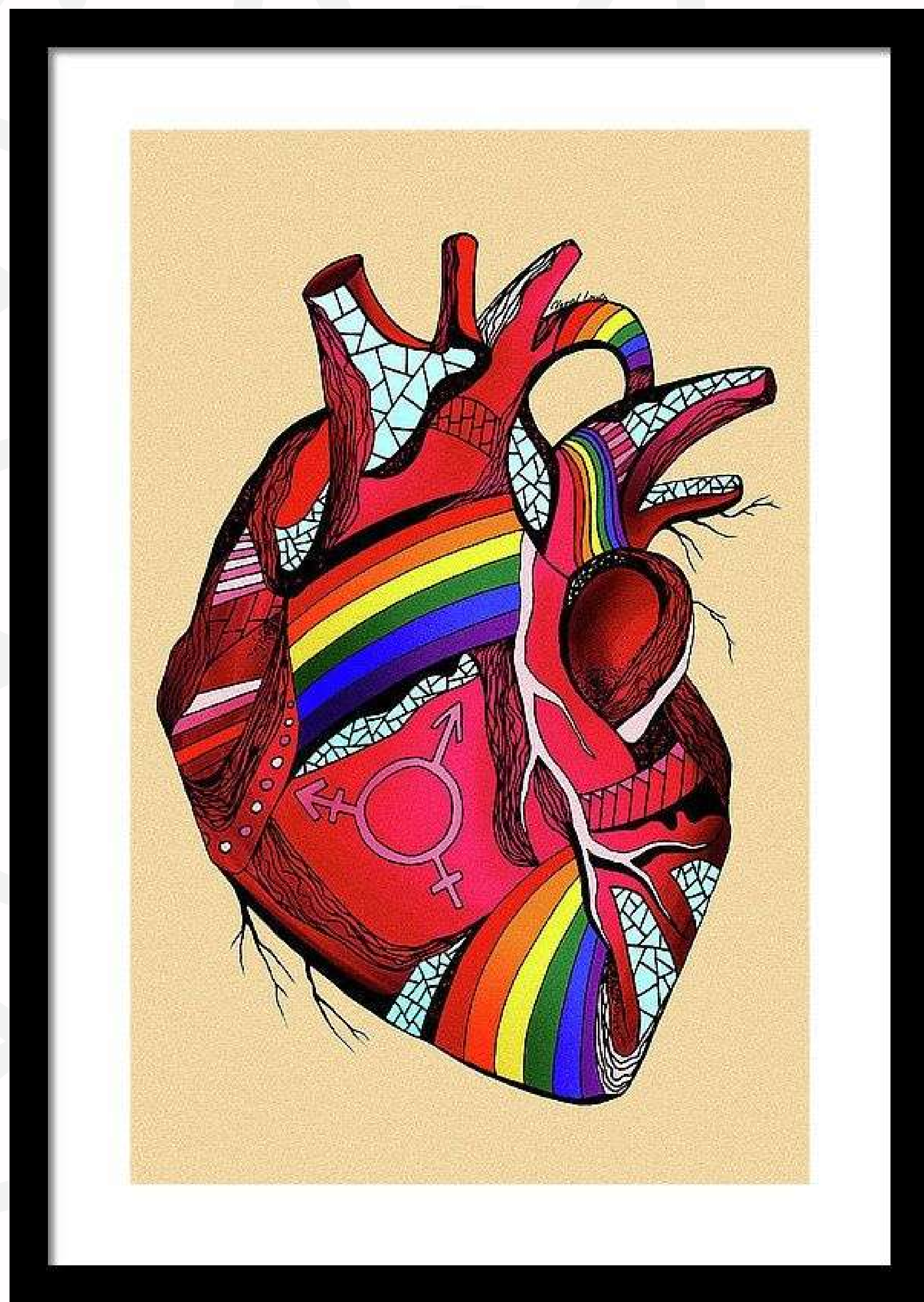# THE PROBE

The Journey of the Rainbow in India

Also in this edition

| Debate: Tokenistic Actions do more Harm than good | A conversation with Prince Manvendra Singh Gohil | Enlightenment: Towards Perpetual Peace or Dystopian Nightmare |

Write for us.

We are delighted to extend a warm invitation for guest entries, for the seventh edition of our magazine. These entries could be in the form of articles, illustrations or cartoons, book reviews related to Politics, Economics, History, International Relations, Philosophy, Literary analysis/commentary, Business, Technology, Lifestyle.

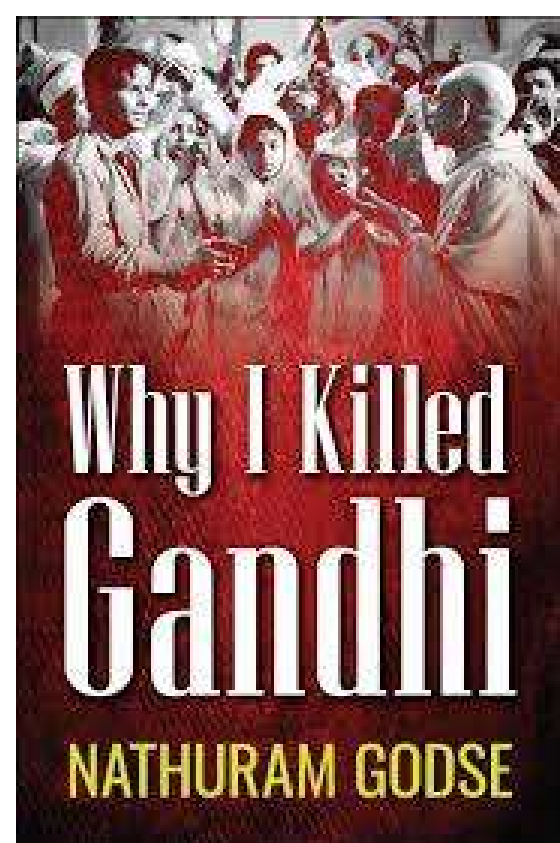Word count range: 1000-3000 words

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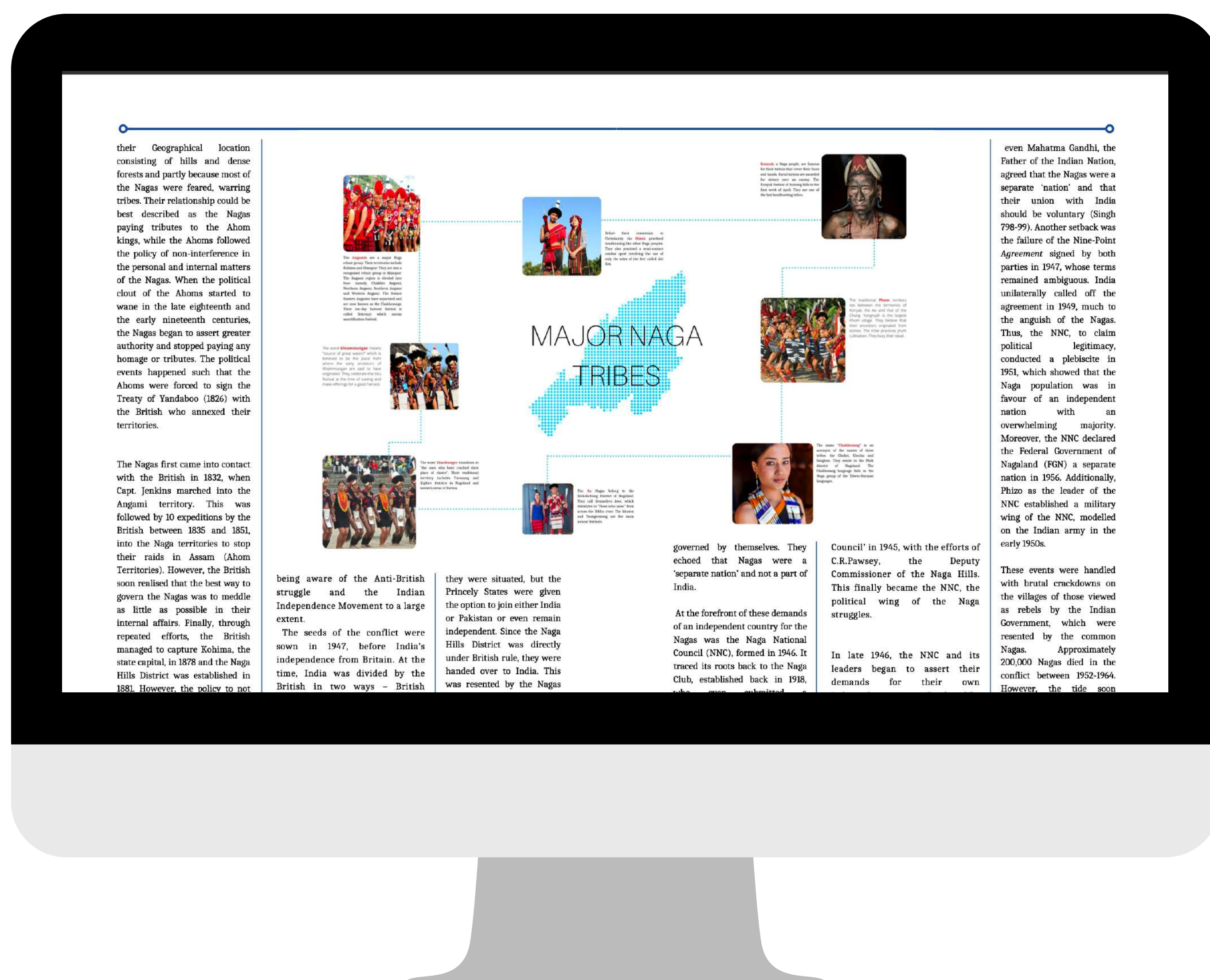
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Book of the month

Caucus read and discussed Nathuram Godse's rationale behind killing Gandhi, for the month of June

Politoon

Page 21

Harikirat Singh

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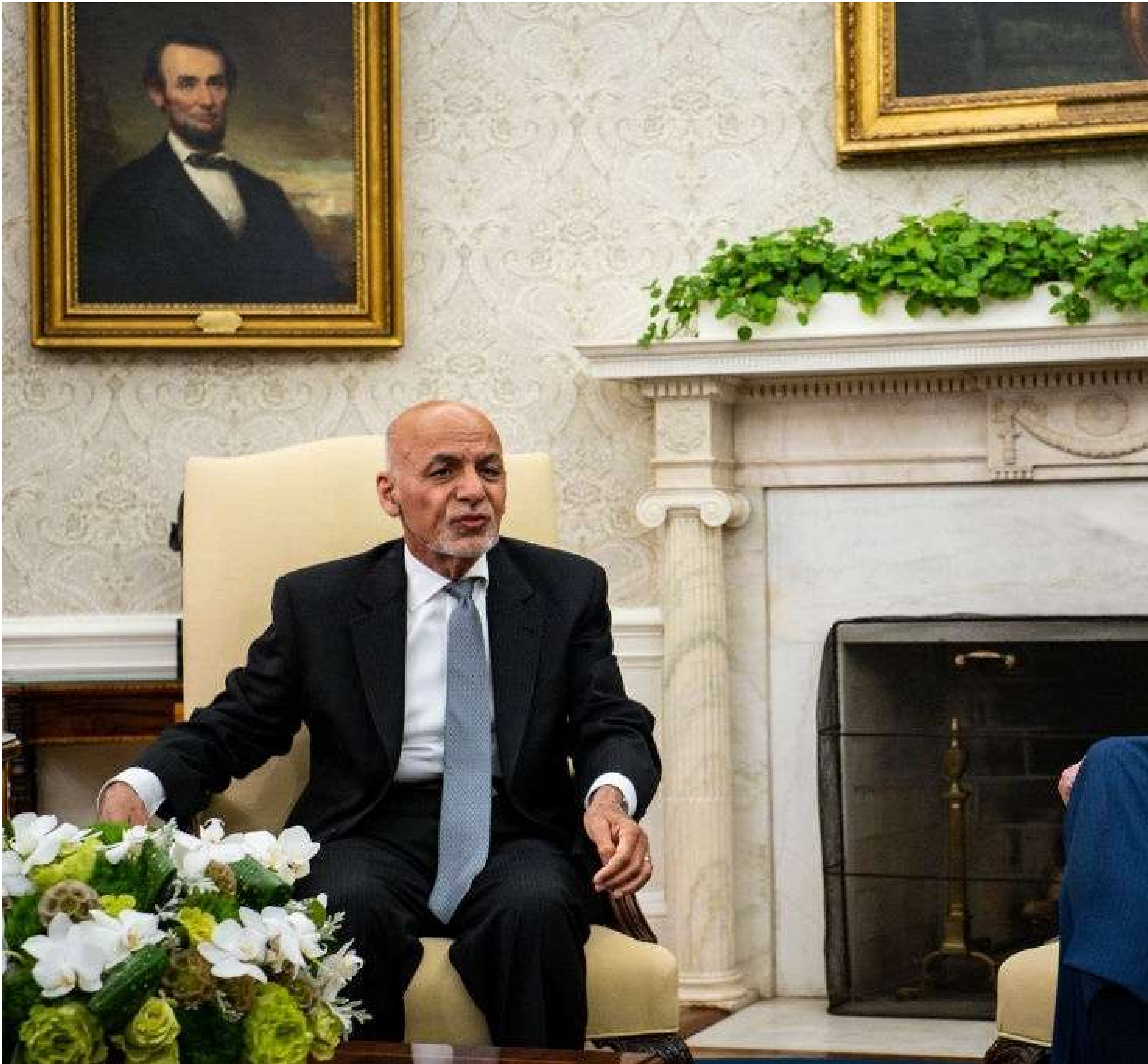
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📷 **US Withdrawal**

Diplomacy with Afghanistan

President Joe Biden (R) hosts Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani in the Oval Office at the White House June 25, 2021 in Washington, DC. Biden announced in April that he was pulling all U.S. forces from Afghanistan and ending America's longest war by September 11. (Photo by Pete Marovich-Pool/Getty Images)

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

Inside

Israel's Moral Culpability: An Analysis
Pomp, circumstance, aplomb, morality, wisdom—strip us humans of these higher desires, and what you'll be left with, is base instinct. The instinct of self-preservation, of protecting our own. Isn't that at the base of all our wants and desires as a species? **more on Pg 43**

Gay Prince, Manvendra Singh Gohil
In Conversation with TheProbe

Read according to your interest! Head over to sections of your choice- History, Politics, Philosophy, Education and more!

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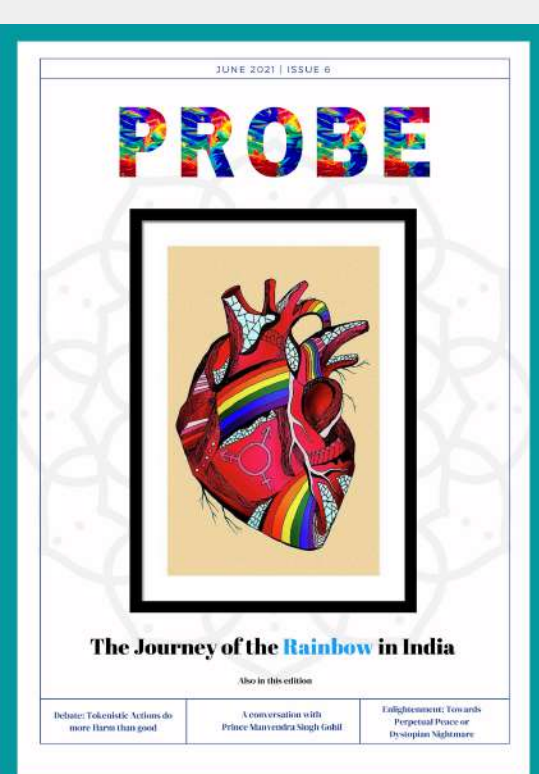
Cover Story
How far has the Pride movement come? What has been the perception of LGBTQ community from past to the present? Read this edition's cover story.
Read more Pg 7

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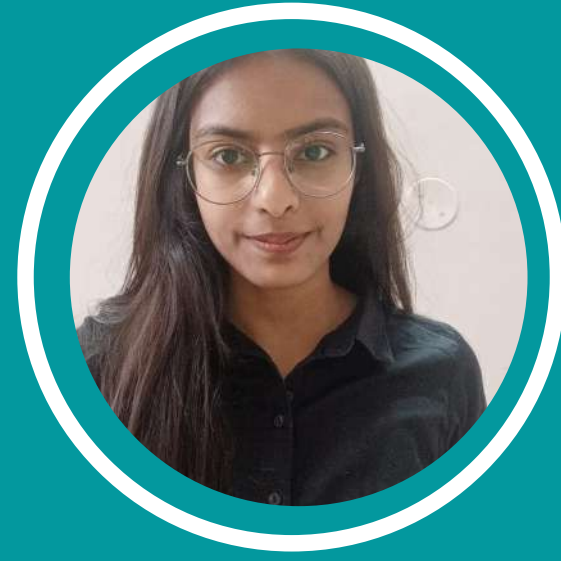
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Message From the Team

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

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

Special thanks to Crown Prince Manavendra Singh Gohil for gracing this Pride Month edition with his interview. We want to extend our gratitude to Caucus and our college for providing us with a platform where we can engage in a reading culture. The diversity of opinion that guest writers offer in their entries make the Probe nothing less than a rainbow in itself.

LGBTQ AND INDIA

"No one is speechless, there are only those who've been systemically silenced."

The Journey of the Rainbow in India

Sanya Sethi, Mehr Kaur and Saberi Mallick

Representation within scripture: The LGBTQ community and theology

When we try to ask people why the idea of someone being queer is almost threatening to them, the primary reason, apart from difficulties related to social acceptability and assimilation, is how such concepts go against the very root of their culture, history, religion and tradition. When we look at India especially, the whole concept of identifying on the LGBTQ+ spectrum, is intuitively looked at as a foreign import, brought about by the process of westernisation. This however, does not take into account the vast volumes of queer literature that have existed in the Indian subcontinent and tries to systematically erase these queer narratives from historical literature pieces, folklores and even mythology.

Mythology is a source from which we derive our norms and cultures, and acts as a source of sociocultural validations. We essentially find various references to homosexuality in the Ramayana, Mahabharata and the Puranas.

The temple art and sculptures at various shrines are a testimony to the sexual variations that

Unlike the West, the Hindu society does not have the concept of 'sexual orientation' that classifies gender on the basis of who they desire to be.

have existed since the beginning of time, but then, myths never have been approving of the

same and the stories are more condescending in nature and majorly describe it as an unacceptable behaviour.

The depictions of homosexual behaviours although existed in Indian mythology but the depictions are mere acknowledgement filled with condescension and disapproval for the same sex relationships, rather than the concept of love, and affection filled, conjugal variant of sexuality. Like some of the old stories from Manusmriti, they contain the code of conduct and the ideal way of behaving, listing down how to deal with deviant behaviours, including expression of same sex love "If men were found to engage in same sexual behaviours they had to take the heating vow of consuming 'prayshchitta' by consuming a mixture of cow dung, cow's urine, cow milk, cow milk curd and sacrificial grass" Such forms of social control are common and were reiterated by social norms, folklores and threat of divine, in order to homogenise behaviours and have a standard of what could be classified as 'appropriate'. However, it is still not uncommon to find mythological references to the same.

Unlike the West, the Hindu society does not have the concept of 'sexual orientation' that classifies gender on the basis of who they desire to be. However, there is a strong, ancient concept of third gender, which is for individuals who have strong elements of both male and female in them. The Vedas, mention two different sexes of human beings as "Purusha" (male) and "Prakriti" (female) but also recognises the existence of another sex, "Tritiya Prakriti" or "third gender". Sanskrit also mentions the existence of four gender states – Pung (masculine), Stree (feminine), Kliba (neuter) and Ubhayalinga (common gender). Thus, there is a historical consensus on the existence of queer identities and the existence of identities out of the heteronormative lens.

For instance, in Bengali literature, the Krittivas Ramayana, attributes the birth of Bhagirath to the sexual union of two females, through the

> **"If men were found to engage in same sexual behaviours they had to take the heating vow of consuming 'prayshchitta' by consuming a mixture of cow dung, cow's urine, cow milk, cow milk curd and sacrificial grass"**

divine sanction of the god Sankara. Here, the same-sex union is approved of and is legitimised, but only through divine intervention. The 'divine intervention' acts as a 'trope' that is used to legitimise something which otherwise could not be socially accepted. Another 'trope' is the 'sex-change' that happens many a times in the Indian mythological tales. The gender-fluidity also brings about the gender-ambiguity, and therefore, a deity might appear in any form – male or female or even transgender, and also in a non- human form. Vishnu is the preserver of the world who had many lovers. Though he was attracted by many women in heaven and earth, when he changed himself as a woman, Shiva was addicted to her beauty. Krishna's lores are full of Krishna's cross-dressing. Similar themes have been illustrated in stories like Mohini's, who is the incarnation of Vishnu as Krishna, takes a feminine form in order to marry Aravan, the son of Arjun, whose last wish was that he did not want to die unmarried. This essentially shows the fluidity and the non rigid patterns of gender and sexual orientation within Gods. Religious-cultural practices, thus, have roots deep within Indian history, were approved of and tolerated in pre-colonial India, and have survived the defamation brought about by the British.

The story of Ila, a king cursed by Shiva and Parvati to be a man one month and a woman the next, appears in several traditional Hindu texts. After changing sex, Ila loses the memory of being the other gender. During one such period, Ila marries Budha (the god of the planet Mercury). Although Budha knows of Ila's alternating gender, he doesn't enlighten the 'male' Ila, who remains unaware of his life as a woman.

Bahuchara Mata is a patron goddess of the Hijra community. In popular iconography, she is often shown riding a rooster and carrying a sword, trident and a book. Various stories link Bahuchara to castration or other changes in physical sexual characteristics, sometimes as the result of her aiming curses against men. In one story, Bahuchara is attacked by a bandit who attempts to rape her, but she takes his sword, cuts off her breasts and dies. In another story, Bahuchara curses her husband when she catches him sneaking to the woods to engage in homoerotic behaviour, causing his genitals to fall off and forcing him to dress as a woman. Samba, the son of Krishna, is also a patron of eunuchs, transgender people and homoeroticism. Samba dresses in women's clothes to mock and trick people, and so that he can more easily enter the company of women and seduce them.

Hindus have many sacred texts ,and different communities give special importance to different texts. Even more so than in other religions, Hindus also foster disparate interpretations of the meaning of various texts. The Vedas, which form the foundation of Hinduism for many, do not refer explicitly to homosexuality, but Rigveda says regarding Samsara that Vikruti Evam Prakriti (perversity/diversity is what nature is all about, or, what seems un-natural is also natural), which some scholars believe recognizes the cyclical constancy of homosexual or transsexual dimensions of human life, like all forms of universal diversities. People of a third gender (tritiya-prakriti), not fully men nor women, are mentioned here and there throughout Hindu texts such as the Puranas, but are not specifically defined. In general, they are portrayed as effeminate men, often cowardly, and with no desire for women. Modern readers often draw parallels between these and modern stereotypes of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender sexual identities.

Public Perception of LGBTQ identities

The public perception of queerness has long been moulded by an interplay of diverse factors. For the longest time, discussions on homosexuality have

Glimpses of Gender
in Indian M
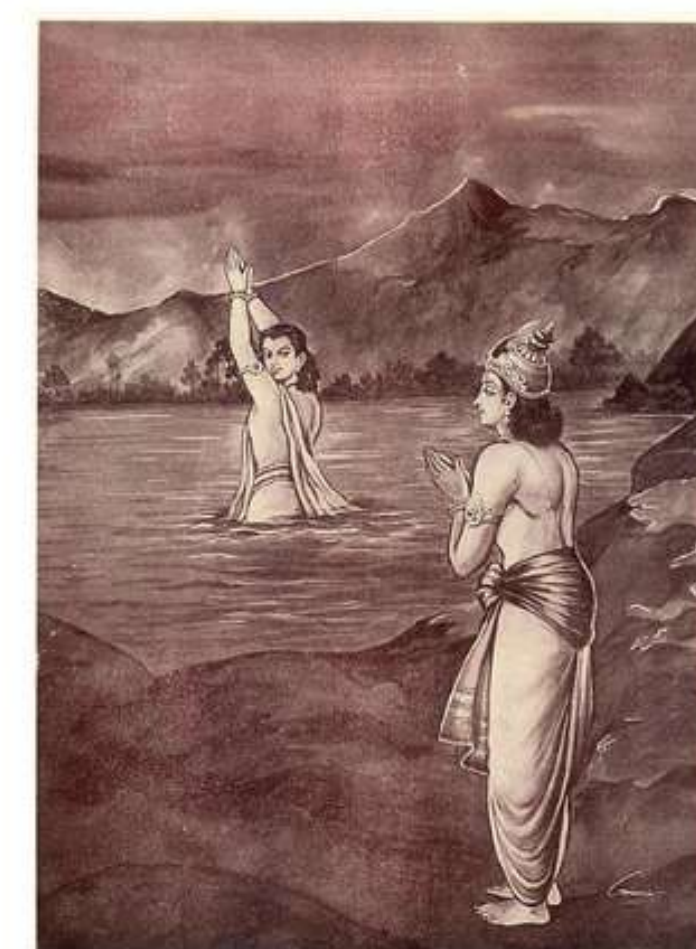
Ila

Bhagiratha

Purusha Prakriti

and Sexual fluidity
Mythology

📷 *Mohini*

📷 *Shiva;the gender fluid figure in mythology*

📷 *Bahuchara Mata*

centred around the nature vs nurture debate with most believing it to be a choice or a product of environmental conditioning. The idea of it being 'manufactured' is the driving force behind the industry of conversion therapy throughout the world. Ranging anywhere from castration and lobotomies to electroshock therapy are some tools that have historically been employed to 'correct' this deviant behaviour. The classification of homosexuality as a 'mental disorder' by the DSM had time and again, reinforced the stigma surrounding this identity.

Besides, the attitudes of most religious scriptures towards the different identities that make up the LGBTQ+ community are rooted in either ambiguity or hostility which adds on to the complexity in terms of social acceptance of these identities. However, the simple rejection of homosexuality by these religions isn't enough to explain the extreme degree of discrimination that queer individuals are continually subjected to. It is pertinent to question why people are compelled to believe such ideas in the face of an ever-growing, active queer movement that demands for nothing more but integration into the systems long been monopolised by cisgender, heterosexual people. Perhaps, the reason behind this is the explicit difference between religious and other beliefs and how the former are tethered to a divine being as opposed to a human which makes it difficult for a person to be willing to compromise on their religious beliefs. People's inherent belief in karma further complicates the equation wherein even if they'd want to have an attitude akin to acceptance, they're unable to, because, for many, detracting from scriptural codes, in some religions, unnecessarily invites death and a traumatic afterlife. Here, karma is used as a tool to justify complacency.

Concomitantly, there exists enough incentive for religions to organise marriage on hetero-patriarch lines, for its organisation on these lines alone can guarantee the continuity and sustenance of these religions through posterity.

Almost naturally, this bias against the LGBTQ+ community then seeped into every societal institution,

and solidified its presence through reinforcement via casual stereotypes and generalisations to brutal physical violence in extreme cases. Queer people and the alienation they experience from the external world and sometimes, themselves too, heightens much more when they're unable to see themselves in these societal structures. Be it the official socio-political institutions of a country or even the media they consume, marginal queer representation only bears relevance in terms of internalising their alienation in society.

At a point in time when the media penetration rate in any society is at an all-time high, it is futile to undermine the socialisation power that it holds. Narratives portrayed on televisions and in books are the ones that go on to subliminally mould the mindsets of people in any society and so, showing homosexual men as pedophiles, viewing lesbian relationships through an overtly sexualised lens or seeing transgender people as 'scary' and 'ghoulish' are just a few instances that contribute to the larger trivialisation of their identities and make up the only type of 'queer representation' in India.

LGBTQ Activism through the years

The advent of economic liberalisation in India in the nineties coincided with an influx of activism across the entire LGBT spectrum. Transnational links were firmly established during this period. This often took the

form of greater funds for NGOs through funding from international human rights groups as well as in the form of Western based Indian scholars drawing attention to Indian LGBTQ realities.

The acceleration of the global fight against AIDS left a resounding impact in India as well. Following institutional indifference post the first HIV diagnosis in India in 1987, many pressure groups came into being to agitate for better life chances for those afflicted by HIV/AIDS. Of these, the AIDS Bhedhbav Virodhi Andolan (ABVA) proved to be one of the most influential. It actively worked for the welfare of vulnerable groups like sex workers and HIV positive individuals after receiving news of forceful testing conducted on a group of female sex workers in Delhi. Due to the stigma surrounding HIV, there was little Indian research on it, even years after the first case was detected in India in 1986. The ABVA through the publication of a report titled

'Women and AIDS' shed light on the discrimination meted to those seen as vulnerable to HIV, namely sex workers and gay/bisexual men, both in the form of victim-blaming as well as medical malpractices. Individuals diagnosed as HIV positive were forced into isolation at the behest of a medical community unwilling to follow WHO guidelines. A series of gross violations of medical ethics including medical negligence, targeted harassment and discriminatory treatment on part of medical professionals were exposed by the ABVA.

The ABVA played a decisive role in the stalling and eventual withdrawal of the AIDS Prevention Bill that would've mandated healthcare professionals to forcibly test those at a 'higher risk' of contracting HIV and disclose their identities to the police, who

were in turn, emboldened to adopt any preventative measure to stop the spread of HIV. The ABVA, through campaigning and the distribution of reports, aimed to raise awareness about LGBTQ identities, clear misconceptions and tackle HIV/AIDS stigma. The report 'Less than Gay', listed a series of fifteen demands including the guarantee of protection to those tested HIV positive, the declaration of privacy as a fundamental right, the decriminalisation of consensual same-sex activities and formal recognition of families which did not conform to hetero-patriarchal norms.

Contemporary LGBTQ activists and scholars have written at length on the impact of serophobia, ie: the fear, rejection and stigmatisation of people affected by HIV/AIDS, in the enactment of homophobic/transphobic legislation, and court orders as in the case of the complete reinstatement of Section 377 in 2013, post its partial reading down in 2009. The stigma around HIV continues to shape cisgender heterosexual sensibilities on the expression of trans/gay/bisexual sexuality as well as LGBTQ rights as a whole. Within this context, concentrated efforts by the ABVA to raise awareness surrounding AIDS become extremely important.

