



POLITOSCOPE

ISSUE NO.1

HUMAN RIGHTS

APRIL 2021

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE
POLITICAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION

2021



PHOTO BY VIJAY KUSHWAHA

JESUS AND MARY COLLEGE,
UNIVERSITY OF DELHI



POLITOSCOPE

'TO BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN
THE PERSONAL AND POLITICAL'



THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE POLITICAL SCIENCE
ASSOCIATION, JESUS AND MARY COLLEGE

FOREWORD

Dear students,

I am happy to be writing the foreword for the very first edition of Politoscope- the annual magazine of the Political Science Association.

It seems like only yesterday when the idea for an annual department magazine was brought to me by a couple of students. Now, after months of hard work, a magazine has been produced by a team of writers, designers and editors. The amount of creativity poured in the regular investment of time, and the research-oriented keen minds show that teamwork can truly make anything possible.

Our team has chosen the theme of the magazine as human rights because the idea of human rights is based on values of tolerance, equality and respect which in turn can help reduce friction within society. Putting human rights ideals into practice can help us create the kind of society we want to live in.

Human right is an essential topic of discussion in today's times. An understanding of human rights helps us picture the world from a compassionate perspective, enhance interconnectedness and ensure every individual's liberties in the political, economic and social spheres of life.

Through our issue, I hope we can stimulate an intellectual discussion within the minds of our readers and perhaps, help gain a different perspective on the theme of human rights.

.....
 - Ms. Disha Narula
 Teacher in Charge,
 Political Science Association

.....

EDITOR'S NOTE

The political demands to be expressed, through words and opinions or through simple yet tangible actions. Politics of the artist is in words and facts, in poetry and in each piece of reflection. Events of 2020 may have culminated in art thriving, although politics remains at the core of every decision, every depiction.

Human rights find relevance in every sphere of existence, considerably so since the past year- manifesting as crucial movements, as interdependent youth-led initiatives, as individual accountability, and as a call for united global action.

To deny the influence of human rights, in one form or another, on every waking moment is to recognise the triumph of complacency and ignorance. To acknowledge the momentous shift in the youth in their increasing determination to be heard and to be seen, indicates the significance of education, agitation and organisation.

We bring to you the first edition of Politoscope- the annual magazine of the Political Science Association, with the theme 'Human rights', to engage in discourse and encourage debate. To promote individual expression with collective responsibility through academia, with the backing of facts and the freedom to create. This is our attempt to bridge the personal and the political, and to let you decide what the journey entails.

Regards,

GAYATRI AHUJA
Editor-In-Chief

EESHA MANI
ISHITA PHULORIA
Deputy Editors

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SUBMISSIONS



A REFORMED ATHENS IN KENYA

BY ANJALI JOY

Begum Hossain reversed the social hierarchy in favour of women when she published *Sultana's Dream* in 1905, and as she penned down her fictional "Lady Land" amidst a society tainted with the qualms of patriarchal values. It's hard to overlook that what Begum Hossain built in her writing, materialised in ancient Greece, except it was the Land not for women but the Men in Athens. While the notion of matriarchy lies distant from reality, with its traces in some degrees within matrilineal systems of ancient Kerala and some tribes in the North East (in the Indian context), Umoja Uaso, an all-female matriarch village in Kenya by beating the odds, has emerged as the cynosure of global discourse in recent years.

Interestingly, ancient Athens - apart from being known as the prototype of democracy, also acquired a distinct policy of citizenship that links the city-state to the village of Umoja in Kenya in the present times. While the former exclusively granted citizenship rights to 20+ years old, propertied Athenian men, the latter limited the access of the village to men, thereby becoming a single-sex community. As opposed to Athens, wherein the non-citizens (i.e Metics, women and slaves) could continue to live, Umoja is a village that bans entry to men.

At a time when the world aims for more efficient democracies, up north within the presidential representative democratic republic of Kenya lies a village that celebrates a less trodden path of governance. Here is when the backstory comes into play, to comprehend the existence of this village.

Umoja (which means "unity" in Swahili) started as a sanctuary for 15 women, who survived sexual assault and rape by British soldiers way back in 1990. But today, it has grown to give shelter, livelihood and life to all women trying to escape genital mutilation, sexual assault and rape, domestic violence, or child marriage-practices that are prevalent in the Samburu tradition as well as lack of educational opportunities. Furthermore, they earned economic independence by resorting to the tourism sector, organising campsites for safari tourists and making colourful beaded jewellery which is put up for sale. They have also built a school on the Umoja women's land, which is open to the nearby villages as well. In terms of children residing here, it is noted that when boys reach the age of 18, they have to leave the village.

Under the leadership of Rebecca Lolosoli, Umoja has done a commendable job in propagating women's rights in Kenya. Nearly three decades ago, she was one of the first voices to speak out, advocating for women's rights with inheritance, access to education, and safe places to shelter women against violence. Yet, the sight is disappointing in terms of national progress as many Samburu communities continue to indulge in customs violating women and Kenyan Law in the form of early marriage and female genital mutilation.

In the light of the above-given account it can be analysed that, on one hand, the rise of such an empowering village in the grasslands of Samburu (rooted deeply in patriarchy), has become an emerging voice for gender justice

across Kenya, but the struggles of women in this country questions the role and efficiency of the Kenyan authority (built on the foundation of democracy) in safeguarding the rights of women in the Kenyan Republic.

As the UN Women body aims for the theme for International Women's Day, 8 March 2021 (IWD 2021) as, "Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world", thereby celebrating the tremendous efforts by women and girls around the world in shaping a more equal future and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, let us ponder on the words of Nas Daily –

"Our governments need to make better policies to protect and give more chances to women and we as parents should educate our sons to respect women, so that one day not just this village but the whole world will be a place where women can succeed."

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THE INTANGIBLE SHADOW OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE OVER INDIA

BY ASHNA JOSEPH



PHOTO BY DELVIN RAJ

India also known as the Golden bird of the World is celebrated for its diverse cultures and humble traditions. It is the land of several Gods and Goddesses and holds beauty no less than the heavens. However, the land of milk and honey is shadowed by profuse evils. One such major immoral venture is that of domestic violence: a result of the long going strength of patriarchy and gender inequality.

The relationship between gender and violence is complex. The distinct roles and behaviors of females, males and children are shaped and reinforced by gender norms within society. These are social presumptions that define appropriate behavior for women and men (e.g. in some communities, being male is associated with taking risks, being tough and aggressive and having multiple sexual partners). As stated by Periyar, "masculine and feminine norms are not given." He also submits

accepted notions of femininity (chastity, beauty and motherhood) to a scathing critique because these fictions convinced women they are subordinate to men. Periyar also considered masculinity a result of merely an expression of brute male power as he locates the existence of these norms as favoring men. He highlighted that economics, masculinity and a spiritual priesthood held the sanctity of a religion in place.

Differences in gender roles and behaviors often create inequalities, whereby one gender becomes empowered due to the disadvantage of the other in the form of domestic violence. Domestic violence is a violence committed by someone in the victim's domestic circle, that is, when there is a close relationship between the offender and the victim. There is generally a power

gap between them as the victim is dependent on the offender, which can take the form of physical, sexual or psychological abuse. Given the patriarchal structure of society, women form the largest group of victims. Such practices not only are part of various cultures but also are highlighted in the media which shapes much of the mindset of people. Movies are one such medium that provides a major perspective to the viewer regarding various themes. Domestic violence, rape and the gender roles are well reflected in the movies in the 90s, before and after, which have contributed a great deal to the mindset, societal norms and gender roles. If someone acts against the made norms- one is portrayed as a 'vamp' or 'the evil one', such as in the movie Lajja. Yet slowly and steadily, changes are seen in the plot and perspectives of the several contemporary movies and movie writers which is helping spread awareness on many new and important topics in the world namely- Girl child rights, Rape cases, LGBTQIA+ issues, Domestic Violence, etc. One such pivotal movie is Thappad, starring Taapsee Pannu as a strong female lead.

The movie revolves around a woman named Amrita Sandhu, a sparkling individual and homemaker, who is shown to spend her days looking after her husband, Vikram, and their house. Her life was perfect until one day, it turned its pages. That day the couple threw a party for Vikram's promotion. However, the contract for the same was later compromised and handed to his inexperienced junior. Angered by this, Vikram gets into an argument with his superior. When Amrita tries to break up the argument, Vikram slaps her in front of everyone. The episode leaves her shaken; she starts to realize all the little unfair things that she had previously ignored and admits to herself that Vikram slapping her isn't what a husband who respects her would do. Furthermore, Vikram refuses to take

accountability for his actions, stating that he was "upset and that she got in the way and things like that happen sometimes." Unable to "forget it and move on," as everyone advises her to, Amrita leaves for her parent's home and stays there while she files for divorce. Later, things further got complicated as she discovered she was pregnant. Thus, for the custody of the unborn child, Vikram and his lawyer, Pramod Gujral, make false claims against her mental stability and character. They filed frivolous charges against Amrita in an attempt to intimidate her. Hurt and disheartened, Amrita decides to file for a domestic violence charge against Vikram unless he agrees to a mutually consensual divorce and joint custody of their expected child, which he later did.

Everyone told her to compromise and change her behavior but only her father stood by her side and fought with her. Later in the movie, even Sulakshana, Amrita's mother-in-law, apologized for the family's fallacy, acknowledged their ingrained misogyny and told Amrita that she is doing the right thing by taking a stand for herself. At the end, when Amrita and Vikram meet to finalize the divorce, he too apologizes to her properly and wonders out loud why he ever thought that he had a right to hit her or disrespect her in any way. They parted ways with a sense of renewed hope. Behind the story of Amrita, there was Netra, her lawyer. The film also shows snippets of the life of Amrita's neighbour, Shivani Fonseca, who is a single working mother and of Sandhus' maid, Sunita, all who realize they have been wronged by their husbands as well. Amrita's actions helped others find the strength to oppose their problems and find solutions.

REVIEW:

I feel Thappad highlights the very important issues in our society that are left undiscovered and unheard just under the

tags of "it's normal, nothing special, women have to understand, she's too educated " and so on. Yet, the most painful and pitiful moment of such events are that these statements are mostly made by women to women, that is, "Thoda Bardasht karna sikhna chahiye auraton ko."

Thappad, as a story, provides awareness to privileged women and girls to understand that 'if this is happening to you, it is wrong, it's time to raise your voices.' However, it is imperative we note that the main target audience of such a film should be the 800 million less privileged people in India who are living in poverty. The audience having the resources to watch this movie are the people who are aware, educated but still remain silent under the shadow of "shame." All this time, Patriarchy and gender differences have played a major role in the emergence of various evils against women such as sati, rapes, domestic violence, etc. Though, in the contemporary world, the evils are decreasing with the better treatment and allotment of equal rights to women and men, such crimes are still prevalent in places where there is lack of awareness that equality and rights for women are necessary, men are not to dominate women and all these evils happening to women are not normal. As seen in Thappad, Amrita being wed into a well-educated and wealthy family faced an incident of violence and was told to shut her voice and continue, then what is one to expect in the case of Sunita, who was wed into a poor and uneducated family, where males are considered the "Grahamath" and the "Parameshwar." The movie highlights different issues women face no matter one's family background, education, economic status and success and this is well reflected through the lives of Amrita and Sunita (the maid) who faced regular physical and verbal abuse from her husband and her in-laws. Even Netra-a well known lawyer was made to feel that no matter how hard she tries she

will always be a wife and a subordinate to her husband. Lastly, even Shivani- a single working mother- was given names and was constantly judged regarding her job, motherhood and character. This reflects the big dark blob in our culture and thinking towards half of the population of our nation. Mothers, sisters, wives and daughters are constantly judged and subjugated to a number of obstacles in their paths of self love. They are not allowed to explore the world of knowledge beyond the four walls they are locked up in. Today, the pages are turning, the doors are opening for the 'Jananis' to explore the world and make the most of opportunities.

Thappad though may not have reached everyone but the ones who were inspired by it may begin their journey towards equality and raising their voices for the ones who are ignored and unheard. This movie underlined the issue that has been long engraved in our veins and has been constantly ignored. It gave hope to people who were shushed away, made fun of, abused and scared to come to the spotlight and grab the chance to speak against the atrocities faced by them, under the notion of normalcy. So as "Thappad" gives hope, let us come together raising our voices for a better tomorrow. As, "It's not about them. It's about me."

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TALAQ, TALAQ, TALAQ

BY ANJALY CLARE SEBASTIAN

Aghast I am to get into,
The life of a man- so harrowing.
Myself I ask- am I a human or what,
To be a puppet of a husband, mine.
Food I cook, happiness I give,
Nothing but I get in return.

Remember thy mom you beast!
Love she showered, wisdom she drizzled,
Change but did not get a hold of you,
What matters to you is your own joy and
comfort.

Reminisce I the moments of ecstasy,
And tell the novellas of childhood mine,
To the walls and utensils so fine.
Else, whom to talk? Whom to tell?

Words unpleasing to thee,
May result in deeds unpleasing to me.
"Talaq" thrice is a pleasure game for you,
It's but a blast for me
-Blast of mind and blast of body

Ruin not, tarnish not a life so divine ,
A lady has feelings, just as a man.
Value her , humanity you value.

Declare with certainty, I,
O woman! Fear you defeat and injustice
you conquer And let love and justice rain,
In the guise of man's greatest acceptance,
That woman and man deserve equal
dignity!!

CASTING A WITCHES' SPELL: THE PRACTICE OF WITCH HUNT IN INDIA

BY EASHA CHANDHOK

India is a land of many paradoxes. While women are worshipped in temples as goddesses and are seen as a symbol of power, back home they are forced to live in a constant threat of being labelled a "witch." However medieval the practice might sound, witch hunts continue to remain a sad reality of the country. Countless cases and incidences of what is commonly referred to as the "Dayan Pratha" can be found in the data reports of the National Crimes Records Bureau (NCRB), though more than half of the cases are not even reported.

Originating in the late 15th century, the practice of witch hunt traces its roots to Europe and the American colonies. It was widely believed throughout Western Europe that "witches" were people, more often women, who had gained magical powers by worshipping Satan instead of God. This belief spread far and wide with the writing of the "Malleus Maleficarum" or "Hammer of Witches" by Heinrich Kraemer who emphasized the existence of witches, while also providing for harsh methods and practices to hunt them down. Women were considered to be easier "targets of the devil" and, thus, more often labelled so, though even men were at risk of being accused of casting evil spells. Several writings consequently came up, further reinforcing a belief in the existence of witches. People began to fall prey to these false ideas and soon began to associate any misfortune, whether it was crop failure or illness in the family, to the practice of sorcery by the branded "witches." Often, the victims of such practices were the social outcasts, widows, and single women, those on the margins of the society. They were then

detained and tried by what was referred to as the "witch trials." Many were questioned and tortured until they accepted the accusations. Punishments varied from a fine to burning at the stakes. Between 1500 and 1660, more than 80,000 were suspected to be witches, with the highest conviction rate in Germany. More than 80 per cent of the suspects were reported to be women.

While a decrease in such cases began to be noted in Europe, America emerged to be a new victim to these baseless trends. The most well-known witch trials were, in fact, held in Salem, Massachusetts in the year 1692. The Salem witch trials saw around 150 people being accused with almost 18 people being executed, of which 6 were men.

From the late 17th to the mid-18th century onwards, a number of scholars and jurists began to counter these practices with texts that brought out the cruelty of these hunts. One such article, supposedly written by Benjamin Franklin, talked about a hunt trial that took place in New Jersey. It was published in 1730 in the Pennsylvania Gazette. Soon, a number of new legislations were passed to protect the people from being falsely accused and convicted. The practice of witch hunt began to gradually decline and disappear. Yet, its remnants continue to be present, even today, in some parts of the world, the key example being that of India.

According to India's National Crimes Records Bureau, more than 2,500 Indians have been accused, tortured, and killed in witch hunts during the period of 2000 to 2016. It has been claimed that the numbers are much higher as many states do not list

witchcraft to be a motive of murder. Now, the question that arises is that what are the reasons behind the prevalence of such an orthodox practice, a practice that died out in Europe and America in the mid-eighteenth century but still continues to live through in India, even in the 21st century?

A simple answer to this would be the practice of scapegoating. More often, women are seen as easy scapegoats or easy explanations to problems whose answers are difficult to locate. If a family is going through a rough time then the woman in the house, be it the daughter-in-law or the wife, is blamed to be a “witch” who has brought about ills on the family. The difficulties could range from crop failure, disease outbreak to the death of a child, among others. As per government statistics, an Indian woman is “killed every other day after being accused of witchcraft.” It has been found that often women are blamed for practicing sorcery just to take over the land they possess or because of property disputes. Activists working in this field have found that widows who live alone in their property are at a higher chance of being labelled, with their age also playing a key role.

The lack of an adequate number of medical professionals and the low rate of education has made matters worse, as people, thus, have to look up to “oojhas” who act as “alternate healers of sorts” or as doctors. In villages, their presence has gained a lot of popularity as people visit them in light of any problems they face. These oojhas then end up labelling women as witches if they are unable to find the root of the problem. They make use of bizarre techniques like putting a few grains of rice in water to check if the woman practices sorcery or not and even claim to treat an ill person just by looking at their photo. These modern-day “witch-trials” also include the writing of a woman’s name on a tree branch, which if withers is a sign of the lady being a witch. These beliefs

are so deeply entrenched that mere awareness campaigns by NGOs cannot suffice. On being identified as a witch, a series of tortures and punishments, are inflicted on the woman, which includes mental and physical torture. Women are beaten up with belts and stripped naked in order to “drive out the witch inside them.” They are also gang-raped, forced to parade naked in the village, made to drink urine and eat human feces, and even drink animal blood, get their heads shaved and breasts cut off, among many other methods. Being ostracized from their own villages, they are further forced to bear the brunt of having to leave their homes, creating a mental agony.

