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Bursting the EdTech Bubble: Why India Needs to Regulate the EdTech Sector

by Shivalika Singh

Current Framework: In an attempt to address the concerns raised by users and multiple stakeholders, leading EdTech companies like BYJUS, Vedantu, Unacademy, and several others have collaborated to form the Indian Edtech consortium. This self-regulatory body functions under the aegis of the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) and aims to ensure an ethical code of conduct to promote a safe and secure learning experience. The consortium follows a two-tier mechanism as a form of grievance redressal system, which is as follows: Tier 1 consists of an internal process within the organisation with the help of its grievance officer, while Tier 2 involves an independent inquiry process. While this process may seem fair on the surface, there are still questions of impartiality and transparency that remain unanswered. In addition, in December 2021, the government issued an advisory against predatory practices that frequently trap parents and students in debt for courses that are often misrepresented in terms of quality and content. Notwithstanding that such measures are appreciable, the impact of such efforts is still constrained by the absence of any clear policy framework.

Legal Conundrum: One of the major legal issues surrounding these online learning platforms is the lack of clarity on consumer protection policies. In India, The Consumer Protection Act, 2019, governs consumer rights and aims to protect them from unfair and deceptive trade practices. While the act has expanded its scope by including e-commerce under its ambit, judicial pronouncements have shown a mixed approach towards recognising educational facilities under the purview of consumer protection laws. As per the act under Section 2(o), the term “service” means service of any description available to users and is not limited to just transportation, banking, financing, entertainment, etc. but does not include services offered free of charge or under a contract of personal service. In the case of P.T. Koshy & Anr. v. Ellen Charitable Trust & Ors. (2012), the Supreme Court held that education is not a commodity and that students cannot be classified as consumers. But later, in P. Sreenivasulu & Anr. vs. P.J. Alexander & Anr. (2015), the court held that educational institutions would come under the purview of the Consumer Protection Act and that education offered by them is a service covered under the act. Such instances are indicative of the judicial ambiguity surrounding the issue and further highlight the need for more clear regulations on the matter.

Data Protection and Privacy: Another important facet surrounding the regulation of EdTech services is the question of data protection and privacy. In July 2021, Whitehat Jr., a coding platform for children acquired by EdTech giant BYJU’s was accused of a sensitive data leak belonging to students, parents, and educators. Such occurrences have become quite common in the digital learning space and emphasise the need for stricter regulations on EdTech companies when managing student data. Edtech companies frequently collect and store sensitive data such as name, phone number, email, and other educational records to maintain student databases, but it is necessary to ensure that this data is stored securely and safely, protected from third-party access to avoid misuse that can range from harassing spam calls to extortion in some cases. Another significant factor is the user’s lack of consent to providing such information. While accessing multiple EdTech platforms, it can be observed that users are often required to agree to the terms and conditions without being adequately informed of the potential risks involved in sharing their data and that companies can easily amend their privacy policy without informing the user about the same. Such data breaches are a major source of concern because they directly affect the privacy of children and young adults, who are the primary users of these services. While companies claim that this data simplifies data analytics and algorithms for users, it also fosters a surveillance culture in which users have little control over the information that is being collected, stored, and used by companies. Further, as the recent Data Protection Bill (2022) is yet to be approved by the Indian Parliament, users have limited legal protection from potential privacy violations.

The Chinese model of regulation: The recent Chinese crackdown on the EdTech sector serves as an important case study for developing an EdTech policy for India, demonstrating how overly restrictive government control can be detrimental to both users and companies. While the Chinese model aimed to protect students from predatory practices in the EdTech sector that were highly profit-oriented, these regulations have not been successful in achieving their intended objectives. The overreaching power of the Chinese government in this sector has only served to stifle competition and innovation, which ultimately hinders the growth of the industry and impacts the quality of education provided to students.

Conclusion: As observed, it is the need of the hour to regulate the EdTech sector with a cohesive policy framework that strikes a balance between protecting the interests of users, and encouraging companies to innovate and expand in a safe environment. A policy like this could create an independent body, similar to CBSE and UGC, to regulate and standardise education quality. This can help in creating a more structured curriculum and ensuring reliable and trustworthy certification. Another important measure would be to create comprehensive data security guidelines, which should include measures like encryption, access control, and privacy protections. Finally, awareness-raising exercises should be carried out to ensure that parents and students are aware of the options for online learning as well as how to properly protect their data and personal information while doing so.

Alienation of the Muslim Citizen

by Shreya Govil

Certain Muslim communities in India seem to have been through systematic disenfranchisement. Feelings of belongingness are deeply rooted in an inclusive system that works for them. But if people of a country are often questioned and their citizenship is often invalidated, it is bound to fuel feelings of exclusion. The citizenship of Indian Muslims is often questioned and they are not seen as a part of the Indian citizenry, which leads to them towards feeling a lack of sense of belonging, and feeling excluded and isolated from the rest of the nation. This article focuses on the exclusion of Indian Muslims and how questions about their citizenship, result in them not having access to good education, public employment and proper political representation. Drawing upon various pieces of evidence it may be argued that not being seen as Indian citizens deprives them of the systemic support that other minorities get to improve their condition. Sanchar's committee published a report in 2006, according to which Muslims are by far the most excluded and alienated community in India. Exclusion is the inability of a community to make meaningful contributions to society. People are often excluded on the basis of caste, gender, sex or religion and such exclusion is faced mostly by women, Dalits, Adivasis and other minorities. These communities lack access to opportunities for social, economic or political growth. In order to understand why there is such ostracization of Muslims it is necessary to analyze the behaviour of the majority towards Muslims immediately after Independence. When India became independent Muslims in India, especially in light of the incidents of partition, needed to prove that they were loyal to India and worthy of Indian citizenship. This was very different from the experience of Hindus, as Hindus who were loyalist were considered to be nationalists, first and foremost and they were either 'Hindu nationalist' or 'secular nationalist' depending on their political views. But Muslims on the other hand were seen only as Muslims. Their expressions of loyalty were not taken seriously by the majority as they felt the alliances could not change so quickly, and thus, Muslims might still be harboring feelings of sympathy for Pakistan. If they were somehow able to successfully prove their loyalty to the country, only then were they considered nationalist Muslims.



