

March 2021

# equilibria

GOKHALE INSTITUTE OF POLITICS AND ECONOMICS, PUNE

IN NEW FORM

*This month's edition talks about 'Denial' in various socio-economic spheres*



# DENIAL

BUZZWORDS

*Gender Inequality*

*Climate Change*

*Rationality*

*Netflix*

*Insta-kart*

*Freedom of Expression*

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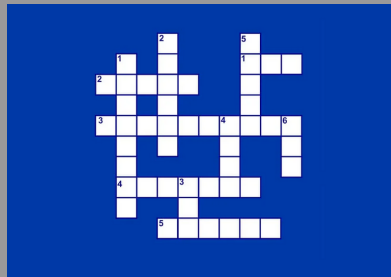
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## DENIAL

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Entering the state of

**DENIAL**

# I think, therefore I'm daft?

By **Arijit Banik**

(**MSc. Agribusiness Economics**)

Economics is a presumptuous subject. One may even dare say, it's pretentious. Resting on bold and impractical assumptions, the subject aims to address the supposedly practical world. We do not need to delve deep into the structure of markets, and their assumptions, to understand the disconnect between theory and reality; a mere prima facie inspection of the subject reveals a valiant attempt by economists, both old and new, to understand and explain human behaviour.

In their pursuit to model human behaviour and predict the future from the past, the assumption of rationality of human beings plays a major role in the formulation of economics as we know it today. It doesn't take a genius to identify behaviour patterns and the intrinsic irrationality of human behaviour at any given point of time, but convention dictates that it cannot be so; humans have been, and always will be rational and utility-maximizing agents (or, Econs). In an attempt to make the best model of reality, economists forget a crucial aspect of human existence: our irrationality.

Human beings are emotional creatures, and what sets us apart from wild animals is our ability to comprehend such emotions and produce reactions. Any action is governed by a set of biological stimuli, which generate a feel-good sensation (utility) for any consumer. In such a case, the idea of rationality or irrationality fails to carry its weight. While chasing utility (basically a hit of serotonin), human beings seldom consider the nature of the activity or its possible repercussions in time. The thrive for sheer reckless behaviour is nothing but man's pursuit of his daily dose of dopamine, which we formally term utility.

Perfect rationality cannot explain self-sabotaging behaviour, which allows us to drink-and-drive, but these are regular occurrences of life, bound and governed by irrationality.

Contrary to popular belief and scientific evidence, we humans still consume alcohol and other intoxicants, while being perfectly aware of their effects on the immediate health of the consumer, and the threat imposed on others. Yet, the drive to satisfy personal utility, the extra hit of dopamine, inhibits the rational mind and ends up pouring itself another peg for the night. Behavioural economists have attempted to include such irrational behaviour within the ambit of the subject, as it is more common to witness irrational events than finding a teenager at H&M, calculating his Lagrangian multiplier before purchasing a pink hoodie.

In the grand scheme of events, irrationality might serve the purpose of the few, but it definitely risks the lives of the many. As if the flat-Earthers weren't enough, the pandemic provided a spotlight for similar irrational activities. The distant cousin of flat-Earthers, the anti-maskers took centre stage highlighting the epitome of human irrationality, nudging towards stupidity. The same group of individuals are more likely to be anti-vaxxers as well. Even though it serves their personal agenda and rhetoric of the freedom of expression and misconstrued scientific evidence, such reckless behaviour poses a great risk to public health at large. Chances are that the anti-masker might not be a potential transmitter of the virus, but the person sets a precedent for such behaviour, and where one bird goes, the flock follows.





Illustrated by Durva Shetye (MA Economics)

The risk and cost to public health severely outweigh the pursuit of individual satisfaction, which shows that irrationality can easily trump rational behaviour even during such a critical juncture of global concern. Even with the availability of scientific proof and rationale, the anti-maskers have grown into a community and publicly promote their beliefs. Even though it's an isolated event, and the pandemic will subside within a year, such activities reflect the dominance of individual irrationality over collective rationality in society.

The denial of rationality, although omnipresent and omnipotent, is yet to be incorporated in mainstream economics and policymaking. Its consequences are grim and damaging, ranging from cost to human lives, to stock-market bubbles (like the Gamestop bubble), yet, it cannot be curbed by any rule of law. However, this innate irrationality of humans has aided our evolution since the Stone Age. Had our ancestors not taken irrational risks, society wouldn't develop and remain transfixed in ancient times.

The irrational risk-seeking behaviour to get a hit of dopamine, has worked since the inception of human life, and the biological reward system is the greatest motivator for mankind, which raises the question that if human behaviour is dictated by intense moments of irrationality, does it make rationality futile? Rene Descartes' famous quote "I think, therefore I am" is but a misnomer to ordinary human beings. "I think, therefore I'm daft" speaks to the irrationals.

-4 Your Eyez Only (J. Cole)



# Casual Workers: A Blessing Still in Disguise

By *Sahaj Manocha* (MSc. Financial Economics)

A glance at the words 'Factors of Production' will unquestionably bring up the word 'labour' in your mind. Labour force, a key economic variable, is a blessing with which the Indian economy has been well-endowed, but often fails to optimize. The benefits an economy can reap from an extensive labour force are infinite, all that is required is to translate this blessing into an undisguised one. Almost 90% of the Indian workforce lies in the informal sector earning an average wage of Rs. 143 per day--a dominant signal of the denial of fair wages and a nod to the labour exploitation in the Indian economy.

The informal labour market problems and conditions are not concealed and have persisted in the capitalistic economy for a long time. The issues of migration, exploitation, language barrier and lack of opportunities for the unorganised casual workers have been around for a long time and no solid solutions have yet been devised. The plight of our casual workers could be witnessed on the streets of India itself where they are lined up for hours to secure minimum wage jobs, waiting for some contractor to fill them in trucks and transport them to the work sites. There are days and even weeks when a portion of this crowd fails to even secure a single job leaving them helpless amidst the hustle and bustle surrounding them.

The Covid19 pandemic crisis further uncovered India's negligence of the informal workforce. When the pandemic was unfurling upon us, the white-collar workers easily switched to the work from home mechanism, but these casual workers are fellow citizens who did not have the same luxury of working from home. They had to struggle to make ends meet during the initial phases of the lockdown and the government reliefs did not help. The asymmetrical power relations that characterize the informal segment of the economy are also evident in the legal structure comprising it. On one hand, laws explicitly devised to deal with labour in the informal economy often ignore certain crucial questions concerning the target group, while on the other hand even when the text of the law is honestly intended, the application is substantially swayed by prevailing social power relations, which are skewed against the informal labour force. It is this deep-rooted powerlessness that has had a pivotal impact on the informal labourers during the lockdown.

The frightening condition of the casual workers was reiterated when hundreds of them walked through the streets to reach their homes, without jobs in the foreseeable future. It got worsened by the long queues in which they had to stand for a single meal.





“Neither their rights as labour nor their right to state welfare was adequately addressed by the adopted approach.” Only a fundamentally modified development model that focuses on the conditions that incite 'informalisation' can restore these conditions. These would comprise substantial investments in agriculture, safeguarding constant employments in the villages to avert the search for precarious jobs by rural crowds; framing new state policies that address the amplified dependency on metro cities; increasing state ability to implement laws covering the informal sector.

Unfortunately, we know what we need to do but the reality is a distant thought. The unwarranted power structure in the political sphere has altogether denied the basic rights of the workers that are not only bringing food to their plates but also constructing the building they are seated in. Only if India could provide for the basic needs of such Indians, we could call ourselves developing; development at the cost of a country's citizens looks goods only in numbers.



# Netflix but no chill

By Lisa M Jacob

(MSc Agribusiness Economics)

If I'm being honest, one of the few things that got me through the inane, downward trajectory of a year that 2020 turned out to be was my Amazon Prime Video and Netflix subscriptions. (Sorry, Hotstar you were great too, but I'll come back to you some other time). The joy that it brought me to lie in bed all day bingeing on Netflix, only occasionally leaving my room to raid my (mostly disappointing) refrigerator, was somewhat unparalleled.

It felt like an odd panacea, a privilege of sorts, to be able to consume and enjoy such media, given the backdrop of terrifying news headlines that made the future look more and more dreary. From craftily curated masterpieces to cringe-fest shows, I was perhaps spoilt for choice. Mine, however, wasn't an exclusive experience with evidence indicating that the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent shutdown of movie theatres only proved to be a boon for OTT services.

## OTT services and the Indian consumer

The Indian consumer today views OTT subscriptions as a utility rather than a luxury. This is attributable to the large-scale democratization of content provided by these platforms as well as subscription rates that are accessible to a large chunk of consumers willing to pay the same. The provision of diversified content across age demographics, geography, genres, and language categories has made streaming services the most attractive disruption within the ambit of the media and entertainment(M&E) industry. A report by Brightcove and YouGov found that content is the primary driver for subscribing to OTT services in India. Given the massive and ongoing shift towards digital platforms over brick and mortar options such as movie theatres, it is estimated that India's movie box office will fall by 2.6% by 2024 while streaming video on demand (SVoD) will grow by 30.7%.

## OTT platforms and creative freedom

OTT platforms have also ushered in a new era for what creative and artistic freedom looks like. Netflix, Prime and Hotstar originals have brought to the forefront newer entrants into the entertainment industry be it directors, actors, or content creators. Inherently, such platforms contribute to an ecosystem wherein content no longer attempts to be conformist in nature, but rather touches on topical issues, providing raw and unfettered social commentary on issues often sidelined by mainstream cinema.



Stories that revolve around previously ignored dynamics of politics, domestic equations, self-identity, relationships, etc. among others are being pumped by such streaming platforms. This freedom in production and consumption of media has largely been welcomed by consumers (mainly millennials) and Internet positivists who believe that such a shift is in tandem with the constitutionally guaranteed freedom of expression.

At its very core, it is also refreshing to see content that pushes the boundaries of majoritarian norms and beliefs, raising pertinent questions about the state of affairs our society revels in. This is of course largely in part because streaming and OTT platforms as of yet do not have any legislation or regulatory mechanism that governs their content in India.

