

JUNE ISSUE 2022 | ISSUE 13

THE PROBE

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THE GEOECONOMICS OF RUSSIA-UKRAINE CRISIS

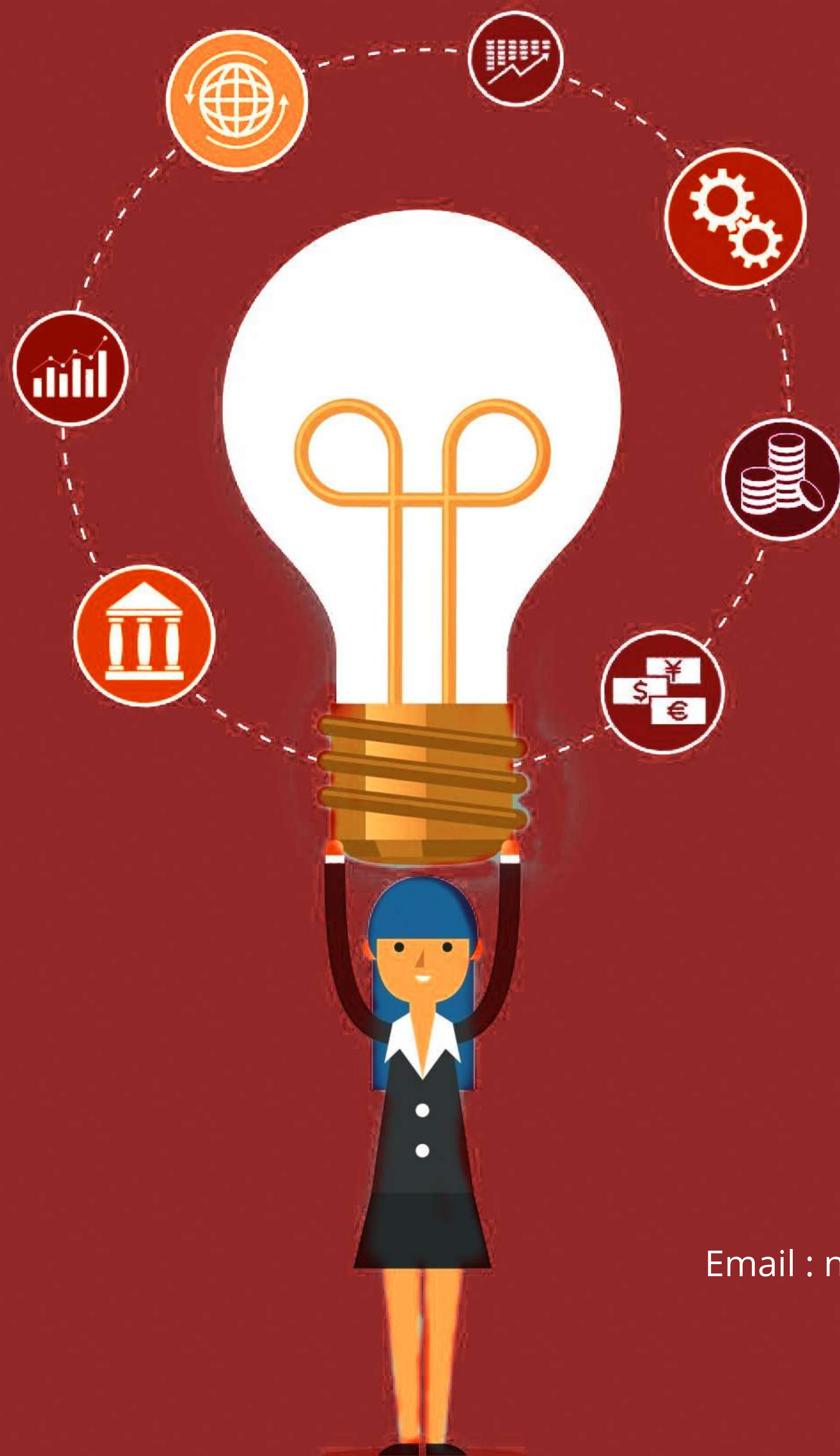
In Conversation with
Dr Amit Prakash

Cover Story:
Goeconomics of Russia-Ukraine Conflict

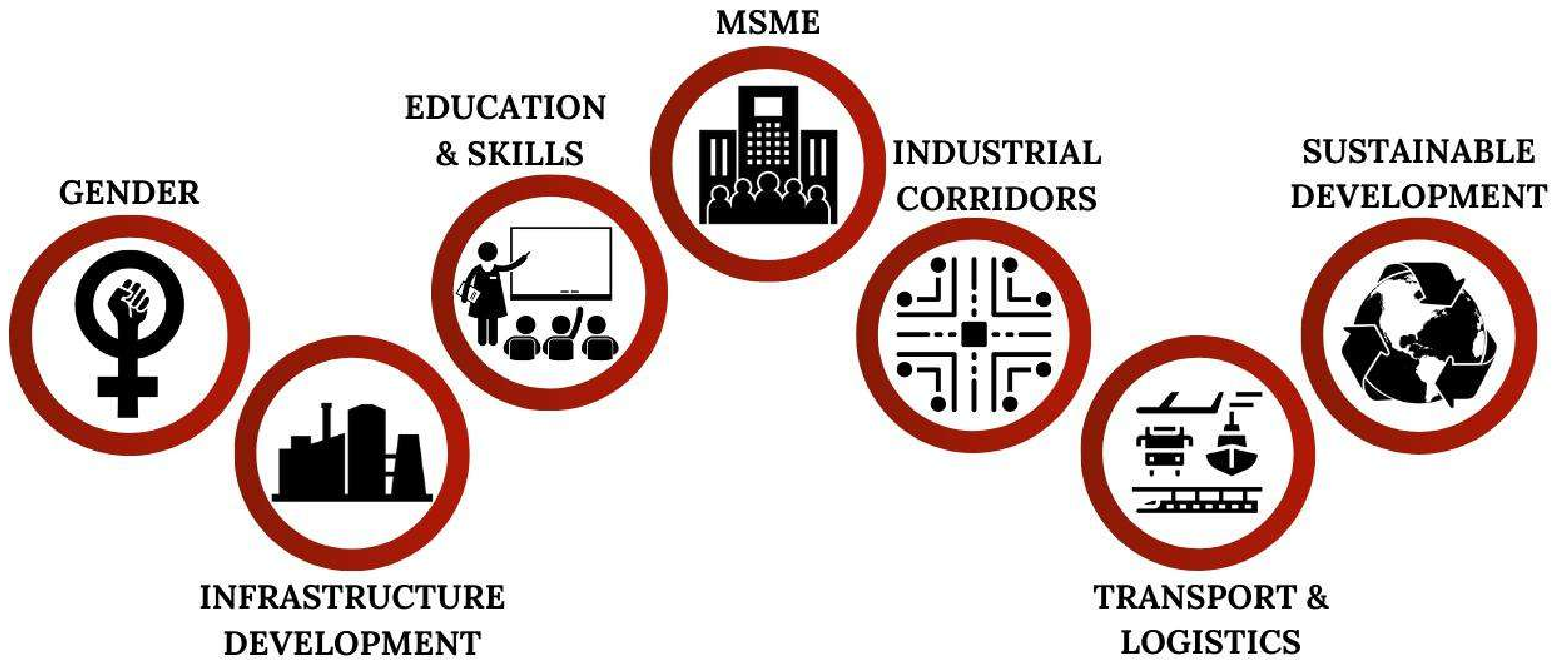
Deconstructing
Lying

NA NIKORE ASSOCIATES

NIKORE associates is an economics research group that raises questions about policies pertaining to a wide range of sectors. Their policy ideas have been published in several national and international news media. Their aim is to continue questioning policy efficacy and create better policy design.



