

MARCH 2021 | ISSUE 4

THE PROBE

The Language Labyrinth

TRACING THE EVOLUTION AND POLITICISATION OF LANGUAGES



CAUCUS, HINDU COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY OF DELHI

A black and white photograph of a hand holding a fountain pen. The pen is silver with a black grip section. The nib is visible and pointed towards the bottom right. The background is a plain, light-colored surface.

*Write
for us.*

Send us your entries at
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P THE ROBE



The Language Labyrinth



How did so many languages come to be? How do they help us in understanding our past? How have languages evolved? What role does language play in modern politics?

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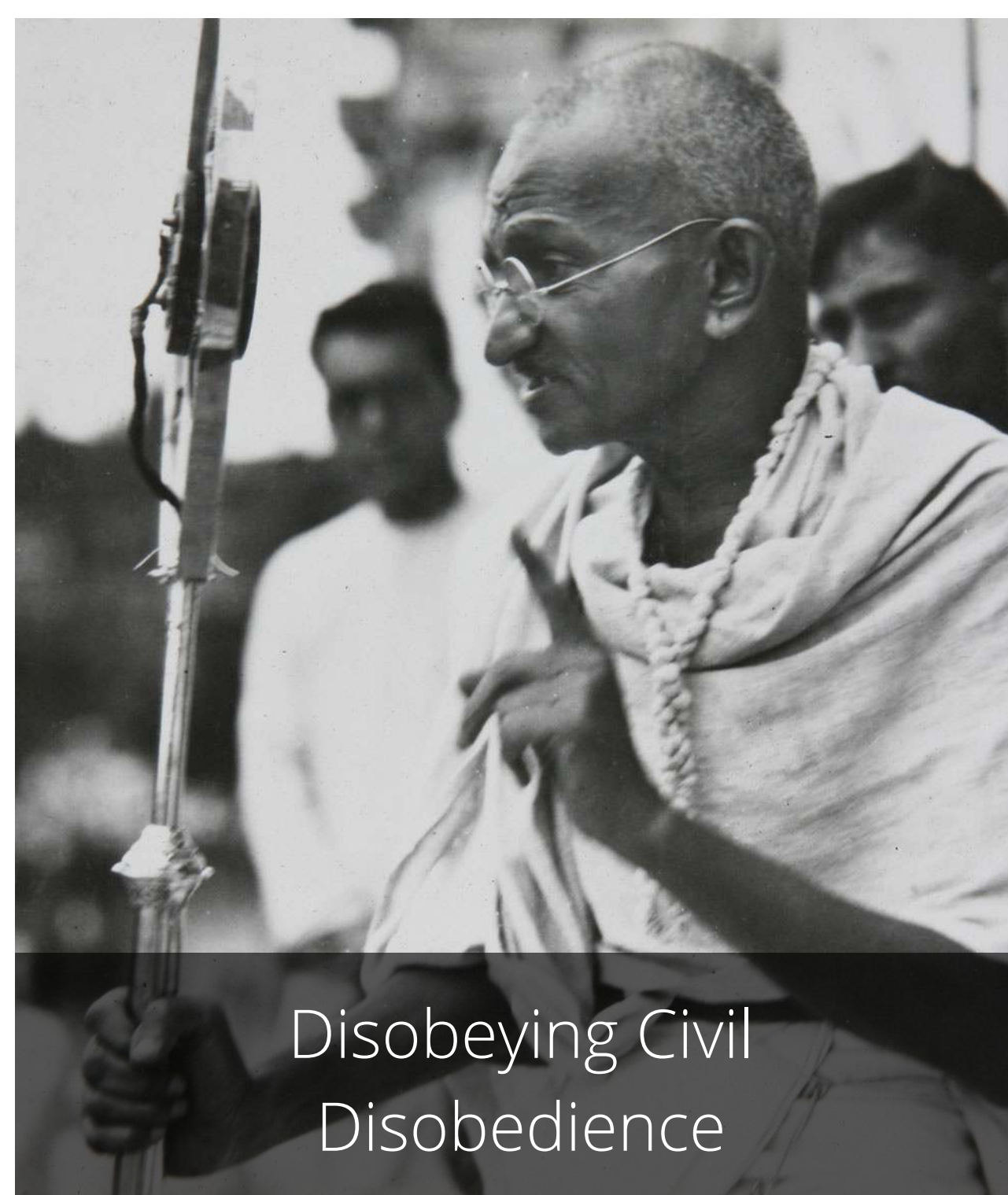


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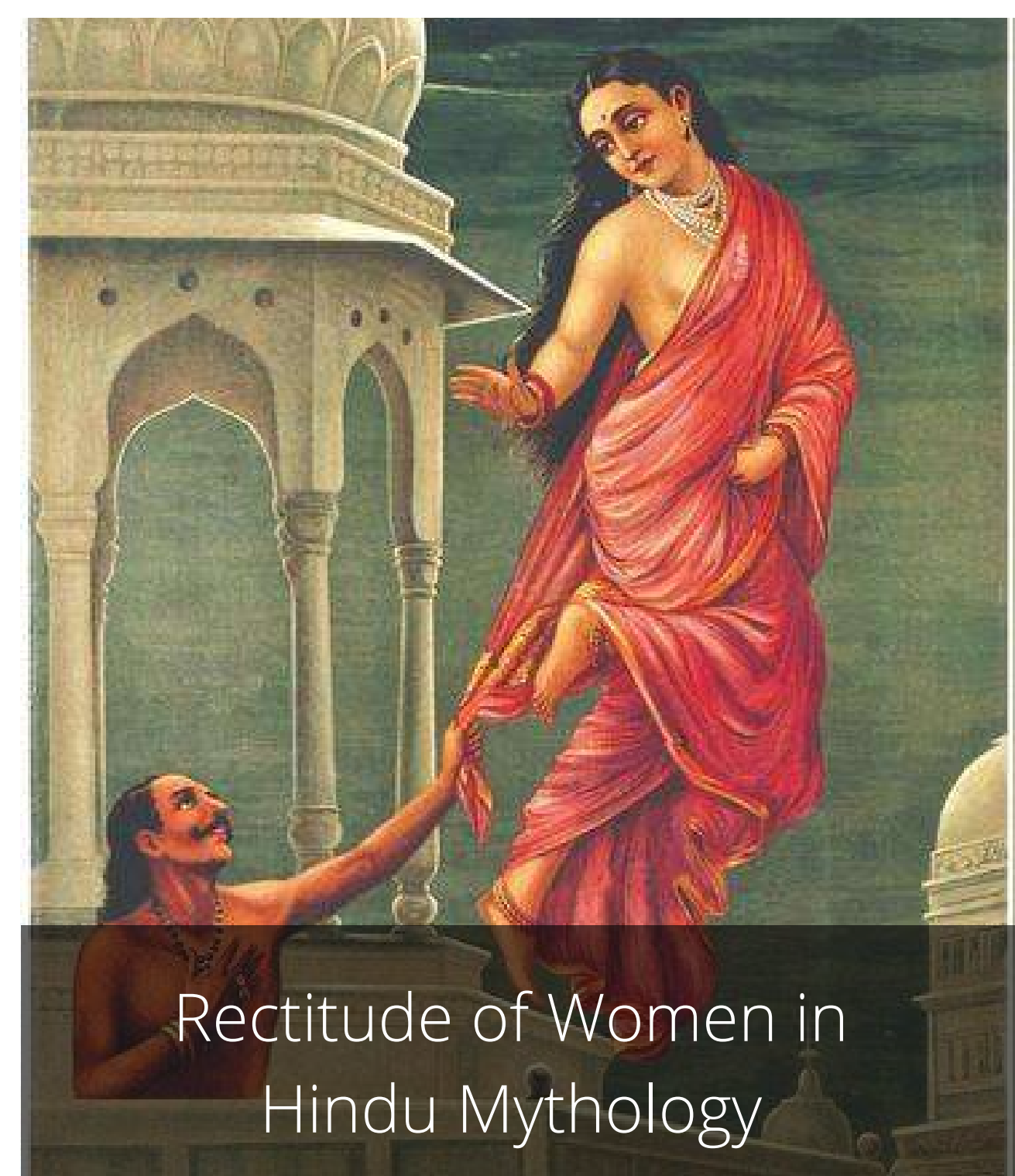


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Message from the team

Humbled by the overwhelming response to the third edition of The Probe, we bring to you the 4th and final edition of our newsletter for the current academic year. As we take on this mammoth task of establishing this publication, we have before us the challenge of maintaining and enhancing the impact that this 120-year old institution is characterised with. We, at Caucus, have always believed that given the right platform, students can produce powerful and creative pieces with unique voices. Not restricting this platform to students, we endeavour to engage with experts and working professionals to create an unprecedented chain of learning.

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

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

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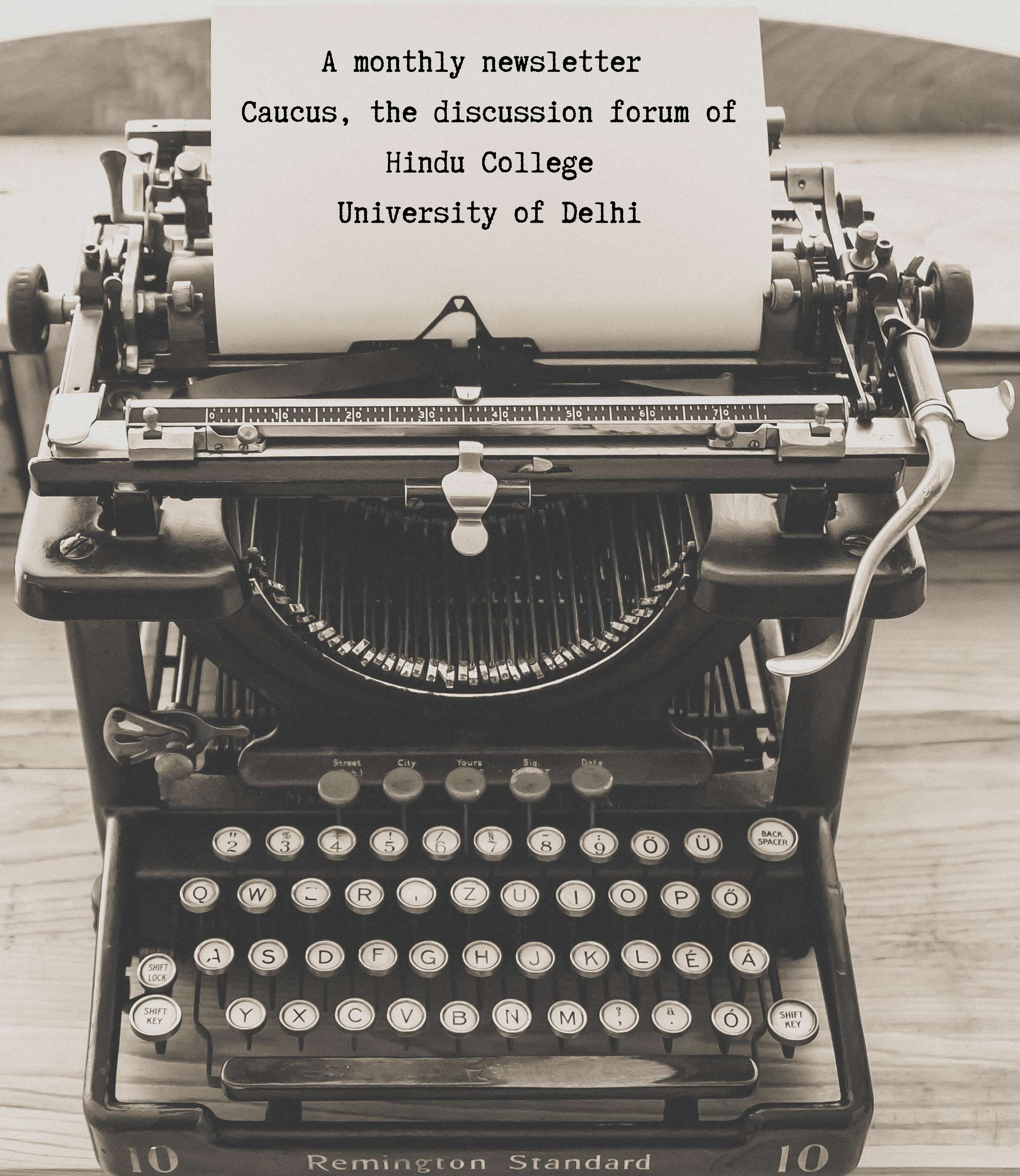
Cover Story- The Language Labyrinth

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Hindu College
University of Delhi



Changing Tides of Economic Diplomacy

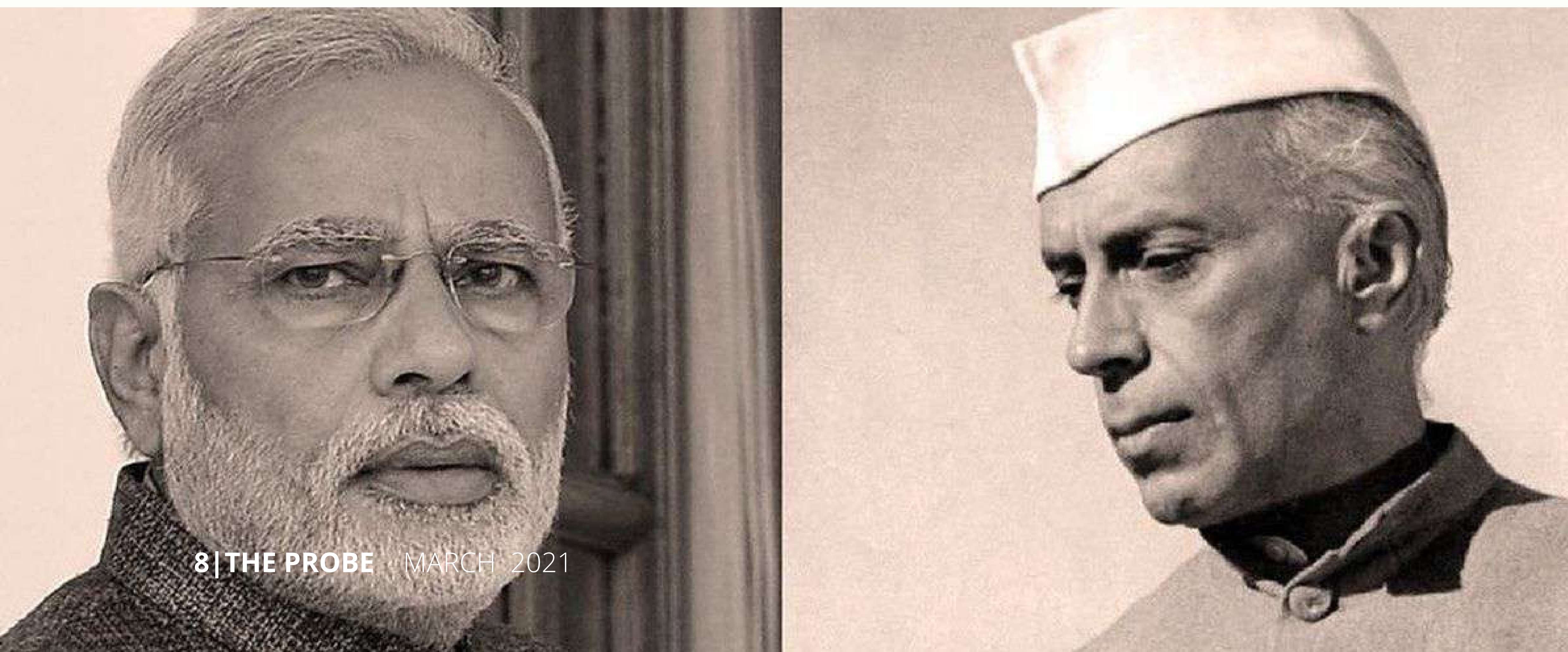
BY AMBASSADOR ANIL TRIGUNAYAT



Economic Diplomacy is the art of prevailing and extracting the maximum mileage for a country's economic opportunities, securing markets, access to technology, attracting investments, deflecting negative trade regimes and barriers, and collaborating for an effective and efficient global rule base trading context and institutions. Of Course, diplomacy in its traditional sense remains quite relevant where the focus was mainly on cultivating actively good political relations and all else was expected to follow. However, if one were to witness major global events of recent times it would be seen that almost all issues have hinged on trade and protectionism. President Trump, for example, had predicted almost all his so-called acerbic demarches on economic issues, be it sanctions regime and trade wars against China, Russia, EU, India, Iran or for that matter dumping or reviewing of JCPOA, TPP or NAFTA or threatening to quit WTO or WHO for that matter, the BREXIT issue in general. Trump has taken credit for slowing down other economies for an interim growth of the US economy that arguably is showing good numbers. But these are extreme steps by the biggest economy as they will eventually hurt the liberal global trading regime irreparably.

China's trade practices have also created a major hurdle for the global trading regimes as it is the largest trading partner of most major economies. India will also have to brace for it as it directly impacts its crucial economic interests as in the wake of the pandemic it has been forced to take recourse to "Atmanirbharta – Self Reliance" to cope with the adverse impact, to develop its competitive edge and be part of global value and supply chains as the world is increasingly becoming more protectionist.

Pandit Nehru, who mostly acted as his own Foreign Minister, had charged the Ministry of External Affairs with the task of economic diplomacy so that the newly independent country could get the requisite capital, technology and assistance for laying the foundations of a modern and strong industrial India. The trend continues. PM Narendra Modi placed a great emphasis on it by reaching out globally for the "Make in India" and several other initiatives while working to improve competitive parameters through economic reforms, changing archaic rules and converting "Red Tape into Red Carpet". Consequently, India has emerged as a favourite destination. Ranking in "Ease of Doing business" has



significantly improved. Moreover, India's stellar renewable energy initiative in the form of "International Solar Alliance", Leadership on Climate Change or adoption of International Day of Yoga by the UN with the largest support for India's soft power projection required tremendous diplomatic outreach and persistence with the other interlocutors and consistent follow up play a great role in ensuring deliverables. This is the priority for diplomats nowadays even if economic diplomacy is conducted at the highest political levels.

I have often wondered if Trump could pressure us to reduce tariffs on his Harley Davidsons and other products why should India be shy of promoting Indian companies abroad. The political fracas and fall out in the Rafael case attests to the point. We must get out of this shell of suspicion and recriminations just for myopic political gains and ends and institute mechanisms that should take care of the implicit ulterior motives if any. India's market is its biggest leverage.

