

**Centre for New  
Economic Studies**

**Nickelodeon**

**&**

**Dimed**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE NO
1.EDITORS NOTE	03
2.PUBLIC POLICY CLUSTER	04
3.LEGAL STUDIES CLUSTER	10
4.ENVIRONMENT CLUSTER	16
5.HISTORY CLUSTER	21
6.INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND FOREIGN POLICY CLUSTER	26
7.ECONOMICS AND FINANCE CLUSTER	32
8.GENDER AND SOCIETY CLUSTER	37
9.CREDITS	45



# EDITOR'S NOTE

Nickeled and Dimed, the official research platform of the Centre for New Economics Studies (CNES) at Jindal School of International Affairs, O.P. Jindal Global University, serves as an open academic forum. It offers well-researched, balanced commentaries on critical political, economic, social, and legal issues across seven research clusters: Public Policy, International Relations, Legal Studies, Environment & Social Issues, Gender & Society, History & Culture, and Finance & Economics.

In an era of abundant information but scarce clarity, Nickeled and Dimed bridges academic inquiry with public discourse. This edition comprises of insightful articles that address contemporary issues and examines their broader implications through books, critical commentaries, and audio-visual narratives.

- Public Policy- “Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty”
- Legal Studies- “Reform or Kill: The Irreconcilability of the Death Penalty and Reformative Justice”
- Environment and Social Issues- Heat, Hunger, and Hope: Inside South Asia’s Climate Migration Crisis
- History and Culture- Archiving Emotion in The Lunchbox
- International Relations- Politics, Power, and the Limit of International Law: Is the International Criminal Justice System Impotent in Times of Geopolitical Conflicts?
- Finance and Economics- The Economics of War and Peace
- Gender & Society- Gender Bias of Cancel Culture : A Witch Hunt in the Digital Age

# PUBLIC POLICY CLUSTER

## Theme:- Borders, Migration, and Statelessness'

Migration today is not just a question of movement — it's a question of power, policy, and belonging. In an increasingly securitised and climate-stressed world, borders are no longer static lines on a map, but deeply politicised instruments that govern who gets to move, who gets to stay, and who remains excluded. Statelessness — the condition of having no recognized nationality — continues to affect millions, stripping them of fundamental rights and access to public services.

This month's theme encourages columnists to explore how India's public policy constructs and responds to questions of human mobility. Rather than viewing migration solely through the lens of economic opportunity or national security, we seek to foreground a broader development perspective — one that incorporates law, history, sociology, and lived experience. In doing so, we hope to expand the idea of development beyond economic growth, allowing for a more nuanced and interdisciplinary engagement with the topic.





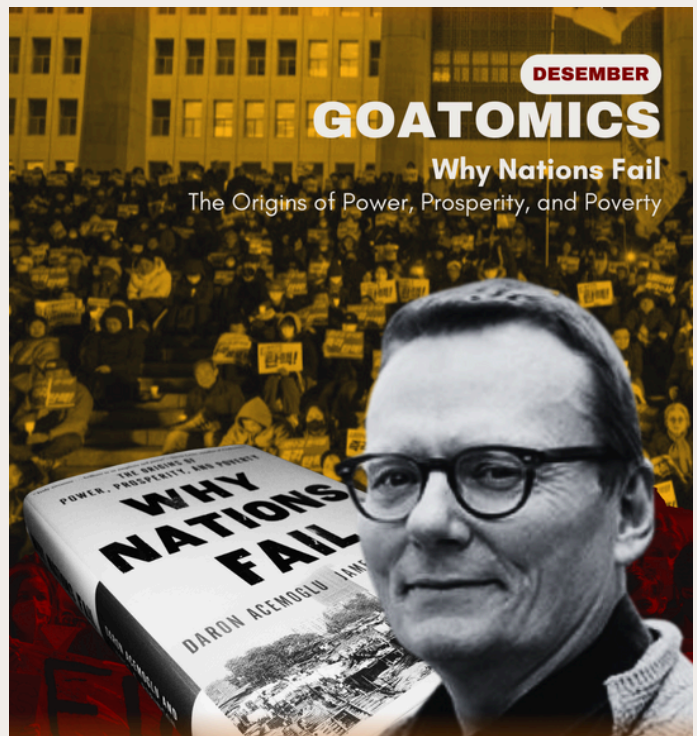
# WHY NATIONS FAIL: THE ORIGINS OF POWER, PROSPERITY, AND POVERTY

BY- UDITI KALRA

## INTRODUCTION

Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty (2012), written by economists Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, tackles one of the most enduring and vital questions in the social sciences like, ‘why are some nations rich while others remain trapped in poverty?’ Against the backdrop of history and current events, the authors set out to challenge the widespread belief that factors such as geography, culture, or the ignorance of leaders are the primary causes of national success or failure. Instead, they argue that the underlying driver of prosperity lies in the creation and maintenance of “inclusive institutions”, political and economic systems that encourage participation, innovation, and fair competition.

This book’s significance goes far beyond academic debate; it confronts the real sources of widespread inequality and political unrest that shape our world.



Drawing from an extensive range of historical examples and case studies, Acemoglu and Robinson invite readers to reconsider the root causes of global wealth gaps and to reflect on possible paths for change.

This review will outline the book’s central arguments and structure, discuss its main concepts and evidence, assess its strengths and weaknesses, and offer a balanced perspective on its impact and contribution

# OVERVIEW

The book is organized into fifteen chapters plus a preface and is structured to challenge traditional explanations for global inequality. The book begins with case studies like the divided city of Nogales and the contrast between North and South Korea to illustrate how similar places diverge economically under different institutional arrangements. After dismissing geography, culture, and ignorance as primary explanations, the authors build their institutional theory: that prosperity depends on “inclusive” political and economic institutions, while poverty results from “extractive” ones.

The authors cover a broad historical range, from the rise and fall of the Mayan city-states to the Industrial Revolution in England and present-day nations. They use critical junctures (such as the Glorious Revolution or colonial conquests) to explain why nations follow different trajectories. Their analysis features a variety of evidence, including historical events, statistical comparisons, and vivid storytelling to connect institutional evolution with national success or stagnation.



Notable chapters examine how institutions drift or entrench over time, the feedback loops that keep nations locked into vicious or virtuous cycles, and rare examples of countries that have managed to break out of poverty traps. The book concludes by emphasizing the enduring significance of institutions and reflecting on the challenges of reform.



## KEY ARGUMENTS AND CONCEPTS

At the heart of *Why Nations Fail* lies a crucial distinction: “inclusive” institutions versus “extractive” ones. Inclusive institutions are those that genuinely make room for broad participation in society. They support property rights, the rule of law, and nurture environments where people are free to invest, innovate, and pursue opportunities. When these systems are in place, individuals from every background have a fair shot at improving their lives and shaping the direction of their country.

On the other hand, extractive institutions leave decision-making and rewards in the hands of a narrow elite. Power is concentrated and guarded, economic opportunities are restricted, and most people have little say or incentive to excel. What results is stagnation and frustration, not because people lack talent or culture, but because the rules are rigged for only a few to win.