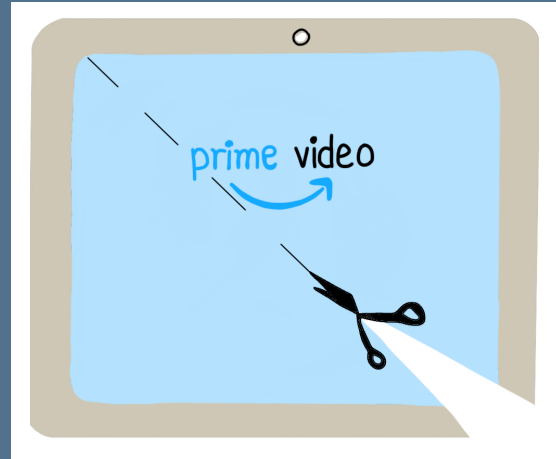
### Regulation and OTT

Regulation of movies made for screening in theatres and on television carried out by the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) has more often than not found itself tied up in ugly tussles, where it has systematically denied certification to films on grounds that are at best absurd in nature. 'Lipstick Under my Burkha' was deemed offensive due to its female-centric take on social issues and physical intimacy. Movies that depict sexual intimacy, racy and gratuitous scenes, mentions of drug abuse (Udta Punjab) among others have also faced issues. It would not be wrong to thus surmise that the nature of censorship undertaken by the CBFC, is one that easily takes offence to narratives that deviate from established structures of cultural hegemony.

Cut to the OTT era when series such as 'Sacred Games' and 'Lust Stories' premiered on Netflix. Audiences were thrilled. While they were not without controversy, it was still a massive win for consumers and artists to see such media being put out. Given this backdrop, the ongoing debate about the regulation of OTT platforms is perceived as antithetic to the principles of such platforms and the creative freedom they offer.

OTT platforms are not new to controversies regarding the nature of the content they stream. In 2020, Hotstar preemptively blocked an episode of the John Oliver show which criticized the Indian government and specifically the Prime Minister on the CAA bill. This received negative backlash from many as it seemed like an overreach by Hoststar to censor content meant for private consumption. It also seemed that platforms were prioritizing political correctness over free speech. Since streaming platforms are paid for services and do not compulsorily shove content down the publics' throat, there is perhaps no reason for them to cut out such content.

More recently Amazon Prime made voluntary cuts to its political thriller series 'Tandav' while Netflix's 'AK vs AK' also had to release an apology for allegedly hurting sentiments of the armed forces.



*Illustrated by Pragati Yadav (MSc. Economics)*

### Current state of OTT regulation

OTT platforms do abide by the 2019 principles of the self-regulation code, where no such content that breaks the laws of the land, disrespects the national emblem and flag, promotes terrorism or violence against the State, shows children in sexual acts, or “promotes and encourages disrespect to the sovereignty and integrity of India” is streamed. However, acts of bleeping out politically sensitive content, abuse, or nudity that constitute censorship have been out of the ambit of streaming platforms. Yet the inflammatory response to multiple shows has blurred the lines of whether such platforms will continue to operate in a non-regulatory manner.

In November 2020 the Information and Broadcasting ministry brought all OTT platforms under its purview. Even though the Ministry previously maintained that self-regulation by OTT platforms without government interference would suffice, this stance has long evaporated. Mired in the controversies surrounding the web series *Mirzapur* as well as the religious backlash received by ‘*A Suitable Boy*’ there is a mounting pressure on the government from both courts as well as civil society to lay down guidelines on OTT regulation.

The government in turn has indicated that it is not keen on platforms regulating themselves as it did not lend support to the self regulatory framework brought in by the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) last year despite it being signed by 15 streaming platforms.

Regulation of OTT platforms brings with it three major conundrums. The first is that such a move is an attack on the freedom of expression and creative abilities these platforms provide artists and other creatives. The second is concerning the form and nature of this censorship. Will platforms proactively choose not to display content and if so, how will they determine what content is prioritized over others? And the third is whether consumers deserve to be denied the unfettered ability to consume media in all its forms?

While it is scary that we don’t possess answers to these questions, what is perhaps scarier is that if OTT services are heavily regulated, we face the possibility of living in an era where the creation of content and the freedom to access it, is under government-sanctioned chokeholds.

# Trump's Optimism

By *Gonik Kaur* (MSc. Agribusiness Economics)

*While Stained in History, Trump Will Emerge From Trial Triumphant and Unshackled*

It made me ponder: are we in denial that Trump cannot become the President of the US (again), or is he in denial that he can?

And is democracy doomed by populism?

President Trump is considered by many to be an authoritarian populist. And one of the characteristics of populism lies in a leader's belief that they alone truly represent the people, which explains why Trump kept clashing with democratic institutions throughout his presidency. And whenever he ran up against the limits of his constitutional authority, he balked at the idea of somebody else--a judge, a bureaucrat, or a member of Congress--telling him what to do. In his mind, it seemed like only he had the right to speak for his country.

It has been over a year since former President Trump first faced impeachment charges in the Senate, but it feels like a decade. During the Pandemic, almost half a million, Americans died of the coronavirus, which also ravaged the economy in numerous ways. Protests erupted across the country over police violence and racial inequality and record-breaking wildfires consumed the West coast.

Mr Trump's loss in the presidential race further revealed the depth of America's division and eventually, culminated in the deadly assault on the Capitol, leading to his second impeachment.

In some ways, it seems as if nothing has changed. The Senate's decision is likely to hinge on the same partisan fault lines as a year ago when Mr Trump was acquitted.

Voters have retreated to familiar corners: Democrats demanding that Mr Trump must be held accountable; Republicans mostly dismissing the charges as mere politics.

A survey by The New York Times reached out to many voters during the first and the second impeachment trial. The survey made it clear that this impeachment did feel very different from the last one. It reflects a final verdict for the Trump era, not a judgment on a presidency that had a year to go. It has mellowed due to the pain, frustration and sense of loss of the past year.

Unlike Mr Trump's phone call to Ukraine, the charges and stakes this time were as visceral as the video footage of the mob that ransacked the Capitol. The purpose of the trial was to litigate Mr Trump's role in the attack on the Capitol. Yet for many, it has morphed into something much closer to the bone.

In the midst of all the partisan division, there was a point of unity: a shared sense of urgency and alarm, as if the nation and the integrity of its democracy had been jeopardized in a way few people could have remembered.

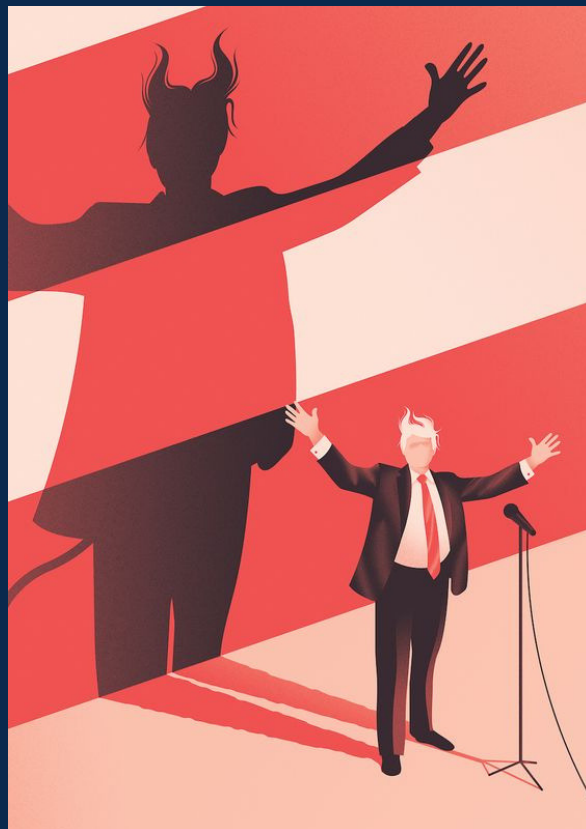
His acquaintances in the Senate assured that the emboldened president will take his grievances on the campaign trail. He is no longer worried about congressional constraint, which was made clear in the Mar-a-Log club's meeting, where the main agenda was to devise a way to win back the House of Representatives from Democrats in 2022.

The fact that Trump successfully convinced so many Americans of his lies about the election, mobilizing tens of thousands of them to protest against the certification of the vote, shows that a significant share of the population is now open to this kind of populist appeal. Facing a choice between their president and the Constitution, they might not think twice before choosing Trump again. But it is also important not to cast the insurrectionists as the true face of the United States. We have to remember that a majority of the population, across the political spectrum, were horrified by these events.

However, we have to remember an aspect of political parties in the most developed democracies. The party leaders have significant resources at their disposal and are formally or informally able to select parliamentary candidates, making it hard for dissenters in the party to sustain themselves if they fall out with their leader. In the United States, parties have traditionally been feeble and running for office is open to potential candidates from all walks of life. It is, of course, how Trump came to lead the Republican Party in the first place.

As a result, Republican lawmakers, at some point, proved to be more willing to stand up to their leader than having populist lawmakers in other countries. It is striking to witness that most Republican senators ultimately voted to certify President-Elect Joe Biden's victory, but can this be treated as the end of the populist era? Or the beginning?

The many questions lingering can be answered only when the time comes. Till then, let's hope for things to get better!





# The Rise of Insta-kart: Denial of Established Market Platforms

By *Jahnvi Aggarwal* (MSc. Agribusiness Economics)

With the advent of globalization and the expansion of foreign brands into the domestic market, diversification of consumers' tastes and preferences is to be expected. In a day and age where social media is key to reaching the masses, it is not uncommon to see advertisements - triggered by your recent search trends - popping up on your Instagram feed. The high-end cosmetics market is no exception. The peculiarity that arises, however, is why are people flocking to Instagram as their preferred medium of retail and purchase as opposed to established e-commerce platforms like Flipkart, Amazon or Nykaa?

