

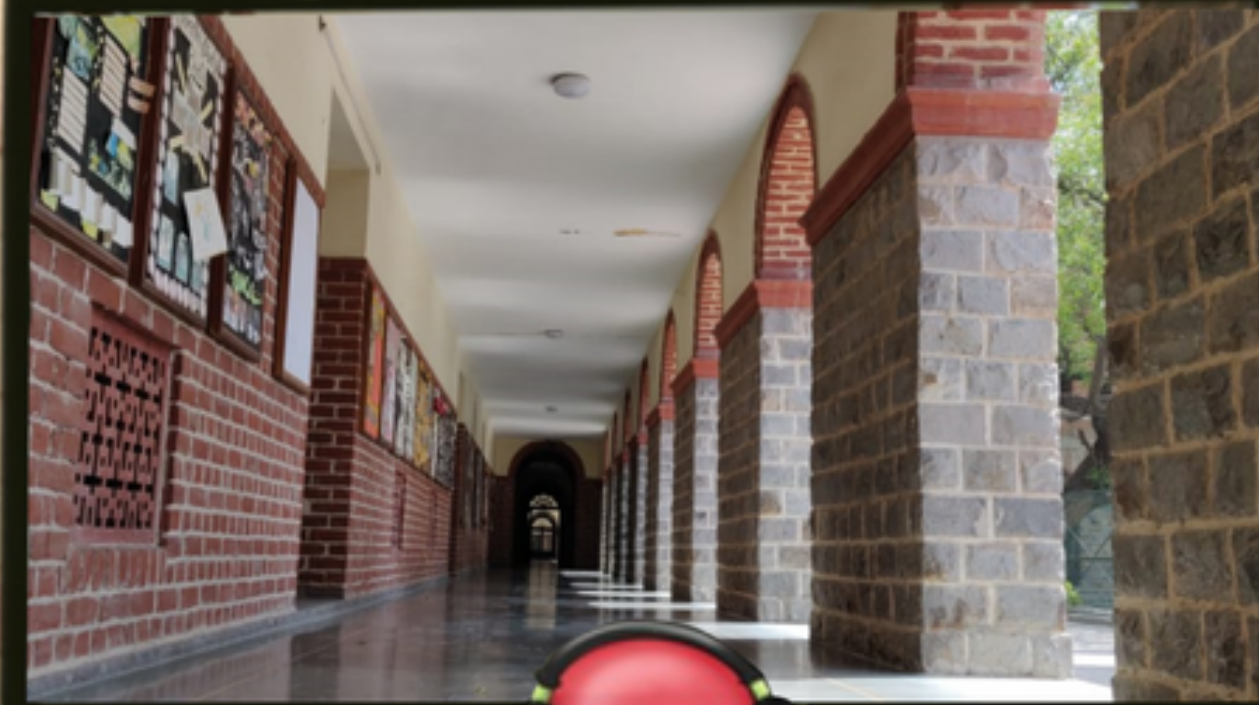


# CORRIDORS



The Official Newsletter of Pinnacle  
Department of B.A. Programme

ACADEMIC YEAR 2020-2021



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# FROM THE CONVENOR



DR. HENA OAK

I congratulate the BA Programme team for yet another impressive issue of Corridors. These have been challenging times for all of us. But challenges notwithstanding, the semester has been as educative as any other semester in the past in terms of activities planned and accomplished. I applaud team Pinnacle and all the student volunteers who have worked tirelessly to make this a success.

Corridors gives you all the opportunity to explore your creative side. Words that you pen as poems, opinions, articles or stories gives us teachers a glimpse of what young India is thinking. The odds have not stopped the student community from creative and academic collaborations. The webinars and the festival with its varied themes, is a case in point.

On behalf of all the teachers of BA Programme, I would like to thank you all for this issue of the newsletter. It truly personifies your energy and enthusiasm. A special applause for the editorial team and the student contributors for their work and for their words.

Dr. Hena Oak  
Department of Economics  
BA Programme Convener



# FROM THE PRESIDENT

KANAK MOHILEY

While it is hard to describe my journey with Pinnacle in a few words, the B.A. Programme Society has become my family. Ever since I was a Photography and a PR volunteer in 2018-19, I have considered every little activity as my own. As I reflect upon my journey from being a volunteer to an office bearer, I realise the contribution that the society has made in developing me as an individual. While it did get exhaustive at times, at the end, the exhaustion metamorphosed into unparalleled joy. I've learnt to manage tasks with patience, perseverance and build as well as respect new perspectives.

We started this academic year with a team of truly talented and amazing women from the department. I can never thank the Executive Board enough for their contributions and marvellous team spirit. Even though we were functioning online, the team has never failed to surprise me with their creativity, enthusiasm and hope. I would also want to take this opportunity to formally applaud the wonderful work done by my co-union members - Kashika, Mumuksha and Shazia. These women have constantly been on their toes and have witnessed the best and the worst that I had to offer.

In these challenging times, Pinnacle has come up with 'one of a kind' initiatives, peer building exercises and the true spirit of oneness. None of this was possible without this great team. Special shoutout to the Class of '21 for being the constant source of validation and inspiration for me. I am fortunate to have met, interacted and built relationships with such brave and uniquely diverse women.

After 'The Pinnacle Palette' and 'Korero and Beyond', EXUBERANCE'21 was planned and executed brilliantly. I express my appreciation to all the authors who have contributed in this magazine. It is this willingness to share knowledge, concerns and special insights with peers that we decided not to define a theme for this issue of Corridors. The interdisciplinary nature and approach of the B.A. Programme course is what we aim to celebrate. We talk about issues that matter both at an individual and at a global level.

I would like express my gratitude to our convener Dr. Hena Oak Ma'am for her immense support, encouragement and guidance. She has truly been a wonderful mentor to us. The amount of love I have received from both my seniors and juniors is unimaginable and I'm eternally grateful for it. Pinnacle has given me some of my closest friends, support systems and people I look up to as source of inspiration. It has given me a bag full of memories and victories which I will cherish forever. I hope the next union takes the legacy forward and continues to thrive for excellence.

Signing Off

Kanak Mohiley  
President  
2020-2021

# FROM THE EDITOR IN CHIEF



DYUTIMA SHARMA

Dear Readers,

As I jot down my signing off note, I would like to thank all of you for your consistent readership and the affection you have invested in our work. Thank you so much for contributing with your beautifully framed thoughts and artworks. Reading and formatting them was a delight!

“I wish there was a way to know you're in the good old days before you've actually left them”  
~ Andy Bernard, The Office

Well, to be honest, my tenure as the Editor-in Chief has been the most rewarding experience of my college life. My team has given me so many opportunities to learn & grow and I couldn't have asked for a better dream team. Not a day has passed without brainstorming about new ideas and concepts on our WhatsApp group and not to forget the (am I audible?) zoom meetings, this year.

I am honoured to say that this academic session, our team achieved a new milestone by successfully curating and running ‘The Pinnacle Palette’ and ‘Korero & Beyond’, both unique and exciting in their own ways.

In the near future, I hope that this legacy of credibility, authenticity, work ethic & originality is carried forward. I wish that new realms of creativity and imagination are explored and worked upon.

“Celebrate endings—for they precede new beginnings”  
~ Jonathan Lockwood Huie

To Pinnacle and all the people I had the honour of working with, thank you for everything!

Signing Off

Dyutima Sharma  
Editor-in-Chief  
2020-2021

# EXPRESSIONS

## THE ART OF ORATION

BY SHALLU JAGLAN AND MEDHA NAVYA DWIVEDI

*WITH MR. SANJIV DOSAJH ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, INDIAN  
BROADCASTING SERVICES OF ALL INDIA RADIO AND DOORDARSHAN*



Pinnacle, The Department of B. A. Programme, Miranda House hosted its first webinar of the session 2020-2021 on 11 July 2020 “Expressions: The Art of Oration”. The session was subdivided into 4 categories: the art of storytelling, voice modulation, public speaking and interviewing.

Mr Dosajh aptly puts ‘the art of storytelling’ as the most effective means of communication because a story is not only a form of entertainment but also encompasses the power and ability to capture the attention of the audience while imparting a deep sense of understanding of various aspects of life. A successful storyteller is the one who manages to connect with the audience, which is diverse and uninterested. While delivering a story, the average level of thinking ability must be maintained to impact and build rapport with at least 80 per cent of the audience

The next part of the webinar focused on ‘the art of voice modulation’. Several important factors help master the art of voice modulation like a moderate pitch, an understandable pace with slowing down in the areas of information giveaway, a confident sense of positive authority and credibility in voice production, correct pronunciation which is prevalent in the location of the audience, the use of stresses and pauses at the appropriate place, moderating inflexion in voice and voice quality. To ensure that the audience does not lose interest, the speaker must use pauses in the right amount and at the right places.



“The art of public speaking is crucial in the current times because it lets you present yourself the way you are”, added Mr Dosajh. Maintaining one’s style while delivering the content helps to build a connection of originality and credibility in the minds of the audience. One of the most important factors in public speaking is that of meeting the aspirations and expectations of the listeners. At least 70 per cent of the audience must be able to perceive your notion and ideas to be an effective speaker. One must speak from the same dais as the audience so as to enable them to have a better understanding of the subject. Maintaining a calm, composed and relaxed posture and attitude help build the required rapport with the audience

“The most memorable interview of my life is the one with Mr Balbir Singh where he narrates his memory of the 1948 Olympic and managed to form a screenplay in his mind of the hockeystadium back in the year 1948”, said Mr Dosajh. Interviews are more than just a one-to-one conversation, it is about information gained, impartiality and spontaneity thereby achieved.

An impactful interview is the one where the audience connects with the speakers and develops an interest. To do so, the interviewer must maintain a sense of impartiality towards the subject and the interviewee. The questions asked must be short, clear and precise.

Every segment of the session was followed by insightful questions from the audience and Mr Dosajh was kind enough to answer each one of them. From shattering myths to breaking down walls of anxiety, he made everyone believe that if one has the confidence and determination within, there is no mountain big enough to be scaled. His experience like the one where he met Roger Federer in the London Olympics, 2012 and expertise on various subjects, brought new ideas home. The webinar was attended by more than 70 participants who were extremely delighted to learn from the speaker. The webinar was moderated by the Editorial Board and concluded with a vote of thanks by the Vice-president of Pinnacle, Kashika Yadav.



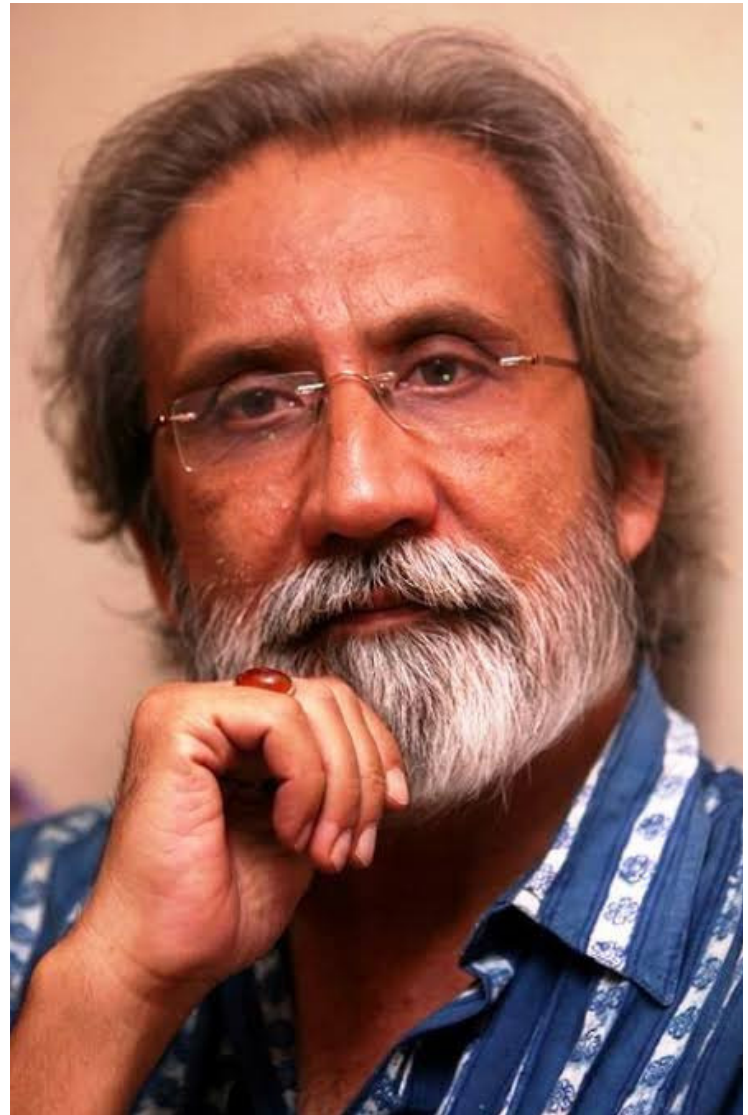
# Many Faces of a Nation: It's Underlying Ideologies

By Medha Navya Dwivedi

Pinnacle, the department of B.A. Programme, organised its first academic webinar, "Providential Paradoxes: A Discussion on Independent India". Professor Habib was welcomed by the President of Pinnacle, Kanak Mohiley and Yusra Khan introduced the speaker. The Professor thanked everyone for the warm welcome and talked about the current situations, be it about COVID-19 or about us living in hyper nationalistic times, probably more than the freedom struggle itself.

Professor told how Bal Gangadhar Tilak wrote in Maratha newspaper in 1917 that Indian nationalism was a recent thing then, a modern phenomenon, and it was meant for a goal, which was gaining independence from colonial rule. Professor talked about how nationalism back then was very inclusive, which did not exclude anyone. Freedom fighters were fighting a battle to make a new nation on two grounds, one battle with colonial imperialism and another against the divisive forces. Majoritarian communalism of right-wing forces, and another Muslim communalism who were a challenge to the nationalism and in making a nation which was inclusive. However, this nationalism continued to be with us for decades with certain changes.

In the recent times, the Professor believed, certain forces are playing their game all the time. This kind of nationalism has come up in the recent past and is state sponsored. This communalism can also be referred to as majority communalism. Earlier, nationalism was not needed to be flaunted. The current notion of nationalism is jingoism of majoritarianism and has become dirty. This type of nationalism is also becoming a global trend. Russia, Turkey, Japan, Philipppians, France, Germany, even the U.S. has tilted towards right wingism. This kind of nationalism needs an object of hate and demands for homogeneity. Somehow, the celebration of diversity is being diluted. Unity is diversity was our slogan for so long and now diversity has become a matter of shame and we demand everyone to be homogenous.




**Professor S Irfan Habib**


**Historian, Padma Bhushan Awardee, acknowledged as one of the most comprehensive and inclusive set of writings on nationalism**

Today's nationalism is being transformed into theology. Free speech is blatantly threatened in the name of nationalism. Seeds of this were probably sowed at the time of freedom struggle when colonists tried to put Hindus and Muslims against each other. The 1920s, 30s and 40s was the time when all this was rooted. The politics of these 3 decades is extremely important to understand the current situation. Politics in the name of Islam and the two-nation theory was introduced by Jinnah, who was earlier the ambassador of Hindu-Muslim Unity and a friend of Bal Gangadhar Tilak. However, in the 1930s and 40s, there was a transformation of Jinnah. Communalism survives only when one is weaker than the other and the nature of this politics is very old and we therefore need to understand today's nationalism in the context of the freedom struggle.

Talking about the recent citizenship issues in the country, Prof. Habib believes nobody has an issue if we go ahead and protect the persecuted Hindus. Prof. Habib said that instead of mentioning "religion" at all, the Parliament could have mentioned "persecuted people", and there is a 99% chance that those persecuted individuals would have been Hindus. But we are pursuing a certain kind of politics which requires such things. The way we are othering each other is something very new and communal riots and violence are becoming a common thing day by day. A large number of people have come in this narrative of looking at each other with a screwed perspective, which is extremely harmful.



THE DEPARTMENT OF B.A. PROGRAMME  
MIRANDA HOUSE

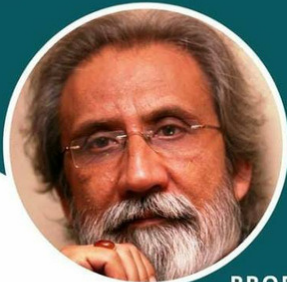


PRESENTS

PROVIDENTIAL PARADOXES

A discussion on Independent India

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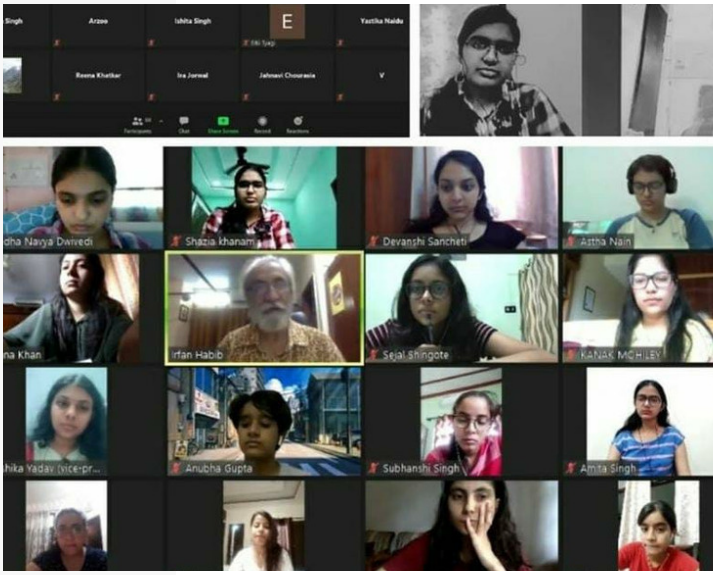


PROF. S. IRFAN HABIB

Formerly Maulana Azad  
Chair National University  
of Educational Planning  
and Administration

MANY  
FACES  
OF A  
NATION:  
ITS UNDERLYING  
IDEOLOGIES

CONTACT  
Kanak- 8400400913



Professor Habib reiterated how we need to recognise the efforts of all these freedom fighters and understand these people sincerely. Young people must fight and understand things, we need to understand all those icons who have left behind a lot of knowledge for us. Unfortunately, we have not read them or misread them. We need to understand India in the light of the inheritance of India, not the medieval but modern freedom struggle because we have a connection with it as it is just 70-80 years old and we can easily relate to them.

Thereafter the discussion was open to the audience, where issues like a CRPF Jawan questioning a politician's identity as an Indian because they couldn't speak Hindi, national identity being misused, need of nationalism, emphasis on humanism, Hagia Sophia and the debate about historical wrongs was discussed. The session was very insightful and was attended by more than 80 people. The vote of thanks was proposed by the PR Head, Amita Singh.

# Neighbourhood First Policy: A Hit Or a Miss Affair

By Garima Mahajan



## Dr. Harsh Pant

Professor, Internal Relations at the India Institute at King's College, London and a distinguished Fellow and Head of Strategic Studies at the Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi

Pinnacle, the Department of B.A Programme, Miranda House hosted the second segment of the academic webinar: "Neighbourhood First Policy: A Hit or Miss Affair" discussing the evolution and trajectory of our foreign policy and the realities we need to confront as a country.

The speaker for the session was Dr Harsh Pant, and began by stating the importance of a strong foreign policy especially given the current climate of territorial aggression, problems around the periphery and so on..



The neighbourhood has always been the focal point of the foreign policy as India's hierarchy in its neighbourhood will ultimately determine its global hierarchy. According to him, this focus has tilted more so towards Pakistan in the last 5 decades. India's historical baggage and the constant sacking of diplomatic energies has made it difficult for us to truly move on. This diverts the majority focus on Pakistan and a global outlook of India through the lens of Pakistan.

As per Dr Pant, this tilt is now oriented towards China- a country that has strategically taken advantage of the India-Pak dog fight since 1947. India's position as a key player in South Asia invites confrontation with China. In this context, India's neighbourhood becomes its main priority where, as Dr Pant said, "China is the most important variable." However, India has faced significant failures when it comes to cooperation exercises in the neighbourhood (point in case: SAARC). This has prompted India to shift to newer and possibly greener areas (BIMSTEC), helping us break the mould and connecting with ASEAN at a greater level.

Next, he focussed on the future of India's foreign policy. Its evolving bilateral ties make it difficult to predict a definitive way forward. "The future looks turbulent", which according to Dr Pant is the 'new reality'

India could face problems owing to its structural location. India's presence looms large in the Asian continent. This contributes to the 'controlling', 'dominating' view of India. And this power makes it a card in domestic politics. Too often, the 'India card' ends up being a pawn and the local leaders use it to establish their position as that of Champion of Local Nationalism. Added to these predicaments is China's growing economic muscle. Its monetary support to countries for development projects, loans, etc. puts India on a "weaker wicket" explains Dr Pant. Many neighbours allege that India fails to deliver or it underdelivers. These countries effectively play the 'India-China' card. Lastly, given India's subsequent rise in the global arena as a key influencer, it can be said without a doubt that its neighbouring countries feel threatened. And it is because of these reasons that India's neighbourhood will always be important. The session concluded with the Vote of Thanks by Kanak Mohiley, the President of Pinnacle, the Department of B.A Programme, Miranda House. The webinar left people with a zest to know more.



# Talk on Constitutionalism

By Medha Navya Dwivedi



## Professor Ujjwal Kumar Singh

**Department of Political Science, University of Delhi**

Pinnacle, the department of B.A. Programme, organised its first academic webinar, "Providential Paradoxes: A Discussion on Independent India". The third webinar of the series was titled "Constitutionalism and Constitutional Morality"

The Professor began his note by requesting everyone to go a little back in time, around the Republic Day. This republic day people were protesting with the constitutions in their hands and the sales of the copies of the constitution went up drastically. Preamble was a part of a lot of protests and the constitution suddenly became a living thing. In March, we moved to a pandemic world where the entire government is being run by two acts, the Disaster Management Act, 2005 and Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897 which is centuries old. The Judiciary has been paralysed and the Legislature has not yet met throughout the process. Two very important organs of the government are not working. Power is highly concentrated in one organ of the government when we talk about pandemic and constitutionalism.

Prof. Ujjwal explained how the Constitution is a text, neither everyone reads it nor is it so accessible to everyone. The simplest way to access it is through the Preamble. According to him, the Constitution is a higher law which helps in the governance process, a document which helps in forming and maintaining the government. The Constitution is also a justice text, as part IV has directives to the state which the society has planned to do. The Constitution also serves as an aspirational text. Different generations have different aspirations, and different people have interpreted the same text differently according to their aspirations. The need of this hour or every hour in fact is to find the best way to address these aspirations.

The Constitution does not live in vacuum, it lives with elected governments, which keep on changing. Ideologies also change, from centrist to rightist, from an inclusive one to a more Hindutva one. So, the question arises, should the constitution also change? Can democracy be a substitute of constitutionalism. There is a paradox that the constitution is above everyone, any party in power can frame laws and regulations that do not change the Constitution but make it hollow. One of the initial aims of the early governments was to eliminate the Caste System. However, the Caste System did not disappear, rather it became a competitive entity.

Dr. Ambedkar had already cautioned that in order to protect the democracy, we must do these three things, follow cautious means and peaceful paths, we need to prevent ourselves from becoming bhakts (bhakti in religion is alright, but bhakti in politics is dictatorship), and finally we have to get a very good sound Constitution. According to him, if we do not address inequalities, especially social inequalities, this democracy will not survive.

