is its elements, which when used in a certain way causes a malfunction in our physio-chemical mechanism. Similarly, these platforms become the breeders of their users' insecurities.

If for once we look at the cyberspace in which dating apps are developed, we will come to understand how exploitative they can get when used carelessly. They are designed in such a way that it seems like the person using the app is in a game. The characters with which they are interacting have no personality, no life and no feelings of their own and thus, it doesn't burden our conscience if we treat the people on the app in whichever way we want to. "The normalization of bad dating

behaviour, giving it humorous childlike, almost affectionate, names like 'ghosting' and 'submarining' only serves to enable users to dismiss what might otherwise be regarded as rude/hostile or unacceptable behavior as just part of the experience." To even think about it, doesn't this behavior also trickle down to our 'offline' lives and provides us with an excuse to walk away from the nitty-gritty of a relationship?

But, what makes us use these apps when we clearly see what potential it has to manipulate our brains? The co-founder of Tinder, Jonathan Badeen says, "having predictable yet frequent awards is the best way to motivate somebody to keep moving forward". The 'gamification' of the dating apps allows our systems to think of a source of unpredictable rewards which ultimately causes an increase in dopamine and serotonin levels which act as natural relaxers and can even stimulate a feeling of being 'high'. This need creates a habit. You get stuck in a dopamine loop when you keep expecting and anticipating rewards on every exposure. And when not satisfied, due to the lack of the endorphins, you either start feeling tired, burned out, lonely or to get back at the rush you push yourself deeper in the pit and become addicted.

To understand the psychology



THE PROBE SURVEY



"An Overwhelming majority of our readers considered dating apps a waste of time"

of SBDMs we only have to focus on the style we present ourselves to our potential matches. Where do your eyes first look? The images. The image dominated profiles with an optional text box below it, has clearly objectified every human that has ever made a profile on the app. Strobel and Petrie, in a BMC psychology report mention, "the objectification theory suggests that such sexual objectification leads to internalization of the cultural standard of attractiveness and self-objectification, which in turn promotes body shame and prevents motivational states crucial to psychological well-being."

Socio-geographical Variations

The popular perception driven among the masses is that the motive behind using dating apps is limited to only casual dating and hookups (two being starkly different). Casual dating refers to relationships with no long term commitments while hookups have

no emotional string attached at all. The norm believes that there exists hypersexualisation of relationships in the dating app world, often more than the real world. However, in reality, the present-day dating habits are, in general, more inclined towards short term relations over serious commitments, and dating apps are only reflective of the change viewed in dating culture around the world. With a booming preference towards 'keeping it casual' to acceptance of more non-institutionalized relationships, people today have chosen dating apps, as per their wants. However, research shows that this is not the sole reason to be on a dating app. As per Ward's research (2016), the main motives are namely entertainment, ego boost and relationship-seeking. Several other researchers have marked the motives with higher scores in the dark triad, i.e. Machiavellianism (cunningness), narcissism and psychopathy (Sevi, 2019) or in regard to self-esteem and body image (Strubel & Petrie, 2017). The validated Tinder Motives Scale (TMS) developed by Timmermans & De Caluwe based on qualitative interviews in Belgium and the USA revealed diverse motives for usage and not only to find quick sex. Participants mentioned of amusement, curiosity, to socialize, to find love, for distraction, to improve flirting skills, to meet people from LGBTQ community, the pressure of social belongingness, for travel reasons, for casual sex, to forget an ex, or even to be cool. Thus, a significant point to note is that Users define the use of technology, even the same technology introduced to 100 different communities will bring out 100 different using styles. One determinant to be kept in mind while basing your judgement regarding the

usage of such apps is the geographical location. Anthropologist Daniel Miller and his colleagues addressed this point in their 2016 study, *How the World Changed Social Media*, which analysed the social media use in nine different locations around the world. The research concluded that different cultural contexts led to completely different uses of social media. The apps didn't alter how people were behaving but rather people changed and repurposed the way the platforms worked for them. Ethnographer Elisabetta Costa, in her study in South East Turkey regarding the use of Facebook found amusing behavioural patterns. Her participants were amazed to discover that people in some countries commonly had only one Facebook account and showed their real identity.

Similarly the book *Modern Romance: An Investigation* Book by Aziz Ansari and Eric Klinenberg highlights the wide variation in the dating culture across the globe, with the sexually aversive culture of Tokyo to the romantically aggressive culture of Buenos Aires, neither dating nor the use of dating apps have any consistency.

The pandemic and the subsequent loss of human interaction has pushed the boundaries of dating apps from urban centres to tier 2 and 3 towns, the experience of being on a dating app is still

unique.

Finding the one for ourselves has always been the prime trope the film industry has played on us. We have always been subjected to experiences, perspectives and imaginations that cater to a bigger picture. A picture that in a way completes us but also takes away a part of us. Finding the one for ourselves isn't something new if one reads up on the survival evolution theory. Species reproduce to make more of their own. But with time and the growth of our earlier primitive brains, reproduction isn't just limited to crass sex rather it has expanded and experimented on the boundaries of love, compassion and status. It's fascinating to know how even a technological advancement, here through dating apps, can bring a revolutionary impact on something as personal and subjective, our love lives.

P.s- love is never too old for technology, so swipe through! ■

Previous article in the Deconstruction Series

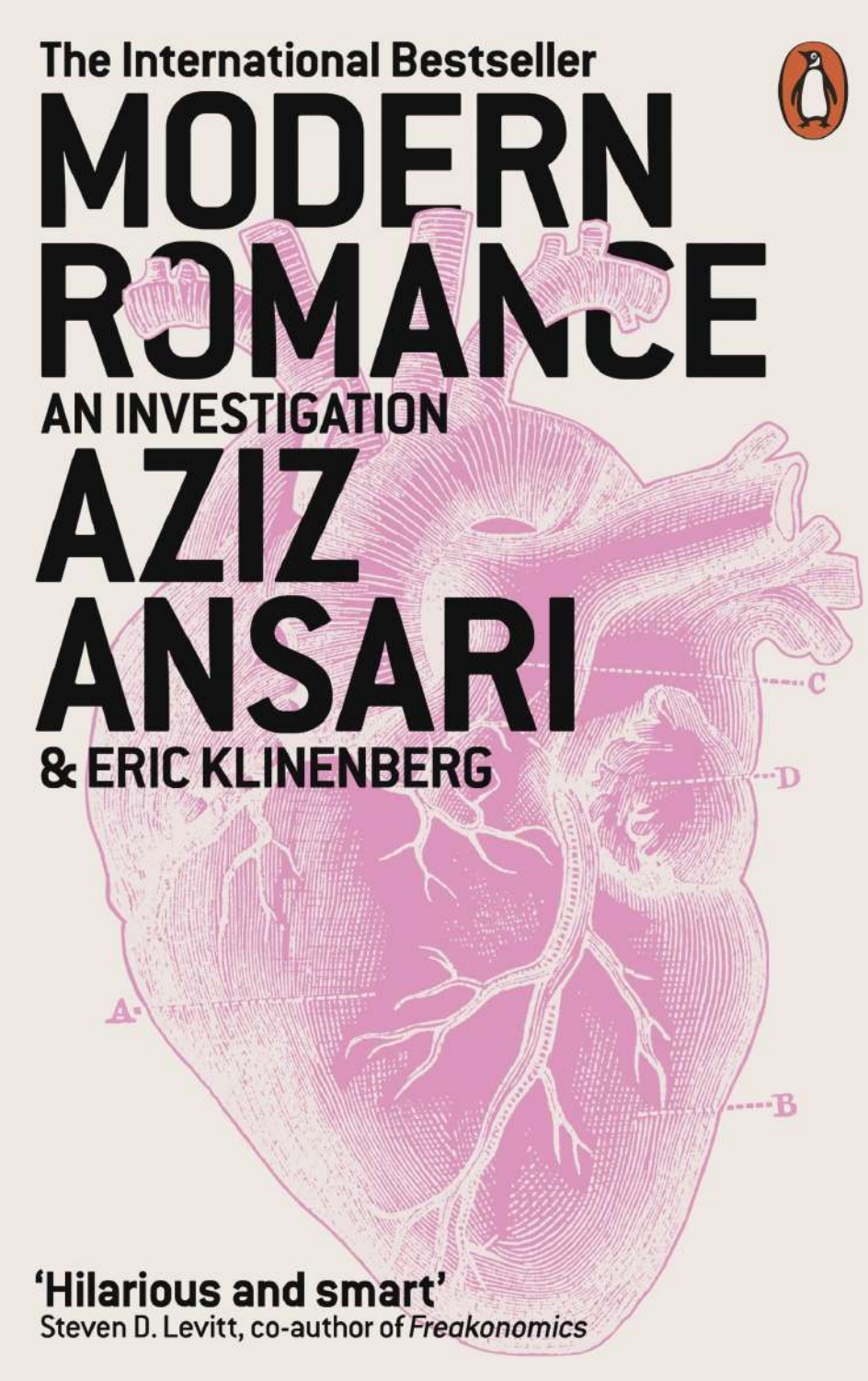


May Edition



July Edition

Want to read more about modern dating culture?



Modern Romance: An investigation is a perfect collaboration between a comedian and a sociologist. It is a fun read for those interested in the topic.

From the Edboard



WHAT COLLEGE THINKS?



CANCEL CULTURE

Interviews & Survey by
Shreya Shukla & Kumar Harsh

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he woke impulses of the illiberal left ensure that the views of those they deem ‘problematic’ at the onslaught of a deluge of “phobias” and “isms” do not see the light of day again. The right-wing populists are not far behind when they get on the streets to teach “dissenters” and “anti-nationals” lessons to get them on the ‘right’ track.

Cancellation in colleges follows a similar pattern on every occasion. A professor or a student says or writes something that gets shot to popularity in the microcosm of society that is the university or college. Claiming that the system is rigged against them, some people take to social media to aggressively type their concerns to spread the word of the professor or the student’s crimes, demanding punitive action and inflicting damage along the way to uphold equality and social justice at the cost of freedom. After this, it can go either of the two ways. The administration appeases the mob by taking punitive action against the “-ist,” or the issue remains under the radar but as the “culprit” has been socially ostracised in the microcosm that should’ve been receptive to different opinions and views, the damage is done and almost irreversible. The cancelled students’ professional prospects may well be harmed before they even begin. Those who are thus cancelled either disappear or join fellow “cancelees” in the professional and academic world’s fringes.

In light of the recent events which transpired at Hindu College, we decided to conduct a college-wide survey and interview people to glean what they think about the rise in ideological polarisation, intolerance, trigger warnings, academic discussions and accountability. The first half consists of interviews and top comments from the survey. The second part captures the findings from the survey. We would also like to hear what you think and constructive critique are most welcome. (Email us at caucushinducollege@gmail.com)

The College Opinion



Anjana Benny

People often ask me whether ‘Cancel Culture’ is justified and I more often than not think that it is an uninformed question. Cancel Culture is such a pertinent and nuanced issue that a binary response can’t be imposed on it. As it happens, we might not be able to get a black and white picture and it will always remain under the ‘grey area.’ For example, I believe that the practice of ‘calling out’ is an indispensable part of Cancel Culture but at the same time, I am of the view that ‘calling out’ and ‘cancelling’ someone are not synonymous to each other. Metaphorically speaking, if I were to explain the above mentioned scenario by an analogy, ‘ignoring’ the issue and ‘cancelling’ someone would be the extreme ends of a pendulum and ‘calling out’ might be the middle path. As history has taught us, sometimes calling out is necessary to hold a person in power accountable. This in no way gives us the liberty to ignore the rights of the “accused.” We can not just ignore or ostracize someone solely based on the statements or acts (not crimes) committed by them. In such a situation, calling out can be an alternative to the cancel culture since the latter does not solve the real problem. We live in an era where social media has become the ‘court of justice’ and everyone acts as a judge.



Ishi Chauhan

I strongly believe that hardly anything can be perceived in 'black and white.' If there are certain pros, there must be certain cons as well. Before making any kind of judgement, it's important for us to critically analyze both sides of the coin. Similarly, cancel culture also has its merits as well as demerits. Cancel Culture has its roots in medieval and ancient history but its form has changed with time. The birth of the Internet in 1983 was pivotal in revamping the practice of Cancel Culture. Just after a decade of the inception of the Internet, a new phrase slipped into the Chinese slang: renrou sousuo, literally translated as "human flesh search." In layman's terms it means that someone is trying to find (search) every last bit of information on the internet about a specific person or a group whom they intend to 'cancel.' It started as a fandom but eventually it took an inhumane form as people started to use that 'information' to ostracize them on the basis of their perception of good and bad. So, coming back to your question, Cancel Culture does take our liberty and the right to present our opinions. People with contrary views are hesitant to express themselves as they are judged within the framework of prevalent norms set by the society. This by and large is undeniable but at the same time we also need to talk about how it is not an alien concept. I believe that Cancel Culture is a derivative of the nature of today's culture. The society will always play the role of a watchdog and scrutinize the acts of its members. We can continue to believe in a utopian conception of society where no one cares about what you do or say but that's not how the world works. The 'Public Perception' is an indispensable part of human life since it constitutes the core idea of human nature. It might be difficult for me to know the actual intention behind your statements but at the same time I just can't give you the benefit of doubt since the remarks made by you testify that social problems exist in our society. And, in order to eradicate these problems we need social movements. The movement may not be perfect but it will help in sensitising the general populace. For instance, the MeToo movement has its fallouts but we can not deny that it provided a much needed push and platform to numerous women across the world to speak against patriarchy and exploitation. Similarly, any kind of movement can not be perfect. The final burden lies on the shoulder of administrative machinery to ensure that the "due process of law" is never violated.



Siddharth Kaushik

Cancel Culture has been positive in its ideation and providing retributive justice but has not produced the societal change we expect it to. However, it is not the job of those on social media to bring high reaching changes in the society and educate people on sensitive issues. It is the government's. It is not surprising that cancel culture and the social media platforms have had a better impact in disclosing cases of sexual harassment and homophobia than the government. However, even nectar can turn into poison if taken in excess.





Aftar Ahmed

Recently, we concluded our department elections and the ambience of the elections reflected our love for democracy. I firmly believe that college campuses should have a democratic outlook. Dissent being the cornerstone of a democracy, be it a state or a college, it is unfeasible to envision a college campus without a platform to express dissent. Moreover, we need to build safe spaces to express ourselves. Due to the lack of safe spaces and appropriate platforms to express our views, we have started to judge people based on the norms set by the society. It might be tempting to accept the norms made by the society, since it makes our life easier, but we can not forget that ‘one size does not fit all.’ According to me, ‘cancelling’ someone is dreadful. Instead, we need to strive towards building intellectual spaces, exchanging ideas, unlearning and learning things and interacting with people who belong to different backgrounds. This again raises a pertinent question: Since ‘calling out’ is a part and parcel of ‘cancel culture,’ is it justified to consider the former bad just because of the latter? As per me, calling out can’t be ignored, since this would mean normalising things which are ‘outrightly wrong.’ This does not stop us from ensuring due diligence while making sure that someone’s freedom of expression is not violated but ‘calling out’ will always remain a part of human nature. Lastly, I would like to end with a quote by Ginetta Sagan, a human rights activist, “Silence in the face of injustice is complicity with the oppressor.”



Parth Pruthi

Cancel culture has always been practiced in some way or another in societies and cultures across space and time. Hippasus, a Greek mathematician who proposed the idea of irrational numbers was drowned to death as punishment for the discovery. Galileo was sentenced to life imprisonment by Catholic Church for suggesting the heliocentric model of the solar system. Cancel culture is certainly not new. It has always been a tool societies have used to censor people and ideas that were deemed inappropriate/uncomfortable. Is it an effective tool? Certainly not. Humans have been proven to be wrong on so many things, which when we look back retrospectively find stupid but fail to realise that those stupid ideas were once dogmas that were not challenged by anyone. In my view, in the marketplace of ideas, all ideas should be challenged on their merit irrespective of how uncomfortable they are, every worldview should be open to scrutiny, ridicule and criticism. It is erroneous to think that cancelling people and ideas will shut them forever, just that they will spread through vectors we are not aware of.



Jahnvi Sharma

Cancel culture is good to a certain extent. It goes without saying that it holds people accountable for what they do. But sometimes it crosses a limit. When it goes into “hyper mode,” it can ruin everything. I know few people personally who think a certain way because they were taught that way, they grew up hearing that, so it is embedded in their mind and anything different is wrong to them. I feel like we should educate people who say something wrong rather than directly cancel them.