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Recent works:

India's female labor force participation rate was a meager 17.5% in 2017-18, the lowest ever since we gained Independence. Wage gaps have remained stagnant over the last three decades, with the female wage being about 60-65% of the male wage. And the workforce participation rate among graduate-level urban educated women has hovered between 27% in 1999-00 to 28% in 2011-12.

FEMALE LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION IN INDIA: INSIGHTS FROM NSSO DATA

Mitali Nikore
Economist
Founder, Nikore Associates

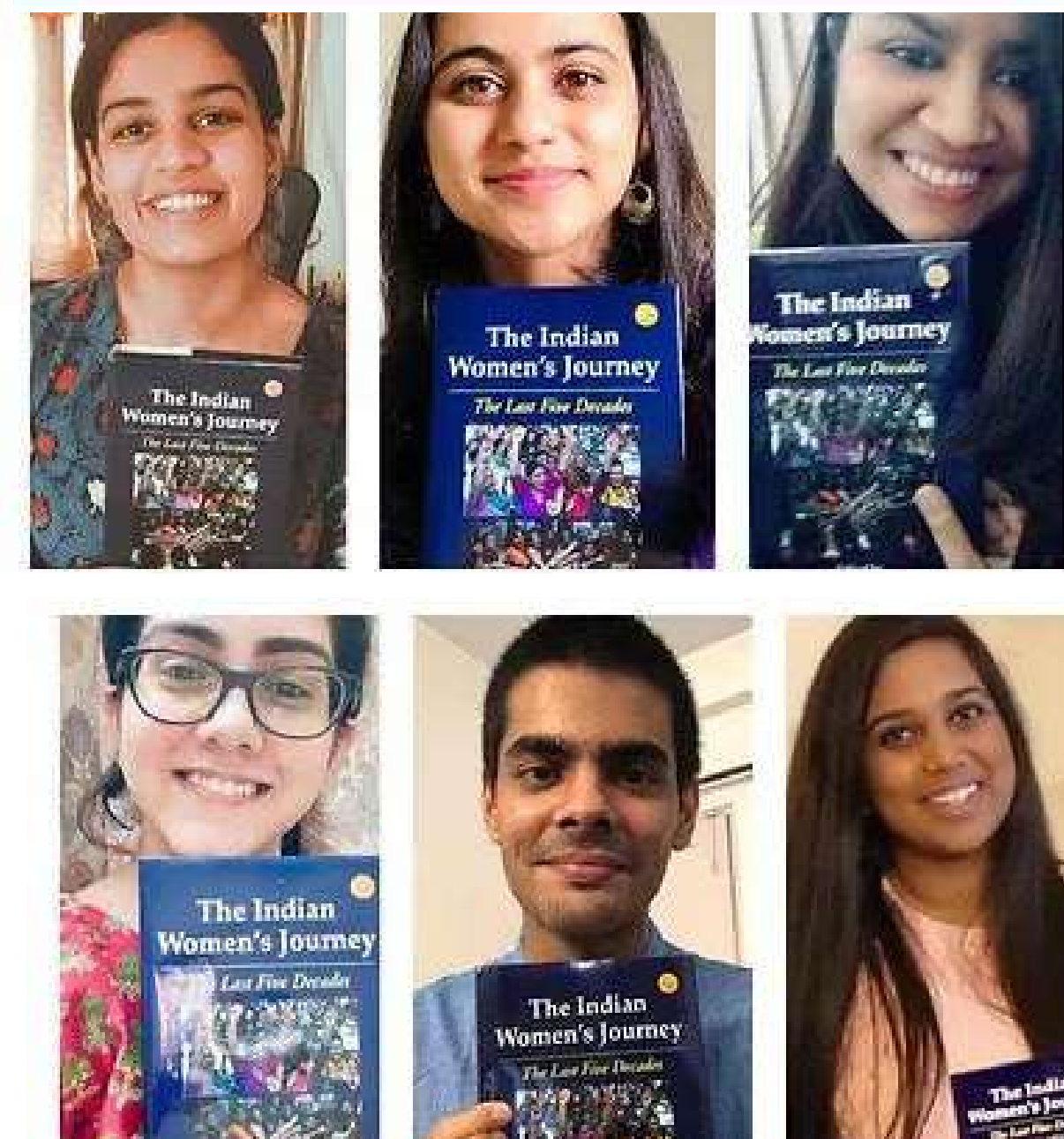
We, at Nikore Associates, spent a large part of 2019 compiling a chapter titled "Women's Human Capital" that was published as part of this book. The chapter analyses women's participation in the Indian economy since its independence, enumerated by government surveys.

NETWORKCAPITAL.TV MASTERCLASS

Gender and Human Capital

Mitali Nikore

25 July | 10 PM IST



In this masterclass, Mitali delineates some of the chapter's key findings and their implications in a post COVID-19 scenario.

Mitali Nikore is an economist and gender policy specialist. She is the founder of the youth-led research group Nikore Associates. Mitali holds a master's in economics from the London School of Economics, and a bachelor's in economics from the University of Delhi.



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FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Dear readers,

We are delighted to present the June issue of The Probe. This time we bring to you our first-ever offline interview with Dr Amit Prakash, Professor at the Centre for the Study of Law & Governance, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. We extend our gratitude to Dr Prakash for having us at the lush green campus of Jawaharlal Nehru University in the scorching Delhi heat and sharing his insights on the tribes of India. This can be accessed by our readers in the interview section of the month.

The issue also explains the complex interlocking of the world economic machinery in times of conflict in the cover story 'The Geoeconomics of Russia-Ukraine Crisis', deconstructs the mortal phenomenon of lying and probes into what makes the problem of consciousness a hard one.

The Probe also welcomes contributors- writers/ photographers/ designers- from diverse backgrounds to work with us. Please send in your resume for consideration.

We greatly value your feedback. Please share your views with us on our social media or mail us at theprobe20@gmail.com.