The words Hindu or Indian were often used interchangeably which made the experience of the Hindu citizens very different. This furthered the feelings of ostracization among Muslims as they were made to feel that they are not "Indian enough" and need to prove their worthiness for Indian citizenship. The impact of such isolation can be understood by analyzing the disparities between Muslims and other communities. There has been a severe impact on the access to education and literacy rates of Muslims due to such exclusion. According to the Sanchar report, in comparison to other minorities, Muslims are worse off in terms of "mean years of schooling, attendance levels, dropout rates and completion of matriculation and graduation." The literacy rate among Muslims is 59 per cent while the national average is 65.1 per cent in 2001, which again shows the disparities between Muslims and other communities. Apart from this, most Muslims do not have access to proper schooling. Different kinds of constraints and difficulties are faced by minority educational institutions, particularly the ones that are run by Muslims. These institutions can play a very important role in increasing literacy rates among Muslims but are unable to do so due to lack of governmental support. Educational institutions in minority concentration areas rarely get any government support and are often neglected. There are very few educational institutes in predominantly Muslim areas. Difficulty in obtaining proper access to school education has resulted in few Muslims getting access to higher and professional education. Due to lack of education and literacy, gender inequality among Muslims has worsened; the sex ratio in this community is 936 as per the 2001 census and the literacy rate among women is just 50 per cent, which shows a huge disparity between men and women.

Over the years it has been observed that the representation of Muslims in public employment has been very low. In the Gopal Singh committee report, it was found that the presence of Muslims in the elite Indian Administrative Service (I.A.S.) stood at 2.9 per cent of the total intake that year. Over the years the maximum intake in a year stood at 7.5 per cent of the total intake. The committee found that in 2006 the presence of Muslims in the I.A.S was 3 per cent and only 2.3 per cent of them were direct recruits while the rest had been promoted from state service. It is important to note that very often Muslim candidates qualify for the written tests but lose out at the interview stage. In the I.A.S exam of 1993, 789 Muslims qualified for the written exam but only 20 of them were able to clear the interview. This was only 2.5 per cent of the total number of Muslim candidates who qualified. Another interesting statistic to be noted is that in different ministries of the central government 677 Muslims are employed in the class 1 jobs and 39,375 Muslims are employed in class 2 as of 31st March 1971. An observation that can be made on the basis of all these statistics is that different institutions of public employment hire very few Muslims at higher governmental posts and these structures work in such a manner that they prevent Muslims from becoming direct recruits at these high posts. As the ratio between the number of candidates qualifying the written paper to the number of candidates clearing the interview reflects a deep-seated institutional bias.

"The fact is that Indian Politics acknowledged Muslims in so far as it did, only as a supplicant minority, not as full citizens." Muslims more often than not do not get adequate political representation and very rarely represented by politicians that truly embody and work towards the interest of the Muslims. This has been an issue the Muslim community has been facing since independence. Right after India gained its independence, the minority-dominated areas where Muslims were in majority were recognised and were split into various parts to be absorbed into other states. This reduced their influence in these areas and thus made it very difficult for them to win elections. India follows the first-past-the-post system (FPTP), which worked against the Muslims and reduced their political strength. This made it difficult for Muslims to become representatives of the whole community. Apart from this, sometimes, Muslim voters were prevented from exercising their rights as a voter. There have been times when the names of Muslims have been deleted from electoral rolls. For example in 1994 in Hyderabad and Sikenderabad names of 1,38,000 Muslim voters were deleted from the electoral rolls. The true essence of politics is that it necessitates accessibility to public spaces and a public discourse, where issues that are common to the whole society can be discussed without any difficulty. But Muslims are often excluded from such discussions. Although internally some Muslim leaders have been able to create a political space for Muslims, the aim is to be able to recognize and satisfy the distinct needs of the community, while making sure that they do not succumb to extremism or become a tool of the state.

Since independence Indian Muslims have had to prove their loyalty towards India in order to be considered worthy of its citizenship. Something the other communities in the country did not have to do. Despite this, they face exclusion from the government in terms of not getting better educational facilities in areas where Muslims are in majority. Whenever a community has very low literacy rates the government steps in to improve the situation, however, in the case of Indian Muslims the government has never taken any substantial steps to improve their situation. Same is the case with low participation of Muslims in public employment and them getting no support from government to improve their situation. The fact that very few Muslims qualify the interview rounds of I.A.S shows that those selecting candidates might have an anti-Muslim bias and this bias results in Muslims not getting employed at higher posts. The lack of political representation and division of states and constituencies in a way that is electorally disadvantageous for Muslims makes it difficult for Muslims to win even Muslim majority areas. Such features of the state make Muslim people lose any sense of belonging they might have with the government, its institutions, or even the country. The questions over Muslim citizenship are based on the belief that Muslims are responsible for the Partition. Thus they are not loyal, so they cannot be trusted with Indian citizenship. However, careful analysis of the situation leads us to the realization that Indian Muslims despite experiencing insufficient access to important state resources like education and employment never expressed their adversities through separatist tendencies or political fanaticism. Despite being in large numbers, Indian Muslims almost never mobilized politically around a particular Muslim party. In conclusion, the basis on which the citizenship of Muslims is questioned, needs to be reconsidered.

