

SEPTEMBER 2021 | ISSUE 9

THE PROBE

AFGHANISTAN

A conversation with Amb
Mukhopadhaya

Afghanistan: A Cautionary Tale of Power
Struggle

Reminiscence with
Ved Pratap Vaidik



Riya Jeph
Editor-in-Chief



Shreya Shukla
Chief Associate Editor



Pranav Jha
Managing Editor



Meghna Rathore
Senior Editor



Shubham Kumar
Senior Editor



Nishi Upadhyay
Senior Editor



Abhilasha Rawat
Junior Editor



Hardik Shukla
Junior Editor



Ritabrata Chakraborty
Junior Editor



Shaily Birla
Designer



Chetan Pandey
Cartoonist

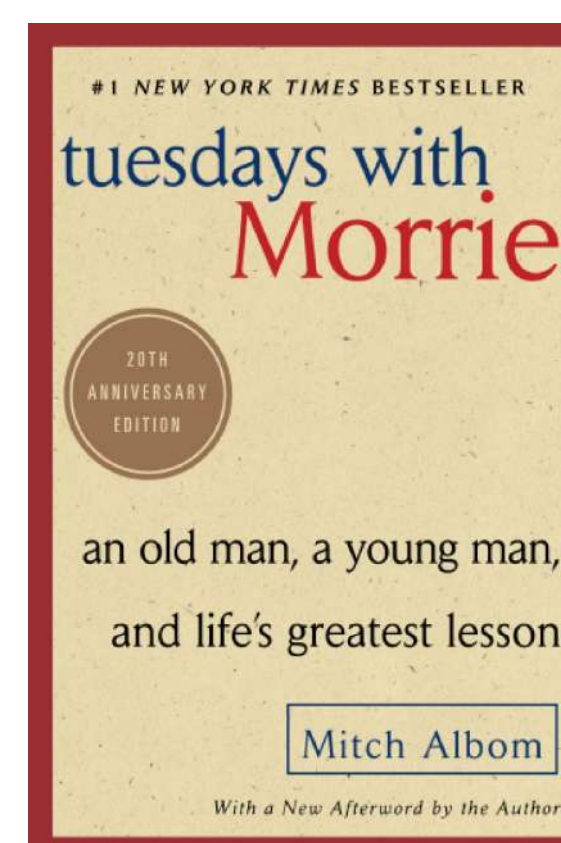
Message From the Team

With immense pride, we present to you the 9th edition of The Probe. We have been successful in building a significant reader base who have strengthened our cause to provide a platform for budding writers to showcase their literary talents. We aspire to work with professionals and experts to enhance the learning outcomes of readers and writers alike. In this month's edition, we are bringing to you one of our most thought-after cover stories which is not only extensively researched to set the taste of our readers but also imperative for the times we live in today. The not-very-recent turmoil in Afghanistan and the subsequent Taliban takeover of the country has affected millions of citizens and affairs of Afghanistan. Thus, in this edition, we bring to you a 360-degree analysis of the issue with a lot more.

Special thanks to Dr. Vaidik and Mr. Mukhopadhyay for ennobling the September issue with their respective interviews. We would also like to thank the college and the students who continuously help us aiming higher and develop this platform into a space that is both inclusive and engaging of people's culture and their opinions.

BILL GATES
HOW TO
AVOID A
CLIMATE
DISASTER
THE SOLUTIONS WE HAVE AND THE
BREAKTHROUGHS WE NEED

Read the review of Bill Gates book on Climate Change and how to avoid it. He advocates a radical change in almost everything to avoid a climate catastrophe.



Tuesdays with Morrie is a warm-hearted read comprising of dialogues between a student and an old professor.

CONTRIBUTORS

ARTICLE

Vaibhav Singh comes from Himachal Pradesh. He loves keeping an eye on current happenings.

ARTICLE

Mabad Ali is a second-year student of Economics at Daulat Ram College, DU

ARTICLE

Thufill Ahamed A R is a second-year student of Economics at Hindu College, DU

ARTICLE

Sivanth Adithya.N is a third-year student of Philosophy (H) at Hindu College, DU

BOOK REVIEW

Pranjal Kumar is a second-year student of B.A.LL.B (Hons.) at Maharashtra National Law University, Nagpur

BOOK REVIEW

Preet Sharma is a Graduate of Political Science from Hindu College, University of Delhi

ARTICLE

Avanindra Yadav is a second-year student of Economics at Hindu College, DU

ARTICLE

Anima Singh is a second-year student of History at Hindu College, DU

ARTICLE & BOOK REVIEW

Hardik Narayan Shukla is a second-year student of B.A. Prog. at Hindu College, DU

COVER STORY

Kumar Harsh is a second-year student of Political Science at Hindu College, University of Delhi

COVER STORY & INTERVIEW

Soham Agarwal is a second-year student of B.A. Prog. at Hindu College, DU

COVER STORY & INTERVIEW

Aaryan Gadhok is a second-year student of BA Prog. at Hindu College, DU

THE PROBE SURVEY

Riya Jeph is a third-year student of Political Science at Hindu College, DU

THE PROBE SURVEY

Nishi Upadhyay is a third-year student of Philosophy at Hindu College, DU



Cover Story

Afghanistan : A cautionary Tale of Power Struggle.

The Indian foreign policy in Afghanistan meant dealing with soft issues of economic activity like infrastructure and investment, leaving the security - military aspect to Iran and Russia. Not developing a direct communication channel with Taliban.

History and Culture

Long wait for freedom- (Neo)colonialism in Africa

Decolonization of Africa is a testimony to the fact that 'Independence' is very broad in its meaning.

A Massacre in Renovation: Assessing the 'New' Jallianwala Bagh

However, who cares about this deconstruction? Dispiritedly, just the descendants of the martyrs and some benefactors of history.

Art and Philosophy

The Hu'man' Religion

Equality is essentially a part of the greater religion of humanity

Laughter and Authority: An Analysis

At the point of absolute freedom, where there are absolutely no restrictions left, there is no more room left for liberation and thus laughter has no role to play.

Mona Lisa: An Illusory Masterpiece

What distinguishes Mona Lisa from other portraits is the depiction of the sitter.

Interviews

17.

Ambassador Mukhopadhaya on Decoding Afghanistan & Taliban

The current situation in Afghanistan has opened up multiple avenues for international actors. It would be interesting to witness how the major powers of the globe would react against the ensuing chaos.

47.

Taliban: The Graveyard of My Home

We all want Afghanistan to again be home to great philosophers like Rumi, to physicians like Ibne Sina, and emperors like Abdali.

81

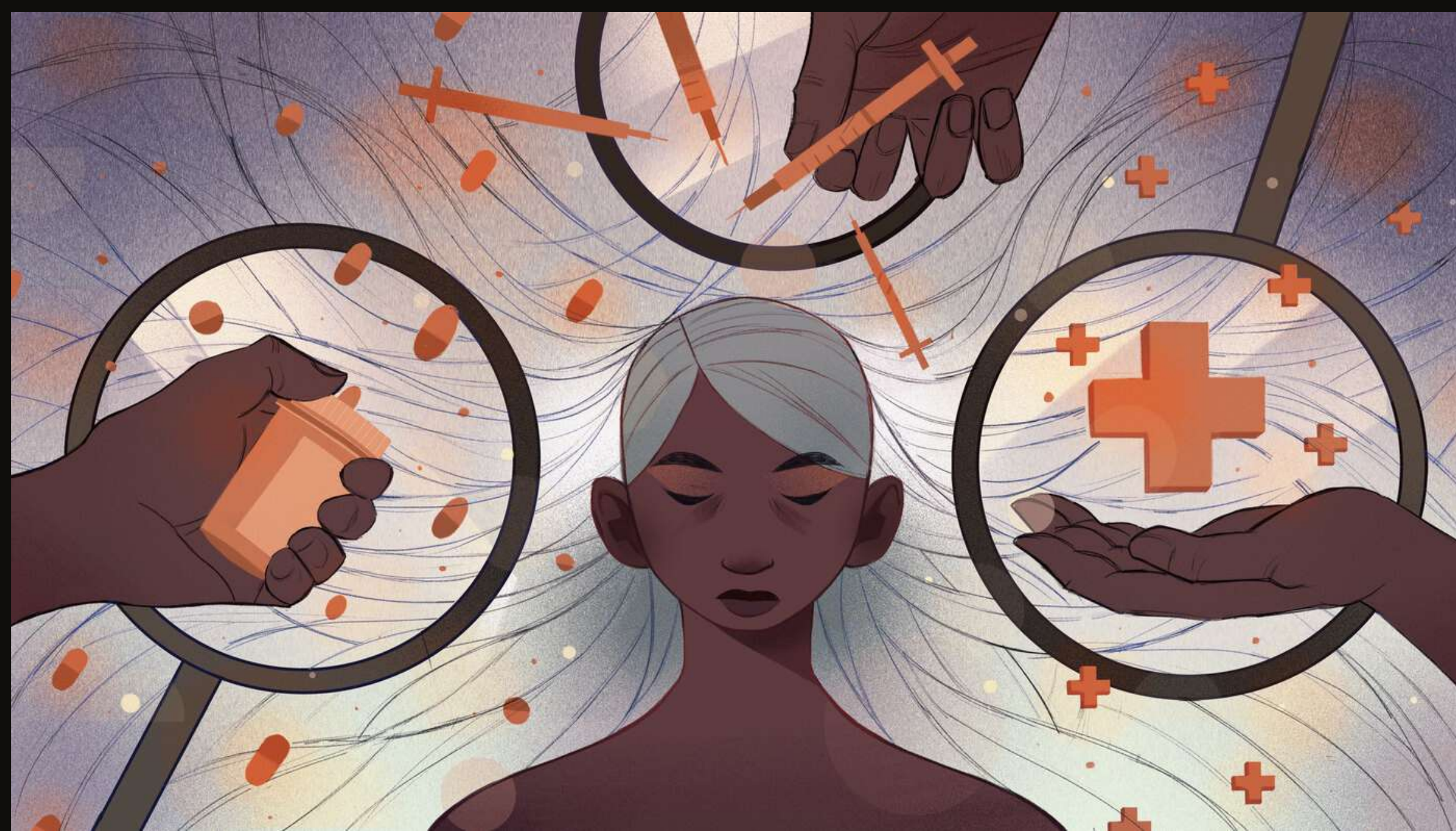
Anecdotes, Advices and Afghanistan with Mr. Ved Pratap Vaidik

We should convince the Afghan militia that India can help it in a way in which no other nation can. We should make them aware of the fact that all other countries want something or the other in return from Afghanistan. India has no intention of making profit out of Afghanistan.

52

Survey

What people think of Abortion?



Book Review

- How To Avoid a Climate Disaster
- Tuesdays with Morrie
- The Social Contract
- A Thousand Splendid Suns



Economy

71

The Burnout of Economic Growth

It is imperative that poor mental health days, when workers aren't in the best of their health, will hurt companies financially and ultimately affect the entire nation's GDP.

Politics and Governance

77.

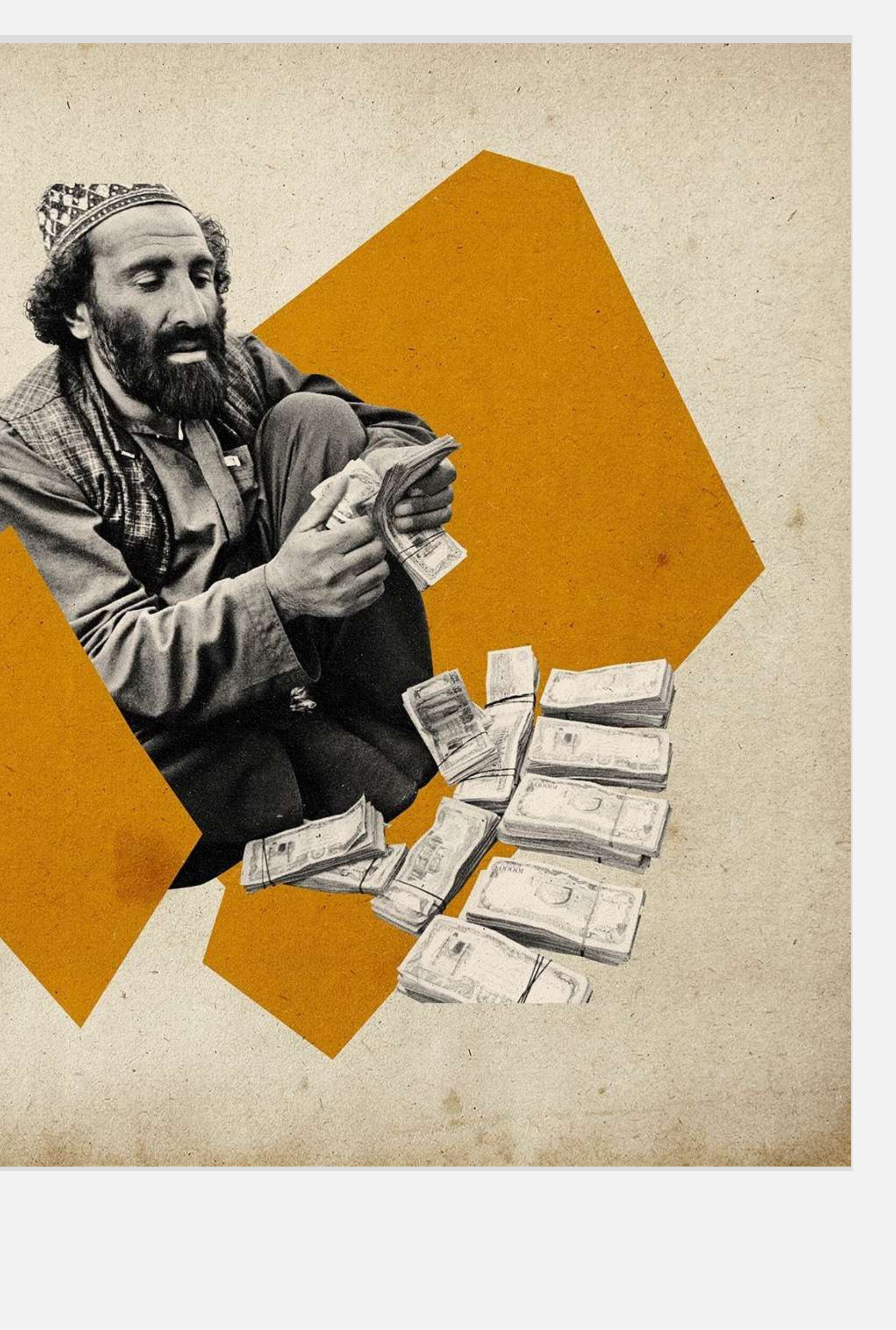
Ambedkar's Idea of a Nation

The level of trust for the Gandhi-led Congress was so meagre that Ambedkar used the words of Edmund Burke, "Better to be despised for too anxious apprehensions, than ruined by too confident a security"



*Write
for us.*

Send us your entries at
theprobe20@gmail.com



AFGHANISTAN: THE
SUBSERVIENT TALE
OF A SOVEREIGN
NATION



Aaryan Gadhok, Soham Agarwal & Kumar
Harsh

Afghanistan: A Graveyard of Empires



Easy to invade, hard to conquer and impossible to rule over”, Afghanistan, a landlocked country at the crossroads of central and south east Asia, is one of the most beautiful countries in the world, embraced with Hindu Kush Mountain ranges and beautiful valleys. What once used to be the major tourist attraction for the world has now become the centre of world politics.

This multi-ethnic country, lying on all the important trade routes has been a prize sought by the empire builders, and since time immemorial, **great empires from Alexander to Arabs and from Soviets to USA with its NATO allies**, have tried to subdue it; leaving traces of their efforts in great monument now has fallen to ruin. This country, owing to this, is often nicknamed as

“Graveyard of Empires”. But why has it been so difficult to rule over this country? And why has this beautiful country been the heavenly desire for the great armies, which ultimately resulted in their destruction? The answer lies in the history of this country.

Afghanistan, as mentioned earlier, lies on an extremely important

strategic location along with the **famous Silk route**, which helped the country to be in connection with the cultures of Middle Asia and other parts of Asia. This land also witnessed various military expeditions by the time, including those by **Alexander the great, Mauryas, Muslim Arabs, Mongols, British,**

Soviets and USA with its NATO allies. But none could manage it properly. It has always proved extremely challenging for these armies.

Being a landlocked country, bordering present day Pakistan, Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and China as well, it has always been easy to invade this country. Moreover, emperors from the middle-east found it as a door to enter South East Asia and vice-versa. Mughal conquest to India also began from this when **Babur firstly captured Kabul from the Arghun dynasty in the early 16th Century.** But it has never been easy for anyone to control it as a whole. This can be guessed by this fact.

The region was a patchwork of small but tough princes when the Arabs came in the early eighth century. Attempts to conquer the Zunbils (an Afghan royal dynasty) of Kandahar failed miserably, marking the Arabs' first major loss after their great conquests began. **A 20,000-man expedition deployed against the Zunbils returned with only 5,000 individuals.** The islamization of Afghanistan from west to east took about 200 years, and it was only nearing completion when Ya'qub ibn al-Layth al-Saffar, a Persian blacksmith born in Zaranj, Afghanistan, captured Kabul. Even after this, the Hindu Shahi dynasty held out in the easternmost regions of modern-day Afghanistan for another hundred years until being captured by **Mahmud of Ghazni** (also in Afghanistan) around 1000 AD.

The fact Afghanistan is extremely difficult to occupy and govern is because of three main reasons.

Firstly, the territorial conditions of Afghanistan make it arduous for a central administration to control it. The country is rugged and mostly mountainous, dominated by some of the highest and jagged mountains in the world. These include the Hindu Kush which dominates the country and runs through the centre and South of the country, as well as the Pamir Plateau in the east. **The Pamir Knot-** where the Hindu Kush, Pamir, Tian Shan, Kunlun and Himalayas all meet is also situated in the **Badakhshan** in the north-east of the country.

Secondly, Afghanistan, as mentioned earlier, is located between the mainland route between Iran, Central Asia and India and it has experienced various military expeditions and this country has been used as a battleground for many conflicts. As mentioned earlier, the reason for Afghanistan being in a state of turmoil lies in its geographical location coupled with the fact that its different ethnic groups and minorities have been in conflict with each other, creating convoluted, twisted and complex situations over the centuries, thus inviting wars. It resulted in the plethora of tribes settling down in the country. These tribes were and still are hostile to each other as well as outsiders. **Ethnic groups in Afghanistan are not subjected to one region and in many cases, overlap, weaving a colourful tapestry of a multitude of languages and cultures that in many ways intricate the pattern of the Afghan rug.**

Third reason is the prevalence of tribalism in the area. Owing to a multi-ethnic country, Afghanistan becomes challenging for rulers. Tribalism has further exacerbated the lawlessness and violence in the country. **The Minority Rights Group published a report in the form of a book called "Afghanistan: A Nation of Minorities" in 1992, claiming that no ethnic group accounts for half of the population.** It is often said that every village here acts as a fortress, or **Qalat** (a fortified place), where local tribal leaders govern the region. The script of Afghans is written in Pashtunwali, which has become a barrier, and Pashtuns asserts that Afghanistan is populated by Pashtuns, inflaming nationalist sentiment among them. Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks, Balochis, Turkmens, Nooristanis, Pamiris, Arabs, Gujars, Brahuis, Qizilibash, Aimaq, and Pashai are among the 14 ethnic groups represented in Afghanistan's national anthem. Ethnicity is an unavoidable component in Afghanistan, and if the country is to escape the ethnic quagmire, it must address rational ethnic representation in weak democracies and end ethnic depoliticization.

MODERN HISTORY

The history of Afghanistan is geopolitical & the root cause of Afghanistan conundrum was its proximity with Soviets. It was located south to the erstwhile USSR & as a result of this the USSR had vested interests in Afghanistan and wanted a pro-Soviet regime there. USA became wary of the communist influence in the newly independent state. America's doctrine of containing communism made Afghanistan the bone of contention between two major superpowers.

In recent times, Afghanistan's fate has been closely tied to the USA but this phenomenon of overarching dependence on foreign actors is not relatively new. **During the 1950s USSR provided military and economic aid to Afghanistan. In 1978, USSR and Afghanistan signed a friendship treaty to bolster the communist government under President Nur Mohammed Taraki and Deputy Prime Minister Babrak Kamral** that aimed to establish a 20 year long period of friendship and cooperation in Afghanistan. **The left wing government introduced land reforms, domestic purges and began a series of modernization programmes but a country where Islamic authority was strong changes such as equal status for men and women were perceived as an affront to Islam.** Opposition was rife and eventually the government began to falter. **The USSR, fearing an Islamic revolution similar to the one in**

Iran in January 1979 invaded Afghanistan on December 24, 1979. Almost 30,000 troops invaded Afghanistan that sowed the seeds of an 11 year long Afghan War between the communist government and the Islamic guerilla forces. **The Mujahideen** (urban groups which engaged in Jihad) resented Soviet presence in Afghanistan and garnered support from Afghan civilians as they claimed to be the nationalists who longed for self-determination in Afghanistan. As a response, the Soviet bombed the rural areas to eliminate Mujahideen's civilian support base. The civilians became wary of the tactics adopted by the USSR as the entire country plummeted into despair. By 1982, almost three million Afghans were driven out of Afghanistan and forced to settle as refugees in Iran and Pakistan. The USSR expected a short campaign but the US government treated it as a part of the Cold War and sent extensive aid to mujahideen. By 1986, they were receiving large amounts of weaponry from the USA and China via Pakistan, the most important of which were ground-to-air missiles, which had a devastating impact on Soviet air forces. In 1985 the USSR had undergone a leadership change and **Mikhail Gorbachev** came to power and very soon he realised that the Afghan War could not be won. **In 1988 Afghanistan and Pakistan signed an agreement in Geneva in the presence of the USA and USSR (both the superpowers acted as guarantors) providing for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan by 1989.** Finally, by February 1989, USSR under the leadership of Gorbachev withdrew all its troops from Afghanistan marking

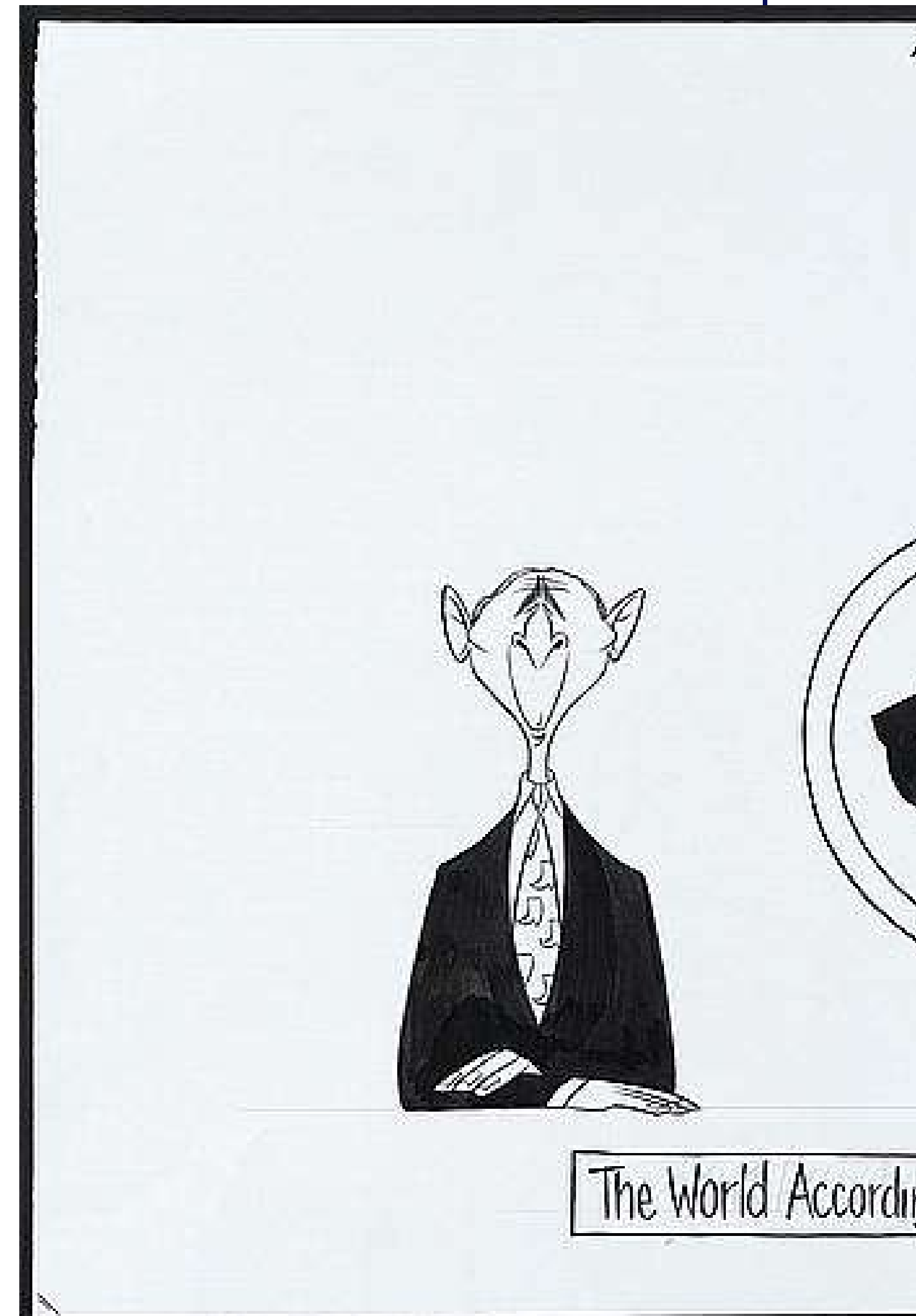
an end of the "Russia's Vietnam" war.

Left to fend for itself **The People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) managed to remain in power until 1992 when it was finally overthrown.** The mujahideen formed a coalition government with a specific power sharing arrangement, but the country soon fell into chaos as the rival factions fought for power. After 1992, a transitional government proclaimed the Islamic Republic. It was being sponsored and supported by several rebel factions of Mujahideen. Eventually, the government failed when President **Burhanuddin Rabbani**, leader of Islamic society (Jam'iyat-e Eslami, a major mujahideen faction) refused to leave office if the power-sharing arrangement made by the transitional government continued. The rival factions became wary of Rabbani's response and started to barrage Kabul and the neighbouring cities, leading to an almost four-year long civil war. Taliban, a former rebel faction of Mujahideen, became the sole victor of the Civil War. Being led by **Mohammad Omar**, it managed to capture Herat and Kabul by 1995 & 1996 respectively. Very soon, they controlled a majority of areas in Afghanistan except for the northwest, where they were opposed by the Northern Alliance. By 1998, the Taliban

was controlling almost 90 percent of Afghanistan. Although the Taliban's extreme policies aroused international disapproval, it managed to gain early popularity as it succeeded in curbing lawlessness, dismantling the network of warlords and stomping corruption. But, the Taliban also implemented their version of sharia law and as it happens, they started to disseminate quick and swift Justice. The measures adopted by the Taliban, to say the least, were grotesque and inhumane. Music, cinemas, dance, television & radio were banned. Harsh criminal punishments were introduced. Women were often publicly beaten for showing their ankles. Public execution became common. Those who were found to be guilty of theft & adultery were amputated & beaten to death respectively. Women were excluded from public life and forced to wear head to toe burqas. They were allowed to step out of the house only if they were being accompanied by their husband or any male family member. Girls were not allowed to attend school after the age of 10 and men were forced to grow beards.

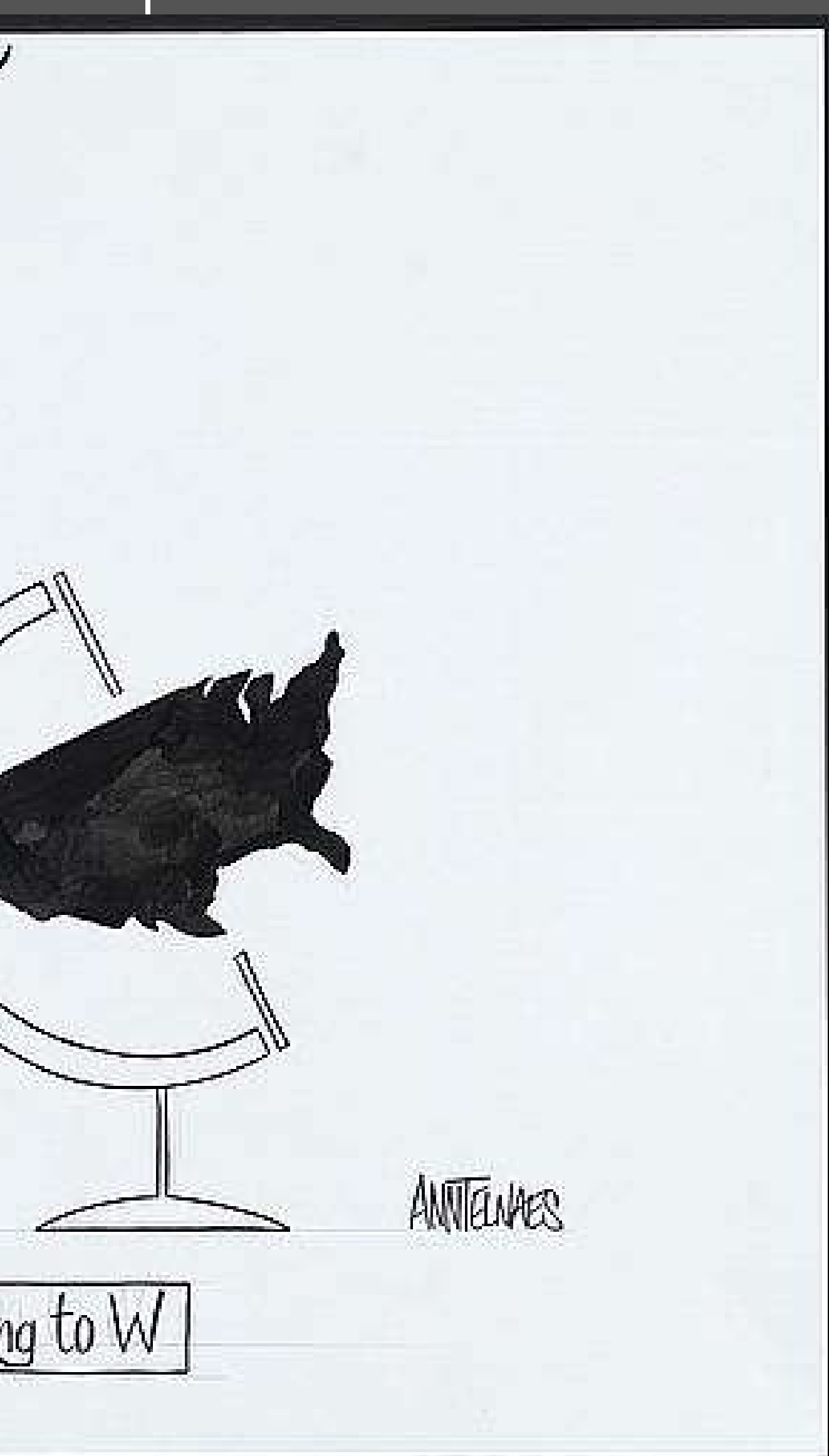
Above all, the unholy nexus between Taliban and Al-Qaeda in Iraq grew stronger with each passing day. It provided sanctuary to Al-Qaeda for operations including the mastermind behind **9/11 attacks**, Osama Bin Laden. The United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1267, creating the so-called al-Qaeda and Taliban Sanctions Committee which placed an embargo on their funding, arms, travel & arms shipments. Meanwhile the alliance between ISI and Taliban became more and more evident. The commander of the Northern Alliance (Taliban's rival ethnic group), Ahmed Shah Masood was assassinated by Al-Qaeda operatives on September 9, 2001. Many experts believe that his assassination assured Laden protection by the Taliban after the 9/11 attacks. On September 11, 2001 Al-Qaeda operatives coordinated a series of suicide bombings and hijacked four commercial airliners, crashing them into the World Trade Center in New York, Washington DC killing almost 4000 people on the American soil. The USA built on world wide sympathy and forged a strong rhetoric of right to self defence. The member states of NATO shared America's concerns as all of

them believed that an attack on any one of them was an attack on all 19 members. President George W. Bush stated that countries were 'either with us or against us' removing the option to remain neutral. He also spoke about 'an axis of evil' which had to be dealt with and the evil states were Iraq, Iran and North Korea.



