HINDU COLLEGE
GAZETTE

JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2021

Faith in the Times of Catastrophe
THEISM - ATHEISM IN A POST - PANDEMIC WORLD

Apeksha Rai / Pg 47

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ISSUED BY
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POLITICS & SOCIETY
IN THIS SECTION

INFANTRY, SHOCK AND FIRE SUPPORT: THE CHANGING TRENDS IN MODERN WARFARE

"Man is a military animal, glories in gunpowder, and loves parade"
- Philip James Bailey

By Aaryan Gadhok

War has been at the backdrop of several major advancements in human evolution, in addition to being a catalyst to cultural change. It started with the extinction of Neanderthals, facing planned attacks from the culturally advanced homosapiens who had the ability to mobilize on a massive scale, which led to a subsequent quest for dominance. Historically, wars have been essential in helping humans establish a sphere of dominance over their target as exemplified by the American policies, which catapulted them onto the centre stage of world politics in the nuclear and post-nuclear era. Interestingly in warfare, only the equipment has changed with the basic principles remaining intact throughout history.

FACETS OF WARFARE: A THREE-PART STORY

Every warring faction uses the three-element approach to strategize and ensure efficient utilization of available resources, which is a crucial factor in overall success. The three elements are infantry, shock, and fire support, which are stages of an evolutionary process, not a sudden leap.

INFANTRY: Comprising troops organized on a massive scale, they are groundsmen who carry out the bulk of the fighting, such as holding the ground and invading enemy territory. Infantry is the backbone of traditional warfare, with its relevance intact even in the post-nuclear era.

SHOCK: Shock, as the term suggests, is an element of surprise which subverts the morale of the defenseless ground troops. Mobility is the essence of this element with chariots, mounted knights, armoured vehicles, and air cavalry forming primary examples.

FIRE SUPPORT: Technological advancement is the driving force of this element which includes long-ranged sophisticated weapon systems like catapults, ballistic missiles, cannons, tanks, guided weapon launch systems (such as MLRS), and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) like drones.

Considering the state of warfare in the 21st century, the cavalry has taken a blow after significant advancements in technology which make Fire Support the decisive factor in winning a war.

"The introduction of gunpowder and firearms was the final death knell for the age of the knight"

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS

It is needless to say that the development of Fire Support is what we are looking at in the near future. As catapults and cannons were becoming obsolete, the world saw a dramatic increase in the production and sale of missiles, weapon launch systems, and UAVs like drones. These weapons were advanced in every aspect of design, cost, and functionality. They are made of lightweight materials, like steel and aluminium alloys, which are readily available in the market.

Moreover, they also help in cost-cutting, as compared to maintaining traditional standing armies, which proves to be a costly affair for many third world countries inflicted by frequent on and off wars.

Functionally superior, they can be virtually launched and placed anywhere according to the target proximity. Weapons such as drones eliminate the need for manned assistance and control, as they are automated technologies powered by artificial intelligence. This saves a lot of effort on part of the infantry and cavalry, minimizing losses to a great extent.

The efficient use of drones, in particular, was observed in the offence unleashed by the Pentagon on the extremists and perpetrators of the deadly 9/11 attacks, which cut the ground under America's feet in 2001. The drone's advanced vision systems were effective in detecting enemy bases, using thermal sensors to detect heat radiation and devastate the target areas.

A TURNING POINT

The use of this new-age technology was recently witnessed in the Nagorno-Karabakh war between Armenia and Azerbaijan: two eastern European nations warring over the same piece of land in the mountainous enclaves of Azerbaijan, which was annexed and inhabited by native Armenians, internationally recognized as militants. The territorial dispute has been a bone of contention through the decades, with Armenia emerging as the victor in the previous major clash thanks to their large infantry and relatively advanced technology, wholly funded by the erstwhile Soviet Union.

However, the tables turned during the recent clashes observed in late September which saw Azerbaijan gaining an edge over their decade-old rival. Azerbaijan had far superior technology and artillery, displaying an unparalleled range of Fire Support in the form of UAVs, missiles, and drones which helped them regain most of the lost territory. Azerbaijan's drones owned the battlefield in Nagorno-Karabakh and demonstrated what the future of modern

warfare could look like. The use of highly advanced Bayraktar and Kamikaze drones purchased from Turkey (a close ally) and Israel helped render the opposite side defenseless and completely demoralized the Armenian infantry, which was at the mercy of the unmanned vehicles. The usage of drones significantly minimized the need for Azerbaijan's infantry to step out on to the battlefield and hold the ground. They used UAVs to detect enemy hideouts and trenches, which were then completely obliterated by missiles dropping on helpless groundsmen.

Looking at the current conditions favourable to one side and respecting international diplomatic norms, a ceasefire mediated by Russia was accepted by both countries. Around 3000 Russian troops are expected to be deployed in the sensitive area to prevent further escalations.

The war is a visible proof of the paradigm shift in modern warfare from a more conventional land-air based dynamic, to one owned by AI-powered unmanned weapons and rapidly developing technology. Nagorno-Karabakh is testimony to the ever-increasing importance of using technology in the battlefield with properly trained ground forces and the consequences a country failing to comply has to bear.

Having said so, one must keep in mind the privilege enjoyed by first world countries in developing and procuring these weapons, which is not so economically feasible for the third world. Third-world countries become a common ground for proxy wars having a devastating impact on the stability and economy of the regions. The sooner they get their hands on these potential game changers, the better chances they have in safeguarding their sovereignty and territorial integrity.

It is now an undisputed fact that drones are going to play an increased role in warfare in the years ahead. To prevent and curb their misuse, it becomes vital that the legal frameworks governing their use are robust and internationally recognized.

Nagorno-Karabakh is testimony to the ever-increasing imp-ortance of using tech in the battlefield and the consequences a country failing to comply has to bear. Azerbaijan's drones ow-ned the battlefield in Nagorno-Karabakh and demonstrated what the future of modern warfare could look like.

The charging bull on Wall Street is decked out with a facemask in New York City on May 19. TIMOTHY A. CLARY/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

A TALE OF TWO STREETS

By Labeeb Hassan

With major economic activities at halt, with unemployment rates reaching new heights, with few businesses completely shut down and many operating at a limited capacity, what explains this current 'paradoxical' upsurge in the stock markets?

As the coronavirus pandemic continues to wreak havoc, only a handful of countries managed to get out of it unscathed. With no prior experience of the current imbroglio, various governments in the woold resorted to the measures of physical distancing and subsequent lockdowns to hinder the relocation of this highly contagious SARS-CoV-2, implications of which led economies to near catastrophe in the short run. Growth rates in nearly all major economies plummeted to a historical low with a corresponding massive surge in the unemployment rates. In the initial months of ambiguities, few noted economists, as well as leaders of the world, vouched for V-shaped recovery of the economy, but as soon as the growth data started pouring in for the first quarter, we witnessed unprecedented contractions, and with that optimism for V shape recovery also diminished. There are doom and gloom all around, but not in stock markets!

Global stock markets tanked in March. The crash was the fastest fall in the global stock markets in financial history and the most devastating since the Wall Street crash of 1929. However, markets were able to get back to their pre-pandemic pace after struggling for a few months depicting a sweet turnaround.

In a 1966 Newsweek article, noted economist Paul Samuelson famously quipped that the stock market had predicted nine out of five recessions. This remark by Samuelson quite subtly subverts the power of the stock market to influence economic activity. Ever since the stock market crash of 1929 and the onset of the Great Depression, people often intertwine stock markets with economic health. Historically some recessions have been preceded by the stock market crashes including the Black Thursday of 1929 which later culminated in the Great Depression of 1929, 2001 recession, and 2008 recession. However, the Black Monday crash of 1987 was not succeeded by any major recession. Similarly, if we were to analyze US bear markets in the post-war era, we would find that 13 bear markets have led to recession only about 7 times within 12 months(53 percent!).

If we talk about the current situation, stock markets have already started rallying steadily towards their pre-pandemic level. In the United States, the Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 11.4%(the biggest daily gain since 1933) in March-end, depicting one of the shortest bear markets in American history. The S&P 500, London's FTSE 100, Germany's DAX, France's CAC, Japan's NIKKEI, and South Korea's KOSPI, all registered significant growth. Between the start of April and August global markets have risen by 37 percent.* This is coming when economists have predicted negative growth for economies around the world in the current fiscal year.

With major economic activities at a halt, with unemployment rates reaching new heights, with few businesses completely shut down, and with many operating at a limited capacity, what explains this paradoxical upsurge in the stock markets? Why does, 'Wall Street' seem more lucrative than 'Main Street'? Why is one soaring and the other is burning? This discrepancy between the both has been a source of much discussion and debate in the last few months and has also been highlighted by the cover page of The Economist on May 9, 2020, "A dangerous gap: The markets vs the real economy" as well.

Below we'll look at some of these factors which would help us in understanding and highlighting the recent dissonance between financial markets, and the real economy. It is generally considered as a rule of thumb in the stock markets that, in the short run,

expectations, collective sentiments, proclivities, and emotions (wisdom, some call it!) drive markets, on the other hand, the real economy tells us about the current situation in the context of events that have already occurred or are taking place at the moment.

As the uncertainty hovering around the pandemic has taken a backseat and optimism regarding a viable vaccine co-ming by the year-end, has influenced people's expectations and 'animal sp-irits' are driving them back to the ma-rket. However, to bring expectations to fruition, investors expect a conducive environment to feel optimistic about their investments.

In the current situation, policy actions taken by major Central Banks to deal with pandemic/lockdown induced slump, have played a pivotal role in providing such a conducive environment. Short term interest rates in various countries have gone down to near zero as a part of various conventional and unconventional monetary policies undertaken by the central banks to combat recessionary pressures. Low-interest rates affect Investments positively as it decreases the cost of borrowing which in turn stimulates output.

Apart from being positively related to the investment, low-interest rates increase the price of bonds, CDs, etc. and lower their yields. As of now, government bonds are barely positive in the United States. They are negative in Japan and much of Europe. With a meager expectation of a profitable return from these investments and a potential risk (minimal) of inflation, losses would be more painful. As argued by Keynes, "that a large proportion of our positive activities depend on spontaneous optimism rather than mathematical expectations, whether moral or hedonistic or economic." So many investors who are looking for a yield on their investments have turned to stock markets to generate a profitable return. As the cost of borrowing is more or less close to zero, a large part of the borrowed sum is being reinvested into the stock markets.

Apart from policy measures, if we take into account how these stock market indices are calculated we will find out that few tech giants hold massive influence in driving the entire stock index up or down. Let us take the example of the US S&P 500 index- composed of 500 of the largest companies in the United States. S&P 500

is not a simple average of the stock prices for every company in the index, it is calculated by weighting each company according to its market capitalization. It means that larger companies will have a much bigger impact on the overall value of the index. The five largest companies- Alphabet, Amazon, Apple, Facebook, and Microsoft account for roughly 23%* of the S&P 500 index value. Similarly, top companies have experienced significant growth in their businesses largely unaffected by the pandemic (ignoring few initial hiccups).

To put things in perspective, we take two companies listed on S&P 500, say, Netflix and United Airlines(UAL). The market cap of the former is much larger than the latter. With lockdown and partial travel restrictions under imposition, people now have spent more time online. If we were to compare the impact of COVID on the businesses of both the companies and the subsequent impact of their businesses on the S&P 500, we would find that one gained significantly in the pandemic while the other suffered brutally. Netflix accounts for 0.83%* and United Airlines roughly about 0.03%* of the total value of the S&P 500 index. So the gains of Netflix would have a much larger impact on the value of the index than the losses of UAL. Thus, driving the total value in an upward direction in the market.

However, the losses incurred by many other companies are not visible on 'wall street' but they have had a drastic impact on the life of people living on 'main street' in the past few months.

The kind of businesses affected by pandemic/lockdown-induced slowdo-wn i.e, restaurants, entertainment pr-oviders, small food joints, parts of retail, etc., are not listed on equity markets. The job losses in those industries do not hold much significance to the investors and therefore the plight of the people on the main street is not visible on wall street. It surely has an impact on investors' confidence in the initial few months of uncertainties, but due to the forward-looking nature of the markets, the bearish phase is short-lived. While in the real economy, the recovery process takes a lot of time.

It is indeed the 'best of times and the worst of times.' Best for some and worst for many. Economies will hopefully be fine again but thousands of people may probably not.

MARIJUANA *and* INDIA:
THE OBSESSION WITH LEGALIZATION

BY SHREYA SHUKLA & NIRMANYU CHOUHAN

The legalization of marijuana has become a hotly debated topic in India recently; it has further divided the people into two sects, questioning whether legalization is a good option or not?

India's relationship with ganja, charas, and bhang has been a love-hate one, though majorly it has been the former. Just as complicated is the understanding of different parts of the cannabis plant, (which becomes all the more important to know as consumption or possession of the wrong part can send you behind bars) so is its history, cultural influence, contribution to medicine, and the laws governing it. From arguably being a highly praised drink soma known for relieving anxiety in the Vedic period to being purported as a dangerous drug looked down upon by mainstream society. What has changed? Should marijuana attain its past glory? Should it be legalized?

The crackdown on celebrities for alleged possession of illicit drugs and connections with the drug mafia; and its sensationalist portrayal by the mainstream media was met with mixed reactions varying from generation to generation. Young adults joked about how the Narcotics Control Bureau would let these celebrities go scot-free if they found the quantity of maal the average college student had; while their parents supported the NCB unequivocally, declaring how the bad influence of the celebrities reflect poorly on society.

This difference of opinion can be attributed to the fact that we may have imported this latter disgruntled view of marijuana's association with crime and social stigma from the US some thirty-five years ago. Despite having opposed the classification of cannabis, alongside dangerous and highly addictive opioids like heroin during the 1961 Convention on Narcotic Drugs, India eventually gave in to the pressure in 1985; as in the Cold War era, India not only needed the US as an ally but also required access to American technology. As the times changed, the US has had a change of heart and is moving towards a green wave, a vindication for India to rethink its policies around cannabis.

India enacted the Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act in 1985, effectively criminalizing cannabis in the form of flowers (ganja) or resin (charas) while allowing the sale of bhang, a paste of the leaves ground on a mortar & pestle. Bhang has deep connections with ancient Hindu tradition and custom, especially the cult of Shiva.

The Tenacious trinity

While Big Pharma companies may argue that their synthetic marijuana products are superior to traditional marijuana, the evidence does seem to indicate that the plant is as good as, if not better than, its synthetic counterparts through research on the effects of organic marijuana is scant. Despite the fact that Big Pharma could enter the organic marijuana production market, it may not be the wisest of choices as anyone can grow it in their backyard.

If marijuana is legalized as a medical alternative, Big Pharma may be faced with a significant competitive adversary. Evidence suggests that Big Pharma may not only respond strongly against legalisation but also prevent research that could shed light on the beneficial effects of organic marijuana. Rather than going after preventing legalisation, proving one's products as safer and more effective seems like the more tenable approach in the long run.

Most of us have heard one of our friends say, "Marijuana is not a drug, it is a plant. It's cleaner to smoke marijuana than to smoke cigarettes." Prima facie, it makes sense when presented with a false dilemma of marijuana vs. cigarettes/alcohol, even when research suggests taking any while the brain is in development has adverse effects. Addiction to marijuana is more likely if you begin to use it prior to the age of 18. When Bob Marley said, "When you smoke-

A few months back, India supported the United Nations' re-solution to remove cannabis and cannabis resin from the category of 'most dangerous sub-stances' by voting in favor of the proposal.

the herb, it reveals you to yourself" he must not have realized that finding oneself is something that perhaps adolescents struggle with the most, and the 'herb' may not be the best way to do that. Easy and inexpensive availability, acceptance in popular culture, and possibly a positive medicinal history make marijuana an attractive drug for young people which is a serious concern. While awareness goes a long way, stringent regulation needs to be in place to keep marijuana off the hands of this age group.

A few months back, India supported the United Nations' resolution to remove cannabis and cannabis resin from the category of 'most dangerous substances' by voting in favor of the proposal.

Hailed as a historic move on the International front, the ground reality seems largely unaffected. "It is an international convention, which cannot have a direct impact on drug laws in India. It will not be right to say that India's stance on cannabis has softened," a senior officer in the Narcotics Control Bureau said in an article in The Print. Local laws have that power and unless they are amended, there will be no tangible change. In 2018, Uttarakhand became the first state to allow farmers to cultivate hemp plants, followed by Madhya Pradesh in 2019. Legalization will increase revenue and taxation to the Government. The regulation will also reduce the costs of buying for the end-user as the drug dealers in the black markets tend to sell the drugs at very high or arbitrary prices. This will eliminate the Black market production. There will also be quality control as the government will have a say in regulating THC and CBD levels. It will also provide an additional source of income to thousands of farmers.

Udta Demand

Countries like Germany and Israel import medical marijuana flowers worth millions of dollars each year, and the demand is only about to shoot up. India is already a big exporter of illegal marijuana and Charas. The creation of custom export zones like the farmers' fields to the ports backed up by a system of processing plants and allied industry can enable India to become a global green leader.

Besides exports, medical marijuana can also help millions of Indians suffering from cancer. Research suggests that marijuana helps cancer patients heal in many ways. It alleviates the pain and helps regain the appetites of cancer and AIDS patients. It also allows terminally ill people to "die with dignity", without much pain and suffering.

But can you get a license and consume cannabis for medicinal use only? No. While the use of medical cannabis is technically legal, its cultivation is regulated depending upon the scientific conditions mandated by the respective state Government (i.e. maximum limit of THC, security measures for cultivation, etc). The growth of non-industrial cannabis is illegal. If the source itself is deemed unlawful, the legality of the way it is consumed is irrelevant. While each state of India is allowed to make their own rules and regulations as far as this is concerned, no state has done so. In reality, it is an impasse.

There are numerous reasons to consider allowing for the legal cultivation of medical-grade cannabis. A number of indigenous research institutes and doctors would be able to obtain licenses to conduct studies on different strains of cannabis and have a database of primary research on the medical benefits of cannabis. They could find ways to administer low psychotropic levels to treat children and young adults as well. We may even come up with alternative treatments in Ayurveda for the most grueling disorder which disrupts the lives of millions every year.

The green wave may grow to be worth over a trillion dollars. Hence, public-private partnerships should be encouraged to harness this green treasure trove which will also contribute to the dream of Atma Nirbhar Bharat before a wave of patents and foreign corporatization of Indian resources hijacks it.

Regulatory Laws

The Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 defines India's law around cannabis and its products (though there are various states that have their own laws around cannabis as well). The law prohibits and criminalizes the sale, possession, transportation, and cultivation of cannabis in certain forms throughout India.

The act specifies charas as "the separated resin, in whatever form, whether crude or purified,

obtained from the cannabis plant and also includes concentrated preparation and resin known as hashish oil or liquid hashish." Ganja is defined under the act as "the flowering or fruiting tops of the cannabis plant (excluding the seeds and leaves when not accompanied by the tops)...any mixture, with or without any neutral material, of any of the above forms of cannabis or any drink prepared therefrom". Notably, the Act specifically prohibits the sale and production of cannabis resin and flowers, while the use of seeds and leaves is allowed.

Apart from the NDPS Act, states have the power to draft their own laws on cannabis. Section 10 of the NDPS Act allows states to permit and regulate "the cultivation, production, manufacture, possession, transport, import inter-State, export inter-State, sale, purchase consumption or use of cannabis (excluding charas)". For example, Uttarakhand became the first state in India to allow the commercial cultivation of hemp in 2018. Another state law is the Assam Ganja and Bhang Prohibition Act which outlaws the purchase, consumption and possession of ganja as well as bhang.

Section 20 of the NDPS Act talks about the punishment for manufacturing, possessing, selling, purchasing, transporting, importing and exporting inter-state or using the manufactured drug or any preparation containing any manufactured drug. For contravention involving a small quantity, there is rigorous imprisonment for a term that may extend to six months or a fine that may extend to Rs 10,000, or both. If it involves a quantity less than commercial quantity but greater than a small quantity, rigorous imprisonment may extend to 10 years with a fine that may extend to Rs 1 lakh. For cases involving commercial quantities, rigorous imprisonment will not be less than 10 years, but may extend to 20 years. A fine of not less than Rs 1 lakh (which can be extended to two lakhs) may also be levied. For cannabis and cannabis resin (charas and hashish) small quantities to commercial quantities is defined as 100 grams to one kilogram. Additionally, the Juvenile Justice Act provides separate rules for minors found in possession, consuming or selling cannabis. So, those below 18 cannot be prosecuted under the NDPS Act.