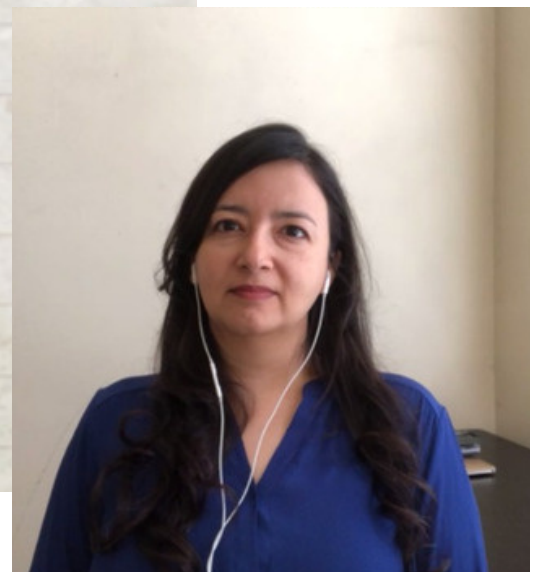
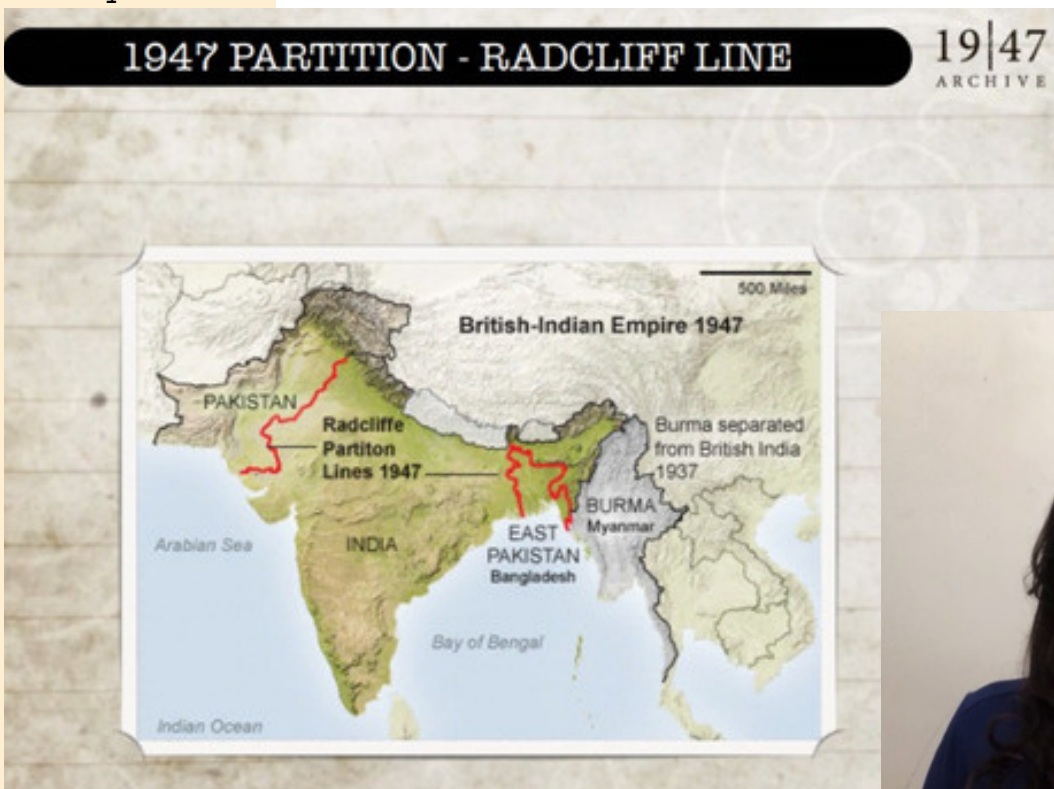
After his talk, Professor Ujjwal took questions from the audience. Issues like supremacy of the Home Ministry during the pandemic, Judiciary not being the only one which interprets the Constitution in recent times, the independence of Judiciary, different ways in which the Constitution is interpreted and the Justice Bogde-Prashant Bhushan controversy were discussed by him.

The vote of thanks was proposed by Mumuksha Mahajan, who thanked everyone for gracing the event. The webinar was a successful one where people gained a lot of knowledge and insights.

# PROVIDENTIAL PARADOXES

## Rediscovering Lost Stories: Partition of 1947

By Medha Nandini



**Ms. Guneeta Singh Bhalla**

**Founder director, The 1947 Partition Archive**

Pinnacle, the department of B.A Programme hosted it's final webinar titled "Rediscovering Lost Stories: Partition of 1947" under the theme "Providential Paradoxes", a discussion on Independent India. It began with a warm welcome by Miss Shazia Khanam, Cultural Secretary, Pinnacle, Miranda House, on behalf of the entire University of Delhi.

The esteemed speaker, Dr. Guneeta Singh Bhalla, founder director of the 1947 Partition Archive, was introduced by Kanak Mohiley, the President of Pinnacle, the department of B.A. Programme.

In the first segment of the webinar, Dr. Guneeta Singh Bhalla talked about the concept of “crowdsourcing”, the prime idea utilised by her for the development of her project. “Before my project of creating a Partition archive started in 2010, the idea of crowdsourcing belonged to the world of science”, she said. She describes it further by mentioning how “crowdsourcing” helps solve the difficult problem of protein folding in science. Crowdsourcing, she explained, “is a method which entails bringing together a lot of people to solve a problem that would be insurmountable by a few people.” The problem of protein folding was solved when the problem was splitted up in hundreds of tiny little pieces and then the pieces were shared to thousands of people, and slowly, people started to solve each of these pieces and finally, in this way people were able to solve the giant protein folding problem. The physicists involved in solving this problem first coined the term “crowdsourcing”.

This inspired her to use the techniques of crowdsourcing to document oral histories of people who witnessed the Partition of 1947.

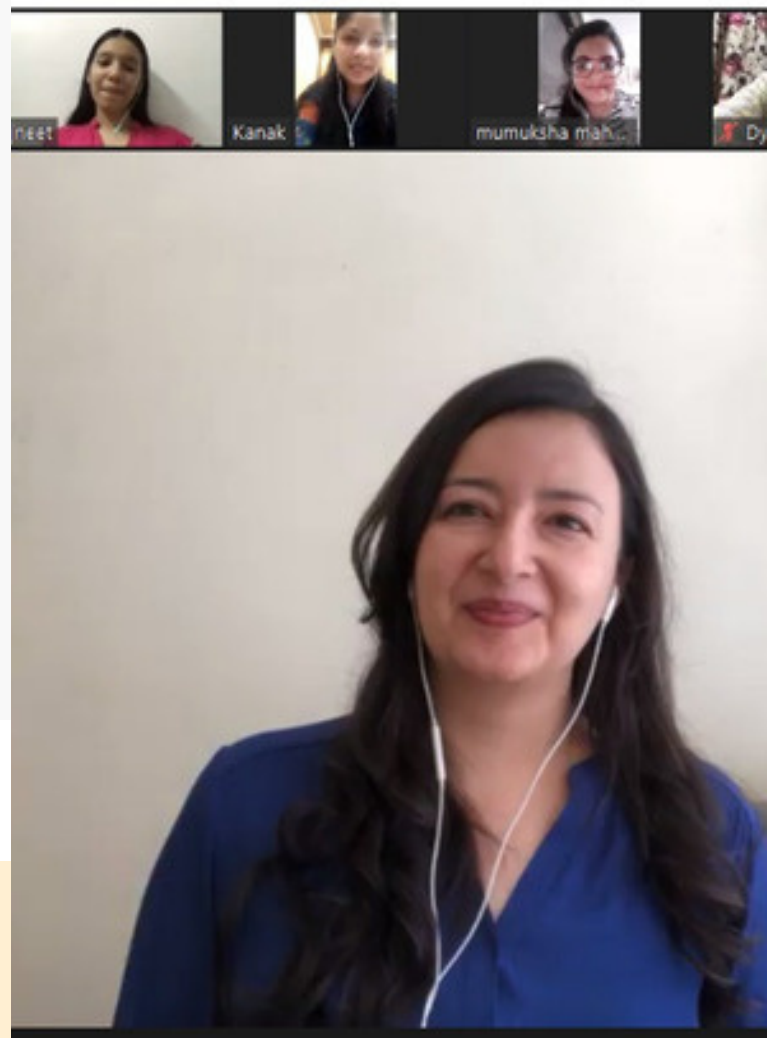
Dr. Bhalla moved on to share the details about her background, and the source of inspiration behind her starting the project. She also highlighted the importance of historical documentation of events and asked the audience to imagine for a second a situation where we did not have any documented witness accounts of the Holocaust, or the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings. In such a case, we would have been having absolutely no global understanding of dictatorship or there would not have been the nuclear non proliferation treaty that we have today.

Her 2008 visit to the oral testimony archives at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial inspired her greatly and she began interviewing Partition witnesses in 2009. It was a deeply enriching experience and she wanted to share it with everyone. She was also troubled with the realization that the generation of eye witnesses was nearly gone and taking their stories with them. She gathered a team and began recording oral histories in 2010. In 2011 The 1947 Partition Archive was born.

Prof. Bhalla furthered her discussion towards understanding the origin of violence during the Partition. To this, she mentioned that the violence was basically economically driven, originated due to top-down polarisation, and the breakdown of civil society during the Partition.

The Archive witnessed 10 million+ shares or interactions in 2017 alone and the number keeps on increasing marginally, till today. This resulted in normalisation of the Partition in the mainstream, and became an inspiration for other works too, like Harvard South Asia Institute, Partition museums and other social media pages. The development of archives took place in three phases, the first phase focused on story collection, the second focused on curating of stories, and the third phase which started from 2019, and is in continuation is the phase of wide dissemination, and global K12 education.

As we moved towards the end, Dr. Bhalla shared a beautiful message to the students, to always question everything around them, to understand the history, and the subtle differences between the state and the people's narratives. One must also always question one's own beliefs and the origin of one's own thoughts.



Kanak Mohiley, the President of Pinnacle, took the questions from the participants one by one, which were really insightful and interesting. Dr. Bhalla was kind to answer all of them in a very crisp, yet comprehensive manner. The session concluded with a vote of thanks by Mumuksha Mahajan, who expressed her gratitude to Dr. Guneeta Bhalla, the participants, as well as the team of students who helped in the organisation of the event, and hoped for an unending association between her and Miranda House.



# DIALOGUES ON COMPARATIVE POLITICS

BY THE EDITORIAL BOARD

Pinnacle, the Department of B.A. Programme, Miranda House in collaboration with the Department of Political Science hosted a series of webinars on the topic- “Dialogues on Comparative Politics” in the months of September and October. The countries on which each webinar focused on includes Canada, United Kingdom, China and USA. There were 4 sessions in total, who were each highly acclaimed in their fields, along with Dr. Abhishek Choudhary, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Delhi as the chair for the event.

# INDIA AND CANADA

Date: 12th September, 2020



## Col. Rupinder Hayer

Political analyst and a media personality based in Canada Professor, Department of Communication, Columbus State University, Columbus, Georgia

In Session 1, Col. Hayer gave some insights on the three major parties in Canada: The Liberal Party, the New Democratic Party and the Conservative Party. There are various reasons why Canada is not going for polls in 2020. The Liberal party thinks it's counterproductive for them to go for polls. The Conservatives have had a change in their leadership recently, he is very unfamiliar as of now. Justin Trudeau is more like a brand in Canada, just like the Gandhi family legacy in India. He furthered the discussion by highlighting some of the major factors which affect electoral behaviour in Canada are party ideology, familiarity with the party leader, stability of the government,

economic benefits like child care, electricity bills etc. and cultural affinity. He then addressed the issue of lack of representation of women in Canada, and also talked about the influence of immigrant communities over policy making in Canada. Dr. Abhishek Choudhary, then took over the webinar, shared some key aspects of the Canadian society and politics and mentioned some important takeaways from the topics discussed by Col. Hayer. Dyutima took the questions from the participants one by one, which were really insightful and interesting. Col. Hayer was kind to answer all of them in a very crisp, yet comprehensive manner followed by a bilingual vote of thanks by Dr. Sonali Chitalkar.

Date: 19th September, 2020

Session 2 was indeed a very enriching and insightful one, where Mr. Kapil Dudakia shared in a very detailed manner, the various contemporary issues revolving around the UK, the state of democracy, the structure of government and the functioning of various political organisations in the UK. He also highlighted some noteworthy, key differences between the Indian and UK political systems. Very interesting questions were put forward by the attendees, and Mr. Dudakia answered them beautifully, in a compact manner. Dr. Choudhary shared some key aspects of the information shared by Mr. Dudakia followed by a beautiful vote of thanks by the organisers.



## Mr. Kapil Dudakia

PGCE, FRSA, Ex OFSTED Inspector, Business Consultant, Guest Columnist (Socio/Political Analyst)

Date: 26th September, 2020

In Session 3, Dr. Rajiv Ranjan delved into the history of China to explain the concept of Nation State and how it evolved from the late Qin Dynasty. He talked about the debate of inclusivity that did rounds in the past with regards to the ethnic-minority people. While drawing a comparative study between India and China he stated that in India, A democratic model of governance took shape. Instead of resorting to western model of democracy, Dr. Ranjan stated, Mao Zedong was influenced by Marxism & Lenin's Policy of Soviet Union. Dr. Ranjan made a comparison of how fundamentally different the two countries are by talking about India's constitution and the way it was framed by the Constituent Assembly by adopting the good aspects from the world over. He further compared India's Rajya Sabha with Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPCC) where he mentioned that unlike India there exists no real power within the latter. The Chinese society is largely influenced by Confucius philosophy which is traditional in its approach.

Public Institutions like education have brought some changes to the hierarchical pyramid but it still remains authoritarian and non-questionable in its nature, as stated by Dr. Ranjan. Dr. Abhishek Choudhary provided us with a theoretical perspective by stating that China is a mix between Parochial and Subject-Political culture. In the last segment of the Webinar, Nidhi KAnaujia posed question regarding human rights and its violation in China. Dr. Ranjan answered by saying that there is some sort of academic freedom that exists in universities however, openness in form of foreign perspectives was seen as misuse of the academic freedom and was meant to demean what is provided by and, is of the state. Scholars are strongly held

back from bringing western ideas and opinions into the curriculum and the state. The session concluded with a vote of thanks by Dr. Abhishek Choudhary. This was followed by an expression of gratitude by Kashika Yadav towards the speaker, teachers, the organizing committee and the audience for maintaining decorum throughout the event.



**Dr. Rajiv Ranjan**

Associate Professor, College of Liberal Arts,  
Institute of Global Studies  
, Shanghai University

## Dr. Ramesh Rao

Date: 10th October, 2020

Professor, Department of Communication, Columbus State University, Columbus, Georgia



In the final session of the series, a detailed presentation was given by presentation was given by Medha Nandini, & Editor at Pinnacle, who explained the governmental structure of the United States of America to give background information explaining the political functioning of

of the country. Dr. Rao, then, discussed the Fundamental Rights in the context of the USA. Rights that are granted to the citizens are guaranteed through the Fifth, Ninth, and Fourteenth Amendments. Fourteenth and Fifth amendments forbid unreasonable discrimination based on irrelevant criteria that include sex, age, religion, etc. Dr Rao furthered his discussion to the Freedom of Communication and then compared 'Cultural and Educational Rights (Articles 29,30). Indian citizens are granted (Article 29) the Protection of minorities' a rights but no such right is conferred to the American citizens. He also addressed the also addressed the question of which culture should prevail in the multi-cultural world. If the next-door neighbour practices a different culture and the other neighbours do not conform to his culture, 'whose culture should prevail' posed an interesting challenge. India does not have a national language but it is widely believed that Hindi is the national language, and that resulted in protests across the nation against imposing Hindi as this would destroy their culture & undermine their language. Kashika took the final round of questions from the participants one by one. Dr Rao comprehensively answered all the question. The session concluded with a vote of thanks by Kashika and Dr Sonali Chitalkar, who expressed her gratitude to Col. Hayer, Mr Kapil Dudakia, Dr Rajiv Ranjan, Dr Ramesh Rao, and Dr Bijaylaxmi Nanda, the participants, as well as the team of students who helped in the organisation of the event and congratulated everyone for successfully organising the series of webinars "Dialogues on Comparative Politics".

# Dynamics of Tribal Economics

A REPORT BY GARIMA MAHAJAN



## DR. SHANTA RANI

Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Lady Irwin College,  
University of Delhi

8th October, 2020

Pinnacle, the department of BA Programme, organized a webinar: "Dynamics of Tribal economics" on 8th October, 2020. The speaker for the webinar was Dr. Shanta Rani, Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Lady Irwin College, University of Delhi. Dr. Shanta began the webinar with the tribal greeting "juhar".

In the first segment of the session, Dr. Shanta goes on to explain that tribal economics is the coalescence of the local system of production & distribution. The native economy is influenced by the social practices and norms. While the world economy may suggest profit earning motives, Dr. Shanta brilliantly pointed out a very novel feature of tribal economies: Them being free of mindless pursuits for profit.

They have a different connotation for profit; for them it means "Good life derived from the Land & sea, that's what we are all about, that's what this land claims is all about.... The land we hold in trust is our wealth."

Moving forward, she defines "Jal, Jungle & Jameen" as the three pillars of tribal economics. Tribal economies and by extension tribal communities can be looked at as defenders of ecology. The three Js find themselves deeply embedded in the hearts & souls of tribal communities evident in their struggles for justice, sustainability & co-existence with nature. She throws light on the self-reliant and independent nature of tribal communities. Here, she shares an instance of the Jarawa community of the Andaman & Nicobar Islands who survive a Tsunami on their own.

Then she mentions that the tribal population of India is the second largest in the world. They take different names like Adivasi, Atavika, Vanvasi, etc. Then, she explains the TINA syndrome, a term coined by Margret Thatcher which suggests that there is no alternative to capitalism. However, the very existence of native people is a testament to the fact the alternatives do exist. She mentions the belief articulated by many scholars that one day the capitalist world we know might be condensed into informal sectors.

However, the pandemic has changed the world completely. It looms large on tribal communities along with factors like socio economic factors, competing land resources, state regulations etc. besides forced acquisition of land. This thrusts them out of their homes into the capitalistic world without any safety blanket. The pandemic has already forced a reversed migration of 476 million people.

While international organizations like the UN recognized the rights of indigenous people to protect their culture traditions and institutions etc., these rules are continuously ignored. In this given climate, it is imperative that we come up with effective solutions without disregarding their autonomy.

#### The theory of subsistence as seen in the case of aboriginals, indigenous and tribal at large.

Subsistence is both an economic and a social system, encompassing various spheres of life that often are inseparable from one another. It is characterized by endless circulation of goods, services, and other products. Subsistence, sometimes also called domestic production, follows the seasonal cycle of available resources—it has also been called the “seasonal, integrated economy”—and it includes hunting, fishing, gathering, trapping, and “other activities which provide income in kind— food, heat, clothing, shelter, and a variety of other subsistence goods and services” consumed by and shared within the family and community. The Inuit Circumpolar Conference defines subsistence as a highly complex notion that includes vital economic, social, cultural and spiritual dimensions. . . .

Subsistence means much more than mere survival or minimum living standards. It enriches and sustains tribal communities in a manner that promotes cohesive- ness, pride and sharing. It also provides an essential link to, and communication with, the natural world of which tribal are an integral part.



#### Global market economy , Indigenous economy and women

Indigenous methods of production and resource management are considered inefficient and backward by the global market economy whose mantra is global competitiveness and comparative advantage. Hundreds of thousands of indigenous women will have to abandon their sustainable agricultural and resource management practices



In the next segment, Dr. Shanta threw light on different tribal communities by way of a documentary video showcasing the principles by which the tribal communities governed themselves: respect for one another, nonviolence and symbiotic relationship with nature, the vibrant socio-cultural dynamic etc.

The webinar concluded with a vote of thanks by Shazia Khanam, Cultural Secretary. The webinar truly enriched the academic milieu.

She suggests mixed economies as a way to address these concerns. Mixed economies will be a mix of market economies and subsistence economies with the latter being the larger driving factor. This will help in their integration while also maintaining their autonomy.





PODCAST

# Korero & Beyond

Pinnacle Miranda House



FOLLOW

...

## REPORT ON PODCAST SERIES: KORERO & BEYOND

*By Garima Mahajan*

The year 2020 is a roller coaster of its own. Some might say that it is a year of mishaps one after the other. But for Pinnacle, the Department of B.A. Programme, it is a year of many firsts and many greats.

After days of mulling around, the Editorial Board was finally able to launch Korero & Beyond, the first-ever podcast series of the department. The days leading up to the launch date were nothing short of an exhilarating ride. Taking forth the belief embracing diversity, Pinnacle reached out to several eminent personalities from various fields for Korero & Beyond, literally conversation and beyond. If one searches the corners of one's heart, we know that conversations, old and new, said and unsaid are the only saving grace when life turns blue. And it is these little conversations that drive the blues away.

For the first episode Pinnacle hosted Mr Vivek Atrey, author, motivational speaker and an ex-IAS officer. Mr Atrey talked about the ways to ace the test that is life without forgetting the morals which govern one's life. He gives an example of a man crossing the red light every day at say 6 a.m. Throughout his life, he does not bother looking around for traffic. But then, he gets a conscience call through a newspaper article one day and from there on he stops at the red light. And thus, it is when we are alone that our character walks the double-edged sword. In life, mistakes are inevitable but what's important is improvement.

Next, Ms Gayathri Ramprasad, a mental health advocate came through for the second episode. She talked about mental health and how to tackle it as an individual and as part of a community. She mentions the three A(s) that anyone can apply at both these levels: Awareness, acceptance and action to deal with mental health disorders.

These three steps will help 'humanize and end the stigma once and for all'. It will help in understanding narratives different from oneself and realizing the importance of mental health.

Following this, Pinnacle hosted Seep Aggarwal, a spoken word artist who talked about poetry and much more. She talked about the importance of vulnerability- an emotion ignored too often. But we tend to forget that the vulnerable self is the real us and thus, it is the biggest strength that one can possess.

Next, Mr Aditya Arora, CEO of Faad Network Pvt. Ltd. graced the next segment. Talking about life, experimenting, and all there is to know about the entrepreneurial world, he defines an entrepreneur as an individual who takes calculated risks, has a vision, is a team player, creative and patient. These skills are truly what one needs to create a mark not just in the entrepreneurial world but also in life..

For the penultimate episode, Pinnacle hosted Ms Sujata Sahu, known as the Iron Lady of Ladakh and Founder director of 17000ft. She implores the listeners to look at the Real Ladakh beyond the tourism sector. She also talks about the static nature of the Indian Educational system which she hopes will change in future.

Ms Tuheena Raj, a poet and writer, founder of Words of Worth joined Pinnacle for the last episode. She talks about all there is to know about writing. When asked about how to figure out what path to choose in life, she says that one should try their hands at everything because human beings are multifaceted people. What's important is to be optimistic and give your 100%.



Listen on  
**Apple Podcasts**



**Google**



**Anchor**

# Pinnacle Freshers

## 2020

*By Medha Nandini*

"The beauty of facing life unprepared is tremendous. Then life has a newness, a youth; then life has a flow and freshness. Then life has so many surprises. and when life has so many surprises, boredom, agony and worries never settle in you!"

Pinnacle, The Department of B.A. Programme of Miranda House very beautifully organised its 'glitter & glam' themed virtual Freshers' Party-2020 on the 14th of February, 2021.

The Freshers, dressed up in glittery sarees, gowns and dresses joined the meeting with lots of enthusiasm and energy.

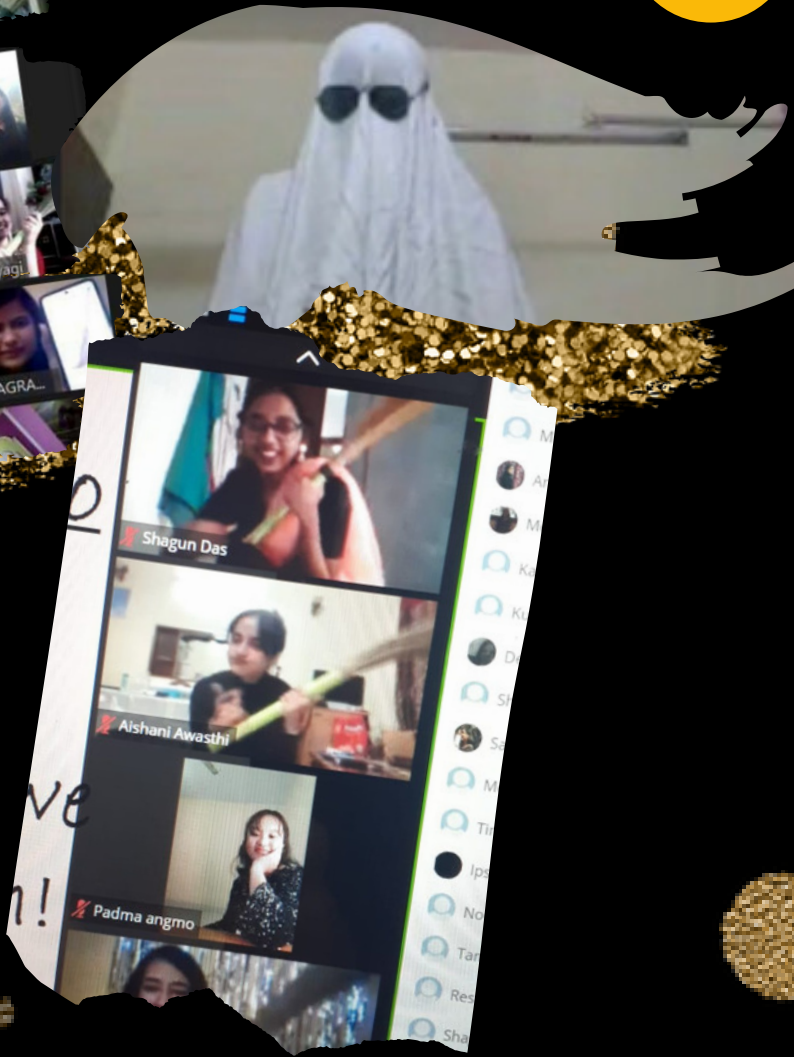
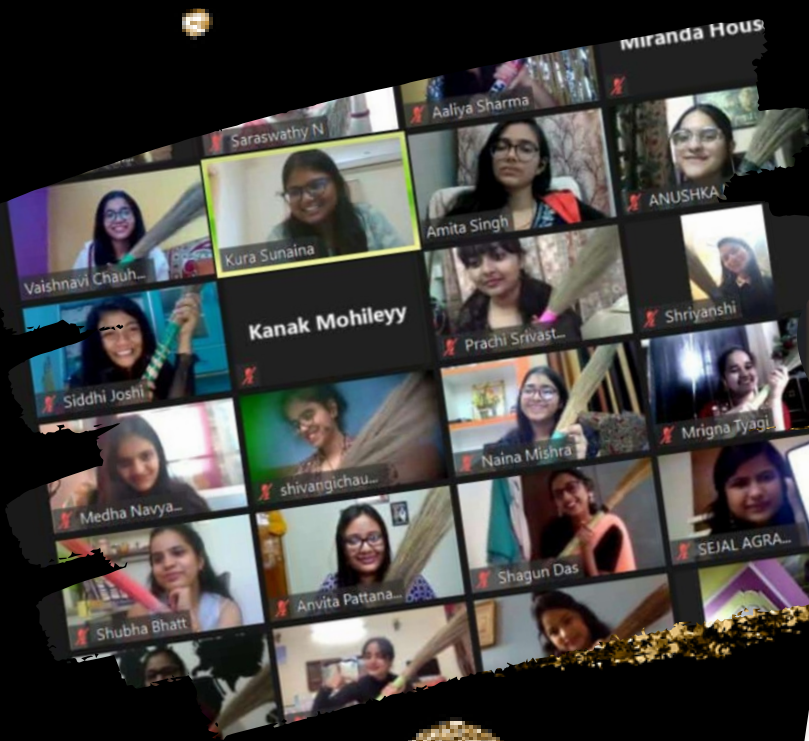
Kanak Mohiley, the President began the virtual party by welcoming the freshers and encouraged them to make the best of their college lives, give their best at everything they pursue and most of all, have a beautiful, enjoyable time at the event.

