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ABOUT US



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GENDER AND SOCIETY

Nudity and Obscenity are not Synonymous: The Progressive take of Kerala High Court



By Puneet Srivastava

Abstract

The XXX vs. State of Kerala case serves as a prism through which we can examine the broader issue of gender equality in India. It spotlights how legal interpretations and societal norms can either contribute to the advancement of gender equality or perpetuate disparities

Earlier this year, the Kerala High Court in the case XXX vs. State of Kerala pronounced a victory for women's rights and also set a paradigm as to what constitutes child sexual abuse, especially when the parents are involved. The court, in its wisdom, discharged the accused – Rehana Fathima – facing several charges, including the stringent POCSO Act (Protection of Children against Sexual Offences Act), ruling, amongst other things, that “nudity and obscenity are not always synonymous”. The State had several arguments against the activist contending that she had sexually abused her children and used them for “sexual gratification”, alleging offences under POCSO, the IT Act and the Juvenile Justice Act.

The poignant saga unfolded in the wake of a viral video that captured a woman, a self-expressive artist, being painted by her children (a boy and a girl) on her naked torso. Several cases were filed against the woman under POCSO for alleged sexual abuse of her children. She defended her actions as a form of self-expression and an attempt to break free from social and cultural taboos that constrain women's bodies. The woman tried to challenge existing taboos spreading the message that there needs to be nothing sexual or offensive about a naked female body. She did this by letting her kids paint on her bare chest. She, through this, went against the ever-luridly-eying female form, by permitting her children to paint her with colours of innocence.

The case brings to the forefront the deeply entrenched societal norms and cultural taboos in India, particularly concerning the female body and the protection of children. In Indian society, women's bodies have long been a subject of fascination, control, and suppression. The judgment signifies a moment of reckoning, urging a re-evaluation of these norms and the liberation of women from historical shackles.

Rehana Fathima's daring act to allow her children to paint on her bare chest was, in her own words, an attempt to challenge these oppressive norms. By doing so, she aimed to desexualize the female body and strip it of its objectification.



Her act was an explicit assertion that there should be nothing inherently sexual or offensive about a woman's naked body. It was a powerful message that sought to confront the ever-watchful gaze that has historically weighed down on women, allowing her children to paint her with the colours of innocence.

The judgment forces us to confront the question: What are the standards of obscenity and vulgarity when it comes to children's protection in India? It challenges the idea that mere nudity is inherently harmful to children, emphasising the importance of intent. Rehana Fathima's actions were not about sexual intent; they were about self-expression, breaking free from stifling social norms and allowing her children to be part of that liberating process.

This case echoes broader discussions in India regarding the intersection of gender, culture, and societal norms. It highlights the need for a cultural shift that liberates women from oppressive norms and advances their rights to self-expression and control over their bodies. While there is progress to be made, the judgment in this case can be seen as a small step towards changing societal perceptions and promoting women's autonomy. The judgment delivered by the court has far-reaching implications for women's rights and empowerment in India. At its core, the judgment challenges the deeply ingrained societal norms and taboos surrounding the female body and the right of women to exercise agency over their own bodies.

Rehana Fathima, the activist at the centre of this case, defended her actions as a form of self-expression, pushing the boundaries of what is considered socially acceptable. Her decision to allow her children to paint on her bare chest was not only an act of personal expression but also a powerful assertion of the right to control one's own body without being subjected to moral judgment or legal sanctions.

This case aligns with the broader women's rights movements in India, where women have been demanding autonomy over their bodies and the right to break free from oppressive norms that dictate how they should behave and present themselves. Rehana Fathima's actions symbolize the desire of many Indian women to challenge patriarchal norms and claim their own agency.



The judgment sends a clear message that women should not be subjected to unwarranted scrutiny, judgment, or legal action for their choices regarding their bodies. It emphasises the importance of consent and the absence of sexual intent, which should be the determining factor in assessing whether an act is offensive or abusive. In this context, the judgment helps to redefine societal perceptions of the female body, moving away from objectification and toward empowerment.

Rehana Fathima's association with various progressive causes and her work for women's rights further vindicate the non-sexual intent of her actions. The judgment acknowledges that the intent behind an act is crucial in differentiating between self-expression and obscenity. By acquitting her of all charges under the POCSO Act, it sets a precedent that reinforces women's right to express themselves without fear of legal repercussions.

Several provisions of the POCSO Act describe sexual assault on children to include making a child touch the breasts of a person, which is the case here. However, an important feature of the provision is "sexual intent". The judge rightly states in the judgement, that sexual intent is "sine quo non" for the applicability of the said provision. Lack of sexual intent and an effort to normalise (and not sexualise) a female body was considered by the judge to acquit the woman of all charges under the POCSO Act.

Beyond the precincts of mere legal discourse, the judgement is commendable on other grounds as well, where it ascends to a realm of social introspection while discussing the standards of obscenity and vulgarity for the offence alleged under the IT Act. The judge comments on the limited rights of women in comparison to men and the historical and contemporary discrimination that takes place due to it. He also goes ahead to discuss the struggles of Kerala with caste discrimination that has historically dealt with the nudity of women.