Undoubtedly a large number of Pharmaceutical companies use marijuana in their medicine products. As per the Forbes report in the year 2015, around 75% of companies use marijuana or its related products in their respective medicines. But the pharmaceutical companies have also lobbied federal agencies directly to prevent the liberalization of marijuana laws. This is because of the fact that if marijuana is legalised and put in a framework of medical use, then the leading pharmaceutical companies would face a stiff competition from the marijuana medicines.

Also, these cheaper medicines would be even available to the poorest of the nation due to a schematic liberalisation of marijuana laws. Bradford's research shows promising evidence that medical-marijuana users are finding plant-based relief for conditions that otherwise would have required a pill to treat. The Report also states, "Cost-savings alone are not a sufficient justification for implementing a medical-marijuana program...The bottom line is better health."

The producers of this respective plant will be affected by the matters of legalisation, the primary, secondary and tertiary employment would also be developed by marketing and branding of both recreational and medical cannabis. Cannabis production would not only provide a substantial revenue stream, including export earnings, but would also include these marginalised farmers into a systematic economic framework.

In line with the advocacy to promote ethical agricultural practices, especially in cannabis, it presents new avenues for cannabis growers to contribute to mainstream agriculture. Baba Ramdev's Patanjali has successfully entered numerous domains and could be the first indigenous company to realize the investment potential in cannabis. It spoke about legalizing the plant last year and is reportedly carrying out industrial and medicinal research. In states like Himachal Pradesh where cannabis plants grow, marijuana is the only source of income for many locals. Himachal Pradesh legalizing the cultivation of marijuana could mean a new chapter for Indian states and cultivators. However, excessive misuse by locals and tourists and illegal cultivation needs to be checked before

any such move is implemented.

The Himalayan Hemp Parable

The attractive Kullu region and its famed tourist destination of Manali and Parvati have also gained a reputation as an international hub for the smuggling of drugs. But not everyone in Himachal Pradesh thinks cultivation of cannabis, a prime source of hemp and charas, is a condemnable trade. The locals cultivating cannabis, now having developed expertise in sourcing hybrid varieties, are pushing for its legalisation, and even for making it a legitimate livelihood.

This poses a new challenge that the state vigilance is to fight against the drug trafficking racket and the cultivation of cannabis -- the basic source of charas, hemp and marijuana. The entire Kullu district and parts of Mandi, Chamba and Shimla are into cultivation of the weed as a cash crop, though it is done quite discreetly. Frequent police raids, destruction of standing crops of cannabis by the police and Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) have not been able to stop the cultivation. Every year, the cultivations spread through new inaccessible valleys and high mountain slopes.

First-time Kullu MLA Sunder Singh Thakur, who had earlier raised the issue in the state assembly asking for legalisation of cannabis, says, *"Jai Ram Thakur government has no political will to take a decision, in our neighbour – Uttrakhand, the ruling BJP has already taken a call and legalised hemp cultivation. Today Uttrakhand has become a nodal state —a status that Himachal Pradesh could have acquired a long time back. Haryana is another BJP state having a policy, so is Jammu and Kashmir."*

He explains how some of the varieties of cannabis could be propagated as a source of natural fibre. This could be a value addition to the cannabis crop, which can be grown under a licence, and be made a source of employment. The former BJP minister and sitting MLA Ramesh Dhawala has suggested the state government to allow controlled cultivation of cannabis in certain areas for its use in the pharmaceutical industry, especially due to its demand in making cancer drugs. MLA Sunder Singh Thakur says, "Last year the court also passed an interim order asking the state government to examine its possibilities, to which the chief minister

had also agreed. He entrusted the matter to the officers. Nothing has been done as this being a decision to be taken by the political leadership".

Two Congress MLAs-- Vikramaditya Singh, son of former Chief Minister Virbhadra Singh and Anirudh Singh--from Shimla have also backed the legalisation demand. Former Horticulture minister Satya Prakash

INDIA ENACTED THE NARCOTICS DRUGS AND PSYCHOTROPIC SUBSTANCES ACT IN 1985, EFFECTIVELY CRIMINALIZING CERTAIN CANNABIS PRODUCTS.
BUT CAN YOU GET A LICENSE AND CONSUME CANNABIS FOR MEDICINAL USE ONLY? IS THERE ANY CONTENTIONS AND CYNICALITIES AMONG THE POLITIES?
EASY AND INEXPENSIVE AVAILABILITY, ACCEPTANCE IN POPULAR CULTURE AND POSSIBLY A POSITIVE MEDICINAL HISTORY MAKES MARIJUANA AN ATTRACTIVE DRUG FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WHICH IS A SERIOUS CONCERN.

Thakur, who is also chairman of the internationally famous cooperative "Bhutti weavers", stresses the need for adopting the Uttarakhand model of cannabis cultivation as a legal way for the extraction of fibre, and its pharmaceutical use. Recently a PIL was filed in Himachal

Pradesh High Court demanding directions to the state government to legalise the cultivation of cannabis in areas under strict state control to reap the economic benefits. Currently, the police and law enforcement agencies are only destroying the cannabis fields using their resources and manpower. The Himachal Pradesh vigilance has a different insight to offer. The department suggests that, marijuana has been an excessive problem for the force and the illicit trade network has been increasing gradually over the years. As per police data, till July 31, as many as 1,170 Indians, including 44 women, and 13 foreigners were arrested under the NDPS act. In total, 914 cases have been registered; the police have recovered 202 kg of charas, 14 kg of opium and 26.3 kg of ganja beside other drugs from the accused.

I.D Bhandari, a former DGP, who himself had led several drives at Malana to eradicate the drug smuggling racket, recalls having detected hybrid cannabis plants, which were as high as six to seven feet. He added, "Malana cream, AK-47, Himalayan Queen, Black Gold, Skunk Balls are a few popular names having high demand. Malana cream is particularly known for its high potency and thus brings high returns to the locals dealing in the cultivation of cannabis and extraction of end-products."

Satya Prakash Thakur in his interview with The Outlook stated, "I don't favour any laxity to those who are in the narcotics trade in the garb of cannabis cultivation but definitely support demand for allowing non-narcotics varieties, which will hugely benefit the locals."

Conclusion

These observations seem promising with regulation being the ballast for ensuring that things do not go the way common imagination makes it out to be. Cannabis farming may indeed prove to be a treasure chest with everyone knowing about its legendary benefits but the rumours of it being guarded by a serpent-like creature with multiple heads, akin to a huge drug nexus controlled by drug lords, may prevent its legalisation and regulation by the Union government. Till then marijuana lies in a dormant state with people remaining unbeknownst to the real value it has, waiting to reclaim its former glory upon rediscovery.

Rawls & Pigou:

Making the Case for Climate Action

BY YASHASWI SHETTY
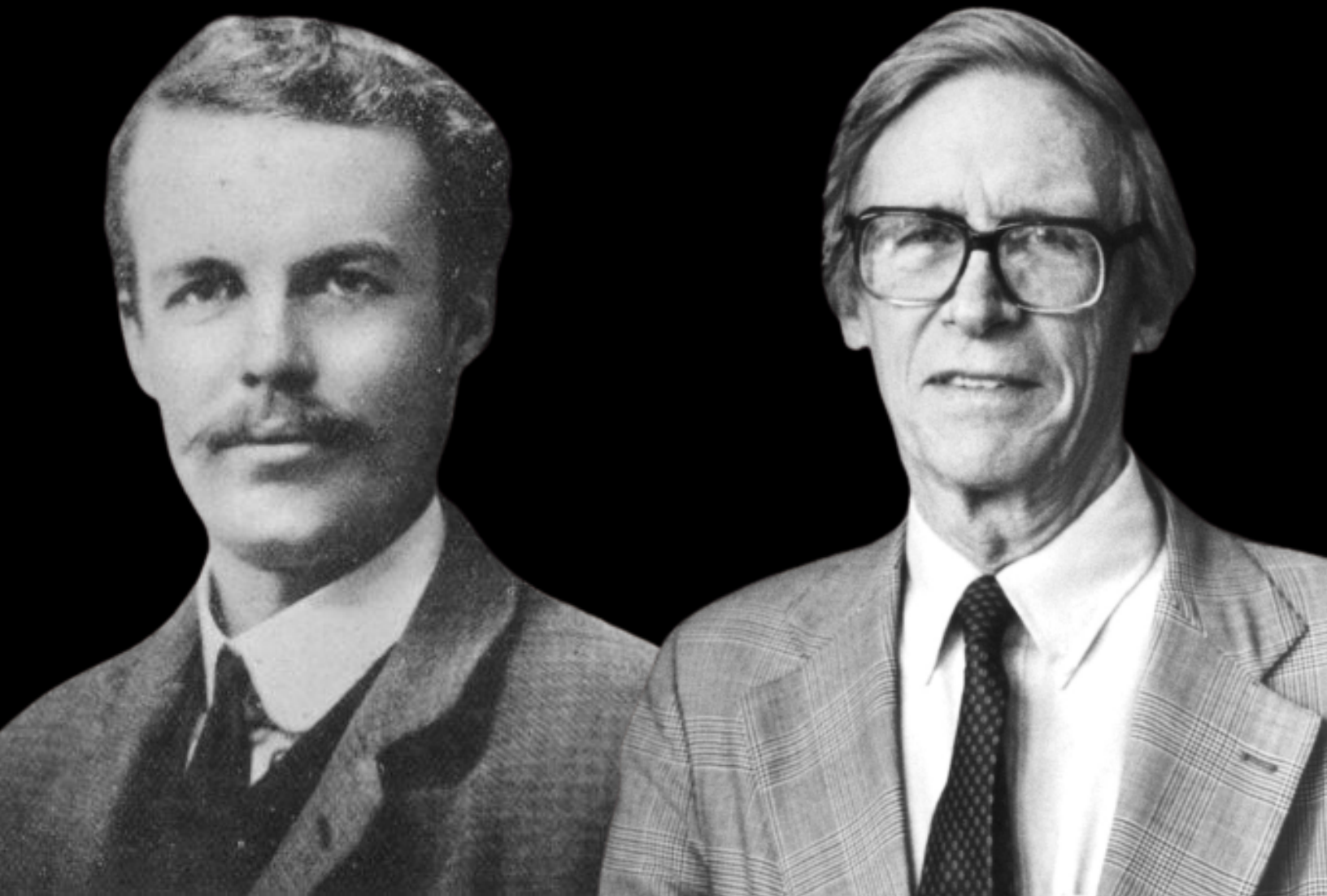
The UN has asseverated climate change to be the defining issue of our time. This anthropogenic change has caused an unprecedented rise in the temperature of the earth, the damaging effects of which manifest in the form of shifting weather patterns that threaten food production, rising sea levels that increase the risk of catastrophic flooding and forest fires that destroy wildlife and biodiversity. Immediate climate action is indispensable, adapting to its ill-effects in the future will be more difficult and costly.

While a significant part of emissions are sourced from domestic consumption, an important part of this unsustainable ecosystem are big corporations who manufacture goods and services for our consumption. Thus, apart from adopting more sustainable practices in our daily lives as a part of our response to the impending climate crisis, it is also imperative that big corporations are held liable for their activities in order to enable a paradigm shift in the functioning of society and improve the relationship between human society and nature.

With ample data and information presented by scientists for the need for climate action, this essay is going to propose a more theoretical argument for the same by highlighting the seminal theories of two great thinkers of the 20th century - Arthur Cecil Pigou and John Rawls.

EXTERNALITIES

Alfred Marshall was among the first to come up with the concept of Externalities. But his most popular student - Pigou was the one who took it forward and further developed it in his book *The Economics of Welfare*.

An Externality is essentially a cost (or a benefit) that a transaction imposes on a third party who was not involved in the transaction. Pigou was studying the effect of the production decisions taken by one firm on that of another. Firms have to often take into consideration the implications of decisions taken by other firms while determining their supply choices. Their output thus needs to be adjusted for such externalities. Pigou extrapolated this idea to the field of welfare economics. Externalities, in terms of the overall welfare of the society, as Pigou defines it is - a divergence between private and social costs.

These externalities are more often than not, a result of market inefficiencies. Prices set through the equilibrium of demand and supply are not reflective of all costs involved, they only measure the benefits that the parties of the transaction derive from it. The point at which the private marginal benefit and private marginal cost meet is what is conventionally considered as the equilibrium price. However, it fails to account for the social costs and benefits of the transaction. Thus the point where the collective marginal cost and collective marginal benefit meet is where the welfare of the society is maximised. Social costs are not taken into account because those undertaking production and consumption are wealth maximising economic agents and the actual cost of carrying out these transactions is greater than the resultant benefit. Externality has been, and is, central to the neo-classical critique of market organisation (Buchanan and Stubblebine, 1962). When the real costs of consumption and production of a product or service are not known, they tend to be over utilised.

Carbon emissions caused by human activities are a perfect example of externalities. Coal, for example, is one of the main sources of energy used for generating electricity. However, the process of burning coal for power releases a huge amount of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. It is in fact the biggest single source of carbon dioxide emissions from human activities. The damage that coal extraction and burning causes to the environment is a social cost incurred by all and not just by those producing and consuming energy and thus is an externality. Not only does it affect our society right now, but it also affects future generations. These social costs are not included in the actual cost of generating electricity.

Although the energy industry seems to be smoothly functioning with prices determined by market forces, the equilibrium price is not including the cost society incurs in terms of increased healthcare costs due to a rise in

respiratory diseases caused by air pollution or rehabilitation costs incurred by areas affected by floods and hurricanes.

"When all voluntary contractual arrangements have been entered into by market transactors, there still remain some interactions that ought to be internalized but which the market forces left to themselves cannot cope with" (Dahlman, 1979). Thus when market forces are unable to correct their own inefficiencies, the government needs to step in.

Veil of Ignorance

In his book, A Theory of Justice, John Rawls proposes his theory of Justice as Fairness by asking his readers to engage in a thought experiment in order to answer the question - What terms of cooperation would free and equal citizens agree to under fair conditions? Suppose that all individuals convene to redesign society ab initio and arrange for political, social economic and legal institutions that are morally optimal. He refers to this as the Original Position.

In this, each citizen has a representative and all such representatives collectively have to agree on what principles of justice organise the basic rights and duties of social cooperation. Each representative would agree to principles that they consider to be fair and ensure freedom and equality for their citizens.

The most important characteristic of this experiment is the Veil of Ignorance. The veil of ignorance prevents representatives from knowing the social characteristics of the citizens they represent. Which means that representatives are unaware of the race, ethnicity, gender, age, income, wealth, natural endowments, etc. of the citizens they represent. One could be representing an upper class, cisgender wealthy man or a transgender dalit woman. This establishes a perspective for making choices that are fair. No party can press for agreement on principles that will arbitrarily favour the particular citizen they represent, because no party knows the specific attributes of the citizen they represent.

Rawls theory of distributive justice creates an even playing field for everyone irrespective of their socio-economic standing in society and thus forms the basis for several economic policies such as healthcare, education and other social welfare benefits.

This principle can also be applied to the argument for climate action. Since a representative is not aware if they are representing the owner of a coal plant or a member of an indigenous tribe who has been displaced because of the setting up of the aforementioned coal plant, the representative is bound to opt for a stance that works in favour of the one that is worse off. Thus, according to this theory, it would only be fair that big corporations are accountable for the damage they ought to cause.

Pigouvian Tax

Pigouvian taxes are a popular name for corrective taxes imposed by the state to offset the negative externalities caused by carbon-emitting activities. This ensures that individuals are charged for the external costs they impose on others. Pigouvian taxes are favoured by most economists because they increase government revenue and are also one of the least invasive ways of correcting market failure.

While the Pigouvian tax is just one of the many steps needed to be taken in order to mitigate the effects of climate change it, however, represents the need for government intervention as a part of effective climate action.

Pigou's theory of externalities as a part of economic welfare was guided by goals of efficiency and not ethics. However, his theory does provide a theoretical understanding of the causes of climate change while busting the myth of the efficiency of markets and underscores the need for state action. Further, Rawls' theory of Justice makes a philosophical argument for government intervention. It is the role of the state to protect those who are worse off in this current arrangement of resource ownership and power relations.

In the case of climate change, all citizens would end up being worse off in the future if necessary action is not taken in time. But climate change would particularly affect the more vulnerable groups as well as future generations.

THE UGLY REMNANTS OF A REVOLUTION

Rice Cultivation & Severe Water Crisis in Punjab & Haryana

BY SHEETAL

The Green Revolution began in 1965 in a bid to make India self-sufficient in terms of food production through the adoption of modern farming techniques. This included high-yielding variety (HYV) seeds, chemical fertilizers and pesticides, modern agricultural equipment such as tractors and the construction and expansion of irrigation networks such as dams and canals. The revolution which was mainly concentrated in the semi-arid states of Haryana and Punjab made possible what seemed inconceivable earlier – the large scale cultivation of water-intensive crops such as Rice and Wheat invariably helping India achieve considerable levels of food security. This remarkable journey took the country from a miserable state of having to import essential grains to becoming one of the largest exporters of agricultural commodities including wheat and rice and eventually turned Haryana and Punjab into the 'Food Baskets of India'. Unfortunately, this development wasn't accompanied by sustainable management of natural resources such as land and water.

Over the decades, the endeavour to maximise profits has led the farmers of Northern India to overexploit the groundwater, leading to the groundwater depletion at an alarming rate. The cultivation of rice requires high humidity with an annual rainfall of approximately 100 cm, and in states like Haryana and Punjab -which receive less than 60 cm of annual rainfall- groundwater becomes the primary source of irrigation inflicting a severe stress over water tables. A WaterAid India's report "Beneath the Surface: The State of World's Water 2019" published in March 2019 showed that water demand of India by 2030 will be twice the then available water supply. Furthermore, the report went on to state that Haryana, Punjab and western Uttar Pradesh are among the world's top water-risk zones for agricultural production, the others being northeastern China and the southwestern USA. According to a 2018 study published in the Journal of

Hydrology, 88.11% of Punjab's districts and 76.02% of Haryana's are drought-resilient. The Tribune reported on 13 May 2019, that according to a draft report of the Central Ground Water Board (North-Western region), with the current unsustainable and injudicious use of groundwater, there are chances of Punjab and Haryana becoming a desert in 25 years.

In 2012, the TOI reported that according to the groundwater wing of Haryana's agricultural department, there was a critical fall of 7.29 metres in average groundwater levels in many districts of the state, the highest falls being recorded as 19.45m and 15.79m in Mahendragarh and Fatehabad districts respectively. An assessment of groundwater level carried out by Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) in 2013 substantiated that out of 119 blocks in 21 districts assessed at the time, 64 of the blocks were found to be overexploited or 'dark zones' in terms of groundwater usage. The whole assessment when performed again in 2017 in 22 districts of the state revealed that the number of dark zones had risen by 12, summing up to a total of 78 dark zones out of 128 blocks. The districts of Faridabad, Gurugram, Mahendragarh, Bhiwani, Dadri, Palwal, Mewat, Kurukshetra, Kaithal, Panipat and Sirsa were found to be the worst-affected, with the water level in these areas falling at the rate of one metre every year. According to a study, 'Haryana - Developing Sustainable Agricultural Value Chain', jointly conducted by Assocham, NABARD and Creative Agri Solution in 2016, the water table in Haryana is depleting 0.33 metre every year, reported RuralMarketing.

Expressing his views on the situation, Om Prakash Dhankar, the then Minister of Agriculture of Haryana had said, "Since the beginning of Green Revolution, we have been exploiting underground water more than the water we get from rain. We consume one crore acre-feet of groundwater every year while only 60 lakh acre-feet water gets recharged in a situation of normal monsoon. Hence, there's a gap of 40 lakh acre-feet every year. The groundwater is like a bank balance, we can extract the amount only which we recharge. Otherwise, it would be finished."