For the consumers, a transparent social media platform like Instagram is an effective tool in avoiding problems like asymmetric information that can lead to a more insidious problem of adverse selection. The daily "Stories" that the retailers post on their profiles not only showcase their products but also include customer reviews. This, coupled with the pages' follower count, acts as a measure of reputation and also signals authenticity to the consumers. The credibility is further enhanced by the fact that prospective buyers can observe the actual buyers in real-time, which boosts trust buying, especially if the former is acquainted with the latter. This is not possible on traditional e-commerce platforms. These pages also offer a wider variety of products and brands like Kylie Cosmetics, The Ordinary, Mario Badescu, etc. that are either not available on the traditional platforms or sold at an excessively



exorbitant rate.

Take Kylie Cosmetics for instance. A lipstick or "Lip kit", as it is dubbed by the cosmetics mogul, retails exclusively on the Kylie Cosmetics' US website for about Rs.1,800 (not including shipping and customs) and for Rs.4,000 on Amazon India, but authenticity is not certain for the latter. Now, consider an Instagram retailer your friend has raved about, who not only has a following of more than 100 thousand, and offers next day delivery, but is also willing to furnish original invoices from the aforementioned authorized retailer.

This ascertains authenticity, and also allows buyers to save money even if the product retails for Rs.2100 on these pages because the opportunity cost of ordering from the websites is more than the opportunity cost of ordering from Instagram, as the former

includes customs, time delays and shipping charges.

This variation is primarily because the owners of the said pages order their products from the websites like Sephora, Ulta, Deciem, etc., and import the goods from countries like the USA and Singapore by coordinating with third party shipping companies. These companies facilitate cheaper freight by setting up dummy addresses in their respective countries, which in turn, helps in avoiding the international shipping costs charged by the original retail website.

For the sellers, a makeshift retail platform like Instagram offers the added benefits of enhanced autonomy and higher margins. The owners of these pages can formulate their own return and exchange policies and avoid losses due to buyer back-out. Moreover, the proprietors can also take advantage of the discounts on bulk buying and can resell the widely popular free samples as exclusive products to their loyal customer base.

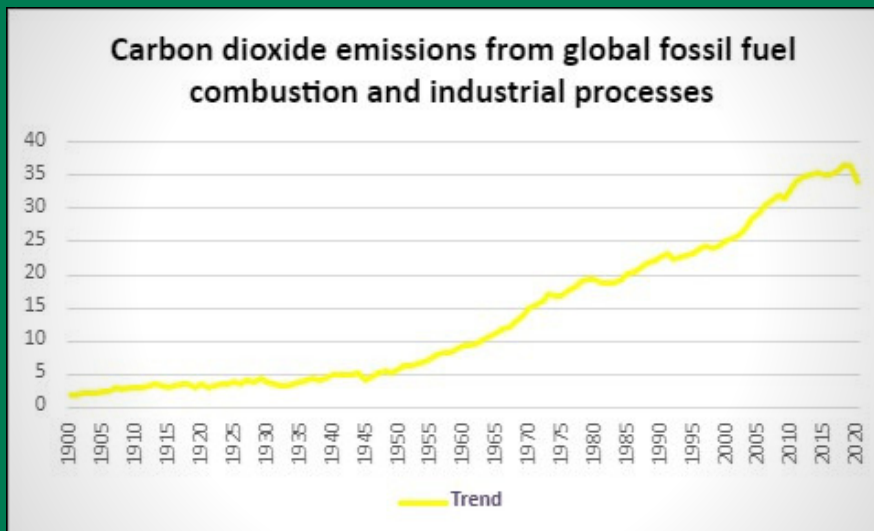
Further, factors like widespread digitization, easy access to smartphones, and not to mention, the user-friendly nature of the platform essentially make Instagram a highly profitable digital marketplace that puts the sellers directly in contact with the buyers, removing all the intermediary costs of involving an established e-commerce retail platform.

# Dissent of Sustainability

By Durva Shetye

(MA Economics)

The discussion around sustainable economic development commenced when it was officially developed in the Brundtland Report 1987. Since then many organizations, activists etc are taking efforts to create awareness for the same. However, the gravity of the issue is not yet realized by many countries. All of us at some point in our lifetime have come across the "BEFORE AND AFTER" images of the world. These images are daunting but not enough is being done concerning the problem. One of the major concerns of the climate crisis is plastic and pollution. The carbon dioxide emissions from global fossil fuels combustion and industrial processes in 2020 itself were 34.07 billion metric tonnes.



*The graph shows a significant increase in emissions from the 1900s onwards and it still continues to grow. However, in 2020 there has been a dip in the emissions indicating a change from the otherwise upward trend. Thanks to the lockdown restrictions imposed due to the global pandemic, which has once more raised discussions on sustainable economic development.*

Now the question that remains is if the global leaders and experts are going to take any concrete measures towards a better and healthy future. Over the past couple of decades, organizations like the United Nations, Global Environment Facility, Global Green Growth Institute etc., have been continuously taking efforts to move forward with the discussion and to adopt sustainable development strategies. European countries are especially addressing these environmental issues by putting in place policies to tackle the issue of the climate crisis. At the same point, many countries have been in denial of the requirement of these strategies.



The United States, at the end of 2020 announced their exit from the Paris Agreement, which consists of 189 other countries as well. The exit from the Paris agreement was also an agenda of former US President Trump's 2016 election campaign. Climate Change Performance Index 2020 published by the New Climate Institute, shows that the United States is rather one of the lowest-scoring countries (18.60) for policy action taken to tackle global warming. Sweden on the other hand is the top scorer (75.77) in the same index. It is believed that Global Emissions have not yet peaked but sooner or later it will. The fact that everyone is in line to win the competition of higher economic growth and they are ignoring the alarming signs of nature. Achieving higher economic growth is the priority instead of attaining sustainable development.

It is also important to acknowledge efforts by certain countries in this dimension. An interesting policy example would be the case of France where they have banned a range of items made from single-used slashed plastics including containers, mugs etc. Although exemptions have been formulated, they will supposedly be implemented in July 2021. The country has also increased the taxes levied for high-polluting cars like SUVs to curb increasing pollution.

There is resistance among many scientific thinkers as they believe that with further innovation and technological advancement, ecological challenges can be dealt with. This resistance is also discovered amongst the general population as well. Despite multiple policies, there is a lack of responsiveness and participation from the general population.

We are used to certain technologies that make our life convenient and we are not ready to give them up whether it is the issue of excess electricity use, inefficient use of water, lack of structured garbage disposal and many more.

Our conscience is not ready to accept the problem and deal with it, rather we have been in a denial, relying on things to shape our own course. The main idea here is to accept that our daily practices are creating a huge ecological mess and we need to adapt to sustainable practices to achieve a healthy world.



# MISTREATING THE SECOND SEX

## The denial of equal economic opportunities to Women

By Akshat Sen (MSc. Economics)

### The struggle to get educated and go to work

Mary Wollstonecraft, one of the founding feminists of the movement, published *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in 1792. In the treatise on equal rights, she contests that women are not inferior to men in the natural sense; women merely lack access to the education men receive. After the treatise was labelled absurd, radical and blasphemy of the natural laws, a Cambridge philosopher, Thomas Taylor, wrote a satirical retort to her treatise. He published *A Vindication of the Rights of Brutes* to emphasize that if equal rights are valid for women, why should animals be denied the same. We see the disdain behind this tactic. It offends the sensibilities of the new millennium. But denial of equal opportunities to females still exists—subtler, yet more concerning than ever.

Although many countries with women rights laws, including ours, are trying to create a level playing field, we observe that women fight for fundamental rights such as equal pay for equal work and paid maternity leaves to this day. At the same time, they should be adept at carrying out household duties traditionally assigned to their gender. It is a gaping divide we cannot deny.

If we peer at the causes of this divide, a major one is inequality of economic opportunities. A woman denied economic opportunities becomes dependent on male breadwinners for their sustenance; if we suppose that this problem is more or less eradicated, that assumption would be wrong. A couple of decades into the 20th century, after World War II, women were recognized and accepted as workers alongside their male counterparts but were discouraged from work once they started a family; or they were considered an auxiliary source of income for the household. The feminist philosophers of the era were optimistic about this change, stating that work provided an economic dimension to the women's civil rights to close the gap between them and the opposite sex. The economic opportunities variable is more important than we presume it to be.

“The system based on her [a woman's] dependence soon collapses when she ceases to be a parasite; there is no longer a need for a masculine mediator between her and the universe.” opined the feminist and existentialist philosopher Simone De Beauvoir in her seminal work, *The Second Sex*. She minced no words in putting her point across. She questioned various misleading studies in her day that asserted: when given economic independence, women would eventually choose to stay at home, rearing kids and cooking for the breadwinning males. She retorted to such claims by simply stating “Women are economically independent only within an economically oppressed class, and tasks carried out at work do not free them from household chores.”



## High Cost of Gender Equality

De Beauvoir was on to something. Decades later, many economists and organizations stress the economic dimension of gender equality for a healthier economy. World Bank's *Unrealized Potential: The High Cost of Gender Inequality in Earnings* is one such report that highlights the maladroitness effects of economic inequalities between genders on the general economic well-being of all people. Women account for only 38 per cent of human capital, globally and this percentage drops in many lesser developed countries. This economic discrimination and the wastage of able human capital would anger any economist with a sliver of passion for the subject. The report further highlights that about \$23,620 per person (based on the per capita GDP of the world) globally goes down the drain due to gender inequality in earnings. It concludes by suggesting that if equality in earnings is achieved, the human capital wealth of the world could have an increment of 21.7 per cent, and an increase in the global wealth by almost 14 per cent. Let's consider our own country for a better perspective of gender economic inequalities and their adverse effects.

I would not be the first to identify India's unmined human capital potential. It is convenient to simplify and blame the government or the quality of education and skill training for our inability to utilize our 'demographic dividend', but gender inequalities are at play too. Using the Gender Development Index as a yardstick, India's performance is underwhelming, to say the least. An optimist would assume that due to rapid growth, attitudes toward education and female labour force participation would improve, and prosperity would follow with the decline in traditional and current social gender setbacks. However, the disturbing trends of the past decade suggest otherwise. While the average GDP growth rate was around 6%, the female labour participation rate declined to 27% from 34%, more so in the rural areas.