He also signed a joint resolution which authorized the USA to use military force against the perpetrators of 9/11 attacks. Then, USA released an ultimatum to the Taliban demanding to hand over Osama Bin Laden which Taliban rejected. The scene was set for a military offence. A joint military operation against the Taliban under the aegis of the USA began, officially launching the **Operation Enduring Freedom**

on 7th September 2001. Al-Qaeda camps were bombed and later American long range bombers carried out raids in Kabul. The Taliban also faced opposition from the Northern Alliance in the north-west. **On 14 October the Taliban offered to hand Bin Laden to an intermediary state, though not directly to America.** The only thing they wanted in return was



for America to stop the bombing. But, President Bush refused to negotiate. At first the Taliban presented a strong defence but they eventually succumbed to US forces by the end of the month. The Taliban surrendered Kandhar on December 9, 2001 marking the formal collapse of the Afghan militia. Even though US forces defeated the Taliban, they were not able to fulfill their primary objective as Bin Laden fled to Pakistan on horseback on December 16, 2001. Meanwhile, the United Nations aimed to

establish relative peace and stability in Afghanistan. The UN Security Council passed Resolution 1378 in November 2001 looking to establish a transitional administration and inviting member states to send peacekeeping forces to promote stability and delivery. The United Nations invited major factions of Afghanistan, notably Northern Alliance and a group led by the former king (excluding Taliban) to sign the **Bonn Agreement in Germany.** Hamid Karzai was installed as the interim administration head and established the International Security Assistance Force, or ISAF. The period between November 2001 and May 2003 was a period of stability and peace. The USA harped on their rhetoric of reconstructing Afghanistan. According to an estimate, The U.S congress appropriated over \$38 billion in humanitarian and reconstruction assistance to Afghanistan from 2001 to 2009. The transitional government of Afghanistan was constituted under the presidency of the incumbent head of the interim administration, Hamid Karzai. Although he was blamed for tolerating corruption by the members of his clan and the government, he managed to bring some positive changes. The parliament was now responsible for all the major authorities and was given the power to veto senior official nominees and to impeach a president. In 2003, U.S. Central Command Chief Gen. Tommy Franks stated that America has already moved from major combat to reconstruction in Afghanistan. At that time, there were only 8000 U.S troops in Afghanistan and it seemed that the period of instability was over. NATO assumed the control of

ISAF expanding their role across the country. The number of ISAF troops grew accordingly from five-thousand to sixty-five thousand troops in 2006. A constitution was formed establishing a strong presidential system intended to unite the country's various ethnic groups. In the historic elections of 2004, Hamid Karzai was elected as the President with almost 55 percent of the vote share. Amidst this Bin Laden resurfaced, releasing a video message on the Arab television network Al Jazeera October 29, 2004 in which he taunted the Bush Administration and took responsibility for the 9/11 attacks. Soon after that, President Bush and President Karzai issued a joint declaration that pronounced their respective countries strategic partners. The alliance's goal was to prosecute the war against international terror, strengthen the U.S-Afghan ties, establish a stable democratic government in Afghanistan and to train and equip the Afghan soldiers. The period of relative peace came to an end in 2006 as the violence increased across the country. The number of suicide bombings quintupled from 27 in 2005 to 139 in 2006, while remotely detonated bombings more than double, to 1677. Cracks in the coalition force started to appear as the US criticised NATO countries in late 2007 for not sending

more soldiers. Collateral killings started to mount. For instance, Afghan and UN investigation found that errant fire from a U.S. gunship killed dozens of civilians. The people of Afghanistan started to feel alienated from the USA. The new American President, Barack Obama recommitted to Afghanistan and decided to send seventeen thousand more troops to the war zone. With the advent of the new presidency America changed its approach in Afghanistan. The U.S Secretary of Defense Robert Gates described the original mission in Afghanistan as “too broad” and called for establishing limited goals such as preventing and limiting terrorist safe havens. The New American strategy linked success in Afghanistan to a stable Pakistan. They aimed to dismantle and disrupt Al Qaeda and its safe havens in Pakistan and to prevent them from returning to Pakistan or Afghanistan. By 2009, the USA called NATO to start supplying non-military assets to Afghanistan and training Afghan military forces. Meanwhile the USA escalated its mission in Afghanistan by announcing to deploy an additional thirty thousand troops, on top of the sixty five thousand troops already in place. Obama hoped that the U.S forces would create the conditions required for the US to withdraw its troops. Obama set July 2011 as the start of the troop drawdown and NATO too signed an agreement to transfer the full responsibility of Afghanistan by the end of 2014. Bin Laden was killed by U.S forces in 2011 in

Pakistan. The efforts to withdraw the troops from Afghanistan continued but there were serious doubts on Afghan’s government’s capacity to maintain authority. **The tensions between Taliban and U.S started to flare up but this did not dampen Obama’s will to withdraw the troops. Afghan security takeover was completed by 2013 and on May 27, 2014 Obama announced to withdraw most U.S forces from Afghanistan by the end of 2016.** Ashraf Ghani and chief opponent Abdullah Abdullah signed a power sharing arrangement in which the former assumed the position of the President whereas the latter became the Chief Executive. The USA underwent a leadership change and Trump came into power. His attitude towards Afghanistan was completely antithetical to Obama’s approach. He refused to enact any pre-set deadline for the drawdown. US attack on Nangarhar province in Afghanistan in 2017 made it clear that Trump was vying for a prolonged Afghan War. The Taliban retaliated by conducting a series of terror attacks in Kabul. The Afghan-US peace talks proved to be futile. Amidst numerous uncertainties and the ensuing chaos the current president of US, Joe Biden announced to withdraw all the U.S troops from Afghanistan by September 2021.

After enduring a turbulent 20 year insurgency, the Graveyard of Empires, has finally brought down the curtains on Washington’s military and hegemonic overreach post 9/11. Kabul has fallen, and with it the American foreign policy disaster stands exposed yet again (keep in mind the Fall of Saigon). The US military miscalculation augmented by an unnecessary

intervention has caused major setbacks to a nation gripped with civil war and factional infighting, becoming a breeding ground for extremist ideologies to flourish. The US fought a war it never should have entangled itself in.

No configuration of military assets or counter-insurgency operations can find success as



long as the Taliban's supply routes and top command receive direct blessings from Islamabad. The war on insurgency was, in reality, a proxy war waged by Pakistan against the US, Afghanistan and NATO forces, using an organisation trained, funded and radicalized by the ISI : the Taliban. Pakistan’s tendency to push islamic militancy as an instrument of foreign policy

can be traced back to the 70's during the tenures of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Zia-ul-Haq. The enforcement of western oriented cultural-religious norms and institutions in a hitherto tribal, ethnic bottom-top society was a major blunder which got 'corrected' as soon as Kabul fell.

There is visible ruckus in the Islamic Emirate government of

Haqqani network have become the center of controversy under the Talibani leadership. There is distrust between two deputy leaders as well. One faction of the bifurcated Taliban has camped in Kabul, while the other has taken over from Kandahar. In this, the Kandahari faction is led by Mullah Mohammad Yaqoob, son of Taliban founder Mullah Omar. Whereas, in Kabul the Amir-ul-Momin or supreme leader of the

and the Afghan Taliban. A reunification in Afghanistan between TTP and certain splinter groups from December 2019 to August 2020 included the Shehryar Mehsud group, Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (JuA) Hizb-ul-Ahrar, the Amjad Farooqi group and the Usman Saifullah group (formerly known as Lashkar-e Jhangvi). It was Al Qaeda that was involved in the moderation between the groups.



Haqqani network, Sirajuddin

Haqqani, is sitting on the throne.

Pakistan's support to the Haqqani network signals how, through its intelligence wing, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), the Pakistani military establishment intends to control and seize power. Carved by the British, the Durand Line, created a distinction

Let us now circle to India which has always been a stealth player in the 'Great Game' of Afghan geo-political influence. In the 90s we aligned our foreign policy with that of Iran and Russias'. The trio achieved a congruence in goal and vision : 1) mutual deterrence against islamist terror and 2) aversion to US overreach and intervention. Russia in their concern against islamic separatism in Chechnya, Iran in their concern against a Saudi-backed Sunni regime and India in their concern against Pakistan's terror funding, found common ground to unite and form a possible trilateral regional partnership (keeping the US out of the equation).

Afghanistan, between the leadership. The top shots of Taliban, as of August 2021, are Haibatullah Akhundzada, the Taliban's Supreme Leader since 2016. Then there is the co-founder ; Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar succeeded in a hierarchical order, by two deputies under the supreme leader, Mullah Mohammad Yaqoob and Sirajuddin Haqqani. Mullah Baradar and the Pakistani pithu

between identity (ethnicity) and sovereignty (state boundary), dividing a hitherto supra tribal land (Pashtuns), with people of a collective culture spilling into 2 different states. Colonial blunders resulted in a major security threat to the national integrity of Pakistan : internal separatist movements by ethnic minorities mainly in the Baloch region. There has also been distrust between Tehrik-e-Taliban, also called the Pakistani Taliban, and

The Indian foreign policy in Afghanistan meant dealing with soft issues of economic activity like infrastructure and investment, leaving the security - military aspect to Iran and Russia. Not developing a direct

YOURS

INSINCERELY,



**CHETAN
PANDEY**

communication channel with Taliban, closing down the Indian embassy in 1996 and backing only the Ahmad Massoud led Northern Alliance in Afghanistan resulted in New Delhi having little leverage during the 1999 IC 814 plane hijacking, which brought home this stark reality. Similarly in the current scenario, we relied too much on the US security feeding Kabul, that any possibility of a hostile takeover was officially neglected. The pluralistic norm in International Relations advocates that a nation's foreign policy is a result of the interaction between its domestic needs and the ecosystem in which it resides. domestic needs of India can be centred around economic development, foreign investment as well as our security concerns stemming from the Beijing-Islamabad bonhomie. The ecosystem we reside in puts the geo-political flashpoint of Kashmir in direct crosshairs of the new dispensation. A good opportunity arises for Pakistan to amplify terror funding by inciting the

Mujahideen to wage another 'holy war', this time for the liberation of "India occupied Kashmir". Thus, the most viable option for India would be to engage with the Taliban through direct diplomatic channels asserting our legitimisation of an Afghan Led - Afghan Owned regime. The Taliban has various power factions within its own organisation : Pakistan backed Haqqanis, ISK sympathizers and Mullah Baradar led 'political moderates'. The onus lies on India to secure its strategic influence and security assurance by backing the politically dominant faction with control over its ground cadre. The Chinese have done the same, by leveraging their dominance over Pakistan as an extension onto Afghanistan.

The CPEC and the Belt & Road Initiative will keep the engines of the Pakistan-Afghanistan economies running while simultaneously establishing Chinese hegemony in world trade. Potential Chinese offshore bases in Afghanistan (note Bagram) will form a direct linkage between their entities in South China Sea,

Balochistan and bases in Djibouti. This brings the Arabian Sea, currently under Indian influence, into China's kitty. Whether or not India ramps up security measures on its periphery by way of increased troop presence will directly relate to our ability or inability in successfully dealing with the Taliban through the lens of Afghan self-determination, free from the clutches of its masters sitting across the Durand Line.

A U-turn by Russia and Iran, who now actively seek to engage with the Taliban in accordance with their own interests, goes to show that India should reconsider its Afghan Policy to suit its current security and domestic needs. The Chinese control over Afghanistan, a country located at the crossroads between the "West" and "East" is a major threat to US foreign policy which believes in "hegemony or survival". Propping up of QUAD to stabilize the Indo-Pacific region can also be extended to the Central Asian heartland and South Asian sea routes, with India playing an active role in the same. India's official stance at the recent UNSC meeting to continue their investments in all 34 provinces of Afghanistan, is a good step in this direction. However the US decision of not inviting India to join the new central-south Asian QUAD (US, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Uzbekistan) is a cause of diplomatic concern, creating noises in the chambers of the MEA. ■



Ambassador Mukhopadhaya on Decoding Afghanistan & Taliban

Interviewed by Aaryan Gadhok & Soham Agarwal

Soham Agarwal: So to start with the situation in Afghanistan. My first question is that recently, the world has marked the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. Unfortunately, the tale has completed a whole circle from attacking the Taliban from driving them out of power by the USA to leaving the country with a Taliban government 2.0. Sir, how do you perceive these 20 years of the USA in Afghanistan?

Gautam Mukhopadhaya: So, I will answer your question in two parts, you know, the good part and the bad part. I today it's actually quite conventional,

almost fashionable to conventional derived, the 20-year period of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan as a bit of a failure. But if you take actually many of the metrics- metrics of social development, metrics of freedom. Let's say one, I think, very telling metrics- metrics of education, metrics of girls education. But I want one defining metric, which I think says it all is just the pattern of migration in and out of Afghanistan. In the previous 20 years, starting with the Soviet intervention, you had massive outward migration to Pakistan, Iran, and many other countries of the world, some even to India. But in these 20 years that we've had from 2001 to 2021, In fact, until the final takeover of the Taliban in Afghanistan, in August, you actually had a net return of

expatriates and refugees from the rest of the world into Afghanistan. Of course, substantial numbers remain because they have been settled for 20 years in different countries. And in fact, there's been hardly any outward migration out of Pakistan. So if you take that metric you know in fact you have to acknowledge a large number of successes of the Islamic Republic in spite of handicaps and of course severe failures and even when we talk about failures I think we have to talk about failures not just in terms of the Afghan government of the time. They were serious limitations that they had and they were failures on their

part as well but also failures and limitations of the international community and the international involvement in Afghanistan. So we cannot blame just one party for this. So on the second part and, you know, just to complete that aspect, one just needs to look at metrics about social development, maternal mortality, child mortality, education as I already mentioned. But even, you know, constructive construction and reconstruction of Afghanistan? Let me tell you that, when I went to Afghanistan in 2001, to reopen the embassy, this was after five to six years of the Taliban period. There was absolutely no reconstruction from the time of the destruction and damage caused by the intra-mujahideen fighting between 92 and 96, that means Taliban in its 1.0 incarnation. They did not do anything in terms of development or reconstruction. By comparing these last 20 years have seen significant strides, and, of course, as you know, India has made major contributions to it as well. In fact, in many ways, India's contributions are likely to be the most lasting because many other countries did not build, and did not invest in infrastructure. The way we did, whether it was roads or a dam or transmission lines and other small development projects, you know, social development projects that we also invested in. And I think our biggest investment was in the education of Afghan students.

But looking at the negative side, you know you are absolutely right. 20 years after 9/11 and 20 years after the fall of the Taliban we are back. In, I would say, in a

downward spiral, We are back to where we were. Actually, it is much worse than what happened, then just coming back because coming back seems to suggest that we are back at the same place. But what has happened in these 20 years which people don't realize has been a radicalization of the Taliban in the hands of Pakistan. In Taliban 1.0 they were a religious militia. They were reared and nurtured in the madrasas and the refugee camps on the other side of the Durand Line in Pakistan. But they were not yet a terrorist force. They were repressive, they were ultra conservative. They impose their values and their program and their system by force, no doubt. You know by very outdated notions of justice as well. But they were not yet, they did not come to power through terrorism. They did not practice terrorism to come to power. What we have seen in the last 20 years on the other side of the Durand line in Pakistan has been that the Taliban in different stages at different points of time. They have been successively radicalized That means, the indoctrination in the madrassas has grown, the recruitment of young Talibs into terrorism has grown, their training in use of IEDs and use of explosives in use in suicide bombings, suicide bombing squads have been created, the entire logistics for that has been created. And all these have been in many ways behind the scenes, masterminded by the ISI and other agencies of Pakistan. So in the last 20 years, which I actually called Taliban 2.0, I don't call Taliban 2.0 the Taliban that has come today, but I think that is probably going to be 3.0.

Taliban 2.0 was a seriously radicalized and effectively a terrorist force. And so, when we say that we

are back to the Taliban we're actually back to the Taliban but at its worst incarnation of Taliban. This does not mean that the Taliban is necessarily bad. I'm not trying to demonize them because there is one issue here involved. You know how Afghanes are the Taliban? Have they been in a way sort of metastasized, have they been changed? This, no doubt, that in many ways the origins of the Taliban come from, you know, come from a large measure from the Pashtoon community in Afghanistan. A lot of it centered around Kandhar which was really in many ways, a kind of Durrani capital of Afghanistan. So what we have seen here, is that what Pakistan has tried to do with the Taliban is to create this kind of religious militia- Partly to use but partly also to erase their Afghan and Pashtoon identity and submerge it in a much larger Islamic identity in the idea of the emirate and the idea of emirate has blurred borders. Because any extremist faction or radical faction, which decides to go allegiance to the emir or mobining, actually comes under the fog of the Taliban. So in many ways they are trying to, you know, destroy the identity of Afghanistan But, you know, identity is a very strong thing. It doesn't cannot be destroyed, it is overnight. So there are still elements of what we can call afghans among the Taliban, and that we will see how that evolves.



But, you know, just a long answer to your first question. We are back to that situation in Afghanistan, the difference is that the Taliban are radicalized. There are 20 to 30 other similar radical groups that have been fighting in the trenches along with the Taliban in order to invade and occupy Afghanistan. The Taliban are not native sons of the soil, a homegrown kind of outfit, they have already been quite perceived as alien. They have been ideologically indoctrinated in ways that are not typically Afghan. But alongside them, they have another whole bunch of groups, some with regional objectives like the Islamic movement of Uzbekistan. But I won't necessarily have to name all of them right now. They range from those that are, you know, against the central Asian Republics, there are those against Iran. There are those against India. There are those against the Shias and minorities and there are those even against Pakistan like the TTP (Tehreek E Taliban Pakistan). So there's a whole bunch of them. So we are dealing with in fact a much more complex

radicalized environment which could easily turn outward. So far their objective was to gain control of Afghanistan. And a lot of people consider this actually a Pakistani invasion and occupation of Afghanistan, not an Afghan invasion and occupation. But what next?

I think the fear is that the next would be an export of terrorism by the region. And there are also international terror groups involved. Al Qaeda is there, ISK is there. So it's not that the rest of the world will be free from sports.

Soham Agarwal: So as you have mentioned from Taliban 2.0 to Taliban 3.0, we are getting like a more radicalized form of Taliban, so it means that we have more challenges towards us like the terrorism challenges, which we need to face.

Gautam Mukhopadhaya: Yeah. Correct. So it's not just radicalized, you know, it is also much more militant. Taliban 1.0 was not particularly involved in export of Talibanism or whatever we call that. And here also they may not

directly be involved. Many of the other groups in the world and among those other groups, as you know, there are many anti-indian groups for instance, Jaish-e-Mohammad, Lashkar-e-Tayyiba. And it should be understandable that we should be focused on India. The reality is that what will happen in India will be part of a much larger phenomenon because Pakistan is behind them. All and Pakistan's priority will be All and Pakistan's priority so naturally, we should expect that in achieving. What has Pakistan achieved in the military takeover of Afghanistan? By the Taliban with their help? Those next steps would probably be directed towards India. And not necessarily only Jammu and Kashmir.

Aaryan Gadhok: So, my question starts from that since the early 90s, India's engagement with Afghanistan was restricted to soft tissues of economic importance. Like investment and infrastructure, we left military intervention to Russia and Iran and even during the UPI led government Dr. Manmohan Singh. He reset India's Afghan policy by making a leap of faith in the Hamid Karzai reconciliation program. There I mean, we have contributed to the Salma Dam, the Zerang's Delaram Highway and even the Kabul Parliament. Now under this new

dispensation apart from diplomatic stakes, the future of 20 years and 3 billion dollar worth of Indian investment is unclear. So sir what lies ahead for us in this regard?

Gautam Mukhopadhyaya: Yeah, thank you Aaryan. So let me just clarify a little bit of the sequence of our involvement and investments. During the 90s when the Taliban were in power. And even before that, when the Mujahideen were in power, actually, we did not have much more, whether it was a development role or that matter kind of Supportive military. We did assist in the aid in the then called the Northern Alliance, which was actually more than just another alliance because it included other groups as well. and we did assist them together with Russia and Iran in resisting a full Taliban takeover of Afghanistan at that time. There were patches in the North that were still in the hands of people like Ahmed Shah Masood and other Northern Alliance fighters. So at that stage, I think our assistance was largely, you know, financial morale that happens to some extent political. But we were part of an international friendship to complete the level of actually what you call investments. Our soft development approach took place really in the Post 2000 period when the international community returned to Afghanistan. The US effectively led the War on Terror, NATO joint, the whole coalition support joint, and under more or less, that kind of political and security cover. We were able to embark

little by little because initially there was some hesitation, particularly in the international community, even in the UN, at that time to involve India much more out of sensitivity to Pakistan. While the United States was able to obtain Pakistan's cooperation so to say in a war on terror they were also extremely obliged to them and dependent on them for their logistics for their ground lines of communication and things like that. so they were highly sensitive and highly mindful that Pakistan had sensitive use towards India. And initially, they were not very enthusiastic about it. India but we stepped in slowly and slowly partly through the good of, you know, offices and the good relationships that we had created during the resistance period. We were in fact invited and encouraged to open consulates in Herat and Maza-i-Sharif, where previously we did not use to have, and the whole idea behind that was that our relationship was more than just with the Pashtoons who resided into Jalalabad or Kandahar and in South East. But then it would be a pan national of the kind of relationship with all the ethnicities and the communities of Afghanistan. So that period is the period that we used to support this kind of investment and development. Now, when we made those investments, they were in a sense, they were contributions to Afghanistan's Reconstruction and different. We did not think of them as investments as we think, in terms of an economic investment that should get an economic return. The economic returns were for the Afghans not for us. For us it was a gift to the Afghans and the returns that we were looking for was the Political Goodwill, a kind emotional capital,

And I think, you know, once we have completed those projects in a way we had already got that, emotional and political capital. And India's popularity in Afghanistan was partly, you know, on account of that. But I would agree with you to the extent that there's a little leading edge to that question. There are two aspects of it. One is whether that was enough and the second is today, now with the Taliban takeover ought to be, so I'll address those two questions. So on the question of what is enough? I think India could have gone further. I think one of the areas where the international community as a whole network by this time now and India also did not do enough, though, I must say we did try to do quite a bit and I will mention one of them was to perhaps invest in the natural economy of Afghanistan. And the natural economy of Afghanistan consists broadly of two or three sectors. One is that everybody knows they have a very rich mineral sector. The United States spent 20 years there but it did not invest one penny in the mineral sector. Whereas if you had invested in the mineral sector you would have generated the revenues from royalties which would have helped the Afghan state be less dependent on international aid and be able to stand on its feet. So similarly there is what we can call the livelihood sector which is what you know people do to

earn their livelihoods which is largely agriculture. Horticulture, crafts, rural industries whether it is milling their grains, or it is producing carpets or shearing wool to make woolen products. So there's a whole range of things that could have been done. India was perhaps one of the few countries in 2000.... I think it was 2013 in my final year in Kabul, that we took the initiative of hosting even as the US had signaled, that it was going to draw down its troops, that we took a certain gamble and we held what was then called the first Afghanistan International Investment Summit, which we held in Delhi and contrary to expectations the response, particularly from Afghanistan was outstanding. But again you know some of those things that happened because the troops were pulling out there was lack of confidence perhaps even in our top level leadership here, that we would be able to pull off investments in conditions of security, though I personally always maintained that Afghans would be very good partners. That security is something that they would take upon themselves for the sake of our investment. So we did not pursue that line, strongly enough and of course there are extenuating circumstances for that. I could see but we did do and we invested a lot in developing these air bridges, these trade, these air freight corridors by, you know, starting air freight flights from places like Kabul and Kabul that, you know, basically a cater to the Indian market and the Indian market has been the biggest market for Afghanistan's

products. Historically you know it was because of that market that we had so many Pathans and Pashtoons settle down in parts of northern India. You know the Grand Trunk Road that was created by Sher Shah Suri actually was a kind of link between them, the Plains of India and the highlands of Afghanistan. And it was also a cultural connection. Most of the political connections with people like Badshah Khan (Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan). Cultural Connection you see how deep the influence of the now, naturalized Pathan community in India, has been in film and music and many other cases. There was a great musician, classical musician, by the name of Mohammad Hussain Sarahan who used to rub shoulders with the greatest of the classical Indian musicians of that time. You know, he was in fact, part of the Patiala gharana extended Patiala gharana. And you know he sang Khayal but he also sang Farsi, Gazals and other Farsi forms of singing. so Afghanistan, you know, was very much part of our civilization and in fact what we call the Farsi Influence in India, actually, very little of it came directly from Iran by Persians, they came rooted through Afghanistan so and particularly through the Farsi language which was spoken in all other parts of Afghanistan even the pashtun spoken, but particularly the non-Pashtuns. So you know, the involvement of Pashtuns and non-pashtuns is almost equal. Sometimes I think the question connection is accentuated. So essentially this was the, I mean that was the trade market that we did try to develop. Now in the present conditions, I don't think it would be particularly until they sort out the issue of an inclusive

government. that whether the people of Afghanistan generally accept the Taliban as a legitimate political force, I think we should be a little reticent in legitimizing the Taliban which as you know, as I described as an alien political force that has come to power through terrorism with the help of Pakistan. So, we should be extremely reticent about any form of legitimacy, but we should continue our people's relationship to the extent that it is possible in other ways. And so, given the chain circumstances, I would say that our focus should be on continuing that people to people relationship and doing that soft development relationship, even continuing the trade relationship with the public with the private sector of Pakistan. We should be extending, we should be opening up, much more in giving sort of temporary visas to those who are seeking to escape, you know, either persecution or even death. And you know, Situations of life and liberty. We should be continuing our extremely well received education program. as our universities, even themselves, should continue to offer self financing students and I would say even continue to offer, even if the government is not able to meet everything, perhaps raise resources individually through philanthropic institutions to

[Watch the full interview here!](#)

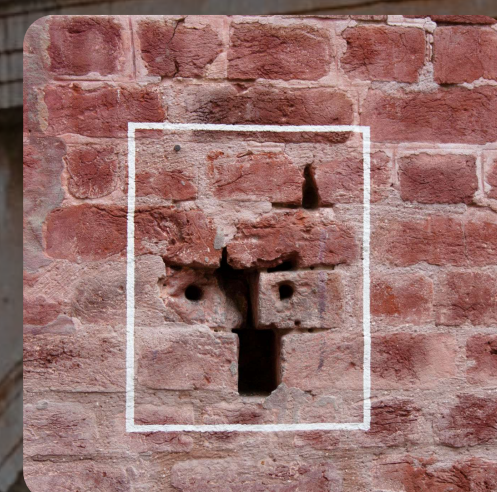
HISTORY & CULTURE



Long Wait for Freedom
- (Neo)colonialism in
Africa

**Hardik Narayan
Shukla**

Pg 23




A Massacre in Renovation:
Assessing the 'New'
Jallianwala Bagh

Anima Singh

Pg 28

Long wait for freedom - (Neo)colonialism in Africa



 A woman holds a sign reading "No to France and partial disarmament" and a man holds a sign reading "No to Neo-Colonialism, no to French accomplices" as Central African Muslims demonstrate against the French 'Sangaris' military operation in the PK0 neighborhood in Bangui on December 24, 2013. Some Central African Muslims accuse French soldiers of siding with the country's Christian population as they disarm the ex-Seleka rebels and of leaving the Muslim population defenceless against many Christians who seek revenge for Seleka excesses. Burundian and Chadian troops in the African force deployed in the Central African Republic (CAR) have also exchanged fire in Bangui, raising new questions today about the stance of the Chadian contingent of a UN-mandated force sent to tame a country rocked by sectarian killings. AFP PHOTO / MIGUEL MEDINA (Photo credit should read MIGUEL MEDINA/AFP via Getty Images)

Hardik Narayan Shukla

Despite having 30% of the world's natural resources and being a leading producer of precious minerals like gold and diamond, the continent of Africa is perceived to be the poorest continent in terms of

development. This means that the abundance of Africa has failed to translate into support for its citizens with nutrition, employment and a decent quality of life. Although some sub-Saharan African countries have performed well economically over the

years, a significant population of the continent still lives below the poverty line and fights for basic necessities.

The Dark Colonial Years

The colonial history of Africa is rooted in Europe's greed, exploitation and dehumanization through slave trade. In the late 15th century, the first maritime trading posts were set up by Portugal in West Africa and it soon gained power in the Indian Ocean, dominating the spice trade. However, in the 16th and 17th centuries, the country had to face stiff competition from several European countries like Netherlands, Spain, Denmark, France and England, which began settling along the African coast. In the following years, these countries enjoyed control of their trading routes and profited the most from the flourishing slave trade.

Anti-slavery movements began gaining momentum in Europe in the mid-eighteenth century and later in the United States. This led to a fall in human trafficking and slavery. Meanwhile, the colonial powers started moving into the interior parts of Africa in search of arable land to ensure the production of agricultural products for the European Markets. It was during their search when the colonists realized that Africa was blessed with a bounty of natural resources, which they could exploit to fulfill their economic and political aspirations in the middle of industrialization.

The ambition of colonial powers to get control of more and more parts of the continent led to increasing competition and

tensions between them. Who should be the master of Africa? To address this pertinent question, the Berlin Conference was held in 1884 under the chairmanship of the then German chancellor Otto Van Bismarck. After rigorous discussion and debate between the 14 nations present at the conference, the partition of Africa was finalized. By 1900, a significant part of Africa had been colonized by mainly seven European powers—Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, and Italy.

This started an era of brutal oppression of indigenous Africans by the colonizers and the quest to bring more territory under control, to drain the continent's wealth to Europe and consequently, decide the fate of Africa.

Way to a 'Formal Decolonisation'

The rise of African nationalism, coupled with the Second World War and the Cold War, gave impetus to the decolonization of African colonies. Most Africans were against their colonial overlords for a variety of reasons. They were deprived of political and economic power and subjected to taxes. Their lands were being settled with an influx of foreigners, who further went on to rule and oppress them. They were dehumanized and treated as second-class citizens in their own countries. Moreover, the infamous policy of 'Apartheid' which institutionalized racism in South Africa was another reason which motivated Africans to demand self-governance.

In the wake of World War II, when all the European countries had faced

faced severe damages and were trying to rebuild themselves, they were not in a



position to hold on to all their colonies. Several Italian colonies gained independence as a consequence. The stage was set for the other colonies undergoing oppression to struggle for Independence.

Under the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana (formerly the Gold Coast), establishes itself as a strong example of how effective resistance under strong leadership can pave the way for a revolution. The Britishers were forced to grant independence to Ghana in 1957.

The decolonization of Africa acquired a swift pace in the 1960s. The 'Cold War' also played a significant role in this process. In their bid to become a supreme power, both the

USA and the USSR tried to weaken Western Europe by



funding Africa's independence struggle. This put more pressure on Europe to give up its colonies. By 1980, almost all African colonies were granted independence.

But was Africa completely free from the shackles of colonial rule? Were African people free to govern themselves in all aspects without any European intervention? Was the continent able to rebuild its economy and ensure its development like other decolonized countries? Apparently, the answers to all these questions are negative.

A New Face of Colonialism

Post-colonial Africa did not suffer a decline in natural resources. Rather, it was in the middle of a 'human resource crisis'.

Europeans never focused on the education and skill development of indigenous Africans. As a result, Africans were far behind in manufacturing skills, let alone leadership and managerial skills. This led to a weakened foundation of industrialization. Corruption levels soared high, especially in politics. All of this was made even worse by the diverse ethnicity and cultures the Africans were divided into.

When Europeans scrambled for Africa, they didn't pay heed to the numerous ethnicities which existed across the continent. Thousands of ethnic communities, with separate cultures, were clubbed together to form a colony. As a result, there were frequent clashes between different ethnic groups. Politics was also centered around ethnicity when it needed to be focused on development. It can be said that although Africans got independence, they were incompetent and divided to the extent that they found it difficult to govern themselves. Lacking manufacturing and other industrial skills, the people of Africa failed to generate wealth from the ample natural resources still abounding in the continent.

Hence, political instability followed independence in many African countries. After independence, most African countries adopted socialism to revive their economy. But they could not sustain it and the hopes of a better future were immediately shattered. By the mid-1980s, 60% of Africa's countries had come under military rule. The citizens started to protest against their own leaders for resorting to bad policies and corruption.

The weakened state of affairs in the continent set the perfect stage for the western powers (Europe and the USA) to once again control the continent, this time indirectly. Moreover, several instances indicate how the western powers have played an active role in destabilizing the political systems in Africa to further their vested interests. One prominent example of this is how the United States sponsored a coup in Ghana to overthrow Kwame Nkrumah. Nkrumah was deposed on February 24, 1966 by the National Liberation Council, which was supported by the CIA. Apparently, the US was keen to remove him from power because of his vision to unite all African countries under the Pan-African Movement.

The increasing Western intervention in African countries was observed by Nkrumah at a very early stage. This is reflected by his use of the word 'neo-colonialism' for the first time in his book 'Neo-colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism'. He wrote, 'The essence of neocolonialism is that the State which is the subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality, its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside.' This definition starts to make sense when we observe the economies of the African countries.

Let's try to understand how France still receives 'heavy tax' from its former colonies in Africa. France had the control of 14 African countries. To enable greater economic integration and administration of its colonies, France created the 'CFA Franc system' in 1945, where CFA stood for French Colonies in Africa. The currency of all these colonies was pegged to Franc. However, this began to cause tensions when the countries were left with no option except to continue this system even after independence.

France was in no mood to compromise with the immense resources Africa was supplying to its treasury. So, during independence, it compelled all its colonies to get into a 'colonial pact' in lieu of getting the economic backing of the French government to maintain their financial stability. According to the provisions of the pact, the eight West African and six Central African countries were divided into separate monetary units. Both these units would use CFA Franc as their currency and have separate central banks.

Now, both the central banks are obliged to hold half of their foreign exchange reserves with the French Central Bank. Moreover, the currency of these countries has been pegged to the Euro since 1991. So, the countries lying in the 'Franc Zone' cannot devalue their own currency, which makes them less competitive for exports. They have to face huge losses and often get into colossal debts.