The case also raises critical questions regarding child rights and parental autonomy. While the judgment in this case acquitted Rehana Fathima, it emphasizes the delicate balance between protecting children from abuse and respecting parental rights to raise their children as they see fit.

Child protection is a paramount concern in any society, and India is no exception. The Protection of Children against Sexual Offences Act (POCSO) aims to safeguard children from sexual abuse and exploitation. It is essential to ensure that children are not subjected to harm or trauma, and the law plays a crucial role in achieving this goal.

However, the judgment in this case highlights the importance of distinguishing between acts that genuinely endanger a child and those that may be unconventional but lack sexual intent or harm. In this case, the judge rightly emphasized the absence of sexual intent in Rehana Fathima's actions and considered them an attempt to normalize, not sexualize, the female body.

Nonetheless, this judgment should not be misconstrued to mean that parents have an absolute right to raise their children in any manner they choose. The line between parental autonomy and child protection must be clearly defined, and decisions should prioritize the best interests of the child. Cases of sexual grooming and abuse within families are on the rise, making it essential for authorities to remain vigilant.

The judgment encourages a nuanced approach to assessing parental actions and their impact on children. While parents should have the freedom to make choices for their children, these choices should not harm or exploit the child. Child rights, including protection from abuse, should remain a top priority, and authorities should intervene when necessary to ensure a child's safety.



However, as we savour this victory, the take on parenting needs to be taken with a bit of nuance. A question that can open is whether parents have the complete right to raise their children as per their wishes, or whether it has to conform to public morality or standards of obscenity, as was the case here. It might open up discussions on parental nudity that have been discussed at length in the West. In the case here, any sexual connotation if attached to the act of the mother and children, would be a travesty to justice and the pure relation of a mother and her children. However, this cannot be extended as far as to say that “Every parent has the right to raise their children in the manner they wish”. It becomes dangerous to say so, as we are in an age where cases of sexual grooming and harassment from family members are on an exponential rise.

The XXX vs. State of Kerala case serves as a prism through which we can examine the broader issue of gender equality in India. It spotlights how legal interpretations and societal norms can either contribute to the advancement of gender equality or perpetuate disparities.

In India, as in many parts of the world, women have historically faced limited rights compared to men. This case accentuates how the legal system can either reinforce or challenge these historical and contemporary disparities. By acquitting Rehana Fathima and emphasizing the absence of sexual intent, the judgment signifies a crucial step in dismantling the entrenched norms that often work against women’s rights.

The case is not just about the acquittal of a woman; it’s about challenging deeply rooted norms that have long governed perceptions of women’s bodies and women’s autonomy. It offers a path towards greater gender equality by asserting the importance of consent and intent in determining what is offensive or abusive.



Gender equality is not solely about legal interpretations but also about societal attitudes. This judgment challenges societal attitudes that have constrained women, both in their self-expression and their roles as mothers. It promotes the idea that women should be free from oppressive norms and should have the autonomy to make choices about their bodies and their children without fear of legal repercussions.

In the general jurisprudence of India with regard to female nudity and obscenity especially in relation to children, this case may be a very small step. However, that does not stop us from commending the judgement given the important precedent it sets that will help protect the rights of women and children all over India.



Fukushima Radioactive Water Release: The Nuclear Conundrum



By Dhruv Bonavate

Abstract

The Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster in 2011 was a stark reminder of the consequences of complacency, lax regulation, and technical negligence in the nuclear industry. The disaster, triggered by a major earthquake and tsunami, exposed fundamental flaws in safety procedures and sparked a heated debate about dumping treated radioactive water into the sea. The purpose of this article is to analyze the 2011 Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster, focus on the key factors causing the disaster, shed light on the post-disaster management of processed radioactive water, and the resulting domestic and geopolitical consequences.

As the world grapples with an array of complex and interconnected challenges, a new era of multilateralism is emerging as a beacon of hope. Multilateralism, the practice of nations coming together to address common global issues through diplomacy, cooperation, and international institutions, is gaining renewed significance in the 21st century. In an era where isolationism and unilateralism have posed threats to global stability, the growing commitment to multilateralism is a welcome development.

The post-World War II era saw the establishment of key international organizations such as the United Nations (UN), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank. These institutions were created with the vision of preventing another global conflict and fostering economic stability through collaboration. However, in recent years, there has been skepticism about the effectiveness of these organizations and a resurgence of nationalism in several countries.

According to Antonio Guterres, the Secretary General of the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund has favored affluent nations rather than impoverished ones. He also calls the IMF and World Bank's reaction to the COVID-19 epidemic a "glaring failure" that has left dozens of nations severely in debt.

What the United Nations Secretary-General refers to as networked multilateralism is no longer an option to the post-World War II paradigm of hierarchical, universal, and formal institutions, but rather an increasingly dominant strategy for addressing the world's most difficult concerns.

The COVID-19 pandemic starkly highlighted the need for global cooperation. As the virus transcended borders, nations were compelled to work together to develop vaccines, share information, and coordinate efforts to mitigate the crisis. It was a reminder that no nation can tackle global challenges in isolation.