Besides economic inequalities, social issues have worsened. Heinous crimes against women—rapes, dowry deaths and honour killings—are on the rise.

It cannot be a prosperous society conquering new frontiers of economic success. The success seems dismal to these realities we deny. We need to assess how often the guarantee of equal opportunity to women—both economically and socially—translates into the ideal world that presently evades us.

### Concluding remarks

Society misunderstands what feminism proposes; it confuses 'identical' rights with equal rights and chooses to be in denial by claiming that we live in an epoch of equality. Equal rights also mean empowering those oppressed, providing them with privileges and access to facilities that will aid them to make progress amid socio-cultural and economic pressures imposed by the flawed system we inhabit. While this article merely covers the economic effects of gender inequality, other cultural issues also plague women, irrespective of their economic success or not. We hope to write about those in future articles.

When the veil of denial lifts, we are no longer seduced by the false preachings of our society, which always claims to get things right with time



By Angela Alés, *Manifestation*, 2014. Photo courtesy Arts League of Lowell

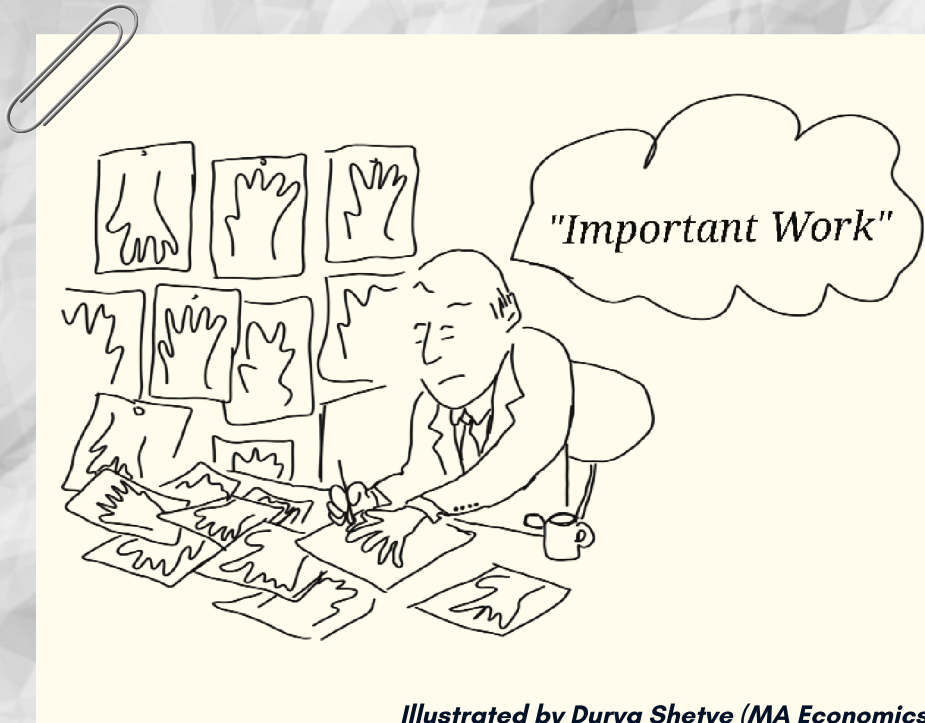


# An Era of Useless Jobs

By **Tejas Akware**

(MSc. Financial Economics)

*"He who has a 'why' to work can bear with almost any how." Nietzsche*



*Illustrated by Durva Shetye (MA Economics)*

It's during the time of crisis, words like "corporate downsizing" and "massive level of unemployment" are flashed by media houses and newspapers, globally. But if one starts to ponder over the level of efficiency that these workers contribute for 8-12 hours a day or any level of contribution that might sum up to the greater good, would they be struggling to stay employed as they do now?

David Graber, an anthropologist by profession - or some might call him an "Anarchist" - talks about the jobs that are socially demoralizing and emotionally destroying, that exist in capitalist regimes just to keep the workforce busy and employed. His book titled *Bullshit Jobs* elaborates on the jobs that are purely nonsensical - hiring people just to keep them employed. An illustration: we often come across such instances where we choose to travel from one floor to another using a lift. Most of the time an employee is known as the "Lift Operator", who has only one task, i.e., to sit on a chair and press buttons according to the needs of the people who use the lift.

Mr Graber differentiates between the bad jobs and the bullshit jobs by defining bad jobs as the hard ones, with terrible working conditions, and the lowest pay scale of them all, but which contribute something substantial to society. Whereas, he defines bullshit jobs like the ones that pay satisfactorily, are well respected by others, but are pointless to society. He compares the terms by explaining them through an analogy: if people who are part of bad jobs like nurses, teachers, or the maintenance officials cleaning the city were to disappear into a puff of smoke it would certainly lead to a catastrophe.

Mr Graber highlights the prediction of John Maynard Keynes through his article in *STRIKE* magazine. In the 1930s, John Maynard Keynes predicted that by the century's end, technology would have advanced sufficiently so that countries like Great Britain or the United States would only require a 15-hour workweek from everyone.

There's every reason to believe he was right. In technological terms, we are quite capable of this. And yet it didn't happen. Instead, technology has been marshalled, if anything, to figure out ways to make us all work more. To achieve this, jobs have had to be created that are, effectively pointless. Huge swathes of people, in Europe and North America in particular, spend their entire working lives performing tasks they secretly believe do not need to be performed. The moral and spiritual damage that comes from this situation is profound. It is a scar on our collective soul. Yet virtually, no one talks about it.

Many questions arise about the existence of pointless jobs and why people are inclined towards accepting such an idea. According to Schouten and Nelissen's data, around 37 - 40 per cent of a country's working population insists on the belief that their work makes no difference whatsoever. It is mentally demotivating for someone who is reading this article and for the ones who are shackled by the compulsion of monthly rent payment and 9 to 5 work hours to perform a task which is secretly not required to be performed—simply a waste of time and resources. Mr Graber highlights the fact that in the last century, the number of workers that are employed as domestic servants in the industry as well as farm sectors has been following a regressive trend. Whereas, the number of people employed as sales, managerial clerks, industry professionals has tripled. As a result, the number of productive jobs has declined. It doesn't take one to scratch their brains to realize that just like the socialist regime used to create millions of dummy proletariat jobs, the capitalist regime has somehow presided over creating millions of white-collar jobs.

*Ophelia: My current job title is Portfolio Coordinator, and everyone always asks what that means, or what I actually do? I have no idea, I'm still trying to figure it out. My job description says all sorts of stuff about facilitating relationships between partners, etc. which as far as I'm concerned, just means answering occasional queries.*

*It has occurred to me that my actual title refers to a bullshit job. However, the reality of my working life is functioning as a Personal Assistant to the Director. And in that role, I do have actual work tasks that need doing, simply because the people I assist are either too "busy" or too important to do this stuff themselves. In fact, most of the time, I seem to be the only one at my workplace who has something to do. Some days I run around frantically, whilst most of the mid-level managers sit around and stare at a wall, seemingly bored to death and just trying to kill some time doing pointless things (like that one guy who rearranges his backpack every day for half an hour every day).*

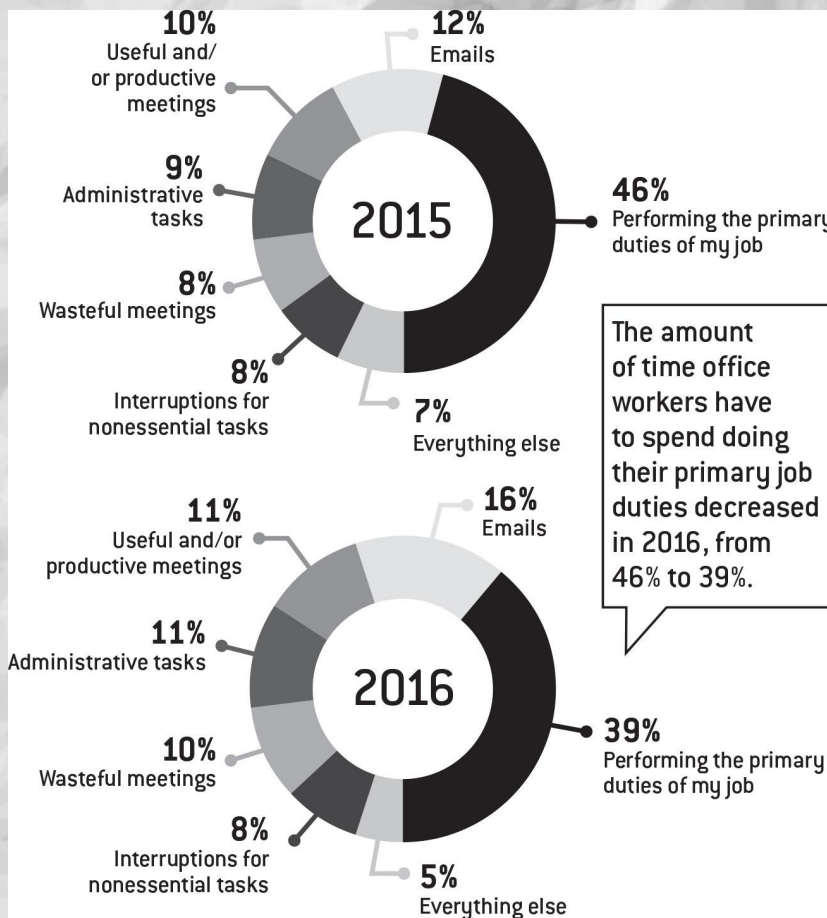
According to Karl Marx's Labour theory of value, "the value of a thing depends on the amount of labour required to produce it". The theory elaborates that the value of a particular commodity or service is derived from the amount of time spent by a unit of labour in preparing it. However, a dilemma for much is how automation plays a role in value creation. As a result, a spark of automation has certainly caused a sense of fear among the labour force. But if compared to the goods that are manufactured by the machines in the factories and goods that are handmade, the value instantly recognizes the price derived from the labour. The discussion further perplexes our mind whether the thought of productive work has any role in society?