Amita, the PR Head, and the host for the event then took over, chatted with the freshers and made them laugh their hearts out. Suddenly, a spooky music was played in the background, which was followed by different heads of the Executive Board dressed up in whites dancing on the tunes of various interesting songs! Initially it did confuse the freshers, but after a while they joined in the fun and danced with the "Spirits of Miranda."

The atmosphere had become so heartwarming as well as thrilling at the same time. After this gala time, it was time to have some more fun and a little bit of brainstorming with the exciting games conducted by different members of the Executive Board.

The first game was called "Guess the Song", conducted by Medha Nandini, Editor at Pinnacle. The Freshers had to guess the song on the basis of the clues given in the form of pictures, translated lyrics, emojis and more. The freshers showed a lot of enthusiasm in guessing the songs and were right most of the times. While showing the answers, the song was played in the background, and they hummed and danced along on the tunes of the songs played.





The Second game, Scavenger Hunt, was conducted by Kura Sunaina, the Logistics Head, who had a series of mind-boggling riddles for the freshers who scratched their heads, desperately trying to guess the answer right, and enjoyed just as much. Next, Monika, the Creative Head of Pinnacle, was ready with a variety of tongue twisters for the juniors! So many of them tried their hands out-or, so to say, their "tongues" out and engaged amazingly in this activity, and tons of laughter echoed in the background!

Tongue Twister, being a huge success, was followed by the hugely popular game, "Truth and Lie", where the Freshers had to pick out the lie between three statements, and the statement were some interesting trivia about Miranda House, Pinnacle and our very beautiful President, Kanak Mohiley! The game was hosted by Medha Navya Dwivedi, Editor at Pinnacle who indeed seemed to be loving her time with the Freshers!

After so much of extraordinary fun, it was time for the Freshers to hold their breath for a while, for it was the time when the results of the Freshers Talent Search - Batch of 2023, was going to be announced.

The prize winners were announced by Deepti, the Hospitable Head, for various competitions organised by Team Pinnacle, and the atmosphere was filled with excitement.

By this, the event had officially come to an end. Pictures of the screen were taken of the lovely Freshers who had stolen the hearts of all the seniors with their beautiful smiles and twinkling eyes full of hopes and dreams!

*Pinnacle Freshers 2020*



## Poetry (English)

First Position- Suhani Duhan  
Second Position- Reshu  
Third Position- Siddhi Joshi

## Poetry (Hindi)

First Position- Nitesh Kumari  
Second Position- Shreya  
Third Position- Kashish

## Art

First Position- Ruchika  
Second Position- Rupali Singh  
Third Position- Nitesh Kumari

## Western Music

Winner- Gurmita Tandon

## Indian Music

First Position- Ankita Singh  
Second Position- Gurmita Tandon  
Third Position- Anvita Pattanaik

## Monologue

First Position- Khushi Anand  
Second Position- Prerna Sharma

## Indian Dance

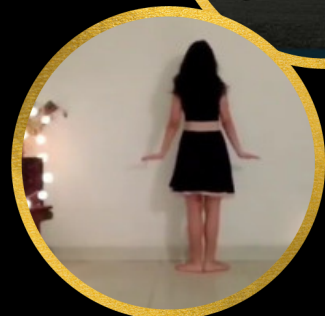
First Position- Anvita Pattanaik  
Second Position- Neelima VP  
Third Position- Srushti Saravade

## Western Dance

First Position- Shreya Rai  
Second Position- Aaliya

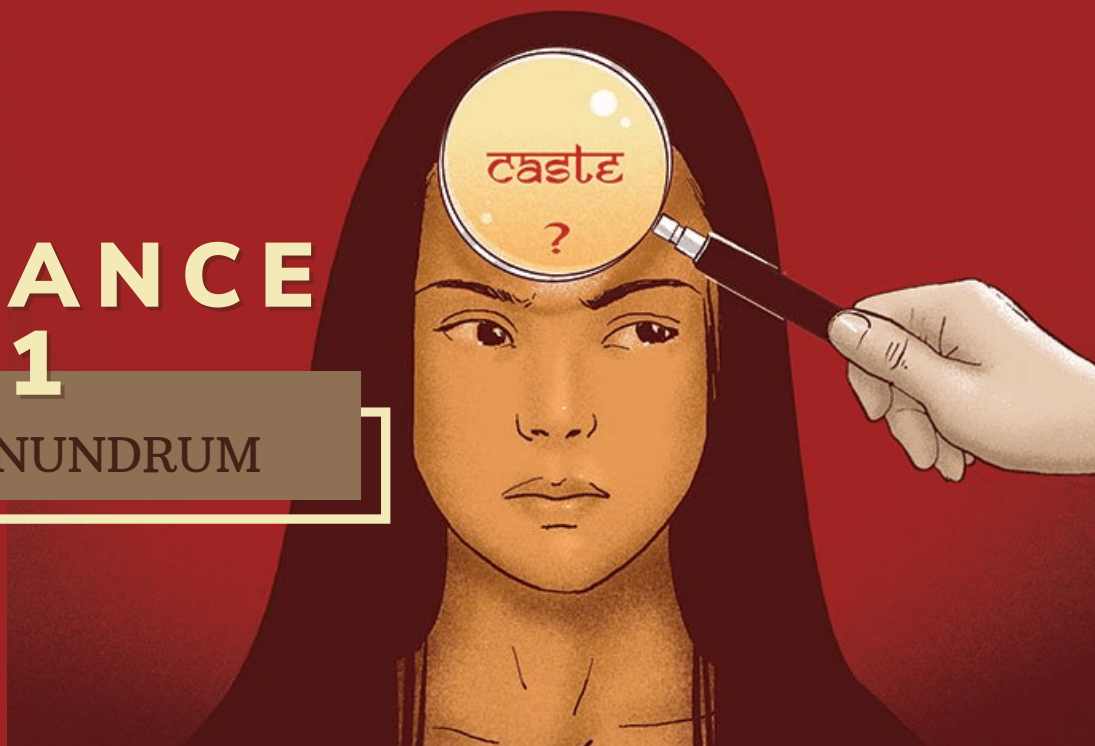
## Photography

First Position- Evangelin Cinderella Jofred  
Second Position- Aleena  
Third Position- Sumedha Gupta



# EXUBERANCE 2021

THE CASTE CONUNDRUM



## VISIBILISING CASTE IN LITERATURE

Professor Kancha Ilaiah

## CASTE, MERIT & RESERVATION IN INDIA

Prof. Sukhdeo Thorat and  
Advocate Prateek Som

## REPORT ON MYTHOLOGY AND MARGINALIZATION

Ms Kavita Kane

# VISIBILISING CASTE IN LITERATURE

*Report by Aditri Priya and Medha Nandini*

Pinnacle, the Department of B.A. Programme, Miranda House organized a series of webinars as a part of its annual fest EXUBERANCE 2021. The theme of the annual fest was THE CASTE CONUNDRUM. Its first academic webinar, "Visibilising Caste in Literature" was held on February 28, 2021, at 11 am via Zoom. The speaker for the webinar was Professor Kancha Ilaiah, - an eminent writer, and former director of CSSEIP at Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad. The webinar was open for all and around 180 people were present.



**PROF KANCHA ILLAIH**

Dr. Hena Oak, the convener of the Department of B. A. Miranda House welcomed the guest speaker and the audience to the webinar. Darshita Aynyas, the Research Head of Pinnacle, gave an introduction of the theme of the webinar and emphasized how caste and gender play a very influential role in literature. She introduced and welcomed the speaker as well.

The Professor began his note by talking about Savitribai Phule, the first Indian woman teacher, who played a crucial role in educating Shudras, Dalits, and women of India. Savitribai Phule and Mahatma Phule played a prominent role in the revolution through 'read, write and fight'. He feels proficiency in the English language is important and also recommended the audience two must-read books to understand Caste, i.e., 'Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents' by Isabel Wilkerson, and 'The Shudras: Vision for a New Path' by Kancha Ilaiah Shepherd and Karthik Raja Karuppusamy. He discussed Isabel's idea in Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents that caste's originated from Germany and India played a crucial role in deepening, grading, and constructing inequality in the world. He gave his point of view on Isabel's quote "Caste is in the bone; race is in the skin" and emphasized that for inequality to be abolished, caste has to be abolished. He then talked about the book 'Who were the Shudras?' by Dr. BR Ambedkar while

explaining the difference between Shudras and various other marginalized communities. Shudras faced discrimination because of the caste hierarchy that keeps Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas above Shudras. But there are two other communities that were not mentioned in the classical Hindu texts. Khatris and Kayasthas, the western and eastern Indian patwaris respectively.

He expressed his disappointment at the fact that there are rarely any thinkers, philosophers, educationists, and intellectuals from the marginalized community. There is a lack of spiritual equality which exists in society. According to him, Isabel and other writers often overlook the fact that even today the Shudras don't have the right to spiritual citizenship.

# EXUBERANCE' 21

## THE CASTE CONUNDRUM

A Shudra isn't allowed to become a priest in a temple, or to become a philosopher, etc. The greatest personalities of India like Nehru, Gandhi, and Ambedkar spoke in English while their wives knew just the regional language. This somehow stopped them from engaging intellectually internationally. A similar method of suppression is being executed on the marginalized communities, who are taught just the regional languages and not English; to stop them from interacting internationally. He compares English with Father's tongue and the regional language with Mother's tongue. According to him, there should not be any discrimination based on language. Every person irrespective of his/her caste and gender deserves language equality along with cultural and spiritual equality.

He feels that spiritual equality is not a matter of thought for the blacks because they can become pastors and bishops. But Shudras are not allowed to be priests in temples. It's disappointing that in India there are rarely any bestselling books or autobiographies written by a Shudra author. He is doing all possible efforts to bring a change. He talks about his autobiography, 'From a Shepherd boy to an Intellectual' which he wrote last year. He discussed the jobs that were assigned to the people based on caste hierarchy. Shudras were assigned the job of cattle rearing, nurturing cows and gradually they came into the field of agriculture. So, Shudras did the job of producing food which was labeled as pollution and not purity by the upper caste community. Women's menstrual blood which is the source of life is also labeled as pollution. Every source of production and procreational creativity is wrongly defined as pollution with the help of logical and industrial excuses. Those who worked with chappals, shoes, boots, and leather lift dead cattle and touch their skin; hence were labeled as untouchables.

He then talked about how household jobs are considered menial and are done by women while

men are made responsible for outside jobs. He highlights how a man or a boy at home in India never cleans the house, washes the clothes, or

does the kitchen work, but a girl, even if, for instance, is the topper of an Institution like Miranda House, does most of the household work whereas a boy, doesn't feel the need to even learn the same. Work and dignity are decided based on gender and not potential. "Read, Write and Fight", he urged all the students, in a very empowering and inspiring tone. The dignity of labor at home is a very underrated topic of discussion and it should be talked about more often. The caste conundrum has destroyed all our mental creativity and productive energy. He concluded by saying that abolishing caste and fighting against indignity of labour and for women's equality is the need of the hour.

Professor Ilaiah very sternly expressed the disappointing status of research in our country. He said most of our research works are just a continuation of the works of Europeans from prestigious universities of Cambridge and Oxford, and lacks originality and rawness. Most of the content of the works is just quoted from the work of the Europeans. He calls this process of research writing as "lift-irrigation" business, and is very critical of the same. He insisted that young scholars and researchers must witness the ground realities of the people, talk to them, understand their plight and express it in their writing instead of just putting forth the ideas of the Western researchers.



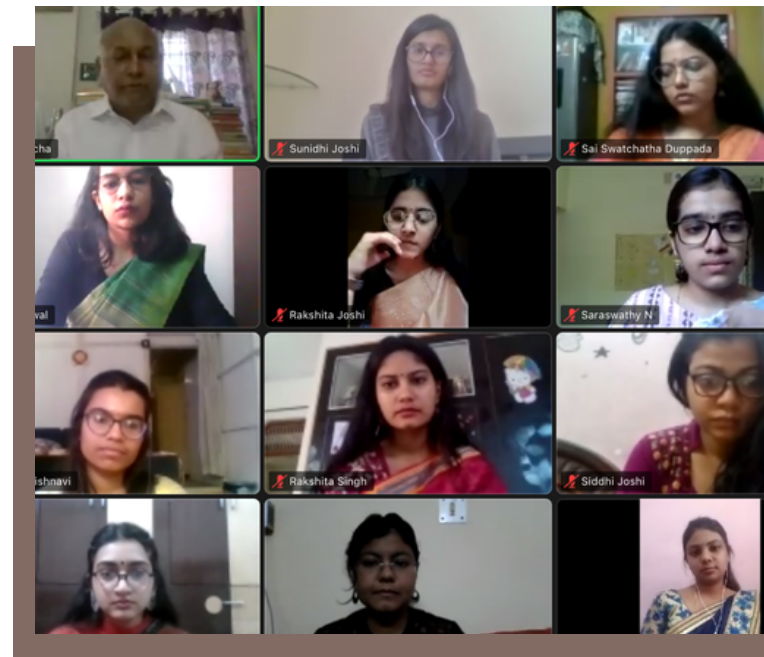
He shared a personal experience to explain this issue further. When he wrote his first book “Why am I not a Hindu”, the scholars of Indian universities bashed him, and criticised his scholarly work for not including the “references” section in his work. “Whom should I refer? Whom should I quote, when my own life is the biggest reference for my writing?”, said Prof. Illaiah.


He very smartly argued further by saying “Do you find references to Kautilya’s Arthashastra or Plato’s Republic?” He then expressed that unlike a lot of Indian scholars today, he does not want to be a slave of foreign researchers and universities, rather he is a slave of his own life, the jobs that he learnt for a living since his childhood- from tiling of the land to herding the sheep in the village, and he will write about it, and teach about it, fearlessly.


He concludes by sending a powerful message to all the young minds of India today, asking them to learn to rebel, against every and all forms of injustice, against all perpetrators of injustice and inequality, irrespective of their age, gender and status. He said with the efforts of the young, we can together make India the best nation in the world, with equality, justice and productivity.

He beautifully ended his talk by saying, “I have been asked a lot of times as to who is my God? I answer them- Equality is my God, and the young, empowered people who teach the lessons of justice and equality to the powerful are my Gods. You girls are my Gurus!”

Thereafter, the Q and A session was open, and a number of interesting and insightful questions were put forward by the participants, and Prof. Illaiah answered all of them beautifully. Finally, the vote of thanks was proposed by Vanshika Chechi, the Hospitality Head of Pinnacle, who expressed gratitude on the behalf of Team Pinnacle to the speaker, our Principal, the faculty members of Miranda House, and all the participants.



  
 DEPARTMENT OF BA PROGRAMME  
 MIRANDA HOUSE  
**EXUBERANCE' 21**  
 THE CASTE CONUNDRUM  
**Visibilising Caste  
in Literature**

  
**Prof Kancha Illaiah**  
 (Writer, Director, Centre for the  
 Study of Social Exclusion and  
 Inclusive Policy, Maulana Azad  
 National Urdu University,  
 Hyderabad)

28TH FEB' 2021, 11 AM

For queries, Contact: Manali- 97922 45512 Amita- 79059 79143

THE CASTE CONUNDRUM

EXUBERANCE' 21

# CASTE, MERIT AND RESERVATION IN INDIA

*A Report by Medha Navya Dwivedi and Shubha Bhatt*

Pinnacle, the Department of B.A. Programme, Miranda House organized a webinar on the topic: "Caste, Merit and Reservation In India" as a part of its annual fest EXUBERANCE 2021. The entire fest was staged virtually and revolved around the theme of The Caste Conundrum. This webinar was held on February 28, 2021, at 4 pm via Zoom. The eminent speakers for the session were Prof. Sukhdeo Thorat and Advocate Prateek Som. The webinar was open for all and more than 100 people attended it.

Prof Thorat is a professor at Emeritus, Centre for the Study of Regional Development, JNU; Chairman, Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, New Delhi and Former Chairman of UGC. Advocate Prateek Som is currently serving at the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India and National Commission of Women, New Delhi.

Kanak Mohiley, the President of Pinnacle, the Department of BA Programme, welcomed the gathering and greeted the eminent guest speakers. Prathna Malhotra, a member of the Research Team was the co-host for the day and introduced the theme of Caste, Class and Meritocracy. She laid down some general rules for the audience and welcomed the speakers.

This was followed by the talk by Prof. Sukhdeo Thorat. Throughout the discourse on the topic of Caste, Merit and Reservation in India, the professor presented a brief account of what reservation is, why it is needed and the various arguments in favour and against reservation in India.

Prof. Thorat began by deconstructing the basics of reservation in India. He first laid down the definition and need of Reservation Policy. He introduced the topic by bringing in the concepts of minorities and the discriminated. He further defined Reservation Policy as the safeguards against the discrimination to the group that has been discriminated against in the past. He went on to illustrate the features and limitations of the Reservation Policy in India wherein he brought an important highlight of share for the reserved category. He explained that under the Reservation Policy, in proportion to their population, the discriminated class get a share in the legislature.

THE CASTE CONUNDRUM

EXUBERANCE' 21



**PROF. SUKHDEO THORAT**



**ADV. PRATEEK SOM**

Prof Thorat briefly discussed why reservation is needed. He went on to explain that certain sections of the society have been denied rights to education, employment, property etc, thus, certain special policies were developed to prohibit such discrimination. He also talked about the element of compensation involved in the reservation.

The next major topic covered by Prof Thorat was concerned with the progress of Reservation Policy in India. According to his views, despite all its limitations, the Reservation Policy has been able to make considerable progress. However, he believed that the progress of Reservation Policy in the private sector is not stable and needs to be addressed.

After covering the basics regarding the Reservation Policy, Prof Thorat highlighted several arguments in favour and against the Reservation Policy in India. One of the first arguments he touched concerns the fact that the scheduled caste constitutes one-fifth of the population of India, and so laws regarding their safeguard must be made.

Some of the arguments against the Reservation Policy illustrate that reservation results in inefficiency & that the reservation has been favourable to economically better off people. Prof Thorat strongly made his points against it with the support of some statistics. He mentioned that both economically better off and financially unstable people can face discrimination and as a result, Reservation Policy is needed. However, he stated that economic benefits of the policy can be withdrawn from those who are doing economically well.

He further shed light on the topic of Merit. According to Prof Thorat, the argument which says that students at educational institutions are applicable to certain 5-10% reservations, does not hold. He said that the main issue is not about the relaxation but about the loss of opportunities to the general category students. He believed that expanding the institution and giving access to everybody is a better solution for this issue rather than denying opportunities to those who've been discriminated against in the past.

Prof Thorat wrapped up his discussion on Caste, Merit and Reservation by mentioning a research study conducted by Ashwini Deshpande who is a professor at Ashoka University. Prof Thorat mentioned a comprehensive study of Indian Railways which concluded that the efficiency of candidates under reservation is as good as others. This concluded the speech of Prof. Sukhdev Thorat Sir in regard to reservation in employment and education.

This is followed by the speech of the second speaker of the webinar, Advocate Prateek Som Sir. Prateek Sir began by giving the outline of his speech. He said that he aims to cover the origin and evolution of casteism in India and post independence reservation system.

Prateek Sir began his speech by talking about the word 'caste'. While tracing the origin of casteism, Sir mentioned that it can be dated to the Mughals and eventually the Britishers. He mentioned that Casteism wasn't new to the world and even Mahatma Gandhi faced discrimination when he was refused an opportunity to study in England on grounds of discrimination (racism).

Prateek Sir believed that classification of specific tribes and castes led to a social divide. He suggested that such things should be walled off and a progressive India needs to be constructed.

He further elaborated the concept of endogamy and inter caste marriage. He also mentioned the efforts taken by the authorities such as the United Nations and the Indian Government to outlaw the use of many words related to untouchability and dalits.

According to Sir, although the modern caste system seems to be a bit relaxing in nature, total elimination of the caste system is a distant dream in India. The main reason for this, he mentions, is caste politics. This sums up the broad view of the Reservation Policy that Sir covered.

In the later part of his speech, Prateek Sir mentioned that a lot of things in the Constitution of India seem to be ignored. He believes that Articles 14, 15 and 16 which are concerned with equality in different spheres, are in sharp contradiction with Article 46.

Further, Sir elaborated upon the various involvement of the Reservation System which is done by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India on various internals.

Prateek Sir summed up his speech by elaborating three important suggestions on Caste, Merit and Reservation in India. His suggestions revolved around encouraging inter caste marriages, income-based reservation and amendments in the laws to limit the reservation to a single member of a marginalised family. These suggestions, as sir insisted, were strictly his personal views and should not be attached to the bodies he is associated with.

Thereafter, the floor was opened for an interactive session wherein the audience put forward some insightful questions. All the questions posed to both Prof Sukhdev Thorat Sir and Advocate Prateek Som Sir were answered by them in a graceful manner. The session was concluded by the vote of thanks.

**INNACLE**  
DEPARTMENT OF BA PROGRAMME  
MIRANDA HOUSE  
PRESENTS  
**EXUBERANCE' 21**  
THE CASTE CONUNDRUM  
**CASTE, MERIT AND  
RESERVATION IN INDIA**

**PROF SUKHDEO THORAT**  
Professor Emeritus,  
Centre for the Study of Regional Development, JNU  
Chairman, Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, New Delhi,  
Former Chairman of University Grants Commission

**ADV. PRATEEK SOM**  
Advocate- Hon'ble Supreme Court of India and  
National Commission of Women, Delhi High  
Court

**28TH FEB' 2021  
4:00 PM**

For queries, Contact: Sajneet- 91406 10340 Manali- 97922 45512

# Mythology and Marginalisation

*A Report By Suhani Duhan*

Pinnacle, the Department of B.A. Programme organized the webinar on Mythology and Marginalization as part of its Annual Fest Exuberance 2021. The speaker for the webinar was Ms Kavita Kane - the author of the bestselling books Karna's wife: The Outcast Queen and Sita's Sister. She has been known for redefining the era by way of retelling the original epics and legends in her eclectic way.

Ms Kane began by deconstructing the common perception of mythology. Mythology is not just a compilation of ancient tales and divine legends; it is the most innate story of humanity and therefore bears a universality of emotions and experiences. Notwithstanding, it does primarily contain stories written, told, heard and circulated by men. This lends mythology a certain patriarchal, masculine undertone that leads to the sidelining of female characters.

The modern discourse surrounding mythology aptly points out the problematic representation of female characters, be it the women in the Ramayana or the Mahabharata. While the writing is primarily to blame, we must also acknowledge our faults in interpretation. We have been biased and myopic in viewing women throughout history, and mythology has been the biggest victim of this prejudiced study.

Repetitive storytelling, influenced by conditioned thinking, reduced the stories of women to one-dimensional clichés. Slowly, a binary came up - women were either glorified or vilified. This black and white binary left no space for grey characters - characters with complex, multi-dimensional storylines. Women bore the brunt of these unrealistic expectations - they were either worshipped, like Sita or Savitri, or punished brutally like Ahilya or Surpanakha. As Ms Kavita points out, we, as a society, have been straitjacketing women into either deities or dayans, conveniently overlooking the fact that they were real, flawed humans with stories to tell. And we find this 'straitjacketing' not only in our mythologies. We find it creeping in the intellectual, social, political and economic milieu. The lexicon for women, as per Ms Kavita, it seems, has been reduced to a simple black and white binary. Rarely do we find mentions of sisterhood in Ramayana. However, we find mentions and in fact, a heavy bias of mythological writers towards depicting brotherhood. This focus on the masculine has led to the complete erasure of women's struggles and trials.

**MS KAVITA KANE**



THE CASTE CONUNDRUM  
EXUBERANCE' 21

Nevertheless, the modern discourse has improved and made space for women narratives. This discourse comes with many benefits - mainly the focus on individualism and the progressive exploration of women characters' motives and personalities. This switch in modern discourse has been brought forth by accepting the fact that these stories written by men cater to men at large and moving forward from there. To debunk these age-old narratives, the speaker felt that we must go back to our 'mythologies', look beyond the atypical and stir conversations around the same. Only then can we ensure the depiction of women as nuanced individualistic beings and not just a goddess or a demoness.