SECONDMENT TRANSACTIONS VIS-À-VIS THEIR TAX TREATMENT

by Pratha Khanna



A secondment agreement is one wherein the employees of a foreign company are sent to the Indian company listed under the group entities wherein such employees are to be held liable against the Indian company itself. To further elaborate, these employees in essence, work under the direct control of the Indian company and are paid salaries by the same company under which they are employed. In such a scenario, the Indian company reimburses this cost incurred by them through payment of salary to the seconded employees to the foreign company. It is pertinent to note that the term of secondment may be restricted to a specific timeline wherein after the conclusion of the same, the seconded employees are sent back to their home country resuming their employee status with the foreign company. This employment arrangement is usually entered into for supplying manpower and technical know-how from one company to another which is a need of the hour especially in such a globalized economy where transfer of skill sets can prove beneficial for any company. These agreements can be a contract for service, a contract of service and a dual employment arrangement. Having understood the nature of this arrangement, it is further of importance to understand the taxability of the same under the Direct and Indirect Tax Laws.

Service as defined under the Finance Act of 1994 through the insertion of Section 65B specifically defines a service as that of an activity carried out for consideration. However, this excludes from the definition, an employee undertaking service for his employer. Thereby it can be said that the employment arrangement under a secondment agreement would also be exempted from service tax applicability as it would thus not be denoted as a service. This aspect has been discussed in various case laws over the years wherein a deliberation is made on these parameters of a secondment agreement. For instance, in the case of Commissioner of Central Excise v. M/s Computer Science Corporation India Pvt. Ltd., it was held by the Allahabad High Court that the element of taxability cannot arise in the said arrangement until each and every critical element of Section 65B are fulfilled. Further, under the Income Tax Act, 1961, Section 9 (1) specifically mentions income that may deemed to be accrued or arisen in India which is also further discussed in the case of Director Income Tax v. M/S Morgan Stanley & Co. Inc, wherein it is stated that as long as the lien of a certain employment is held by the foreign company, till that extent, the same cannot be taxed. The taxability of secondment agreements was finally settled in the case of CCE&ST vs. Northern Operating Systems Pvt. Ltd, wherein the apex court confirmed the position under the taxation laws.

The court finally opined in this case, that in an event wherein the Indian company is treated as an employer, the reimbursement would take place. However, wherein the employer is an overseas entity, the service would be liable to be taxed. The apex court refrained from giving a specific parametric setting wherein the employee- employer arrangement would be liable for taxation and instead left it to be decided on a case-to-case basis. By doing so, in an attempt to lay down definitive findings, the court moved away to a more substantive approach by giving the substance of the agreement more weightage as opposed to its form. The court in this specific factual matrix observed that after the cessation of the term of secondment, the employees are entitled to certain benefits and incentives all laid down within the global policy of the overseas entity in terms of foreign currency. Finally, the court stated that in the present scenario, the secondment is a simple means of providing manpower supply to the Indian company and the same can be liable to tax and thereby, as the transferring of manpower can be termed as a taxable service.

The implications of this judgment are manifold wherein, this could negatively impact the Indian entities partaking secondment arrangements as necessary activities for the growth and development of the company as a whole. Moreover, this judgment in turn provides to say that secondment transactions would also be taxable under the GST regime and would further, make the issue of FTS (“Fee for Technical Services”) more evident in terms of International Taxation. The court has also not provided much certainty in terms of the specific clauses of an arrangement or an agreement on the basis of which the charge of tax would arise upon an entity thereby causing more confusion and chaos within the corporate sphere. This judgment clearly paves way for revenue to push towards taxing more such secondment arrangements by bringing them under the ambit of the employer-employee diaspora and would further alleviate the number of contentions raised before the Income Tax Tribunals as well as the Courts of the country. In conclusion, this case opens a Pandora’s box in terms of which agreements would evoke taxability and the ones that would not specifically lay focus on the nature and the substance of the agreements entered into between two companies.

Notes from Nauru: Tracing the Economic Collapse of the Island Nation

by Sashank Rajaram

The Republic of Nauru, situated in Micronesia, is the third smallest country in the world behind only Monaco and Vatican City. But what it lacks in size, Nauru makes up for with some important economic and management lessons. From being a resource-rich and wealthy nation, Nauru experienced one of the most devastating economic downturns that left the country scrambling for assistance. As the global economy trods towards a recession, this article aims to revisit the Nauru economic catastrophe through a historical lens and understand the rags to riches to rags story of Nauru.



Phosphate Rush: Nauru was first discovered by Europeans in 1789 when a British ship passed by an island covered with a green central plateau and tall and lush coconut trees flanked by white sand beaches. The island's natural beauty led the British to call it a 'pleasant island'. Initially, the island's resources were thought to be limited to coconuts and fish, until a British geologist discovered high-grade phosphate that could be used in fertilisers, cosmetics, and animal fodder. Around the turn of the 20th century when it was discovered that 80% of the island was rich in phosphate, the mining rights were promptly sold to Germany, the coloniser of Nauru. In the following years, around 80 million metric tonnes of phosphate were exported from the tiny island. Shipping ports, processing facilities, and supporting industries sprung up swiftly to aid the export process. As Germany became occupied during WWI, Australia quickly captured the island and claimed it as its own. By now, Nauru had become an offshore mining site where phosphate was sold at a subsidised rate to Australia, New Zealand, and Great Britain. Unfortunately, decades of mining had already destroyed much of Nauru's natural landscape with the topside of the island described in National Geographic as a 'ghastly tract of land'.