A big reason these institutional differences exist is politics. Acemoglu and Robinson argue that those in power often shape institutions – political and economic alike to protect and extend their interests. Unless power is balanced and spread more widely, institutions usually remain extractive, and societies struggle to break out of poverty cycles.

Another core idea is the concept of “critical junctures”, pivotal moments in history, such as wars or revolutions, that offer a chance for institutional change. The eventual outcome, however, depends on existing power structures and previous institutional arrangements, an idea called path dependency. For example, while the Glorious Revolution of 1688 in England paved the way for broad-based political rights and eventually fuelled the Industrial Revolution, similar crises elsewhere often resulted in even more entrenched rule by elites.

Throughout the book, the authors back their arguments with striking examples: the economic gap between North and South Korea despite shared cultural backgrounds; the failure of wealth to transform societies under colonial or extractive regimes in Africa and Latin America; and the way institutional innovations in Britain led to global waves of prosperity. These cases are used not just to illustrate their theory, but to demonstrate how the rules of the game, set by those in power, ultimately decide whether nations flourish or fail.

## STRENGTHS OF THE BOOK

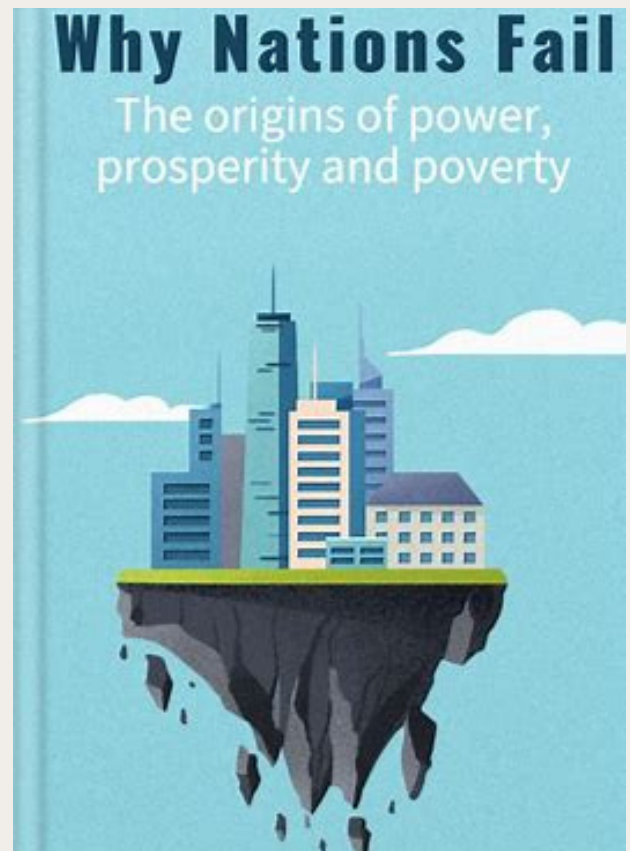
One of the book’s biggest strengths is its clear and engaging writing. Acemoglu and Robinson manage to weave together stories from vastly different eras and continents, turning history and economics into a compelling narrative. The book’s use of case studies, such as the contrasting fortunes of North and South Korea, or the development trajectories of colonial societies, provides vivid and memorable illustrations of the authors’ arguments. The sheer breadth of historical examples, from the origins of ancient civilizations to the challenges of present-day nations, helps ground their thesis in real-world events.



This approach makes their argument that inclusive institutions are key to prosperity especially persuasive, as it resonates across so many diverse examples. Additionally, *Why Nations Fail* has sparked important debate in economics, history, and policy circles, pushing the conversation about development to focus more closely on the intertwined roles of politics and power. Even for readers skeptical of its central claim, the book's accessible style and ambitious scope make it an essential addition to discussions about why nations thrive or struggle.

## CRITICISM

One aspect I found lacking in the authors' analysis is how they largely examine countries as if each develops in a vacuum, without giving enough weight to the ongoing influence of the global system. External factors like international trade, foreign interference, and the long shadows of colonialism are mentioned, but they rarely get the depth of discussion their real-world impact deserves. In addition to this I have noticed that the book tends to revisit its central argument again and again, illustrating it with new examples but not always revealing fresh insights. The repetition, while making the thesis clear, sometimes comes at the expense of a more nuanced or multifaceted analysis.



## PERSONAL REFLECTION

What I found especially thought-provoking was how Acemoglu and Robinson present institutions not as distant, abstract systems, but as everyday rules shaped by those with real power, rules that evolve through conflict, negotiation, and unexpected turns. The stark examples, like the contrast between the two Nogales and the lasting impact of the Glorious Revolution, reveal how present realities are built on past struggles over who has a voice and who holds authority.

This perspective led me to set aside the familiar notion that nations are held back mainly by culture or geography, and instead reconsider how shifts in politics, incentives, and power can unlock or block opportunity for entire populations. Their focus on the “rules of the game” and how deeply embedded and resistant to change they can be reshaped has reshaped my understanding. It made clear that although real progress is difficult and slow, positive change remains possible as history is made not just by fate, but by people repeatedly challenging and reshaping these rules.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, *Why Nations Fail* stands out for its bold argument that the prosperity or poverty of nations ultimately comes down to the quality of their institutions and the politics shaping them. By combining vivid historical examples with accessible storytelling, Acemoglu and Robinson have made a major contribution to our understanding of economic development. While the book has its limits, especially in handling global influences and repetition, it succeeds in reframing a long-standing debate and encouraging readers to look beyond surface explanations. Whether you agree with their thesis or not, this book is sure to spark new ways of thinking about why some countries thrive where others struggle, making it a valuable read for anyone interested in history, economics, or the future of global society.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Uditi Kalra is a Bs Economics student at The Jindal School of Government and Public Policy and a columnist at CNES.

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# LEGAL STUDIES CLUSTER

## Theme:- “Constitutionality of the Death Penalty”

Positioned at the intersection of law, morality, and justice, the discussion critically examines the legal framework, philosophical underpinnings, and socio-economic realities surrounding the death penalty. Key questions addressed include the viability of the “rarest of rare” doctrine, the implications of proposed legislation like the Aparajita Bill, and whether the current system upholds constitutional guarantees of dignity, due process, and equality

The dialogue also considers comparative constitutional approaches from countries like South Africa and Canada, the psychological toll on convicts and families, and the systemic biases of caste, class, and gender in the imposition of capital punishment.





# REFORM OR KILL: THE IRRECONCILABILITY OF THE DEATH PENALTY AND REFORMATIVE JUSTICE

BY- MALVIKA NAMBIAR



## INTRODUCTION

The death penalty is harsh. Does any crime justify taking the life of those who committed it? What is the standard to determine those 'deserving' the death penalty? A plethora of questions boggles the mind of a prisoner awaiting trial in a remote Indian prison. He believes in his innocence, but the courts state otherwise. The man spends day and night awaiting death, made certain with the court's judgment. The wait becomes the most intense part of being imprisoned, every shadow becoming more menacing and every silence deafening.