The rise of interconnected models has become evident in a lot of areas, primarily driven by crises. Repeated instances of financial contagion have significantly influenced global economic governance, resulting in the establishment of a networked governance structure that offers something akin to global public goods within the financial sphere. It also demonstrated its effectiveness during the COVID-19 pandemic by injecting 6 percent into the global GDP through synchronized monetary and fiscal support, while financial systems displayed resilience. Enhancements in the International Monetary Fund, the improvements in its mechanisms, and increased transparency have enabled better coordination amongst both state and non-state actors.

While the effects of climate change are irreversible and worsening, the expected warming by 2100 has been reduced from 4.4°C to 2.7°C as a result of "unprecedented cooperation to build the scientific evidence, agree on a global goal, design governance systems that can ratchet up ambition in line with the science, and drive the technological advances we now need to deploy at scale."

It is also indispensable in addressing security challenges and preventing conflicts. The United Nations Security Council, despite its imperfections, remains a critical forum for diplomatic solutions to international crises. Peacekeeping missions, sanctions, and negotiations are tools used to maintain global security and prevent the escalation of conflicts.

Additionally, arms control agreements like the New START treaty between the United States and Russia demonstrate the power of diplomacy in reducing the risk of nuclear conflict. In this context, it is not only about avoidance of war but rather fostering trust and cooperation among nations.

Despite the clear advantages of multilateralism, challenges persist. Nationalism, protectionism, and skepticism about international institutions continue to pose obstacles. Some argue that these institutions need reform and revitalization to better serve the interests of all nations. The United Nations Security Council, for example, is one such organization scrutinized heavily, mainly due to its authoritative structure and lack of representation.



Moreover, striking the right balance between sovereignty and international cooperation remains a delicate endeavor. Nations should retain their autonomy while recognizing that some issues require collective action. The goal is not to erode sovereignty but to enhance it by addressing global challenges that no nation can face alone.

As we face global challenges that transcend borders, the importance of diplomacy, cooperation, and international institutions cannot be overstated. Furthermore, the emphasis on future generations has a geopolitical component that is overlooked. According to the UN Secretary-General, 85 percent of the 10.9 billion people expected to be born in the rest of the twenty-first century would be born in Africa and Asia. With the international system failing to reflect the interests of young people, the inability to address long-term concerns exacerbates existing global disparities by harming the interests of young nations where the majority of future generations will be born.



LEGAL STUDIES

A Critique of Surrogacy Regulation Act 2021



By Devansh Singh

Abstract

Surrogacy Rights can be a very important part of a woman's right to her bodily autonomy. The government's regulation of Surrogacy can be considered as an attack on the same. This article delves deeper into the regulation of surrogacy rights in India.

Surrogacy is an important point of contention in India in light of the notions of morality, and economic conditions of surrogates. It has become even more critical after the passage of the Surrogacy Regulation Act, of 2021 in India. Surrogacy, as defined by the act, means a practice whereby one woman bears and gives birth to a child for an intending couple to hand over the child to the intending couple after the birth. The term “intending couple” means a couple who have a medical indication necessitating gestational surrogacy and who intend to become parents through surrogacy. Surrogacy has been mainly put into two categories based on the reasons for which a surrogate agrees to surrogacy. In Altruistic Surrogacy, “no charges, expenses, fees, remuneration or monetary incentive of whatever nature, except the medical expenses and such other prescribed expenses incurred by the surrogate mother and the insurance coverage for the surrogate mother, is given to the surrogate mother”. The second form of surrogacy is Commercial surrogacy. It includes selling or buying of human embryos or trading in the sale or purchase of human embryos or gametes or selling or buying or trading the services of surrogate motherhood by way of giving payment, reward, benefit, fees, remuneration, or monetary incentive in cash or kind, to the surrogate mother. The stakeholders in a situation involving surrogacy are women who act as surrogates, people who want to be single parents (including widows, widowers, divorcees, etc.), couples who aren't biologically capable (proven infertility and essentiality for surrogacy), and couples who are biologically capable but still want to opt for surrogacy.

These categories can involve people belonging to the LGBTQIA+ community because of the evolving definition of family and foreigners who come to India for surrogacy because it is 5 times cheaper in India. The Supreme Court has gone for a broader understanding of family by saying that same-sex couples or single parents will have the same rights as a heterosexual couple could avail under the pretext of a family. Commercial surrogacy was legalized in India in 2002 and ICMR guidelines for regulating Assisted Reproduction in clinics were approved in 2005. However, eventually, commercial surrogacy was banned by the government in 2015. Here too, a distinction was created by banning foreign homosexual couples and single parents first in 2013. After this happened, the Government finally passed the bill in 2021 which allowed altruistic pregnancy only for married heterosexual couples with a specific age limit where one of them or both of them have a biological issue making gestational surrogacy necessary. The act also allows Indian women who are a widow or divorcees between the ages of 35 to 45 years to avail of surrogacy. It only allows cisgender heterosexual couples who have been married for 5 years to be allowed for surrogacy.