After suffering from a Japanese invasion during WWII, Nauru was handed back to the Australians who continued to exploit the island's remaining phosphate. Between 1945 and 1968, phosphate mining reached record highs, so when Nauru finally achieved independence, the island lost nearly a third of its area to mining. Ironically, even though it was evident that the natural resource would only last another lifespan or two, Nauru's unskilled labour and inadequate infrastructure meant that mining phosphate was the only way forward to keep up the country's economy. As a result, exports continued to rise and soon, Nauru was known as the 'wealthiest island in the Pacific.'

Weight Matters: The export boom resulted in Nauru enjoying a per capita income of \$27,000 in 1981 against the USA's \$14,000 per capita income. With its abundant phosphate wealth and political independence, Nauru soon transformed into a retiree's dream. Yet, as incomes improved, health deteriorated with Nauru becoming the most obese country in the world. The average Nauruan life expectancy was just over 60, as healthy indigenous foods such as coconuts and fish were replaced by imported foods.

Analysing the diet of an average Nauruan, one can notice that it consists of instant noodles, white rice, soda, tobacco, and beer. Amy McLennan, an anthropologist at the University of Oxford, commented 'I was lucky to find one vegetable a week.' Interestingly, the Nauruans were aware of the risks associated with poor nutrition and obesity. The problem, therefore, was a lack of access to high-quality food as decades of phosphate mining had destroyed the natural environment to such an extent that the agricultural industry became almost non-existent. Moreover, after independence, the Nauruan government believed that the only way to lift its people out of poverty was to continue mining whatever phosphate was left. As a result, little attention was paid to manufacturing or agriculture.

Failed Endeavours: However, realising the over-reliance on phosphate mining, the country did try to diversify its exports and ventured into offshore banking which resulted in giving licences to roughly 400 foreign banks at the beginning of the 1990s. Customers did not have to visit the island to open bank accounts here, and Nauru became a haven for money laundering and tax evasion as a result. Though the government earned millions through fees, it was not the solution to diversify its economy after the eventual depletion of phosphate. Nevertheless, in 2005, Nauru banned offshore banking and started requiring a physical presence to obtain a bank licence due to immense international pressure including from the US. The government also tried to set up a Sovereign Wealth Fund designed to invest natural resource wealth in a way that will generate dividends in the future. Unfortunately, the scheme was not implemented properly such that risky investments and large-scale forgeries led to huge losses on investments, ultimately pushing Nauru to the verge of bankruptcy. Even the discovery of secondary phosphate deposits and the subsequent phosphate rush failed to change the imminent economic collapse. The central bank collapsed, and overseas real estate assets were seized. One disaster thing leads to another and that was exactly the case for Nauru. The island nation infamously became one of the biggest disasters in the history of London theatre. The country had earlier invested in Leonardo, The Musical: Portrait of Love—a musical that depicted a fictional love triangle between Da Vinci, Mona Lisa, and a soldier. The musical failed at the box office and Nauru's economic woes deepened. By 2001, the country ran out of phosphate and their foreign investments had failed miserably. By this point, Nauru's GDP was \$32 million (adjusted for inflation) and unemployment skyrocketed to 90%.

Unfortunately, this was only the beginning of darker chapters of the economic misery faced at the turn of the century. In 2001, the local freighter MV Tampa – whose crew rescued more than 400 mostly Afghan refugees from a sinking boat – wanted to dock in Australia. However, they were refused access to Australian waters and instead found Nauru as an offshore detention camp. Following the economic collapse, Nauru was not in a position to wave off millions of dollars in return for housing immigrants. Nauru, therefore, continues to receive payments from Australia despite fierce opposition from some of its citizens to detention centres. This, along with foreign aid, has kept the island's economy barely afloat.

Conclusion: James Aingimea, former Minister of the Nauru Congressional Church, lamented, "I wish we'd never discovered that phosphate. I wish Nauru could look like it was before when I was a boy, it was so beautiful. There were trees; it was green everywhere and we can eat fresh coconuts and breadfruit. Now, I see what's happened here and I want to cry!" The economic history of Nauru is interesting for the reason that the mismanagement of a country's resources can have devastating consequences. Since the reasons for Nauru's fall are well documented, it provides significant insights and lessons for leaders and policymakers from other countries regarding what not to do—something that is especially pertinent in 2023.



One-China Policy's True Meaning

by Sriniket Bandaru

During a speech to commemorate the 40th anniversary of issuing the Message to Compatriots in Taiwan, President Xi Jinping called on the Chinese across the Taiwan Strait to “advance the process” toward reunification of China. This statement, made in January 2019, was immediately refuted by the President of Taiwan, Tsai Ing-wen. She responded by saying Taiwan would not accept China’s “One country, two systems”, and neither will the people of Taiwan. She also hinted that Taiwan’s decision is a ‘Taiwan consensus’, implying the 1992 consensus, which Tsai disregards. The current flare-up between the two countries discloses the complex nature of their beliefs and how the scope of the past status quo riddles future diplomacy in resolving the two’s current predicament.