Witch-hunting is practiced across 12 Indian states, with only 7 states having separate legislation criminalizing the practice. Jharkhand has the highest reported cases majorly because the state is dominated by communities known as the “Adivasis”, where women have equal rights to the property just like men, and with the coming of the mining industry, there has been a struggle for land. Accusing, thus, often seems to be an easy method of gaining control over land and property. However, it would be incorrect to conclude that such attacks have been limited to only the rural areas as even the industrialized cities report such cases, like the city of Jamshedpur. The NCRB data reveal that between the years 2010 to 2012, though there were 77 deaths in the state, only 9 of them were reported, despite the fact that the practice has been criminalized in the state. Other states who have reported cases are Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Rajasthan, and Assam, though a similar situation appears to exist even here.

To cite an incident of a witch hunt as reported by Tribune India, an 84-year-old woman was attacked by a mob and made to march the village with her face blackened and a garland of shoes in her neck, in

Himachal Pradesh, after being suspected of casting evil spells as a “witch.” In another incident, a woman and her four children were murdered in Odisha for the same reason. Such gruesome acts take place throughout India, where the victims are locked up in their homes, are tortured using the most inhumane methods, and most often, driven out of the villages. Family members who try to help and protect the victim are themselves faced with greater danger. A number of states have passed legal legalizations criminalizing the practice of witch-hunting and witchcraft. A prime example of this would be the Prevention of Witch (Daain) Practices Act, 1999 passed by the then Bihar government, which paved way for similar legislation to be enacted in Jharkhand, i.e. Prevention of Witch-hunting (Dayan Pratha) Act. These acts, however, continue to remain on paper as it has been noted quite frequently that the official authorities tend to side with the one accused of witch-hunting due to the bribe they receive. People are, further, not aware of the existence of these laws or about the legal consequences of practicing witch-hunts, generating a need for greater awareness and literacy.

Help groups have also engaged themselves in the task of ending these superstitions and acts of violence against the victim. ANANDI, i.e. Area Networking and Development Initiatives, is one such group operating in Gujarat that is actively working towards helping women in the rural areas and asking them to work as respondents to gender violence. The group helps bring to light cases of witch-hunting and pressures the police to report these cases under witch-hunting. It has also been working towards the creation of laws that make branding someone to be a witch, a crime.

To conclude, the path of modernity that India claims to be on is actually based on the

ignorance of the existence of social evils prevalent even today. While we might advance in terms of technology, our outreach in terms of education and awareness to the grassroots is still limited. “A worrying combination of factors” has led to the misuse of the stereotypical thinking of the people to gather greater gains for a few. Thus, the need of the hour is that the government needs to bring in stringent laws and legislations to end this practice along with an effort to root out the superstitions in the people’s minds through education.

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THE SNOOPING INDUSTRY

BY EKTA CHOUDHARY

In a recent bid to create a 'safe' cyber environment, the Ministry of Home Affairs has engineered a controversial programme that will empower cyber volunteers to flag content on social media as unlawful. The category of the posts includes child pornography, rape crime, terrorism, and anti-national activities. Being piloted in Jammu and Kashmir, and Tripura on a trial basis, the initiative has invited deep-seated apprehensions and criticisms. Scholars have raised concerns over the ambiguity that lies in the term, 'anti-national activities.' They have also hinted at the lack of checks and balances in the plan. "What if I report you and get it reported by multiple people to settle my differences with you?", a senior lawyer told the Indian Express. (Sircar 2021)

With the outbreak of COVID-19, the dependency on technology has increased more than ever. While on the one hand, it acquainted us with its unprecedented merits, on the other hand, it has made even more individuals increasingly susceptible to human rights violation, especially in the vacuum of essential safeguards and unfettered powers in the hands of the government. With the rise in the cases of website blocking, internet shutdown, suspension of social media accounts, censorship and surveillance, the fundamental rights of Indian citizens, including the freedom of speech and expression, are trampled upon and most of the times on illegitimate grounds and minimal justification.

Since the 26/11 terrorist attacks in Mumbai, the government has been at the forefront of advancing the Indian security system, linking it with the latest technologies.



ILLUSTRATION BY AANCHAL JAIN

Keeping in view the objective to strengthen the country's counter-terrorism capabilities, former Home Minister, P. Chidambaram formulated the plan of the National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID) in 2009. The project aims to connect approved security and law enforcement agencies (IB, R&AW, CBI) with designated data providers. (Airlines, Banks, Railways). Although the target number of data providers is 1950, in the first phase, 21 data providers will be linked. (Internet Freedom Foundation 2020).

At first glance, the project may appear to be impeccable, however, it is riddled with complications, the major issue being that NATGRID is exempted from the purview of the Right to Information. This move is contentious as it widens the perils of function creep - information being used for other purposes than specified.

Another system that has exacerbated the risk of exploitation in the name of national security is the National Automated Facial

Recognition System (AFRS). AFRS requires facial biometrics to be extracted from videos and CCTV footages to identify criminals and the scenes of crimes. This will be compared with the database of photographs managed by the National Crime Records Bureau (NRCB). There is a belief that this technology would make the criminal identification process effective. Studies have suggested an alternate reality- AFRS is not full proof. Experts have expressed their grievances about the possibility of a false positive and false negative that may originate if the state would adopt unreliable face recognition technologies like AFRS, putting the lives of innocent people at risk. This fails to meet the threshold of necessity- the requirement of a legitimate state aim - which was upheld by the Supreme Court in the Justice K.S Puttaswamy case (Internet Freedom Foundation 2020).

In the backdrop of large-scale surveillance, it becomes essential to have a robust framework to protect citizens against the contravention of privacy and freedom of expression by the government to target intellectuals, dissenters and human right activists. To reach the principle of legality laid down in the KS Puttaswamy case, the government is inching closer in the direction of designing a Data Protection Act. A joint parliamentary committee is probing the Data Protection Bill, 2019 and is likely to submit its report in the second part of the current budget session.

The 2019 bill has come under scrutiny for bestowing unrestrained powers in the hand of the state. Justice (retired) BN Srikrishna, who authored the first draft of the bill in 2018 has criticized the 2019 version, stating that it may transform India into an "Orwellian State." One of the sections of the bill talks about establishing a Data Protection Authority. If an individual is not satisfied by the grievance redressal

undertaken by the data fiduciary, they can file a complaint to the DPA. (Vaishnav 2019) The composition of the select committee that is indulged with the task of appointing the Data Protection Authority members has broached questions pertaining to the independence of the DPA. (Mehrotra and G 2020) Apar Gupta, an advocate and executive director of Internet Freedom Foundation has argued that the select committee lacks variety, making the committee and the appointment process government centred. Consequently, the DPA members will be inclined to work on the orders of the government.

The new bill empowers the government to exempt any state agency from any/all provisions of the data protection law if it is necessary to protect the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the state, friendly relations, public order and to prevent incitement to the commission of an offence. (Internet Freedom Foundation 2020) With such absolute power, the state can arbitrarily target certain groups while its actual intention will remain shrouded by the notion of national security. What is the nature of issues that will come under national security? What is the guarantee that data will be deleted after it has served its purpose? Questions like this have transcended from mere 'suspicion' to macabre 'reality' when similar policies have been used to authorize the arrest of people who have raised their voices against the policies of the government.

The Pegasus spyware scandal is a manifestation of such fears. Pegasus was used to spy on various Indians from different professions such as human rights defenders and scholars to lawyers and journalists. The privacy attack occurred in 2019 and despite ongoing investigations we still do not know who was responsible for the act. However, a

lawsuit filed by WhatsApp against the NSO group in October 2019, accused the group of enabling the government to undertake hacking sprees against civil society members in 20 countries. NSO denied such allegations and maintained that this technology is only sold to the government to combat crime and terrorism. In a report submitted to a US Court in California, the company has alluded to the government's knowledge of this privacy violation. Alleging the involvement of the government in the breach, Nagpur-based lawyer Nihal Singh Rathod claimed that the state agencies have employed the software to plant letters which are now referred to as evidence in the Bhima Koregaon case (Dahat, Sathe, and Sethi 2020).

Web Censorship and Internet Suspension by the state are grave issues that are now spreading their fangs in India. 2020 witnessed a surge in the cases of website blocking, especially in the context of campaigns led against the much-disputed draft Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification 2020. Organisations including Let India Breathe (LIB), Fridays For Future (FFF) and There Is No Earth B, in July 2020, said that their domains were put on hold by the National Internet Exchange of India (NIXI) without any reasons given in advance (Nandi 2020). The ongoing feud between the centre and twitter has further diverted the attention of the scholars into the transparency of section 69A of the Information Technology Act which warrants for public blocking of information by the central government in the interest of national security akin to the Personal Data Protection Bill. The BJP government, for instance, ordained the blocking of hashtags like #KashmiriUnrest and #KashmiriNow, jeopardizing free speech (Srivastava 2021). In 2019, Al Jazeera report revealed that nearly one million tweets from Kashmir have been blocked by the government since 2017.

“Dissent is being criminalised and space is stifled,” Kashmir-based human rights activist Khurram Parvez told Al Jazeera (Al Jazeera 2019).

The government has resorted to frequent internet shutdowns to muzzle democratic protests. As of February 2021, India has already witnessed ten internet shutdowns this year. Restricting the use of the internet, as per the United Nations, is a human rights violation. A report, “Global Cost of Internet Shutdowns,” disclosed that India restricted internet access more than any country in the world in 2020 (Binoy 2021). Internet shutdowns are practiced to prevent the protests from turning brutal, nevertheless, Raman Chima, head of the Asia Pacific Region for Access Now, a global body fighting for digital liberties, told the wire that there is enough research to show that internet suspension actually intensifies violence.

History is a testimony of the fact that absolute powers in the hand of the government can undermine the freedom of individuals. In the Indian context, after the Bharatiya Janata Party, whose policies revolve around giving expressions to its Hindutva ideology, came to power, the spectre of human rights violations owing to the 2019 amendments to the Right to Information Act, has become even more sinister. The BJP government has profoundly resorted to the tool of sedition laws to sanction the incarceration of protestors. This was witnessed by the world when large-scale objections arose against the internationally condemned Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019 and Farm's Bill, 2020. In such a scenario, the storage of sensitive data by the government can have far-reaching consequences. As cases related to Aadhar data leaks, sale of data on the dark web, anxieties regarding unlawful storage of sensitive information by the government

mounts, the requirement for designing a framework based on the principles of transparency needs to be urgently realised. Taking into account recommendations forwarded by vested groups, the government must carve out a balanced data protection statute.

As Amos Toh states, without binding regulations we can never be sure that the governments are meeting their human rights obligations.

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ECHO OF FEMINISM- AN INDIAN ACCOUNT

BY SALONII KHEMANI

Many moons ago, during my early teenage years, gender roles were not completely established. From taking care of my siblings to running around for errands, my grandmother and my mother never quite felt the need for taking a breath and letting the male members of the household take up these responsibilities. Since childhood, I have seen women work endlessly to make ends meet one way or the other. The male members of the household were traditionally and conventionally termed as the sole “bread-makers” of the family. “Are women equally capable?” was one question I kept asking everyone around me.

Almost a decade, and this question still lingers around the quiet and dark streets of rural areas where women feel whether they are as capable as the men in their families. Not only this, women in general – all over the world – are taught to be “quiet,” “well-mannered,” “submissive,” every time they try to be expressive. To put it plainly, is this what equality of genders mean?

Feminism has been among the many discussions that has never ended in a satisfactory resolution. Being a feminist in today’s world not only calls for abundant criticism but is also a benchmark of how “modern” or “progressive” an individual is. Feminism has evolved significantly over the years. It started off as a mere movement and has continued to evolve every day.



“ You had the power all along
my dear.”

- L. Frank Baum

ARTWORK BY SHALWI TIGGA

Merriam Webster defines “feminism” as the theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the genders or organized activity on behalf of women’s rights and interests. Feminism, for most of its course, has been multicultural and pretty diasporic. While one might say that feminism started in the West, there's no doubt that it has spread over the entire world. The Indian context with regard to Feminism has been evolving since the beginning of time. However, it would be wrong to compare Indian feminism with the Western, which is marked by radical standards, in such a complex setting, and to invoke Western feminist critics on the problems faced by women in India.

Jasbir Jain, the author of *Indigenous Roots of Feminism* (2011), has examined a number of Indian historical texts with respect to Feminism. She says “Draupadi deconstructed the notions of chastity and sati; Sita, of power and motherhood; Kali, of violence; Puru's young wife, of sexuality; the bhakta women, of marriage and prayer”. Jasbir believes that “feminism is more than a voice of protest or questioning. It is moral self-reflection, a conquering of inner fears and a realisation of self-worth ... It does not abandon values or relationships, but goes on to create new ones”.

In today’s modern and progressive world, Feminism has not only been every young student’s major topic of debate, but it has also taken a backseat every time criticism has stopped being constructive. Feminism is often associated with a movement that’s based on the superiority of women over that of men. Often, and not surprisingly so, it’s confused with misandry.

In a world that’s continuously rambling about the increasing number of women entrepreneurs, being a feminist can be nothing less than a task. Catering to all these misconceptions about feminism, people have also come up with “Feminazis” wherein they imply that being a feminist is not less than being a Nazi.

Indian women have risen above every stereotype about working women. Not only do they have respectable jobs, they also have been actively engaging in Indian politics. The fact that women don’t have the persistence and the will to take up serious jobs and that they are meant for things concerning fashion and beauty has been proven wrong at every step so far.

Why is feminism needed?

Feminism, in totality, does not advocate the superiority of women over men. Instead, it stands for equal rights of both the sexes. One of the questions that usually pop up every time feminism is talked about is its relevance in the contemporary times if women already have the “basic rights” such as the right to vote and education. Feminism is needed not because women don’t have rights, it’s needed because the existing patriarchal pattern of the society has not ceased to exist yet.

It’s not uncommon to stumble upon the subject of “feminism” during the very elaborate dinner parties in Indian households. India requires feminism because, whether it be her father, brother, husband or son, a woman should not be considered a male liability at any point in her life.

The degree of male superiority is highlighted by activities like '*kanyadaan*,' Raksha Bandhan' and the 'purdah system' where a woman is veiled behind a *ghoonghat*.

Ruchi Saxena states that while “India prides itself on producing great female warriors such as Rani Padmavati, Razia Sultana, and Rani Ahilyabai Holkar, yet the participation of women in the Indian defence forces is disheartening. Equal involvement of men and women in the army is still a far-fetched dream. This only supports the stereotype that masculinity implies physical strength and femininity, sentimentalism.”

Feminism's media representation leads to its stigmatized image. Both traditional and social media can be credited with this. The Feminist has been painted by the media as an angry, man-hating woman. Women face tremendous sexism worldwide in the workplace as well. The gender pay gap in India, for example, is estimated to be 19% on average, with the percentage increasing as the skill level of the work increases”.

On the brighter side, however, through a number of measures, feminism has proven to be instrumental in society. Voting rights were gained by women in many countries around the world through this movement, as was greater access to education and an increased degree of bodily autonomy. Latest campaigns such as #MeToo have taken the debate to the mainstream around sexual harassment and abuse, serving not only the entertainment industry, but other sectors worldwide as a wake-up call. In exchange, this has led to concrete changes in the form of social and political change in many workplaces.

“Expanded attention on intersectional feminism, in addition, has increased the inclusivity of the movement, taking into account imperative factors such as race, religion, sexuality, and caste.”

Audre Lorde said, “ I am not free while any other woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own.” Reflecting on this quote, it is important to note that there are still so many women all around the globe that do not enjoy the same privileges as men. Patriarchy still exists and breeds in almost all societies. Being a feminist might be a choice, but it's also the need of the hour. It's a long journey, but not an endless one.

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THE EVOLUTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

BY SANDHYA JEREMIAH DUNG

Human Rights are the most imperative instrument towards creating a peaceful world. Human Rights are not provided to us by the state, instead every individual inherits these human rights by birth. The main purpose of enshrining these Human Rights is to protect people from any form of political, social and legal abuses and to preserve the dignity of an individual or the society at large but in contemporary times, the number of violations of human rights has increased. From using force on protesters to suppress dissent to the persecution of specific communities such as in Israel and China, states now have become agents of human rights violations. Such instances from across the globe have resulted in the deterioration of the sanctity of human rights. Thus, to understand the significance and scope of these human rights in the contemporary times, we need to understand the historical development of the same.

The historical foundation of human rights can be traced back to primarily three rough categories, namely, religion, the philosophical inspirations and the political and social theories.

The first category, although seems very complex to decipher, is actually very pivotal to keep in mind when we talk about Human rights. In ancient times, the divinity of religious worship paved the way for developing an understanding of Human rights. This can be exemplified by a few examples, taking into account the diversity of religions all around the globe.