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A magazine's brilliance is a fine combination of quality content and aesthetic appeal, made possible by a dedicated team of designers. With a trajectory of constant improvement in design with every coming issue, this time we have augmented our designing team by inducting volunteers.

With this, we aim to lay the foundation of a sophisticated design team which will help in creating an identity for The Probe in the longer run. In case you are someone who is currently pursuing or interested in learning designing, we welcome you to volunteer for the design team of The Probe. We hope to make this an enriching learning experience and a fruitful collaboration for both!

Kindly mail us at theprobe20@gmail.com.

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THE GEOECONOMICS OF RUSSIA–UKRAINE CONFLICT

WRITTEN BY

Divyanshi Agarwal
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History of Geoeconomics of Russia and Ukraine

In the post-cold war era, it seemed as if the world had put on a pair of rose-tinted glasses and the belief that increasing globalisation, integration and economic liberalism would become the keystones to world peace and prosperity would start to prevail. However, it is easy to mistake this naivety as logical optimism when we ignore the weight of history and human nature in general. The ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine serves as the quintessential case to shift the current paradigm.

The two countries have shared a long history and culture, yet the distrust between the two nations is nothing unheard of in the geo-political sphere. It is important to note that the image of Russia underwent a metamorphosis when the reigns of the country were handed to Vladimir Putin by Boris Yeltsin and Russia was thence seen as an assertive and strong republic. Under the leadership of Putin, Russia started taking strategic measures to contain the expansion of NATO mainly because its doctrine of democracy, human rights and other liberal values were considered to be in direct conflict with Russian ethos. The main reason behind this mammoth conflict can be traced back to the growing proximity between NATO and the Ukrainian leadership.

The stationing of NATO troops along with regular maritime exercises especially in the Black Sea also alarmed Russian policymakers. The world has also borne witness to the fact that ever since Russia adopted its Greater Eurasian policy, it has chosen to go down a more audacious and aggressive path, especially in the post-Soviet space. As part of this strategy, Russia aspires to be a significant maritime power through greater control over both the Black Sea and the Mediterranean Sea. This will enable Moscow to control the strategically crucial maritime corridor. The relevance of Ukraine transcends its role as a buffer state that great powers wish to control to satiate their imperial hunger but also has undisputed eminence when viewed from a geo-economic standpoint due to its infrastructure. This includes networks of natural gas pipelines and motorways, stellar industrial

capabilities, well educated human capital, an unprecedented inflow of foreign capital and deposits of various desired natural resources. Choosing Ukraine as a target, kills two birds with one stone, as Russia can get its hands on what can be considered the Crown Jewel in the “Russian Project” and send a strong message to NATO.

Geoeconomics

The study or application of the influence of geography on domestic and international economics is often defined as geoeconomics.

Geo-economics is the analysis of how economics operates in a globalizing world. It is an academic study of international capital, market, and labour movements. As a result, the notion of geo-economics intersects with the geographic and demographic aspects of states and consequently influences their policy regarding international trade and commerce. It also offers us a list of economic powers, or the states with the most economic power, as well as how this affects the power structure.

In the context of this paper that deals with the economic analysis of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the study of geoeconomics becomes extremely imperative. Geo-strategy is the pragmatic realm of international policymaking between states. It helps the states to plan a strategic course of which policies to pursue to order to strengthen their standing in the international system. These include policies aimed at becoming the world's dominant power, an economic power, or a regional player. In the formulation of geo-strategy, a country's geographic location is crucial. In this regard, the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 eliminated all residual concerns regarding the annihilation of inter-state war as a forceful means of resolving unsettled geopolitical issues in the twenty-first century. Even though past examples steered in the same direction, the large scope of this conflict and the tectonic impact of its shockwaves demonstrate that nations may use hard power to pursue their goals, even if it means a huge setback for the world in general.

Nevertheless, this conflict is not being fought exclusively through military means. This conflict is

reflected in cyberspace domains, the clash of contrasting civilizational worldviews, and the flow of propaganda and psychological manipulation throughout the info-sphere. Furthermore, the warring sides are engaging each other in the geoeconomic operational theatre, and Ukraine is worth fighting for from a geoeconomic standpoint.

Geoeconomic Impact on Russia

This war has had a tectonic impact sending shockwaves throughout the world but the aggravator, Russia has been bearing the brunt of its brazen decisions. Just 12 days before this conflict showed the world its ugly head, Russia enjoyed the status of being one of the biggest economies of the world and was a key supplier in the areas of commodities, fuel and food in particular.

The fact that both sides have a large arsenal of nuclear weapons at their disposal deterred the west's decision to face Russia on the battlefield and resorted to economic sanctions as a means to punish Ukraine's invader. The harsh sanctions imposed by the West have successfully pummeled the Russian economy and their effects have spread across the nation like wildfire. These sanctions include freezing Russia's central bank assets, targeting wealthy Russian individuals and some state-owned banks, partial access restriction to the international payments system SWIFT and a stop from Germany to its Russian gas pipeline project.

As the Russian economy is highly dependent on the export of oil and gas, restrictions have made the trade with these third countries extremely expensive and this measure is inarguably capable of crippling Russia's economy. Using the Global Econometric Model, it can be projected that the war will contribute to a fall in GDP in Russia (relative to base) of 1.5 per cent in 2022 and 2.6 per cent by the end of 2023. It is also estimated that the country will have to suffer from high levels of inflation shortly with stats showing a 20 per cent rise by the end of this year. It has also been predicted that Russia could see a significant reduction in foreign direct investment which would lead to an outflow of

capital and this can hamper the country's overall growth rate to a huge extent. Reports suggest that the value of the Ruble has been plummeting at an exceedingly fast rate and if the situation continues to go down this lane for a while without any intervention, the Russian administration will have a daunting task at hand. The cherry on top is Russia's growing dependence on China which puts it in a vulnerable position and if things don't change course soon, Russia might be left dancing to Beijing's tunes.



Geoeconomic Impact on Ukraine

Ukraine's significance extends beyond its status as a contentious flashpoint, borderland, buffer state, and geopolitical pivot that major powers wish to control to further their imperial ambitions. This Eastern European country is geoeconomically very significant. It has the infrastructure that connects Russia to the European peninsula, such as natural gas pipelines and highways. As a result, it can serve as a trade and energy flow corridor. Furthermore, the Dnieper River is a navigable waterway, and Ukraine has access to the Black Sea via the port of Odesa, implying that Ukraine's geography provides

a beneficial gateway to participate in international trade and reap its benefits for fostering development and prosperity.

Ukraine is also a fast emerging economy with great potential when it comes to its well-educated human capital, IT services, and research and development activities. Talking about its rich natural resources, the country has abundant reserves of coal and metallic minerals such as iron, titanium, manganese and uranium, all of which are needed



Russia- Ukraine Confrontation

for various important industrial applications. The nation is an important source of neon, a gaseous element used for the production of lasers and chips. It also possesses fertile lands that are suitable for growing various cereal crops like wheat, barley, and cash crops such as potatoes, pumpkins, etc. Importantly, profits from Ukrainian grain exports financed Stalin's ambitious aspirations to accelerate Soviet industrialization. Furthermore, one of the reasons the Third Reich's planners were so interested in conquering Ukraine was that Nazi Germany was not self-sufficient in food production.