At the expense of the failing economies of African countries, France has been making great economic profits. This fact was acknowledged by former French President Jacques Chirac in 2008, when he said, "Without Africa, France will slide down into the rank of a third [world] power".

In recent times, this colonial arrangement has faced severe criticism. The West African countries have now come up with a new currency 'Eco', to assert their sovereignty. Although it will remain pegged to the Euro, these countries will no longer require keeping their reserves in the French treasury. Also, the requirement to keep a French Representative as a member of the currency union's board will end. However, the successful implementation of this initiative still seems questionable.

Lastly, Africa is being looted at the hands of several multinational companies and corporations operating in the continent. They do so by avoiding taxes by shifting their profits to 'tax havens' – places with reduced tax rates. All these tactics by MNCs make the African treasury lose billions of dollars every year.

Conclusion

Colonialism has not really left Africa till date. It has continued in a different form and hindered development and welfare across the continent. The continent not only faced a grave economic loss but also faced a loss of its culture and languages. The official language in most African countries is the

language of their colonizers – French, English or Portugal etc.

Decolonization of Africa is a testimony to the fact that 'Independence' is very broad in its meaning. The indomitable struggle by Africa to gain independence was successful in driving out the colonist forces, but the impressions and influence of colonialism didn't wash away. Economic stability and ensuring equitable distribution should be the primary goal of these countries. Africa has a long way to go in order to realize freedom in its true sense. ■

“Africa is a paradox which illustrates and highlights neo-colonialism. Her earth is rich, yet the products that come from above and below the soil continue to enrich, not Africans predominantly, but groups and individuals who operate to Africa's impoverishment”.

Neo-Colonialism: the Last Stage of Imperialism, 1965.

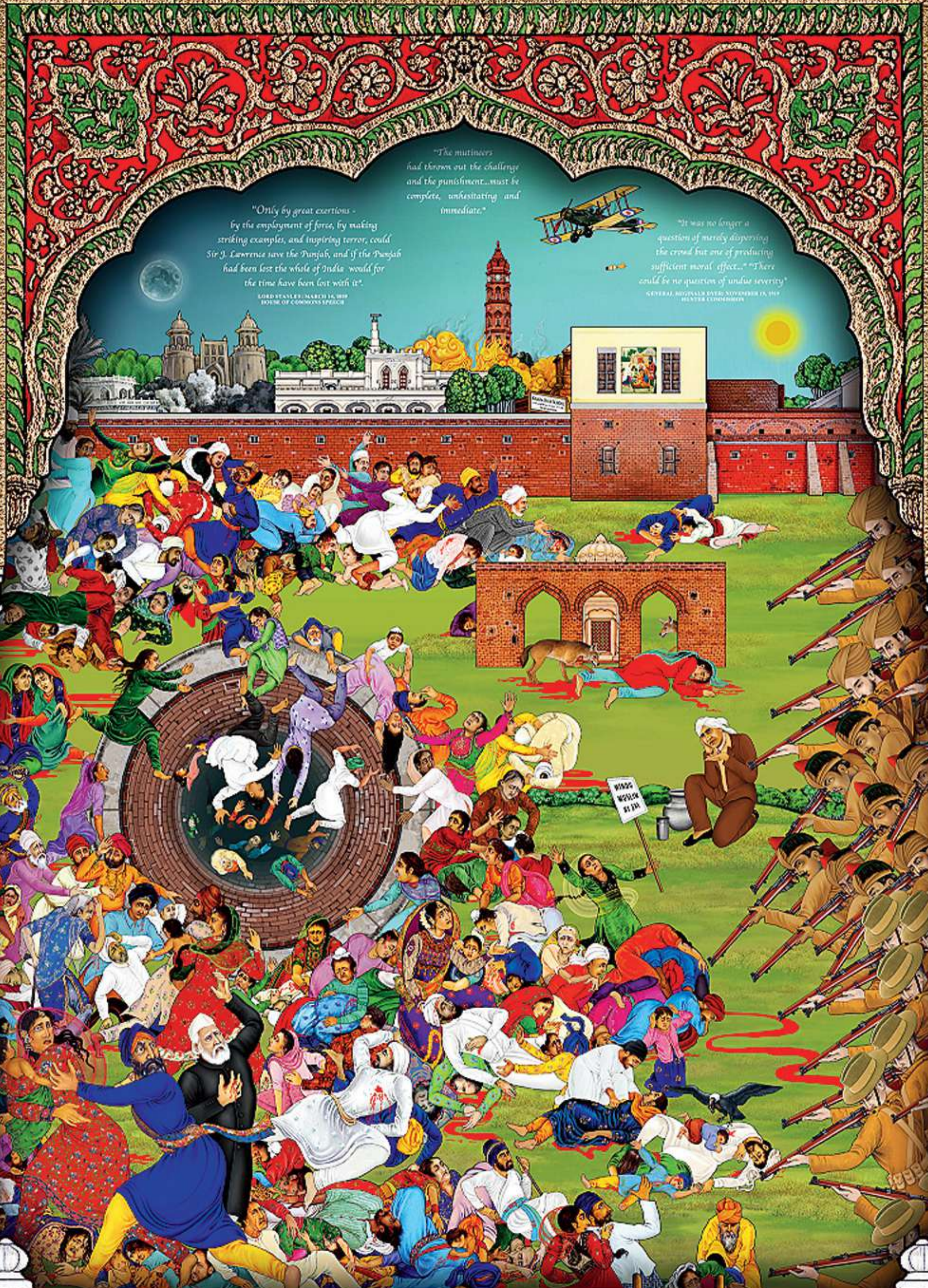
VAISAKHI

1650 BULLETS

4.5 MILLION

2000 CASUALTIES

APRIL 13th 1919



"Only by great exertions - by the employment of force, by making striking examples, and inspiring terror, could Sir J. Lawrence save the Punjab, and if the Punjab had been lost the whole of India would for the time have been lost with it."
LORD STANLEY, MARCH 14, 1919
HOUSE OF COMMONS SPEECH

"The mutineers had thrown out the challenge and the punishment must be complete, unhesitating and immediate."

"It was no longer a question of merely dispersing the crowd but one of producing sufficient moral effect." "There could be no question of undue severity."
GENERAL BRIGGLES, FEBRUARY 15, 1919
HOUSE OF COMMONS



"The accounts of insults and sufferings undergone by our brothers in the Punjab have trickled through the galled silence, reaching every corner of India. The time has come to stand them on any special distinctions, by the side of those of my countrymen, who for their so-called 'insignificance,' are liable to suffer a degradation not fit for human beings."
KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN, MAY 31, 1919

"A monstrous event." "Without parallel in the modern history of the British Empire."
WINDHAM CHURCHILL, JULY 1, 1919
HOUSE OF COMMONS SPEECH



"ENGLAND'S NEED IS INDIA'S OPPORTUNITY"
LORD CURZON, 1919



"We conquered India as an outlet for the goods of Britain. We conquered India by the sword and by the sword we shall hold it... We went with a yardstick in one hand and a sword in the other, and with the latter we continue to hold them helpless while we force the former down their throats."
SIR WILLIAM DOUGLOSS BRYCE, BRITISH EMERALD EMERALD, 1919

"For over a century British protagonists have searched for an appropriate word. 'Sorry' has not been among them."
SHANMUKH TRIPATHI, 1919

"He did his duty as he saw it."
"The man who saved India"
THE BRITISH PRESS, 1919



EQUALITY OF RIGHTS WITH ALL SUBJECTS OF THE KING & EMPEROR

"IS IT SURPRISING THAT THE GOVERNMENT SAY IN THEIR AGONY, THAT THE DEAD LAY PUTREFYING IN THE HOT WATERS OF AN AMBULANCE, THAT THE WITNESSES AND JURORS CAME TO TEAR THE FLESH FROM THE BONES OF THE INNOCENT VICTIMS OF THIS BARRACKS HOLIDAY, WHILE THE ANKLES RELATIVES OF INNOCENT VICTIMS REMAINED 'FETTERED IN THEIR HOMES'."
(JOHNSON MAY 1920)

ਜ਼ਾਲੀਆਂ ਵਾਲਾ ਬਾਗ ਸਮਾਰਕ
ਜ਼ਾਲੀਆਂ ਵਾਲਾ ਬਾਗ ਸਮਾਰਕ
JALLIANWALLA BAGH MEMORIAL

"He saved us from the repetition of the miseries and cruelties of 1857"
(Wesleyan Methodist - Christian Missionary, Jerusalem)



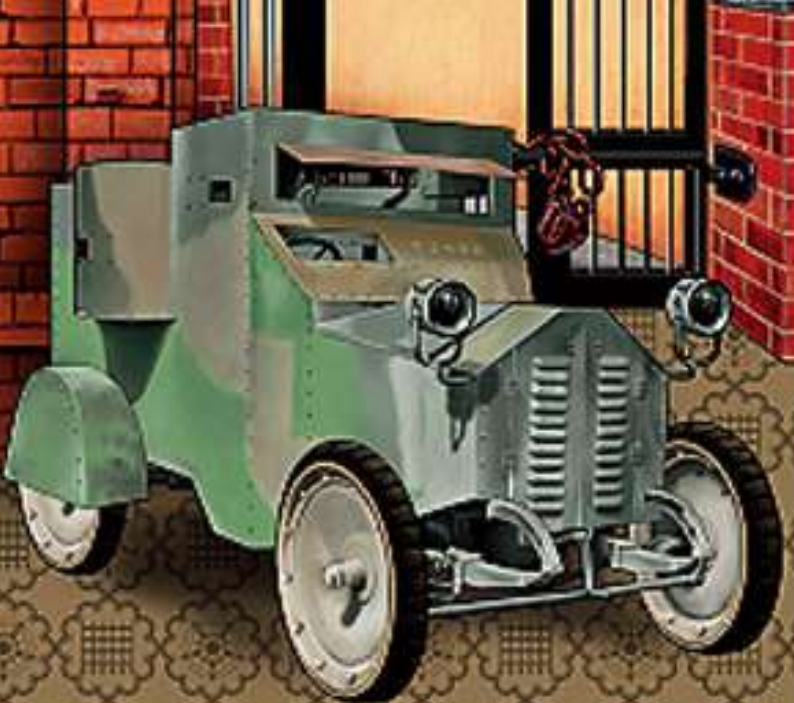
THE CRAWLING SPIDER



The Bombay Chronicle
"ROUND TABLE" POST-WAR PLANS FOR INDIA EXPOSED

"NA DALI, NA VAKIL, NA APPEAL"
"No argument, no lawyer, no appeal"

The Civil & Military Gazette
DISTURBANCES IN PUNJAB





A Massacre in Renovation: Assessing the ‘New’ Jallianwala Bagh

Anima Singh

When concrete historical reminiscences are subjected to a Faustian bargain, it is detrimental in the secondary sense, but an insidious attempt to maneuver the historicity of archaeological sources as well as human memories in the primary sense. The garden of Jallah - man or Jallianwala Bagh was nothing short of a pilgrimage to historians, scholars, researchers and avid visitors. Further, it would have remained a sacred site for future

generations as well, had not the authorities decided to barter its emotional and moral bearings for mere pomp and show. Ironically, the Ministry of Culture and National Buildings Construction Corporation Ltd(NBCC) have painted those walls with crimson which were hitherto red with the blood of the martyrs.

Ironically, the little good done in the entire process is that numerous naive tourists will now be able to amuse themselves and stroll in awe of the place of mourning. They will remember the display of modern infrastructure deprived of the

essence of history behind it. The centurial gift bestowed by the government has, by all means, ripped the place of its identity. Probably, the renovators have forgotten that the Jallianwala Bagh massacre is a tragic memory and we cannot celebrate the sacrifice of martyrs by incongruous beautification. Nevertheless, it is pertinent to discuss the fallacies to realise a simple thing that history is a serious discipline that can amuse you with its revelations and that in no sense grants the liberty to

transform its remnants into amusement parks.

An Iniquitous Tale of Past

“Like birds from the woods, they flocked together. So, the hawk could have his fill, my friends.”

Fifteen minutes of ruthless firing and scores of corpses lay on the ground with many desperately gasping for breath. The partisan British records at the National Archives of India have called the gathering on the fateful day of April, 13th 1919 as having a political motive. However, the indubious fact is that some thousand odd people had assembled there for Baisakhi and many were just listening to the speeches being delivered in condemnation of the tyrannical colonial orders including the banishment of Mahatma Gandhi from Amritsar and the arrest of Dr Saifuddin Kitchlew and Dr Satyapal, the benefactors of Hindu-Muslim unity.

“That narrow lane to enter the Bagh, sealed off on Dyer’s command, my friends.” One thousand six hundred and fifty rounds of firing and that amounted to the entire ammunition with which Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer

entered the aisles of Jallianwala Bagh on the order of the then lieutenant-governor of Punjab Sir Michael O’Dwyer. This untenanted Bagh owned by the family of Himmat Singh, one of the ‘Panch Pyare’ of Guru Gobind Singh or ‘Five Beloveds of Sikhism’ was encircled by multiple buildings in a precarious state with only a single lane for entrance and exit. Many people were not even aware of the order passed by the administration banning unlawful assembly and were taken aback by the attack of General Dyer and the abominable directives of Dwyer. The former British official wrote the bloody chapter of Indian history with his bullets and the latter



with his pen.

“In minutes the Bagh was so strewn with corpses. None knew just who was who, my friends.” Gurkhi and Baluchi soldiers armed with Scinde rifles blindly followed the commands and reduced the Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims to a state beyond recognition irrespective of whether

they were alive or not. The massacre martyred more than a thousand people, but the British in yet another display of ignominious demeanour understated the numbers to less than few hundreds. The figures are a matter of debate, but the evident scars of history hardly need any testimony. The quantum of trauma and insult supersedes historical facts and figures.

“The aforementioned lines in quotes are excerpts from the poignant poem by Punjabi writer and survivor of the 1919

tragedy, Nanak Singh. His grandson Ambassador Navdeep Suri, a former Indian High Commissioner to Australia translated the poem to English because the original Punjabi poem was banned way back in 1920. The imagery in the lines is a historical artefact to resurrect the past of the massacre which

led to momentous steps in the freedom struggle of India. Since the inauguration of Jallianwala Bagh National Memorial Trust, in 1951, there have been many touch-ups and valuable additions like the flame of liberty, but what stands today is an antithesis to historical sense.”

A Dismaying Juxtaposition

The heritage Nanakshahi bricks which reminded the harrowing alley of death have now been displaced with coruscating floors and embellished murals on the walls. The entrance which once reverberated with cries of unknown faces now has futile exhibitions of men, women and children. The main memorial complex has been endowed with a Lotus pond. Apart from being the national flower of India, isn't Lotus also a political party's symbol? Probably the majority party in the union government wants to earn some brownie points by implicitly keeping its association with this infrastructural investment intact.

The entry and exit points have been repositioned without bothering about the fact that people had been trapped in the Bagh because of the only entrance being blocked by British troops. Not only that, the renowned 'Shahidi Kua' or Martyr's Well has also been shielded with a glass frame. One cannot even take a proper glimpse of the depth and darkness embraced by the martyrs to escape the bullets. On one hand, there is an

arrangement of a 28 minute long sound and light show and on the other hand, a Salvation Ground has been made to honour the martyrs in silence. Seemingly, the renovators prepared a cinematic screenplay to completely animate the experience of the onlookers. *“The creation of galleries using underutilized buildings in the compound can be digested, but the depiction of myriad historical events on it like the history of Punjab, Gadar movement, freedom struggle and so on doesn't do justice to the historical space that each of these events deserves individually and at the same time superimposes Sikh identity in the entire complex instead of representing a harmonious amalgamation which has historical basis to it.”*

The Tussle of Power and History

“Prominent historian and author of the book “Jallianwala Bagh- An Empire of Fear and the Making of the Amritsar Massacre”, Kim A Wagner has termed the revamping as an event to effectively erase the remnants of the tragedy and an act of Disneyfication. Another maven of history S Irfan Habib has accused the renovation of being a part of the corporatisation of the monuments. These assertions have valid ground because evidently the heritage value of the Bagh has been bargained for unrevealed political interests. The precursor of politics and power can be ascertained if we go back to 2019 when the Jallianwala Bagh Memorial (Amendment) Bill was tabled and passed with an aim to dilute the dominance of Indian National Congress, Punjab Chief Minister and the governor in the list of

trustees by effectively handing over the power of trustee nomination to the hands of the Central Government.” Surprisingly, it has been claimed that the entire renovation was carried out under the supervision of ASI (Archaeological Survey of India) and an expert panel of historians.

At this point, I am reminded of the time when we were seeking a heartfelt apology by the British government for the 1919 mishap. What we received was just a sigh of deep regret from the former Prime Minister of Britain, Theresa May. The House of Lords descended into a debate on the Jallianwala Bagh massacre which highlighted the relevance of this reckoning event. Apologies for historical wrongs by contemporary leaders are best when they flow from an act of genuine and humane realisation and is better not sought for political rebranding. Ironically, the Indian authorities themselves have introduced a shallow display of real sacrifice. Amidst the kerfuffle, the most distressing is the loss of historical understanding and the unfortunate chasm created between the archaeological and literary description of the memorial site. However, who cares about this deconstruction? Dispiritedly, just the descendants of the martyrs and some benefactors of history. ■



The Hu'man'
Religion
Vaibhav Singh

Pg 33



Laughter &
Authority: An
Analysis
**Sivanth
Adithya N.**

Pg 38



Mona Lisa : An
Illusory Masterpiece
**Thufill
Ahamed A R**


Pg 44

ART & PHILOSOPHY








 "A godless world is as mysterious as one suffused with divinity," John Gray writes. Illustration by Seb Agresti

The position of authority allows them to dilute certain principles not suited to their agendas and propagate their own beliefs. These beliefs over the years get cemented as rules of conduct for followers of a religion. While this dynamism of religions allows them to remain relevant in changing times, it also allows dominant adulterations to transform and integrate into the core principles of religion.

The Hu‘man’ Religion

Vaibhav Singh

"Today, I call Waris Shah, "Speak from your grave,"
 And turn to the next page in your book of love,

Once, a daughter of Punjab cried and you wrote an entire saga

Today, a million daughters cry out to you, Waris Shah,
 Rise! O' narrator of the grieving! Look at your Punjab,
 Today, fields are lined with corpses, and blood fills the Chenab."

An anguished Amrita Pritam wrote these lines after being turned into a refugee post the achievement of independence that led India into 'light and freedom' while at the same time pushing millions into an abysmal state of darkness-of poverty, despair and

marauding of one's agency over personal possessions and even one's body. Massacres and looting followed rapes and forced marriages of women and girls, seen as territories to be captured and marked in an expression of masculinity and male pride. The disgraceful shattering of cherished values of respect and right to self-determination, an idea of swaraj applicable at an individual level, the very ideas that laid the basis of India's independence became aliens in their land like the millions of displaced and murdered.

It is indeed worth one's time to ponder over the conditions in which we gained independence with women becoming the greatest collateral damage of political, social and economic entropy underplay at that time. It becomes important to analyse whether

Indian ethos sanctions such brutality meted out to those women and that which continues even today, or not.

Institution of religion that has guided mankind long before modern-day statutes and laws emerged has never remained static but has evolved with progress in societal setup. Also, of all the guiding documents that conduct human relationships in a social setting, religious scriptures have emerged as almost the most sanctified, religiously and unquestioningly followed and inviolable documents. When a modern-day state fails, of which the ongoing Afghanistan crisis is an example, masses are guided by principles of morality encoded in their religious beliefs. Despite concepts of secularism and state-religion separation religiously followed in countries of the west, knowingly or unknowingly principles enshrined in the religion one follows, guide substantively one's conduct. However, this also poses a significant risk.

Many times, certain scholars of religions regarded highly command significant say in how the religion is to be interpreted. This position of authority allows them to dilute certain principles not suited to their agendas and propagate their own beliefs. These beliefs over the years get cemented as rules of conduct for followers of a religion. While this dynamism of religions allows them to remain relevant in changing times, it also allows dominant adulterations to transform and integrate into the

core principles of religion.

Excellent examples of this deduction can be found in many religions. In Hinduism, for example, Manusmriti compiled between 200 BCE to 200 CE, deprives women of their agency and makes them subservient to their male family members. However, this runs contrary to the practice in Puranas. Although royal families in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata are seen conducting *Swaymvaras* to select grooms for their daughters, they (the daughters) still retained veto power, something evident in Draupadi's refusal to marry Karna (though her reasons to do so may not be justified) in epic Mahabharat. Furthermore, the level of influence enjoyed by matriarchs in the epics appears contrary to what we have become accustomed to in present times. Ganga's refusal to honour the conjugal rights of Shantanu is a shred of evidence that stands in stark contrast to what happened in the Dadaji Bhikaji vs Rukhmabai case of 1885 when a 22-year-old Rukhmabai, who went on to become one of the first practising women doctors in India, refused to cohabit and solemnise her marriage which occurred when she was just 11. While the final verdict as well as sentiment amongst some Hindus including Bal Gangadhar Tilak went against Rukhmabai, fortunately, the case laid bare the contamination of Hindu religious ideas with those of feudal England which considered marriage as a deal and wife, the property of the husband, thus allowing for restitution of conjugal rights. While the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India is going to analyse the viability of the provision in present times especially given its *Joseph Shine v Union of India*, 2019 judgement upholding the right to

privacy and bodily autonomy of married women, it is concerning how an alien element so easily came to be recognised as a part of Hindu religion.

Bina Agarwal, a professor at the University of Manchester, UK has highlighted another major issue. She argues in an article that owning land would enhance a woman's well-being, improve children's health and education, reduce domestic violence, raise farm productivity, increase family food security, and empower women socially and politically. However, her paper in the *Journal of Development Studies*, of April 2021 based on data from the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) paints a grim picture of Indian realities. Women were found to constitute only 14% of the landowners owning just 11% of the land with an average of 1.24 ha relative to 1.66 ha for men. Amongst these land-owning women, the majority were widows who acquired land from their marital families and not as daughters through parents. Surprisingly, a nation that saw Razia Sultan and Ahilya Bai Holkar reigning vast empires, has had its treasured past and glorious legacy obscured from collective public thought and way of life.

Another major issue worthy of consideration is the Taliban's capture of power in Afghanistan that has prompted debates about women rights. Zabihullah Mujahid, spokesman for the

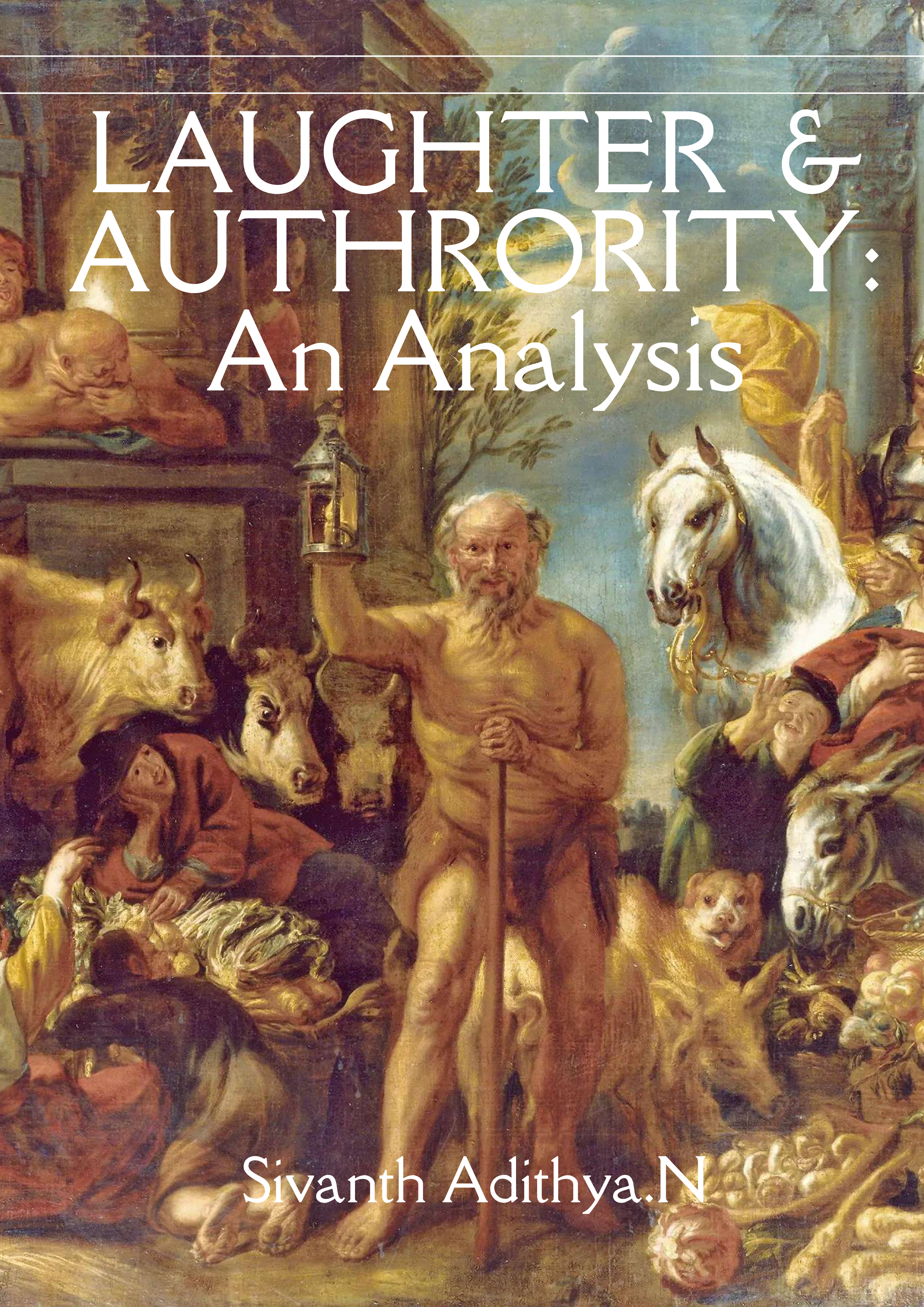
Taliban (and now Deputy Minister of Culture and Information in its interim government) in a press conference said, "We are going to allow women to work and study. We have got frameworks, of course. Women are going to be very active in the society but within the framework of Islam." Here the expression 'framework of Islam' draws attention as has also been pointed out by SY Quraishi, former Chief Election Commissioner of India, in a piece titled 'Faith and her Freedom' for an English daily. Quraishi highlights that the Taliban is guided by Shariah as the law which is derived from The Quran, Sunnah or the "Habitual Practices' of the Prophet and Ahadees, i.e., recorded sayings of the Prophet. The article further highlights how Islam in the 7th century CE recognised women as equal partners to men, participating in business, war and several other activities. Abdel Rahim Omran, Professor of Islamic Law at the University of Al-Azhar, Cairo, has summed up the position of women in Islam as enunciated in Surah An Nisa 4:11,12: "Islam championed equality for women in all matters-religious, social, economic and familial. A woman cannot be forced into marriage by her family or guardian- she has to give her consent. Islam endorses a woman's consent to such an extent that a marriage could be annulled when it has been forced on a woman by her guardian." Similarly, a woman is allowed to prevent her partner to not pursue polygyny. Veiling as a mandate too, emerged over the years as a

result of interpretation and adulteration of original texts.

The inference that can be drawn is that just as laws risk facing revolt when they no longer remain in tune with changing times, it is time that we realise that even religions are not immune to change. This dynamism, however, when hijacked and directed by a few tends to displace core values that resonate equally across all religions. Equality is essentially a part of the greater religion of humanity. Issue of women's rights and oppression in a large measure emanates from a corruption of core values that are ingredients to the making of all religions. A solution can be derived from Gandhi's suggestion in Hind Swaraj where he says, "If everyone will try to understand the core of his religion and adhere to it, and will not allow false teachers to dictate him, there will be no room left for quarrelling." While the system metaphorized by Hindu Lord Krishna needs to step up its game to combat the issue of women oppression, religions too need to announce in unequivocal terms their support for women's rights such that Vidurs, Bheeshmas and Dhritrashtra no longer remain wriggling onlookers but heed to the voice of their conscience motivated by the religions they follow. ■



LAUGHTER & AUTHORITY: An Analysis



Sivanth Adithya.N



“To remain in authority requires respect for the person or the office. The greatest enemy of authority, therefore, is contempt, and the surest way to undermine it is laughter.” - Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (1970).



William Shakespeare said that the eyes are the windows to your soul." This is true up to a great extent. You can tell a lot about a person from their eyes. Eyes easily capture the hidden feelings, emotions, and thoughts of people.

One thing that I noticed during this pandemic period was that even if someone laughs while wearing a mask, we can easily discern from their eyes whether their laughter is genuine or not. Eyes reflect the soul. Laughter is medicine for the soul (but if you're laughing for no reason, you may really need medicine). I guess this is why laughter is so easily reflected in the eyes.

LAUGHTER AND SOCIETY

I think that laughter may have contributed a lot to the formation of societies. Man is a social being. We are complete only when we stand in relation to others. For successful social cooperation, the goals and aspirations of the members must at least be broadly similar. Laughter is a universal phenomenon found across all types of people. Shared qualities help us to see the world in similar ways. As a universally shared signal, laughter helps to create a feeling of kinship among all members of the human race. As Victor Borge wrote, "Laughter is the closest distance between two people". Also, we are naturally

attracted to people who make us laugh. Humour is an avenue that leads the self to others and allows them to suspend the bitterness between them and laugh together in comrade spirit. A laugh can reunite a lot of broken relationships. An innocent laugh is enough to eliminate a lot of anger as it's difficult for anyone to resist the onslaught of laughter. Thus, laughter works as a social glue that brings and binds people together.

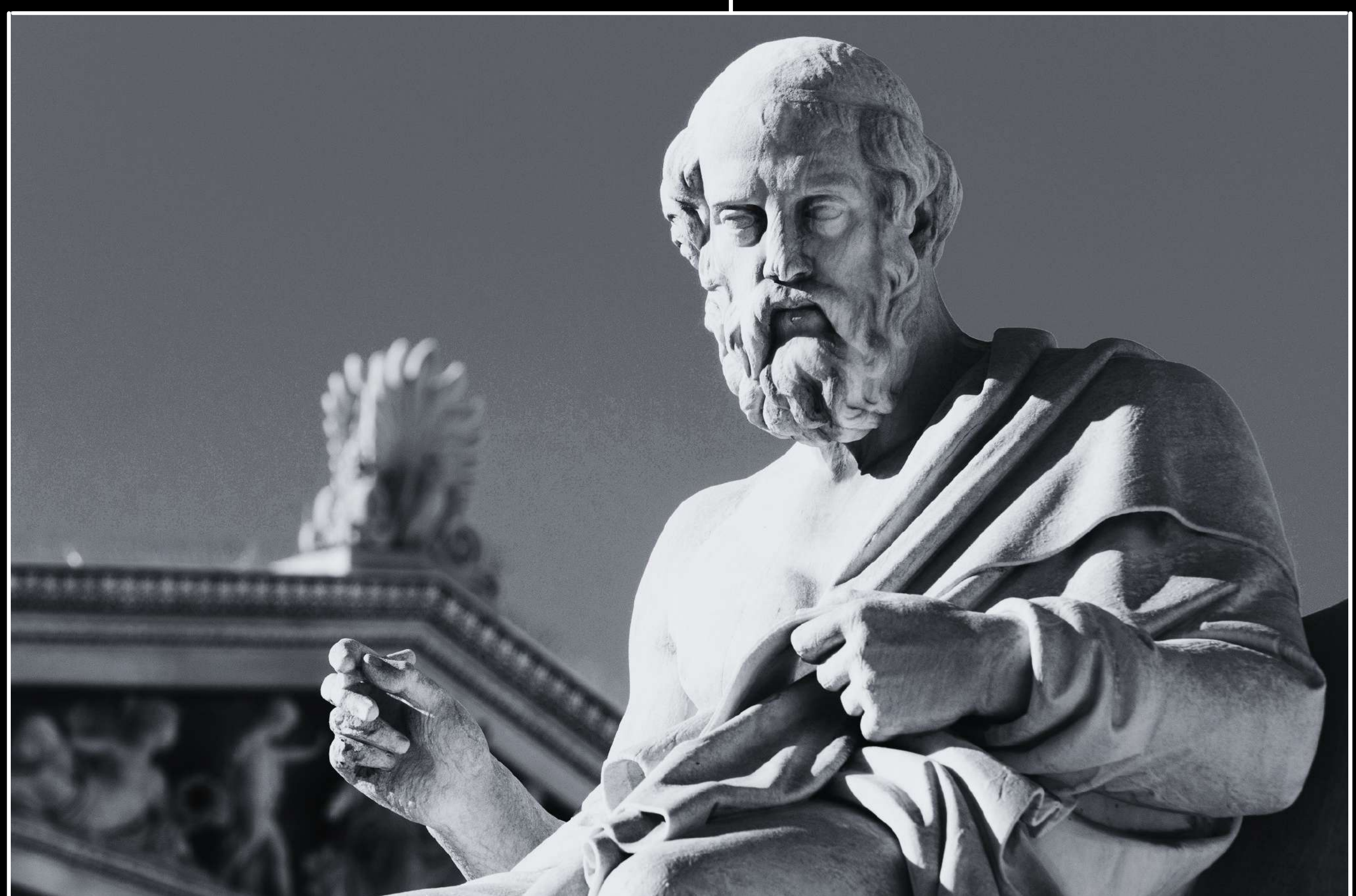
PHILOSOPHY OF LAUGHTER

Most major philosophers have commented on laughter, but very few have given it the detailed analysis it deserves.