In the *West*, **Judaism**, a religion established more than 3,500 years ago, emphasized the performance of duty, a notion that further led to the development of respect for one's rights. For example, *Leviticus*, the third book of the Hebrew Bible, explicitly commands, "*You shall not oppress. You shall do no injustice. You Shall love your neighbours as yourself.*" This example shows how most of the modern day Human rights can be associated with the societies of the bygone. Stemming from Judaism, **Christianity** endows human dignity with universality, a concept that is central in human rights even today. Shattering the divisions based upon ethnicity, social status, and gender, Christianity acknowledges that we "*are all one in Christ Jesus.*" In the *East*, **Hindu** social ethics, which emerged around the fifth century B.C.E., connect the notion of duty with specific legal, political, and economic rights. Philosophical inspirations, which is the second category seeks to interpret human rights through reasoning, often followed by political and social revolutions. Different civilizations across the globe have bred their own perspectives on human rights. For instance, Confucianism espouses many ideas related to human rights, including conscience, human dignity, morality over personal interest and social harmony. Similarly, the Greek classical era, from 476 to 336 B.C.E. witnessed the birth of the world's first democracy where citizens were granted civil and political rights within the Polis or the city-states. Greek philosophers, such as Socrates, Plato, and

Aristotle, argued for “a universal law of nature” that applied to all creation and provided the foundations for natural rights. Later, the Roman Stoics advanced and promulgated natural rights by supporting the values of impartiality, egalitarianism, and cosmopolitanism. Furthermore, during the *thirteenth* century C.E., the Christian philosopher **Saint Thomas Aquinas** polished Aristotle’s concept of natural law. **The Renaissance**, an intellectual movement that prevailed in the *fourteenth and fifteenth centuries* C.E., spread the ideals of humanism and free expression that had previously been undermined by political and religious authorities. Furthermore, the concepts of natural laws and natural rights evolved and shaped the political spheres as well. In 1215 C.E., the **Magna Carta** was issued and, for the first time, exerted legal restraints upon King John of England to protect certain liberties and the due process of law. In 1689, the **English Bill of Rights** constituted one of the milestones in the history of civil and political liberties, delineating free elections, open speech within parliament, and judicial justice as privileges for all citizens. Another significant contribution towards the human rights was the **Enlightenment period** of the *seventeenth to eighteenth centuries* C.E., a European intellectual movement emphasizing human reason and individualism which added vitality to the ideals of human rights.

Significant scholars, who contributed in the realm of Human Rights include John Locke who employed the theory of natural law to build upon the theory of natural rights, which he argued should include “life, liberty, and possessions.” The German philosopher Immanuel Kant who is often praised as the “giant shoulders [upon which] the modern theory of human rights rests,” stated that humans’ freedom to choose made them distinct from other beings. Along with the efforts of other Enlightenment philosophers, these ideals inspired *American and French*

Revolutionary thinkers and thus the following groundbreaking documents: the U.S. Declaration of Independence in 1776, the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen in 1789, and the U.S. Bill of Rights in 1791.

These documents strove to affirm human rights, offering legal protections for fundamental liberties and even launching the historical beginning of the constitutional movement. This was the same time when Feminist movements were also embarking. A prominent event of the same is in 1791, when the French political activist **Olympe de Gouges** challenged patriarchal traditions in her **Declaration of the Rights of Women and the Female Citizen**, announcing that “*woman is born free and remains equal to man in her rights.*”

All of the aforementioned ideas and processes culminated, eventually forming the foundations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which, for the first time, presented a transnational commitment to defining and protecting human rights. For instance, the Magna Carta is credited with being the “most direct ancestor of the actual language” in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, whereas the U.S. Bill of Rights served as one of the previous models upon which the drafting of the UDHR heavily depended. Furthermore, what’s distinct about the UDHR is that it comprises not only the Western notions but also the notions originating in the East. This is exemplified by the varied principles in the UDHR which can also be found in the world’s great religious and philosophical traditions. Thus, it is concluded that the UDHR is universally applicable to all. The UDHR’s essence is deeply rooted in a diverse range of histories, making it, at least theoretically and idealistically, relevant to all of humankind.

The entire evolution of Human Rights even faced some **hurdles**; among the serious threats to human rights were social practices and processes which were discriminatory in



PHOTOGRAPH BY SHANTAM SINGH

nature, such as **slavery, gender inequality, and racial prejudice**. The atrocities faced by the sections of people who suffered in the Apartheid, the form of slavery practised in colonies and the subjugation and sexual objectification of women in the bygone, especially during war times, are important examples of the threats Human Rights have faced over the years. These practices often divided the society in different sections namely the oppressors and the section that was being oppressed. These oppressed communities were subjected to hatred and prejudice and were excluded from the ambit of even basic rights. Unfortunately, such practices continue even in the contemporary times and they might have worsened in this age of globalisation.

The **scope of Human Rights in the modern days** is viewed in a very distinct manner. The most pivotal event of the contemporary times has been **Globalisation**, which in turn has impacted human rights both negatively and positively. The interconnectedness through Globalisation has resulted in newer transnational actors such as MNC's, corporations and agencies who might violate human rights without any form of accountability, but at the same time it has accentuated the flow of solidarity amid human rights movements across the world. A

classic example of the same is the Me Too Movement, which is also considered as another wave of Feminism and has spread out to different countries, across the globe, wherein women are raising their voices against sexual exploitation at their workplaces prominently. It can be concluded that in the contemporary times the scope of human rights might have widened because of the increased flow of information and ideas and also because of the wave of online activism through technological and *cultural globalisation*. While new forms of threats such as crimes in the cyber space, rapid development of nuclear weapons etc. might have accelerated, it can be said that violations against human rights in this modern era by any state or non-state actor is intolerable. This can also be vouched by the fact that multiple International organizations (including NGOs) such as **Amnesty International, United Nations** and even Individual **Human Rights activists** have been working successfully to raise their voices against human rights violations in any and every corner of the world. The fact the world hasn't witnessed any global war after the WWII is a testament to their efforts. Nevertheless, we cannot conclude that we as a society have reached the peak threshold where human rights aren't being violated.

A SINGLE SYRIAN MOTHER

BY FARIA KHAN

An extract from my fictional book under progress and yet to be published, based on the Syrian Civil War crisis.

"I hope this will never happen to anyone."
~A mother's silent prayer

The night was solemn and darkest of all; the twinkling stars illuminated the vast expanse of land. I was sitting on a rock and the calm sea was the only witness to my tears. I had lost everything and was not fearful now.

The war had changed it all, my life, my family and my hope in my two children. I come from a country that is torn and shredded by civil war. The world calls it the tragedy of all times. Despite my tiredness, sleep had eloped me; there not goes one day when I do not recite a prayer for my children. Tears dripping from my eyes as an everlasting stream of grief- which no one might understand or maybe many mothers like me can feel. Everyone was asleep by now, and I found myself shivering; the cold winds were restless like me, mourning my helplessness.

I stood up and walked towards the refugee tent with silent steps and a paining heart. Pain flows in the veins of each and every refugee and fugitives who have abandoned their homes to cross the war-torn country's border in this epoch of agony and pain.

I have a clear picture of that day etched in my heart and soul. The day when everything catastrophically altered for me was 21 November 2011.



ARTWORK BY SILVI SUNIL

The day of horror and helplessness, the night before the awful morning was showing its signs. Our streets were silent, and not a soul wandered on the deserted narrow lanes surrounding our small one storey home. I was standing by my room's window praying for our safety, and I knew we all were frightened. I had to put on a facade of being calm on the outside, while on the inside I had several reasons to be anxious.

The night passed without my eyes blinking, and I constantly stared outside from my window, my two boys asleep huddled with fear. The Baahar Al Assad's supporters could be heard chanting slogans at dawn.

Suddenly! Horror unleashed when a massive bomb dropped on our residential area, chaos and cry, blood splattered on roads, dust and smoke from the collapsing buildings. I found myself losing my mind. I was unable to find my children, scrounging on the ground I found my youngest son, his eyes closed with shallow breathing, crying. I picked him up in my arms and looked around hastily for my elder son. All my searches were in vain. I heard some people calling us outside as our small house was about to collapse; one of the men pulled me outside despite my utmost resistance. I was crying and calling out his name, but he was not to be found.

I was not in my senses and soon collapsed. I remember when I regained my consciousness I realized I was in a refugee camp in Lebanon. I immediately started inquiring about both my sons. The health worker took me to my younger son, who was laying conscious on the small bed while my first son was still untraceable, and I lost myself in him.

This is not just me- such is the story of thousands of women torn and shredded from their families and children living dummy lives devoid of happiness and full of pain.

Where are the so-called public servants by the name of politicians? Oh! They are still busy working out their whims and fancies, culling out their advantages from the flesh and blood of lakhs of innocents by putting their lives at stake.

MAY THEIR VOICES BE HEARD

BY VANSHIKA

Mother's trembling fingers shield my ear
 As our inevitable faith alas, draws near
 The earth and our home quivers
 Amidst the deafening silence and
 Screeching violence
 As the night spreads and the light dies
 Our voices, mute, fall into a hushed
 lullaby.

I shiver in my mother's last embrace
 This will be my last haven, my last happy
 place
 Blasts erupt and pierce
 Her wounds open
 Blood, like my dad's, oozes out
 The legacy of her silenced pain as bruises
 in the corners of her mouth.

I look into her damp eyes
 She pretends, forces a smile.
'Do not be afraid, mom is here my child'
 She thinks I believe,
 Her hastily woven lies.

The sirens wail
 Families like ours with children, wail.
 For one last time I see my father's
 photograph
 I recall the feeling of his strong arms,
 baritone
 And secured, loving laugh.

Then I remember him being
 thrashed and dragged, a bullet
 without remorse,
 Straight through his forehead
 Memories I wish had faded
 Memories and resent that I could
 never forget.

The earth shakes and the end draws
 nearer,
 Bombs blast, one or two fatal, pierce
 through the air.
 I inhale my mother's scent
 Sobbing, she performs her last prayer.

My father, my friends, probably long
 dead,
 My home, my mother's trembling
 breast.
 For if afterlife may be bestowed,
 I shall treasure and carry them in my
 chest.

All these memories that my heart
 remembered,
 And if next life be granted;
 I hope that those who survived,
 I hope their voices don't fall into
 hushed silence.
 I hope their pain is heard.

STUDENT AND POLITICS

BY KHUSHI MEHROTRA

Students have formed an active component of politics since the Indian Freedom Struggle. All around the world, students have occupied spaces which have given way to socio-political change.

In April 1970, President Richard Nixon's decision to expand the Vietnam War into Cambodia led to campus protests. At Kent State University, National Guardsmen confronted and killed 4 students and wounded 9. For the masses, especially the youth, it was a nerve-wracking and agonising example of an authoritarian presidency which they saw thriving in Nixon's America. Soon, over 4 million students shut down over 450 campuses across the U.S. The widespread action soon shifted public opinion about the ongoing war. Similarly, Bhagat Singh was only in his 20s when he vowed to avenge Lala Lajpat Rai's murder at the hands of the British and conspired with revolutionaries like Shivaram Rajguru, Sukhdev Thapar, and Chandrashekhar Azad to kill James A. Scott.

Young individuals have played a crucial role in the political processes be it through forming the electorate, casting a vote and criticising or appreciating the government. Student representatives and unions, if working correctly, can provide a massive platform for young people to express their opinions. All over the world, student unions act as active pressure groups, drawing attention to issues which stay hidden from the centre stage.

Many student leaders end up in mainstream electoral politics, where they either do wonders for young people or become bad examples.

Such unions however, do bring newer perspectives and ideas to the table which is very important for the growth and development of any society.

Student Unions from prominent universities across the country like Delhi University, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Aligarh Muslim University and Jadavpur University have at times acted as strong oppositions to government when the real opposition of the country have taken a back seat.

The Navnirman Andolan of 1974 was a socio-political movement primarily led by the students and middle-class in Gujarat against corruption and economic crisis, which later spread to other parts of India. With the defeat of Pakistan in 1971, the Congress government came back to power with the infamous slogan 'Garibi Hatao'. This promise turned out to be an empty one as 'Garibi Hatao' gradually changed into 'Garib Hatao'.

The life of the poor worsened. In Gujarat this misery got coupled with a severe famine and steep price rise. This forced the then late Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi to ask the CM of Gujarat to resign and fresh elections were ordered. The movement was further strengthened when it gained the support of Jayaprakash Narayan, a well-respected public figure and a known crusader against corruption. At the same time, Mrs Gandhi was accused of charges of electoral malpractice in the 1971 legislative elections. The Jan Sangh demanded Mrs Gandhi's resignation. However, the declaration of the Emergency in 1975 killed the optimism of the Navnirman Movement.

During this agitation, Narendra Modi played an active part as a part of the Akhil Bharatiya Vidhyarthi Parishad, the student wing of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).

It also must be noted that Navnirman Andolan (Re-invention or Reconstruction movement) is the only successful agitation in the history of post-independence India that resulted in dissolution of an elected government of the state.

In more recent times, student movements and protests have been described by Khaliq Parkar of JNU as 'post-liberalisation student movements and agitations'. These can be traced to the JNU agitation of February 2016 and the agitation against Rohith Vemula's suicide at University of Hyderabad. These also include the recent protests against CAA and NRC.

The Telangana movement is also an example of another major student agitation which led to the creation of a new state. Though spearheaded by K. Chandrashekhara Rao and the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS), it was largely a student-driven agitation witnessing *jail-bharo* (fill the jails) campaigns, particularly from Osmania University and University of Hyderabad.

As powerful as these agitations have been, they have also been stifled and crushed. Often these student-led movements are considered menial or seen as an attempt to create 'noise'. The students are reduced to mere noisemakers and such movements, an extra-curricular project outside their classes.

However, it must be noticed that students are not drawn into the political sphere at the university level. Politics is something all of us are surrounded with 24x7. From selecting a discipline monitor to sports team captain, the selection of a class representative to the university elections, all fall under the confines of politics.

The constitutional right to freedom of expression and speech comes with restrictions which must be respected and followed. While organising protests and taking part in the political process is a constitutional right, it must be exercised in a manner which does not go against the purview in which it's been set. Damage to public property or violence during such times has often brought down the credibility of these movements.

Social Media has played a major role in current times. Through social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram and Facebook, information and SOS calls can be spread and shared at a much faster rate. Hashtags on Twitter have become a popular tool to bring attention to matters of importance. Social media has given the marginalised communities a platform to raise their concerns which are often lost amongst the majoritarian opinions. While social media has a positive side, the spread of hate speech, fake news and false propaganda is increasingly becoming a concern.

Music, poetry, prose and theatre are also some popular methods used by student organisations and institutions to generate interest, activism and to spread awareness

amongst the masses.

Recently, The ‘Nabanna Abhiyaan’ was announced by 10 Left supporting youth and student organisations, including the SFI (Student’s Federation of India) and DYFI (Democratic Youth Federation of India) to protest against the policies of the TMC-led West Bengal government, demanding jobs, industrialisation and also to show a ‘red card’ over the law and order condition in the state.

The agitation saw Kolkata Police lathicharge, fire tear gas shells and water cannon at protesters, leaving hundreds with bleeding injuries. Many are still undergoing treatment. On one hand, TMC leaders give speeches in the Parliament which target the ruling party’s attitude towards dissent, and on the other, they handle dissent in their own state through violent crackdowns.

In Pakistan, the ban on student unions by the most ruinous usurper and dictator, Zia Ul Haq, hurt the education sector the most. The decades during which the student unions were functioning, the education sector was progressing. Zia Ul Haq saw the threat posed by the unions which led to him banning them completely. Till date, the ban on student unions stands in place. The recent wave of emerging student politics in the form of ‘Student Solidarity March’ is a manifestation of this reality. The march was organised in fifty cities across Pakistan during 2019 as opposed to the nine cities it managed during 2018. Students rallied in numbers to demand the revival of student unions and grievance redressal.

Prominent student leaders like Aishe Ghosh and Kawalpreet Kaur and their activism shows promise.



ARTWORK BY RASHI GUPTA

This also addresses the issue of the need for more women leaders in the political arena especially in student union elections for active redressal of gender-centric concerns and safety in campuses.

In India, 65% of its population falls below the age of 35 and a data profile shows that a mere 13% of today’s cabinet is under the age of 40. If we glance over the age profile of an average MP in today’s India, MPs between the age of 56 and 70 form about 44% of the current batch whereas this age group just forms 8% of the total population. This has caused the average age of an MP in the country today to increase to 56 from 46.5 that marked the first Lok Sabha of free India. This analysis shows the need for younger and newer politicians to lead the way and inspire the public with a fresh perspective. While experience is a badge worn by our veteran leaders, India surely needs the force of the youth to take charge.

Student-led movements are often tossed aside as students are considered naïve and seeking to cause trouble. However, troublemakers will continue to exist and this makes it even more important to identify them for movements to remain credible. These unions form an important part of our country's political process by acting as a mediator between the students and the administration as well as an active opposition against the government. Not only have they given us powerful politicians but also promoted a spirit of community building and camaraderie.

Students, after all, are the leaders of the future.

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A REVIEW OF SHAKTI BILL AND ITS IMPACTS ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS

BY PRASHNI TYAGI

December 10th is rightly commemorated as Human Rights Day every year, but Human Rights Day in 2020 brought about a landmark bill called Shakti Bill. The bill has been introduced to counter the incidents of violence and atrocities against women and children within the state. The Maharashtra Shakti legal code (Maharashtra Amendment) Bill, 2020 is drafted along similar lines with Andhra Pradesh Disha Act criminal law, 2020.

Women in India have always suffered the brunt of the misogynistic views of society. This bill has further entrenched the patriarchal view that's profoundly rooted in our society.