*Betsy: Most of my job was to interview residents and fill out a recreation form that listed their preferences. That form was then logged on a computer and promptly forgotten about forever. The paper form was also kept in a binder, for some reason. Completion of the forms was by far the most important part of my job in the eyes of my boss, and I would catch hell if I got behind on them. A lot of time, I would complete a form for a short-term resident, and they would check out the next day. I threw away mountains of paper.*



The interviews mostly just annoyed the residents, as they knew it was bullshit paperwork, and no one was going to care about their individual preferences.

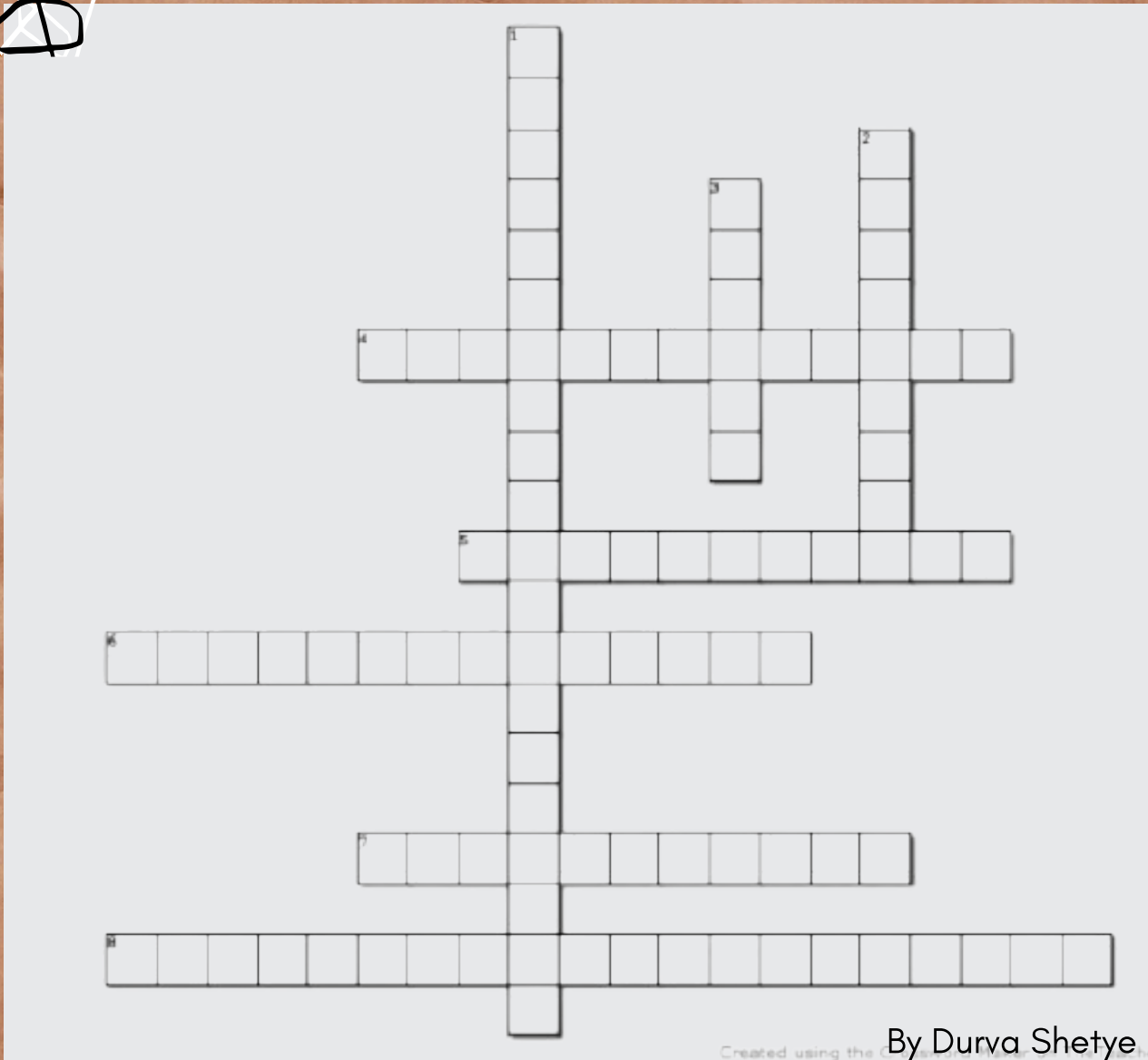
Hannibal: I do digital consultancy for global pharmaceutical companies' marketing departments. I often work with global PR agencies on this and write reports with titles like *How to Improve Engagement Among Key Digital HealthCare Stakeholders*. It is pure, unadulterated bullshit, and serves no purpose beyond ticking boxes for marketing departments. . . . I was recently able to charge around twelve thousand pounds to write a two-page report for a pharmaceutical client to present during a global strategy meeting. The report wasn't used in the end because they didn't manage to get to that agenda point.



The author concludes on the brief chain of thoughts by finding reasons behind the proliferation of bullshit jobs. The inferences that Mr Graber noted, led to the term "managerial feudalism" & cosmology behind the existence of humans in bullshit jobs. He understood the reason these kinds of jobs existed in capitalist society was that the money that they received in the form of salary made their brains robotized. This, in turn, led to creating a sense of dependency that fuelled our livelihood and which involved satisfying consumer pleasure by spending on PlayStations or even buying expensive meals at restaurants. People have soaked up the idea of "life" that involves compensatory consumerism (buying things that make up for the fact they don't have a life), in contrast to sitting in a cafe and debating about politics or even the complex polyamorous love affairs of friends.

**I believe that this instinct to perpetuate useless work is, at the bottom, simply fear of the mob. The mob (the thought runs) are such low animals that they would be dangerous if they had leisure, it is safer to keep them too busy to think. - George Orwell**

# Crossword of the month



Created using the By Durva Shetye

**Across**

- 4. sell or export products and services outside the community and bring new currency into the community
- 5. amount of carbon emissions that exceed sustainable carbon sinks
- 6. tax on any market that generates negative externalities
- 7. Direct obligations issued by government-sponsored enterprises
- 8. A non-standard mortgage owed by a borrower characterized by a strong credit history

**Down**

- 1. producer of the pollution should bear the costs of managing it to prevent damage to human health or the environment
- 2. The simultaneous purchase, and sale of funds in order to profit from a difference in price.
- 3. A stock exchange where trades are made electronically



# *FEATURED ARTICLES BY GUEST WRITERS*





# Denial in a few situations

*Dr. Sunil Kapadia*

## ***Denial or diversity?***

The present situation of environmental social science is examined from a perspective that locates it within an increasingly challenged and resisted set of conditions. These are correlated with the increasing sphere of influence of environmental vulnerabilities and resource consumption on the one hand, but the political economics of denial, on the other.

In this surrounding, it is critical to examine how elements of ecological modernization can be popularized and developed in unlike regions—as dissimilar alternatives and more spatially fixed resource-based structures. Economics and politics of its denial are what have been contended, wherein environmental social science sits in the juxtaposition of increasing environmental and social vulnerability.

Although situating these in their resisted and fierce relationships, this factor needs to motivate more crucial treatment of another to the common 'treadmill of production' model. A more efficient and normative 'sustainability science' could contribute.

More explicitly, it is contended that it is a 'battlefront' among the 'treadmill of production' and carbon-intensive models in the 'newly industrializing' territories—such as the agri-food territory of China and Brazil—and other sustainable development models are especially intense. This feud suggests both traditional and substitute resource structures and at the same time, simultaneously scales and spaces, and a re-interpretation of environmental lumpy development.

## ***Uncertainty-denial***

The uncertainty which has characterized the financial crisis has encouraged renewed attention to uncertainty in economics. Yet, not only does uncertainty challenge economists to the extent that uncertainty is absent from most of the mainstream theory, but it is also seen as unpalatable in financial markets and economic life more generally.

The purpose of this article is to consider the reasons for this in terms of attitudes to uncertainty and the coping mechanisms that society develops to deal with uncertainty. The causes, nature, and consequences of uncertainty are therefore reviewed, both in the economy and among economists.

A review of mechanisms for bringing order to uncertainty is followed then. In cases where it arises from a closed-system understanding of uncertainty as being exogenous and inevitably anathema, it is argued that the coping mechanism of uncertainty—denial can be counterproductive. An uncertainty as more integral to economic life is what an open-system of understanding sees.

Furthermore, as a counterpart of creativity, it allows for uncertainty which can be seen in some circumstances in a positive light. Tailoring a few of our methodologies and theories to address the uncertainty that economists could profitably consider—embracing uncertainty is what is concluded herewith. Policy to reduce uncertainty in the economy and also to reduce our uncertainty can be tailored, thus.

*Denial of death*

Denial of death and its effect on economic behaviour is what we model. The possibility of denial of mortality—relevant information interacts with intertemporal choices, and an attempt to reduce death anxiety may lead to time-inconsistent behaviour and other “behavioural” phenomena.

However, the repression of signals of death rates takes to underconsumption for innocent persons, but in the model forward sophisticated individuals may over-consume in anticipation of future denial and may look for ways to execute to act based on one’s death rate prospects as presently perceived.

The mere possibility of engaging in this kind of denial leads to time-inconsistent but efficient behaviour. The underutilization of tax-advanced inter-Vivo gifts and inadequate purchase of life insurance are a few for which refusal to face up to the reality of death may help explain a wide range of empirical phenomena.

***Dr SUNIL B. KAPADIA is visiting faculty at Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Pune. You can reach him at [sk.sunil457@gmail.com](mailto:sk.sunil457@gmail.com)***

# Denial of the recognition to the Northeast

*by Arismita Deka*

I would like to start this article with a question: how does an Indian look? This might sound like a general and irrelevant question for many people but if you have small eyes and you belong to the north-eastern region of our country, this is the question you will carry to your grave. Surprisingly, even after 73 years of independence, it seems the rest of India has not totally accepted the Northeast.