Lesbian/bisexual women's activism in India has been chronicled at length by Naisargi N. Dave in her book, 'Queer Activism in India: A Story in the anthropology of Ethics.' As per Dave, the establishment of the Delhi based lesbian network, Sakhi, was pivotal to the creation of a pan-national network of women exchanging letters through relative anonymity. The publication of Sakhi through newspapers also helped to normalise and solidify lesbianism/bisexuality as viable identities for Indian women, correcting the erstwhile perception of sapphism as an elitist concept available to only Western women. In addition to serving as a homosocial space, Sakhi was actively involved in political assertion against heteropatriarchal oppression and was partially conceptualised as an activist space.

A rift within the movement led to the establishment of Sangini by Betu Singh. Moving away from Sakhi's position of identity politics, Sangini was to be a community safe space dedicated to preserving the safety and anonymity of its members. When interviewed by Dave, Singh cited the overwhelming presence of 'foreigners' and NRIs within Sakhi as a point of contention and expressed her desire to establish an organisation completely rooted in the Indian context. Sangini set up helplines operated by trained counsellors in order to provide advice to women in need of counsel. These conversations culminated into semi-regular support group meetings wherein sapphic women, mostly married, could partake within a shared community space, even if just for a few hours.

LGBTQ ACTIVISTS

Siddharth Gautam was one of the members of ABVA and amongst the first LGBTQ activists in the country.

Gauri started the trust S̲akhi Char Chowghi, which works for the rights of trans people.

Keshav Suri played an important role in the revocation of article 377.

Many organisations including the ABVA, the Naz Foundation, the Keshav Suri Foundation, among others, launched efforts to seek nullification of the draconian measures prescribed under Section 377 of the IPC. Their struggles came to fruition in 2018 as the Supreme Court partially struck down the contested portions unanimously. While the verdict was seen as a much welcomed respite from decades of institutionalised prejudice, material conditions for much of the community did not improve. Members of the transgender community continue to be one of the most vulnerable social groups in the country, and the implementation of trans affirmative laws remains an uphill battle.

The implementation of the Transgender Persons (Protection Of Rights) Act, 2019 has seen backlash from members of the trans community. The Act has been condemned as profoundly unjust for subjecting trans

individuals to a validation procedure contingent upon the provision of proof of sex reassignment surgery to the District Magistrate. This is in clear violation of the NALSA v. Union of India judgement of 2014 which affirmed the right to self-determination of gender. It is also likely to act as a roadblock to legal transition for many as not all transgender individuals can afford the expensive surgical procedures required to obtain a certificate. Additionally, the act erroneously conflates the categories of transgender and intersex; does not mention the implementation of affirmative action policies like reservation in higher education and in employment; provides a six-month to two-year sentence for the sexual assault of transgender women as compared to the seven-year life sentence for sexual assault of cisgender women; imposes rehabilitation centres upon trans individuals who have been rejected from their families, denying them

the right to join non-traditional family structures as in the case of the Hijra community, among other injustices.

Shortly after the act was passed in the Rajya Sabha, members of the transgender community took to the streets during Delhi's 12th Queer Pride Parade to raise the proposed legislation as a point of contention. Other activists, both online and those working on the ground, have raised alarms over the contentious legislation.

Direct action on part of the LGBTQ community has put up an effective challenge to the mainstream perception of LGBTQ people as helpless minorities in need of the cisgender heterosexual saviour. It is important for potential allies to tackle this saviour complex wherever they might encounter it, and remember that the label of 'ally' should be treated as an active verb. Passing the mic to those who do not share the same platform or privileges as oneself is of utmost importance. After all, no one is speechless, there are only those who've been systemically silenced.

Members of the transgender community continue to be one of the most vulnerable social groups in the country

The Probe Debate

Tokenistic Actions do more Harm than Good
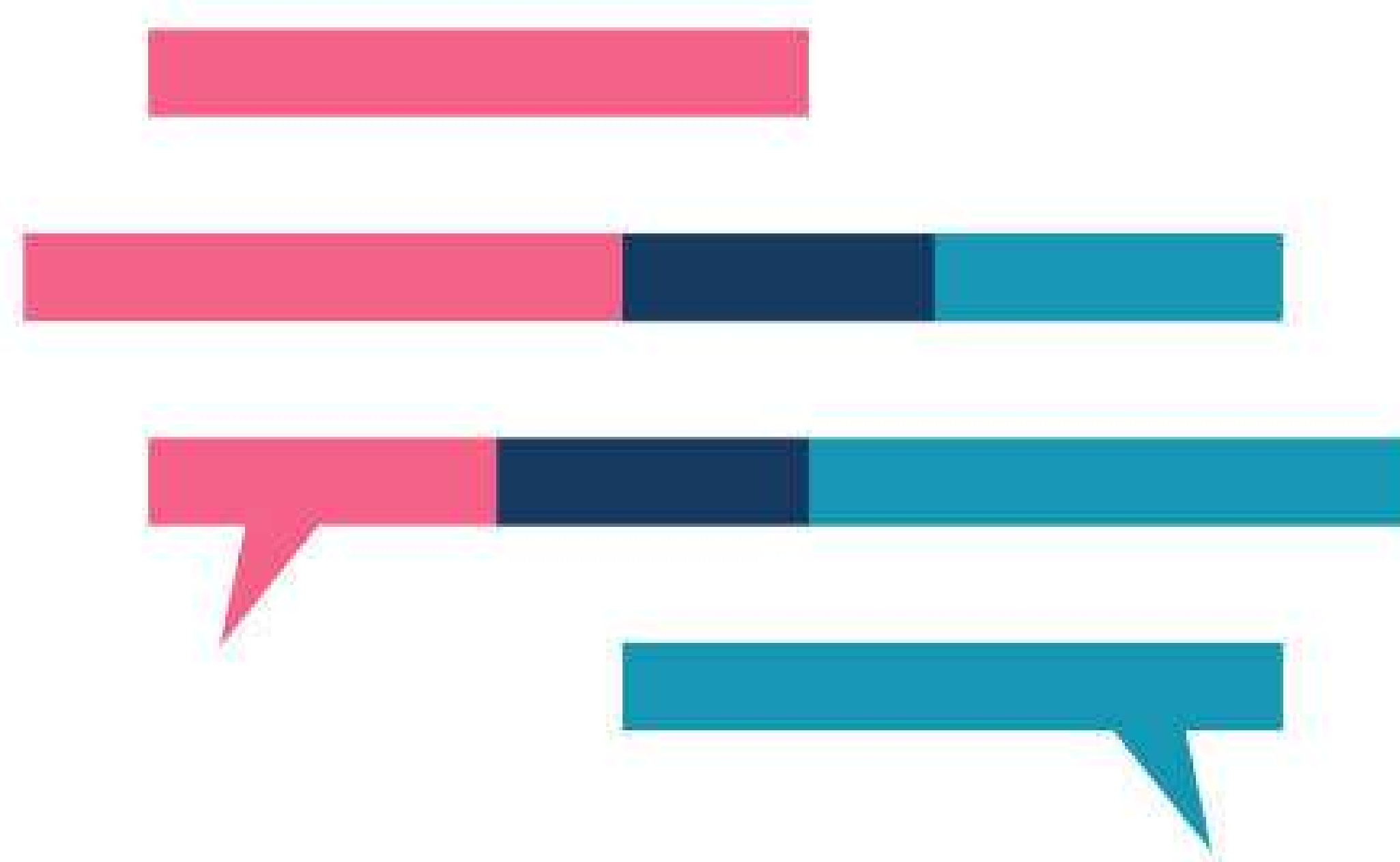
The Proposition by Suboor Saifi

Tokenism is a symbolic gesture that involves treating a group of people differently especially in workplaces. It manifests largely as a public display of support with little credence to effective ground level reforms. For example, companies capitalise on social movements like Pride Month by incorporating rainbow into everything from their logos to website interface. In reality, it is merely a step to whitewash their wrongdoings by creating a facade of inclusivity and openness, only to hide their ongoing and historic malpractices.

While it is often aimed at creating awareness about an issue, claiming even tokenism helps educate people to some extent. However, what this so-called need to spread the message does is further aggravate the issue of adequate representation. The affected people who are the actual stakeholders are systemically silenced when influential brands jump into this. They use these movements according to their comfort and end up creating false narratives about the movement. Like rainbow capitalism, a targeted inclusion of the gay community has acquired sufficient purchasing power to generate a market-focused specifically on them. The arenas of such targeted inclusion are bars and nightclubs, LGBT tourism, or specialised culture consumption.

The *modus operandi* involved in tokenism shows a very general trend where institutions use a few people of any marginalised section, put them on a pedestal, and exploit their identity to appear trendy, relevant, and more accepting. In the US, after the civil rights movements of the 1960s, a small number of black people were employed in white-collar jobs or predominately white spaces, in an effort to weaken the movements against racial discrimination. This in turn was used to weaken the social movement by citing such examples and show that racial discrimination

"doesn't exist".

For highly diverse societies most movements are based on the idea of inclusivity of people who have been ostracised for years, in order to bring them into the mainstream. Over time, it is also seen that such symbolic are often used by people for aesthetics, often promoting cultural appropriation, leading to cultural stereotypes, affecting these alienated communities instead of fulfilling their basic social duties on humanitarian grounds by using their social and financial capital in uplifting culturally oppressed people. Brands in turn fetishise the misery of these people to appear quirky and garner the attention of the larger public, subverting them for the fancy of their billboards and ad campaigns.

Even though tokenism provides a good kick start to any social or cultural movement, it often leads to the hijacking of movement as what is seen in most social movements be it pertaining to caste atrocities, religious persecution, and even environmental causes. How few "privileged" people hijack the whole movement with their charisma and influence over media, to satisfy their ingrained saviour complex.

Tokenism helps a social movement by adding to the numbers of the movement which are needed by them because they are often anti-establishment and could die off very easily if the establishment were to attack it and it didn't have the strength to retaliate, but it is also inevitable that in a long run for a movement to make a significant impact it needs genuine support which continues to exist till the very end. While most of these tokenistic "supporters" are here for the optics or for virtue signalling, when things get tough, or when it shakes their position of privilege for power, they'll abandon the movement, or when they see the movement move away from their comfort levels. Movements have died in the past because they lost supporters.

Thus, they create this facade of support that the movement had banked on, and then suddenly withdraw. This breaks the morale of those with honest causes to be a part of the movement, as well as devalues the movement itself.

While the case of oppressor vs oppressed continues to exist as the people who were once the prevailing gatekeepers start preaching for such models. These very obvious tactics by brands affect the stakeholders by reducing their very identity to their one particular trait that makes them "conventionally" distinct, doing more harm than good.

The Opposition by Shreya Shukla

It's Women's Day and a news channel decides to switch their all-male panel with an all-female one because why not? It's Women's Day after all. What about the other 364 days? Who cares? They have proven they aren't sexist or misogynist and that is what matters.

Do tokenistic gestures even in their most vile and rudimentary form have to be met with such censure when they can be let off with the same pat on the back with a 'Needs improvement' certificate? "There is room for improvement" can be said about anything under the sun and above it but do actions like this help garner greater support for a cause and help make room for a marginalised people? If yes, then isn't it reason enough for such actions to be seen for what they achieve than what they may have been intended as?
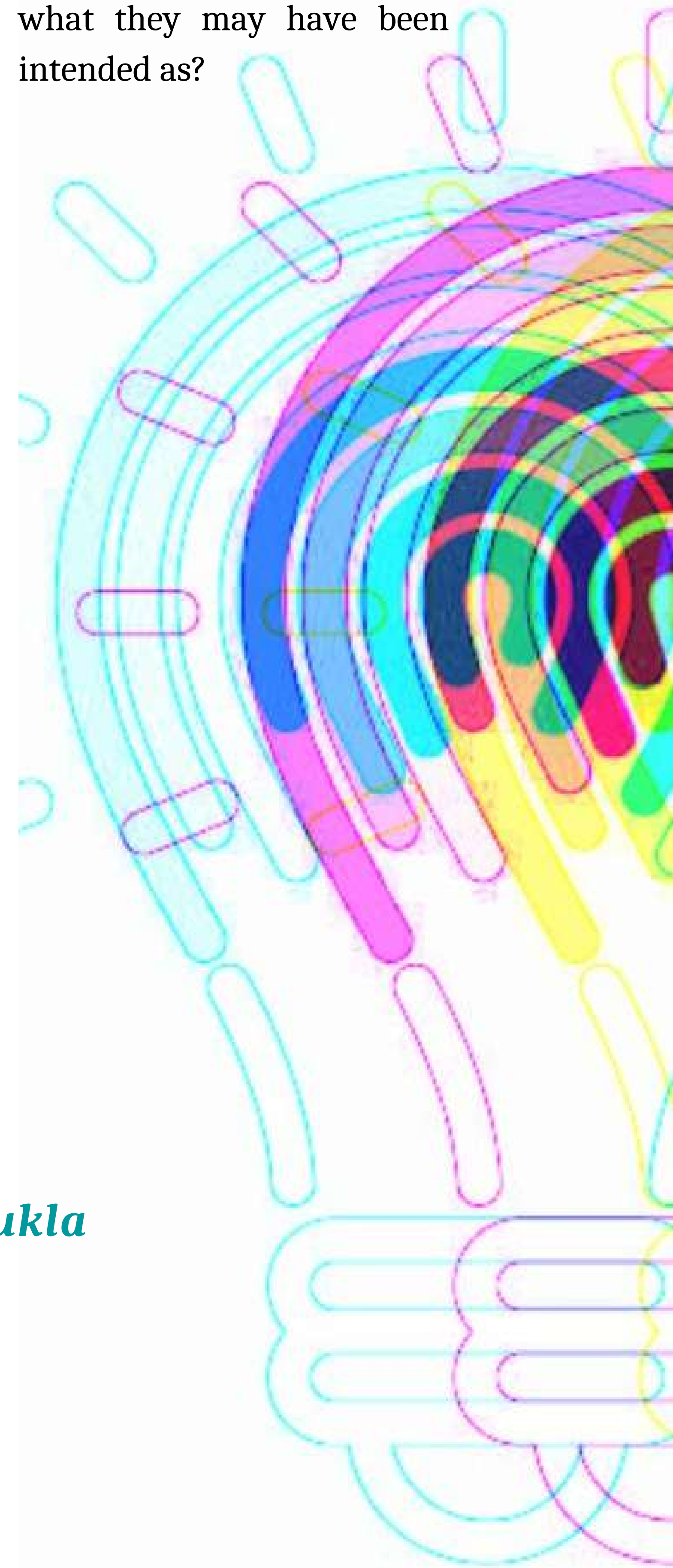
As Adam Smith rightly said, "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own self-interest. We address ourselves not to

their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities, but of their advantages". Moreover, we aren't talking of individuals here but big corporations that thrive on self-interest, I don't see why they would go out of their way to ensure something that is achieved
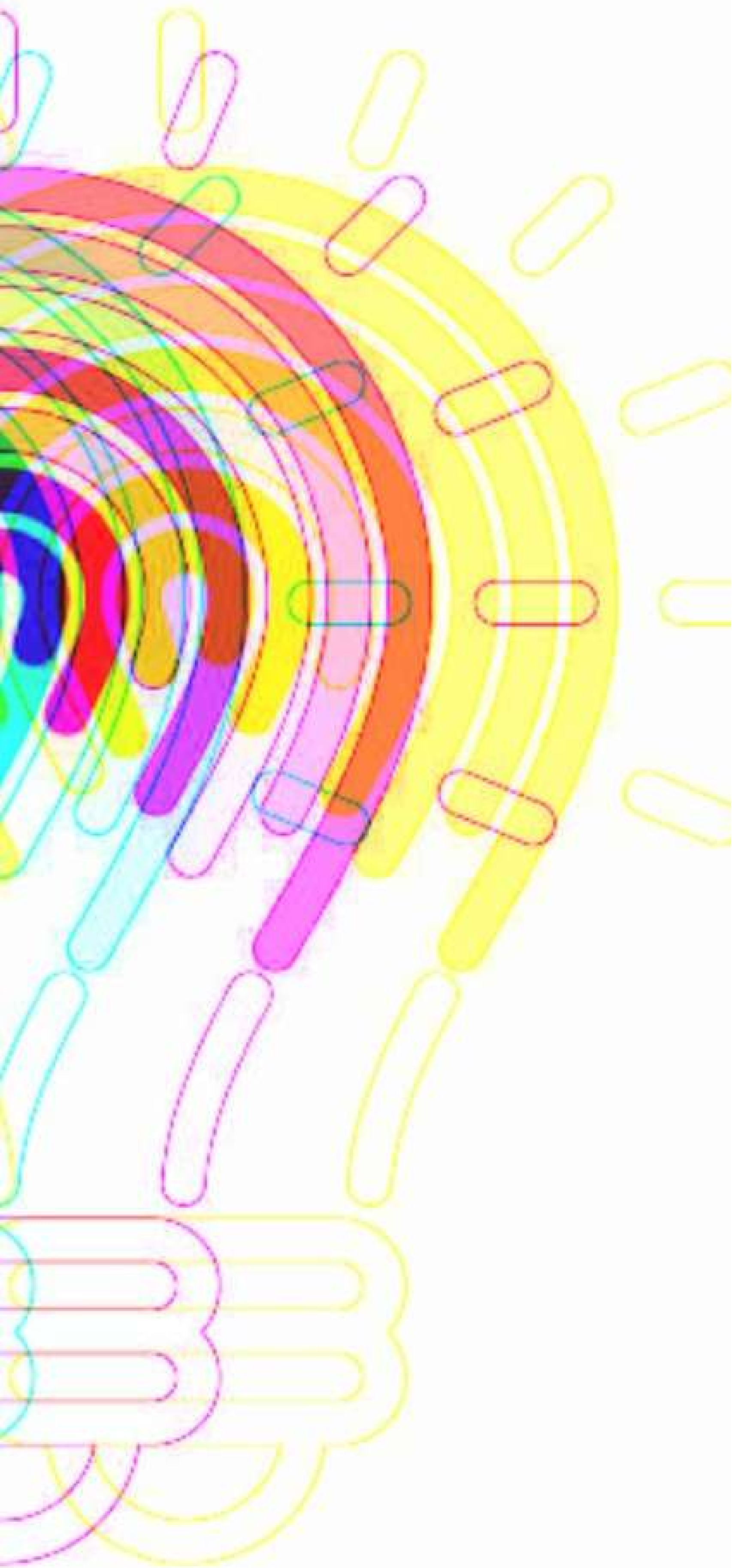
through the bare minimum of actions which they are fully aware of being perceived as tokenistic by some.

Rather than categorically asserting your demands thinking that it's something you deserve

you start with a small and harmless one followed by what you wanted to accomplish in the first place. Essentially, foot-in-the-door of big corporations that are reflections of people they cater to, who make the society and the system.

An otherwise black and white logo of a company decides to go rainbow for a month and it works! They are successfully able to attract the target group by showing that they believe in their cause. This acts as positive feedback to either expand on the same, capitalising on the support they are enjoying or continuing with tokenism with the possibility of it eventually backfiring. Either way, it looks like a win-win to me.

Why can't symbolic gestures be seen as a form of celebration of a movement, culture and everyone involved over an obsession with what it truly means? When all's said and done, facts seldom change people's minds. Emotions do. When a corporation people have faith in stands for a cause, it is impactful however intangible it may seem. Support for a movement doesn't necessarily imply that the company is quintessential of what it advocates but that it is on the right path.

The association of social movements with symbols has a long history and for good reason. Be it the latest three-finger salute used by pro-democracy protesters in Myanmar inspired by Suzanne Collin's *The Hunger Games*, the holding up of George Orwell's *1984* in Thailand or rainbow-coloured flag worldwide. Having a widely recognised symbol for a movement and then lambasting those who use it is shooting oneself in the foot. You want more and more

people to know about what you stand for and what your demands are but at the same time, you want to be selective about who gets to hear it. Even if some people do it out of conformity in an attempt to look more acceptable in society, it only helps the movement. In fact, symbols are designed to make the movement easily recognisable to get mass appeal and show support that 'you're on their side'. It is not just convenient and appreciated but why it is successful to begin with. More people and organisations joining in to celebrate the socio-political victory of a movement should be seen as a victory in itself.

An otherwise black and white logo of a company decides to go rainbow for a month and it works! They are successfully able to attract the target group by showing that they believe in their cause.

Manvendra Singh Gohil

"Even though in India there is so much of homophobia, our country encourages homosexual behaviour"
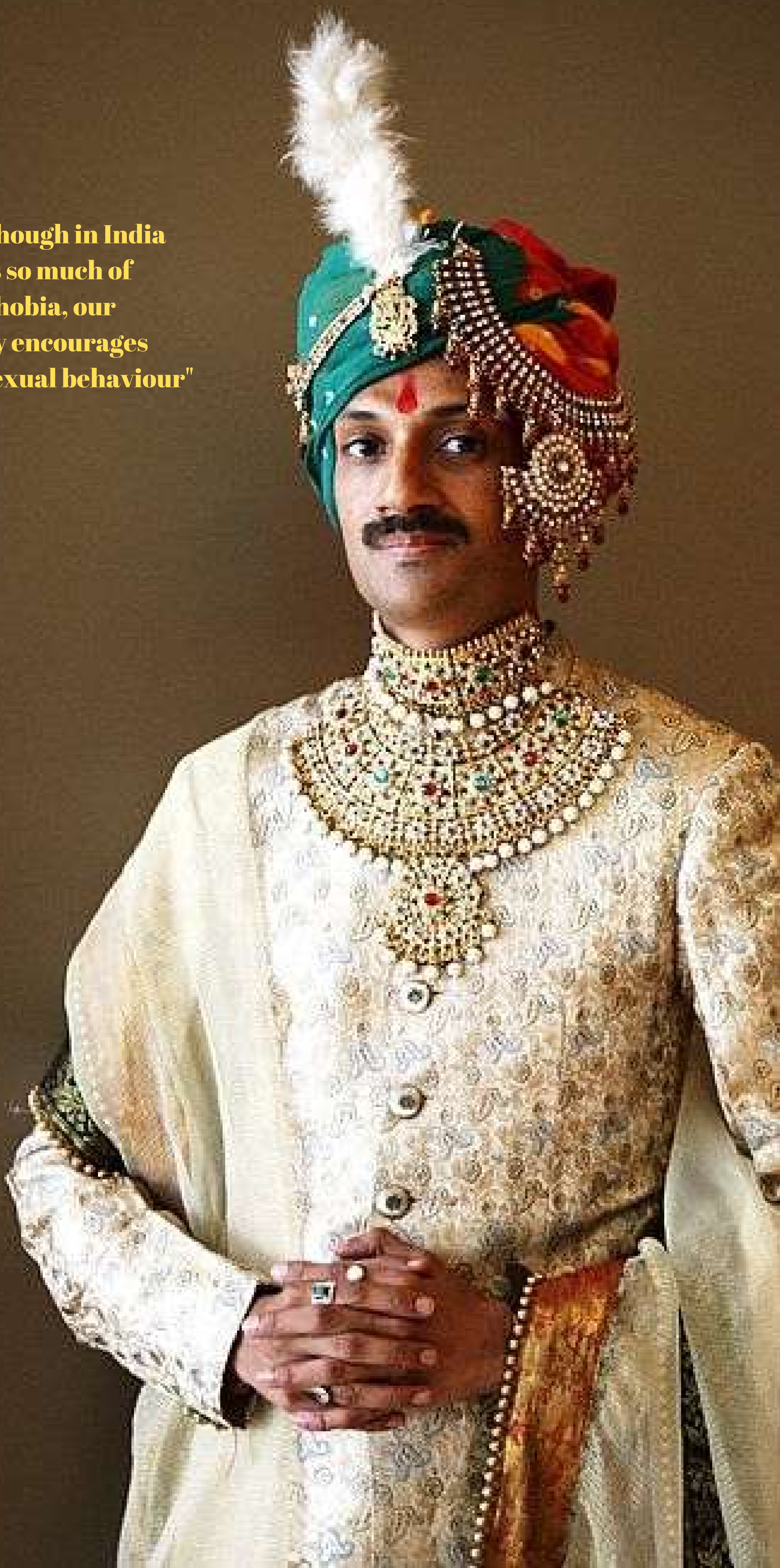
India's first openly gay prince

by Sumit Singh & Anjana Benny

Delhi queer pride parade
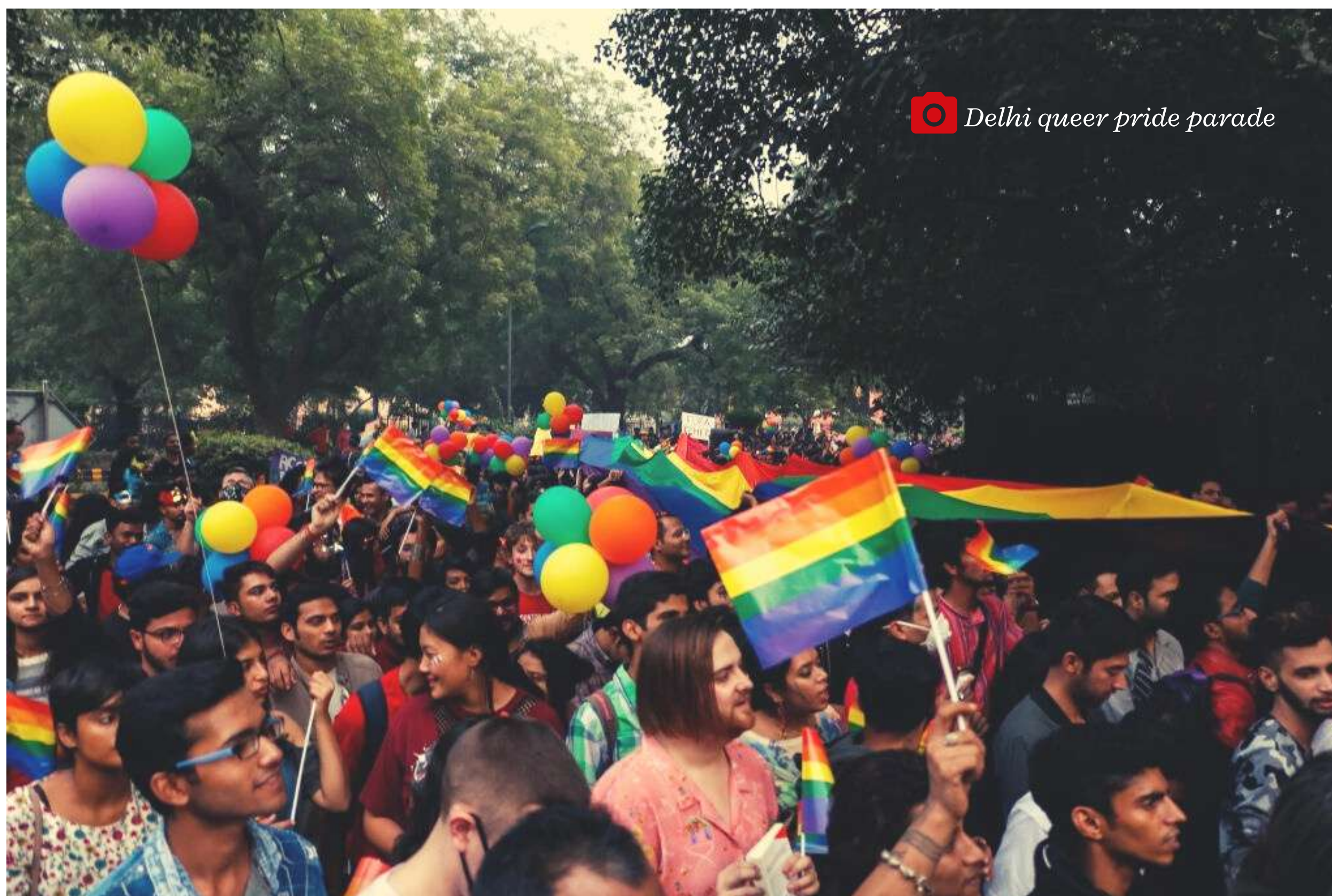
To begin with, we would like you to first talk about your life, the social circumstances where you were growing up, the background of your family you were born and brought up into and your formal years of schooling.

My life was in a very protective lifestyle because even though we are part of a democratic republic and we don't have the power to rule any more, but yet we are the custodians of this rich cultural heritage which is, my dynasty goes back to the 13th century. And we have many roles and responsibilities on our shoulders to maintain and to preserve and protect this cultural heritage and there are a lot of expectations from us. So our entire grooming happens very differently from other families; there are a lot of protections there, there are many rules and regulations to be followed, there is hardly any exposure to the outside world. We are kind of guarded all the time, and we are groomed by our own retainers whose families have been with us for more than hundred years and 200 years. So having said that, my early childhood and my teenage years were very different I would say. I was first of all, raised by my nanny (governess) and not by my

"I was finding myself different; I knew I was not attracted to the opposite sex but I was attracted to the same sex"

mother which is very different from other families. So I did not develop the natural love and affection which a child develops towards a mother. This happens in a lot of royal families, it's just that nobody talks about it. Secondly, there is no attachment with the parents and obviously there is no communication. So when I was growing up, I was finding myself different; I knew I was not attracted to the opposite sex but I was attracted to the same sex. I studied in a co-education school in Mumbai, one of the best schools of the time (Bombay Scotish School), and I kind of liked girls in that way and not sexually, and I didn't like the boys because the boys were bullying the girls. So at the end of the day I was having more girls as friends than boys; and even the girls liked me because I was also siding with them and supporting them. So that was like my childhood days; I didn't have anyone to talk to, no one to communicate about why I am having feelings like this, I thought maybe I am the only one or it is a passing phase and that everything will be okay once I get married and I did get married to a girl - a princess - but unfortunately the marriage did not last because I had no attraction towards her and it ended up in a divorce just after 15 months due to non consummation of marriage,

See, as I was telling you, I had absolutely no clue about myself as a child - who am I or what am I - because there was no chance for communication and in those days there was no internet, mobile, social media or anything; nowadays at least the young generation has these facilities. And then to be born and brought up in a royal family itself is like being born in a prison, in a way I was actually a prisoner; many people think that you are royal and you have this advantage and facility, but we always think the grass is greener on the other side of the fence, but it is not. So it was not easy for me growing up and I had absolutely no clue that I was gay; I was just thinking maybe it is like a disease or a disorder or anything, and I voluntarily decided to get married. I thought that after marriage things will change; that my attraction towards the same sex will not be there anymore. The thing in India we need to understand is that even though in India there is a lot of homophobia and bigotry and everything; but our country encourages homo-social behaviour. And when I say 'encourages homosocial behaviour', even when I was young, as I told you I had so many girl friends , I was not allowed to meet my girlfriend in the absence of her mother. But if I had to meet a boyfriend, if I had to meet a guy who's my friend, he would be allowed to meet me and he could even come to my bedroom and nobody would question why he is here, because he is a boy and I am a boy. So what are we doing? We are encouraging homosocial behaviour. We are not encouraging heterosexual behaviour in this country. I am sure even in your college, things have changed but you see boys and boys flocking together and girls and girls flocking together, and that's fine, you know. That's not taken as a problem. But if a boy and a girl do anything together, immediately the authorities will be informed and " wow... What's this? What's happening? How can you allow a boy and a girl to be together?".