This, geoeconomic profile of Ukraine is however a perilous situation for the country itself but a desirable prize for the great powers. The Russian

invasion of Ukraine will have far-reaching ramifications in several areas: the situation has devolved into a humanitarian disaster, has put food and energy security in jeopardy, and raises concerns about the global security architecture. These issues will not be restricted to Ukraine but will pose challenges around the world as a result of the globalized world we live in. Since the war started, half of all Ukrainians have lost their jobs. Only 2% were able to find temporary earnings. up to 30% of crop areas in Ukraine will either not be planted or be unharvested this year because of the Russian attack. In addition to this, supply chains from Ukraine have been disrupted, because of the closure of the Black Sea ports and limited ability to transport commodities through the Western border.



Geoeconomic Impact on Europe

With the two warring sides that continue to be conflicted, the whole of Europe can feel the thunder causing a storm. There is also a significant effect in Europe, with energy and other prices rising and probably set to continue to do so. The war in Ukraine is indeed having a much greater impact on neighbouring countries due to the influx of refugees and their heavy dependence on Russian gas. The war in Ukraine is the third asymmetric shock, as economists call it, that the Union has experienced in the last two decades after the 2008 financial and economic crisis and the following Eurozone crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic. An asymmetric shock is a sudden change in economic conditions that affect some EU countries more than others.

The impact on the market for grain, wheat but also maize, sunflower and fertiliser, for which Russia and Ukraine were major exporters, will also be significant. The prices of basic agricultural products were already high. They will probably increase further with major potential for creating suffering and political instability. Europe is also hugely dependent on Russia for its energy. It is a key destination for Russia's energy exports. In 2021, Russia exported 49% of its crude oil and condensates and 74% of its natural gas to Europe. The Eu has also expressed its hostility against

Russia and it strictly stands in solidarity with its neighbour, Ukraine. In retaliation, Russia has discussed stopping the flow of natural gas to Europe. Energy is a chief concern to Europe, one of the world's most energy-dependent regions. As a result, this has a huge geoeconomic world impact that expects the European economy to slow, which could have a negative effect here in the U.S.

Even though the war commenced just two months ago, it has managed to make an indelible impact on the world at large, reminding people about the horrors of war, the plight of civilians and the high amount of collateral damage it causes to other economies. In the eyes of the West, Russia has lost all moral authority and the international credibility it once enjoyed depriving it of trade, income and prospects of growth in the future.

The war has also reminded the world that even though the battle is fought with bombs and bullets, multiple pieces are moving on the economic chessboard as well, making the geo-economic sphere a key battlefield in this conflict. This unconventional war which is being fought with economic sanctions and forex fluctuations might not seem to be as lethal as a nuke but is still very much capable of wreaking havoc, having unprecedented consequences and exacerbating tensions beyond the point of control.







DECONSTRUCTION

L₁ Y₄ I₄ N₄ G₄

A₁ C₁ H₄ O₁ I₁ C₁ E₃ O₁ R₁

C₁ O₄ M₁ P₁ U₁ L₃ S₁ I₁ O₃ N₃

By Shreya Mahajan

Lying: A Choice or Compulsion?

Why do we lie? Is it because we're embarrassed to tell the truth or because we're biologically compelled to be dishonest when it comes to saving our skin? Everyone lies, there's no disputing that, but this gives rise to a bigger question, "When does lying become a choice? When does it become a conscious moral decision rather than an unsaid compulsion?"

"Lying to save ourselves: a choice or compulsion?"

Can someone ever be so compelled by circumstances that lying becomes their only resort and when that happens would they really focus on the rightness or wrongness of the act? Lying eludes moral righteousness. When a person lies, they do not pay much heed to whether what they're doing is morally correct or incorrect, good or bad. Their only aim at that point is to dodge unwanted repercussions. Lying in itself carries a sense of necessity and compulsion. It symbolises conformity to circumstantial constraint. We lie, not because we choose to, but because we have to.

On the other side of the coin, lying can be seen as a personal choice. An actively informed conscious decision that we take for ourselves. Dishonesty and immorality form the basis of a lie. These are characteristics, we as individuals, selfishly adopt to look out for ourselves. To make sure we can escape trouble. Our conscious indulgence in unacceptable acts puts us at the risk of lying.

Rather than rectifying our actions, we lie about them, making lying a choice.

All of us possess a sense of intrinsic worth and human dignity. Lying corrupts the most important quality of being human: rationality. With every lie one tells, they're depriving themselves of that moral worth. Thus, when it comes to saving ourselves, lying isn't just a choice but also an immoral one.

"Lying to save relations: a choice or compulsion?"

Before we analyse whether lying to save relations is a choice or compulsion, it is important to understand whether in such situations our actions are independent or whether they're influenced by the virtue of someone else's involvement. For those of you who answered with 'independent', lying to save relations appears to be a choice. However, those who believe someone else's involvement clouds our judgement and compels us to lie, view lying to save relations as a compulsion.

When it comes to shielding our relations from the bitterness of the truth, moral boundaries become blurry. Our only aim then is to salvage the bond we share and to reassure our love for them. Often, we find ourselves in the moral dilemma of lying to save that relationship or telling the truth and losing a loved one. Human beings are highly emotional beings. We crave to be loved, to be cared for and to know we matter. As a result, lying seems like the easier option, which helps sidestep loss of relations and offers a desirable end result.

This brings us to the theory of Utilitarianism that separates right from wrong based on the outcomes of the act. Lying can be seen as morally acceptable when it helps maximise benefits or minimise harms. Lying is acceptable when the consequences of lying are better than consequences of not lying. **Thus, lying to save relations is a morally appropriate compulsion in light of the favourable results it offers.**

"Lying to one's own self: a choice or compulsion?"

Out of everyone in the world, we want us to love ourselves, but often that becomes harder than one can imagine. We look for flaws in ourselves. We point out the most trivial things that could be wrong with us. We reject the idea about how it's perfectly normal to not be perfect. The pressure we put on ourselves puts us in a mental tug-of-war: whether to accept those flaws or to do nothing about them.