Prison is a dark realm that brings out scarier aspects of humanity. Treating prisoners in zoo-like conditions leads to barbaric behaviour. Irrespective of the verdict, the harassment, silences and isolation they suffer cause mental breakdown. For instance, the Netflix show *Black Warrant* amazingly captures this grim reality in the Tihar Jail. The main character is an outsider, learning the haunting truths of prison and the killers that await. The show consumes the viewer and takes one to the deepest and scariest parts of Tihar prison. A self-righteous officer who is determined to change the face of the prison system and reform conditions is exposed to the harsh truth of the Indian justice system; it is arbitrary and unfair, a slave to years of political and societal conditioning, and resistant to change. Hence, we must focus on reformation and abolish the death penalty.

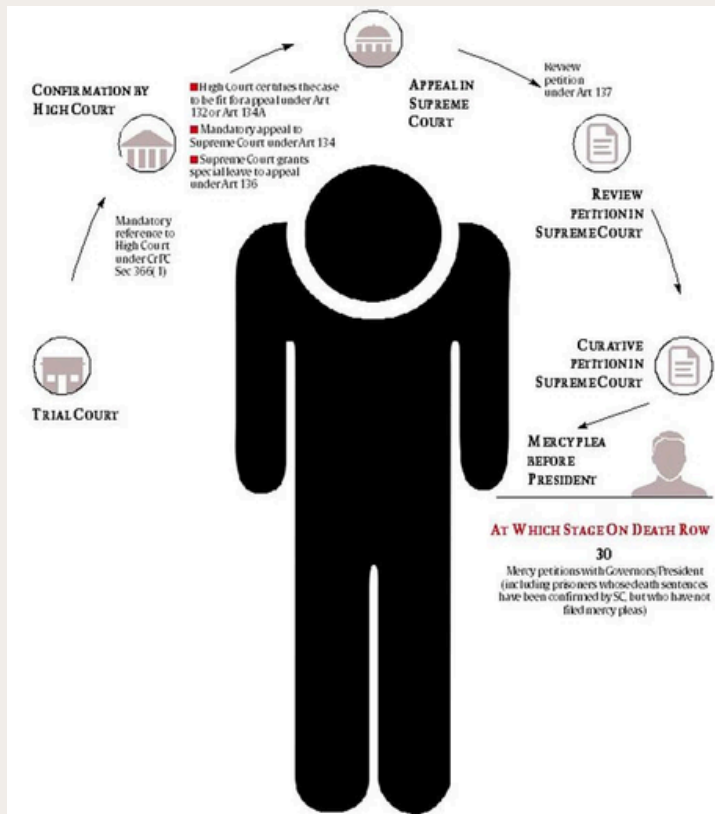
# DEATH PENALTY IN INDIA

The Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, and the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita confer powers on the State and the Union Government to confirm the death penalty awarded by the courts concerning various offences. The case of *Bacchan Singh v. State of Punjab* led the Supreme Court to a judgment that there must be 'aggravating and special circumstances' to justify it. However, the nature of these aggravating circumstances was not clearly defined. Hence, in the case of *Macchi Singh v. State of Punjab*, the judiciary established guidelines to follow before awarding the death penalty, including consideration of the socially abhorrent nature of the crime and the circumstances that led to its commission. These guidelines would help rule out the death penalty in most cases, and life imprisonment could be considered.

Yet, the problem with using this doctrine is that it is extremely subjective and judge-centric. As the American Realists have often stated, the law is what the judge had for breakfast. In the case of the death penalty, subjectivity can be literally and figuratively fatal. For example, the Punjab and Haryana High Court commuted the death sentence of a man accused of raping his 17-year-old daughter and getting her pregnant.

He is now subject to thirty years in prison. The court held that this case was not a 'rarest of rare situation' requiring the death penalty. However, many opine that at least life imprisonment should have been awarded to the accused for committing such a heinous crime. These kinds of crimes shock the moral conscience of society, and to leave it up to a bench to decide on the life of the accused is a game of chance.

The Indian Constitution guarantees citizens' rights to equality, freedom of speech and expression, and the right to life, enshrined in the golden triangle of Articles 14, 19, and 21. Justice Bhagwati has openly criticised the death penalty as being unconstitutional and against human rights in his dissent in the *Bachan Singh* case. The majority bench held that the death penalty is awarded under notable provisions of the Constitution, such as Article 72(1)(c), 161 and 134. Yet, the Constitution is a living document that evolves with progressive changes, an example being the decriminalisation of homosexuality. According to Justice Bhagwati, the most worrying omission was upholding the death penalty without dealing with the issue of pain and suffering inherent to the punishment.



India has an alarming rate of wrongful convictions, and the death penalty makes such convictions more worrisome.

According to Matters of Judgement, an opinion study by Project 39A involving sixty former judges, one confirmed that the police would often pick up helpless men and torture confessions out of them even if they were innocent. Botched up investigations and a lack of good defence counsel impede the presentation of a comprehensive picture of the accused and their lives, costing many innocent people their lives.

## THE PAINFUL EFFECTS OF DEATH PENALTY

A report by Project 39A found an overwhelming mental health crisis among prisoners awaiting death penalty in India. This crisis is further exacerbated by the poor living conditions, physical and sexual harassment, social isolation and ostracisation of not just the prisoners but also their families.

The 262<sup>nd</sup> Report of the Law Commission of India concluded that the death penalty neither has a deterrent effect on crime nor is it a justified form of retribution. Unfortunately, the criminal justice system works in favour of those who have the resources to defend themselves.





# DEATH PENALTY AND REFORMATIVE JUSTICE

Humans are adaptable beings, capable of reform. Human rights are for all, not just the victim. The justice system must be willing to look at the possible reformation of the accused persons before awarding the death penalty. Prisoners' rights have become important in the international law space, with Nordic countries such as Norway adopting a reformative prison system that believes in treating prisoners as human beings. The system provides a conducive environment for potential change. Reformative justice includes a mix of humanity and accountability. The offender can make amends with the victims and walk a 'second mile'.

A retributive system makes the accused run from justice and adopt strategies that delay justice. Poor and dangerous conditions chip away at the humanity left in prisoners, who toughen up to survive prison. This makes their transition back into 'normalcy' difficult and leads to more crime. A retributive criminal system purports a cycle of crime where prisoners are stuck. This is seen across cases, including the tactics adopted by the convicts in the Nirbhaya case to delay their execution. As per a US based study (a country with a harsh retributive system and high recidivism rates), prisoners once free are unable to find jobs, live a normal life and are forced to return to crime.

Hence, a death penalty provision stands in the way of a reformative system. On the one hand, we are changing our laws, seeing the potential of accused persons to reform and granting judicial discretion. On the other hand, the retributive system is maintained in 'rarest of rare cases'. This law is not only futile in the face of many more progressive laws but also is a hindrance to societal growth and development.