Let's take a glance at the present scenario in the region. The Northeast, which comprises eight per cent of India's total area and just four per cent of its total population, has understandably remained on the periphery of mainstream India's sub-conscious. The region has suffered so much neglect and apathy that it seems next to impossible to catch up with the other parts of India. Successive governments at the Centre have been announcing special economic packages for the development of NE, but no one is aware of how much of this has been translated into results. Maybe the one aspect that stands out in this regard would be the road infrastructure development projects (NHDP) that seem to have made a constructive impact during the past few years.

The reasons for the negligence of NE in the Rest of India could be many. For one, the North-Eastern states are geographically isolated from the Rest of India. They are "connected" with the Rest of India through a narrow strip called the chicken's neck which is just 20-odd kilometres wide. Secondly, the NE states are culturally different from the Rest of India in that the culture here has elements of South-East Asia and China (Tibet in particular).



But why always see the negative? Here in this article, I am going to address the positive things about the Northeast that have remained aloof from the rest of the country.

- We all are proud of the Indian defence force, and the biggest academy to train them is NDA ( National Defence Academy). Do we know that every year the best cadet or the best performer is given an award? That award is named after Lachit Borphukan who is by far one of the fiercest and bravest military commanders of India who took back Assam from Mughals in the battle of Saraighat, in spite of being largely outnumbered by them.
- Secondly how much do we know about Bharat Ratna Dr Bhupen Hazarika? His songs are so popular not only in our country but one of his songs "Manush Manusher Jonno" is the second most heard song in Bangladesh after their own national anthem.



- Thirdly, do we know that there was only one person Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru compared to Rani Laxmi Bai and Joan of Arc. Yes, Rani Gaidinliu was a Naga leader who fought against British Raj in India. She was so fierce on the battlefield that Panditji himself conferred her with the title of Rani.
- Also, for those who think that all Northeast has to offer are tribals who are unapproachable and living in stone ages, the average literacy rate of the northeast is higher than the entire country.
- Talking of sports, Mary Kom is the living example of smashing the patriarchy and reminding the world about women empowerment. She is a champion in boxing and after scoring a hat-trick of wins at the world championship, she was given the title of “queen of boxing “by the media. Another woman is Hima Das from Assam, nicknamed “Dhing Express”. She is the fastest Indian sprinter in India currently. Deepa Karmakar made India proud by being the first Indian gymnast to win a bronze medal at the 2014 commonwealth games.

I can keep going on like this and the list will keep on stretching. The point here is it is high time we stop stereotyping the Northeast and its people. We are not from China, and although some of us might resemble people from other South Asian countries, we are a part of India. When will these lynchings and judgements stop? Derogatory epithets are given to every other person from the Northeast and honestly, I have heard so many of them that now I feel sorry, not for us but for the people who are still living with this mentality.

We cannot ask for justice for the black people in the US when our own citizens are harassed each day. We must remember that even the north-eastern people are an integral part of India and they have a right to be Indian as much as the rest of India does. At the same time, they owe India as much as other states do. I would like to conclude this article by hoping for an India where Northeasterners are not treated as foreigners in their own nation.



# Climate Change: How long will world leaders stay in denial?

By *Mahi Rajawat* (MSc. IBEF)

World leaders, the bourgeoisie and corporates have been rejecting the warnings of scientists about climate change for ages but were keen to buy every bottle of sanitizer they could get their hands on when the current pandemic struck. This displays their denial about what is not apparent.

Climate change has been the most pressing human rights issue for a few decades now, affecting the rights of millions to water, food, health, and quality life. From melting ice caps, barren land, polluted ocean bodies to major wildfires and rising sea levels there is compelling evidence of the intensification of the problem. The repercussions of our past actions are upon us now.

Ratifying climate action agreements has been a trend ever since the Montreal Protocol, UNFCCC, or the Kyoto Protocol. The present international mechanism to combat Climate Change has also joined the bandwagon. The Paris Agreement, which was modeled in 2015 to invite a global response against this issue, has failed to keep up with its targets. It was devised to keep the global temperature rising increasingly well within the bounds of 2°C above pre-industrial levels and further aim to limit the temperature increase eventually to 1.5°C.

The world leaders are still trying to hold off their responsibilities and the ambitious bureaucrats are trying to attain economic profits out of their climate action initiatives. In 2015, at a United Nations conference in Paris, PM Modi said India had no part in creating the climate change issue but was suffering the consequences of this global challenge. India has noticed a rising level of emissions, nonetheless, Modi has approved many coal mine expansion projects and dismantled many environmental projections. The Indian government has been posing as pro-environment for quite some time but has little to no evidence to prove it: a true example of denial and arrogance.

The US, which is now the second-largest contributor of global greenhouse gas emissions -- around 6.7 billion metric tons--is one of the most powerful economies that walked out of the Paris agreement under the presidency of Donald Trump in November 2019. "The decision to leave the Paris agreement was wrong when it was announced and it is still wrong today," said Helen Mountford from the World Resource Institute. Moreover, Trump relaxed many environmental regulations and reversed many auto emission rules stating them as an unnecessary burden on the US economy.

Another example of sheer ignorance on the part of world leaders is illustrated by Xi Jinping's plan to open a 'polar silk road' in the already melting Arctic. Beijing made a muted comment for the UN Climate Action 2019 "climate change is a challenge common to all countries". It failed to understand that with size comes responsibility as it is the largest producer of carbon emissions. Boris Johnson, the climate skeptic who pretends to care about climate change, did not turn up for the UN Climate Action Summit, 2019 with other politicians from powerful economies. Besides, we cannot ignore the intensity of the Ecocide conducted by Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro.



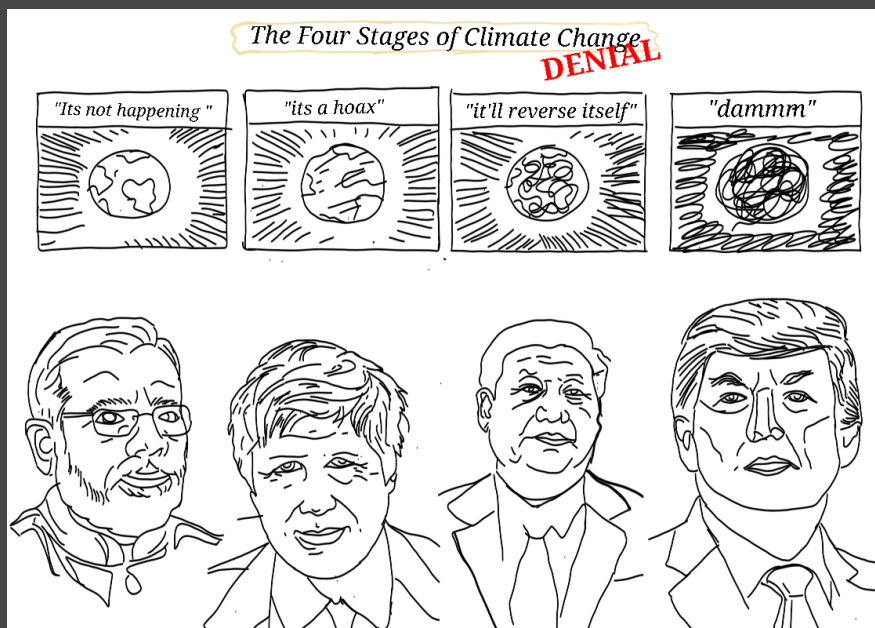
Amazon land invasions have increased by 135% for commercialization. Even after multiple wildfires in 2020, Bolsonaro's government has proposed budget cuts in 2021 under environmental protection and fire prevention 27%.

The country which oversaw the signing and negotiations of over 196 countries and territories for the Paris Climate Agreement failed to follow its protocols. France committed to reducing greenhouse emissions by 40% by 2030 but was found guilty of not being able to keep up with its commitments, signaling the incompetence of one of the most developed nations of the world.

The challenge posed by the current global health crisis showed that world leaders are capable of taking quick and decisive actions during crises and that is precisely what we need to address this climate emergency.

Covid-19 is the turning point and now more than ever we require a healthier and safer world. They say, "Delay is a new denial" and the world leaders should quit blaming the pandemic and delay critical action required to handle the environmental crisis or danger bombing on the future generation. As Greta remarked "For more than 30 years, the science has been crystal clear. How dare you continue to look away, and come here saying that you are doing enough when the politics and solutions needed are still nowhere in sight."

As the damages done by Climate Change are reaching irreversible heights, we need concrete and result-oriented solutions to address this issue. If governments are capable of emptying billions into furlough schemes and bailing out companies- then they ought to be fit for making the undeniable choice to urgently eliminate non-renewable energy sources. There is a need for a comprehensive and collective response from world leaders and move forward in this fight against Climate Change because, in the end, it is either this planet or the scientists need to start looking for another one.



Illustrated by Durva Shetye



# THE HATSHEPSUT OF 21ST CENTURY

*By Anshi Pandey (BSc. Economics)*

“Is a woman’s claim of being raped not taken seriously if she has had sex before?” I asked a friend of mine. She said, “Not according to the book, however.” By book, she meant the Constitution. The presence of the word ‘however’ in her reply makes me wonder--do other women think this way as well? And if multiple women answer the same way, then there must be a basis to which we can attribute this response. Is it because statements like “sleeping after being ravished are unbecoming of an Indian woman”, as quoted by a Karnataka High Court Judge, and the countless cases of victim-blaming happening worldwide make my friend and many other women answer in this manner? What is unbecoming of a woman will have multiple answers across states--from the length of our skirts and the straps of our bra to the way we sit, or the number of hours we work. What is, however, becoming of an Indian woman, is the gap between what ‘the book’ says, and what we are ‘allowed’ to do.