Ishita

I believe that our college campus is diverse and it does give a platform to everyone to disseminate their views irrespective of their identity, social background or political leaning. Although, in recent times, we have witnessed a surge in right-wing ideas, we have not become ideologically polarised. We stand in solidarity with our peers. In the offline mode we used to conduct rallies, like LGBTQ rallies, to show our support. We have not been able to do so due to the pandemic and owing to some recent happenings, it seems that we have judged people prematurely and as a result of that we have grown apart from each other. Privacy has become a myth and it has become really tough to know people's intentions through their screens. But, I still believe that unison runs in the veins of Hindu College and something such as 'cancel culture' can not overshadow it.



Jeev Kumar Chittoria

Political correctness has always been there. The problem today is that it is primarily masked as compassion for the downtrodden, instead, it is more about eliciting resentment towards the people who are well off. Neither cancel culture makes a positive impact, sociologically or culturally nor does it help to remove the "evils" (what the cancel mob thinks it is aimed towards) that are prevalent. There is a wide range of things that people may find offensive depending upon their epistemological position, hence, nothing should be deemed as absolute. A particular ideology cannot account for all 'objective truths', hence it is bound to be narrow and further improvable. Thus, we should collectively aim towards developing a culture where freedom of speech and expression is celebrated. It is because only through unbridled communication that problems are solved and truth interpreted, otherwise we are just tribal groups aiming to establish our group members into power and punish those who are not. We are not just atomised units fighting the world so that we do what we want to, but also social animals with responsibility that we sustain an atmosphere that is positive for everyone.



Shailja Sahani

Cancel Culture is just a hyped-up term for a rather fundamental issue. It has been persisting through eternity by adopting an ever changing form. In the contemporary era, even the state machineries have started to cancel people subconsciously.



Abhishek Singh Chauhan

Sadly sometimes, intolerance towards the other's opinion is the only thing that the opposing sides to an argument have in common. You can be intolerant irrespective of what your ideologies are. As someone who identifies as liberal, seeing this intolerance in my peers is often disassociating.



Kailash Limba

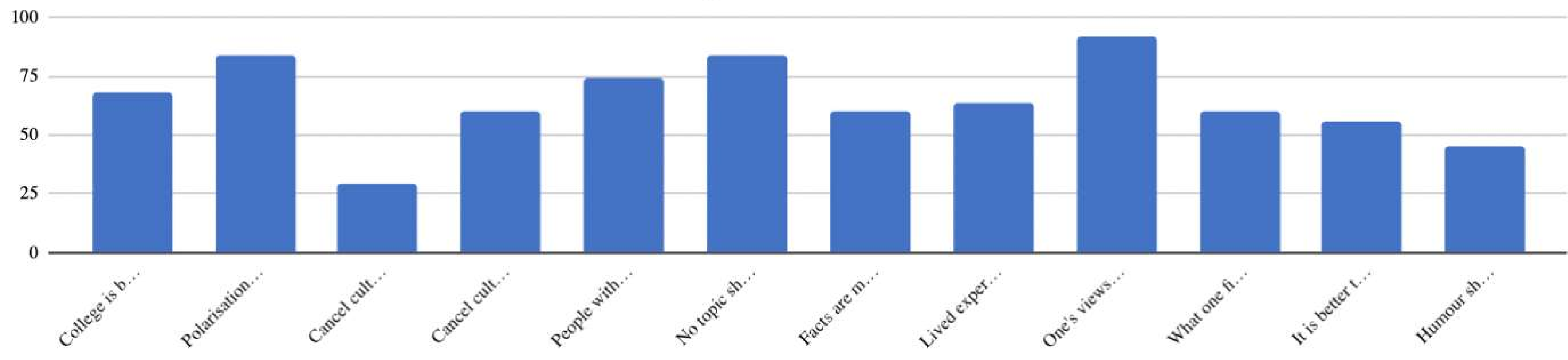
Since you have asked me a direct question, I won't beat around the bush. Yes, our college campus has become ideologically polarised. We have failed to give voice to 'differing opinions.' The ones who are in majority dominate the intellectual strata of our college and as it happens, they are the ones who judge the validity, correctness and intention of someone's opinion. Whenever I witness any such incident, I think to myself "who has given them the authority to judge me?" I often try to muster up the courage to pose my concern to them but "fortunately", I have never been able to do so. While I stand for the freedom of speech and expression, I need to make it clear that the freedom of speech does not give us the freedom to incite violence or propagate hate speech. There might just be a thin line of distinction between them but it's not at all negligible. The online mode also shares the responsibility for polarisation. In offline mode, we used to interact with others on a much more personal level, we indulged in healthy debates as well as discussions but all this is extremely tedious to do through digital screens. We take pride in the democratic outlook of our college but due to the constraints posed by Covid, we could not even conduct our college elections. As I have made it pretty evident, I do not stand with 'cancel culture' at any cost but I believe that the merits of the practice of 'calling out' can't be ignored either and to ensure that the merits of the same remain intact, the media has to play a proactive role. It has been given the responsibility to ensure that 'unheard voices' are heard. But, nowadays it has resorted to conducting media trials and issuing verdicts. For instance, the Supreme Court of India acquitted Miss Chakraborty but the entire nation had already convicted her of murder. I don't mean to defend her, but the deplorable state of affairs shows that we have lost our faith in the process established by the law. In the end, everything boils down to our outlook towards society. I just hope to see the day when one would be able to speak their mind out without the fear of being "cancelled".



Lavanya

I have a keen interest in political philosophy and one of its theories that particularly intrigues me is Postmodernism. Postmodernists reject any constant, definite and universal belief and instead, consider knowledge to be relative, local and fully influenced by special cultures and values. Any unilateral philosophy cannot claim autonomy over truth, as the idea of absolute truth or a perfect theory is unattainable. Similar ideas can be applied in our day to day life. We need to be completely free to realise our conception of ideal life. One should be allowed to shape their own opinions while being unbound from external influences. Meanwhile, it also needs to be ensured that our society allows us to stay true to our values. As per me, this is the core idea that dictates our understanding of freedom. Ultimately, we aim to create a space where no one is hesitant to express their opinions and no one is afraid to be 'called out' or get 'cancelled.' The ones who 'differ' also have the freedom to do so but they should not try to impose their differences upon others. In recent times, our college campus has become polarized and we have started to judge people on the basis of our sense of right and wrong. I am of the opinion that we should not rush to judge or label people with titles that we deem to be justified. A healthy discussion between both the parties is the only way ahead.

What College Thinks: Cancel Culture



College is becoming increasingly ideologically polarised.

68.4%

Polarisation in college campus can be harmful/dangerous.

84.2%

Cancel culture is a way of holding people in power accountable.

29%

Cancel culture does not address the real problem.

60.5%

One's views should be challenged by peers and professors.

92%

It is better to give someone the benefit of the doubt than to presume the intention behind their statement.

55.3%

People with views different from ours should not be given a platform to disseminate their opinions

73.8%

No topic should be off limits in an academic discussions as long as it is factual

84.2%

Facts are more important than feelings in an academic setting.

60.5%

Lived experiences should be valued in an academic setting

63.2%

What one finds triggering is subjective, thus what is triggering should be decided keeping in mind "a reasonable person" rather than "the most sensitive one".

60.5%

Humour should be checked on the basis of the norms set by society pertaining to what is to be considered offensive.

44.8%

THE RESULT OF THE SURVEY

68% of participants think college is an increasingly ideologically polarised space. A whopping 84% consider this polarisation potentially harmful and dangerous on college campuses. About 29% believe cancel culture is a way of holding people in power accountable. Six in ten fail to see cancel culture addressing real problems (casteism, islamophobia, sexism, transphobia etc.). Three-fourths do not believe in de-platforming or no-platforming of controversial takes by other students. In an academic setting, 84% want no topic to be off-limits to discussions as long as it is factual and 61% believe facts should take precedence over feelings. 63% want lived experiences to be valued in the classroom. 92% say their views should be challenged by their peers and professors. The findings suggest that 61% of students reason that what one finds triggering is subjective, thus what is triggering should be decided keeping in mind "a reasonable person" rather than "the most sensitive one". 55% think the accused should be given the benefit of the doubt rather than the presumption of the intent behind their statement. And the same number thinks humour should not be checked based on the norms set by society on what should to be considered offensive.



I still believe that unity runs in the veins of students of Hindu College and cancel culture cannot overshadow it.

- Ishita

Imagine that archetypal scene from your run-of-the-mill horror movie in which one of characters opens a creaky wardrobe with unoiled hinges and a skeleton falls right over their face, giving them a run for their life only to realise the skeleton has come along clutching onto the feet of the runner as other characters behold the spectacle with dread, awaiting their turn.

Today one can be said to have a digital archive of every text message, post, tweet, image and life update sent out by them. As you leave behind a digital footprint, a trail of human life online, with only competition from footprints on the moon, you'd like scrutiny only in one of the cases. It doesn't take great effort to scour through some posts over the course of young adulthood or even middle age of a person to in uncover some skeletons in the context of the different systems and their overlapping in several contexts that are in the past or recent past presently to judge someone as representative of a belief system that isn't acceptable in the modern political discourse as they navigate through the world learning about the same systems directly or indirectly.

Everyone has skeletons in their closet as everyone makes mistakes. That's how we learn, unlearn and relearn throughout our lives. To rob people of this natural process, especially in the formative years of their life, can seriously impede their growth, trapping both the cancellers and cancellees in an impasse of perpetual retributive justice.



Semiconductor
Geopolitics
**Aaryan
Gadhok**

Pg 73



Chanakya Niti and
Foreign Policy

Adhrish Chakraborty

Pg 77



Book Review:
Savarkar by Vikram
Sampath

Preet Sharma

Pg 78

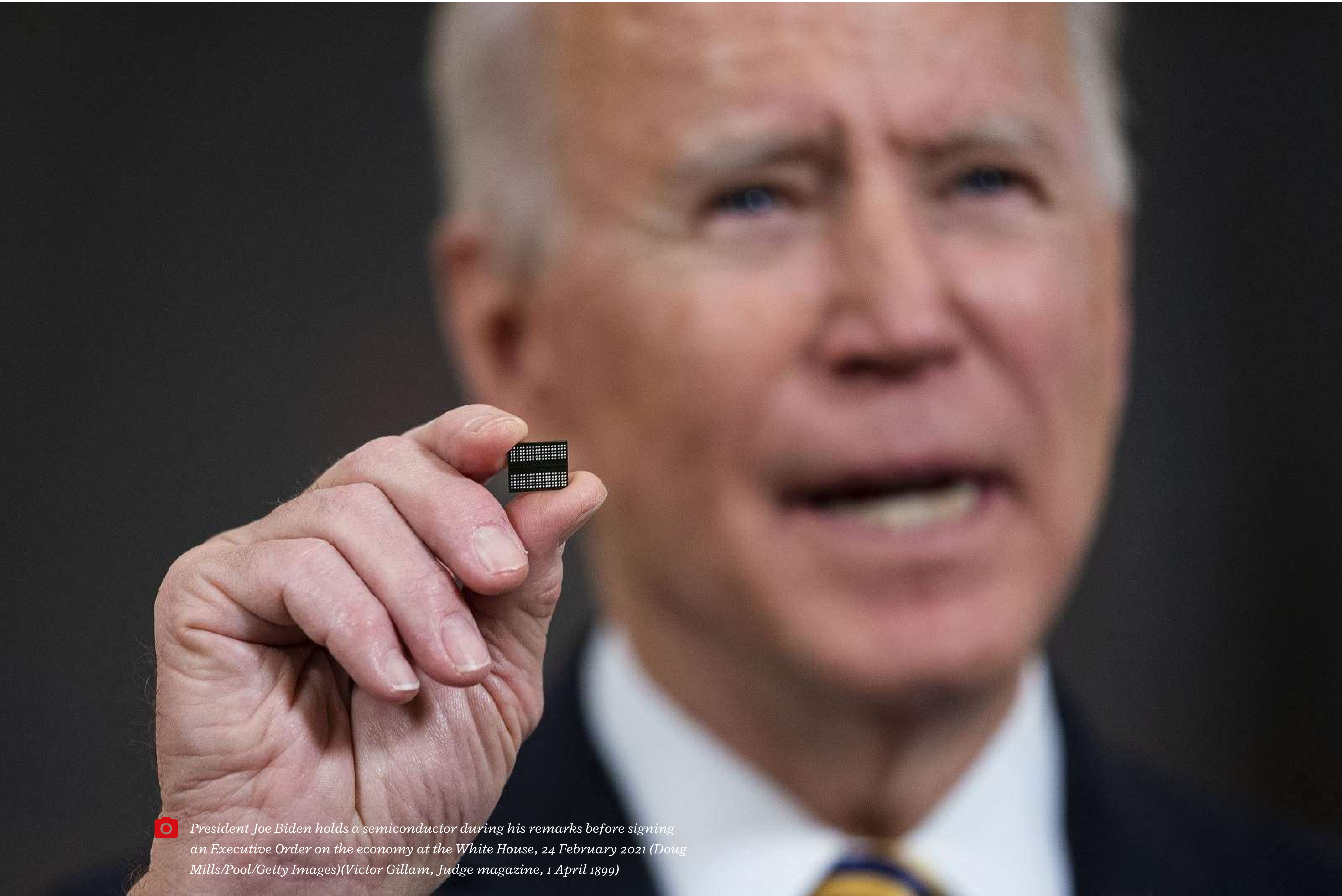


Remembering
Kalyan Singh

Vikram Bana

Pg 88

POLITICS & GOVERNANCE



President Joe Biden holds a semiconductor during his remarks before signing an Executive Order on the economy at the White House, 24 February 2021 (Doug Mills/Pool/Getty Images)(Victor Gillam, Judge magazine, 1 April 1899)

Semiconductor Geopolitics

Aaryan Gadhok

In a short span of one tumultuous year, the Covid-19 pandemic has exposed deep crevices in the global semiconductor supply chain which hitherto virtually seemed immune and recession-proof. Market indicators like delayed car sales or stockpiling of the new Playstation 5 point out the reality of us being in the midst of a global chip shortage. So, how exactly did we end up in this dire situation? When the Covid-19 pandemic caused a precipitous drop in vehicle sales in spring 2020, automakers cut their orders of all parts and materials — including the chips needed for functions ranging from touchscreen displays to collision-avoidance systems. The pandemic has caused a swift and severe impact on the globally

integrated automotive industry which was already grappling with a downturn in global demand.

Symptoms like disruption in Chinese parts exports, large-scale manufacturing interruptions across Europe, and the closure of assembly plants in the United States may lead to increased merger & acquisition activity. Then, in the third quarter, when demand for passenger vehicles rebounded, chip manufacturers were already committed to supplying their big customers in consumer electronics and IT. Geopolitical factors also played a role, specifically when the Trump administration began tightly regulating sales of semiconductors to Huawei Technologies, ZTE, and other Chinese firms. Those companies began stockpiling chips

essential to 5G smartphones and other products.

At the same time, American firms were cut off from chips made by China's Semiconductor Manufacturing International Corporation after the federal government blacklisted the firm. In July, a fire at a Japanese factory cut off supplies of special fiberglass used for printed circuit boards. Then, in October, a fire at a Japanese plant belonging to Asahi Kasei Microdevices took advanced sensing devices used in automotive and other industries out of circulation. As of late February, the plant was still down.

Nearly 7% of ocean freight is not making it out of China ports this quarter. Shortages of shipping containers resulted in companies having to pay premiums for shipping and drove demand towards airfreight. But the airfreight system has been experiencing higher demand due to global shipments of the Covid-19 vaccine even as its capacity has been reduced due to the pandemic-related drop in passenger travel, which has effectively meant that there are fewer passenger planes available to carry freight. In fact, global air-cargo capacity in the first quarter of 2021 is 25% less than last year.

The global semiconductor industry relies on high transnational divisions of labor stemming from the increasing complexity of chips and the economic pressure to innovate. In the late 1990s more than 20 companies operated 180 nanometer (nm) fabrication plants or "fabs,"; today only TSMC

in Taiwan and Samsung in South Korea have the capabilities to successfully run cutting-edge 5 nm fabs. To run a cutting-edge logic fab, companies need extensive process

military applications. TSMC's dominance of advanced logic semiconductor manufacturing will most likely not change in a decade and perhaps longer, for



Facility occupied by the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC) in Taichung, Taiwan
Credits: ToyW / Shutterstock.com

knowledge, close research collaborations with their suppliers, deep pockets to constantly invest in new equipment, and substantial government backing. These drivers explain why the number of firms operating cutting-edge logic fabs went from more than 20 to just two within two decades.

They also gave rise to the "fabless" business model – only designing chips and relying on contract foundries to manufacture them. Alibaba, Apple, Hisilicon, Tesla, and others all design their own chips but bank on TSMC as their contract chipmaker. TSMC is the largest contract chip maker in the world, with a market share of more than 55 percent. It is often the only viable option for chip design companies who want to develop cutting-edge logic chips – processors used in data centers, laptops, smartphones, automobiles, and

for several reasons.