A reformative system can save an accused person from severe mental distress, agony, and save their families. While there are attempts to institute a reformative system through more lenient bail laws, judicial discretion is considered to be the underlying cause of committing the crime due to reduced sentencing. There is a need for bigger leaps into reformative laws. A structured policy of how and when reformation is possible must be introduced.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Malvika Nambiar is a final-year law student at O.P. Jindal Global University, pursuing BA LLB (Hons.). She is interested in International Human Rights Law, Business, Dispute Resolution and their intersection.

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# ENVIRONMENT CLUSTER

## Theme – Environmental Migration

Environmental migration is the movement of people forced to leave their homes due to climate change and environmental stress—such as floods, droughts, sea-level rise, and extreme heat. It highlights how ecological crises directly drive displacement, especially among vulnerable communities. With July bringing monsoons, floods, and heatwaves, this theme underscores the urgent link between climate change, human mobility, and the need for just policies to protect those uprooted by environmental change.





# HEAT, HUNGER, AND HOPE: INSIDE SOUTH ASIA'S CLIMATE MIGRATION CRISIS

BY- VARSHA M

## INTRODUCTION

The climate crisis is no longer a threat; it is a reality for millions, especially in South Asian countries. In the Sundarbans, Assam, Bundelkhand, and Bangladesh's riverbanks, people are losing their homes and the landscapes that rooted their lives. Today, a large number of forced displacements are not consequences of wars or economic deprivations, but of the increasing climate crisis caused by floods, droughts, rising sea levels, and crop failure that destroy their homes and livelihoods.

A 2025 journal 'Climate' classifies India and Bangladesh as "climate migration hotspots". This classification has become a sad testament to how the climate crisis reshapes lives in the region from the bottom up.



# CLIMATE AS THE CATALYST

The most vulnerable groups in the climate crisis include small farmers, rural communities, and tribal populations. These sections of society depend on natural resources like rainfall, fertile soil, or fish stocks in the seas for their sustenance and livelihood; even a slight change in climate brings devastating consequences for those dependent on it.

For example, in the Bundelkhand region of central India, there is progressively less rainfall every year, as the temperatures continue to rise, causing a crisis over decades. It has become a hotbed for droughts, facing nine between 1998 and 2009, while other districts like Lalitpur and Mahoba in Uttar Pradesh suffered at least eight. This has led to failed crops, deepening debt, and loss of livelihoods for many farmers who are now forced to give up agriculture altogether and work in diamond mines or migrate to urban hubs like Surat, Delhi, and Bangalore.

A similar story unfolds in the Charpauli village of Bangladesh. It is located along the eroding banks of the Jamuna River, where flooding is an annual issue. In May 2022, in merely a week, riverbank erosion destroyed around 500 houses and left thousands homeless and displaced. As ETH Zürich researcher Jan Freihardt notes, displacement begins with people shifting within the village, but over time, entire households migrate to cities like Dhaka as a last resort.

Furthermore, the men in affected households, often the sole breadwinners, frequently leave their homes behind to look for work in big cities. Consequently, women and the elders are left behind to face significant challenges in maintaining the household and providing for their families until the money comes home.

Additionally, the DGAP report on Gender, Displacement, and Climate Change states that women displaced by disasters are 14 times more likely to die during climate events and face higher risks of sexual violence in temporary shelters and informal camps.

Women from conservative families even choose to stay behind to avoid socially unacceptable living conditions in urban hotspots, like living with men in the same room. This leaves them especially vulnerable to natural disasters, where they end up losing their lives, being subject to disproportionate impacts of climate change, especially those at the intersection of marginalized social and economic groups.

Such cases exemplify how climate migration is often permanent and involuntary, with long-term socio-economic consequences for those who fall victim to it.

## OVERCROWDED CITIES

Metropolitan cities like Delhi, Mumbai, and Dhaka are the ones absorbing this human fallout; cities that are hardly equipped to adequately accommodate it. When migrants move to urban cities, many face exclusion from host communities, which are already constrained by scarce resources like housing, water, sanitation, and jobs. Therefore, climate migrants often end up living in slums or informal settlements, in flood-prone areas, or on the outskirts of the cities. They take up low-wage and insecure jobs, lacking legal recognition or public services.

In addition to this, migrants often lack the necessary documentation like voter IDs or residence proof, which often qualify them for welfare schemes, entitlements, or even voting. Without the same, their low standards of living are reinforced, highlighting their invisibility in city planning. Stigmas regarding migrants in the city deepen if they come from a marginalized caste, tribal, or linguistic background. Such identity markers lead to further social exclusion within the informal urban areas, where established residents see them as outsiders.

The big urban cities are themselves vulnerable to climate change, in cases of urban flooding, heat waves, and water shortages, which make them increasingly unlivable. For instance, coastal communities of Mumbai, like the Koli fishermen, see displacement by both climate and urban development pressures.

These developments force them to leave their fishing grounds due to rising sea levels, polluted coastlines, and extravagant real estate expansions. The pressure from both climate and market forces shows us that there exists a more comprehensive socio-economic crisis when migrants increasingly enter cities that are themselves in ecological decline.

## LEGAL AND POLICY GAPS

Even though the severity of the climate crisis is clear, both India and Bangladesh fail to provide the necessary legal recognition needed for climate migrants. India's policies continue to treat migration as an issue of economics or development, instead of recognizing it as a climate-induced compulsion. Although a Climate Migrants Bill was introduced in 2022 in the Indian Parliament, there remains no foreseeable development stemming from it.

Bangladesh, on the other hand, fares slightly better in acknowledging climate displacement through the Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP) and the Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan; however, measures for adequate protection, resettlement, and employment guarantees for the migrants remain lacking.

In both cases, migrants continue to be legally invisible and unsupported, as they are denied rights and entitlements such as ration cards, housing schemes, or access to education and healthcare after displacement.

## REGIONAL INACTION

India and Bangladesh share climate vulnerabilities and multiple river systems. The Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna Delta is one of the world's most climate-vulnerable regions. Still, there remains no bilateral framework or cooperation strategy to address the climate-induced migrations.

The Loss and Damage Fund, established at COP28, gives both countries an opportunity to fund displacement solutions. However, without local legal frameworks and data on vulnerable populations, such funds are unlikely to reach the people who need them most.

## CONCLUSION

Migration has always been part of human societies. However, in today's world, it has become mainly an act of survival rather than an opportunity. As the impact of climate change grows severe, the livelihoods of rural populations collapse, with millions already on the move.



Yet, in many countries, there continues to be an absence of legal recognition, planned relocation, or coordination in addressing them. They are forced to move invisibly into cities that are unprepared to account for them.

Addressing it requires India and Bangladesh, together with the global community, to recognise migration as both a consequence and a major form of adaptation to climate change. That means building legal protections, resilient urban housing, and multilateral support systems that treat these migrants not as victims or burdens, but as frontline climate survivors.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Varsha M is a third-year law student at Jindal Global Law School and a columnist in the Environment & Social Issues cluster at Nicheled & Dimed. Her interests lie in environmental governance and climate justice.