The 1992 Consensus

Much of the text provided to explain the severed Cross-Strait relations in recent times is regarding the consensus reached in 1992. Held in Hong Kong, Taiwan set aside its ‘no contact’ policy and agreed to sit across the table with China. Once they did, it was tough to sidestep the elephant in the room: can either decide how to define China? Taiwan claimed that the Republic of China (ROC) was the legitimate head of China, while the People’s Republic of China (PRC) said otherwise. Neither could move ahead with the talks. The negotiators found a mutually agreed workaroud. They established a ‘one-china’ policy—an understanding that both parties considered that only one China exists. The procedure was mindful of the different meanings derived by the two parties. Still, it was essential to eliminate any other framework that China or Taiwan found to be disrespectful. Unfortunately, this circumvention still haunts the present-day ROC and PRC.

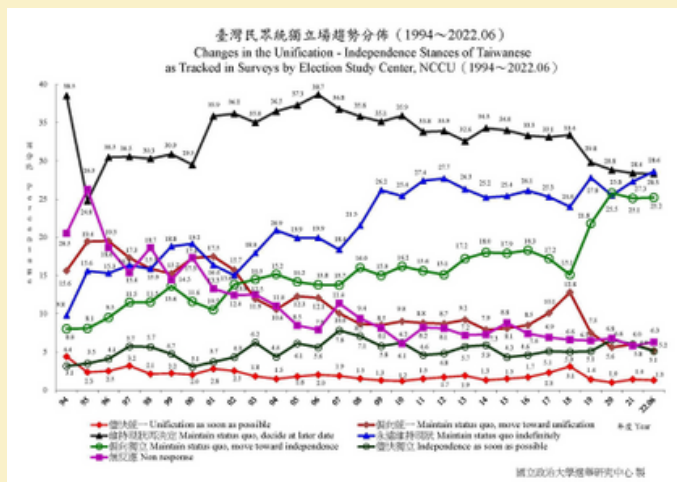


Taiwan’s Rocky History with China

Taiwan’s political ideologies have significantly shifted from a nationalist Kuomintang (KMT) to the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). It was a natural transition that began after the demise of the ROC leader Chiang Kai-Shek, a man responsible for the economic development of the country. Following Chiang Kai-Shek, Chiang’s son and Lee Teng-hui have made strides toward democratising the political framework. A primary reason for this shift in ideology was the rising Anti-KMT sentiment, culminating in a strong opposition in the form of DPP. The 1992’s consensus was during Lee’s tenure, and once the 2000s rolled in, with the help of other independent parties, the DPP took power for the first time. In the following years, DPP and KMT were in power, which was concluded by the 2014 student-led protest called the Sunflower movement. The sunflower movement was extremely quintessential in highlighting the change in the perspectives of the Taiwanese. KMT’s attempt to force the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement (CSSTA) without any clause-by-clause review was halted successfully by student-led groups, who accused the KMT of aligning with China and leaving Taiwan in a jeopardising position. The Sunflower movement propelled the DPP to the election victory in 2016 with a full majority, the first party to do so apart from the KMT.

The PRC’s Demands

China’s attitude towards Taiwan is conditional on the party in power on the other side of the Strait. Beginning in the 2000s, as that was the first time the DPP won, China began to feel that the new government might not hold up the consensus made in 1992. Even though the new president had no intention of breaking the status quo, the PRC built up an array of threats that justified any form of military aggression by Chinese forces if the ROC did not comply with any. Moreover, China has bullied other countries into severing diplomatic ties with Taiwan. Tensions cooled down once KMT returned to power, with a government willing to trade and hold fresh talks to reopen Cross-Strait relations. This time, China was willing to believe the ROC when they promised that the status quo would be upheld. Taiwan even allowed Chinese investments in their financial markets to reduce chances of conflict. Meanwhile, China kept offering various options for Taiwan to be integrated into mainland China. When Tsai Ing-wen became president of the ROC in 2016, it became clear to China that Tsai would not uphold the status quo. Since her appointment, Cross-Strait relations have been highly volatile: China has repeatedly begun military exercises and violated Taiwan’s airspace to intimidate the ROC’s stance. The PRC has also taken advantage of trade relations by temporarily banning certain products. The infamous fruit ban in 2021 exemplifies China’s desperation to get Taiwan to bend to its will. Stuck in between them are the people whose livelihoods are in question; they believe maintaining the Status quo is the best solution.



The graph shown above is a clear indication of the general public opinion favouring the maintaining of the current status quo. It is a simple reason why the people would not like to demand independence yet: the consensus worked in favour of the ROC. Trade with China has propelled the economy to grow. Furthermore, China provides additional incentives, such as the absence of tariffs on fruit, for instance, for greater public favouring. China’s belief that trade incentives would change public opinion in favour of unification was unsuccessful. Unfortunately, they are unwilling to hold back by accepting any form of status quo.

Future of Cross-Strait relations

China’s president, Xi Jinping, has an agenda too. For Xi, unification is a sign of victory and achievement that none of his predecessors could do. Therefore, he has used several methods to coerce Taiwan into accepting the PRC’s interpretation of the 1992 consensus. The heavily militarized response to Nancy Pelosi’s visit is a trend that will not cease anytime soon. The PRC is also on a mission to resolve this issue before the 100th anniversary of the party, representing a significant milestone in the party’s history. Incidentally, the anniversary eclipses the reunification of Hong Kong, another state unwilling to be integrated into the mainland. China’s forceful attempts have only pushed Taiwan into a corner, making it more challenging for the public to agree on any deal or offer from the PRC. Irrespective of which party is in the power of the ROC, the most crucial reminder for Taiwan is to enforce the people’s voice into policy.