I had been interested in commercial work and thought of it as 'the real bread and butter' issue from the very beginning. Fortunately, I got sufficient opportunity to do my bit for promoting India's economic interests abroad for over three decades in diverse geographies. During the early 1980s, I was posted to Ivory Coast (Cote d'Ivoire) in francophone, West Africa where India was not very well known as it was totally within the ambit of the French advisers and influence. The only thing they seemed to know about us was Sathya Sai Baba and Indira Gandhi and of course, Indian black magic. However, knowing their focus on Agriculture I thought of exploring exports of Indian agricultural implements and sharing some expertise. I met Minister Henri Konan Bedie, who later rose to become the President, who told me that 'why don't you try to get some tractors and other implements here so that the Ivorians could have an idea of your expertise if you bring in something 'as seeing is believing. I took it up with all concerned in the government and Industry to at least gift one tractor, to begin with, but to no avail. We even organised a large 'Made in India' exhibition in Abidjan by the ITPO, which its famous founder Mohammed Yunus brought along. While after about a year I was still trying to persuade the authorities to have a greater presence, I read a news item that the "New South Korean Ambassador had gifted 100

tractors". I was intrigued and went to call on him and sought confirmation. He said, "Yes, we are also opening service centres cum spares shop and hopefully within a short time they would be able to recover the total cost". That was a farsighted and practical approach while we were still enmeshed in the bureaucratic labyrinth. Fortunately, we were able to break into the supply of cycle parts and became the biggest exporter as well as for some strange reason also of Renault car parts of some models. Also began to import raw cashews from this country that was known for its Coffee and Cashew. In later years, several big companies from India took advantage of opportunities in this "Show window of the French". We have come a long way since then.

As we move towards AI-driven Industrial Revolution 4.0 and beyond the role of Techno-Economic Diplomacy will become far more pronounced for which it may be necessary to train and empower diplomats with specific and critical skills to discern and match the requirements of technology in the country. Globally, qualitative shifts in production technology and processes are rendering the old global value-chains redundant and competitiveness is being re-defined. The pivot is moving towards Asia and we are talking about the Asian Century despite the adverse trajectory of the pandemic. India's Vaccine Maitri and Diplomacy as well the epithet that it is the 'Pharmacy of the World' have created a new paradigm shift in the way global diplomacy is conducted under the rubric of 'Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam"

The rise of India and China – the two largest and fast-growing economies are bound to have intense competition for energy, food and resource security, and economic diplomacy is being used to create dedicated corridors to secure such vital supply sources. At the recently held first QUAD leaders' Summit (March 12) between the US, India, Japan and Australia all the key notions were directly or indirectly aimed at Chinese expansionism and hegemonistic approach whether it was the Free and Open and Resilient and Inclusive Indo-Pacific, the supply of safe and affordable access to Covid Vaccines or for that matter developing and harnessing critical technologies. Negotiations for Free Trade Agreements, Regional Trading Arrangements, Multilateral consultations and Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreements are becoming

increasingly complicated and require extensive information, precise analysis, consultations and projections through SWOT mechanism. Hence, in all these important domains, the role of techno-economic diplomacy will acquire greater salience in a bilateral, multilateral, or regional context and frameworks where our national interests could be optimally served.

India has always been a trading nation and in this complex web of technology, trade and investment regimes – the economic diplomacy and its sharpened acumen will provide rich dividends but for this to occur we shall have to ensure that behind “Single Window Mechanisms” there are no more windows and our investment regimes are transparent and predictable as the healthy competition among the Indian States to attract investments and foreign enterprise continues apace.

(The writer is a former Indian ambassador to Jordan, Libya and Malta.)



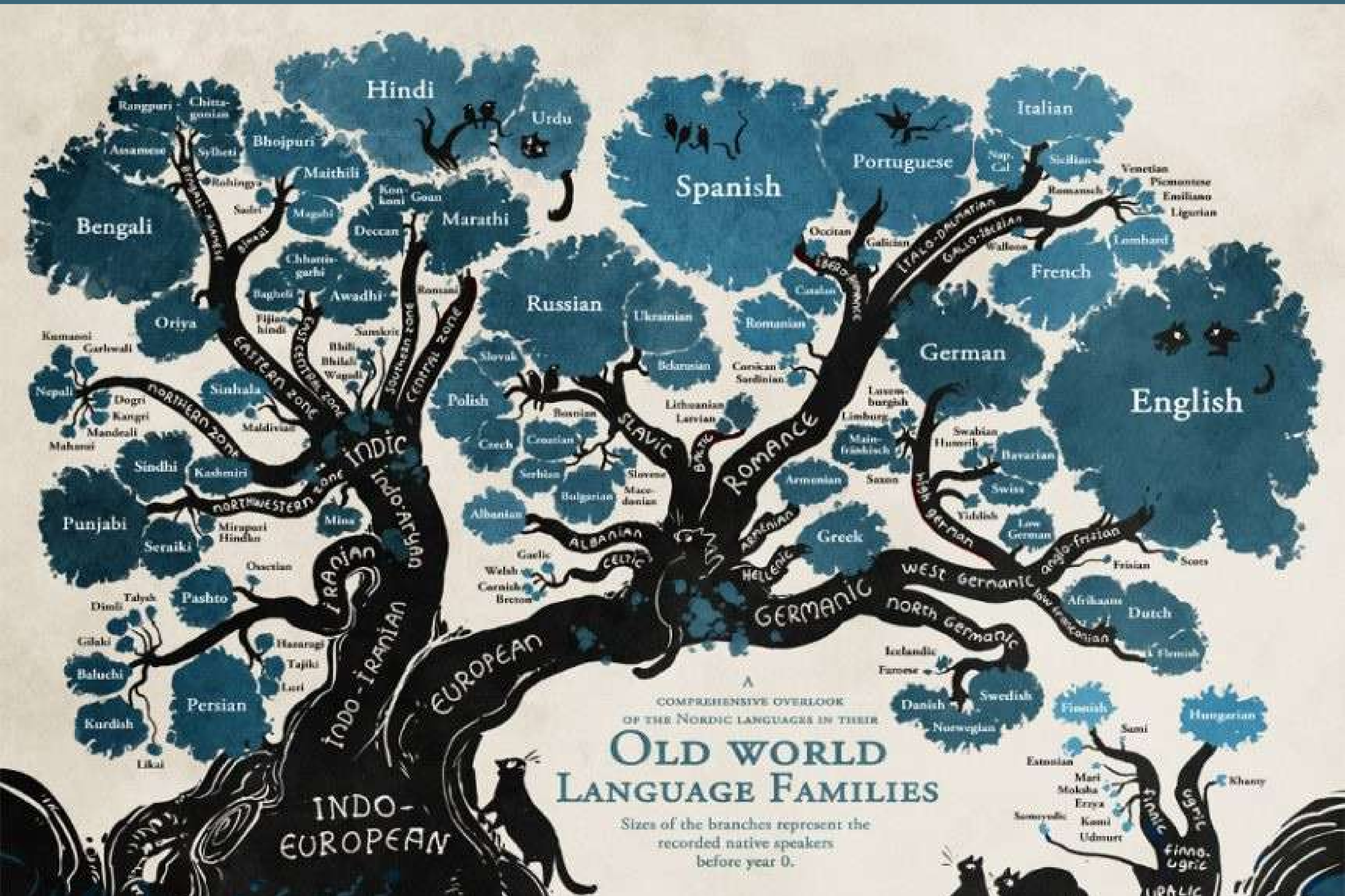
ON THE COVER

THE LANGUAGE LABYRINTH

TRACING THE EVOLUTION AND POLITICISATION
OF LANGUAGES

BY

RIYA JEPH, RITABRATA CHAKRABORTY, SHREYA SHUKLA & PRIYANKA





“I dream of lost vocabularies that might express some of what we no longer can.”

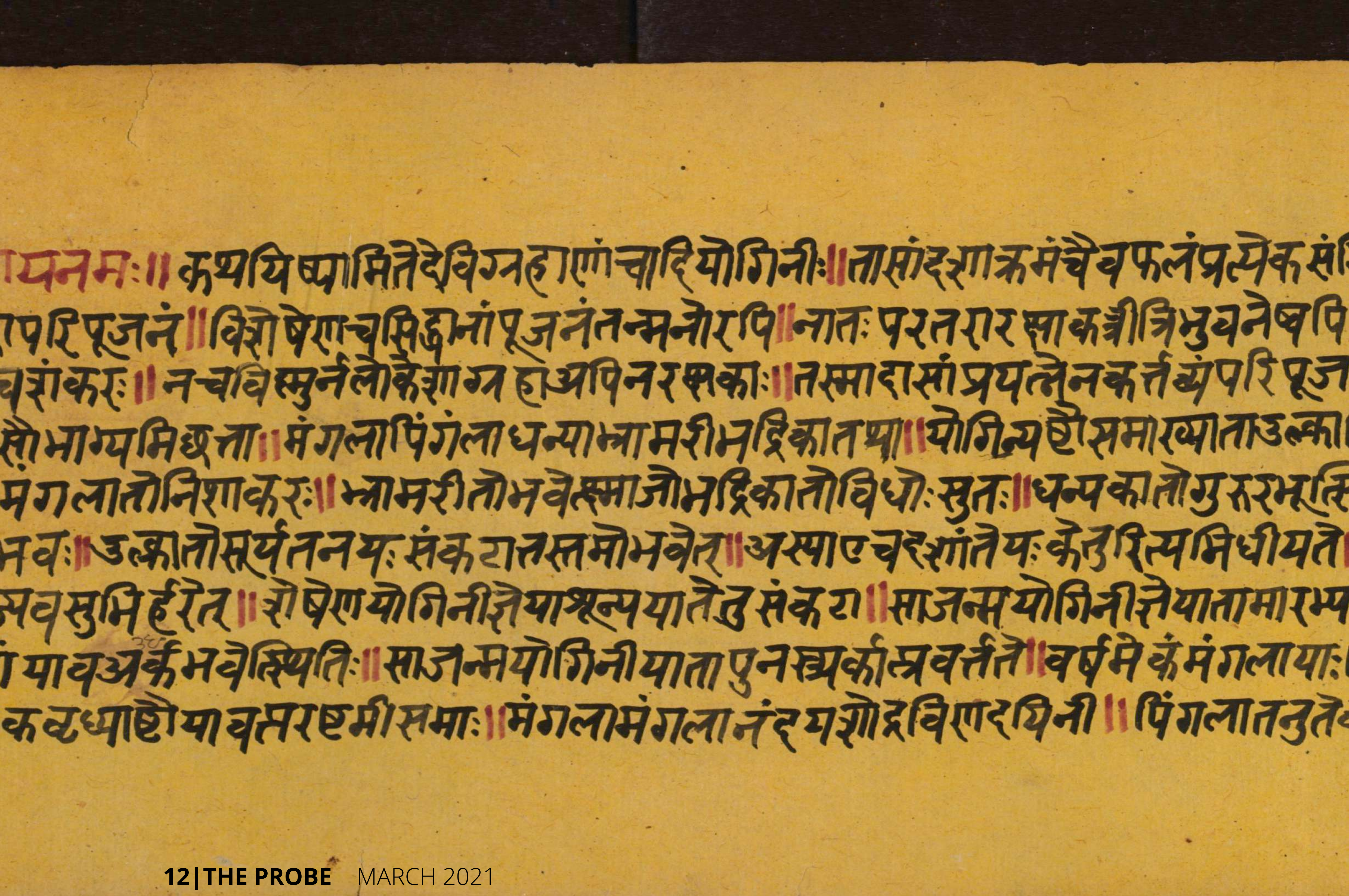
- Jack Gilbert

Language, one of the most crucial and unique developments in humankind's evolution, has served multiple functions since its inception. The story of a particular culture is embedded in its language(s)—for example, Hindi. As we know it today, Hindi is just a modern variant of Khari Boli or Braj bhasha, highly influenced by Sanskrit and mainly spoken in India's northern belt. An academic study of languages deconstructs their evolution and the stories embedded within them. An unbiased, critical study of Hindi would reveal the story of Ancient India rotten by Casteism; the reserve of cultural and scientific accomplishments, the tale of Brahminical hegemony, the story of cultural clashes and assimilation; the story of partition and communalism, the story of

confusion in distinction among Urdu-Hindi-Hindustani and the story of it being a tool in the hands of political elites to polarise masses.

Language is both beautiful and fragile, beautiful as a medium of expression and fragile as it is susceptible to the wrongs of manipulation and division. It is, therefore, imperative to undertake a careful study of language that'd lead us to a better understanding of how to deal with it, and not, if necessary.

Before addressing, anything more topical about language, it is necessary to first understand the bedrock of any issue related to language-its evolution. A clear understanding of how languages evolve will help us understand the nature of language better.



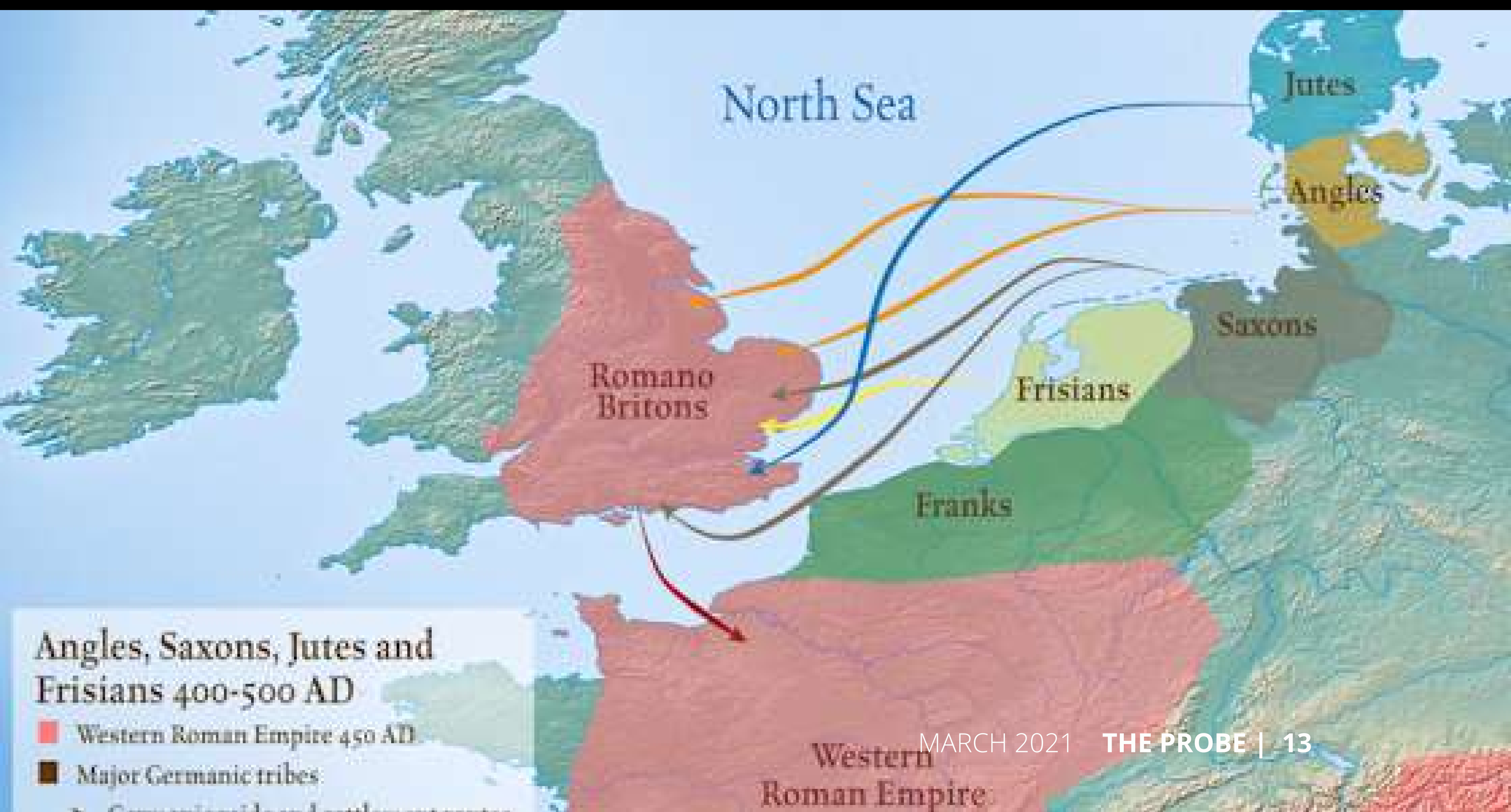
EVOLUTION OF LANGUAGES

If we set aside the linguists' problem in recognising what constitutes a full language, we can roughly argue that humans today speak somewhere around 7000 languages. How did so many languages come to be? Linguists have two major theories for the existence of different languages- Monogenesis and Polygenesis. Monogenesis claims that the present languages originate from a protolanguage used by the first humans in Africa. As they spread out in different parts of the world and isolated from each other, the languages also changed and got distinct over time, turning into new languages. The other theory, Polygenesis, argues that there's no one common ancestor of all the languages. Different languages developed separately from one another in isolated conditions and by subsequent interactions with other tribes.

One theory explains that the emergence of language as a unique feature of the human species can be traced back to the habit of hominids producing different sounds like grunting, hooting; according to their state of mind, these sounds eventually took the expressions of words and language. Though the question of the emergence of language

is an important one, it is of little significance to the questions we are trying to address in this cover story. More than the question of emergence, our societies are affected and shaped by the question- What happens to languages after they emerge? More importantly, what happens when different languages interact? A language's evolution doesn't stop after its emergence, just like learning a language doesn't stop at its alphabet. It only begins.

The number of languages is continuously changing. Languages go extinct when they have no speakers left or evolve into a different sounding language, distinct from its older version, like English. History shows that the languages which were flexible and open to influence didn't die out. To understand the direction a language takes, we can take up the example of English. 94% of European languages come from the Indo-European language family, whose parent tongue is called Proto-Indo-European(PIE). If we carefully examine the English language's history, we can answer various language debates in politics and society. The history of English is the history of invasions and movements of different tribes and clan to present-day England.



English came into being in the 5th Century; its development can be divided into three parts-

1. **Old English/Anglo-Saxon Period (450-1100)**
2. **Middle English Period (1100-1500)**
3. **Modern English period (1500-present)**

English is a Germanic language which was the language of the Germanic tribes that invaded Britain in the 5th Century, which were Saxons, Angles and Jutes. Their language mingled with the Celtic languages spoken by the native inhabitants of Britain and gave birth to Old English or Anglo-Saxon. Albert Baugh, a notable English professor at the University of Pennsylvania, notes amongst his published works that around 85% of Old English is no longer in use; however, surviving elements form the basis of the Modern English language today.

The Viking Invasion of England marked the beginning of Middle English; they introduced Norse words. 1% of modern English is words from the Norse language like egg, kindle, reindeer etc. The Norman conquest, led by William, the conqueror in the 11th Century, introduced French words to the English language. During those times, the upper aristocratic class spoke French, whereas the ordinary masses spoke English. It was during this time that English became enriched with words from different languages. English roughly contains around 7000-10,000 French words.

The tale of Modern-day English starts from the 15th Century, marked by two crucial developments- Shakespeare and the Great Vowel Shift. Shakespeare has given English many words(somewhere

around 1750), phrases and idioms like assassination, cold-blooded, which we unknowingly quote in our daily lives, and the Great Vowel shift transformed English drastically and made it sound like today's modern English.

The English language has also taken words from the languages of its colonies. Numerous words from India alone have become common in English today, such as pyjamas, khaki, bungalow, jodhpurs, juggernaut, curry, chutney, shampoo, thug – to name but a few. The most recent addition being juggernaut and jugaad.