Following the question and answer session, the event concluded with a formal vote of thanks. With over 100 participants joining the webinar from their homes, the webinar picked at our minds, forcing us to think about how we conceive stories and how we can do better to ensure diverse narratives.

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MIRANDA HOUSE

**EXUBERANCE' 21**  
THE CASTE CONUNDRUM

**Mythology and Marginalisation**

Ms. Kavita Kané.  
Author- The Karna's Wife: The Outcast's Queen, Sita's Sister  
Former journalist

1ST MARCH 2021, 11 AM

For queries, Contact: Sajneet- 91406 10340 Amita- 79059 79143



# EXUBERANCE' 21

THE CASTE CONUNDRUM

## WINNERS

### OPEN MIC

1st: Bhavya Pari

2nd: Mansi Vijay

3rd: Nitesh Kumari



### WEAVE- A- TALE

1st: Srija Reddy

2nd: Saraswathy

3rd: Amita Singh

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# Draupadi's Story

By: Suhani Duhan  
BAP 1st Year

I stand – all alone – and ask and ask for justice from,  
a pitiless hall, ringing with the clattering roll of dice,  
but all that answers me is a helpless, echoing quiet,  
spiralling from my oldest husband's lowered eyes.  
The little girl in me attempts her best to root out,  
the blinding rage that flowers from his silence,  
but I? I strangle that blameless child's thoughts,  
and promise a future of broken, bloody violence.  
And what then? I kill and kill and kill,  
all peace and bliss and joy in me, and turn,  
a deaf ear to the pleas of the little girl, who –  
unlike me – could not watch the world burn.  
The scorching embrace of battle fills the air with,  
the frail whispers of millions of men's last breaths,  
yet my heart – set in stone – can think of nothing,  
but that day, when my pride died a thousand deaths.  
Rivers of blood flow into the ground,  
mountains of bones gleam in the sun,  
funeral pyres flicker and kiss the sky –  
all answering for the silence of one.  
I stand, at the helm of destruction,  
and the little girl stands beside me,  
for I would not let her inside my heart, afraid,  
that she would render me incapable of cruelty.  
She is me, young and ambitious and optimistic,  
a child who yearned to leave her mark on history,  
who bravely, foolishly stayed by my side at all times,  
and now, my ire cooled, I pray she accepts my apology.  
I am sorry for blaming her for the faults of men,  
for holding her naivety in contempt, for the anger,  
that fills my heart, and for the vengeance I crave, and  
I am sorry, for a thousand other things I have done to her.  
She smiles, with the cheery, nostalgic innocence of youth –  
and I recall the carefree years that have long passed by –  
a soft reminder of the life that I could make for myself, and,  
I thank and thank the little girl for never letting hope die.



# Metaphors, Melancholy and Me

By: Aditri Priya  
BAP 1st Year

She had fire in her eyes hidden deep within,  
Abysmal it is, that you still have that grin.  
Jumbled like jigsaw were her thoughts.  
Defeated yet again, She forgot how to open the knots?  
The wind chimes and bird's chirp got muffled.  
The moonlight and the lousy-rage playlist got shuffled.  
The serene sight of seascape became bleak.  
The mountaineer lost way to his well-owned peak.  
The Wanderlust preferred staying within the walls.  
The precise Calligraphist now began to scrawl.  
The Swimmer feared his friendly extreme depth.  
The Claustrophobic suffocated and wished for breath.  
No one knew whether she was dead or alive,  
Solitude was all for which she used to strive.  
Someday she will fall and start from downhill.  
And maybe then the crawling child will learn to stand still.

# What Does a Quill Think

**By: Asra Malik**  
BAP 1st Year

Started my career with an alibi  
And questioned myself did I?  
Have seen the end of an abyss  
And grinning shadow within  
The blot's color is the depth in me  
And the pause beholding you

The reason why sacrifice rhymes with doodles  
From a pen fight to unfathomable oodles  
Moral bankruptcy wrapped in its imagery can never be curbed  
Gives up its essence, just to add to yours and so it twirled  
They say every atom has its memory  
But it's a selfless commodity with a lifeless body

# To Love, With Questions, From Cynicism

By: Suhani Duhan  
BAP 1st Year

Dear reader,

Does love even matter? Truly, really matter,  
in a world saturated with broken atrocities,  
carefully built on centuries of brutal bigotry?  
Who cares if your heart has some sweet ease?  
Does a candlelight dinner or stroll in the park,  
put bites of food on a hunger-cracked plate,  
or bring warmth in the cold, dead winters?  
Tell me, does your love change harsh fate?  
Does a red rose or XOXO's at the end of a letter,  
welcome neglected lives from dead, defiled land,  
or wreck ill tidings of hate before they ruin lives?  
Can your love do any more than clasp your hand?  
Does a soft kiss on your lips, or long nights in bed,  
change the cruelty produced by prejudiced paradigm,  
or unbury the million graves dug by political greed?  
Is your selfish need to be held worth anyone's time?  
Perhaps not. Perhaps, in the grand scheme of things,  
love can't make mountains move, and rivers don't part,  
but are my cruel, pitiless questions any more useful?  
Will you let my embittered words break your heart?  
Does love even matter? Tell me what you think –  
do you cherish your dinners and letters and kisses,  
and your roses and walks and nocturnal delights?  
Is your love a blessing among a thousand curses?

Regards  
Questionably Cynical

HELLO?

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LET ME OUT

# Letter To the Unknown

By: Shubha Bhatt

BAP 1st Year

Dear Unknown,

I hope this letter finds you in the pink of your health and good spirits. I hope it rings the bell of peculiarity in you, as it does to me while I'm writing this.

A quilt of queerness seems to layer upon my chest as I've finally decided to pour out my heart to you. An equally troubling dilemma of whether I'm doing this right or not keeps invading my thoughts every once and then without fail. But with resolution and firm commitment, I sit here in my balcony to write this to you.

So finally, here's a note from me to you, from the known to the illusory, from the existent to the unrevealed.

But you know that feeling when you want to write so badly, but you fell short of words. Yeah! There are times when you feel that words won't justify your feeling to the person you're writing to. And it's here that I find myself regretting having not completed my last novel

(because you know right, I always feel that my last was the best).

With my mind tangled in these thoughts, I am now gazing at the sky, hoping to receive some tips from it. I want to fabricate words that blend with my palette of thoughts, but the sky seems to have no intention to help this handicap writer. On the contrary, it seems to sway my soul to itself. And like the sun-drenched golden granules of sand of the vast deserts, I am blown to the sky.

Oh! It's endless, cloudless and luminously blue. And now.. now I seem to be hypnotized and think of you. Yes, about you! I am thinking of the moments when I turned up to you to seek help. The moments when you were there for me as I thought I'd lose my mind and faint. And I'm thinking of all those times when I had none but your shoulder to put my head on to cry.

We are one, my love. We reside in the same body, but you seem to be far more mature than me. You seem to be that elder sibling consoling me when things aren't easy. You seem to pamper and possess me. And it's in you that I find true love.

Yes, my love, you're the voice in my head that's always there for me, by me. I belong to you, to the unknown and that's love for me.

So, until we unite in the other world,

Love and sunshine

Shubha

# Dear Love

By: Livi H Yeputhomi  
BAP 1st Year

Dear love,

I saw you today. You were sneakily disguised as my neighbour's dog pulling her tiny babies close to her in hopes of keeping them warm and safe. I saw you again when dad made a cup of coffee for mom and showered her with forehead kisses. You also came to my toddler brother when he found marshmallows on the kitchen shelf. Heck, I see you everywhere, everyday. Not that I mind seeing you. I actually love witnessing you creating your magic on everything you touch. It is really comforting and makes me so very happy and content. So keep on sprinkling your magic fairy dust on everyone because it is really needed by all. Some may deny it, but deep down they desperately need it to get by.

I always had this image of love in my head, and thought that it was like that of Romeo and Juliet's, or Heath cliff and Catherine's or Hazel and Augustus'. It never crossed my mind that love could manifest itself in Charlie Bucket, when he refused to inherit Wonka's chocolate factory because he loved his family more than fame and wealth. Or the time when love made Matilda stay back with Miss Honey rather than accompanying her spiteful family. So stupid of me to ignore all the other faces and forms of love and believe, focus on and chase only one form of it. To save face, I blame it on my naiveness, if such a word exists.

As I'm growing up, I am learning more about you, and I absolutely adore you. I think it is wonderful how you manage to brighten up someone's day with a simple smile or hug, when you step in and help mend broken relationships, and when on that certain chilly night you wrapped a blanket on the stray dog down the corner. You've taught me how to make friends and keep them, taught me how to forgive, and treasure the people close to me. You really are the only thing that keeps the world happy and sane. You are like a lighthouse, providing sailors directions, warmth and security when dangerous and angry storms and seas threaten to harm us. What would we ever do without you?

Love, I love you and I am forever grateful that you exist. I hope you always stay the same and keep us all safe in your sweet warm embrace. I also hope you stick around for a long time and help people who need you, because it gets pretty wild and cruel out here. Take care.

From,  
Love

# The Hues of Us

By: Shree Vardhani  
BAP 1st Year

So much of endurance we've weaved into us  
For the changing hues of us.  
Into the blue, the memory  
Of swaddled in a pink cloth  
And cradled in a white crib  
Ebbs away;  
ebbs away, into an area of grey.  
Was it the time when I was tickled pink?  
To have had painted my own sun, and  
there didn't crop up a red sign in every blink.  
A jest, how is it now, you see,  
Manifesting their intentional,  
yet seemingly unintentional true colours,  
Push me in a blue funk  
at every step of mine,  
To witness me as one of those junk.  
Do their hearts engender souls smeared green with envy?  
Or do their souls  
Cradle and pamper deceits?  
A revelation, unveiling, there it came,  
Of masses  
When I removed my childhood's rose coloured glasses;  
Not in the least, are they of same shade;  
Some bring out the red roses, and others, cut deep to see our bleeding poses,  
Some like the exuberant dawn,  
And the boisterous dusk, and others ochre beige husk.  
Howbeit, what intrigues me, is how  
The off colour raindrops  
Mizzling and drizzling through the pinked and oranged sky,  
Splashing through the scintillating sun, generating lush green grass  
Prompt the hope of reaching the high and blue sky sans blues;  
and reminds how  
So much of endurance we've weaved into us  
For the changing hues of us.

# प्र

By: Karuna Sharma  
BAP 2nd Year

दुनिया के खुद के ही अलग रिवाज चलते हैं,  
यहां भेड़िए भी पहन के अच्छे लिवास चलते हैं।  
कर्महीन होकर भी उन्हें शर्म ना होती है,  
भावहीन होते हैं वो उनकी अंतरात्मा सोती है।  
ईमान अपना बेच कर दिखलाते है झूठी शान,  
पर्दा हटेगा झूठ का एक दिन टूटेगा अभिमान।  
अपनी कार्ली करतूतों पर भी जरा लाज न करते है,  
झूठ के नशे में है किसी से न डरते है।  
उम्र कभी झूठ की लंबी नहीं होती है,  
भूल मत झूठ के आगे खड़ी सत्य की ही ज्योति है।  
अहंकार तुम्हारा उस दिन चूर – चूर हो जायेगा,  
जिस दिन तुम्हारे अपनों का तुमसे स्वार्थ पूर्ण हो जायेगा।  
इंतजार करो उस वक्त का जब वक्त सही आजाएगा,  
तुम्हारे अंदर का दैत्य भी तब खुद शीश झुकाएगा।  
उत्पीड़ितों को उस दिन तुम क्या पीढ़ा पहुचाओगे,  
जब देखोगे उनकी आंखों में और अपना हैवान स्वरूप पाओगे।  
मेरे प्रश्नों को उत्तर तो खैर तुम क्या ही दे पाओगे,  
कहने से सायद रोक दो – पर क्या लिखने से रोक पाओगे।

# If I were a painting

By: Aditi Choudhary

BAP 2nd Year

If I were a painting ,  
Which glorious scene I would be depicting ?  
Beating my brains out thinking about my inception,  
My ingenious painter, taking pride in his or her creation  
Whether a famed ,noted and heavenly  
Or unsung and anonymous gentleman or lady ?  
Or a rebel in parochial and patriarchal society ?  
A gifted individual creating me with rich colours  
Might be the victim of society's barb and slurs !  
I might be portraying the scene of hamlet or cloudy sky  
Or moon and stars or a desert considerably dry  
Or enchanting sunset or sunrise or a lady with blue eyes  
Holding a flower or sword or something that would me, suffice .

If I were a painting, town's famous art  
Hung on decorative wall in the exhibition hall  
For my possession, a rich brat with a large hat  
And a silk stocking mistress engaged in a spat.  
Alongside, reproducing and replicating my facsimiles,  
To adorn the houses of middle-class and baseborn families  
Worth being thousand cents ,I,the original painting of my beloved painter  
Who actually would triumph after that banter ?  
Might be the lady ; with pomp and show hung over fireplace on a high wall  
Of her towering villa embellishing the great Common Hall  
Becoming the cynosure, irking every green eyed visitor  
The royal lady forfending me from every imposter  
Recording me in the annals of her family history  
Divulging my story to her posterity  
I would be a heritage of such an affluent family  
Where my anecdotes would be narrated for centuries  
To every generation; I would be struck there for centuries  
Much of muchness , bowing to my destiny !  
If I were a painting.....

(1)

While you and I run through the spaces between these lines,  
Let's stop for a while under the shade of t's dash  
And while we're here, let's push the ime and  
Swing from the minute hand  
Slow diving into the red desert of the day,  
Let's rest by the dunes for now.  
And in the morning we'll walk to where the water's sweeter  
Where the minute hand ebbs and flows like a swing on a  
random day in autumn.

For now, though, let's look at the stars.  
She's there.  
Riding the train of yesteryear, cackling.  
The laughter and the train whistle together.  
Can you hear it settling?

It's the gentle alarm of a new wrinkle in time  
A stitch in time being knit by the minute and by the hour.

(2)

Let's not think too much.  
Let's waddle in deserts, paddle the murky waters of time for  
now.  
Let's leave it here.  
I leave it here, for you,

# Her

By: Garima Mahanjan, Editor

# Silence that Speaks

By: Roshni Kumari

BAP 1st Year

Thou fasten my crippled soul  
The broken jar of woes  
When my emotions got froze  
Thee filled that little hole

I never heard you saying  
Never saw you crying  
Don't know how you look  
A man with a tie or a boot

But there is something unusual about you  
We share a silent bond  
This silence bought me to me

Thee taught how to hide my sighs  
Present the world a beautiful smile  
I fumble when I am asked  
"How so lively?"  
Then grumble, the you inside me

"Watch the silence in my words precisely"

I cried with no one but with you  
You are the only one I never lied to  
I carried with me a jar of life  
Which i filled with emotions, people  
And experiences with strive  
Appallingly, it never reached the brim  
It remained what I call 'The jar half filled'

Like everyone else, I had my own difficult times  
Have seen the dark days, those odds and prime  
When the failure kissed my opportunity  
I ran despondently in search of impunity  
I was a naive, interm gratification  
Was all that I craved

I was in an eclipse state  
Unaware about the fact  
That you are my fate

The more I got lost in you

The more I found myself  
I could hear you  
Even when you couldn't express  
You became my constant companion  
I felt like river draining inside a canyon

You surrounded me with thy shade  
I was not alone, as you were  
The always one who stayed

You have the most melodious voice  
Which helps me to reconcile and survive  
Today I got the answer  
The jar wasn't half filled  
You occupied the half inside

O dear, you are not the absence of words  
But, are the thunder of lords  
You are the only one who hugged and furred  
When i muted the world

# A Promise from the other side

By: Siddhi Joshi  
BAP 1st Year

A letter of hope to my younger self

Dear me,

As I sit here basking under the soft light of the evening sun after a fulfilling day of work, rereading our childhood's favourite "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows" on the e-reader (yes, I finally convinced myself to give up on the beloved paperback books!), I am pulled as if by a strong force of gravity to the chaos that filled our world some exact ten years ago.

There seemed no bright light at the end of the tunnel. The horrendous things happening were filling the blue planet with blues. However, today, it's a different world. A world that back then I couldn't fathom would ever come to be. Here's a little something from me to you, from the who has weathered the storm to the one who is struggling to hold on.

Worry not I did not become a monotonous adult who is no more a nomadic artsy monk at heart. Let me fill you in with a verse from my latest book:  
Yesterday shouldn't be the only place,  
Where you carried kindness in your chest,  
Happiness, your face reflects.  
Let not the ruined world tangle with the lessons of beauty,  
From your mother that molded the soil of your being,  
into a human.

I know it would almost unbelievable when I tell you how we as a generation have finally succeeded in putting an end to climate change. The governments around the world now spend more on health and education instead of their military budgets, switching up the priority of looking for extraterrestrial lives with serving lives on our own Mother Earth! There is a conscious movement towards spirituality, remembering the impact one has through each of their actions. A newfound sea of self-healing and self-awareness is quenching the thirsts of the common people.

I think the peace we see around is merely a reflection of the calm within us. The tragic memory of war has faded in the sweet fragrance of flowers that began blooming in the soil of calm. When I look back, as cliché as it sounds, the dots do connect, and everything we were going through ultimately prepared us to give our best in all the things that were still to come. There is truly no end to the human potential.

I fall in a state of trance when I wonder the source of the change that I'm living today – was it the year that shook us all or was it a moment where the people decided to act upon the power they had been carrying all along.

Dearest, please smile more often, because every time you do, everything becomes brighter.

Hold on to all those songs and poems that glorify hope, peace and love while keeping yourself open to the change. Change will come, and when it does, be ready for you will be sailing in the vast ocean of possibilities, slowly moving towards better days, until you eventually reach your destination, the beautiful faraway lands, called, Tomorrow

A Promise from the other side

Yours Siddhi



**RUCHIKA MEHRA**  
1st year



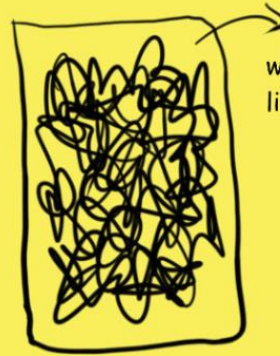
**TANISHA JAIN**  
1st year

Sometimes I feel like a ruled page



where everything  
is well defined

And some days i feel like a scribbled page



where everything feels  
like a mess

But in the end,I believe, this is what it is

A part of a notebook  
called life  
and it is okay to  
feel this way  
sometimes



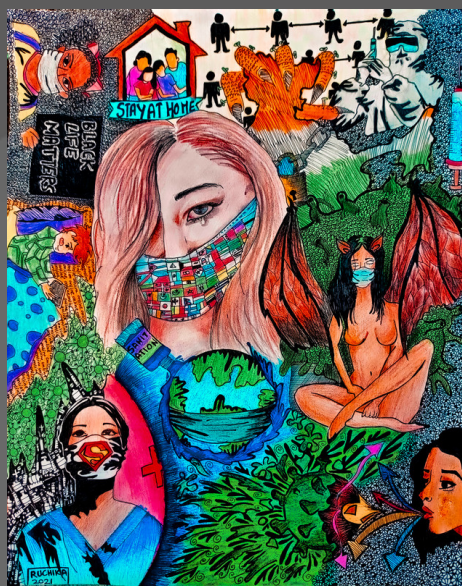


**SUNIDHI SHARMA**  
2nd year

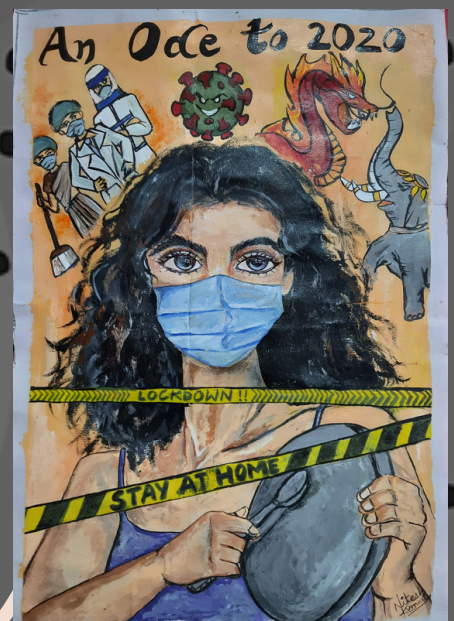
# An Ode to 2020



**RUPALI SINGH**  
1st year



**RUCHIKA MEHRA**  
1st year



**NITESH KUMARI**  
1st year

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# FREE SPEECH & HATE SPEECH: WHERE TO DRAW THE LINE?

BY: MEDHA NANDINI, EDITOR

Freedom of Speech and Expression, is one of the most precious, yet powerful gifts of a democracy. Preservation of this foundational principle of a democratic society must be the foremost instinctive reaction of anyone in the business of ideas. But, today one of the biggest challenges about free speech is that almost everyone thinks they know what it means, and they are unquestionably sure that it applies to their speech, and doesn't apply to speech which they find offensive or dangerous. Is it really that simple?

In a presently digital worlds of ours, the rising debates on questions revolving around the extent or limitations of free speech, as well as its exceptions is most definitely in the backdrop of the rising feelings of transphobia, anti-Muslim, anti-Semitism, communal far-right extremism, as well as the “cancel-culture”. Social Media is supposed to be the invaluable tool of bringing the world together, connecting different people, allowing people to sit within the four walls of their homes and express themselves to the big, busy world out there. But unfortunately, not only, it has also become a space of increasing hatred, bias and misinformation but also, there is noticeable, direct suppression of online speech and internet shutdowns in different parts of the world including India. It not only stifles the accepted notion of free speech but also aids the fading away of real, unbiased voices.

Hence this debate on the notions of free speech and hate speech has complexities and complications of innumerable layers. “Where to draw the line?” is now not just a question to ponder upon, but finding an answer to it has become an absolute necessity in the present times.

How do we define and decide the scope of hate speech? As far as the Indian laws are concerned, it presents several complications in attempting to make a distinction between permissible speech, merely offensive speech and hateful speech. This complicity has taken various forms- starting from criminalisation of dissent in a vibrant democracy like ours to outright censoring. India presents a classic case of the conflicting opinions concerning free speech, which presents itself in various shades- including but not limited to, the rise in cases of political arrests of dissenting students, authors, journalists, activists, and even comedians and cartoonists, prolonged internet curbs, and suppression of democratic protests through threats of prosecution and censorship of reporting.

Even in the international arena, cases like that of banning Trump from social media have triggered controversy. While Trump and his supporters accused Twitter of stifling “free speech”, his opponents argued in support, calling it a necessary action to smash efforts of glorifying violence & protecting stability.

Events like these provide us a chance to redefine free speech and understand its bottom lines and limitations.



Presently there is no internationally accepted legal definition of hate speech, which is also the reason for the widespread controversies surrounding it. However, according to the Constitution of India, Hate speech constitutes a criminal charge under Section 153A, which is the offence of promoting communal disharmony or feelings of hatred between different religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities. This vague definition has caused dilemmas and controversies in various instances.

Hate speech can be called as a speech or expression that aims to denigrate a person or persons on the basis of (alleged) membership in a social group identified by attributes such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, physical or mental disability, and others. Hate speech can also include nonverbal depictions and symbols. For example, the Nazi swastika, the Confederate Battle Flag (of the Confederate States of America), and pornography have all been considered hate speech by a variety of people and groups. Malicious stereotypical slurs or epithets, which promote racism, or other social evils can also be considered within the ambit of Hate speech.

Traditional liberals argue for permitting hate speech within the boundaries of free speech, maintaining that state censorship's a cure that causes more harm than bigoted expression. They believe that this principle of censorship can be often used to suppress unpopular yet legitimate expression of opinions and criticism against the privileged and powerful. But, on the other hand, advocates of censorship argue that the traditional liberals fail to understand that hate speech is not just an expression of ideas. There are sections of society who are so much more vulnerable to be subjects of such speech. Hate speech, along with being "insulting", also perpetuates oppression by causing the victims, the perpetrators, and society at large to internalize the hateful messages and act accordingly. Victims of hate speech cannot enter the "open marketplace of ideas" as equal participants to defend themselves, because hate speech, in conjunction with a broader system of inequality and unjust discrimination that burdens the victims, effectively silences them.

"Drawing a line" between free speech and hate speech and bringing objectivity to matters as sensitive and critical as this is filled with complexities. Whoever draws this line, and however the line is drawn, it won't be possible to absolutely avoid discontent and resentment. The world is presently in a state of turbulence. Hate is moving into the mainstream- starting from TV news debates to the closed spaces of our homes. On looking at various definitions of hate speech and different perspectives on it, we can somehow reach to a conclusion that any kind of speech or form of expression, which essentially incites violence, discrimination, or hostility against a member/members of a particular social group and/or is factually incorrect cannot, and should not come into the purview of free speech. But the expression of dissatisfaction, or criticism against the ruling government, and opinions based on real events and facts should not be silenced or made the subject of censorship. Hence, two aspects of speech are very important while undertaking its assessment and/or regulation- intention, and context. Both of these aspects should play a primary role in deciding on the cases of hate speech.