Let us start small. In India, no one is denied the right to access public spaces based on their religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. I am paraphrasing Article 15 of the Indian Constitution here. This much is common knowledge. But there is a deviation between what ‘the book’ says and the reality. Women are often denied the right to access public places past a certain hour in India. No, they are not physically stopped from accessing public places, but we as a society have internalized the idea that a woman who wanders or loiters, as Shilpa Phadke so gracefully phrased in her novel “Why Loiter?”, is not of ‘clean’ character. We restrict the women of our families to be out of the house wearing certain clothes, at certain times and even in certain places, because it is deemed unsafe.

Hence, we take the right of women to take a risk. We can see the evidence of this denial of access in everyday instances. From the lack of public washroom facilities for females at night to the way, women pretend to be busy while walking in public.

Let us take this a step further.

Article 39 of ‘the book’, states that the State is required to direct its policy towards securing men and women equally the right to an adequate means of livelihood. But from the way the families in our society assign household responsibilities, to the way corporate hours are set in India, it's factual knowledge that it is extremely tough for a woman to earn a livelihood after marriage or pregnancy.



Our choice of getting married, or working in a corporate, seems mutually exclusive. And somehow, our biological and career clocks always conflict. The direct implication of this being that between a man and a woman of equal educational qualifications and calibre, their opportunity sets are very different.

The above two paragraphs discussed some examples of the dissonance between a woman's constitutional rights and its systemic denial by society. But I would like to emphasize that these are not isolated ways in which Indian women face denial of rights. Something as personal as sexual desires expressed by Indian women can be used to deny women their constitutional rights. Case and point, the victim of the Karavali MMS Scandal, whose appointment letter was withdrawn by the Intelligence Bureau after they ran a background check on her and found out about her past. A question was raised on her calibre due to a crime where she was the victim. One must ask that if she weren't the victim of an offence that came under Section 67 of the IT Act, would the action of the IB be the same? Moreover, what percentage of reduction in her calibre was attributed to her choice of being in a sexual relationship?

A common aspect of all these instances is that time and again women are denied individuality. The closing scene of *The Great Indian Kitchen*, a Malayalam movie, showed that women are shamed for their individuality, and desired by gender stereotypic notions of utility. This practice has festered every stratum of Indian society. Denying women individuality based on their sexuality, lifestyle preferences, access to public facilities is not uncommon. In fact, the core justification for why women are denied individuality comes from the idea that women need to be protected. The irony, which I'd like to bring out, is that this rejection of this individuality is what causes us to often go unheard and unseen.

# A Freedom that's not free

*By Upasna Sharma*

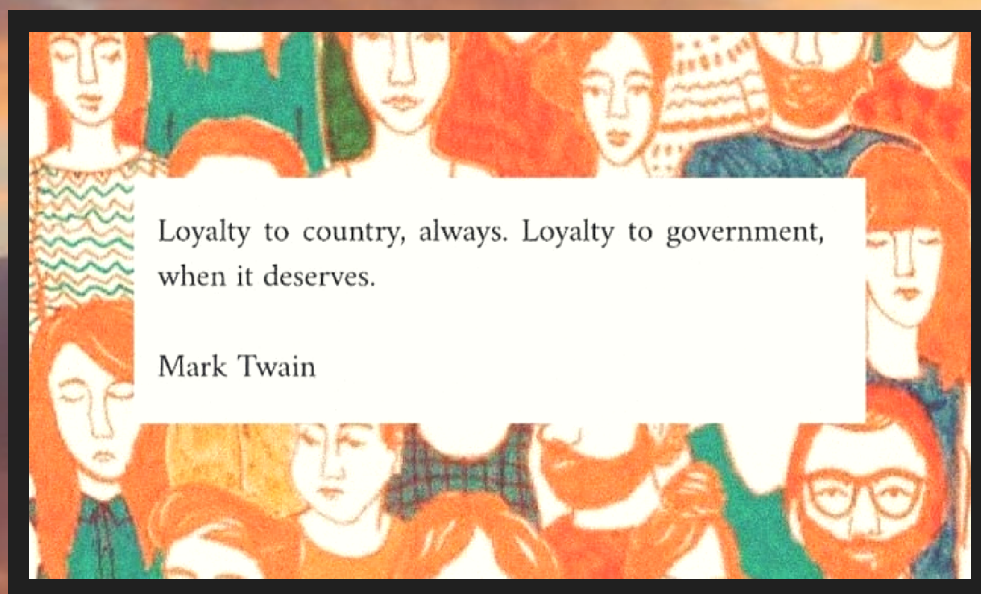
In 2020 India ranked 111th on Human Freedom Index amongst 162 countries and not at all surprising, India dropped to 111th from 94th last year. In the press freedom index, at 142nd we compete with Pakistan and still dare to call ourselves a democracy.

A democratic nation is powered by its citizens and should in return empower them with their basic rights. But what is happening today? The news headlines above taken from various dailys' is evidence of the picture of denial in the country.

What is the kind of freedom being denied today? Is it the same freedom that the constitution-makers granted the citizens of our country or is it some twisted interpretation by the current government that holds the correct definition?

FREEDOM, the power or right to act, speak or think as one wants. Our constitution clearly entitles every citizen the right to freedom of opinion and expression as a fundamental right under Article 19. In numerous instances, the government restricted the freedom of fellow citizens, be it their right to speak or be it their right to protest. In the union territories of Jammu and Kashmir, it took the government almost two years to restore internet services, which were shut down in the name of national security and to curtail incitement of violence.

But is the government willing to be held accountable for the loss of 2 years the students suffered due to no access to study resources on the internet during the pandemic? Also, various services the general public lacked because of negligible connectivity or the businesses which suffered huge losses due to the ban. They require accountability.



SEDITION. This term is frequenting the headlines these days more than words like 'pandemic' or 'economic growth'. It is defined as conduct or speech inciting people to rebel against the authority of the state. However, in certain cases it is applied to, it is assumed according to convenience, that the accused has indulged in seditious activities without any overpowering evidence. Isn't there a thin line between sedition and freedom of expression?

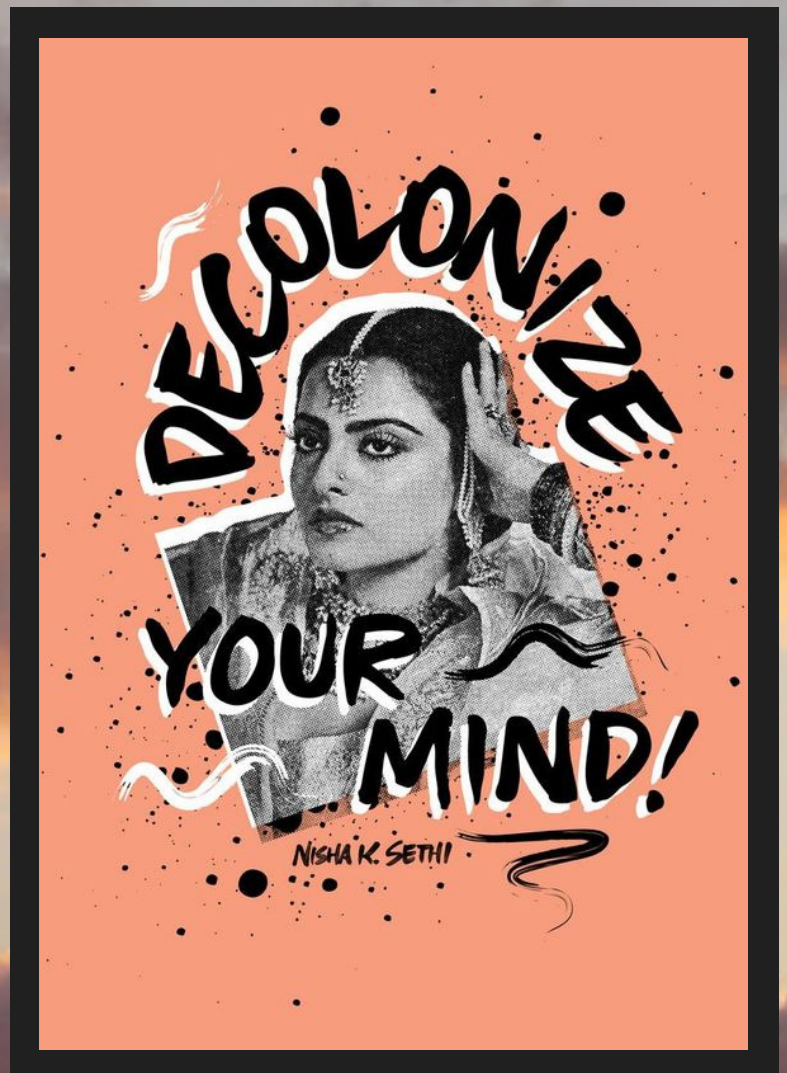


According to India's sedition law, which dates back to the 1870s, the Indian Penal Code criminalizes any action that "excites or attempts to excite disaffection towards the government". How can an outdated, draconian law which does not define the act of sedition on clear lines be used to curb a person's right, subject them to defamation, and further deprive them of their right to a dignified life? A dignified life itself implies the right to basic freedom of expression.

Let us talk about the Farmer's rally to Red Fort on Republic day. It was not at all similar to the US Capitol attacks. It was a normal protest that turned violent later, unlike the hostile motives of the Capitol attack. But condemning the whole movement due to a few nuisance creators is not justified and is unfair to the peaceful poor farmers who have been sitting at the borders protesting against apprehensions that might turn into reality if the farm bills are implemented.

Finally, I would like to shine some light on the denial of the basic right to marry a person of one's choice being imposed on the people of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and other states using the excuse of the love jihad law, that too by police officials who are entitled to the task of investigation of any case. It is appalling how law enforcement officials are playing the role of the judiciary under the guise of this law. Article 21 gives the person the right to choose a partner of their choice but clearly, that is being forcefully taken away.

In a recent judgment, the Supreme Court pointed out that the youth of the country, by performing inter-caste marriages, will take the country towards the path of progress by shattering the notions of caste identity in the minds of the public. Since the beginning, the judiciary has participated vigorously to correct the wrongs in various landmark judgments like basic structure doctrine, right to privacy and so on.