Centuries of Brahmanical patriarchy: How caste controls Women, and their

by *sexualitygava*

Women's complicity in the caste system

The control of women and their sexuality has been legitimised in Hindu society in the name of traditions and culture. This is why many women have internalised misogynistic values in the name of "stri dharma" or the appropriate codes of conduct for women, thus becoming complicit in perpetuating the whole system of inequality. The caste-ridden society exerts control over women through a system of rewards and punishment. Therefore, compliance with patriarchal codes and norms allows women to access the material resources of their families and maintain a status of respect in society. Deviance, on the other hand, expels them from such material resources of the family as well as tarnishes their reputation in society. The overarching patriarchal setting asserts so much influence on women's lives that even their individual decisions result from the oppressive social conditions surrounding them.



As Uma Chakravarti points out, the compliance of women to the oppressive patriarchal structure is "normalised" under the garb of "upholding religion or culture". In her words, "women are regarded as upholding the religion by conforming to the Brahmanical codes, men on the other hand uphold traditions by enforcing these codes-not upon themselves but upon women." As Chakravarti rightly points out that in a Brahmanical patriarchy setting, men are merely the rule makers and enforcers while the women are rule followers. The upper caste men for centuries asserted their dominance on the bodily autonomy and sexuality of women in the name of customs and traditions. This is manifested in the institution of marriage, where the autonomy of a woman is completely transferred to her husband. Under the ancient practice of Sati in Hindu society, the widowed wife was supposed to sacrifice herself with her husband. Thus, under Sati, a woman's life was contingent upon her husband; woman was not an individual entity. While the practice of Sati is banned in contemporary society, Brahmanical oppression finds various manifestations even today, majorly through practices like endogamy in marriage.

Honour and Purity of a woman in Brahmanical society

The institution of marriage is a deeply entrenched societal institution. It is a reflection of caste hierarchies and is a way to perpetuate the segregation of castes through endogamy. Marriage has, for centuries, stripped women of their bodily autonomy. The Manusmriti lays down the proper rules for eligible marriages permitting some and forbidding others based on caste and in every instance, treating women like objects of transfer to maintain the purity of the caste. The women in the matrimony are treated as objects who adheres to the needs and desires of their husband. The legalisation of marital rape is also a product of Brahmanical patriarchy. Women are devoid of consent and agency under the caste system. They are used to facilitate the caste-based system of an arranged marriage to protect the "purity" of the upper caste. The extreme control over women in the institution of marriage precludes any resistance to the caste-based order and thus perpetuates Brahmanical patriarchy. As Sowjanya Tamalapakula writes, if this control over women is subverted, caste dies a quick death,"

Endogamy is a pre-requisite for the furtherance of the caste system. In the words of Sharmila Rege, "the superimposition of endogamy and exogamy means the creation of caste". In this way, the equality of sexes as well as varnas became an antithesis to the very existence of caste. Consequently, the concept of endogamy lies in the notion of "purity" and "pollution". The upper caste, due to their purity, cannot marry the lower caste or else they will be defiled. Any deviance from this attracts sanctions. Honour killings by panchayats have been common in the past with respect to intermarriages. While both men and women have been harmed by "endogamy", the impact on women is much more. The concept of "honour" in the caste system is contingent on women. If a woman marries outside her caste, her honour or "purity" is tarnished. Thus, "honour killing" is seen as a form of restoration of the lost honour. The "purity" of women is associated with maintaining the blood purity of the ancestry and the social hierarchy of the family. As Uma Chakravarti noted, "any relationship based on genuine consent of the partners is interpreted as a defiance of patriarchal authority and a threat to endogamy." Thus, marriage legitimizes the violent, caste-based ordering of the society that is dependent on erasing the consent of women.

The overlapping disadvantage of Dalit women

As Dr Ambedkar stated, caste is enclosed in class and further concluded that women are the gateways of the caste system and it is the caste system which provides a structure for the subordination of women. While the caste system relies on the oppression of all women, Dalit women have experienced overlapping disadvantages due to the pervasive system of inequality. As Uma Chakravarti points out, Dalit women are oppressed in three ways, "as subjects to caste oppression at the hands of upper castes, as labourers subject to class-based oppression mainly at the hands of upper and middle caste men who form the bulk of landowners, as women who experience patriarchal oppression at the hands of all men, including men of their own caste. This intersectional oppression of Dalit women has become so normalised and institutionalised in the Brahmanical society that even heinous crimes committed against them elicit a negligible response from the State.

Take the Hathras rape for instance where a Dalit woman was raped by a Thakur man. The police, instead of arresting the rapists, went on to forcefully cremate the body of the victim. Many such rape cases have been reported and have been dismissed by the police due to the inherent casteism in society. The rape of a Dalit woman by an uppercase man is a "crime of power", it is a way for the upper caste man to assert his dominance and control the sexuality of the woman. In the case of Dalit women, the concept of "honour" also doesn't come into the picture. Unlike upper-caste women, Dalit women are considered impure or without honour. Thus, crimes against the "honour of women" like rape, assault etc., are not considered crimes against Dalit women. The Dalit women are perceived as having no modesty; thus, their rape does not defile the "purity" of the caste system. The Dalit women's body is abused and brutalised because of their caste, this is done in order to reassert the power structure, the dominance of upper caste men and their control over the bodily autonomy of the lower caste women.