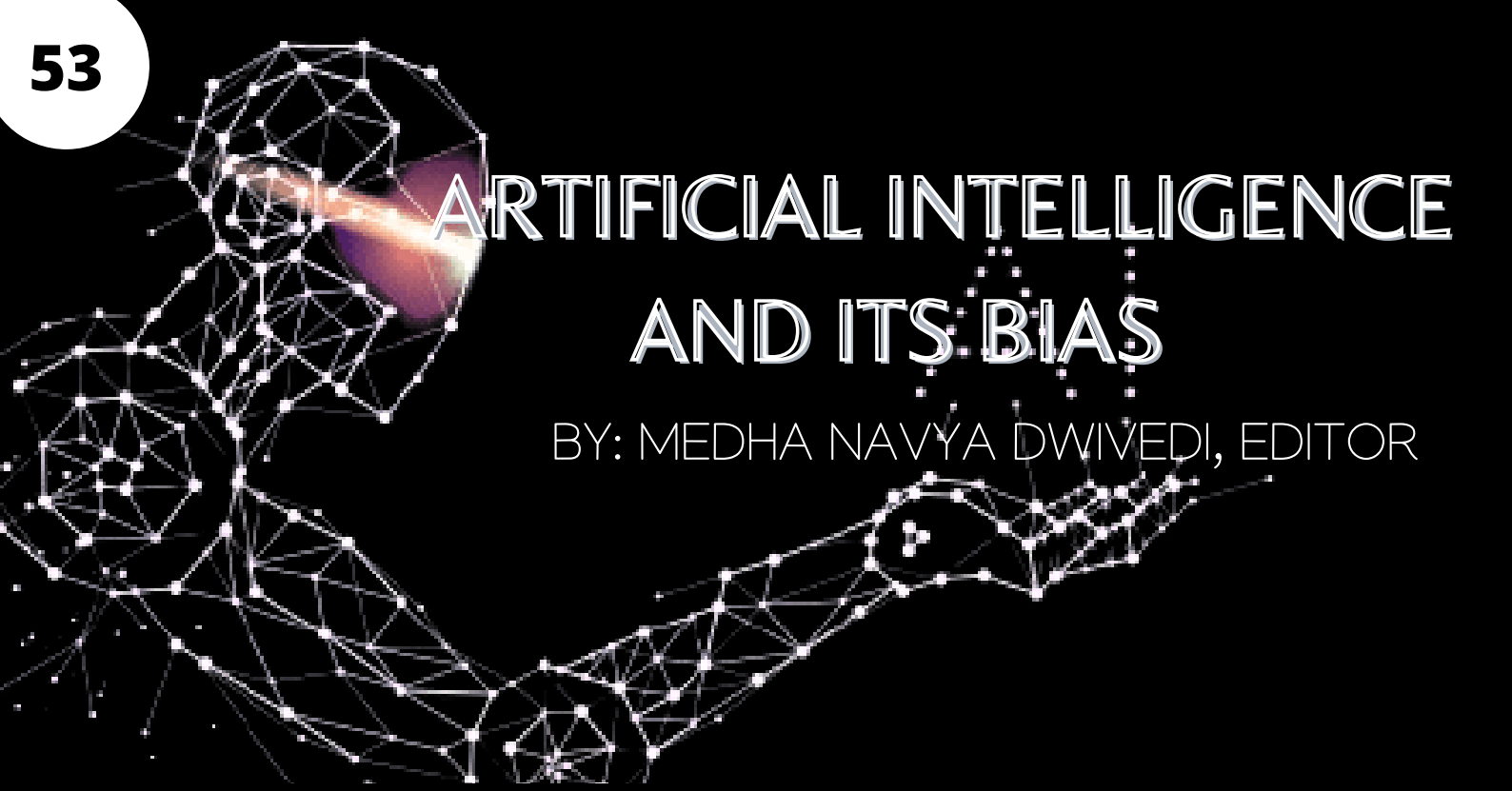
The sudden rise in hate speech can be attributed to the "attention economy" existing in our times, when people behind their screens express with scarce rationality and knowledge just to grab eyeballs and attain popularity. The Internet has provided a very comfortable space for the spread misinformation and propaganda narratives which has worked as a tool for dividing people and opinions. Amidst this polluted atmosphere, very little space has remained for logical discussion and deliberation. 280 characters are not enough- neither for expressing one's own self nor for understanding others. There is no better time than now to create a platform or transform the present platforms for debates for people who are provided "brownie points" for reasoned arguments instead of likes, retweets and follows for speech that are impulsive in nature and does more harm than good.

It has become very essential to engage with new and traditional media to address hate speech narratives and promote the values of tolerance, non-violence, pluralism and freedom of speech and expression. Also, organisations and companies must be made morally accountable for their actions.

Nevertheless, hate speech cannot be controlled until and unless we raise awareness at an individual level and contribute towards fostering an inclusive and peaceful society. People must be exhorted to come out of their algorithmic-driven echo chambers and learn from varied viewpoints. When an individual fails to objectively analyse the opinion of others, that is exactly when the fear of sanctity of the “public square” being sacrilege by the actual purveyors of hate arises.

In this course of addressing hate speech, one must not forget the true essence of the freedom of speech and expression. Real voices, real stories of vulnerable or marginalised, or sufferers of any kind must not be stifled in the garb of “hate speech.” Like George Orwell said- “ If liberty means anything at all, it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear.”

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# ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND ITS BIAS

BY: MEDHA NAVYA DWIVEDI, EDITOR

From finding insurance policies to diagnosing our illnesses, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is everywhere. AI has entered every aspect of our lives and it is increasingly becoming normalized. Although in its nascent stage, AI has made way into law, medical science and human resources.

AI systems are only as good as the data we put into them. Bad data can contain implicit racial, gender, or ideological biases. Many AI systems will continue to be trained using bad data, making this an ongoing problem. Human prejudices translate into AI; As AI learns automatically and grows, the discrimination is amplified. It picks up the stereotypes and prejudices of humans from books, articles, and social media online. Hence, one can say it is the automation of bias.

We generally see AI as something which is very neutral in nature, which is a very dangerous assumption, given that AI is quite biased in nature.

To portray the truly discriminatory nature of Artificial Intelligence, let us consider Amazon's system of screening applicants. The system learnt that male candidates were preferable when it was trained to observe patterns in the resumes submitted to the company over a span of 10 years. The system began marking down resumes which featured the word 'women's' because most resumes came from men and since the AI was trained on the basis of historical hiring decisions, which favoured men over women and so learned the same.

According to ProPublica, an investigative journalism organization, a computer program used by US courts across the nation has been reported to be biased against black prisoners. The program, named the Correctional Offender Management Profiling for Alternative Sanctions, mistakenly flagged black defendants as likely to re-offend at almost twice the rate as white defendants (45% to 24%). The program likely factored in the higher rates of arrest for black people into its predictions but was not able to escape the same racial biases that contributed to those higher levels of arrests. Bias has also been reported in granting credit to home buyers, even going as far as to potentially violate the Fair Housing Act. Rates of defaulting may be higher in some neighborhoods, but an algorithm using this information to make black and white calls runs the risk of heading towards "red-lining" territory. Examples abound, with plenty of cases to show AI and technology to be both sexist and racist. Let's not forget Google's search algorithm including black people in the results of a search on "gorilla."

Human biases are well-documented, from implicit association tests that demonstrate biases we may not even be aware of, to field experiments that demonstrate how much these biases can affect outcomes. Over the past few years, society has started to wrestle with just how much these human biases can make their way into artificial intelligence systems — with harmful results. At a time when many companies are looking to deploy AI systems across their operations, being acutely aware of those risks and working to reduce them is an urgent priority.

The appeal of AI systems is the idea that they can make impartial decisions or are absolutely neutral, free of human bias. This has been proven to be wrong multiple times. AI is also spreading into the healthcare industry, but even data in health is not free of biases against women. It's because they learn by looking at the world as it is, not as it ought to be. Many times language translation machines have assumed doctors to be 'male' even when a gender-neutral term is used in the native language or no gender is mentioned. These systems are more likely to associate positive terms with Western names as opposed to names from other parts of the world. A study in Boston University created an algorithm which labeled women as homemakers and men as software developers, using Google News Data.

The problem is not entirely new. Back in 1988, the UK Commission for Racial Equality found a British medical school guilty of discrimination. The computer program it was using to determine which applicants would be invited for interviews was determined to be biased against women and those with non-European names. However, the program had been developed to match human admissions decisions, doing so with 90 to 95 percent accuracy. What's more, the school had a higher proportion of non-European students admitted than most other London medical schools. Using an algorithm didn't cure biased human decision-making. But simply returning to human decision-makers would not solve the problem either.



In the Indian context given a large number of biases within our society which are themselves seen in policies and speeches alike, a translation of the same into Artificial Intelligence is dangerous. The lack of representation of various communities and ethnicities in tech makes the occurrence of these biases more likely. States like Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand are already using software for facial recognition along with digital criminal records.

Bias is all of our responsibility. It hurts those discriminated against, of course, and it also hurts everyone by reducing people's ability to participate in the economy and society. It reduces the potential of AI for business and society by encouraging mistrust and producing distorted results. Business and organizational leaders need to ensure that the AI systems they use improve on human decision-making, and they have a responsibility to encourage progress on research and standards that will reduce bias in AI.

The primary problem occurs during the collection of data. Wherein either the data is not reflective of the status quo, for instance when an algorithm is fed only data of one race, making facial recognition AI inherently bad in recognising various races. To illustrate, a study by MIT 'Gender Shades' revealed that systems by companies like Microsoft and IBM for gender

classification showed a high error rate of 34.4% for dark-skinned females as opposed to light-skinned males. A similar problem occurs when the data in itself is prejudiced.

Ensuring the removal of biases is a continuous process like is the case with all forms of discrimination. It requires long-term research and investment by multiple disciplines. Google, for instance, is investing time into ensuring their AI is not discriminatory. Recognising that facial recognition and camera were not picking non-white skins adequately, they developed technology to detect the slightest differences in light. They went on to have their home assistants and speakers have insults and slurs hurled at them to be able to check how the AI reacts to these terms and where to fix it. Sorting out AI's discriminatory behaviour hence requires an active effort from all people involved in the process of creation and testing to recognise and catch onto the problems.

A crucial principle, for both humans and machines, is to avoid bias and therefore prevent discrimination. Bias in AI systems mainly occurs in the data or in the algorithmic model. As we work to develop AI systems we can trust, it's critical to develop and train these systems with data that is unbiased and to develop algorithms that can be easily explained.

## BY: KHUSHI KANSAL, 3RD YEAR

From purchasing multiple perfume bottles and expensive lip kits to booking appointments at hair and spa salons, we all have spent an obscene amount of money on beauty products and services on more than one occasion in order to look “good” or “presentable”. If one were to assess how much money is spent by an individual on such products and services in a couple of months, the number might surprise or even compel one to wonder- why do we spend so much money to look good? Society puts unfair pressure on both men and women to look a certain way which results in the forming of certain beauty standards that are both unrealistic and ever-changing. To “look good” is to match these beauty standards set by society and to feel accepted or even taken seriously by the people you interact with.

On 29 September 2019, we conducted an online survey aimed at ascertaining how much money is spent by an individual in India on beauty products and services. The goal of the survey was to evaluate the power of beauty standards set by society, how aware people are of these standards and what are their views on them. We prepared a questionnaire asking people how much money they spend on- hair products (hair cream, hairspray, gel, hair colour, etc), makeup (lipstick, foundation, eye makeup, etc), toiletries (perfume, deodorant, body cream, etc), and saloon services (haircut, spa, waxing, etc) each in 3 months. We also asked them whether they think of themselves as beauty conscious or not and what their views on the beauty standards set by society are.

We received 95 responses, 95% of which were by women, out of which 68% were within the age group of 18-32 years. The survey revealed that more than half of the responders (approx. 63%) spend up to 1000 INR on beauty products and services with approx. 12% of the responders spending more than 1000 INR and only 25% not spending any money on them. Approx. 90% of the responders admitted to being beauty conscious and concerned about their looks quite often. Even responders who don't spend much money on these beauty products and services acknowledged the pressure they face to meet the unrealistic beauty standards set by society.

While a very small section of responders feel that beauty standards aren't that restricting or discouraging, a large chunk of them strongly believes that these standards are unfair, derogatory and discriminatory, especially towards women. They understand how problematic these norms are and while some may consciously try to avoid falling into this societal trap, it has become unavoidable for most as these standards have been internalized and engraved in people's minds from a very young age. Women especially experience this pressure to conform and endorse the so-called 'ideal beauty' the most which has led to an increase in mental illnesses like depression, anxiety, low self-esteem and eating disorders within them. Many women are utterly convinced that they aren't beautiful and hence- strong, worthy or powerful, as the media has falsely conditioned people to believe that their worth is determined by their physical attractiveness. This is due to the media wanting to create a butterfly effect wherein the people are compelled to buy beauty products and services in order to thrive and feel accepted.

However, it is important to understand the social expectation that women should adhere to these stereotypes is completely unreasonable and unworldly. A lot of the responders emphasized the need to break free of these stereotypes and focus instead on the liberty of self-expression and authenticity that each individual possesses. One such responder stated that “real beauty comes from within” resonating the importance of personality and individuality over one's physical appearance. In the words of D. H. Lawrence, “Beauty is an experience, nothing else. It is not a fixed pattern or an arrangement of features. It is something felt, a glow or a communicated sense of fineness.” We are also a sum of our thoughts, emotions and intellect and it is this which makes us beautiful, unique and valid.

# Women in Parliament: Or lack thereof

BY: GURMANVEER, 2ND YEAR

Politics as it is practiced today is not a female-friendly environment. While technically the playing field is level, in reality women operate at a disadvantage compared to men. Democracy is biased against electing women. Women lead different lives to men because of both their sex and their gender. They are treated differently. They experience the world differently, and this leads to different needs and different priorities. Female and male legislators inevitably bring different perspectives to politics. The system is skewed towards electing men, which means that the system is skewed towards perpetuating the gender data gap in global leadership, with all the attendant negative repercussions for half the world's population. Like a male-dominated engineering company which makes PPE kits around the standard male body, a male-dominated legislature will therefore suffer from a gender data gap that will lead it to serve its female citizens inadequately. And surprise, most of the world's governments are male-dominated. These data gaps in government thinking results in the government producing male-biased policies that are harming women. As of December 2017, women made up a dismal average of 23.5% of the world's parliamentarians, although this figure hides significant regional variation: Nordic parliaments are on average 41.4% female while Arab parliaments are on average 18.3% female. Women account for 10% or less of parliamentarians in thirty-one countries, including four countries that have no female parliamentarians at all (Caroline Criado-Perez, Invisible Women, 2019).

With little to no representation of women, the male-dominated legislatures often tend to generate gender-neutral or gender-skewed policies with no account of women's bodies and their needs. Take Poland for example. What is underway in Poland is a forceful rolling back of pregnant women's sexual and reproductive rights by declaring the law authorising abortions for malformed fetuses to be unconstitutional, effectively banning most of the small number of official abortions carried out in Poland. The law, almost exclusively made, supported and passed by men, implicitly states that the life and dignity of women are less important than the life of a foetus.

One US analysis has found that framing human rights as women's rights issues makes male politicians less likely to support the legislation. This reluctance to support women's rights issues comes from a place of fear. Certain men, who have grown up in male-dominated houses, fear what they see as women taking away power and public space that is rightfully "theirs". For them, women taking up space means less space for them and our male legislatures are not, of course, immune to this insubstantial fear which results in them not taking up and actively standing for women's rights. When we exclude half the population from a role in governing itself and the other half which is governing is ignorant about the needs of the former, we create a gender data gap at the very top which results in doing more harm than good to not just the former but to the latter too.



Globally, 75% of the unpaid work is done by women, who spend three to six hours per day on it compared to men's average of thirty minutes to two hours. Women do three times the amount of unpaid care work men do; according to the IMF, this can be further subdivided into twice as much childcare and four times as much housework. Estimates suggest that unpaid care work could account for upto 50% of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) in high-income countries, and as much as 80% of GDP in low-income countries. The omission of unpaid services of women from GDP was a deliberate decision taken and supported by men on the flimsy ground that it would be too big a task in terms of collecting the data. It not only resulted in undermining the importance of the work women do but also ripped them off any kind of financial independence they must have enjoyed had the unpaid work they mostly do been included in the national income and they were paid for it. According to economics professor Sue Himmelweit, the unpaid work women do tends to be seen as a costless resource to exploit. Women's unpaid work is work that society depends on, it is work from which society as a whole benefits. Several researchers have found that teams with a higher proportion of women often reach better decisions and generate more novel solutions. One wonders if women had been equally represented in the legislature or had their opinions and voices been heard before making policies which affects them profusely, would the world have been different. And by different, one means better. Or atleast I do.

Having different perspectives in the government matters. The data accrued from a lifetime of being a woman matters. We have to stop wilfully closing our eyes to the positive discrimination that currently works in favour of men. We have to stop acting as if theoretical, legal equality of opportunity is the same as true equality of opportunity. And we have to start getting women with might and main on board, we have to start actively listening to them, we have to start taking their needs and demands seriously and above all, we have to start accepting and celebrating women taking up space.



# A POSTCOLONIAL READING OF SELECTED WORKS OF EDGAR ALLAN POE AND SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

BY: LIKITHA REDDY, 3RD YEAR

Dr. Shampa Roy, in her book *True Crime Writings in Colonial India: Offending Bodies and Darogas in Nineteenth-Century Bengal*, states that, "Crime-centred writings can often yield rich insights into the social experience of the historical moment in which they were produced. The fascinating enterprise of pursuing clues and leads and investigating mysteries also inevitably lead to engagements with questions about why and how crime and criminality were understood, defined and dealt with in their contemporary contexts. And since questions related to criminality cannot be fully understood without delving into several social and ideological issues that cluster around the ever-changing boundaries between legitimate and illegitimate behaviour within specific social locations, the pursuit of such questions becomes an exploration of the historical moment in all its varied complexity." Thus, in order to do a postcolonial critique of 19th century British society and its outlook, I chose to look at the early detective fiction produced in that period. The works selected for perusal here are the writings of two prominent authors of the detective-fiction genre and in which the issues I intend to focus on are more conspicuous.

Edgar Allan Poe, born January 19, 1809 in Boston could indubitably be considered one of the most influential writers of the nineteenth century, and is considered as the 'father of detective fiction'. The short story *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* was first published in *Graham's* magazine in 1841. It is considered as the first detective story in English literature, which went on to serve as an inspiration and archetype for the detective tales published after that.

It is the first instalment in a series of three stories called the 'Dupin Tales', named after the protagonist Chevalier C. Auguste Dupin. The other stories in the series are *The Mystery of Marie Rogêt* (1842) and *The Purloined Letter* (1844). Every story from the Dupin tales introduced a new element into the crime fiction genre: *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* is a locked-room mystery; *The Mystery of Marie Rogêt* is the first example of armchair detection; and *The Purloined Letter* introduced the theme of a most unlikely perpetrator. Dupin is introduced as an analyst and a well-read, imaginative man with a talent for meticulous observation. He, along with his unnamed companion (and narrator of the stories) lived in seclusion, entertained no visitors and only ventured outside after nightfall. The analyst is described as cryptic, eccentric and moody, with an unusual fancy for night-time.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was born in 1859 into an Irish Catholic family in Edinburgh, Scotland. When he was pursuing a medical degree, Doyle wanted to write a detective story, one in which the detective would reach his conclusions by deductive reasoning and not by accident or carelessness of the criminal. He was inspired by Edgar Allan Poe's analyst Dupin, Gaboriau's crime novels and his tutor from university, Dr. Joseph Bell. Bell had the most remarkable powers of observation- when he looked at a patient, he could tell not only their disease, but very often also their occupation and place of residence.

Doyle wrote his first detective novel, *A Study in Scarlet* which was published in *Beeton's Christmas Annual* in 1887. *A Study in Scarlet* introduced the legendary characters of consulting detective Sherlock Holmes and his loyal friend/assistant Dr. John Watson, who is also the narrator of Holmes' adventures. Holmes is described as highly intelligent and intellectual, observant and an egoistic man. He is often anti-social and moody, but very adventurous. He is also known for skirting the law at various instances.

The tales of Dupin and Holmes, along with their companions and other recurring characters earned such tremendous popularity that they became prototypes for the plots and characters of the detective-fiction to be produced over the years, not just in literature, but also in theatre, films and television. Poe lays the foundation for a stereotype by creating Auguste Dupin, and Doyle follows suit by creating Sherlock Holmes. The stereotype is of a reclusive male detective who is given to eccentricities with a male companion whom the reader can trust and relate to. This detective is rational and looks to science and logic for answers, while his loyal companion waits in his shadow, waiting to be of help. These qualities such as physical strength, reason and toughness have often been attributed to men, and not women. These characteristics are considered 'masculine' traits, and are unnatural for a woman to possess and exhibit these attributes. Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot and Captain Arthur Hastings; Rex Stout's Nero Wolfe and Archie Goodwin; and Saradindu Bandhopadhyay's Byomkesh Bakshi and Ajit Kumar Banerjee etc are some examples.

It is also important to note that various feminist movements and milestones in the 19th and 20th centuries in Britain find no representation in Poe and Doyle's stories. These stories reinstate the patriarchal dichotomy of 'public' and 'private' spheres. Women belonged inside the 'private' sphere, and if a woman was found outside of it, in the 'public sphere', she was either killed off or married by the end of the narrative. This holds true with the representation of most women, not only in nineteenth century detective fiction, but also in a good number of Victorian novels.

For instance, in Poe's *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, Madame and Mademoiselle L'Espanaye, both presumed to be single women, are murdered. In *The Mystery of Marie Rogêt*, Marie Rogêt, who works in a parfumerie goes missing and is found dead in a river. In Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet*, Lucy Ferrier dies of heartbreak. In *The Sign of the Four*, Mary Morstan, who consults Holmes regarding a mystery, becomes engaged to be married to Watson by the end of the novel. In *A Scandal in Bohemia*, it is indicated at the end that Irene Adler gets married. In *The Speckled Band*, Julia Stoner is murdered and Helen Stoner is engaged to be married. The only female character who holds a recurring role in the Holmes canon is Mrs Hudson since she is well within the boundaries of the 'private' sphere.

Edgar Allan Poe also seems to have deliberately overlooked the implication of sexual crimes in his stories. While discussing *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, Nancy Harrowitz states that "it is far easier for Dupin to imagine a runaway orangutan, a wild man of the forest, than face the truth about 'sexual' relations at home: the agonistics of violence against women." Even if the murders had indeed been sexual crimes, by incriminating a foreign entity, Poe artfully refutes any association with a white person.

Edgar Allan Poe once again steers clear of the sexual crime hypothesis in *The Mystery of Marie Rogêt*, despite unmistakable evidence of its probability. Why is Poe so loath to the notion of the possibility of the crime being a sexual one? One probable reason could be that historically, "nineteenth century America was a period in which the sexual impulse, at least for the middle class, was systematically repressed and deformed." From a postcolonial perspective however, it is likely that since the story ends with the mystery unsolved, there could be the risk of a white person, or a group of white people being implicated in the crime, which is why Poe may have struck down the entire sexual crime theory as soon as the plot permitted. Also, his not-so-subtle victim-blaming attitude on the subject of rape is quite apparent in Dupin's line- "The medical testimony spoke confidently of the virtuous character of the deceased."



Michael Gillespie and John Harpham explain the emergence the relationship between imperial anxieties and the popularization of detective fiction in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries:

The centre of imperial anxiety was London- the political, economic, and cultural centre of the Empire. From 1800 to 1911, London's population grew rapidly, which put city services under tremendous strain. Social and economic conditions in London were deteriorating during most of this period and the wages were terribly low and criminal organizations spread throughout the city, mostly unchecked except by the equally violent vigilante groups that opposed them. Many immigrants also came to London from the rest of Europe, especially after 1848. Blacks from Africa and the Caribbean, Egyptians, Chinese and Indians also had their communities... Indeed, antipathy toward a growing immigrant population was a pervasive feature of cultural, political, and economic life in Victorian and Edwardian England, particularly in London... Throughout this period, popular attitudes toward immigrants were reflected in popular attitudes toward crime... British contributions to the emerging field of ethnology tended to associate the foreign with the degenerate and criminal, while leading studies of criminal anthropology traced criminal tendencies to foreign characteristics. England in the Victorian and Edwardian era was not for the most part a violently or radically xenophobic society. But it did harbour powerful anxieties about the steady arrival of foreigners and the dangers they presented.

A brilliant character like Holmes, who sought out and fought crime, seemed to quell the people's anxieties for a while, at least. At the point where imperialism was at its zenith, as well as the concerns that it brought along, the genre of detective fiction emerged and became wildly popular. Both Poe and Doyle clearly subscribed to the dominant theoretical paradigms of their time. They created a binary between the European and the non-European. The 'high-handed executive attitude of nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century European colonialism' is distinctly manifest in a number of their detective novels and stories. They exhibited signs of underlying orientalism, racism and xenophobia. Media sensationalism fuelled the rising fear of crime in Europe and associated it with all things foreign.

Historian Bernard Cohn believes that representations of India bulked large in the international exhibitions and world's fairs of the second half of the nineteenth century. Cohn explains that rulership over a colony allows for creating a historiography that gives the colonizer the power to define the nature of the colony's past, create a suitable record of its civilization, and propound canons of taste.