The law provides for harsher and severe punishment like compulsory sentences – including execution for non-homicidal rape, life sentences, and hefty fines for the perpetrator. This bill proposes the necessity for quick trials and attempts to revise sections of IPC and CrPC and therefore the POCSO act of 2012. The Shakti bill seeks to add an explanation to Section 375 – “where parties are adults and the conduct of such parties from all circumstances surrounding the same appears that there was consent or implied consent, a presumption of consent will be made”. It invalidates the whole definition of consent under section 375 and therefore the offence of rape itself. This bill is seen as a step backwards from women's rights after the 2013 amendment.

The issue of consent has always been a contentious one within the history of sexual violence.

Another questionable provision under this bill is the execution of the accused. This will increase the already existing low rates of conviction. The notion of consent added to the bill can create a burden for women to prove the occurrence of rape. The Shakti bill, if implemented, will create the notion of an 'Ideal rape victim' and can create a demarcation between who is going to be and who won't be qualified for cover under the rule of law.

Many social activists have associated this bill with a draconian legislation introduced within the name to curb violence against women. The bill itself questions the very stand of feminism and the human rights of girls provided to them under the Indian constitution.

The execution is the last stage of the legal procedure, but before this stage, the rape victim faces several problems that are often neglected by the system. When it involves India, our country has enough laws concerning rape and sexual harassment; the matter arises when such laws aren't implemented properly.

Shakti Bill and Disha Bill of Andhra Pradesh is another addition to several rape legislations, the matter won't be resolved

until the right step is taken to reform the mindset of individuals within the country and make laws, not from the attitude that upholds the patriarchal notion, rather by including the views of women in creating such laws. The government within the Centre and State should first check the implementation of existing laws, and then, should implement other laws.

The rape survivors face several problems in registering complaints, therefore the main target of the criminal justice systems got to shift from sentencing and punishment and towards reporting, the victim-support mechanism, and investigation. The bill doesn't specialize in such concerns. The bill has encompassed the patriarchal notion of consent.

In many rape cases, it has come across that the accused takes the plea of consent, with such a provision added will make it difficult for the prosecution to establish rape.

The limitation of this bill is extremely vast, studies have shown that a lot of times the accused is closely linked to the victim, or maybe in many cases the accused is the father, brother of the victim. This deters the victim from filing a complaint against the accused. Crime data from the National Crime Bureau shows that in 93.6 per cent of those cases, the perpetrators were known to the victim.

Numerous studies have also questioned the potency of execution as a deterrent to stop crime. Stricter punishment under this bill won't necessarily remove the biases and prejudices in the minds of judges and police, who disdain to register complaints or convict the offenders in cases they feel aren't serious enough.

The provision of the execution will also endanger the lives of survivors as in several cases the rape is followed by a rapist killing the rape victim. Women in our society are already a victim of undeserving of being believed. They are looked at through the lens of suspicion. After this bill becomes a law, it'll create all the more climate of mistrust on women. This bill will reinforce the patriarchal notion of seeing women as competent in incriminating men in false rape cases. It is yet one more bill introduced that doesn't include the sexual violence committed against the people of the LGBTQIA community. The constant sidelining of other gender orientations has always been a practice practised by lawmakers in India. Such a practice of law-making should adopt more progressive steps to make sure equality in society for all. The notion of gender shouldn't be limited to men and women. It should adopt a wider viewpoint.



ARTWORK BY AANCHAL JAIN

The period for investigation during this bill is 15 days and 1 month, which can end in the haphazard investigation and unjust trials. The given time for investigation wouldn't be sufficient for collecting the shreds of evidence and may be used as an excuse for the police just in case of an improper investigation. Such provisions within the act are deemed to be impractical given the very fact that the system of the country isn't that efficient. At times, it takes a month to only get forensic reports during a case.

The predicament in this bill is quite more than what is visible to us, the name Shakti itself is a paradox. The word Shakti means giving, "Power or empowerment". Instead, in the case of this bill, it'll deduct the limited power that women are left with. If this law were for women, it should specialize in the protection of women by creating proper mechanisms like the protection of rape victims during trials. The implementation of such laws neglects the basis of the problem; it's time that, rather than a superficial solution to the issues, we attempt to search for a more realistic measure to counter the evils present in our society.

Measures like sensitization of society and safeguards such as women's cell in the police station and protection officers as advocated by the domestic violence Act are not present.

Also, women in India are still not conscious of their rights, therefore there's a requirement to sensitize them about their rights to ensure the effectiveness of such laws. The government should ensure regular training and courses to sensitize cops, judicial officials, and medical professionals on the proper handling of cases of sexual violence.

Another mechanism they can adopt is to make sure that the one-stop crisis center is correctly equipped and accessible, establish monitoring mechanisms for these centers and publish accountability reports periodically. The government should work with women's rights groups, civil society organizations, urban planners, etc, to develop and implement concrete plans within a hard and fast timeline to form public spaces safer and more accessible to women.

The question arises, are the human rights of girls safe within the hands of central and state governments that are constantly trying to form laws without considering the impact of previous laws on women.

The severity of punishment is not a deterrent; rather, the consistency of punishment is a deterrent. The execution in India is given for several crimes, but it doesn't ensure the elimination of such outrageous crimes. Tons of studies conducted have shown that within the majority of cases the accused may be a person known to the victim, including relatives.

The amount of burden and pressure exerted by this bill on the victim is gigantic. In several instances, the victim is forced to stay hostile due to the pressure that comes from the family. During this go-after speedy trial, justice to women can't be denied. The government should do far more outside the legislation like protective measures to the victim, steps to guard the security of the child victims, basic amenities given to children, and to ensure that the parents of the child will be safe enough to take their child to the police station and not be hesitant by the Indian criminal justice system.

The government should take a step forward to enhance the victim's family capabilities.

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CALLING OUT THE CALL-OUT CULTURE

BY YAMINI ISSAR

In today's day, after a particular age, the discussion of politics and sufficient awareness of the same is considered to be integral to the intellectual development of a person. Therefore, dinner table conversations and the subject of discussion at any gathering, especially the ones marked by forced, awkward conversations, revolve around political discourse. Being adequately up to date on topics of such a discourse is not only a mark of being aware but the level of engagement also determines whether the person is 'trendy' enough to be able to talk about what's trending or not. Awareness with respect to what is happening around and being informed about the world we live in, is extremely important and being able to voice one's opinion is more than imperative towards the functioning of a vibrant democracy. However, with the widespread use and impact of social media in our daily lives, what accompanies this much needed pattern of well informed journalism and citizenry, is what has come to be known as the "call- out" culture or the culture of being politically woke, which though unintentionally, is not always channelled in the right direction.

The Cambridge dictionary defines the call-out culture as, "a way of behaving in a society or group in which people are often criticised in public, for example on social media, for their words or actions, or asked to explain them." While having a platform for voicing one's opinions and getting acquainted with that of others is a great manifestation of freedom of expression and an easy source of education, the 'toxicity'

that follows and has developed over the last few years has blurred the original motive of these sources and points of discussion.

Similarly, although the term 'woke', has always been well known in dictionaries, its usage has widely increased alongside the increase in the number of national and international movements that are guided towards the achievement of specific goals. It is an adjective and an outlook that is said to have come into being in 2014, as part of the Black Lives Matter Movement, amongst the African- American community in the United States of America.

According to Amanda Hess, a journalist with The New York Times, the term 'woke' has now turned out to be "the inverse of politically correct.... It means wanting to be considered correct and wanting everyone to know just how correct you are." This "social affirmation" in the words of Hess, is what has derailed the rightfully opinionated from the path of being informed and striving towards the achievement of a particular goal to wanting to be correct and unopposed.

Amidst the pandemic, a few months back, I came across a video clipping of Former US President Barack Obama's interview at the Obama Foundation Summit in Chicago in 2019 where he talked about calling out the young activists for being judgemental under the pretext of being "woke." With reference to the growth of this form of activism especially amongst college students through social media, Mr Obama was

quoted as saying, "This idea of purity and you're never compromised and you're always politically 'woke' and all that stuff. You should get over that quickly. The world is messy; there are ambiguities. People who do really good stuff have flaws." He further added, " Like, if I tweet or hashtag about how you didn't do something right or used the wrong verb, then I can sit back and feel pretty good about myself, cause, 'Man, you see how woke I was, I called you out.'" His words received much applause from the audience and skilfully focused on the topic of activism going wrong.

The issue here however lies deeper than calling out and not calling out, as the flames of the aforementioned fury are buried on social media but easily spread to the other domains of the lives of those involved. A story, a post, a tweet and the discussion that follows between two or more people always has the probability of turning into a heated argument, mostly due to intolerance towards the opposition and vice versa. Highlighting an issue or a topic, talking and discussing it, often escalates into instances whereby instead of addressing the larger problem, the opposing parties turn against each other in lieu of the real mess. Before the concerned parties know it, the gravity of the situation moves beyond the screen of the phone or the laptop to the real life relationships and the physical and emotional space of the community to which they belong. This often makes one wonder whether this form of expression or this platform of debate is bearing any sweeter fruits with respect to the greater positive functioning of our world. Coming back to Mr Obama's interview, "This is not activism. This is not bringing about change." As people, a part of the social media generation antagonise each other, the real adversary is forgotten amidst the chaos, painting a bleak picture of who's the winner and the change that is brought about as a consequence of that victory.

Let us take the example of any random Facebook or Instagram post/story wherein a person expresses his/her views with respect to any current affair or any topic of social or political interest. Amidst the applause and the agreements that come from the audience, are a few disagreements, perhaps sometimes even more in number than the agreements. That difference in opinion may turn into yet another heated argument that keeps on getting boiled up as friends, relatives of the two opponents join their respective sides, adding on to the debate. Before we know it, things get ugly and the disagreement soon turns into yet another instance of an unpleasant, unnecessary cyber brawl. This might get followed by yet another post/story by either of the two parties calling out the other by summing up the course of the deliberations from their perspective. Therefore, knowingly or unknowingly, instead of a rational discussion guided towards a meaningful consensus/solution, the situation ends up this way. In addition to the same, a few other common examples of the same are with respect to social media posts or stories that are directed towards antagonising one person in particular or people in general for voicing or not voicing their opinions. As important as it is for people to be informed and not indulge in anything that goes against what is largely considered to be humane, this call- out culture goes beyond the correct use of freedom of expression and often intensifies into toxicity and hatred which forms the crux of the discussion at hand.

In theory, call-outs should be very simple – someone does something wrong, people tell them, and they avoid doing it again in the future (*The Guardian* 2019). However, the trend as portrayed by the internet has taken a different turn as, in the process of telling someone what he/she is doing wrong, people often get carried away. "What can

often start out as well-intentioned and necessary criticism far too quickly devolves into brutish displays of virtual tar-and-feathering," writes the activist and writer Ruby Hamad (The Guardian 2019). Therefore at the end of the day, one may wonder what good comes out of calling out the wrong, if the right gets lost amidst the negativity and blame game.

It all comes down to the fact that being politically woke without being morally awake, and calling out in expectations of positive change without any positive action is rather futile. A politically woke population coupled with the right usage of social media can bring about major positive changes directed towards the greater good of the world. This has been exemplified by a number of instances – Producer Andrew Goldberg apologising and promising to do better after being called out by the queer community for inaccurate representation of bisexuals in his Netflix animated series, *Big Mouth* (The Guardian 2019); the very famous Me Too Movement or the deliverance of justice in any criminal case following social media uproar. All this is testimonial to the fact that if channelled correctly, the calling out culture and any campaign on social media can bring about change. However, as pointed out earlier, being "the inverse of politically correct" and not channelling the call out correctly can be extremely problematic. In conclusion, as beautifully put into words by New York Times journalist, David Brooks, "Even the quest for justice can turn into barbarism if it is not infused with a quality of mercy, an awareness of human frailty and a path to redemption. The crust of civilization is thinner than you think."

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MOVIE REVIEW: CRIP CAMP-A DISABILITY REVOLUTION

DIRECTED BY JIM LEBRECHT AND NICOLE NEWNHAM
'A TALE OF BYGONE STRUGGLES'

BY HIMANSHI NEBHANI

It's not uncommon for someone to change after a summer camp, But it is uncommon to see a summer camp alter the entire course of history.

The tone of pity in people's voice when they address persons with disabilities is easily discernible. Maybe society conditions us to ingrain that perspective. Maybe it's our natural behaviour. Either way, the campers at Camp Jened, a summer camp organised for the disabled, strongly oppose this patronising attitude of the world towards their community. Brought by Netflix, 'Crip Camp: A disability revolution' is a documentary culled out of the archive footage recorded during the 1970s at Camp Jened, a camp run by hippies in Catskills, a few hours north of New York City.

Executive-produced by Barack and Michelle Obama, this documentary was co-directed by Jim LeBrecht, an attendee of Camp Jened in the '70s. The directors, in a heartfelt attempt, have laid bare the emotions of the handicapped community in front of the world. It narrates the experiences of the campers and throws light on the welcoming and non-judgemental aura of the camp. Spending time amongst those who went through the same problems, the attendees felt more at home in the camp than their actual homes. A space for the disabled to unleash their inner teenager and live a 'normal' life; Camp Jened gave them what they longed for the most, that is, independence. The struggle of the disability

rights movement in the '70s, as a part of the Civil Rights movement of the US, has not been given enough attention by the mainstream media. This documentary recounts the efforts of the campers at Camp Jened in advocating for the rights of the handicapped community. The attendees of Camp Jened stayed in touch after their time at the camp and fought in a united effort against the inaccessible infrastructure of federally financed institutions, for the disabled, in the US.

In a tale of about 1 hour and 45 minutes, the directors have been able to capture the heroic struggle of the community under the leadership of the renowned activist, Judy Heumann. The former campers successfully founded the Centre for Independent Living and organised a record-breaking 28 days sit-in at the Health, Education, and Welfare offices at San Francisco in 1977, to demand their rights.

The documentary serves as a reflection of our society and presents the bitter reality of a world that mistreats the handicapped and considers them creatures of pity. The campers at Camp Jened refused to go along with this clouded reality and went on to challenge the US government to carry out proper enforcement of the disability rights legislation. Less sugar-coated and more inspiring, Crip Camp revives our belief in solidarity and perseverance as the stepping stones to demand what we deserve regardless of our abilities, ethnicity, race, gender or class-Human rights.

RIGHTING THE WRONGS-AND HOW? HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE WHITE TIGER

DIRECTED BY RAMIN BAHRANI
BASED ON 2008 NOVEL BY ARAVIND ADIGA

BY SHIVANGI SHARMA

The White Tiger- the recently released Rahmin Bahrani's Netflix film is a gripping adaptation of Aravind Adiga's Man-Booker Prize-winning novel, which was published in the year 2008. An irony of the movie is its release was on one of the most expensive streaming platforms in the country when the central theme revolves around emancipation from the class divide and inequality.

The movie's protagonist, Balram Halwai- played by Adarsh Gourav, is a classic representation of the rags to riches tale of modern India. Halwai belongs to an underprivileged class of the society and lives in the village of Laxmangarh, where his father works as a rickshaw puller, his brother works at a tea stall, and he himself is forced to give up his educational scholarship at a very young age, only to contribute more to his family's business.

Nevertheless, Halwai misses no opportunity to break out of the village and secures a job as a chauffeur with the Stork's son, Mr Ashok.

In Righting Wrongs, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak contends "Human Rights is not only about having or claiming a right, it is also about dispensing these rights. The idea of human rights, in other words, may carry within itself the agenda of a kind of social Darwinism—the fittest must shoulder the burden of righting the wrongs of the unfit—and the possibility of an alibi."

A closer read to this contention suggests that the one who claims the human rights-is (or can be) the dispenser of rights and if so, then it opens the chances of the unfit easily working towards their emancipation and not relying on the privileged for it. This is not to misunderstand that the 'underprivileged' must shoulder the responsibility of claiming and dispensing rights for themselves and the others, but just to analyze how these rights might be dispensed by the weaker, while also re-imagining their course of development. In the course of this analysis, Balram Halwai-the protagonist in the movie represents the weaker class.

Thus, this article questions the means and ways by which Halwai attempts to right the wrongs for himself and if it was ethical of him to do so. It also analyses the questions of Halwai's character being influenced by the virtues of modernization and globalization and the ways he adopts to break out of underdevelopment, but is modernization, really a way out of poverty, or is it a road to another form of impoverishment?

The Central Premise

Balram's narrative in the movie begins with him writing an email to the then Premier of China, Wen Jiabao, where he contrasts between the two India's - the India of 'light' and the India of 'darkness'. Presently, he's a

successful entrepreneur of a taxi firm in Bangalore, but the story goes way past, tracing his oppression, his experiences with class divide and inequality, the inexplicable servitude towards his Master Ashok and Pinky Madam, and finally his roguish criminal acts.

As an opportunist, he leaves no chance to secure a job as a chauffeur and thus begins to identify the nuances of the class divide and inequality in the Stork's family. He explains how he was earlier held back and his only 'dharma' was to serve his master, but he soon learns that his master only cares for himself. This is represented through many incidents, one of which pertains to gaslighting and forcing Halwai to commit a crime that he wasn't guilty of.

But soon, he finds the opportunity to make his own moves towards breaking out of the shackles of class division. He decides to kill his master Ashok and steal the money from him, use this as capital to establish his new firm in Bangalore and finally, bribing the policemen to clean his image for the murder.