Plato, who argued for an undemocratic republic where the philosopher-king rules, said that in that ideal republic comedy would be banned for two reasons primarily—1) because it is deceptive mimesis. 2) because laughter is a passion and it may cause people to lose self-control.

He also argued that hilarious works should be kept away from people by censorship.

But Plato was surely aware of the potential of laughter's social utility. As written in 'Philebus', "however, the proper aim of comedy is to unmask ignorance and pretension, making it thus an important tool for furthering



"The best example that illustrates the connection between authority and laughter is the political philosophy of the man whose philosophy became the biggest source of inspiration for the authoritarian regimes that came after him."

- Plato

the moral aim of self-knowledge".

Plato's student Aristotle, as often, disagreed with him on the subject of laughter and humour too. Aristotle believed that the proper usage of laughter is a social virtue. He also believed that laughter, which is a bodily exercise, is quite valuable to health. Aristotle also wrote, "In a middle way between the excess of laughter (buffoonery) and its deficiency (boorishness) lies Eutrapelia, the 'true witness' characteristic of an honourable and free person".

Epictetus, who is claimed to have never laughed once in his life, had some harsh advice about laughter. In *Enchiridion* he wrote, "Let not laughter be much, nor on many occasions, nor excessive". He also wrote, "Take care also not to provoke laughter; for this is a slippery way toward vulgar habits, and is also adapted to diminish the respect of your neighbours."

Epicurus, who could be described as the laughing philosopher, wrote; "At the same time we must laugh and philosophize, do our household duties and manage our business, and never cease proclaiming the sayings of the true philosophy."

The situation remained the same even till the time of Hobbes and Descartes mainly due to Plato's influence and the Bible's views about humour, which are based on the Superiority Theory, according to which the feeling of superiority lies at the heart of humour—either superiority over



others or over our former selves. The superiority theory, though the right to an extent, cannot explain all types of humours.

Surprisingly, it was Immanuel Kant, the most mundane of all philosophers, who made a radical breakthrough in the theory of humour and laughter and put humour in a positive light. Kant's theory is now called 'The Incongruity Theory'. In Kant's words; "In everything that is to excite a lively convulsive laugh, there must be something absurd (in which the understanding, therefore, can find no satisfaction). Laughter is an affection

arising from the sudden transformation of a strained expectation into nothing. This transformation, which is certainly not enjoyable to the understanding, yet indirectly gives it very active enjoyment for a moment. Therefore its cause must consist in the influence of the representation upon the body, and the reflex effect of this upon the mind".

Kant provided some examples to illustrate his theory. One of them is; "A man's rich relative dies. Suddenly he is rich. To honour his relative, the man

wants to arrange a solemn funeral service. But he keeps complaining that he can't get it quite right. What's the problem? someone asks.

"I hired these mourners, but the more money I give them to look grieved, the happier they look."

In 'Ars Poetica', Horace gives a practical illustration of the incongruence theory—"If a painter should wish to unite a horse's neck to a human head, and spread a variety of plumage over limbs [of different animals] taken from every part [of nature], so that what is a beautiful woman in the upper part terminates unsightly in an ugly fish below; could you, my friends, refrain from laughter, were you admitted to such a sight."

GANESHA AS THE SYMBOL OF HUMOUR

I think that even though many western thinkers have commented about humour and laughter, none of them has captured all the multifarious features and nuances of humour and laughter as comprehensively as the symbolism associated with the Hindu deity Ganesha.

INCONGRUITY IN GANESHA

Ganesha is a being who was not born (he was created by his mother) but was killed and then brought back to life. Ganesha's image is a composite of four animals—human, elephant, mouse and serpent. He has an

elephant's face with a broken tusk, huge belly, four arms, riding on a mouse. His skin has been depicted in many colours like white, red, orange-red, golden-yellow, blue, blue-green etc. Basically, Ganesha is a single being and at the same time, he is an ensemble of several beings.

Kant and many other philosophers and psychologists after him were of the opinion that incongruence is the basis of laughter. It's clear from what's aforementioned that Lord Ganesha is the best representation of incongruence. Even his very incongruent appearance incites laughter within us.

IMAGINATION IN GANESHA

Ganesha, who is the product of creation, with all his incongruent features definitely excites our imagination. I think that one could make a case that humour facilitates imagination and creativity.

Both humour and imagination work by linking apparently incongruent elements that don't go in accordance with conventional expectations. Both of them break the existing frames through which we view the world and enable us to view things from new perspectives. Also, both humour and imagination exhilarate us and provide reasons to live. As Francis Bacon said, "Imagination was given to us to compensate for what we are not; a sense of humour was given to us to console us for what we are".

The chief example of this is the immensely creative and humorous Dr. Albert Einstein himself, who once said, "Any man who can drive safely while kissing a pretty girl is simply

not giving the kiss the attention it deserves". Other than his famous formula $E = mc^2$, Einstein also created a less renowned, but quite humorous, formula for success in life—"If A is a success in life, then A equals x plus y plus z. Work is x; y is play, and z is keeping your mouth shut."

HAPPINESS & OBSTACLES IN GANESHA

Ganesha is the God of happiness and the remover of obstacles (he is also known as 'Vigneshwara' and 'Vighnaharta', meaning the 'lord of obstacles' and 'remover of obstacles' respectively). Laughter has both these qualities too. Laughter pours happiness into the sombre mind and helps to eliminate or face obstacles and difficulties in our lives. There are no places that laughter cannot penetrate.

TEMPORALITY IN GANESHA

The Trishul (Trident) on Ganesha's forehead symbolises his control over time, (past, present and future). The mind naturally projects itself into the future as the future holds possibilities, and we should make prudent choices from these possibilities to navigate through life for a better life than the present.

We fix our hopes for the future based on the thoughts stored in our minds. Humans have an instinctive aversion towards uncertainty as it may pose

threats to our existence. We crave certainty and security. We hope for a certain future, but due to our limited knowledge, the future is, up to a great extent, unpredictable and thus uncertain to us from the perspective of the present. Uncertainty creates anxiety and excessive anxiety reduces our focus, concentration, increases confusion, distractibility, forgetfulness, fuzzy thinking and thus clouds our judgments and reduces our ability to make prudent choices. Laughter helps to reduce our stress and thus helps us to make more prudent choices. Thus, in a way, laughter and time are connected here. Laughter relieves us from the chokehold of the uncertain future.

All these features of Ganesha, individually and collectively, symbolically convey a lot about humour and laughter.

LAUGHTER AND AUTHORITY

Authority, by its very nature, doesn't want people to laugh. When we laugh we are free and authority wants to suppress freedom. One of the chief characteristics of the nature of authority is that it wants to be unquestionably recognized and obeyed. We cannot allow this. Authority should be questioned and scrutinized and should only be allowed when it can rationally justify itself. Otherwise, the authority would turn arrogant and tyrannical.

Laughter and humour are very



effective tools for keeping power in check. However, unfortunately, due to Plato's galactic influence on Western intellectual history, virtually no major thinker after him gave laughter and humour the much-needed importance they deserve.

The Greek philosopher Diogenes, who was a master of exposing and ridiculing double standards and hypocrisies by his odd and humorous

lifestyle, exemplifies the power of humour.

Diogenes used to carry a lamp in Athens in the daytime. When the Greeks asked him why he was carrying a lamp during the daytime, he said that he was looking for an honest man, but could only find frauds and hypocrites everywhere.

The encounter between Plato and Diogenes is also interesting. Plato declared that a human was a featherless, bipedal animal. Diogenes' response was that he brought a plucked chicken to the Academy and declared, 'behold, I have brought you Plato's man!'

As a result, Plato and his posse were forced to revise their definition of a human to a 'flat-nailed featherless biped.'

No wonder Plato called him 'Socrates gone mad'. Groucho Marx put it more appositely, 'Humour is reason gone mad.'

Another example is Cervantes' hysterically funny novel 'Don Quixote'. It is a great social commentary, a mordant mockery of the unrealistic chivalric romance and the Renaissance belief in man's unlimited possibilities which implies that 'a man can do all things if he will', to quote the Renaissance humanist Leon Battista Alberti. The novel exposes this belief to be a hilarious illusion. Likewise, humorous movies like V for Vendetta (2005), Office Space (1999), Borat (2006), and Dr. Strangelove (1964) all portray the truth in humorous ways.

LAUGHTER AGAINST AUTHORITY

George Orwell was right when he wrote that every joke is a tiny revolution. In order to make progress, we need to keep power in check because unchecked power leads to corruption and

tyranny. So, unleashing these little revolutions against those in power is a mark of a healthy democracy.

As said above, laughter can penetrate everything. There is comedy even in tragedy. When the authority is unjustifiable, the goals of the people are not aligned with the goals of the authority and thus people cannot wholeheartedly accept the 'truth' imposed from above. Thus the authority and the people are not compatible with each other and the 'truths' imposed by the authority will be incongruous with the needs and aspirations of people. Such a society will be unnatural and incongruous. This, I think, is why there's comedy in tragedy. This is probably why memes are so popular. Even in tragic news, memes best capture the incongruity of the situation.

The most nefarious authoritarian of the 20th century would be Adolf Hitler. The greatest comedian of the twentieth century would be Charlie Chaplin. Chaplin made the satirical masterpiece "The Great Dictator" (1940) to mock Hitler and lambasted Hitler, Nazism and anti-Semitism. Hitler banned the movie in Germany, but he arranged the movie for private viewing and watched it twice.



Thus humour and laughter are hostile to unjustifiable power structures. They easily expose the incongruity and unnaturalness of the situation. The following joke which was circulated during Hitler's time clearly shows how laughter exposes unjustifiable authority —'All classes are now abolished: decency, reason,

Our ideas, beliefs, moral values, all get refracted when viewed through the prism of humour. Humour problematizes the normal and calls into question conventional values and norms. Humour and laughter subvert the official order.



prosperity. All that remains is the state of emergency!

Another one is about Guernica. Guernica is a painting by Pablo Picasso which depicts the horrendous Nazi aerial bombing of the Basque town of Guernica during the Spanish Civil War.

The Nazis hated Picasso because his artistic style was not in accordance with the Nazi ideal of art. A Gestapo officer saw a photograph of Picasso's painting Guernica while he was searching through his apartment and asked Picasso, "Did you do that?", "No," Picasso replied, "You did".

Our ideas, beliefs, moral values, all get refracted when viewed through the prism of humour. Humour problematizes the normal and calls into question

conventional values and norms. Humour and laughter subvert the official order. Friedrich Nietzsche clearly understood this subversive potential of laughter. He realised that laughter could free us from the strict and rigid conventions of society and thus it breaks new ground for the transvaluation of all values. Emphasizing the value of the laughing spirit in countering the exhausting burdens of society, Nietzsche wrote—"What hates the mob's blether – cocks and all the bungled gloomy brood – praised be this spirit of all free spirits, the laughing gale that blows dust into the eyes of all the black – sighted, sore – blighted".

The most important feature of humour is that the person who listens to humour becomes vulnerable. You cannot laugh and remain stiff at once. When you laugh you are weak.

Humour strips down all that's wrapped in respectability to vulnerability. It provides space for a little revolution to erupt. So, humour and laughter have subversive and revolutionary potentials and this opens doors for progress and freedom. Bayard Rustin urged people to 'speak truth to power'. I would add, 'speak it humorously if possible' as it is the best joke. As Bernard Shaw said, 'My way of joking is to tell the truth. It's the funniest joke in the world'. When you speak truth to power, it's important to make power laugh because when you make people laugh, they'll listen to you and you can humorously tell anything to power as one cannot take revenge while giggling.

It must be kept in mind that laughter in itself is not freedom. Rather it is a source of liberation. Laughter takes men from a lower level of freedom to a higher level of freedom. This may explain why Jesus Christ, who initially possessed absolute freedom, is said to have never laughed. At the point of absolute freedom, where there are absolutely no restrictions left, there is no more room left for liberation and thus laughter has no role to play.

If this is true, then we wouldn't need to laugh in the state of perfect freedom. Thus, laughter could be used as a thermometer that marks the distance between our current level of freedom and the ideal perfect freedom. As Mark Twain said,

"The secret source of humour is not joy but sorrow; there is no humour in heaven".

Humour shows us the incongruity of our situation. It helps to reduce the power of authority and humour's affinity with imagination helps us to imagine better possibilities for the future and humour helps us to make more prudent choices to achieve those better possibilities and thereby liberate ourselves into higher levels of freedom, and freedom is, in a sense, power. Democracy means the power of the people. Democracy is the governmental expression of freedom and equality. The end of democracy is the freedom of the people. I think that from what's said so far, we can safely conclude that humour and laughter are the cheapest tools available for checking the tyrannical tendencies of authority, and their importance as the liberators of mankind is invaluable. ■

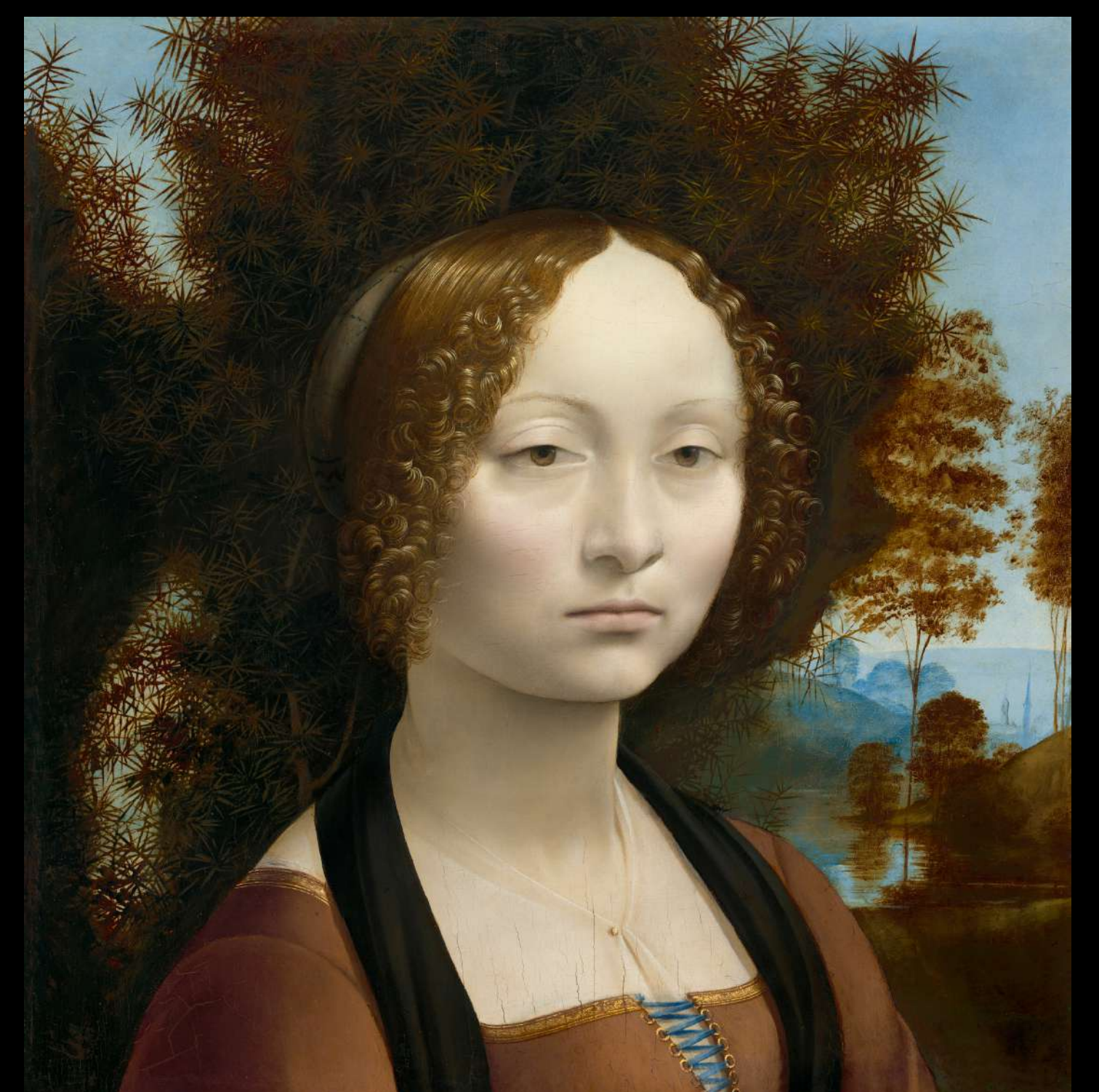
Mona Lisa (La Gioconda), regarded as the most famous painting in the world a masterpiece created by legendary Italian polymath, painter, draughtsman, engineer, scientist, theorist, sculptor and architect, Leonardo da Vinci, is a half portrait of a woman in her early twenties which finds itself a distinctive place, in Louvre museum, France.

Mona Lisa attracts about 10 million people from around the world to Paris where the museum is situated. Over a period of 300 years, the painting migrated from Italy to Fontainebleau Palace, France, to the bedroom of Napoleon Bonaparte in Tuileries Palace to where it is hung at present at the Louvre Museum. But is the painting really so good to be this famous? Is the painting worthy enough to have such a captivating and intriguing appeal among the masses? Is the painting overvalued?

These are some questions that prominent art historians and aestheticians have debated in the past and continue to debate to this day.

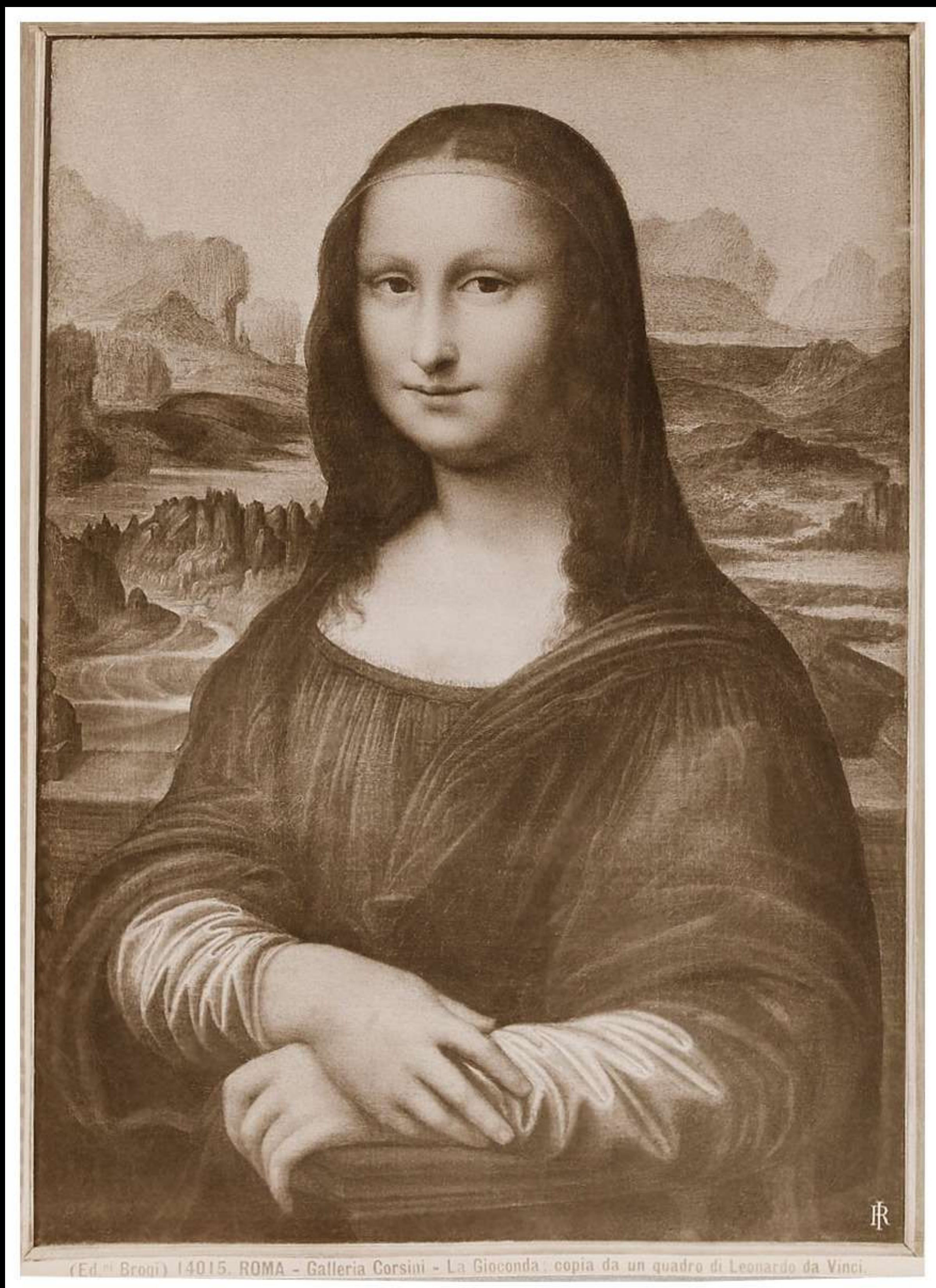
Leonardo da Vinci began working on Monalisa between 1503 and 1506 and it wasn't completed till 1517-18. The identity of the woman in this portrait is still unknown. Art historians mainly believe the woman to be an Italian Noblewoman, Lisa Gherardini, wife of a wealthy Florentine silk merchant Francesco del Gioconda who commissioned the portrait for their new home, to celebrate the birth of their second son, Andrea. However, some people also believe that the painting is a self-portrait of the artist himself, Leonardo da Vinci. He did not give the painting to the Gherardini family, instead kept it with him for a long period until he was hired by King Francis I to work

DA VINCI Gallery



PORTRAIT OF GINERVA BENCI

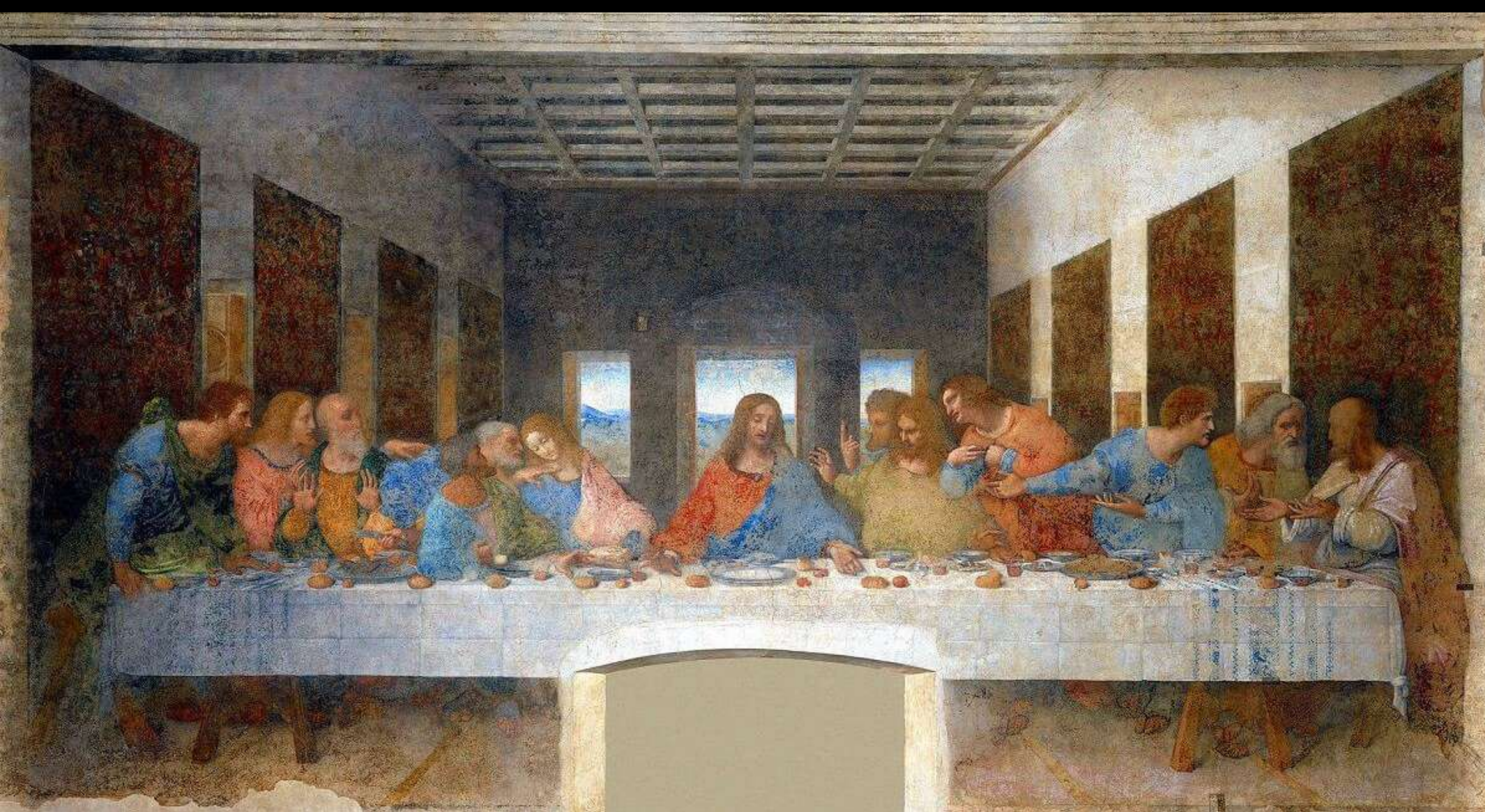
1474-1478



Mona Lisa : An Illusory Masterpiece

Thufill Ahamed A R

"Over a period of 300 years, the painting migrated from Italy to Fontainebleau Palace, France, to the bedroom of Napoleon Bonaparte in Tuileries Palace to where it is hung at present at the Louvre Museum."



THE LAST SUPPER

1495-1498



THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST

1472-1475

as a Court painter, engineer and architect in Fontainebleau Palace, France.

What distinguishes Mona Lisa from other portraits is the depiction of the sitter. While other paintings painted during the Italian Renaissance covered the full body of the subject, Monalisa was the first painting to depict 3/4th of the subject's body (which became the norm after its completion). This was done to fill the frame with the sitter completely to reduce distractions to the viewer. Da Vinci wanted to paint the Mona Lisa simple and therefore, made the subject devoid of jewels and wearing a simple dress instead of luxurious or loud clothes. Mona Lisa's eyes gaze directly at the viewer and unlike other portraits which had a simple and monotonic background, its background had an imaginary and complicated scenery that was blurred and not focused so as to attract increased attention towards the sitter. Another interesting fact about this painting is that Monalisa's eyes would seem to follow the viewer, no matter from where the viewer looks at it. Da Vinci achieved this through Sfumato, a technique invented by himself that involves using fine shading to soften the transition between colours so that the painting would seem more natural.

If we gaze briefly at Monalisa, we conclude that the sitter is smiling. But slowly when our eyes concentrate on her smile, it seems she isn't. To craft this enigmatic smile, Da Vinci relied on his

knowledge of anatomy and human muscles which he got from analyzing cadavers in morgues. Da Vinci was not only an artist but also had exceptional knowledge in optic studies and anatomy. He applied this understanding to fabricate a psychological illusion in the painting whereby the shadows and tones in the painting creates an impression of a smile when the viewer focusses on her eyes but when a person takes a deeper glance at her mouth, these shadows fade and our mind concludes that she isn't smiling.

However, the reason it became a household name can be attributed to a theft that took place in 1911. Right after the painting was stolen, the news was published throughout the newspapers and magazines all over the world. Tourists and visitors from all over the world thronged to Louvre to see an empty wall in the museum. Famed artists like Pablo Picasso and French poet Guillaume Apollinaire were arrested on suspicion. Later it came to the limelight that Vincenzo Peruggia, an Italian patriot who wanted the painting to be brought back to Italy, stole it. There were also several acts of vandalism caused by museumgoers to the portrait which obligated the museum administration to protect the portrait with bulletproof glasses and controlled humidity with suitable light and temperatures to preserve it.

Right from the time when da Vinci started painting Mona Lisa till where it is hung right now, Mona Lisa has witnessed varied events which include social revolutions, wars, attempts of vandalism and theft, which in a way catapulted it to becoming much-fabled and a known-to-everyone painting, yet the puzzling, enigmatic appeal it has and attention to detail with which da Vinci painted it is what excites people from over the world to come to Paris to see it. ■



**TAX THE
RICH IN
THEIR OWN
PARTY**



Interview of an Afghan Student in India
Iqbal Ahmadzai

TALIBAN: The
Graveyard of My
Home



WE MOVE MORE

LOST HOME

Q1. Tell us something about your background and your area of study.

My name is Iqbal Ahmadzai. I am originally from Afghanistan. I was born in Sisli. I completed my schooling in three different cities across central Asia. I did my last three years of school in my own city, Kabul.

Q2. Do you have any family or relatives living in Afghanistan?

Fortunately, all my family members are outside Afghanistan in this chaotic situation. However, I do have some of my closest friends and several school friends still there, who are facing those harsh conditions.

Q3. What has been the impact of the recent developments in Afghanistan on you?

As an Afghan, and as someone who views oneself as a patriot, I believe in being loyal and faithful to my society, my nation, and finally to my country. Seeing my country in this horrific situation has affected me mentally as well as spiritually. It has in many ways brought a complete disorder in my daily life. This is the point where we have lost our achievements of the last 20 years. There used to be a time in Afghanistan when people experienced

comfort in their lives, a time when women and girls got education and worked, and most importantly, people felt a sigh of relief and freedom. Everything that we struggled to achieve in the past years is now lost and gone.

Q4. What do you think about the Taliban government? Will they prove to be a good Government?

Taliban government, presently in power there, is a government, in the background, completely run by our neighbours. This is a government, not for the country's citizens, but one that works for others' interests based on borrowed values. They are trapped and bound to fail in their own game. Since the fall of Kabul to their hands, the central bank is running out of cash. People are facing financial crises throughout the country. There is economic turmoil and the local currency has lost its value drastically.

Afghanistan's government has now become a pseudonym for the terrorist organisation in power. There is no western support with them which is going to be a major drawback as our economy was mostly foreign aid-dependent (from the western countries). Thus, with such limited capital, they won't last for long.

Meanwhile, there is also a major shortage of bureaucrats. Thus, there are no resources, no technical staff, and a complete lack of knowledge among the Taliban leaders which will cause the regime to collapse.

Taliban's ideologies have always remained the same. Since 1996, they have been forcing people to not cut their beards, forbidding women from getting out of their homes, and depriving millions of children of education. Therefore, there is no change in terms of their ideology, their extremism, and their brutality. None of which points towards a better and brighter future for our people.

Q5. What kind of future do you want for Afghanistan?

The hope of millions of Afghans is to build and live in a peaceful, democratic, liberal, and free Afghanistan, a country where everyone lives without any fear, a country where women are equally free to live, free to choose, to speak, and to educate themselves.

We all want Afghanistan to again be home to great philosophers like Rumi, to physicians like Ibne Sina, and emperors like Abdali.

Q6. Tell us something about your experience studying in India. Do both


countries share any similarities?

My experience in India has been quite a journey. I have been living in India for the last 8 months. I have seen that India is a hugely diverse country. The kind of culture and society that it perpetuates matches nowhere with my society and culture. It has been a difficult journey for me to accommodate myself here due to various reasons. From the hot and humid weather and constant sweating to the spicy food and most importantly, living away from parents and your known ones, nothing came easily.

Q7. Anything more that you'd like to share with our audience, any message.

For me, the relationship between India and Afghanistan is crucial. What I have gathered till now is that Afghanistan won't remain the same as it has been, as a consequence of the recent events. The Indian government and Afghanistan's government have built a stable relationship between them over the last twenty years. I along with millions of other youth afghans, as well as the future generation of India have to seek and look for mutual interests and grounds for cooperation. We need to work hard to build a stronger block, ahead of the regional rivals. ■



 https://www.instagram.com/p/CUSjo7hIity/?utm_medium=copy_link

THE PROBE SURVEY

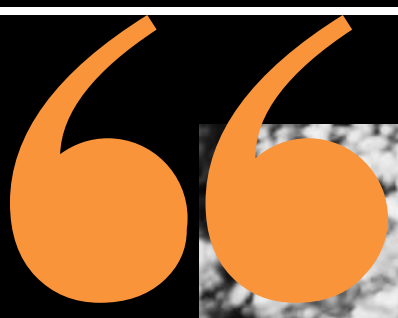


WHAT PEOPLE THINK:



ABORTION

Interviews & Survey by
Riya Jeph & Nishi Upadhyay



Pratyaksha Singh, 3rd year, Zoology, Hindu College

Abortion needs to be legal in every country up to a safe threshold, that being around the first trimester, be it a medical emergency, unwanted pregnancy or sexual assault (though in a minority of cases, abortion is considered essential up to the second trimester, where genetic defects may start kicking in, imposing a fatal risk to the expecting mother). Women haven't had freedom over their own bodies and what they want to do with it for too long now. With the abortion debate being such a big deal in so many countries, making it illegal because of religious fanaticism and 'pro-life' downtrodden arguments, display a really sad state of affairs for women all over the world.