So we ourselves as society are to be blamed for encouraging homosocial behaviour since childhood and we don't encourage heterosocial behaviour. So how are we going to get a chance to discover ourselves? So I had no clue about myself, I got married and the first night itself as very well Ophrah has described, if you watch my Ophrah show you would know that she had very well described the agony the wife has to suffer, getting married to a guy whom she doesn't know he is gay and what happens after that. So most of the marriages which happens as said 80 percent, not all some who get married volunteerly also, but most of the marriages which happens in the gay community or even in the lesbian community, they are forced to get and in fact the lesbians are in the worse shit than in ours. I mean at least men have a little bit more say than women. I've got cases in in lesbian community, some of them were my clients, where the parents have gone to the extend of raping the girl to prove that she is not lesbian and she is a straight women. Can you imagine that! And her family members have done it. Her family member has forced sex with the girl who was lesbian to prove that she is not a lesbian. So these are the things which are happening in our own society and people are just turning a blind eye towards it. Nobody talks about it, nobody even comes out because there is always shame

and a lot of things attached to it. But you imagine how our lives are doing, lot of these marriages and parents absolutely don't care about it or they are scared, they are scared of the society that like "oh what will the other people say if we don't get them married." Yeah I agree parents have their responsibility, but parents also should understand the child's needs and try to understand and love the child the way he or she is, instead of forcing them or torturing them and exploiting them.

> 'I broke my news on 14th March 2006. It was definitely a big earthquake and it shook a lot of people'

Yeah, so sir when the news broke about your sexuality, your preferences in 2006, reactions were polarising and you said that the day was like an earthquake whose tremors were held across the globe. Why do you say so, why do you feel so and also how difficult was that phase to come out openly and talk about your sexual preferences? Also how did the people of your hometown, your province react to that?

Yeah why I call it an earthquake is because I created history because before me nobody in a royal family has ever come out and spoken so publicly about their own sexuality because sexuality is kept private. Nobody speaks about it. Especially in a family like ours where we demands so much of respect and reputation and everything attached to that, nobody has even dared to speak about it in public, forget about coming out in public. Off course I did mention in my interview, I may be the first member to come out openly as gay but not the only one. There are several of us who are just hiding in the clothes. They don't want to come out because they are all scared of their reputation. So this was in fact an earthquake. So when I say it was an earthquake, the epicentre was Rajpitula, that's my town and the shock waves went right up to America. So it was an earthquake. You know, people now with the digital media and everything, the news travels very fast.The day I came out itself, I started getting calls from Newyork Times,

which is the world's most popular, most circulated newspaper in the world and I started getting calls from there. So imagine, the news has definitely spread from India to all over the world when I broke my news on 14th March 2006. So it was definitely a big earthquake and it shook a lot of people and kind of broke a lot of hearts and people were just shocked at how this has even happened.

So as we know the early Indian culture had queerness at it's core and we respected the homosexual culture as an essential part of our country itself. But it was the west and it's Victorian era lord's wish which turned Indians against the LGBTQ community. Ironically when you came out as a gay, it was the west, the hollywood and the international community which recognised your courage and your voice for the first time as you just mentioned. So how do you see the irony and also to add to it, after bringing international fame what was the response from your family and all those who turned against you before?

See I am sorry to say, but most of us in India, we are ashamed of our cultural heritage. I don't mind or saying this but most of the people they say "ooh, homosexuality never existed in this country. You guys are all westernised." I say I am not westernised, you guys are westernised because you all are not proud to be Indians, you all are not proud of the rich cultural heritage like just now you just mentioned in the introduction, we have Kamasutra, the world's oldest sex encyclopedia which was Indian. It was not a foreign written book. It was an Indian book and I have travelled the whole world, it is popular all over the world except India. It is very unfortunate. I don't know why we are so ashamed of our culture, I am very proud of my culture. I am Indian, I am proud to be Indian and I have always dressed as an Indian and you will never find me in western clothes. So I might be more Indian than any one else is and therefore it is the foreigners who are more fond of our culture than Indians. You look at anything, look at Sanskrit, look at yoga,look at

any Indian origin thing, it gets more popular out of the world than it gets in India. Why? Are we so shy of even looking at our history that we don't want to even think about these things? So it is the foreigners who are making India realise that please wake up, please look at your culture. Many people ask me why did people like Oprah and Sandy had to call you. Because there are the people who are reminding the Indians that you need to recognise, you need to be aware of your rich cultural heritage and you need to change your thoughts and mind processes and wake up and see. Dig your history and find out that India was one of the most liberal countries as regard sex was concerned in the world. And yet we are not imparting the basic sex education at schools. It's such a paradox. You know, it's such a paradox that when we even talk about the laws, you mentioned the law which was passed during colonial rule. Yes, we were ruled by the Britishers, fine. But didn't we get rid of them? We got rid of them in 1947. So much of efforts were put by the freedom fighters who has fought for India's independence including the transgender community. Let me bring this fact to you and it is a historical evidence we have. Transgenders were part of the army of Bahadur Shah Safar, the last Mughal emperor and in 1857, when the mutiny happened the transgender community, the hijra community has fought the war of independence. Tell me, how many of us even recognise them? We give awards to freedom fighters and so and so have got freedom.

Why hasn't anyone even thought of honouring the transgender community on the contrary we humiliate them, we shame them, we mock at them, we violate their human rights, that's what the country is doing to us for no fault of us. So coming back to this question, we should have laws based on our culture. Why do we have laws based on the British moralities? I cannot understand. Are we still their slaves? Are we scared of the Britishers that we still continue laws like 377 which was continued even after India got independence and the Indian Constitution is the best constitution of the world and that it was because of the Indian Constitution that we got our rights and we were seen and which gives equal rights to all citizens including us. We are also citizens of this country. We have the right to live, why has a foreigner reminded India? Why does Oprah have to remind India? Why do the Kardashians have to remind India and tell you that you knowyou need to give rights to your citizens? Why can't Indians themselves realize it? So that's the irony.

Yeah, sir moving forward, in your earlier interviews you have talked about how your family took you to a lot of doctors and bhabhas and then you opened up about your sexuality and they had this sort of thinking that it's a kind of disease and a mental illness that can be cured. From then to today, a lot of people think like that, the mentality hasn't

changed particularly talking about the bhabhas like Ramdev or Jaggi Vasudev,Shri Shri Ravishankar, and some some on the other point, they have made statement like curing homosexuality. How was your experience when you were subjected to that kind of treatment and what do you have to say to these people who think that it's kind of a disease and it can be cured?

See if you are specifically talking to me about any of the religious heads or leaders, no offence to anyone, I have had clients coming to me who are from extremely respected members of the religious leaders who have come out to me and told me that I am gay. And even female leaders also and you know why this happens, I asked one religious leader who is a highly respected individual. He is so respected that people wash his feet and drink that water. So just imagine, how respected he is and I asked him why did you come out to me. He said "Look I felt that I should come out to you because you have come out to the world and I thought that I should also come to you and the reason I took to religion is because I was forced to get married. My parents discovered my sexuality and I was forced to get married. I said I am not getting married

to anyone, I am not getting married to a boy, I am not getting married to a girl. I am renouncing the world and going away and that's how I have come to this position". But by becoming a religious leader his sexual orientation is not going to change. He is gay and he is going to remain gay. He is not going to become straight. So a lot of the religious leaders who are opposing us are hypocrites, I would say. Most of them are educated illiterate. Many of us are educated. We are double graduates, we are post graduates. But we are not literate. We are illiterate when it comes to homosexuality and issues of lgbt or we know about it and we just don't want to accept the truth. So I tell this people look, no religion teaches hypocrisy. You go to any religion of the world, all religions teach that you should accept the truth,you should be true, you should be honest to yourself and others. No religion teaches to hate a human being. No religion teaches inequality. So when you call yourself religious leaders please at least basic religious principles you should adopt in your life before pointing fingers at other people and judging somebody else when you don't have the knowledge about that person. So that is how we need to answer back to these people whosoever talks about us in this manner because they have not studied about us, they have

Justice N. Anand Venkatesh

not read. Now today you all have taken the trouble of inviting me and getting yourself educated on us. Tomorrow if somebody questions you, you have an answer. You are not educated illiterate. You are an educated literate person. You will be able to answer the questions but anyone who behaves in this manner has first to get them educated and then you can pass your comments, whatever you want to. These people whosoever talks about us in this manner, they have not studied about us. Today you all have taken the trouble of inviting me and getting yourself educated on us. Tomorrow if somebody questions you, you have an answer, you are not educated-illiterate, you are an educated-literate person; you will be able to answer questions. But anyone who behaves in this manner should first get themselves educated and then pass your comments, whatever you want to.

So, sir 'ignorance is no justification of any kind of discrimination,' this was actually a statement I admired a lot from the recent verdict by Judge Anand Venkatesh of the the Madras High Court, when he ruled in favor of a lesbian couple and moreover, further called for numerous reforms upholding the LGBTQ+ rights and moreover it was the 2018 judgement of the supreme court on September 6th, which really stands out As the biggest turning point in the LGBTQ+ community history in India. So, in this context what do you think is the role of Judiciary, and do you see a brighter future for the community, with regards to the legal procedures, results and the changes

I think fortunately for us the judicial system has become quite open and progressive and somebody who wants to learn or somebody who wants to like know more of it; and that's the reason why Justice Venkatesh, he took the opportunity of meeting the mental health

practitioners, meeting the community and understanding our issues and on that basis he was able to give such a historical judgement in the Madras High Court.He himself admitted that he's ignorant. So, similarly as I told you that this educated-illiterate thing will also apply to judges. They may be educated regarding the lawyer's concern. But they are illiterate as far as LGBTQ+ issues are concerned. And like Justice Venkatesh, I would expect those other members of the law fraternity also educate themselves on our issues before they pass any judgements because any kind of judgement could be biased and could be discriminatory and could be not justified towards the person who is fighting for it. I am very happy this has happened and there are lessons to be learnt. Other courts in India, for example, Delhi High Court is hearing the petition for same-sex women marriage, so I think that there also the judges ought to be sensitized about our issues and then they will be able to give us the just statement and I can give you example of the Delhi High Court judge who is retired now, Justice AP Shah who gave a ruling in our favor in 2009. Now, he was sensitized by none other than Justice Michael Kirby who was the first open the gay judge of the world and he's very good friend of mine. Justice Kirby is the judge in the Australian High Court and I am friends with him and even part of the biography which he has written. And he told me that when he came to India spoke to a lot of judges and lawyers of India when he was invited here and one of them was Justice AP Shah. It just happened that Justice Shah happened to be sitting in the Delhi High Court when the ruling came in our favor. See how judgements are given and justice is given by the judges. because they have understood our issues and after that have made their judgments.

Sir, my next question to you is according to you how inclusive do you think are the queer movements that take place in India and what measures do you think should be taken to make them more inclusive and not to sort of restrict it to the elite class and make it more inclusive further people who are from the religious or caste minorities and from the differently abled class?

So, I think we need to create as many allies as possible. Our movement can become strong if there is a combination of activists and allies, and when I say allies, allies are all those people who are not from the LGBTQ+ community. For example, you all the students and you are the best allies we could ever have because you are the youth of today and the future of tomorrow if you are able to understand our issues and educate yourself and thereby you are able to accept and understand us better; you would be able to be the future torchbearers and spread this awareness and education amongst the other people whenever or wherever you grow up and whatever position you take. That will be the right way to take this LGBTQ+ movement forward. The movement doesn't just become strong just with the community. We definitely need allies. You see any movement whether it's a woman's right moment or an animal rights movement or any movement is there even for example you see the black movement in USA. It has got support from the whites. You see in the olden days the blacks were discriminated and the whites came forward and supported the blacks and the people of color and that's how the discrimination got reduced and their movement became strong. That's why, these allies, I keep repeating myself, it is through allies that we would be able to mainstream issues in the society and that's very important.

Yes sir, since you mentioned allies, according to the Ministry of health and family welfare assessment in 2012 the population of LGBTQ community in India stands at around 2.5 million and I think as per many other activist's assessments it's around even 10% of the population of India. But it moreover brings us to the conclusion that the majority of the people viewing this interview right now will be heterosexuals and cisgenders. So, what real changes can we bring in as you mentioned the allies, heterosexual allies, the cisgender allies, so what change can be bringing in your real life and what true support can we provide to you in practical terms?

See, why did I make the statement and come out publicly about my sexuality? I could just have led a double life and sat at my Palace and enjoyed the luxuries of my royal status. But the reason I stepped out of my privacy and came out in the public, it's because I wanted to break the stereotypes. I wanted to break the silence. I wanted to open this Pandora's box which was closed all these years for an open discussion on issues like these which have been existing in a society but yet they have been considered a taboo and they are underground. Similarly, the more talk the more the silence is something which will be important for us to bring about any kind of change in the society. So, what you all can do, the people listening to us can do, can simply talk, you know, of course get educated about us first, find out about our issues, and talk. Just start a dialogue, "Hey, what do you think about gay?" "What is a gay?" Just have simple dialogues, you know, just keep talking about the issues. The more you will, see, for example, I'll give you an example of our own situation last year, we had Covid. In 2019, who even knew what the word Covid or Corona was? It came in 2020 and we had to face it, we couldn't run away from it and we started talking about it. Now we are trying to protect ourselves by using masks and sanitizers, whatever we are doing, at least we have started talking about it and we are now preventing it and we are managing to take precautions. So similarly, we need to talk about these issues, and it doesn't matter if people get negative feedback and it doesn't matter if there is a negative debate

happening. At least let the debate happen. This talk has to be continuous. We have to keep talking about it because it's not that you talk now and then tomorrow you forget about it. You continuously need to engage in this topic. If you all are part of an educational institution, then have screenings. There are many films based on LGBTQ+ things and show them to the audience and get feedback on that. Thereby people will know about what is reality? What is the truth? And engage with organizations like ours. Now thankfully we have more than 150 organizations all over India working for the community. We are part of the network also.

> ## Key Lessons

Start a dialogue
Keep talking about the LGBTQ+ issues & let the debate happen.

Screenings
Screen LGBTQ+ films, take feedback.

Build connections
Engage with regional organisations and invite

I think each and every state of India hs at least one organization, one or two organizations. Get hold of the organizations like ours in your region and engage with the people, engage with the communities and invite them over to your institutions. Invite them, nowadays, it is easy to invite them because now you have zoom and call them, you don't have to be physically present also. You know, the pandemic has taught us many things. So, you can just have a zoom meeting and engage with people, let them let them share. See storytelling has a very big impact on people's minds. Call somebody to share their personal life, their personal journey to the audience. That will have a huge impact and open up a lot of people's mindsets and they would start thinking about so much that has happened in that person's life. They will start, not sympathizing, but empathizing with that person so that's what we want.

Sir in the last part of the interview I would like you to talk about Lakshya trust which you are engaged with and the kind of work you do to bring a positive change in lives of queer

people and also what's your vision for LGBTQ+ community in India?

Yeah, Lakshya trust was founded by me and some of my friends around 21 years back in the year 2000. The whole idea came up because my mentor Ashok Kavi who had guided me had started Humsafar Trust in Mumbai and the government that time was looking out for organizations like ours to partner with them for HIV. Because they were looking for vulnerable populations, the government decided that only the best way they could bring about HIV control is to join hands with vulnerable groups like ours and that we could have more effective control. So, in Gujarat there was no organization of this sort, so government of Gujarat got interested and thereby we started Lakshya and the first project we got was a government project under the Ministry of health and family welfare for HIV prevention and awareness amongst men having sex with men and the transgender population. That's how we began and it was a huge thing imagine getting government recognition in those days with Section 377 was being challenged and our homosexual act was criminal and in spite of that government funded us and supported us and it is still funding us after 20 years. We had a huge recognition from the government and we started off. We worked in three cities of Gujarat which are Vadodara, Surat and Rajkot. We had a very good, committed and dedicated staff of almost 300 people working for me. Most of them belong to the LGBTQ+ community and we have reached out to a population of more than 25,000 people across the state. Which is huge when you talk about the figures, the population figures. I mean with our small little attempt with our small capacity also, we've reached out to this huge population to actually come and take services from us and we are also providing mental health services, work for ageing population, we also like you mentioned in the beginning that most of us are married to women, so we are also working for the wives of the gay men, the first project of its kind which happened in India. And now we have a special project for the trans-community where we are taking care of the social entitlements, getting their Aadhaar cards, PAN cards and all made.the care and support of HIV positive Trans-persons also. And very recently again India created a history when the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India, announced

the first transgender shelter home of India to Lakshyat shelter home has started the cabinet minister, Mr. Thawar Chand Gehlot, himself inaugurated the shelter home in the city of Vadodara which is being hosted by Lakshya Trust. ThWe work for arted now. We are going to provide shelter, food and build their skills and help them get self-employment and also help them with their job opportunities so that they can get empowered. See in certain areas I must say the government is helping us with trans-rights, with trans-issues. Government is definitely supporting us. The Ministry of Health has got a community representative sitting at the Centre for issues. Even the Ministry of Social Justice has a transgender community representative. I have been appointed by the Government of Gujarat as representing the gay community and I also sit with the government. So there have been steps taken, we need to take more steps, we need to do a lot of advocacy. I always tell the government to always have a representative of us on your board. in your committee. Like how this judge had to take help from community members to give his judgement. Similarly, the government also comes under the category of educated-illiterate. They also need to get literate. The government officers themselves have come and told me that we don't know anything about you, please educate us. As we said, this is not their fault, this is ignorance. They need us and we are happy to be with them, and thereby we can also give job opportunities if they're employing us. That's what Lakshya has been doing and of course won several state awards, national awards and international awards. Because the government trusted us so we also made the government realize that they are now proud of us, of our work which we are doing.

Manvendra Singh Gohil

Click the link to watch the interview

HISTORY AND CULTURE

Naga Nationalism: A Historical Overview

The genesis of conflict between the Indian state and the Nagas requires a look at history. Since ancient times, Nagas were their own masters, not under any of the prevalent empires.....

The Play Is Over, Applaud!

We live a life of cultural dichotomy. In our public life, we learn to behave in a certain....

Homophobia: A Colonial Legacy

In fact, Britain itself didn't legally criminalise homosexuality until 1553. Prior to the Renaissance, it was quite a socially and legally acceptable concept across most of Europe....

NAGA NATIONALISM

While India has dealt with and continues to deal with a number of insurgencies, namely Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab and the Naxalite insurgencies, surprisingly, Naga military conflict and Naga Nationalism are the least talked about.
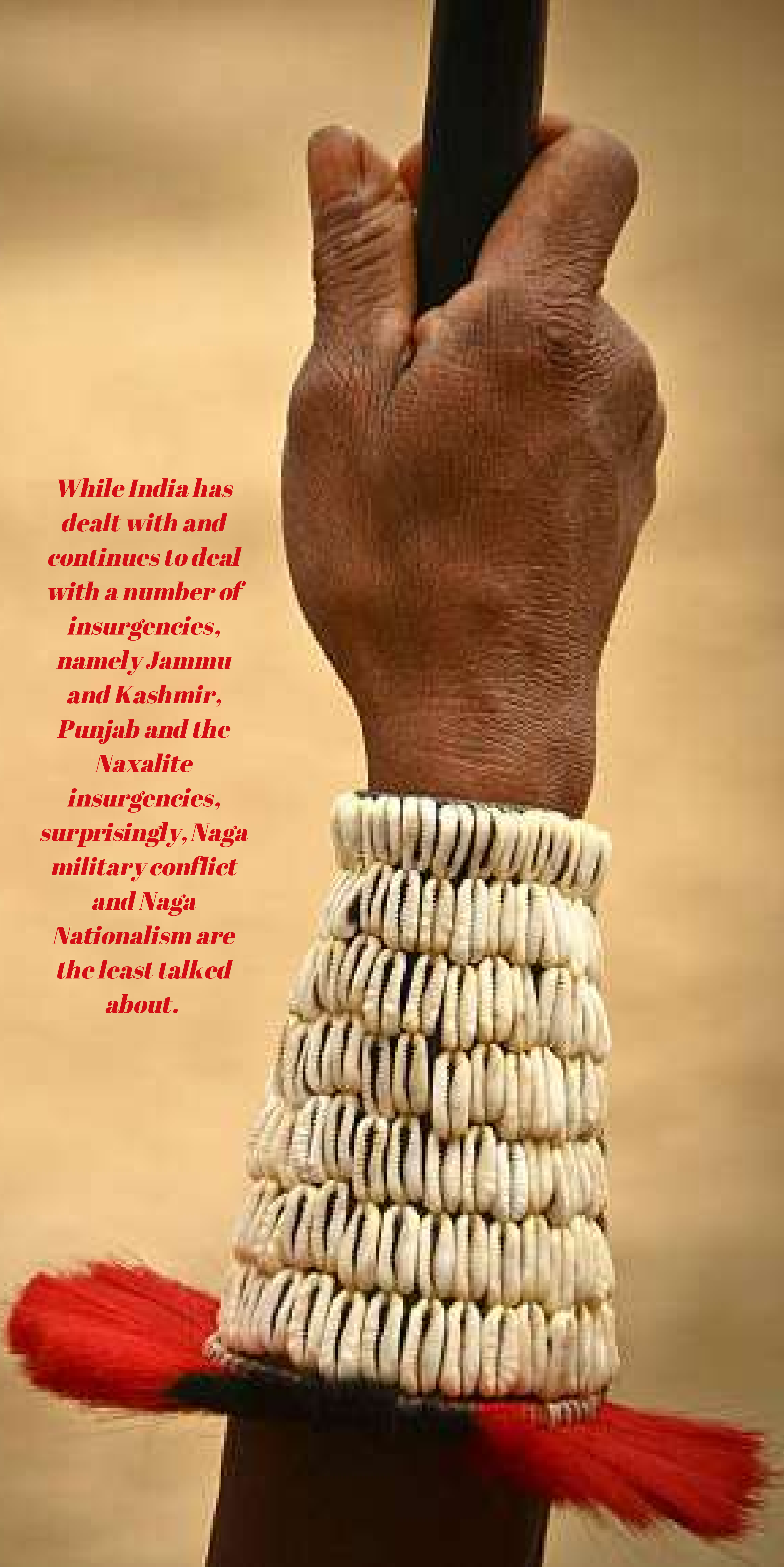
Chang Tribe Beating Tribal Drum, Nagaland,India

A Historical Overview

North East is often forgotten in Indian discourse; Naga Nationalism is one such instance.

Nishant Nanda

India is a country of many nations and great diversity of which Nagaland constitutes a small part. However, seldom would we have thought that the 'Naga Nationalism' of Naga people could develop into one of Asia's and the modern world's longest guerrilla armed confrontations. While India has dealt with and continues to deal with a number of insurgencies, namely Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab and the Naxalite insurgencies, surprisingly, Naga military conflict and Naga Nationalism are the least talked about.

Thus, this article aims to deal with how one of the longest armed struggles of the modern Indian State seems to be missing from the long tale of nationalism in India and does this imply that

Naga Nationalism has had no effect on the Republic of India's unity and stability. Moreover, it further aims to question whether Naga Nationalism is characterised solely by military confrontation or does it have a socio-cultural angle as well.

Nagas, inhabitants of the Indian state of Nagaland (a landlocked state in the North-Eastern part of the country), refer to a broad group of roughly 17 major tribes and sub-tribes, of Tibeto-Mongoloid origin. Every tribe has its own unique language and identity and exhibits different cultural traits. Some of the more prominent tribes are the Ao, Sema, Konyak and Angami, among many others. By every means - linguistically, culturally, religiously - the Nagas constitute a

minority in India (most of the Nagas are converted Christians, while Hinduism and Islam are the two most prominent religions in the rest of India). Most of the Naga tribes still practice their ancient and socio-cultural practices even today.

The genesis of conflict between the Indian state and the Nagas requires a look at history. Since ancient times, Nagas were their own masters, not under any of the prevalent empires. Even the *Ahoms,* a dynasty that ruled great parts of North-East India from the thirteenth to the nineteenth centuries, were not able to subdue the Naga tribes, partly due to

their Geographical location consisting of hills and dense forests and partly because most of the Nagas were feared, warring tribes. Their relationship could be best described as the Nagas paying tributes to the Ahom kings, while the Ahoms followed the policy of non-interference in the personal and internal matters of the Nagas. When the political clout of the Ahoms started to wane in the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries, the Nagas began to assert greater authority and stopped paying any homage or tributes. The political events happened such that the Ahoms were forced to sign the Treaty of Yandaboo (1826) with the British who annexed their territories.

The Nagas first came into contact with the British in 1832, when Capt. Jenkins marched into the Angami territory. This was followed by 10 expeditions by the British between 1835 and 1851, into the Naga territories to stop their raids in Assam (Ahom Territories). However, the British soon realised that the best way to govern the Nagas was to meddle as little as possible in their internal affairs. Finally, through repeated efforts, the British managed to capture Kohima, the state capital, in 1878 and the Naga Hills District was established in 1881. However, the policy to not interfere in the internal functioning of the tribes continued. Such policies of non-interference since ancient times meant that the Nagas were left isolated and relatively untouched by the outside world, not even

The **Angamis** are a major Naga ethnic group. Their territories include Kohima and Dimapur. They are also a recognised ethnic group in Manipur. The Angami region is divided into four- namely, Chakhro Angami, Northern Angami, Southern Angami and Western Angami. The former Eastern Angamis have separated and are now known as the Chakhesangs. Their ten-day harvest festival is called Sekrenyi which means sanctification festival.

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MAJOR
TRIB

The word **Khiamniungan** means "source of great waters" which is believed to be the place from where the early ancestors of Khiamniungan are said to have originated. They celebrate the Miu festival at the time of sowing and make offerings for a good harvest.

The word **Yimchunger** translates to "the ones who have reached their place of choice". Their traditional territory includes Tuensang and Kiphire districts in Nagaland and western areas of Burma.

The **Ao** Nagas belon
Mokokchung District of
They call themselves A
translates to "those who
across the Dikhu river. T
and Tsungremong are
annual festivals.

being aware of the Anti-British struggle and the Indian Independence Movement to a large extent.

The seeds of the conflict were sown in 1947, before India's independence from Britain. At the time, India was divided by the British in two ways – British Provinces (areas ruled by Britain directly) and the Princely States (whose rulers accepted suzerainty to the British crown). The British provinces were directly handed over to the Governments of India and Pakistan, depending on where they were situated, but the Princely States were given the option to join either India or Pakistan or even remain independent. Since the Naga Hills District was directly under British rule, they were handed over to India. This was resented by the Nagas who believed that the British could rule them since they actually subdued them, however, if they do not continue to govern them then the Nagas should be given the right to being

Konyak, a Naga people, are famous for their tattoos that cover their faces and hands. Facial tattoos are awarded for victory over an enemy. The Konyak festival of Aoleang falls in the first week of April. They are one of the last headhunting tribes.

their conversion to
...nity, the **Sümis** practised
...nting like other Naga peoples.
...lso practised a semi-contact
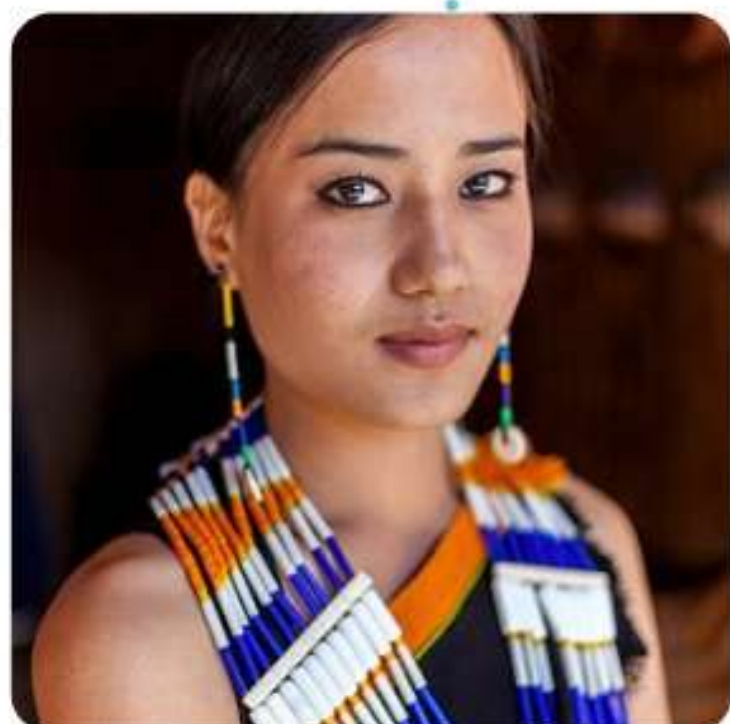...sport involving the use of
...e soles of the feet called Aki

The traditional **Phom** territory lies between the territories of Konyak, the Ao and that of the Chang. Yongnyah is the largest Phom village. They believe that their ancestors originated from stones. The tribe practices jhum cultivation. They bury their dead.

R NAGA

BES

The name "**Chakhesang**" is an acronym of the names of three tribes: the Chokri, Khezha and Sangtam. They reside in the Phek district of Nagaland. The Chakhesang language falls in the Naga group of the Tibeto-Burman languages.

...g to the
...Nagaland.
...*oer,* which
...came" from
...The Moatsu
...the main

governed by themselves. They echoed that Nagas were a 'separate nation' and not a part of India.

At the forefront of these demands of an independent country for the Nagas was the Naga National Council (NNC), formed in 1946. It traced its roots back to the Naga Club, established back in 1918, who even submitted a memorandum to the Simon Commission in 1929, emphasising the fact that if the British stopped governing them, then they should be allowed to rule themselves. It took 16 years for the Naga Club to become 'Naga Hills District Tribal

Council' in 1945, with the efforts of C.R.Pawsey, the Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills. This finally became the NNC, the political wing of the Naga struggles.