It is this morally-questionable act of his that helps him to rise to a 'higher class' and supports him to break out of the shackles of the class divide. Thus, the questions that mainly arise out of his actions towards his master are 1) *Is it ethical for a subaltern to commit an act of rigorous violence to achieve a level of emancipation and 2) Is this his only viable option to break out of the shackles of class division?*

To answer these questions, one should turn towards the ideas of underdevelopment that Bahrani tries to portray in the film.

The Rooster Coop-A metaphor for the class divide

To explain the class inequality between the rich and the poor in our country, Halwai uses the metaphor of the 'Rooster Coop'.

"The greatest thing to come out of this country... is the Rooster Coop. The roosters in the coop smell the blood from above. They see the organs of their brothers...They know they're next. Yet they do not rebel. They do not try to get out of the coop. The very same thing is done with human beings in this country."

He explains to us how the coop is a symbol of two forms of underdevelopment for the poor-first, in which the rich try to torture and profit from the poor and second in which the poor under develop each other.

In an extended metaphor, one can understand from this analogy that the butcher, who slaughters the hens, is described as the 'richer class', and the hens in the coop as the 'subaltern class'. In this divide, the 'butcher' is profiting from the situation as he serves them with food and later kills them, the second idea of the poor under developing the poor emerges from the roosters feeding on the others, yet not rebelling because they know that there is no way out of this cycle of oppression.

While describing this divide, one can relate it to the theories of global inequality and underdevelopment. This argument holds that Third World countries were deeply underdeveloped by Western countries due to the processes of colonization. They were politically and economically exploited by the Western countries for the sake of their own profits, which has currently led to the state of the underdeveloped economies of the Third World. This is also suitable to Halwai's theme of the 'brown man' and the 'yellow man', which he further describes as the Indian and the Chinese respectively, trying to uplift themselves over the 'white man'-who he describes as the leaders of the Western countries. He remarks on how the underdevelopment of the South-Asian countries was deep-rooted in the oppression by the Western nations, but the present emergence of China and other South Asian economies have challenged the hegemony of

the Western states. More intrinsically, the divide between the 'have' and the 'have nots', can be associated with his ideas of local inequalities between the rich and the poor.

In Halwai's discourse of the rich oppressing the poor, the sounds of the global North and global South divide echo equivalently. The scenes where the Stork and the Mongoose force Halwai to sign on a legal document-reverberate massive class divide. A representation of privilege also adequately seeps in through the educated and learned wife- Pinky Madam, when she explains the importance of breaking away from the shackles of class divide to Balram, but throws him under the bus to take the blame for a crime she committed. Therefore, in some shape and form, characters like Ashok and Pinky become the upholders of the very system that they are trying to stand up against.

In the second discourse of the poor under developing the poor, Bahrani looks at a more complex aspect 'the Indian family'. He recognizes that a form of ethic, a moral understanding stands for the community and one who can move against this norm i.e. someone who can see his family destroyed, will be able to break out of the rooster coop. In doing so, Halwai goes against ethics and morality-which ascertains his ways of following 'modernized ways' that lead towards development.

Halwai's ways of Breaking the Coop-Towards Modernization

According to Sankaran Krishna, modernization theory offers a different explanation for global inequality and underdevelopment. It suggests that the Western countries are richer than the non-West because of their 'rational, self-interested ways to better their own life'. This can be shown through Halwai's many actions in the movie. The first attribute according to the

modernization theory, is to act in scientific, rather than religious ways. Halwai's character in the movie portrays a disinterested take on Gods and religion in the Indian community-by referring to them as wealthy politicians, it is clear that he's not into Gods and religion as much as the other Indians. Simultaneously, one also notices the ways and means by which he understands the structural orientation of religion in the country, and leaves no opportunity to benefit from it. He's reasonable enough to 'pray in front of more gods than the other driver, so as to secure his job with the Hindu boss.'

More than his pragmatic takes on religion, Balram also tries to profit out of most situations, thus acting as a rational man displaying business acumen-another popular trait of modernization. He takes rounds of his master's car whenever he finds the time, hides petrol bills from him and even picks up paying customers to secure capital for himself. When he's summoned by Ashok, at first, he feels guilty about his wrongdoings, but soon realizes how his Master stole so much from him. His rage lies in the sense of injustices committed to him by his Master and also in the ideas of the rich getting richer by the day.

Based on Halwai's embodiment of his modernized actions, he also begins to manifest specific physical attributes, while taking the path of development. The film attaches a visual symbolism to Halwai's ideas of modernization. He begins to follow the ideas of a Westernized entrepreneur, by wearing shirts and pants to his job, along with formal black coloured polished shoes.

With all of these actions, Halwai benefits by rising from an impoverished, subaltern individual to a taxi firm owning entrepreneur. However, this kind of development also *comes at a price* for him. This brings us to the last question to be examined, did Halwai fairly break from the shackles of the rooster coop, or did he get trapped in the perils of

modernization to become a second Ashok?

The Question of Ethics

Halwai's character saw a huge form of development-through his 'modernized practices' and 'entrepreneurial acumen', but all of this came at the cost of sacrificing his family and his morality.

Within this purview of development, Halwai then finds that he has 'the choice to do something better than his master', which is justified through his so-called moral actions of benevolence, when he bribes a victim's family and capitalizes on their emotions to hire the younger brother of the victim for the self-interest of his own business. This makes him believe that he is ethically much superior in a master-servant relationship, by saving his employees from a criminal offence through acts of bribery.

However, when one examines such an act of 'kindness and benevolence', one can easily interpret how it is a product of structural capitalism. The act of monetizing on a human's emotions and profiting from it is a new form of suppressing the voice of the oppressed. One can easily interpret how Halwai's motives lead to a form of economic upliftment, dictated by the norms of a free-market system. He reduces the victim's family to the status of 'labour and services', something he can easily take profit from. This form of action not only makes him a perpetrator of the same system that he is trying to break but also reduces all his actions towards development to null and void.

Human Rights and the White Tiger

Unlike the theory of modernization, a human rights approach takes a more comprehensive view of development. This approach believes that enhancing one's civil and political, social and economic, cultural and environmental freedom will improve their development.

Therefore, Halwai's narrative of achieving development would not be supported by the Human Rights contenders, as this has resulted in the underdevelopment of his family and Master Ashok-through the indirect torture of the former and direct killing of the latter.

However, another question that arises from this debate is the 'possession of the agency of human rights'. It is only those who have greater power and wealth that typically dominate the basis of human rights, therefore, prescribing to the rich man's idea of ethics and morality. One can thus justify Halwai's actions towards his master, as one for his own development through the ethics defined by the poor, which are not controlled by the rich.

Although Halwai's sense of ethics seems uneasy through the perspectives of human rights and development, they make significant sense when looked at from an egalitarian point of view. He tries to secure his socio-economic, civil and political rights, by adopting his own praxis of ethics. Thus, one can conclude that human rights and theories of development may not overlap with each other, but they surely recognize one community developing at the cost of the other. Such a form of development can be described as development 'from below' and thus an 'active agency of the oppressed'. Therefore, Halwai's development is not only valid, but also ethical.

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EMINENT HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS

"A RIGHT IS NOT
WHAT SOMEONE
GIVES YOU; IT'S
WHAT NO ONE
CAN TAKE FROM
YOU."
-RAMSEY CLARK



MANEKA GURUSWAMY
(1974-)

A senior advocate at the Supreme Court of India, Maneka Guruswamy was one of the notable figures in the Section 377 case, and has made consistent efforts to sensitise senior judges in the Supreme Court to the plight of the LGBTQ community. An alumni of reputed academic institutions like Oxford, Harvard and National Law School of India, Guruswamy has also been a part of several notable UN initiatives on International Human Rights Law. She has been an advisor for United Nations Development Fund and United Nations Children's Fund



RUTH MANORAMA
(1952-)

Ruth Manorama is a Dalit and labour rights activist from Bangalore. Having been a victim to some of the worst instances of Dalit abuse, Ruth Manorama's career revolves around mobilizing Dalits and advocating for the empowerment of Dalit women, as well as the unorganised labour sector, the homeless and the slum dwellers. She is the President of the National Alliance of Women, Joint Secretary of the Christian Labour Dalit Movement, and President of the National Federation of Dalit women. She was awarded the "Right Livelihood Award" in 2006 for her work in the arena of Dalit and Labour rights.



KRITI BHARTI
(1987-)

Dr Kriti Bharti is a Rehabilitation Psychologist and the Founder of Saarthi Trust, which is a Non-Profit Organisation based in Rajasthan, India. The organisation's primary focus is the prevention and annulment of child marriage and working on the establishment of child and women rights, along with the development and rehabilitation of vulnerable women and girls. Dr. Kriti had a major role in the first annulment of a child marriage in India. She has stopped almost 900 and annulled 150 child marriages involving underage boys and girls.

HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS

A RIGHT IS NOT WHAT SOMEONE GIVES YOU; IT'S WHAT NO ONE CAN TAKE FROM YOU."
-RAMSEY CLARK

EMINENT



SUNITHA KRISHNAN
(1972-)

Sunitha Krishnan, a survivor of sexual assault, co-founded Prajwala to assist women and girls out of sex slavery. She has established collaborations with a number of companies to help rehabilitated women find work, including Amul India, Taj Group Hotels etc. Not only this, Ms. Krishnan has brought the issue of commercial sexual abuse to the attention of a larger audience. She was named a "Real Hero" by CNN-IBN in 2008. She has also received the Government of India Award, the Stree Shakti Puraskar, and the Perdita Huston Human Rights Award from the Indian government.



KIRUBA MUNUSAMY
(1987-)

Kiruba Munusamy, a Dalit activist, is an advocate in the Supreme Court of India. A social, political and judicial activist, Ms. Munuswamy has been working against caste and gender discrimination in India, as well as caste-based atrocities against Dalits, violence against women, discrimination in academic spaces, the death penalty, state repression, and the prohibition of the inhumane practise of manual scavenging. She advocates for indigenous rights, LGBTQ! rights, minorities, development of disadvantaged groups, and freedom of expression.



NEELAM JAIN
(1995-)

Neelam Jain is a 27-year old social entrepreneur and founder of PeriFerry. She quit her job to pursue a career in the development sector with a vision to create inclusive job opportunities for the transgender community. She started the first ever social enterprise in the country solely dedicated to improving the socio economic status of the transgender community and foster a culture of inclusion in workspace. Till date, her organisation PeriFerry has created jobs for over 180+ transgender persons and have successfully sensitised over 20000+ corporate India employees.

RESEARCH PAPERS

Separating the People from their Republic

By Manjiri Nene

The People's Republic of China is a nation that is quickly catching up with First world in the 21st century, with sprawling metropolises and a booming economy¹. The PRC, equipped with propaganda tools such as state sponsored cultural festivals, a biased and censored media, state sponsored and military parades among others, indoctrinates its citizens.

A cursory glance at the wings of these pompous and energetic productions reveals the opportunity cost of the perceived unity and harmony of the republic. There exists a limit to the propaganda: a point at which it is weaponized by the state in deviant ways. Under the communist regime, especially since Xi Jinping took over², the liberties of individuals have been sacrificed routinely for a utopian imagination of the nation. These concerns stem from the skewed communist understanding of homogeneity. Identities within or beyond the ones permitted by the central authority are seen as threats. If an individual does not conform to the ideal form, they are removed from the Chinese communist dream.

The People's Republic of China has made continuous efforts to rid its citizens of individual identity. Originally focusing on weeding out landlords and other bourgeoisies, the PRC also launched the famous Cultural Revolution and other such "revolutions" to eliminate political and social opposition. The Chinese culture, as propagated by the CCP, is an exhibition of the majority Han Chinese culture. All deviators are viewed as heretics. This begs the question, how can a government prove that it is backed by the people's will, when the people have no will of their own?

The latest targets of this enforced homogeneity are the Uyghur Muslims of Xinjiang province, who have a complex history. Although they share the name of ancient Buddhist Mongolian tribes, their similarities are few and far between. Due to their continuous interaction with other Mongol and central-Asian tribes, under Chagatai Khan's rule, the Uyghurs were Islamized and gained many phenotypically Caucasian features.³

¹Centre for Economic and Business Research (CEBR), "World Economic League Table 2021", December 2020, Accessed January 17 2021, <https://cebr.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/WELT-2021-final-23.12.pdf>

²Shirk, Susan L. "China in Xi's 'New Era': The Return to Personalistic Rule." *Journal of Democracy* 29, no. 2 (2018): 22–36.

³Finnegan, Ciara. 2020. "The Uyghur Minority in China: A Case Study of Cultural Genocide, Minority Rights and the Insufficiency of the International Legal Framework in Preventing State-Imposed Extinction" *Laws* 9, no. 1: 1. <https://doi.org/10.3390/laws9010001>

Despite these apparent differences, the Uyghurs and Han Chinese have had a historically amicable relationship⁴ due to the constant external threats. This relationship took a sharp turn with the beginning of the Sino-Soviet competition. Russia aided the promulgation of an independent identity of this group by making the old identity a mainstream one. This was succeeded by Uyghur secessionist movements where the Soviet and Xinjiang clique fought against the Chinese nationalists. These conflicts continued till the 1940s, which became the underpinning to the PRC's prejudice against the Uyghurs. A spike in secessionist movements was encountered in this region in the late 2010s which inadvertently kickstarted the "re-education" program. Many reports suggest that these re-education camps are the epicenter of the biggest genocide in modern history since the Holocaust. Chinese nationals who have escaped these camps claim that the inmates are regularly tortured, given little food and even that their organs are harvested. An expose by the New York Times of the notices circulated by the Chinese government shows an even harsher reality of how the government is propagating systematic violence against this minority group.⁵

An extent of this chilling circumstance is the condition of those Uyghur Muslims who continue to remain "freely" in Xinjiang province. Their reality is limited to small isolated boroughs as the Han Chinese begin to settle in their region, being constantly surveilled by the multiple cameras that have been positioned in every public place. Any action deemed as a "threat to the social fabric of China", including practicing their religion, having knowledge of the Quran, speaking in a language other than Mandarin, can mean the end of this limited freedom for the Uyghur Muslims. Xinjiang has thus become the test-bed for the surveillance mechanisms of the central government. The cameras can track individuals across cities and sometimes even provinces. More than 50,00,000 face scans of Uyghur Muslims have been conducted, which is officially called the "minority identification" policy.⁶ Claims have also been made that any travel or gathering of Uyghur Muslims is identified by this sea of surveillance units, which alert the police. This repressive and authoritarian policy has been in some way justified by the central government as a re-education of those individuals who wish to separate themselves from the republic.

This additional dimension of constant surveillance has far-reaching consequences for the Chinese and Hong Kong citizens.

The Chinese government has had plans to harness the technological advances made by Chinese entrepreneurs and incorporate them into its surveillance programs. Surveillance began as a powerful tool of suppression during Mao's rule, conducted by members of the government to keep a check on those individuals who wanted to become separate from the Chinese republic.

⁴Gernet, Jacques., GERNET, JACQUES AUTOR., Anchen, Nick., Clifford, Norman., Ulm, John. A history of Chinese civilization. Brazil: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

⁵A. Ramzy, C. Buckley. "‘Absolutely No Mercy’: Leaked Files Expose How China Organized Mass Detentions of Muslims". The New York Times. (2019)

⁶P. Mozur. "One Month, 500,000 Face Scans: How China Is Using A.I. to Profile a Minority". New York Times. (2019)

With the technological advances made at the turn of the century, cameras and other machines have taken the place of individuals. The crown jewel of this operation is the “Social Credit Scheme(SCS)”, which has been considered dystopian by many public policy analysts. This policy was unveiled in 2014, with parts of it already functional. As discussed early, camera surveillance and wire-tapping are used frequently in China. The government plans on integrating the data captured by such cameras with its existing financial, internet and social records. This program allows the Chinese government to entirely disrupt any semblance of privacy for a Chinese citizen. This program serves to benefit only those who are the financial and political elite of China. Others face restrictions such as travel bans, unemployment, eviction, lack of school choices for children and higher taxes for having a low social credit score. Much like the surveillance of the Uyghurs, the criteria for social credit seems very whimsical. Activities which are considered negative can result in the real-time reduction of social credit, which will justify any curtailing of individual rights. The crux of this matter then lies in what can be considered an unfavorable activity. Although envisioned as a single credit system to be used across the nation, its reality is more complicated. Some aspects of the limitation on individual actions have already been implemented. The Supreme People’s Court of China has published a list of “Dishonest Persons Subject to Enforcement”, colloquially called the ‘blacklist.’ The individuals under this list are usually whistleblowers, unbiased journalists and other such people. An important individual in this list is Lui Hu, who has been arrested, fined and blacklisted for his reports on the corruption and censorship that has proliferated under the communist government’s rule. Having been blacklisted, Liu’s reality is that he is no longer “qualified” to purchase an airplane ticket, to travel by certain train lines or even to take out a loan.⁷

The credit system varies in different contexts. Activities in the public place within your province come under the jurisdiction of both the central government and the provincial authority, whose directives on Social Credit can differ. Activities on the internet are then to be scrutinized by private entities. This results in the conflation of real-time changes in the credit of an individual. As most tech giants generalize the use of algorithms and robots in their processes, a very real possibility emerges that the score of an individual could deviate exponentially due to a small action. A chilling detail of this credit system which furthers the destruction of privacy for a regular Chinese citizen, is the tie-up between dating sites and credit systems. Through tie-ups between private credit pilots such as Sesame credit and Baihe (a dating site), potential partners can view each other’s social credit. Of course, in light of the documents published by the Chinese government that the social credit of all individuals will be open to the public, the above stated problem seems very minimal.