The English language continues to evolve, absorb and adapt, which is perhaps the reason behind its global domination. Every language evolves in a similar fashion; they are not static but dynamic. Hindi shares a similar story; it belongs to the same language family as English, Indo-European but differs in the subgroup, i.e., Indo-Aryan. The present-day Hindi does not have a single parent- Sanskrit, Persian or Prakrit; in fact, Hindi is a culmination of all. Khariboli, which emerged from Sanskrit, can be considered the protolanguage of Hindi. Throughout India's history of Invasions, foreign languages influenced Khariboli giving rise to Urdu, Hindi and Hindustani, which are more or less the same. The process of evolution is dynamic, continuous, practical and secular. A narrow and limited understanding of the evolutionary science of language can bring chaos to a diversely populated society's social fabric. However, the sad reality is that many don't consider language to be dynamic and secular; rather, they consider it to be static and rigid and look at it from the lens of identity. This situation leads to the politicisation of language, which has been rampant throughout history.





POLITICISATION OF LANGUAGES

A particular culture buds because of the social relations served by languages which act as its conduit. Cultural ideologies get propelled through poems, stories, sermons, myths, fictions, epics and literary compositions etc. and this way, language becomes an important mark/symbol of a particular culture. Often, people conjecture about the cultural practises just by knowing which language is spoken by a specific community.

The close relationship between cultures and languages is why political and religious preachers have kept this correlation in mind. Also, language is one of the chief unifying elements of a nation. Therefore, it can't be kept devoid of the political effect perceived through various historical incidents. To mobilise a significant number of people, articulated political aims are required, which demand a language strategy. The politicisation of social, economic and cultural issues can be manifested by using the language card by politicians and planners who

won't ever fail to take it into account while working for their goals. Efforts directed only towards the dominant mainstream language by ignoring the minority languages for political gains may even make the mainstream dry. This manipulation of language variation has accompanied the expansion and contraction of political frontiers across the centuries. For instance, in 1204, England's separation from the continent began when the French crown won Normandy's sovereignty. Political differences started to appear in due course of time and grew in the coming years. For the time being, Latin and French continued to be the languages of court and government, which retained the status of formal language and dominated the education sector, the church, the government activities but Englishmen—even those of Franco-Norman descent—began to consider them as foreign tongues despite their eminence and effective usage. The decision to start Parliament in 1363 with a speech in English contributed to the rise of a new symbol for a new

identity.

Also, conquerors have associated deep value to their traditional cultures and languages, which motivated them to impose their language on the conquered land, which played a role in cultural transmission and expanded their influence over the masses. Spanish language, for example, has got moulded into its current form after the languages in this region were politicised many times when Latin was imposed after the Mediterranean region was conquered by the Roman Empire and later with the Arab influence on the Spanish language when the Muslim forces conquered modern-day Spain. The imposition of languages after invasions in different parts has colossally affected the communities. Similarly, the Japanese Colonies' languages in the East Asian region were tried to get politicised and influenced.

The languages that couldn't thrive the effects of politicisation became extinct along with the plethora of information known to those communities only.

Along with this, many cultures have died too. The plight of the Indigenous communities after invasions and impositions by different governments can be seen in this light. Many Aboriginal Languages in Australia are lost because up until the 1970s, government policies banned and discouraged Aboriginal people from speaking their languages. The loss of language has many harmful effects on the people to whom it belonged. These Indigenous groups who lost their language often feel disconnectedness, which can cause many other problems and a deep sorrowful impression on them. This process of coercion of languages had been a mark of monarchal times; however, the process persists.

LANGUAGE POLITICISATION IN INDIA

Even after witnessing movements like the renaissance, the reformation, the Bhakti movement, and the establishment of the doctrine of faith in human reason and individual sovereignty, we have not learnt to refrain from polarising the language and identity of people. The politicians of Indian democracy continue to behave like the monarchs of predemocratic times. Not believing in individual sovereignty, they continue to advance the dominance of the language belonging to their culture instead of leaving the language to its natural evolution process. The linguistic debate in India has always involved the political dominance of Hindi(Sanskritised) over other languages. The Hindu-Urdu controversy is a very typical example of how language can fall prey to communal and political tensions.

HINDI-URDU

If we look at Hindi and Urdu's issue, we can notice the buffoonery of identity obsession. Practically speaking, Hindi and Urdu are both the same, with differences in the script and vocabulary, resulting from the deliberate political and religious intervention. Hindi and Urdu can be thought of as two sides of the same coin. An ancient coin, with each side telling the same story from different cultural and religious perspectives. When this language is written in Nastaliq script, we call it Urdu, and when written in Devnagri, it is called Hindi. A change in script accompanied by little changes in vocabulary and pronunciation can create a distinction. Similarly, Punjabi is written in different scripts- in Gurmukhi

meaning 'from the Mouth of the Guru' by Hindu and Sikh Punjabis and Shahmukhi meaning 'from the mouth of the Shah' (modified Nastaliq alphabet) by Muslim Punjabis. But both remain Punjabi. This change in the script was also caused by religious conflict; earlier, everyone used the Shahmukhi script.

Both Modern Standard Hindi and Urdu are literary forms of the Dehlavi dialect, also known as Khariboli. During the Delhi Sultanate and Mughal Empire in South Asia, a Persianised variant of Hindustani began to take shape as Persian was considered prestigious. Hindustani emerged as the *lingua franca* in north India and elsewhere, like Dakkani in the south. It was written in numerous scripts such as Devanagari, Kaithi, Gurmukhi and Nastaliq.

The Delhi Sultanate's reigns and the Mughal Empire saw the infusion of Persian, Arabic (through Persian) and Chagatai words with Old Hindi due to cultural exchange. They became an inseparable part of the Ganga-Jamuni tehzeeb. It is believed that *Zaban-e-Urdu* meaning "the language of the army/camp", derived from the Turkic word *ordu* meaning "army", traces its origin to a market close to the Red Fort called *Urdu Bazar*, meaning "Army Market" which was subsequently shortened to *Urdu* around the year 1800 as it spread from the interaction of Persian-speaking Muslim soldiers with the local people who spoke different dialects of Hindi.

The Persian script in the cursive Nastaliq form was adopted with the addition of more letters. Persian and Arabic loanwords form 25% of Urdu's vocabulary. As a form of Hindustani, 75% of Urdu words have their etymological roots in Sanskrit and Prakrit, and approximately 99% of Urdu verbs have their roots in Sanskrit and Prakrit.

Called Hindustani by the British, Urdu was promoted in colonial India to counter the influence of Persian. In the United Provinces, the interaction between ordinary Muslims and Hindus conversing in Hindustani, or one of its dialects like Awadhi or Braj, was more pronounced. While Muslim elites wrote the Nastaliq script's language in courts and government offices, Hindus used the Devanagari script in literary and religious contexts. Urdu replaced Persian as India's official language in 1837 and was made co-official, along with English. Around this time, Indian Muslims began to see Urdu as a symbol of their religious identity.

Under the Arya Samaj, Hindus in northwestern India agitated against the sole use of the Nastaliq script and demanded that Hindustani be written in the native Devanagari script, gradually deepening the communal divide of "Hindi" for Hindus and "Urdu" for Muslims. As Sir Syed Ahmed Khan stated, "I look at both Hindus and Muslims with the same eyes & consider them as two eyes of a bride. By the word nation, I only mean Hindus and Muslims and nothing





else. We Hindus and Muslims live together on the same soil under the same government. Our interest and problems are common, and therefore, I consider the two factions as one nation." After the language controversy heated up, the governor of Banaras said: "I am now convinced that the Hindus and Muslims could never become one nation as their religion and way of life was quite distinct from one another." A political, not-so-mutually intelligible rift found a voice in the two-nation theory and was formalised with India's partition.

In 1900, Hindi and Urdu were granted equal symbolic status and began to diverge linguistically. In the wake of increasing language-centric nationalism and movements to restore Hindi to its pre-Islamic past, many sought to purge Persian, Arabic, and Turkic loanwords and replaced them with borrowings from Sanskrit. A movement towards the hyper-Persianisation of an Urdu emerged in Pakistan since its independence in 1947, which many think it as artificial as the hyper-Sanskritised Hindi in India. However, Urdu's style in Pakistan is akin to neutral Hindustani that serves as the lingua franca of the northern Indian subcontinent. While on the one hand, India and Pakistan's religious divide caused a rift in their linguistic culture; on the other, West and East Pakistan's religious unity was threatened because of the linguistic divide, which eventually led to their separation in 1972.

MANY LANGUAGES

Writing about Hindi as the national language and debate on the same, Dr Ambedkar said, "There was no article which proved more controversial than Article 115 which deals with the question. No Article produced more opposition. No article, more heat. After a prolonged discussion, when the question was put, the vote was 78 against 78. The tie could not be resolved. After a long time, when the question was put to the Party meeting, the result was 77 against 78 for Hindi. Hindi won its place as a national language by one vote. I am stating these facts from my personal knowledge. As Chairman of the Drafting Committee, I had natural entry to the Congress Party enclosure."

About 78.05% of Indians speak Indo-Aryan languages while 19.64% speak Dravidian languages, and the remaining 2.31% of the population speak languages that belong to the Austroasiatic, Sino-Tibetan, Tai-Kadai and others. Dr Ambedkar's fears of consolidation of the north and the south were not unfounded but fortunately, the apprehensions didn't materialise; instead, there has been an intermingling of people and cultures over the decades through the length and breadth of the country, bringing us closer than ever before. However, if we don't deal with our differences prudently, we might sabotage the delicate and harmonious social fabric we have created.

THE FANTACISM OF PURE LANGUAGE

According to Noam Chomsky, a famed linguist, many speakers' attempts and hard work to keep their language "pure" by not using words from other languages while speaking their own is futile as no language ever existed in a vacuum. Like we observed with Hindi and Urdu, they are intricately intertwined and inseparable as they evolved together. This is evident from how unnatural it feels to purge Sanskrit's words from Urdu and those of Persian from Hindi.

Borrowing words from other languages is natural and ensures the survival of a language. 'Preserving' a language in its 'pure' state which practically does not exist in the first place would be exceptionally hard in a world where speakers of so many languages are constantly coming in contact with one another through the internet and globalisation, with every language adapting to a new state of affairs.

Nonetheless, the desire to pass on certain endangered words of a language to the next generation through a revival and reignited use may not be a lost cause.

SHOULD STATES DIRECT THE PROMOTION OR DEGRADATION OF A LANGUAGE IN MODERN TIMES?

The relation between state policy and the promotion of languages has always been a thorny issue. It assumes importance as language usually acts as the interface between the administration and the people. Before the emergence of contemporary liberal-democratic states, language policies were mainly dictated by the rulers' proclivities and much less by governance considerations. While Persian was the choice of Mughals, the Britons firmly maintained the use of English even in a country like India, which had been a melting pot of several languages and largely alien to English back then. The interface function may seem to collapse in such scenarios but what ultimately developed was a growing sense of conformity, especially in the latter case. The British realised that the inclusion of Indians adept at their language would narrow the gulf between the administration and the people, while the desire to delve into Western thought and a need to secure prime government jobs prompted many to learn the language. These developments in the colonial era resulted in immense but often unrealised

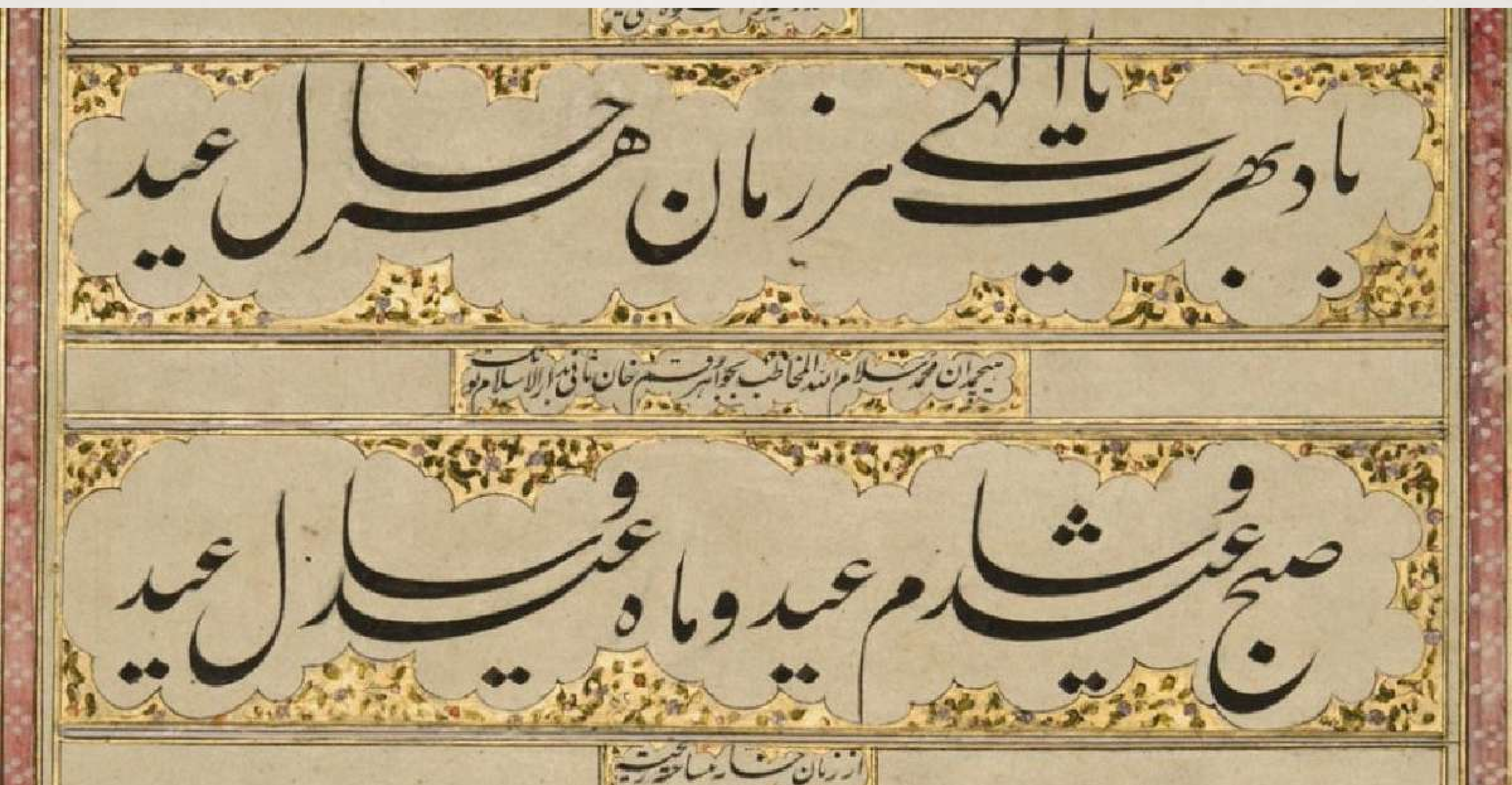
assimilation of English terms into the vocabulary of Indian languages. Departing from such impositions, the most significant shift in the language-policy of states has perhaps been a pronounced sensitivity to both the language spoken by the masses and its diversity. It may seem obvious that states with a single language being used by their people would not face problems or opposition in promoting it as doing so would ease governance and enhance national cohesion. Idealistic this may seem, but few countries can claim to have a complete commonality of language across their populace. Due to increasing cross-country migration, countries nowadays have a heterogenised population with factors like religion, language, and ethnicity seldom enjoying uniformity throughout(Bangladesh can perhaps be an obvious exception regarding language). Subsequently, any language-promoting policy would always leave out a particular minority linguistic group, further increasing its distance from the mainstream. Unless any incumbent government is impervious to the need to take every segment along, adopting such a policy

It would also instil in, not just in the minorities but among everyone, a moral imperative to learn and hone the official language, thereby creating a rift between those who master it and those who stumble in the way, as in the case of English and Hindi speakers in India.

Nevertheless, governments worldwide, including ours, take measures not to promote languages per se but to establish safeguards to preserve a minority language. In India, there are hundreds of languages with further fragmentations in dialects, and as many as twenty-two languages enjoy official status. Besides such accommodation of diversity, provisions like Article 29 give the minorities the (fundamental) right to maintain and preserve their language. As the turmoil preceding the States Reorganisation Act, 1956 showed, even governmental inaction can fuel discontent among people wanting the creation of a separate state along linguistic lines. Inter-state correspondence can use a common, official language, but extending it to the country will create problems, as mentioned earlier. What lends the enormity of importance regarding language is that it is not just a medium of communication but also the vehicle of culture.

The rate at which many languages are becoming extinct is worrisome for linguists and the general

public. There are many unethical ways by which the traces of a particular language cease to exist, but mostly, it is seen that the causes by which a language dies are not immoral. For example, people often abandon their mother-tongue when it starts to appear feeble in providing access to versatile opportunities. Learning the English language for economic opportunities is an example. Most languages die when people become bilingual and become eager to learn the more prestigious language, losing proficiency in their traditional tongues, which are also no more taught to the younger generation. Languages must be preserved as wide value is attached to any particular language. They act as a channel of human heritage. Community's songs, stories, poems and experiences pass from one generation to another through their language. A language assimilates within itself the unique methods, knowledge, culture and experiences of a society. Its preservation is also crucial to protect Indigenous and traditional heritage. Especially in the case of oral languages, losing them comes with the cost of getting devoid of knowledge about the local ecosystems and geography that the speakers knew about and which was accumulated over a very long period. Thus, conditions for the preservation of languages should be the norm instead of promoting one, and the rest should be left to the natural process of language evolution.





DISOBEYING CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

BY SHANMUKHA ADITYA

Perhaps the greatest turnaround in the history of political communication was ushered in with a walk. Not just a walk, a march. Not just a march, an act of defiance. When Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi set his foot out of his ashram on March 12, 1930, not only did he begin one of the most triumphant phases of the Indian National Movement, but he also rephrased the logic of civil disobedience.

True, there were incidents of civil disobedience before, and after. This piece shall deal with either form. But what Gandhi did to civil disobedience is roughly analogous to what a triangular prism would do to a beam of light: channelise it. Differentiate the strands. Reorder them. Club them together.