The US and China are the two key players around which the semiconductor supply chain revolves. Being the two biggest customers, their needs are different in many ways. While most chips purchased from Taiwan/South Korea are for final product, a good part of Taiwan's production is for American chip firms, such as Nvidia, where designers choose less expensive places to produce. Geopolitically, Trump dragged the chip industry into the middle of the US-China trade war and Pompeo re-recognized the Taiwan government. However, the Biden Administration will strengthen relations with South Korea and Taiwan, and likely use chips as leverage against China. In the Defence

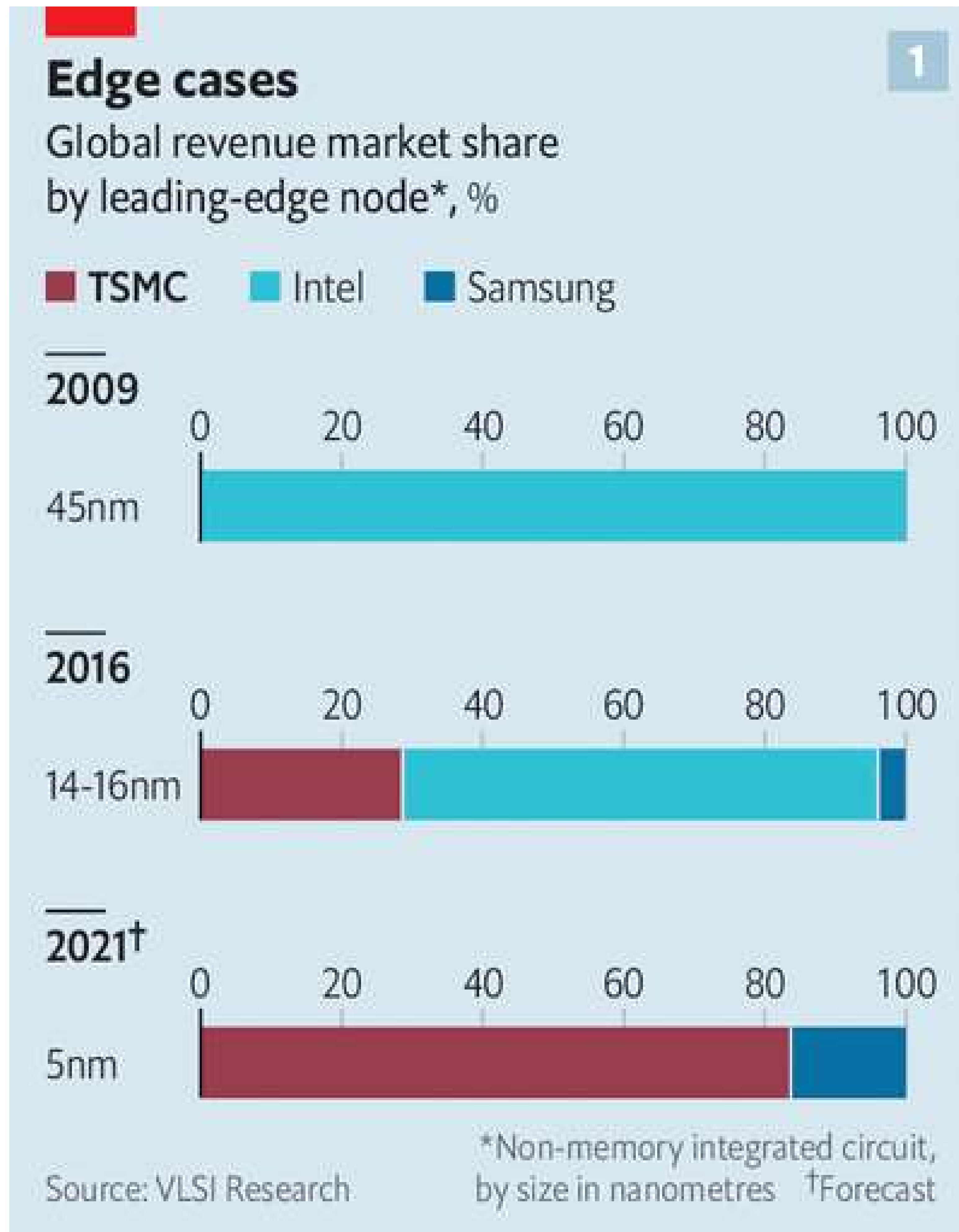
bill just passed, there was a provision for subsidizing US chip manufacturing and research, a counter to governmental subsidies in the Far East. The provision will be funded as there is bipartisan support, and it fits with Biden's "build back better" program. But for now, in stark contrast with China, the US is comfortable with offshore production. For Beijing, semiconductor dependence is a "knife at China's throat". Improving domestic innovation and technology self-reliance are its two top policy priorities for 2021. Beyond this year, ambitious 'China 2025' targets still hold. The near-term focus is de-Americanisation of technology supply chains, entailing import substitution where possible, and order rerouting to East Asia if it is not. But cutting out US suppliers further increases PRC reliance on Taiwan and Korea. Such is the mainland dependence on Taiwan that Beijing is unwilling to apply economic pressure to the island. Instead, China has adopted "grey zone" warfare tactics, and even talked of military action, all the while continuing to purchase TSMC products.

Despite the growing prowess of Chinese technology firms in areas such as 5G, AI, mobile applications, and quantum computing, the country remains far behind the global cutting edge of semiconductor manufacturing. As a result, to meet Beijing's ambitious goals for China's technology and economic development and to remain globally competitive, domestic tech companies rely on overseas

fabs to create their most advanced chips. China has been stepping up its push to master advanced semiconductor manufacturing. Through its massive National IC Investment Fund, established in 2014 and recapitalized in 2019, and other regional and local funds, China has earmarked funding in excess of \$200 billion to move China up the manufacturing curve. Yet, it has so far achieved limited results. China's leading fabrication company, Semiconductor Manufacturing

International Corporation (SMIC), remains three to five years behind industry leaders Intel, Samsung, and TSMC.

Taiwan has now become the focal point of new US concerns about the semiconductor industry's trajectory. US officials have also become uncomfortable with the growing presence of Chinese engineers at TSMC, which they view as increasing potential





risks of IP theft or introduction of malicious hardware or software into US-bound supply chains. The US doubts Taiwan's status as a safe haven for US IP—specifically, the potential for Chinese intelligence services to inject malicious code or hardware into advanced semiconductor designs.

As for China, any forced decoupling of Huawei or other Chinese companies from TSMC also carries the long term risk of higher geopolitical tensions across the Taiwan Strait. The status quo that governs the strait is partially dependent on economic ties, including the strategically important role that TSMC plays in supplying Huawei and other leading Chinese technology firms with cutting-edge semiconductors. Removing that ballast would push the relationship toward a more unstable place. Some Taiwan-based companies have already responded to President Tsai Ing-wen's drive to reshore from the mainland to the island by moving some operations out of China. Military action over Taiwan regarding the semiconductor issue remains unlikely. Beijing and Washington will both attempt to avoid initiating a course of action that could lead to uncontrolled escalation between the world's two leading military powers.

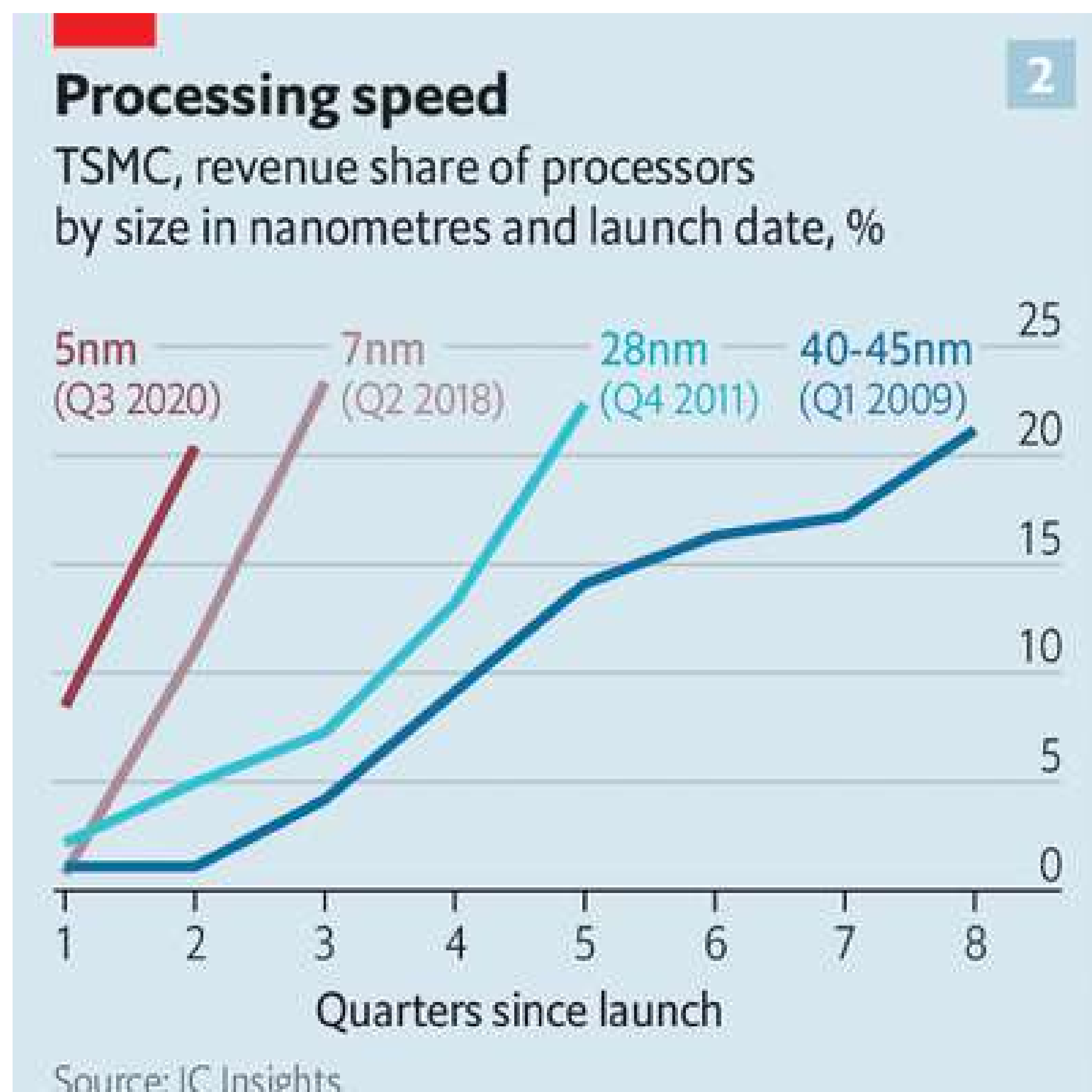
That said, China has other options short of military action that it can use to try to gain leverage, including increased saber-rattling, nationalization of TSMC facilities in China, recruitment of key TSMC or Samsung personnel, IP theft, retaliatory actions against US and other Western technology firms operating in China, and greater investment in its domestic

China's advantages in this competition, including its STEM education system, dedicated industrial ministries, funding mechanisms, and market size will eventually produce breakthroughs, but the US will continue to hold key advantages and harbor a willingness to use punitive measures.

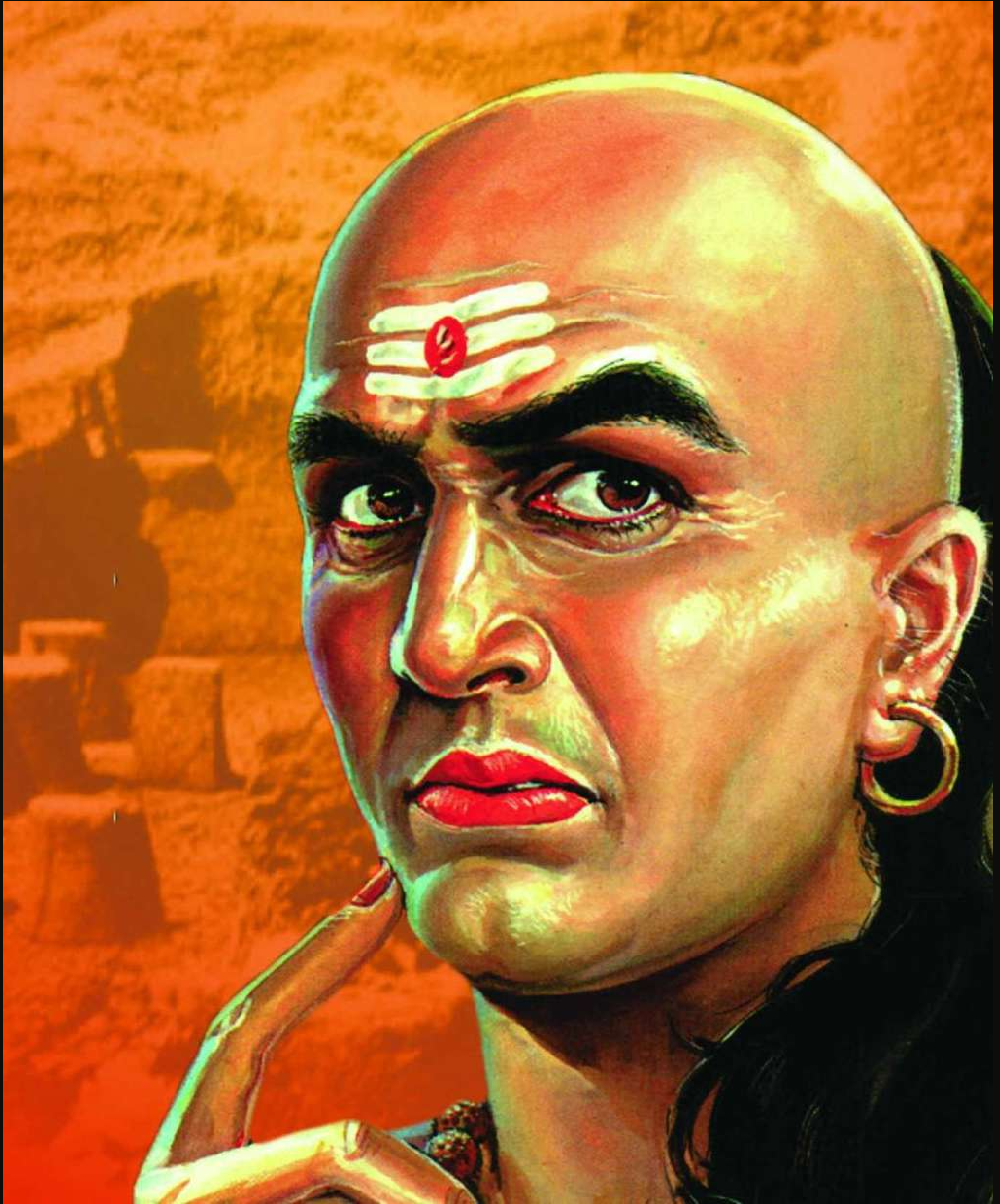
technology sector, including leveraging capital markets via the Hong Kong Stock Exchange or the new high-tech STAR market in Shanghai.

Thus, Taiwan and TSMC have taken on increased geopolitical importance in this environment- if the US broadens technology restrictions targeting semiconductors to other Chinese firms and succeeds in driving a wedge between China and Taiwan in the area of semiconductors, it would provoke a sharp response from Beijing, raising risks for global technology supply chains.

China's advantages in this competition, including its STEM education system, dedicated industrial ministries, funding mechanisms, and market size will eventually produce breakthroughs, but the US will continue to hold key advantages and harbor a willingness to use punitive measures. If the US decides to further restrict semiconductor manufacturing equipment exports to China in addition to other measures such as the foreign direct product rule, China's timeline for achieving greater self-sufficiency will be pushed further out. In any case, the global semiconductor industry will be in for a prolonged period of adjustment as the US-China-Taiwan triangle moves toward a new and hopefully more stable equilibrium. ■



Revisiting the Relevance of Chanakya Neeti



By Adhrish Chakraborty

Bharat's foreign policy paradigm has its roots in the geriatric civilisational heritage throughout various epochs witnessed by the country. The influence of ancient India's most eminent political philosopher, Chanakya, still finds its ascendancy throughout the framework of strategic planning in India which has sought a system of layered relations coupled with a gross mistrust for most nations. Modern India is quite aware of President Roosevelt's maxim or rather a Kautilya dictum of speaking softly while carrying a big stick.

Kautilya's Arthashastra or the science of statecraft was the first practical step taken to develop the foundation of administrative principles which has relevance to the modern Indian bureaucracy. Like Machiavelli, who was concerned with the unification of Italy, Kautilya, too, was the first ancient philosopher who talked about a unified Indian empire or state.