Once this system is open to public access, it will lead to a downward spiral for those individuals with lesser resources. Poorer individuals who are more likely to default on fines and other payments, will face further challenges in achieving other forms of success, leading to a negative spiral. On the other hand, the political and economic elite of China will have to face little to no problems. As part of the party or the bureaucracy, higher points will be

⁷N.Kobie, “The complicated truth about China's social credit system”. Wired. (2019)


guaranteed to such individuals. Being from a safer economic position will imply that they will be less likely to face any consequences for short-term defaults unlike their poorer contemporaries, by virtue of their already high social credit score.

An important facet of this surveillance regime is the technological monopoly of the Chinese government. Reports regularly surface claiming that Chinese entrepreneurs are often blackmailed, threatened and even kidnapped by the government to do their bidding. China also has a series of wide-ranging internet laws under which companies are expected to hand-over the data they have collected to the Chinese government. This adds an even more confusing dimension to the overarching threat of the Social Credit system, where the same activities which were being scrutinized by the private firms is now also under the central government's jurisdiction.

If this situation does not seem threatening enough, the real time execution of this policy, combined with the draconian laws implemented in Hong Kong drives home the point that with the implementation of the Social credit system, any action or non-action of a Chinese individual could be generalized as the will of the central government, because any deviation will be unwise and dangerous for the individual and everyone associated with them. A vast network of cameras and audio-devices, similar to the one being proposed under the SCS was also used to suppress the protests in Hong Kong. Videos from these protests were published by several new agencies, showing the ingenious ways in which the protesters ensured their anonymity. A core problem that the Hong Kong protestors faced during this period was the National Security Law, passed on the eve of the 23rd anniversary of Hong Kong's handover to China. This law gave the Chinese government unrestrained power over Hong Kong, to curtail protests and the freedom of speech. The law defined terrorism as any act ranging from destruction of public transport to public protests and even any perceived harm to the general public. Under this law, terrorism, collusion and secessionist tendencies would be punishable by a life sentence in prison. Over the past year, the implementation of this law has led to the erosion of the judiciary's independence in Hong Kong, the arrest of 53 activists and the unnecessary use of violent force against citizens of Hong Kong. ⁸

With this deeper understanding of the oppression of multiplicity and diversity under the communist regime, one can postulate that the social credit system is not a program meant to make life easier for the citizens of China, rather it is the next tool of propaganda to increase and further delimit the power of the Communist party in China. Introducing this multifaceted record keeping allows the government to gain both social and economic power. This becomes even more important for the government as it seeks to regulate the opening up of its markets and society. This power struggle is essentially a zero-sum game. When the government controls every aspect of the nation, public and private, the people have to let go of their control of their own lives. This inevitably promotes an alienation of the people from their nation, which is used as an excuse for persecution. In this infinite power struggle, the isolation

⁸I. Marlow, N. Lung, A. Liu. "Hong Kong Police Arrest 53, Including U.S. Citizen, in Massive National Security Law Sweep". Time. (2021)



of the people will become a given variable. Proof of this lies in the course of communist China's history. Social and economic divisions have existed within the communist nation for years. These have also been basis of discrimination. The expected separation of people from the republic is both an end in itself and the means to an end. The end is the creation of a homogenous society, which is a flimsy and unrealistic mirage. Within the majority Han Chinese also there exist multiple complex and intersectional identities. If the Chinese government maintains their fight against diversity, they will be left with a handful of individuals who prescribe to this identity of a "true Chinese citizen" and the responsibility to enforce this utopian label on all other citizens of their nation at the expense of their rights.

Culmination of rising Farmer distress: Farmers Suicide and Human Rights

Rajshree

Introduction

“Agriculture is the noose around our necks.”

The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) defines a farmer as, “someone who owns and works on the field as well as those who employs/hires workers for fieldwork/farming activities. It excludes agricultural labourers.”⁹ The share of the Gross Value Added (GVA) pertaining to agriculture and allied activities to the total economy was 17.1 per cent in the financial year 2019–2020.¹⁰ While, 54.6 percent of the Indian workforce is engaged in agriculture, engulfing 118 million farmers and 144 million agricultural labourers.¹¹

As of 2019, 10,281 farmers committed suicide as per the National Criminal Records Bureau (NCRB), which is 7.4 per cent of the total suicides in the country.¹² From 2001 to 2011, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh accounted for nearly two-thirds of the farm suicides in the country.¹³ On the other hand, Bihar, Orissa and West Bengal have very low suicide rates. Studies and researches have shown that the growing agrarian distress linked to declining farm income, repeated crop failure, insufficient institutional support, the decline in the availability of credit, indebtedness, unemployment leads to farmer suicide. Does it point to the need for the greater intervention of the state in order to reduce the distress of the farmers?

Numerous policies are launched every year to bring down this distress. Though some farmers are able to exploit them, there remain many who are unaware of such measures. It is argued that though the rights-based approach has worked well in certain sectors (like education), the farming sector can too be transformed, with the application of the same.

The following article is divided into three sections – the first section reviews the farmer suicides in India from 2001 to 2018, the second section analyses the factors underlying distress,

⁹ NCRB, “Farmer Suicides In India”, 2014

¹⁰ National Accounts Statistics, Central Statistical Organisation, Government of India, 2020
<https://www.nddb.coop/sites/default/files/statistics/GDP-ENG-2020.pdf>

¹¹ Government of India, Agricultural Statistics at a Glance 2016. Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers’ Welfare, Department of Agriculture, Cooperation & Farmers Welfare, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, New Delhi, 2016

¹² National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) Accidental Deaths and Suicides, Ministry of Home Affairs, New Delhi

¹³ Nagaraj, K., P. Sainath, R. Rukmani, and R. Gopinath. "Farmers’ suicides in India: Magnitudes, trends, and spatial patterns, 1997-2012." *Rev Agrar Stud* 4, no. 2 (2014): 53-83.

and the third section argues for the need of a rights-based approach to reduce farmer's distress.

Farmer Suicides in India- A review

Nagaraj et al. (2014) divide India into four groups of states.¹⁴

The first group includes Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh while the group two consists of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Goa, Pondicherry, West Bengal and Tripura. The data from both these groups depict the highest rates of farm suicide in the country which was 29 per cent and 23 per cent in the years 2001 and 2011 respectively. Pockets, where the rates have been the highest and most acute, include Vidarbha region in Maharashtra, the Deccan in Karnataka, Telangana and Rayalaseema region in Andhra Pradesh which are all semi-arid, poor regions of the heartland of India. Suicides have been the lowest in group 3 and group 4 which include Assam, Gujarat, Haryana, Orissa and Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh.

A mint research study based on NCRB data, 2018¹⁵ underlined Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Mizoram, Sikkim and Punjab as the states with highest rates of suicides i.e. '6 and above' per 1,00,000 population.

Factors Underlying Distress- A Descriptive Analysis

The National Crime Records Bureau in its publication, "*Accidental Deaths and Suicides in India*" ascertains 26 causes of a "general" suicide. This includes a sudden change in economic status (bankruptcy), illicit relations, non-settlement of marriage, illnesses (paralysis, cancer, AIDS/STD, insanity, etc.), divorce, dowry dispute, death of a person, drug abuse, failure in examination, family problems, fall in social reputation, physical abuse, property disputes, unemployment, causes not known and other reasons. The farmer's distress, which in turn, culminates in suicide, engulfs various social, political, economic, environmental and individual factors.

Integration of agriculture into the world market¹⁶, increasing cost of production¹⁷, insufficient institutional support, and decline in the availability of credit, a decline in wages, growing indebtedness and unemployment,¹⁸ frequent loss of production are some reasons for the same.

¹⁴ ibid

¹⁵ Padmanabhan, Vishnu; Dantewadia, Pooja, 'The geography of farmer's suicide', Mint, 2020
<https://www.livemint.com/news/india/the-geography-of-farmer-suicides-11579108457012.html>

¹⁶ Shiva and Jafri (1998) as cited in Vasavi, Aninhalli R. "Suicides and the making of India's agrarian distress." *South African Review of Sociology* 40, no. 1 (2009): 94-108

¹⁷ Vyas (2004) as cited in Vasavi, Aninhalli R. "Suicides and the making of India's agrarian distress." *South African Review of Sociology* 40, no. 1 (2009): 94-108

¹⁸ Patnaik, Dev, Sharma (2004) as cited in "Suicides and the making of India's agrarian distress." *South African Review of Sociology* 40, no. 1 (2009): 94-108

With the opening of the economy and growth of liberalization, the resources and funds are being channelled to the ‘deserving’ user. The banks try to reach the affluent zones and thus “skim the cream”, leaving behind the poorer regions to fend for themselves. As a result, the competition amongst the banks has increased, and with the growth of the industrial and service sector, the agriculture sector has become less attractive in nature. Thus, the bank lending to agriculture has also reduced over the years. As the liberal reforms took a flight, the GDP contribution of agriculture decreased from 40 % of the 1960s to 25 % in the 1990s to 15% in the 2000s. It has become a less attractive option to invest in. Farmers suicides are higher in the regions where the competition amongst the banks has resulted in reduced loan lending.¹⁹

Lack of knowledge is another important reason for the increase in the farmer’s distress.²⁰ With the advent of the Green Revolution, the methods of farming have transformed with an extensive use of Hybrid seeds, use of fertilisers and pesticides. Toxic Links Report (2002) manifests unsafe ways in which pesticides are applied leading to health hazards and deaths. Not having proper knowledge of how to use such chemicals has also led to increasing debts amongst the farmers. Ergo, despite periods of strong growth, Indian agriculture has seen low productivity.

50% of farmers do not have access to information.²¹ Small and marginal farmers are unable to access information that can help increase the yield and bring in better prices. The benefits of ICT remain unevenly distributed. Not only this, access to Kendra Vigyan Kendras (KVK) is very limited and is highly dependent on formal credit access, education level, household size, age, and land size. This shows the dire need for an increase in rural financial markets and literacy amongst the farmers.²²

An agricultural review by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and Indian Council of Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER) has unveiled that the share of the gross farm receipts averaged -6.2% in the year 2014-16. The average figure of -6.2% (INR -1,643 billion) consists of two major components. First, the budgetary payments of input subsidies of 6.9% (INR 1,814 billion) of gross farm receipts and two, the market price support equivalent to -13.1% of gross farm receipts (INR -3,458 billion). While the first component is positive support, the second is negative support. The negative

¹⁹ Kennedy, Jonathan, and Lawrence King. "The political economy of farmers' suicides in India: indebted cash-crop farmers with marginal landholdings explain state-level variation in suicide rates." *Globalization and health* 10, no. 1 (2014): 16.

²⁰ Vasavi, Aninhalli R. "Suicides and the making of India's agrarian distress." *South African Review of Sociology* 40, no. 1 (2009): 94-108

²¹ NSSO, 2005

²²International Food Policy Research Institute, “The impact of India’s farm science sectors (KVK) on farmers household economic welfare: Evidence from national farmers survey”, 2019

<https://doi.org/10.2499/p15738coll2.133226>

price support not only taxes producers but also discourages them to produce crops as per the population demand.²³

As mentioned earlier, the semi-arid zones of group 1 and 2 states constitute the pockets of acute cases of farmer suicides. Behere and Behere (2008) point to lack of social support in infrastructure, uncertainty in farming, lack of farm credit, increasing cost of cultivation, political callousness as the factors related to farmer's distress in the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra.²⁴ Prasad et al. found chronic stress in almost all subjects in rural south India.²⁵ Sadanandan attributes farmer suicides in the state of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Kerala, Maharashtra, to debts and credit crunches.²⁶ In the case of Amravati and Yavatmal districts of Maharashtra, Mohanty ascribes indebtedness and decreasing farm incomes for smallholder farmers and failures in business, trade and politics for large farmers as the cause of rising distress.²⁷

A Way Forward- Conclusion

Anomic suicide, triggered by egoistic factors is caused due to lack of clarity of social rules during a social, economic, political crisis. In the case of farmers, indebtedness due to crop failure, low prices, natural calamities result in hopelessness and helplessness which in turn clouds their thinking, making them opt to end their life as an immediate escape.²⁸

Majority of the studies pointed to the indebtedness of the farm households as the major cause of suicides followed by reduced loan by banks, lack of knowledge amongst the farmers, dearth of social support in infrastructure and diminishing farm incomes. What has also been witnessed is a lack of attention and greater marginalisation of agriculturalists and agrarian issues in the post-liberalisation phase. Farmers fear being left unremunerated and unreimbursed as a result of growing privatisation. P. Sainath, founder editor of "People's Archive of Rural India" states that the agrarian crisis is highly policy-driven marked by an imbalance in agricultural credit distribution, acquisition of farmlands for Special Economic Zones (SEZs), leading to 'predatory commercialisation of countryside'.²⁹

²³ OECD/ICRIER, "Agricultural Policies of India", OECD Food and Agricultural Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris Pg 201 <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/9789264302334-en.pdf?expires=1610698434&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=C9FCB0CDB3938CBD8316076500578829>

²⁴ Behere PB, Behere AP (2008) Farmers' suicide in Vidarbha region of Maharashtra state: a myth or reality? *Indian J Psychiatry* 50:124–127

²⁵ Prasad J, Abraham VJ, Minz S, Abraham S, Joseph A, Muliyl JP, George K, Jacob KS (2006) Rates and factors associated with suicide in Kaniyambadi Block, Tamil Nadu, South India, 2000–2002. *Int J Soc Psychiatry* 52(1):65–71

²⁶ Sadanandan A (2014) Political economy of suicide: financial reforms, credit crunches and farmer suicides in India. *J Dev Areas* 48(4):287–307

²⁷ Mohanty BB (2005) 'We are like the living dead': farmer suicides in Maharashtra, Western India. *J Peasant Stud* 32:243–276

²⁸ Durkheim's Theory of Suicide as mentioned in Bhattacharyya, et. al. "The Macro and Micro Point of View of Farmer Suicides in India." *National Academy Science Letters* (2020): 1-7

²⁹ P Sainath, "More Farmers Killing Themselves, Deaths not Reported", NSOJ, 2019 <https://www.nsoj.in/stories/more-farmers-killing-themselves-deaths-not-reported-p-sainath>

Devinder Sharma, “India’s Green Chomsky” states that what we need today is a massive investment in the agricultural sector, building the economic capacity of the poor farmers and creating more demand. This can help overcome the stagnant income growth of farmers which was only 0.44 per cent in the year 2011-2016 as per NITI Aayog.³⁰

Prof. Chand, (member, NITI Aayog) emphasises on enhancing the infrastructure, rather than providing subsidies. The primary concern shall be on policies like PM Kisan Sichai Yojana, e-agricultural markets, garden approach.³¹

AS Mittal, agriculture business industrialist argues how agri-credit does not reach small and marginal farmers. He states how in the past ten years, agriculture credit increased by 500 per cent but didn’t reach even 20 percent of the 12.56 marginal farmers. He postulates a greater emphasis on technology, reforms in leasing and a national-level agency to coordinate between states with regards to agri-credit and land reforms.³² While these policies continue to work well, some additional efforts are requisitioned given the slow-rate of increase in the farm income. One such method to explore solutions could be the adoption of a right-based approach. While the rights-based solution has worked very well when it comes to Public Distribution System, Mid-day Meals and (right to) education (Article 21A), the farm sector continues to demand and is in dire need for the same.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) defines a rights-based approach as a justifiable entitlement, with human dignity and worth, to basic services like employment, food, health, and education. The root of the rights-based approach in India is found in Article 21, the “Right to life” which states, “No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to the procedure established by the law.” The approach is validated by the non-enforceable claims of Directive Principles of the State Policy, of which Article 41 states, “within the limits of its economic capacity and development, make effective provision for securing the right to work, to education, to public assistance, in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness, disablement and other cases of undeserved want.” Article 38 of the Directive Principles of the state policy, authorizes the state to secure a social order for the promotion of the welfare of people while Article 48 for the organisation of agriculture.

Based on this, it is argued that an emphasis should be led on the formulation of social and psychological support systems (Farmers Counselling Centres) at all federal levels. Greater access to schemes like MGNREGA can lead to diversification of incomes in the non-sowing/harvesting seasons. Private Banks should be encouraged along with government banks to provide sources of credit with legitimate protectionism by the state. Emphasis shall

³⁰ Giri, Avinash; Sinha, Shristi; “Devinder Sharma on India’s Agriculture Crisis”, The Diplomat; 2018
[Devinder Sharma on India’s Agriculture Crisis – The Diplomat](#)

³¹ Anand, Nupur; “Agricultural crisis: Development Initiatives likely to get government priority over subsidy routes”, Observer Research Foundation; 2016
[Agricultural crisis: Developmental initiatives likely to get government priority over subsidy routes | ORF \(orfonline.org\)](#)

³² AS Mittal, “In agri-credit, small farmers are still outside the fence”, The Hindu, January 25, 2021
[In agri-credit, small farmers are still outside the fence - The Hindu](#)

be led on diversification of crops, making India self-reliant (*Atmanirbhar*) as much as possible, and eventually import less and thus divert more income to our own farm sector. Therefore, “regional-level” parochial reforms shall be bought within the existing farm system based on the consultation and suggestions of the farmers and their state-level organisations.