To conclude, the caste system has for centuries controlled the sexuality and autonomy of women and has perpetuated patriarchy in the process. Dalit women have been at the receiving end of most of the caste atrocities. Their autonomy, honour and individuality have been exploited and oppressed for the furtherance of Brahmanical patriarchy. The sexuality and agency of a woman has been controlled by "few men" for a long time and unless and until this is changed, Indian society will never be liberalised.

The employability of the clean energy sector

By Sanjana Bajaj

The progress of clean energy is of the utmost importance to the environment and society. In recent years, there has been a tremendous effort from governments, businesses, and citizens to move away from their reliance on fossil fuels and towards renewable sources of energy. This shift has led to many positive changes for the environment and society, ranging from reduced emissions of harmful pollutants to increased access to affordable energy.

At the most basic level, the transition to clean energy has already helped to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide, other greenhouse gasses, and other pollutants that are released into the atmosphere. This has had a positive impact on the environment and public health, as these substances harm the atmosphere and human health. By reducing the amount of air pollution, clean energy sources can help to improve air quality and reduce the number of related illnesses. In addition, the shift to clean energy has the potential to reduce energy costs. As the cost of renewable energy sources decreases, they can become more accessible and affordable to the public. This could lead to lower electricity bills, which would benefit individuals and businesses alike. Renewable energy sources are usually more reliable than fossil fuels, meaning that they could provide more consistent power and better stability in the energy grid.



Finally, the shift to clean energy has the potential to create new jobs. As the demand for renewable sources of energy grows, new jobs will need to meet that demand. In addition, these jobs are often in rural areas, which can provide much-needed economic opportunities to those areas. A new report by UKERC has also found that renewable energy can create three times as many jobs per million pounds invested as compared to fossil fuels. This can be seen across the world as the number of people employed in the clean energy sector of the energy industry outnumbers those involved in the fossil fuel industry, according to the International Energy Agency.

Following this trend, India has made significant strides in its development of clean energy sources in recent years. In 2017, the country announced an ambitious plan to generate 175 gigawatts of renewable energy by 2022, with a target of 450 gigawatts by 2030. This has opened up a range of new job opportunities within the clean energy sector in India. They have also continued to increase these goals as they move forward and increase their target to 500 Gigawatts by 2030 at COP26 in 2021. In the same year, the NRDC predicted that this can cause the creation of over 3.5 million employment opportunities that include both short-term and long-term job opportunities.

The Indian government has invested heavily in the sector and is committed to creating and supporting jobs in the clean energy sector. This has led to an increase in the number of public and private sector jobs related to solar, wind, hydro, and biomass energy sources. For example, the Indian government has launched several initiatives, such as the National Solar Mission and the National Wind Mission, to promote the development and adoption of renewable energy sources. In addition, the government has also provided incentives to companies in the clean energy sector. These incentives are aimed at encouraging private sector investments in the sector and creating more job opportunities for skilled professionals. This has resulted in creating a range of jobs, such as engineers, technicians, project managers, and technicians.

The private sector has also been actively involved in the development of clean energy sources. Many companies have invested heavily in research and development to develop new technologies in the sector. This has led to an increase in the number of jobs in the clean energy sector. With wind energy being one of the key producers of renewable energy in India, there has been an emergence of prominent players in this field. One of the most important ones being the Wind World India limited, which manufactures wind turbine generators in the states of Tamil Nadu and Gujarat. They employ over 5000 people, giving job opportunities to high-skilled and semi-skilled workers from emerging urban centers.

With the decentralization of the renewable energy sector, solar energy has become the fastest-growing energy in this sector. This has led to a dramatic increase in employment within India, with over 80,000 workers being employed in this field in the past year. There has also been an increase in diversity of the work with over 20% of the workers being women and the figure is flourishing.

If the current figures are an accurate description of the employment rate, then it is assumed that the renewable energy sector in India will have employed over one million people in less than a decade. This number is ten times the estimated current workforce number as reported by the NRDC. Most of the job opportunities created would be in small-scale renewable energy projects such as the mini and micro-grid systems as compared to more complex and costly solar parks. This would lead to an increase in small-scale industries, which would help further decrease the price of electricity per unit. An increase in employment would also translate to renewable energy being more accessible.

Overall, the development of clean energy sources in India has led to an increase in job opportunities in the sector. The government has provided incentives to the private sector to encourage investments in the sector, while the private sector has been actively involved in research and development to develop new technologies. As a result, there is now a range of job opportunities in the clean energy sector in India, which should increase as more progress is made in the industry, allowing for a faster shift to clean energy.

The Relevance of Oral History

By Kona Aditya Kalyan

Oral history is the study and collection of historical information passed down through the generations by word of mouth. It is an invaluable tool for historians to gain insights into the lives and experiences of people who lived in the past. Oral histories can provide detailed information about a person's life and can help to fill in gaps in the written record. They can also provide a more personal insight into a particular moment in history, often taking the form of interviews, conversations, or other recorded conversations. Interviews are often used to capture the thoughts and feelings of people who lived through a particular event or period of time. They can be a powerful way to capture the voices of those who lived through a particular moment in history and provide a more personal and intimate perspective than written documents, as well as valuable insights into the culture and beliefs of a particular time and place. Oral history is often considered to be more reliable than written history because it is based on first-hand experiences and personal accounts of events. They are also considered to be more detailed and accurate because they are based on personal memories and conversations rather than written records which can be incomplete or biased. Oral historians try to provide a human perspective on history, as they allow people to connect with a story in a more intimate way than written records.