The reason for introducing this act is based on the fact that many women were being exploited by couples and agencies connecting couples with surrogates. They often gave them less money and there was a higher risk to the women's health. Also, provided the economic condition of many women they agreed to become surrogates at a very cheap price which is a direct unfair disadvantage due to their vulnerability. Moreover, the act criminalizes commercial surrogacy with a fine and imprisonment of up to 10 years. This act is aimed at preventing the exploitation of women and stopping reproductive tourism but has its flaws. Firstly, it puts many women who used surrogacy as a source of income to secure their future economically. The act in a very patriarchal fashion tries to take away economic returns a woman gets through her work and expects her to do it for free using bonds of kinship. It is another nail in the coffin that is carrying women's rights because women who are single or childless are not even allowed to become a surrogate.

Many economically disadvantaged women were forced to give up a source of income.

his income being an amount could have helped her with many other aspirations by giving them enough money to start an enterprise of their own or gain education to improve their skills. Whatever value judgments are attached to surrogacy, the government has no right to restrict their reproductive or economic autonomy. Secondly, it very clearly excludes members of the LGBTQIA+ community from the right to parenthood through surrogacy. The act clearly states that only heterosexual couples are allowed to opt for surrogacy, thus, confirming heteronormative notions. However, now even the Supreme Court has recognized same-sex couples to constitute a family. It said that same-sex couples or single parents deserve the same benefits as offered by the law to heteronormative couples.



The assumption of heteronormativity while drafting laws ignores the notion that many families do not conform to it. But these people can be good parents or parents too. So, same-sex couples, single parents, etc. should be brought under the ambit of this act. Moreover, women who are already a disadvantaged community in many ways in society can be forced into becoming surrogates in the name of altruism using coercion or undue influence. This will eventually increase the probability of violence and oppression of women.

One of the many solutions to mitigate the flaws, as suggested by scholars, is through compensatory surrogacy which will involve a contract stipulating terms for the surrogacy involving well-being, and insurance. So, the main conclusion of this argument is that instead of banning commercial surrogacy the government should bring in strict laws and even stricter implementation of the laws regulating commercial surrogacy to protect the rights of women who want to use their reproductive labour for economic benefits. This should be irrespective of the notions of immortality. But the safety of women is a factor that can not be forgotten because many women are forced into surrogacy by their husbands or other family members leading to even more exploitation and harassment and not receiving any benefits.

The government might be right in protecting the interest of women who were being exploited by middlemen, couples, etc. but a better solution could be a very strict regulation of commercial surrogacy instead of banning it.



FINANCE AND ECONOMICS

America's Decline in Power Due to Policy?



By Shria Pallati

Abstract

America has remained a great power in the world for decades. However, recently, due to economic and political climate shifts, there is some arguable instability in their credibility and support among the world. This article examines potential instances of power instability or decline for America: its handling of the Venezuelan crisis and policy rhetoric changes. Its perception in the world is important, especially with the threat of power held in the East or BRICS nations, and while it has orchestrated events which have concerned the world, it still remains a key player across contexts.

Introduction

America has served to be a major power for decades, rising to prominence, especially after World War II. It has gained power in all dimensions, hard and soft, allowing it to gain control of and remain a key stakeholder in multilateral organizations and their decision-making. However, in recent years, there has been an arguably slow decline in its power and influence internationally, and even at home domestically, among its own population. This essay will explore two instances that can depict this decline. This is the USA response to the economic and political Venezuelan crisis and the last two presidential terms' effect on international sentiment (particularly European) with respect to the flip-flopping the USA conducted on key policies and long agreements. It can be seen through these examples that the international sentiment that America held in high regard has been decreasing, but it is still not entirely accurate to say that America is fully on the down curve, as it still holds a significant hold over the international stage, and still will do so for a long time.

America and Venezuela

The Venezuelan crisis, which from protests led to the controversial election of Nicolas Maduro to his second term. The election, which was said to have undemocratic roots and poor credibility led to the USA and other countries recognizing Juan Guaido as an interim president. However, Maduro did not acknowledge this, and still, to this day there is a genuine question in the minds of Venezuelans on who is actually their president, as they don't like either candidate, and Maduro seems to have still retained a decent amount of power in the country. Guaido also came under fire due to many scandals and accusations of mismanaged funds and poor distribution of humanitarian aid across the continent. This endeavor that the USA embarked on, reminiscent of its past decades as a sort of champion of democracy and freedom, then failed, as the situation in Venezuela is still poor.



Venezuela is a petrostate, which means the government is heavily dependent on income from fossil fuels, leaving potential problems to arise due to unsustainable reliance on volatile natural resource exports (Dutch Disease). States like this also frequently have corrupt governments and extreme power concentration within weak political institutions. Due to the large amount of resources, the country's economy attracts great amounts of foreign inflows which appreciates the local currency. This increased the demand for cheaper imports, and pulls economic resources like labor away from other key sectors, like agriculture, which was the case in Venezuela. The political climate is also harmed, as bureaucracy is poor and accountability of politicians is nonexistent. America has tried to take advantage of this by intervening in the situation.