In late 1946, the NNC and its leaders began to assert their demands for their own independent country. Leaders like A.Z. Phizo and T.Sakhrie exchanged letters and conducted meetings with the Indian leadership headed by J.L. Nehru, however, they were left disappointed. They re-iterated that

even Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Indian Nation, agreed that the Nagas were a separate 'nation' and that their union with India should be voluntary (Singh 798-99). Another setback was the failure of the Nine-Point *Agreement* signed by both parties in 1947, whose terms remained ambiguous. India unilaterally called off the agreement in 1949, much to the anguish of the Nagas. Thus, the NNC, to claim political legitimacy, conducted a plebiscite in 1951, which showed that the Naga population was in favour of an independent nation with an overwhelming majority. Moreover, the NNC declared the Federal Government of Nagaland (FGN) a separate nation in 1956. Additionally, Phizo as the leader of the NNC established a military wing of the NNC, modelled on the Indian army in the early 1950s.

These events were handled with brutal crackdowns on the villages of those viewed as rebels by the Indian Government, which were resented by the common Nagas. Approximately 200,000 Nagas died in the conflict between 1952-1964. However, the tide soon turned towards peace with the first step being the creation of a separate state called Nagaland in December 1963. Moreover, a 'Peace Mission' headed by J.P.Narayan, a socialist and

social worker, along with Christian Missionaries, though failed, gave hope towards a more peaceful solution in the future. This led to the rise of civil groups like the NMA and the NBCC and an era of peace accords and treaties with the Shillong Accord of 1975 being the focal point. This was followed by peace efforts in the 1990s by various Indian Prime Ministers and several peace accords in the twenty-first century, with the 2001 and 2015 Accords being the most successful.

However, quite often the peace accords gave rise to factionalism and split within those claiming political legitimacy, which slowed the Naga Nationalism process. Those who opposed the peace treaties created factions of their own, primarily because of two reasons: first, the inter-tribal conflicts meant a lack of unity in the Nagas and that no one political actor could claim state legitimacy and secondly, the lack of institutions to prevent factionalism only accelerated the process. This led to the split of NNC in 1976 and further splits into NSCN-IM and NSCN-K.

Indian Government too was at fault since it failed to follow up on peace accords and is still not viewed as legitimate governing power. Moreover, an illicit economy

of war, Nagaland's proximity to porous international borders, dearth of employment opportunities and proud history of defying oppression has only made the task difficult for peaceful integration. There are also demands for 'Nagalim', uniting all the areas where Nagas live (including parts of the Indian states of Assam, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and North-western Myanmar), which the government has to deal with from time to time.

However, this brings me back to my original question, why is this struggle not talked about often. One of the prime reasons is the cultural differences between mainland India and Nagaland and hence, this struggle not being talked of. Mainland India's views are largely shaped by the colonial views of Nagas – savages, head-hunters, promiscuous women, etc. This leads to attacks on women in the mainland and the Nagas, in general being subjected to unceremonious taunts and comments. They feel like second-class citizens in their own countries Moreover, the Government of India also did not undertake sincere efforts to change this image and knowingly or unknowingly kept portraying the Nagas as primitive. Additionally, the religious differences and the preference of American/Western culture amongst the educated Naga youth, wedges this divide further. Lack of infrastructure also greatly hampers Nagaland's contact with the rest of the country and this also leads to the continuance of

Flag of naga nationalism

the existence of stereotypes and misrepresentations of the Nagas.

Thus, at the outset, Indian unity and stability do not seem to be impacted much by this prolonged Naga struggles, however, the reality on the ground is slightly different. The belief that everything is under control is just a supposition by the majority of Indians, who are caught unaware of the North-Eastern and Naga issue. Indian unity at its North-eastern fringes is weak and being tested still and while, the general populace hopes for peace, only time can tell how the reality will unfold.

Cock Match
by-Johann Zoffany

The Play is over, Applaud!

Aishwarya

The process of imitation and inflluence

In ancient Greece, there was a tradition of theatre in which the characters put on masks (called *persona* in Greek) to play the role of the desired character and as soon as the play was over, they put off the mask; which signified coming back to their 'true-self'.

We live a life of cultural dichotomy. In our public life, we **learn** to behave in a certain way; talk, eat and wear clothes in a particular way. however, on the other hand, when we are at our homes or anywhere, we need not be conscious about ourselves, most of us retreat to our natural self and become completely different people.

My grandfather used to tell me the story of my great grandfather, who used to be a government official in the colonial administration. In his office, he was a suited-booted man, who ate bread for breakfast, read-only English newspapers, quoted Shakespeare and Wordsworth in intellectual conversations, spoke impeccable English and thus,

was "more English in his ways than most of the Englishmen around him". But as soon as he came back from office, he hurried to take off the suit and settle comfortably in Dhoti-Kurta, recited *Sundarkand* from *Ramcharitmanas,* conversed happily in Bhojpuri and preferred to eat *Chiwra Dahi* and *Bati Chokha*. the day he got retired from service, was the last time he ever wore a suit and delivered a speech in English. From the very next day, he immersed himself into *Ramcharitmanas* and other Hindi literary texts and composed poems in Hindi and Bhojpuri about the beauty of '*Vasant Ritu*', the stories about *Chath Pooja* and the likes. While doing all this, he exuded a different kind of satisfaction and happiness, as if the '**play was over**' and he could go back to his true self and withdraw to the world which he had consciously excluded from his overt self all his life. This was nothing remarkable as for a vast number of Indians, especially of the elite and middle classes, this dichotomy was a way of life. Such a condition created an English 'high-culture, which needed to be embraced and adopted to progress in life and gradually this meant dissociation and loss of pride and love for one's own culture.

However, the end of colonialism did not mean the washing away of its consequences. It is because the epicentre of the colonial empire did not lie in physical or economic subjugation of the people but, "**their real strength lay in the colonization of minds",** as

stated by Thomas Babington Macaulay while introducing his "revolutionary education policy" in British Parliament.

The legacies of the past have a powerful momentum. They persist in myriad ways, affecting our language, beliefs, behaviour, self-esteem, creative expression, politics and everyday interactions.

Although extensive studies have been done for the economic and political effects of colonisation, the issue of cultural effects of colonisation has seldom held the significance it should hold in academic discourse. The effect of colonisation is very disruptive for the cultural consciousness and psyche of the colonised people and hence, today when we are struggling against

all the vestiges of subjugation, **the authentic re-appropriation of one's cultural space holds a significant place**.

However, it needs to be done without any kind of chauvinism or xenophobic anger. This task is quite challenging because even as we grapple with the consequences of the past, a new present is taking shape in the form of globalization. It has its own benefits but in the cultural realm, it's no less than "Neo-colonization".

It, in fact, is more pervasive, more intrusive, relentless and institutionalised. **This increasing "McDonaldisation" of culture is bulldozing our cultural diversity and we are gradually becoming mirror images of each other.** The renowned political commentator and author Thomas Friedman commented on this phenomenon saying that **"The world is (becoming increasingly) flat."**

It is important to understand that great cultural civilisations like India cannot become derivative, or reduce themselves to caricature or mimicry, measuring their progress solely by economic statistics. We were an example of civilisational excellence in the past, and we must endeavour to be the same again, capable of original and independent thinking.

"I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the culture of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any."

- Mahatma Gandhi
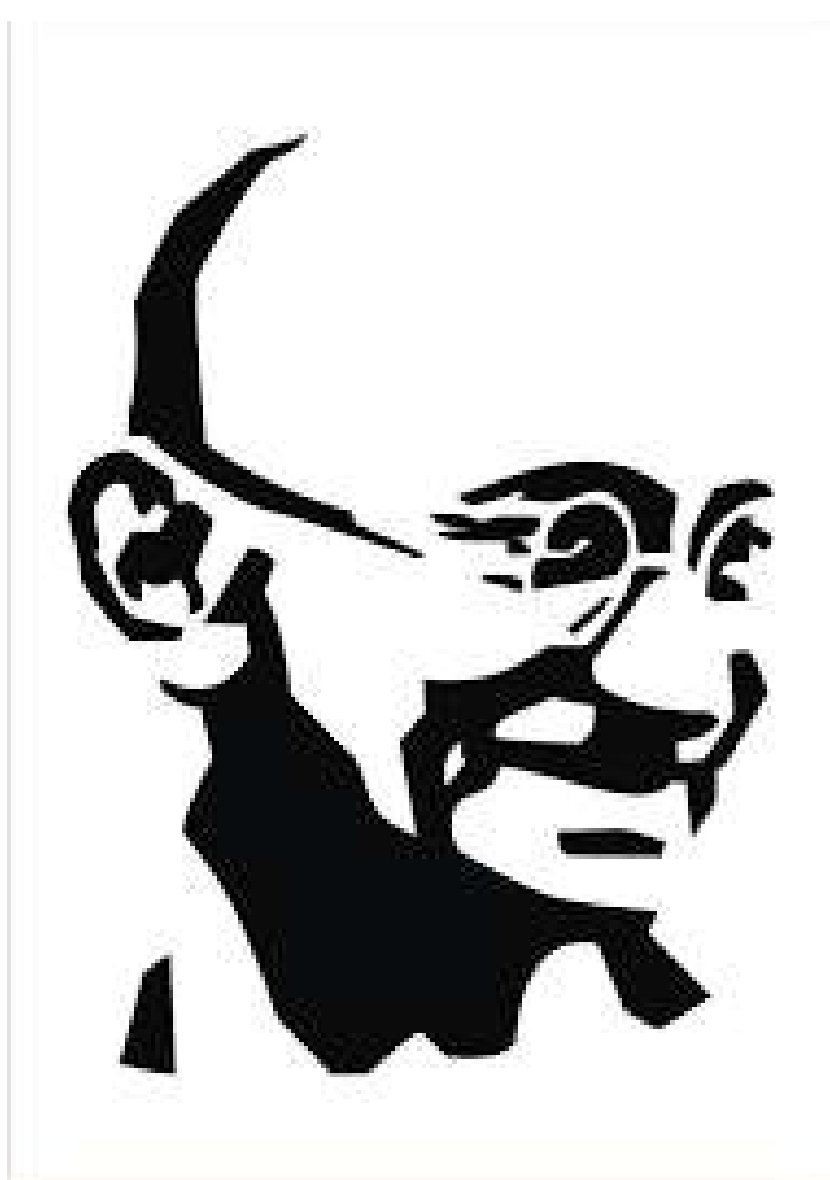
On History
Riya Jeph

What is true of Bhagwat Geeta is also valid for history- anyone can interpret it in multiple ways, and all readers can find their own truth. One might see history as a constant class struggle, while the other might see it as a gradual development towards legitimate social hierarchies. Perhaps, this is the reason why the study of history can sometimes be conflictual and polarising.

However, the truth remains that history is not necessarily a source of conflict unless one is hellbent on making it so. In my opinion, history is a great source of human

📷 *Trial of socretes*

enlightenment. It gives us good ideas, values and understanding. It is a guide for a good life, not merely for historians but others as well.

Historical catastrophes, which are savage beyond description and reasonability, angers us and frightens us. Events like Rape of Nanking and Kashmiri Pandit Exodus give us insight into how unreasonably brutish and unfair life could get. The demise that great men like Socrates, Jesus and Gandhi met irritates us, but at the same time warns us about the dangers of goodness and

truth. Even the ones with the best intentions for humanity were sacrificed at the hands of ordinary and insecure humans.

Those who derive wrong conclusions about the world have not studied history, or if they have, they chose to remain oblivious. Just like physical ailments, people suffer from historical ailments. It is very natural for humans to fall prey to narcissism and narrow mindedness. History can tame our ego as a species.

It makes us realise that our achievements as a generation are not in isolation. Each invention, achievement, or development of

today, stands on the social, economic and scientific foundation laid by generations who have walked on this planet before us. We thrive and exist on the collective genius of our forefathers.

History can evoke numerous reactions, but in the end, it has a positive and calming effect on our lives. It is a tool at our disposal as individuals and society. It consoles us, humbles us, and perhaps something more relevant to the present; it tells us — this too shall pass.

Homophobia: A Colonial Legacy?

Ipsita Bhaumik

On 6th September 2018, the Supreme Court of India in its historical verdict decriminalised homosexuality by reading down the colonial-era section 377 of the Indian Penal Code. This victory was not easily achieved in a largely conservative society like India. It took almost a quarter-century-long legal battle coupled with the sheer courage from the activists to mark this freedom after seven decades of Indian independence. The strongest opposition to this act of decriminalizing homosexuality in India was on the grounds that it went against the 'Indian Culture'. A World Bank Report (2014) showed that 41% of Indians would not want a homosexual neighbour and around 60% of Indians found the demand for a separate identity of the LGBTQI community irrational. It was claimed to be "imported" and an outcome of foreign influence in the young Indian minds.

However, taking into account the sources of our ancient history, one finds that homosexuality is not against what we call Indian culture. Rather it is very much at its core. Irrespective of the religion Indians followed, this concept was very much embedded , in society. In the land of *Kamasutra (4th Century A.D),* sexuality was not even a taboo. Even though homosexuality was not a widely practised norm, "all kinds of sexual practices coexisted side by side for centuries without being named such and such."

This makes us question: If "homosexuality" isn't imported, what is?

The answer is "Homophobia". Thanks to the White Man's Burden.

Out of the many things British exported to its colonies, the one that has rooted itself deep within, since centuries, is Section 377 under their Penal Code. Besides India, people from the LGBTQI community from almost all the former British colonies have been suffering a great deal due to this homophobic law. While the British themselves have struck it down in 1967, this post-colonial hangover is still being carried on by many of the Asian and African nations (former colonies) including Ghana, Barbados, Guyana, Pakistan, Kenya, Singapore etc.

In fact, Britain itself didn't legally criminalise homosexuality until 1553. Prior to the Renaissance, it was quite a socially and legally acceptable concept across most of Europe. Later when the Roman Catholic Church declared it as a 'sin', most of the kingdoms started declaring it illegal, going against which could incur the death penalty or severe punishments. Consequently, King Henry VIII of England, introduced the 'Buggery Act, 1553'.

As the name suggests, this law criminalised any kind of so-called "unnatural" sexual relationships including homosexuality. later the same monarch dismissed the Catholic Church when it

Thomas Babington Macaulay

didn't allow him to remarry. It was then Henry VIII created the Church of England, declared himself the monarch, the Head of the .

Anglican Church and allowed himself to remarry. That's how he legally ended up marrying six times. However, the 'Buggery Act' continued.

By the 19th century, the Sun of the British Kingdom was at its zenith under the reign of Queen

Victoria. As a matter of fact, the Victorian age was an age of great progress and of the consolidation of the powers of England. While on one hand, this age was marked by the transition from the old, orthodox doctrines and past traditions, on the other, it marked the emergence of a new future, a modern world. With the intellectual anarchy in place, Victorians preferred strong convictions and established beliefs. It was during this time that the British had not only colonised a quarter of the world surface but also reinforced their laws in the colonies they took over. In Britain, the sense of "Victorian morality" had already led to widespread conservatism leading to a sharp rise in prosecutions for illegal sexual acts.

However, most of the colonies didn't have a history of being hateful towards LGBTQI people. Rather, norms of homosexuality and matriarchy were widely practised in several African nations including present-day Uganda and Lesotho. In fact, Indian openness about these concepts made Victorian Englishmen view India as a backward and uncivilised society.

They took it as their responsibility to civilise these colonies by imposing their penal code. In 1861, Thomas Babington Macaulay introduced Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code in British India.

As a response to being considered uncivilised,"Indian Nationalists further tried to assert the country's respectability by adopting all the conservative Victorian attitudes towards their heteronormative tradition." It marked the beginning of how these nations immersed themselves into the exported conservative concept. This later degraded and unfurled to such an extent that while the British themselves got rid of its own law five decades ago, almost 30 former colonies still follow this law quite faithfully.

LGBTQ people from these countries live under the constant feeling of threat and are often subjected to mental and physical harassment and torture, even in the public. The fact cannot be denied that Education and Awareness play an important role in changing the mentality of people. Nonetheless, legal backup is one of the most potent drivers of change in society.

Fortunately, things have been changing for India gradually. A recent study shows that "between 1990 and 2020, the share of Indian respondents who believed 'homosexuality is never justifiable' fell from 89% to 24%—from an overwhelming majority to a

"A World Bank Report (2014) showed that 41% of Indians would not want a homosexual neighbour and around 60% of Indians found the demand for a separate identity of the LGBTQI community irrational."

clear minority". Thanks to the Indian Youth population. Young voters look forward to updating and modernising their country and playing leadership roles on the global stage. The pace with which the world is progressing, one can hope that things will change for the good worldwide very soon. ■

Of Monsters and Men

Ekaksh Handa

The French revolution stands as that one historical event that portrays men at their wisest and at their worst. People holding pens writing off the destinies of the enemies of the state, punishing them with gruesome death at the littlest of crimes is the legacy of the French radical revolution.

Some would say that the French public probably got influenced by the American ideas of freedom. It was also the works of thinkers like Jean-Paul Marat who influenced the public through literary mediums to take control. A national assembly was formed and on the 20th of June, 1789 in what is known as the Tennis Court Oath, men of education, lawyers like Maximilien Robespierre and Georges Danton gathered to give the people ideas about a revolution against the clearly incapable government.

At first, the revolution was dormant with few signs of violence. All the National Assembly really wanted was to possibly lessen or even strip the power off of the monarchical leader. But things got out of hand as the public started to get more and more insecure because of the growing fear of oppression. They started using violent methods of attack and

conquer. The first such incident was the storming of the Bastille on July 14, 1789, to arm the revolutionaries. On June 20, 1791, a new constitution was passed. The Radicals and the Moderates within the government separated as their ideas started to differ, the moderates, who consisted of people who believed that the king shouldn't be removed were opposed by the radicals, largely led by Robespierre and the ideas of Marat who wanted to overthrow the king. The radicals took matters into their own hands and overthrew the largely moderate government. King Louis XVI, was brought

Storming of the Bastille
by-Jean-Pierre Houël

on a trial in 1793 and was executed using a guillotine. The people who were found guilty by the radical courts usually consisted of the people who belonged to the upper classes back in the days of the monarchy and ever since the people had gotten control, they had been sending thousands of aristocrats to prison but the looming fear of a prison conspiracy, neighbouring nations' attacks and ambiguity for who's in control became a paranoia that resulted in a dark stain known as the September massacres of 1792.

Almost 1600 people, including women and children of the upper classes, were brutally slaughtered by the national

guard. This was by far the most violent incident of this revolution. People started questioning modern thought and whether freedom and morality can coexist. It gave monarchies like Britain an example to create for their general public. While also giving way to sophisticated political philosophies like Communism to emerge. The French revolution served as an inspiration to countries craving freedom like India and China. The atrocities certainly didn't end there as the leaders got more paranoid and eventually it all resulted in the reign of terror in 1793 which made revolutionary thought a punishable offence. It started making the people aware of their leader Robespierre's growing lunacy. It was around the time when Napoleon had gotten popular because of his involvement in the brave European wars which made him assume absolute control over the government thereby ending the revolution.

It was a wheel of fate as the revolution brought about the birth of democracy and after years of rage-fueled violence, ended up becoming a dictatorship. The ideas that were the backbone of this revolution were great but the people carrying these ideas were learned but terrible.

POLITICS
AND GOVERNANCE

Afghanistan: A New Moral Dilemma in Indian Diplomacy

Afghanistan, a landlocked country in South-Asia, ...

Israel's Moral Culpability

The world's history stands witness to what is now almost a century of an achingly jarring conflict.....

Applied Spirituality and Public Policy

The planet is facing multiple challenges due to unsustainable practices by human being....

Afghanistan: A new Dilemma in Indian Diplomacy

Soham Agarwal

"Afghanistan is a country, which is easy to invade, hard to conquer and impossible to rule over."

Afghanistan, a landlocked country in South-Asia, is situated at a strategically important location, connecting Middle Asia and West Asia with Indian subcontinent. It is often said, *"Afghanistan is a country, which is easy to invade, hard to conquer and impossible to rule over."*

After the intervention of the then USSR in Afghanistan in 1979, a second cold war of world history started resulting in an era of long mayhem in the country. With the withdrawal of Soviet troops in 1988-89 from Afghanistan, the second phase of struggle started. In 1995-96, the radical Islamist Pashtun Group- Taliban took over the administration of Afghanistan with the support of America and Pakistan. This Taliban forged its ties with Al-Qaeda and gave shelter to Osama Bin Laden. Taliban leader Mullah Omar and Osama Bin Laden jointly stated

giving a boost to terrorism in the world. The results were the attacks on American embassies in **Tanzania and Kenya in 1998**, destruction of **Buddha idols in Bamiyan** and the hijack of Indian passenger flight **IC-814**. The climax of this alliance was the attack of 9/11, in 2001 which trembled the entire world along with the USA. That was an attack on the heart and mind of the USA, and was the biggest attack on the USA after the Pearl Harbour attack by Japanese in 1945.

Bewildered and shaken by this attack, the US invaded Afghanistan and drove the Talibani forces out of power. AL-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden was also executed on 6th August 2011 by the US troops in Abbottabad, Pakistan. This seemed to be the end of this war but conflict continued. During this period of 2001-21, a

Osama bin Laden

Ashraf Ghani

a democratic government of President Hamid Karzai (2001-14) and then Ashraf Ghani (2014-till now) kept functioning in Afghanistan with the protective arm of the USA. But now the USA has decided to withdraw its troops from the country after a twenty year long 'forever war' costing the USA the lives of more than 2300 soldiers and more than 2 trillion dollars.

Withdrawal of Troops and Doha Peace Talks

Amid the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan, a long war is grinding to an end and consequences in Afghanistan are changing at a very fast pace.

On Feb, 29, 2020; the US and Taliban signed a historic peace agreement in Doha, Qatar, according to which:

Suhail Shaheen

S Jaishankar

- The USA would withdraw its troops by May,2021
- Taliban accepted to sever its ties with Al-Qaeda and ISIS.
- The peace talks with the current democratic government would continue.

Now, in a recent decision of the New Biden Administration, the date for military exit has been extended to September,11, 2021, marking the 20th anniversary of 9/11 attacks.

It is noteworthy here that India has been accepted as a major stakeholder in Afghanistan in the Doha Peace Talks. External Affairs Minister (EAM) S Jaishankar participated in the inaugural session of the intra-Afghan negotiations held in Doha on 12 September 2020 via VTC. EAM's participation was in response to an invitation extended to him by the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of the State of Qatar, H.E. Mohammad bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani.

Mr. Jaishankar has referred to millennia old relationship between the two countries and highlighted the role of India in the developmental projects in Afghanistan. The MEA also released a statement regarding the peace process in Afghanistan reading, "India believes any peace process must be *Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-controlled*, has to respect the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan."

Rapidly evolving dynamics and India:

As US troops are withdrawing and India is in a diplomatic conundrum regarding the future relationships with Afghanistan. India's key role in stabilising Afghanistan was reaffirmed through an exhaustive joint statement by Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar and the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the European Commission, Joseph Borrell, that asked Taliban to demonstrate a genuine commitment to lasting reconciliation as both New Delhi and EU ruled out any restoration of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Obviously, India is not going to support the Taliban for an Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. But should India ignore the Taliban again and break its ties with the Taliban? Experts say that it is right to alienate the Taliban but the situation is changing rapidly and the need of the hour is that India secure its national interests first.

As the date for withdrawal of the US led NATO forces from Afghanistan draws closer, events in Afghanistan are changing rapidly in a dramatic way. With the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan, the influence of the Taliban is increasing there. The Taliban has taken over several districts of Afghanistan in the past few weeks.

The Taliban taking over the Afghan government in the wake of American military exit is an imminent possibility that looms ahead.

This possible victory of the Taliban has worried India as well as other neighbouring countries including Pakistan. Pakistan's foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi said on 27th June 2021, "The country will shut its border in "national interest" with neighbouring Afghanistan if the Taliban takes over the country after the withdrawal of US troops from the region concludes." Pakistan is concerned about the refugee problem that might be generated after the Taliban take over Kabul. Apart from this, the support of Afghan-Taliban led extremist group- Tehrik-E-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) by the Pakistani Taliban may also give a setback to Pakistani efforts to come out from the Grey list of Financial Action Task Force (FATF). Hence at present, Pakistan also is not in favour of the upcoming Afghan government to be completely taken over by the Taliban and supports the representation of other ethnic groups in the administration.

India and Afghanistan have been in close ties since time immemorial. A beautiful image of **Kabuliwala Pathan** has always been etched in the minds of Indians. But after the Taliban came into power in 1996, Indian diplomats withdrew from Afghanistan and India neither recognized nor coordinated the Taliban rule in Kabul. But after the removal of Taliban, India again established diplomatic relations with its neighbour and since then it has invested more than 50 thousand crores INR for the developmental projects in Afghanistan like the construction of Chabahar Port, Zaranj Delaram highway, construction of Parliament in Kabul and the Salma Dam (Afghanistan India Partnership Dam) etc.

Apart from this, India has announced more than 150 projects in Afghanistan in November, 2020 alone. So India has had deep strategic, economic, cultural interests in its neighbouring country and to protect these interests is the need of the hour for India. Hence, strategic experts including Shri Ved Pratap Vaidik have suggested the Indian Government indulge in direct talks with Taliban.

In the last week of June, 2021, a senior Qatari diplomat Mutlaq bin Majed al-Qahtani, who was also involved in the Afghan peace process, claimed that Indian diplomats were engaged in talks with the Taliban deputy leader **Abdul Ghani Baradar**, confirming a development which was being widely speculated.

While the Indian MEA hasn't given any official reaction to this but speaking to journalists, MEA **Suhail** Shaheen said, "Pakistan is our neighbour, we have shared values and history. India is also our regional country. None can change one's neighbours or region. We must accept this reality and have peaceful coexistence. That is in the interest of all", in response to questions on how the Taliban viewed India's role in Afghanistan after the US .

withdrawal, and what their views were on the Kashmir issue.

After the removal of Taliban, India again established diplomatic relations with its neighbour and since then it has invested more than 50 thousand crores INR for the developmental projects in Afghanistan like the construction of Chabahar Port,

Clearly, India has effected, and witnessed, a major diplomatic and realistic shift in its foreign policy regarding Afghanistan. This new policy of India is in line with the new changing politics, strategic conditions and ground realities. India's direct involvement in the peace process will also give a boost to the future Afghan government. A stable, sovereign and violence free Afghanistan is mandatory for the peace and progress of this region.

Afghanistan Landscape

Israel's Moral Culpability

An Analysis

Mehak Aggarwal and Yatharth Dhingra

Jerusalem old city Western Wall with Israeli flag

Pomp, circumstance, aplomb, morality, wisdom—strip us humans of these higher desires, and what you'll be left with, is base instinct. The instinct of **self-preservation**, of protecting our own. Isn't that at the base of all our wants and desires as a species? The world's history stands witness to what is now almost a century of an achingly jarring conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians.The very elaborate list of wars involving the Israel-Palestine crisis—the Arab-Israeli wars, the Lebanon wars, and all the others,

have brought an indiscriminate amount of terror and loss to the civilians, to the extent that they are no longer even certain as to whether their homes will still be standing by dawn the next day or be a mere pile of rubble. What is intriguing is that in spite of the level of upheaval that the Israeli and Palestinian Arab citizens faced, they still democratically elected their representatives as those whom they knew were the organizers and initiators of such violence—Benjamin Nethanyahu and now Neftalli Bennet for the

Israelis, and Hamas for the Palestinians in the 2006 Palestine elections.

How many of us today are quick to condemn without ever bothering to appraise ourselves of the complete back-story? A whisper here, a whisper there, and it burgeons like wildfire—and most of us fall prey to the seduction of fallacious moral condemnation and herd conformity. Through the medium of this article, we've set out to explain that the

This article will attempt to inject some nuance into the matter, so as to prove our conviction that the Israelis are **not** morally culpable for their actions, as opposed to the views held by millions of people. The determination of the moral culpability of Israel, in the status quo, is highly subjective to people's individual and arbitrary determination of what makes an actor morally culpable for its actions. As a result, the majority of the opinions formed denounce Israel as morally culpable for its actions, simply after watching civilians dying on social media sites. Before we play juror and award Israel with a guilty verdict for their supposed moral culpability in the ongoing conflict, we must dig deeper and allow ourselves to face and understand a new, and quite understandably, a jarring prospect for most readers—the stance that stands somewhere in the grey space between black and white—**does the killing always make the killers monsters?** Going forward, we must abandon the ubiquitous belief that every action can be simplified and classified as intrinsically right or wrong and every actor as strictly good or evil. The faulty notion that Israel is to blame is premised on the **supposed** oppression existing in a vacuum, which it does not. There are structural historic reasons that have incited such a response by the Israelis, reasons that systematically shed them of any moral culpability for their actions.

MORAL CULPABILITY AND SELF DEFENCE

Moral culpability deals with the question of blameworthiness of an actor in undertaking a particular action, in accordance with the distinction between what is morally right and what is morally wrong. Here, it is imperative to note that morality as a concept exists on two levels—one is the **individual** level, and the other, **societal**. For instance, where a predominantly conservative right-wing society might consider it is

immoral for a woman to have multiple sexual partners, that woman, on an individual level, might consider her actions to be completely morally justified. Considering the propensity of individual morality to be used to justify almost any action, owing to its highly subjective and arbitrary nature, our arguments will

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Triggering conditions of the right to self-defence

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1. TRIGGERING CONDITIONS

Triggering conditions—the basis of determining whether it is morally permissible to engage in self-defence at all, depends on objective considerations and are unaffected by the defender's epistemic condition. That is to say, at any point in time, if an actor X is faced with a direct threat to its self-preservation due to any action undertaken by an actor Y, it is actor Y who has acted culpably. There is no reason why actor X should have to endure the risk to its self-preservation resulting from actor Y's wrongful acts. At that time, the triggering condition has been met and actor X has morally gained the right to self-defence.

2. RESTRICTIONS ON THE EXERCISE

Coming to the second aspect of the restrictions on the degree of exercise of the right to self-defence, the determination of whether an instance of self-defence is disproportionate, excessive, minimal, or proportionate has to take into account the defender's epistemic limitations. That is to say, if a threatener Y meets the triggering condition, which is objectively defined, the defender X using apparently disproportionate or even unnecessary force in error at the time due to its epistemic limitations will be morally justified, for, in that case, actor Y is, after all, the one who culpably placed actor X in such a position where judgments about necessity and proportionality had to be

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primarily be based on the morality of the society as a whole, that is, what is considered moral by the overarching societal norms.