As per the Ground Water Cell, Agriculture and Farmer Welfare Department, Haryana, the average decline in the water table from June 1974 to June 2018 was 10.38 metres. According to the department's report in 2019, the worst-affected districts were Kurukshetra, Mahendragarh, Kaithal and Fatehabad, followed by Rewari, Karnal, Panipat, Gurugram, Faridabad and Sirsa. The decline had been sharp in paddy-rich districts like Fatehabad, Kaithal and Kurukshetra, being 30m, 23m and 19m respectively. The village of Alawalwas has about 3300 acres of cultivated land and rice is planted on about 85% of the land every year since 2010. "The farmers of our village practised Cotton farming along with Guar, Moong and Bajra(millets) about 15-20 years ago. Cotton was planted at a large scale from 2005 to 2009 but then it started catching different types of pests due to which the crop started failing and the financial condition of farmers declined. Slowly, several farmers started setting up pipelines and tube wells with the help of bank loans to enable them to plant rice. Rice cultivation turned out to be a huge success and the farmers' financial condition got better. This success made every other farmer set up tube wells and start planting rice and thus within a few years, the villages' white landscape turned green."

"Each year, we have to deepen the borewell by 2-3 metres. If the groundwater keeps lowering at this rate each year, then what will be left for our children? Just barren land, I guess!", says Sunil Kumar, a farmer residing in the village of Alawalwas which lies under Ratia block, district Fatehabad, Haryana. Ratia has been classified as a dark zone based on groundwater depletion by the Haryana government.

Punjab's situation isn't very divergent from that of Haryana's. Studies have shown that the incessant paddy cultivation from the times of the Green Revolution has been responsible for 80% of the state's groundwater depletion. The water table in Punjab reportedly declined at a rate of 0.7 metres per year from 2008 to 2012. According to a report published by Groundwater resources of Punjab State in 2018, out of the 138 blocks taken for study in March 2017, 109 were found to be 'overexploited', 2 were found to be 'critical' and 5 blocks were found to be in the 'semi-critical' category. In March 2020, in several blocks in districts like Mansa, Sangrur, Ludhiana, Bathinda, Hoshiarpur, Jalandhar, Moga, Pathankot and Patiala, the groundwater level had gone below 50 metres.

REASONS FOR GROUNDWATER DEPLETION

Rice cultivation is believed to be the chief reason behind the depleting groundwater table in the areas of Haryana and Punjab. These states lie in the semi-arid region of India where the monsoons are uncertain, and unevenly distributed. During the summer months, a large amount of underground water is used mostly for rice cultivation than what is replenished by the monsoon rains. The changing monsoon trends of Haryana and Punjab are making extensive rice cultivation in these states even more detrimental for the environment.

According to a TOI report published in 2014, rain statistics from the Indian Meteorological Department showed that Punjab had received above-normal monsoon rainfall for just two years since 1999. The statistics for Haryana weren't very encouraging either, where the state achieved the average rainfall rate in only 4 of the past 16 monsoon. The monsoon rainfall in Punjab has fallen from about 600 mm in 1980 to 480 mm in 2014. In the case of Haryana, the fall was almost similar to Punjab, from 600mm in 1980 to 470 mm in 2014.

Taking into consideration the more recent statistics of rainfall in the two states from January to July 2020 (*June and July are crucial months because transplantation of paddy takes place in these months which requires an

enormous amount of water), the cumulative rainfall recorded in Punjab was 209.2 mm which is only 1% more than required 207.2 mm; and in case of Haryana, it was 191.9mm, merely 2.5% more than required 189.4 mm. Out of 43 districts, 11 districts of each state recorded deficit rainfall. Therefore, even if the cumulative rainfall is more than required, many areas still face rainwater shortage for cultivating crops. Inducing huge stress on groundwater.

During years when the monsoons fail, larger quantities of groundwater is drawn for irrigation, thus accelerating the fall of the water table. In 1966, the area under rice cultivation in Haryana was 1.92 lakh hectares which went up to 14.22 lakh hectares in 2018. Being a water-intensive crop, an acre of paddy is irrigated for about 30-35 times in a period of 4 months by a method called Surface Irrigation. This method requires 3-5 cm deep submergence of the field.

Most farmers aren't satisfied with 30-35 days of irrigation and thus, flood the rice fields throughout the growing season. The main water source for this flooding continues to be groundwater through private tube wells. As a matter of fact, about 5,389 litres of water is required to produce 1kg of rice.

Nearly 85 per cent of Haryana's cultivated area is irrigated by groundwater or surface water, as per Indian Council of Agricultural Research. In 1960-61, paddy was grown only over 6% of the cropped area in Punjab, this increased to 69% in 2012-13. The share of area under paddy in Kharif cereals increased from 33% in 1961 to 96% in 2013. The number of tube wells in the state has increased by 200% since 1990. These statistics are a clear indication of the merciless extraction and utilization of groundwater by the farmers for watering their crops.

How do we alleviate the crisis?

According to a 2018 study by the National Bank for Agriculture & Rural Development (NABARD) and Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER); the imminent water crisis by 2030 could be prevented by the shifting of rice cultivation from Haryana and Punjab to states such as Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand.

In an attempt to prevent the depletion of groundwater, Haryana and Punjab passed Preservation of Subsoil Water Acts in 2009. The Act prohibits the sowing of paddy before the notified government dates notified. These sanctioned dates mark the arrival of monsoon in the respective states. This prevents farmers from using groundwater for sowing paddy, they can now only sow it once the region receives its first monsoon rain thus, decreasing the pressure on groundwater. But the act has some repercussions too. Such as the shift in the planting of rice meant an inevitable delay in harvesting. This gave farmers less time for harvesting the rice and planting the next crop and therefore forced them to burn their residues in October-November, inconsequence enhancing the Diwali Smog. More recently, in efforts to encourage farmers to switch from paddy, to less water-intensive crops, the Haryana government launched the Mera Pani - Meri Virasat Policy which provided an incentive of ₹7000 p/a along with free seeds to the farmers switching over to alternate crops. This scheme, however, received mixed reviews from the farmers all over the state; some were unwilling to switch to other crops due to the abrupt nature of the scheme. "Even after lying in one of the 'dark zones', the farmers of village Alawalwas haven't paid much heed to the new scheme, most of the cultivated land is again covered by rice this season". With the constant deepening of the -

existing borewells, and the setting up of new tube wells to irrigate water-guzzling rice and the predictions of ending up in the middle of a water crisis in the next decade, the picture is definitely not a rosy one . To ameliorate it the government and the farmers need to work together. The former needs to bring out strategic changes in its procurement policies for rice, provide good MSPs for crops such as maize and pulses, and a state-assured procurement of these crops in local *mandis.* The latter need to widen their perspectives and try to move past the conservative farming techniques, use sustainable irrigation methods such as drip irrigation and practise water-saving methods of planting rice such as Direct Seeding, and explore new domains of agriculture such as Horticulture, Organic farming, etcetera.

Sunil Kumar is a progressive farmer who is always eager to get to know about new techniques and domains of farming. Almost 5 years ago, he realised about the destructive nature of rice cultivation and this made him switch to other crops such as Sugarcane and other domains of agriculture such as Horticulture, Organic farming; using alternative irrigation techniques such as drip irrigation. When asked about the scope of crop diversification in the village's farms, he said, "It won't be possible to entirely boycott rice farming because then it would get financially unreliable. But the farmers should at least try to leave their self-interest and do their bit for the greater good. The farmers of my village are aware of the depleting groundwater but they are unwilling to try something new. To improve this situation, there are several things that the government can do. First of all, it should assure the procurement of crops such as maize, grams, etc at their MSPs. The government should also make farmers aware of whatever is new in agriculture. According to me, the environment can be saved if we all make enough selfless efforts."

By Devansh Mittal

IFS: The Indian Frugal Service?

The institution that represents the interests of the soon-to-be largest population of the world, in front of the world, is changing. But not nearly as radically as it should be.

A little more than a year and a half ago, former Ambassador to both the United States and China and ex-Foreign Secretary, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar was chosen to lead and steer Indian foreign policy. Modi's choice of Jaishankar-one of India's toughest diplomats and most perspicacious realpolitik strategist-won him some curses from senior party members and plaudits by many (even outside the party), but is putatively regarded as the perfect man for the job.

In February this year, the IFS undertook one of the most profound administrative reforms and restructuring in independent India's history, authored by Jaishankar himself, some say. The major overhaul of the structure will change departments and reporting structure which will empower seven different Additional Secretaries who will focus on long term solutions rather than fire-fighting.

"The problem is very grave," said Congress' Shashi Tharoor former Minister of State for External Affairs and former under-secretary-general at the UN who, as chairman of the Standing Committee on External Affairs in 2017, had authored a detailed report on the issue. He echoes the concerns that are pervasive in India's diplomatic circles.

Amidst these concerns about, and bids to augment the capacity and capability of the External Affairs Ministry, it will be instructive for us to look instead at the big picture.

The Problems

First let us look at the people, or the lack thereof. This year, the Union Public Services Commission(UPSC)- selected 180 candidates for the IAS and 150 for the IPS. And for the IFS, whose officers do everything from formulating policy and strategy at the highest levels in South Block to implementing the nitty-gritty of the policies on the ground around the world, the UPSC chose 24 candidates. According to the Ministry of External Affairs, India's sanctioned IFS cadre strength is 850. Let's juxtapose Indian numbers with others' and see how we size up with different countries. We, a nation of 1.3 billion people have as many diplomats as New Zealand and Singapore, countries with around 5 million people each. Our diplomatic corps is veritably and woefully understaffed and really can't be compared with Japanese and Australian services of around 6,000 people, the estimated 7,500 diplomats of rival China and the US State Department's service of nearly 14000 officers.

For instance, India's permanent mission to the UN houses 14 diplomats, while its Chinese counterpart has 12 separate divisions with many officers serving in each of them. A stark contrast can also be seen at the World Trade Organisation, where India has eight officers whereas China is believed to house a staff of 1000. The understaffed and overburdened MEA is deleterious to Indian ambitions.

As Manjari Chatterjee Miller writes in an article in Foreign Affairs, "New Delhi's foreign policy decisions are often highly individualistic -- the province of senior officials responsible for particular policy areas, not strategic planners at the top. As a result, India rarely engages in long-term thinking about its foreign policy goals, which prevents it from spelling out the role it aims to play in global affairs".

The size of India's diplomatic footprint around the world is also nothing to write home about. According to Lowy Institute's 2019 Global Diplomacy Index, India ranks 12th, behind smaller countries like Turkey, Spain and Italy.

A more nuanced look at the rankings is all the more a cause for concern. China has a total of 276 diplomatic posts, USA 273, Japan 243, Turkey 235, Brazil 222 and India 186. In terms of embassies and high commissions, China has 169, Brazil has 138, and India has 123, while in terms of consulates and consulate-generals, China has 96, Brazil 70, and India 54. This means Brazil, whose GDP is about $1.8 trillion, almost a trillion less than India's, has a larger global presence than India.

The quality of the overall cadre has also atrophied gradually, but considerably. People in the top rankings have stopped choosing IFS as the glamour of foreign travel has reduced, and also due to difficulties in uprooting your life and that of your family for a new posting. An officer also observes that another reason could be shifting demographics. Earlier most civil servants used to be recruited from urban centres but now comparatively more are from tier-2 and tier-3 cities, who don't prefer to go abroad. As Tharoor notes, "It seems appalling that we have to make do with a diplomat who is only there because he couldn't fulfil his dream of being a police superintendent or customs official".

Another issue that warrants our attention is the glaring insularity of our policy from outside influences. Our policymaking remains immune from

think-tanks and public intellectuals. Officers don't turn to extraneous sources for advice and stratagems that can sometimes help fill in the gap of long-term thinking inside the government.

Solutions Galore

A myriad array of solutions have been opined by various people for the numerous problems plaguing the Indian foreign service.

One apocryphal and piecemeal reform that can be implemented without ruffling too many feathers is increasing the number of officers recruited each year. However, it brings with it, its attendant problems. The cadres inducted now will be trained and become diplomats after a few years, and further become experienced and occupy key positions after 20-30 years: we can't wait that long. Also, we can't ignore the quality of the recruits: going down the rankings even further to increase numbers would lead to substandard recruitments.

According to Dhruva Jaishankar(Director of the US Initiative, ORF) and Harsh Pant(Professor of International Relations, King's India Institute), bureaucratic inertia and maintenance of status quo are the two biggest forces working to thwart attempts to reform the cadre. Right now, almost every officer has an assurance that s/he will find himself at an ambassadorial position in the future. More candidates would mean more competition. As a vindication of the career progression concerns, KC Singh, former ambassador to Iran, argues that "The government has to work keeping in mind the pyramidal structure of the cadre," he said. "You cannot recruit hundreds of people in one go since that would cause frustration when it comes to promotions."

It is also necessary that diplomats are recruited through a specialised examination, one that tests knowledge of international affairs, an aptitude for diplomacy and different languages, instead of the common UPSC exam. The present exam prepares good bureaucrats, not good diplomats. However, since the possibility of such a radical reform being accepted in the near future veers on the impossible, Shashi Tharoor advocates that people who choose IFS in their preferences be made to sit for an extra paper.

In this era, we also need specialists in the field of technology, trade, defence, environment, public health etc and can't just rely on traditional diplomats to articulate India's point of view to the world, and negotiate for us. For this, the lateral entry has been touted as the perfect solution. There have been lateral entrants from other ministries (not nearly enough), but what is more acutely needed are subject domain experts from academia, corporate world and think tanks who have been part of, and contributing to global conversations, and can bring a fresh perspective into the government machinery. These proposals have also received some pushback from orthodox, career diplomats.

At the heart of this quagmire of issues are budgetary constraints. As Dhruva Jaishankar points out, the powers that be, including the Finance Ministry and also the rest of the civil services aren't going to accept and finance an IFS cadre of 4000 officers pending a wholesale civil service reform and increase in the size of the bureaucracy. Shashi Tharoor has also criticised the MEA's 'failure to convince Ministry of Finance for higher allocation in consonance with the ever-increasing foreign policy mandate...(and) the mismatch in demand and allocation and further recurrent budgetary cuts imposed by the Ministry of Finance at all stages of budgetary allocation'.

Paths of Glory

In this highly globalised era, nations face what former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan calls 'problems without passports', problems such as climate change, health epidemics, cybersecurity, migration, drug trafficking and nuclear disarmament cannot be tackled by individual nations independently. These challenges require what Shashi Tharoor and Samir Saran call 'blueprints without borders': responses that are coordinated by many different actors in the international arena. Whether we acknowledge it or not, increasingly many facets of our life are impacted by what's going on outside our country and how we interact with it. As a corollary, increasingly what happens inside the country influences outside events too. One has to only look at the foreign reactions elicited by seemingly internal matters such as Kashmir's lockdown, the anti-CAA protests, the urban migrants or the controversial farm laws. This begs the question: what is really internal anymore? and blurs the differences between external and internal matters.

This period is also marked by India's ascendance in importance among the global comity of nations. We now have a larger share of the pie, but with that, we also have much more at stake. The world's second-most populous country with one of the leading economies and the largest diaspora ever cannot afford to be lackadaisical about its foreign policy. The welcome personal engagement of Prime Minister Modi has also underlined the need for a more robust foreign policy infrastructure which can implement the actual policy decisions beyond the rhetoric of foreign trips and announcements. Our peripatetic wander-lust PM alone has visited approximately 60 countries, trying to elevate India's image around the world (and also maybe make up for the lack of

foreign travels in his childhood).

"This is a time for us to engage America, manage China, cultivate Europe, reassure Russia, bring Japan into play, draw neighbours in, extend the neighbourhood and expand traditional constituencies of support", as Jaishankar points out in his book The India Way: Strategies For An Uncertain World. At this time, India is angling for a seat at the UNSC, NSG and also being invited for the G7. We have also offered solutions to the world and helmed initiatives like the International Solar Alliance, Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure and Leadership Group for Industry Transition. Increase in our raw military power, along with our cardinal position at the top of the Indian Ocean has made us an integral part of policies of different nations' Indo-Pacific policies and international strategies. Our economic prowess trajectory has been watched with much awe by the rest of the world. Our average age is 29, and we are set to become the youngest nation with 64% of our population falling under the working-age category. Thus, it is all the more significant and pertinent at this point in time that we talk about efforts to revamp and reform our foreign policy cadre. It is reassuring that the upper echelons of the government are cognizant of the situation and are working to ameliorate the situation.

The present government had in the initial years recruited more officers, but the number came down gradually and then precipitously and inexplicably this year. In 2015 and 2016, 45 officers each were selected for the IFS, but the next two years, the numbers fell to 42 and 30, respectively. The MEA's Public Policy and Research Division have also grown in heft in the past couple of years, with outside academicians and military officials being recruited to formulate a coherent policy.

In the 2019 budget, recognising the lack of diplomatic coverage in the African continent, the Finance Minister outlined plans and budget to open 18 new embassies in African countries. In recent years, the MEA has outsourced the job of convening functions and summits to outside organisations like the Raisina Dialogue which is hosted by Observer Research Foundation or the Global Technology Summit hosted by Carnegie India. Appointment of Dr Jaishankar is also laudable and is also the most significant measure. Subsequently, Ashok Malik, a distinguished fellow at ORF, was taken on as a Policy Advisor in the external affairs ministry with the rank of additional secretary. In January this year, preceding the deep-seated structural reforms in March, the MEA also set up a much-awaited New and Emerging Strategic Technologies (NEST) division, underscoring the importance of technology in the global digital landscape.

All this is not to pat ourselves on the back, but to inform that the vector and intention is correct. We're on the right path, but much more needs to be done in an era of tumultuous change and non-polarity(as suggested by Richard Hass. President, CFR) by a country of India's size and ambitions. It will not be surprising if India, the oldest continuing civilization in the world and also the youngest nation finds itself as one of the leading players of the 21st century, and it will be sad if it doesn't have the people (which it has in abundance in general) to steer it onto its rightful place in the world.

WAGES FOR HOUSEHOLD WORK: WOMEN EMPOWERMENT OR MANIFESTO KITSCH?

By Vibhuti Pathak

It is definitely possible." Unveiling his party Makkal Needhi Maiam's (MNM) seven-point Governance and Economic Agenda', the actor turned politician Kamal Hassan assured rightful payment to homemakers if his party was voted to power in Tamil Nadu. "Homemakers will get their due recognition through payment for their work at home which hitherto has been unrecognised and unmonetised, thus raising the dignity of our womenfolk.", the agenda read. Hassan boosted his argument by emphasizing the provision of opportunities for education, employment and entrepreneurship for women. Many viewed it as an assault on traditional family values and a move of pseudo-feminism for trivial political benefits, thereby sparking a nationwide debate.

History of the Wages for Housework Movement

The concept of wages for housework has a long history. The demand was first raised at the third National Women's Liberation Conference in Manchester, England. Selma James, an American pioneer of feminism and a social activist, co-founded the 'International Wages for Housework Campaign' in Italy in 1972. Her esoteric argument was based on the conjecture that household work was the basis of industrial work and, thus, should be paid for. Silvia Federici, among the other founders, in her book titled 'Wages for Housework' reiterated James' ideas- "To ask wages for housework will by itself undermine the expectations the society has of us" which are "the essence of our socialization".

In the Indian context, the leadoff endeavour to seek economic recognition for the quotidian chores done by women was illustrated in a report titled 'Women's Role in Planned Economy' in 1940, by a subcommittee of the National Planning Committee (NPC). The subcommittee was spearheaded by Rani Lakshmibai Rajwade, an Indian independence activist and a stalwart feminist, and its member secretary, Mridula Sarabhai.

The report pertinaciously challenged the conventional Indian notion of male 'bread-winner' arguing for the equal economic status of household work of women for fixing the 'standard of life' and creating a benefic 'cultural environment'. Despite sup-remely commendable attempts made by the female independence activists, the issue lost political leitmotif and remained underwhelmed for a long time. In 2012, Krishna Tirath, the then Minister of Women and Child Care Development announced the consideration for the same by the government, with husbands paying for the household work. The rudimentary approach though offered to foment women's status, it conversely tended to increase the dependence of wives on their husbands. The idea was never materialised.