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Deadly Calm: On Xinjiang Re-education Camps In China
Shambhavi Kalash

Abstract

The notion of religious freedom in China has been turbulent in the modern era. With a vague constitution, anti-religious campaigns and sinicization of the country, the minority ethnic groups, especially the Uyghur Muslims are often victim to forced assimilation in an effort to curb '*extremism*', which, according to China is a justified response owing to the numerous terror attacks in the Xinjiang autonomous region since 1997 and by Islamic terrorist organisations over the world. The ethnocide of the Uyghur Muslims and the forced rehabilitation centres built for them is a way for the Chinese government to erase any traces of Uyghur and Islamic practices in China and make the state culturally homogenous and completely atheist. Initially denied of their very existence for months, these brutal incarnation camps with over 1.5 million prisoners have attracted international spotlight due to the harsh subjugation of the Uyghurs and the atrocities they are subjected to. The situation to this day is dire as reports contradict Chinese statements on the abatement of such camps and claiming freedom of the prisoners, as kidnappings of Uyghur scholars and lack of contact from detainees, who are suspected to work in labor intensive industries in Xinjiang and are subjected to forced labor and further political indoctrination still occurs.

Keywords: Xinjiang, Uyghur, Muslim, China, Education, Human Rights

Introduction

"If we are to preserve culture we must continue to create it." - Johan Huizinga.

The People's Republic of China, as a state that is predominantly Han-Chinese and espouses state atheism, shares a tumultuous relationship between religious freedom and its ethnic minorities. With the ruling Communist Party continuously advocating for cultural homogeneity and having a narrowed perception towards Islamic practices in China, and following 9/11, in addition to other various terror attacks, the state has linked Islam to terrorism and constantly tries to suppress traditional Islamic practices, targeting the Uyghur Muslims in particular. The establishment of '*rehabilitation centres*' in the Xinjiang autonomous region wherein majority of this ethnic group resides, China continues with its efforts to assimilate them into the Han-Chinese society and aims to reduce '*extremism*' in the region, subjugating the Uyghurs to harsh conditions, political indoctrination and violating several international human rights in the internment camps that continue to this day. Violation of human rights can be understood when it can be seen that a person is being treated as if they

were not human or that the natural human rights are being forfeited and overruled in an event.³³³⁴

The issue of human rights violations in the People's Republic of China has been an open secret for decades. China defines human rights differently and refuses to accept the Universal Declaration Of Human Rights adopted by the world and maintains that according to their constitution the four cardinal principles supersede Chinese citizenship rights and can be used as legal grounds for arresting people the government is suspicious of. While on the contrary, compliance to them can yield enjoyment of all the rights that comes with being a Chinese citizen.³⁵

Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have criticised the Chinese government's mishandlement of various human rights issues and their policies such as the capital punishment system, the political and legal status of Tibet, Hong Kong and Taiwan, the harsh censorship laws i.e, the great firewall, lack of legal recognition of human rights, no independent judiciary or rule of law, lack of worker's rights, discrimination against ethnic minorities, lack of religious freedom, repression of Christians, Tibetan Buddhist, Uyghur Muslims and Falon Gongs, and the continued, arrest, detainment, disbarment of Chinese human rights defenders, activists, and attorneys.³⁶

Freedom of religion in China

While China officially has five state sanctioned religious organisations, namely: Buddhist Association of China, Chinese Taoist Association, Islamic Association of China, Three-Self Patriotic Movement and Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association, State Atheism is officially espoused by the ruling Communist Party, who, in the past have led various anti-religious campaigns.³⁷ In China, the freedom of religion is provided within its constitution with an important anecdote that the government has the right to protect what it finds '*normal religious activity*' such as practices taking place within the named religious organisations and registered places of worship. While unregistered religious groups like house churches, Tibetan Buddhists, underground Catholics, and Uyghur Muslims— are legally bound to face varying degrees of harassment, including imprisonment and torture. This has proven China to be home to the largest population of religious prisoners.³⁸

Targeted harassment of such religious groups under "*Sinicization of religion*" or to shape all religions to conform to the values of the CCP and the customs of the majority Han-Chinese

³³ Kamruzzaman, Md & Das, Shashi." *The Evaluation of Human Rights: An Overview in Historical Perspective.* " 5-12.

³⁴ UN General Assembly, "*Universal Declaration of Human Rights,*" 217 (III) A.

³⁵ Connell, "*How China Is Violating Human Rights Treaties and Its Own Constitution in Xinjiang.*"

³⁶ Amnesty International, "*Everything You Need to Know about Human Rights in China.*"

³⁷ Johnson, "*In China, Unregistered Churches Are Driving a Religious Revolution.*"

³⁸ Eleanor, Albert, and Maizland, "*The State of Religion in China.*"

population, as termed by Premier Li Keqiang at the National People's Congress in March 2020, has been a major issue. In addition, numerous Buddhist, Taoist temples, Mosques and Churches were destroyed under government orders along with the imprisonment of religious leaders not recognised by the Chinese ruling party for “*endangering state security.*”³⁹

Uyghur Muslims: Erasure Of A Minority

China’s ethnic demographic consists of over 91% of the population being Han-Chinese. It houses 55 officially recognised minority ethnic groups and the Uyghurs are one of them. They predominantly occupy the north-western part of China in the autonomous region of Xinjiang (which geographically occupies one-sixth of the Chinese landmass and is the hub for Chinese oil and gas resources). According to the 2010 census, approximately 10 million Uyghurs inhabit the country and make up less than 1% of the Chinese population.

The Uyghurs are ethnically Turkic people and follow the moderate Sunni Islam religion, for them, being Muslim is one of the core aspects of the Uyghur collective identity, hence, practicing Islam is an important aspect of Uyghur nationhood. To understand the gravity of the issue, one must understand the meaning of ‘Cultural Genocide.’ The importance of culture is paramount in this sense, especially in the case of minorities. Knowledge about one’s cultural heritage serves as an anchor for the minority and allows them to live their lives as a community that has a separate culture from the majority, that can be attributed to their ethnic, religious or linguistic traits. So, if a core part of a person’s culture is ripped from them, they might physically live on but their culture has been removed from them, leaving them hollow. This robbing of a person’s cultural identity is known as cultural genocide, a common way to enact it is to conduct forced assimilation and coerce the minority to accept the majoritarian cultural values. This approach is undertaken by governments to subdue minority cultures and make a culturally homogenous state.⁴⁰

China’s constitution, while providing for religious freedom under article 36 states that, “*No state organ, public organization, or individual may compel citizens to believe in, or not believe in, any religion.*”⁴¹ also ambiguously alludes to the fact that “*The state has the right to protect ‘normal’ religious practices and activities that do not disrupt public order, impair the health of citizens, or interfere with the educational system of the state.*”⁴² The right to religious, social and cultural self determination are protected as fundamental freedoms by various treaties China is part of (Including Articles 18–20 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights⁴³, Articles 2 and

³⁹ Davidson, “*Thousands of Xinjiang Mosques Destroyed or Damaged, Report Finds.*”

⁴⁰ Finnegan, Ciara. “*The Uyghur Minority in China.*”, 1.

⁴¹ China, *Constitution Of the People's Republic of China.*

⁴² China, *Constitution Of the People's Republic of China.*

⁴³ UN General Assembly, “*Universal Declaration of Human Rights,*” 217 (III) A.

5 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination⁴⁴; Articles 1, 2, and 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights⁴⁵; Yet, this constitutional ambiguity leads to interpretation and marked constraints on religious freedom.

China has made endless attempts to dissolve the traces of Uyghur culture by forfeiting their religious freedoms and subjugating them to forced assimilation. Their reasoning for this act is to act in *'the nation's defense'* towards threats of extremism that came up due to the east Turkestan independence movement, that gave way to terror attacks in Xinjiang like the 1997 Urumqi bus bombing, 2009 Urumqi attacks, 2009 Shaoguan Incident, 2014 Kunming attack, and the 2015 Aksu colliery attack. This *'justified'* response has put China in the limelight as it received harsh criticism from the world, calling the measures taken by China to be cultural genocide.⁴⁶

One of the biggest attempts to exterminate the Uyghur culture is the establishment of Xinjiang re-education Camps. Initially, China had denied the existence of such camps but later, acknowledged them after global outcry. Since 2015, over a million Uyghurs have been detained in these *'rehabilitation'* or *'education through transformation centres'*, created under general secretary Xi Jinping's administration to ensure *'adherence to the national Chinese ideology.'* and are forced to renounce their Islamic ideologies and pledge allegiance to the CCP. They are detained in the camp for upto 12 hours and sometimes don't even get to go home (even there, they are kept under surveillance), Both inside and outside the camps, Uyghur Muslims are prevented from practicing traditional marriage ceremonies, burials, circumscions, having long beards, wearing head and face coverings, fasting, making pilgrimages to Mecca, giving their children Muslim names, are forced to eat pork, drink alcohol and reports of allegedly banning halal food in Xinjiang have surfaced. Inmates are forced to sing hymns that praise the CCP and write self-criticism essays. The inmates are subjected to physical and verbal abuse by the guards and women have been detained at the centres on extension of the acts by their husbands or sons. From the information given by the media sources, the hygienic conditions of these camps are rough and the isolation periods between the male and female Uyghurs have been interpreted as an attempt to stop Uyghur procreation to change the ethnic composition of the country.⁴⁷

Many religious figures, scholars and journalists are even till now, detained in these internment camps for exercising their right to religion and expression, some famous inmates include Iham Tashpolat Teyap, former president of Xinjiang University who was sentenced to death with two years of reprieve on charges of separatism in 2017.

⁴⁴ UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*, 277.

⁴⁵ UN General Assembly, *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, 3.

⁴⁶ Lee, Se Young, and David Brunnstrom, "China Warns U.S. over Uighur Bill."

⁴⁷ Buckley, "China Is Detaining Muslims in Vast Numbers. The Goal: Transformation."

Life At Internment Camps And Recent Human Rights Violations

It has been noted that since the ethnic unrest in 2009, China has made concentrated efforts to stabilise the area through security measures in effort to combat terrorism, separatism and religious extremism. Criminal arrests in the Xinjiang region had spiked from 1400 in 2013 to over 200,000 in 2017.⁴⁸ Since 2018, the sinicization measures adopted by China to assimilate Uyghurs into Han-Chinese society has reduced Uyghur culture in China, thousands of mosques have been demolished, thereby removing islamic motifs. The same Sinicization policy has placed upon arbitrarily restrictions on Uyghur practices that according to China, prohibits expressions of extremism.

In the internment camps, the guards are equipped with tear gas, tasers, spiked clubs and stun guns to keep the 'students' in line if they break the rules of the camp and not become 'better chinese citizens.' The aim of these programs is to break Uyghur lineage and rip them apart from their origins. It has been reported that the detainees have been subjected to intense torture and beatings. The Uyghurs who remain at home are under government surveillance by having assigned Han chinese 'relatives' in forced homestays. These assigned 'relatives' number more than a million and are used to employ further indoctrination and adherence to the Han-chinese ideology. The threat does not stay in China however, the state views the very existence of Uyghur Muslims to be a threat and therefore are even hunting down Uyghurs globally for extradition. Holding the overseas person's family in China as hostage, they threaten the Uyghurs living abroad to submit and return to China for internment.⁴⁹

Due to China's Great Firewall, the world has to rely on leaked footage, media sources and testimonies from previous detainees for information. China intensely monitors Uyghur communication and movement. A leaked video from Xinjiang based model Merdan Ghappar, who is a detainee at the camp showed the dire living conditions in the camps, his video showed set of handcuffs fixed on his left wrist to the metal bed frame, the only piece of furniture in the room, along with swollen ankles and ruddy clothes. The video also showcased a document wherein it states the children as young as 13 have to '*repent*' and '*surrender*' to the Chinese authorities, and he insists that even though China claims that the camps are now being shut down, people are still being detained.⁵⁰ A former detainee, Mihrigul Tursun, described the forced drugging and being tortured in an electric chair; she had witnessed nine deaths in her cell of 68 people during her three months of detainment.

Adding on, there have been widespread reports that state that the prisoners are being subjected to abuse that meet the definition of torture under the international human rights

⁴⁸ Chinese Human Rights Defenders, "*Criminal Arrests in Xinjiang Account for 21% of China's Total in 2017.*"

⁴⁹ Wang, "*More Evidence of China's Horrific Abuses in Xinjiang.*"

⁵⁰ Sudworth. "*China Uyghurs: A Model's Video Gives a Rare Glimpse inside Internment.*"

law, including the Convention Against Torture (Which says that states should take measures to prevent any act by which severe pain, regardless of mental or physical, is intentionally inflicted on a person for purposes of obtaining a confession, intimidation, discrimination, or punishment.), The abuses inflicted on the detainees also violate Article 2 of Genocide Convention by causing bodily and mental harm to the prisoners. In addition, Article 5 of the ICERD and UDHR, that guarantees protection from torture and punishment regardless of race, sex, religion and other statuses are also being violated. Further adding to the research, former detainees describe extremely crowded cells, waterboarding, food deprivation, being chained to chairs for long hours and electrocuted, rape and sexual humiliation.⁵¹

In 2019, Chinese officials claimed that most of the detainees have been released, however according to the Uyghurs abroad there hasn't been any communication between them and their mainland relatives. Reports suggest that these former detainees have likely been convicted of some crimes and are placed in higher security facilities. While some of these camps have been seemingly decommissioned, newer facilities have been seen springing up via satellite imaging. According to some reports, China has moved the Uyghurs into textile and labor intensive industries in Xinjiang and the ones who refuse such employment face detention and criminal charges. Further, employers at these forced labor industries are required to attend political science classes after work.⁵²

Human Right Defenders

The freedom of human right defenders to carry out their work has shrunk in China. The officials subject the defenders to harassment, surveillance, detention, imprisonment and prosecute them on broad charges like '*subverting state power*' and '*provoking trouble*.', defenders are put in '*residential surveillance in a designated location*' under charges of suspension and are denied access to legal counsel. China regularly sustains crackdowns and enforces disappearance, torture, and ill-treatment of HRDs.⁵³

In the United States, Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act of 2020, was passed and signed in June 2020 to reprimand China over their oppression on Uyghur Muslims, China critiqued this act and called it a malicious attack on China and unneeded interference from outside on internal state matters.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Ioanes, "Rape, Medical Experiments, and Forced Abortions: One Woman Describes Horrors of Xinjiang Concentration Camps."

⁵² Raza, "China's 'Political Re-Education' Camps Of Xinjiang'S Uyghur Muslims"

⁵³ Amnesty International. "Everything You Need to Know about Human Rights in China."

⁵⁴ Lee, Se Young, and Brunnstrom. "China Warns U.S. over Uyghur Bill."

Conclusion

China, and the case of cultural genocide against the Uyghur Muslim minority group in Xinjiang, even with recent developments and global outcry, do not denote a positive tone or scope of improvement. Disappearances of academicians studying Uyghur culture, abductions and forced sterilisation of Uyghurs on the basis of their religious identity are still happening.⁵⁵

On October 6th, 2020, Germany, on behalf of 39 countries, condemned China's actions and explained how it is a "*Gross act of human rights violations.*"⁵⁶ The International community should at large give more attention to the suffering of the Uyghurs and as quoted by U.S Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, "*All nations should join in and put an end to the dehumanising abuses occurring in Xinjiang against the Uyghurs even to this day.*"⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Sharma, "*Uyghur Scholars and Students Interned or Disappeared.*"

⁵⁶ United States Mission to the United Nations, "*Joint Statement on the Human Rights Situation in Xinjiang and the Recent Developments in Hong Kong, Delivered by Germany on Behalf of 39 Countries.*"

⁵⁷ Hansler, "*Pompeo Condemns China's Treatment of Uyghurs.*"

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Politics in Digital Spaces and its Human Rights Implications in India

Srishti Gupta

An American pop star tweets a news article about the farmers' protests in India. Rihanna with her 102 million Twitter followers spurred the largest protests in world history to the international limelight, providing a classic example of the internet acting as a global village, as proclaimed by Bill Gates so many years ago.

The next day, Greta Thunberg, a Swedish teenage environmental activist tweets a protest toolkit made on Google docs. Ten days later, the cyber-crime cell of Delhi Police arrested a 21-year-old environmental activist in Bengaluru and moved her to Delhi without a requisite transit remand. Disha Ravi, the co-founder of the Bengaluru branch of Thunberg's global environmental organization 'Fridays For Future' (FFF), was charged with sedition. Her crime? The police said she had edited and shared the toolkit with Thunberg.

The CNN news article shared by Rihanna had reported on the internet blackouts following violent clashes between farmers and the police on Republic Day in India. Building on this, it highlighted democratic concerns in light of India's infamous track record with internet shutdowns. Moreover, it is common knowledge to any netizen familiar with online activism that toolkits are used during protests as advocacy documents (compiling information on schedules, guiding people on strategies and risks involved, and providing resources to aid allies for concerted efforts to make their voices heard by responsible authorities). This was also widely employed during the BlackLivesMatter and Hong Kong protests.

However, such a document now became the subject of national controversy in India. Delhi Police filed an FIR against the toolkit's creators for waging 'social, cultural and economic war' against India. S. Jaishankar, Indian External Affairs Minister, claimed that it has "revealed a lot". Yet, the publicly available toolkit is primarily clicktivist in nature. It contains information on the background of the farmer issues (structural problems, the role of corporate) in India and enlists 'prior' and 'urgent' actions which include appeals for solidarity tweets, learning more and becoming a part of the on-ground movement.