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# HISTORY AND CULTURE CLUSTER

## **Theme: Economy as Archive: Reading the Past Through Economic Life.**

This month's edition frames the economy as an archive, challenging conventional views of it as merely a system of growth, production, and consumption. Economies, in this sense, are not neutral mechanisms but layered records of how power is exercised, how labour is valued or obscured, and how cultural memory is preserved or erased. This perspective draws attention to the ways in which exploitation, invisibilised work, informal exchanges, and economic structures shape what societies remember and what they forget. It highlights that economic processes actively filter and curate history, privileging what can be monetised while marginalising what cannot. Thus, it is imperative that we recognise the economy as a contested archive that not only reflects the past but also influences how we imagine more inclusive futures.



# ARCHIVING EMOTION IN THE LUNCHBOX

By- Apoorva Lakshmi  
Kaipa



## INTRODUCTION

The Lunchbox (2013), directed by Ritesh Batra, is a tender, introspective film set in Mumbai that weaves together chance, routine, and the quiet sorrows of everyday life. The movie follows a lonely housewife, Ila (Nimrat Kaur), and Mr. Fernandes (Irrfan Khan). Their lives intersect through a rare mistake in the famously efficient dabbawala system. A lunchbox delivered to the wrong address becomes a portal for connection, memory, and hope.

The film explores what the city provides to its dwellers, serendipity and affection, along with a blend of the city's social and capitalist structures. This movie captures the simplicities and complexities of human emotion perfectly. Even though Mr. Fernandes and Ila had exchanged only two or three letters, the moment he heard that a woman and her child had died, he was instantly worried about Ila.



## OBJECTS, LABOUR AND THE CITY:

Batra's film is deeply embedded in Mumbai's economic infrastructure, and it uses those systems (dabbawalas, trains, lunchboxes, apartments) as vessels of memory and connection. The dabbawala system, in particular, becomes not just a delivery network, but a symbol of a city's living archive; one that records the daily routines, desires, and dependencies of its working population. Each lunchbox is a document of care, sustenance, habit, and, often, invisible emotional labour. It is a literal container of nourishment, while also being a silent bearer of longing, frustration, and joy. The Lunchbox showcases the layers of economic structures in modern-day Mumbai, whether through the dabbawala system or the local trains. Even the streets of Mumbai show the different economies and their histories.

A moment from the movie that stood out in this respect was the scene where Shaik (Nawazuddin Siddiqui) sits on the train and cuts vegetables to save time preparing dinner at home.

This brings out a lot of unspoken truths about working-class life in the city. Here, trains are not just for commuting, but spaces where personal and economic lives blur. In that moment, the train becomes both transport and kitchen, a place where time is repurposed, where survival strategies are improvised within the rhythm of Mumbai's relentless workday. Shaik's simple act of chopping vegetables on the train carries a world of meaning; it archives the hidden domestic labour, the shrinking leisure in urban lives, and the adaptive choreography of the city's workforce.



Source: (imdb)

Even the visual architecture of Mumbai becomes an archive in this film. Mr. Fernandes' reflections offer a melancholic catalogue of what remains and what has vanished: "The old houses of the boys I used to play with as a child are gone now. My old school too. But some things are still the same. The old post office, still there and the hospital where I was born and where my parents died, and my wife." – (54:50-55:15)

This memory of space mirrors how cities evolve economically; real estate replaces heritage, gentrification erases memory, but certain institutions persist, anchoring people to their personal and economic pasts. The city changes, but certain emotional geographies never fade. In such a city, emotional ."



Source: (imdb)

## CONCLUSION

Here, storytelling becomes economic resistance, a way to preserve lived experience in a world that otherwise has no room or record for it. Storytelling here is also about remembrance, reverence and a chance to pause within one's materially motivated lifestyle. In line with Marx's critique of alienation, it allows Ila and Fernandes to reclaim a sense of self and connection, something often lost in the whims of capitalist life. Just as the economy archives income, expense, and production, the human heart archives what it loses and cherishes through narration. The final line that stays connection becomes an act of archiving. Through their handwritten notes, Ila and Fernandes begin to share memories, jokes, regrets, and smells. Their relationship unfolds not through modern technology, but through an analogue, tactile mode of communication that resists erasure. In a world where we have instant messaging and digital removal, their handwritten notes become quiet acts of remembrance.

Fernandes notes, in what I think is one of the film's most poignant lines: "I think we forget things if we have no one to tell them to with the viewer, and I think sums up the film's quiet radical optimism, is: "Sometimes even the wrong train takes us to the right destination." This metaphor powerfully affirms the beauty of chance within rigid systems. In a city like Mumbai, where things are run like a machine, where every lunchbox is expected to arrive on time and every train follows a timetable, *The Lunchbox* shows us that sometimes, errors, detours, and misdeliveries can hold grace, possibility and happiness. In doing so, it reveals a truth about both emotion and economy: that the margins are often where the most meaningful things get recorded.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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# INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND FOREIGN POLICY CLUSTER

**Theme– Beyond Privilege: Diplomatic Immunity and Its Loopholes in International Law”.**

International Humanitarian Law (IHL) is designed to apply impartially in all armed conflicts, aiming to protect civilians and regulate the conduct of hostilities. In practice, however, its application is often perceived as selective. Certain violations are condemned or prosecuted while others are overlooked, depending on political, strategic, or institutional considerations. This uneven enforcement challenges the universality of IHL and risks reducing it from a neutral humanitarian framework to an instrument influenced by power dynamics. The theme of selective application therefore raises important questions about consistency, accountability, and the credibility of international law as a whole.







# POLITICS, POWER, AND THE LIMIT OF INTERNATIONAL LAW:

BY- BHAVYA AGARWAL

## INTRODUCTION

The backbone of international humanitarian law is to cater to civilians during armed conflicts between nations. Despite its enhanced legal framework, the actual application of these laws often reflects the underlying geopolitical interests of powerful nations, ignoring the universal ideals these laws are meant to protect. To give it a closer view and understand the nuances of it, in the international response to the attack on civilian infrastructure in Kyiv (Ukraine) and Rafah (Gaza). Both the participants of war have witnessed and experienced indiscriminate violence, yet it is apparent that the global diplomatic, media responses, and legal framework highlighted deep-rooted problems of selectivity and inconsistency. This article adopts a critical stance: the principal international legal institutions—including the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and International Criminal Court (ICC)—have repeatedly demonstrated their impotence in the face of great power politics, leading to a fractured enforcement of basic humanitarian norms.

# RAFAH: CATASTROPHE, CONTESTATION, AND LEGAL OBFUSCATION

Since May 2024, Israel's attack on Rafah and throughout Gaza systematically destroyed central civilian infrastructure—destroying houses, hospitals, water and electricity systems, and internally displaced people's shelters. Air bombardments in populated areas and serial bombardment of the few remaining hospitals have triggered massive humanitarian disasters while alarming throughout the world. Although Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) asserted that targets were militants, independent probes and eyewitness accounts have long shown a grossly disproportionate number of civilian deaths. Various accounts of attack and witness statements show the destruction and direct attack on the civilian infrastructure. Arguably one of the most terrifying instances, the Tel al-Sultan airstrike set fire to a tent

camp, killing a minimum of 45 civilians. The systematic targeting of Gaza's health system and persistent blocking of humanitarian corridors indicate a deliberate strategy of warfare that disregards the fundamental principles of international humanitarian law and goes against the legal framework that has been set by these laws.