Statistics of Unpaid Labour Contributed by Women

When the manifesto of MNM was announced, it was welcomed by most of the feminists and social activists, including many homemakers. It highlighted the wide gap in the unpaid work done by male and female members, that has heretofore remained insouciant. The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines unpaid work as "non-remunerated work carried out to sustain the well-being and maintenance of other individuals in a household or community". According to a 'Time Use Survey' (2019) by the Indian Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, men spend 80 per cent of their working hours on paid work while women spend nearly 84 per cent of their working hours on unpaid work. Female participation in unpaid labour (243 minutes per day) is 10 times more than that of an average man (25 minutes per day). This is cer-tainly higher than the global average of 76.2 per cent of total hours of unpaid care work which is more than three times as much as men (ILO Re-port 2018). The paid female workforce has also been severely hit by lockdown and a looming recession, with four out of every ten women losing their job, and

30 per cent increment in time spent on fulfilment of family responsibilities. Although the capitalist economy has looked for solutions in the 'work from home' model recently, it has been a part of women's unpaid domestic services for a long time.

Despite its immense potential, female labour goes unaccounted for. In India, women's unpaid domestic work is estimated to be 40 per cent of its current GDP as compared to the global 13 per cent according to the IMF. Oxfam's Time to Care' report suggests that unpaid work accounts for trillions of rupees every year. Therefore, the exclusion of women's work has aggravated the disparity in the gendered division of paid and unpaid labour.

Arguments in Support of the Proposition

Globally, patriarchy has been the norm of society since times immemorial. Its traces are still conspicuous. In India, advertisements, television serials, films, government policies and neighbourhood gossip mills- all celebrate 'good' housewives, thereby concretizing gendered notions of labour. The woman of the family cooks, cleans, takes unconditional care of children and elders round the clock. The creator of dreams of the family ashes her aspirations in the fire of the hearth. Kamal Hassan, drawing inspiration from his mother, proposed the idea of paid housework.

In response, Shashi Tharoor expressed his acquiescence and tweeted "This will recognise and monetise the services of women homemakers in society, enhance their power and autonomy and create near-universal basic income". As already mentioned, the huge unpaid work of women, if recognised and monetised, would lead to a splendiferous bump in the economy. Sweden, for instance, regarded as the champion of gender equality and work-life balance, introduced subsidies to household work in 2007. Last year, the Swedish National Audit Office revealed that in families using subsidies, both men and women reported more hours of

earned income. MNM has also politicised otherwise invisible housework and furthered the discourse that women shoulder a disproportionate burden of it. It, therefore, aims to take into account the income poverty of women and provide efficacious solutions. The problem also limns the patriarchal roles in a family- men are unwilling and often find it inferior to contribute to unpaid domestic work. To bring about a change in this flawed perception and to recognise housework by estimating its monetary value and paying women is a huge step forward. It would enhance the financial freedom and dignity of women.

FAILING ASPECTS OF THE PROPOSAL

"We don't need salary for being the Queens of our own little kingdom, stop seeing everything as a business". Kangana Ranaut's tweet opposing the move of wages for housework further read "she needs the all of you not just your love/respect/salary". This looks hypocritical, and rather utopian, in a male dominant society where 'Queens' are subjected to domestic violence and economic dependence on their husbands. However, there is a modicum of truth. It is crucial to provide recognition to female work, but creating value cannot be restricted merely to remuneration.

Feminist and economist, Diane Elson laid a systematic approach before the policymakers to fill the huge gap in unpaid domestic and care work in the form of the three Rs- Recognition, Reduction and Redistribution. While the party promise addresses the first aspect to some extent, it miserably fails the remaining goals. In Tamil Nadu, 90 per cent of females and 24 per cent of males in the age group 1-59 participate in unpaid housework.

Instead of reducing this rift, the electoral promise conversely cements the gendered role of women in the household- a food for patriarchy and a critical lacuna in the proposal. Payment of wages may turn out to be a formal endorsement of the belief that housework is the domain of women. Besides, it also provides an impetus to the unwarranted male mentality that they can merely help and not participate in unpaid care work because women's work hours are now being compensated for. This contradicts the idea of domestic work as a shared responsibility. Furthermore, the manifesto promise seems to reinforce gender stereotypes by disincentivizing women from working in the paid sector. Accepting wages for housework would appear more tempting as women can earn money

and simultaneously fulfil their 'expectations' as wives and daughters-in-law by carrying out domestic work. Moreover, it is difficult to quantify the amount of work and time women put in household duties provided the mental and emotional strain they undergo. Another aspect is that many women also associate dignity and 'swabhiman' in the care work they do. Therefore, its monetisation may be seen as a threat to their self-respect. Upon being questioned about the economic feasibility of the proposition, Kamal Hassan replied that it can be materialised if corruption is eliminated and prosperity is ensured. So even those awaiting benefits may have to face disappointment, given the humongous challenges.

CONCLUSION

Evidently, the limitations of the proposal outweigh its advantages. The manifesto should give primacy to enhancing opportunities for education and employment of women to make them financially strong and independent. Recognising household work equal to any other work, measuring and placing an economic value to it in the national accounts and statistics is sufficient. Remuneration of the housework, as discussed, is an exploitative option for women as it bars them from realising their full potential. The case of Sweden may appear to be alluring but it is necessary to consider its high HDI which served as the base to the compensation provided for women. Moreover, Sweden has one of the highest female labour force participation rates globally (70 per cent in 2016). So, before introducing such policy reforms it is necessary to build the foundation. Alternatively, families should be urged to divide the total value income equally between the male and female members to ensure economic freedom and recognise the labour of the latter. This needs to be supplemented by incentivising men to participate more in household work to reduce the burden borne by women and redistribute responsibilities.

Therefore, the proposition may partly serve in the actualisation of 'practical' gender needs by providing wages, but it languishes in addressing the 'strategic' aspect of women empowerment. It would be deceptive to label it as manifesto kitsch because it politicises the invisibilised unpaid work by women. But, as far as the efficacy of the plan is considered, it turns out to be hastily designed and is liable to culminate in undesirable, and even contradictory consequences.

By Abeera Arif-Bashir

THE CROWN JEWEL:

Jammu, Kashmir & Ladakh

By Harsh Suri

Upon entering the National Highway 1 (NH-1) which connects the Rest of India with Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh you might see a board displaying "Welcome to The Crown of India".

Well, that title crown is open to many interpretations, one being that this union territory is in the uppermost part of India but the meaning of ' The Crown' is not so shortsighted, it has a huge geopolitical aspect to it. We will be concentrating on that Geo-political aspect & also the relevance and meaning of the title 'Crown' given to the Union Territories of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. This region has always been the soft underbelly of India. With titan neighbours like China and Pakistan, this region makes every National Security Advisor and every Prime Minister of India go sleepless many times.

The Crown is the Centerpiece of any authority and of any representation of power. Likewise the Region of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh is the Centrepiece of India's geopolitical standings, strategic high ground and a barrier to any misadventures against India. India very well knows the significance of this region. In geo-politics, you cannot afford to lose the high ground and this crown is the high ground of India. Authority over this region not only helps India command and control the Region in many ways but also serves India's interests vis-a-vis other nations : be it through the control over Siachen and its resources or the close proximity to Gilgit-Baltistan. Also, the higher ground in Ladakh turns in India's favour. How important is this crown and how apt is this title in geopolitical terms we got to know during the Kargil war. We will examine the major geopolitical significance and international standings of this region.

When you see the Map of India on the top you see the Union Territories of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. These Union Territories border some of the most belligerent neighbours present on this earth (China and Pakistan) along with the presence of the Afghan fighters through the mountain ranges and the large chunk of terror outfits like LASHKAR-E-TAIBA, HIZB-UL-MUJAHIDEEN, AL-BADR and the JAISH-E-MOHAMMED. These are just a few of the 35 terror outfits in the

> INDIA HAS LEARNT FROM THE PAST FAILURES IN THIS REGION AND NOW IS NOT ONLY BUILDING UP NEW DEFENCE MECHANISMS BUT GREATER ECONOMIC, GREATER CONSTITUTIONAL, LAW, POLITICAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL INVOLVEMENTS.

region. All this makes the region extremely destabilized and prone to a major escalation not only with the Terror outfits but with the Big nations themselves. In the West, the Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK), works like a launchpad for major terror activities and intrusions; not to forget the daily ceasefire violations that lead to many economic disturbances in the border areas. In the east and northeast - you have the Rising Dragon breathing fire, eye to eye in the region of Ladakh. Aksai Chin works as China's base-1 against India in this region. Squeezed in between LOC and LAC is the Geopolitical gold of India - The Siachen glacier.

It cuts these two volatile neighbours at a major place and also gives India a high-ground which is strategic in military value. India needs to control the Siachen desperately because of its strategic value and yes because it's a glacier, it provides a huge freshwater reservoir in the 21st century when climate change is leaving nations thirsty. Siachen is the main source of the Nubra river which drains into the Shyok river which in turn joins the Indus, which is Pakistan's major water source. Close the Taps of the Shyok to the Indus and a major escalation is bound to happen between the two neighbours. This is what gives India a controlling stake in the Region over Pakistan. Siachen is also a strategic reservoir for a hugely populated nation like India and key to meet its rising demands of water.

On the other hand, you have China which desperately wants to control the region to secure its interests and investments in the Region. This is where Gilgit-Baltistan plays a major role. This we will take up next.

The Fundamental reason for the relationship between Pakistan and China is Gilgit-Baltistan (located in PoK). The Day Pakistan loses control of Gilgit-Baltistan, that day China will no longer have a major benefiting relationship with Pakistan which it has now. There are many reasons for this but the major reason is - China's need for an excess of uninterrupted energy
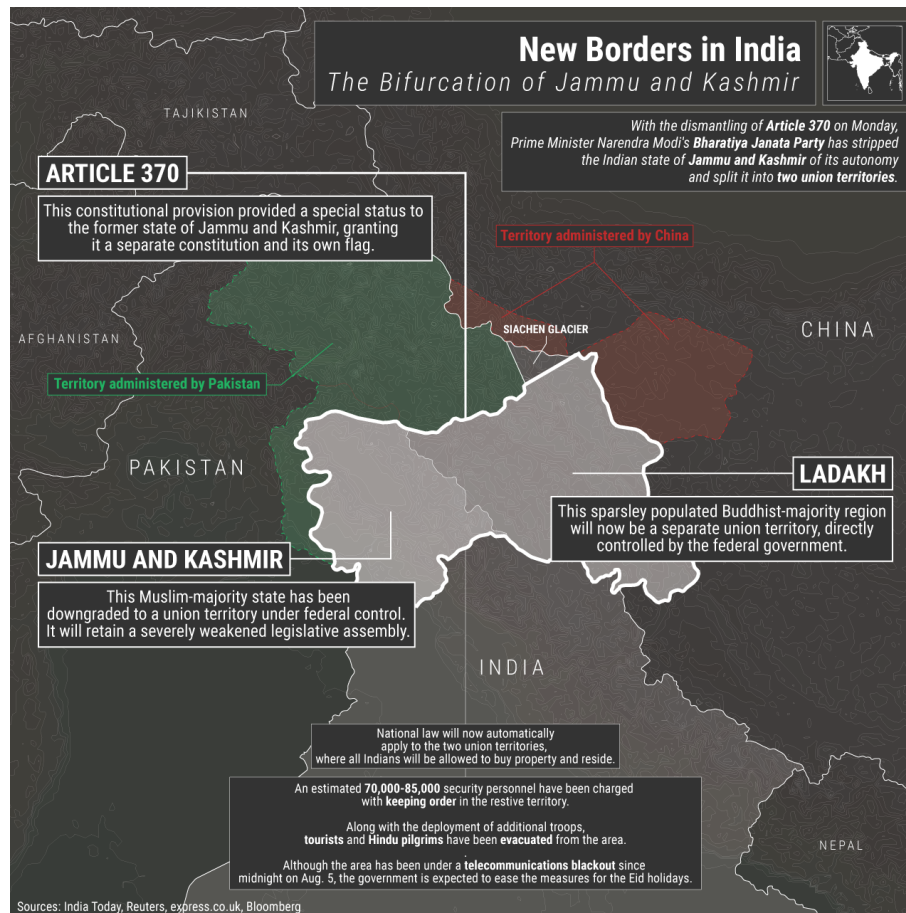
resources. China is day by day becoming energy thirsty as it is in its epitome of economic rise. Currently China imports oil and gas from the Middle East. If any conflict ever arises in the South China Sea or the Strait of Malacca - the United States or India need only one aircraft carrier or a Naval fleet to block the Strait and cut China's entire supply of energy, choking China to its knees. This will also disrupt China's trade supply chains and they will have no option but to beg to Russian Federation which is no less than a 'Frenemy' and cannot be relied on in case of a global escalation between China and US. This will be a huge geopolitical nightmare for the Chinese. To avoid this geopolitical choke-hold China has invested in creating CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor) which is nothing but an uninterrupted guarantee of China's energy demands and trading supply chain savoir. This is also the major reason why China and Pakistan will never afford to give away PoK or land beyond the LAC, not to even dream about the independence of Tibet. Although China is still preparing for the worst case scenario, by building relationships with the Central Asian Countries and also Iran. India taking over Gilgit-Baltistan is the last thing that Beijing and Rawalpindi want. Now you can see the global significance of the region Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh.

Apart from China and Pakistan, the third major player in the Region is The Taliban. Once the Afghan peace deal is stuck between the US and the Taliban, it is easy to guess where the Taliban will propagate and spread its movement next. When in 1989, The Soviet Union lost the Afghan war, the Mujahideen fighters with the active help of outside power like the US and Pakistani handles, returned to Kashmir and trained and equipped the local and Pakistani terror outfits, causing militancy in Kashmir. In 2001 when 9/11 attacks happened, the US invaded Afghanistan, which resulted in the control of militancy by the Talibani outfits in Kashmir. Now when the

Peace deal is coming to near close and The US is preparing to withdraw, India needs to prepare for the worst. All these fighters, heavily equipped and trained, will be concentrating in the Kashmir region once again. This is no good news and to tackle this India has already taken steps for faster and greater involvement in the region. Names of terrorist organisations have changed but the threat remains the same. The major priority of India remains to keep the Crown safe and secure.

Every year India loses hundreds of its brave-hearts, countless civilians and spends billions of dollars to keep peace in this region. India also has a huge deployment of troops, weaponry, and all of India's major bases are designed in near proximity to this region's neighbours. India also has been building the state of the art infrastructure in this region like four-lane roads, tunnels, highways, railways and air-strips not just for the development of this region but for the major military advantage- to facilitate faster deployment of the Military and its equipment to the places of urgent need. India is also building hydro-projects in this region to secure its water and energy interests. The reason why India is spending all this chunk of money on defence and development in this region is due to its heavy geopolitical significance to India. If this region is lost, India immediately loses control of Indus taps, water and electricity supplies in huge volumes, mineral wealth, tourism potential and the religious shrines which have the faith of billions in them. If India loses this Geopolitical high-ground, China and Pakistan will be able to partner up with the more military ground and may even have railway links to fasten up the supply chains, not to forget the Military bases that would increase drastically. The last but not the least would be the result that China and Pakistan would be in close proximity to the seat of power of India, i.e., New Delhi. Delhi would always have to be on high alert to keep this nation together. There will be many separatist movements all over

New Borders in India
The Bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir

With the dismantling of **Article 370** on Monday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's **Bharatiya Janata Party** has stripped the Indian state of **Jammu and Kashmir** of its autonomy and split it into **two union territories**.

TAJIKISTAN

ARTICLE 370
This constitutional provision provided a special status to the former state of Jammu and Kashmir, granting it a separate constitution and its own flag.

Territory administered by China

AFGHANISTAN

SIACHEN GLACIER

CHINA

Territory administered by Pakistan

PAKISTAN

LADAKH
This sparsley populated Buddhist-majority region will now be a separate union territory, directly controlled by the federal government.

JAMMU AND KASHMIR
This Muslim-majority state has been downgraded to a union territory under federal control. It will retain a severely weakened legislative assembly.

INDIA

National law will now automatically apply to the two union territories, where all Indians will be allowed to buy property and reside.

An estimated **70,000-85,000** security personnel have been charged with **keeping order** in the restive territory.

Along with the deployment of additional troops, **tourists** and **Hindu pilgrims** have been **evacuated** from the area.

Although the area has been under a **telecommunications blackout** since midnight on Aug. 5, the government is expected to ease the measures for the Eid holidays.

NEPAL

Sources: India Today, Reuters, express.co.uk, Bloomberg

the nation just because of losing this region. Losing the Crown Jewel of Indian geopolitics will be a great blunder. All this sums up the Crown's relevance.

Increasing infiltration from PoK, frequent ceasefire violations, huge deployment of Pakistan's forces, and on the other hand, current conflicts and stand-offs between India and China in the Region of Galwan valley, Rezang la and Chinese manoeuvres in Shaksgam valley; all signal to the Future conflicts that await this region. Both China and Pakistan are concerned about any unilateral move by India to change the status quo in future or present. That's what they use as a justification to provoke India. Stand-off between China and India is nothing but China's frustration that Pakistan may lose Gilgit-Baltistan. So China keeps pushing India to send a message or warning not to act on POK or in Aksai Chin. Current conflicts and confrontations are all insight into the future. This partnership between Pakistan and China to push India is what India fears or what our military experts call the Two-Front war.

The 21st century is the turning point for this region and is going to be one of the most important phases for this region. This region will witness major changes not only in the terms of economic, military or political angles but in terms of demographics, democracy and demonstration of power and by all the stakeholders. India is already gearing up for this future change.

India has learnt from the past failures in this region and now is not only building up new defence mechanisms but greater economic, greater constitutional, law, political and developmental involvements. This is evident by the decision of abrogation of Article 370 which India has done much for both the internal aspects of greater reach, involvement, demographics, democracy and refugee crisis and also external aspects like tackling the Taliban threat, China's greater involvement and Pakistan's belligerence. Power play by all three titans- China, India and Pakistan along with smaller players like the Taliban in Afghanistan will decide the fate of this region not only at a regional level, but global level too. Future will not be like a cakewalk for this region, conflict and confrontation is here to stay due to the huge stakes involved in this region. What remains to be seen is how the key players will deal with it. The crown has to be kept safely to keep the Geopolitical High Ground with India always.

HISTORY & CULTURE
IN THIS SECTION

DADA MOVEMENT

ARTISTIC NIHILISM MOCKS THE 20's

BY SAMYA VERMA

Hannah Höch, Cut with the Kitchen Knife
through the Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural
Epoch in Germany, 1919-1920, photomontage
and collage with watercolor, 114 x 90 cm
(Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Nationalgalerie)

> Humour is the human mind's error message: evolutionary coding for the brain's inability to deal with reality and reason beyond a breaking point. What of a collective cultural resort to cutting absurdity for expression of existential pain? This is 'Dada', and its nihilism has now struck two generations, one century apart.

Dada is a cultural spectre of the misery of a post-war generation that we, the GenZ, never met, but would've shared the exactness of our fears, existential dread and helplessness with. 'Dada' remains an everlasting echo of the holler of our ancestors against the human civilization's near-apocalyptic, avarice-ridden march towards materialistic meaningfulness, an echo that we've adopted as our very own. In the following article I will try to decode 'Dada' as instrumental to the study of public psychology in the decade lying before us.

In illuminating the historical backdrop of Dada, I would like to hark back to the First World War (1914-1918) and the trauma it wrought on the youth of that decade. They saw the senseless death and destruction of a meaningless war, waged in order to satisfy the hubris of their elders. In the wake of the War, the world was savaged by the deadly Spanish Influenza of 1918 and the Great Economic Depression of the late 1920's. With the sole purpose of adding to this misery, Nazism reared its ugly head as the greatest of all moral failings in human history, and the Second World war broke out in 1939. The hopelessness of life, and suspicion towards morality experienced by that generation, disfigured into the cultural movement of 'Dada'.

Dadaists essentially believed that logic and governance had led to their misery. A hungry pursuit for power and dominion had become the bane of their generation's existence. Their future had been extinguished, lost somewhere in the ear-splitting war cries of their elders. Dadaists argued that the world was undeserving of any kind of beauty or symbolic and meaningful art: a stark reversal from the coveted renaissance high-art that was previously dominant. Their essential goal was to attack the bourgeoisie sensibilities and hubris of their elders, who had lived extravagant lives themselves as the spear-headers of meaningless battles, but had destroyed the simplest of hopes harboured by the youth in the process.