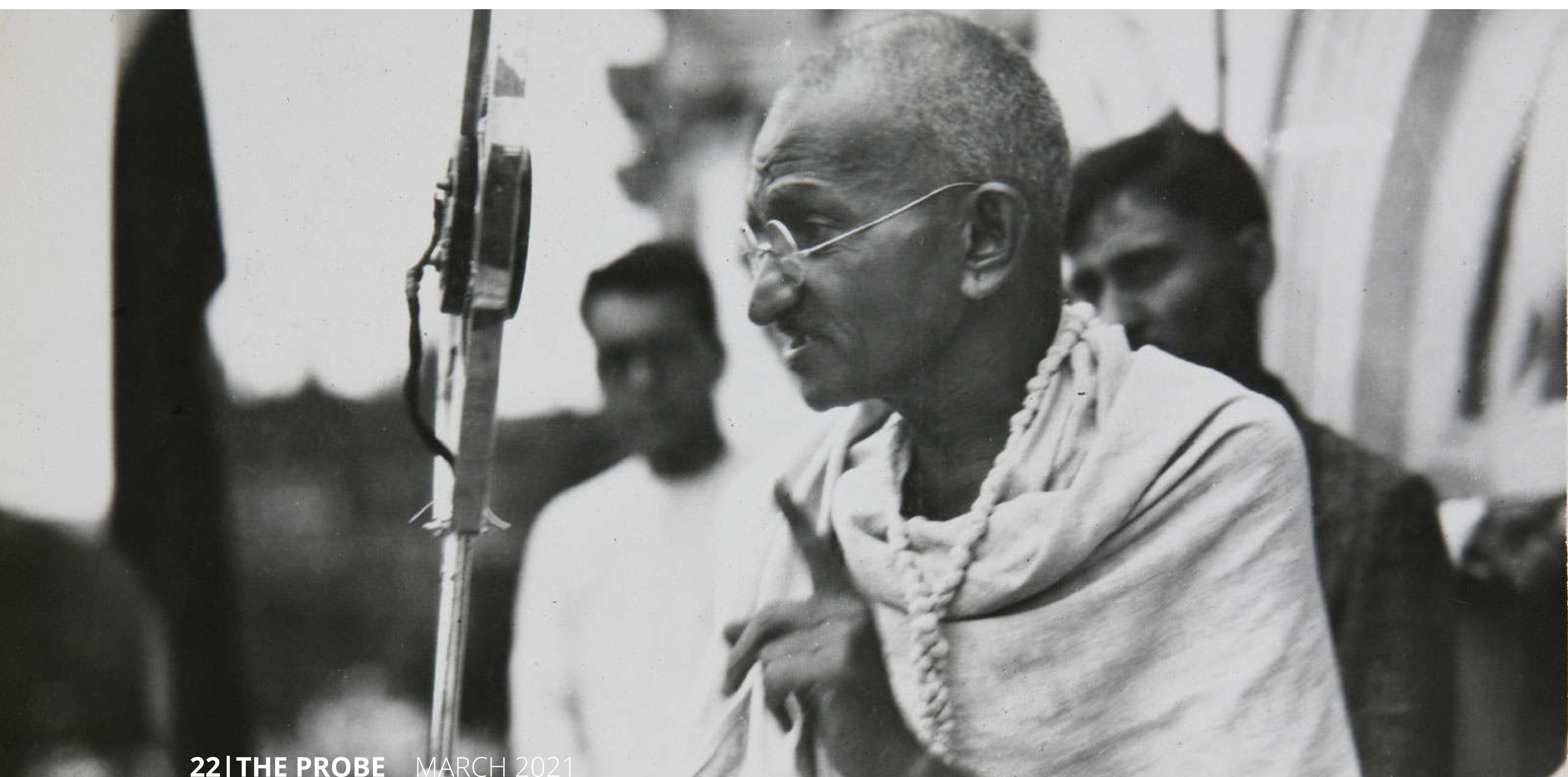
Where does this idea arrive from? What exactly does civil disobedience entail? To answer these questions, we turn to a thinker whom Gandhi himself acknowledged that he “greatly benefited from”. He was an essayist named Henry David Thoreau.

On January 26, 1848, Thoreau was called for a lecture on a peculiar subject – his experience of prison life. Thoreau’s lecture was committed to a pamphlet and was published as “Essay on Civil Disobedience”. Interestingly enough, Thoreau did not mention the phrase ‘civil disobedience’ even once in the speech/essay. Nonetheless, it came to impress, influence and direct civilians worldwide in the art of disobedience.

What did Thoreau say that was so transformational? His argument was plain – the best government was the one “that did not have to govern at all”. His position was unmistakably enmeshed in the backdrop of events that he was writing: The Mexican American War – that drew wide condemnation from pedestrians to senators – one among the latter being a certain Abraham Lincoln. For Thoreau, the government was not the vehicle of progress, it was the inhibitor of it. The government pulled the levers of a massive machine that disregarded individual rights, affirmed slavery, waged wars against distant lands, and crushed individual earnings under taxation. One could observe here an almost mirror resemblance of Gandhi’s own ideas.

While the issues were one half of it, the solutions were the other – and the most crucial – half. In what he terms as “counter-friction”, Thoreau discusses his plan of action. It was to wage a “peaceable revolution” – he wanted disgruntled citizens to make the State aware of their disgruntlement. And if you are incarcerated? Thoreau has an answer ready from his own prison experience – a Government can only lock your senses up: not your soul. And surely not your ideas.

While Gandhi’s lessons from this text might already be apparent to us, it is prudent to pause and reflect on



what this truly meant. What did Gandhi wish to achieve by agitating against the salt tax? Sure enough, salt was a levelling commodity: it is used by all – irrespective of varnas and classes. But here, Gandhi also looked at what the tax represented. To borrow from his letter to Viceroy Irwin of March 2, 1930, the tax was “the most iniquitous of all from the poor man’s standpoint.”

Yet this was not the end of civil disobedience. The Gandhian model of protest acquired the status of a ritual for civil rights activists across the planet. Despite its fluidity, or because of it, activists took liberties with picking and choosing among strands of this playbook. One such black civil rights activist, named Bayard Rustin, would exemplify a perfect turnaround in the idea of civil disobedience. From the annals of philosophical anarchism, he would place the idea of political communication via civil disobedience in the vortex of modern democracy: in electoral politics.

Rustin was a longtime associate of Martin Luther King Jr. In fact, he was the prime organiser of the March on Washington ceremony in 1965, where King made his now-famous “I Have A Dream” speech. Yet Rustin was known for another reason. In 1967, he published a famous article that would signal a shift in the ideology of civil disobedience. The title was self-explanatory: From Protest to Politics: The Future of the Civil Rights Movement.

What motivated Rustin was his lifelong commitment to socialism. His journey in politics taught him politics might be the root of all ills, but there was no better medicine than politics itself. The United States in his time might have phased out the notorious Jim Crow Laws, but they were only halfway through. *De facto* segregation of whites and blacks still proceeded.

And Rustin’s method to alter this was not to boycott politics but to enter into the political machine.

Rustin appreciated the progress in the civil rights movement in America – of which he himself was an active volunteer. He acknowledged that while civil rights activists of yore fought for desegregation in canteens and equal seats in buses, they were now inching closer to the systemic root of racism and bigotry in America. His averment to his fellow activists was not to retreat, but progress. “Power corrupts, but the absence of power also corrupts,...”, was his conviction.

It is not hard to finely draw similarities between Rustin and Gandhi and their historical pathways. Both were protesting against what they perceived as unjust oppression: accentuated by myths of race and inequality. While it is debatable if civil disobedience is worthy as an instrument of protest, what is unquestionable is its moral power.

One last question is left unanswered. Was this shift inevitable? In some ways, it was. Although civil disobedience is not dead, it assumed varied forms. The initial adherents and preachers of civil disobedience were philosophical anarchists – their ideal form of government was a far cry from the mammoth machines that we have today. They could breathe, live and prosper without a State. But today’s State is different. Democracy is not an end in itself. It is a means to a higher-end, as J S Mill would have it, to realise the full breadth of the moral consciousness of an individual. And Rustin was quick to grasp it. Civil disobedience did not mean civilian distance. Government is amenable to change, within, or without.





Expressing Dissent Through Art – The Past and the Future Scenario

BY SOUVIK BISWAS

"Painting is not made to decorate apartments; it is an offensive and defensive instrument of war against the enemy."

—Pablo Picasso

Art plays a pivotal role in shaping the nature of protests during any social upheaval. It allows the people to give a new direction to their political imagination and make powerful statements challenging authorities. Visual representation often helps people connect to shared struggles against injustice more vividly and intimately. Thus, the language of art functions both at the personal and the universal level. It resonates with the individual, who is facing hardship in their daily life, and it resonates with the larger social group affected. By empowering people and forging a collective consciousness, a particular social movement's reach and message become more concrete and consolidated through protest art. This article will analyse some of the important ways in which paintings have played a role in 20th and 21st-century social movements. I will try to delve into the common themes prevalent in diverse cultures and ideologies that have used art as a medium of protest and comment on the future of

such art in virtual spaces. The latter part of this essay will focus on the massive impact of social media and the internet on protest art and protest movements as a whole, consequent problems and possible resolutions.

GUERNICA BY PICASSO

Guernica is one of Picasso's most powerful paintings, depicting the moment the town of Guernica was bombed at the request of the Spanish Nationalists led by Franco. The recurrent themes are that of destruction and death, and the sombre grey and black colours are used to bring out the disturbing theme. The bull and the horse are recurrent motifs. At the time of the bombing, most of the men in the town were away serving as soldiers in the war, and a large number of those killed were women and children. Through this painting, Picasso depicted the cruelties of the much-hated Franco regime and challenged it.

He was a staunch believer in people's inherent power to liberate themselves from the clutches of war and political destitution.

YOKO ONO, CUT PIECE

Yoko Ono did a social experiment titled *Cut Piece* in the year 1965. She would sit on stage, wearing a dress, and hand over a pair of scissors to the audience. The people would be encouraged to come forward and cut a piece of clothing. At the very beginning, people were reluctant to come forward and participate, but slowly, the participants started becoming more sexually aggressive. There were taunts and a lot of jeering, with one man reportedly remarking, "You should do a cover for Playboy!" "The final male participant cut off her bra strap, and she was left almost naked. This is one of the most powerful public performances highlighting how quickly a woman can be turned into a sexual object. She was an important icon during the feminist movement of the 1970s, which dealt with the important questions of identity, patriarchy, and the controversial issues of domestic violence, sexual harassment, and marital rape. A large number of critics have mentioned that she was commenting on the victimisation and the subordination of women in society.

GRAFFITI

Graffiti art offers a fascinating study of everyday resistance. It allows the common people to express their dissatisfaction with government policies and authoritarian rules. It has been described as a sort of modern-day guerrilla warfare, and in the words of Banksy, "If you do not own a train company, go and paint on one instead."

The Berlin Wall has many beautiful murals and paintings, but this one stands out from the rest. It ironically captures the moment Leonid Brezhnev and Erich Honecker had signed an important arms deal through which Germany would continue providing support to the Soviet Union. Vrubel remarked in an interview with Andrey Borzenko on 11 November 2014, "But I wanted to paint specifically on the Berlin Wall and specifically Brezhnev and Honecker's kiss. In this painting, there's one German and one Russian, and the Berlin Wall is about the same thing but in reverse: here [in the painting], there's total love, while the Berlin Wall separates two worlds — it was a perfect fit".

The CAA and NRC laws had roused thousands of people to take to the streets and protest against the ruling government. The words "Raja tor Kapor Kothaye?" loosely translates to O King, where are your clothes? It is a line that has been taken from a famous poem by the Bengali poet Nirendranath Chakraborty, titled 'Ulongo Raja' (Naked Ruler). These artworks expose the hypocrisy of those who are in power.



THE SAHAMAT COLLECTIVE POSTERS

Safdar Hashmi was a gifted playwright who revolutionised street theatre in India. He was associated with the Communist Party of India (Marxist) as a lifelong member and is credited with the formation of JANAM (Jana Natya Manch). He dealt with farmers' and women's rights to the systematic corruption that pervaded politics and society during those times. He spoke about unemployment and the working class's distress and tried to voice their concerns by being their mouthpiece. He was killed while performing his play *Halla Bol* in 1989 when goons from the then ruling party attacked his troupe. Within some days, hundreds of artists, writers, poets, and painters came together to create Sahmat, which had the motto of preserving the freedom of cultural and creative expression. Every year, Sahmat sends a poster to street theatre groups from around the country, who use it on National Street Theatre Day. The Sahmat posters help us visualise the political changes and turmoil through which India has progressed over the years.

THE COMMON MAN, RK LAXMAN

RK Laxman's satirical drawings, featuring scenes from everyday life, bring out the irony omnipresent in India's democracy. The Common Man sits apart from the rest of the people, cutting sharply across all divisions to paint the real state of affairs in the country. The cartoons freeze a particular

moment in time and usually feature a single line of text. As Sushmita Chatterjee notes, "His cartoons emphasise that the art of ideal caricature is to bring out the essence of personality through credible exaggeration." For more than 50 years, the Common Man has featured in the Times of India, capturing the political pandemonium that never stops.

MITHILA PAINTING

Madhubani art has evolved in different ways among the different castes present in Bihar. The Karna Kayasthas have evolved the Kachni style; the Bharni sub-genre has been developed by the Mahapatra Brahmins who are predominantly scribes. However, I want to focus on the works of tribal women and the lower castes who have overcome large barriers to earn recognition around the world. The Gobar style was developed by Jamuna Devi, which involves using a subtle brown cow dung wash to prepare the paper of the painting. These paintings have been exhibited in New Delhi, Japan, and other places around the world. The recurrent themes include episodes from an oral epic that features the mythical hero Raja Salhesh and his powerful adversaries. According to Narayan Sinha, by focusing on themes that are

not drawn from the Ramayana and Ram (mostly present in upper-caste painter's works), the Dusadh people want to quietly confront the worldview of the upper castes and develop their ideas independently.

Another important subaltern form of art is the Godna style, which is a kind of tattoo painting. Dalit women from the state of Bihar look upon this style as a path for their emancipation and restoration of the dignity of the self. The most famous painter of this tradition was Chano Devi, from the Chamar caste. She was the first to experiment with natural colours and different folk themes that reflected the life of the lower castes of society.

Patriarchy is deeply rooted in Mithila. The men take the most important decisions and restrict the imagination of women. However, a critical attitude has emerged in society, and it is reflected in some of the paintings. A great example is Sugata Kumari's *Beast of Burden*. The principal image is that of a man riding an elephant. All around him has been drawn the life-cycle of the Mithila woman and the struggles that she has to face.

THE FUTURE: PROTESTING THROUGH ART IN VIRTUAL SPACES

As we can see from the wide-ranging examples drawn from different societies from around the world, art helps to bridge the gap between people and educate society about structured inequalities. As we live in a globalised and technological world, the spread of information

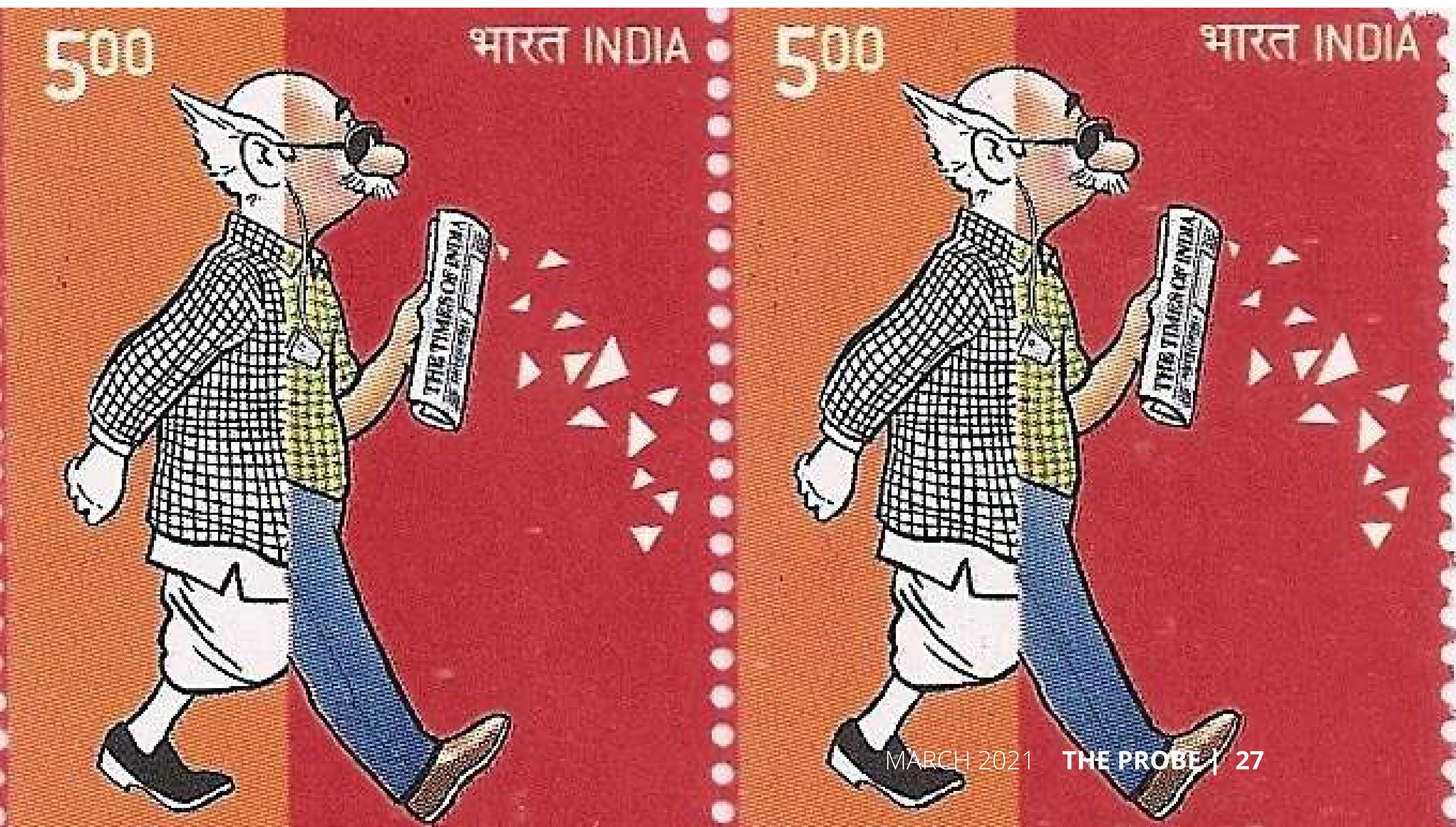
"RK Laxman's satirical drawings, featuring scenes from everyday life, bring out the irony omnipresent in India's democracy."

and art through social media platforms has taken the world by storm. Digital platforms are used to create posters and banners, and people in the remotest corners of the world can see them on multiple devices and make them go “viral”. What remains constant is the desire to share stories of injustice and struggle, to break the narrow domestic walls, to empower generations and guide them towards a more egalitarian world through art.

One of the most effective means of critique employed in today’s times is memes. There has been a constant rise in the popularity of memes as a means of satire to challenge oppressive government policies openly. Memes regularly feature in major protests worldwide, and their themes are eclectic and universal. This rapid changing of the social landscape has also allowed Twitter to be an important platform where ideas are constantly exchanged as well as space where duels are fought constantly between world leaders, different organisations and any person with access to an internet connection and a smartphone. The goal seems to be clear; to come up with witty comebacks and arguments framed within 280 characters. Twitter trends and Instagram hashtags are also used as instruments in the new protest movements that are taking place.

It is important to point out some consequences that can emerge in the near future. Firstly, there seems to be little accountability on either side of the discourse. One just has to follow the tweets of Donald Trump to understand that. The lack of accountability and the relative anonymity one can maintain (for reference, the vigilantism of the online hacker group Anonymous) even while posting memes can often backfire instead of furthering the message of a protest movement.