Kautilya institutionalised the concept of social welfare in an economic format, centuries before his Greek successors. He preached that in a good state, it is not only necessary to have the right laws and institutions devoted to public welfare but the right kind of relationship and interdependence between other states as well. At a time when ancient India delved in spiritual and religious peremptoriness, Kautilya understood the real world Politik

and hence both a friend and an enemy (state) became constituent elements of his understanding of sovereignty.

Kautilya propagated the organic theory of state and conceived the world order to be fundamentally anarchic in nature. He analysed that in order to grow, states or kingdoms have to follow the '*Matsanyay*' principle or the law of the jungle where the weaker and the vulnerable states ought to be devoured by the stronger ones, to grow and expand. History is a living example of how Kautilya's dictum held true in the global context, from medieval Europe to the colonial aggrandisement.

However, he believed that relations with other states are important as no state exist in isolation, in fact, every state is competing with each other to be at the helm of the power chain. This implies no state can be stable unless it takes care of its foreign relations. If such relationships are paid no heed to, argues Kautilya, the state will soon fall prey to fratricidal conspiracies and insurgent activities hatched by fellow conspirators struggling to be at the top of the food chain.

Kautilya maintained that the only viable modus operandi for the protection of an empire or state is to be wakeful and to treat the offence as the most effective defence, to ensure that the state is not only capable of defending itself but also inflicting damage as and when the need arises.

Kautilya's interpretation of inter-state relationship is one of the most realistic and fundamentally sound principles based on the nature of the distribution of power belt, unequal

growth of lines of communication. Discovery of new territory and ethnic and population differences coupled with economic disparity.

These are some of the factors which guide inter-state relationships even in the neoteric world order. The extensive body of rules concerned with mutual state relations in Kautilya's works contains the most complete as well as the most important contribution on the subject made by our ancient political philosopher.

Neo foreign policy and strategic planning are based on the geographies of diplomacy. Kautilya recognised it a millennium ahead and argued that the multiplicity of topographic features along political lines is a constant source of conflict and instability. He says whoever build a fortification on the strategically best-fitted ground is able to maintain a balance of power. A modern example of this understanding is the Sino-Indian conflict along the LAC (Line Of Actual Control) in the Aksai Chin region, where both the countries try to maintain a strategically superior position to wield control in that area and keep an eye on the development on the enemy front. Instability of the boundary is a factor determining the mutual relationship between the two nation-states.

Kautilya promulgated that

The basic principles of the Mandal theory are:-

A neighbour is a natural enemy.

A neighbour's neighbour is a natural friend.

Greater is the distance, lesser is the enmity

All friendship in the international sphere is guided by interest and convenience.

Inter-state relations cannot be taken for granted.

when a river flows across the territories of two or more states, a conflict between the neighbours is inevitable. Modern-day examples include the Indo-Bangladesh Ganges river dispute, India-Pakistan river water dispute or the India-Nepal Kalapani dispute where Nepal's claims to the region are based on this river as it became the marker of the boundary of the kingdom of Nepal following the Treaty of Sugauli signed between the Gurkha rulers of Kathmandu and the East India Company after the Gurkha War/Anglo-Nepal War (1814-16).

Kautilya was also the proponent of the *Rajamandala* theory (a strategic geographical location that determines the notion of friendship and enmity). Through his *Rajamandala* doctrine, Kautilya prescribes foreign policies and diplomatic strategies to the king's in the circle to become the conqueror of all other kings within the circle or a *Chakravarthi*.

In Kautilya's view, "A king should

not hesitate to break any friendship or alliances that are later found to be disadvantageous."

Kautilya is thought to have opposed the involvement of religion in politics and therefore called for the restructuring of the 'Purusharthas' to give precedence to materialism over religion. The Kautilyan polity seems to go well with the idea of *Nayagyaha Prithivim Jayathi* meaning one skilled in diplomacy wins over the world.

Another important contribution of Kautilyan diplomacy was his *Shadguna Niti* or six-fold policies to deal with other states, friendly or hostile. The six still nitis are :-

Sandhi (treaty)- If the enemy is strong, one should go for sandhi. Contemporary reference can be given to the Treaty Of Versailles. The Treaty of Versailles (1919) officially ended World War I between the Allies and Germany.

Vighra (Break treaty/sandhi)- Break a sandhi when you become stronger. Nazi Germany followed this maxim of Kautilya when fascist leader Adolf Hitler violated the Treaty of Versailles

and the Locarno Pact by sending German military forces into the Rhineland, a demilitarized zone along the Rhine River in western Germany, sparking the flames of another World War.

Aasana (To sit)- Stationing of forces near enemy's territory, a classical example would be the modern-day border patrol and surveillance to protect a country from external aggression.

Samashrya (Objective)- To join hands with those who have similar objectives. Various military and inter-governmental alliances like the Quad were set up with keeping a specific objective in mind. For Quad, it was to contain China's influence in the South China Sea in particular and to promote freedom of navigation or rules-based maritime order.

Yana (movement)- Military exercises near enemy territory. Russia has deep interests in Afghanistan is pursuing a twin-track policy by pursuing diplomacy backed by military exercises with two erstwhile Soviet Republics, on the other hand, to safeguard its security interests and keep the Eurasian region stable amid Taliban surge and fear of ISIS.

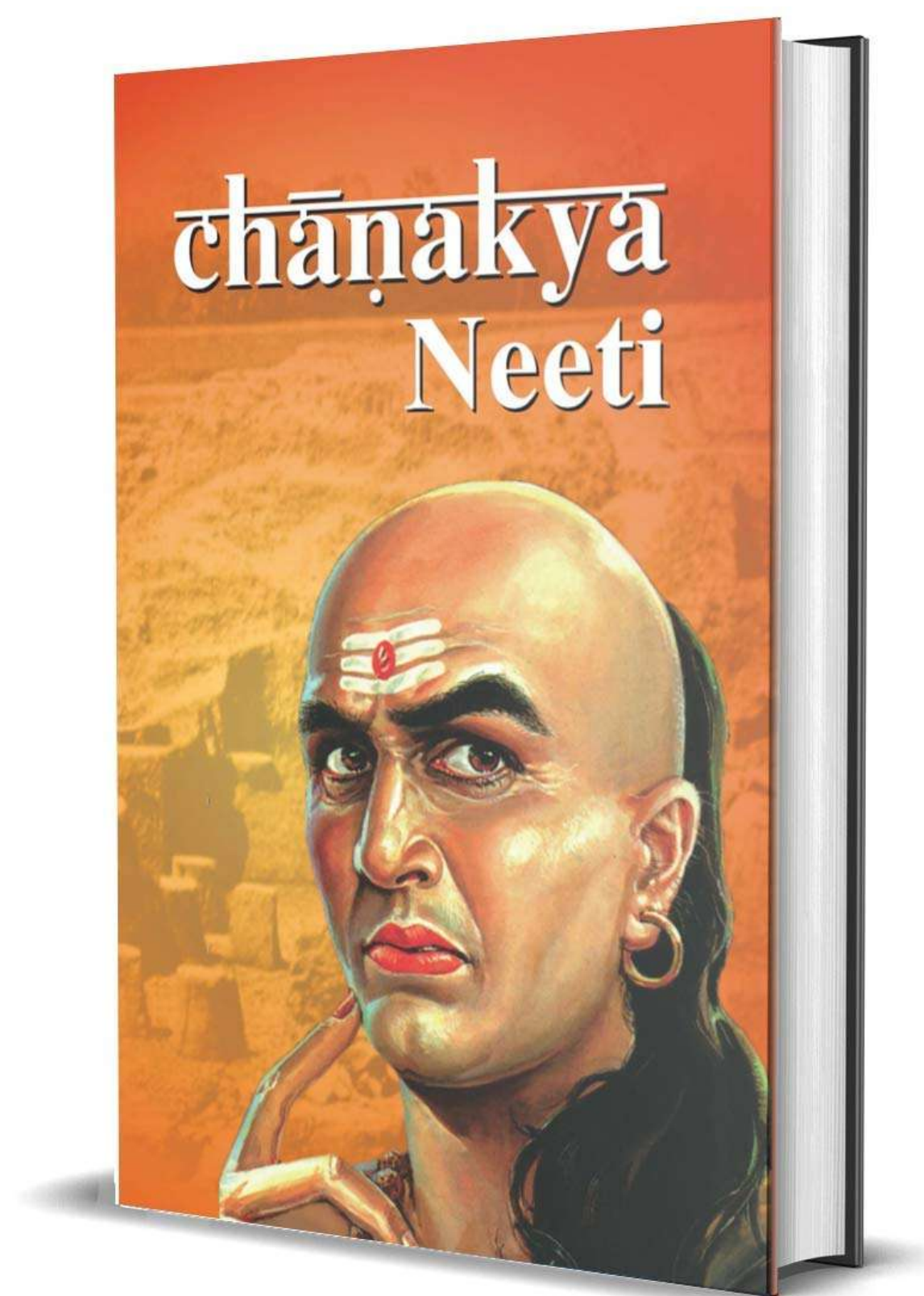
Dvaidhbhava (Dual Policy)- It signifies friendship with one and enmity with another. Kautilya insists the king not to go to war on two fronts at the same time. Dual Policy is one of the keystones of American foreign policymaking. Under

the Trump administration, the U.S government praised Russian President Vladimir Putin, denied Russia's penetration of the U.S. elections and sought to normalise relations with the Kremlin in order to make bargains with America's key adversary, on one hand, meanwhile, it maintained economic sanctions on Moscow, pushed forward with an enhanced military presence along NATO's eastern front and supported further NATO enlargement.

It is evident from here how Kautilyan dictums influence foreign policy and strategic planning to date. He was undoubtedly a realist and dealt with the state adversaries in a clinical fashion. Max Weber in a lecture called *Arthashastra* to be more harmful than Machiavelli's *The Prince*. Kautilyan realism goes beyond that of modern realists like Hans J Morgenthau. However R.K Kangle, explains, the end justifying the means is only against the enemies. It does not apply to normal personal relationships.

Kautilya emphasized that foreign relations be determined by rational calculation of self-interest rather than by ethical considerations. Kautilya's conception of foreign policy is brilliant, cohesive, comprehensive and logically sound.

In the ultimate analysis, Arthashastra's discourse on foreign policy and diplomatic practices can only be described as a profound timeless classic book on realism, much ahead of its peers written later. ■

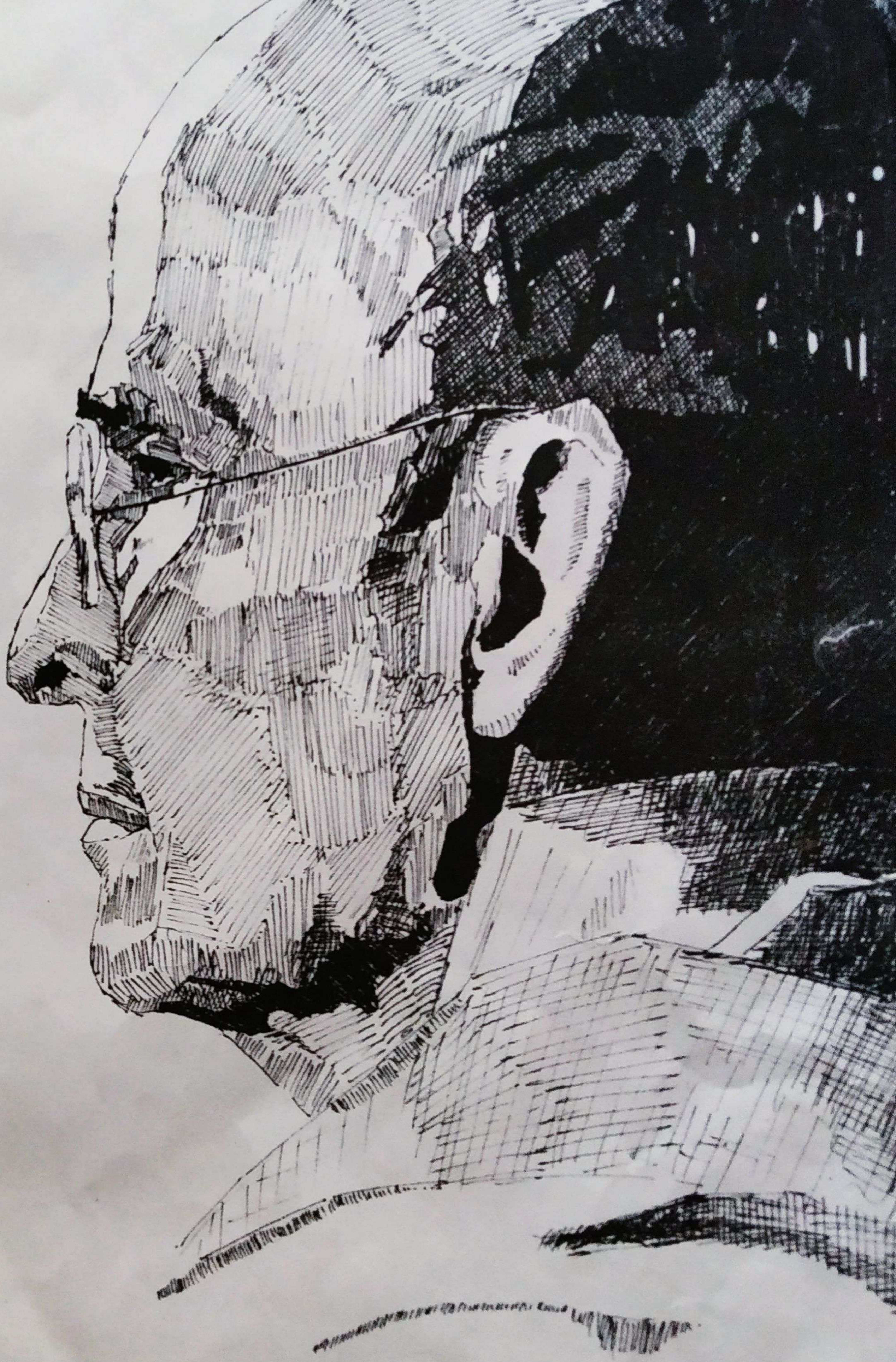


Learn more about the Book! Keshav Chandra

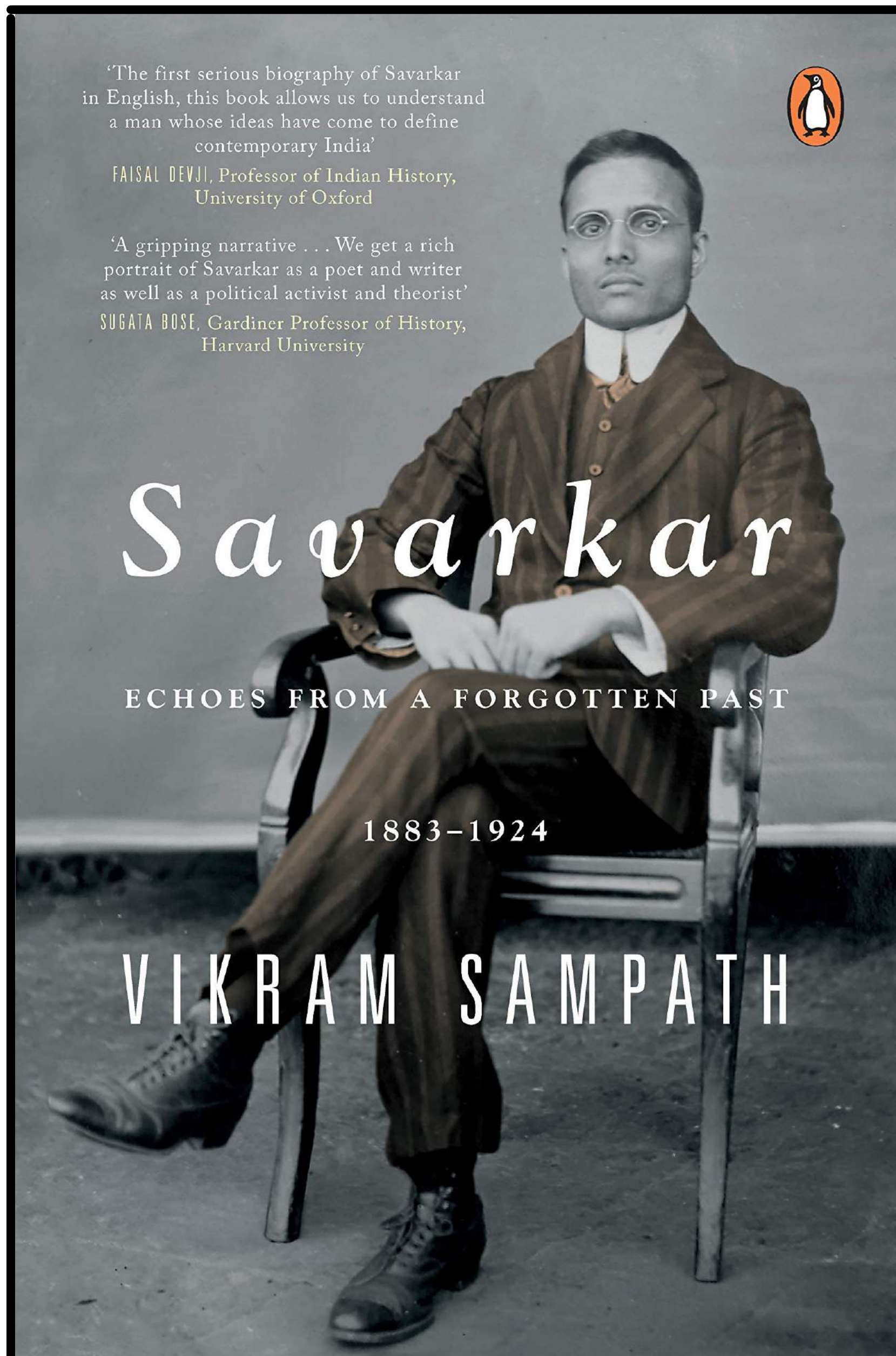
Arthashastra, by its very name, sounds like a book on economics but it is a work dealing with the administration of a State, written by the establisher of the Mauryan empire, Kautilya or as we know him, Chanakya.