'Dada' art was a blend of absurdism and chance: coloured blocks tossed in the air, graffiti on public walls, caricatures of renaissance paintings (dare I say, the earliest memes) or even sound shows with artists in bizarre get-ups made out of trash, dancing to what could not be adequately described as music, constituted Dadaism.

Dada was anti-art and opposed to anything that pleased the senses.

It's idea was to perturb the onlookers and repulse them. Dadaists wanted to expose the hypocrisy of their elderly generation that called itself a connoisseur of beauty, but had sentenced it's children to the suffering of the trenches.

The growing absurdity of GenZ nihilism mirrors this: we've steadily degraded from the 'ice-bucket challenge', to the hysterical commentary on Tumblr, to ultimately the meme-ers, bedecked in pillowcases, posing for the 'Pandemic Challenge of 2020'. And the downward spiral of our collective psyches is still on. The anti-music has been replaced by nihilistic Genz chants of 'Binod, Binod, Binod', but the idea remains the same: this world no longer deserves logic and the GenZ will laugh itself to tears over its sorry state at the barest provocation.

But in many ways, the original Dada movement was a planned rebellion: it's proponents met in Zurich, Switzerland, during the war years, and based the movement in a collective agreement over the dreariness of human condition. The art moment was so named after one dadaist stabbed a French dictionary and chose the first un-slashed word he came across in it: 'Dada', meaning hobby-horse.

The meme-ers of today, however, didn't plan 'nouveu-dadaism' or 'shit-posting' (as it is sometimes termed in modern parlance). In fact, the genesis of the contemporary internet meme culture, and its firebrand mockery of the global situation, is arbitrary and based on sudden occurrences such as an unforeseen rise of conservative politics, an unexpected pandemic right at the beginning of the decade, consequent relegation of education to the sphere of poorly organized e-learning, a looming economic recession, the sudden global consciousness that climate change is slowly killing us etc.

The kids of 2020 are perhaps just unconsciously drawing on the time-tested methods of their ancestors in order to give expression to their pain. Many of the aficionados of nihilistic memes, whom I interviewed, weren't even aware that theirs was an established movement of art. It seems that the Dada of the past century has more or less remained alive in public consciousness all this time.
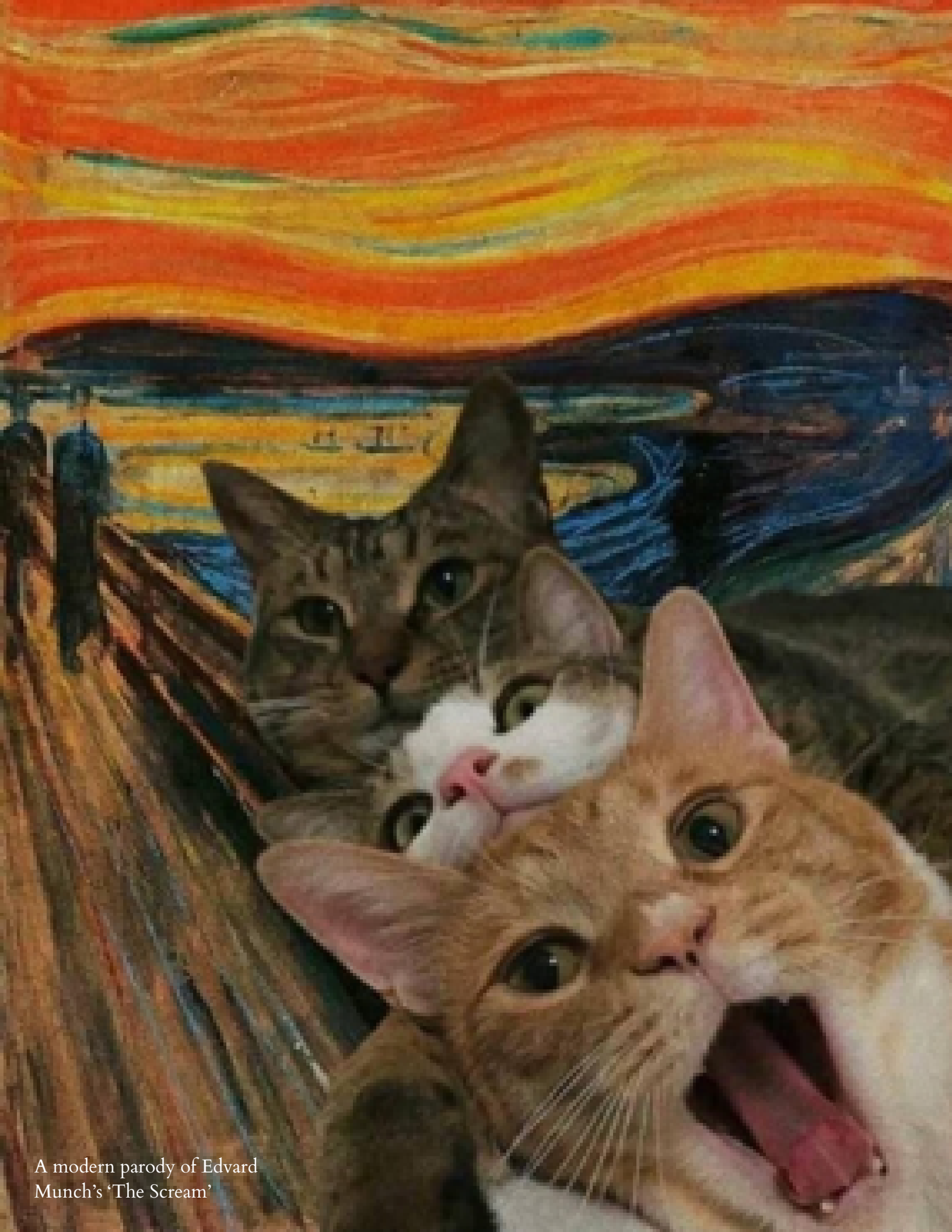
Dadaist Hugo Ball dressed in
tubes for a 'noise show' c. 1918

A modern parody of Vermeer's
'The Girl With A Pearl Earring

2020 Pandemic
Pillowcase challenge

A modern parody of Edvard
Munch's 'The Scream'

Trump family's visit to India in 2020 was much satirized (right). The POTUS himself has been one of the major targets of nouveau–dadaism (left).

Left: Dadaist Duchamp's Mona Lisa Parody: 'She Is Lucky' from 1919
Right: An internet meme from 2020

That the GenZ worldview might not be very different from the youth of 1914, should be apparent to our elders from the near frequent meltdowns we have over social media platforms. Case-in-point: when Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the ban on TikTok, his social media was flooded with thousands of satirical remarks on the central government's policy decisions of the past year and half-wit lyrics from old Bollywood songs (I dare you to read the commentary with a straight face!). World-over, populist leaders are targets of nihilistic satire meant not to make sense, but only to evoke hysterical laughter.

Our hopeless jibes at the global condition and volatility of international politics have become a desperate lashing against the authorities and their high-handedness in deriding our generation's demands for sustainability, compassion and better living conditions worldwide. The idea that the environmental collapse may very soon be beyond reversal, and the utter apathy of those in power to visible signs of climate change, have haunted our generation to the core. Powerless, we watch with utter trepidation as the leaders, who would be no more in a matter of decades, make decisions 'for us' and mock our concerns in their greedy pursuit for 'more.'

I personally began by resorting to satire as a means of creating awareness on the social issues plaguing the country. The more my frustration grew, the more savage and sarcastic my satire became, almost as if it was my personal weapon in a war against the authorities. I never even realized that I was partaking in a cultural movement until I stumbled across an E-reverie on 'Dada!' Not only is its resurgence absurd, but also reflective of a darker trend: the younger generation is collectively on the verge of a mental collapse, and the rusted cog-wheels of institutional machinery cannot be bothered less as they march onwards to increasingly anti-democratic trends. The global society as a whole is becoming one juxtaposed Dadaist meme, leading some philosophers to comment that this is how the human society will collapse: not with a bang, but in slow murmurs as humanity loses all logic and sensibilities to overpowering greed.

Add to this what can be most aptly described as the 'sudden and unexpected rise of conservative politics world-over.' Our adults have chosen leaders whose sensibilities are a stark contrast to the values of egalitarianism that our generation has imbibed. Perhaps the reason for such a choice was a lack of access to technology and an internet-facilitated woke-culture for them, that we are lucky to grow up with. Whatever be the cause, the generation gap, nay chasm, is wider than ever, and we deal with it using incredibly meaningless humour: perhaps we're looking up to laughter in order to find a remedy to the human experience.

ROMANIAN REVOLUTION AND THE SOCIALIST
DICTATOR CEAUȘESCU

By aaliya zaidi

History is a witness that nearly every monarchy, dictatorship or any autocratic regime met its ignominious end all over the world in the 20th Century. Be it Hitler of Germany, Benito Mussolini of Italy, the Shahs of Iran or the Ottomans of Turkey. All of them had similar and deserving ends. Romania was not an exception to it; a similar fate was written for its leader Nicolae Ceaușescu. But, his end had charisma and uniqueness of its own, which forces us to shed some light on it. Seeking inspiration from the work of Yuval Noah Harari's *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow, this article* highlights the decades-long Ceaușescu rule, his fall and the pillars sustaining any dictatorship but first, let's start with the never seen speech of any powerful leader in this world.

THE LAST SPEECH

Bucharest: On December 21, 1989, complement, Romanian President Nicolae Ceaușescu organised a mass rally in the centre of Bucharest to claim his power and to show the rest of the world that the majority of Romanians still loved him, or at least feared him. Ceaușescu, who had ruled Romania since 1965 believed that he could withstand even a

AP Photo – Vadim Ghirda

tsunami, even though riots against his rule had erupted in Timisoara on 17th December 1989. The creaking party mobilised 80,000 people to fill the city's central square, and citizens throughout Romania were instructed to stop all their activities and tune in to their radios and televisions, which happened every time he came to deliver his speeches. To the cheering of the seemingly enthusiastic crowd, Ceaușescu mounted the balcony overlooking the crowd, dressed in a black Persian lamb hat with a matching coat collar. Accompanied by his wife Elena, leading the party officials and bodyguards, Ceaușescu began delivering one of his trademark dreary speeches.

"Dear Comrades and friends, citizens of the Capital of Socialist Romania. First, I desire to address you...the great participants of this great popular meeting, to all residents of Bucharest Municipality... warm greetings, revolutionary!...along with best wishes for success in all fields!...I want to also address thanks to the initiators and organizers of this great event from Bucharest considering it as a.........". And then something mischievous happened, you can watch history in action on YouTube. He never completed this sentence. Somebody in the audience booed. People still argue today about who the first person who dared to boo was.

And then another person booed, and another, and another, and within a few seconds, the masses began whistling, shouting abuse and calling out 'Ti-mi-șoa-ra! Ti-mi-șoa-ra!'.

All this happened live on Romanian television, as three-quarters of the population sat glued to the screens, their hearts throbbing wildly. The secret police, Securitate immediately ordered the broadcast to be stopped, but the television crew disobeyed. The cameraman pointed the camera towards the sky so that viewers couldn't see the panic among the party leaders on the balcony, but the

NICOLAE CEAUSESCU'S REGIME WAS SHAKEN WHEN MILLIONS OF SUPPRESSED VOICES FINALLY CHALLENGED HIM WHEN HE WAS STANDING TALL IN HIS BALCONY AND CLAIMING HIS POWER IN FRONT OF A MASSIVE CROWD. A CHAIN OF BOOING 'TI-MI-ȘOA-RA! TI-MI-ȘOA-RA!' ERUPTED IN THE CROWD AND ITS FLAMES WERE IGNITED SO FIERCELY THAT IT SNATCHED THE PALACE OF POWER FROM CEAUȘESCU'S FOOT INSTANTLY.

soundman kept recording, and the technicians continued the transmission. The whole of Romania heard the crowd booing, shouting, while Ceaușescu yelled, 'Hello! Hello! Hello!' as if the problem were with the microphone. His wife Elena began scolding the audience, 'Be quiet! Be quiet!' until Ceaușescu turned and yelled at her to shut up first, live on television – 'You be quiet!' Ceaușescu then appealed to the excited crowds in the square desperately, 'Comrades! Comrades! Be quiet, comrades!' But the comrades were unwilling to be quiet. Socialist Romania collapsed when the 80,000 in the Bucharest Central Square realised that they were much stronger than the old man in the hat on the balcony. This was the never seen last speech of a powerful dictator in world history. This episode marks the end of Ceausescu, the long-standing leader of Romania and the collapse of Socialist rule. And just after 4 days, Ceaușescu and his wife Elena had become history.

Around 25 minutes after this speech, his mass rally drew to a close. Thousands of young people marched down the nearby central Magheru boulevard, chanting "Down with Ceaușescu 3/8", and calling for the "libertate" - or "freedom" - that was coming to them from their neighbouring countries. The next day, protests spread all over the country. Ceaușescu and his wife fled on a helicopter but were later captured that day as the army joined the protest. On Christmas Day, the trial lasted an hour and they both were found guilty of genocide and immediately sentenced to death. They were hauled and lined up against a wall, Nicolae shouted "I have the right to do what I want" and Elena shouted, "Don't tie us up and Don't offend us!" And then, both were shot dead by one of the paratroopers.

The Rise of Ceaușescu
When Gheorghiu-Dej, the then head of state died on 19 March 1965,

Romanian demonstrators gathered in front of the headquarters of the Romanian Communist Party in Bucharest during the 1989 anti-communist revolution, 22 December 1989. Photograph: Radu Sigheti/Reuters

ON THE DAY OF TRIAL, NICU TEODORESCU WAS APPOINTED AS THE COUNSEL FOR DEFENCE BY THE NATIONAL SALVATION FRONT. CITING IT AS AN 'INTERESTING CHALLENGE', HE MET THE CEAUSESCU COUPLE FOR THE VERY FIRST TIME IN THE COURTROOM. BEFORE THE LEGAL PROCEEDINGS BEGAN, A SPOT FOR THE EXECUTION WAS ALREADY SELECTED. INDEED, IT WAS A HASTY TRIAL BUT WITH LEGITIMATION OF ITS OWN. CEAUSESCU WAS THE LAST PERSON TO BE EXECUTED IN ROMANIA, CAPITAL PUNISHMENT WAS ABOLISHED THEREAFTER IN 1990.

Ceaușescu succeeded the leadership of Romania's Communist Party as First Secretary (general secretary from July 1965); and with his assumption of the presidency of the State Council (December 1967), he became the head of state. After coming to power, he changed the name of the party from the Romanian Workers' Party back to the Communist Party of Romania and declared the country a socialist republic, rather than a people's republic. At first, he eased press restrictions, removed censorship and openly condemned the Warsaw Pact Invasion in his speech on 21st August 1968, which led to a surge in his popularity. However, this period of stability was short-lived as he soon turned to become the unquestionable leader of Socialist Romania. His government came out to be the most repressive in the eastern bloc of the region. His secret police 'Securitate' was responsible for mass surveillance and severe repression of opposition.

His short visioned, brutal and repressive policies caused major havoc on the people of Romania and its economy. As he often stated in all his speeches, his main aim as a leader was to make Romania a world power, and all of his economic, foreign and demographic policies were meant to achieve the ultimate goal:

turning Romania into one of the world's great powers. In October 1966, Ceaușescu banned abortion and contraception and brought in one of the world's harshest anti-abortion laws, leading to a large spike in the number of Romanian infants abandoned to pathetic conditions in the country's orphanages. Mothers with at least five children were entitled to receive significant benefits, while mothers of at least ten children were declared "heroine mothers" by the Romanian state. Few women ever sought to receive this status. Instead, the average Romanian family had two to three children during this period. To implement anti-abortion laws more rigorously, his govt made divorce more difficult, it was decreed that marriages could only be dissolved in exceptional cases.

To increase the rate of reproduction, encouraging measures like financial motivations for families who bore children, guaranteed maternity leave, and childcare support for mothers who returned to work, work protection for women, and extensive access to medical control in all stages of pregnancy, as well as after it was implemented. Medical measures were seen as one of the most productive effects of the law, since all women who became pregnant were under the care of a qualified medical practitioner, even in rural areas. In

some cases, if a woman was unable to visit a medical office, a doctor would visit her home. By the late 1960s, the population beg-an to surge, and this rapid dem-ographic change resulted in cre-ating a problem of child aba-ndonment, which enlarged the orphanage population. This sub-sequent generation of children is known as generația nefericită (ge-neration unfortunate) in Rom-ania.

Not only did his measures severely affect the demography of Romania, but the economy also collapsed under Ceaușescu's rule. Economic mismanagement due to failed oil ventures during the 1970s led to skyrocketing foreign debts in Romania. To come out of this crisis, he exported much of Romania's agricultural and ind-ustrial products to repay loans in 1982. This resulted in the drastic shortage of produce within the country; significantly lowering the living standards, heavy rat-ioning of food, water, oil, heat, medicine and power cuts. The situation worsened after he ap-pointed his wife Elena as deputy Prime Minister. Moreover, fore-ign debts were largely the result of Nicolae Ceausescu's overreach-ing industrial and infrastructural projects. One of the projects that he sought to carry was to destroy dozens of Romanian villages with bulldozers and convert them into agrotech equipped centres. Furt-hermore, his wife Elena also

played a crucial role in Socialist Romania as its First lady. But to the people of the country, she is remembered as Romania's lying, thieving and hated First Lady. With puppet machinery and the system in her husband's hands, she entered the Romania Academy and earned a PhD degree in Chemistry and other scholarly honours. Years later, it was found that her work had been done by other researchers. In her party, she was referred to as "comrade academician doctor engineer Elena Ceausescu, a brilliant politician and patriotic scholar of broad international renown". With this glossy, highly appreciating introduction of her, it is important to revisit the famous thievery of the Ceaușescu couple. During a state visit to France in early 1978, the couple reportedly raided their official accommodation. It led to France's then President, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, to warn Queen Elizabeth II ahead of the Ceaușescus' visit to Britain months later, to hide the valuables at Buckingham Palace.

These extremely unjust policies, abuse of human rights and severe repression led to great unrest in Romania. As a result, an anti-government protest erupted in Timișoara in 1989. These demonstrations initiated the Romanian Revolution, the only violent overthrow of a communist government in the turn of the revolutions of 1989. After his last speech, Ceaușescu and his wife Elena fled the capital in a helicopter, but they were captured by the military after the armed forces defected. On Christmas, 25 December 1989, they were tried and convicted for economic sabotage and genocide. They were immediately executed by a firing squad, and Ceaușescu was succeeded as President by Ion Iliescu, who had played a major part in the revolution.

THE UNQUESTIONABLE LEADER: CONTOUR OF A DICTATOR

Nicolae Ceaușescu was a cult and strong personality, which is preliminary to any dictator in the world. But other factors make their rule decades long. Prof Christoph Stefes says that *dictatorships are sustained by repression, legitimation and cooptation.* He has analyzed every absolute monarchy, military regime, one-party state, as well as a multi-party system in which the winner is already decided before elections. He says that there are three pillars sustaining any autocratic rule:

First, repression; that is suppressing all divergent opinions and emptying all space for the opposition. Stefes regards it as a strong instrument in increasing the life expectancy of any dictatorship. Ceaușescu imposed strict regulations on the media; censoring the press and implementing methods that were considered to be the most severe and harsh in the world. His secret police 'Securitate' repressed all kinds of anti-government protest, abused human rights and was responsible for mass surveillance. This is evident from the Timișoara protest that erupted on 17th December 1989, where he ordered the military forces to open fire on protesters. One journalist said, " It was a war zone, there was bloodshed, violence everywhere, the bloodiest revolution of Romania". Ceaușescu had left no room for any dissent and opposition. If anything was found mischievous to his rule, it was repressed with brutal tactics. And on his birthday 26th January, every person was forced to watch his TV show- highly saturated with praise and appreciation of him. According to historian Victor Sebestyen, it was one of the few days of the year when the average Romanian put on a happy face since appearing miserable on this day was too risky.