International legal debate in this respect has become more polarized and politicized ever since this incident, although the language of "war crimes" and indeed even "genocide" has been used in official court proceedings—most prominently by South Africa in its complaint against Israel before the International Court of Justice (ICJ)—most Western governments have otherwise put forward Israel's actions in terms of the doctrine of "self-defense," which raises serious question on the understanding and integrity of these powers in the realm of humanitarian laws and the stance of the International Justice system and the ICC on it. That hesitation to use the more dramatic legal labels betrays a

profound asymmetry in international legal and diplomatic reactions, deflating both universality and credibility of international humanitarian norms that have been set in place for this very reason.

## THE ICJ AND ICC: IMPOTENCY AND LEGAL POWERLESSNESS

To better understand the functioning mechanisms of International Justice mechanisms, it is essential to analyse the roles played by the ICJ and ICC. To better understand the functioning mechanisms of International Justice mechanisms, it is essential to analyse the roles played by the ICJ and ICC. In the significant global conflict of Ukraine vs Russia, Ukraine invoked the 1948 Genocide Convention at the ICJ. The petition involved an immediate action to halt Russia's military operations. Amid the invasion by Russia, which took place on February 2022, in the month of March, the court issued provisional measures, ordering Russia to suspend its offensive measures, which were bluntly and very vocally ignored by Russia. The court authority remains unenforced, and the violence continues till this date, the legal move by Ukraine. It appears powerful on paper but crumbles under the weight of geopolitical interests.

South Africa in December 2023 took a case to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) charging Israel with genocide in Gaza under the 1948 Genocide Convention. In its first-ever interim ruling, on January 26, 2024, the ICJ found the charges "plausible" and directed Israel to stop genocidal acts, permit humanitarian assistance, and report back. Follow-up orders issued in March and May, calling for an end to the Rafah offences.

The ICC issued arrest warrants for Russian leaders, including President Vladimir Putin, with western fervour. The warrants that were issued are, however, useless because Russia will not cooperate, and it is outside the ICC's jurisdiction. It can be seen in late 2024 in the historic move. The ICC also issued an arrest warrant for Israel, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the defence minister Yoav Gallant, and senior Hamas officers, for war crimes and crimes against humanity, including starvation, which was used as a weapon of war. This shows the clear exploitation of the Humanitarian law. Alias from different countries, such as Hungary wild flat-out non-corporation, which further illustrates the court's reliance on the United States corporation. Different reactions to the Gaza and the Ukraine cases the war highlight a deeper fault and the international system of justice, while it is true that the ICC does issue strong, symbolic verdicts. It looks good on paper, and it has a systematic symbolic value, but it remains ineffective in times of global conflicts.

# THE IMPOTENCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

It has been noted in war-like situations, countries simply opt out or flatly ignore the judgments passed by the ICJ and ICC when adverse to their interests, as the Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Palestine cases blatantly illustrate. Powerful nations, including the Global North and its allies, are successful in shielding themselves from the reach of international justice on their own discretion. It can be said that the ICC, meanwhile, is stymied by state non-cooperation and lacks independent enforcement resources, which makes its power only advisory rather than being implemented.

It is important to understand that while landmark rulings may carry moral reliance, they are largely symbolic, with their enforcement depending on the political association rather than any legal authority. In many other global conflicts, particularly those which are marked with deep-rooted ethno-national tensions, war has now become a means of ethnic cleansing while on the face of it citing other geopolitical issues.

Thus, it is fair to say that in the International Realm, “Justice” is not determined by legal principle, but by power dynamics, using international law as a tool of narrative dominance by politically strong nations, rather than being used as a guarantor of human protection.

## CONCLUSION

In this unbalanced world order, which is highly dominated by great powers and cynical pragmatism, it is often the case that the International Humanitarian law is often ignored and unvalidated; it is seen that the ruling is upheld or ignored selectively, its concept deployed with an eye to alliance and advantage rather than principle or precedent. This reveals a deep-rooted reality that global institutions function not as impartial guardians but as theatres for the projection of power. There is an important need for change in the current working of the international justice system, from the current bankrupt paradigm of legal selectivity. Until then, the International Justice System remains impotent and in the most crucial times, a toothless giant, which has a symbolic value but is impotent in action.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bhavya Agarwal is a second year law studying at O.P Jindal Global University. Her interests lie in meeting new people and learning about new cultures.

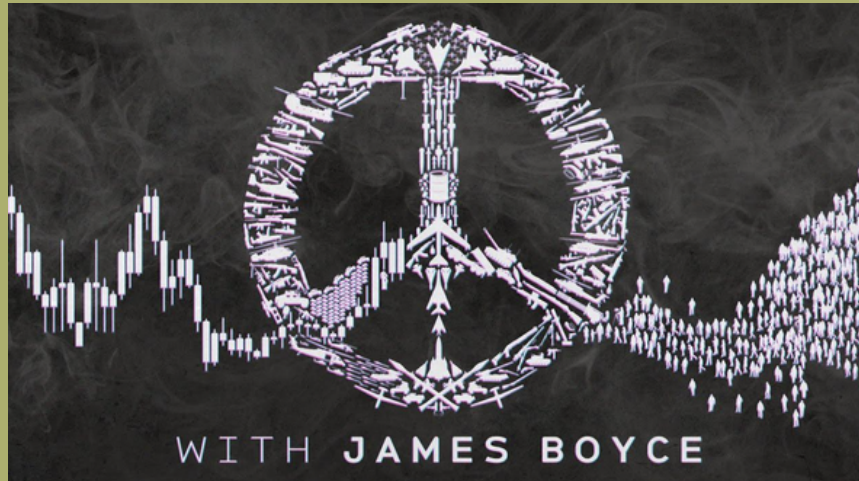
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# THE ECONOMICS OF WAR AND PEACE

BY- SIDDHARTH GOKHALE



## ABSTRACT

The Economics of War & Peace presents a compelling and deeply critical re-evaluation of conventional economic policy in post-war and fragile states. Its core thesis is straightforward yet profound: economic policies and analysis, often seen as neutral tools for development, are in fact powerful instruments that can either lay the foundations for lasting peace or, through negligence or competing interests, reignite the embers of violent conflict. Moving beyond a simple pro-development stance, Prof. James K. Boyce advocates for a fundamental reorientation of economics to prioritize “investment in peace” as a primary, and often overriding, objective.

## THE FOUR DILEMMAS OF ECONOMIC INTERVENTION

The series dissects four major dilemmas inherent to economic intervention in post-conflict zones. The first, the humanitarian dilemma, explores the paradoxical ways that wartime aid can harm. By providing resources that are politically taxed by warlords, used as “bait” to lure back refugees, or serve as a mere “veneer” of peaceful engagement, humanitarian aid can inadvertently prolong suffering. This critique forces a re-evaluation of the simple act of giving, urging a shift from a short-term focus on immediate relief to a long-term strategy that accounts for political and social repercussions.