It is composed of the internal administration of a State. Further, It talks about the relationship between the states and the last topic which provides a detailed description of the social composition of the then society. It is quite patriarchal in its nature. It is elaborated in 15 books, each book discusses only a single chapter but in depth. The books treated females of that society as second class citizens. What makes it interesting and a work of excellence is that it concentrates on the qualities of an administrator, like, for instance, self-control, control of one's desires and personal motivations. It also talks about the non-western conception of international relations but supports the caste system in a strong manner.

If we go through the Arthashastra in a much deeper sense then, we, for the first time, witness the idea of a pan Indian State. It also speaks about the nature of punishment or as we would like to call them punitive actions that should be and would have been rendered then. It gave the subjects (people) the right to revolt in the case where the king is not able to perform his functions. It also talked about an integrated form of economy where there is only one form of tax.



यश



Savarkar: Echoes from a Forgotten Past, 1883-1924

By Vikram Sampath

Preet Sharma

★★★★☆
(3.5/5 star rating)

"In history, the deeds of an individual or nation are judged by the character of the motive . . ."
- Vikram Sampath, *Savarkar: Echoes from a Forgotten Past, 1883-1924*

Vikram Sampath quotes American Historian John Noble Wilford stating "All works of history are interim reports." It means that each generation draws lessons from the past based on its own unique experience. Sampath writes that the constant absence of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar in history books and the passions that Savarkar still invokes in social and political discourse in India made him curious about Savarkar's story. Sampath writes that Savarkar was a "bundle of contradictions and is a historian's enigma."

Vikram Sampath in his significant work titled "*Savarkar: Echoes from A Forgotten Past, 1883-1924*" tries to uncover Savarkar's story, his political philosophy through the yardstick of historical documents and Savarkar's writings. It is the first volume of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar's biography, the second

of which is titled "Savarkar: A Contested Legacy" which has been recently released. Sampath's book is an objective assessment of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar and he has based his research on original archival documents from across the world including Marathi documents.

Sampath writes that "stripping of any personal biases, the records must be allowed to speak for themselves." Sampath gives detailed notes, a bibliography, and an index towards the end of the book that allows the reader to be aware of the sources that he is referring to while making his arguments. The direct quotations from the book are in double quotation marks.

The Story of Savarkars

Vikram Sampath gives a brief account of the history of Chitpawan Brahmins who trace their ancestry from Lord Parshuram, a mythical figure who is

believed to be an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Vinayak Damodar Savarkar was born in a Chitpawan Brahmin family in 1883. Since his ancestors were from a region called Palest in Maharashtra which has an abundance of sawri trees, they became known as Savarwadikar which was shortened to Savarkar. (Sampath, 2019, p.4)

Vinayak's father Damodarant, was a young *jagirdar* and was married to Radhabai. Vinayak's elder brother Ganesh Savarkar who was fondly called Babarao was born in 1879. Vinayak was born four years after Babarao. Vinayak's sister Maina was born in 1886. The youngest Savarkar brother was Narayanrao Savarkar. Vinayak started his formal education at the age of six. Sampath argues that Vinayak Savarkar from an

early age liked reading newspapers, he discovered the political situation in Maharashtra through newspapers, the debates around the Age of Consent Bill and celebration of Ganpati festival and Shivaji festival on a massive scale etc. Vinayak lost both his parents quite early in life. When Vinayak was sixteen, his father died due to contracting plague. Narayan, Vinayak's younger brother also contracted plague and was admitted to a hospital in Nashik. The Savarkars moved to Nashik.

Vinayak Savarkar must have read about the assassination of Walter C. Rand, a special plague officer by the Chapekar brothers, which created a sensation all over the presidency in Bombay. Sampath argues that Vinayak committed himself to the path of revolutionary struggle to free the motherland. Vinayak also wrote a play on the Chapekar brothers titled *Veershriyukta*. He was also an admirer of *Kal*, a newspaper by Shivram Mahadev Pranjpe. Sampath writes that for Vinayak, "revolution was not a mindless activity but it had to be backed by strategy and knowledge."

In Vinayak's organization, *Mitra Mela*, intellectual enrichment along with physical exercise was an important part of activities. Since Vinayak was against caste-based discrimination, the members of his organization came from all backgrounds as Sampath states. Vinayak married Yamuna, the daughter of Bhaurao Chiplunkar in 1901. His father-in-law financed his education thereafter. In 1904, Vinayak

suggested a new name for his organization *Mitra Mela*, hence *Abhinav Bharat* (New India) came into existence. *Abhinav Bharat* was a revolutionary organization. Vikram Sampath can be credited here for offering us a detailed account of Savarkar's early life, as a voracious reader, the son of a jagirdar and as a revolutionary.

Vikram Sampath quotes from *Savarkar Samagra* and writes that "The *Abhinav Bharat* calls for total and complete freedom, to attain which armed revolution is an inevitable means." Vinayak ended his letters with the slogan *Swatantra Devi Ki Jai* (Victory to the Goddess of Freedom). Manu S. Pillai, however suggests that though Sampath is not "mindlessly worshipful of his subject" but he could have maintained a more cautious distance from the subject, avoiding words like "inspiring" for Vinayak's speeches too often, though it may be true but it cannot be accurately verified.

Savarkar in London

Since Vinayak was academically bright he got a scholarship from Shyamji Krishna Verma to go for further studies in England. He was to reside in India House, which was a hostel in London for the accommodation of people holding an Indian travelling fellowship and of other Indian students as deemed fit. In England, Vinayak came in contact with other revolutionaries like Har Dayal who was later known as a member of the Ghadr Party. Virendra Nath Chattopadhyay, Sarojini Naidu's brother, was also attracted by the "underground movement for the liberation of India."

VVS Aiyar, also became a lodger with Vinayak in India House, London. Madan Lal Dhingra and Madame Bhikaji Cama also dedicated themselves to the cause of revolution, writes Vikram Sampath. The Free India Society was formed in 1906 and it had discussions regarding the political situation in India.

Vikram Sampath argues that according to Vinayak, secret societies could work on two fronts- propaganda and action. To Vinayak, it seemed impossible to gain freedom without resorting to force of arms. Vinayak translated Italian revolutionary Joseph Mazzini's autobiography in Marathi. The book was banned in 1907.

Sampath describes the meeting between Gandhi and Vinayak in London in 1906. Vinayak was keen on writing about the 1857 uprising. He wrote the book called the "Indian War of Independence of 1857". In the book, he writes that "In history, the deeds of an individual or nation are judged by the character of the motive." The book was banned before it could even be published. However, Sampath writes that it was smuggled in India with false covers. It served as an important book for revolutionaries across India.

Vikram Sampath argues that during this time Europe was emerging as the hotbed for several anti-colonialist as more liberal laws were in place here

From the Book



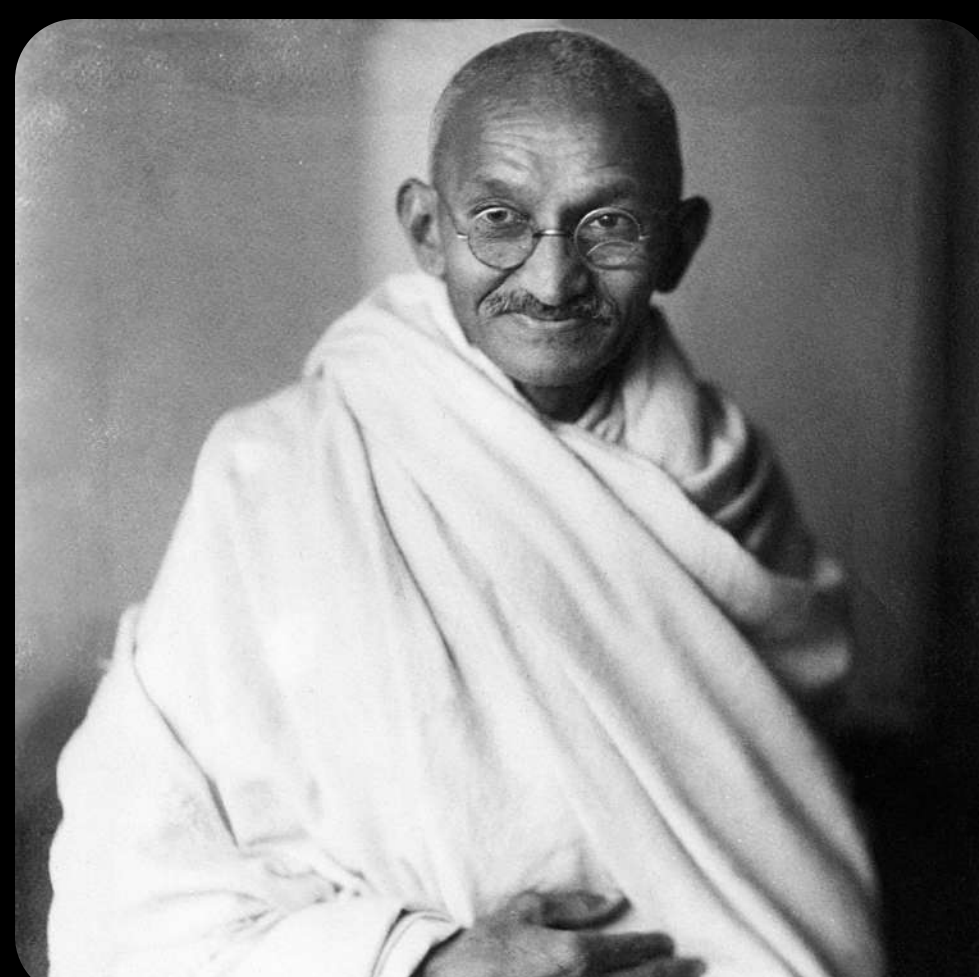
Vikram Sampath is an Indian Historian and the author of four acclaimed books. Vikram was awarded the Sahitya Akademi's first Yuva Puraskar in English literature and the ARSC International Award for Excellence in Historical research in New York for his book on Gauhar Jaan.

The Cellular Jail was a colonial prison in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, India. The prison was used by the British government for the purpose of exiling political prisoners to the remote archipelago. Many notable independence activists, including Vinayak Damodar Savarkar were imprisoned here during the struggle for India's independence.



The plaque erected in 1985 by Greater London Council at 65 Cromwell Avenue, Highgate, London to commemorate the Indian patriot and philosopher Vinayak Damodar Savarkar. He lived there from June 1906 until July 1909, when it was known as India House.

Interestingly, Savarkar was not at loggerheads with Mahatma Gandhi, as the common perception holds. Both of them enjoyed such a good rapport that Gandhi referred to him as “bhai (brother)” in a letter he wrote from Sevagram on 22 March 1945.



as compared to colonies under the Empire.

Soon, the activities of India House came under the radar of Scotland Yard. In 1909, Sampath argues that the Yard regularly sent reports to its Indian counterpart, the Department of Criminal Intelligence about “Indian agitators ” as per British agencies. During this time, Vinayak received the sad news of his only son passing away and his elder brother being arrested on the charges under Section 124 A, sedition and Section 121, aiding abetting treason against the king. On 8th June 1909, Babarao , was sentenced to transportation for life in Andamans..

Madan Lal Dhingra assassinated Sir William Hutt Curzon Wylie on 1st July 1909. Sampath in the book provides information regarding the assassination and how some members of the Indian community in London conveyed condolences to Mrs Wylie while Dhingra’s own family disowned him. Sampath quotes Madan Lal Dhingra’s statement in which he asserts that “Just as Germans have no right to occupy this country (England), English people have no right to occupy India”. Dhingra was sentenced to death by hanging on 17th August. Mahatma Gandhi in criticism of Dhingra wrote “I must say that those who believe and argue that such murders may do good to India are ignorant men indeed.”

Sampath suggests that for the progress of the Indian Council Act popularly known as Morley-Minto Reforms that legitimized the election of Indians to various legislative councils some credit can be attributed to revolutionary movement as well. In the aftermath of Curzon Wylie's assassination, India House was closed.

The Journey Back To Motherland

On 21st December 1909, Nashik's District Collector Arthur Mason Tippet Jackson was assassinated by Anantrao Laxman Kanhere and his comrades Krishnaji Gopal Karve and Vinayak Narayan Deshpande who all happened to be members of Abhinav Bharat. All three of them were hanged on 19 April 1910 and their bodies were cremated in Thane creek.

Sampath writes that a warrant was issued against Vinayak, charging him with five offences, waging of war or abetting the waging of war against the king, procuring and distributing arms in London thus abetting the murder of Mr. Jackson, delivering seditious speeches, etc. The speeches that Vinayak gave before coming to London from January to May 1906 were treated as seditious and used against him in which he gave the call to "cast of foreign yoke through armed struggle." On 12th May 1910, the judge ruled that Vinayak must be sent to India and face trial there. Vikram Sampath gives the readers a glimpse into the works of poet Savarkar, he has translated a number of Vinayak's poems from

Marathi and has beautifully presented them. While departing from England, Vinayak wrote the "Farewell Poem" some lines of the poem are :

prisoners were kept in the jail. The details of cruelties inflicted on prisoners are unsettling for any reader who values human rights. Vikram Sampath writes

**Our Mother India, a beacon light Humanity
to guide,
Oh martyred saints and soldiers, do
awake!
The battle is won for which you fought and
fell!
Till then, oh Friends! Farewell! Farewell!
(Sampath, 2019, p218)**

In India he was tried in the Nasik Conspiracy case of which a detailed account is presented in the book. However, on 30 January 1911, the court found Vinayak guilty and he was sentenced for transportation for life to Andamans. The life sentence in England was 14 years but in British Indian, it meant 25 years as Sampath observes. Manu S. Pillai in his book review of the same book rightly observes that no matter whatever we may feel about Savarkar today, he did suffer for his country and lost his youth in the process, something that Sampath argues very strongly in the book.

Life in Andamans: Saazae-Kalapani

Vinayak was deported to Andamans on 25 June 1911. He was taken to Cellular jail. Sampath details the inhuman conditions in which

that there were 12000 convicts by the early twentieth century in the Andamans, out of which 3000 were freedom fighters of the 1857 war, members of Manipur royal family after the Anglo-Manipur war of 1891, etc.

The absence of lavatories troubled Vinayak most. Vinayak wrote in his memoir My Transportation for Life that "The prisoners had to control the demand of nature, of hours together for want of these arrangements in the cell itself. Morning, noon, and evening - these were the only hours when prisoners were let off for this purpose at the stated time only." Rotis served were burnt or half baked. Sampath writes that prisoners were tied like *Kohlus*, bullocks, with oil grinding machines. Both Savarkar brothers were housed

in Cellular Jail.

Winds of change began from 1914-15, as Vinayak with the superintendent's permission started a library in Cellular Jail with more than 2000 books. Sampath analyses Vinayak's mercy petitions. Being a Lawyer, Vinayak used the process of petitioning to free himself from prison. He utilized all available options. He petitioned the government to release him by declaring support for constitutionalism and non-violence but Vikram Sampath argues that "they were a mere tactical ruse to secure a release." While A.G. Noorani argues that mercy petitions were a sign of Vinayak's cowardice. Looking at things from a practical angle, one can observe that the cruelties inflicted in Cellular Jail were bad enough to compel most humans to take recourse to legal mercy petitions if they can. Why would somebody let go of a legal opportunity to free oneself from prison?