Yet, these two innocuous tweets drew online ire from a large section of Indians. For days, there was a seemingly-incessant wave of racially and sexually insensitive remarks against Rihanna by Indians on Twitter and her past-abuser Chris Brown was glorified. Google trends witnessed a peak in "Is Rihanna a Muslim?" searches, conspiracy theories cropped up overnight claiming she and Greta were paid to tweet in favour of farmers. Paid by whom? Nobody knew, but as plausibility met imagination, an online toolkit was taken as a substantial basis for theories of an international ploy to destabilize India for a second time within the past year. Even though nothing in it, as retired Supreme Court Justice Deepak Gupta said, merited a charge of sedition, the police claimed they found "pro-Khalistani links" which needed to be investigated.

The flipside was that the farmers' cause rose in international prominence -UK Parliamentarians and US state officials also weighed in. This compelled our External Affairs Ministry to release a statement wherein it stated that certain "vested groups" were trying to "mobilize international support against India". While speaking in the Lok Sabha about the importance of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), PM Narendra Modi, (known for his quirky renditions of classic acronyms), said there is a new FDI- 'Foreign Destructive Ideology'- that the nation needs protection from. He also claimed to identify a nascent tribe of "andalonjeevi" (literally: persons who protest for a livelihood) and went on to describe them as "parjeevi" or parasites who feast on agitation. It makes intriguing chronological sense that Disha was arrested 5 days after this. This made the correlation more conspicuous. Various union ministers participated in a Twitter trend "At 21..." which aimed at highlighting how none of them, at Disha's age were involved in "anti-national" activities- a tag which has increasingly been given to all kinds of dissent in recent memory.

Concerns about the arrestee's right to life and liberty, 'procedure established by law' (about sedition) and the colonial era 'black' law being invoked arbitrarily- were raised. The State police claimed that they were unaware of the arrest until Disha was on the flight to Delhi and the arresting officers had tracked the arrestee's phone to ascertain her location. This, along with Disha's claim about her laptop and phone being seized, followed by leaks of her WhatsApp chats in the media, and Delhi Police confirming they had gained access to key information on the toolkit's origins via Google, raised questions of data privacy and security. Moreover, opinionated tweets issued by the police seemed to jeopardize her right to a fair trial.

The day Disha's chats were leaked, I opened Twitter with particular apprehension having witnessed the news media leak chats of celebrities last year, while an NCRB drug probe was underway, and then the vitriol spread by a Twitter mob. This phenomenon can be explained in Gustav Le Bon's 1895 theory on the psychology of crowds (multiplication in means of communication where separated individuals can get interconnected and influenced by violent emotions and then act as a crowd). I was expecting vile stuff and was proved right. Disha in her chats had allegedly expressed fear of getting charged under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, an anti-terror law. Many tweets saw this as the accused's confession about her awareness of her crimes. However, last year the Union Environment Ministry had blocked citing UAPA and booked FFF India under a previously-struck-down section of the IT Act after FFF had led an email campaign criticizing the Environment Impact Assessment notification 2020. Even though both actions were called "errors" and taken back the next day, it shows us how Disha's fear wasn't entirely unfounded.

The Twitter mob endemic to India has consequences beyond petty trolling and calling for dissenters to be prosecuted under laws that could procedurally tag them as terrorists. This must be understood through the functioning of political IT cells, particularly that of the ruling party- due to its dominance in both relative (the scope of reach of which far exceeds that of the second leading 'Congress' party) and absolute (omnipresence across the Indian social media




landscape) terms. The BJP's IT cell was established in 2007 for purposes of seeking advice on IT policy, attracting IT professionals, reaching out to voters and automating the Party with the use of open-source software. This software over the years has acquired the form of a virtual 'Hindu ecosystem' disseminating party propaganda and ideologically-motivated disinformation, through coordinated and seldom blindly copy-pasted delivery of targeted information.

The Home Minister Amit Shah has on occasions referred to the role of this organization. In 2018, he had expounded on the impact of the traction gained via their WhatsApp groups, upon the news routine leading up to the Uttar Pradesh assembly elections. Even while acknowledging their complicity in creating fake news, he emphasized their ability to make any messages- even fake, 'sour' ones- go viral. That such practice is discouraged was mentioned only in passing. Time and again ahead of various elections, while addressing the party's social media volunteers as "cyber warriors", he has reminded the troop of their soft power and exalted them for ensuring the party's victory whenever they 'took command'. This amounted to the last general elections in the largest democracy of the world being termed as 'WhatsApp elections' by many observers- both Indians and outsiders (when maliciously photoshopped images, clipped videos, targeted texts and memes thrived). Indeed, the alarming digital deployment of lies and half-truths by the largest political party in the world to win the popular vote in a country with the second-largest number of global internet users has been widely documented.

Appalled and outraged by the Twitter mob, I updated my social media with posts of solidarity with Disha Ravi. One reply I received just read: "Her name is actually Disha Ravi Joseph." Now, not only was that an ad hominem reaction, but also untrue. Compelled to take on an emerging proof about the toolkit's benignity, the "cyber warriors" employed a time-honoured tactic: the vilification of minorities. By rebranding her as Christian, they aimed to invalidate her legitimacy in the public eye- reinforcing the ruling regime's ideological background in viewing minorities as 'foreigners' who are unfaithful to the Hindu fatherland.

Since 2014, cases of lynching due to rumours of organ harvesting, cow slaughtering, etc. as spread over WhatsApp has staggeringly increased. The victims of such have overwhelmingly belonged to marginalised sections of the "mobocracy" as termed by the Supreme Court. What's worse is that Union Ministers have been known to repeatedly patronise with those accused and convicted in these cases by providing them public sector jobs, embracing them with garlands, overseeing as they're draped in the tricolour like a martyr at their funeral, and essentially involving them informally in the party's activities.

Last year, even as the pandemic settled in and fake news stories regarding it peaked during the first 3 months itself, India witnessed a still graver threat to its social harmony as the Muslim community was widely boycotted- both online and offline- owing to a religious congregation held in Delhi, wherein attendees were stuck inside premises till a week after the lockdown was imposed.




The fact that this was by no means an isolated incident, all factors considered, was conveniently overlooked at that time. Thereafter, a slew of hate speech and fake news demonising the entire community emerged daily on the internet, so much so that even police in districts of Uttar Pradesh- currently a Hindutva stronghold under Yogi Adityanath- had to debunk various stories on Twitter.

Perhaps the ugliest instance still was the online character assassination of JMI student and anti-CAA protestor Safoora Zargar including slut-shaming her pregnancy, while she was jailed under the UAPA as a key conspirator in the Delhi riots. BJP leader Kapil Mishra, infamous for having given the hate slogan ‘...goli maaro saalo ko’ (shoot the bastards) which had likely rather provoked riots, made a tweet that was disgusting at best.

As a DU Professor pointed out in her Facebook post, this came in the same week as the #BoisLockerRoom incident wherein online group chats showed teenage boys sharing their female classmates’ pictures non-consensually and making disturbing comments about their physical features (something quite reminiscent of CEO Mark Zuckerberg’s origins with FaceMash). It is worth mentioning in this context that Facebook is increasingly being questioned by governments in various countries including India for failure in containing hate speech and whether personal biases of tech experts impacts AI algorithms that filter content.

A well-meaning friend had once asked me why I participate in online activism citing how much of it is echo chamber-like. It was correct; yet, I was firmly convinced that it does make a change, albeit minimal. Since then, however, I’ve come to realise that there is greater importance attached to it in countering IT cells, however minimally, in a country where they sway elections. Moreover, even though the practice is largely slacktivist, it helps form safe spaces for healthy discourses and solidarity networks for raising awareness. For instance, when the National Investigation Agency failed to provide straw and sipper in over 20 days to Stan Swamy- a tribals rights activist suffering from Parkinson’s and the oldest person arrested under UAPA- some people posted screenshots placing online orders of the same address for the NIA Mumbai office. Even then, the required was provided to him after 10 more days.

Disha Ravi was acquitted on 23rd February, after spending 9 days in custody. The judge granting bail orders cited unavailability of evidence to link her with Khalistani groups or the 26th January violence. Upholding freedom of speech, he included the “right to seek a global audience” under it. However, the opportunity for international communication rooted in the conception of the internet as a global public good is considered non-excludable just as human rights are inalienable is not available to everyone in India. Kashmir valley was until recently, as locals put it, under an “e-curfew” or “digital-apartheid” as 4G services were restored after 18 months of shutdown- the second-longest in the world. In fact, this placed India as the leading country in restricting internet access, a fact contravening the popular Digital India programme in spirit.




Even though the UN in 2016 had termed internet access disruptions as a human rights violation and the Supreme Court held internet access as a Fundamental Right under Article 19, the Indian government continues to impose blackouts ostensibly to maintain public safety, which instead works to quell the flow of information during protests. The 2019 #KeepItOn report showed that 121 of the total 213 internet shutdowns that year were from India- which was over 10 times more than the second-worst offender country (Venezuela with 12 shutdowns). India continued at the top in 2020, even when the number of instances decreased, hours of blackout more than doubled, incurring a loss of \$2.8 Billion. According to a report made on 4th February, 7 shutdowns have already been enacted this year, affecting over 52 million people in just the NCR.

In 2012, an India Against Corruption volunteer Ravi Srinivasan was arrested for a tweet targeting the then Finance Minister's son. Since that first instance, even after the Supreme Court struck down the enabling section of IT Act 2000 in 2015, a pattern of arrests and charges of sedition for 'offensive' or merely satirical/critical online posts about politicians across political parties has persistently been aided by the misapplication of legal provisions. Concerningly in recent years, this has also involved journalists like Prashant Kanojia, who served 2 months of jail-time for raising concerns of rumoured discrimination. Worse, the Ministry of Home Affairs recently introduced a Cyber Crimes Volunteers Program, calling for the creation of an unprofessional citizen class of "Unlawful Content Flaggers" to identify and report, inter alia, "anti-national" and "radicalizing" social media posts to law enforcement authorities. Experts say that this promotes dystopian practices like cyber vigilantism, lateral surveillance and could encourage self-censorship of speech.

Spaces for creative dissent have already been shrinking with artist Rachita Taneja and comedian Kunal Kamra (both enjoying primarily online popularity) getting served contempt of court notices for their stick-figure comics and tweets.

For now, I believe, we are only free to agree or more accurately, not to disagree. As in all wars, the unceasing scrutiny by the cyber warriors has a deterrent effect as people prefer censoring themselves. Yet, there is perhaps some hope to be found in the farmers' protests. While the police continue their crackdown on social media accounts for allegedly spreading fake news, protestors insist on using social media as an alternative to a section of news media practising embedded journalism.

Twitter refused to buckle under the Indian government's request to remove certain tweets, accounts and hashtags (while geo-blocking some for India), reiterating its commitment to free speech even with its employees being under arrest. YouTube banned two farmers' songs citing a legal complaint filed by the government. Yet, copies of these were re-uploaded within hours, reminding me of the phrase used by many new-age dissenters, including writer Rega Jha: 'the revolution will be archived' she wrote, after the events of 5 January 2020 on JNU campus when #LeftAttacksJNU and #ABVPGoons trended simultaneously even as the objective truth screamed in first-hand footage and images, and several universities across India stood in



solidarity with JNU even before the goons made their quick, unmonitored escape. Thus, modes of disseminating propaganda and half-truths were harnessed to document ground realities. Journalist Raghu Karnad recalled on Twitter as a young US NRI had written to him after the anti-CAA protests: "New regimes of control in India will require new forms of resistance in spaces where it remains possible."

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Higher Education Abroad: Current Scenario and Future Trends

Rajshree

The study aims to review the current scenario of Indian students pursuing higher education abroad and determine how the choices of students who want to study overseas may get influenced by the National Education Policy 2020, and the global outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic. As per UNESCO Institute of Statistics, more than 3,00,000 Indian students are pursuing tertiary education overseas as of 2017, which has made an average annual growth rate of 22% from 2000 to 2016. Indian students choose to study abroad due to specific pull factors such as greater exposure, better quality and standard of higher educational institutions and enhanced research opportunities, funds and employment opportunities. The United States of America, Australia, Canada, United Kingdom and Germany remains to be the most preferred countries as of 2017 and STEM as the most chosen area of study followed by engineering, business administration and management, and life, medical and social sciences. The National Education Policy, 2020, seeks to transform the higher educational institutions in India and make them globally competitive through the implementation of plans like an increased investment of overall public expenditure on the education sector six per cent of the GDP, branch campuses of foreign universities, joint and dual degree programmes, open and distance learning, liberal education programmes, National Research Foundation with separate funding in research, Institutes of Eminence and greater use of technology. The global pandemic of COVID-19 has destructed the economies of the world, and it has also led to a significant loss for the students planning to pursue higher education abroad. Visa expiry, massive education loans, economic recession, a lower return of investment, withdrawn job offers, travel restrictions are some of such problems. It has intensified the role of technology and consequentially, online education which has, in turn, made the teaching-learning process more manageable. From online lectures, discussions to interactive academic sessions through platforms like Zoom, Google meet, Skype, Google classroom, websites like Coursera, edX, Swayam, and other MOOC (Massive open online courses) platforms have allowed students to gain knowledge, even amidst the period of lockdown. With dual-degree and joint degree programmes, branch campuses of foreign universities in the special education zones, enhanced research funding along with upcoming challenges of travel restrictions and economic recession due to the pandemic, decisions of students planning to pursue higher education abroad may get affected. Primary data was collected through the method of an online survey based on snowball sampling of over thirty students to fulfil the objective of the research. Based on the findings, it is visualized that the future trend of higher education in India as an effect of COVID-19 and NEP, 2020 will be based on the three pillars of Online Education, established Branch Campuses of foreign universities and Open and distance learning. The major driving factors in establishing such a trend include the role of technology, the growing travel restrictions, economic recession, return of investment, emphasis on 'local' and family influence.



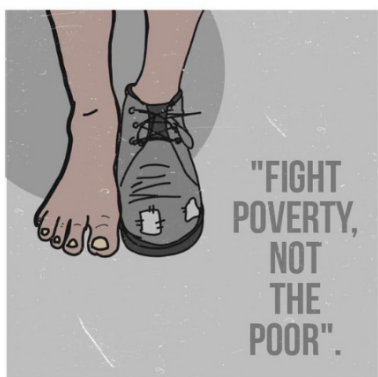
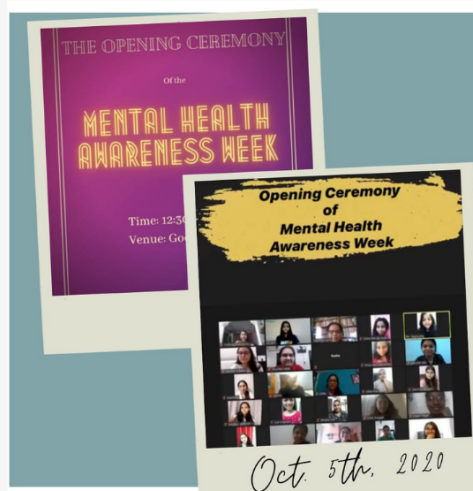
Rajshree is a student of the Political Science Department at Jesus and Mary College. This is the abstract of her research paper presented at the National Student Seminar, 2021, for which Rajshree won the first prize. The DOI of the research paper is: <http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4084046>

DEPARTMENT EVENTS

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK

"I am not afraid of storms for I am learning how to sail my ship" ~ Louisa May Alcott)

The Political Science Association of Jesus and Mary College celebrated Mental Health Awareness Week from 5th to 10th October 2020, recognising and illustrating the importance of mental health.



WORLD FOOD DAY

The Political Science Association, JMC collaborated with The Department of Sociology, JMC for its social media campaign on the occasion of World Food Day and Eradication of Poverty Day 2020

TEACHER'S DAY

"True teachers are those who help us think for ourselves"
~ Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan

Political Science Association, Jesus And Mary College organised a virtual Teacher's Day Celebrations for their respective teachers.

It was a beautiful evening that began with dances and songs and ended with shayaris, poems, stories and a personalised video presented by the students of the department.



DEPARTMENT EVENTS



FRESHERS 2020

The Political Science Association organised its Retro Bollywood themes freshers on 16th January. Titles were also distributed to the first years. Despite an online freshers, the second and third years tried their best to make the day a memorable one for the freshers. We had organised dance and singing performances, a reality vs expectation video and a virtual tour of JMC.

OFFICE BEARERS



Ragini Jha
President



Gorvi Sajnani
Vice-President



Anjaly C. Sebastian
Treasurer

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I express my gratitude to the principal, Dr. Sandra Joseph, for providing the students of the Political Science Association with a platform to express their views through this magazine. I extend my appreciation to our teacher in charge, Ms. Disha Narula, and our faculty advisors, Dr. Sushila Ramaswamy and Dr. Tanuja Sachdev, for their constant support and guidance at every step of the journey.

This project would not have been successful without the department and the students, especially Ann Maria Anil, who facilitated the very first issue of the magazine through teamwork. It was the students' creative inputs, innovative suggestions and impressive contributions which made the magazine possible.

I would like to acknowledge the work of the editorial team in maintaining efficiency and the credibility of the magazine while encouraging our writers and designers to create a balance between the factual and the creative. I thank the writers for their enthusiasm and efforts put into the content, and the design team for their cooperation in making the project a success.

I would like to acknowledge the hard work put into the magazine by Eesha Mani and Ishita Phuloria, my deputy editors. Their involvement and persevering support can be witnessed in the very essence of Politoscope.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge everyone who sent in their submissions and made the magazine a reality, your words and perspectives at the core of Politoscope.

Sincerely,
Gayatri Ahuja
Editor-In-Chief

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