The second is the corruption dilemma. Prof. Boyce astutely distinguishes between petty corruption (i.e. small bribes) and grand corruption (i.e. systemic theft by elites). He argues that while the former is an unfortunate reality, it's the latter that poses an existential threat to peace by undermining a State's legitimacy and feeding into the grievances that cause conflict in the first place. Essentially, tolerating grand corruption for the sake of getting things done is a false economy, one that ultimately costs more in instability than it saves in efficiency.

By highlighting the problem of “odious debt” of a State, which is illegitimate debt incurred by previous authoritarian regimes, what is provided is a powerful moral and legal framework for why new governments should not be forced to repay them. The “odious debt” dilemma illustrates the tension between global financial norms and the practical need for a fresh start, arguing that debt forgiveness is not just an act of charity but a crucial tool for consolidating peace and enabling a new government to invest in its people.

Finally, the partition dilemma addresses the fraught choice of dividing a country to end a conflict.

While partition may end the fighting, the peace it can create by rewarding warmongers and punishing those who sought reconciliation is inherently fragile. Indeed, the pragmatic solution of separation can sow the seeds for future conflict by entrenching divisions rather than bridging them.

## THE FOUR OBSTACLES TO A PEACE-ORIENTED ECONOMICS

The latter half of the series shifts from internal dilemmas to external obstacles. Prof. Boyce identifies four major barriers that prevent economic policy from serving peace. The first, competing objectives, is perhaps the most pervasive. It encompasses geopolitical rivalries (like the French-Anglo-American tensions in Rwanda), commercial interests in reconstruction contracts and the need for rapid refugee repatriation which often take precedence over the long, difficult work of building durable, sustainable peace.

The second obstacle is the faulty system of performance metrics. The administrators of humanitarian aid and loans are often judged on their ability to disburse money quickly and on-schedule, rather than on the long-term impact of their projects.



This leads to a systemic bias against peace conditionalities, which tie disbursement of aid to progress on reconciliation or other peace-building commitments, because it might not meet the “money out the door” metric. This obstacle highlights the bureaucratic inertia that plagues international aid and its inability to adapt to complex, fluid environments.

The ideological biases of economists themselves are presented as a third key obstacle. Economists have fetishized “efficiency”, but the narrow economic definition of efficiency neglects crucial issues of resource distribution which lie at the very heart of conflict.

The final obstacle is the misuse of the concept of national sovereignty. The series dismantles the argument that peace conditions infringe on sovereignty, pointing out that aid itself is a massive intervention that alters power dynamics. Prof. Boyce offers a compelling counterargument: weakening the sovereignty of a corrupt ruler or warlord may, in fact, strengthen the sovereignty of the broader population. It reframes sovereignty not as an end in itself, but as a means to achieve human well-being and freedom, thereby justifying external oversight in the name of the people.

## A RETHINKING OF TRADITIONAL ECONOMIC THOUGHT

The series is an intellectual tour de force, effectively deconstructing the economic paradigms that have often failed post-conflict societies. Its greatest strength lies in its ability to connect abstract economic theories with their tangible, human consequences. By providing clear examples and a compelling moral vision, Prof. Boyce makes a convincing case that economics must be re-politicized and reoriented towards social and ethical outcomes.

However, a critical perspective must also acknowledge some complexities. While the series powerfully diagnoses the problems, the prescription for action remains a monumental challenge, seeing as it demands a foundational shift in mindset among international institutions. The very systems and incentives that create the problems are deeply entrenched. The series also, by necessity, focuses on top-down policy, leaving room for further discussion on the role of grassroots economic initiatives and the agency of local communities in building their own peace.

Ultimately, *The Economics of War and Peace* is a vital contribution to the discourse on peace building through economic policy, a must-watch for anyone in development studies, international relations, or economics. It's a sobering reminder that there is no such thing as a neutral policy in a conflict-prone environment, and that the path to peace requires not just a change in tactics, but a change in the way we think. To truly build peace, we must first learn to think beyond the balance sheet and embrace a more holistic and humane economic vision.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Siddharth Gokhale is a fifth-year law student from Jindal Global Law School and leads the Economics and Finance Cluster of Nicheled & Dimed. He is an avid reader of economics and is passionate about exploring the realm of international trade and investment law. He also has a keen interest in corporate restructuring.

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# GENDER AND SOCIETY CLUSTER

## Theme: Pop Culture

The theme for July focused on Pop Culture, offering a lens to critically engage with how media, entertainment, and everyday cultural symbols influence and reflect gendered experiences in society. The articles explored how pop culture can both reinforce and challenge dominant narratives around gender, identity, and power.

Through examinations of online trends and subcultures, the pieces highlighted the subtle and overt ways cultural spaces shape societal attitudes. The result is a collection of nuanced perspectives that examine the ongoing dialogue between popular culture and the social construction of gender.



# GENDER BIAS OF CANCEL CULTURE: A WITCH HUNT IN THE DIGITAL AGE

BY- GAURI YADAV



## ABSTRACT

This essay explores how cancel culture, once a tool for justice, now reflects the same hierarchies it sought to dismantle. Using Foucault's theories on power and surveillance, it analyses how digital audiences act as judges in spectacles of punishment. Through case studies involving Depp, Heard, Brown, and others, it reveals the gendered and selective nature of public outrage. The article ultimately questions whether cancel culture holds power accountable or merely recycles old injustices in new forms.

## INTRODUCTION

Cancel culture emerged as a digital tool that promised accountability. At its inception, it felt radical. Finally, ordinary people could call out public figures for wrongdoing. For a moment, it felt like power had shifted. Audiences were no longer passive consumers. They became active participants in shaping the reputations of celebrities, influencers, and politicians. The internet, particularly platforms like Twitter, YouTube, and TikTok, became arenas of public reckoning.



Cancel culture emerged as a digital tool that promised accountability. At its inception, it felt radical. Finally, ordinary people could call out public figures for wrongdoing. For a moment, it felt like power had shifted. Audiences were no longer passive consumers. They became active participants in shaping the reputations of celebrities, influencers, and politicians. The internet, particularly platforms like Twitter, YouTube, and TikTok, became arenas of public reckoning.

But this power soon revealed its own limitations. Cancel culture, instead of staying a tool of justice, began to mirror the very systems it sought to challenge. It became selective, performative, inconsistent and most importantly, gendered. The following article examines how cancel culture, far from being a democratic mechanism of accountability, reproduces the same hierarchies it claims to dismantle. Using Foucault's theories on power and surveillance, it investigates the ways in which public trials are carried out not in courtrooms but through edits, comment sections, and viral clips.

It shows how cancel culture has turned into a spectacle. It is not always the guilty who get punished. It is the most visible.