Books related to oral history are being increasingly published in recent times. One of the most prominent writers of this branch of history is Aanchal Malhotra who has published various works related to the partition of India. She has written extensively about the experiences of the people who were displaced during the Partition of India and Pakistan and has worked to document the stories of those who lived through the partition. Malhotra seeks to bring to light the often overlooked or forgotten stories of the Partition and to give a voice to those who were affected by this tragic event. She has conducted countless interviews with survivors of the Partition and has used their stories as the basis for her writing. In her work, Malhotra is deeply committed to the idea of remembering and honouring the past. She believes that by preserving the memories of those who lived through the Partition, we can better understand the events of that time and ensure that the experiences of these individuals are not lost to history. Through her writing, Malhotra has shed light on the human cost of the Partition and has helped to keep alive the memory of those who were affected by this seminal event in South Asian history. She is a powerful and important voice in the ongoing dialogue about the importance of remembering the past, and her work continues to inspire and educate readers around the world. In the book, Malhotra looks at how cultural artefacts, such as furniture, artwork, and clothing, have evolved over time and how they are used to express different aspects of the Indian culture. Malhotra examines the ways in which material culture has been used to shape and inform a national identity. She looks at how material culture has been used to create a shared sense of belonging among different communities in India, and how it has been employed to instill a sense of pride and nostalgia in people. She also discusses how the use of material culture has changed over time, and how it has been used to reflect the changing values of society. In the book, Malhotra discusses the relationship between material culture and memory and looks at how material culture has been used to preserve memories of the past, and how it has been used to shape the identity of people in the present.

Other prominent work in the field of oral history is the book "Humanity amidst Insanity" written by Tridivesh Singh Maini, Tahir Javed Malik and Ali Farooq Malik. While oral history in the Indian Subcontinent focuses more on the trauma of the partition, the book is filled with tales of hope and compassion exhibited by the people during the traumatic times. This book fills in the gap that has been noticed in contemporary literature by bringing together the stories from both the lands. The text is divided between stories that originated from India and the experiences of those who travelled from Pakistan. Most of the stories come from the region of Punjab, which was brutally divided during the partition. The partition of India led to a mass migration of Punjabis, with many Hindus and Sikhs moving to India while Muslims moved to Pakistan. This resulted in the displacement of millions of Punjabis and the loss of their homes, properties, and businesses. The violence that accompanied the partition also led to the loss of many lives and the forced migration of many Punjabis.

The partition of India also resulted in the division of Punjabi culture and traditions. The Punjabi language, for example, was divided into two standard forms: Shahmukhi in Pakistan and Gurmukhi in India. The partition also led to the division of Punjabi literature, music, and other cultural practices. The text does not aspire to be factual or quantitative in nature. Rather, it aims to ask questions based on the experiences of people who lived through the partition. The book also covers the trauma of people who were born after the partition, paying attention to the phenomenon of generational trauma.

With more people being interested in the past, books that discuss the lives of people who lived through the partition can provide insights to those whose families had been displaced during the partition. While written history serves a very important purpose by providing quantitative knowledge and physical evidence, it lacks the touch of the human voice, therefore excluding the people who were subjected to violence during the partition.



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SAMVAAD: A student-run discussion forum initiated by the Centre for New Economics Studies. The forum seeks to promote active public engagement by distinguished scholars who have expertise in areas of law, economics and other social studies, presenting an interdisciplinary perspective.

CONVERSATIONS IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES: The student-run publication is an in-house, peer-review journal of OP Jindal Global University which aims to promote a variety of perspectives from different scholars over a stated theme.

INFOSPHERE: Being the centre's latest research platform, InfoSphere offers a space for a fact-based, objective analysis on some of the most contemporary issues of economic and social policy concern in South Asia.

INTERLINKED: The Inter-Linked podcast series aims to hold nuanced conversations on the interdisciplinary nature of the problems that are plaguing the world today.

AZAAD AWAAZ: This monthly magazine (Patrika) aims to focus on the marginalized sections whose voices are often muted in the cacophony of flashy mainstream media discourse.

SWABHIMAAN: The premise of Swabhimaan is based on the themes of Gender and Entrepreneurship but is not limited to the conventional meanings they are commonly perceived as.

VISUAL STORYBOARD: Visual Storyboards are an experimental method for visually archiving our research team's fieldwork, with a more exclusive focus on studying the lives and livelihoods of unsecured workers and communities across India.

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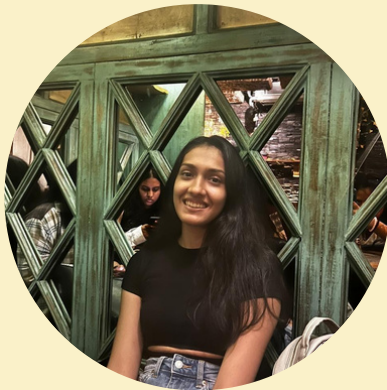
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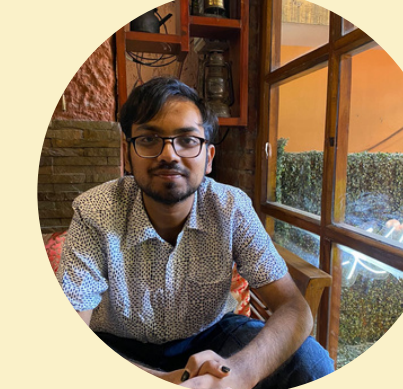
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