On a societal level, self-defence

threat to its survival, it is morally justified for the actor to undertake action to obliterate that threat. Another interesting and integral factor to consider is the extent of the action undertaken by the actor to

Before WWI struck out, the Ottoman empire had territorial control over Palestine, with the demography consisting of Arabs and Jews. It included what we now call the Gaza strip, the West Bank, and Israel. The Ottoman Empire, however, suffered a cosmic blow in the war, and consequently, the territory of the state of Palestine went to the Allies and was awarded to the British rule, under what is popularly known as the British Mandate for Palestine, with approval from the League of Nations. This is the period in Palestinian history where all the bloodshed we witness today has its root.

The **British** entered into **2 binding agreements**:

1) The **McMahon–Hussein Correspondence (1915-16)**

This consisted of a series of letters wherein the Government of the United Kingdom agreed to recognize Arab independence in the states under British rule, in exchange for the Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire. This had under its purview the state of Palestine, as it was a territory of the British inhabited by the Arabs in heavy numbers.

2) The **Balfour Declaration (1917)**

THE ARTICLE

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Resources availed in the execution of that right on a state-wide level

ng condition is met, actor X's robability, and proportionality **ve**, whether or not they seem others' standards in the given he culpability of actor Y gives to act as deemed necessary,

to realise that there exists no f the degree of proportionality norally justified on a societal **societal morality has no the degree of self-defence**, s the action, in its entirety, . Thus, we see that once the met, the restrictions on the to be employed is purely individual considerations of use morality here has to idual concept, rather than a e arrive at a crossroads with morality, cannot exist on an y circumstance. roportionate force as a method ill be legally culpable for the lly culpable.

3. RESOURCE LIMITATION

In the final aspect of our moral culpability analysis, drawing a page from Darwin's evolutionary theory of 'survival of the fittest', we deal with the morality of resources availed for the execution of one's self-defence. The actors who're being alluded to are countries, so the degree of the exercise of the right to self-defence is not only **subjective** to epistemic limitations, but also to the resource limitations of the country. This becomes relevant once it is determined that actor X, who was threatened by actor Y, has engaged in a **disproportionately higher degree of self-defence** against actor Y to ensure its preservation, to the extent that it now becomes a threat to the self-preservation of actor Y. At that point, actor X is not morally culpable for this action, as it is **not acting out of a desire to issue a threat**, but rather on the basis of its own primal **instinct to defend itself** and its own. However, it cannot be denied that actor X's actions objectively meet the triggering conditions for actor Y, giving actor Y the right to engage in self-defence as well.
We thus arrive at the conclusion that when both actors X and Y have objectively gained the right to defend themselves against each other. If at that point, actor X disproportionately executes a much higher degree of self-defence than actor Y owing to its possession of resources superior to those with actor Y, actor X can in no way be held morally culpable for it.

is an exception to culpability from a moral, as well as a legal standpoint. The reasoning for this lies in the fact that when an actor reasonably believes that it faces a direct and

neutralise the threat, and this is the point where we distinguish moral culpability from legal culpability.

The "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine was announced. This move was undertaken by the British to enlist the Jews, then a small minority population, in the wider war against the Ottoman empire.

Even though both of these agreements had the propensity to have many different interpretations, the issue then necessarily became that Palestine was promised as the national state to both the Arabs and the Israelis by the British. At this point, the 6 ground realities of Israel after the end of WWI that need to be noted and contemplated are:

1.**Promised Land**- The Jewish people, under the Balfour Declaration of the British Mandate, were promised "a national home in Palestine."

2. **Place of Birth-** The land of Israel within Palestine wasn't just any piece of land where the Jews decided to settle on a whim, but rather, it constituted the birthplace of their very origin, which isn't the case with the Arabs.

3. **Minority Population**- The demographic distribution of Palestine was such that Arabs were the dominant inhabiting community, and Jews were then an exceedingly small population in comparison to the Arabs in Palestine.

4. **Arab Supremacy-** The Jews in

Palestine were not only surrounded by an Arab majority within Palestine, but even all of its neighbouring nations were chiefly Arab dominated, including Egypt, Transjordan, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen.

5. **Nazi Persecution of Jews**- This coincided with the time when the Nazis came into power in Germany and started indiscriminate and horrific persecution of the Jews in large numbers under their mandate to eradicate their very existence.

6. **Acceptance of the UN Partition plan**- Once the British mandate of Palestine was about to come to an end, the United Nations drew up and enacted a partition plan for Palestine wherein it announced the creation of two separate independent states for the Palestinian Arabs and the Palestinian Jews, with the city of Jerusalem as a *corpus separatum* (Latin for "separate entity") to be governed by a special international regime under UN trusteeship. The Jews accepted this plan in an attempt to settle the issue. However, the plan received vehement opposition from the Arabs and was repudiated by them.

What we're left with now is the simple **deductive conclusion** that the **Jews** then were a **small, vulnerable,** and **persecuted community**, with the **constant**

threat of becoming extinct, and faced by **opposition** in the Middle East which was comfortably **more than 10 times their own size**, and were engaged in a quest to regain their right to a land which wasn't only publicly **promised to them**, but was also the very **birthplace of Judaism**. Despite all of this, we conclude that it was the **Jews** who were **willing to bite the bullet** and agree to a small independent state as directed by the UN in the partition plan, whereas the **Arabs took up arms against** the Israelis the day following its enactment.

1ST ARAB-ISRAELI WAR

In spite of consistently mounting tensions between the Jews and Arabs under the British Mandate, it hadn't till then escalated into a full-fledged war. One day after the UN partition plan came into existence and Israel agreed to it, Palestinian Arabs and neighbouring Arab regions including Egypt, Syria, Yemen, Transjordan, and the others went to war with the Jews. And what was **the main intent** of the Arab Insurgency? It was to **permanently drive out the Jews from Palestine.** It was this very objective that propelled all subsequent Arab-Israeli conflicts.

Despite this tumultuous history, in a significant

attempt to promote peace with Palestine and to improve its national security, Israel undertook a **unilateral disengagement from the Gaza Strip in 2005**, wherein the IDF forces along with about 8,500 Jewish settlers were withdrawn. Contrary to the Israelis' optimistic beliefs, what has followed since then has only been **unmitigated tragedies,** with Hamas seizing full control of Gaza in light of the 2007 **civil war** between the Palestinian factions, planning covert and surreptitious **operations against Israel** from what henceforth became Hamas' operating base (the Gaza Strip), and initiating four devastatingly tragic wars, compelling Israel, together with Egypt, to impose a blockade in Gaza.

APPLICABILITY OF THE MORAL CULPABILITY & SELF DEFENCE ANALYSIS TO ISRAEL
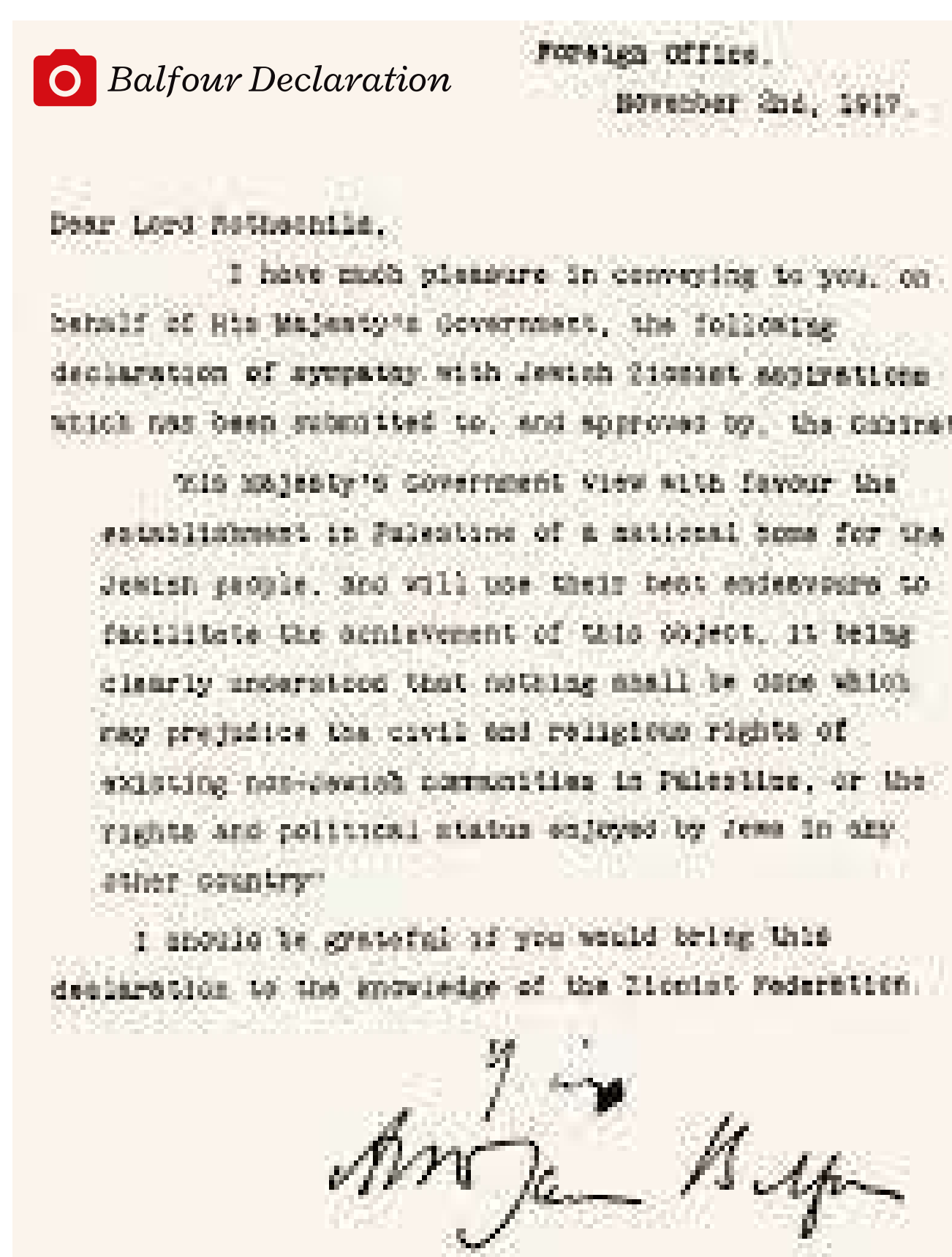
1. TRIGGERING CONDITION

From the day the Balfour Declaration was signed till today, the Palestinian Arab ideology has remained the elimination of the Jews from 'their land', the only difference having ensued being the tilting of resource availability in favour of the Jews, who've now risen through the ranks to become a force to be reckoned with in terms of military prowess and national defence systems. The **triggering condition** was first objectively **met by the Arabs** the moment they lit the match to the 1948

First Arab Israeli war
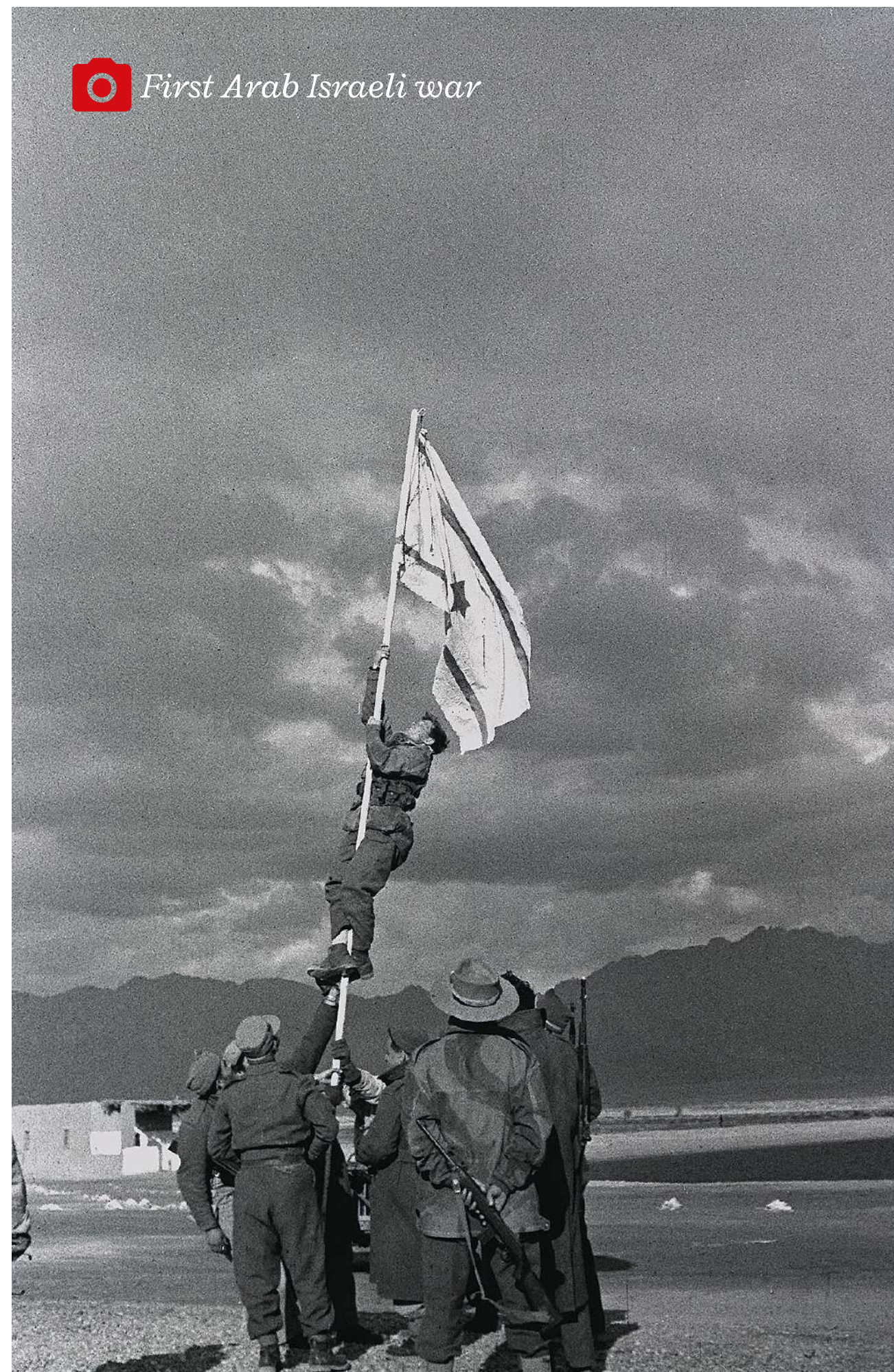
Arab–Israeli War, soiling the UN Partition Plan for Palestine, as well as in subsequent wars.

2. RESTRICTIONS ON THE EXERCISE

Bearing in mind the gruesome holocaust Jews were subjected to in recent history at the hands of Nazi Germany that wiped away 11 million of the Jewish people, the recurrence of such brutality against their people is still a possibility they have to contend

Balfour Declaration

with. By repeatedly taking steps against and inciting a war to eradicate Israeli Jews despite their multitudinous attempts to reach peace, the triggering condition has been met by Arabs. Thus, as per our analysis, the degree of measures employed in self-defence are now subjective to Israel's beliefs and ideologies about necessity, probability, and proportionality of self-defence, in the absence of an objective societal metric to define the moral threshold for proportionality in acts of self-defence. Thus, Israel's actions cannot be determined as morally unjustified, because morality here is necessarily an individual concept, and not societal. This is also the primary reason for the fact that even if we have reached a phase in the status quo where the self-preservation of the Palestinian Arabs is now threatened, the Israelis are still not morally culpable for it.

CONCLUSION

The conflict between Israel and Palestine is an age-old one, and any attempt to simplify the tragedy to a single incident of violence would be a grave injustice. This turbulent history of the conflict is deeply entrenched in each actor's conduct. Israel is a country that is held to the same standards of conduct as the rest of the

developed and progressive world by most, but doing so is unfair because the fact that rings true is that Israel is currently in an idiomatic position—one that is of power, and is yet also one of vulnerability due to its **unique placement** and the history of its people. The world has been no stranger to the fall of powerful nations in the past, and neither have Jews to that of their people; in an attempt to counter the ever-present threat to its existence, Israel defends itself to the best of its capability. Compulsion precedes what is considered intrinsically morally wrong, thus stripping an actor acting out of compulsion, of moral culpability for that act. For Israel, defending itself through targeted attacks on the Gaza Strip is **not a matter of choice** but one of **compulsion**, the **compulsion** to follow its **instinct of self-preservation** for its continued survival. And that, in our view, deserves no moral denunciation. ■

Aliyah; Jewish Migration

Applied Spirituality and Public Policy

Poorva Israni

An Idea for Good Governance

Mankind has witnessed unprecedented growth in the recent years of the 21st century. The planet is facing multiple challenges due to unsustainable practices by human beings, and the world is struggling to practice sustainable development. It is in this background that the context of this paper is set. It initially attempts to explain the nature of spirituality which stands at the mystical core of various religions, and it seeks an interconnectedness of spirituality, mysticism, and consciousness. Further, it examines how the understanding of spirituality and consciousness can be applied in the field of public policy. Advancing on these concepts, this paper deliberates on the opportunities and challenges of applying spirituality to resolve public policy issues.

Nature of Spirituality

Spirituality is seen to be a belief in something beyond the self. It

comprises a sense of association with something bigger than oneself. It may encompass religious traditions which are grounded in a higher power, in individual connection with the inner self, in other beings, and with the world at large. Of late, spirituality has come to be seen as a concept that has given room for many diverse outlooks. Christina Puchalski, an international leader who works at the intersection of spirituality and healthcare, defines spirituality as the aspect of humanity that attempts to seek the deeper meaning, purpose, and the experiential essence of the connectivity to self, to others, to nature, and to the sacred being. This description of spirituality demonstrates that spirituality is associated with large questions about one's existence and identity. It tends to explore the purpose of life by considering questions such as what is the meaning of an individual's existence and suffering?

How are human beings supposed to serve the world around them? What is the best practice to live a life? Furthermore, according to the authors of "The Spiritual Brain," Mario Beauregard and Denyse O'Leary, spirituality is an experience that can bring the experiencer in contact with the divine (Delagran, n.d.). This definition conditions the meaning of spirituality as it necessarily involves a link with a deity.

Against the slight differences in the above-mentioned definitions of spirituality, the meaning of

spirituality given by WC Roof can be observed. He states that spirituality encompasses four themes - a sense of mysticism and consciousness along with a source of values and ultimate meaning and purpose of life above oneself, a way of understanding, inner mindfulness, and personal integration. He articulates that spirituality is a universal human experience that cannot be separated from one's being (Roof, 1999). His thoughts appear rational because spirituality is indeed an inherent part of our innermost soul and our activities. Some people perceive spirituality as a religious experience that is associated with various places of

By conceding to the policy problems around us, we can release immense energy to elevate our consciousness and build a sustainable world.

Christine Puchalski

worship. Some individuals see spirituality as a deeper sense of aliveness and interconnection. This can be grasped by a relationship with the higher power, connecting to nature or art, or exploring the purpose of life. However, throughout one's life, spirituality can be an evolving concept which can take up different meanings based on the experiences of an individual. It can be in the form of questioning subjects such as the existence of a person and its afterlife or experiencing compassion for others. Along with this, spirituality may involve profound connections with the self and others, sensing happiness beyond material belongings, and the urge to turn the world into a better place.

Spirituality and Public Policy

One dimension of being a human is to have a vision about existential questions about life: Who we are? What is the purpose of our life? What do we truly have to care about? These existential questions can be regarded as the political dimension of spirituality. Perhaps, a place that is at the intersection of politics, policy issues, and spirituality is an experience that the majority of the world population is seeking. This is the place where individuals look for the possibilities to practice the power in their inner self for the world.

The relationship between politics, power, and spirituality is complex and challenging, but nevertheless, it is important and rapidly evolving. The collected literature at the intersection of policy and spirituality is limited, but this subject matter of policy and spirituality offers a lot of questions on policy issues—Does spirituality have anything to do with human development? Does spirituality hold the answer for how much consumption by an individual is sustainable for the world? Does spirituality have anything to offer on policy issues such as health, climate change, or conflict?

We live in the Anthropocene, where human actions have greatly impacted global ecosystems. Against this background, the future of the world lies in the hands of the people, and the commitment should especially lie within the younger generation (Banerji & Prasad, 2018). In spite of the

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the other international agreements on climate change and sustainability, ensuring sustainable development seems a distant dream. Alain Desvigne, a CEO of a leading European solar infrastructure investment company has often argued that the reason for the unsuccessfulness of the SDGs is a lack of public responsibility. He further claims that spirituality and the evolution of consciousness are key to achieve the SDGs (Visseren-Hamakers, 2020). The manifestation of these two arguments can stand true in

elevating the citizen responsibility, both individually and collectively, towards a sustainable world. Sustainability is a concept that interrelates social, environmental, and economic concerns. It involves the need to attain a better balance between the above mentioned three concerns to ensure a better world for future generations to survive. In the contemporary world, sustainability has become central in shaping initiatives of

the government, corporations, non-profits towards social responsibility initiatives, mainly in environmental protection and carbon mitigation efforts.

The notion of sustainability was recognized in the 1980s, and since then the global awareness of sustainable development has been growing. In spite of the progression in adapting the concept of sustainability, actual tangible outcomes continue to fall short to achieve the objectives. In view of this, the position of India in the SDG Index can be considered. The SDG Index measures the progress of implementation of Sustainable Development Goals and targets across 166 nations. India stood at the 117th position in SDG Index 2020, and its stand exhibited significant challenges for the policymakers in achieving the SDGs. Some of the challenges include governance issues, poor implementation of the programs to fit the local context and political issues at the sub-national level (Sachs et al., 2021). One possible explanation of this setback in sustainability can be our

lack of sense of urgency. Humans need to realise that the challenges that we face today, such as overconsumption and climate change concerns, increasing social inequality, and poverty are one of the greatest challenges that humanity has faced. To realize the impact of these crises, and to work towards addressing the challenges, the evolution of consciousness is an absolute key. The evolution of all our individual and collective consciousness is central in making SDGs an absolute priority for individuals, organisations, and governments. This would help in creating a mindful and sustainable force, which is significant to identify the means to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs.

In the Indian context, bearing in mind the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Clean India mission) of the Indian government, the conceptual need of spirituality and consciousness within the people to support the government in achieving the policy objectives becomes crucial. The clean India mission is a step in the right direction to achieve SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation) and SDG 13 (climate action). It could be observed that spiritual development in individuals, in terms of taking care of their surroundings and being conscious of the environment greatly assisted in achieving the objectives of the Clean India mission in states like Indore and Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh. Likewise, the policy of the Indian government to put a

nationwide lockdown in the first wave of COVID-19 in March 2020 had a favourable impact in controlling the COVID-19 cases. This favourable impact is partially attributable to the consciousness of the individuals towards their responsibilities as citizens. Any mass level program that is mission-oriented should consider collective choices which can help in propagating collective actions.

Furthermore, policy challenges such as conflict resolution have a spiritual aspect. Every challenge

> **The evolution of all our individual and collective consciousness is central in making SDGs an absolute priority for individuals, organisations, and governments.**

of conflict and making peace needs a reflection of the stakeholders on the meaning and purpose of the conflict (Barker, 2007). In this light, it becomes significant for the stakeholders of the conflict to ask questions to themselves and others: What is the worth of the fight? What is the true opportunity here? What is the cost of the conflict? These questions have a spiritual dimension of life, which is central to the field of conflict resolution. This opens up prospects to have wisdom and delve into moving.

Picture depicting Swachh Bharat Mission

forward by making peace within the stakeholders and situation.

Opportunities and Challenges

The scholars have argued that applying spirituality to public policy is contradictory because spirituality is not utilitarian, and public policy underlies the utilitarian philosophy. Public policy is a tool to solve social problems arising due to coordination failures among the stakeholders. To solve the coordination failures, collection action is required where people take responsible action. In the process of acting responsibly, something spiritual comes into being. Hence, it can be stated that it is worth taking a positive perspective towards the intersection of spirituality and public policy.

The main challenge is to expand the collective consciousness based on everyone's individual consciousness. Thus, it becomes important to see what drives individual consciousness. Consciousness is a contextual concept. The evolution of consciousness depends on the thinking of our minds, and this is the reason why individuals need to regulate their thoughts and morals and have the power within to be present in their actions. Nevertheless, spirituality and consciousness have to be the core values to shape human life to take responsibility in society for the most pressing issues indicated in the SDGs. The interconnectedness of spirituality and public policy opens windows of opportunities to analyse the thoughts footprint of individuals so that the path can be paved for a sustainable world. The policy challenges in the domain of poverty, health, education, the environment cannot be addressed unless all the individuals address these challenges consciously and collectively.

Spiritual capital has a substantial share in building human capital.

Spiritual capital deals with the process of self-inquiry. It entails experiential questions relating to empowerment, wellbeing, health, emotions, educational beliefs, the carbon footprint of an individual, and the world as a whole. Customarily, spiritual capital is not considered while interpreting human capital. Promoting the practice of yoga, meditation, and exploring spiritual texts in institutions and organisations can be of great value to build the spiritual capital of society. It can help in inculcating responsible practices among human beings. It can aid in controlling undesirable societal practices such as corruption, conflict, and environmental encroachment.

Responsibility is central in order to achieve sustainability in all domains like environment, societal issues, or business. Therefore, the linkage between spirituality, consciousness, and responsibility needs to be acknowledged by each individual. If all the people imagined what could be created together through applying spirituality to public policy issues, it can be soon known that everything an individual needs to make its contribution to the world is already within them. By conceding to the policy problems around us, we can release immense energy to elevate our consciousness and build a sustainable world. ∎

REMEMBERING THE BLACK DAY OF DEMOCRACY

25 JUNE 1975

It was its framed blank editorial, representing censorship by the Indira Gandhi government in the name of Emergency, which gained maximum attention and would go on to be remembered for years down the line. (Express Archive)
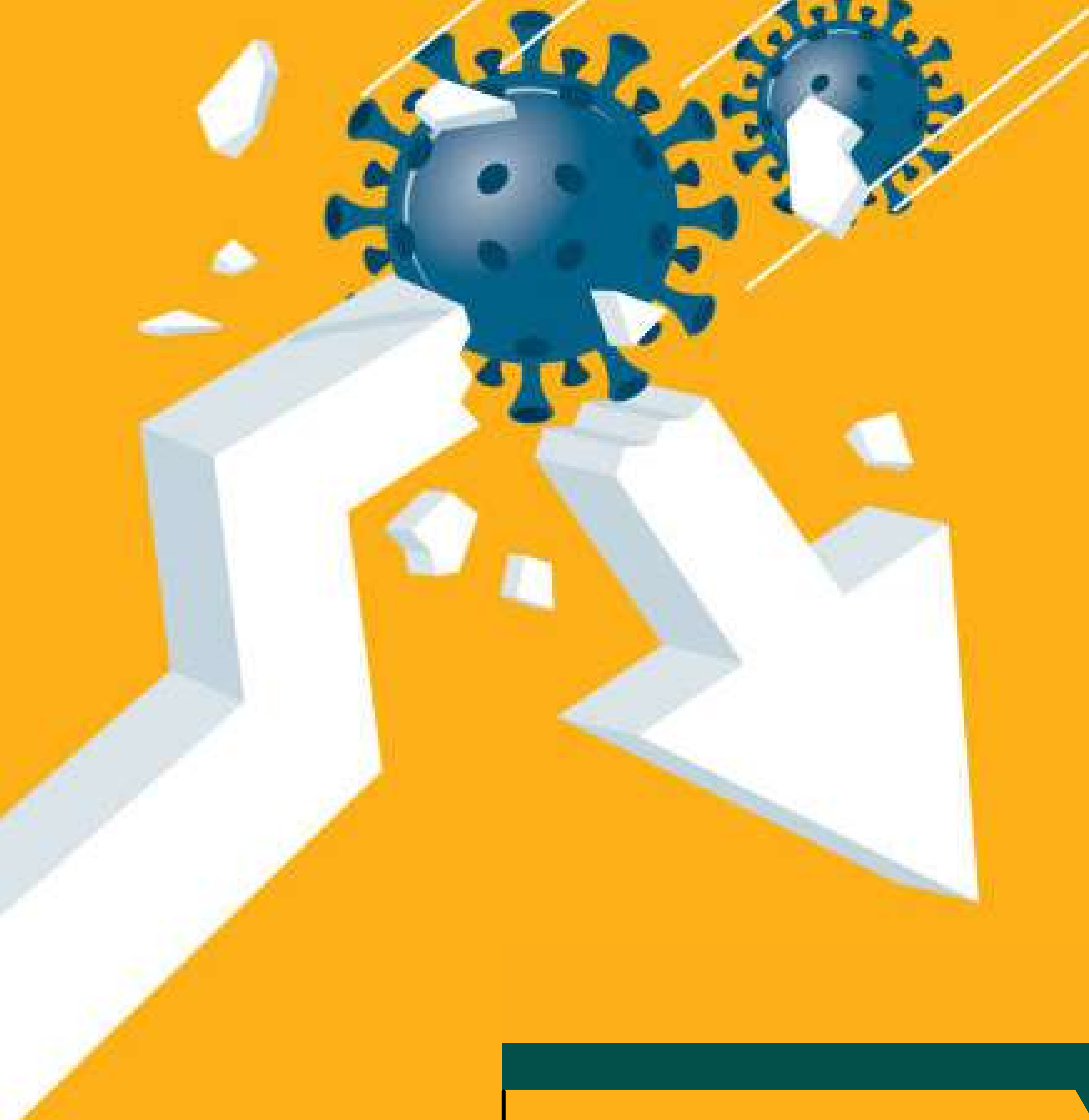
COVID ON LABOUR ECONOMY

India's labour market is very vulnerable and it was already very vulnerable even before the.....

FIAT CURRENCY: AN IMPENDING END?

The story of this problem dates back to 1944 with the Bretton Woods Conference...

POLITOON

By-Harikirat Singh

M-DOCUMENT FOR 2021

People will not lose confidence in India just because the fiscal deficit goes up....

ECONOMY

Labour migration during covid

COVID ON LABOUR ECONOMY

Rashi Kapoor

This article aims to explain the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on the labour market in the Indian economy, as the title suggests.