Sneh Mahajan writes that "the language of cultural dominance and ideology of race had been accelerating since the eighteenth century. By the end of the nineteenth century, colonialism had developed into a system of ahistorical categorisation in which cultures and societies of the colonised were perceived as intrinsically inferior. In these narratives of power, lands and peoples were arranged according to European purposes and principles."

Set in nineteenth century Paris, the plot of Edgar Allan Poe's *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* opens with the gruesome murders of two women inside a locked room in their house. While the room is in absolute disorder, the only clue found is the murder weapon- a razor, but no perceivable signs of forced entry or traces of the criminal. Our analyst Dupin enters the crime scene, conducts a thorough examination and comes to the astonishing conclusion that the perpetrator of the crime is a rogue Orangutan brought back by a French sailor from the Malay islands, which is still out loose.

Dupin exhibits his deductive abilities by explaining how he solved the crime. It is important to note that Dupin uses language as a tool to solve the crime. He says that the shrill voice heard soon after the murders was not in any European language, and it couldn't have possibly belonged to an Asiatic or African since they don't abound in Paris, so it was not a human voice. Nancy Harrowitz draws attention to the fact that the witnesses would not have been able to recognize words from either an Asiatic or African language. "The fact that these utterances seemed quick, unequal, and harsh does not exclude the possibility that they belonged to a language with which the witnesses were not familiar, which they themselves had made clear in their interviews."

Since the shrill voice was "foreign in tone to the ears of men of many nations" and unintelligible to a few Europeans, Dupin comes to the conclusion that it wasn't a human voice at all. By doing so, he denies the existence of languages outside of Europe. Also, the interviews of the people at the crime scene throw light on the imperialist nature of European nations and their competition for control and hegemony in foreign territories, i.e. the colonies.

By making an orangutan (how could Dupin be certain, in the first place, that it was an orangutan in particular, and not any other ape, just from a tuft of hair?), from the Malay islands, guilty of the brutal murders, Poe participates in the imperialistic concern of his time. The wild orangutan is unmistakably a juxtaposition for the immigrants from colonized states and its mindless, savage killings symbolize their culture and habits. Poe tries to make the crime and criminal as far removed from Europe as possible. Between the clues that were made and the clues that were missed, the underlying cultural implications of the text are made abundantly clear: that the languages and cultures which do not belong to Europe and unfathomable to Europeans are non-existent; and that Europeans don't commit crimes- they are in fact the victims of the crimes committed by the Oriental immigrants.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is equally guilty of racism and class discrimination, which find clear manifestation in a lot of his works. The first Holmes novel, *A Study in Scarlet* is about the mysterious murders of two Americans, Enoch Drebber and Joseph Strangerson, in London, which Holmes investigates and solves. With the help of people from the working class and the homeless, he captures the murderer, Jefferson Hope, who is also an American. A backstory is then revealed which revolves around a Mormon band of settlers in Utah, America and their relation with the crime committed in Europe.



The story opens with the introduction of Dr John Watson and his career as a military doctor in Afghanistan. He is wounded in the war and is admitted into a military hospital in Peshawar, where he contracts enteric fever, which Watson calls, "the curse of our Indian possessions." In the very first page of the novel, Doyle's contemptuous, imperialistic outlook is evident. This, of course, is a reflection of the public attitude of the English about their colonies at the time- the colonies were but mere playthings, to be used and enjoyed, and cast away when they were squeezed dry of their utility.

Newspapers on the next day were filled with accounts of these mysterious murders, each with its own theories and suspicions. However, what was common in all reports was that they accused political refugees, revolutionists and foreigners in England for the crimes. Holmes enlists the help of the homeless and members of the working class to solve the case. Watson finds the choicest derogatory terms to refer to them- street arabs, dirty little scoundrels, disreputable statuettes, rats and little beggars. He is being simply racist when he calls them 'street arabs' when they are indeed not Arabs at all. When they enter Holmes' apartment, they elicit disgusted groans from Watson and Mrs Hudson. Holmes warns them to stay out and only allows their leader Wiggins to enter, who according to Watson has the most 'insignificant and unsavoury' personality. Watson is unreasonably nasty and condescending, describing them in the most insidious and othering manner. These are intelligent people; they do most of the leg-work for Holmes and often are responsible for catching the criminal. However, since they are not 'gentlemen', they are never given their due credit.

When the murderer is caught, he talks about his history in Utah that justifies his crimes, which is described in the second part of the novel- the 'Mormon melodrama'- as Michael Homer calls it. The Mormon sub-plot, set in Utah, America, is not recounted by Watson, but by an omniscient narrator. It is as toxic as the first part of the novel. The opening scene is in the Alkali plains, painted as a barren and repulsive desert, with no trace of human life for miles.

Firstly, it is to be noted that the subplot is without a doubt a coloniser's narrative. The representation of the native Americans as barbaric and their association with wild animals proves my claim. Secondly, the narrator talks of the area as absolutely uninhabited and also uninhabitable. If there was no sign of human life there, where did the native Americans living there go? And if the land was so unfit for habitation, why did the Europeans settle there? Thirdly, Jefferson Hope himself was a hunter of the native Americans. Doyle seems to have conveniently chosen not take into account the tribes of native Americans already living there and deliberately overlook their massacre and the colonisation of their land by European colonisers and subsequently the United States government; and thereby depriving them of their identity and wiping off their existence.

The novel's misrepresentation of the Mormon community has been particularly criticised by American writers and critics. The text paints them as cold-blooded assassins and sex-maniacs, who would turn on anyone who speaks up against their sect or abandons it. He calls them "persecutors of the most terrible description" and not true Christians. Doyle's depiction of them as forceful polygamists is also far from accurate, since the Supreme Court of the United States in 1879 gave a ruling that even Mormons are not exempted from the law against polygamy; long before the publication of the novel.

According to scholar Sebastian Lecourt, "since the late 1830s, when the Mormons had begun to attract English converts, a growing number of journalists, travel writers and novelists had been stoking the English public's curiosity about this strange American sect." Such a portrayal actually legitimized the European fantasies about the Mormons and the Avenging Angels.

When asked about his misrepresentation of the Mormons in his novel, Doyle is unapologetic about his descriptions. He defends himself by saying, "All I said about the Danite Band and the murders is historical, so I cannot withdraw that, though it is likely that in a work of fiction, it is stated more rapidly than in a work of history. It's best to let the matter rest." Although the imperial processes of the time find room to manifest themselves in the text, Doyle, who is well aware of its implications, does not attempt to comment on them.

*The Sign of the Four*, Doyle's second novel, revolves around a stolen treasure from Agra in India, for which contenders commit multiple murders. Jonathan Small along with his companion Tonga- a tribal from the Andaman Islands, seeks revenge against Captain Morstan and Colonel Sholto who stole the treasure from him. Just as in *A Study in Scarlet*, this novel too has a subplot outside of London- in Agra, India during the Revolt of 1857.

The Sign of the Four, according to McBratney, “works to legitimize the concepts of racial and criminal type as they appear in the ethnography of the time. In that process, Doyle’s narrative functions to deny Indians any meaningful political agency- a denial that tends to bolster the colonial structures that govern them. By setting racial, caste and tribal types in authoritative taxonomies, the Indian census formed an epistemological template that left its stamp on imaginative literature about the Indian subcontinent.”

Holmes finds information on Tonga’s tribe from an old volume which states that the aborigines of the Andaman Islands are ‘a fierce, morose and intractable people...They are naturally hideous, having large, misshapen heads, small fierce eyes and distorted features.’ John McBratney says that the most striking feature of Holmes’ account of Tonga is its blatant unreality. He calls it ‘the rankest tissue of popular stereotype, crude sensationalism, and bare-faced fabrication’.

Another of Doyle’s reckless blunders is the character of Mahomet Singh. In what state of mind did Doyle create a character that is both Muslim and Sikh at the same time? This point reaffirms Doyle’s complete disinterest to be accurate about statements he made about subjects foreign to him and his sheer apathy about their cultural and political implications. In *The Speckled Band* (1892), Holmes exposes Dr. Grimesby Roylott, who has already murdered one of his stepdaughters, Julia Stoner, and has tried to kill the surviving stepdaughter, Julia’s twin, Helen by using an Indian snake. Roylott wanted to murder his stepdaughters in order to control his dead wife’s money which would have passed onto the girls when they married. But the Englishman’s greed is associated with the evil practices he learnt while working in India, thus allowing Doyle to orientalise Roylott’s crime.

The Holmes novels also underline the xenophobic character of Doyle. For him, England, which then dominated almost half of the world, was a target for crime and criminals that originated in foreign lands. He was always eager to alienate and disassociate crime from England. The murderer and the murdered in *A Study in Scarlet* belonged

to America. Similarly, in *The Sign of the Four*, Holmes solves a crime that originated in India and involves criminals who were natives of India. In *The Speckled Band*, Roylott is shown to be friendly with the gypsies and his crimes are seen as a result of the ‘oriental’ influence from his time spent in India.

Poe and Doyle’s detective stories are often littered with objects and animals from the ‘Orient’ such as orangutans, tiger skins, cigars, rugs etc. This could be seen as a sign of fetishization of Indian objects. The ownership of these objects by the characters symbolizes the imperial domination and ownership of India by the British. The inhabitants of the colonized states were mere exhibits in the museum for anthropological, biological, linguistic and ethnographic purposes. They were denied franchise and the Orientalist fancies about them were believed to be empirical reality.

Crime and class position are strongly interlinked. In the bourgeois scheme, it is the working class and the economically unprivileged that are almost always associated with crime. The statistics of crime may be leaning towards the poor, but that is chiefly the consequence of capitalism and exclusionist politics. In the words of Roger Caillois, “crime in conventional detective stories is usually seen as a symptom of personal evil, rather than social injustice, and the detective is depicted as an ideal incarnation of competitive individuals.”

When Doyle couldn’t find an apt foreign land onto which he could exile crime and criminals, he managed to find suitable persons from the underprivileged classes of society- the working class and the homeless- to play the criminal. In the words of Laura Otis, “all too often, a respectable gentleman who won his fortune in the colonies by questionable means calls in Holmes to preserve his reputation when an old acquaintance he would rather forget tracks him down. Although he reveals sources of wealth the late Victorians would rather not contemplate, Holmes appeases readers by releasing the tainted upstanding citizen. Instead, the blackmailer, generally a member of the lower classes, becomes the criminal.”

Nineteenth century detective fiction is a conservative genre. It became popular for the very reasons that it is condemned today by postcolonial writers. Nineteenth century detective fiction thus emerged as a safe that harboured and instigated the imperialist, racist and xenophobic ideologies of the age. Both Poe and Doyle make no attempts either to examine or interrogate such phenomena that are clearly manifest in the background of their works, but instead monetise on the situation.

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During a class discussion, our professor asked us reasons which prompt a person to commit a crime. Most of my classmates were inclined towards the increasing inequality amongst the individuals being the reason for the rise of crime. I agreed with them but I wasn't satisfied. Not always are criminals from poorer or marginalised sections of the community. Over time, we have had many examples of educated, well-to-do individuals committing crimes. I started pondering over this thought. I had utilised ample resources of psychological thrillers in the form of movies and cartoons.

With this knowledge, I tried narrowing it down to two reasons – vengeance and normalcy. This subject of understanding the psychological functioning of criminals interested me. I got myself involved with this subject in my free time. Soon, I came across Ms. Hannah Ardent. I regret not having known her earlier.

She was a victim of the Nazi regime. Fearing the Nazi persecution, Ms. Ardent fled to Paris and subsequently to New York, the United States of America where she lived till her death. She is a renowned thinker for her profound work ranging various topics. She does not have a particular style of writing. Her work is so distinctive that it doesn't fit the traditional methods used to classify writings. She has primarily worked on the nature of politics and political life but it is difficult to bring all her work under one theme. She didn't focus on one particular topic and expanded it, rather worked on multiple topics from totalitarianism to mind. She uses a phenomenological approach to politics which is eccentric. Yet, like every political scientist and philosopher, her works were the product of her experiences. A distinguishing aspect is her concern for civic affairs for which she has earned the title of 'scholar of civic republicanism.'

She inspired me not just by her ideas, but also by her bold attitude and individuality. She did not let herself be influenced by the circumstances around her. She seemed to be unbiased in her approach. Her writings and ideas were controversial then. Yet, she feared none and presented her thoughts. She says she writes not to influence but for her own understanding and if people understood her, she would feel to be among equals. This idea of hers' emphasizes understanding and self-analysing. This is unique.



## HANNAH ARDENT – AN IMPECCABLE SCHOLAR

BY: KURA SUNAINA, 3RD YEAR

Her last work which was released posthumously is the three-volume work on thinking and judging titled 'Life of the Mind.' Unfortunately, she died just when she started working on the third volume. This work of hers gives a more concrete understanding of her ideas on 'The Eichmann Trial.' In her first volume, she tries to distinguish thinking from knowing. Ms. Ardent puts great emphasis on thinking, thinking that leads to questioning. She believes that questioning everything around and questioning self is vital to realise the meaning of the world. This action of questioning everything and self is regarded as the need for political responsibility. Having said, her other volume tries to work on judgement as connected to thinking but different from it. This work of Ms. Ardent is again very unique and resonates with the present. The inspiration for this work, as said earlier, was the trial of Eichmann and this leads us to the 'Banality of Evil.' This concept has had a huge impact on me. I could apply and analyse the present situations with the help of her work on Eichmann's trial.

In the same year as 'On Revolution,' Ms. Ardent's most controversial and brave work was released – Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on The Banality of Evil. The banality of evil was the closest to my idea of normalcy mentioned in the very beginning. This was the concept that actually led me to read more of her works and interpretations. As I read more on this subject, I realised that Ms. Ardent wasn't presenting the banality of crimes but the banality of thoughtlessness among individuals. The book says that Eichmann was indoctrinated to the point that he could barely use his own consciousness. He was just following orders but did he actually possess the intention to harm millions of Jews was the greater question. I never came across this dimension of looking at a crime, at least not in all the texts that I have read till then. When the idea of intentions struck me, I tried to relate this to the present scenarios.

The whole of the world seemed to have been moving towards the banality of evil. Especially with the advent of social networking sites, it has become easier to brainwash people. The more one is fed with a particular kind of content, the more one gets influenced and loses the ability to think consciously. Added to this easy propaganda

platform, it is also accessible by all on this planet. The greater the number of people being influenced, the more is the impact. This has led to major destructions, knowingly or unknowingly. Selective hatred towards a particular community has become easy to propagate. Crimes have increased, be it cyber or physical. The best example of this can be the use of Facebook to stir up a divide among civilians and instigate offline crimes in Myanmar. This has led to the mass destruction of the community of Rohingya is now regarded as one of the most prosecuted migrants in the world. Did people had the intention to massacre men and children, and rape women, or was it just because of their thoughtlessness? Is it the inability to think that has led to the destruction of humanity?

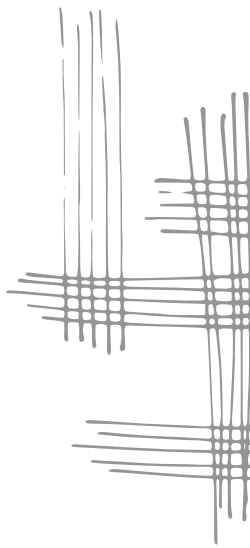
Ms. Ardent says, "...but perhaps there is something in-between resistance and cooperation and only in that senses do I say, maybe some of the Jewish leaders might have behaved differently." She was regarded as a self-hating Jew among her fellow Jews and was perceived in a wrong manner. If left Eichmann alone, Ms. Ardent has actually put forward a more powerful statement. She didn't let her thoughts get foggy because she belonged to a certain community. She emphasised the human ability to distinguish between right and wrong. She did not condemn Eichmann for his participation in the genocide rather his inability to distinguish right from wrong. This idea was beyond understanding for many then.

Again, I could connect this view of thought to the present situation. It is inevitable for an individual to be born without a predetermined name tag. The name tag has the community or organisation one belongs to. The community or organisation can be on the basis of social, economic, political, and many others. Nonetheless, the ability to think and decide on what is right or wrong is independent of the community or organisation one belongs to. Unfortunately, today's world, in most cases, fails to realise it. It is disheartening to see that often time's people regard the community as dear and not their conscious. People fail to condemn a crime as it is. There are many examples that are better left unsaid. The idea of protecting members of one's clan has failed the nation. The two ideas that I have presented above have made me think beyond I could have ever.

These ideas, if left Eichmann alone, are ubiquitous. They question the present law and take on various injustices that are common today.

The maturity that Ms. Ardent holds while assessing a case is impeccable. She tried her best to present an argument unbiased, not fearing anyone. She has taken things for they are. She never fits the norms of the traditional school of thought. She manifested her own school of thought, which is utterly unique. She braved to be true to herself. She was ahead of times, no wonder she was criticised and at times rejected by her own camaraderie. All of her works are inspiring and moving. Ms. Hannah Ardent is a kind person, philosopher, and political scientist. She inspires people to be true to themselves and think independently. Thinking is the greatest value that humanity possesses.

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# EPICUREAN PARADOX

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BY: SUMEDHA GUPTA, 1ST YEAR

Epicurus is one of the earliest thinkers we know to have raised the Problem of Evil, arguing against the idea that by pointing out the manifold misery on earth, the world is under the providential care of a caring deity. The Problem of Evil relates to the need to reconcile faith in an omnipotent, omnibenevolent, and omniscient God with the presence of evil in the universe. The original version of this theoretical and experiential problem is claimed to be the Epicurean Paradox. It questions the potency and all-knowing nature of the creature we acknowledge as God. It presents the trilemma, if God is willing but unable to impede evil it's unlike His inherent nature; if He is able and unwilling, it makes Him immoral and at deviance with the concept of God; if He is neither willing nor able then how is He God without being all-powerful and all-knowing or if He is both willing and able, why is He not eliminating the evil which persists? Since He created the universe and its fragments, He must have created Evil as well, if this was to test us, He would already know the result being all-knowing and, if he couldn't prevent its existence due to free-will then He is not all-powerful. This problem poses as a paradox because no clear or straight forward solution exists to debunk it, all premises in question contradict the main argument that if God is omnipotent, omnibenevolent, and omniscient.

Epicurus and his followers claimed that their gods are at variance with the common conception without denying their existence. They did not believe that gods were anthropomorphic beings who walked the earth, instead they were beings with moral perfection residing in interstellar space. He criticised popular religion and said gods were detached from humans, incapable of interfering in our lives and, with no role to play in our wrongdoings. Hence, God is not almighty being incapable of controlling earthly phenomenon. On the contrary, classical Greek religion attributed humanistic flaws to the gods which, changed with popularisation Plato's teachings. Plato considered God to be the highest being of perfection and morality. He believed the order God offers the universe is constrained by inherent material imperfections. Therefore, faults exist in the universe and are not merely greater divine aims mistaken by humans. If each one in society followed Theory of Justice hypothesized by Plato, performing functions fitted by nature for their own and common good, there is a chance evil would not exist; humankind would be socially moral and righteous. For Plato, knowledge came after escaping from the world of sense perception which could be misleading, it can be said, what the society considers as evil may just be an illusion. The three notable Greek philosophers, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, considered morality and true knowledge of paramount importance. Furthering his teacher's ideology, Aristotle regarded God as the apex of knowledge and existence who engaged with none but Himself and was neither, aware of our world nor cared for it; though He was a divine being He was not loving. Following Aristotelian logic, evil on earth is simply unbeknownst to God, and in relation to the Paradox, it makes Him impotent. These ideas are contradictory to what popular religion conceives God as. Aristotle was an empiricist; true knowledge came from close examination of the world around. Therefore, evil was done by man and God had no association with it. Socrates' God was somewhat similar, He was rational, morally good and perfectly wise but unlike his students' rationale, He knew of humankind and thought it His purpose to better man's souls and ensure they had universal valid knowledge. Socrates was of the view that human soul is immortal and possesses all worldly and other-worldly knowledge which, can be reawakened by universal definition and inductive reasoning. In its pristine form the soul knows concepts like essence of reality, goodness, and justice. Socrates postulated no one knowingly did wrong and evil arose out of ignorance and lack of knowledge; man, who does injustice is under a deception and warped sense of reality and his soul has not been nurtured with the truth and virtue (true knowledge). There are various arguments and defences with respect to the Paradox, some debate it's free will of humans and that God cannot ensure good moral behaviour of the beings he creates; or evil and suffering are necessary for spiritual growth; some believe it is God's plan, and He shall set things right on Judgment Day; or cynicism of His existence. The possibility of concealed or unexplained reasons for the presence of evil are still prevalent. Presence of God, however, is seen as any large-scale hypothesis or interpretation that seeks to make sense of certain specific evidence but remains unverified. In conclusion, there is no singular perspective to the Paradox's solution, if we look at the theistic aspect there remains a possibility for an omniscient, omnipotent and omnibenevolent being to co-exist with evil.

# UNDERREPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN STEM DISCIPLINES

BY: VAISHNAVI SINGH, 1ST YEAR

When we take a look at the hard sciences or in the field of technology, we find women pioneers scarcely. Though there have been remarkable inventions and discoveries in the past, when we look at the present-day scenario, the situation is grim. There have been numerous studies in a bid to find an answer to the question – why does STEM lack female participation? (STEM stands for science, technology, engineering and maths)

In this article, you should find an abstract answer to this question.

When we think about female representation in any field, our minds automatically direct us to link the gender disparity of a region to the advancement of its female population. So, if we are told to connect the lack of women in sciences to the gender equality in that country, the answer would definitely surprise us. There have been many studies which indicate that there is an inverse relationship between the gender equality and women in STEM. Women in more gender equal countries (Scandinavia, for example has less than 25% females as science college graduates) tend to opt out of sciences and women in more unequal countries, choose sciences over humanities (India, for example has 35-40% females who are science graduates). The reason behind this trend is apparently that the wealthier nations have more study options and women are less afraid of ending up without work if they pursue other avenues. In less-wealthier nations, on the contrary, STEM education is seen as a path to economic security.

Next, we are bound to assume that the reason girls don't pursue STEM is their lack of skills in those areas. This notion has been proved wrong after a dozen surveys and researches. The conclusion of a survey based on the report released by Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2015 says that, in 97% of the countries, the male students scored higher in science subjects while the female students scored higher in reading. But the girls didn't perform worse in science. Further analysis revealed that girls generally scored the same or more than boys in science, but they were even better at reading. So, they rated reading as their greatest individual strengths whereas the boys did that with science and maths. Hence, there is no evidence that boys are biologically smarter than girls in science and/or mathematics.

So far, we have seen that gender disparity in a country and the biological component are not responsible for the underrepresentation of women in STEM, the real reasons are purely psychological and societal.

In the survey conducted by PISA, though the girl students fared better than the boys, their anxiety levels were higher and self-confidence was low while attempting mathematics, which validates their dislike towards mathematics (and subsequently maths centric subjects like physics and computer science). Then, a survey conducted in Australia showed that girls in pre-school or kindergarten referred to themselves as 'smart' and 'intelligent', but as their school lives progressed, they associated the term 'brilliance' with boys and 'hard-workers' with themselves. This gives us an insight about how children when exposed to more years in the society, tend to think differently about themselves and their peers.

We also consider the society's perception as to what professions are more suited for women; a psychologist might wonder why so many computer scientists are male. She further observes and notes that many 'nontechies' stereotypically perceive the life and environment of a computer scientist as someone who lives and breathes the computer and surrounds themselves with computer games, junk food, and science fiction gadgets – characteristics that add up to a very masculine ambiance. Hence, a tentative explanation would be women feel they do not belong in such stereotypically masculine surroundings. A possible solution could be changing the image of computer science which may help increase the number of women choosing to go into this field.

Furthermore, there are factors like rigid timings and full commitment in the STEM arenas which tend to make these fields even more deprived of female participation, and this roots from gender stereotypes and primitive gender roles, which have been challenged in recent years.

During Alibaba Group's third global conference on women and entrepreneurship in 2019, Melinda Gates cited a study sharing that the global economy could grow by an estimated \$28 trillion by 2025 if women participated in the economy at an equal level as men, but this is possible only if these women are efficient in their work. And this would happen only when women are self-motivated to pursue STEM disciplines and are not forced into the fields by external agents like the government, for example.

"The quality of a person's life is in direct proportion to their commitment to excellence, regardless of their chosen field of endeavour", as long as you are happy with your field of study and work, you are not only at the peak of personal excellence, but also achieve professional excellence!



# INDIA BELONGS ONLY TO ME

AN ATTEMPT TO REDISCOVER  
GENDER, IDENTITY, SEXUALITY & NATIONALISM  
THROUGH THE LIFE OF AMRITA SHER-GIL  
BY: SHUBHA BHATT, 1ST YEAR

In a country that celebrates its diversity extensively, perceptions of art can evolve through a diverge realm of narratives and interpretations. Wrapped in an exquisitely stunning trove of artistic expression lies Modern Indian Art that entails our glorious past majestically.

Modern Indian Art emerged when the Indian artists tried to bring in new styles by redefining traditional art. Thus, art played a prominent role in the national freedom movement by making regular attempts to regenerate patriotism, rediscover India's past and recollect India's cultural values by socially boycotting foreign means.