The Trump Administration left any hope of coming to a peaceful, sustainable solution behind when it imposed economic sanctions on the already struggling country, but a key reason why it failed was due to its abandonment of multilateralism. While the US government did take a backseat to negotiations, galvanizing Latin American countries to come together and take charge of the issue on their territory, a change to Secretary of State leadership led to them to try to "take ownership" of the issue themselves. He and his team changed directions from the low-profile emphasis on Latin American autonomy the USA was attempting to US predominance and its battle against "poisonous ideologies".

Venezuela may have some help with the news that oil sanctions will be eased, but the country struggles with high debt and hyperinflation. They have not only made an economic crisis, but a humanitarian and political one too.

America and Policy

What is a shame is that before this change in policy and approach, the USA had managed to garner some of the "most successful coalition building" in the international response, and had the support of the EU as well. However, over time, the EU distances itself from the changing approach and saw that "lack of emphasis on negotiation" to be concerning.



It created and implemented the International Contact Group on Venezuela (ICG). Over time, it has gained many members of Latin American countries and has been received better than the USA, and has managed to maintain still, “significant engagement” in the region.

This does depict a sort of decline in America’s credibility, as it notes a distrust on the EU’s part in America and its ability to carry out diplomatic relations. This is especially necessary for such a region that has colonial ties and sensitive history. The EU was initially on board with the American approach, but quickly switched gears after it no longer agreed with its methods. This incongruity does not inspire confidence in international onlookers, especially since a whole other organization was created in response to the USA in order to salvage what had been negotiated before. Additionally, the notice of America’s quick policy change after a position change does not allow for consistency, which begs additional questions of if the government has a cohesive policy or was following the whims and fancies of individuals flush with rhetoric. The latter would not bode well for further international diplomatic relations.

This issue with inconsistency in American policies is also seen in the withdrawal from and then rejoining into the Paris Agreement over two presidencies. Donald Trump pulled the USA out of the Paris Climate Agreement in 2020, claiming that remaining in the 2015 agreement would harm the US economy and its future goals and that the USA had no obligation to continue providing help for an endeavor it did not support. This was also untrue at the time, as many in the country were against this move and supported climate legislation. Pulling out of the agreement, while the USA was the biggest economy in the world and accounted for 15% of global greenhouse gas emissions, and after it was one of the main proponents and drivers of the agreement in 2015, truly gutted trust across Europe and further internationally. It was described as “wrong”, a “problem”, and a “failure”, and the sentiment was further solidified after President Biden rejoined the agreement quickly after he came into office in 2021. Current rhetoric about the climate seems to be positive, with Biden’s Inflation Reduction Act carrying the largest investment into clean energy, but during the election time it is likely that it will slowly start to shift to gather a larger base.



Again, this sort of inconsistency in policy stances which are so drastic and seem to be up to the individual, rather than the whole US government, significantly harms confidence and makes it harder for countries to work with America without reservations. Multiple countries have talked of the need to become more self-sufficient after negotiating with the US, particularly during the Trump Era, and so there has been a power decline over time.

However, this is not to say that the USA remains powerless. It is still one of the most powerful nations in the world and has both hard and soft power in spades. While there is a small decline in its legitimacy in policymaking and which stances it chooses to take, as seen in Venezuela and the Paris Agreement, countries still rely on the USA heavily and will continue to do so in the future, both politically and economically. The USA remains a key player in the world for management and movement.



HISTORY AND CULTURE

Transformation of Academic Learning in India



By Savya Atrey

Abstract

India's academic landscape has experienced a significant transformation in recent years. This article highlights key trends and drivers of change in the Indian education system. It aims to discuss the evolving nature of education in India, and the need to move towards a more flexible, inclusive, and skill-focused model, which is better aligned with the demands of the 21st-century world.

Introduction

India has enjoyed a long and distinguished history as a global hub of education. This recognition was especially prevalent during the ancient and mediaeval eras. India was the centre of knowledge and intellectual thinking throughout the Vedic period and some of the world's first religious and philosophical writings, the Vedic scriptures, were written here. Once a leader in higher education with globally sought-after universities like Nalanda and Takshashila, India's rapidly developing world-class university system positions it to once again become a global educational centre. This article, however, does not aim to compare the logistics and statistics of development of then versus now, rather, it delves into the characteristic differences between ancient and contemporary teaching methods. It also examines the subsequent academic backlog suffered by India during its educational transformation and proposes methodologies inspired by ancient literature to address it. The article essentially lays out the developmental perspective of modern teaching methods within the context of ancient and mediaeval education.

Education Before

Lacking a complex economic and political framework, the societal structure of ancient India was simple. People lived simple lives and the objective of education was to cultivate ethical traits in children and build character by focusing on truthfulness, discipline, humility, respect and self-reliance. Students received their schooling either in forests, gurukuls or ashrams that always provided a pleasant and silent atmosphere for learning. Teachings followed the tenets of the Vedas, Brahmanas, Upanishads and Dharmasutras. In order to include all facets of life, students were taught to respect the harmony between humans and nature while performing their obligations to themselves, their families, and society. Educational resources came from a variety of disciplines, including Varta (agricultural and commerce), Itihas (history), Anviksiki (logic), Arthashastra (polity), and Dhanurvedya (archery), indicating the emphasis of the ancient education system on academic, spiritual and physical development.