Chaitali Rathore, 3rd year, BA Prog, Miranda House

The "Pro-life and Pro-choice" debate is quite contentious. No doubt, abortion is a homicidal act. It kills a foetus (which is no less than a life). In normal cases, where pregnancy can be avoided with apt contraceptive measures, the pro-choice argument that women should have their reproductive rights seems weak, as reproductive rights also include the right to use contraception if they wish not to conceive. No one has the right to take any life, just for the sake of choice.

Yes, the right to choose or not to choose motherhood is important but more important is to not kill life. In adverse cases like rape or complications with a mother's health, abortion holds a stronger stance, in order to avoid maternal mortality and mental trauma (in cases of underaged rape victims). However, these extreme cases should not normalize abortions. Abortions should be highly and strictly regulated and should be undertaken only when the case is extremely serious (say, a mother's life is at stake at the expense of the foetus).

Moreover, there should be laws ensuring care and development of the rape victim's child, to reduce the sense of insecurity and fears of the impact of trauma induced by societal pressure on both, the mother and the child.

Abortion must be prohibited as far as possible. It is a brutal act and is not as simplistic as portrayed by the popular media.



Shreya Mundhra, 3rd year, Political Science, Hindu College

A person should have control over something as intimate to them as their own body- even if there is another human (I don't think a foetus is a human) inside their body and some choices will lead to its death.

But the larger question I think, must deal with how the question of killing what may or may not be a human pops up ever so often. Killings of a much less ambiguous nature (war or death penalty, for instance) are justified much more easily on utilitarian grounds-- for the betterment of humanity. It almost seems like it isn't really about killing, but is an intricate power play wherein traditional power holders (men) can act hypocritically when they aren't the ones facing the brunt of their own decisions.



Hardik Narayan Shukla, 2nd year, BA Prog, Hindu College

Unwanted pregnancy can be very critical for the physical and mental health of a mother. Hence, taking morals and ethics into consideration, especially when the life of mother is at stake, appears to be a regressive approach to me. Abortion can prove to be a healthy way for a mother to relieve herself from the suffering and mental toll which can otherwise accompany the child if she is not ready. Moreover, the family also suffers along with the mother. So, rather than criticising abortion and banning it entirely, it's important for us to spread awareness regarding safe aborting practices.

WHO DECIDES





Shrishti Malani, B Com Honours, Maharani College, Jaipur

Women do have a right to decide what they want to do with their bodies. Even though, abortion holds something against the conscience of some people, it is absolutely wrong to forcefully make someone feel like it is a sin. Because, it's not. It could prevent an unhappy kid born into a world, where their parents are not emotionally there for them. Everyone has the right to be ready to take responsibilities, instead of them being thrust upon them, in the name of God. If God exists, and in whichever form, I'd like to think that they want us to be happy and not do something we that makes us a version of ourselves that is even slightly abominable, or, bring a dissatisfied and human being into this world. Bottom line, Abortion is the Bearer's choice.

In 2021 itself, there have been 561 abortion restrictions across 47 states in USA



Kushagra Kulshreshta, Pol Science Honours, St. Xaviers College, Jaipur

It's simple, the one who bears the womb would decide for it.

Progressive societies move from monopoly to choice and as women become more financially independent, their rights over their bodies would be realised sooner than later. It's going on in Mexico right now, Poland had pro-abortion protests some months ago, Argentina last year and India also had an Amendment to its palaeolithic age law. It was disappointing, our laws are neither good nor bad, they are just there as an essential service. The doctors have more say than the pregnant person and they can cite a hundred fictitious reasons, from medical and mental health to IPC sections or just an arbitrary denial.

And this happens for obvious reasons, patriarchy, religion, a very strange male victimhood boosted by societal pressures, even psychological situations discerned by the Neo Freudian Karen Horney who gives the "womb envy" of the males as the reason for them to assert dominance in other socio-political or economic spheres.



Malvika, MA in Global Studies, Ambedkar University

A medical procedure that terminates pregnancy at an early stage is referred to as abortion, as per the traditional thought it is a very unfortunate event attached with truckloads of societal taboo.

A participant of this procedure is left under the fear of infertility, intense grief, regret and the list goes on.

As a part of a very progressive 21st century as we call it, it's rather a time we load the guns with healthy bullets of comprehensive sex education at school and all levels instead of hustled half baked knowledge lectures, affordable access to birth control without judgement and quality health care.



Sonalika Rani, 2nd year, Pol Science Honours, Hindu College

In my personal opinion, humans should have the complete right to decide what to do with their bodies. In the case of pregnant humans (given they are not mentally disabled or under the age of 18 years as here their guardians can) should decide whether to or not to get pregnant or continue their pregnancy or to abort it. Of course, this abortion should not be premised on discrimination against female fetuses. I base this belief of mine majorly on three lines of argumentation. Firstly, in a liberal democracy where 'choice' is sanctified the provision of 'free choice' to a pregnant human is the most rational thing to think of. Any form of deliberate engineering with the choice, as most states including India, indulges in through laws mandating doctors approval at various stages and other provisions is abhorrent and wrong on the basis of principles of democracy. Secondly, by the principle and right to bodily autonomy which is granted to every human just by the virtue of being human, it is

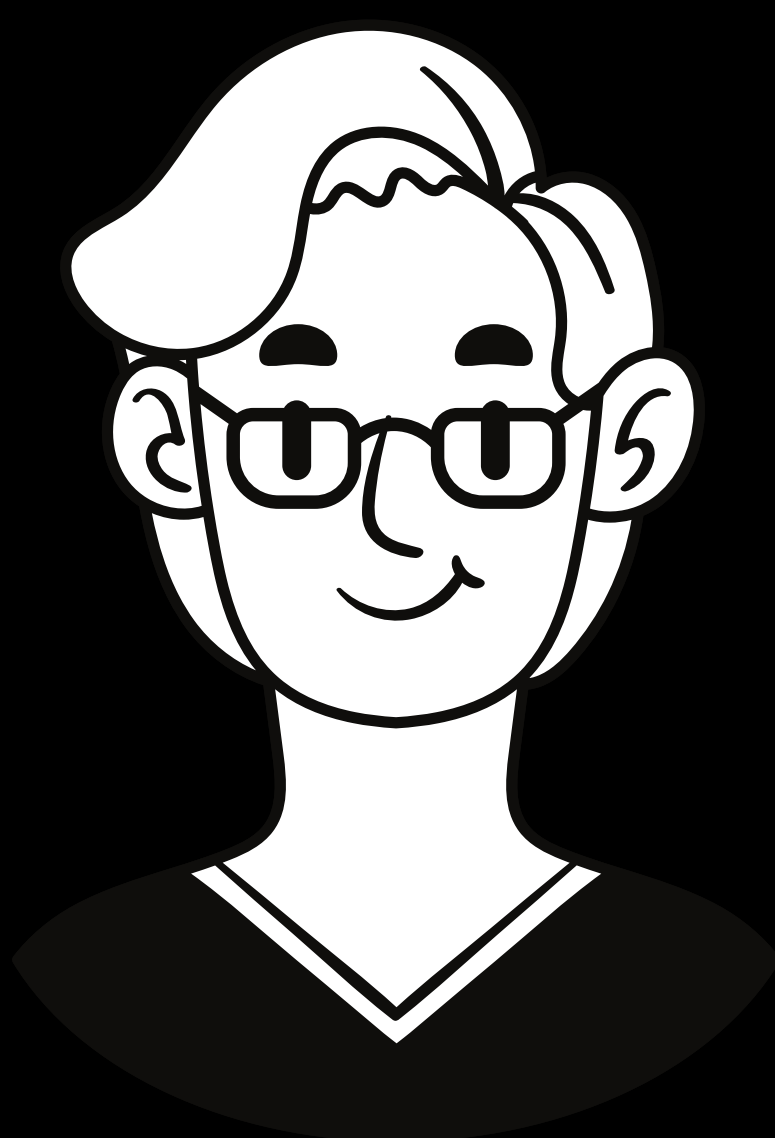
completely bizarre to think of why pregnant humans should not have the right to abort the fetus they are carrying within their bodies. Are they not humans?!?!? Thirdly, the locus of harm, here physically, mentally, socially, emotionally and economically completely lies on the pregnant human. They are the most directly impacted stakeholders at all points in time and the denial of choice to them on something that can completely change their course of life is morally wrong and understanding the otherwise is beyond me. The denial or even manufacturing of choice on abortion is a direct question on the human agency of these individuals and a direct paradox on every facade that the state undertakes to show 'equality amongst sexes'. The choice should be granted and rather it's high time to deliberate about how to make abortion more accessible and safer.



Saberi Mallick, 2nd year, Sociology, Hindu College

Whether the foetus is a human being or not is irrelevant. Criminalisation of abortion in any sense is a violation of the principal of bodily autonomy. If the foetus is to use the gestating person's body, it needs to have the consent of the person whose resources they're using. It's unacceptable to force a human being to go through the physical changes of pregnancy AND the immense danger and pain of labour.

Shashank, CIC, Political Science, Hindu College



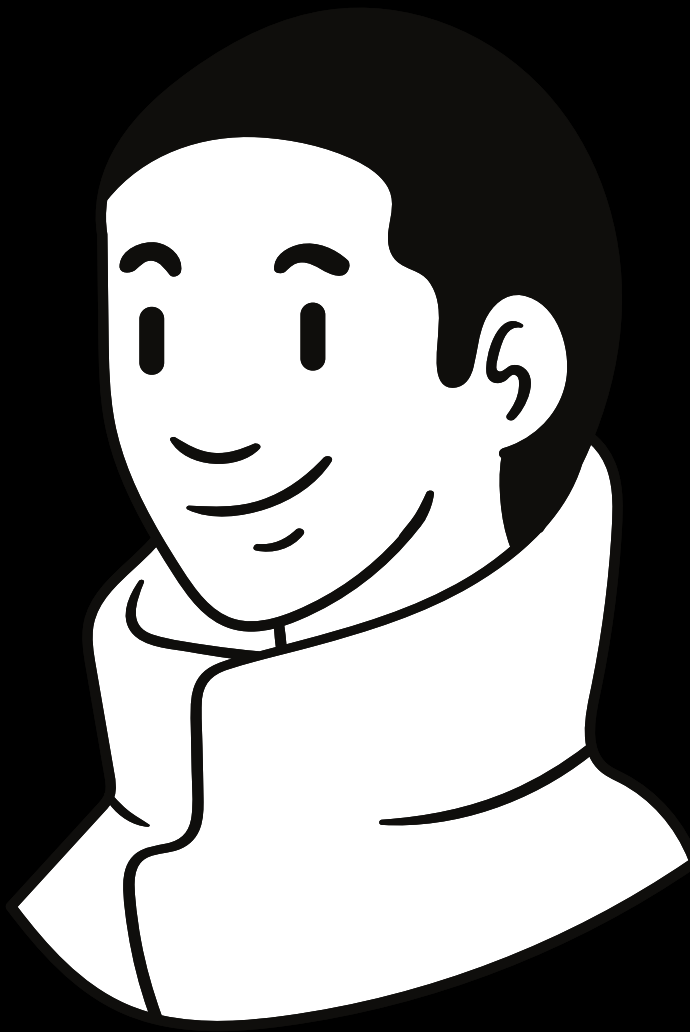
The topic of Abortion has always been a complicated topic for me and I'm sure it has been same for most of us. Because of the deep rooted society's moral values on us we often ignore the right of women over the right of fetus. As someone who can't in true sense empathize with a woman I have made peace with the idea that "No uterus, No opinion" and it's not about restricting someones right to speech, it's just not interfering into the debate without a complete knowledge.

Just like the boundary of subset can never be greater than its superset, The right of fetus cant exceed and should not be above the right of its bearer. As long as it's inside the womb, any debate regarding it should be seen with respect to the carrier of that womb only.

Shruti



Though an unborn child is innocent, its life after birth depends on the mother. If the mother is not ready, overall, it is still harmful to the baby. So the mother should get to decide whether she wants the child or not.



Ajay Jhakar

It's a topic that can't be answered in Yes or No. A lot of factors decide what is right and what's not. A fetus should only be allowed to be aborted when it seems impossible to give it a proper life with all the necessary things available. If there is even a small chance of it being provided all its needs, It should be conceded and brought up with proper care. Mother's say should be given maximum importance because she is going to have the most important role in the child's life. After analysing mother's views, it's legitimacy and the kind of life fetus will get if conceded, than only a decision should be taken.



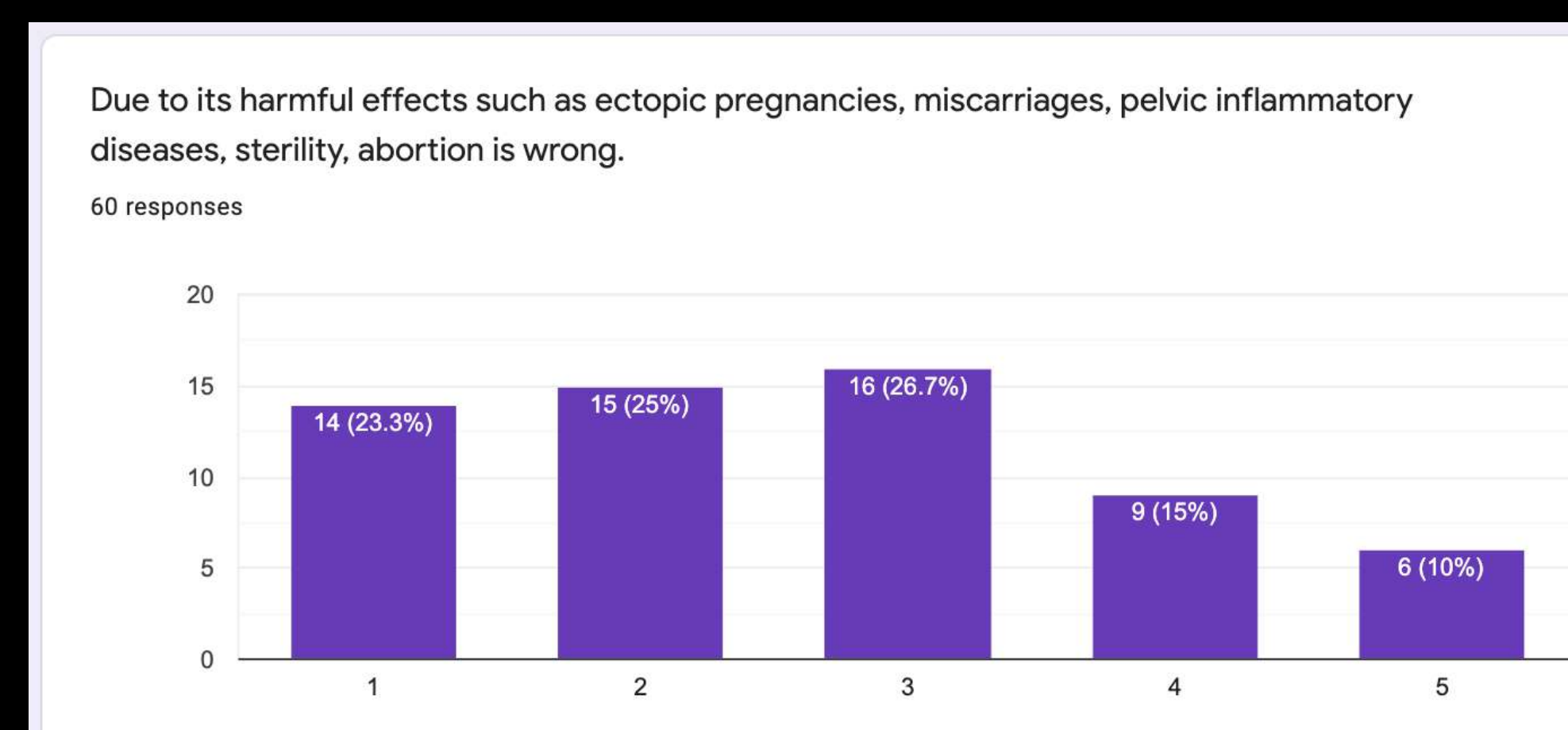
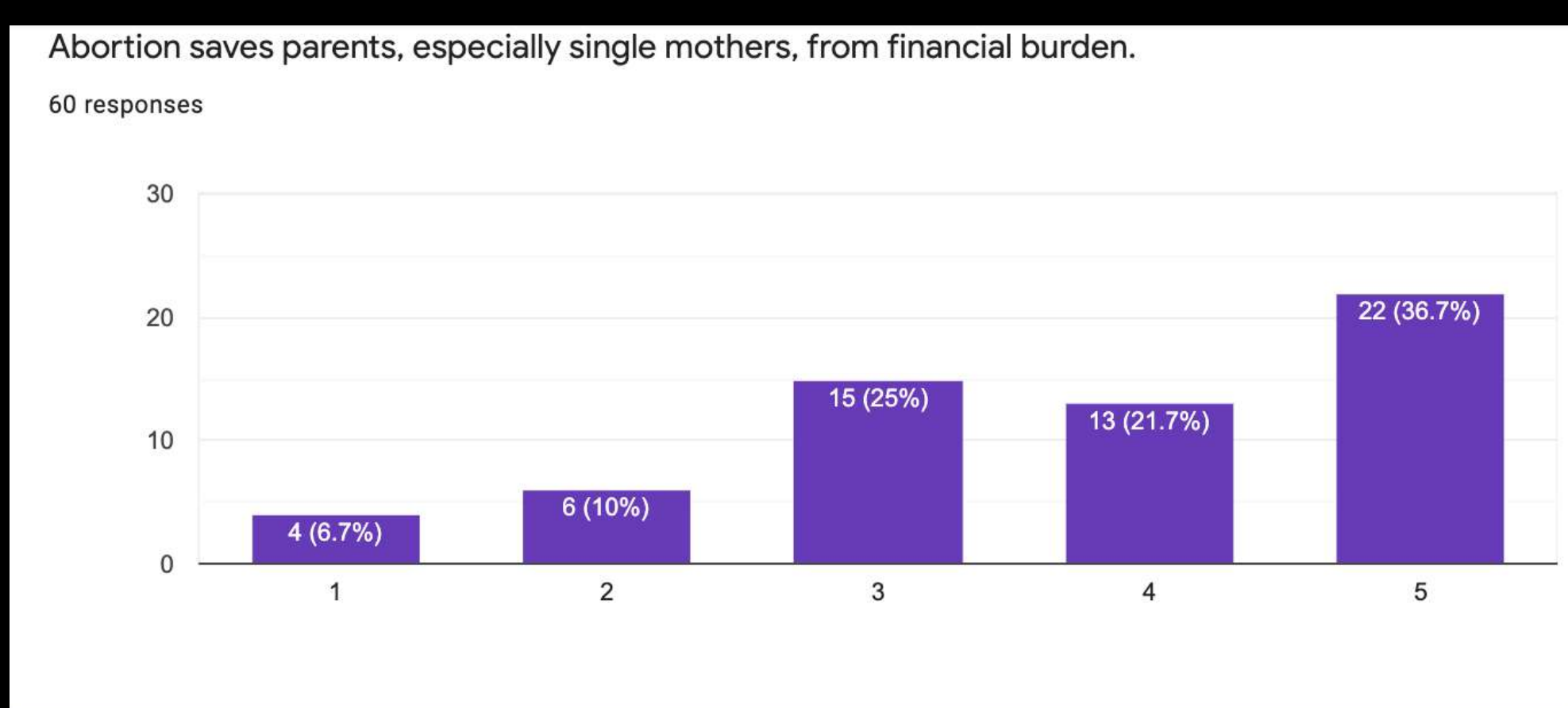
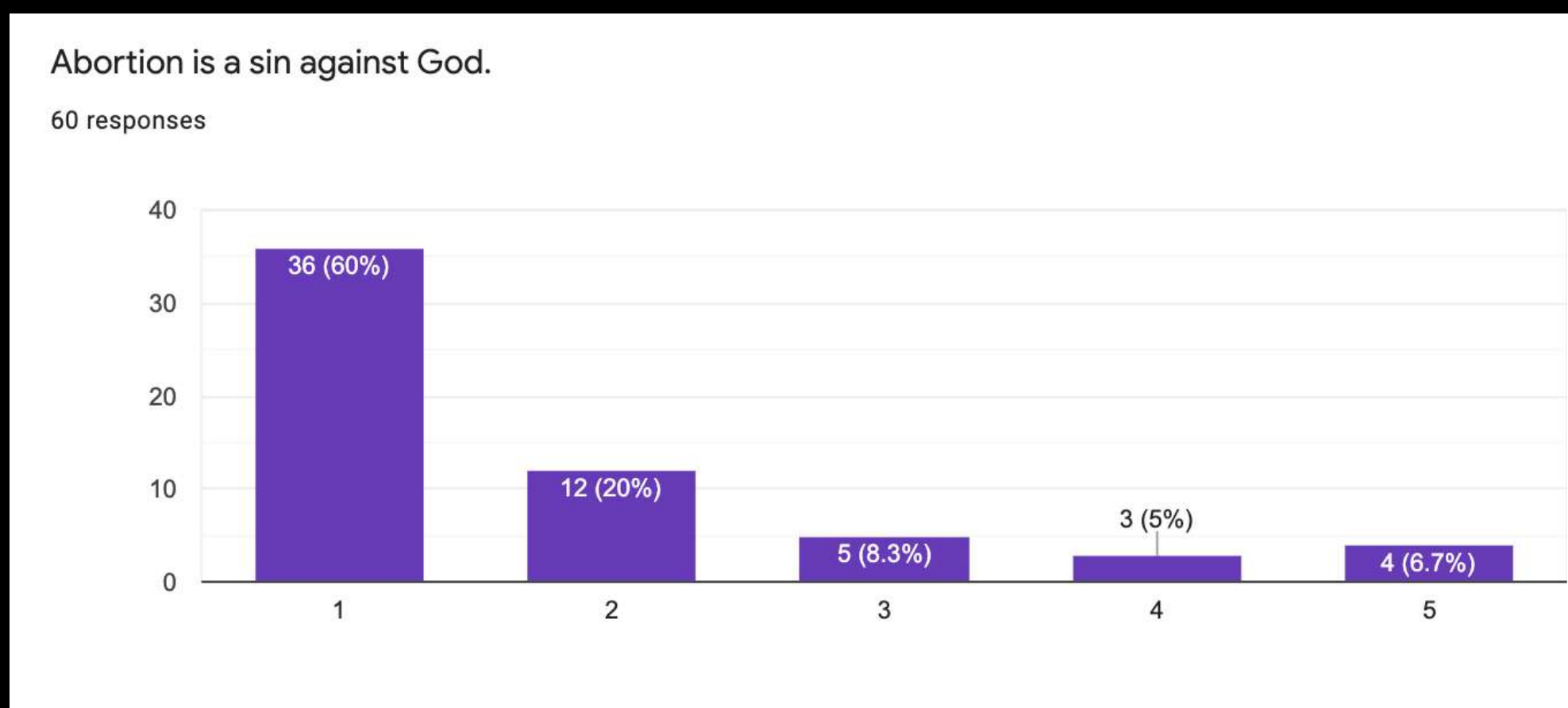
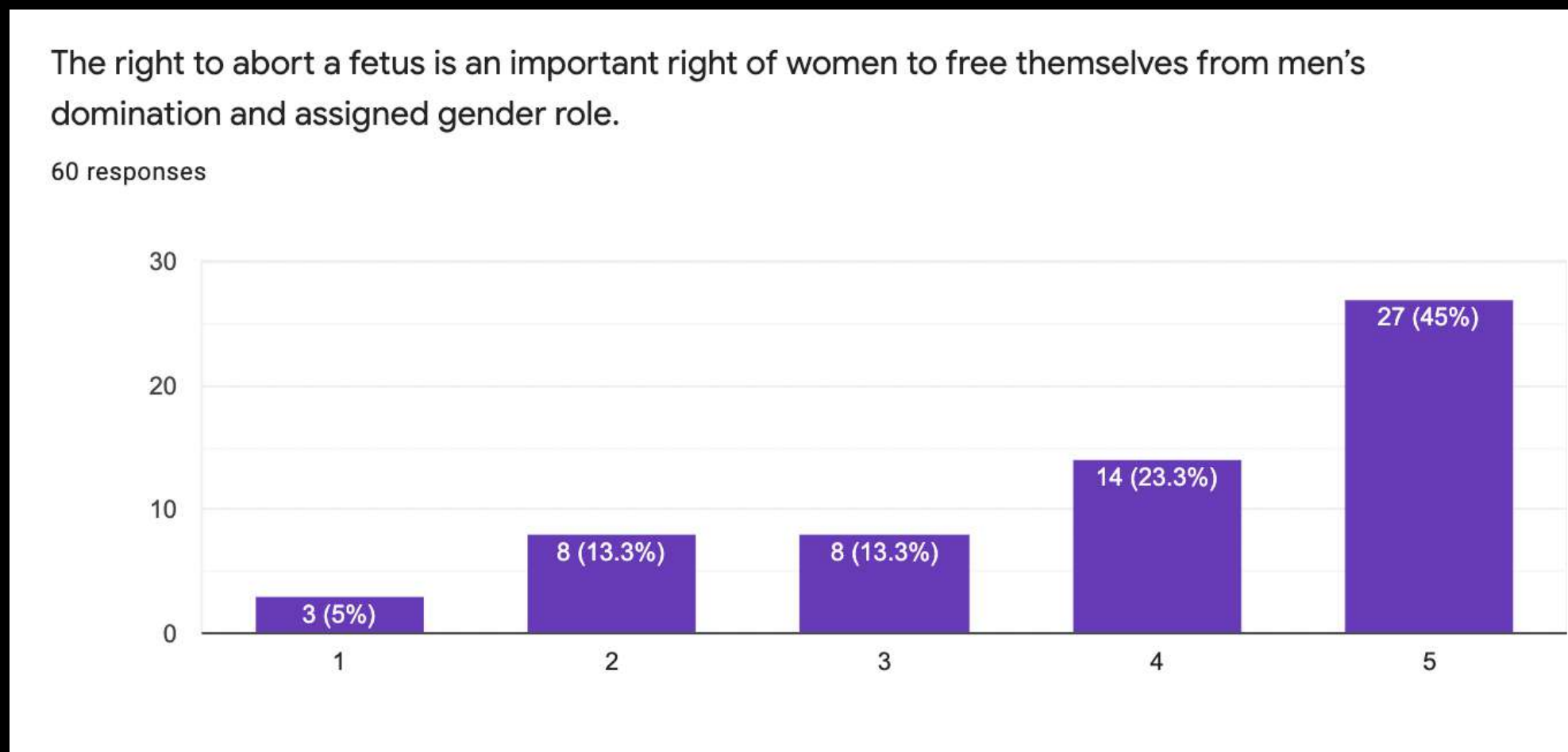
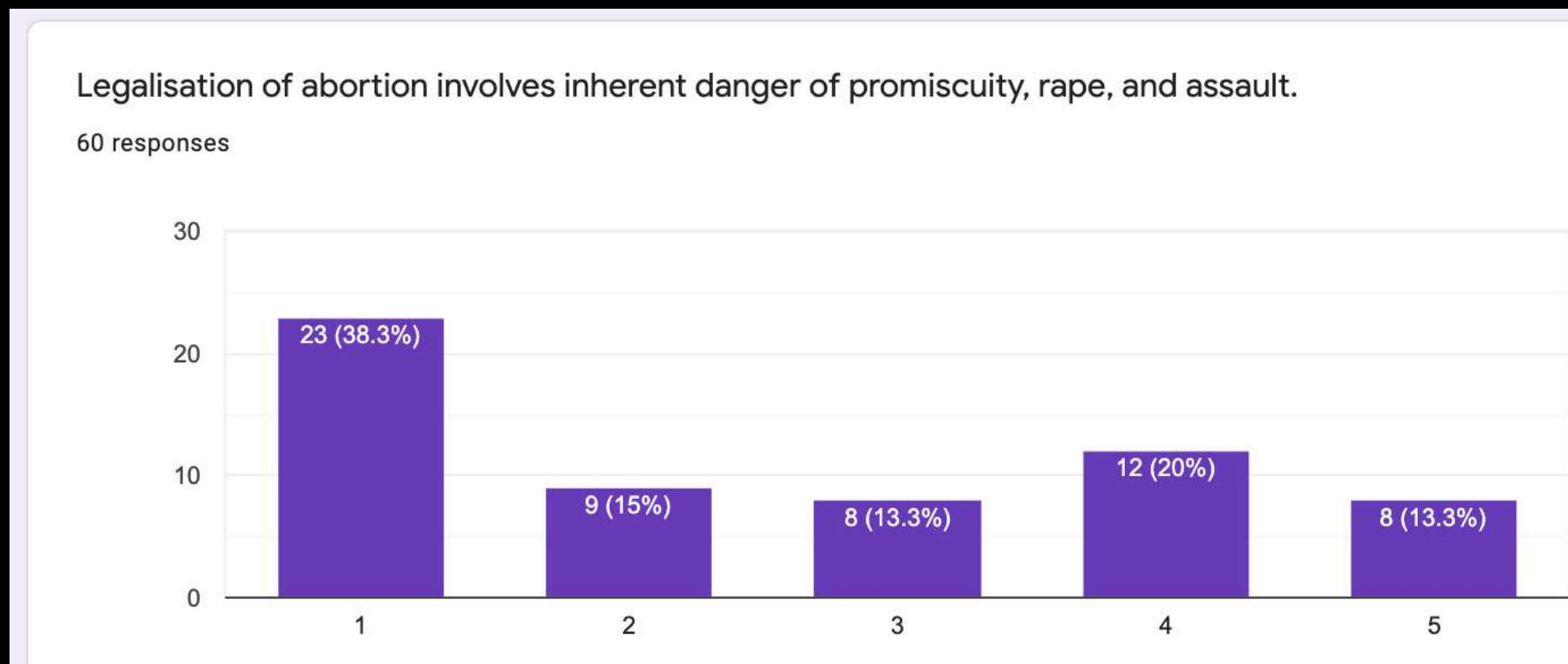
Meghna Shivani

I think it's high time that we let women decide what she wants in her body and life. If today, we are discussing this topic today, then women is still in that period where she has to demand the authority to choose between her bodily integrity and the sacrificial image society has paired her with.



Anonymous

It is absurd that I have to answer this question. Being a man, and not a healthcare professional, I have no authority or right to weigh in my opinions as at the end of the day, they are just opinions. And shouldn't be used as a metric to justify anything whose validity and need lie with women and the expects in the field of gynaecology.