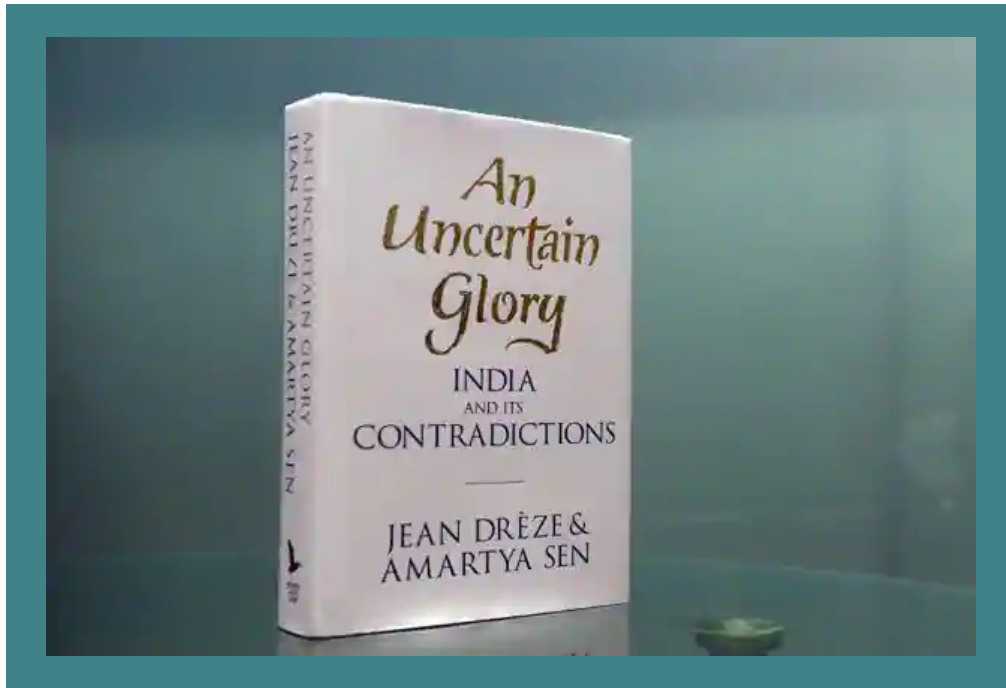


This makes me hopeful in my heart that some checks and balances still prevail in the country and institutions like the courts still incite the flame of correction in the current scenario which our nation builders never dreamt of.

Citizen engagement is an essential facet of every democracy, be it policy making, implementation of laws or the subsequent grievance redressal. Besides the will of the citizens, perception of the government in the mind of the citizen also plays a role in this engagement. The government needs to earn the trust of its citizens and make it easy for them to express and act in a free democracy with genuine and reasonable restrictions.

# At the heart of Sen and Dreze's *An Uncertain Glory*

By Akshay Gharde (MSc. Agribusiness Economics)



It's not about going where everyone goes. Or being part of a trend because it is one. Or taking sides because you don't know enough. It's about freedom. The freedom to have an opinion that's yours. A mind that isn't fuelled by someone else's thought. Where actions are based on informed opinions and not ignorant assumptions.

India and its Contradictions is the argument that economic growth is meaningless without redistribution of its benefits to the underprivileged. Instead, according to Sen and Dreze, there is a strong case for public expenditure on education, healthcare and employment, leading to better capabilities and opportunities. This, they claim, will accelerate economic growth. The writers argue that private intervention driven by profit cannot prove effective in sectors like education and healthcare because a single-minded focus on profit can be in conflict with the interests of the public. Especially the interests of those who do not have the power to even ask for their rights, let alone possess influence to sway policy. The result: India is performing terribly on most social indicators.

The book also makes recurring references to the media's under-reporting of development issues and a greater focus on "fashion, gastronomy, Bollywood and cricket". Yet, there is a steady stream of articles, editorials, books (like the present one) and magazines focusing singularly on development and the shortcomings of our imperfect society.



When the authors can quote "social commentators as diverse as Harsh Mander and Shobhaa De" to point out the deep apathy of the so-called Indian elite, this criticism seems ill-founded.

While talking about social perspective, the authors examine the rigid caste system which does not allow Dalits and Adivasis to express themselves fully. Atrocities against Dalits increased by 6% from 2009 to 2018 with over 3.91 lakh atrocities reported. On average, 88.5% of cases under the Prevention of Atrocities Act remain pending trial from 2009 to 2018.

A recent case provides a valid testimony to the above statistics. In September 2020, a Dalit girl in the Hathras district of Uttar Pradesh was allegedly murdered by 4 men from the Thakur caste. According to the victim's family, the girl was gang-raped by Thakurs of the Village and in order to eliminate the evidence, her backbone was broken and the tongue was chopped off by the perpetrators. Still, no justice has been delivered yet. Many atrocities still occur. A Dalit Groom was beaten to death just because he got a ride on a horse. The issue of manual scavenging is no longer hidden. Such incidents show the denial of freedom of choice.

Poverty is not only the deprivation of economic or material resources but a violation of human dignity too. Poverty erodes or nullifies economic and social rights such as the right to health, adequate housing, food and safe water, and the right to education.

Hence, freedom is necessary for the development of a country. We can observe that a society that respects and protects freedom of all sorts is considered developed by HDI and other development indices. For example, Scandinavian people lead prosperous lives, are healthier and happier compared to those from the rest of the world's countries. The reason for this is high productivity from good education, infrastructure, and industrialization, and low levels of systemic corruption, which is a general trend in these countries. So for the development of India and other world countries, the Gandhian perspective of freedom and truth should become the supreme ideals of society.

## AFFIRMATIONS #1:

# The Self-Sabotaging Behaviour of Denial

*By Gonik Kaur*

*Pain grows stronger,  
Life, exists no longer.  
Welcome to a world of pain:  
Death and Despair,  
Denial to live  
Created by your mind  
To overtake your life;  
Sacrificial suicide,  
End it with a knife,  
Much too late  
To change your mind;  
A bloody corpse  
Left behind*



If you have grown up with family or people who constantly discount your feelings, rationalize or minimize what is happening to you, then you probably have had a hard time owning your truth. As you get older, you will find yourself a host to self-sabotaging behaviours that will prevent you from manifesting the life you desire. It is convenient to adopt the state of denial as you grow older under conditions that do not favour you all the time.

Denial is a silent but toxic self-sabotaging behaviour. The first step in overcoming denial is to acknowledge its existence. Denial acts as a defence mechanism that discharges anxiety and emotional discomfort.

By denying there's a problem, we don't have to accept the fact that there's a problem. Unfortunately, this doesn't solve anything or make our lives any better. It just sweeps our problems under the rug.

They're still there, gnawing at us and still getting in our way.

Denial can be about anything that makes us feel vulnerable or threatens our sense of control, such as an illness, addiction, eating disorder, personal violence, financial problems or relationship conflicts. We can be in denial about something happening to us or someone else. Refusing to face facts is a fundamental human fear.

One thing that scares a human being the most is losing, Be it someone very dear to us, or something precious or the goals not accomplished.

This self-sabotaging behaviour is accompanied by guilt, shame and self-loathing. I understand, sometimes the only option we have is to be in denial of that thing to keep ourselves sane. But, deep down we are aware that being in denial won't solve the issue. But, we're stronger than this.

Therefore, the first step is to accept our mistakes and defining what is right and wrong. Ask for forgiveness, forgive others, love yourself, and teach that to others. The more we do this, the more we send the message to our subconscious mind that we are good, loving beings who deserve happiness and success, and the more the subconscious mind shifts its purpose. If needed, take some time off, have a good cry, beat the crap out of that bean bag. Do whatever it takes to get through, but when you get up and decide to face the truth, make sure you first make peace with yourself and your mind--both conscious and subconsciously. Make sure you come out stronger and wiser!

*Believe in yourself because I believe in you.*





# Things you should Check out

By Lisa Jacob and Jahnvi Aggarwal

## BOOK

### *Poor Economics*

Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo create an extraordinarily engaging narrative, which forces the reader to rethink their ideas about what an appropriate poverty alleviation policy should look like.

While the book seemingly deals with heavy economic ideologies and theories, it is in fact, quite easy to comprehend due to the reader friendly way in which it is written.

We would recommend this to anyone who wishes to embark on a marvellously educative journey through the fascinating world of developmental economics, or simply wants an insight into the ground reality of the world in which we live.

## PODCAST

### *Francis Fukuyama's Proposal to Rein In Big Tech- by Capitalisn't*

Capitalisn't is a podcast hosted by Vanity Fair contributing editor, Bethany McLean and world renowned economics professor Luigi Zingales, which basically deals with the ways capitalism works in the world and possible fixes to the evils of capitalism. This episode in particular is a great one with a fresh take on Big Tech regulation by renowned professor and author, Francis Fukuyama. Fukuyama talks about a white paper he has co written developing a newer perspective on how to rein in the big digital platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Google.

## STAND UP ARTIST

### *Yoram Bauman a.k.a. The Stand-up Economist*

Yoram Bauman is an American Economist and stand-up artist who wishes to contribute to educational reform by the virtue of educative yet hilarious cartoons about economics, carbon taxes, current affairs and the like. He is also known for dabbling in the comedic arts, and shot to fame after his witty take on Mankiw's Principles of Economics.

He is a must watch for anyone who wants to explore the lighter and the brighter side of economics or simply wants a break from the mundane jargon that is the plague of traditional textbooks.

## BLOG

### *Are we just not gonna talk about Hasan Minhaj?*

This is a brilliant take on the double standards of SJW, and the cognitive dissonance that often plays out when it comes to taking a stance on one of their own. I think the blog has a perfect balance between not being too preachy while also highlighting significant flaws in the way progressives choose to align themselves with "cancel culture"

<https://kaliandkalki.medium.com/are-we-just-not-gonna-talk-about-hassan-minhaj-5a4182c93e5f>



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