The second important point is larger in scope and needs serious discussion and resolution. In a democratic state, governed by laws and where people subscribe to a constitution, it is possible to hold the government accountable in a court of law to repress freedom of speech. There are inbuilt mechanisms within most constitutions to safeguard such rights, even though we have often seen them being simply ignored in practice. However, when we think about Instagram, Twitter or Facebook, we are going out of the domain of the state. This is one of the important points of difference in the case of protest art in social media. Censoring and deleting content that does not comply with either the state or these corporations’ wishes can be done much more quickly and easily. Resolving this issue will go a long way towards safeguarding protest art in virtual spaces and allowing people to use their creative liberties.



The Hero of Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalysis: Jay Gatsby

BY GEORGE MATHEWS

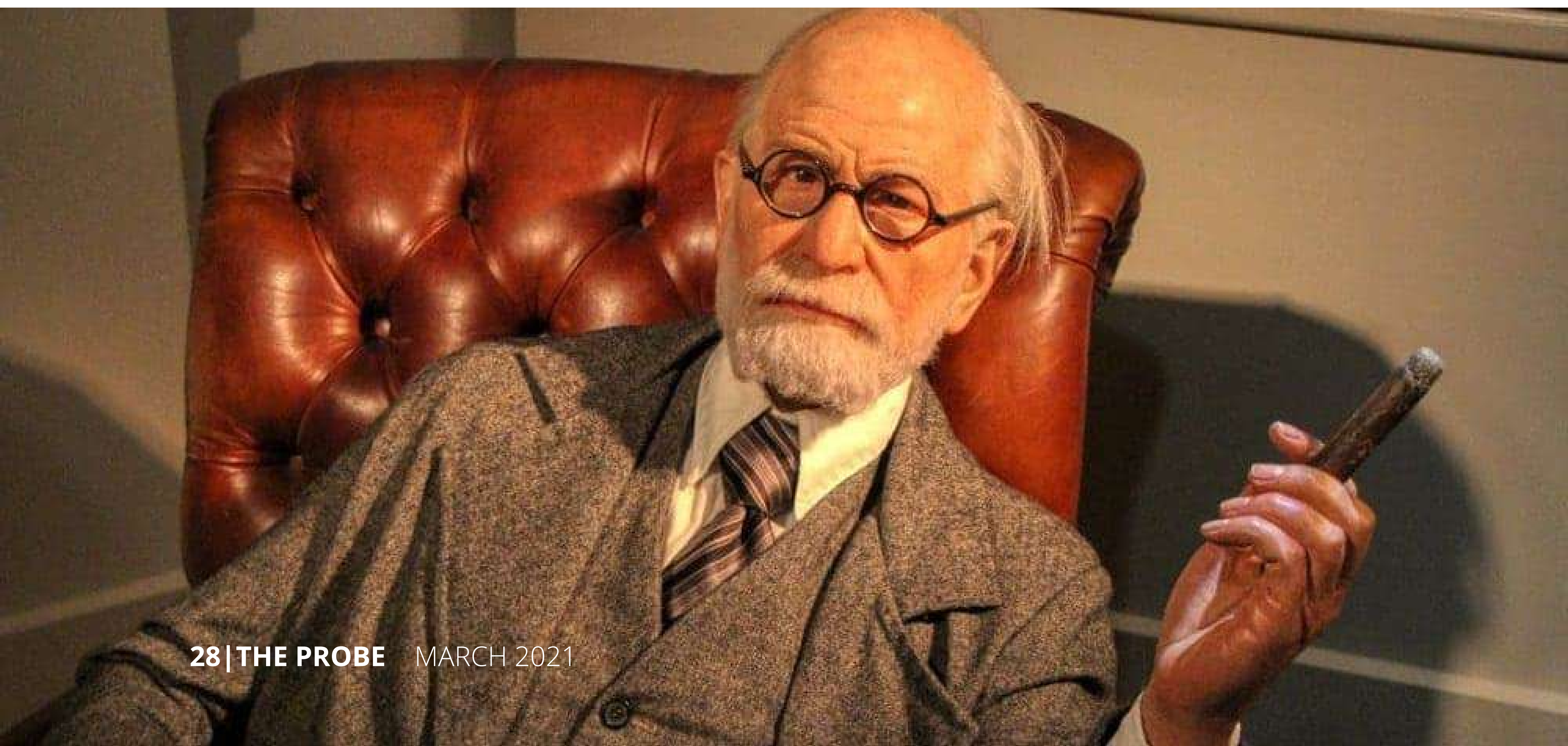
This research literary analysis is an earnest attempt to explore psychoanalytical elements embedded in F. Scott Fitzgerald's magnum opus *The Great Gatsby*. The present study navigates into the representation of the novel's characters, especially Jay Gatsby as the 'psychoanalytical hero' using the research methodology of Freud's psychoanalysis. Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* is one of the most remarkable Bildungsroman novels that depict America's social life between the end of the First World War and the Great Depression (1929-1939). First published on April 10, 1925, the novel explores the Jazz Age or 'roaring twenties' generations' attachment to the age's self-destructive moral values and pleasure-seeking lifestyle. The novel, which was an artistic and material success examines the tragic lives of wealthy and prodigal people in Long Island, New York.

Literary criticism is the scientific and systematic way of understanding, analyzing, interpreting and evaluating a work of art using theory. The word 'theory' comes from the Greek root *theoria*, which means 'contemplation' or 'speculation'. During the time humanity puzzled over the functioning of the human mind, Sigmund Freud's insightful Psychoanalytic theory was a revolutionary discourse that unveiled the structure of the human psyche and was a turning point in the arena of literary criticism.

As Pramod K Nair writes in his magnum opus, *Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory*, Psychoanalytical criticism explores the language of the unconscious, the repressed and the hidden as embodied in literary and cultural texts such as art or fiction, with particular attention to the representation of sexuality and desires.

Nick Carraway, Jay Gatsby, Daisy Fay Buchanan, Tom, Jordan Baker, George Wilson, and Myrtle Wilson are the novel's main characters. Nick, the narrator of the novel, chooses to hide in the shadow of his sexual fantasies, putting forward a substitute for it, Jay Gatsby. Camouflaged by the title given to the novel Nick narrates, he presents Gatsby recreating his unconscious Oedipal wishes. Jay fits the archetypal mould of 'hopeless romantic' and Daisy to that of 'unfaithful love'.

Freud described dreams as the 'royal road' to the unconscious, arguing that dreams provide us with the best understanding of repressed desires. Dreams are the expressions of repressed desire, which shows us the unconscious. Gatsby is the perfect example. According to Freud, the Oedipal Complex is the source of the repressed desire, and he argues that all desire, repression and anxiety are based on the condition of prohibition, termed as 'taboo'. Freud proposed that the repressed or the unconscious emerges in art,



which is best seen in Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. According to Sigmund Freud, "The id is the impulsive part of our psyche which responds directly and immediately to the instincts. The id is not affected by reality, logic or the everyday world. The idea that every wishful impulse should be satisfied immediately, regardless of the consequences. Freud describes three components of the human psyche, namely the ego, the superego and the id. The ego is the conscious mind which is the source of decision making and rational thought. The superego is the conscience drawn from the social world and cultural codes that influence how conscious works. The 'id' is the area of dreams, instincts, desires, commonly called the unconscious.

Realization of self happens in three phases; the need phase, the demand phase and the mirror phase. Gatsby makes no effort to distance himself from the dark rumours that circulate him, and he attempts to behave in ways that are attractive to others. Nick presents Gatsby as a 'strange' character. Gatsby has 'fear of abandonment caused due to 'low self-esteem' and 'unstable sense of self. The lack of love he experienced during his childhood and loss of love is the root cause of abandonment. The 'abandonment' can be 'physical or sense of emotional distance' when someone feels alone and understands no one cares for him. In the below lines taken from the Interpretation of Dreams, Sigmund Freud explains the dreams that act as the mind's wish fulfilment.

What is common in all these dreams is obvious. They completely satisfy wishes excited during the day which remain unrealized. They are simply and undisguised realizations of wishes.

The concept of 'dreams as wish fulfilment' is manifested in Gatsby's character with its displacement in his dreams and his dreams are not affected or influenced by common sense. Gatsby's 'id' or 'unconsciousness' throws luxurious parties in the objectives of attracting Daisy. Gatsby's weekend parties are attempts to attract the 'object of desire'; in other words, it is 'nothing more than shimmering nets thrown out in the hopes of snaring ... Daisy.' In my opinion, the female characters are portrayed in 'low light' throughout the novel.

The novel *The Great Gatsby* highlights the cultural rift between East and West and explores the national myth, the 'American Dream'. The great American philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson in his treatise 'Self Reliance' formulated the basic principles of the American Dream in the mid-19th century.

But in the early 20th century when North Eastern America grew rich in wealth and industrial power, the dream took on a purely materialistic nature. Fitzgerald exposes this corruption of dream with Gatsby's projection, which symbolises the vulgar pursuit of wealth and social privilege.

Interestingly, most of the guests do not know much about the host; moreover, the host Gatsby never drank or joined in the revelries. Gatsby's headstrong attitude can be analyzed as his 'id' ruling over the 'superego'. Gatsby faces this psychological trauma as he is afraid of losing a romantic partner. Gatsby's 'id' works mostly in the novel with his dreams and desires, superseding his 'ego' and 'superego'. Gatsby is the paradigmatic example for 'repression', the cornerstone of psychoanalytical theory. The process through which certain desires, especially sexual, are pushed into the unconsciousness as they do not influence our daily lives and the conscious mind is 'repression'. Gatsby's feelings about Daisy are repressed, and it naturally comes out of the 'unconscious.'

Freud says that all human life is caught in the tensions between the 'pleasure' and 'reality' principle. The novel's central conflict is Gatsby's psychological struggle between 'pleasures' he wishes to have with Daisy and the bare 'reality'. Looking through the lens of 'pleasure principle', we can see that Gatsby's acts are governed by his need to attain 'pleasure' and avoid 'unpleasant'. Adding the flavours of 'reality principle', over time, Gatsby realizes that all our pleasures cannot be fulfilled in the way we wish and chooses other options to attain pleasure.

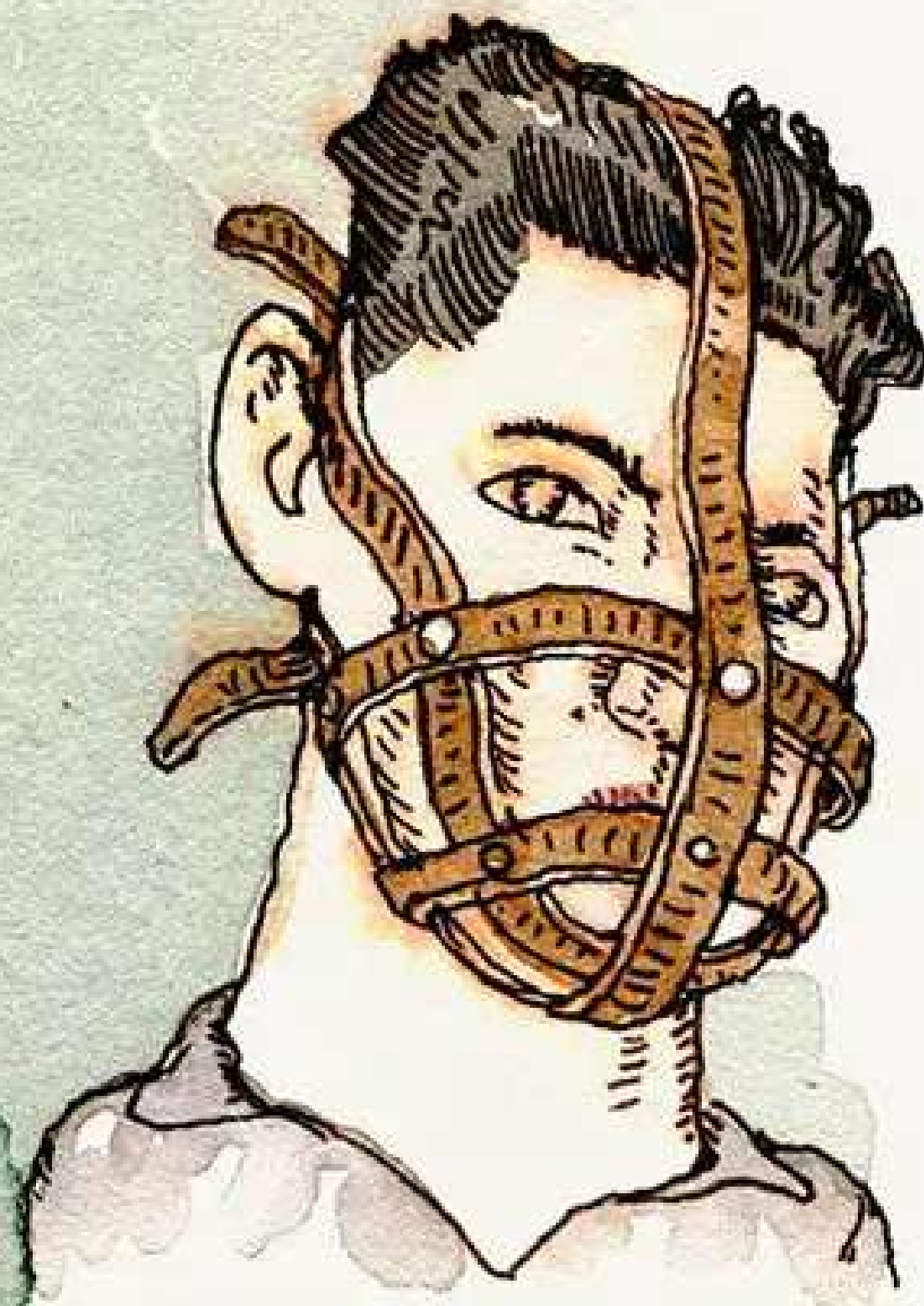
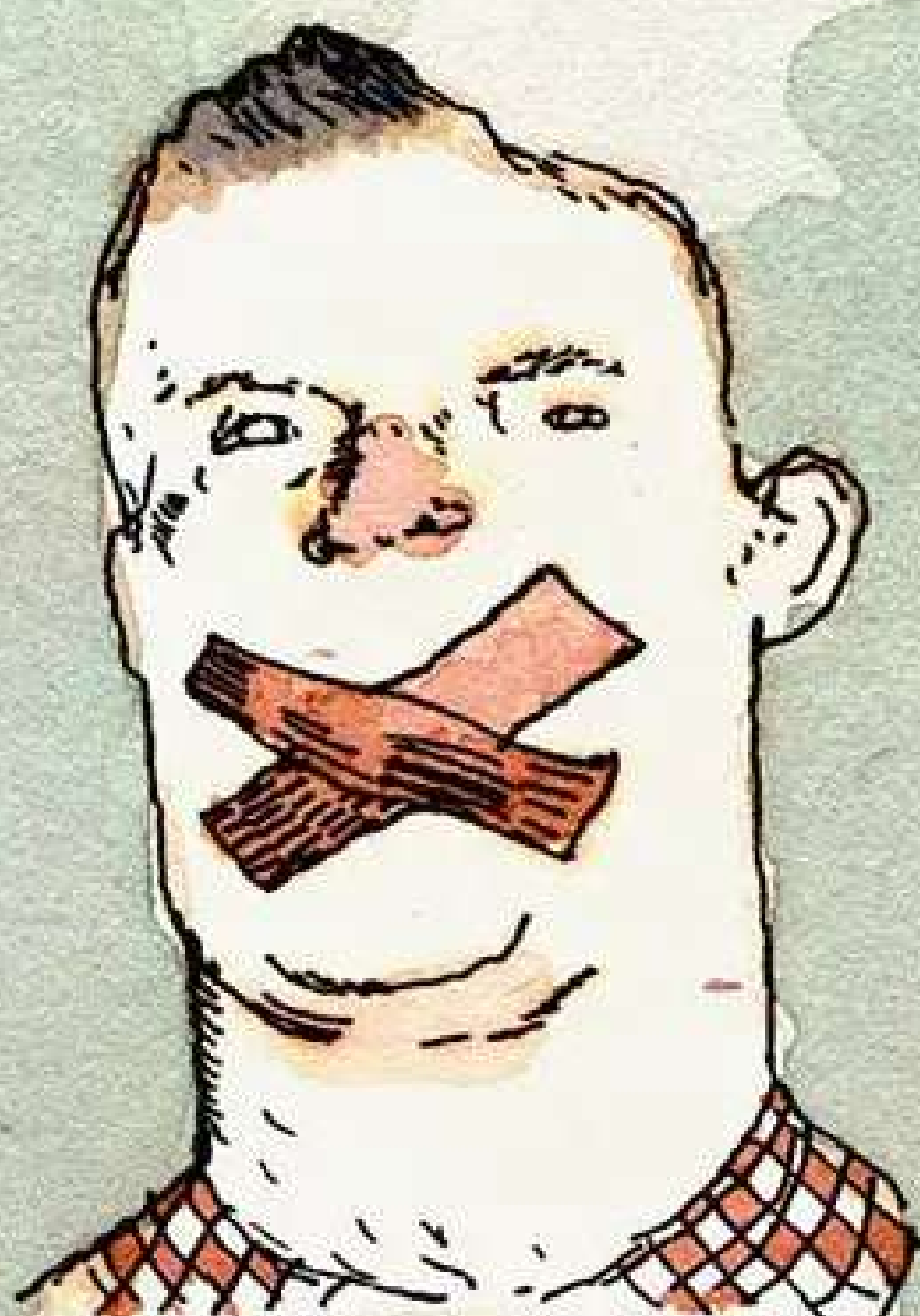
The conflict between id and ego is 'normal' anxiety, whereas the conflict between ego and superego is the higher level of anxiety. The 'superego' of Gatsby works into action after Daisy has a change of heart and decides to mend her relationship with Tom Buchanan, her husband. When Daisy rejects Gatsby, he goes to the couple's home and stands outside without any actions. Here, Gatsby accepts the social values and taboos imposed by the 'superego' and behaves to respect the marriage's sanctity. If 'id' had ruled Gatsby's mind, for the time being, he would have perhaps forced his way inside by breaking the door or by kidnapping Daisy. Gatsby's 'ego' manifested by the external world's direct influence restrained him from dangerous deeds considered unacceptable by society.

We can see Gatsby's superego overpowering his 'id' when he walks for the pool of his home despite having been desperately expecting a phone call from his love Daisy. Towards the end of the novel, Gatsby seems to be consciously experiencing and reacting to the external world where his 'ego' finds a balance between 'id' and his 'superego', thus no longer running behind his dangerous desires. But the surprising chain of events with twists and turns in response to Gatsby's id-driven pursuit of Daisy leads to a pathetic tragedy long before the 'ego' succeeds in controlling the rampant expression of Gatsby's deepest desires.

The final lines of *The Great Gatsby* serve as a sort of epitaph for both Gatsby and the novel; "So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past".