While Barin Ghosh and some revolutionaries were released from Jail on clemency grounds, the Savarkar brothers and especially, Vinayak were not released as the government feared that releasing them would set Maharashtra ablaze, observers Vikram Sampath. On 26 May 1920, Gandhiji wrote an article titled Savarkar Brothers and argued a case for their release. In May 1921, the Bombay government was weighing prospects of closing cellular prison, thus it decided to shift the Savarkar brothers to one of the jails in India. Babarao was

was released later from Sabarmati Jail and Vinayak was shifted from Ratnagiri Jail to Yeravada Jail in 1923. The authorities were contemplating Vinayak's conditional release from prison in 1924.

The Political Philosophy of Vinayak Savarkar

Vikram Sampath in this biography of Vinayak Savarkar also gives us a glimpse into his political philosophy especially in chapter eleven titled "Who is a Hindu?" and Chapter twelve titled "Interpretation of Thoughts." Vikram Sampath writes "that Hindu did not mean someone merely who followed the religion, he was primarily a citizen – either in himself or through his forefathers who had revered this land as their motherland." (Sampath, 2019, p.412) Vinayak Savarkar's concept of Pitrubhumi (fatherland) and Punyabhumi (holy land) also raises some doubts in the minds of modern readers. Why should the location of somebody's holyland determine their right to citizenship on their ancestral land? However, Vinayak Savarkar's concept of Hindutva is much more extensive and elaborate with a lot more complexities.

Sampath argues that Vinayak despised the caste system right from his childhood. Vinayak in his essay "The Seven Shackles of Hindu Society" which has been translated by Vikram Sampath in his book argues that Vedic literature must become accessible to all, he also argues that untouchability is a sin and a blot on humanity. Vinayak also wrote that *Samudrabandhi* or the belief that crossing seas led to the loss of caste was diminishing trade and

educational opportunities for the countrymen. He was also against Shuddhibandi. He writes that "The folly of disallowing reconversions to Hinduism is a self-destructive one."

Some people may not agree with Vinayak's views on the modernisation of Muslims. As a reader one recognises that here he presents an oversimplification of the process that was much more complex. Regarding inter-caste marriage, he argues that "Instead of demonizing such marriages, they must be honoured." Mentioning his thoughts on cows, he writes that cows and bullocks are one of the most beneficial animals but he also recognizes that "it is her usefulness that makes cows worthy of worship." Vinayak argues that "a cow is an object of utility for the human and not the vice versa." (Sampath, 2019, p 430).

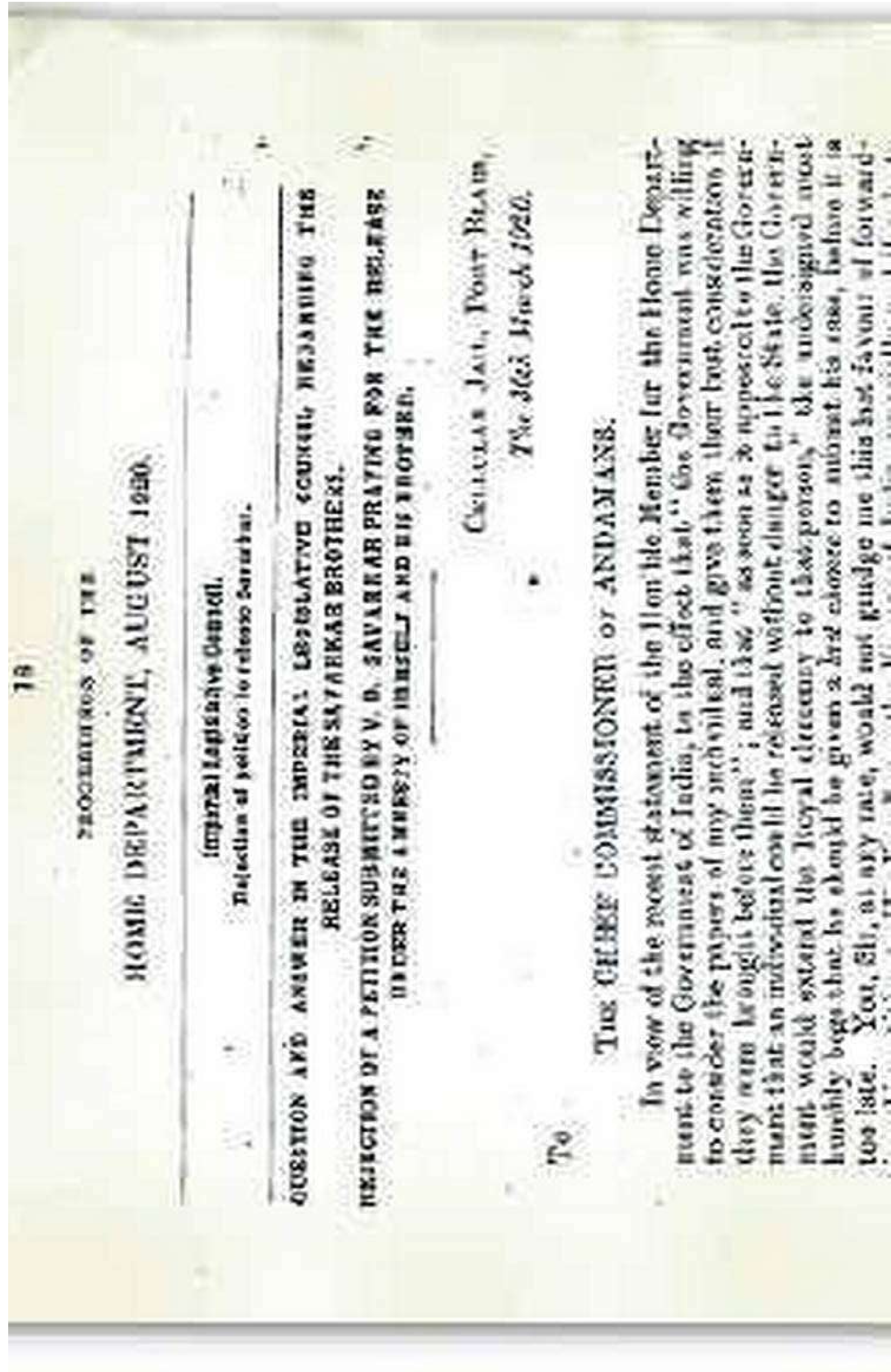
Vinayak Damodar Savarkar was released from prison in the January of 1924 on two conditions: first, that he would reside within Ratnagiri district and would not go beyond its limit without the government's permission and second, that he will not engage in any manner of political activities without the consent of government for five years, such as extension being renewable at government's discretion (Sampath, 2019, p 441). Surajkumar Thube, in his review of the same book, writes and I quote "The book largely

focuses on showcasing anecdotal information and some rare public participation records rather than providing a critical analysis of Savarkar's theoretical oeuvre." Volume two of Vikram Sampath's biography of Vinayak Savarkar titled "Savarkar: A Contested Legacy " has been recently released which discusses the more controversial aspects of Vinayak Savarkar's life.

Conclusion

I intend to end this book review with a personal tale. During my graduation, while studying Indian Political Thought, our Professor often advised us two things: one, that while reading political thought of any historical figure, do not export categories of the present on the past and second, to grasp Indian intellectual history in a better way always make sure, that you read as widely as you can, analyze what's written and if you wish, subject it to scathing criticism based on facts.

I would follow my professor's advice of reading more widely before arriving at any conclusion and would request the readers of this book review to do the same. As far as Vikram Sampath's book on Savarkar is concerned; it is an interesting read and a welcome addition to the scholarship on Vinayak Damodar Savarkar. ■



Savarkar's Mercy Petition

In Memorium

Kalyan Singh

1932-2021

By Vikram Bana



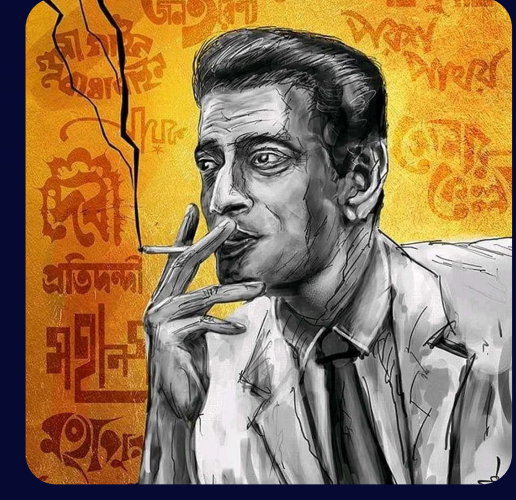
The former two times Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh and Governor of Rajasthan Kalyan Singh passed away aged 89 on Saturday night (21 August 2021) following multi-organ failure and sepsis at the Sanjay Gandhi Postgraduate Institute of Medical Sciences (SCPGI), Lucknow. His health had been deteriorating since the last few months and he was admitted to hospital on July 4th. Kalyan Singh will always be remembered as one of the prime faces and pioneers of the Ram Temple movement who dedicated his entire life to serve the cause of constructing the grand structure dedicated to Lord Shri Ram in Ayodhya at Ram Lalla's birthplace. He was the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh when the Babri masjid structure was demolished in the year 1992 and had to resign from the Chief Ministership of the state following events after demolition and President's rule was imposed on the same day the Babri masjid was demolished.

Kalyan Singh was born to a family in the Lodhi community in the Aligarh district of the erstwhile United provinces of the British Raj India in the year 1932. He had been an active member of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) since his school days and later on became an active politician. In 1967, he became an MLA from the Atrauli constituency of Uttar Pradesh as a member of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh from which later on the Bharatiya Janata party emerged.

Kalyan Singh enjoyed considerable support among the OBC community in Uttar Pradesh which was seen as a considerable problem by some upper caste members of the BJP. This along with a few other reasons led to his departure from the party and thus a new party known as

the Rashtriya Kranti Party (RKP) emerged. Kalyan Singh returned to BJP in the year 2004 and was given the responsibility of state level election committee of the Bharatiya Janata party for 2004 general elections. Kalyan Singh again left the BJP in 2009 following spats within the party and contested Lok Sabha election from Etah constituency of Uttar Pradesh as an independent candidate and emerged victorious. He formed the Jan Kranti Party in January 2010, claiming it to be a Hindutva-oriented party. Kalyan Singh returned back to the Bharatiya Janata Party in 2014 and was made the national vice president of the party. His Jan Kranti party merged into BJP in 2013. Kalyan Singh served as the governor of Rajasthan from 2014 to 2019 and became the first governor of Rajasthan to serve a full term in the last 52 years of the state. As Rajasthan Governor Kalyan Singh discontinued the "ceremonial/tradition/protocol" guard of honour accorded to his office during his arrival and departure from Raj Bhawan, and during the arrival and departure from districts. He also ordered that the Governor be addressed Hon'ble instead of His Excellency which was a sign of colonial tradition and thus eliminated the usage of the term.

Kalyan Singh may had been part of controversies throughout his political career, especially after the kickdown of Ram Janmabhoomi movement but his dream as of millions of other Indians of having a Ram Mandir built at Ayodhya at Shree Ram's birthplace has come true and will remain his most important legacy.



Book Review:
Memoirs of Satyajit
Ray

Peeyash Das

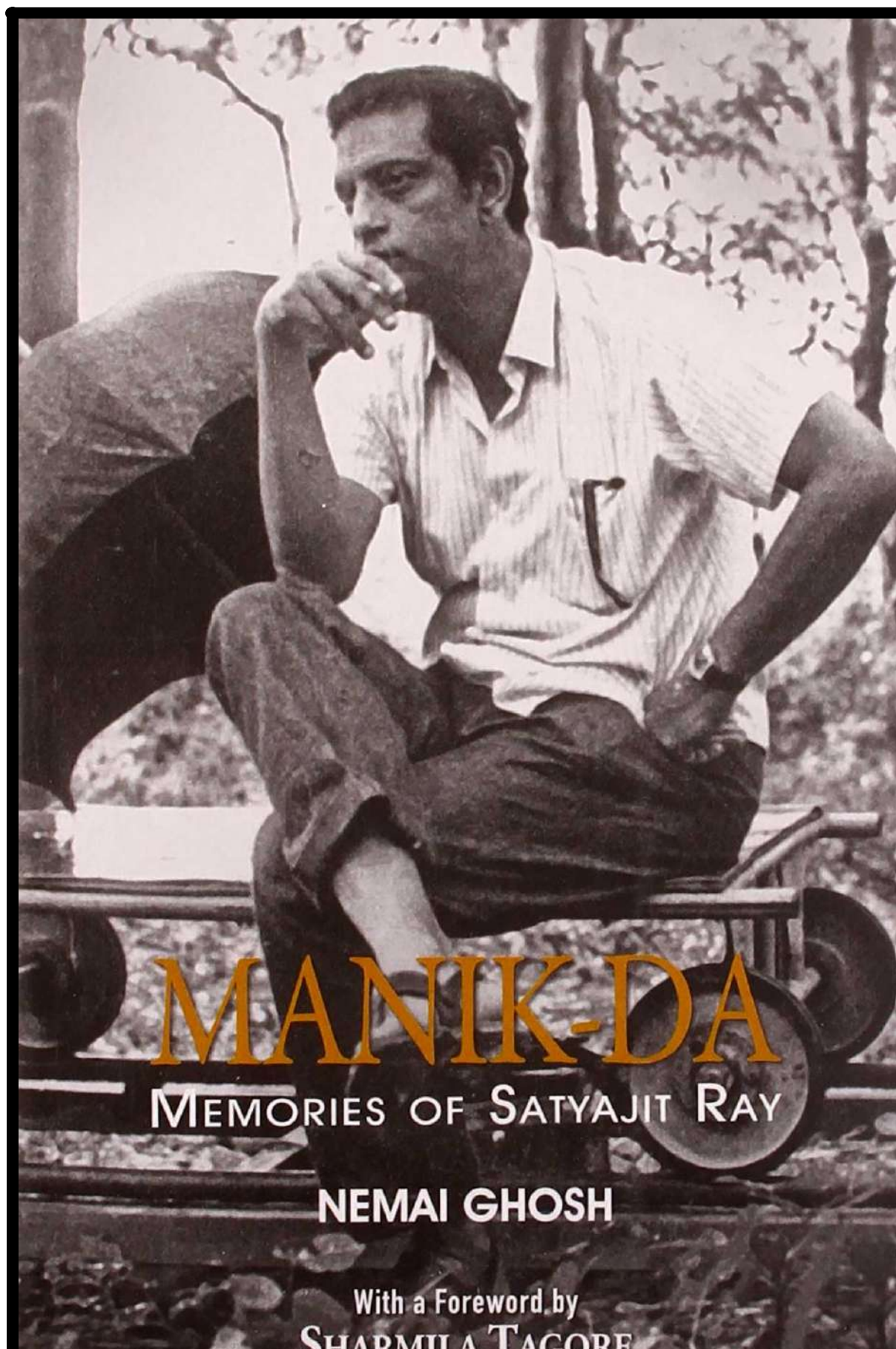
Pg 92



ART & PHILOSOPHY



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Memoirs of Satyajit Ray

by Nemai Ghosh

Peeyash Das

★★★★☆
(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*

Endearingly referred to as Manik Da by his intimates, Satyajit Ray was a man of charismatic persona who transformed the lives of those he crossed paths with. One such individual was Nemai Ghosh, best known for his photographs of Satyajit Ray and stills from his films. Ghosh had a long-standing association with Ray and he has managed to immortalise Ray through his photography. Through the book 'Manik - da' authored by Nemai Ghosh, he pays a homage to his friend, philosopher and guide Satyajit Ray who managed to discover a photographer extraordinaire in a theatre artist. Nemai Ghosh's 'Manik - da' is an attempt to help readers move beyond the magnanimity of ray and get a glimpse of an unpretentious man, immune to his accomplishments and keen on guiding amateurs in their field of work.

The book begins with Ghosh narrating his journey from being a theatre artist to becoming a photographer after he finds a lost camera and the process of his

friends helping him understand the nitty-gritty of the technicalities surrounding its functions. Ghosh beautifully intertwines his professional journey with his personal growth, accrediting Ray for making him the man he was and for building a photographer out of him. Through the course of the book, Ghosh reiterates the fact that he cannot separate photography from Ray, and the readers can see the respect and love that Ghosh had for him.

The non-fiction manages to grab the attention of the readers through captivating anecdotes, for instance, how Ghosh began his career under the guidance of Ray, and how he urged Ray for a payment of at least a rupee in desperation to be recognised as a professional photographer. The book is sprinkled with rare and insightful photographs that manage to keep alive in the mind of the readers the memories of Satyajit Ray. The book is a detailed and lucid translation from the Bengali original, with a foreword from Sharmila Tagore, a friend of Ray and Ghosh who effectively manages to enlighten the readers about the chemistry between the two and hints

at what to expect from the book.