## JOHNNY DEPP AND AMBER HEARD

The Depp-Heard defamation trial became one of the most-watched court proceedings in modern digital history. Taking place during the pandemic, it was consumed like reality television. What made this case particularly disturbing was not just its content but how it was consumed. Heard, a young actress, accused Depp, a seasoned actor, of abuse. Depp responded with a defamation suit. As the trial unfolded, livestreams were dissected in real time. Reels of Heard breaking down were turned into memes, courtroom footage was transformed into fan edits, and her testimony was reduced to soundbites. Before a verdict had even been passed, public opinion had already cast her as the villain.

The legal breach in question was defamation. However, the case also seemingly decided that Heard was never abused or sexually assaulted. This is not to say she may not have been a perpetrator too. However, the public largely painted her as the villain while portraying Depp as the quiet, abused man enduring it all. The case cost Heard significantly, including her role in *Aquaman 2* and several brand endorsements. Depp also lost his part in *Pirates of the Caribbean*, but he held on to his Dior Sauvage ambassadorship and was celebrated as a masculine figure who had endured years of quiet suffering.

This case shows how digital audiences have become the new judges. The facts of the case were quickly overshadowed by the way they were presented. What is crucial to note here is how the trial was watched like a reality show. Livestreamed testimonies and viral courtroom clips became the knowledge people based their judgements on. Foucault's idea of the "panopticon" where everyone is watched and corrected by social norms fits too neatly into this phenomenon. Heard's career was not judged in law but judged in living rooms and group chats and hashtags.

## CHRIS BROW

Chris Brown's story is the opposite. He was convicted of domestic violence against Rihanna and has also faced other allegations, including rape and drugging. But his public image has not suffered the same way at the behest of "cancel culture". His songs still chart, he performs regularly, people attend his shows in massive number, and continues to release music with well known artists. He was recently accused of raping and drugging a woman on a yacht in Miami. Despite this allegation, he has continued to appear in award shows, has been nominated for Grammys, and faced little to no boycotts from industry insiders. There is almost no mass cancellation of Chris Brown. In fact, many of his fans have justified his actions using strange rationales like "he was young" or "Rihanna forgave him". This moral selective amnesia indicates that cancellation does not respond to the gravity of the crime but to the spectacle of it. Because the abuse inflicted Rihanna was not as publicly broadcasted as Heard's courtroom cries, it did not evoke the same performative outrage.

## JUSTIN BALDONI AND BLAKE LIVELY

The lawsuit between Justin Baldoni and Blake Lively offers another example of gendered narratives in digital justice. Earlier last year, Lively filed a lawsuit accusing Baldoni of sexual harassment and creating a hostile work environment. She also alleged a coordinated campaign to smear her reputation. Baldoni filed a defamation suit in return. His case was dismissed. But Lively's reputation has continued to suffer. Social media quickly turned against her. Clips of old interviews were recontextualised and she was labelled a "pick me" girl. Her awkward moments were looped into narratives of manipulation and dishonesty. The truth of her claims seemed irrelevant. The meme had already taken over. This incident demonstrates how easily the power of storytelling gets hijacked. When a woman raises serious allegations, the response is not empathy but mockery. The trial continues in court. But the verdict online has already been delivered.

## PRIYANKA CHOPRA AND SHAH RUKH KHAN

Looking at things closer at home, during the early 2000's there were rumours of an affair between Priyanka Chopra and Shah Rukh Khan, during the filming of "Don 2". Despite the fact that Khan was married himself, it was Chopra who was framed into the narrative of the "homewrecker". An inflow of biased information in the form of articles, newspaper reportings and even interviews came into the picture, all where Khan was revered and Chopra vilified. Her career in Bollywood stalled. She was reportedly blacklisted and moved to Hollywood. Years later, it came to light through various sources that she had been ostracised not because of professional incompetence but due to her personal associations. Khan never faced any consequences and his image remained intact. He continued to be revered. Chopra, on the other hand, had to reinvent herself in a new industry. This episode reveals the gendered dimension of public judgment. A man's infidelity becomes gossip. A woman's becomes her downfall.

# ANALYSIS

Foucault argues that knowledge is produced through power. It is not neutral but rather constructed. It serves someone. Cancel culture shows how this operates in the digital age. The knowledge we have about Heard, Brown, Baldoni or Chopra is not shaped by facts alone. It is shaped by who has the power to shape the narrative. In his book, *Discipline and Punish: The Body of the Condemned*, using the brutal execution of Robert Damiens, Foucault highlighted that form of punishment is a spectacle which is meant to reinforce the absolute power of the monarch and instill fear in public. Earlier, executions were highly ritualized, which demonstrated both the suffering of the criminal and the power of the state. Today, cancel culture is highly publicized, showcasing that power is still in the hands of the capitalist classes controlling the masses and punishing those who deviate.

The core issue revolves around the selective nature of accountability that is offered. Although Heard was both a victim and perpetrator, her story got distorted to be a complete villain despite never being convicted of the offence of abuse.

However Brown, who was not only convicted of abuse once but multiple times and has been charged with rape, continues to flourish. Similarly, despite Baldoni's claims of defamation being dismissed, Lively's accusation of sexual harassment is not taken seriously. This disparity speaks to Foucault's deeper point that truth is produced through systems of power. The law did not save Heard's image even though it did not convict her of abuse. Because the court of public opinion had already decided. That court does not rely on testimony or facts. It relies on what generates the most traction. Brown's legacy was never put under trial by social media in the same way. His crimes became old news. But Heard's perceived hysteria and her crying face frozen on thousands of Instagram reels became the knowledge people held. It was edited and looped and watched millions of times

This new system of surveillance does not require the state. It requires attention. People watch each other. People punish each other. But they do not always punish the worst offenders. They punish the easiest targets.



## CONCLUSION

The truth is, no article can truly capture the experiences of the many women who are constantly pitted against one another, while the issue often centres around the man. These situations are far too common, whether it is Selena Gomez, Hailey Bieber and Justin Bieber or Jaya Bachchan, Rekha and Amitabh Bachchan. Women are subjected to far greater scrutiny because the standards imposed on them are higher. Men, in contrast, have always been allowed to make mistakes, even when those involve sexual harassment. For women, even something as basic as loving someone can be turned into a weapon. These stories are always framed as women fighting women. The man in the middle quietly fades from view. The conflict becomes entertainment and the power imbalance remains hidden.

Cancel culture no longer functions as a tool for progressive accountability. It now operates as a spectacle of punishment controlled by internet virality. This form of public accountability is not guided by facts or law but by the manipulative use of images and soundbites. Foucault reminds us that knowledge is not innocent. It is always linked to regimes of power. The knowledge we have of Heard and Brown and so many others is not a reflection of truth. It is a reflection of the politics of attention. What trends get seen and ultimately become the truth used to silence. In the end we must ask who is really being cancelled? Is it the powerful? Or is it the ones whose characters and morality is easier to assassinate?

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gauri Yadav is a fourth-year BA LLB Honours student at Jindal Global Law School. She is passionate and keen on the subjects of Jurisprudence, Gender Studies, Sociology and Constitutional Law.

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