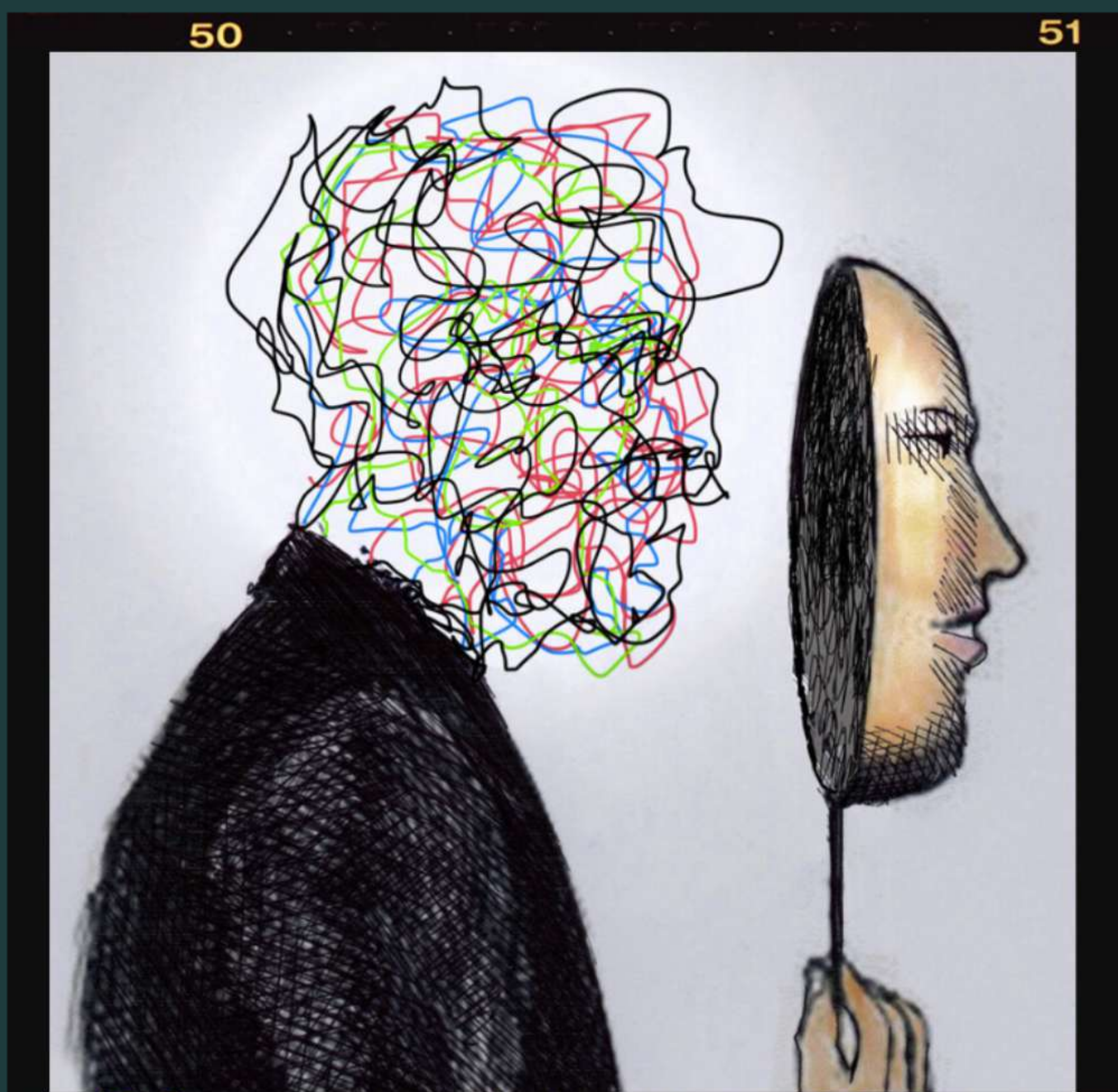
Once we exhaust ourselves, we lose hope and resort to denial. We choose to ignore those very flaws that we found in ourselves. We lie to ourselves. We withhold the truth from ourselves.

Nobody's perfect. We all have our own flaws we hide from the world. It's not rare to live in denial of who we are. But one must realise the underlying risks associated with the same.

Failure to accept and acknowledge our own identity kills the scope for self-improvement. We never overcome our weaknesses because we refuse to accept them. Thus, lying to ourselves is an independent choice while also being an unconscious decision.

“Lesson to learn”

The takeaway from this article is that however compelling you find the circumstances to be, however bitter the truth might appear to be and however pleasant the consequences of lying may be, **DON'T LIE**. When you lie to save yourself, you're rejecting the purview of improvement. When you lie to save relations, you're grounding bonds in dishonesty making the relation solely superficial. When you lie to yourself, you fail to make yourself your priority and continue to live in self-rejection. The bottom line is that lying is an inescapable part of life but we should try our level best to not let it get the best of us. **Acceptance is the key to healthy relations and a healthy self-image and honesty is indeed the best policy.**



Lying Visualised

PUBLIC POLL



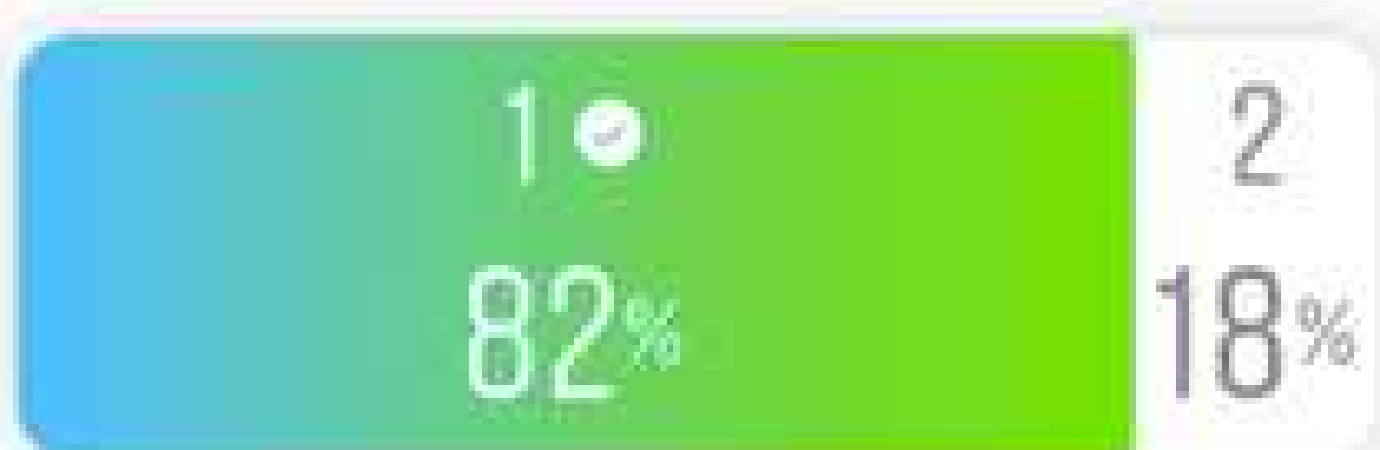
**IS LYING TO SAVE
RELATIONS A
(1) CHOICE OR (2)
COMPULSION?**



**IS LYING TO SAVE
YOURSELF A
(1) CHOICE OR (2)
COMPULSION?**



**IS LYING TO ONE'S
OWN SELF A
(1) CHOICE OR (2)
COMPULSION?**



WHY DO WE LIE?