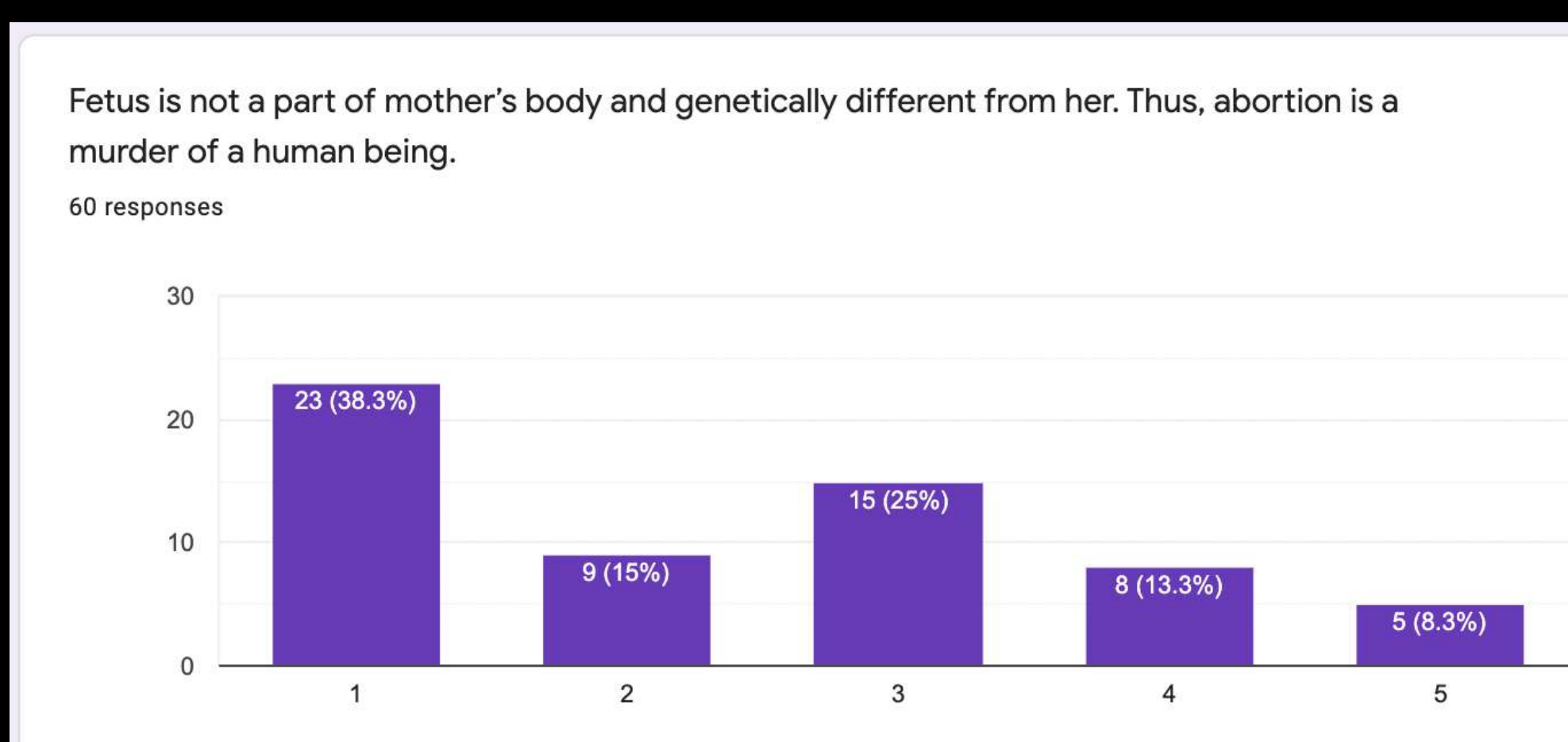
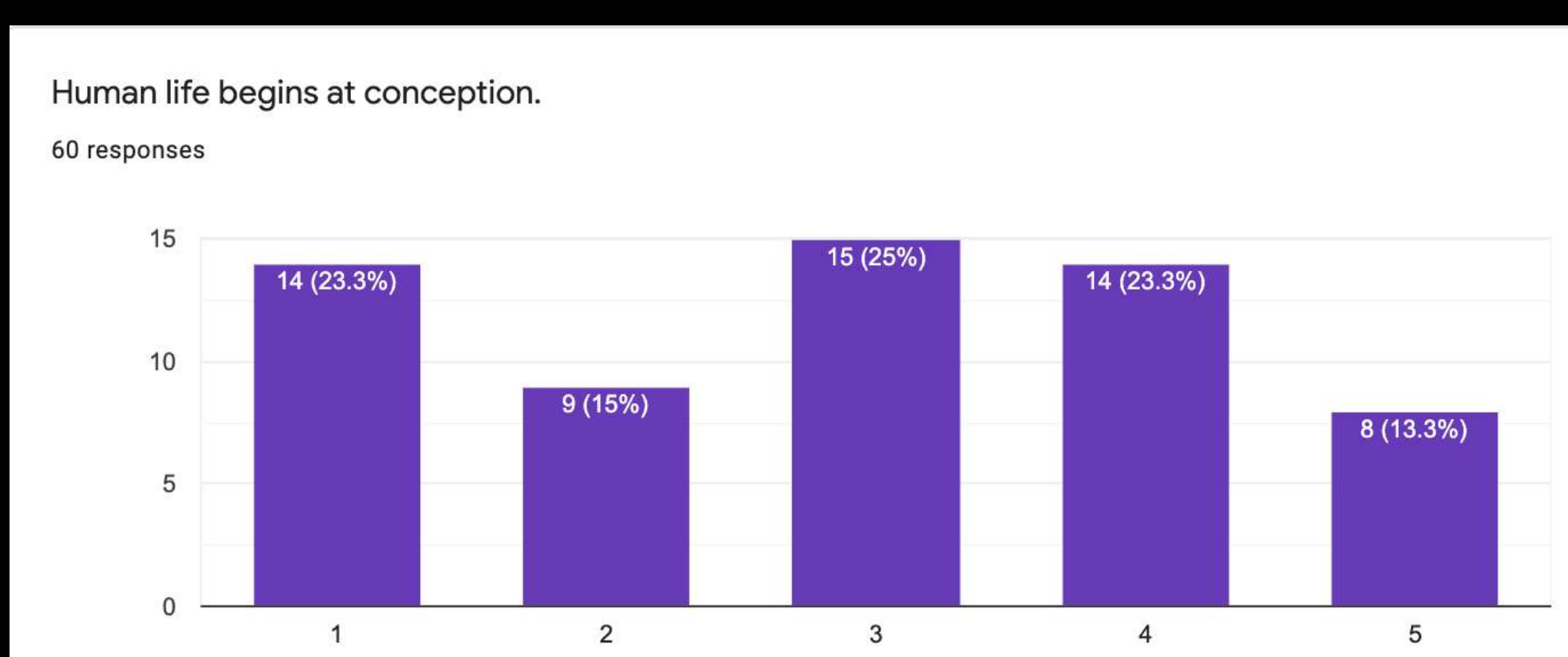
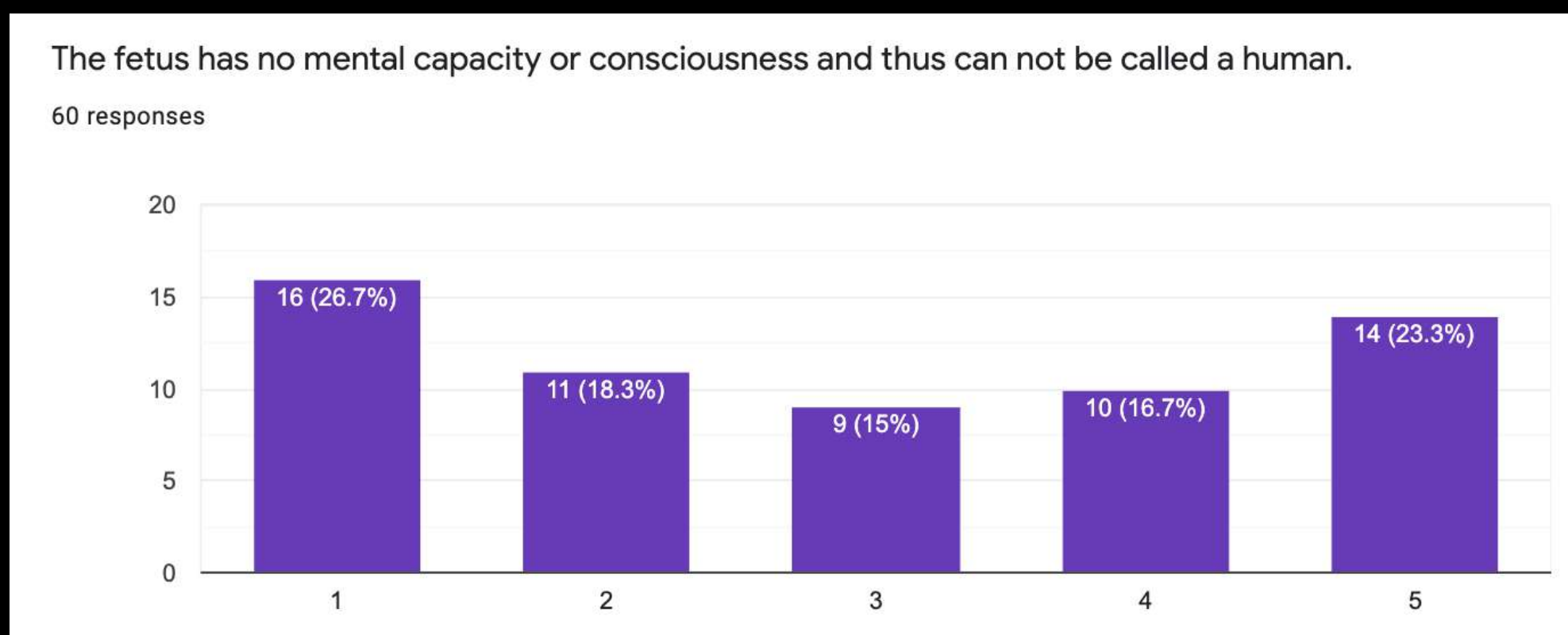
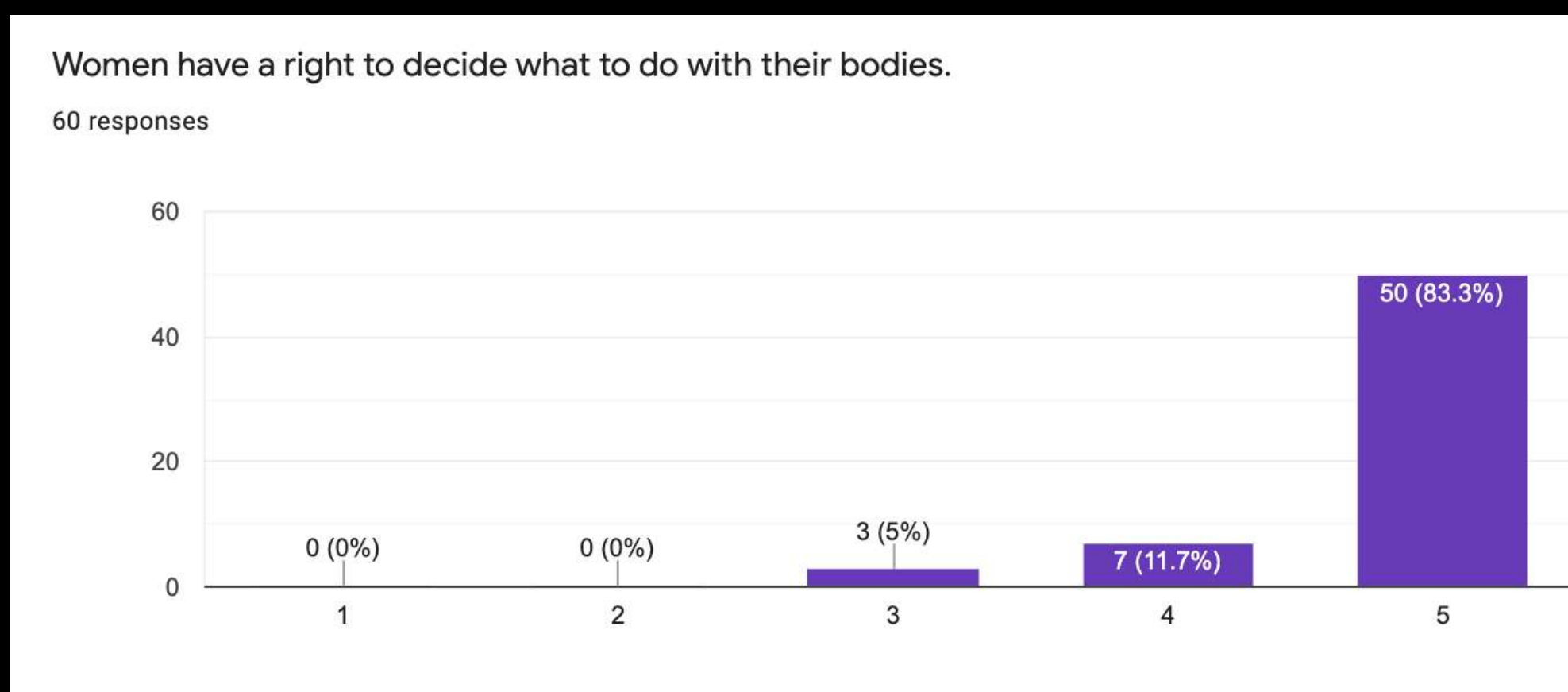
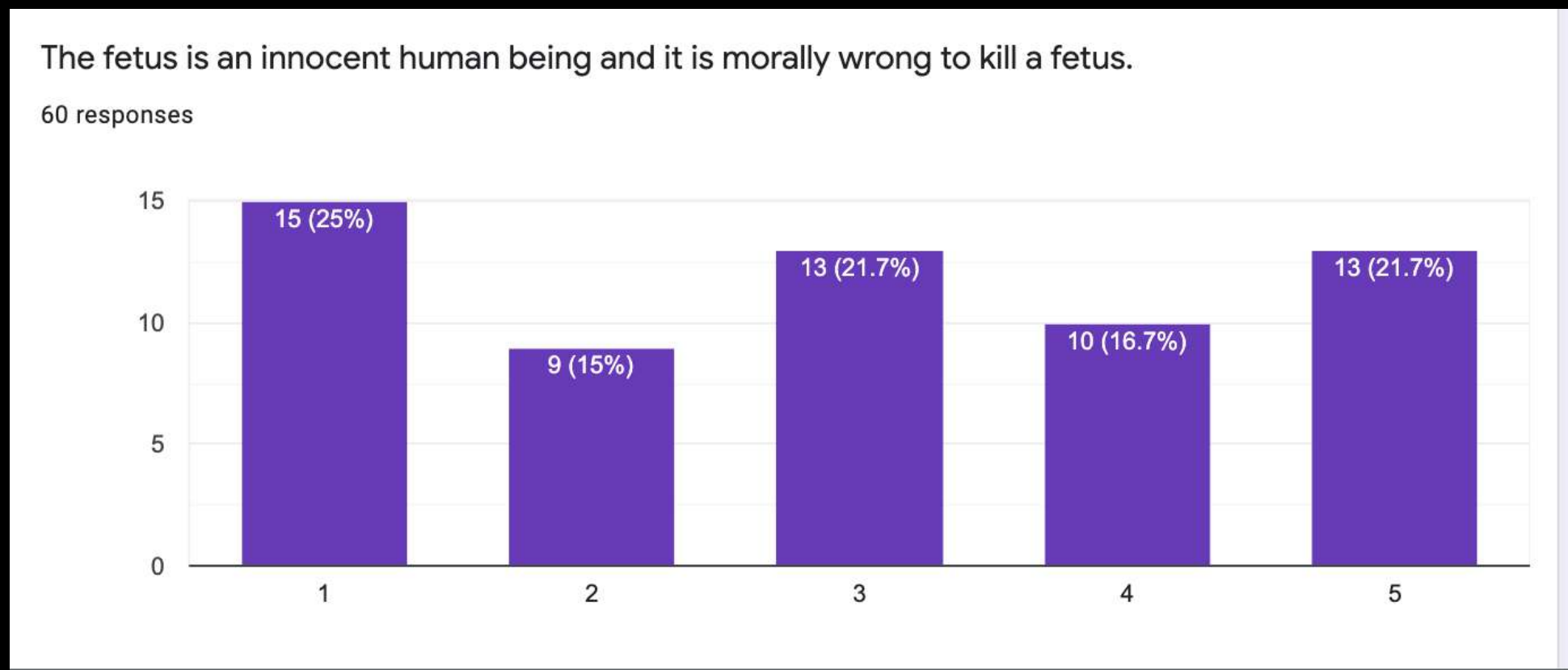


About 50 years, no one would have thought that one of the unending debates in the 21st century will revolve around a woman's autonomy over her womb. From giving rise to ideological differences to formulation of laws and acts, abortion debate has become a moral and legal struggle of our generation, challenging our assumptions and raising some difficult questions which require re-thinking.

The typical anti-abortion argument is that since fetus is a human being, killing it is an immoral act. On the other hand, the pro-abortionists emphasise the importance of reproductive rights and their denial being incompatible with liberal democracy.

As of now, 67 countries of the world permit abortions on request. Recently, Argentina became the first country in Latin America to legalise abortion. With more and more countries following suit, the pro-abortionists seem to be winning the debate. However, the fate of this controversy is still undecided and significantly depends on the upcoming generation.

In the light of recent events, we did a survey to know the opinion of students community about the reproductive rights, legalisation of abortion, its economics and social consequences, and other issues involved in the controversial debate. We covered all the main pro-life and pro-choice arguments. The first half consists of interviews and top comments, and the second part captures the findings from the survey. We would also like to hear what you think and constructive critiques are most welcome. (Email us at theprobe20@gmail.com).



60% of the participants think women have a right to decide what to do with their bodies.

Four in ten believe that the fetus is an innocent human being and it is morally wrong to kill a fetus.

The responses were divided on the question of whether the fetus has the mental capacity and consciousness to be called a human and the point of conception of human life.

A whopping 72% of people chose the life of a mother over the life of an unborn child.

The majority disagreed with the view that abortion is helpful in population control.

About 37% were in concordance with the view that abortion saves parents, especially single mothers, from financial burden.

The findings suggest that the students strongly disagreed over the anti-abortion arguments: due to its harmful effects such as ectopic pregnancies, miscarriages, pelvic inflammatory diseases, sterility, abortion is wrong (50%), abortion is against God (80%), legalisation of abortion involves inherent danger of promiscuity, rape, and assault (53%).

80% supported the view that the right to abort a fetus is an important right of women to free themselves from men's domination and assigned gender role and half of the participants disagree with the argument that the fetus is not a part of the mother's body and genetically different from her. Thus, abortion is a murder of a human being.

Perhaps, the debate on abortion presented as "pro-life vs pro-choice" is nothing more than a false dichotomy to make people think abortion is murder when in fact, it saves the lives of women and empowers them with greater bodily autonomy, and that of unborn child from feeling uncared for and unwanted. ■



How to Avoid a Climate Disaster

By Bill Gates

Preet Sharma

★★★★
(4/5 star rating)

"Innovation is not just a matter of inventing a new machine or some new processes; it's also coming up with new approaches to business models, supply chains, markets, and policies that will help new inventions come to life and reach a global scale."

-Bill Gates, How to Avoid a Climate Disaster

The Orca carbon capture plant in Iceland which aims to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere is the largest installation in the direct air capture industry as of now. Bill Gates in his timely book "How to Avoid a Climate Disaster" argues that direct air capture will be an important part of achieving net-zero emissions. Gates's book on climate change is an engaging read that provides credible information regarding climate change to an average reader. Gates points out that two numbers 51 Billion and 0 are of immense significance for any person who is even remotely interested in understanding climate change. Gates writes that "51 billion is how many tons of greenhouse gases the world typically adds to the atmosphere every year." Zero is what we must aim for.

Bill Gates considers himself a technophile and is aware of the fact that his carbon footprint is

absurdly high. He argues that he is trying to reduce those emissions. Gates does not deny being a rich guy with an opinion. In this book, Bill Gates tries his best to lay down the solutions we have and the breakthroughs we will require to avert a climate disaster in the near future.

Bill Gates provides a useful framework to think about climate change in the book. Whenever I read about climate change and ways to mitigate it, I often come across arguments advocating reducing consumption; but Gates makes us aware of the fact that more consumption is a sign of prosperity. Consumption here does not include wasteful consumption. Instead of reducing consumption, why not work towards a world where consumption grows with net zero emissions? This can happen only through the application of innovative technology-based solutions where higher consumption is sustainable with net-zero emissions. Gates writes that:

"You can also send a signal to the market that people want zero-carbon alternatives and are willing to pay for them. When you pay more for an electric car, a heat pump, or a plant-based burger, you're saying, "There's a market for this stuff . We will buy it." (Gates,2021)

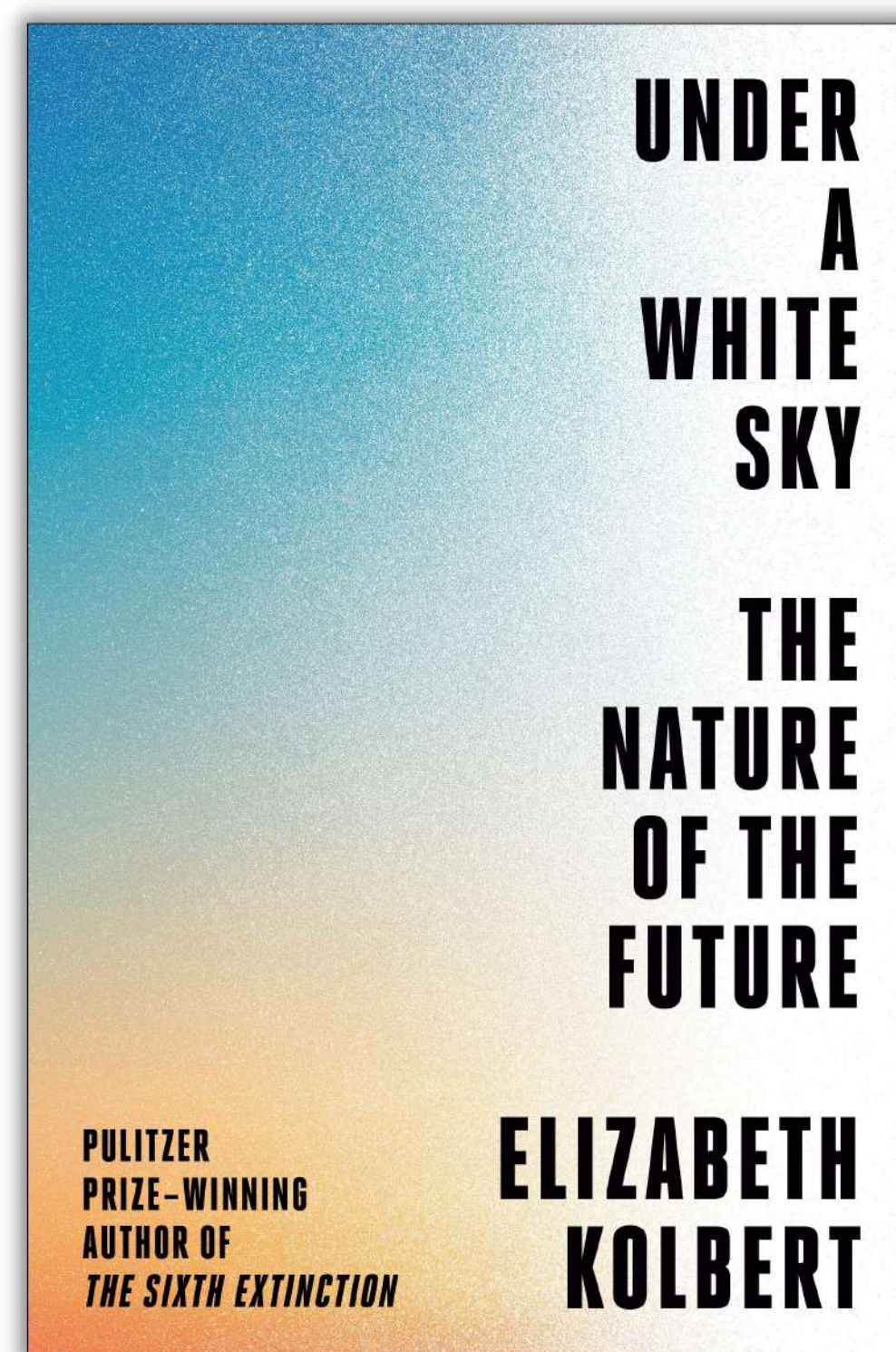
Bill Gates gives the reader information about the five major actions by humans that lead to the emission of greenhouse gases: Making things (cement, steel, etc.), which accounts for 31% of emissions, electricity with 27% emissions, growing things (plants, animals) with 19% emissions, getting around (trucks, cargo, humans) responsible for 16% of emissions and finally keeping warm and cool (air conditioning and heating) that constitutes 7% of total greenhouse gas emissions. He deals with all

these five activities in different chapters of his book and elaborates on possible solutions for getting to net-zero emissions.

Bill Gates lists several ideas and techniques that will help us reach net-zero emissions as soon as possible. Gates argues that electrification, the technique of using electricity instead of fossil fuels for some industrial processes, using carbon capture, switching to plant-based meat, decarbonizing the power grid, and using fuels more efficiently, will help us in reducing emissions. He has successfully listed several solutions, some of which are already well developed and some of which are in their initial stages.

He recognizes the indispensable role governments will have to play in reaching the target of net zero-emission and asserts that every national government ought to do three things: make it a goal to get to zero emissions by 2050 for rich nations and soon after for middle-income nations, develop plans for meeting those goals and to fund research in clean energy to help middle-income countries to get to zero.

Anyone who loves binge-watching Netflix must have probably seen the series “Inside Bill’s Brain” where Bill Gates talks about harnessing the capability of nuclear power for generating carbon-free electricity. He discusses the same in the book as well. But the kind of nuclear accidents the world has seen makes most people, common citizens and environmentalists alike, skeptical about deploying

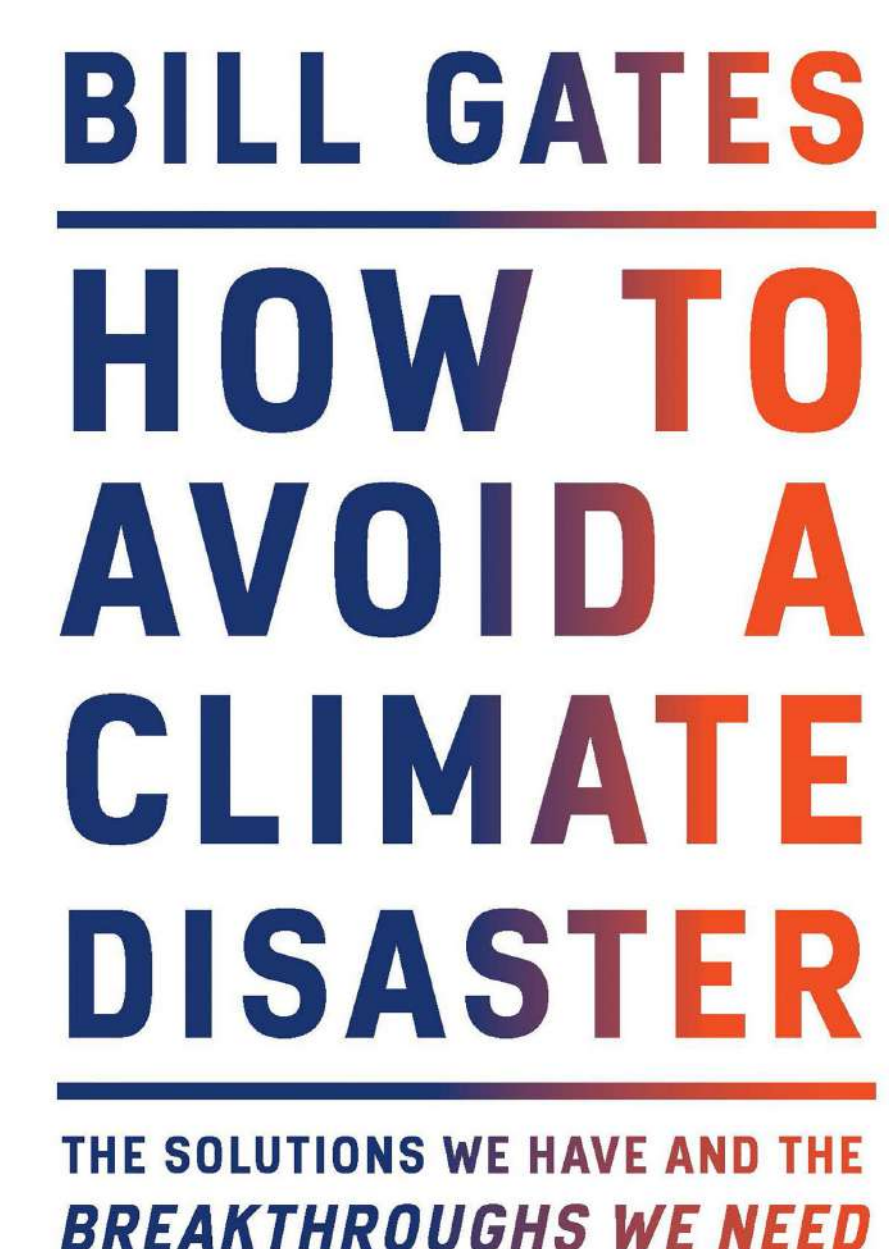
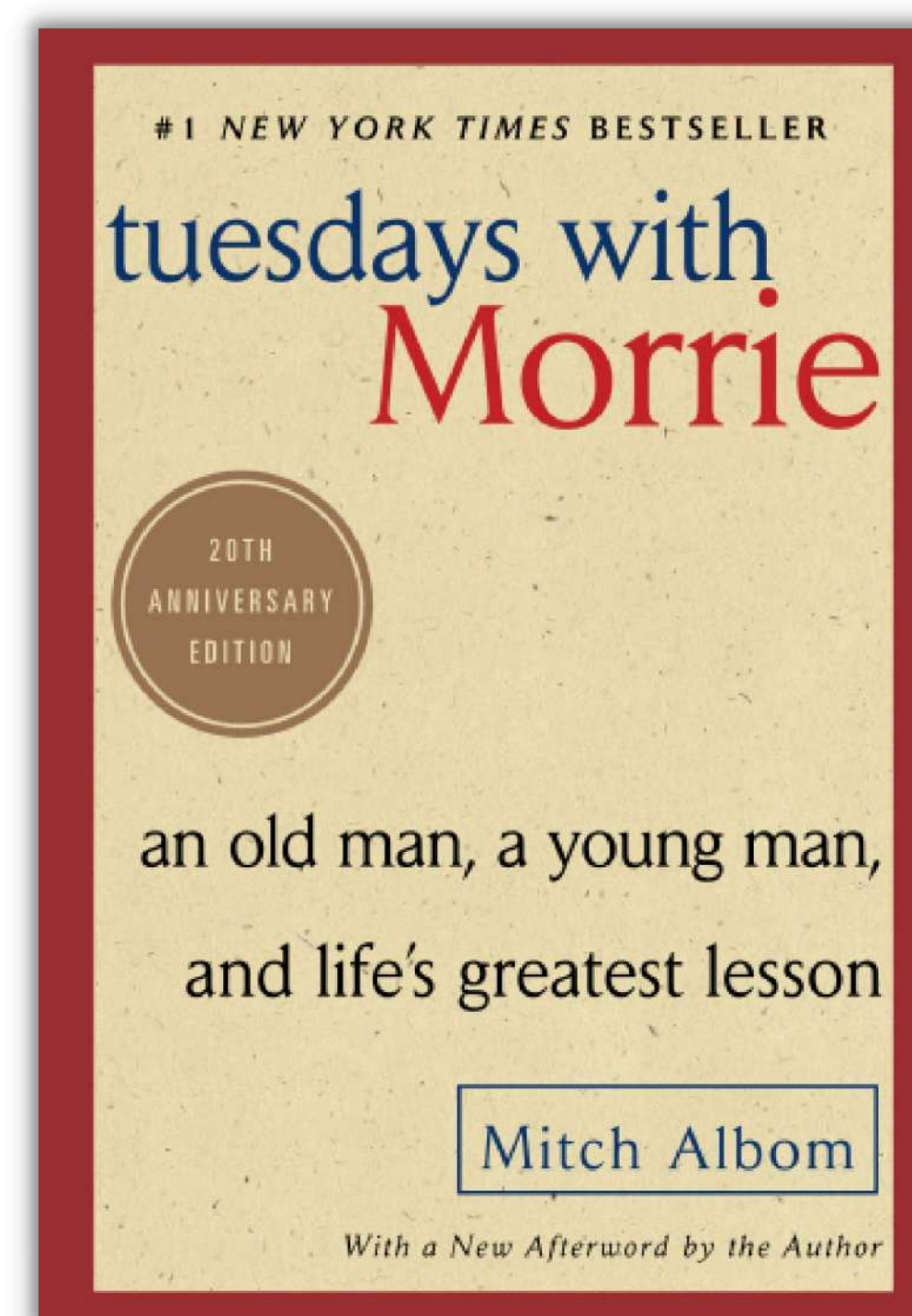
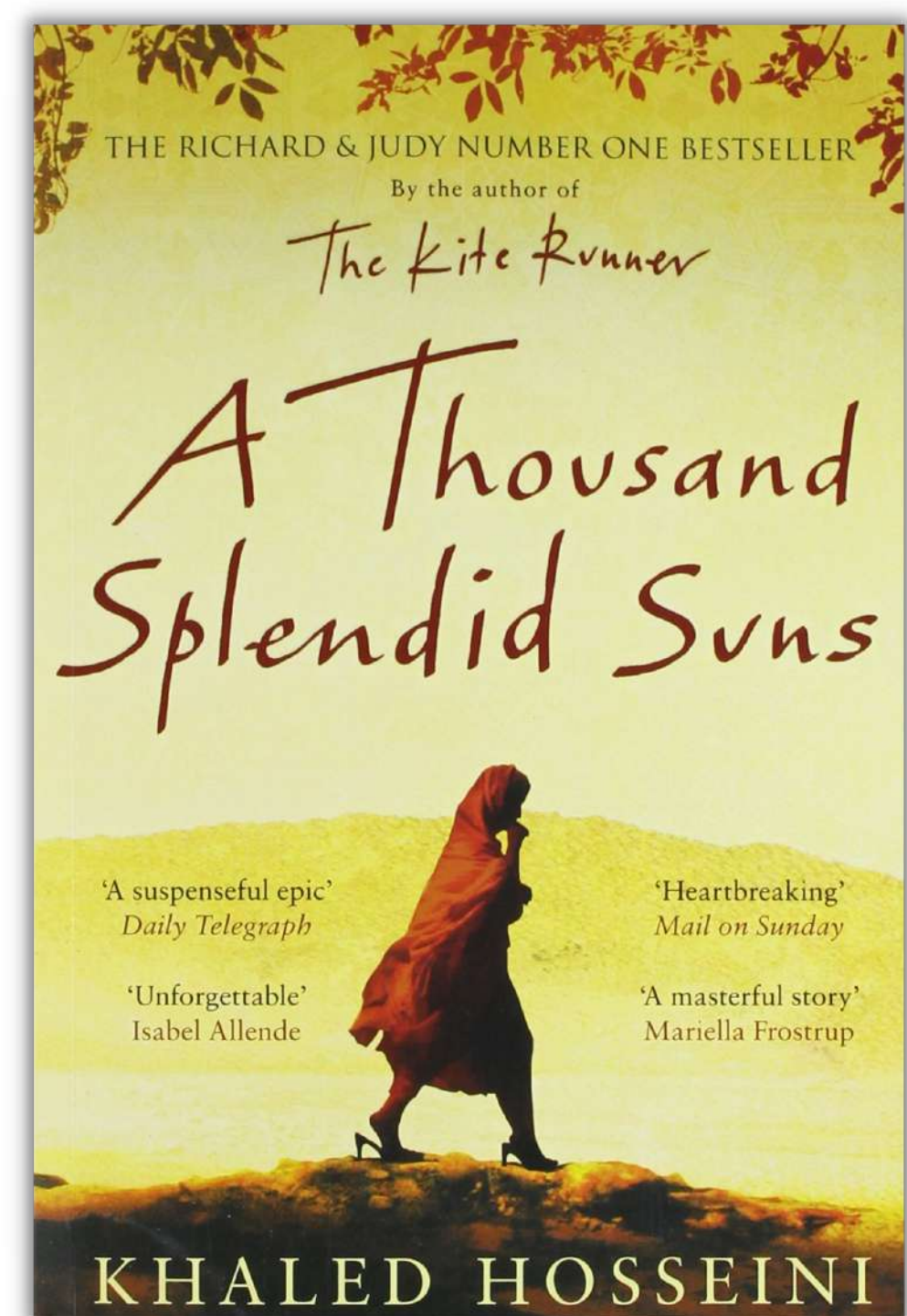


Bill Gates's recommendation on Climate Change

nuclear power for generating electricity in their provinces. He must be credited with explaining complex subjects in an easy language in the book.