Second, legitimation; that is legitimizing the rule and all actions of the government. In a democracy, it is legitimized by free and fair election, whereas in a dictatorship, the leader develops his legitimation. Stefes writes that one way of doing this is to touch national instincts; like former Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic, or to evoke an ideology of communism, socialism etcetera. Another way of doing this is to promise economic prosperity. Ceaușescu, the leader of Socialist Romania had the legitimacy of his own. His main aim as a leader was to make Romania a world power. Any leader must touch the national instincts as a way to influence people and consolidate power. He also created a pervasive personality cult, giving himself such titles as "Conducător" ("Leader") and "Geniul din Carpați" ("The Genius of the Carpathians"), with inspiration from Proletarian Culture (Proletkult). Imperative in this context is the last sentence that he spoke, "I have the right to do what I want". Even in his last breath, he had the legitimacy of his own, the unquestionable personality; but this time he was lacking the greatest element, that is power.

Third, cooptation means incorporating people by securing their participation. They are allowed to be a part of the system and benefit from it. However, cooptation is the weakest of the links and has the least influence on the stability of any authoritarian regime. Ceaușescu used to organise mass rallies, deliver speeches and greet the people as great people of great Romania. As we can see in his speech, he remarked: "...First I address you the great participants of this great popular meeting". With this tone, he wanted to incorporate people to create a degree of solidarity as a gesture to strengthen his rule and to claim his power.

HOW DICTATORSHIPS FALL

According to Stefes, a dictatorship continues to function as long as the three "pillars" remain stable and in equilibrium. Its days are numbered when the people rise against repression; or when cooptation no longer helps participants achieve power, but only encourages corruption; or when a dictator dies suddenly and it is completely unclear who will succeed him. Here in Romania, Ceaușescu's rule fell

when people realised that they are much stronger than the old man. Romanians rose above the repression of Ceaușescu's rule and finally checkmated the Socialist leader Nicolae Ceaușescu. It was a happy Christmas after a very long time, a time for celebration and peace for most of the Romanians.

The Romanian Revolution was unique in its own; from questioning the unquestionable leader, bloodshed and violence, to the hasty trial of the Ceaușescu couple. Nicu Teodorescu, the prominent lawyer, was appointed as the Counsel for defence by the National Salvation Front. Citing it as an 'interesting challenge', he met the couple for the very first time in the courtroom, where he was given ten minutes to consult with his clients before trial. With so little time to prepare any defence, he tried to explain to them that their best hope of avoiding the death sentence was to plead insanity. Ceaușescu rejected his help, terming it as a deep insult. Before the legal proceedings began,

General Victor Stănculescu had already selected the spot where the execution would take place along one side of the wall in the barracks' square. It would take place in an open and public fashion. Ceaușescu was the last person to be executed in Romania, capital punishment was abolished thereafter on January 7, 1990.

Valentin Ceaușescu, elder son of Ceaușescu argued in 2009 that trial wasn't needed; his parents could have been shot when they were captured on December 22. Ion Iliescu clarified in this regard, stating that it was "quite shameful but necessary." However, several countries criticised the constitutionality of the execution, the United States being the most prominent critic of the trial saying, "We regret the trial did not take place in an open and public fashion". However, to most Romanians, the trial had vindication and legitimation of its own that could best compliment the pervasive and cult personality of Nicolae Ceaușescu. At last, the Ceaușescu rule met its ignominious end.

Protesters wave Romanian flags at an anti-communist demonstration in Republic Square, Bucharest, 21 December 1989, GETTY IMAGES

FAITH IN THE TIMES OF CATASTROPHE

Theism–Atheism In A Post-Pandemic World

By Apeksha Rai

Swept under the carpet of New Year celebrations and the apparent joy of moving past a cursed year, spiritual distress lingers in the minds of theists and atheists, alike. The pandemic has challenged the beliefs of both, highlighting that faith might exist in the functioning of the cosmos, albeit unbound to deities or divinity. Ideally, faith is meant to provide a psychological refuge against any misery. But with what face do we turn to our beliefs when their very foundations are rocked by heart-wrenching misery? Unsurprisingly, a new version of the age-old debate regarding the coexistence of God and evil has popped up: "Why did God allow the pandemic to occur if he exists at all?" To understand the etho and pathos of this question, it is necessary to travel back to the time of its origin.

It begins with the theological views of Epicurus who is often labeled as one of the earliest atheists in the history of mankind. While the term "atheist" has held a spectrum of meanings and connotations throughout history, it is interesting to note the writings of Epicurus date back to the Hellenistic era of Greek Civilization, when religious beliefs were so widely disseminated that atheism was used as a term of abuse. Out of fear, or possibly in defense, Epicurus never actually denied the existence of God; as scholars argue, his philosophy defies the conventional black-white rendering of theism and atheism. Out of all the preserved works of Epicurus, the Epicurean paradox or the Epicurean Trilemma stands as the most classic proponent of this "grey" area of thought. Thus remarked Lactantius on this paradox: "God, he says, either wishes to take away evils, and is unable; or He is able, and is unwilling; or He is neither willing nor able, or He is both willing and able. If He is willing and is unable, He is feeble, which is not in accordance with the character of God; if He is able and

Jun Lee, a Catholic from South Korea, prays in front of an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe at St. James Cathedral in Seattle on March 12, 2020. On March 11, the Archdiocese of Seattle became the first in the country to announce the temporary suspension of all public Masses to help prevent the spread of coronavirus. Places of worship in the archdiocese are still open for prayer. (CNS photo/Jason Redmond, Reuters)

unwilling, He is envious, which is equally at variance with God; if He is neither willing nor able, He is both envious and feeble, and therefore not God; if He is both willing and able, which alone is suitable to God, from what source then are evils? Or why does He not remove them?" (Lactantius) Whether Epicurus asked a mere question, or actually 'questioned' the divine existence, is hard to ascertain. But what demands focus is the series of questions that challenged the omnipotence, omniscience, and omnibenevolence of God.

Consider these 2 statements-
(i) God exists.
(ii) Evil exists.

These statements exhibit no explicit contradictions. It is only because of the assumed attributes of the Supreme Being that it seems logically impossible for both the entities to coexist. The tone of the argument makes it obvious: One of these is surely absent and since suffering is all around, God might not be there.

If we believe that God does exist, we shift from the realm of theism to theodicy as the questions become more concerned with the divine providence or the degree to which God is involved in human affairs.

In lieu of addressing the second case, it is important to consider Aristotle's ideas mentioned in Metaphysics, where he discards the notion of divine providence and justifies his denial through the assumption that the universe has eternally been in place and is not a creation of God. Akin to this philosophy, Epicurus' assumption of God living in a state of ataraxia from where he doesn't intervene in worldly activities provides a backdrop to the problem of evil. Different theodicies can be listed out in defense for this, but the most reliable one is said to be The Free Will Defence, as proposed by Alvin Plantinga. It says, "God maximized the goodness in the world by creating free beings. And being free means that we have the choice to do evil things- a choice that some of us exercise". Therefore, it is technically impossible to create a free will in the absence of evil because if mankind is bound to do well, it is barred from the freedom to do evil. And that itself conflicts with the idea of free will. Others add to it, by explaining the greater good that comes with suffering. Even if such arguments are believed to be true, there is no justification as to why physical or natural evil exists. What lesson do we get to learn when people end up losing their lives because of a natural calamity or a pandemic? What "greater good" does it serve? This is exactly where religion steps in.

As the meanings of the two terms might suggest, it seems rational to assume that religion is a byproduct of theism. However, such is the case only when the relationship is analyzed through an academic perspective. Historically speaking, this perspective has been nearly redundant ever since the various religions have organized themselves. Only a small fraction of society including atheists, agnostics, or academicians continue to examine the relationship. After all, why would a common man be interested in the philosophy of theism when he has been exposed to his religion ever since his birth? To him, theism is either equivalent or synonymous with his religion. Therefore, the practical standpoint makes it evident that the case has always been the opposite because if we hold a theistic view, it is very much probable that it roots from the religion we're born into. The religious authorities consequently exercise the power to attract followers, which comes hand in hand with the responsibility of reviving faith among them in times like these.

Judaism predates the problem of evil and the decay of Epicureanism corresponds with the rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire. Various reasons could be listed for the same, but we shall focus on the ideas that had an edge over the Epicurean school of thought. On the moral part of the argument, the Old Testament humanized evil through the mistakes of Adam and Eve or Abraham and Sarah. In contrast to Epicureanism, here the character of evil is inserted to strengthen our belief in the existence of God through a simple message-People who know they are loved and forgiven by God become the people who love and forgive others. Furthermore, Jesus Christ becomes the ultimate symbol of suffering. Reiteration of statements like "Even Christ went through adversaries" provides a feeling of relief to the followers. But once again comes the part of natural evil. Christian scholars have numerous explanations regarding this and all of them come to a common conclusion: The knowledge of God, and not happiness is the ultimate goal of life. Larger the suffering, the higher the intimacy.

Refurnishing of the same point is highlighted, given the suffering caused due to the pandemic. In the past year, a huge number of explanations have been presented by the core believers of Christianity. In the book "Where is God in a coronavirus world", authored by John Lennux, the following argument is proposed: "If this induces us to look to the God we may have ignored for years, but who wore a crown of thorns in order to bring us back into relationship with Him and into a new, unfractured world beyond death, then the coronavirus, in spite of the havoc it has wreaked, will have served a very healthy purpose", (Lennux 2020, 59)

Besides, the theists claim that God chose to limit himself during the pandemic just in order to give people the opportunity to respond to him with faith and allegiance. What follows this is even more perplexing. "Will the pandemic end?"-- "Well that really depends on how we as Christians respond to this terrible tragedy". It almost appears like a bigoted emotional contract or an ill-administered barter system between two parties, where faith might be reciprocated with freedom from suffering. Be it the Book of Job, the biblical verses illustrating Paul's suffering, or the contemporary explanations regarding covid-19, almost every text throws us in an infinite loop of repetitive questions.

Similar is the case with Islam. Even though the Qur'an doesn't engage its disciples in theological discussions about evil, it does emphasize the normalization of suffering and the "examination of faith" in such times. Furthermore, several scholars believe that the almighty has deliberately introduced evil in the world and He shall reward the believers in the afterlife. The Islamic literature, especially the teachings of Rumi, continues to talk about the importance of faith in the divine source as the evil and suffering shall not be resolved but accepted as part of the human experience. The role of prophets in Islam can be paralleled to the role of Jesus in Christianity. Despite presenting the image of the Supreme Being as Allah or God, the religions establish human-like entities who possess divine powers. It is through their experience,

suffering, and the subsequent emotional appeal that despite the paradox, it manages to convince the followers that evil is very well a part of life. Nevertheless, logical arguments are barely provided in any religion.

Hinduism is slightly different in this case because ever since its inception, it has solely worked on inculcating the above mentioned emotional appeal. As a combination of diverse traditions and schools of thought, it provides a variety of options to the disciples. In the orthodox schools of Hindu philosophy including Nyaya, Sankhya, Mimansa, and even certain branches of Vedanta, different alternatives to a divine being are highlighted. Considering the polytheistic nature of the religion, people worship Devas (human-like divine beings) who are mortal and subject to Samsara (the world). More focus is provided on concepts like Karma and Moksha, which are also a part of Buddhism and Jainism, the faiths created under Hindu influences. Humanization of deities and afterlife theodicies hence make up the two most striking commonalities between the defenses provided by the major religions.

The complex nature of the Hindu trilogy of Brahma (generator), Vishnu (operator), and Mahesh (destroy) often justifies the ups and downs in the worldly order. However, it would be wrong to assume that Hinduism is completely free of such problems. Had this been the case, the Epicurean paradox might not have existed. Epicureanism gained popularity exactly when people worshipped the Greek Gods. We have sufficient information about the huge similarity between the nature of Hindu deities and the Greek Gods. (Roychowdhury 2017)

These gaps provide the atheists a platform to voice their opinions. As said by an Egyptian scholar, "People become atheists because holy books have obvious lies in them". Atheism is surely a broad category of people but in reference to the pandemic, many believe that since people couldn't visit the places of worships, they might have begun to view religious institutions as custodians of the wealth-the same amount of wealth that could be used to save lives in such tough times. More diplomatic views focus upon the dire need to keep faiths and beliefs limited to the private sphere, which is definitely possible as proved during the pandemic. As we might fail to differentiate between theism and religion, we also fail to distinguish between the various shades of "atheism"; What are they exactly challenging- theistic views, the religion, or the religious institutions? The answer differs in all cases but the question continues to create bafflement among the laymen.

When we talk about the Indian version of this confusion, the story remains incomplete without the name of Javed Akhtar. Much coincidentally, he received the Richard Dawkins prize during the pandemic itself, for encouraging the ideas of rationalism and secularism.

He has heavily criticized the way the government has prioritized the opening of shrines over the ameliorating health system of India. Back in 2017, he made a controversial tweet: "I had said if there is a God, he is rather embarrassing. Seems to be a terrible administrator." A personal opinion, but definitely hurtful to the religious people. With instances like these, terms like "theism" and "atheism" seem to go beyond the psyche of an average man. He would rather replace the terms with "religious" and "non-religious" for his convenience.

In conclusion, both the parties are confident of the claims they make regarding the near future of faith and theism. Christian scholars claim that countries that have endured the most hardships show the highest growth rate for Christianity. While some feel that the adversary has amplified our love towards God, others see it as another evidence of God's absence. Despite the claims, it would be wise to believe that such tragedies do not possess the supremacy to dismantle or rekindle one's faith in God. The people have already decided their inclinations and it is pretty natural for them to look at every situation through their chosen lens. Whatever the case, a general and independent feeling of pessimism among people cannot be denied. The world is still ravaged by a pandemic, and even though it appears to be ending, we are still uncertain as to how to vaccinate our minds against the feelings of mistrust and disbelief. 2021 brings forth the idea of a promising and covid-free world but it also comes with the duty of fastening the anchors of faith, love, and hope in the minds of people.

Workers disinfecting a mosque ahead of Friday prayers in Istanbul in 2020. Chris Mcgrath/Getty Images

WAS THERE EVER A CAVEWOMXN? MAPPING ART AND FILM IN CONTEMPORARY CAPITALISM

By Kunal Panda

A peculiarity that separates the core of art history as a profession between the 20th Century and the 16th Century is the presentation of female artists – There is virtually no mention. Gender roles in the current mode of production claim their naissance from the Victorian era. It is the Victorian insistence of separate spheres for womxn compatible with a bourgeois patriarchal ideology that has precipitated into the dismissal and devaluation of womxn artists in the 20th Century. This reduces the history of art as a subjective description, not an objective explanation.

As the French critic Leon Legrange summarizes:

"*Male genius has nothing to fear from female taste. Let men of genius conceive of great archi-tectural projects, monumental sculpture, and elevated forms of painting. In a word, let men busy themselves with all that has to do with great art. Let women occupy themselves with those types of art they have always preferred, such as pastels, portraits or mi-niatures...To women above all fal-ls the practice of graphic art, those painstaking arts which correspond so well to the role of abnegation and devotion which the honest wo-man happily fills here on earth, which is her religion.*" *('Du rang des femmes dans l'art', Gazette des Beaux-Arts, 1860)*

The essay does not wish to objectively outline remarkable epochs of artistic expression but examines critical nodes which instil a philosophical rupture in perspective and atte-mpts to identify oeuvres un-heard of. It wishes to unravel the biased history of conte-mporary art by reviewing the definition and fulfilment of femininity. Transcending a m-erely terse chronology of art movements, the scope of the essay also finds snapshots of crucial artistic identities that represent 'the female'.

To situate 'the female' and understand the artwork of female artists, one can look towards psychoanalysis and ge-nder theory that point to gender performativity. Gender as a performance and gender performativity differ in the premeditated action – the for-mer signifies that a subject performs predetermined roles, whereas the latter overturns this role and explains how a subject, say, consolidates the impression of 'being a man or a woman'. Judith Butler uses J.L. Austin's speech acts in her theories. Gender performativity is described as an illocutionary speech act that produces perlocutionary effects.

The intended perlocutionary effects also conform to societal norms. For Butler's synthesis, the subject does not produce the performance, the opposite is true. It deals with a structuralist notion of gender as a discursive practice.

In Butler's work on 'Gender Trouble', an accla-imed book for gender and queer theory, Joan Riviere's notion of 'Womanliness as a Masquerade' is revisited. Riviere's suggestion is that womxn who wish for masculinity may put on a mask of womanliness to avert anxiety and the ret-ribution feared from men. The nodal point for the masqu-erade stems from 'castration' and the development of ego from the mirror stage, which lets go of some narcissistic authority for the child. Castr-ation here could very well relate to the genital phase of Freudian infantile sexuality wi-th the development of sensory perception that helps the child differentiate between biological sex organs. It is this differe-ntiation, or through a rather patriarchal lens, the lack of a penis for the womxn that is pointed out as castration. Fre-ud goes on to argue about concepts such as 'penis envy' and the acclaimed Oedipal des-ire to 'kill' the maternal sym-bolic and yearn for the father. The mask serves as a correlate for the anxiety that stems from not fulfilling the expectations of being a female and leads to certain performativity to disgu-ise oneself so that the man finds no stolen property within 'the woman': "*She has confessed to me that even with the butcher and baker, whom she rules in reality with a rod of iron, she cannot openly take up a firm straightforward stand; she feels herself as it were 'acting a part', she puts on the semblance of a rather uneducated, foolish and bewildered woman, yet in the end always making her point.*" *(Riviere 307-308)*.

The Recalcitrant Surrealist Project

The Surrealist intellectual ci-rcle often treated the female as a muse, as an object for rep-resentation. It is in these circles where one finds the first ins-tance of gender performativity through the life and career of Meret Oppenheim.

A vivid reader of Jungian archetypes and dream analysis, Oppenheim was the perfect su-itor for the Surrealist circle, which claimed much of its arti-stic liberation to Sigmund Fre-ud and his seminal work on the interpretation of dreams. In many of her exhibitions, critics and patrons, assuming the Su-rrealist circle to be exclusively male, often referred to her as 'Mr. Oppenheim'. She often renounced the term 'feminine art' and substituted it with 'androgynous creation'.

As the Hungarian-American psychologist Mihaly Csik-szentmihalyi points out: "Psyc-hological androgyny is a much wider concept, referring to a person's ability to be at the same time aggressive and nur-turing, sensitive and rigid, do-minant and submissive, rega-rdless of gender.

A psychologically and-rogynous person in effect doubles his or her repertoire of responses and can interact with the world in terms of a much richer and varied spectrum of opportunities. It is not surprising that creative indiv-iduals are more likely to have not only the strengths of their own gender but those of the other one, too."

Her most widely acclaimed Surrealist project features a teacup and saucer covered with fur of a Chinese gazelle, titled 'Object'. With a charming wit and desire to unzip society of its psychological roots, she mixed fur, an object of feminine luxury and status with another object – a teacup.

The assemblage disfigures the signified of the teacup, saucer, and spoon, which is of a civilized character. A view of Object often leads to am-usement, irritation, and the uninvited sensation of wet fur. It also indulges the viewer into the frenzy of a soft and delicate touch. The ensemble is a fetis-hized commodity, but from the perspective of a female psyche already under the influence of a performative dynamism. The soft and hollow teacup can invoke female genitalia, further eroticized by the phallic reference of the spoon. By fetishizing the teacup, Op-enheim momentarily obscures its ideological frame of civil life and fills it with a dramatized anticipation of sexual grati-fication.

Split Allegiances in India's Decolonization

Simultaneous in temporal landmarks with the changing culture of Parisian intellectual parlours, the history of art in India presents a colonial experience. Even though Mu-ghal courts disseminated illus-trated miniatures, the easel was introduced around the 18th Century with a formidable pre-sence of the East India Company and later by the Bri-tish Crown. Affluent families of the time popularized col-onial art in the country via realist landscapes of the Ga-nges, Nabobs, and everyday life.

The most famous am-algamation of the western easel with pre-colonial and ancient Indian culture can be seen with Raja Ravi Verma. Given the time, he was an anachronism for the changing unconscious of the Indian countryside. His easily available lithographs de-picted scenes from Indian epics and created a feudal 'aura' of a dismissed Indian past during a period where colonization arguably reterritorialized an

Erotique voilée, Meret Oppenheim à la presse chez Louis Marcoussis , 1933 Man Ray, Fondazione Marconi, Milano

Meret Oppenheim, Object, 1936. Fur-covered cup, saucer, and spoon, Cup 4 3/8" (10.9 cm) in diameter; saucer 9 3/8" (23.7 cm) in diameter; spoon 8" (20.2 cm) long, overall height 2 7/8" (7.3 cm). Museum of Modern Art, New York.