In December 2019 while Wuhan province in China was battling with what today is known as **Covid-19** or **Coronavirus**, the whole world was grappling with their problems, unaware of what lay ahead in their path. Coronavirus proliferated like a wildfire at an unprecedented rate around the globe, causing innumerable deaths. In a blink of an eye, the disease turned into a pandemic, and to cope up with this, countries imposed lockdowns, bringing in their own set of implications. While affecting various sectors, the sector that was hit the hardest was the economic sector under which the labour market has been deeply shaken. The International Monetary Fund (**IMF**) commented that *'it was the worst economic fallout since the Great depression.* Even the **developed countries** like the USA and European countries were blown away on how

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) commented that 'it was the worst economic fallout since the Great depression.

to deal with the falling economy. It's almost horrific to think about developing countries like India on how their economy and labour market have been affected by the Covid-19.

The widespread loss of jobs and incomes following the dual shock of pandemic and lockdown has generated much worry. Moreover, what puts the country in an even more grave concern is that the effects of these shocks are not uniform.

Broadly speaking, it is very obvious that the repercussions of this pandemic and lockdown will be harsh on the informal sector of workers in India, which mainly consists of casual labour and the self-employed. This specific group of workers are the ones less educated and...

....and engaged in low-paying, precarious and unstable work arrangements with almost negligible social security benefits. **Radhicka Kapoor,** a fellow at the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER), argues *"The unequal labour market in India would have seen a widening of disparities after Covid-19 struck. Those at the bottom, with few skills, limited education and without security, would have been affected the most; they are the ones in immediate need of support."*

Therefore, it is not wrong to say that the pre-existing inequalities in India's dualistic labour market, characterized by stark disparities between a miniscule proportion of the workforce that is engaged in the formal sector and a disproportionately large proportion engaged in the informal sector, will take a leap forward.

SECTORAL DIFFERENCE IN LABOUR MARKET:
Education & Profession

To understand the falling impact on the labour market, it is necessary to first understand the labour market and their sectoral differences based on various parameters.

India has one of the biggest informal job sectors in the world, with a very small formal employment sector. In the 2018-19 PLFS data available, 52% of the workforce was classified as self-employed.

Over 95% of the self-employed were either those who operate their enterprises without hired people or those who hire labour. Around 24% of the workforce comes under the category of **casual workers**, with no security of income or any social security benefits. Both casual workers and self-employed lie outside the ambit of the employer-employee relationship that provides employment-linked benefits. The rest 24% of the workforce is absorbed by **Regular waged salaried workers (RWS).** This group of workers receives salary regularly, which directly puts them in a better condition than casual or self-employed workers. Social security benefits constitute provident fund, pension, gratuity, health care, and maternity benefits. According to PLFS 2018-19, only 40.6% of RWS workers have had access to at least one social security. Although, one thing of utter importance that can intrigue the reader is that according to PLFS data of 2018-19, only 4.2% of the total workforce have jobs that provide them with the maximum social security benefits, which can be actually categorised as a **'good job'**. This perfectly shows that even being in the RWS sector, workers are deprived of their benefits. Even though the definition of regular formal employment involving having access to just one social security benefit is already a very relaxed one.

Still, RWS workers are offered higher earnings with better conditions. This is the privileged section of the society that can shift their work to their home. Casual labour and self-employed, on the other hand, have a juxtaposed condition, making them more financially vulnerable with the onset of pandemic and lockdown. They are the ones often less educated and their work usually cannot be shifted to home. Especially, casual labour who earn daily will be the ones suffering the most. A sudden loss of income will bring catastrophic changes, uprooting them more into poverty. This section of the workforce particularly lay in the lower sections of a pyramid. (fig 1.1)

The given pyramid explains the basic forms of employment in proper hierarchical order, according to their befitting conditions. Regular formal jobs are very limited and are usually held by those who are first off the blocks in the education ladder. In the PLFS 2018-19 data,(fig 1.2) people in regular formal jobs were majorly graduates and postgraduates.

On the contrary, people engaged in casual work and self-employment have very low levels of education. 25.7% of the self-employed are not even literate and 80% have only secondary education or even below! Casual workers are in even more deteriorated condition

in terms of education, as 37% of them are not literate and 90% of them have secondary education or even below. Thus, this data proves that people with low education are predominantly engaged in poor work arrangements which do not fetch them enough income and therefore, are likely to have to bear the disproportionate brunt of the dual shock of pandemic and lockdown.

Agriculture accounts for 42% of total employment. The three sectors which cumulatively account for approximately 36% of total employment are manufacturing, construction and trade, and hotels & restaurants. These sectors have been majorly hit by the pandemic and the subsequent containment policies, due to both supply-side disruptions and a fall or collapse of demand. Adoption of physical distancing has only made it worse as it did not only affect the consumption patterns but also the services provided by these industries. These sectors, especially, are a very prominent source of employment for the less educated. Sectors like manufacturing, construction, trade, and hotels & restaurants are the type of industries that majorly have a casual and informal type of employment. More than half
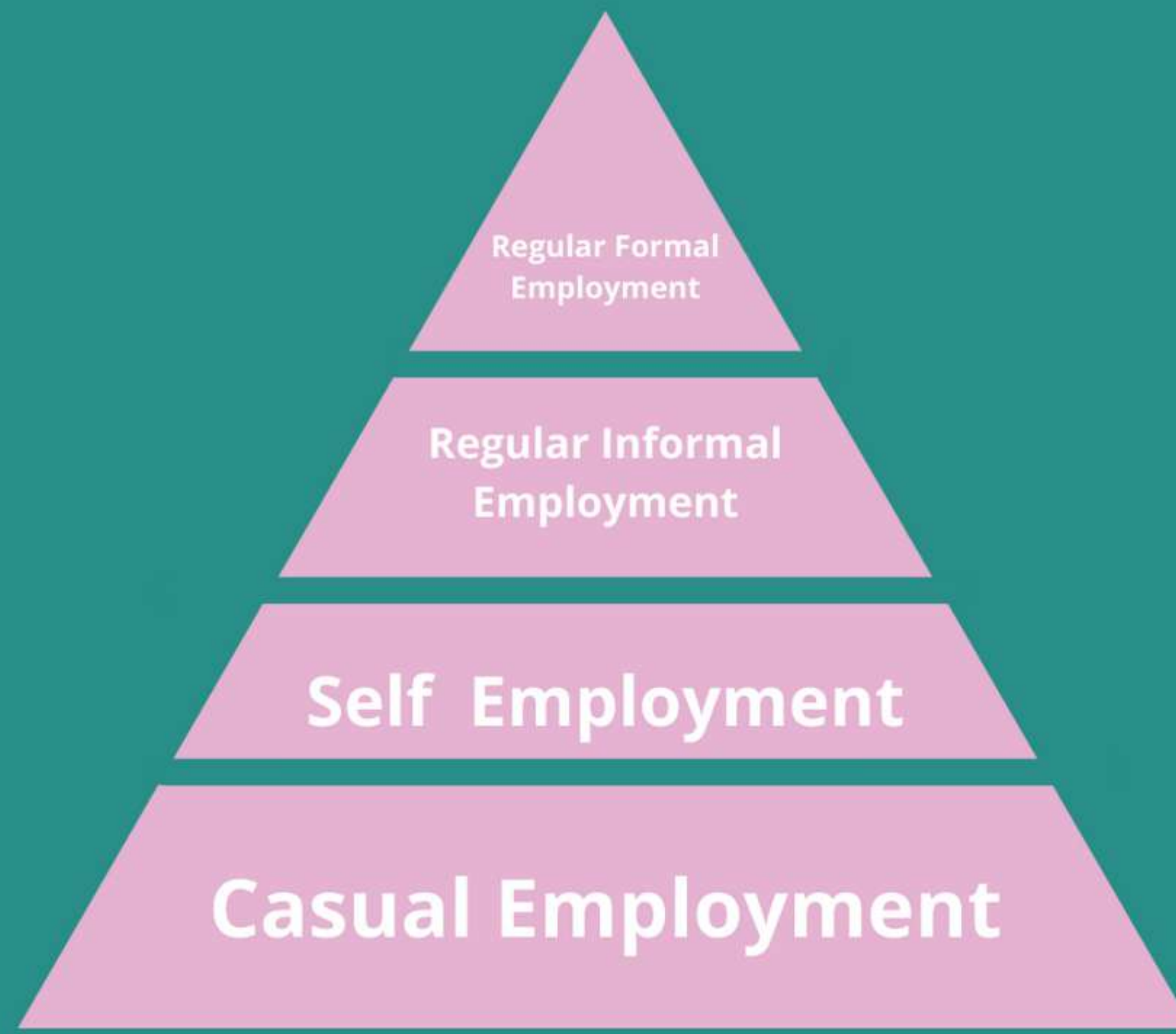
STATISTICS

fig. 1.1

fig 1.2

fig 1.3

Classification (NIC 2008)	Not literate	Literate without formal education	Literate Below Primary	Primary	Middle	Secondar
Agriculture	37.50	0.42	6.80	15.21	19.77	9.96
Mining & Quarrying	20.91	0.07	10.31	12.02	21.33	12.54
Manufacturing	14.00	0.33	5.70	15.79	25.71	14.62
Electricity, Gas & Water supply	13.33	0.35	3.00	8.15	18.29	15.08
Construction	27.72	0.62	6.60	18.35	25.86	11.25
Trade, Hotel & restaurants	11.13	0.30	4.55	11.98	24.73	17.09
Transport, Storage & Communication	9.94	0.33	3.85	12.97	25.58	15.05
Finance, Business, Real Estate	3.00	0.12	1.35	4.61	11.71	10.41
Health, Education, Public Admin	10.30	0.21	2.68	7.31	13.67	11.45
Total	24.30	0.38	5.56	13.88	21.28	12.09

Source: Kapoor (2020) based on PLFS 2018–19 u

fig 1.4

Education level	Regular Formal	Regular Informal	RWS	Self Employed	C
Not literate	2.29	11.79	7.93	25.70	
Literate without formal eduction	0.04	0.19	0.13	0.43	
Literate below Primary	1.25	3.90	2.83	5.67	
Primary	3.28	12.66	8.85	14.20	
Middle	10.52	23.57	18.27	22.46	
Secondary	10.99	15.00	13.37	12.99	
Higher Secondary	20.16	14.79	16.97	10.06	
Graduates and above	51.48	18.09	31.65	8.51	
Total	100	100	100	100	

Source: PLFS unit data (2018-19)
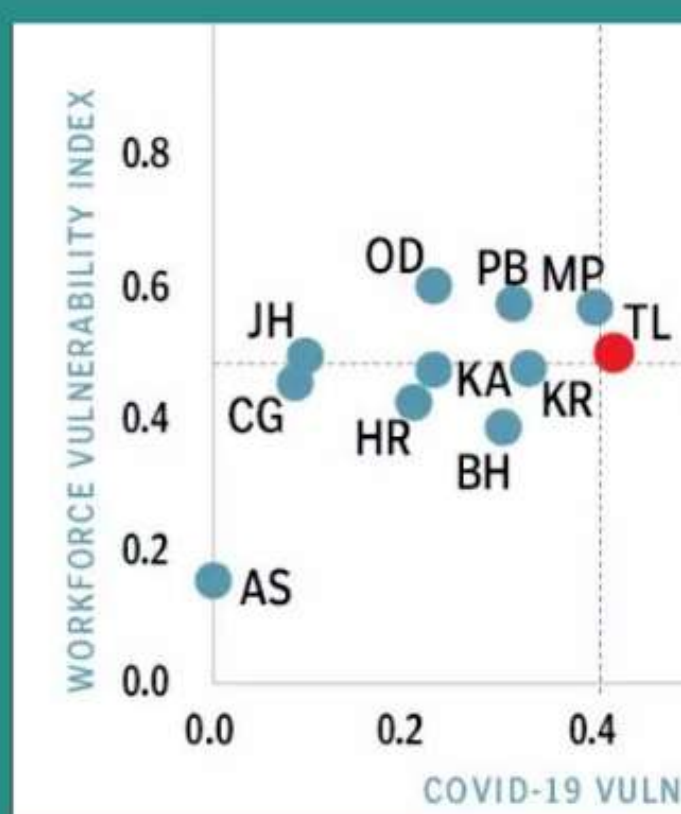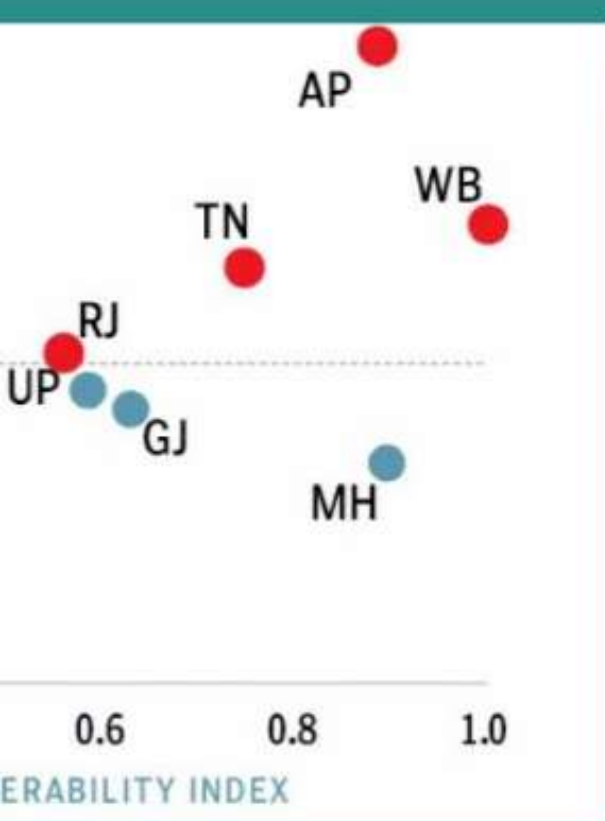

fig 1.5

of the population working in these sectors just have secondary education or even below (fig 1.3).

The crux, here, is that these sectors majorly employ in the labour market but at a cost of precarious work...

engagements, low pay and no job stability making the people employed there more vulnerable to the adverse effects of the pandemic. Juxtaposing, high-end services like **finance, business, real estate, and public administration, health & education constitute** a higher share of regular formal employment. These sectors are better off than other sectors in terms of employment, job stability, and wages. Casual workers in these sectors are very minuscule. However, the irony is that the contribution of these sectors to total employment is 14% and the jobs generated here are majorly bagged by those at the top of the education ladder.

Tabel 1.3 clearly states the kind of educational qualification that people usually have across different professions. Agriculture is one

of the most crucial sectors of employment in a country like India. Despite being of the most prominent sectors, it doesn't provide the required quality of pay or job stability.

VULNERABILITY OF INDIA'S LABOUR MARKET:

India's labour market is very vulnerable and it was already very vulnerable even before the pandemic. The PLFS reports prove that the unemployment rate was rising even before the pandemic started. The viral infection just gave it a knock-on effect. ILO defines a worker as vulnerable if
a.) The earnings from the employment are not able to lift the person & his/her household into poverty
b.) The economic activities carried out by workers are not able to provide them any social safety net in terms of social security benefits, paid leaves, formal contracts and so on
c.) Combination of both a and b. These types of workers, according to ILO, are the most vulnerable to any shock and their employment cannot be counted as 'decent work'.

India proves to put its workers in a state of excruciating problems as they'll be the ones primarily affected and if they work, they'll be in high chances to catch the infection. **CMIE** estimated that India will bear the loss of **122 million** in April 2020 with most of these losses accounted for by small traders, hawkers, mainly those who fall into the category of casual

workers and self-employed. **ILO** (2020) estimates that in India about 400 million workers in the informal economy are at risk of falling deeper into poverty. Estimates of the World **Bank** suggest that the Covid-19 shock will push **12 million** people in India into extreme poverty i.e those living on less than $1.90 per day. **Radhicka Kapoor** says "*In a developing country like India, where there is no unemployment insurance, even at the best of times, the poor and uneducated do not*

Estimates of World Bank suggest that the Covid-19 shock will push 12 million people into extreme poverty

have the financial wherewithal to remain unemployed."

HIGH, MEDIUM & LOW RISK WORKERS:

Workers who don't have the privilege to shift their work to home can be classified as **risky**, as the concept of social distancing does not apply to them.

For instance, a barber is a high-risk occupation, as social distancing cannot be maintained and further physical proximity with the client also leads to exposure.

Workers in high-risk occupations are always going to be more exposed to infections by virtue of their jobs requiring them to deal with the public. Then there are workers whose jobs are low or medium-risk jobs, but they face the risk of job loss because they cannot go out and work. Almost half of the workforce in India is employed in medium or high-risk jobs. The share of workers in these jobs is higher in rural areas than in urban areas. Women are comparatively more in jobs that can be shifted to work from home which makes it a little less impactful for them. Hence, returning to work post- lockdown depends on the risk factor associated with the job and it is likely to be slower for workers in high-risk jobs.

DISUNIFORM GEOGRAPHICAL IMPACT OF UNEMPLOYMENT:

The present scenario has created an even more disheartening situation for the country as it has not impacted all the states in India uniformly, which will make it tough to analyse the brunt of the problem and the consequent solution. Differences across the state economies mean each state is facing a different type of crisis. 8 states had a higher share of red zone districts, which have the most active cases and stringent restrictions than the national average(fig 1.4). Four of these states are- Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh & Telangana. These states account for almost 60% of

of India's GDP and are crucially hit ultimately affecting India's GDP growth. The workforce in these states is largely casual labour and self-employed, which make these states even more vulnerable to job losses. Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal & Tamil Nadu are the most vulnerable to job losses, given their higher share of informal workers.

The dis-uniformity can also be seen very clearly if we see them through the lens of urban and rural areas of India(fig 1.5). In rural areas, MGNREGA has emerged as a critical safety net. In June 2020, 32.2 million households were employed under the programme, causing an overall decline in the unemployment rate. There is no such fallback employment option as MGNREGA in urban areas. Moreover, the cost of living is higher there than in rural areas. CMIE data on employment rate show that the rural rate has bounced back to pre-covid levels while the urban rate is still stuttering even after a decent recovery of the unlock.

EFFECTS ON MIGRATORY LABOUR:

The dual shock of pandemic and the lockdown has created a situation of **chronic crises** for **migrant workers** in India. More than 300 migrant workers died due to lockdown, with reasons ranging from starvation, suicides, exhaustion, road accidents, and police brutality. With their daily

wages dried up, most of them can barely afford rent or even food in cities and are thus left with little choice but to attempt a journey to home by any means possible. Delhi NCR has been a national hub for north-Indian migrants. Migrants here particularly come from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and West Bengal, to seek a better livelihood for themselves and their families. Reports of workers stuck in informal settlements akin to detention camps & people attempting to walk hundreds of kilometers to reach home and some of them even dying en route is a very critical problem being faced by the country. The World Bank reported that 40 million migrant workers will face the major brunt of the pandemic. Government should invent some protection measures for them.

GAP BETWEEN RICH & POOR:

India after Independence had faced many ups and downs, from the struggle of the 1950s to a $ trillion-plus economy in 2020. Two trillion-plus economy seems appealing, but the reality is that it's not enough to support its constantly expanding population. India has one of the highest wealth gaps among great economic countries. The United Nations report from 2019

informed that India's growth over the last two decades has been unequal, especially between 2000 and 2007. The covid pandemic had just worsened the condition for low and middle-income groups. The popular notion is that the covid pandemic has worsened the economic condition for everyone. However, some of the world's top billionaires have seen their wealth rise. An International Labour Organisation (ILO) report, which predicts that 40 crore Indians could be pushed into poverty, offers a better picture of the widening wealth gap in India. During strict lockdown from 25th march onwards, millions of the country's poorest workers were immediately rendered jobless and left without any income. Even the middle-class population encountered a sharp loss of income during the pandemic due to a wave of job losses and pay cuts. Mahesh Vyas the CEO of CMIE gave a statement that the white-collar employees lost most jobs among salaried employees. Some billionaires of India who gain profits are Mukesh Ambani, Cyrus Poonawala. Increasing wealth gap leads to lower transitional GDP per capita growth. OECD analysis of 2014 shows that reduction of income inequality leads to the growth of the country.

Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal & Tamil Nadu are the most vulnerable to job losses, given their higher share of informal workers.

SOLUTIONS:

The first and foremost thing that the government can do is to provide immediate **relief to the poor, displaced & vulnerable workers.** This is the section of society that has suffered the most in terms of loss of livelihood and vulnerable financial conditions. Another thing that the government can do is to **support enterprises to protect low-wage regular formal jobs**. This can be a lifesaver in these tough times as this policy will have a multiplier effect. Government should support enterprises financially and when enterprises will be in a good position to run properly, they will directly hire people which will generate employment and income for workers, this will directly help them to come out of poverty and their disturbing conditions. **Temporary reallocation of workers** is another alternative that can be used to soothe the current trouble situations. Reallocating migrant workers to their native place with some external government help will aid them in a better way. **Strengthening workforce programmes** like MGNREGA would be an effective solution not only to deal with current situations but also to empower India's labour market in the long term. Another viable alternative is extending social security benefits to informal workers. This alternative would create a lot of relief for the informal sector workers; benefits like paid leaves and advanced income can be given to workers so that they can survive the pandemic and the lockdown. In the short run, the expansion of social assistance and public workfare programmes would provide relief and protection to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged. In the long run, there is a need to expand earnings, job opportunities and give security to those at the lower end of the education and skills ladder. This will require a serious rethinking of our growth and development strategy.

CONCLUSION:

The Covid-19 crisis has accentuated the problems of high unemployment and weak aggregate demand that the Indian economy was grappling with even before the onset of the pandemic. It has not only resulted in large-scale job losses and loss of incomes but also increased poverty. With a disproportionate burden of the shock being borne by those who are working in low-paying, precarious and informal jobs, the dual shocks of the pandemic and lockdown have exacerbated inequalities in the labour market. Most of these individuals will not be able to afford remaining unemployed in the

months to come and if the prospects of finding jobs shortly are bleak, they are likely to resort to self-employment in the informal economy as a survival mechanism. There is an urgent need to put in place a comprehensive plan to create well-paying secure jobs, not just to address the challenge of open unemployment but to enhance worker's earning and boost consumption. ■

Fiat Currency:
An Impending End?
Shaily Birla

The Global Financial Crisis of 2008 is considered to be one of the worst financial disasters to hit the world since the Great Depression of the 1930s. As the markets crashed, stock prices plummeted and financial institutions collapsed, governments all across the globe issued massive bailouts and stimulus packages to stabilise their economies. Although the measures taken by the governments appeared to aid the financial rehabilitation, they also created a sense of doubt and unease in the public mind.

Today, it is being speculated that perhaps the Global Financial Crisis was merely the tip of the iceberg and that there is a deeper and much more pervasive underlying problem that the general public might be unaware

Yours Insincerely,

The term 'AATMA NIRBHAR BHARAT' as lucrative as it may sound, is the biggest lie of the decade that has been served to us as a nation and we have taken it well in the name of nationalism . Tell me, are we better off doing all our works ourselves including construction of our own house, making our own clothes, growing our own food and what not ? The answer is a big fat NO , we gain a lot from interaction with fellow human beings . Similarly in this globalising era , our aim should be to specialise in some fields and be an export capital of the world for it instead of making every good of unsatisfactory quality . It seems we have adopted the proverb , 'Jack of all traits , master of none ' just because it was served to us after marinating it in the layer of National interest but is it really in the interest of Nation ?

of. The story of this problem dates back to 1944 with the Bretton Woods Conference in the United States. During this conference, the countries decided to fix and adjust their exchange rates to the U.S. Dollar. The dollar on the other hand fixed itself to gold at the existing parity of US$35 per ounce. This system was established with a motive to overcome the rigidities of existing international monetary systems, promote economic

growth, and exchange rates stability. It allowed countries to trade their currencies for the U.S. Dollar which they could then exchange for gold. Precisely, this meant that all the currencies were backed by gold. To avoid the logistics of physically transporting gold across the globe, when countries exchanged their currency for gold it was usually stored safely in the United States. The trouble was that this exchanging policy only applied to foreign governments and central banks causing budget deficits for the U.S.

By the 1960s, commitment towards the Vietnam war and the space race further added to the budget deficit of the U.S, making other countries suspect that the U.S. was spending more money than the corresponding gold reserves it had- more dollars were being printed with a lack of physical gold to support it. As a result, other countries began demanding to exchange their U.S. dollars for gold and physical delivery of the gold.

This was the first sign of a crisis. To prevent the outflow of gold from the United States, President Nixon temporarily halted the USD to Gold conversion system, in 1971. The explanation given for this action was that it would "defend the dollar against speculators".

Since then, the U.S. has mostly had a budget deficit, as there was no longer a connection between the USD and gold. Reason being that under the old system, should a country face budget deficits the

gold would flow out of the country until a balance is struck. However, without any gold backing, the country would run perpetual deficits.

By abandoning the gold standard President Nixon created a fiat currency where all currencies were backed by nothing but government promises. A fiat currency essentially operates on the public's confidence in the currency and the

Bretton Woods Conference

government's force. It remains in circulation for a period of time, until people start losing their confidence in it.

With currencies no longer backed by anything tangible with *intrinsic* value, their value was measured only in relation to each other. Therefore, countries started to devalue their currencies deliberately to produce goods and services cheaply, and become favourable trading partners.

It does not seem like a great problem until now but the tables turn when we bring into the picture the Ponzi scheme. It is essentially an investment scheme where the organisers promise the investors massive returns with negligible risk, and quickly. Sounds too good to be true? Well, it indeed is the case, Ponzi is a fraudulent scheme that pays its existing customers from the funds collected from the new customers. It does not use the money invested to build wealth but to only attract new customers. Therefore, in the long run, a Ponzi scheme must constantly bring in a larger and larger number of customers to pay off the old customers and continue functioning. Eventually, the scheme collapses if a large number of customers cash out together or no new

customers can be found. What is left behind are the customers who did not cash out at the right time and lost their money to the perpetrators of the scheme.

The U.S. is running a similar kind of Ponzi scheme, but the scale of it is huge. With no links to the gold, the U.S. Treasury has been able to borrow and spend as much as it wants. Thus, when the U.S. government requires money it takes out a loan from the Federal Reserve, which prints the currency required for the loan. In return, the Federal Reserve (which is the central bank of the U.S. and arguably one the most influential financial institutions of the world) receives an I.O.U. or government bond from the U.S. Treasury. A government bond represents the government's debt that is issued and sold to support the government expenditure.

With the money received from the loan, the U.S. government pays its bills and obligations. Simultaneously, the Federal Reserve and U.S. Treasury work in tandem to sell these bonds at auctions, where foreign central banks, pension banks and individuals purchase these U.S. government loans because they are virtually assumed to be a risk-free investment.

However, if the money received by the U.S. government is spent on bills and previous loans, where does the money to pay back the current loan with interest comes from? To pay off the current loan plus the interest charged on it,

more money is borrowed. Imagine a hypothetical scenario where the government borrows U.S.$1 from the federal reserve, now to pay back that dollar with interest is impossible unless more money is borrowed since there was originally only one dollar created. Hence, the debt keeps augmenting.

As mentioned before, the U.S. has been running trade deficits ever since 1971, which suggests that the U.S. is importing more than it exports, more USD is going out of the country. If other countries like South Korea, China et cetera convert the USD they receive from exporting it would inflate their currencies, making them less suitable trading partners.

Therefore, even the other countries prefer buying I.O.Us instead, without realising that the more they lend today the higher they would have to lend to the U.S. tomorrow, and if it is stopped, the whole system would collapse. Just like the Ponzi scheme, if it fails to

attract larger and larger investments over time, it collapses.

Being set up as a huge Ponzi scheme, the global economy is dependent on more and larger debt to keep functioning. Even if the U.S.

Federal Reserve

today decides to take out loans and live within its means, paying the interest on the borrowed money collapses the currency supply. They must continuously borrow more and bring more money to existence than the money

they extinguish by paying off the debt.

The politicians are in a situation where if they do not come to the rescue, the U.S. can have an overnight shutdown. They cannot afford to let such a crisis happen when they are in power which is why they are kicking the can down the road.

For a couple of years after 2008, the economy was patched up by the expansion of the money supply. This was indeed impactful in the short run but cracks started appearing in the long run. The bad debt, insolvent banks, stagnant economic growth et cetera persisted. Buying the way out was not the solution to the problem but governments nevertheless opted to do it to push the problem further in future and make it worse.

The end game for this Ponzi scheme would be just like any other classic Ponzi scheme. When the participants (countries) finally wake up to the con, they would not want to participate anymore. As foreign investors stop buying I.O.Us, the Federal Reserve may step up and supply the demand of the people realising the cons, but once the Federal Reserve becomes the only buyer the entire system is doomed to implode and hyperinflation would creep in. Hyperinflation is a rapid increase in the inflation rate to an extent that money loses its value and people lose faith in it. If the U.S. economy suffers from hyperinflation all of the other economies in the world would suffer a severe economic crisis because, in the end, the reserves of the other currencies are basically USD.

At this point, it is logical to question why there has not been much discussion about this pressing issue. It is suggested that this is due to the higher positions being held by the perpetrators or the beneficiaries of the current monetary system, who do not want this system to cease. Many now believe that the price of gold and silver have been artificially suppressed to make them seem less desirable as a medium of global exchange. Gold specifically is the only strong competitor of a national currency-while gold is the money; the national currencies are merely the money substitutes. As Peter Schiff, an American stockbroker puts it, "Gold is an enemy of big government, but is a friend of freedom".

Fiat currencies are destined to fail and if the world is to extricate itself from the current monetary system we have to back the currencies up again with something that holds intrinsic value like gold, silver, et cetera.

It is time we learnt the difference between money and currency. It is time we reverted to the gold standard.

The U.S. is running a similar kind of Ponzi scheme, but the scale of it is huge. With no links to the gold, the U.S. Treasury has been able to borrow and spend as much as it wants.

M-Document for 2021

Montek Singh Ahluwalia

The following is an excerpt from A Conversation with Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Compass

Dr. Montek Singh Ahluwalia- If you are asking me what are the important things that we should focus on in the next three to four years or so, I would certainly say that the following are the most important-

Fiscal deficit

Don't be too worried about the fiscal deficit for the current year but have a credible strategy for the next four or five years for bringing it down. People will not lose confidence in India just because the deficit goes up this year. Biden has taken the US deficit to double-digit numbers so they can hardly say that India's going down the tubes. Whatever we do this year, the important question is what India is going to do next year, and my view is that if you have a committee to make a thorough report of our tax system and get that committee to report by the end of December so that the entire discussion on taxation for the next year is conditioned by a publicly available report, it would increase confidence.