The novel's ending becomes a symbolic reassertion of the conservative American values rooted in domesticity, honesty, and simplicity. Looking through the lens of Freud's psychoanalysis, Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* generates from the embryonic dream of Jay Gatsby based on the romantic youth, which suits the best soil for psychoanalytical reading. *The Great Gatsby*, by Fitzgerald, is an appreciable literary work that expounded the repressed psyche of the psychoanalytical character, Jay Gatsby. This wonderful piece of literary work that navigates deep into the socio-political arena of the then America is an important fictional exploration of Freudian Psychoanalysis.



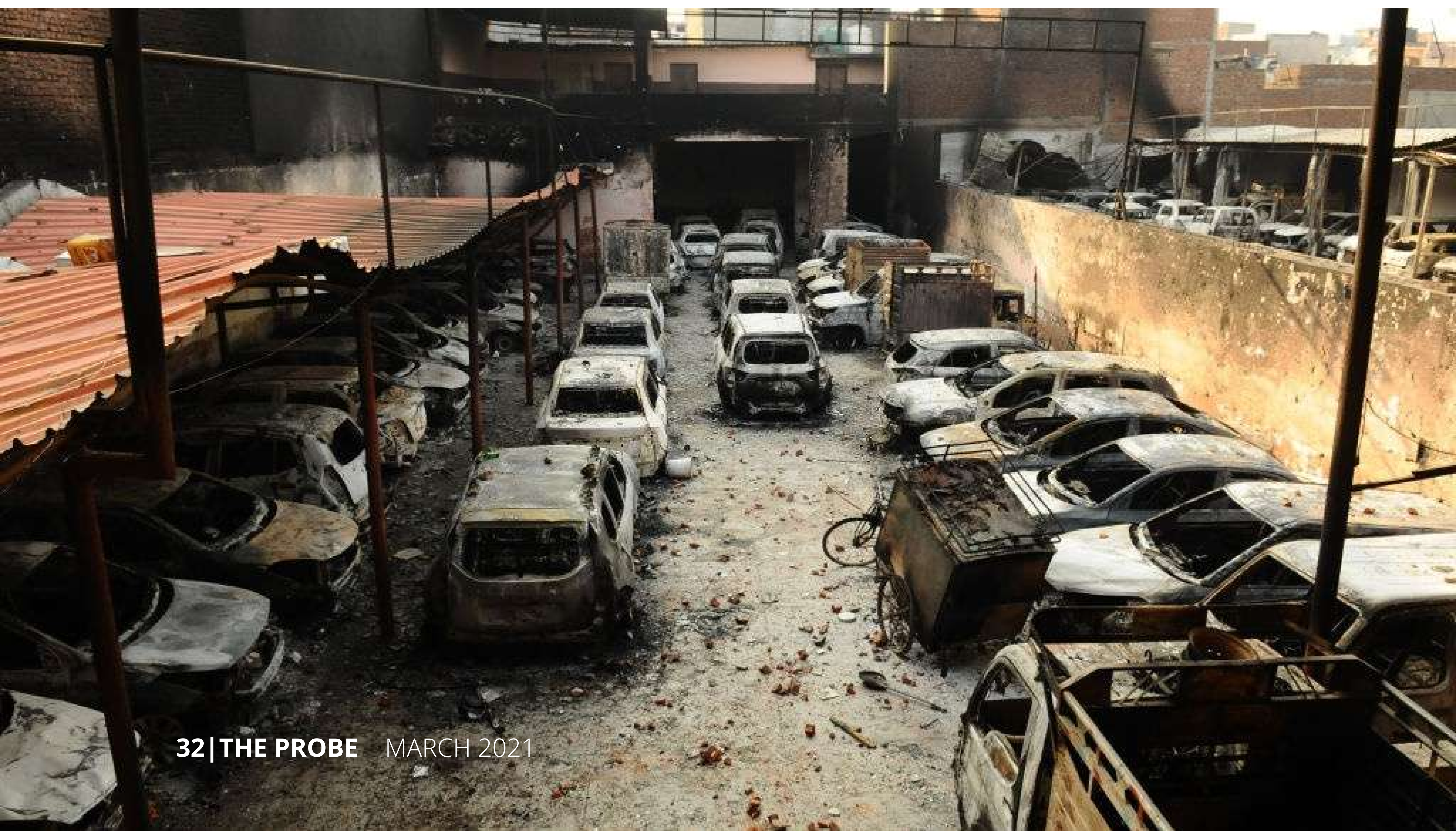


Political (In)Correctness

BY ABHILASHA RAWAT

The rise of illiberal elites, the obscurity of opinions and the sheer craving for limelight has pressurised every individual to hold an extremist stand and the entire society to inadvertently neglect the concept of moderation. Choice has to be made immediately rather hastily to fit in the sects of classification, pre-determined by few and proposed to all. It might seem like an individual decision from an overt perspective; however, the amalgamating lines of private and public question the subjectivity in practice. When a media culture like this thrives, what comes with it is the loosening fibres of once distinguishable but ever subjective, moral and ethical values. Social media provides a platform where people feel free to give power to a thought, their id once proffered, but ego never permitted. It often seems like a harmless tool, but the lack of regulations to what can be empowered now creates a slippery slope. Agencies around the globe are trying to search for the streak of appropriation of thought, bringing upon a culture of attempting speech to be in-offensive, the culture of political correctness, more popularly known as the PC culture or as Salman Rushdie likes to say it, a “culture of offendedness”.

The notion was commissioned as a sign of social civility, to be careful not to offend the sensitivities of anybody, especially communities that are generally considered peripheral or marginalised. However, it has, in return, hampered the freedom of speech and led to further outrage towards the marginalised. One of the reasons for the failure of establishing an artificial boundary of political correctness is the lack of objectivity in what can be offensive. Casteist slurs, Islamophobic stereotypes, or stubborn associations around women are among a few disputed arenas. However, it often translates into having a deliberation regarding such sensitive issues more difficult and sometimes implausible without offending anyone. Terminologies are often unsettled ground as well. Words with freighted history and associations become a bone of contention with the ‘woke’ population. ‘Harijan’ was the word of a condescending outsider, ‘scheduled caste’ is an administrative term, whereas ‘Dalit’ stands for assertive politics and community. Other terms with more prejudiced and derogatory historical baggage include Bhangi, Chamar, Chandala etc. In 2017, the Supreme Court of India declared that calling people ‘dhobi’ or ‘Harijan’ was offensive.



Racist terms like “whitelist/blacklist” and “master/slave” are also being probed with a sensitive air. Nevertheless, the line stretches in a manner that it leads to new discoveries every second, making half of our language debatable of its origin. Though steeped in controversy, some believe that the first part of the phrase “Hip hip hooray!” relates to anti-Semitic demonstrations that started in Germany in the 19th century. Germans cheered “hep hep,” a German herding call, as they forced Jews from their homes across Europe. Indeed, ignorance is bliss or, more, a privilege when you want to escape the fact that the comfortable air around you is a product of systematic discrimination and subjugation that others faced, to which the accepted solution is the change of symbols over actions.

In the actual world, the real pressure of being politically correct has landed on artists more than political and social leaders. Writers, comedians, movie makers being continuously involved in a tussle to protect their right of artistic expression in a tumult of social acceptance. With twitter’s over-enthusiasm to ‘cancel’ everything to desperate protesters who emerge as the selected representative of their entities, artists spend more time justifying their artwork than in its making. Literature that historically emerged to overpower the political strands is unjustly expected to abide by the political norms. Even the most innocuous writing might provoke somebody somewhere, which can grow into a mindless collective called the mob. The mob as censor is a convenient clamp-down weapon for democratic governments to silence any uncelebrated opinion in their eyes and cater to their vote banks. Banning books by the government as a claim to hate speech has been a very prominent part of curbing literary tradition. From Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses* by the Rajiv Gandhi government in 1988 to Taslima Nasreen’s book called *Lajja* by the West Bengal government in 2003, the only fascinating development here is that the government only ‘bow’ to public pressure now.

A Santhali writer, Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar, faced a ban on his collection of short stories ‘The Adivasi will not Dance’, in response to his own community members’ protest against one story titled “November is the Month of Migrations” considered to be demeaning to the women of the tribe. Recently, even government involvement is scarcely required in the instance where Bloomsbury India was pressured to withdraw the book titled *Delhi Riots 2020: The*

Untold Story by RSS-sympathetic lawyer Monika Arora, Sonali Chitalkar and Prerna Malhotra due to the popular backlash faced on the invitation of BJP minister, Kapil Mishra, who had allegedly made controversial remarks before northeast Delhi communal riots. In a scenario where books are causing a revolt, one cannot think about the levels of censorship cinema faces, owing to both its wide-reaching audience and influence. Movies, being culturally momentous, are also on the verge of becoming ‘dangerous’ any second when viewed with a political lens. One barely knows when sympathy towards a marginalised group can be misunderstood to become a glorification of their limitation. At opening night screenings of the movie *Joker*, the police issued warnings about the possibility of mass shootings. The movie was criticised on the grounds that it ‘glamorises’ violent incels. Film critics often attach little comprehensive capabilities to viewers, thus rejecting every portrayal of any complicated issue. More often, viewers reinforce such stereotypes through unnecessary boycott movements. With protests against films like the infamous *Padmaavat* comes another trend of changing movie titles, achieving the value of popularising the intolerance towards anything and everything. In the case of the horror-comedy *Laxmi Bomb*, the Hindu Sena argued that associating the name of Goddess Laxmi with the word Bomb is disparaging in nature and hurts the sentiments of the Hindu community, causing the makers to change the name to *Laxmi*. At present times, there is an increasing amount of limitations for cinema makers. Imagine a movie like *Blazing Saddles* or *Ghostbusters* or even *Hangover* being made today.

The contemporary and blooming field of getting offended is nothing else but comedy. The penetration of western culture is such that a phase of defying conventional ideas of society that came as a revolution there, with large scale arrests of comedians, has a replica here. Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh has instructed the police to take legal action against the comedian Agrima Joshua over allegations of her insulting Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. Comedian Munawar Faruqui and four others were arrested on a complaint by Eklavya Gaur, the convenor of the Hind Rakshak Sangathan, accused of passing “indecent” remarks about Hindu deities during a show. (No context can be provided as the state is still finding the proof.)

Comedians often defend offensive comedy as a mode of normalisation of differences while struggling against a lawsuit and a mob attack. Artists thus are constantly pondering over the line that should not be crossed. There's no consensus of what can be funny, like Tig Notaro, an American stand-up comic, gained laughter, talking about her breast cancer. Jokes about rape or disabilities or religion have always sparked controversy; some suggest adopting a 'punch up' approach to challenge the status quo while others recommend reducing the social responsibility on jokes and joke-makers.

Despite the fact that there is an undeniable role of art and literature in formulating and altering a culture, thus inducing a larger implication of adherence to social and moral responsibility, the act has become

mechanised with the PC culture, attaching diminished value to generating awareness and turning into a mockery. The tragic history of communal riots and unequal status shows us that a very individualistic, private feeling of offence can easily become a dangerous public expression in India. Awareness over what becomes public should be heeded; however, overdoing censorship or the formalities to a point where the conveyance of an idea is hindered, and a new form of oppression rises is not only imprudent but also abusive.

Therefore, the dilemma exists where either all of us can decide to be completely unconscious and celebrate any thought, disregarding the repercussions, or can be so cautious that almost every thought is discarded.





**MENSTRUAL UNTOUCHABILITY
THE REAL “CURSE” ON
SOCIETY**

BY PREET SHARMA

I am fortunate that I am born to two feminist parents who understand that menstruation is a natural biological process that doesn't make women "impure" or "polluted". In my hometown in Rajasthan, patriarchy and patriarchal institutions are still very strong. Period Untouchability or menstrual segregation and seclusion are still common in India. It is a seldom vocalized topic. This article is based on my experiences in my native province. However, the suppression of women due to the restrictive practices followed during menstruation is not just limited to Rajasthan.

WHY IS MENSTRUATION STIGMATIZED?

Menstruation is rarely discussed in public discourse in India. Despite the fact that most women menstruate, it is still a part of the private realm of family. We, as a society, have made it solely a part of the private sphere associated with immense stigmatization. The human rights of women are violated every month as if they cease to be humans during the time they menstruate. Article 17 of the Indian Constitution abolishes Untouchability and its practice in any form. Citizens of this country should ask themselves whether Article 17 gives protection only against untouchability based on caste and class, shouldn't this practice include the abolition of menstrual untouchability as well?

Women are discriminated against because of their biology. Their biology is defined as their destiny. Women are considered "polluted" and "impure" during the days they menstruate. Inside their homes, numerous restrictions are put on their mobility. I talked to several women I knew in Rajasthan about what kind of restrictions and seclusion they face during their menstrual cycle. Though I was familiar with some of them, I was shocked to hear certain responses.

Most women said that they were not allowed to enter the kitchen or touch the place where water was stored for drinking purposes. They were not allowed to sleep on a bed and could not even worship God and Goddess.

These were some common limitations and were relatively less shocking, though equally exploitative and inhumane. Some women were not allowed to touch taps till they bath. A mother whose daughter was menstruating was expected to put a bucket of water on her daughter first, only then she could touch the tap and vice versa. Touching pickle was not allowed as people believed that if a menstruating woman touched pickle, it turned sour. This argument was beyond what my rational mind could comprehend. They couldn't touch any dry food item and thus, were not allowed to enter the kitchen. The first thing in the morning, whether a 12-year-old or a 40-year-old menstruating woman was expected to do was to take a bath before touching anything as she was segregated from other members of the family and was expected to sleep either on the floor with some mattress or on a separate "khat"(a small bed). She was not even allowed to take clothes from the cupboard, as she couldn't even touch the cupboard. The purpose of enunciating the restrictions in detail was to make the extent of human exploitation and trauma visible in the public discourse.

THE INTERNALIZED "INFERIORITY"

I was troubled by hearing those heart-wrenching stories of women. Even though I was unsettled, the women who narrated them were completely comfortable with how things were. They believed that during menstruation, they are "impure" and so these restrictions were justified. I could see the patriarchal mindset, they were conditioned in. The first step of eradicating injustice is to make the victims realize that injustice is being meted out to them. I tried talking to some about how those standards were patriarchal and how they crushed the human dignity that every human is entitled to. While some women agreed, most thought that I was essentially a "westernised" girl who didn't understand the concept of "impurity" or "pollution" during periods. Nevertheless, the conversation with those women was important.

I should clarify here that the restrictions are practised across caste and class lines. I met a very educated woman whose equally educated husband,

working in one of India's top companies, refused to take water from her hand and cooked food for his wife, children, and himself, not because he wants his wife to rest or to be little comfortable while she is bleeding for 4 days continuously, but because, despite being highly educated he still thinks that his wife during periods becomes "impure" and "polluted", so, she no longer remains fit to cook food. This shattered my assumption that period untouchability is restricted to the economically backward and rural areas. Period untouchability like patriarchy can be found across genders, educational backgrounds, caste and class.

Period Untouchability is a crime. Period. We must ponder over how we are losing precious confident women by crushing basic human rights to dignity, inflicting mental torture, making women less confident throughout their lives by practising period untouchability with them during their menstrual cycle. Since we have made periods a taboo, a concept not to be discussed in public, can the exploitation that is carried on within the home be justified? Shouldn't the government of this nation come forward with a provision for criminalizing period untouchability which should empower women to use it if they face any sort of exploitation during periods? Is forced segregation and seclusion not a form of mental violence and torture that is inflicted on women every month? Why can't we have provisions that protect human rights during the menstrual cycle? Do human rights stop at the door of the house? These are some tough questions everyone must ask themselves.

MENSTRUATION: BLESSING NOT CURSE

Most women are made to internalize the idea that period untouchability is normal and justified. The agents of the patriarchy are found across genders. They force women to uphold these restrictive practices and most women don't even question them. Though, we do have some voices against these regressive practices of seclusion. While delivering the Sabrimala judgment, the then Chief Justice of India, Justice Dipak Mishra asserted that excluding menstruating women is not a necessary part of religion. We also have progressive religious

celebrations like the Ambabuchi Mela celebrated in the Kamakhya Temple in Assam. It is a four-day ritualistic fair, celebrating the annual mensuration of Goddess Kamakhya. This has also led to relatively fewer instances of period untouchability in Assam and has helped weaken taboos around menstruation there.

The mobility of women cannot be restricted at the hands of patriarchal norms. Women must decide for themselves. Whether a woman while menstruating wants to cook or not should be her choice, not a societal compulsion. The ability to reason and speak a language is central and distinctive to humanity. Both these qualities remain with women even while they menstruate, so they neither are impure nor unfit to enter any part of their homes. However, the reasonability of people and practices that encourage stereotypes can be easily questioned. Period Untouchability is forced upon women through conditioning and sometimes, through exertion. According to the National Health Survey Mission Statistics, Period Poverty is also rampant in India with only 36% of women having access to sanitary pads or any other menstrual product. Due to the stigma that surrounds periods, girls, in absence of proper sanitary products, end up missing almost 4-5 days in school and some even drop out of school once they start menstruating. Period Untouchability is rarely questioned. Questioning the restrictions on women during periods is central to criticizing them and ultimately shattering them down. Students, regardless of their gender, should be educated on gender sensitization. Topics like menstruation should be a part of class discussions, not something as wrapped under a "black polybag." Awareness campaigns should be undertaken to educate society and end untouchability based on the ability to menstruate. Criminalizing period untouchability should be a policy priority and menstruating women must be treated as humans with dignity. The feminist movement must fight against the patriarchal ideology that perpetuates the exploitative narrative of women being "impure" and "polluted" during menstruation. One should recall that menstruation is indeed a "blessing" of the Goddess, not a God's curse.

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Stake in a Mistake

The unprecedented rise of Gandhi's assassins in India's public space

BY KUSHAGRA KULSHRESTHA

In April 1947, Mahatma Gandhi was at his daily prayer meeting, "One of the correspondents asked, why should I not be called "Muhammed Gandhi"? And then he hurls the choicest abuses, which need not be repeated here", he spoke to the audience. "If we ignore the person who abuses us, he will repeat his performance once, twice, thrice, several times—only to tire of it. Being tired he would either keep quiet or, driven by anger, kill us."

A candid discourse as it was, after 9 months and 3 weeks, on January 30th, Mohandas K. Gandhi was shot dead when he was on his way to the prayer meeting, by a bigot, named Nathuram Vinayak Godse. Subsequently, he was hanged to death and a radical rightwing outfit, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) was banned for some time. The assassination of Mahatma Gandhi was ideologically driven, the RSS men were overjoyed and distributed sweets on the day when the entire world was sending condolences. The same rafter has resurrected which has a stake in Gandhi's assassins.

Gandhi's India is in a state of perplexity on Gandhi, on

one hand we see the Prime Minister writing in New York Times' editorial, on Mahatma, his party's de facto parent organisation, the RSS's chief writing in the editorials of Hindi newspapers with an underhand for the past, on the other side we see Godse being annotated as a patriot in the nation's Parliament. In the recent years, on every 2nd October, his anniversary, the Indian twitter is over flowing with the hashtags in support of Godse and denouncing Gandhi with distorted history sermons, a slanted reminiscence of the year 1969, when the world celebrated the centenary of Mahatma Gandhi's birth, Naxalites (Indian Maoists, after the name of the village Naxalbari in the Indian State of West Bengal, their origin) brought down statues of Gandhi in villages and towns, sometimes entering a government office to vandalise his portrait. As J.S. Mill would say that no idea is completely false, makes truth have different versions, so has India accepted Godse's version of truth when it votes his legatee to power?