There was no interference from the people in curriculum development, indicating how highly valued teachers were considered at the time. Knowledge was considered sacred, and teachers were seen as conduits of this knowledge. Consequently, they were given a great deal of autonomy in developing their curricula and tailoring their teaching to the individual needs of their students. The lack of intercession is a reflection of the idea that education was a personal concern between the student and the teacher. Students often left their homes to live with their gurus for the duration of their studies, this allowed them to devote themselves fully to their education, and to develop a close relationship with their teacher. The sacrosanct value of knowledge and teachers during this period also led to a strong tradition of philanthropy in education. While students received their education mostly free of cost, wealthy individuals and families often donated generously to support institutions and teachers. This philanthropy helped to ensure that all students had access to quality education, regardless of their socioeconomic status. Since the emphasis was on holistic training, people in ancient times were more adept at handling the circumstances of their situations, as their education had a flexible and personalised approach where practical knowledge was valued more highly than academic understanding.

The Vedic Period

India saw significant intellectual and spiritual advancement throughout the Vedic era. Education was not rigorous or focused on rote memorization; rather than forcing knowledge upon students, it placed more of an emphasis on ingraining it in their minds through discussions and storytelling. They were not pressured to learn in a certain way but were encouraged to listen and engage in conversation with their teachers to dive deep into the concepts being taught. Women played a vital role in this era; there is evidence to suggest that a significant number of women in the Vedic period received a general literary and cultural education.



This is supported by the fact that they were expected to be proficient in the Vedas and learn about other subjects, such as music, dance, and philosophy. Women from all economic backgrounds had access to education during the Vedic era, they participated in religious ceremonies, composed hymns and poetry and played a role in developing and improving educational practices. The positive impact of women's education on society in the Vedic period can be seen in the high standards of morality and ethics that prevailed during this time.

Transformation in the Education System

The first change in Indian education came with India's invasion by Mughal rulers. They introduced new customs and civilizations, and the educational system mainly emphasised Islamic and Mughal teachings – the structures, institutions and beliefs of which were far removed from the Buddhist and Hindu education systems. In addition to focusing mostly on secular and theological themes, mediaeval education also included history, geography, philosophy, Vedanta, Patanjali, and astrology.

The Industrial Revolution, which brought forth new discoveries, scientific advancements, and technical developments, ushered in a period of profound change. The British government's policies and actions during its rule in India established the basic structure and principles of the higher education system that would be used in the 20th century and beyond. Post-independence era saw the establishment of universities to ensure quality education in India.

Modern Education

The transformation of academic learning in India is a complex and ongoing process that is being driven by a number of factors, including technological advancements, globalisation, and the changing needs of the workforce. The benefits and drawbacks of contemporary schooling are manifold but it is important to note that these advantages and disadvantages are not mutually exclusive.



Today, government policies support equal access to education for all students, regardless of gender, as a key component of modern education whereas in the past there was a strong emphasis on educating girls, which started to fade in the later Vedic era due to ideological shifts in societal behaviour. The shift in societal norms came in many forms; the education system took a patriarchal approach and women's roles were seen as merely domestic. This was a culmination of socio-cultural and religious factors that barred women from practising rituals and mantras. Rig-Vedic ideals were destroyed when caste started to infringe on the right to education, preventing lower caste children from studying in ashrams and gurukuls alongside men from upper castes.

Nowadays, there is more emphasis placed on teaching traits that are more “industry-oriented” where the focus lies on making money rather than on instilling cultural sophistication and morality. Although technology has greatly improved education, it may also cause social anxiety, addiction, and sleep deprivation. Our attention spans have also been severely impacted, such that students often lose focus and resort to using their phones and laptops during lectures; this has also worsened student-teacher relations. Technology has made high-quality education accessible to students all over the world. But at the same time, modern education is becoming increasingly expensive, especially for higher education purposes, making it difficult for low-income students to access the education they need.

Is One Better than the Other?

Essentially, we can't definitively say which method was a “better” method of teaching, rather we can identify the shortcomings of past eras and determine what we can use to improve the educational system we have now. One of the most critical shortcomings of the modern era in education is the capitalist mindset that has been instilled in students from a very young age. This mindset prioritises economic growth and profit over all else, often at the expense of the environment.



Students are not taught how to coexist peacefully with nature, and they grow up to contribute to environmental destruction. Capitalist thinking manifests in education in a number of ways. One is by emphasising competitiveness where students constantly being pitted against each other breeds conceit and a lack of empathy for others. The manifestation of capitalism is also through the emphasis on consumerism which fosters a wasteful culture and a disregard for how our spending habits impact the environment. The shortcomings of the capitalist mindset in education are evident in the current environmental crisis – climate change, pollution, and resource depletion are all major threats to the planet, and they are all directly or indirectly linked to our economic system. If we want to create a more sustainable future, we need to start by transforming our education system. Students need to learn about the importance of environmental stewardship and help in creating a more sustainable and cooperative economic system.