Sharmila Tagore may be all praises about this book, but these 107 pages work fails to be seamless as various episodes from Ray's and Ghosh's days together begin and end abruptly leaving the readers bemused. Some of the book's essence is lost in translation and the readers are prescribed to read the words that Ghosh penned himself. Many words have been written and many papers have been published on Ray as a creator who managed to bring the attention of the world to Indian cinema and carved a niche in film making. However, in all these works 'Manik - da' stands out as the sole work which attempts to bring forward the man behind the mask of a director who should be applauded, and it would be interesting to see how a man with his camera lens pierced through the solemn Satyajit Ray to find a jovial Manik da in him.

ECONOMY & SPORTS, HEALTH



**Indian Football:
Alive or Dead?**

**Aman
Choudhary**

Pg 94



**Circular Econoy:
Towards Economic
Sustainability**

Khushi Chugh

Pg 99



**The Mental Agony of
Online Shift**

Mayank Gangwani

Pg 101

Indian Football: Alive or Dead?

Aman Choudhary



Recently India defeated Bangladesh in the joint FIFA World Cup 2022 and AFC Asian Cup 2023 qualifiers on June 7, 2021, at the Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium, Doha. Talisman Sunil Chhetri struck twice in the second half to hand India its first win. It turned out that this was one of India's worst World Cup qualifiers in years. Although India was already out of contention for a berth in the World Cup next year but remained in the reckoning for a place in the 2023 Asian Cup. This win in the 'World Cup qualifiers' came after six years. Of course, it was a great moment for us Indians but it also shifted our focus on the word '6-years'. Six long years!!! Why can't a country of roughly 1.39 billion people which is the 2nd most populous country in the world, produce a good strength of football players?

This is the same country that won the 1962 Asian games and was once known as the "Brazilians of Asia." But how did India, once a Golden team which dominated Asian football, transformed into a team which is now struggling to even register a single win at the qualifiers? How and why did this happen? Let us take a look at all the aspects related to Indian football's history as well as its shortcomings.

The Bittersweet Journey of Indian Football

The roots of football in India are traced back to the mid-19th century when it was introduced by the British soldiers in the army, probably to unify it. It was due to the efforts of Nagendra Prasad Sarbadhikari (a Bengali movie 'Golondaaj' is all set to be released this year based on

Nagendra's life with Dev as the lead actor), known as the Father of Indian football, and a teenager at that time due to whose efforts football spread in India. Soon clubs were established, among which Calcutta FC was the first in 1872 and others like Mohun Bagan, Dalhousie Club, RB Ferguson, and Sovabazar came into existence. Gradually, Calcutta became the hub of football in India. The Indian Football Association was also formed in 1893 and several tournaments cropped up. Gladstone Cup, Trades Cup, and Cooch Behar Cup were among the first tournaments that cropped up. The Durand Cup and IFA Shield were started in the late nineteenth

century. The first major success was perceived by Mohun Bagan in 1911 as it won the IFA shield, becoming one of the first Indian teams to win a major national football tournament. These club tournaments gave impetus to the formation of the Indian national team (with Indian origin players) and the national team started touring various other Asian nations like Japan, Indonesia, and Australia for international friendly matches in the 1930s. Not only this but other national teams like that of China also started touring India too around this time. As a direct result of the success of the Indian national team and the Indian clubs, the AIFF (All India Football Federation) was formed in 1937. The phase of 1930-1950 was indeed remarkable in the development of football in India. The London Olympics in 1948 was India's first main global event, where by and large a discoloured Indian team participated. The crowd greeted as well as appreciated them for their sporting spirit. After that, India also got an opportunity to play in the 1950 FIFA World Cup when some other nations took their names back and India qualified automatically. But India wasn't able to play at the WC due to various onerous and pecuniary reasons, which haunts us to date. After that, the Indian side never performed well at the qualifiers for the FIFA World Cup. After the 1950 WC spectacle, India won the Gold at the 1951 Asian games defeating Iran in the final. From this moment, the so-called 'Golden Age' of Indian football started (the Golden Age is regarded to be

from 1950-1962). After the triumph at the Asian games, the Indian team didn't perform well at the 1952 Olympics at Helsinki but left its mark at the 1956 Melbourne Olympics by finishing at the 4th position. It was after this tournament that India gained some limelight on the world stage. In 1962, India again won the gold in football at the Asian Games. India even made its mark in various tournaments like the Merdeka Cup and Quadrangular tournament and Indian clubs also performed well in their respective tours and tournaments. The National team won innumerable titles in this era under the guidance of Syed Abdul Rahim, who was the national coach. But after his death in the mid-1960s, the Indian team started to lag a bit in its form. After the summer games at Rome in 1960, India never qualified for the Olympics and also performed direly at the Asiad. Despite the poor performance of the national side, the Indian clubs were still on the track and won back-to-back IFA shields defeating foreign clubs in the 1970s. 1977 was indeed a special year in Indian football history as the legendary Pele or 'O Rei do Futebol' (The King of Football), as he was exquisitely known, came to India for an exhibition match for his club New York Cosmos with Mohun Bagan. It ended in a draw at the Eden Gardens stadium in Kolkata. After living through the golden age of the 1950s and 1960s, Indian football went through a sterile stage in the 80s and 90s and gradually lost its bridgehead among the top Asian teams. Although, the only positive outcomes were that the Nehru Cup was started by AIFF in 1982. It was a tournament in which international teams from all over the world participated. The National Football League (NFL) was also

started in 1996 and continues to date, as the I-League. The Indian side also dominated the SAFF (South Asian Football Federation) Championship from 1984.

After the 1990s, frequent ups and downs were seen in the Indian football world. After 2000, India won the silver medal at the Afro-Asian games but lost all other major tournaments including the SAFF championship, LG cup, World Cup qualifiers, and also the Asian cup qualifiers. India again experienced a little revival after winning back-to-back Nehru Cups in 2007 and 2008, for the first time in its history. It also won the AFC Challenge Cup in 2008 and also qualified for the 2011 AFC Asian Cup. Indian club, Dempo also made history in the 2008 AFC Cup by reaching the semi-finals and East Bengal FC also won the ASEAN Club Championship in 2003.

In 2011, India crashed out of the Asian Cup in the group stages after losing all the matches. The team performed well at the 2012 AFC Challenge qualifiers but again were knocked out in the world cup qualifiers. They also experienced poor results in the Caribbean tour. Later in 2013, to revive the club football, ISL (Indian Super League) - a brand new league was started with 8 teams participating. It expanded to encapsulate 10 teams later on. Mohun Bagan, in 2016, qualified for the 2nd round of AFC Champions

League qualifiers and became the first-ever Indian club to do so. India also hosted the FIFA under-17 World Cup in 2017 and would also host the FIFA U-17 Women's World cup in 2022. Although it wasn't able to get through the group stage, this was the first time India participated in the finals of a FIFA-organised world tournament. Indian U-20 side also defeated Argentina U-20 in 2018 at the Cotif Cup. Looks like India has a much brighter future in football.

Women's football underwent somewhat similar experiences to their male fellows. They started playing in the '70s. Various popular clubs like Mohun Bagan and East Bengal started women's clubs around 2000. Local leagues also took off. The women's national team performed quite well at the AFC Women's Asian cup editions around the 1980s. Many Indian players got recognition on the Asian and world stage. But despite these good performances, the women's team was pegged back after the '90s. Complaints started arising against the AIFF for the poor treatment of women's football concerning that of the men. The below-par assistance by the AIFF towards the national team became quite perceptible and the coverage was confined to the state and local level. One of the barriers to the sport growing was and still is, that many women experienced prejudice for playing the sport. The poor performances and crushing defeats further added to the problems leading to the deterioration of women's football. Although little efforts in recent

times by the concerned government bodies has led to little recognition of the sport among girls but it is well perceptible that women's football has not had the analogous edge in the sport that the men's game has had, and also has not become as pervasive in the country as its male counterpart.

Indian football journey was an alloyed one, experiencing ups and downs apart from the golden uproar in the starting. But what all led to these ups and downs? How did a country which was counted amongst the football powerhouses in Asia get derailed and experienced a big downfall? There were and still are

The roots of football in India are traced back to the mid-19th century when it was introduced by the British soldiers in the army, probably to unify it.

various problems that led to its deterioration.

Reasons why football got undermined in India

Despite being the most favored sport in the world, football was hardly cared about in India after the '60s and '70s. The question that interests an ordinary Indian - why is football undermined in India and not so popular? What went wrong with the sport after such a bright start in the early years? How did football manage to seduce the entire world but not India? Is it the fault of the sports bodies or just the preference of the population? Many sport pundits and journalists have come up with their own research to decipher the possible

causes. There are various reasons as to why football in India got pegged back after the 1960's Golden era. Let's take a look at the main reasons that limited the popularity and spread of football in India.

- **The wave of Cricket:** One of the main reasons football has been neglected in India is the unparalleled popularity of cricket in the country. India is a country that ingests, drowse, and lives cricket. Cricket is considered somewhat a religion and cricket players are considered as gods. From the moment India began to practice cricket, cricket established an emotional connection with us Indians. This connection rapidly expanded after India won the World Cup in 1983 and a 'cricket wave' swept over the country. That created a sensation and made us Indians pick up bats and balls to play cricket. Football has failed to establish such emotional connections in India, and the lack of understanding of the rules and regulations of the sport further makes it problematic for our people to establish a rudimentary connection. When cricket matches are played internationally between two or more countries, it is a matter of national pride. But this isn't the case with football in our country. Due to the low frequency

- of international matches between nations and club football being in a dominant position, it makes it difficult for people to pay attention to the sport.
- **Constant failure of the Indian national football team:** Over the years, the Indian cricket team has achieved considerable success and is one of the best in the industry, having won the World Cup twice (1983 and 2011). It is in stark contrast to the achievements of Indian football. On the other hand, the last time the Indian football team achieved great success was in the 1962 Asian Games, where they won the gold medal. In contrast, these stories are completely side by side. Cricket in India was a path to glory and fortune encompassing the hall of fame, but parallel to this, sports like football had a different tale to tell. In sports, popularity is usually directly proportional to the amount of success achieved. This is the reason why clubs like Real Madrid and FC Barcelona have a huge following on all of the continents. It is undeniable that the Indian soccer team failed to attract the interest of the multitude because it continued to fail over time. The quality of Indian football is substandard, further excluding the masses. Since 2015–17, India have not won any major titles but only won 3 trophies which includes friendly tournaments like Intercontinental Cup and

- SAFF cup. As a country, the public has high expectations that India will be able to participate in the World Cup. However, due to the low quality of soccer and the lack of outstanding performance in international competitions, ordinary Indians pay little attention to the Indian team.
- **Lack of funding and poor infrastructure:** The quality of Indian football, as discussed earlier, is substandard, further excluding the masses to follow it. Lack of funds and poor infrastructure has not helped the cause either. Compared to the BCCI and BAI (Badminton Association of India), the government and the All India Football Federation (AIFF) not only failed to improve the standard of the sport but also failed to nurture the capabilities of potential emerging players in different states in the recent years. The main reason that cricket and badminton are more popular is that the government, sports committees and associations, and other private organizations spend huge sums of money to provide world-class infrastructure and related facilities to these sports. Lack of funds is the main problem in football. This sport lacks funding, but people are not prepared to fund or sponsor the Indian team because of the poor quality of their game. The lack of media coverage is another problem related to the unpopularity of football in India. Just like in the case of a game of the Indian cricket team, it will be broadcasted on many TV channels, but if the game of the Indian football team is played, it

- will barely be broadcasted on one TV channel or none of the TV channels. Due to this less media coverage in India, cricket is the favorite of the masses. In cricket, the players are given higher salary contracts to play for their respective teams and franchises which is a stimulus for the players while the soccer players are given lesser salaried contracts to play due to which people are not interested to pursue football as their career. But it is difficult to regard the lack of infrastructure as the only reason for the lack of football culture. The lack of suitable opportunities has also increased the problem of the diffusion of Indian football.
- **Limited regional spread:** Although this beautiful sport is most popular in the world, except it's following in the states of West Bengal, Goa, Kerala, and the Northeast, it is almost unpopular in India, especially the northern Hindi heartland. This regional difference can easily be seen in the Indian team as most of the players come from the aforementioned regions. There are Fernandes and Borges, Thapa, Gurung, and Bose, but no Aggrawal or Sharma or Kohli. Although games like East Bengal vs. Mohun Bagan are very popular in the



Winning celebrations by ATK in Hero Indian Super League 2019-20

Credits: AFP Photo

- Bengal region, they have failed to attract the national audience. The reason is that the quality of football is poor and people are not able to relate themselves with the essence of the "Bengal and Ghoti divide" of the competition. Only Bengalis can understand this rivalry, while the public prefers the talent and excellent derby of the El Classico or Derby d'Italia, or even the Manchester derby. Due to the culture and tradition, this beautiful sport is limited only to these certain areas, such as Kerala, Kolkata, Goa, and northeastern India, which further restricts the development of football in the whole country.

In addition to the reasons listed, there are many other reasons why football failed to become the

country's premier sport and wasn't able to regain the reputation it had in the 1960s. The only way to put the sport on the track is for all stakeholders to understand the importance and by contributing to the reconstruction of football. Through the efforts of all of them, football can regain its prominence and be tied with other sports across the country.

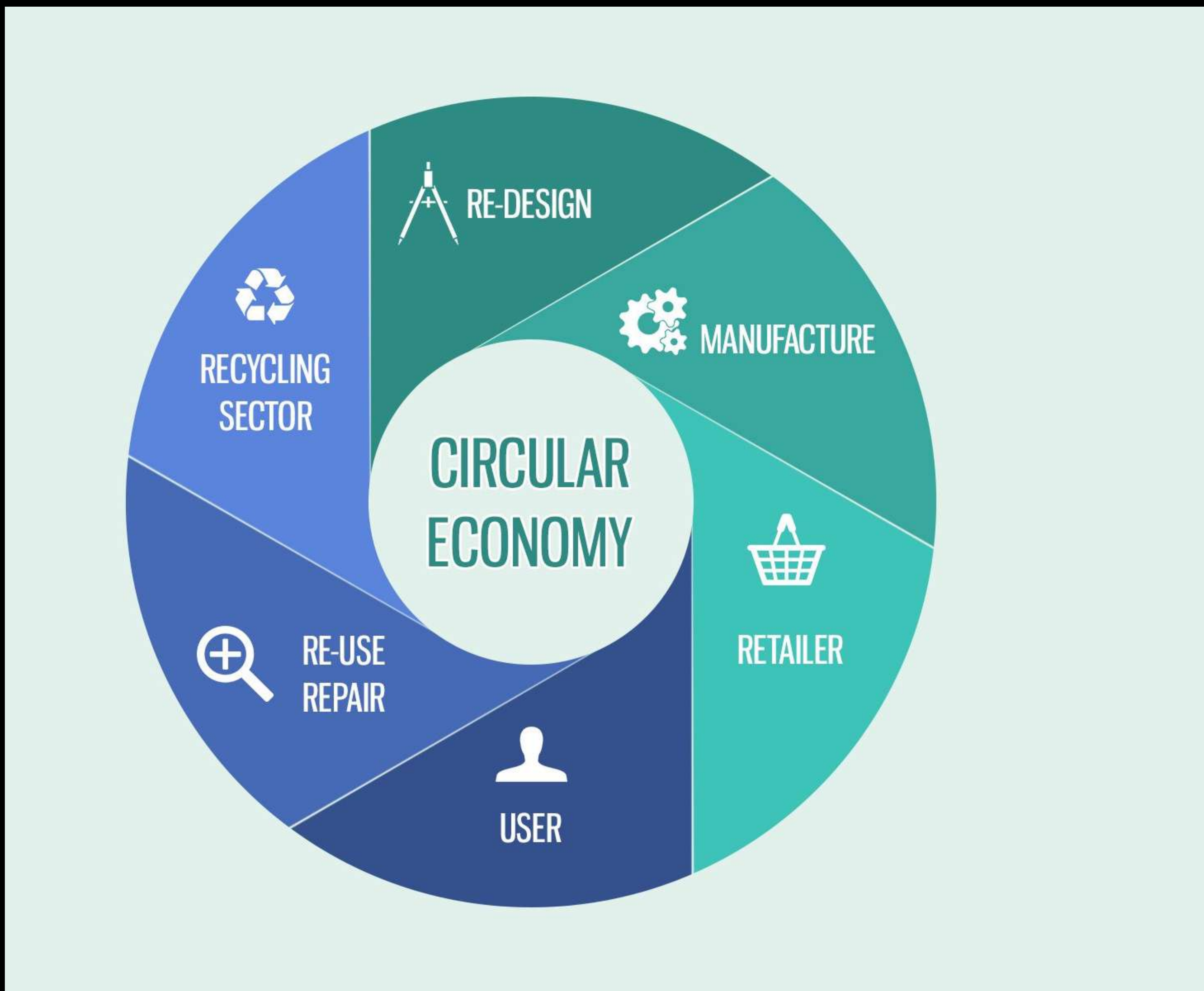
However, with the above points in mind, our attention should also be diverted towards the arrival of various reformed football leagues and the introduction of ISL tournaments in almost all major sports cities in India, the popularity gap between sports is narrowing. Second division leagues are also running in parallel. With the launch of football leagues such as the **Indian Super League (ISL)**, which not only attracts a large number of corporate funds but also leads significant improvement in infrastructure, we can hope for the

best. Strict measures must be taken at the grassroots level to promote world-class academies and encourage more and more children to take football as a career. Today, the country's youth are increasingly exposed to football and are building a positive awareness. Many football organizations and clubs have opened their youth academies and are trying to attract the younger generation to join the sport. Women's football has also started to gain some recognition nowadays and it is one of the important aspects where everyone has to look and also dispense similar support as they do for men's sport.