In May 2022, The Probe conducted a survey to understand people's opinion on why we lie. The insights from the same are reflected below



Because we're scared of losing
the people we love and we
don't want to hurt them with
the truth

I feel like lying, which people might consider an act for others, often complying to how others might perceive your actions, more inherently comes from inside. No one judges us more than we do ourselves. We are constantly criticising ourselves, making scales for every action of ours, living up to our own expectations. I believe we lie for ourselves. To continue to be heroes of our own stories; to build and maintain those walls of facade that tells us we are the good we believe in. I think we desperately want to believe our lies. When we tell lies, we are usually telling it to ourselves, in the hope that we believe it.

Self preservation, nothing more, nothing less.

To save ourselves, to avoid conflict, to not hurt someone's feelings.

To save ourselves from facing humiliation or degradation at the hands of others.

To fit in, for love and validation, To protect.

To save ourselves from exposing the truth we don't want others to know.

We have an ideal picture of a situation in our mind and we tend to tweak the truth to get it.

Human tendency, to protect ourselves or for a greater good which is more important to us than the truth.

To not break expectations.

It is easier than telling the truth.

To save situations from getting worse and to avoid unwanted repercussions.

In order to avoid facing the consequences of telling the truth.

We lie for many reasons. Two of these reasons are self preservation and personal choice.

Every person is a liar. At some point in our lives, we all lie, some more than others. we all have our own reasons for lying. We lie to save face, we lie to impress, we even lie to not hurt someone else's feelings and sometimes even our own. Lying is a part of life. It may be flawed but it's what makes us human. Some people lie selfishly and some lie selflessly. No matter how honest our intentions may be, a lie remains a lie, told to avoid unwanted consequences.



DEMYSTIFYING THE TRIBAL QUESTION

WITH DR AMIT PRAKASH

Interviewed by Shreeya Prasoon and Arpit Rituraj



Image credits - Vidisha Yashaswini

The Probe, quests for the answers surrounding the tribes of the country, in an interactive session with JNU Professor, Dr Amit Prakash

Dr. Amit Prakash is a professor at the Centre for the study of Law & Governance, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Dr Prakash holds a PhD from the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. His areas of research includes politics of development and identity, governance studies, conflicts and state, democratic political process in India and global governance, etc.

SP- There is a lot of confusion among the masses regarding the characterisation, definition and origin of Tribal Communities. Sir, how do we trace the formation of the development of these loose definitions of Tribals and who exactly is a Tribal ?

The common belief among the masses regarding the characterisation of tribals has been solely based upon the presumption that these people have lived isolated lives since time immemorial. This is not the truth as these tribal communities were the major artisan class supplying the peasants with various essential services

during the primordial times.

Therefore, the classification of communities into indigenous and migrants in order to trace back origins becomes a contested matter which further occupies political conversations.

Nevertheless, it's quite doubtful to identify who is indigenous and neither is that the point, the point is to understand who can be called tribal.

If a certain section of people demonstrates a continuity of uniqueness of culture and heritage, separate and different from mainstream areas, then that section is usually classified as tribals.

The reason why Oraons and Mundas in Jharkhand are termed as tribals is the continuity of uniqueness of culture that has been observed in their respective communities. This classification becomes difficult to attain in areas like Andaman and Nicobar Islands because every community is unique there.

The mainstream section of the society in those islands is an external impetus that includes the people from Bengal and Tamil Nadu who have migrated and settled there.

Therefore, there is no one to compare the native communities with.

SP- Sir, what is your view on the boundaries we create between indigenous communities and migrants. Even in the case of Assam, the oldest known tribe “Bodos” migrated in 1000 BC(2000 BC according to some historians). In this scenario, can we measure the nativeness of communities?

These hard boundaries are a very recent phenomenon.

In earlier times, these boundaries weren't present. These notions were created recently for various reasons- Cultural, Political, etc. Definitional categories are constantly mobile.

For example, Assam was the whole of North-East India 40 or 50 years back. Even though it has been reduced to a smaller state now, the identity still, somehow, persists. Therefore, these identities are constantly being reinvented.

AR- Sir, it is observed that different cultures develop hostilities against each other which might be due to differing practices, affirmations and lifestyles. What is the source of these hostilities and how can they be minimised?

Primarily, our usual assumption is that hostilities take place between two unknown cultures.

In actuality, most of these interactions take place between cultures that have known each other for a long time.

Sometimes, the Oriyas and Santhals find themselves hostile to each other even after having known each other for a long time.

This is due to the different interests of different communities. This is more of a matter of varied interests and less of cultural lifestyles.

AR- The communities we are in conversation about with you seem to be living in pockets, away from the “mainstream”. Is that the reason why they are stereotyped as shrewd and savage?

The tribals are construed as savage due to the construct of the society. Why the Europeans started considering themselves flagbearers of civilisation was because they left behind imprints of their kingdoms, established organised religions and spread their languages. Cholas and Pandyas of India were never considered as savage by them as they left behind forts and palaces. But they did classify the Africans as barbaric as they couldn't leave behind any huge buildings for the simple reason that their buildings were wood-made which would rust away with time.



The pleasant weather of Africa did not render Africans in the need of stone palaces for survival. Also, the Europeans failed to understand the religions and languages developed in the African regions. Hence, they called the Africans barbaric to feel civilised themselves.

The Europeans equated the people living in Jungles as savages, failing to understand there was no contest for space among these people for which they'd feel the need to construct western-like cities. Africa had gone through a very different kind of evolution, unacceptable to the Europeans.

This social construction which was considered backwardness for the Europeans was taken up as a challenge by the Europeans to disintegrate. Hence, they felt it to be their responsibility to bring these people out of these Jungles, educate them and introduce them to European religions

SP- There has been a prolonged debate on drawing a line between the tribals' rights to habitat-spreading development. Sir, could you please through some light on accommodating socio-economic development like education and healthcare as well as their right to socio-cultural distinction?

This is a very difficult question to answer and has been a subject of debate for 400 years. One way to go about this, as argued, is to assimilate them into mainstream society to make them peasant-like, another is to understand that these communities have thrived on their own for centuries without any external help, and respecting that, one should leave them on

their own. According to me, there is no simple solution to this. The answer to this question will always lie on the grey area of the scale much to the disagreement of those who see the world as black and white. To snatch away their cultural identities for assimilation is as wrong as leaving them isolated without the services of good education and healthcare.

The tribals have the right to decide their future. They should have the liberty to choose their way and make their path without any forceful external influence of power or politics. Why are we choosing the direction of their lives in terms of socio-economic decisions on behalf of them when they can do it for themselves?



This depicts a lack of respect for differences in our society. These differences are often very well understood by people but used as tokens of hate by governments and constructed systems.