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ancient superstructure with Victorian ideology.

Subjects of the colonial experience often present a split allegiance – the interpellation of alien signifiers and ideology, and domestic identity shaped by indigenous discursive structures. For female signifiers, said allegiance is the strongest. Ravi Verma presented a similar duality. The interplay of mannerist and often baroque characteristics to create a realist portrayal of ancient mythology was a scene of awe for landscape enthusiasts among the British legion of painters and the bourgeoisie. However, such 'outdated' premises and storylines set the stage for another school of artists in Bengal that not only reacted against Ravi Verma, but utilized religious signifiers to narrate a story for India's subsequent decolonization. It is here that the first instance of modernism in Indian art is witnessed.

The Bengal Renaissance may as well rival the Medici's patronage in Italy for it authored a dense sketch of Indian nationalism and regional integrity that still instils its character. The birth of Brahmoism with Raja Ram Mohan Roy is another instance of split allegiance – reformist and revivalist practices within the guise of traditional faith. Abanindranath Tagore's first rendition of 'Bharat Mata' re-signifies the performativity of the female body. Recognizing traditional patriarchal notions that map the female psyche with nourishment and motherhood, Bharat Mata revives, exploits, and magnifies this identity within a national context as the first 'emotional' push towards decolonization.

The anti-colonial feminist critique outlines a comparison of the hybridity of the colonial and the colonizer and finds a new niche of performativity in the context of modernity. Among the predominantly male persona of Santiniketan and the Bombay Progressive Artists, emerges the split psyche of Amrita Sher-Gil. Born and raised as a Hungarian – Indian among an affluent bourgeois family, Sher-Gil was instructed at the Academy des Beaux-Arts and admired Cezanne and Paul Gaugin. Perhaps Gaugin's fetishized Tahitian women proved to be a focal point for her paintings of Indian subjects. The perception of Sher-Gil often remains elusive and fairly foreign, having several British loyalists in her family. However, she remains conflicted between her national identity as quintessentially

A peculiarity that separates the core of art history as a profession between the 20th Century and the 16th Century is the presentation of femxle artists – There is virtually no mention. The history of art as a subjective description imbues biases that have traditionally conferred creative genius to masculine performance. This essay deals with the lens of gender performativity to locate femxle body politics in crucial artistic movements across modern capitalism. The lens of an exaggerated masquerade is witnessed in critical gaze theories in film and the culture industry, whereby crucial departures from traditional Foucauldian power relations are reinterpreted.

Indian and a deep persona of 'being a woman'. She entered a changing Indian art scene where her nationality was a battleground and her gender was a source of symbolism for the nationalist struggle. Amrita's quasi nationalist palette relates as well as separates her from the likes of the Bengal School and the Progressive Artists with a static albeit neorealist training of the easel that paid homage to Ajanta murals and the Mughal miniature which highlights metaphorical brevity in her work.

Sher-Gil's subjects and their representation exude an excess of libidinal arrogance and are very private in the setting. (left: Amrita Sher-Gil, Self Portrait as a Tahitian, 1934, Oil on Canvas) Her womxn often mirror the alienated allegory of Hammershoi and Edward Hopper but digress from being alone to play a collective masquerade of femininity. The almost cultic personality of Sher-Gil's subjects displays the Oriental aesthetic from the lens of a Eurasian body to constitute a feminization of contemporary Indian art. Through the protectionist seclusion of her subjects, she finds criticality that ends up being domesticated by masculinity. The external lack of seduction in these womxn is a response against the desire of a male colonial gaze. She challenges Ravi Verma as both artists attempt to find the Oriental gaze via material representation and devising an indigenous body. Her convoluted narcissism stuck at a crossroads of defining Indian modernity led her to disengage desire from a confessional self and disperse a romanticized class (gender and ethnic) struggle from the material reproduction of myth.

AMERICAN EXPRESSIONISM AND CULTURAL NATURALIZATION

A successor of European Surrealism and the protégé of Kandinsky's palette, Abstract Expressionism after the Second World War established a stronghold of a new aesthetic bourgeoisie in New York City and led to a rather conservative perception of the Parisian avant-garde. The conclusion of Kandinsky's career with the foundation of abstract art coincided with the War, but chiefly mirrored historical developments that the newly Industrialized Europe witnessed over the years. By the end of the 19th century, many artists felt a need to create a new kind of art which would encompass the fundamental changes taking place in technology, science and philosophy. The

Amrita Sher Gil, Self–Portrait as a Tahitian, 1934,
Oil on Canvas, Kiran Nadar Museum of Art

sources from which individual artists drew their theoretical arguments were diverse and reflected the social and intellectual preoccupations in all areas of Western culture at that time.

Abstract Expressionism rose to the zenith of non-representation and was materially transcendent. Often nihilist and overtly emotional, the United States as the centre for the movement could not be more obvious as the nation established the foundation of a subsequent cultural and economic hegemony after 1945 and created the personality of the 'big American (capitalist) dream'. The lack of any material representation in Abstract Expressionism mirrors social alienation that the working-class experiences. It is a close candidate for Ernst Fischer's stipulation of what art does – make the individual ('I') a whole with historical development: *"In the alienated world in which we live, social reality must be presented in an arresting way, in a new light, through the alienation of the subject and its character. The work of art must grip the audience not through passive identification but through an appeal to reason which demands action and decision."* (Fischer, The Necessity of Art)

Dismayed by the decline of the avant-garde in Paris in the 1940s, and with faith in the revolutionary potential of the working class shaken, the leftist critical sentiment was in the U.S. shifted to a post-dialectical materialism that sees radical agency emerging not from "the working class" but rather out of the creative potential of the individual. The most combatant debate on the meaning of avant-garde in New York was between Harold Rosenberg and Clement Greenberg. Both art critics have the same socialist roots but are diametrically opposed in their assumptions and conclusions about American Art.

Ernst Fischer expounds on art's emancipatory expression yet calibrated strategy of filling in the gap of alienation via abstraction. He also explains how the work of an artist is "a highly conscious, rational process by which the work of art emerges as a mastered reality – not at all an intoxicated inspiration." It is in this duality of artistic expression where Greenberg and Rosenberg speculate and situate themselves.

Greenberg is on the rational spectrum of artwork, an Apollonian formalist, i.e., to judge art by its content, form, and colour. His theory of art claims to have a logical, historical, and progressive development, that autonomy and self justification make the modern.

His progressive theory stems from German philosophy – Kant, Hegel, and Marx. Rosenberg's position is of an exaggerated Dionysian existentialist. Inspired by the phenomenological discoveries of Camus, Sartre, and Nietzsche, he explains art on the canvas as a process of self-discovery. His writings feature psychological states more than the objective and formal properties of artworks. Rosenberg describes art in post-war America as not just any derivative of Parisian schools, but a clean rupture in worldview and the notions attached with the abstraction of aesthetics. While defining an 'Action Painting', he opines, "The act-painting is of the same metaphysical substance as the artist's existence. The new painting has broken down every distinction between art and life."

Here, the motive of painting changes from the mere representation of objects, or a blueprint of anticipation. Action Paintings for Rosenberg deviate from satisfying the urge of the onlooker and create a world for artists to discover themselves: *"Criticism must begin by recognizing in the painting the assumptions inherent in its mode of creation. Since the painter has become an actor, the spectator has to think in a vocabulary of action: its inception, duration, direction—psychic state, concentration and relaxation of the will, passivity, alert waiting. He must become a connoisseur of the gradations between the automatic, the spontaneous, and the evoked."*

In two deceptively aggressive essays, Rosenberg takes a subjectivist position in 'Action Painting, Crisis, and Distortion' while Greenberg makes ad hominem attacks on exuberant and borrowed existentialism in 'How Writing Earns its Bad Name'. These attacks come from a purifying perspective of art's formal qualities – that a work of art must have an internal set of resources to prove its logic and argument. This modern continuum of artworks presents a problem for the public as "modern art", institutionalized in the art world and promoted solely in terms of its "aesthetic quality" by the bureaucrats of taste, has lost its relevance and fails to reflect contemporary experience. It has become just another commodity. Here, we turn once again towards Benjamin's lost 'aura' and critique its existence through Theodor Adorno and his work on 'The Fetish Character in Music and the Regression of Listening'. He sees dissipation and the decay of 'aura' as a positive effect, either trans-historical or historically specific by attributing

technical reproducibility to an exorcism of a work of art from its parasitic subservience to ritual.

Horkheimer and Adorno's introduction of 'The Culture Industry' throws new light on the psychological egotism of art and popular culture by labelling it as an instrument of economic and political control, enforcing conformity behind a permissive screen. Adorno points first and foremost towards popular music and its role of turning the consumer into a passive listener, to listen without hearing. Culture becomes a mere appendage and exponent of society's socio-economic predicament rather than assuming the responsibility of being a catalyst for change. It abstracts, codifies, and disseminates ruling ideologies and is fostered by a legion of passive consumers. Cultural "goods," and satisfiers by their very administration, are "transformed into evils" and pseudo-satisfiers. The musical consciousness of the masses today is "displeasure in pleasure" — the unconscious recognition of "false happiness." If film and photography is the evidence of not just repressing but killing the cultic personality of an artwork, the Culture Industry is evidence of the return of the repressed through the cultic impression of celebrities via sound films.

The Fetish Character of Guilt in Film Theory

The Masquerade of Femininity carries the corpse of society's skewed sexuality with the onset of female sex symbols in American popular culture in the 1950s. The sexual objectification of women and the rise of pin-up marketing creates and conjoins commodities that lead to a callback of genitalia and the visual pleasure of sexual intercourse, leading to their popularity and the inclination to buy and consume such commodities. The greatest of such symbols is the creation of Marilyn Monroe. Her movies and stories instilled the ideas of the 'dumb blonde' stereotype and have subsumed the roles of women as being intellectually inferior, submissive, and under the subservience of a man with another fallaciously universal Jungian archetype of a hero. Marilyn Monroe's acceptance of this stereotype in her public life broke her private life in shards but led to her meteoric rise to fame but only as a pretty poster girl typecast as a thrifty bombshell in films.

Featured here in the iconic 'flying skirt' sensation in New York City, 1954 Within the perception of sex symbols -

such as Monroe and countless other characters that impugn or describe reality in film, a general theory of apparatus and the gaze – and their interrelation provides a compendium of stories that motion pictures outline for the viewer. Another conception of film theory is for the viewer to perceive the film screen as a mirror. The reality in films – its distortion or lack thereof - is theorized to be internalized or eulogized by the viewer as they metamorphose into the film character. The gaze is a widely acclaimed concept that explains the anxiety associated with the actions of an individual as the subject of the Other. Foucault in Discipline and Punish explains this gaze as originally laid by Bentham, referred to as his architectural plan of the Panopticon:

"The dissociation of the see/being seen dyad [which the panoptic arrangement of the central tower and annular arrangement ensures] and the sense of permanent visibility seem perfectly to describe the condition not only of the inmate in Bentham's prison but of the woman as well. For defined in terms of her visibility, she carries her own Panopticon with her wherever she goes, her self-image a function of her being for another. . . . The subjectivity assigned to femininity within patriarchal systems is inevitably bound up with the structure of the look and the localization of the eye as authority."

For the very condition and substance of the subject's subjectivity is his or her subjectivation by the law of the society that produces that subject. Thus, the female subject under the panoptic gaze performs discrete subjectivities and lays ground to her anxiety as implantation of the law. She internally monitors herself under a patriarchal eye. The localization of the gaze has been a mainstay in film theory but lacks in explaining another facet of its production by virtue of which the viewers reconstitute themselves. The gaze in film theory, as Joan Copjec argues, is a "Foucauldization of Lacan." The argument can be elaborated through what Lacan terms the big Other – Knowledge that knows itself completely, the totality of

knowledge that remains distant from us. The Darwinian maturity that constitutes discourse puts human intelligence at a pedestal. Conscious labour kept aside, Lacan argues that humans are born rather prematurely, they have a constitutional lack. Subjectivity is hence, defined as ontological unconsciousness, a gap between the premature subject and the world. The original Hegelian dialectic that speaks of an idealized spiral of synthesis distances the Pure Concept from its material reaction that arises as human thought. A similar argument is opined by Bachelard's 'phenomeno - technique' which provides the establishment of science as purely structural and explains the gap between theory and the absolute concept across epochs. The lack of not knowing the absolute truth generates a desire commensurate with anxiety and doubt. The problem with mainstream film theory's conception of 'the screen as a mirror' is that it does not really leave room for criticism – we are what we see/sense. By turning the assumption around, 'the mirror as a screen', Copjec constitutes a Lacanian foundation of what is not said/described. The predicament of a character in film unable to express themselves in its entirety makes them culpable and is the right place to criticize film's indeterminate nature of an intersection of discourse into the viewer which is never monolithic.

Art and Culture need more than an objective description. Through the psychoanalytical façade of ideology and consciousness, this essay leaves out further gaps to criticize as it rightly should. The presence of nonknowledge presents a battleground to devise short-circuits in discourse and everyday life. Everyday life needs argumentative demystification to elevate the banal into what it could be – a rupture in thought, traditional concept and form. Criticism and the constitution of sexual cathexis lie in asking the question, "What is it that you are not telling me?"

Amrita Sher-Gil, Bride's Toilet, 1937, Oil on Canvas, 146 cm x 88.8 cm, National Gallery of Modern Art

Wassily Kandinsky, Composition, VII, 1913, Oil on canvas

Marilyn Monroe, born Norma Jean Mortenson (1926–1962) Featured here in the iconic 'flying skirt' sensation in New York City, 1954

By Preet Sharma

DIVERGENT DESTINIES OF TWO NATIONS:
ANALYSING DEMOCRACY IN INDIA & PAKISTAN

When the State itself turns its back on a certain group or community, and defines and demarcates its enemies, nothing but State-sponsored violence can ensue.

On the intervening midnight of August 14 and August 15,1947, the newly created nations of Pakistan and India became independent of almost 200 years of colonial rule. Both nations at their onset were ravaged by a violent and genocidal partition, and were busy dealing with the resultant refugee crises. Both countries faced the twin challenges of eradicating poverty and at the same time developing their respective societies. However, both countries took divergent paths in terms of their democratic trajectories.

The constitution-making process in Pakistan was continuously delayed while there was a bureaucratic domination there from 1953 to 1954. Pakistan's tryst with democracy bolstered in 1958 with a military coup. On the other hand, India was quick in ratifying the world's largest constitution. It also conducted elections in 1952 based on Universal Adult Franchise and had an elected Chief Executive for making Indian administrative organizations functional.

DEFINING DEMOCRACY
Despite huge diversity and mass poverty, India's ability to remain its democratic character throughout these years is commendable. Pakistan, on the other hand, has not been successful in its democratic experiment and has struggled to maintain democracy throughout these years. India and Pakistan achieved independence together, but while one has been a successful procedural democracy, the other has relatively struggled to maintain its democratic character. A thorough investigation can help us decode this mystery further. We must take into account that in this analysis 'Democracy' has been defined in a strictly procedural sense. As Joseph Schumpeter remarked:

"That institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote (is democracy)."

Going by this procedural sense India has been a democracy throughout and Pakistan has been an unstable democratic regime since its inception.

ANALYZING THE REGIME TRAJECTORIES

The major structural features in India and Pakistan are largely similar, but a marked difference is seen in the regime trajectories of both nations. The difference manifests itself in two most important indicators: one, about the kind of social classes that were leading their social movements; and two, the strength of the respective dominant parties upon independence.

A colonially entrenched, landed aristocracy dominated Pakistan's nationalist movement. It was highly unlikely that this privileged class would try to establish a system of government that would employ redistribution of material resources and political capital to other social groups, and would tolerate the erosion of its privileges for the benefit of the masses.

On the other hand, the Indian Nationalist Movement was dominated by the educated, urban middle-classes, who demanded political power and upward mobility in social hierarchy and employment. They advocated a democratic government based on the principle of Universal Adult Franchise.

In order to analyze the strength of dominant party in Pakistan at independence, and its role in formation of differential regime trajectories, we have to base our discussion on three factors:

1. Programmatic Ideology

Two ideologies could have dominated the Nationalist Movement: either 'programmatic' or 'vague'. There was a constant absence of programmatic vision in Pakistani nationalism; it was mainly defined only in opposition to Congress rule and only concentrated on opposing the Congress. Thus, there were no clear principles or practices in which Pakistan's leading political party could base itself in the post-independence period. It was unable to reconcile policy conflicts that took place in post-1947 Pakistan.

On the other hand, Indian nationalism was not limited by its anti-colonial struggle; it was based on a strong foundation of economic and social principles not only in theory but also in practice. This practice of programmatic nationalism helped India to reconcile its political conflicts in the post-independence era.

2. Coherent Distributive Alliances

The distributive alliances could be coherent and functional only if their distributive interests were relatively aligned. Pakistan's national movement was based on the support of landed aristocracy and peasantry. Since their interests were diagrammatically opposed, the distributive alliances collapsed in the face of post-independence power-sharing arrangements.

On the other hand, the Indian nationalist movement was based on the support of the urban and rural middle-classes. Their common interest lay in the redistribution of resources to the marginalized sections. They encouraged downward distribution of power to subordinate socio-economic groups. The presence of coherent distributive interests led to a stable democratic regime.

3. Robust Intra-Party Organization

The robustness of intraparty organization in a country is determined by the state of its development. While Pakistan's political party was largely based on the charisma of its leaders and was minimally developed, the Indian National Congress was already well placed and had a well-developed centralized party organization. The INC was easily able to broker compromises for the development of unified political programs.

THE TRYST WITH DEMOCRACY

There is also a common misconception that India and Pakistan inherited the same colonial legacy and were treated alike by the British Raj before independence. This misconception ignores the reality that India had some experience with democracy before because the British started devolving power in the early twentieth century to some local governments in regions that became part of the Indian nation on independence.

On the other hand, the two major zones that made- up Pakistan, Punjab and Northwest Frontier Province, were highly militarized and almost half of the British army came from these two regions. Thus, the democratic devolution of power was never exercised in these regions by the colonial government as it could be a threat to British supremacy. This also laid the ground for military and bureaucratic elements in Pakistan. Also, Pakistani leadership's inability to recognize the majority group politics in Bangladesh led to the secession of East Pakistan and the formation of Bangladesh in 1971. Lack of ability to manage diversity in Pakistan's leadership and the country's inability to accommodate demands of predominantly Bengali people of East Pakistan was responsible for its fragmentation. There have been constant interruptions in the

proper functioning of democracy in Pakistan. The Pakistani constitution came into force on 23rd March, 1956 (Republic Day of Pakistan). It was prepared by Pakistan's constituent assembly and was enforced under Pakistan's Prime Minister Chaudhry Muhammad Ali. However, within two years General Ayub Khan took power into his own hands in the military coup of 1958. He was in power till 1969, when General Yahya Khan took over. Finally, in 1971 , Zulfikar Ali Bhutto became the president and made efforts to re-established democracy in Pakistan.

In India, Indira Gandhi imposed an emergency in 1975 which was a massive setback for Indian democracy. The emergency was recalled in 1977 and Indira Gandhi called for fresh elections. The emergency was the darkest period of Indian democracy. In Pakistan at the same time in 1977, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto guided the establishment of a new constitution with more powers to the provinces. Then in 1977, Indira Gandhi called for free and fair fresh elections to the parliament and in the same year, Pakistan fell under the dictatorship of General Zia- ul-Haq. General Pervez Musharraf imposed an emergency in 1999 in Pakistan and arrested major politicians. His dictatorship lasted till 2008. In 2008 democracy was restored in Pakistan and then from 2008 to 2013, for the first time in the history of Pakistan, a democratically elected civilian government completed its five-year term without interruption.