In 2019, the Indian government had emblazoned Gandhi's 150th birth anniversary with sumptuous preparations, which can be seen as the most altruistic

endorsement of him during the ongoing second tenure of PM Narendra Modi's regime along with the visits of the Head of the States since 2014, the latest being President Donald Trump to Gandhi's Ashram earlier this year. In spite of his roots being in the RSS, the Prime Minister has articulated his inspirations from the Mahatma at many occasions, Modi launched the world's largest sanitation programme in 2014, inspired from Gandhi's Champaran Satyagraha in 1916, incremental citing of the Gandhian values behind the government's move in the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019 in massive political campaign rallies, the inaugurations of palatial museums, whether it is Gandhi's High School in his home State or installing large spinning wheels, an emblem of Gandhian economic self reliance during the Indian freedom struggle, in the cities of Delhi and Noida, his promotion of traditional Khadi clothing, all boast of the nation's great love for Mahatma Gandhi, where everything is inspired by the global pacifist.

But in love, you don't zig when you can zag, an apprehension that everything in the ruling party today, from policies and partisan networking to giving tickets to those like Pragya Singh Thakur, the one who went on the spree in Lok Sabha to call Godse a patriot, gets stronger on the veracity platter than ever before in independent India. As mentioned, looking at twitter on the day of Gandhi's birth

anniversary, reveals that there is a section of hate mongers, who would justify the killing of Mahatma Gandhi, vilify him as a Muslim appeaser and throw strident expressions of their want to modify the current the stature of the Mahatma. On Gandhi's death anniversary, they openly call Godse a martyr and celebrate the cause of Gandhi's death as "Shaurya Diwas" (Day of Valour), their profiles would tell you that they are "proud" Hindus (albeit Gandhi was a devout Hindu throughout his life), that they are associated with the RSS, Hindu Mahasabha or any other organisation of the conservative right and they are inspired by the Prime Minister. One might think that social media is not exactly a mirror of society and that ideological differences are indeed a beauty of democracy, since Gandhi can not be accepted in entirety by anyone in 2020, but this antagonism climaxes not just to some strong goading speeches but to audacious acts, like shooting of an effigy of Gandhi on the front side of a balloon filled with red coloured water, by Pooja Shakun Pandey, a leader of Hindu Mahasabha, to repeat the scene of 30th January. Ironically, this all happened in the 'Gandhi' Park Police Station area, in the city of Aligarh. The bigger question is, where does this audacity come from, because there were no such extreme aversions in the public space of India before 2014.



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To add, we might think that these uncouth people are just hyped up common folks (as they support the party in power), after all most of them are not holding any office of profit and the leadership never endorses them, that is the dodge, which becomes tangible when the same Pooja Shakun Pandey is seen in the row of guests for the swearing-in ceremony of the State of Uttar Pradesh's Chief Minister, Yogi Adityanath, who belongs to the same party. Another crevice in the Gandhianism of the government was when Vicky Mittal, BJP's Indore IT cell incharge who tweeted that by auctioning the gun of Godse, we would come to know whether he was a patriot or not, met Narendra Modi and their picture became a point of criticism. In the last week of October, Anil Kumar Saumitra, head of the State media cell for BJP, who was expelled from the party for calling Gandhi, "father of Pakistan" got appointed as professor in Indian Institute for Mass Communication.

Last year, in a school which runs on government's aid had a question in exam, asking the reason why Gandhi committed suicide, the same year in another State government's booklet on Gandhi's 150th anniversary had mentioned that Gandhi "died due to accidental reasons in a sudden sequence of events on January 30, 1948 at Delhi's Birla House".

When asked about the promise of giving V. D. Sarvarkar, the highest civilian award of India

by the BJP in an Indian State election, Nitin Gadkari, a cabinet Minister used the word "Gandhi vadh" (killing of Gandhi instead of murder) when justifying Savarkar's innocence in the assassination[10], this same term was used by Gopal Godse, Nathuram Godse's brother in his book, "Gandhi Vadh Kyon" (Why Gandhi was killed) in which he had put up their rebuttal. Sakshi Maharaj, a sitting Member of Parliament of the BJP has openly called Nathuram Godse a patriot, so had the BJP's leader from South Indian State of Karnataka, Anant Kumar Hegde. It was still not overwhelming if things ended with indiscreet statements of Ministers and alike, but the deeper infringement and neglect of the ethos of Gandhianism in government's certain legislations, probably the most recondite thing, is the biggest hypocrisy. It was Gandhi who refused to keep a registration card with ten finger prints in South Africa and he burnt them in the presence of police, as for him, that law to register all Indians was a symbol of hatred, little did he know that one day his own people would come up with the idea of a NRC, National Register of Citizens, orchestrated by an Amendment in Citizenship Act by the government, again, against Gandhi's ideas, which had a mention for "nationalist Muslims" in Pakistan and how



minorities in both India and Pakistan should be faithful to their land. This would only come to the Indian sundry when it is elicited from history books, but what to say of the times, when an eminent biographer of Gandhi, Ramchandra Guha couldn't teach in a university at Gandhi's own Ahmedabad city in 2018, allegedly after ABVP (Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad), a student wing of the regime, wrote to the University against this appointment, "If such persons will cooperate with anti-national activities and activities for disintegration of India with the help of your institution, Vidyarthi Parishad will lead radical movement against your institution and you will be solely responsible for it,"

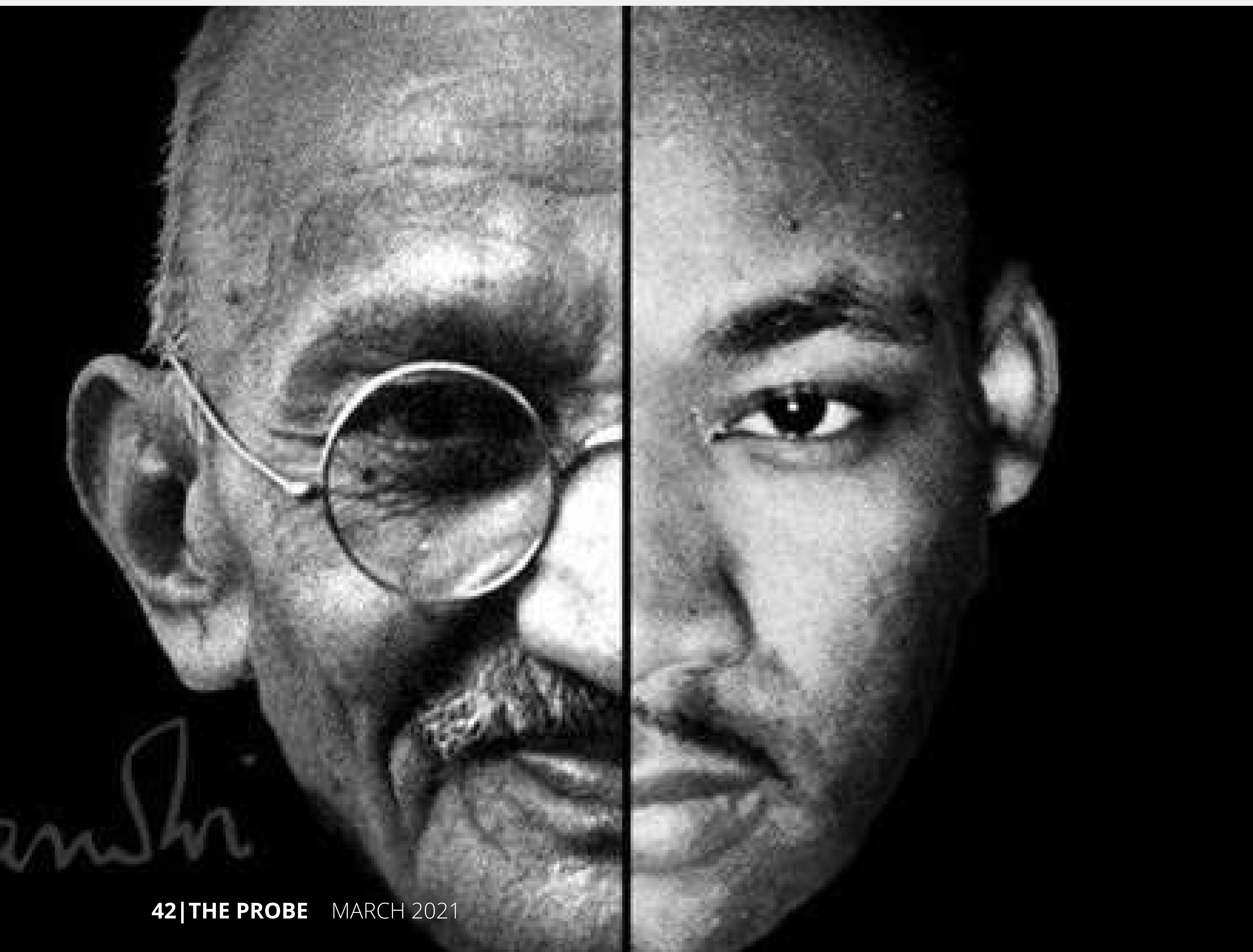
Gandhi, who would forgive a man in a conspiracy to kill him, can not inspire a government which slams preventive acts for terrorism on its critics. Certainly, not when it comes to the domineering and absolutist ways of the government on the Kashmir question. For Gandhi, he will win even if the battle is lost, as his soft power is a global realization. From Michael Jackson to Nobel peace prize laureate from Yemen, Twakkul Karman, Gandhi lives an everlasting life through the celebration of his ideas, even after 72 years of his

assassination. Moreover players of broad based politics in India know very well that their populism will not revamp as inclusive till they add Mahatma Gandhi to it. The surge in the RSS Chief's interests in Gandhi is a testimonial to this fact.

But is Gandhi's appropriation by the rightwing forces justified and can Godse and Gandhi be admired together? The ruling party's silence on the extreme right is contentious, their talks on Gandhi would always be seen with a sceptical eye till they denounce all their stakes in the past. Their selective application of Gandhian ideals is another restraint in any acknowledgement of Gandhi by the rightwing, sometimes against the essence of his work, like the demand of a Hindu Rashtra (a nation with the dominance of Hindu culture) which Gandhi never approved in his lifetime, evident in the reality that Gandhi's appreciation by the regime is mainly on politically trivial things,

other than citizenship where he is often quoted in a distorted manner, the best example is the constant ignorance of Gandhi's views about communal harmony.

India is a hard labour democracy, each day there is a fight for rights and Gandhi, since his inception into mass politics before independence, bequeathed not just the country but the world to agitate without hate, to invoke the power of truth and speak to the conscience of the suppressor, his tryst with civil disobedience shook the colonial world and his appeal to the countrymen to be fearless was a threshold for civil rights movements across the world. In every protest against the establishment in India, there is a sense of virtuous pride, but this incessant credence in defiance saturated with Gandhian ways, is threatened today, the binary of silent support for Godse sympathizers and Mahatma's appropriation to the comforts of those in power has to go, which only requires political fortitude.

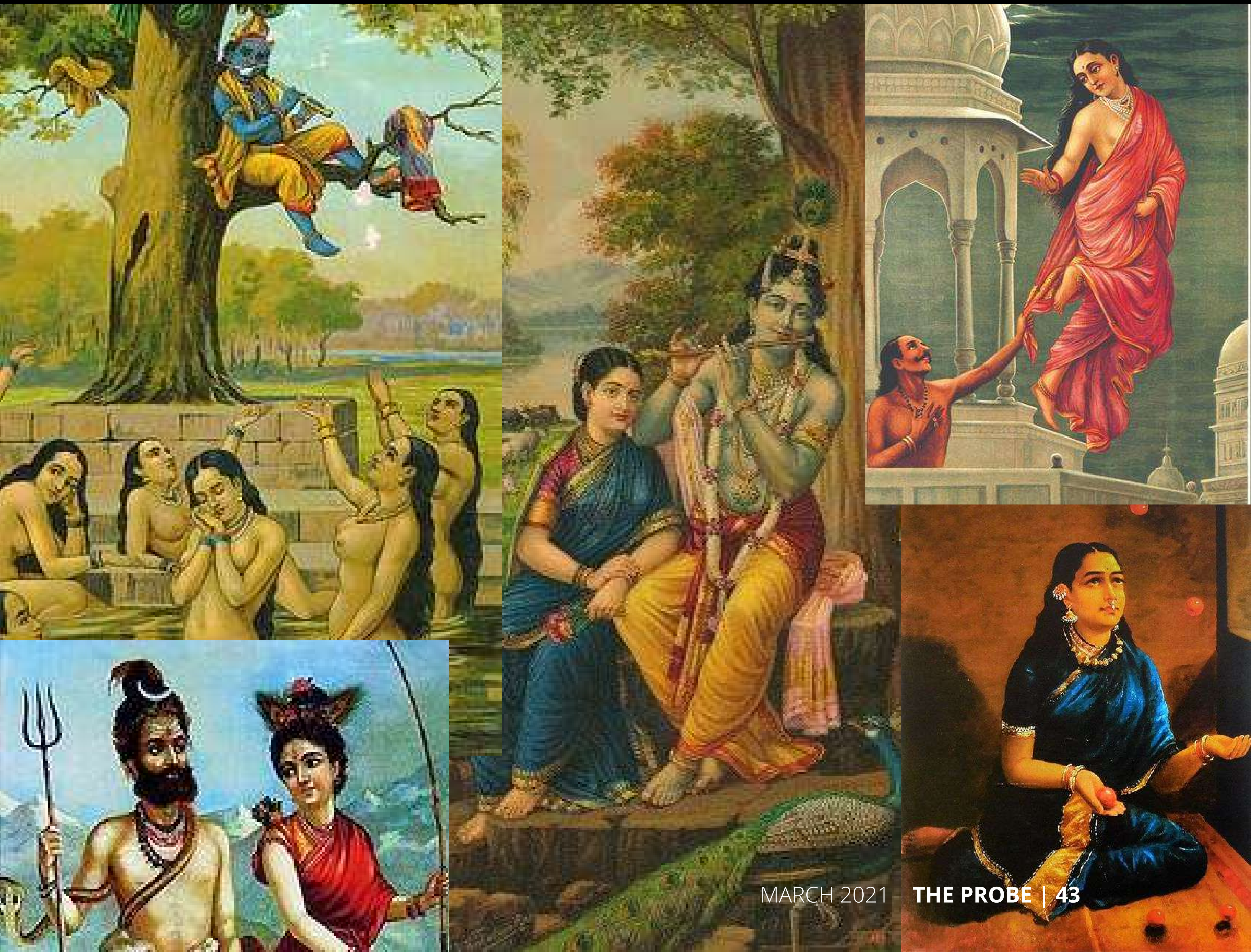


The Rectitude of Women in Hindu Mythology

BY SHRUTI SARKAR

Endowed with stature and wedded with virtue, women have played an indispensable role in Hindu mythology. Though addressed as individual entities, their association with male deities, has rendered their contribution as inappreciable. From Durga, the most powerful female figure in the Hindu pantheon to Sita, the perfect example of selflessness, each one of them has been personified for her consortium with the powerful male deities. The aforementioned verses from the Bhagavad Gita, present the way women were conceptualised. It talks about how the spread of irreligiousness corrupts the women of the family, eventually leading to the production of unwanted progeny. This brings into picture the systematic

abasement of women who have been viewed as objects of pleasure, instruments of trade, incapable of rationality, and in dire need of protection. It has projected women as controllable elements in the hands of the revered male deities. The portrayal of female characters, such as Parvati, Lakshmi, Saraswati in their various incarnations, in the Hindu mythology has led us to believe in the morally indefensible attitudes towards women, normalising the inhumane societal expectations from them by setting unattainable standards of obedience, domesticity, fidelity and chastity, thus making the goddesses the vehicle for the subordination of Indian women.



“My lord is my god” (Kuniyath and Sankaranarayanan 2), the mantra chanted by the devout and obedient wives whose primary goal of existence was servitude towards their husbands. This can be brought forward by throwing light on the character of Sati, consort of Shiva, who sacrificed her life when her husband was disrespected by her own father. The roots of certain social evils, such as the practice of committing Sati, can be traced back to this story. Reincarnated as Parvati, she continued to express her devotion towards Shiva by performing severe penance and eventually gaining his acceptance of her. Another startling example is of goddess Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity is questioned for her fickleness as “she moves from one deserving consort to another shifting her attachment to different male figures” (Bose 20), for a long period before meeting her final consort, Vishnu. She transforms herself into a helpmate to revere her husband. She occupies a secondary position in the relationship and adopts a self-negating attitude, outlining the ideal code of conduct for married

women. Sita, an incarnation of Lakshmi, remained “uncomplainingly loyal to her husband, Ram, despite suffering injustice at his hand” (Bose38).

"Sita raised both her sons alone as a single mother, after her husband ceased to look after his family".

She is portrayed to blame herself for all the misfortunes that befall her and ultimately has to undergo the fire ordeal to prove her loyalty. Her depiction reflects the acceptance of social norms by valuing public opinion and familial duties over individual freedom. This, in turn, has traditionally succeeded in framing the idea of ‘women’s willing consent to subjugation’. Radha, another avatar of Lakshmi, who defied societal

values in pursuance of personal choices, has faced widespread condemnation for her involvement in an adulterous relationship with Krishan, who was way younger than her. Krishan continues to be looked upon highly while Radha’s morals are questioned.

It is important to realise how these tales have shaped our very basic understanding, paving the way for the blame game, with women at the receiving end. It can be derived that the distinguished eminence of these goddesses comes into play, only when accompanied by their male partners.

The men could abandon their partners, give away their daughters as priceless commodities and punish them for improper service offered, while women had no such choice available. This illustrates the differentiation in the gender roles with a lack of rights and strict moral code of conduct for women. Women were also expected to uphold the institution of family and protect its sovereignty without the desire or need for assistance from their better halves. “The mythologies describing the plight of Sita amplify the attitude of ancient Hindu society towards women” (Kuniyath and Sankaranarayanan 2).

Sita raised both her sons alone as a single mother, after her husband ceased to look after his family. According to the myth, Parvati gave birth to Ganesha without Shiva’s assistance, as he was uninterested in the institution family. She was also considered to be ungrateful by her husband when she failed to pay attention to his recitation of Brahmdayan and was cursed to lead the life of a fisherman.



Despite goddess Durga's "role of battle-queen; it is her domestic role as the wife of Shiva and mother of several divine children" (Kinsley 113) that is foregrounded in Durga Puja, pointing towards the importance of domestication. Radha was abandoned by Krishna when he went to take revenge on his uncle, Kansa. The prevalent ritual of Kanyadan, where the daughter is viewed as a form of Lakshmi while the son-in-law is treated as a form of Vishnu, has structurally objectified women. It was conjectured to free the father of all sins, once he married off his daughter. This has also led to the belief that unmarried daughters are burdens on the father's shoulders and therefore need to be given away and a price has to be paid for such an act. This act of paying such an amount has given rise to the custom of dowry, which has supplemented the scourge of women by treating them as economic liabilities.