SP- Sir, as you mention the concept of accepting differences, it tempts me to talk about how India has been more of a civilisation

harbouring different cultures than a nation with only one language and culture in ancient times. How and why has the perception changed after we've entered the 21st century?

India is like a bowl of salad. All the components have their individuality, yet they come together to become one. The main problem is that people

refuse to accept its civilisational identity which is native to South Asia and rather try to dress its roots with western national identities which will never work in the Asian ecosystem. India can have a national identity but a compromise on its diversity will render its unity weak.

Opencast mining was started in the 1970s in our country. A piece of land in Jharkhand that belonged to a few families from a community who used to use the land for their family sustenance was taken away by the government in return for promises of land and jobs.

These promises were never fulfilled and these landowners were now labourers barely earning anything. Once, a man from this community, perhaps unknowingly, picked a lump of coal from the same land and sold it in the market for money to feed himself. He was immediately caught by authorities, called a thief, and demeaned.

He simply replied and I quote, "Is Zameen ka Maalik Hua karte the hum, aapne chor bana diya", roughly translated to-we used to be the owners of this land, you all reduced us to mere thieves. This is the harsh reality of our country.

AR-It has been observed that a dearth of developmental initiatives in the tribal dense regions, not just impedes the process of their integration into the mainstream, but also creates conditions for extremist movements, to expand their base among the



ignorant tribes. How do you think this dearth has contributed to keeping movements like Naxalism alive ?

No doubt, there is frustration among the communities who have resorted to extremist movements as their livelihoods have been at stake. Although, there is no dearth of violence from their side anymore but only its threat.

SP- There are preconceived notions of civilization and brutish living. These notions keep differing from person to person. Are these closed descriptions of civilization and barbarism even relevant in today's time?

Marina Carter has written a lot about this, the areas of Jharkhand and where the tribes have stayed mostly concentrated around, the kingdoms there were back then so powerful, a political entity that strong existed, that even the Mughal empire too was not able to take over, though because of the rich mining resources of Jharkhand, the Mughals maintained contacts for reaping the benefits, but they were never able to occupy the area.

So the people belonging to the concerned communities are not barbaric they know the civilized way of cooperation, they are just different. The savagery associated with the tribes is nothing more than a made-up construct.

I have stayed in Jharkhand for quite a significant number of years, and the times I visited the areas of their subsistence, I hardly recall when I felt threatened and endangered. I have driven across Jharkhand on my scooter, and never did anything

happen that I can say was an act of sheer barbarism. If for real they are that indolent, violent and hate-mongering, one should have felt terrified, isn't it? In my experience living there, I never had such a feeling.

Ultimately it boils down, that the notions that are propagated and circulated regarding the tribal people are mere constructs, constructed for various vested interests by various interest-holders.

AR - Looking at the Interlocked and Interdependent interest conundrum between the state and the tribal people, we see a twin challenge emerging out of it for the government to pull the indigenous into the stream of development and modernity as well as at the same time, preserve their innate culture, how do you see both these facets accommodating from a policy perspective?

I doubt if the state could do that actually, not particularly India, it's a common impediment to any liberal state.

The reason is the dearth of evaluation, now let me explain this by bringing an example from Jharkhand.

See the dialogue there between the tribes and the government officials occurs in a specific manner, they claim that they are distinct and to safeguard that they require a certain degree of autonomy, and the state in most cases replies by acknowledgement but not doing anything much with its regard, this cycle of making claims and facing them goes on for some time.

The demand for the autonomy, raised by the tribes, keeps emphasizing that it's not about the property it is about the difference.

The state refutes it by prevailing on its view that it is about the property, gradually what happened, that the tribal people after initial bewilderment, learned this language, they started saying that you've been saying that we are poor, not different, the truth is that we are both poor and different.

And since you've been telling us that we are poor, you are trying to remove that poverty for many decades unsuccessfully now, why don't you let us do it ourselves.

Now what happens is that the conversation acquires the tone of the duality of distinctiveness and development, the state then take up the measures of decentralization, the inability of the state to eradicate the poverty that it keeps on reiterating exposes on the face of its claims to have had made efforts and how much of it materialized.

The problem of redistributive justice as identified by the state as the issue hindering the development is unlikely to make any difference until the distinctiveness and distinction that the tribes hold are given due recognition.

Therefore the state hasn't been able to do much about it, because it hasn't understood the lingual communicative capability that it'll take to find an answer to this question.

AR - Sir, how much have the affirmative policies to bring in the marginalized groups, through various constitutional and subsequent legislative provisions impacted the lives of tribes at the ground level, have they been able to achieve their objective?

Since the implementation of affirmative policies, things have indeed changed quite substantially, but are they in themselves sufficient to get the desired outcomes, not really.

The question is not simply about getting more money, more benefits and more facilities there, the question is, in addition to that which is required anyway, should they not have a voice, a say on issues that matter to them?

That is the question we have to look for the answer to.

Tribal people are not supposed to be dictated to arrange their habits following the preferences of others. For example, they shouldn't be forced to include wheat in their diet. Look, the Glycemic index of wheat is not suitable for the Indian climate, therefore, it wasn't always the staple crop of the north of India, but eventually due to numerous historical reasons we have turned into a wheat-eating nation now.

Traditionally we were more millets and more dal-eating people. When tribes are made to go through this transition, it becomes very severe because, look, food is simply not for nourishment. Food constructs social structures, it is in a way an anchor of a lot of social elements.

Here if we attempt to replace food with something else, it will have consequences, this is the problem with the understanding of their upliftment, appropriating the mainstream methods of overcoming backwardness, which doesn't always work, prescribing alien foods, education to them, could have had created a paradigm where the voices of tribal people were curbed, that would have led to major conflicts.

Hence, the affirmative policies become highly relevant because they have given a platform to the concerned people to express their desires and decide their preferences by themselves.

SP - Sir, what inspired you to take up the subject in particular and research so in-depth about the tribal people ?

I was at a stage in my life where I had to choose a topic to work on, I wanted to understand how does socio-economic accumulation and differences disperse, so I had two examples to go with, one was Sindh other was Jharkhand. Visa for the former was hard to get, hence I was left with the latter. The people I will meet, the practices I will come across there, for me it was clear that it

would not be mere anthropological specimens. Most travel literature from these areas are works of anthropology, I did not want to essentialise tribal people as specimens of any museums, so in much of my writings, I was very clear that I am not concerned about whether they are tribal or not anthropologically.

I am interested in understanding how the question of tribal people becomes a relevant question from political and policy-making perspectives. There are already sufficient studies conducted to identify what their practices are, and what are the materials they use, but I did not want to endure my work in those aspects any further.

The area of my study was to find ways of integrating the tribal people into the laid out development avenues and realize what would be the claims and rights of these people as this avenue expanded.

That was the intention that I started with and keep on adding.