Amidst the reconstruction of Indian art, history marked the rise of Amrita Sher-Gil, an Indo-hungarian woman artist who decided to step out of the conventional stereotypical boundaries laid down by the society. In an attempt to conceptualise the essence of contemporary art in India, Sher-Gil questioned the dominant patriarchal notions and evolved as a symbol of cultural insurrection. In the present-day context where the idea of heteronormativity is seen taking a pervasive and entrenching stead in our society, it is vital to contemplate and examine Sher-Gil's works through feminist lens.

In this article, we will try to analyse the numerous themes of Sher-Gil's works that usually revolved around diversity of gender expressions, identity, and sexuality. While doing so, we'll also brinh up the discourse om the feminist engagement accompanied by her artistic themes.

If we try to trace down the artistic endeavours of Amrita Sher-Gil, we will find ourselves enclosed in a two-dimensional setting. So, as pointed out earlier, Sher-Gil was born in Budapest to a Hungrain-Jewish mother and a Sikh father and mostly spent her early life in Paris where she explored a diverse range of art forms and styles.

In Europe, she worked on a series of portraits and nudes that were inspired by academic realism and post impressionist style. It was in the first half of 1930s that Sher-Gil painted a series of figure studies of family, friends and professional models that reflected the bold character of her own self. This fact is evident through a number of nude studies that she painted and revealed her notions of the female body that was fiercely librated.

Yashodhara Dalmia in her Amrita Sher-Gil: A Life paves way to the discourse of identity that can be associated with the works of Amrita Sher-Gil. As Sher-Gil painted numerous self portraits, Dalmia highlights her as a character "grappling with her own identity". The question of identity can be linked with her battles with both Hungrain and Indian existences.

In 1935, Sher-Gil returned to India, only to discover the dramatic transformation in her works. She travelled extensively to South India and the Ajanta and Ellora caves. As a result, her growth as an artist reflected in her palette that turned saturated with intense reds, ochres, browns, yellows and greens.

It is during this juncture that themes of Sher-Gil's artworks began dwelling around women. She addressed the Indian society from a fresh perspective and captured the ordinary Indian women and men trapped in the domestic sphere.

Her artworks, namely 'Bride's Toilet', 'Brahmachari', and 'South Indian Villagers Going to Market' exhibited her artistic grandeur where she portrayed normative gender roles that were prescribed in the Indian society. Her canvas echoed with the depiction of daily lives of Indian women. Her subject matter involved oppressed women trapped in a pathetically miserable state of hopelessness. Her portrayal of women posed striking questions to other artists who exhibited women as elated and submissive beings.

Three Girls', 'Haldi Grinders' and 'Musicians' are some of the artworks which highlight that Amrita comprehends the intense emotions of Indian society and questions the patriarchal set-up by feminisation of themes and emotions.

Apart from her artworks, Amrita wrote numerous letters to her family and friends which were later compiled by her nephew, Vivan Sundaram. This collection of letters assists in highlighting the theme of sexuality in Amrita's life. Sher-Gil questioned her sexuality and according to Dalmia, such a situation arose *"partly as a result of her larger view of woman as a strong individual, liberated from the artifice of convention."*

A discourse on her opinions on sexuality is evident from one of her letters addressed to her mother where she *confessed about disadvantages of relationships with men* and further elucidated, *"... I would start a relationship with a woman when the opportunity arises."*

So far, we touched upon the themes of gender roles and expressions, identity and sexuality through an overview of the life and career of Amrita Sher-Gil. Another theme that was close to Sher-Gil was Nationalism- something that our nation has dramatically indulged in recent times. It's inquisitively fascinating to know the notion of nationalism that Amrita carved.

In an article published in the Hindu in November of 1936, Amrita wrote, *"The Indian Art committed the mistake of feeding almost exclusively on the tradition of mythology and romance. I am an individualist evolving a new technique that though not necessarily Indian in the traditional sense of the word, will yet be fundamentally Indian in spirit."* This was Amrita's notion of nationalism. The dichotomy of her identity is something that separates Amrita from other artists of her time.

Her concern for her fellow Indian women is reflected through her depiction of *Bharat Mata* as a poor old lady wearing a worn out saree, with realistic eyes and deep sorrow on her face. Such a rendering highlights the realistic concerns of Sher-Gil. It is essential to note that this delineation was juxtaposed with other idealistic depictions of Bharat Mata.

Dr Seema Bawa in her article published in Deccan Chronicle rightly mentions that as we question the systems of representation that stereotype women in ways that perpetuate gender roles prescribed by hegemonic patriarchal systems, the role of the subversive artist, particularly the woman artist, becomes significant. So, the insight in the life and career of women artists like Amrita Sher-Gil magnifies the need to have discourse on contemporary womanhood. The level of feminist engagement that was carried forward through the works of Sher-Gil is exemplary.

Back in the times when the Indian cultural setting was dominated by a patriarchal set-up, Amrita Sher-Gil addressed a plethora of complicated social issues revolving around women. One may argue about her elitist origins, but it is undeniably true that she defied the ordinary social norms of the time and reclaimed spaces in the most subtle ways.

Though, she did not actively participate in any feminist projects, it is inevitably evident from her themes, subject matter and way of life that she was bold enough to break the traditional barriers that confined Indian women. It is unfortunate that an artist like her died at an early age of 28, however an insight into her account evokes one to have a more nuanced understanding of sexuality and gender categories and to reconsider their stance in the modern queer politics.

I'll love to conclude on an utterly fascinating note that in a world where paramount supremacy of patriarchal systems thrived, Amrita Sher-Gil went on to comment that, "Europe belongs to Picasso, Matisse, Braque and many others, India belongs only to me."



# हिंदी-साहित्य में नारियों की भूमिका

-नितेश कुमारी , 1ST YEAR

साहित्य को किसी भी जाति और समाज की जीवंतता को प्रमाणित करने वाली धड़कन कहा जा सकता है। जिस प्रकार जीवन और समाज की धड़कन बनाए रखने में स्त्री-पुरुष दोनों का सामान हाथ है, उसी प्रकार जीवन के विविध व्यावहारिक एवं भावात्मक स्वरूपों के निर्माण में भी दोनों का सामान हाथ है। साहित्य उन भावनात्मक रूपों में से एक प्रमुख एवं महत्वपूर्ण विद्या स्वीकार किया जाता है। भारतीय भाषाओं के साहित्य के इतिहास के आरंभ से ही इस बात के प्रमाण मिलने लगते हैं कि इसकी रचना और स्वरूप-निर्माण के कार्य में नारियों का स्पष्ट एवं महत्वपूर्ण योगदान रहा है। विश्व का सर्वप्रथम लिखित साहित्यिक ग्रंथ ऋग्वेद माना जाना है। विश्व के सभी महान विचारक यह तथ्य एकमत से, मुक्तभाव से स्वीकार करते हैं कि वैदिक ऋचाओं की रचना या दर्शन में अनेक आर्य नारियों का हथ रहा। कहा जाता है कि **अनुसूया** जैसी ऋषि-पत्नियों ने भी अनेक वैदिक ऋचाओं के दर्शन एवं प्रणयन करके वैदिक साहित्य को समृद्ध किया। वैदिक काल के बाद लौकिक संस्कृत-काल की अनेक विदुषी नारियों के नाम मिलते हैं, अनुमान किया जा सकता है कि उन्होंने भी साहित्य-सृजन किया होगा, जो या तो समय के गर्त में समा गया या फिर पुरुषों के नाम से प्रचारित हो गया। यही बात परवर्ती पालि, प्राकृतों और अपभ्रंश भाषाओं के संदर्भ में भी कही जा सकती है। जो किसी विशिष्ट नारी-साहित्यकार का नामोल्लेख नहीं मिलता। हां आगे चलकर चारहवीं शताब्दी के बार से या फिर कहा जा सकता है कि हिंदी-साहित्य के भक्ति काल से नारी-साहित्यकारों के नाम अवश्य मिलने लगते हैं कि जिन्होंने अपनी सृजन प्रतिभा के बल पर साहित्य का सम्मान, वर्चस्व और प्रभाव बढ़ाया। वह सब आज भी बना हुआ है।

**भक्तिकाल** में चलने वाली सगुण भक्ति धारा की कृष्ण शाखा ने ही सर्वप्रथम हिंदी-काव्य जगत को कुछ महत्वपूर्ण साधिकाएं प्रदान की। उनमें कृष्ण-दीवानी **मीरा** का नाम सर्वोपरि एवं सर्वप्रमुख है। मीरा की वाणी में जो सहजता, तरसता, अपनापन, तल्लीनता और समर्पित निष्ठा है, वास्तव में वह अन्यत्र कहीं भी उपलब्ध नहीं होती। मीरा जैसी प्रेम की पीर और विरह की वेदना भी अपनी सहज स्वाभाविकता में कहीं अन्यत्र सुलभ नहीं।

मीरा की भक्ति परंपरा में ही बाद में बीबी ताज का नाम आता है, जो कृष्ण के सांवले-सलोने स्वरूप पर कुर्बान थीं और इस समर्पित भावना के कारण ही वह मुसलमान होकर भी हिंदवानी ही रहेंगी।

इसके बाद **शैख** नामक एक कवयित्री की चर्चा भी मिलती है, जिसके बारे में कहा जाता है कि काव्य प्रतिभा में तो वह धनी थी ही, रूप-यौवन में भी धनी थी। उसी के प्रभाव से मूलतः ब्राह्मण जाति का कवि बाद में मुसलमान बनकर **आजम** नाम से प्रसिद्धि पा सका। हिंदी साहित्य में संत-काव्य-परंपरा में **सहजोबाई** का नाम भी बड़े आदर के साथ लिया जाता है। कहा जाता है कि वह भी एक प्रतिभावन कवयित्री थी और इस क्षेत्र में उसका खासा प्रभाव था। इस प्रकार स्पष्ट या प्रत्यक्ष रूप से भक्ति-काल से नारियों का हिंदी काव्य के निर्माण और विकास में महत्वपूर्ण योगदान आरंभ हो जाता है।

आगे चलकर **रीतिकाल** में भी कुछ ऐसी ज्ञात-अज्ञात नारियों की चर्चा मिली है जो विशिष्ट काव्य-प्रतिभा की धनी थीं। कहा जाता है कि रीतिकाल के प्रमुख एवं प्रतिनिधि कवि बिहारी की पत्नी भी कवयित्री थी। आज जो दोहे **बिहारी** की रचना माने जाते हैं, उनमें से अनेक उनकी **पत्नी** ने रचे थे। डॉ. सनातक-संपादित 'बिहारी' के परिशिष्ट में ऐसे अनेक चौपदे भी दिए गए हैं जो बिहारी की पत्नी द्वारा रचे गए कहे जाते हैं। इसी प्रकार रीतिकाल के एक अन्य कवि **गिरधर कविराय** की पत्नी को भी अच्छी कवयित्री कहा जाता है। उसका नाम '**साई**' था। आलोचक मानते हैं कि गिरधर की प्रसिद्ध कुंडलियों में से जिनसे साई जुड़ा हुआ है, वे वास्तव में उनकी इस नाम वाली पत्नी की ही रची हुई हैं। दूसरी मान्यता यह है कि कविवर गिरधर और उनकी पत्नी मिलकर काव्य रचा करते थे। तभी तो अनथक कुंडलियों में दोनों के नाम समानांतर पर उपलब्ध होते हैं। उन प्रमुख नामों के अतिरिक्त रीतिकाल में कुछ और ऐसी नारियों के नाम भी उपलब्ध होते हैं, जो काव्य-रचना द्वारा साहित्य को समृद्ध बनाया करती थीं। राजमहलों रहने के कारण, दूसरे युग की पुरुष-प्रधान नैतिकताओं के कारण उनके नाम सबके सामने नहीं आ पाए।

आधुनिक काल में पहुँचकर तो हिंदी-साहित्य के लिए नारी-सृजकों का योगदान बहुत बढ़ गया है। काव्य और गद्य दोनों क्षेत्रों में नारियां समान स्तर पर सक्रिय रही हैं। काव्य और गद्य के विभिन्न विधात्मक क्षेत्रों में इनके योगदान को आने वाली शताब्दियों तक कौन भुला सकता है। हमारे विचार में काव्य की चर्चा हो या गद्य के विधात्मक रूपों की, श्रीमती महादेवी की चर्चा के बिना उसे अपूर्ण ही समझा जाएगा।

महादेवी छायावादी काव्यधारा के चार स्तंभों में से एक प्रमुख स्तंभ तो रही ही सही, गद्य-सर्जना के क्षेत्रों में उन्हें एक प्रमुख शैलीकार का मान और महत्व प्रदान किया जाता है। संस्मरण, रेखाचित्र और निबंध-रचना के क्षेत्रों में इन्होंने जिन नव्य एवं भव्य शैलियों का प्रतिष्ठापन किया है, उनके कारण हिंदी साहित्य उनका हमेशा ऋणी रहेगा। आजकल और नई नवयुवक नारियां भी हिंदी काव्य के क्षेत्र में अपनी विशिष्ट प्रतिभा का परिचय दे रही हैं।

आज का युग गद्य-रचना का युग ही प्रमुखतः स्वीकारा जाता है। गद्य के विधात्मक रूपों, विशेषकर कहानी-उपन्यास के क्षेत्र में कई नारी सर्जकों का नाम बड़े ही सम्मान के साथ लिया जाने लगा है। मन्मू भंडारी जैसी कुछ कहानी-लेखिकाएँ भी हैं कि जिनकी कहानियों के अनेक फिल्मी एवं नाट्य रूपांतरण सफलता और धूम-धड़ाके के साथ प्रस्तुत किए जा चुके और आज भी होते रहते हैं। इसी प्रकार हिंदी-एकांकी और कहानी के क्षेत्र में उषा मित्रा का नाम भी अपना आधारभूत मूल्य-महत्व रखता है। रजनी पनिकर को उपन्यास के क्षेत्र में विशेष स्थान प्राप्त है। ममता कालियां, सुधा अरोड़ा, कृष्णा सोबती, उषा प्रियंवदा, शांति मेहरोत्रा, शिवानी, मालती जोशी, मृणाल पांडेय, सुनीता जैन, इंदु बाली, ऋता शुक्ला आदि ऐसे नामी नाम हैं कि जो आज भी हिंदी-साहित्य के विकास के लिए समर्पित भाव से काम कर रहे हैं।

इस सारे विवेच्य एवं विश्लेषण के बाद यह बात कहने की कोई अधिक या विशेष आवश्यकता नहीं रह जाती कि हिंदी साहित्य को नारियों की देन क्या और कितनी है। वास्तव में भारतीय नारियों ने जीवन के अन्य सभी क्षेत्रों के समान साहित्य-क्षेत्र को भी अपनी सृजनात्मक और जागरूक प्रतिभा से समृद्ध एवं प्रशस्त किया है, इसमें तनिक भी संदेह नहीं। उन्होंने साहित्य के हर युग के हर रूप को अपनी कोमल-कांत भाव-प्रवणता से प्राणमय और प्रभावी बनाया है। उसे भाषा, शैली और नवीन शिल्प तो दिया ही है। भावों-विचारों का अजस्र मानवीय स्रोत भी विधात्मक तटबंधों में प्रवाहित किया है। उसमें स्वर-संगीत की सरिता भी बढ़ाई है और नव-निर्माण के ज्वार भी उभारे हैं। साहित्य के माध्यम से नारियों ने मां की ममता, बहन का स्नेह, प्रियतमा का प्यार सभी कुछ दिया है। संबंधों की चर्चा जिनती गहराई से नारी-सर्जकों की रचनाओं में मिलती है, अन्यता कहीं सुलभ नहीं है। इस सारे विवेचन का सारांश यह है कि नारी-जीवन ने हमारे स्थूल जगत के समान ही साहित्य जगत को भी अपनी तप पूत कलात्मक प्रतिभा से ऊर्जस्वी और अनवरत गतिशील बनाया है। यह देन कम करके रेखांकित नहीं की जा सकती।

# Evolution of Feminism

Feminism isn't something which has grown overnight. It was a long gradual process. From the point where people were fighting for women suffrage to now, where people are raising voices against pity issues and filing petitions for them, feminism has evolved a lot. So exactly when and how did such a purposeful word turn into a controversial one. Feminism is very wrongly confused with man-hating. Why so? Is it the lack of enlightening education? Or are our attacks on sexism misunderstood as attacks on men? Or there are really some pseudo feminists who use feminism as a shield for man-bashing? Whatever the reason may be, the consequences are not quite fruitful because as of now the word 'feminism' sours many men — and quite a few women.

The first and the most important thing is to know what is feminists' ideology. Feminism is about all genders having equal rights and opportunities. Quite simple and easy to understand isn't it? Yet feminism movements these days are frowned upon. Unfortunately, these movements at points have been exploited and misunderstood as the female's agenda to take over the world. Academically, the term feminism is used to describe a political, cultural or economic movement aimed at establishing equal rights and legal protection for women. Feminism's activist around the world have fought and campaigned for the legal rights of women (contract rights, property rights, voting rights), abortion rights, reproductive rights, from the protection of women and girls from domestic violence like sexual harassment, rape; workplace rights including maternity leave and equal pay; misogyny and various other gender-specific discrimination against women. While the roots of feminism are buried in ancient, the most recognized movements are the three waves of feminism. The first wave, occurring in the 19th and early 20th century, was mainly concerned with women's right to vote. The second wave, at its height in the 1960s and 1970s, refers to the women's liberation movement for equal legal and social rights. The third wave, beginning in the 1990s, refers to a continuation of, and a reaction to, second-wave feminism.

Feminists' activity during the 19th and the early 20th century sought to win women's suffrage, female education rights, better working conditions and to put an end to gender double standards. It primarily began in Britain and the United States. In Europe, women's enfranchisement spread quickly, starting with the British colony of New Zealand in 1893. American first-wave feminism ended with passage of the 19th Amendment to the US Constitution in 1919, granting women voting rights. However, the vast majority of women in this movement were white, which accounts for their racist rhetoric and unwillingness to include women of color in the vote. Coming off the heels of World War II, the second wave of feminism focused on the workplace, sexuality, family and reproductive rights. During a time when the United States was already trying to restructure itself, it was perceived that women had met their equality goals with the exception of the failure of the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment (which has still yet to be passed). However, the successes of the second wave did not account for all women, and daughters of second-wavers realized that this "women's rights movement" did not acknowledge non-white, lower class women. Thus, the third wave of feminism began in the mid-1990s as a reaction to the failures of second wave and the backlash against second-wave initiatives. Its ideology seeks to challenge the definitions of femininity that grew out of the ideas of the second-wave, arguing that the second-wave over-emphasized on experiences of upper middle-class white women. The third-wave sees women's lives as intersectional, demonstrating how race, ethnicity, class, religion, gender, and nationality are all significant factors when discussing feminism. It examines issues related to women's lives on an international basis. This wave was about acceptance and a true understanding of the term 'feminism'.

At present feminism is growing little bit day by day but it also has some stigma associated with it. There are things on which we need to keep an eye on, or else this would lead us to something which can, later on, prove harmful for our society. So far, feminism has obviously had to focus on women's rights because women have always faced the brunt of inequality. However, the movement today has evolved to become more than just about rights under the law, but also about removing and equalizing privileges outside of institutions. Feminism today is about the prejudices men face just as much as it is about those that women face. Feminism can help men, too — by placing equal value on their role as parents or by encouraging better mental health care and reducing male suicide. Our fractured and flawed culture badly needs healing from the gender wars as well as other divisions. To be a part of this healing, feminism must include men, not just as supportive allies but as partners, with an equal voice and equal humanity.

# The Golden Age?

DECONSTRUCTING THE NOTION OF PERFECTION ASSOCIATED WITH  
THE LATER VEDIC PERIOD IN THE SOCIO-RELIGIOUS CONTEXT

BY- SUHANI DUHAN, 1ST YEAR

The Vedic Age has been heralded by many as a glorious period of Indian history, the epitome of perfect society - in short, it is the Golden Age. Yet, the question arises - to what extent did this age live up to its title? An in-depth analysis of caste and gender relations crumble any ideas of perfection.

The Vedic Age stretched from 1500 to 500 BCE. This period was divided into two broad phases - the Early Vedic or Rig Vedic (1500-1000 BCE) and Later Vedic (1000-500 BCE). Significant changes in social structures and transitions in polity differentiated them from each other. The focus of this piece will be the later Vedic period, as that is when we see the establishment of social structures relevant to the question at hand.

The primary sources of information about the later Vedic period's political and economic conditions are later Vedic literature and material remains. Later Vedic texts reveal greater complexity in political organisation, social life, and economic activities. The principal literary sources from this period are the Sama Veda, the Yajur Veda, the Atharva Veda; the Brahmanas; and the Upanishads and the Aranyakas.

## The Evolution

The heavily pastoral Rig Vedic society had given way to an increasing focus on agriculture in the later Vedic ages. While cattle-keeping was still important, agricultural activities now became the primary source of livelihood. This emphasis on agriculture had a ripple effect on all aspects of life.

To practice agriculture, a settled way of life was essential. As permanent settlements began to bloom, the idea of private possession of land crystallised. The term grihapati emerged, which referred to the lord of the house (griha was seen as an individual unit of agriculture). He was the defacto owner of the land.

Consequently, the ruler could now depend on a steady source of tribute from the surplus of agriculture. Regular offerings meant that they could

support numerous priests, who then developed various rituals that became a hallmark of the Vedic society.

These developments laid the groundwork for the evolution of Vedic society, both in terms of social conditions and religious practices.

## Social Conditions and Religious Developments

The social and religious life of the later Vedic period showed marked differences from the generally egalitarian Rig Vedic society. The varna system and the proliferation of the patriarchy symbolised this development - deep-rooted divisions in society were drawn along class and gender lines. The propagation of dogmatic religious notions played into this sectarian worldview. Religion and society interacted and engaged with each other to define the status quo of the later Vedic age. Two major developments took place, which have been outlined below.

Firstly, the Brahmanas consolidated their close relationship with the ruler and created elaborate rituals. They came up with intricate forms of prayer that would require their presence. However, these rituals sidelined women and Shudras, and placed more power in the hands of upper-caste males - in short, they permanently altered the visage of social life.

Secondly, the focus on agriculture, and consequentially, land ownership led to both women and Shudras being in a disadvantaged position again - after all, neither of them had access to private property. Also, Shudras were economically backwards and expected to serve others, and women lacked the physical strength needed for arduous work in the fields.

Kumkum Roy has highlighted the nexus between the emergence of the monarchical system, the organisation of kinship relations, the varna hierarchy, and the structure of households. They will be dissected in detail in the context of the later Vedic period's socio-religious conditions.

## Divinity, Materialism and Karma

Later Vedic literature contains a multitude of approaches to the idea of creation. The *Purusha-sukta* describes creation as the result of a primordial sacrifice, while other hymns describe creation as emanating from the sun or *Hiranyagarbha* (the golden embryo). The Brahmana texts also reflect a situation where sacrifices had become longer, more elaborate, and expensive. They expanded the sacrificial cult into an extremely specialised activity, and sacrifices came to have a certain composite character.

These ceremonies mandated the presence of the Brahmanas, who had become ritual specialists of a sort. They received extravagant benefits in the form of *dakshina* for performing *yajnas*. The *dakshina* was an essential part of the sacrifice, and as the sacrifices became longer and more complicated, it became larger and larger. There were simple, daily rituals for the heads of *dvija* households (like the *agnihotri*) and grand, complex rituals associated with kingship (like the *rajasuya* or *ashwamedha yajna*).

However, the growing entrenchment of materialism and divinity did not go unchecked. There was a strong reaction to the centrality of the sacrificial movement. In response to this, Brahmanas penned down the *Aranyakas* and the *Upanishads* - two texts against a mediator's role between the mortal and divine. The *Aranyakas* dealt primarily with ascetic life, while the *Upanishads* aimed to understand and explain the relationship between the soul and God. It is important to remember that the *Upanishads* do not reject sacrifice; instead, they employ the vocabulary of sacrifice to new ends. Rituals are re-described symbolically and allegorically. The link between humans and the cosmos is not the ritual itself but knowledge of the forces symbolically represented in the ritual.

The concepts of karma and rebirth also sprout in these times. Brahmanas saw rebirth as being dictated by a person's *karma* (or action). Good deeds would lead to a favourable next life and vice-versa. They used this ideology to enforce their partisan interests and offered the performance of rituals as a way to atone for sins committed in your past life. They also propagated the idea that transgressions in previous lives had led to an individual being born in a disadvantaged section of society.

## The Varna Hierarchy

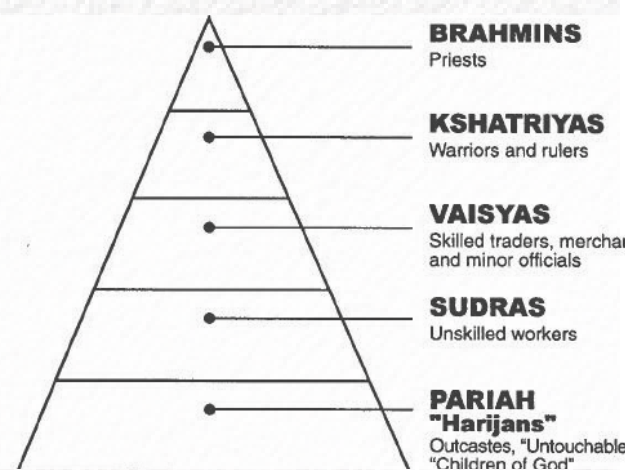
Armed with the support of the ruling class, the Brahmanas solidified existing class divisions into a rudimentary structure of the varna system. They placed themselves at the top of the societal hierarchy, and at the receiving end of social and political privileges. Kshatriyas functioned as the ruling class, and the Vaishyas became the unwilling payers of tribute. Shudras formed the bottom of this hierarchy, and their sole purpose in life was supposed to be the service of the upper three castes.