"Though destitute of virtue, or seeking pleasure (elsewhere), or devoid of good qualities, (yet) a husband must be constantly worshipped as a god by a faithful wife" (Manu, Muller and Buhler 153)– This clearly indicates that the goddesses had to maintain their fidelity and remain docile, as they were equated to standards of purity while no such obligations were attached to the gods. This also demonstrates the discriminatory principles women were expected to uphold. The concept of polygamy in Hindu mythology showcases the misbalance among both the genders. While polygyny was practised freely, as in the case of Shiva, Brahma and Vishnu, without the need for an explanation, the act of polyandry was reprimanded. A number of temples depict gods with many wives, the Tirumala Tirupati temple in Tamil Nadu, where Lord Venkateswara (a form of Vishnu) has been portrayed with his wives- Sridevi and Bhudevi, presents a striking example. However, there are no images of goddesses with multiple husbands. Certain religious texts permit men to have polygynous unions but prefer maintaining silence on the subject of women. This has laid the foundation for the subservience of women, repressing their individuality and defining the appropriate form of social behaviour desirable to the society.

"In case a damsel tears the membrane [hymen] of her Vagina, she shall instantly have her head shaved or two fingers cut off and made to ride on Donkey" (Manu, Muller and Buhler 153).

These verses of Manusmriti focus on the treatment women were subjected to and the lack of autonomy they received. They were expected to preserve their chastity and punished for disobedience. Though the mighty goddess, Durga ('Mahishasura-Mardini) was idealised as a model of domesticity, yet "she is known as Kanyakumari (the virgin daughter)" (Bose 30). The great epic Mahabharata glorifies the role of Kunti who managed to protect her hymen after giving birth to a child.



Goddess Saraswati, despite her incestuous congress with Brahma, is identified as the virgin goddess. The legends of Panchakanya have been glorified in several texts. The union of Ahalya, Draupadi, Sita, Tara and Mandodari constitutes the tale of the five virgins. The obsession of the Hindu mythology with preserving the virginity and maintaining the chastity of women has given rise to the social malaise of performing child marriages, where children are wedded before attaining adolescence. The texts that highlight the duty of goddesses to protect their virginity, have completely disregarded the subject of male virginity as it is conceived as a trivia, unworthy of contemplation.

Several texts have gained pre-eminence over the ages due to the high-sounding titles they have conferred upon women and their role in society. Manusmriti is recognised to be one such document which speaks highly about respecting women. "Let the (husband) employ his (wife) in the collection and expenditure of his wealth, in keeping (everything) clean, in (the fulfilment of) religious duties, in the preparation of his food, and in looking after the household utensils" (Manu, Muller and Buhler 329). These lines from the text draw our attention towards the equal

contribution of women in all affairs and the responsibility of the male members towards ensuring the adequate involvement of women. However, the same text presents contradictory views on the subject of women's participation and autonomy in such matters. This can be verified from the following verses- "In childhood, a female must be subject to her father, in youth her husband, when her lord is dead to her sons; a woman must never be independent." (Manu, Muller and Buhler 195) The idea of not granting women independence puts them in an inferior position where something as personal as freedom needs to be asked for. This brings into picture the stereotype created about women, considering them to be unworthy of governing themselves and incapable of managing their external affairs without the male assistance. This has been functional in creating the gender-exclusive roles of men as the wage earners and women as the homemakers. The idea that women are second to men has been perceived strongly; this, in turn, has led to the manifestation of different forms of violence against women. This ranges from marital rapes, domestic violence to sexual harassments.

The Hindu goddesses have been represented to celebrate the idea of femininity and womanhood. They are regarded as the source of divinity, who show women the path to execute their duties successfully. Draupadi, a form of Parvati's Kali roop, breaks the conventional norms by being in a polyandrous relationship with five husbands. But numerous attempts have been made to justify her act; this includes- Shiva's boon and Kunti's order. This expresses the lack of consent on her part and the obligation to follow orders. She was expected to live for a year with each husband and walk through fire to cleanse herself, before moving on to another husband. Shiva, Vishnu, Krishna and Brahma, all of them, practiced polygyny, yet none of them was expected to purify themselves or prove their continence by performing any sacrifices. Draupadi fails to acquire a central position in the Hindu mythology despite her prominence in the Mahabharata; she has been regarded as being manipulative for expressing her distrust over her husbands and for demanding justice for the humiliation she suffered in an open court, this has formed the harsh reality of the contemporary world where women who do not fit into the archetypical frame of expectations are ostracised by the society.

Religion and culture influence the public and private domains of an individual's life; they attain the spirit of universality by forming a perceptual reality of their own. The grandeur of the Hindu mythology, with its enduring myths and enigmatic characters, plays an active role in channelizing and procuring the requisite validation for such fabrications. Though goddesses are known for their control over royals and riches, devotion and asceticism, speech and wisdom, growth and prosperity, agriculture and abundance, power and valour, yet each one of them has been systematically associated with the notion of fertility, domesticity, chastity, purity and fidelity, making the latter their primary duties while the former as their secondary abilities. This highlights the social burden on Indian women, who regard the goddesses as the epitome of sanctity. Women are expected to offer reverence rather than seek it. The goddesses "are significant primarily as sisters, daughters, mothers and wives. Women are said to be incapable of handling their own affairs and socially inconsequential without relationship with men" (Kinsley 99). While the male pantheons are conferred with the superior status for their assertive independence and autonomy, in lieu of their gender, women suffer under the norms of patriarchy. The failure to adhere to the set standards, puts them in a position of being shunned. This tangles them in the social fabric without access to the essential guide to detangle themselves. It provides clear evidence of disparity in the expectations from both genders and the roots of the prejudices behind women's tribulations.



INDO-CHINA RELATIONS: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

BY PREET SHARMA



The Asian Century is defined by the rise of China and to an extent by India's spectacular economic growth. Be it bilateral, regional or global level, India's interaction with China has grown at all levels. Economic cooperation and cultural ties have grown but they have been unable to assuage each country's concerns about the other's intention. The two Asian Giants do cooperate on several international forums like BRICS and more recently, at New Development Bank and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). There are similarities between India and China, both have nuclear weapons, surging economies, heavy military budgets, and the potential to tap into human capital. Though border clashes are constant irritants in this uneasy relationship both India and China defend similar positions on international issues of climate change and trade at international forums.

THE TRYST WITH HISTORY

S Jaishankar in his book *The India Way* writes that :

“History and geography make India-China relations grapple with numerous sets of realities: those of the distant past and the nearer one, of modern history and contemporary politics, of their twin but differential rise, and of the emerging future.”

There have been centuries of robust cultural contacts between India and China of religious, commercial, and spiritual nature. The coming of Fa Xian and Xuan Zang both famous travelers to India points to

the importance that India held in Ancient China. The concept of India as the land of Lord Buddha's is valued in China. Both India and China are ancient civilizations that can reflect on the glory of their past and seek out their unique destinies. While India was being crushed by colonialism during the 19th and early 20th centuries, China was facing its Century of Humiliation. Harsh V. Pant writes that India transpired as the significant place for the British exploitation of China, by the East India Company, thus sometimes in Chinese discussions India even now serves as the “cat's paw” for the west.

The Chinese Century of Humiliation began in 1840 and lasted till 1949. It began with Chinese defeat in the First Opium War that arose in 1839 and lasted till 1842. Then, the Treaty of Nanjing, where China was forced to cede Hong Kong to Britain for 150 years, Treaty of Tianjin that China signed after defeat in the Second Opium War and ransacking of Summer Palace in China, the Treaty of Shimonoseki that China signed with Japan after defeat in Sino-Japanese war forced China to cede Taiwan to Japan, recognize Korea's independence and pay indemnity to Japan . It was a national humiliation for China, then the invasion of Manchuria in the 1930s and being the Forgotten Ally as per Rana Mitter in the Second World War even after contributing significantly to allied forces during the war, all conspired in Chinese Century of Humiliation which impacts decision-making process and people's outlook still in China.

The establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 after the victory of the Communist Party of



China in the civil war against the Kuomintang (KMT) marks the end of the Century of Humiliation in Chinese history. In the early cold war period, Jawaharlal Nehru saw the anti-imperialist friendship between two big states of Asia as imperative to avoid interference by two external powers. The Indian National Congress also expressed firm solidarity with China in its war against the Japanese Occupation. David Malone classifies the modern history of Sino-Indian relations in four distinct periods, from 1950 to 1962 was a period of purported friendship, from 1962 to 1976 was described as the Sino-Indian Cold War, from 1976 onwards the period of normalization and from 1988 onwards the period of economic diplomacy.

1950-1962

India established diplomatic ties with PRC in 1950. It also advocated for PRC membership at the United Nations. India supported the seventeen-point agreement between Tibetan delegates and China in 1951, which recognized PRC's sovereignty over Tibet and guaranteed existing socio-political arrangements. India and China signed the famous Agreement on Trade and Intercourse between India and China relating to Tibet which incorporated the Panchsheel principle that asserted five principles of peaceful coexistence in their bilateral relationship. In 1954 India officially recognized China's dominance over Tibet.

In the 1950s both countries emerged out of imperialistic dominations and were navigating

There have been centuries of robust cultural contacts between India and China of religious, commercial, and spiritual nature .

through a free world. The Entente reached its zenith with the famous slogan of Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai (Indians and Chinese are Brothers). S Jaishankar writes that with all issues with each other, India and China do recognize that they are fighting an established western order. The Camaraderie between India and China did not last long. Also, by the emphasis on their anti-colonial past and agony under colonial

S Jaishankar writes that China is essential for Pakistan because it rectifies the power imbalance concerning India and also Pakistan provides a gateway for China to approach the Islamic world.

domination both nations wanted to be viewed as leaders of the developing world which created a contest between the two countries. David Malone writes that in their fight for ideological domination of the newly independent third world countries, China and India had been set at odds by 1955.

At Bandung, China is reported to have got to a well-calculated and deliberate understanding with Pakistan founded on their convergent interest vis a vis India. A dispute between India and China escalated into the 1962 Sino-Indian war. S Jaishankar argues that the issue was not about border disputes or historic evidence but he asserts that it was more about the way politics played out in that period – within China, between China and India, and between China and the USSR. The Dalai Lama sought and obtained political asylum in India in the wake of the Tibetan uprising in 1959, India-China relations were stretched to breaking point, especially with the establishment of the Tibetan government-in-exile in Dharamshala. India did not recognize this government but this dual policy aroused suspicion in the PRC and continues to remain a major irritant in the relationship between India and China. China's territorial conflict with India is about cultural and territorial integration of Tibet in China, China also considers Arunachal Pradesh especially (Tawang) as a part of southern Tibet. Thus, it has often protested against high-level official visits and the Indian Defence minister's visit to Arunachal Pradesh. China believes controlling Tawang would be central to absorbing Tibet.



1962-1976

The Sino-Indian civil war was the epistemological breakthrough that questioned the idealism of the Nehruvian era and made the policy framing more realistic. In the 1965 war between India and Pakistan the United States declared neutrality. However, Chinese assistance was received by Pakistan. In the India-Pak war in 1965 China also threatened India to open a front with India on the Sikkim Front. S Jaishankar writes that China is essential for Pakistan because it rectifies the power imbalance concerning India and also Pakistan provides a gateway for China to approach the Islamic world. China conducted its first nuclear test at Lop Nor in 1964. This was a strong reason behind India's subsequent attempts at Pokhran in 1974.

The period of 1965 to 1969 was tumultuous for China internally, the economical debacle of the Great Leap Forward, the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis happened in 1958, and on the foreign front, China went to war with the Soviet Union in 1969. During the 1971 Bangladesh War, India faced tremendous pressure from both the US and China to not interrupt in internal affairs of Pakistan. Then India signed the Treaty of Friendship with USSR in 1971 to counter the US-China-Pakistan axis. David Malone writes that Sino-US rapprochement brought UN membership and a permanent seat on the UN security council for PRC.

India conducted a Nuclear test in 1974 and the annexation of Sikkim provoked loud Chinese

proclamations. Both nations were caught in a serious security dilemma behaviour. David Malone argues that China at this time did not see India as a serious security threat or foreign policy priority; it was much more occupied with the Soviet Union.

1976-1998

After the death of Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping's foreign policy was based on the program of economic liberalization and "Tao Guang Yang Hui" (Hide Brightness, Nourish Obscurity) with a focus on domestic economic strength and disentailing the country from international conflicts. This prompted a transformation in Sino Indian relationship. In 1976 ambassadorial relations were restored. During 1979, Atal Bihari Vajpayee as foreign minister made a historic visit to China as India's Foreign Minister, but the visit coincided with the Chinese pedagogical war in invasion of Vietnam and caused him much embarrassment as David Malone argues.

A strong interest developed in both countries to resolve the border dispute. A dialogue process happened when the then Chinese foreign minister Huang Hua visited India. But the border dialogue did not achieve any substantial gains and there was a large-scale military standoff between India and China in the eastern sector in Sumdurong Chu in 1986-87. The impasse was resolved and Rajiv Gandhi visited Beijing and signed an agreement aimed at achieving a reasonable and fair settlement to the border dispute. Harsh Pant points out that the meeting also saw the

establishment of a Joint Working Group to explore the boundary issue. Thus, the period from 1976 to 1988 saw an attempt to mend their relationship after the disputes of 1962.

1998- 2009

The relations between India and China deteriorated in the aftermath of the nuclear test conducted by India in 1998. Washington made a private letter public that Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee wrote to then US President Bill Clinton justifying India's nuclear test as a response to the threat from China. China did react strongly and diplomatic relations were deeply troubled. But China this time was quick in resuming relations with India. During the Kargil War Jaswant Singh, Indian Foreign Minister Visited China and was assured of Chinese neutrality. China since then on India-Pakistan bilateral conflict has advocated their resolution bilaterally.

In 2003, Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee visited China. The Joint Declaration signed during the visit asserted that China was not a threat to India. First joint naval and air exercises were also held . India also acknowledged China's claim over Tibet pledged not to allow anti-China activities in India. The establishment of a Special Representatives Mechanism in 2003 showed genuine concern for the resolution of border disputes. In 2005, Chinese prime



minister Wen Jiabao visited Bengaluru to partner with India's information technology sector. The Nathu La pass was reopened in 2006. In 2004, the Manmohan Singh government also was for improving relations with China. He signed the shared visions of the 21st century with the Chinese side. In December 2008 India China conducted Joint Hands-2008 an army counter-terrorism exercise. This positive trajectory was helped by growing economic ties between India and China.

2009 ONWARDS

S. Jaishankar writes that the year 2009 marked a turning point in China's current rise. Due to the Global Financial Crises, a change in US administration and the US Iraq Invasion made China no longer under compulsion to hide its light. There was a vigorous expression of this newfound confidence in China. In 2012, Xi Jinping asserted that China is keen on realizing the Chinese dream by mid-century. Samir Saran writes that Beijing is now ready to dictate the political, cultural, and economic architecture of the continent. He considers the Belt and Road Initiative to be a potent weapon in this regard. Samir Saran asserts that the last five years of India's China relations have been defined by the vacillating camaraderie between China and India to contest in Indo- pacific. Shanghai Cooperation Organization of which India is also a part has developed Asian solutions to political, economic, and security imperatives. Also, by being invested in the quadrilateral Initiative, a group of democracies in



Indo-pacific, India seeks to respond to maritime coercion and Chinese mercantilist's trade propositions.

Beijing has also been disregarding India's concerns with Kashmir by putting money in China's Pakistan Economic Corridor. It is also levelling up its efforts in Nepal, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives to counter India's economic diplomacy with these states. On the economic front, China views India as a place to sell finished goods. Samir Saran argues that China offers no room for the partnership; it only wants Indian dependence on Chinese goods. Despite strategic conversations, the negative trade balance between India and China has only increased. But we also have to recognize that China is one of the largest investors in the areas that will drive India's economic growth.

The recent Galwan Clash on 15 June 2020 had seen both India and China face off each other in Galwan Valley, Ladakh. Twenty Indian soldiers and four Chinese army men lost their lives as the Chinese side officially confirmed. In April 2020, China had started amassing troops and weapons along the disputed line of control, leading to a dispute standoff at Galwan valley, Pangong Tso Lake, and other areas. Now, the disengagement plan is in the process of substantially restoring the situation to prior stand-off as per the agreement announced on February 11, 2020.

THE WAY FORWARD

Kishore Mahbubani in his book **Has China Won?** Writes that that first step towards framing a long-term strategy is asking the right questions. India must first of all work towards framing the right questions and construing the rise of China holistically and must come to terms with its rise on the world stage. To frame a long-term strategy for China, there is an apparent need of having scholars who have a great depth of knowledge about the Chinese civilization, its politics, and economics. Tansen Sen and Arunabh Ghosh rightly argue:

“ That in absence of meaningful research Indian discourse on China will descend into a vortex of racism, ignorance, and envy.”

Academic exchanges between Indian and Chinese scholars must ramp up, more institutions teaching

China-related courses and the need for more Indian scholars who can scrutinize and bring into perspective the Chinese state well are the need of the hour.

Samir Saran writes that India also has to focus on increasing its capacity to retract and counter China's political aggression even after embracing Chinese investments and commercial opportunities. Srinivasa Srinivasan writes that there are three possibilities in future of India-China relations - a Grand Bargain on border dispute which he thinks as highly unlikely to obscure in next 15 years, second is to maintain the status quo that seems the option that he points is the default option for India which has high probability to remain as it is in next 15 years and finally a Hot War between India and China which to many seem unlikely but to Srinivasan seems likely if the border dispute is not resolved in 15 years or beyond. But in the world of nuclear weapons, it seems highly unlikely as it would weaken both nations and both nations have nuclear weapons which do act as deterrents.

Tansen Sen, professor at NYU Shanghai also rightly points out that India and China have had bilateral issues and border skirmishes despite commercial contacts, thus the interaction of people beyond the framework of diplomacy at the grassroots level is required. A group named West Haven in Shanghai did organize a program on Indian classical music in Shanghai, and enormous Chinese people came to listen to Indian music. People-to-people exchanges must rise and India must also harness the power of popularity of Bollywood in China. Indian films have got impressive theatrical success in China.

CONCLUSION

India and China are one of the most ancient civilizations of the world, they share historical-cultural, economic, and political contacts spreading over millennia. The rise of the nation-states of India and China after suffering colonial exploitation and a Century of Humiliation is impressive and has embarked the world to believe that the 21st century is the Asian century. The key to foreign relations between two Asian Giants is cooperation and collaboration. Though border disputes and structural uncertainties that have come up due to their

remarkable rise are going to prove as irritants in the relationship, in the end, Indian and Chinese policymakers do realize that war is a cost that no nation can afford to pay if it wants economic development. India and China must continue

the process of dialogue to resolve disputes along the border or otherwise, and should continue to work together on key international forums, about relevant issues of climate change, trade, labour laws, and arms trade.



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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