Bill Gates makes an intelligent point that while measuring the countries that are making progress on preventing climate change, we must not only look at which countries are reducing their greenhouse gas emissions but we must also take the larger picture into account and look for countries that may take a little more time but are aiming for net-zero emissions. He thus advocates that our focus should not only be to narrow down emissions by 2030 but also to plan for zero emissions by 2050.

The simplicity of the language with facts and insights make “How to Avoid a Climate Disaster” an engrossing read. The book is full of facts and ideas and is worth a read by anyone interested in climate change and ways to avoid a climate disaster.



In today's world, the relationship between a teacher and his students is becoming highly formalised. However, this pure and special relationship has been celebrated since ages. The 1997 book 'Tuesdays with Morrie' by Mitch Albom presents a true account of the beautiful bond the author shared with his professor Morrie. The book is peppered with timeless lessons and thought-provoking insights on life and death, which we come across through the author's interactions with Morrie. With a beautiful storyline, inspirational narrative and profound expression of emotions, this book has got something for everyone.

Morrie Schwartz was an American professor of Sociology at Brandeis University. Unlike professors of a serious demeanor, he loved dancing, rock and roll, food and had a good rapport with his students. Among all his students, Mitch Albom was his favourite. Both of them met and talked about various issues and enjoyed each other's company outside the classroom.

After passing from college, Mitch forgot his promise to keep in touch with his professor and got busy with his life and ambitions. In the fateful year of 1994, Morrie is diagnosed with ALS - a terminal disease. He was told that he was going to die. And then comes the most fascinating part of the story. The knowledge of his foreseeable death did not discourage Morrie. Rather, he motivated himself to embark on this 'journey to death' with love, joy and gratitude.

Tuesdays with Morrie

By Mitch Albom

Hardik Narayan Shukla

★★★★☆
(3.5/5 star rating)

Back in Detroit, Mitch comes across a familiar face while switching channels on the television. It was his old professor sharing his experiences on death with an unusual smile. The author was very emotional by noticing the state of his beloved professor and decided to visit him. Their meeting rekindled the love and emotions between them.

Apart from this heart-warming storyline, the book focuses on deeper issues like death, fear, aging, greed, meaningful life, etc., which makes it more riveting. Every Tuesday, Mitch sat with his professor Morrie and listened to his insights on these topics. Morrie also wanted to provide Mitch with all the knowledge he had accumulated throughout his life. Through their conversations, the reader is illuminated with a new perspective about life.

The theme of 'death' is very well explored in the book. Morrie was at the phase of life where most people lose all passion and are often afraid to feel death approaching them anytime soon. But Morrie's case helps the reader see death in a new perspective. He said, "Once you learn how to die, you learn how to live." It essentially means that once we accept that death is inevitable, we only focus on the things and people which are important to us. Once we realise the importance of our life and recognise our worth, we start living our life to

the fullest. When death finally arrives, we are ready to accept it with utmost satisfaction.

Morrie thinks that people are very busy with their ambitions and run after the most trivial things in life to become happy. But every time, they end up unsatisfied with life. He feels people should enjoy their life by following their heart. When everyone will spread love and be happy, the world will become a better place.

Morrie was also very critical about 'culture'. He believed that the culture we have does not make people feel good about themselves. There are certain standards to become a respected member of society. People spend their entire life competing to get all the luxuries and maintaining their societal status. However, they still lack meaning in life and find themselves confused.



He stresses on being happy by finding joy in the smallest moments of life. He not only questions the culture but goes on to say, "If the culture doesn't work for you, don't buy it. Create your own."

All these insights coming from Morrie actually makes us rethink our approach towards life and helps us understand the true essence of life. Although some of his views may sound highly philosophical, they certainly provide food for thought. The enriching account provided by the author helps the reader attain the knowledge and experience of a lifetime.

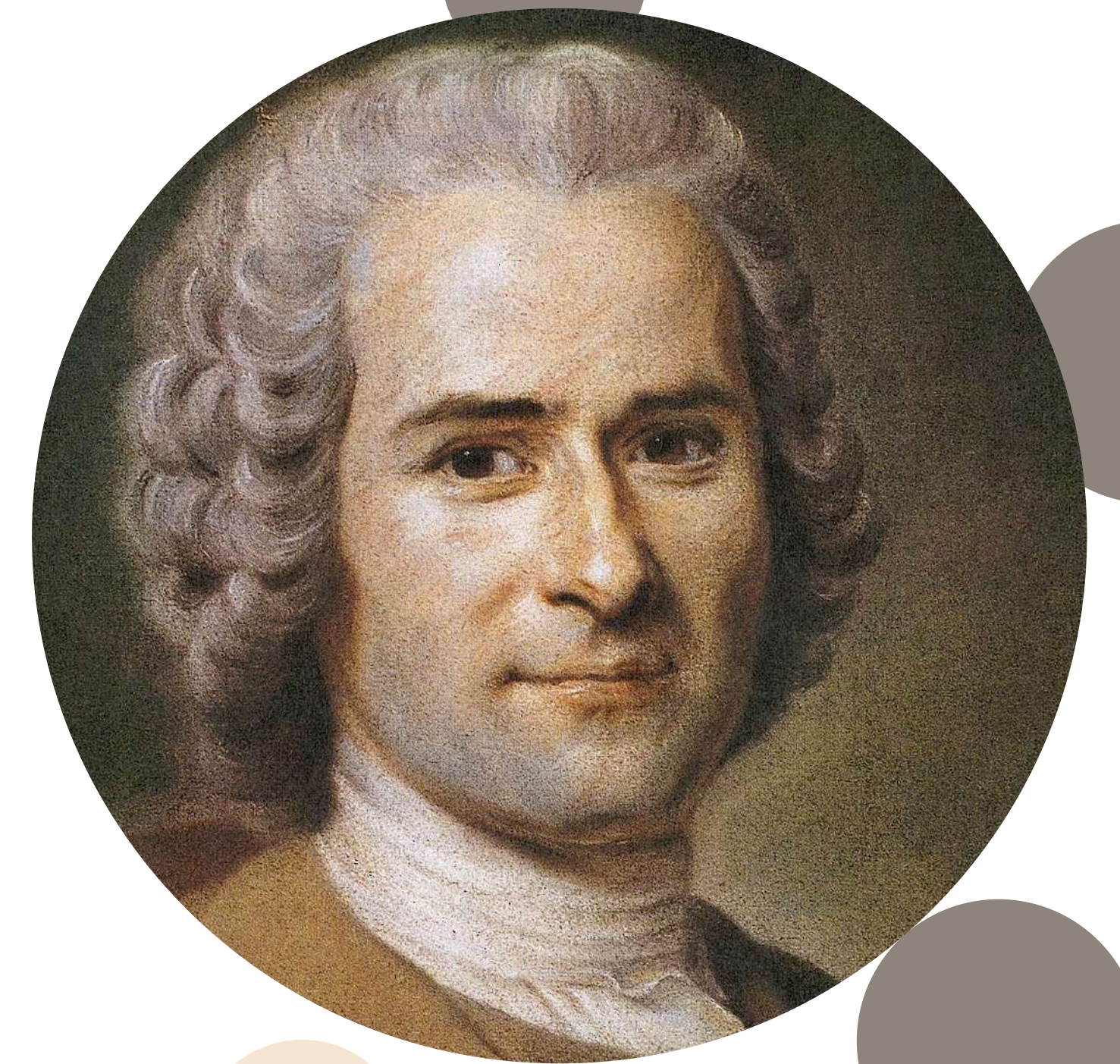
The fluidity of the narrative keeps the reader engaged and involved with the characters at every point of time. Moreover, as it is a true account, one is more interested to learn about the views and ideas of professor Morrie, which have survived with us for about 25 years in the form of this book.

Tuesdays With Morrie can be considered as one of the best works in the memoir genre. People lacking clarity in life, confused with their ambitions and those who want a mind-refreshing read should really look forward to reading this book. ■

The Social Contract Theory has been propounded by many great thinkers including Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. It essentially signifies a contract or a covenant either among the people, or between the people and a leader, giving rise to the concept of State where such covenant has the purpose of developing and maintaining harmony among the people, besides securing them the fundamentally essential rights of justice, liberty and equality.

Published in 1762 as *Du Contrat social*, The Social Contract was written in the years preceding the French Revolution and inspired the revolution in numerous ways. It talks at length about the interaction of nature and man, thereby forming the State, as perceived by Rousseau. The book is written in a normative manner and aims to mention ways to alleviate the problems that modern society has supposedly created for us.

While Hobbes in his social contract theory said that man was living in a chaotic manner and a supreme and permanent king was a necessity to streamline people's lives, Locke focussed on the king as a moderate person, susceptible to be changed owing to the circumstances and performance. Rousseau, on the other

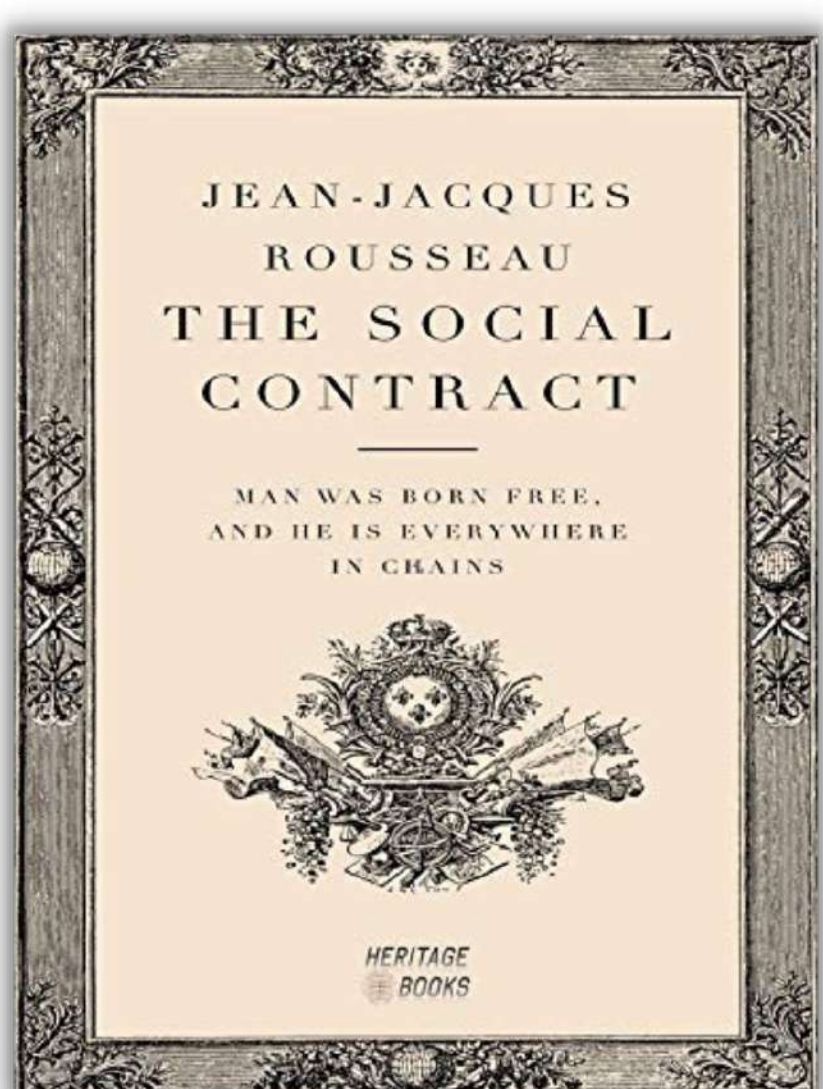


hand, said that only that king can be legitimised to legislate for the people who have been chosen by the people themselves. The people were at the centre of Rousseau's version of the Social Contract Theory.

ANALYSIS

With the striking lines, "MAN was born free, and he is everywhere in chains", the book begins with Rousseau endorsing liberty and suggesting how slavery as a concept is flawed. Debunking the claim of force as a legitimate method of ruling over the people, he mentions that force does not always yield morality. The use of force in ruling doesn't allow people to practise their free will and conscience.

The divine sanctity of a king is



The Social Contract

By Jean Jacques Rousseau

Pranjal Kumar

is confuted. He says if all power comes from God, then so does every disease. All legitimate authority among men must be based on covenants. A king needs to nourish his subject, but with effects of force or divine sanctity, he begins to draw nourishment from them and seldom does a king require little nourishment. This in effect corrodes society instead of enhancing it. The government must be such that it keeps itself in alignment with the needs of the coming generations and changing societal equations. Going by modern political thought, the basic purpose of democracy is also to let the people choose the leader and such a framework is created for the leader which allows him to enhance the social structure while giving the people freedom and liberty to live their lives in their own way.

Property as a concept has been referred to as one of the primary issues for which conflicts take place and wars happen. Wars, according to Rousseau, cannot happen between men living in a primitive state of independence. Wars take place not because of quarrels between men, but over material things, property being the primary one. The man initially was simple and only tended to interact with nature for survival. But ever since the concept of State and private property came into the picture, wars and conflicts began to take place. A state of war is not between men, but between governments and between States. Men are only a medium through

which two States compete to find victory. A state of war transforms men into slaves of the State, ready to do all moral injustices for possession of certain things.

Rousseau projects himself as a proponent of liberty achieved through uniting for a process similar to democracy, albeit direct democracy, which he says is the contract that binds the people and the State together. He says that people have a right to come together and deliberate on who they wish to give the authority to legislate on their behalf, and the rule of majority must prevail in such deliberations. People subject themselves to the deliberated leader whose primary task is to allow people to live in as free a manner as they were before. People should have the liberty to think for themselves and work according to their wills, living under the purview of the laws made by the ruler who the people have legitimised on their behalf. Such an arrangement is a State, where people are the subjects when they put themselves under the laws and citizens when considered individually. This creates a reciprocal arrangement between the people and the government. This is an accurate representation of the political aspirations of modern society, except for the bleak possibility of direct democracy.

The law is mentioned as anything which is in consonance with the aspirations of the people. The laws must mandatorily bestow on the citizens right to liberty and equality, and further laws may depend on the local circumstances. The people subject themselves to come under the purview of the law, by their own free

will. Rousseau is of the belief that the one who has the command over men, the ruler, must not have the command over the laws, and similarly, those who have the command over laws, the lawgivers, must not have command over men. This arrangement can even be witnessed in the modern democratic society where the Legislature and Judiciary are separated horizontally in their powers and functions. The lawgiver has a twofold job, not only to frame laws that are good in themselves but also to understand and connect those with the aspirations of the people, who must be the centre of the laws made.

While everyone must be allowed to observe their personal beliefs in private, the State must act like a platform where a general and common will of the people can be contemplated and implemented in a true sense through various agencies, which would be in existence thanks to the social contract agreed to by the people.

ROUSSEAU'S ROLE IN THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Rousseau advocated for finding a method where people's lives, liberty and property are protected and every person still remains free. He focussed on popular sovereignty and propounded the idea of the people as the centre of all power. Although his ideas

were rather vague and more suited to the administration of small city-states such as Geneva, the people of France were inspired by his work. Robespierre and Jacobins, two of the greatest figures of the French Revolution, owed mostly to him for his theory of popular sovereignty and denial of any existence of right with anybody politic except the people themselves.

Even though Rousseau did not have a direct role in the French Revolution, it was his ideas that formed the basis of the core ideology behind the French Revolution, including those of Justice, Liberty and Equality. His theory of unification of people to achieve combined strength even finds mention in the Constitution of the United States which begins with 'We the People'. On the basis of his ideals and the role of his theories in the French Revolution, The Social Contract by Rousseau is referred to as the bible of the French Revolution.

CONCLUSION

Rousseau's ideas were largely focused on extracting the true meaning of the concept of people being the agents and the source of power. In a society portrayed by Rousseau, people disseminated power to get the returns and fruition of the disseminated power themselves. His ideas were strong enough to inspire the flagbearers of the French Revolution.

Rousseau had a different perspective on the means



to achieve an end, which still today remains a way for the state to be able to fulfil the aspirations of the people who are its citizens. While direct democracy is a distinct possibility today, few of his ideas including religious heterodoxy and unitedly living together do form the most basic components of modern social life.

Rousseau in his lifetime had to flee his place of birth to avoid arrest for keeping such heterodox views, but in the years following his death, he continues to inspire a whole bunch of philosophers, politicians and especially the common people. He helped people realise that they are born free in and by nature and the societal complex makes them surrender their liberty to the authorities in various forms.

His ideals of liberty and equality continue to remain the most common

aspirations of the people along with the globe, only the means to achieve them differ. Being one of the most crucial philosophers during the era of Enlightenment, Rousseau's theory of the Social Contract has and would continue to inspire a lot of minds in all the times to come. ■

***The strongest is
never strong
enough to be always
the master, unless
he transforms
strength into right,
and obedience into
duty.
- Rousseau***

As someone who invariably averts her eyes from any media that depicts the feelings of dejection and sorrow, when I was given this book I could have never imagined to be so moved, by a chronicle of three decades of Afghan history. *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is an inspiration to all.

A Thousand Splendid Suns is a 2006 novel written by Khaled Hosseini. The New York Times Bestseller is a fiery historical fiction set against the backdrop of Afghanistan's last thirty years. It is a revelation of a time when survival was a constant struggle depicted through two resilient women.

The story begins with Mariam, the illegitimate daughter of Jalil, a wealthy merchant living two rather separate lives across the outskirts of Gul Daman and Herat: an ideal albeit absent father to Mariam and the husband of three wives with nine legitimate children. Nana is Mariam's mother, who once worked as a servant in Jalil's house and was an outcast on the birth of Mariam. These circumstances make Nana a cruel and bitter hearted person and she becomes one of the few characters in this story whose true nature is difficult to comprehend. Deep down Nana's tough love for her stays her entire life while the rich lies and compliments of Jalil dim in comparison. Mariam is forced to marry a man 20 years her senior when she turns 15. Initially kind and solicitous to Mariam,

A Thousand Splendid Suns

By Khaled Hosseini

Shreya Shukla and Aditi Deokar

★★★★
(4/5 star rating)

Rasheed being a conservative man doesn't believe in modern, intellectual men who don't have control over their wives.

Part Two of the book introduces us to a nine-year-old Laila in Spring 1987. A precocious girl with two brothers serving in the army, Laila lives in the absence of her mother's affection, often turning to her father Hakim (Babi) with whom she has a special bond. Babi, who was once a teacher, strongly believes in the education of his daughter. He influences Laila's strong feminist identity. Babi's saying that "A society has no chance if its women are uneducated, no chance" rings true to the ears throughout the entire book as Kabul begins to crumble due to its oppressive laws on women.

The two Afghani women of this story born generations apart are brought together by a series of jarring events during the Afghan Civil War of 1992. Khaled Hosseini writes with utmost sensitivity evoking sympathy for the women and contempt for the male figure they are bound by. He uses symbolism to give an insight into the pain, fear and suffering of the women of Kabul. One such instance is when Mariam lays on the couch looking at the whirlpool of snow outside, she remembers her mother's words, "each snowflake was a sigh heaved by an aggrieved woman somewhere in the world. That all the sighs drifted up

the sky, gathered into clouds, then broke into tiny pieces that fell silently on the people below. As a reminder of how women suffer. How quietly they endure all that falls upon them." One can't help but feel astonished by the brutality inflicted on the women by the Taliban and the men who dutifully follow them.

Under Taliban rule one summer, televisions are banned and the people of Kabul are gripped by the Titanic fever as they watch in the dark. The movie and its protagonist Jack symbolise freedom and hope, a hero figure to rescue Kabul from the disaster unfolding across their eyes. But Laila like Mariam and countless women feel resigned to their fate, the future of Kabul like Jack is dead.

While there is no aspect of life where the characters are not affected by war, Khaled



Hosseini beautifully portrays a light at the end of the tunnel where each Afghan story is marked by death, loss and grief yet a way is found to survive and go on. Through this historical fiction, Hosseini exposes readers to the stunning life of Kabul such as the Bamiyan Valley, the rich culture of Kabul, of finding true love in hidden alleys and Islam is celebrated, the learnings from the Quran passed from generations, all crushed beneath the Taliban's extremist religious laws.

No matter how much we convince ourselves that Laila, Mariam, Tariq and others in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* are not real, we know someone in Afghanistan today is one of them with a thousand Rasheeds to fight against, perhaps without consequences. We witness a pattern that spans generations, what Mammy does to Laila, what Jalil does to Mariam is perpetuated in how Rasheed treats Aziza. Hosseini shows us how difficult it is to be a good man, father or mother when society and its demands prove to be limitations for each attempt made. This is the society of the same glorious Kabul that Saib-e-Tabrizi wrote about:

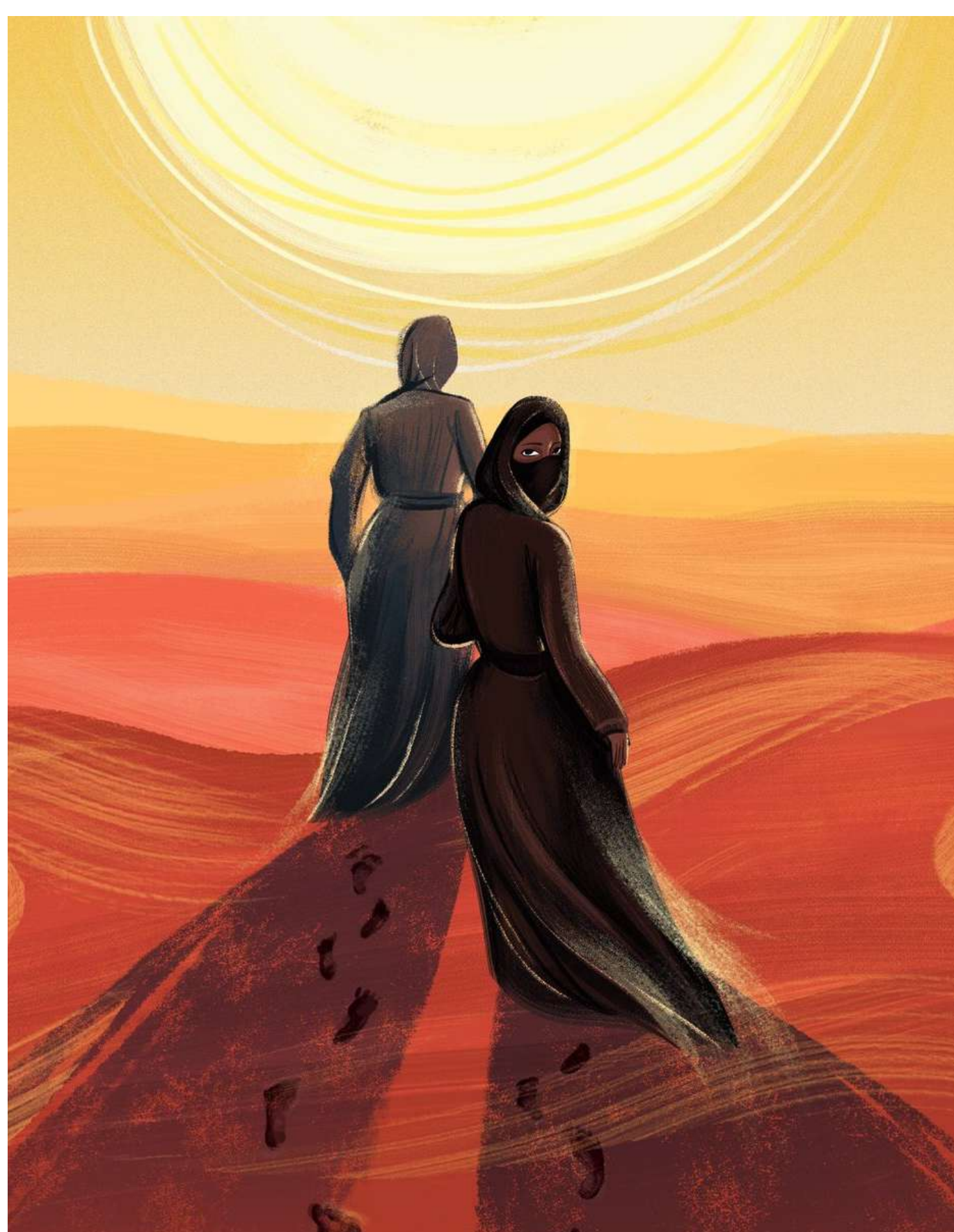
***“One could not count the moons that shimmer on her roofs,
Or the thousand splendid suns that hide behind her wall”***

Such a blessed land that Kabul is, its people are just as hurt,

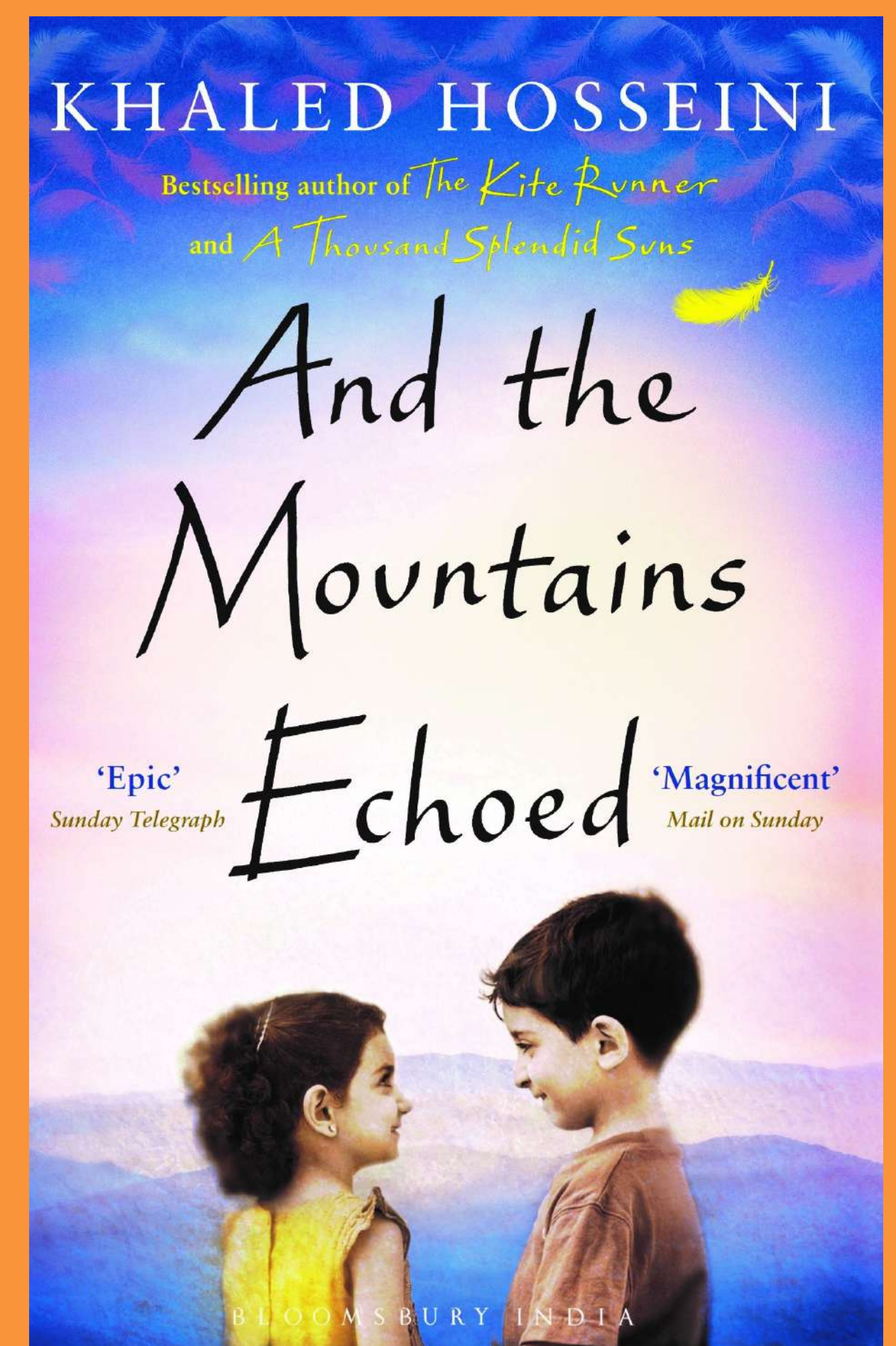
troubled, controlling and controlled in silence, overshadowed by the loud and powerful love they seek asylum in, that they can do anything for. The book, true to its title inspired from the poem “Kabul”, is thought-provoking, daunting and melancholic, as it shows us Laila and Mariam who refuse to submit to their destiny, their strength, and the sheer capacity to sacrifice themselves for others.

In an AMA (Ask me Anything) on Reddit seven years ago, Khaled Hosseini was asked about Laila's life after the book ends. He replied with "My guess is that Laila is persevering, that she is continuing her work at the orphanage, that she is troubled by the unrest in the country, that she worries for her children, especially the girl, Aziza. I suspect she worries about a Taliban return. I suspect she is terrified at the prospect of another civil war when NATO leaves. But she is a strong woman and the memory of Mariam and her sacrifice drives her. She perseveres."