It feels dejected when Sunil Chhetri, one of the greatest footballers that India has ever produced, had to come forward to make an impassioned public plea before all the people of the country. "Abuse us, criticize us but please come to watch the Indian national team play", appealed the skipper. We should never let this kind of thing happen to any sport in the future. Even though I feel that each sport shall remain as better as the other, but the gap cannot be removed altogether. However, the gap can be reduced and would be reduced to the barest minimum within the near future by our support.



Circular Economy- The Key To Transitioning Towards Economic Sustainability



Khushi Chugh

Over the last 25 years, global resource extraction has risen significantly, from 40 billion tonnes in 1980 to 58 billion tonnes in 2005, representing a 45 per cent increase.

The globe has faced several environmental and ecological issues as a result of previously adopted economic mechanisms and development processes. In light of this, the article explains how the Circular Economy

appears as a powerful tool for initiating a process of long-term growth. According to the 2020 World Population Data Sheet, the global population is expected to grow from 7.8 billion in 2020 to 9.9 billion in 2050. With the existing human

population, the rapid rate at which it is growing, and the rate at which natural resources are being depleted, the question arises: Will the resources suffice or will scarcity of resources

lead to the irreparable and despairing end of the entire planet?

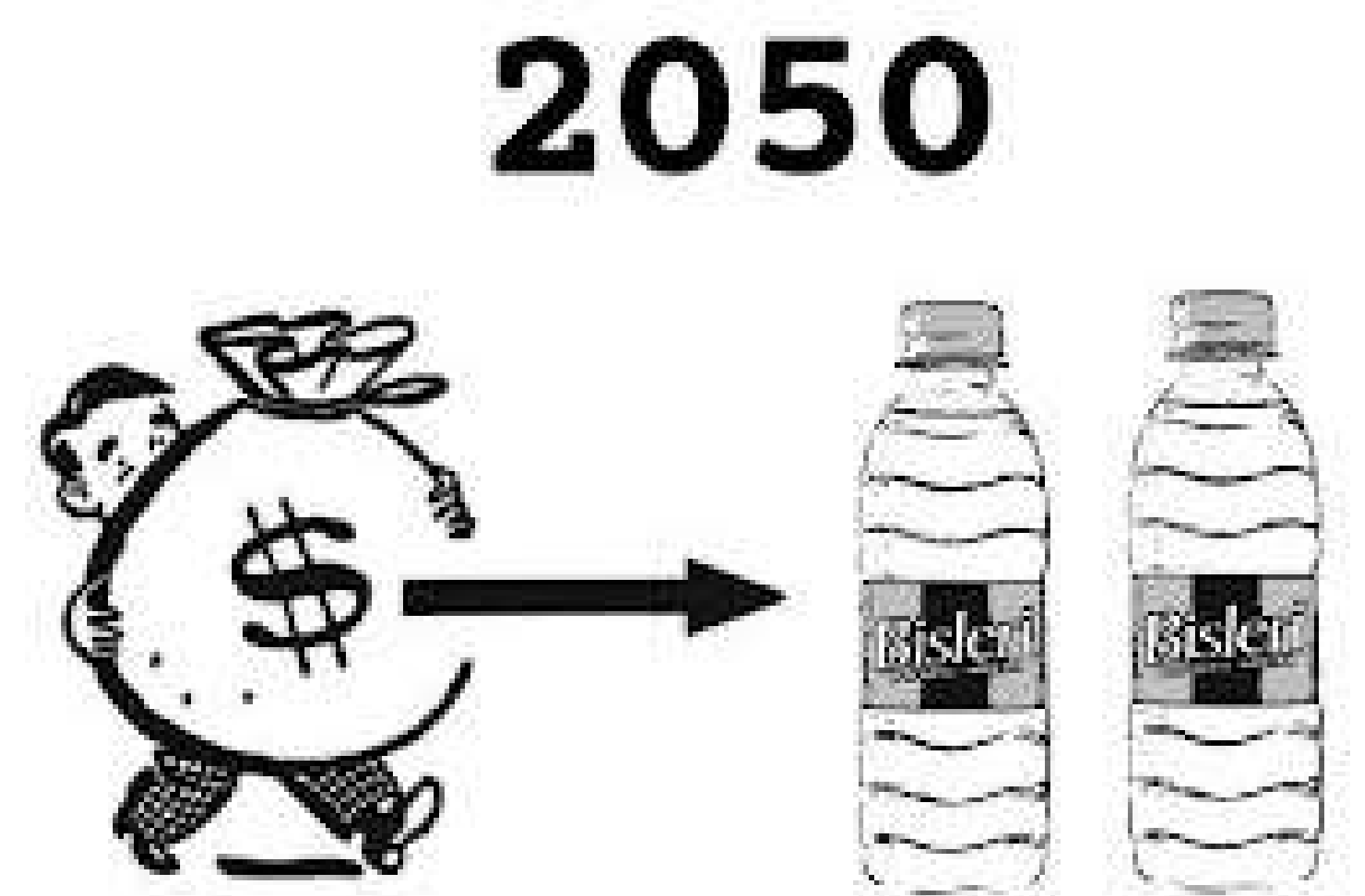
Adopting a circular economy is requisite for countries, corporations, and even humanity's long-term development. The circular economy is an economic concept that maximizes the use of natural resources. Each non-biodegradable substance is utilized, reused, recycled, and rebuilt to decrease the negative influence on the environment. Countries, on the other hand, are contemporarily practising linear economies. A *linear economy operates on the principle of "take-make-dispose."* The linear economic strategy entails gathering raw materials, transforming them into completed commodities, and distributing them to customers until they are collected as trash.

Over the last 25 years, global resource extraction has risen significantly, from 40 billion tonnes in 1980 to 58 billion tonnes in 2005, representing a 45 per cent increase. The present Linear Model produces too much waste and depletes too many resources to be sustainable. Furthermore, the linear economic model generates numerous tonnes of plastic.

These issues will be efficiently addressed by the circular economy.

- One of the core ideas of the circular economy is to design waste out of the items we generate and consume.

- The circular economy includes regenerative agricultural practices that restore soils as well as innovations like hydroponic gardening, which, along with reducing food waste and adopting sustainable diets, are critical to reducing malnutrition and eliminating hunger.
- By prolonging the lifetime of items, allowing them to cycle longer in the economy, and recovering their fundamental materials, the circular economy creates value throughout their entire lives.
- The circular economy offers a sterling potential for economic growth. It helps to create new, more sustainable jobs while also reducing reliance on non-renewable resources and the production of negative externalities.
- There are numerous circular economy solutions for the water and sanitation sectors that can provide safe drinking water and sanitation services to millions of people who currently lack access.
- New circular business models based on digital solutions, additive manufacturing such as 3D printing, and innovative logistics systems to close resource loops are vital for resilient and sustainable economies.
- Low-carbon circular mobility solutions that reduce urban air pollution and toxic waste and effluents from industrial activity can aid community health and well-being.
- Furthermore, by actively creating new job opportunities for women and recognising the critical role of informal sector workers in the circular economy, progress can



be made toward improving gender equality and reducing inequalities.

According to studies, a circular economy development path might deliver India yearly advantages of 40 lakh crore (US\$ 624 billion) in 2050 as compared to the current development path - a benefit comparable to 30% of India's current GDP. According to Patrick Schröder, the circular economy, a model for reducing waste and increasing the value of resources, has the potential to help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Several start-ups have developed that are beginning

to supply alternatives to non-biodegradable commodities to make the economy more circular. Tipa, an Israeli start-up, has developed a flexible packaging material that has the same technical features as traditional plastic but is 100% compostable. A French start-up, Algopack, is converting seaweed into furniture without the need for oil, pesticides, or fertilizers.

Not only businesses but also countries have begun to embrace the circular economy. The European Commission announced its Action Plan for fostering the circular economy in Europe in December 2015. In 2016, China became the first country to pass legislation requiring the adoption of a circular economy. The Spanish National Environment Congress (CONAMA) was held in Madrid in November 2016, and the circular economy was identified as one of the country's major environmental issues.

A paradigm shift is required to move from a linear to a circular economy. It necessitates novel business models that generate, collect, and deliver value based on resource efficiency, product usefulness, life extension, and materials flow cycle closure. The three circular business strategies: narrowing, slowing, and closing the loops, can help to accelerate the transition to long-term value creation.

- **Narrowing Loops-** This method calls for greater resource efficiency by using fewer resources per product. To put it another way, "do

more with less."

- **Slowing resource loops-** These strategies aim to lengthen the lives of products to slow down the flow of resources. It involves developing goods that are long-lasting, repairable, and manufacturable. It may imply investing additional resources that are eventually offset by the product's extended use cycle. Long-life product design, concentrating on design for attachment and trust or durability, and product life extension, focusing on ease of maintenance and repair, upgradability, or flexibility, are examples of the slowing loops approach.
- **Closing resource loops-** This technique closes the loop between post-use and production, resulting in a cyclical movement of resources from disposal to production, reducing waste. Recycling is the most well-known example of resource closure. Designing recyclable parts and items is one way to close material loops.

It is necessary to develop policies and encourage political, budgetary, and educational reforms to modify and improve the current production and consumption systems.

In a nutshell, a circular economy is a comprehensive approach that encompasses agriculture, energy, climate change, water, and sanitation. Indeed, combining circular economy methods with social justice considerations across all domains creates a unique framework for accomplishing the Sustainable Development goals. ■

The Mental Agony of the Online Shift

Mayank Gangwani

Education institutions are the giant pillars of any country's prosperity and growth. With India lurking at the doorstep of extreme poverty and unemployment, the role of educational institutions had become much more important. However, the predicament of global pandemic Covid-19 declared by WHO halted the shivering progress made by the world's youngest populous country, India. With the advent of online learning and teaching, educational institutions have been coping with an unfortunate pause of traditional teaching and classroom learning. The student community across the world has been facing mental issues and problems that affect them at the individual, interpersonal, and institutional levels. Nowadays, most students suffer from various mental health problems at the individual level, which affects student's physical, emotional, cognitive, and interpersonal operations. Several mental health problems like suicidal ideation, anxiety, and depression are common

among student communities in such times of treacherous Covid-19 outbreak. Mental health is a topic that is often overlooked by society as similarly in the classroom environment; it is not normal for someone to have mental health issues. In today's difficult situation, depression is prominent among youths in the form of several symptoms like disturbed mood, fatigue, low energy, sleep disorders, memory breakdown and impaired concentration, loss of motivation and social esteem, isolation, social withdrawal, homicidal and suicidal thoughts. In December 2019, for the first time, there was a registered case of the novel Coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2), which causes the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19), which appeared in Wuhan, China, and spread across the world. On March 11, 2020, COVID-19 announced a pandemic by World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom. The coronavirus is the largest public health emergency in the world, causing significant loss of life and extreme human suffering. With the fear of infection spreading to the entire campus and the students' native places, most prominent educational institutes and colleges have been shut for the entire year. The mental well-being of the student is worsening day by day. It is believed that the student community's continuous agony over their ongoing college education and contemplation about their bleak post-college endeavours causes them a high level of stress, anxiety, and sleepless nights. With the entire previous year of 2020 in

lockdown, students across the age have lost physical contact with their companions. Final year students in graduation have to celebrate their farewell in online mode resulting in a sense of misery. In the past, several researchers across the world have synchronised mental health problems on academic performance, retention capability, and graduation rates. In 1995, a study by Brackney and Karabenick, associated a high level of psychological distress with the academic performance of college students. Students with a high level of psychological distress have lower academic self-efficacy, improper utilisation of time management, and poor application of study resources. A similar study (Randall and Dobson, 1993) instigated psychological distress with impaired information processing skills, important for academic performance. Kessler instigated four types of disorders, namely anxiety, mood disorder, substance abuse, and conduct disorder. Emergency closures of schools and colleges amid the Covid-19 outbreak have left student communities to shift from classroom blackboard to online learning and teaching. According to a report by UNICEF, schools with more than 168 million children were closed for the entire year of 2020. Schools create a fostering environment to learn subjects and overall personality development through their plethora of exciting curriculum. As school children have the habit of learning in groups and jelling with their peers to develop a sense of cliquishness whereas in an online mode they are learning in isolation which leads to loss of interest and motivation among students in taking online classes. With a massive divergence gap in the digital divide often referred to as digital inequality and traditional

classroom learning shifted to online mode, around 468 million children globally could not seize remote learning. With poor bandwidth connectivity, the student's often failed to participate in classroom activities that lead to extreme pity and anguish. A recent report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on mental health discovered that a large number of 18 to 24-year-old students had encountered "suicidal thoughts" in the past month. As the Chicago School of Professional Psychology quoted that "Young people like to make plans for the future, and it's difficult to do that when they don't know how long this new way of life will last." Similarly, a study that mentioned students' experiences studying at Research University found that students are suffering from depression and anxiety at increasing rates compared to previous years. At times, the student community feels isolated and lonely due to restrictions in movement, and bereaved by the death of their close ones has upped the ante of mental dejectedness. The unstable home environment in terms of financial hardships and lack of normal routine worsened the sad plight of the student community. Like a famous saying, with great challenges, there come great opportunities. In the online domain, students have the opportunity to self-regulate

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die führende Stellung von Viscose Française und Givet-Izieux zeigt hieraus klar hervor. Nur wenig läßt sich über die in der dritten Spalte angegebenen Beteiligungen sagen. Zum Teil handelt es sich um ein System gegenseitiger Verschachtelung; die auch übrigens das Verkaufskontor selbst in Kunstfaserwerken beteiligt ist zum Beispiel die schweizerische Anilin- und Farbfabrikation.

Warenmärkte

Berlin, 26. Aug. Getreidegroßmarkt. Ankünfte im getreide kommen täglich an den Markt.

A BREACH OF PEACE





their work effectively and efficiently, which would assist them throughout their lives. Historically, educational institutions are viewed as mental health service providers. So it is the utmost responsibility of teachers and instructors to support their students in such tough times. They should pay attention to the issues and problems of students and should provide them solutions to deal with those problems. However, as evident from past studies, counselling, meditation, and yoga served as invaluable armour against mental health problems. The frequent practice of meditation and yoga helps young students to overcome anxiety and depression in these tough times. Counselling has a profound impact on personal well-being, academic performance, and retention rates. So it is of utmost importance for academic institutions to adopt mental health in their curriculum to be treated better. Everyone in the academic establishment should involve themselves in grooming students by providing extensive support, preventing hardships, and offering a wide range of opportunities to enable participation in good mental health practices to face such tough times. Numerous studies in the past have demonstrated the positive impact of counselling on students in achieving academic and personal goals and preventing any accidents and mishaps (Wilson, Mason, and Ewing, 1997). Counselling centres in academic institutions are the need of the hour. In today's disturbing environment, direct appointments for students in crisis, phone consultations, and video meetings could fill the void among the lonely hearts of students. Apart from the role of educational institutions, family members of students could also assist in good mental health by providing a nutrient-enriched diet, monitoring their routine and sleep schedule, regular communication, and playing stress buster games with them could do wonders for their mental well being. Lastly, education is like a ladder on which each step creates an opportunity to build a student's capability and potential that is the sine qua non of a country's success on the global stage. So to keep the zeal of educational institutions going, one must assist and monitor its students and their families as the current generation and India's future deal with the anxiety, confusion, and loss that this current pandemic Covid-19 has proposed. ■

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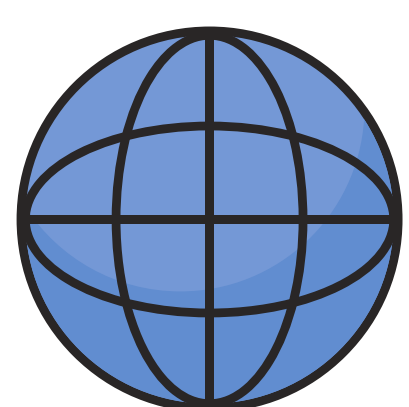
About Caucus

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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