Custom duties & RCEP

The raising of custom duties and the refusal to join RCEP(Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership) was a mistake. Even

if we immediately do not lower custom duties, we need to give a clear signal that Atmanirbhar does not mean that in order to produce things domestically, we are going to keep raising duties. We have seen that problem, for example, in the solar sector. We are applauded by the rest of the world for having taken an initiative on solar energy which I think the government deserves credit for. At the same time, in order to indigenize the production of panels we have levied huge

duties on solar cells and modules. This has created a lot of uncertainty on the part of private investors, who don't want to bid for setting up new solar plants for two reasons- they really don't know whether you are certainly going to slap duties on the import, and secondly that most of our DISCOMS. are broke, and they have been reneging on power purchase agreements on the grounds that since prices are falling, they don't want to pay earlier commitments. However, the current assumption is that today's solar price will fall by thirty thirty-five percent or so for the next five to six years

Now, if we have a reputation that our DISCOMS will cancel whatever power purchase agreements that have been entered into now because technological change makes power cheaper a couple of years from now, it seriously discourages investment. So, I think on the duty front, we need a very clear signal and I think that we should have a signal which says that we in

ART & PHILOSOPHY

On Writing: Deconstruction of "trains of thought" and the metaphysic of the "strings"

It is of the opinion that everyone does have their own writing style and I do not....

Enlightenment: Towards Perpetual Peace or Dystopian Nightmares?

The world's history stands witness to what is now almost a century of an achingly jarring conflict.....

On writing:

Deconstruction of "trains" of thought and the metaphysic of the "strings".

Tridip Patir

It is of the opinion that everyone does have their own writing style and I do not deny it. No one is wrong in writing the way they are naturally disposed to write. What I aim to convey in this essay, (which arose as an answer to a webinar held by Dr Anil Behal, "Fielding Graduate University") is what I, by my own rational mind, believe is the truest way one ought to write. For what reasons, one might ask? Well, for better conservation of time, perhaps. Or because that way is naturally what will bring forth the best version of one's writing. It should not be such that following some other form of writing than what is championed here, is somehow wrong! But rather, it is that this particular form might just yield the best results.

One's writing style should be as such that they write down whatever their mind blurts out first, in a controlled setting. One should never go back and "redact" entire portions of text. Herein, one must understand the difference between "redaction" and "editing". Both differ. "Redaction"
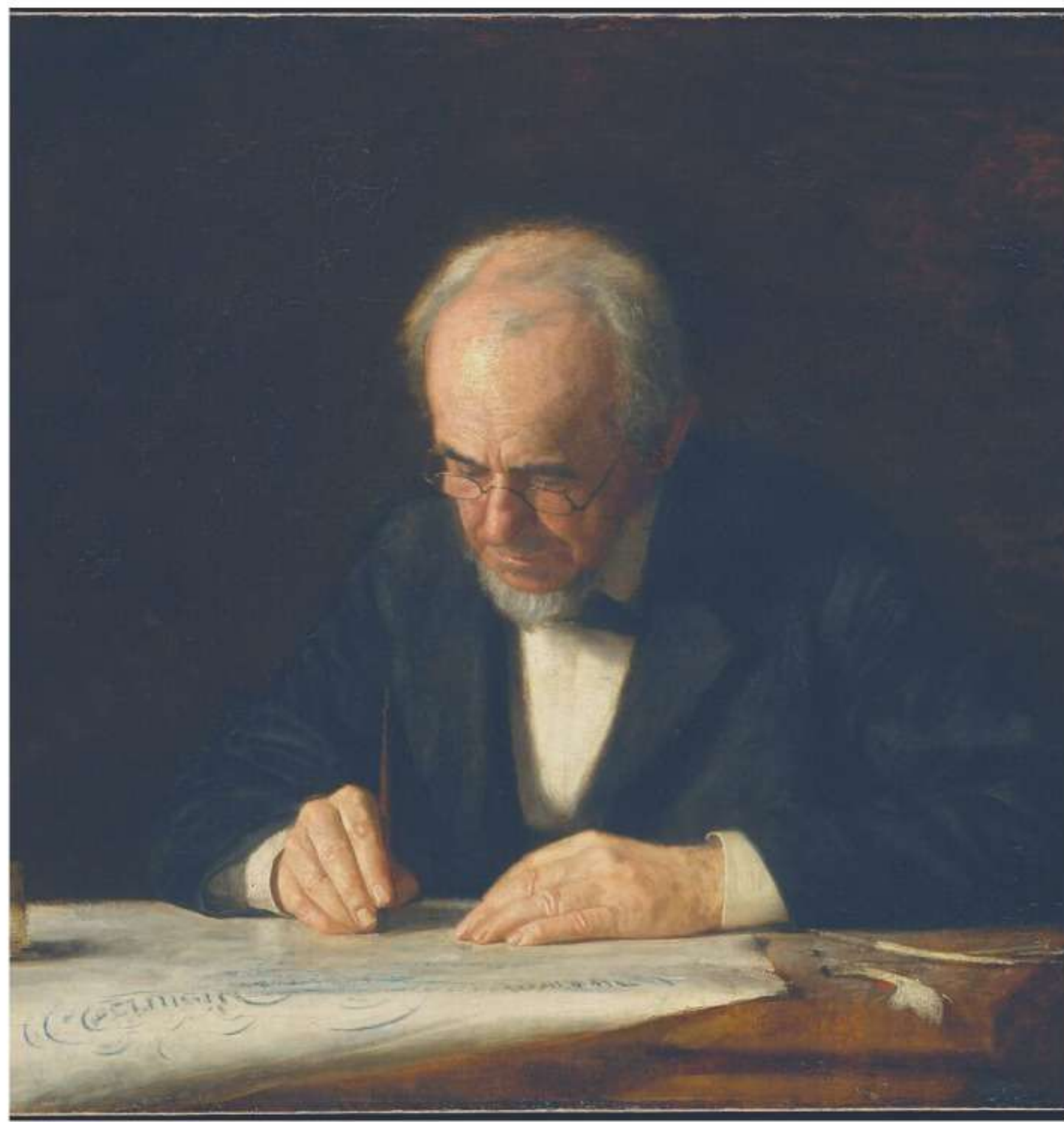
is recognising that one's proto train of thought was not the most apt in its early writing process and therefore, begets "redaction". "Editing" is just going through sweeping for grammatical errors or typing errors.

A "train of thought" brings forth the idea of an uncontrollable thought process. Perhaps one should attain a self so matured and controlled that one has no unnecessary spikes of thoughts to detract from the controlled train-of-thought.

I might actually liken it to oneself driving a car. The car is driven by itself, technically, but we control it. In the same way, once such a state of mind is reached, one needn't worry about unnecessary spikes or "trains" of thought. But instead, one can go ahead and write down, at the first sitting, whatever their mind blurts out and be fine with it, for it arose from a self so controlled and so "mature" that one

in the door. Drafts, to me, is editing taken to a more whole level. There is no doubt most individuals would change up paragraphs of text and change the train of thought altogether. While these dispositions of humans exist, I claim it is the act of the person who hasn't yet reached the more "matured" stage whereby he can string a paragraph together at one go. Remember that this does not mean writing at an impulse. There is a difference between "writing" and "musing". Musing involves browsing through strings of thought (to put down on paper) that would best suit the subject matter at hand. And musings are not a redaction, either. Redactions only can occur once someone has put their thoughts onto paper- when the controlled trains of thoughts have manifested, from the metaphysical realm to the physical, material world. Musing in one's mind, thereby choosing what to stamp onto pages and what to leave behind in this realm of thought, is not at all, redaction. For better understanding, I will change "train of thought" to "string of thoughts", for as said above, the image of '"trains" of thought' brings forth an uncontrollable spike of thoughts: a metaphorical train that we are riding without any control of it ourselves. We are only mere passengers to this train heading who knows where.

has full confidence to not let it undergo further redaction but only editing. In that, this string of thought indulged in, in such a controlled setting, is free of any random "spikes".

One should never interfere with their "controlled" train of thought or their "self-driven vehicle of thought" at the moment of their writing. For that moment is the truest we are to our cognition. Later redaction is just artificial and influenced by outside things rather than by the self controlled-mind we possess.

It is important to realise that merely changing words at a previous line of text is nothing but editing. The idea that most writers espouse is of innumerable "drafts". The idea of drafts being that your first written version of your article, essay, whatever may be, is not the best-written version and thereby, needs more editing to reach its final/best stage. The conception of drafts is not missing in my theory of writing.

In fact, drafts exist, in a controlled manner. I liken it to how the sunlight perforates through cracks

Therefore, it is up to us to take control of this metaphorical 'train' of thought and be the operations master.

A string of thought is not interrupted by handpicking what to keep on pages and what to leave to the vacuums of space in the mental realm. A string of thought is not interrupted if certain words are interchanged for more concise ones. It is also not interrupted if the sentence is phrased in some other way. It is merely changing "A is B" to "B is A". The essence, as a whole, remains the same. When it is interrupted, however, it results in what one calls "writer's block", although I don't use it in its traditional sense. When one undergoes this block, he has run out of what to say. Perhaps this is because the topic one has to write about is not to his natural liking or perhaps he has limited knowledge on this subject matter. While writing this essay, I have followed a string of thought, from the first sentence to this sentence and to the conclusion, for I had this whole idea spark up a fire in me. This is what is known in layman's terms as "inspiration". I agree that this thing does exist. But in no part of my writing process have I thought to myself, "maybe I shouldn't write this". I have, no doubt, gone back and changed plenty of words to better convey what I want but I haven't changed a sentence or sentences so far that they no longer bear resemblance to the string of thought that occurred in the first place. This is where the matured mind would not need to write just for the sake of writing, but he has carefully planned out his writing,

"My first train of thought is the best train of thought"

whether consciously or unconsciously even before putting it on paper. He knows that the first "string of thought" he will have is the final "string of thought". For he can think of no other "string of thought" than the best one congruent to the subject matter at hand!

This is in part, very similar to how artists convey their art. A Samurai swordsman was said to be one with his sword. So much that they could not even have "thought" of their moves, but in fact, it was "reflex" to them. The sword had become a part of their 'self'. Perhaps the strings of thought I claim here needs to be the sword to the collected matured self of the individual. Perhaps only then one can confidently put down on paper what they truly desire to be put out and not mere ramblings of a lost individual. But this is not to say that reflex actions are the same as

Train of thoughts in Disney's movie "Inside out"

the amalgamation of "strings of thought" and the "collected self". These are different. To do something involuntarily in response to external stimuli would be what "reflex" actions are. But "strings of thought" stamped onto paper are not reflex actions despite them being so effortless. They appear reflexive but have years of knowledge and practice behind the utilisation. Whereas reflex involuntary actions happen because our body tells us so. "Strings of thought" are careful operations by the matured collected mind.

Violinists, guitarists, pianists, actors all would concur with me that sometimes the first playthrough is the best that they could ever do. This part of me, being a musician, is best regarded as being able to answer this. When I play the guitar, I realise that the first playthrough, without thinking of what I am playing, is the best

playthrough, as compared to the later ones I might try. Why is this? I cannot answer perfectly but going back to the outside influences I mentioned somewhere above, I would say that there might be a natural disposition of my own mind to do the best possible playing that I can, but outside influences and learned things come to interfere in the latter ones. Say, for example, I play through something of my own conception, what is known as improvising, the first playing would yield a good result. Now my 2nd or 3rd playthroughs would not bring forth the exact same results. Maybe this is because of the fear of not getting the part right (as I did so in the first) or a self-inhibition of not being as good enough to play like the first time, come into being. Such outside influences affect a musician. Just as how the same affects an actor, who would admit the first time he goes through a scene or even something like improvisation, yields the most interesting results. Notice I said, most interesting and not "most correct". I routinely repeat that there are other ways to achieve results. But to me, the best and most interesting results are achieved through such means. Now is "improvisation" the same as these "strings of thoughts"? The answer lies in the idea that "all improvisations are essentially, strings of thoughts, but not all strings of thoughts are improvisations". Why is an individual so naturally disposed to certain things and none whatsoever, to some? This is, in my opinion, because of the years of accumulation of knowledge towards certain subjects one has practised or shown inclination towards.

Dr Behal's idea was that this was an interesting take on writing style but that in a scholarly writing, one needs to redact portions of text should new shreds of evidence or musings relay different ideas than what was originally stamped on paper. Sure, then, they can definitely redact in such a context but that has little to do with my conception. First, my idea is in relation to the contexts given, at the time, the string of thoughts be as such. Second, one needs to achieve a "collected self" of matured ideas before writing down anything at all, to save himself the effort of redacting entire portions of text should the next idea come knocking at the door. Instead, wait for all of these ideas to come knocking and only let those in, that have worth. In doing so, I reject the idea of Dr. Behal that good writers write down small pieces every day. I believe a good writer can lay down whatever he thinks, at one instance, without questioning himself or his thoughts or essentially, going back and redacting something that was already put to paper.

The benefits of such a unique agreement of the controlled matured self and the musings or strings of thought lead us to write, what would normally be considered, "long" answers, in a routinely short amount of time. For when one has attained the "controlled self", as I talked of, one would realise that words flow out of their string of thought onto paper, as water flows out of a fountain, without inhibition, without hesitation. How does one achieve this "controlled self"? Through practice, determination and collection or accumulation of knowledge, as mentioned prior. The more knowledgeable and creative a person can hope to be, the better he is disposed to achieve this "controlled self" and the better he is disposed to amalgamate this with the "strings of thought". Not everyone can attain this "controlled self" and not many have. I can't deny that I, myself have not mastered this, either. And that is alright. No one is required to follow this, only that this essay might help one understand this idea better. For I, myself, will not change any "strings of thought" in this essay. I might add new ones in "later drafts". I might rephrase words, might correct typos but a complete redaction of any large portions of text is unnecessary, for me. This resulted in me, completing this essay in approximately 45 mins. For my "strings of thought" could align with my "controlled self", at least in this instance, deterring any spikes of rambling thought that would detract me from my strings. But again, I myself do not claim to have mastered this art to the highest degree. For I am also naturally disposed to the same errors as anyone would make. I let my string of thought get distracted by

outside influences and cannot keep it intact. If I go back and change an entire portion of text and in turn, "redact" my original string of thought present in that portion of text, I have admitted, on my own accounts, that I have yet to master the "controlled self". I would have admitted that the erstwhile strings of thought I stamped onto paper were wrong. A collected matured mind would have no need to "redact" his earlier stamping. For that stamping would be the final stamping. This is the extent of his confidence!

Dr. Behal's ideas of how good writers write piece by piece everyday works, to a certain degree, I must admit. Perhaps the idea of going back and critically evaluating one's previously written writing would yield good results, too. There is no doubt that analysis and going through our own writings would provide us with things we might have missed on our initial undertaking. What I aimed to answer or give an answer to, in this essay, is the idea of the most perfect way to write an essay. Perhaps the "most perfect" would not be apt. Maybe "most efficient" would succinctly answer this. Despite what results will be yielded following such tactics, there is little doubt within my own mind that if one is able to master this "controlled self" which I propagate within this essay, one would become the best writer that he possibly is disposed to be.

In the end, I would relay to you, reader, again, that adding something new is not a "redaction", neither is changing words or phrasing and neither is correcting wrongfully written sentences. For it is my belief that one can make the mistake of writing an entirely different text on paper than what was originally intended. This does not disrupt the concept of "strings of thought", for again, humans are naturally disposed to errors and the "intention" is in line with the string of thought present prior to the writing. Despite the connections, there is a thin line of difference between what the strings of thoughts are and the physical manifestation of such thoughts onto paper. I claim that "what was intended" is different from "what was written". And so long as the original intention was to write down the perfect string of thought from the realm of the mind, it, then, doesn't matter what was written down. The string of thought remains untethered. The mistake in writing something entirely than the intended is just that- an innocent mistake.

A "string of thought" is a very abstract concept that functions in an unseeable metaphysical realm that directs your writing as an invisible hand guiding each stroke of your pen.

"*Yes I agree, Sir (that each has a different writing style). However, my writing style is such that I blurt out whatever is on my mind. I never go through a 'revision' or 'redacting' a train of thought. I believe the train of thought I have, at the moment of writing, is the final train of thought (with necessary editing). I believe it is the time we are at the truest to our cognition*".

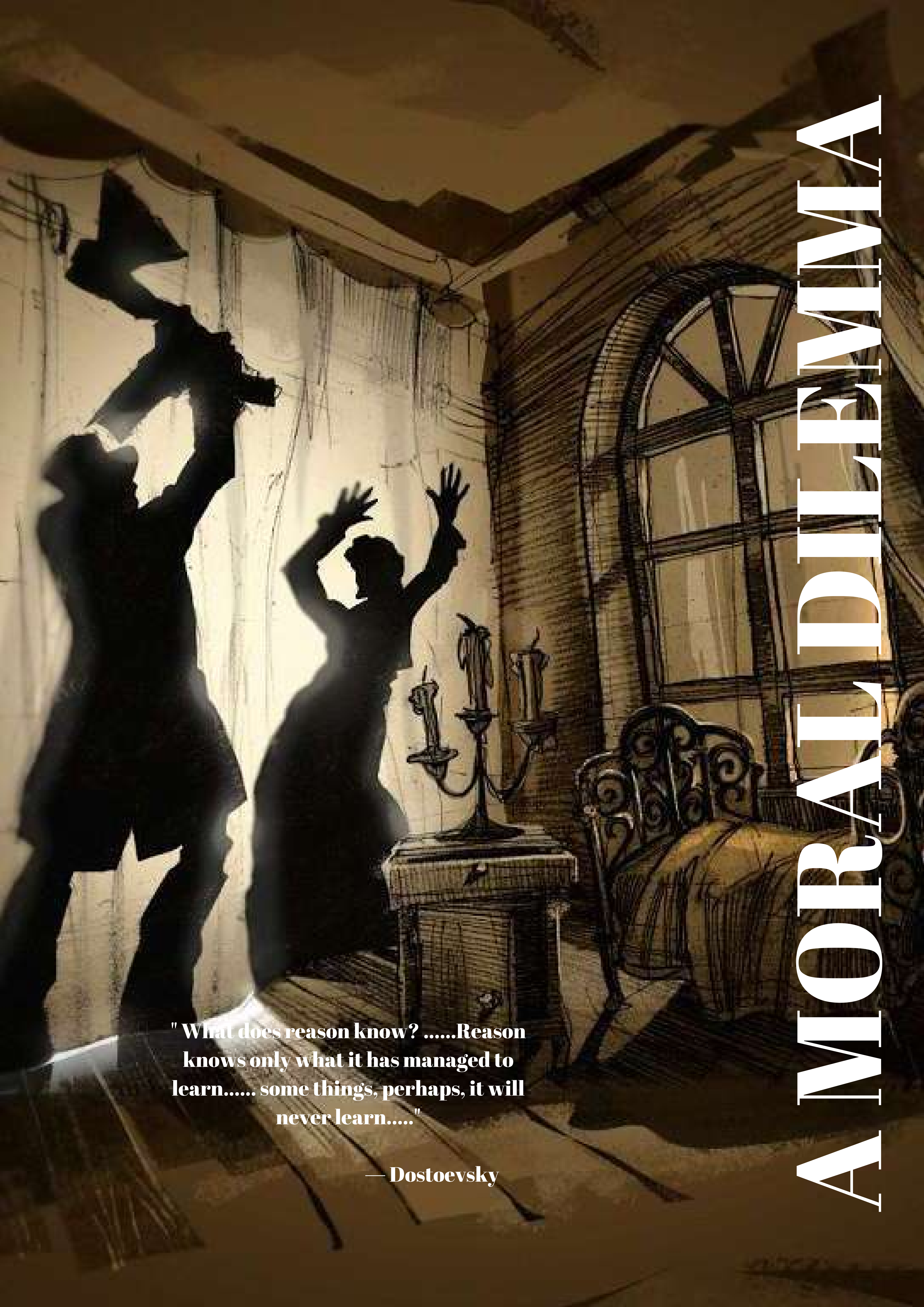*My answer to Dr. Behal's conception of "editing" vs "revision".* ■
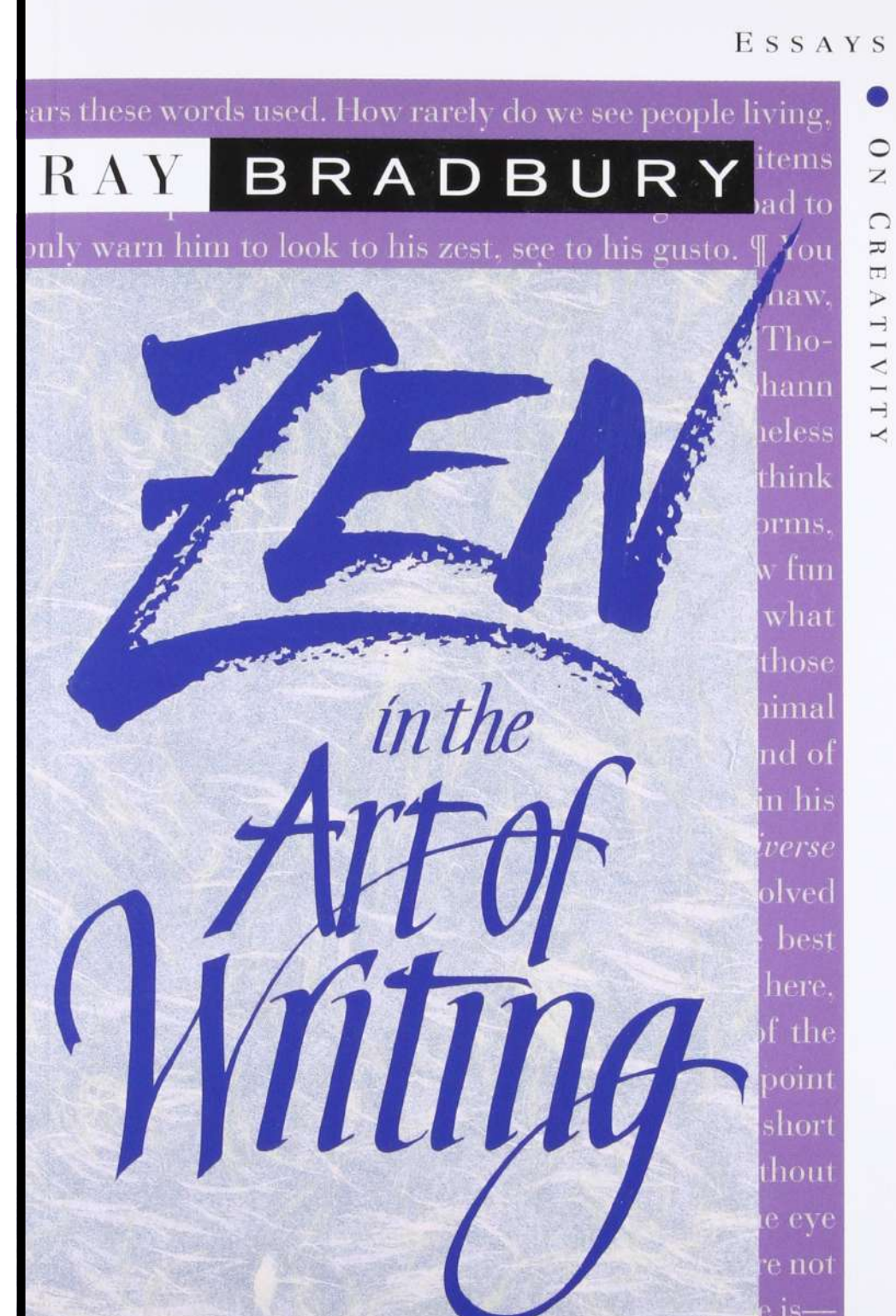
" What does reason know? ......Reason knows only what it has managed to learn...... some things, perhaps, it will never learn....."

— Dostoevsky

A MORAL DILEMMA

Enlightenment: Towards Perpetual Peace or Dystopian Nightmares?

Nishi Upadhyay

In the salon of Madame Geoffrin showing Voltaire reading L'Orphelin de la

The Age Of Reason: Enlightenment

The Enlightenment era marked the culmination of the belief in human reason whose sovereignty was established. Traditional authorities and structures were questioned. The advent of scientific discoveries and inventions and their remarkable achievements nudged everyone to wonder what the power of human reason was capable of bestowing on mankind.

In his essay, " An Answer to the Question: *What Is Enlightenment* ?", Kant writes that enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity which is the inability to

make use of one's intellect without the guidance of anyone else. Everyone needs to think for himself rather than letting others think for him. He boldly

declares," Sapre aude!" or "dare to know", which encapsulates the spirit of Enlightenment.

Kant states that the reason why most people, throughout their lives, remain in their bubble of ignorance is because they are lazy and cowardly who are so content with their lives that they don't have any desire to take the authority into their hands. He quotes the following example: " If I have a book that reasons for me, a pastor who acts as my conscience, a physician who determines my diet for me etc, then I need not make any effort myself." Due to this indolence of man, others become his guardian. The benevolent guardians assume the guardianship of the far greater portion of mankind who think that the step towards maturity is arduous and dangerous. By acquiring this superintendence, they domesticate people and keep them under an " imaginary danger" to prevent a person from doing anything without their guidance. But this danger is not that great since after falling a couple of times, man will eventually learn to walk alone which will mark his release from his self-incurred immaturity. However, the fear of failure can also discourage people from trying again as the "failure makes them timid and ordinarily frightens them away from all further trials". Consequently, no one will use his reason and will demand guardianship to show him his way. According to Kant, to free oneself of this vicious circle of self-imposed immaturity, one must take an "uncertain leap". Immaturity has become an intrinsic part of his nature and he is incapable of using his reason as no one ever allowed him to do so. Thus, his state of immaturity has become perpetual and eternal. This state can only be ended by exercising one's mind which requires freedom to make public use of one's reason. For Kant

the prerequisite for enlightenment is freedom or in his words " if only freedom is granted, enlightenment is almost sure to follow".

The Promised World

The great 'Age of Reason'– the Enlightenment– vividly painted a world based on freedom and progress run by human reason. Traditions and religion were subjugated by the mirage of exploration, individualism and scientific endeavours. What followed was materialism, atheism and a sense of nihilism with an individual searching for meaning in the mechanistic and rational society. The assumption that the pursuit of reason will ultimately lead to a progressive world formed the cornerstone of the idea of modernity. Filled with profound optimism, it promised a more fulfilled existence by awakening one's intellectual might. With high confidence in human reason, it served as the ultimate guiding principle to acquire knowledge and organize practical life. From leading political revolutions and ideals to being one of the most creative ages of philosophical thought, it promised a society self-

directed in thought, exercising freedom and a precursor to a distant utopian world.

Raskolnikov: The Extraordinary Man

The main character of Dostoevsky's novel, *Crime And Punishment*, is Rodion Romanovich Raskolnikov who is a poor law student struggling to survive. He lives in one of the "dark" corners of Saint Petersburg, having borrowed money from his landlady. While he struggles with extreme poverty, his sister, in order to help her brother financially, is planning to prostitute herself in an altruistic manner by marrying an arrogant man. Surrounded by these tough circumstances, poverty and resentment, he concocts a plan to kill a pawnbroker lady whom he considers a "useless" member of the society. However, due to some inevitable circumstances, he ends up killing her half-sister Lizavet also. After the murder, Raskolnikov wakes up in a different universe, filled with hallucinations, confusion, and agony.

His reason is in conflict with his feelings which is very apparent throughout the novel: he is filled with pity and generosity seeing the poverty and suffering around him. On numerous occasions, he financially helps a poor lady, dying of consumption, and her children and tries to save his sister from a loveless marriage. Furthermore, he pays for the funeral of an injured clerk. However, his abstract rationalism clouds his feelings and emotions and Raskolnikov helplessly keeps hovering between the two, leading to contradictory actions and a conflicting mind. He is a member of the "intellectual class", swept by the new ideas of the enlightenment age in Russia, who is capable of great reasoning. He can even be considered hyper-rational as he uses reason to justify the murder by formulating the theory of "extraordinary men", similar to Nietzsche's ubermensch, who have "inner right" to transgress law for the greater good. As Dostoevsky writes: "It would seem, as regards to the moral question, that his analysis was complete; his casuistry has become keen as a razor, and he could not find a rational objection in himself."

Enlightenment's dogmatic faith in reason puts everything under inspection and justification, questioning every belief and idea from its rigid framework and negating everything that seems to go against it or provides meaning or purpose in life. Charles Taylor argues that the Enlightenment belief of "disengaged" or "self-responsible" reason does not provide room for any intrinsic purpose or meaning in life. This is how Raskolnikov ends up in a nihilistic cage, filled with despair and resentment. His cold rational side didn't allow him to find solace in faith and he kept being torn between the two.
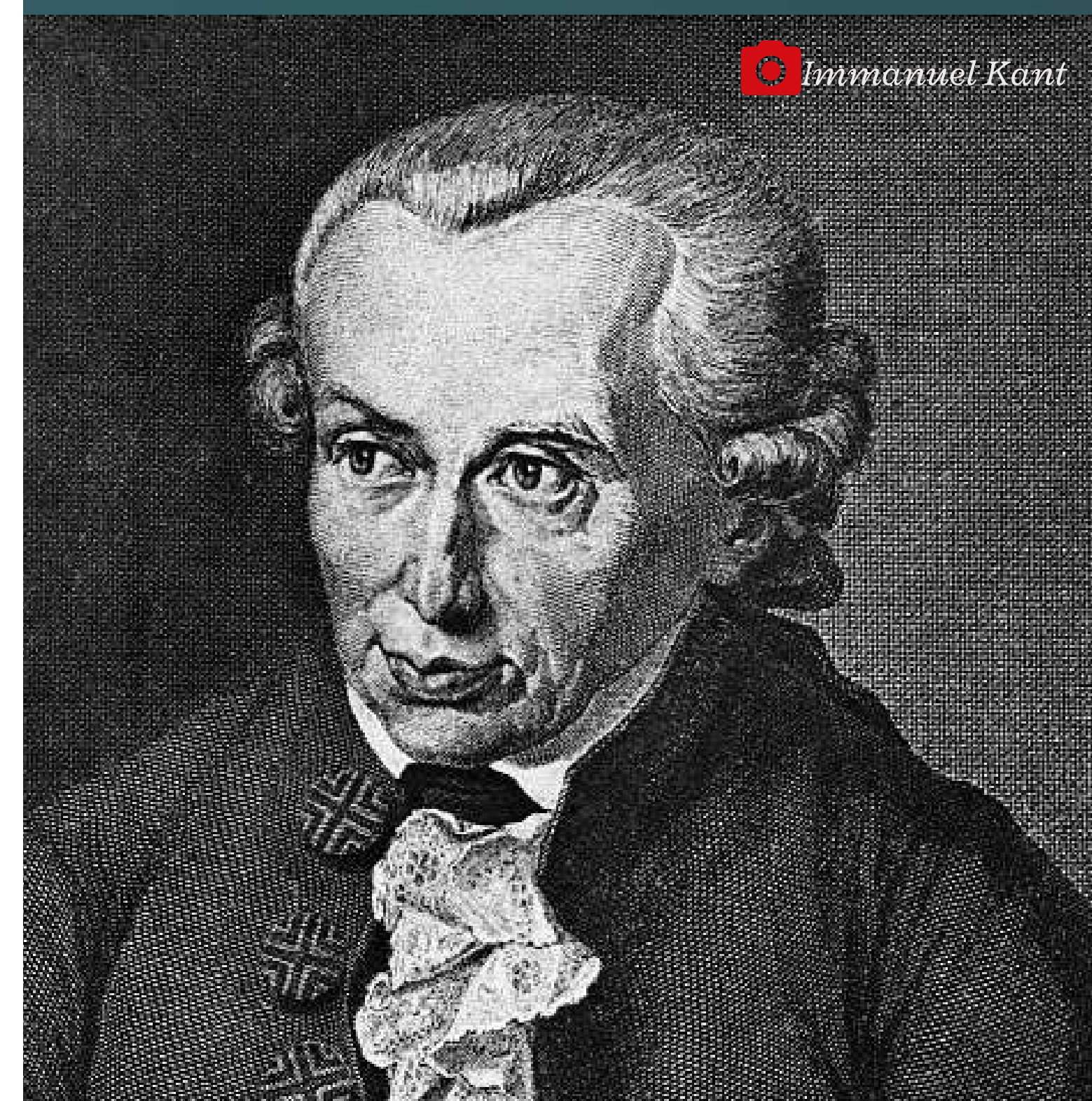
Sonya, a merciful and devout girl, is forced into prostitution by her stepmother and chooses to sell her body to feed her siblings.