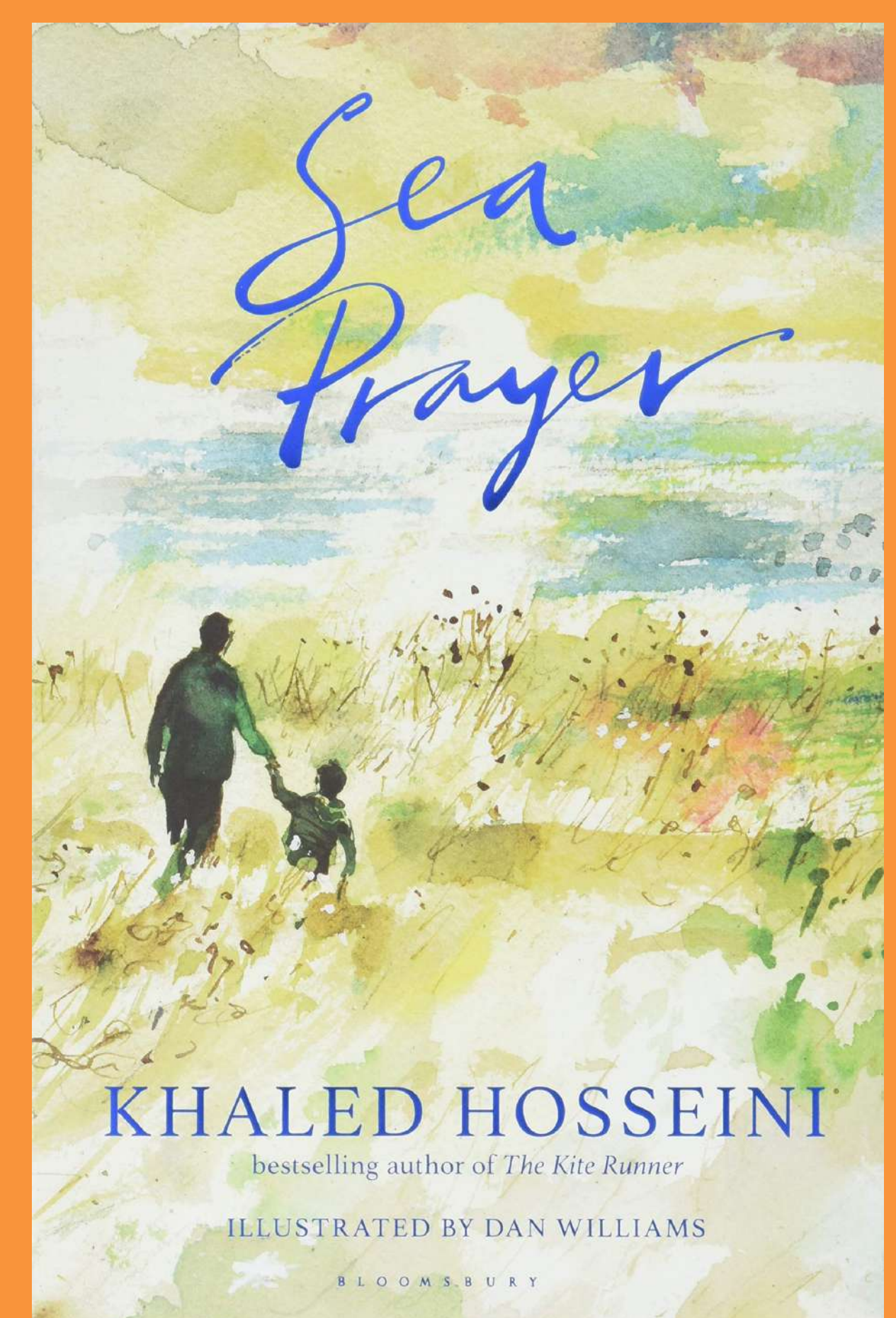
As heart-wrenching it is to come to terms with the reality of this fiction watching Laila's worst fears brought back to life again, we are but powerless witnesses. ■



More by Khaled Hosseini



And the Mountains Echoed



Sea Prayer

ECONOMY



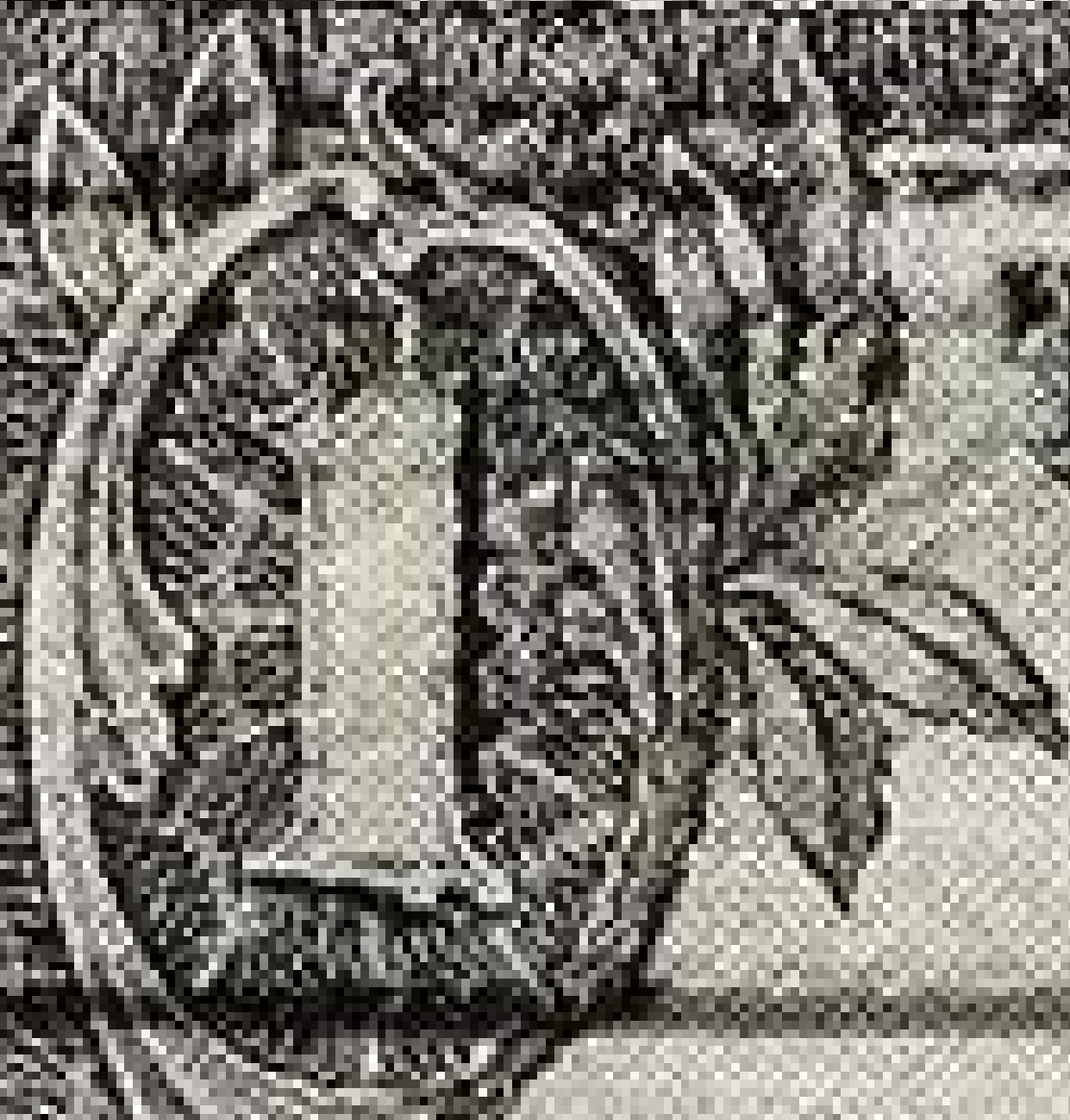
**The Burnout of
Economic Growth**

Mabad Ali

Pg 74

THE UNITED

THIS NOTE IS LEGAL TENDER FOR ALL DEBTS. PUBLIC AND PRIVATE



B 2



B 03542754 F



2 *Two hundred and two*

Two hundred and two

ONE

The Burnout of Economic Growth



Mabad Ali

“

With steady economic growth regarded as the **ultimate factor** of a nation's development, mental health of those running the economy is often neglected which is bound to pose grave consequences for the economy in the future.



The world is constantly changing. With electric cars being regarded as the future of transport and continuous efforts underway to search for a possibility of life on Mars, there is no end to technology transforming our lives. The constant urge to acquire more resources and expand overall output has certainly improved living standards. At the same time, soaring inflation and squeezed pockets during the pandemic took a toll on the world's population. A state of gloom and dejection took over and overwhelmed the world population, making Darwin's theory of the 'survival of the fittest' even more relevant. During the pandemic, it became increasingly hard to make ends meet. People became so fixated on upping their human capital and survival that mental health ended up taking a backseat.

The pandemic distorted the way we live - claimed millions of lives, reduced social interactions and led to economic slowdowns, all worsening the psychological well-being of most people. These times have been trying and testing the mental strength of people rigorously and research indicates increased incidences of mental health ailments like anxiety, depression and bipolar disorders. A study within the USA showed that pre-pandemic and post-pandemic depression symptoms had a three-fold spike, with similar trends discovered in other mental health illnesses. Several under-developed and developing

nations often dispel the significance of taking good care of mental health, even during a pandemic. In a country like India, where women, low-income households and under-privileged sections of society bear the brunt of any change in the social landscape, the pandemic wasn't easy on them. Women were often subjected to domestic abuse and sexual assault while the poor, especially migrant labourers were walking on a thin line of survival and near-death starvation. The pandemic has changed the way we live and it has been ascertained that it will never be the same or go back to normal, for better or for worse. Therefore, it is of utmost importance and urgency that the physical and mental sufferings of all individuals and households be acknowledged and taken care of.

The reins of the new-age tech savvy world is in the hands of the younger generation. In recent years, a general trend in the world economy's growth stands at about 2%. An interesting aspect to note here is that, according to a study in China, higher rates of GDP growth per capita were associated with a deterioration of

mental health, indicated by higher incidences of depression symptoms, cognitive impairment, and life dissatisfaction. The effects are small in size, quite similar in men and women and are modified by the level of income, with the population of lower income being the most harmed by economic growth. This clearly suggests that the economic growth of nations is at the expense of the working population having adverse effects on their physical and mental well-being.

It is imperative that poor mental health days, when workers aren't in the best of their health, will hurt companies financially and ultimately affect the entire nation's GDP. In an analysis of economic and demographic data from 2008 to 2014, researchers found that an additional poor mental health day in a single month had been associated with a 1.84% decrease in real per capita earned income growth



The silent shame of having a mental illness in a Chinese family.

rate, with \$53 billion fewer total incomes each year. To give a perspective of the size of the problem, the researchers added that over the next 20 years, the worldwide economic cost of mental illness will be more than \$16 trillion, more than the cost of any other non-communicable illness. The effect tends to be stronger in rural counties, which often have limited resources and are left to fend for themselves. In rural regions, poor mental health was linked to a 2.3% reduction in income growth compared to a 0.87% decrease in urban counties. If poor mental health days have a greater impact in the poorer countries, it would be even more difficult for them to keep up with the rich countries.

Owing to increased concerns on mental health, several companies and countries are contemplating on the idea of four-day workweek, instead of five long excruciating days of work, especially in the middle of a pandemic. Pilot tests have been conducted in countries like Finland to test the efficacy of a rather short workweek and it has been found that it increases productivity and hence the overall GDP. Kickstarter CEO in the US, Aziz Hasan was forced to switch to remote work during the initial phase of the pandemic and now wishes to reward his employees who stuck around with a new advantage: the four-day workweek. He is bound to experiment with it at the beginning of the next year, 2022, to see if it works out and enhances productivity for his company. Several others have begun to consider the idea of a

four-day workweek which will help their employees juggle work and home life while having more time for personal pursuits.

While distressed and burned-out populations might be working hard to keep economies growing, it will not take long for the tables to turn. Neglecting mental health for the development of a nation's economy will pose grave consequences in the future. Mental health and development goes hand in hand, investing for mental health means investing for development. To ensure that it is taken care of, the key is to sensitize policymakers to the adverse consequences of mental health. It is the responsibility of the state to increase investment and public expenditure to ensure a healthy living environment. Researchers suggest that investing in mental health can be one way to reduce the cost of poor mental health, especially in the hardest-hit countries. Mental health plays a key role in development and therefore, focusing upon it will automatically generate economic growth that will integrate both human and economic development.

How long will it take till we finally embrace life and work for self fulfillment rather than self destruction? ■

An interesting aspect to note here is that, according to a study in China, higher rates of GDP growth per capita were associated with a deterioration of mental health, indicated by higher incidences of depression symptoms, cognitive impairment, and life dissatisfaction

4 Reasons to have a 4-day work week

According to Sydney Business Insights

- **Volume of work** decreases, as firms hire more workers, each with lesser work load.
- **Improved work and life balance** aids an increase in productivity and possibly a reduction in cost.
- Working days can have longer working hours, which can **scale down the commute**.
- For physically demanding jobs a 4-day working week would be **less stressful on the body**, allowing all workers at all ages to enjoy a **better work/life balance**.

Read more at:
<https://sbi.sydney.edu.au/the-four-day-work-week-fit-for-a-crisis-and-also-better-times/>



Ambedkar's Idea of a Nation

Avanindra Yadav

Pg 77



Anecdotes, Advices and Afghanistan with Mr Ved Pratap Vaidik

Pg 81

POLITICS & GOVERNANCE

Ambedkar's Idea of a Nation



In the fight for Swaraj you fight with the whole nation on your side. In this (fight for a casteless society), you have to fight against the whole nation—and that too, your own”

Dr. B. R.
Ambedkar

Annihilation of
Caste

दलित



Avanindra Yadav

Introduction

Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar filled various roles during the course of his career - a scholar, jurist, activist, politician, and many others. His intellectual capabilities were of the highest degree, transcending time barriers for evaluation. Despite

his contribution towards the building of modern India, he is mostly viewed through the restricted lens of the leader of the untouchables and the chief architect of the Indian Constitution. Ambedkar, who was known as Babasaheb by his admirers, had a unique vision for Indian society, and his constant efforts and struggle made it take form in reality.

Nation and Nationalism

The notion of 'Nationalism' and 'Nation' has been omnipresent in political discussions in modern India with varied visibility. The discussions and rise of these notions are a part of the basics of the Modern Indian thought process. The interpretation of these into ideologies or movements have led to most of the political developments.

Ambedkar's entry into public life coincided with the rise of such discussions which led to his opinions on the same. Nationalism is seen in India as the force behind the freedom movement and had been advocated by the people associated with it. The Indian National Congress under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi became the torch bearers of this ideology.

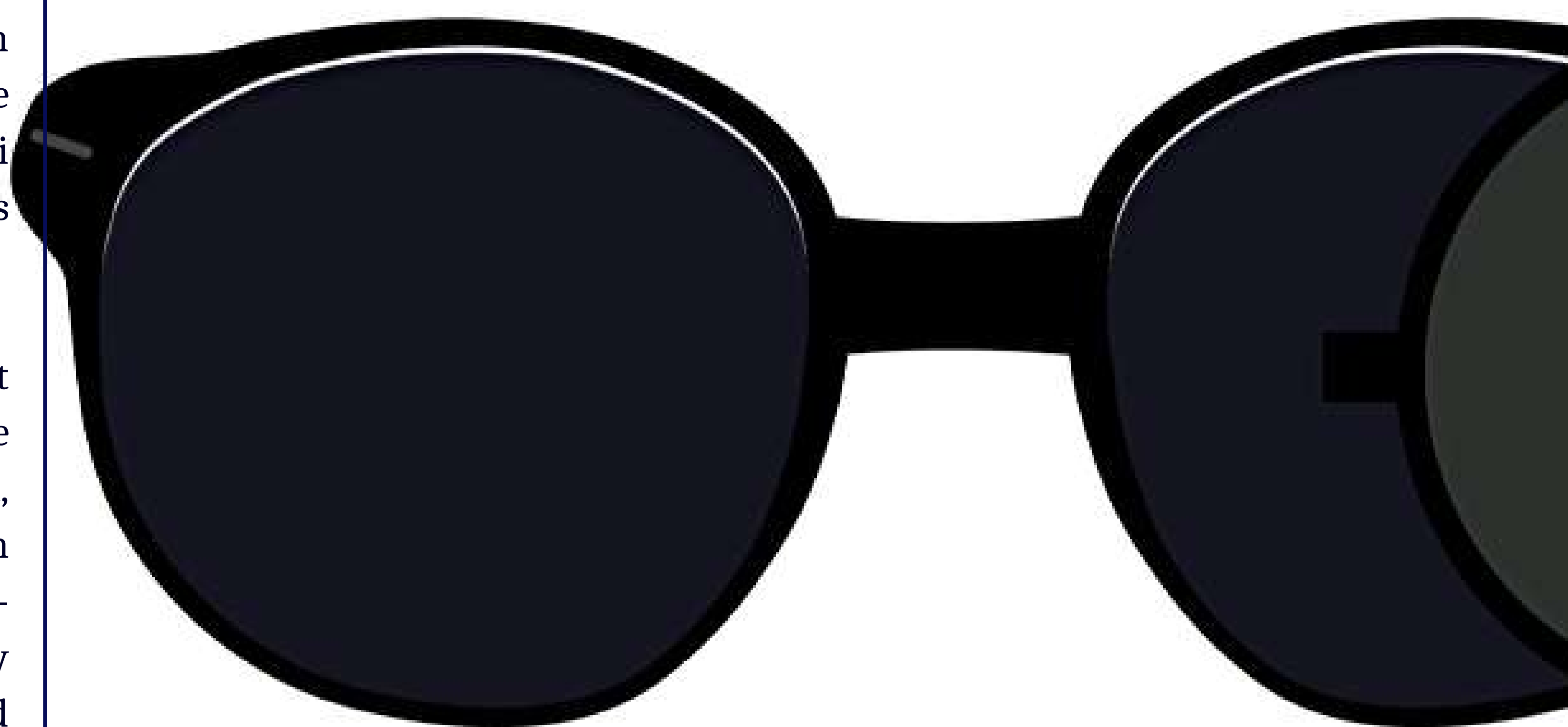
The concept of 'nation' has not been fixed and there are multiple versions of it. In the local context, it was widely believed to be an idea of self-governance - Swaraj - in India i.e., India, being ruled by its people. Ambedkar simplified Congress' concept by interpreting it as a political transformation where the power is transferred from the British Imperialists to Indians. The manifestation of devotion or love for the country and this political transformation was referred to as nationalism. Ambedkar however, gave more distinct definitions to these ambiguous concepts and went on to analyse their reasons and repercussions. In other words, Ambedkar decoded the actions of Congress and also gave his own theory on 'Nationalism'. Their ideology prioritized the transfer of power from the colonial powers to Indians.

Ambedkar's Theory on Nation and Nationalism

Ambedkar gave a socio-political concept of nationalism centred around equality, liberty, fraternity and justice. He believed that nationalism was not just

related to the formation of a state or its ideology of a modern egalitarian restructuring of power but also a liberal and equal society. He agreed with and used the French nationalist Ernest Renan's description of a nation as 'a daily plebiscite' and envisioned a

existence of that tie of kinship,' and 'Nationalism,' is 'the desire for a separate national existence for those who are bound by this tie of kinship.'...it is important to bear in mind that the converse is not always true. The



Inequality and

society coming together as "abatement of ascriptive hierarchy as well as discrimination, leading to the formation of a power-homogenized society is called a nation." (Ambedkar on Nation and Nationalism, G. Aloysius)

Nationalism is a unique force in the history of humankind that constitutes pride, self-dignity and well-being, and this force is manifested in times of political solidarity of that nation. Ambedkar has acknowledged this force and sees nationalism as a matter of both dignity and freedom of the people. He has given a clear distinction between nationality and nationalism and explained their connectedness:

"Nationality is 'consciousness of kind which is an awareness of the

feeling of nationality may be present and yet the feeling of nationalism may be quite absent. That is to say, nationality does not in all cases produce nationalism." (Pakistan, or the Partition of India, 1945, Ambedkar).

It is understood that there cannot be nationalism without an associated feeling of nationality. Nationality is a feeling that invokes "consciousness of kind" which leads to the binding of the people who share it. On the other hand, nationality also transcends the various social and economic inequalities. Ambedkar believed that for nationality to produce nationalism, two things are

imperative – firstly, there must arise a will to live as a nation with expression and secondly, the social feeling must express itself as a cultural home. Even in his celebrated work, The Annihilation of Caste he mentioned a nation invoking consciousness of kind.

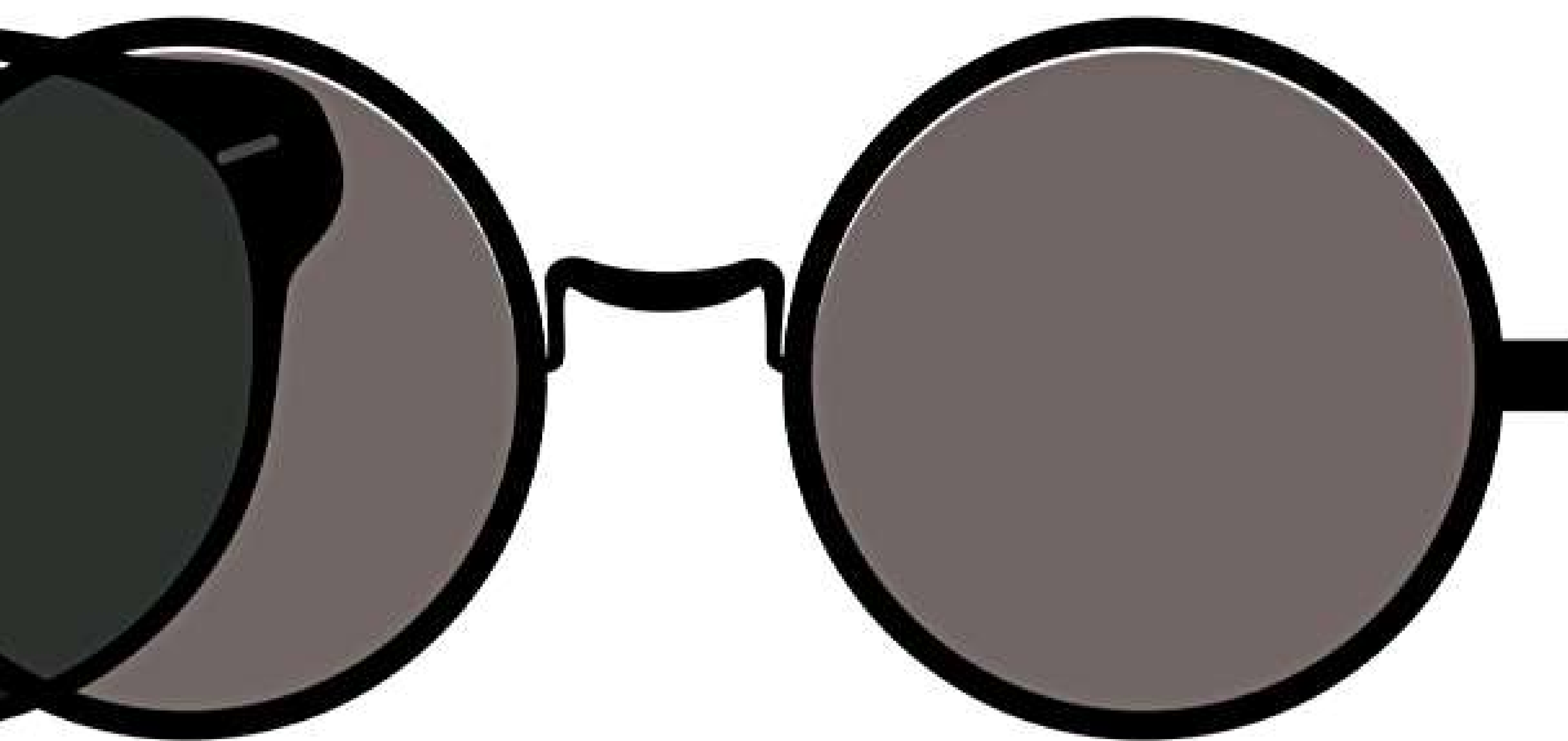
social reforms and believed that without social reforms that integrate different communities to believe in national identity, it shall merely be a transfer of power.

independence of our country and to forget the foremost serious problem of social and economic independence. It is suicidal to imagine that political independence necessarily means real and all-sided freedom. Not to make a distinction between the freedom of the country and the freedom of the people in the country is to allow oneself to be misled, if not deceived.

Basis of the Nation: Equality, Liberty & Fraternity

Ambedkar's idea of a nation was both a social and political democracy based on the principles of equality, liberty and fraternity. Therefore, the social gradation system dividing society into different communities, and especially, the caste structure in the Hindu community made him of the opinion that India was not a nation. Ambedkar, in his speech to the Constituent Assembly on 25 November 1949 warned:

I am of the opinion that in believing that we are a nation, we are cherishing a great delusion. How can people divided into several thousands of castes be a nation? In India there are castes. The castes are anti-national. In the first place because they bring about separation in social life. They are anti-national also because they generate jealousy and antipathy between caste and caste. But we must overcome all these difficulties if we wish to become a nation in reality. Without fraternity, equality and liberty



Emancipation

He emphasized that in Indian society, people have different identities and find it difficult to be Indians first. Emphasizing on the Hindus, who form the majority in the population, Ambedkar expressed his disagreement for them to be nationals, as each individual's caste and even at times regional identities took precedence over one national identity. Ambedkar's definition of nationalism had no place for parochialism.

According to him, a nation must be both socially and politically in conjunction. The Indian National Congress was solely focused on gaining political democracy in India, whereas Ambedkar opposed this preference of political transformation over

Criticism of Nationalism and Nation

As mentioned earlier, the main engines and drivers of the nationalist movement were the leaders and members of the Indian National Congress. Ambedkar has given a lucid explanation in his Annihilation of Caste as to why social reform is essential before both political and economic reform. He has described how the political reform movement gained momentum while the social reform movement faded. However, the results do not prove political reforms' precedence over social reform. He has stated in his article published in 'The Times of India' Bombay edition (21, March 1940):

It is entirely wrong to concentrate all our attention on the political

will be no deeper than coats of paint.

Vision of Social & Political Democracy

In his work, *What Congress and Gandhi Have Done To The Untouchables*, he underlined the measures that must be taken to strengthen and protect the untouchables from atrocities. Those safeguard provisions were submitted by him to the British Government during the Round Table Conference and included equal citizenship, equality of rights, protection against discrimination, adequate reservation in legislature, cabinet and services and some more. These were his views on ways to make India a just society. Ambedkar also advocated the provision of departmental care, which would ensure the creation of a separate ministry that shall be empowered to take welfare steps for the depressed classes.

Clash Between Congress and Ambedkar

Strong criticism of the nationalism proposed by the Congress again came in when they prepared the Nehru Report in 1928 which was to address the question of the Constitution of India and the communal representation in the government. The report was prepared under the chairmanship of Pt. Motilal Nehru and had members from other parties too apart from the Congress. The all-party committee which was constituted had no members from the depressed classes. Further, the prepared document mentioned reservations in the legislature for religious

minorities and no provisions were made for the depressed classes, nor were there any safeguards for them and against untouchability. Then, during the Round Table conference, Ambedkar represented the depressed classes and after the first session, the Minorities Committee prepared a report in which they considered a separate electorate for the depressed classes. However, in the second session, Gandhi too attended as the representative of the Indian National Congress. According to Ambedkar from his book *What Congress and Gandhi Have Done To The Untouchables*, Gandhi strongly opposed the separate electorate for depressed classes to such an extent that he went on to compromise for an agreement with the Muslim and Sikh representatives over separate electorates for them which his party earlier was opposing. However, his out of the committee settlement plan failed as the Sikh and Muslim delegation could not build consensus. Another important event that happened was that Gandhi claimed to represent all of India, including the depressed classes and implied it in such a manner as to nullify the claims of Dr. Ambedkar as the sole voice of the depressed classes. The conclusion which can be drawn from this is that Congress under Gandhi was rigid toward the demands of depressed classes for political representation and providing safeguards on one hand, and still wanted their support as they claimed to be their representatives.

Ambedkar has criticised Gandhian philosophy strongly, especially over his views on the caste system. Gandhism was the new name for Gandhian philosophy which was supported and mostly seen as the real thought of the nationalist movement.

Gandhi has strongly spoken in favour of the caste system in the name of Varna Ashram Dharma or Varna System. This thought goes completely against the vision of an egalitarian and just society, as even if untouchability is removed, according to Gandhism, the Shudras cannot take up any profession apart from their own and that inter-dining and inter-marriage should still remain prohibited. Thus, it will defeat the objective of creating a single national identity. However, it should also be remembered that Gandhi's rigid stance on caste softened with time and he, with great zeal, pushed the anti-untouchability crusade. Nevertheless, the level of trust for the Gandhi-led Congress was so meagre that Ambedkar used the words of Edmund Burke, "Better to be despised for too anxious apprehensions, than ruined by too confident a security"

Conclusion

Ambedkar's nationalism was about social endosmosis – creating a healthy environment for exchanges between different communities, ultimately, establishing a humanist social structure. He hence rejected the divine origin theory of the caste system and advocated a casteless society for India to be a nation. Caste was anti-national. His nationalism clearly stated that the primary identity of each person should be Indian and not premised on different religious or caste-based identities. His famous quote explains it clearly and precisely:

"We are Indians, firstly and lastly" ■

HIG

H L I



G H

T S

Anecdotes,
Advices and
Afghanistan
with Mr
Ved Pratap
Vaidik



INT

ER

VIE

W



REMINISCENCE

When I first met Badshah Khan, he said to me, “You Indians, you congressmen have thrown us before a pack of wolves”. He said this to me 50-55 years ago. He reiterated his concerns when Indira Ji called him to India. But if the Taliban succeeds to form a powerful government in Kabul, then the fear of Pakistanis will come true.

When I was a student of Kabul university, I used to visit the Pathan villages. They said to me, “Do you think we will accept slavery of these Punjabis? We are Pathans. We will show these Punjabis their place.”

THE DURAND LINE TROUBLE

Our leaders are busy with notes and votes but are not able to understand this very simple thing. They think that Pakistan will now capture the region but they fail to understand that Pakistan is more afraid of the situation than us. There are several reasons for this. First, Pakistan knows that if Pathans become powerful in Kabul, they will scrap the ‘Durand Line’. This boundary line was drawn by Sir Mortimer Durand in 1893 between India and Afghanistan. It is said that Amir Abdul Rahman signed this agreement. But if you read his autobiography and the statements that he made in that period, you will come to know that Britishers had put a lot of pressure on him. The Afghans never accepted this line and every Afghan government speaks against it. Sardar Daoud has always spoken against it during both his tenures as Prime Minister and President. King Zahir Shah was against it. The five Prime Ministers during his reign strongly resisted it. So, there is no reason for Pakistan to not be afraid. The population of Pathans in Pakistan is more than that of Afghanistan. 30-35 lakhs Pathans have earlier crossed Pakistan’s border and have been living in Karachi, Lahore and Peshawar. They have established unilateral dominance in all these places. So, Pakistan is worried that if Pathans are strengthened in Kabul, then they will capture Peshawar.

GRAVEYARD OF EMPIRES

It is called the Graveyard of Empires because not only the USSR and USA have failed here but also powers like Great Britain, which was even bigger than the USA and USSR was not able to control Afghanistan. Now, if China wants to occupy it, they would have to go through Afghans and believe me it would not be a cakewalk. It is quite natural for Pakistan to think that they can run Afghanistan, because for the last 35-40 years, Mujahideen and other militant groups have been nurtured by Pakistan. But let me tell you, I have seen the Pathans carrying out such gruesome attacks on the Pakistani embassy, which cannot be described. However, at the behest of Pakistan, our embassy was also attacked in 2008, in which dozens of people were killed. Pakistan is trying their best to use Afghanistan as their weapon, but Pakistan should learn a lesson from history. Pathans have never been slaves to anyone, they have been autonomous and once they regain power, they will overpower Pakistan.

DISTURBED STATES

Apart from this, Pakistan is afraid that Pathans can again cross their borders and settle in large numbers. Although they have placed barriers over their borders to stop any transgression, a large population will be able to overpower these barriers.

Secondly, Pakistan is in a very helpless state right now. No country is ready to help it except China. In this situation, Pakistan is more vulnerable to the wrath of the Taliban than India. And Pakistan is trying its best to take Afghanistan in control. They sent their Intelligence Chief there. Before that, Pakistan's Army Chief has also visited the country. Imran Khan and Mahmud Khuraishi have also visited Afghanistan. This means that Pakistan is trying to increase its influence in the region. Afghanistan's earlier government was very repulsive to Pakistan.

With the help of the Taliban, Pakistan is also trying to better its

relations with the USA. In a recent statement it said that Joe Biden did the right thing. So, Pakistan is busy pleasing everyone as it is very worried.

China too shares Pakistan's concerns. It wants to ensure that the Taliban doesn't support the Uighur Movement in East Turkestan. In addition to being worried, China is seeing immense profit in Afghanistan. China has always had its eyes on the vast resources of Copper and Iron in Afghanistan.

Russia is also worried about the same. In the last 150-200 years, the population of Russia's five older republics has turned Muslim. Consequently, Russia also tried its best to suppress the Arabs in their country by forcing them to change their names. Now, it is afraid that if the Taliban becomes powerful, separatist movements can start in its country.

Now you should understand that both Russia and America are trying

to initiate talks with the Taliban. On the other hand, our leaders are practicing the policy of 'wait and watch'. They are indirectly talking to Saudi Arabia and Iran, which will have no results. We should protect our investments in Afghanistan, strengthen Afghanistan-India relations and protect the interests of our country.

**WATCH THE
INTERVIEW HERE**



THE IDEAL RESPONSE

I want to say to the Indian government that it should be cautious, work with a conscious mind and should directly contact the Taliban. It should convince the Afghan militia that India can help it in a way in which no other nation can. We should make them aware of the fact that all other countries want something or the other in return from Afghanistan. India has no intention of making profit out of Afghanistan.

We should hold talks with the Taliban but I am not in favour of giving recognition to the new government. We should wait and see the new government's behaviour before recognising it. I feel that the Indian government should show more awareness. And when we are the chairperson of the Security Council, we should try to pass a resolution in the UN to send peace forces in Afghanistan, to ensure free and fair elections within one year in the region. But India seems to be in a mood of losing this opportunity too. ■



Number of Pages- 86
Published on 6 September 2021
Circulated on 7 September 2021

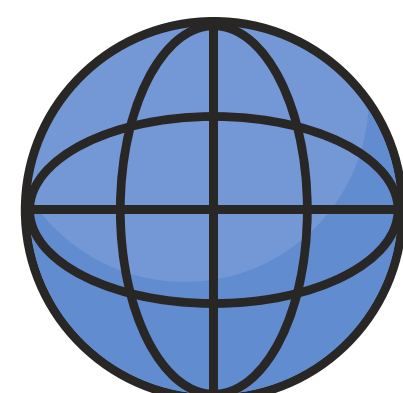


For educational use only.
Published by Caucus, the discussion
forum of Hindu College, University of
Delhi, India.

P

THE PROBE

F



<https://caucushindu.in/>



https://www.instagram.com/the-probe-caucus/?utm_medium=copy_link



<https://www.facebook.com/The-Probe-105643738463827/>



<https://twitter.com/TheProbeCaucus?s=08>



<https://www.linkedin.com/company/the-probe>