In recent years the country has witnessed a shift towards a more holistic and learner-centric approach, fueled by several factors, including technological developments, government initiatives, and a growing emphasis on skill development and practical knowledge. This is in tune with the National Education Policy 2020 which has set the stage for fundamental reforms, emphasising critical thinking, creativity, and multidisciplinary learning. While challenges such as educational inequality and infrastructural limitations persist, the evolving academic landscape in India reflects a promising journey towards a more progressive and globally competitive education system. Perhaps there are a few ancient teachings that we can adopt to help reach this goal faster; where we can make schools more sustainable by adopting energy-efficient appliances and reducing waste production. The need of the hour is to focus on a student's character development by emphasising the value of fostering relationships that instil a sense of social responsibility and service. Students need emotional literacy to manage the demands of a competitive world while balancing their physical and mental health.



. There is a need to allocate resources towards providing teachers with training to stay abreast of contemporary pedagogical approaches and to hone their classroom management skills to improve upon student-teacher relations that can boost learning outcomes for children. To better prepare for the demands of adulthood, they must learn practical life skills like financial literacy, time management, and communication skills and be prepared to adjust to a world that is rapidly changing.

Overall, the transformation needed in modern education is about preparing students not just for academic success but also for life in a complex, interconnected, and rapidly changing world. It ought to provide students the ability to think critically, adjust to changing circumstances, and grow into responsible, compassionate, and active global citizens.



PUBLIC POLICY

Lessons For India From The Ukraine Conflict



By Sankalp Wadhvani

Abstract

This essay examines key lessons from the Russia-Ukraine war that are relevant to India's military strategy. This highlights the need for India to maintain its defence independence while also highlighting the ongoing significance of conventional warfare. A thorough, flexible plan is shaped for India's changing security requirements by highlighting the critical role of sophisticated artillery, the effects of technology, the necessity of a united national morale, and the necessity of an integrated defence approach.

Introduction

The Russia-Ukraine war is an ongoing conflict where a symphony of warfare plays out, revealing modern battlefields' intricate dynamics. The conflict has unexpectedly lasted for more than one and a half years challenging the common beliefs of modern warfare up until now, therefore, it is not merely a localised dispute; it is a revelation of the contemporary art of war, laden with profound lessons. War is a cruel but instructive teacher, and often the only thing we can gain from the suffering of others is more knowledge and wisdom for the future. Likewise, the Russia-Ukraine war has proven to be a lesson for India in terms of military and strategy. India's strategic autonomy in the changing geopolitical landscape has allowed it to adapt and refine its defence doctrines, acquisition approaches, and technological advancements in alignment with the changing paradigm of warfare. An in-depth analysis of the key lessons learned from the Russia-Ukraine conflict is provided in this paper, along with suggestions for how they might be applied to create a more adaptable and reliable security environment for India.

The Lessons

The first lesson for India is realising that conventional warfare is not completely over, and it will play a crucial role in the future. "Military icons of the 20th century" were on their way out in 2020, according to General M.M. Naravane, then-chief of the Indian Army, in the same way that the "Sony Walkman" was rendered obsolete by modern music-listening devices. This war has showcased that despite the growing technology in warfare it has restrictions on it, therefore a mix of conventional warfare is necessary for future modern warfare. The world has come full circle, and Russia has modified its approach, switching from brigades to divisions and reverting to World War II tactics.



More importantly, this war proved that possession of nuclear weapons is no longer a huge deterrent. The “Joint Doctrine of the Armed Forces–2017” states that future wars are expected to be “ambiguous, uncertain, short, swift, and lethal.” On this plain assumption, some reflection is necessary, and hopefully, it is already under progress, according to Lt Gen DS Hooda. Consequently, the possibility of a long war is still in place. Since India has two active borders, it is always advisable to be ready for a conventional confrontation because both sides may change their capabilities and intent at any time, and the situation may worsen. Therefore, the Indian Armed Forces must be ready for everything.

The second lesson for India is that it has to be self-sufficient in the defence domain. As observed, there may be conventional warfare, thus war may last for a longer period as well for India considering its neighbouring nations like China and Pakistan (which can be backed by China). In this context, it is noted that whereas the Kargil fight was rather prolonged and confined to a specific sector, the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War was brief. Therefore, the emphasis must be on accumulating sufficient war reserves to last for a longer period. Currently, India is not self-sufficient in the military domain and not ready to sustain a long war. As conflict loomed after the 2016 Uri terror assault, the Indian military was forced to embark on a global shopping binge to stock up on ammunition, including specialised shells for its T-90 tanks. In a 2017 assessment, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India discovered that almost 40% of the ammunition used by the Indian Army would not even last ten days during a conflict. The CAG audit also observed that the Defense Ministry’s 2013 goal to close the artillery gap in the Army by 2019 had not yet been put into practice.