The *Purusha-sukta* of the Rig Veda Samhita refers to four social groups - Brahmana, Rajanya (instead of Kshatriya), Vaishya and Shudra. Initially, there was some interchangeability among the ranks of the first two castes. These divisions took stronger hold of society in the later Vedic times.

The foremost distinction between the upper-castes and the Shudras was visible in the performance of the upanayana ceremony. The first three varnas were known as *dvija* (literally, twice-born) - they were the ones eligible to perform the ceremony mentioned earlier upon the completion of their education. Shudras could not receive the instruction of the religious texts and were forbidden from performing this ceremony.

However, the texts also tell of differences between the upper three varnas. The *Aitareya Brahmana* (8.36.4) asserts that the *rajasuya* sacrifice bequeathed each of the four varnas with certain qualities—the Brahmana with *tejas* (lustre), the Kshatriya with *virya* (valour), the Vaishya with *prajati* (procreative powers), and the Shudra with *pratishtha* (stability). Later texts such as the *Shrautasutras* laid down the different details of the sacrifices dependent on the sacrificer's varna.

While the upper three varnas enjoyed social privileges to varying degrees, the Shudras occupied the bottom rung of the social ladder. In fact, according to *Aitareya Brahmana* (35.3) - the Shudra is at the beck and call of others, can be made to rise at will, and can be beaten at will (*yatha-kama-vadhya*).



However, the Shudras were not the most oppressed group in society. Below them were the slaves (dasas and dasis). There are references to forceful enslavement, especially of women, with a marked lack of mention of hired labour. In all probability, these slaves contributed to household and agricultural work for minimum or no compensation.

Below even the slaves were Chandals. They were looked down on with contempt by the elites. While we find no particular reference to untouchability, it is evident that the Chandals were not actively involved or included in mainstream society. They were perceived as the lowest of the low, as seen in the Chhandogya Upanishad (5.10.7), which states that those who perform low actions acquire birth in a correspondingly low condition - as a dog, boar or Chandala.

The term 'mleccha' also starts to make appearances in various texts. It meant outsiders and generally referred to individuals or groups outside the mainstream, Brahmanical fold (such as tribal groups and foreign people).

### **Gender Relations**

The dual processes illustrated above also severely impacted gender relations in the later Vedic age. Primarily, the emergence of rituals played into the expansion of the patriarchy. The *grihapati* was encouraged to perform a series of rituals to solidify his control over the household's productive and reproductive resources. Simultaneously, the king's grand *shrauta* sacrifices legitimised his control over his realm's productive and reproductive resources.

Guided by these binding rituals, society was giving way to a more patriarchal bent. Men held considerable sway over their female counterparts. Their power was consolidated because they were the landowners and because all religious ceremonies centred around them. While rituals required the presence of the legitimate wife of the patron of the sacrifice, she could not conduct a ceremony independently. Women came to be increasingly identified in terms of their relations with men.

In this period, we also see the necessity of marriage beginning to emerge. The patriarchal society saw marriage as fundamental to continuing the system of patrilineage. Spinsterhood was denounced and seen as a terrible fate or 'curse' for women (Atharva Veda - 1.14.3). Additionally, male offsprings were welcomed as heirs in such a society. Sons were seen as saviours, whereas daughters were seen as a source of misery (Aitareya Brahmana - 7.15). While there were a few exceptions to this rule, the status quo of that time remained skewed in favour of men.

We also see the stigmatisation of menstruation, lack of access to education, pre-puberty marriages of girls, the prevalence of polygyny, and expectations from women to conform to a docile role. The state of women was no better than that of a Shudra. Clearly, the increasing social differentiation and the emergence of a state was accompanied by an increasing subordination of women.

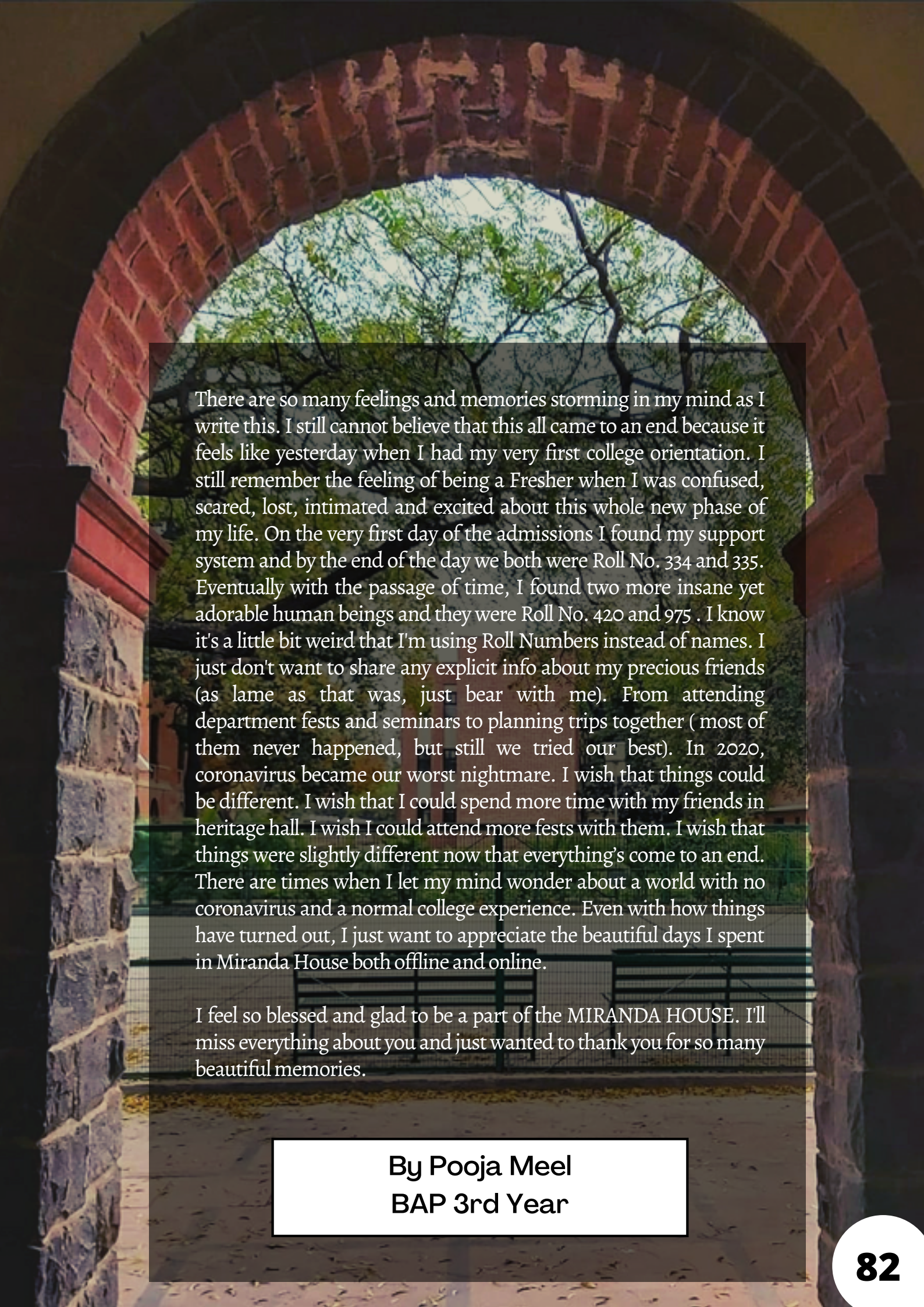
### **Conclusion**

The later Vedic age existed as a stepping stone for establishing grand states and efficient administrative machinery in the sub-continent. It showed progression from the tribal polity of the Rig Vedic period, yet retreated from the egalitarian society of earlier times.

Hence, we can quite easily conclude that the later Vedic Age was in no way the 'Golden Age' it is often referred to. Despite the negative connotation carried by social and religious developments however, this period does present a fascinating study of the evolution of civilisation. In Upinder Singh's words - towards the end of this period, north India stood on the threshold of urbanisation.



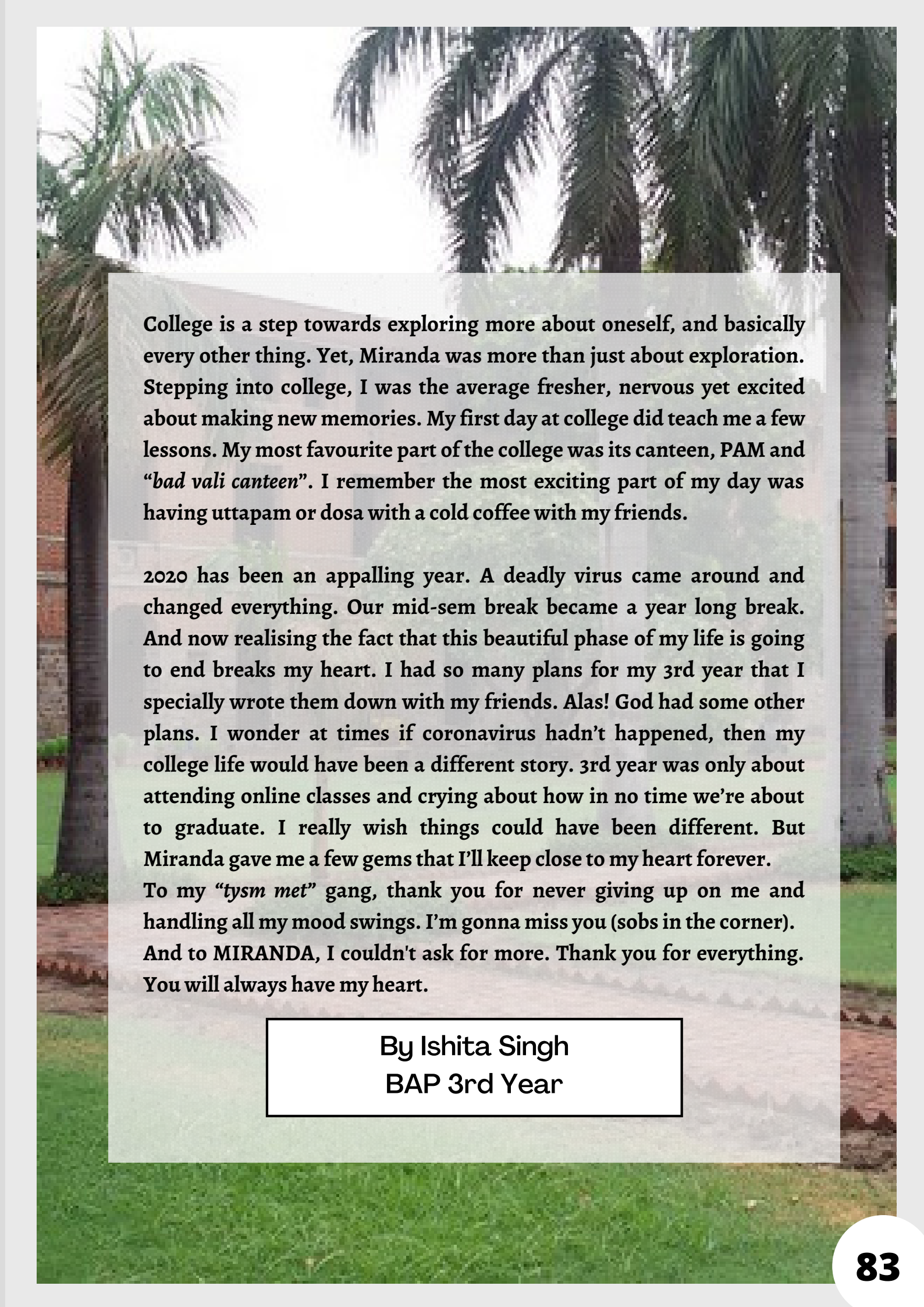
# MEMORIES OF 3RD YEARS *College 101*



There are so many feelings and memories storming in my mind as I write this. I still cannot believe that this all came to an end because it feels like yesterday when I had my very first college orientation. I still remember the feeling of being a Fresher when I was confused, scared, lost, intimidated and excited about this whole new phase of my life. On the very first day of the admissions I found my support system and by the end of the day we both were Roll No. 334 and 335. Eventually with the passage of time, I found two more insane yet adorable human beings and they were Roll No. 420 and 975 . I know it's a little bit weird that I'm using Roll Numbers instead of names. I just don't want to share any explicit info about my precious friends (as lame as that was, just bear with me). From attending department fests and seminars to planning trips together ( most of them never happened, but still we tried our best). In 2020, coronavirus became our worst nightmare. I wish that things could be different. I wish that I could spend more time with my friends in heritage hall. I wish I could attend more fests with them. I wish that things were slightly different now that everything's come to an end. There are times when I let my mind wonder about a world with no coronavirus and a normal college experience. Even with how things have turned out, I just want to appreciate the beautiful days I spent in Miranda House both offline and online.

I feel so blessed and glad to be a part of the MIRANDA HOUSE. I'll miss everything about you and just wanted to thank you for so many beautiful memories.

By Pooja Meel  
BAP 3rd Year



College is a step towards exploring more about oneself, and basically every other thing. Yet, Miranda was more than just about exploration. Stepping into college, I was the average fresher, nervous yet excited about making new memories. My first day at college did teach me a few lessons. My most favourite part of the college was its canteen, PAM and “*bad vali canteen*”. I remember the most exciting part of my day was having uttapam or dosa with a cold coffee with my friends.

2020 has been an appalling year. A deadly virus came around and changed everything. Our mid-sem break became a year long break. And now realising the fact that this beautiful phase of my life is going to end breaks my heart. I had so many plans for my 3rd year that I specially wrote them down with my friends. Alas! God had some other plans. I wonder at times if coronavirus hadn't happened, then my college life would have been a different story. 3rd year was only about attending online classes and crying about how in no time we're about to graduate. I really wish things could have been different. But Miranda gave me a few gems that I'll keep close to my heart forever. To my “*tysm met*” gang, thank you for never giving up on me and handling all my mood swings. I'm gonna miss you (sobs in the corner). And to MIRANDA, I couldn't ask for more. Thank you for everything. You will always have my heart.

By Ishita Singh  
BAP 3rd Year

Miranda House was not a choice. It was a privilege and I am so glad I took this opportunity to be one with it and contribute to the amazing community it provided. The first memory takes me back to the admission day. And in my opinion, that's the only war one needs to win to be a permanent part of its heritage. The next memory is a battle of its own: the id card queue. But the very first lesson I learnt was -'no matter how long the wait all nectar lies in patience'. Parallel to this, the next thing that I learnt was -'how important it's to have a guide no matter where you are and what you do. Fortunately I was lucky to have one as my roommate. I met Divya as my roommate and as time passed by she took the role of a friend as well. I seriously don't know what I would do without her as I had never really stepped out of my house without my parents before, never went alone out to buy things and explored my independent side for that matter. I had stayed in my cocoon and wanted to stay there forever. The best part about meeting Divya is that as time passed by, we have grown together maybe as a dynamic duo.

Moving forth, I remember the Orientation day as an exciting day. And with that came the first ever test in college and another lesson- 'expect the unexpected'.

The best part was this test was the only one I studied, (or at least tried to), by pulling an all nighter with Divya. We got 5.5 marks writing just 2 and 1/2 sides and that too, when the minimum expected was 6 sides. It was the greatest accomplishment ever! The way we reached the classroom was definitely an exhilarating ride. We woke up 10 min before 8:30 a.m., brushed our teeth and above everything, I still had my breakfast and Divya patiently waited saying it's 8:30. That was enough to send me into panic mode. Still, with our level of preparation, both of us sat together on the first bench and took the test. As we started writing, we could not even remember the quote we had decided to start our answer with let alone the answer. We spent 30 minutes modifying the quote and putting it inside double inverted commas and in the next 15 minutes, we made magic happen. After the test, we looked at each other with a weird smile trying to convince ourselves that our answer was great.

Days passed by with the endless chit chat in our room. What remained constant was the excitement we had as we looked forward to each day. The assumption I had about subjects like English which were compulsory every alternate semester being boring was soon debunked. They were certainly interesting and contributed a great deal in making me the individual that I am. The professors left an indelible mark as well. Library, on the other hand, I assumed would be interesting. It was not boring exactly but had a really serious vibe in which I never ever could concentrate. However, it remains a wonderful place for a short power nap. When the 1st semester results were declared Divya and I were actually in the library and the funny fact was -despite the poor connectivity we managed to get our result. No wonder that's the only time we were completely productive inside the library.

Assignments never have managed to throw us off guard as we never did that alone except for the first semester. And at the end of 3 years, I am proud to say that we have mastered the skill of a bit of copy paste and procrastination to ace all assignments (our secret ingredient). After exams got over in the evening, people could not wait to rush out of college but we sat in front of the main laws where I mastered my talking skills and Divya her listening skills (We tried to engage the other way round as well but it never really worked).

Everyone knows that Divya is a busy person, engaged in a million societies and I have been fortunate enough to have all the leisure in the world. With all this leisure, I made a couple of great friends like Aayushi, Garima, etc. who remain equally close to me. Special occasions like Diwali, etc. lit up the college, the foodie inside me and activated the binge shopping mode for Divya. When in this mode, she would many times show me my gifts by saying "I am buying this for you." and just ruin the mystery of a surprise altogether.

Photographs have never been an issue as all we did every two to three days was clicking pictures from all possible directions, though, relatively similar poses with none of them qualifying as perfectly normal. Thanks to Miranda where every spot is picturesque. Our greatest adventure, albeit a failed one, was when we tried jumping out of the window during Cejun Ma'am's class. Penultimately, who can forget the aunties at the main gate; these women made my day everyday. They stood as a symbol of closing the generation gap and showed me that one is always adept with the trends of the time if one is willing to adapt to the need of continuously updating our mindset and has a desire to keep growing.

All in all, "Who knew that in each red brick,  
One could hear the footsteps;  
Of a search within and an unfathomed giant leap."

The great thing about college is that despite it being a single journey, it leads to different destinations. Here's to hoping we reach our destinations!ng



By Khushi Yadav and  
Divya Chaudhary  
BAP 3rd Year

I vividly remember being assigned to write a diary entry for the first three days of our college. It was a task assigned by Prof. Sengupta and the next day we were to read it aloud in front of the class. I poured all my emotions into this assignment. The next day, as I read out about the time I went to see off my mother at the airport, my voice cracked. I couldn't read any further. I made sure not to lift my head and see my classmates. Not that I am a shy person but I didn't want them to see me on the verge of crying. When I was done at last and was about to leave for my seat, I saw all my classmates in tears. I was flabbergasted when everyone came one by one to hug me and finally, Prof. Sengupta hugged me too. The hugs I received from almost strangers made me feel at home.

I never knew sleeping sun-kissed on grass would be the most relaxing thing ever. In the lawns of Miranda, I had a few of my best sound sleeps. I wouldn't wake up for at least hours at a stretch. My friends would go attend their classes as I lay there and then another set of friends would join me. We would order three meals to be eaten by five, plus one spoon to the one running to the class and the other spoon to the one trying to catch a Metro. Cold Coffee was a drug I was addicted to. Standing in free coffee lines every Monday, was a strange bliss. I remember my entire class standing in front of the canteen and discussing the college trip, fest and mid-semester break. Alas! No one knew none of it would be a reality. I left home on the 29th of February 2020, a week before the mid-semester break; I could never imagine that it would also be my last day at college. I am just happy that it was a leap year and fetched me an extra day at college, and my flight got delayed by more than two hours and bought me two extra hours to cherish in Delhi. I vaguely remember how I bid farewell to each one of my friends anticipating meeting them in a fortnight, memories that I would carry with me forever.

Online wasn't that bad, but it wasn't good either. I missed the red brick building's silent words, "You are capable!". I understand it is not the building but the people who encouraged me. Yet, it wasn't the same. I was still being encouraged and sent love and power from everyone but I missed those hugs that felt like home. I missed the cheerful laughs, the songs sung, and the ukulele being played when I walked through the corridors. The hustle and bustle are what made Miranda for me. I have been emotionally turbulent all through my college years. I laughed out loud some days or cried like a baby the other days. Burnt out on some days and a sloth not waking up from bed on other days. No matter what, I was in the most satisfying state of my life. You see, no matter how harsh the waves are, the ocean bed is always calm and composed. The three years in Miranda were just like an ocean, no matter how harsh the circumstances, I was living the happiest and most cherished times of my life.

Kura Sunaina  
BAP 3rd Year

# An ode to the Red Bricked walls

Sometimes, the most beautiful things happen by chance. This is true for my admission in Miranda is nothing short of a chance miracle. I knew I wanted to study Psychology and Economics at my undergraduate level but to my bitter disappointment, I couldn't find any college which offered both of these as a combination. So, I decided to knock on the door of the college with the No.1 NIRF ranking taking solace in the fact that at least I will be studying in a tier-one college. It was an impulse decision to take admission here, a decision that fared better than most of the calculated ones.

Miranda has a strange way of growing on you and liberating you while pushing you out of your shell. I was a timid and shy kid throughout my school life who was always surrounded by books. This, however, changed in college; the people I met, the teachers surrounding me and the discourse I became a part of helped me realize the importance of having a voice and going beyond books. It reminds me of a verse from a poem by Rabindra Nath Tagore:

“Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high; Where knowledge is free; Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake”

I believe it is one of the best-kept secrets of our time, that the utopian world that Tagore talked about in his poem exists, but is limited to the area inside the 4 walls of Miranda. What first shook me and later, became my favourite part of college was that you can be anything you want to be here. No judgements, no questions. Wear whatever you want, sleep outside the canteen door all you can and take the cats with you to class (which I often did), there will be no restrictions. In a way, Miranda isn't just your commonplace “utopia” but a feminist utopia where you have an agency, where the clutches of patriarchy are temporarily disabled to allow you the full extent of freedom.

In the course of these three years, I have grown and matured beyond my expectations, thanks to my college and people that came along with it. Despite the aforementioned maturity, I am still going to sulk over the fact that my farewell will be online and my goodbye note will probably find its audience through the written medium. My plan for farewell was simple: coax PAM wale bhaiya into sharing his cheeseburgers recipe with me and smuggle my favourite cat out of college and take her with me to my next home. However, life rarely goes according to plan and we live in a world where closure is a luxury. So, I have no choice but to rejoice in the fact that no closure means I will always carry a part of Miranda with me; and even if it won't call me back for my final semester, it still owes me a few more memories, the debt of which I hope to recover someday in a warmer future.

So long! Till we meet again.

**Sakshi Bansal**  
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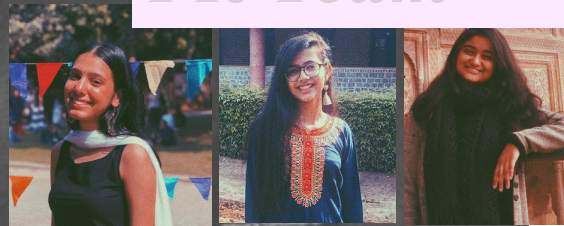
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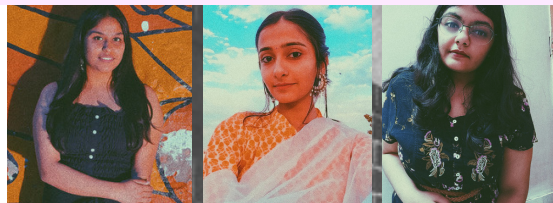
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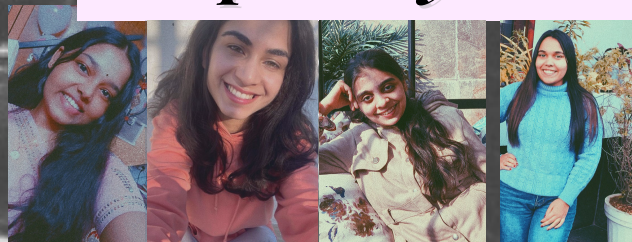
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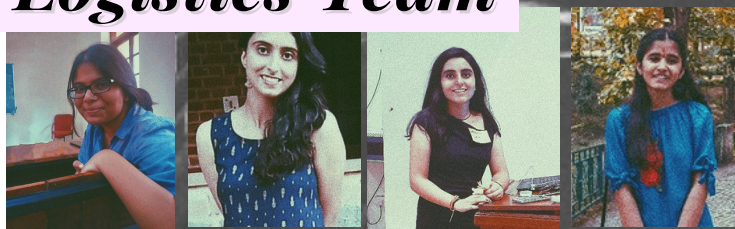
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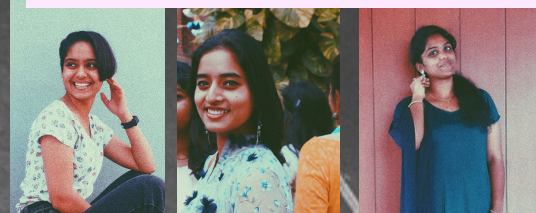
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