Fyodor Dostoevsky

Gulag in soviet russia

Immanuel Kant

However, even after committing this seemingly immoral crime, she holds on to her deep faith in God and moral values despite suffering to the core. Her faith gives her inner strength and purpose which Raskolnikov's reason fails to provide. She is an embodiment of self-sacrifice who metaphorically represents the compassionate side of Raskolnikov who calls her " a holy fool", incapable of any thinking. However, he is strangely and unconsciously drawn towards her and in the end, it is the Christ-like figure of Sonya in whom he ultimately seeks salvation.

Raskolnikov is the embodiment of the individual of the post-enlightenment period who is baffled at the death of traditional structures and the rise of this flamboyant idea of human reason, capable of solving every problem. The novel attempt to emancipate humans from the "fetters" of immaturity led to a sense of meaninglessness as Nietzsche puts it: "For why the advent of nihilism becomes necessary? Because the values we have had hitherto thus draws the final consequences; because nihilism represents the ultimate logical conclusion of our great values and ideals– because we must experience nihilism before we can find out what values these 'values' really had". Raskolnikov constantly struggles to see his own compassion and embrace it; his reason and rationalisation render him to ignore his unconscious moral dispositions or what Nietzsche calls "instincts".

One of the most intriguing questions that the whole story poses is " can human beings really follow reason?" Man is not just a man of "reason", he is also a man of caprice, a man of violence and a man of emotion. According to Raskalnikov's plan, only the old lady was supposed to be murdered. However, as his half-sister suddenly enters the house, Raskolnikov kills her out of fear and confusion. Enlightenment dreams of a utopia built on human reason and where everything is too idealistic as it disregards the other aspects of human nature which are irrational.

Kant in his work " Idea For A Universal History With a Cosmopolitan Purpose", formulates the notion of history following a rational plan which can be studied through the scientific investigation which further provided support to the enlightenment thought. However, to what extent can we scientifically uncover the motivations behind human conduct as it does not always necessarily stem from some logical reasoning which can be predicated; it goes beyond reason. A particular instance in the novel highlights this point. Raskolnikov thought that the money he would get from the old lady could be used to lift himself out of poverty and perform "great" deeds. However, after immediately committing the murder, he thinks of throwing all the stolen goods and money into a canal. He even forgot to examine them to determine their value and never actually used the money for himself. This stands in clear contradiction to his apparent reason for killing the lady and somewhere reaffirms the point that the cause of murder was none of the logical explanations he provided, some of them contradicting each other, but some fundamental irrationality which Raskolnikov tried to put in the garb of infallible reasoning.

Raskolnikov's world is intellectual and free; there is science and modernity progressing towards the promised world. But in the chanting of the enlightenment motto, the individual is lost and isolated more than ever

Man is not just a man of "reason", he is also a man of caprice, a man of violence and a man of emotion.

before, searching for meaning and purpose and looking for an escape through consoling means.

The Aftermath

The contribution of the Enlightenment movement to modern political thought can't be denied and we have inherited significantly from this intellectual revolution. From advancing ideas such as liberty, progress, and toleration to laying the foundation for modern liberal democracies, it has shaped and influenced us

in what we do, how we think and what we are today. It was one of the most creative and profound eras of human history as philosopher Isiah Berlin remarked:" The intellectual power, honesty, lucidity, courage, and disinterested love for the truth of the most gifted thinkers of the eighteenth century remain to this day without parallel. Their age is one of the best and most hopeful episodes in the lifetime of mankind."

The irony of Enlightenment is that it dreamt of elevating man from his ignorance and "immaturity" to a higher state of realisation and freedom but it landed the man in an exact opposite state: oppression and turmoil. It is credited for being the main cause of the horrors of the 20th century: the rise of totalitarianism. The enlightenment's "reason" snatched people's beliefs, morality, historic values and ideals with the promise of giving them the ultimate solutions to their problems. Bereft of hope, they sought solace in various ideologies, promising that "ultimate" solution, which paved way for Nazi death camps and Soviet gulags. Berlin argues on similar lines, pointing out that enlightenment thought carried the dormant seed for totalitarianism. He called the core Enlightenment values "monist" in nature which presuppose the world is a systematic whole consisting of eternal laws that can be known by humans and entail implementation of a final solution of all problems which ultimately led to a quest for "perfection in politics" causing the mass

Frontispiece to the Encyclopedie

slaughter and bloodshed of millions of people in the last century. Despite being the apparent saviour of human freedom, Enlightenment, because of its monism, led to the most horrific oppression of the masses that history ever witnessed.

It would be foolish that the visible impacts of the Enlightenment project ended with the horrors of totalitarianism. It is still part of our world, our political discourses and moral and social problems. Edward Said traces the rise of modern orientalism in the Enlightenment century, during which the Westerners portrayed the Orient as irrational and Savage, unlike the West which was rational and superior. Similar arguments are given about Enlightenment being the progenitor of racism and strengthening the gender divide. Also by failing to provide a rational justification for morality, an individual is left surrounded by a horde of possible choices, without any guiding principle to make a

specific choice over others. The result is a modern world, filled with millions of Raskolnikov, looking for that "why" which reason itself is incapable of providing and has also deemed religion ineligible to do the same. What we are left with is deep discontentment and estrangement with no actual self-realisation.

Conclusion

It can be easily argued that all the confusion and struggle following the enlightenment marked the beginning of a new era and is a natural reaction of an oppressed man who has, for the first time, woken from his deep slumber of immaturity. All that uneasiness could very well be just discomfort with replacing the old with new. But we need to ask ourselves again: Was this new truly a progressive and peaceful world or just a larger manifestation of Dostoevsky's fictional work?

> **Despite being the apparent saviour of human freedom, Enlightenment, because of its monism, led to the most horrific oppression of the masses that history ever witnessed.**

EDUCATION

My name is _____. (name)

मेरा नाम सोनू है।

I am a girl (bo..

मैं एक लड़की

I read in class IV (..लड़की)

कक्षा चौथी में पढ..

दिनांक 06.04.17

Input Based Approach to Education

India's labour market is very vulnerable and it was already very vulnerable even before the.....

Can Online Education Replace Campus Learning?

The University of Delhi requested Telegram to take down a group formed by students.....

Input Based Approach to Education

Pranav Jha

Right to Education or Right to Free & Compulsory Education Act, 2009 has undoubtedly been a groundbreaking legislation in the Indian education landscape. The right has been mandated to ensure that education becomes a fundamental right for all the children between the ages six to to fourteen years. Right to Education (RTE) has been famous for its input based approach to education. Ellis (2012) defines input-based instruction as an instruction that "involves the manipulation of the input that learners are exposed to or are required to process." Right To Education has mandated that schools ensure that the students attain learning outcomes in basic math skills, linguistic acquisition, etc. It has caused an enhancement in enrollment ratios across India and has been a phenomenal step in the direction of ensuring equitable access to education.

RTE has been aimed to increase the efficacy of the education system as a whole by ensuring education centres have access to basic facilities. While school education had remained cornered in policy discussions before the advent of RTE, its input based approach to education has been a focal point of discussion in education policy circles.

It should be noted that learning outcomes as mandated by the RTE have become necessary in the current setup. Despite the debate whether solely focusing on inputs would reap any benefit, educators should have targets to attain. The basic arithmetic, linguistic & comprehension skills mandated by RTE have laid down a clear path for educators. The teachers need to devise their pedagogies to train the students in foundational numerical and linguistic literacy. These targets are relevant- they ensure that the students pick up the skills in the primary stage, which can help them cope with academic rigour later. RTE has accorded legal & legislative sanctity to these learning outcomes, with these targets aiming that the educational outcomes are in line with outcomes of other developing & developed countries. Lack of these targets could prevent the realization of academic potential of learners.

RTE has laid out an emphasis on infrastructure. It is critical that we realise the importance of infrastructure in facilitating better learning experiences of learners. RTE has mandated that

schools should have a minimal infrastructure in place. This has in turn helped to incentivize the students to come to schools. Setting the required number of teachers has ensured a healthy teacher-student ratio. Indeed, the majority of schools don't comply with infrastructural norms.

After primary school, India's enrolment levels are much worse than those of developed nations

International comparison of GER (2014) (in %)
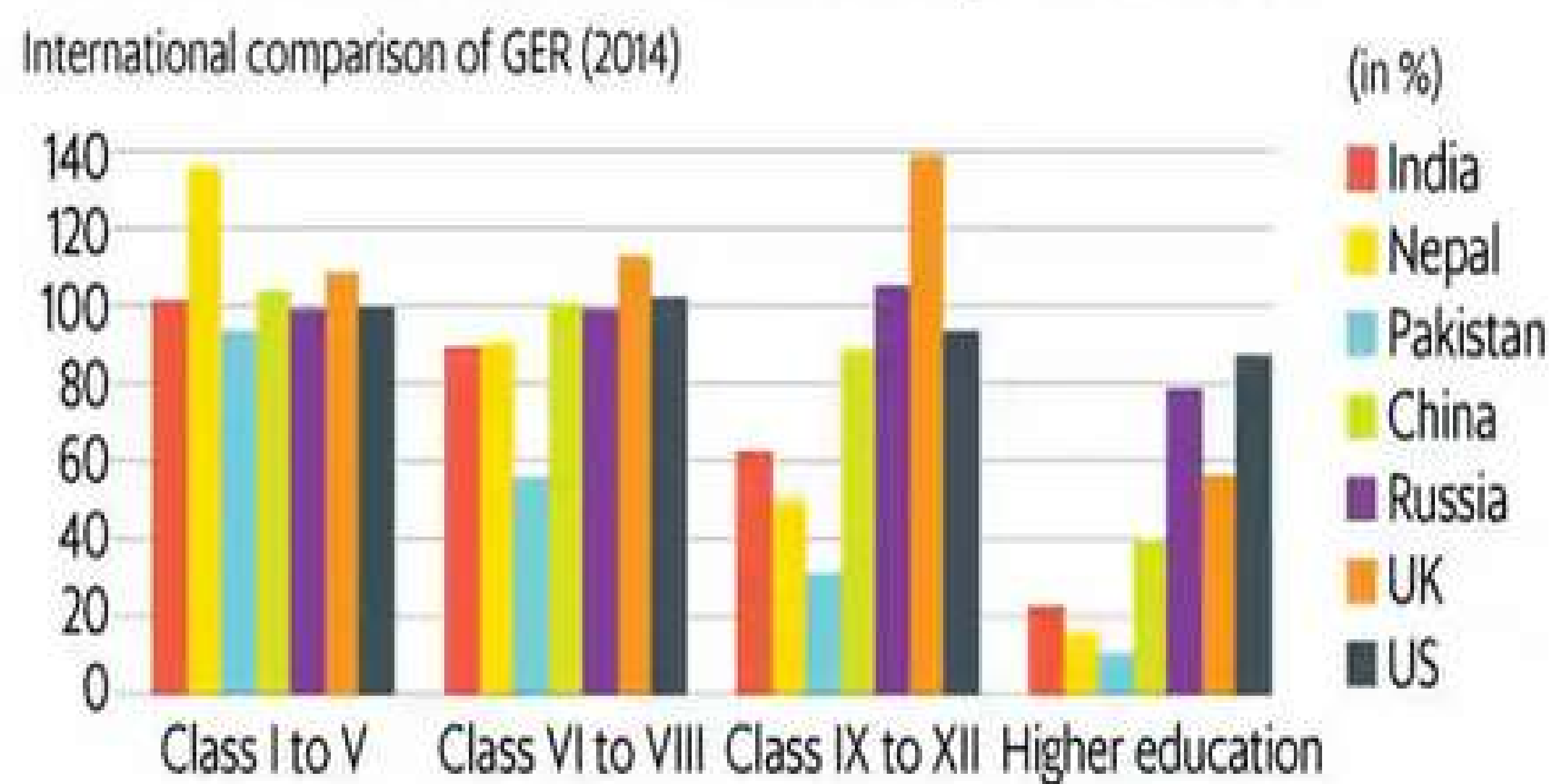
However, the ones which do so are in a better position to retain students. Compliance with minimal infrastructural requirements has been a crucial component of RTE. The recent success of the Delhi government educational model has shown with proper investment in infrastructure the schools can do wonders. Within the Delhi government schools, there has been a focus on building better staff rooms that incentivize teachers. Setting up of School Management Committees has ensured the voices of stakeholders can be heard. Importantly, the legally enforced representation of students from economically weaker sections in the private schools has been a crucial step to curtail the under-representation of students from the underprivileged groups in the educational setup.

Massive focus on inputs has resulted in underperformance of primary schools. The input-based approach restricted

the system to text-bookish knowledge. It has clamped down on low-cost innovative learning methodologies. This approach has emphasized hardware infrastructure over virtual infrastructure.

In the time of the pandemic, an abysmal virtual school infrastructure wreaked havoc. The sudden switch to online learning was just not possible in rural areas and this has widened the digital divide. Heavy focus on this input-based approach constrained the use of technology. Technological tools can come in very handy in the teaching-learning process. It has also failed to incentivize the teachers who can be real drivers of change if they are empowered to make decisions. There is no recognition of a mismatch between the learning levels of students and the prescribed academic curriculum. The unhealthy teacher-student ratio restricts the ability of

teachers to maintain track of the progress of individual students. Students lagging in primary levels can't perform well in later stages in basic linguistic or numerical literacy. Many education systems in other parts of the world have discarded conventional modes of evaluation and adopted innovative measures to track academic progress. We need to reward schools that have recorded an improvement in the learning outcomes of students. The input-based approach has limited schools to the prescribed curriculum, hampering creativity & innovation. Most schools don't have an intensive feedback mechanism for teachers under this approach. Religiously sticking to the prescribed syllabus will have a detrimental impact on the engagement of students. In the era of artificial intelligence, the need of the hour is technological-driven personalized curriculums. Furthermore, there has been little effort to integrate community participation in learning & teaching. Community participation can ensure improved access to equitable education for all. It is very crucial to treat communities as an important stakeholder in the education process. Many successful education models in various Indian states have had community participation at their core. Legislation to ensure integrating community participation in primary education could be a good step forward. Policymakers haven't paid attention to the fact that innovative activities like enhancing peer-to-peer

interactions can tremendously impact the growth of students. Learning process could be revolutionized if group learning activities could be prioritized. The input-based approach remains devoid of emotional support to students while they are in a critical learning phase. Simply restricting education to picking up a language or arithmetic

might not be helpful in the long-term. Experiential learning practices could be introduced in the curriculum for reaping great benefits. It is essential that tutors are provided with enough incentives to ensure that universal literacy and numeracy is driven on a large-scale. Improvement in learning outcomes needs to be identified & rewarded. Proper technological supplements need to be made available at different levels.

The pandemic has caused a spike in inequality across sectors. Education is considered to be a great leveler and the pandemic has exposed the digital divide impairing it. RTE has been instrumental in ensuring equitable access to education. It becomes essential to uphold the RTE Act in these times. It is very critical to address the issue to address the problem of digital divide. Ensuring technological supplements to schools at different levels can help solve the problem. Going forward, technology is going to play a crucial role in education and it is

crucial that we address these issues. Learning is not a function of restricting one to the standardized syllabus but putting in efforts to pick up life skills. Holistic education is an amalgamation of relationships, emotions, values, critical life skills, standard & efficient learning, and it is imperative that policy making takes this into account.

"It is important to note that these inputs have been carefully curated after including immense research from different quarters. Age-specific educational outcomes have been curated to ensure holistic development at the right stages. There has been an increase in enrollment rates across India. Yet, we cannot ignore the fact that students in the primary government schools have underperformed in Maths and language. We have witnessed sky-rocketing enrollment rates in Indian primary schools. However, even as we talk about this, half the students in 5th standard can't read a simple text of 2nd standard and 1/3rd of them can't do simple division. High enrollments have not translated into better learning outcomes."

Can Online Education Replace Campus Learning?

Sohom Roy
A student's perspective

On 3rd June 2021, the University of Delhi requested Telegram to take down a group formed by students to cheat in the upcoming Open Book Exams. It had faith that Telegram, the preferred messaging app for cybercriminals and terrorists, would take action against a sticker-filled group of cheating students. It is also believed that only one Telegram group had been formed to assist and coordinate the use of unfair means, and hundreds of such groups did not exist in Whatsapp, Telegram and other messaging apps. In the last year, the university has released multiple self-congratulatory statements about its ability to shift education online. This optimistic attitude regarding online education is shared by UGC too. It recently released a notice allowing universities to teach as much as 40% of their courses online. The notice came with a concept note on the blended mode of learning, which excels in vagueness and reassuring terminlogies want to extend online higher education beyond the pandemic. Being a student who has experienced two years of 'offline' college education and one year of its online version, I find the same scary.

In the actions and ideas of the university administrations and government departments pushing forward online education, their attempts to replicate formal classroom environments in online platforms are very apparent. But I believe the respected officials if they remember their college days, would know that colleges are much more than classrooms- they involve campuses. We can forget the trees, roads, and overall scenery, campuses include campus cultures and practices, which cannot be recreated online. They are developed over decades by generations of students. We can take the example of the innumerable department, society, and college fests/events/competitions which are a part of college campuses across India. These are organized by students, enabling them to learn from a diverse range of experiences that come with the same. They provide students platforms for expression and healthy competition and also allow them to meet and learn from professionals of various fields. Very few of these can be satisfactorily shifted online as they fundamentally involve offline activities which online platforms aren't built to replicate. We can also take the case of earmarked campus spaces. By this, I mean the spots unofficially fixed for protest meetings and demonstrations, the walls fixed for posters and graffiti, the parks, courtyards, and unused classrooms fixed for the activities of societies and groups. Moving away from campuses would mean losing all of these spaces and the activities associated with them (since the activities are dependent on these spaces).

Much more importantly, the canteens, corridors, and parks of campuses provide

excellent opportunities for making new acquaintances. As students meet other students from different regions, classes, castes, genders, and cultures, prejudices and stereotypes break down and students learn to unlearn and get out of the cocoons created by their particular circumstances of birth. The presence and interaction of such diversities often make campuses the hotbed for the emergence of new ideas and initiatives. Campuses lead to the coming together of different

An online society interaction

College fest before covid 19
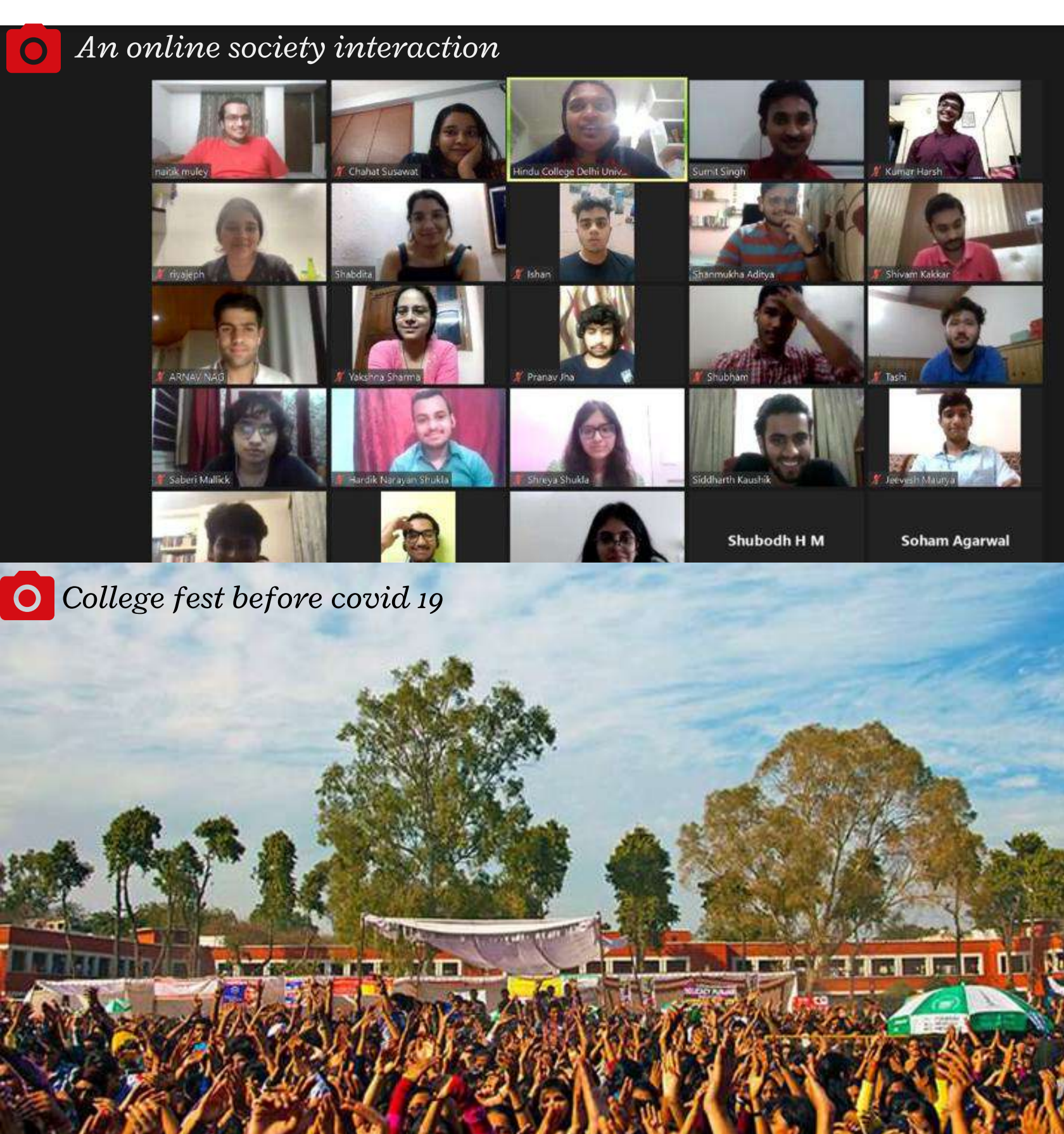
people who discover similarities among them, and that results in the foundation laying new start-ups, NGOs, research projects and social movements. In online spaces, however, communication occurs between numbers and photographs and there is very little opportunity to know and understand the persons behind them and hear about their experiences. You are put into, and you remain in Whatsapp groups where you don't know the first names of most members. An overwhelming number of

messages fill these groups in the first few weeks of their formation, but soon they become as silent as empty classrooms, with only occasional conversations about tests, assignments, syllabus, and other necessary subjects. Online spaces also provide few opportunities for making new acquaintances. Yes, the profile of one's friend's friend does show up but rarely are conversations started after accepting friend or fan requests of unknown college mates.

Online education also minimises peer learning, mainly because having serious conversations over online mediums is a communication nightmare. Anyone who has tried to have serious conversations involving disagreements via chatting would know that it is excruciatingly difficult. It is hard to know when the other person has completed his/her statement, it is harder to stop oneself from messaging in the middle while the other person is typing out a group of messages, typing errors and auto-correction often makes messages meaningless, and emoticons are an extremely crude medium for conveying emotions. If one dares to attempt the same in groups (say, class groups), it doesn't take long till others who don't care much for the subject of conversation flood the groups with stickers, memes, and random messages, derailing it all; or worse- someone might decide to send something offensive and perverted just for fun, as they know that repercussions can largely be avoided by muting or leaving the group. Thus a shift to online education means the loss of uncountable discussions and debates in campus spaces, which for many students like me, provide more important learning opportunities than formal classrooms.

We must also remember that campuses of the more renowned universities like DU or the IITs exist in important urban centres. When students from smaller towns and cities study on campuses, they also get access to the cities and their opportunities. This comes in the form of internships, part-time jobs, workshops, seminars, competitions, research opportunities, and perhaps more importantly, connections with other students who have always lived in cities. These are the students who control information regarding opportunities, they hold important positions in societies and departments and largely dominate classroom discussions. Being acquainted with them (or sometimes even overhearing them), provides students from less privileged backgrounds opportunities for upward social mobility. But in the arena of online education, 'cool kids' have their groups to which others can't enter.

But the powers do not want to focus on these aspects of higher education. They have reduced it to formal classroom lectures, and they are trying hard to replicate them online. My experience with online classes, however, tells me that even that is a difficult goal to achieve. In DU and every other university whose students I know, the norm is to join

online classes, turn off the mic and camera, and sleep, or do something else entirely. Classroom interaction is extremely low and even the first benchers don't reply to the repeated calls for questions and comments from professors.

The pandemic has brought in exceptional circumstances. And currently, online education is the option. But I don't see why this needs to be tended beyond the pandemic. I don't understand how online education improves the system of education. It must be remembered that neither the students nor the professors have demanded it. Online education possibly makes the work of administration easier, and cuts costs, but we must ask if administrations are the biggest stakeholders, or cost-cutting the greatest priority when it comes to higher education. ■

How quality early childhood can prevent high-school dropout?

Pranav Jha

Many studies have quantitatively proven that the chances of one completing their formal education increase significantly if that person had a quality early childhood. Strong formative years of childhood lay the groundwork for a bright future. Investment in quality childhood can result in many long-term benefits. We're sharing with you the crucial benefits that directly influence the prevention of future high-school dropouts.

1. Building an engagement with academics

An in-deep analysis of dropout rates indicates that a major factor behind it is disinterest in academics. This disinterest might stem from the lack of attention paid towards the child in their formative years. If a child switches directly to elementary education without going through formal education, the chances of disengaging with academics increase significantly. That is why the significance of the preschool period is unparalleled. Pre-schooling allows kids to witness an educational setup for the very first time. It facilitates accelerating their curiosity in learning new things. Empirical data indicates that the students who have attended a preschool score better grades than those who have not. Evaluating the

academic progress of students solely based on grades is not a hallmark of a holistic evaluation process. However, we cannot ignore the fact that low academic success might lead to dropouts at a later stage. Quality pre-schooling is a subtle way of ensuring that students start from an equitable academic ground.

2. Interaction with the outside world

Childhood education is not limited to learning about math, picking up linguistic skills, or recognising shapes. It is more about preparing for life itself. Thus, no other stage of education can match this one. Kids get introduced to a very new world for the first time.

If they can spend quality time with peers, teachers, and parents while learning, they grow fond of it. Later, the probability of them dropping out of high school decreases significantly, as they understand the environment around them better. These skills will come in handy at higher stages of education, where they have to apply both their knowledge and skills while grasping new concepts in a format set up.

2. Impart a set of Life skills

At this stage, children forge relationships with friends, teachers, and parents. They can acquire communication skills and desired range of socio-emotional values. All of this will aid them to cope up with later rigours of the education system.
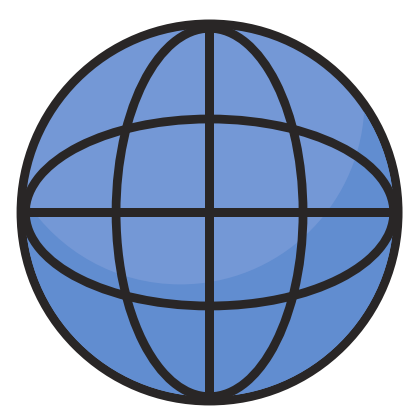
About Caucus

We, at Caucus, value academic discussions and discourse. It is through these conversations that we can tickle the intellect of our members and invoke opinions from across the spectrum. We make humble efforts towards the development and intellectual growth of our members. Through this process, we are able to produce scholars who are articulate and opinionated. We are an active society in Hindu College, University of Delhi. Given the competitive environment of Delhi University, it is our prerogative to stride further ahead and give our members an edge over their fellow companions. It is in this direction that we encourage our members to express their opinions on issues of policy, international relations, domestic and international developments among others in the form of the written word. The blog is meant to provide a platform to our members as well as serve to the wider prospective audience by providing perspectives on various subjects. Caucus – the discussion forum is a place where we discuss, debate and share our thoughts and ideas. Caucus was formed in 2007 in Hindu College, University of Delhi. We at Caucus not only discuss and deliberate, we also provide our members avenues to grow and explore through the various events that we organise. We organise group discussions on a weekly basis where we discuss current events. Some of our annual events include the "International Hindu Model United Nations" where we host various institutions for a two day long immersive and competitive MUN experience. We try out best to provide delegates with an immersive and holistic experience the best hospitality. This year, we also started an educational lecture series called "Compass" where we invited various industry experts. This not only encouraged us to look at issues from a different viewpoint but it also gave our members a chance to interact with these experts on a one-on-one basis. Moreover, we also train and send delegations to various MUNs. We also have a blog and encourage our members to contribute to our online blog with their opinions on trending topics. This helps them express their creativity and thoughts. We also encourage members to indulge in research and provide them all the necessary support regarding research and publication. Last but not the least, we at Caucus do not forget to have fun. We often discuss films and pop culture and we love playing pictionary. Do follow us on social media to stay updated on our events.

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