The same case is with the Indian airforce and navy which lack the numbers to engage in a long period of war being self-sustaining. More importantly, Russia, one of the biggest suppliers to India in defence has been not able to meet the defence requirements of the Indian army due to its engagement in war. While India’s reliance on the Russian Federation will likely last for some time, India will undoubtedly need to wean itself off on Russian military prowess given its growing stock of Russian-made conventional weapons.



. Hence, India needs to focus on the indigenization of arms and equipment. Positively, India has started the defence indigenization process to attain the ultimate goal of “Atmanirbhar Bharat”. “Mediumization with indigenous guns is likely to be completed by the year 2042,” according to India’s plan. Additionally, the Army has ordered 300 Sharang guns that are 155 mm instead of 130 mm and 114 Dhanush weapons that are locally modified versions of the Bofors guns.

In addition to firearms, indigenization of munitions is a primary focus, according to officials, who noted that four different munitions types are presently undergoing trials.

The third lesson this war has taught India is that hard firepower still plays an integral part, and more advanced fast-paced artillery is required on the battlefield. The use of precision-guided munitions in well-thought-out strikes only makes artillery more deadly, even though it still plays a significant role in warfare. The inability of Russian artillery bombardments to breach Ukrainian defences is instructive. In contrast, Russian ammunition stockpiles, command centres, and important bridges were frequently destroyed by NATO’s High-Mobility Artillery Rocket System, or HIMARS, which can fire GPS-guided rockets up to 50 miles away. India has also learned from this lesson and started to improve its artillery with a focus on mobility and long-range firepower which makes it imperative for the Indian army. Indian army officials have recognized the importance of “shoot and scoot” capability in the war. Given that artillery fire was responsible for 80% of the estimated war losses in Russia-Ukraine, one official claimed that the conflict has confirmed the use of firepower as a decisive factor in winning battles. Along with the Operations Branch, the Artillery Regiment conducted a thorough investigation. The Army is aiming for additional self-propelled and mounted gun weapons in the updated Artillery profile. The focus is on improving the range and accuracy of rocket and missile regiments, developing and modernising munitions with longer ranges, reorganising surveillance and target acquisition (SATA) units for effective surveillance, data management, coordination, and targeting tasks, and creating efficient sensor-shooter networks and procedures.



Lastly, the DRDO is improving the missile capability for both ballistic and cruise missiles in terms of range and accuracy. The BrahMos missile's range has been increased, and the DRDO is looking into developing a variety of other missiles with a range of different capabilities.

The fourth lesson the war has taught is the importance of technology and the role of non-state actors on the battlefield. The war has displayed the successful use of drones on the battlefield, and the role of social media as well as creating a hybrid warfare. Even smaller drones have been crucial in information, surveillance, and reconnaissance missions. Major drones, like the Turkish Bayraktar, have proved incredibly effective in striking major targets in Ukraine. The spaced-backed capability and open-source data have made it easy for the military to be more transparent. More importantly, the role of social media, to drive the narrative of the war globally towards the West is something to be looked upon by India. Social media cannot be permitted to set its standards for material outside of the legal frameworks of the nations in which they operate. India should control how social media platforms operate while engaged in a conflict. Lastly, the use of nonlinear warfare techniques and the presence of non-state actors on the front lines add another level of complexity, thickening the haze of conflict. India might also need to deal with non-state actors while it is engaged with Pakistan in a conflict. However, regarding the use of technology in the battlefield especially drones, there are certain limitations as well. According to reports, the drones can be used for border-area attacks as well as monitoring. Drones won't be able to do deeper penetration, though, like a fighter, it is predicted. Therefore, India must maintain a strong air force to deeply penetrate beyond enemy lines, and not be heavily dependent on drones for offence, but on the other hand, start infusion of technology into warfighting systems.



The last lesson for India is that it must understand that the morale of the nation matters in a war and there should be an integrated approach to the conflict. The conflict will bring economic pressure, due to possible sanctions, but India should be able to unite its diverse citizens, as the morale of the nations will also affect the soldiers on the battlefield fighting for India. Experts claim that the early failure of the Russian assault was caused by a lack of coordination between the armoured columns, mounted infantry, self-propelled artillery, air defence, airpower, and logistics, which showed the absence of a combined arms formation. Without any actual coordination on the ground, it appeared as though each arm was engaged in a separate conflict. Therefore, defence experts consequently emphasize the need for a cohesive approach to war, which would require employing the assets of all three forces in a focused manner. India should make sure its army is well coordinated in an event of conflict as it did during the 1971 Bangladesh liberation war.

Conclusion

In conclusion, India can use the lessons learned from the Russia-Ukraine conflict as a compass to strengthen its military plans and develop a strong security paradigm. India's defence mentality must be imbued with the necessity of a balanced strategy that includes conventional warfare, self-reliance, artillery firepower, technological integration, and national solidarity. India sets sail for a future where its military posture is resilient, responsive, and flexible in a constantly changing international environment by taking these lessons to heart.





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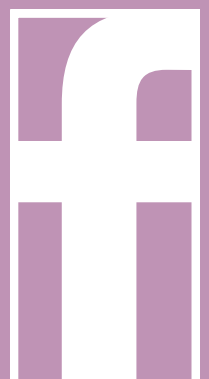
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