THE EVALUATION OF SUCCESS AND FAILURE

The weakness of Pakistan's democracy can also be attributed to other factors. First, the constituent assembly of Pakistan delayed its constitution-making process. Pakistan's constituent assembly was unrepresentative of large sections of society, showcasing a lack of democratic process. Second, the weakening of the Muslim League as a party after the death of Muhammad Ali Jinnah also holds significance. Third, military intervention in Pakistan's politics further weakened the political system. Fourth, the Pakistani democratic system in many ways encourages dynastic politics which is markedly visible. The politics in Pakistan still centers around the Sharif family and the Bhutto family, with Pakistan People's Party being headed by Bilawal Bhutto, Benazir Bhutto's son, and also the Pakistan Muslim League being headed by Nawaz Sharif. As he is ill, the party is currently lead by his daughter Maryam. Lastly, Pakistan's economy is already in shambles where the Imran Khan government has

been forced to take steps like selling Nawaz Sharif's buffaloes to refill the government's coffers in Pakistan or selling off of luxury cars, and cutting off of air-conditioners in government offices to reduce expenditure.

We also need to look at factors that have led to democratic success in India. Firstly, India since its inception has been strengthened by strong institutions that were created by its forefathers based on the grounding of a timely and robust constitution. The political culture of India since its inception has been participatory. Secondly, the presence of timely democratic elections at regular intervals has also led to reconciliation and amalgamation of diverse social, cultural, economic, and political interests within the fold of nationalist development. Thirdly, India since its inception has been a fairly secular and democratic state, whereas Pakistan is a theocratic, Islamic state. Secularism in India has played a huge role in deepening democracy. Fourthly, the charismatic personality of secular leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru also strengthened the secular roots of India and provided a firm grounding to the functioning of democratic institutions in India. Lastly, the economic development of India has helped strengthen the democratic ethos in the people of India. India at present is the world's fifth-largest economy and economic development plays a massive role in the validation of democracy in countries.

The Way Forward

Pakistan is once again on the brink of a major protest where all opposition parties have united against Imran Khan government asking for his resignation and blaming him for all adversities that have befallen Pakistan: from the floundering of Pakistani economy to massive inflation. Pakistan is heading towards volatile months with continuous protests and rallies plaguing its polity amidst the coronavirus pandemic.

India must emphasize on moving towards a form of deliberative democracy, where it will work towards broadening its democratic character and not diluting it with majoritarian aspirations. India needs to realize the importance of democracy that has been functional here since 1947, and must continue to value the higher moral ideals of liberty, fraternity, equality, and secularism that the founding fathers envisaged for it. Healthy democracies essentially require the presence of healthy economies which can only blossom in a safe, healthy, and friendly environment which is ultimately a result of tolerance and the feeling of unity among people. India must emphasize on preserving its unity in diversity while Pakistan must work towards strengthening a strong procedural democracy, and for this, it must concentrate on creating a sound economy. The "destinies" of both nations depend on the course their democracies take in near future.

DEAD WHITE MEN & UNIVERSITY CURRICULUM

Analysing the relevance and contribution of Dead–White Men in University Curricula.

BY PREET SHARMA

The Black Lives Matter movement that recently shook the institutionalized and systematic racism in the United States of America and the larger world also saw the statues of various leaders and famous personalities being toppled around the world, who were classified as racist and imperialist. Cecil Rhodes was among one of them. The students of Oxford University and people around the world demanded the removal of the statue of Cecil Rhodes from the Oriel College, Oxford University. The campaign " RHODES MUST FALL" began at the University of Cape Town in South Africa in 2015, which again got reignited in the events following massive protests against racism due to the death of George Floyd in the United States in May last year.

CECIL JOHN
RHODES
853 – 1902

I DREAM MY DREAM
BY ROCK AND HEATH AND PINE
OF EMPIRE TO THE NORTHWARD
AY ONE LAND

ORIAM
1918
1945

The governors of Oxford University voted to remove the statue of Cecil Rhodes in June but it did not amount to immediate removal, the final decision still awaiting judgment in spring this year. The Vice-Chancellor of the Oxford University Louise Richardson had a different view. She said that denying or hiding history can be no route to enlightenment. She emphasized that history must be studied in the context in which it was made and we need to focus on why people believed what they believed. The claim that Cecil Rhodes was a racist would fetch nothing but an analysis of why he thought so will lead us to better under-stand the causes of racism which will then help us to solve the problem more systematically.

Why Read the Dead-White Men?

The dilemma of removing statues of people with a racist belief in the university campus can be related to larger accusations that are often labeled against universities for not having an inclusive curriculum and for only teaching about the dead-white men. There are often demands for remo-ving the teachings of these dead white men from the curriculum and to include the perspectives of the so-called third world, margin-alized sections, the subal-terns, and women. The inclusivity of other persp-ectives in the study of classical political philoso-phy, literature, history, and politics is most welcome but the emphasis on the removal of the "dead-white man" per-spective from the curr-iculum is neither justified nor desirable.

This leads us to delve deeper into the question of why studying about them is important? The answer can be based on moral and prudential arguments.

First, reading about the dead-white men is crucial as reading authors, political theorists, hist-orians, and philosophers of all races and gender increase our chances of actualizing our human potential.

Second, reading as an activity has been enabled by the use of language which essentially forms the backbone of the civilization. What we choose to read or not to read subconsciously has a result on our values and ultimately on what we become. Therefore on a moral level, no one should be deprived of the progr-essive character of some of the writings of white men.

Third, the readings of dead-white men are essential because the theo-ries or works that they have written, contain uni-versal applications and are not limited to the color of their skin. The joy of poetry and of reading clas-sics of Shakespeare and Plato has not been enjoyed by Europeans or white people alone, but have contributed significantly in providing joy of rea-ding, delving so deep into it as to be transported in the imaginary world and broadening the under-standing of people all acr-oss the world. Fourth, reading about the dead white men is essential for criticizing them and their work. The rule is to know how to un-learn and criticize. When we claim that the study of dead white men must not be taught in universities, we somehow impose the same stereotypical straitj-acket of trying to monop-olize knowledge and restr-ict it which leads to the same exclusionary educa-tion that we seek to abolish in the very first place. Lastly, we commit the grave error of looking at an individual in a one-dimensional way. Rem-oving the study and work of predominantly white men solely on ac-count of their race or color will lead to a reduction of their life to the color of their skin. An individual is a lot more than his or her race, gender, religion, and caste. Individuals are multi-dimensional crea-tures and as Amartya Sen points out their identity cannot be defined in a unidimen-sional way. Th-us, the study of the 'dead-white man' is essential to und-erstanding humanity in its entirety.

The Influence of De-ad-White Men in Philosophy and Po-litics

We can understand the importance and univer-sality of the teachings of the dead white men by focusing on some thinkers. The teachings of the dead white men are not limited to their white students but are illuminating the cla-ssrooms, minds, and lives of people across the world from the United States to India. Plato (429 –347 B.C.E.), the great Ath-enian philosopher has made us realize the im-portance of having a vision. His idealism, thou-gh often labeled as utop-ian, is indeed inspiring. Plato exhorts us to think that the ideal is achievable. He forces us to redefine utopia not as something that is not achievable but as something that can be realized by using the force of determination and radical restructuring of the society. Idealism sustains the world; human civiliz-ation has never progressed from what it is but has become what it is using the application of reason to understand what ought to be and then achieving that. The platonic ladder of love is refreshingly and beauti-fully elucidated as it begins from bodily love and tran-sforms itself into the pla-tonic form of beauty itself where love becomes an "everlasting loveliness wh-ich neither comes nor ages, which neither flowers nor fades."

Now let us look at Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E.), known as the father of Political Science. He auth-oritatively asserts that man is a political animal. In my opinion, this statement is a landmark assertion that has opened up the once reserved field of politics dominated by the elites to people from all sections of society. For Aristotle, the universal notion of equality that prevailed in ancient Greece did not suffice and he argued for proportional equality. From him, we can learn that equality is not about treating everyone in the same fashion, rather it

is about treating the equals equally and about providing a pedestal to the unequal to become equal. Proportional equality thus becomes the rationale behind the progressive policies of affirmative action in modern society. Aristotle's belief in the principle of the golden mean can also have a greater application in our lives. His concept of "golden mean" posits that virtue lies between both extremes. This is an important principle that makes life easier and soothing.

Machiavelli, who is believed to liberate politics from religion, is another figure who has often been despised and cited frequently to defend the European imperialist project. Machiavelli (1469-1527) was a Florentine diplomat who wanted to unite Italy. His most famous work "The Prince" is a monumental book on statecraft. He can be rightly credited as being the beginner of empirical political science who rescued it from pure normativity. Machiavelli has taught the world a sort of secularism where the church should not be allowed to intervene in the activities of the state. He also emphasizes that a future prince should not only be as powerful as a lion but also be as cunning as a fox. This advice can be of special help in the modern world of multinational corporations where the application of mind is more important than brute military force. Thus, the thought and philosophies of these dead-white men were not limited to their specific race or time but these teachings are very much relevant and form a part of our lives in the modern world.

CONCLUSION

Coming back to where we began, Cecil Rhodes was an imperialist. He did think of English as the superior people - 'the master race'. He was also the person who donated generously to universities spreading liberal education. Rhodes Scholarship was created with his will which empowers students from

around the world to come and learn at the prestigious Oxford University every year. In the year 2020, out of 32 students that have been selected for Rhodes scholarship in America, 22 are from people of color out of which 10 are Blacks. My insistence in this article is not to continue with the Eurocentric curriculum nor do I not stand for the overwhelming dominance of white men in the university curriculum. Instead what I stand for and believe that we all should stand up for, is having a deeply holistic, well-researched curriculum in universities across the world. The inclusion of women's voices, black voices, LGBTQ voices, anti-colonial and immigrant voices, non-Christian voices is the golden thread that needs to be woven into the dominant discourse of subjects like philosophy and literature. The emphasis needs to be on inculcating a hybrid and vibrant culture, delving deeper into the unknown to uncover the truth, and reimagining it from a fresh perspective. We must not deny the contribution of dead white men in developing these subjects but must emphasize including the work of the marginalized sections of society. Their voices need to be integrated into the system like that of Frantz Fanon, a psychiatrist and political theorist born in the Caribbean island, who had what W.E.B Du Bois calls double consciousness of living, the experience of living in both worlds which the dead white men lacked. The cosmopolitan world we live in needs the fragrance of inclusion of voices from around. We should aim at the inclusion of new voices and not the exclusion of the existing literature. Political Philosophy, history, and literature are ready to accept the representation of minority and revolutionary views. The true joy of reading and learning lies indifference and variety, in trying to understand the larger concerns of being and creation itself through engaging in a dialogue across civilizations.

The Cecil John Rhodes statue was removed at the University of Cape Town on April 9, 2015 in South Africa.

Campaigners want a statue of the British imperialist Cecil Rhodes in Oxford to be removed. Photograph: Martin Godwin/The Guardian

The MAHATMA
versus
CHRISTIAN
MISSIONARIES

By Sahil Bansal & Anirban Chanda

Gandhi very well understood that people belonging to different religions do not generally encounter one another in purely religious arenas. Rather, it is in the everyday social milieu that they cross paths. Therefore, did Gandhi try to understand religious plurality in a crisscross of overlapping human experiences. Gandhi, being a Hindu, started engaging with Christianity because it mattered to his friends in London. "The business acumen and honesty of the Muslim merchants brought them close to one who immediately recognized their "bania"(the Indian regional variant for trader/merchant) virtues."

Gandhi's engagement with Christianity can be unraveled based on his general attitudes towards religious pluralism, but it also deserves a distinct dissection of its own owing to its distinctive nature. Christianity, unlike the other religions, jostled with Gandhi in a power hierarchy of colonialism. It unquestionably tainted the relationship of Gandhi with the British, throughout his life. Although there was a presence of Christians in India long before British arrived, a quick rise in the number of Christian missionaries in India happened only with the entry of British. Christianity thus came to be concomitant with its 'colonial genesis '. Christianity was Gandhi's tool to reprimand the colonial master. He himself admitted that he had learnt a lot from Christianity. The Christians who knew Gandhi in fact felt that Gandhi would make a much better Christian than they were.

In this essay, we aim to reveal Gandhi's engagement with the religion of Christianity. In such a revelation we will begin by analyzing Gandhi's take on, perception of, and use of Jesus Christ in his political life as a promoter of non-violent methods of resistance. In addition to this, we shall portray Gandhi's views on conversions carried out by Christian missionaries against the backdrop of his belief that one does not need to convert in order to respect and learn from other religions.

Jesus: the Son of God?

For Gandhi, Christianity was not so much about worshipping Christ as it was about becoming Christ. Though he never revered Jesus as 'Son of God', he also did not let go of Christ all through his life. He rather chose to understand and grasp the ideals by which Jesus lived his life as a person. This was a reaffirmation of Gandhi's 'my life is my message' approach which he also adopted towards Christianity. He thus wrote:

"Faith does not admit of telling. It has to be lived and then it becomes self-propagating. Nor do I consider myself fit to interpret Hinduism except through my own life. And if I may not interpret Hinduism through my written word, I may not compare it with Christianity." Gandhi turned to religion in order to justify the righteousness and just nature of freedom movements. In Young India of 4th August, 1920, Gandhi wrote:
"*I venture to submit that the Bhagavad Gita is a gospel of non-cooperation between forces of darkness and those of light...To say of the Bible that it taboos non-cooperation is not to know Jesus, a prince among passive resisters, who uncompromisingly challenged the might of the Sadducees and the Pharisees and for the sake of truth did not hesitate to divide sons from their parents.*"

Gandhi was always skeptical of popular religious beliefs and ever-ready to break the scriptural interpr-etations when they were used to justify violence and oppression. But being a man of quick wit, he turned to the same scriptures in order to cha-llenge the acts of the oppressor. Bh-agavad Gita was one of the texts that lay at the heart of Gandhi's differen-ces with those Indian revolutionaries who felt that resorting to violence was the correct way to go ahead. Bhagavad Gita is an account of Lord Krishna explaining to Arjun the justification for him to fight the battle of Kur-ukshetra. The likes of V.D. Savarkar chose to interpret Bhagavad Gita as a call for violence. But Gandhi used the text itself to give the following interpretation: "*... the Gita, ... under the guise of physical warfare, it described the duel that perpetually went on in the hearts of mankind, ... The author of the Mah-abharata ... has made the victors shed tears of sorrow and repentance, and has left them nothing but a legacy of miseries.*"

In the same way, he used the Christian texts at various instances to condemn the acts of violence and excesses committed by the western civilizations. The colonial masters had tried to justify these using Christian religious scriptural interpretations. In his letter dated 29th of November, 147 to Madam Edmond Privat, whom he also called Bhakti, Gandhi wrote:
"*Europe mistook the bold and brave resistance full of wisdom by Jesus of Nazareth for passive resistance, as if it was of the weak. As I read the New Testament for the first time I detected no passivity, no weakness about Jesus as depicted in the four gospels ... Has not the West paid heavily in regarding Jesus as a passive resister? Christendom has been responsible for the wars which put to shame even those described in the Old Testament and other records, historical or semi-historical.*"

Gandhi used his knowledge of Christian ideals from the scriptures and the life of Jesus Christ to also offer advice to Jews under the rule of Hitler. To one of his advice of non-violence, a newspaper under Anglo-Indian management retorted by saying that Gandhi has failed to understand the message of the scripture as portrayed through Christ's life. They essentially said that it was because Christ opted for non-violence that he faced the hardships and bad times in life. They also concluded that Jesus had to die because he was upholding his idea of passive resistance. To this Gandhi replied as follows:
"*Though I cannot claim to be a Christian in the sectarian sense the example of Jesus's suffering is a factor in the composition of my undying faith in non- violence which rules all my actions worldly and temporal. And I know there are hundreds of Christians who believe likewise. Jesus lived and died in vain if he did not teach us to regulate the whole of life by the eternal Law of Love.*"
Gandhi's proclivity to hold Jesus in high regard as a person and to imbibe from his way of life was a stern and lifelong journey, which even after his demise made repeated appearances in the way Gandhi is perceived by people all around the world. John Haynes Holmes, a prominent unitarian minister in New York said in 1921, "When I think of Mahatma Gandhi, I think of Jesus Christ"

Conversion or Commercialised Trade?
Gandhi, in his understanding of religious assistance in transcendence from light to dark, was hinting at a shift from tamasik to the sattvik i.e. a shift from darkness of aloofness to the light of moksha. He believed that a prayer was not asking its devotee to give up

his swadharma and find refuge in a foreign dharma. Whereas, 'conversion', was the only connotation when the Christian missionaries promised a person, a shift towards light.

Gandhi welcomed the ideals of Christianity while ordaining his Hindu identity and expected the same from Christians. He wanted the Christians to help Hindus be 'better Hindus' and vice-versa. He was not the one to advocate conversion. He rather found the idea of having to change one's way of being, like one's name, attire, dietary habits and such, in order to adopt the ideals of Christianity, ridiculous. Gandhi as a kid, saw such missionaries standing at street corners speaking ill about Hinduism and trying to lure people to convert to Christianity.

Mirabehn, having renounced her previous ways of life, chose to adopt a lifestyle based on Hindu ideals, and wanted to convert to Hinduism. But Gandhi staunchly opposed her decision to abandon her religion. [15] He wanted her to assimilate Hindu way of life into the folds of Christianity because he believed that there was a commonality of good in both Hinduism and Christianity. The need was to find it without abandoning one religion for the other. He wrote in Harijan of 25-1-1935:

"I am no keeper of anybody's conscience, but I do feel that it argues some sort of weakness on the part of a person who easily declares his or her failure to derive comfort from the faith in which he or she is born."

Gandhi ascribes the act of conversion being carried out by the Christian missionaries, to a colonial intent of destroying the cultural diversity of India. A question that Gandhi posed on the ideals of the missionaries who engaged in conversion in the name of Christianity was 'why should not the service be its own reward?'. He believed that the aspiration and motivation of Christian missionaries behind the spreading the message of Christ was inspired by financial gains and insincere motives. He suspected that every time a Christian missionary rendered his medical or spiritual services to Indians, he did so with a hope that the recipient of such service would convert and accept Christ (Harijan, 17-4-1937).

Gandhi believed that a tokenistic change of religion for material gain, through fear, starvation, etc., is not conversion, rather it is the selling of religion. Gandhi not only argued against the conversion and compartmentalization of religion, but he also was of the strong opinion that one could sincerely respect the tenets of another religion without forsaking their own religious identity. Joseph Doke writes about an instance when Gandhi was engaged in a simultaneous reading of Bhagavad Gita and revelations of Christ. After reading Sermon on the Mount, Gandhi exclaimed that both the texts (Bhagavad Gita and Sermon on the Mount) must have come from the same source.

Gandhi strongly advocated against the attempts of forced conversion of Christians. With respect to an incident of persecution of Christians in Gurgaon of 1947 he said that "these Christian brothers and sisters would be left to follow their own faith and avocation without let or hindrance. Surely, they were not less entitled to their freedom than they were under the British regime, now that there was freedom from political bondage. That freedom could never be confined to the Hindus only in the Union and the Muslims only in Pakistan."

Concluding Remarks

Gandhi's critique of the spree of conversion launched by the Christian missionaries, is very resounding of the spiritual bankruptcy of the white man that scholars of his time spoke about. Gandhi was being challenged by the white missionaries and colonial government of having wrongly understood the lesson of Christ to be that of non-violence. They argued that a white man with his civilised way of being knows better than to resort to non-violence. This argument and the whole concept of Orientalism does not stand when one reads the following lines from the work of Reinhold Niebuhr:

"It is no accident of history that the spirit of non-violence has been introduced into contemporary politics by a religious leader of the orient. The occident may be incapable of this kind of nonviolent social conflict, because the white man is a fiercer beast of prey than the oriental ... his religious inheritance has been dissipated by the mechanical character of his civilisation."

The need is for India to realise the spiritual treasure that Gandhi realised in himself and the scholars realised in the existence of the whole of India. It becomes crucial to understand and appreciate the importance of Gandhian thought on religions other than Hinduism, especially today. With the politico-religious environment of India being a rather volatile one, what one needs is a reminder of the foundation of mutual-respect on which our country was built.
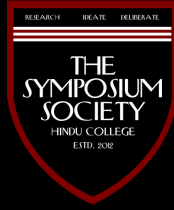
When Hindu fanatics in India are threatening to assault Hindus for visiting Churches, need is read the following words by Father of the Nation: *"For Hindus to expect Islam, Christianity or Zoroastrianism to be driven out of India is as idle a dream as it would be for Mussalmans to have only Islam of their imagination to rule the world."*

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