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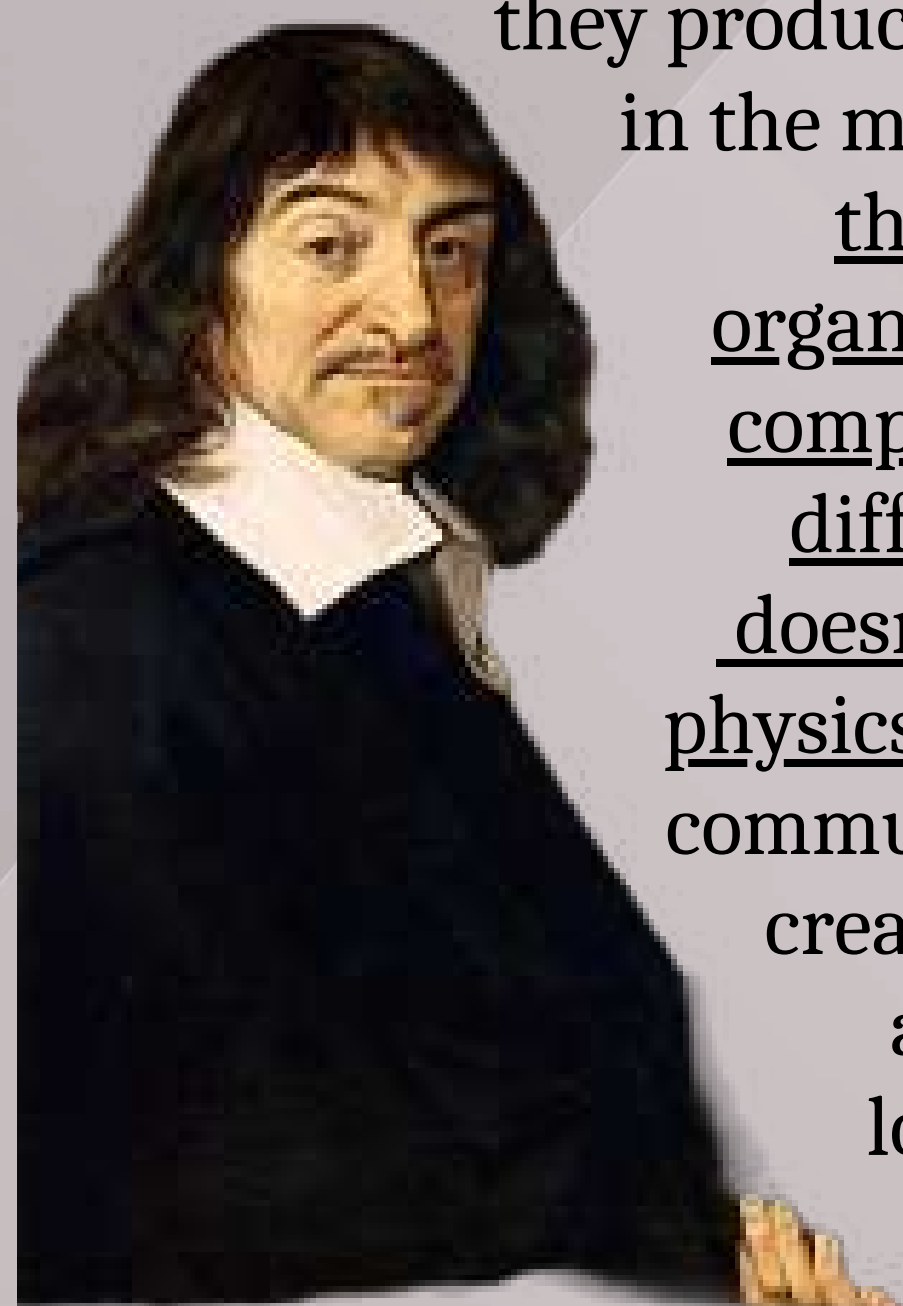
THE HARD PROBLEM OF CONSCIOUSNESS.

By Parth Pruthi

Seventeenth-century French polymath Rene Descartes was very impressed by his mind and its thinking prowess and for good reasons. If some people deserve to be impressed by their thinking, Descartes has to be one of them. A whole lot of mathematics and physics progressed because of the Cartesian coordinate system, one of his major claims to fame. In awe of this ability to think and reflect, this ability to experience things, he wondered about the nature of our minds, our bodies, and the external world.

His famous statement "Cogito, ergo sum" i.e., "I think, therefore I am" is a lot more than a cool Instagram bio. Descartes, being sceptical of all his senses, uncertain about the existence of everything, concluded from his thought experiments that because he was able to think, one thing he was certain of was his existence. Thus his appreciation for minds, Res Cogitans(thinking things) as he called them.

It occurred to him that our mind and the experience they produce don't resemble anything in the material world. He theorised that our minds, unlike other organs, are not material entities composed of matter but of some different kind of material that doesn't have to obey the laws of physics. The substance somehow communicates with our body and creates the experience of being alive. Religious myths have long espoused similar views in terms of souls, but



RENÉ DESCARTES, FRENCH PHILOSOPHER

Descartes hypothesised it as some scientific theory. This dichotomy between mind and body, often called the mind-body problem or Cartesian Dualism, has ever since been the hot topic of debate amongst philosophers of minds.

Why Hard?

Not too long into the journey of thinking about consciousness, one has to encounter certain questions, "Is consciousness a binary property or a spectrum i.e. are all living things conscious and non-living things not?", "Are our minds really composed of some different kind of substance as Descartes hypothesised?", "Are bacterias actually aware of their existence? Are plants aware? If they aren't, are they alive or just the result of complex biochemical interactions?"

Explaining consciousness is an ambitious undertaking. Not only do we have to think scientifically about what it is like to be alive, but we also have to give plausible falsifiable explanations about the diversity that different organisms show with respect to the awareness of their environments, simultaneously avoiding the urge to attribute things to mysterious beings and magical substances.

Humanity's obsession with mystery has been one of the greatest imagination blockers to have existed. **The curiosity to explore scientific explanations for unanswered phenomena is not appreciated much because it throws that romanticised**

mystical element out of the equation, especially in matters of life, death, and gods. No one feels uncomfortable when an explanation is offered for various physiological phenomena in organisms in terms of biology, chemistry, and biochemistry, but the moment similar accounts are offered for life, death, and consciousness in humans, there is some sense of discomfort. The urge to have some magical soul seated in our brain overpowers other explanations.

Descartes' hypothesis, despite appealing to our intuition and experience, doesn't stand the test of the scientific method. Is there any great reason to believe that all human organs are composed of cells made of atoms, but the brain is not? Anatomical procedures have dissected the brain to the core in search of this otherworldly substance, but to no avail.

As Carl Sagan's famous aphorism goes, extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence. The presence of a substance that doesn't obey the laws of physics making our minds is certainly one, and as long as there is no extraordinary evidence to testify to it, our working assumption should be otherwise.

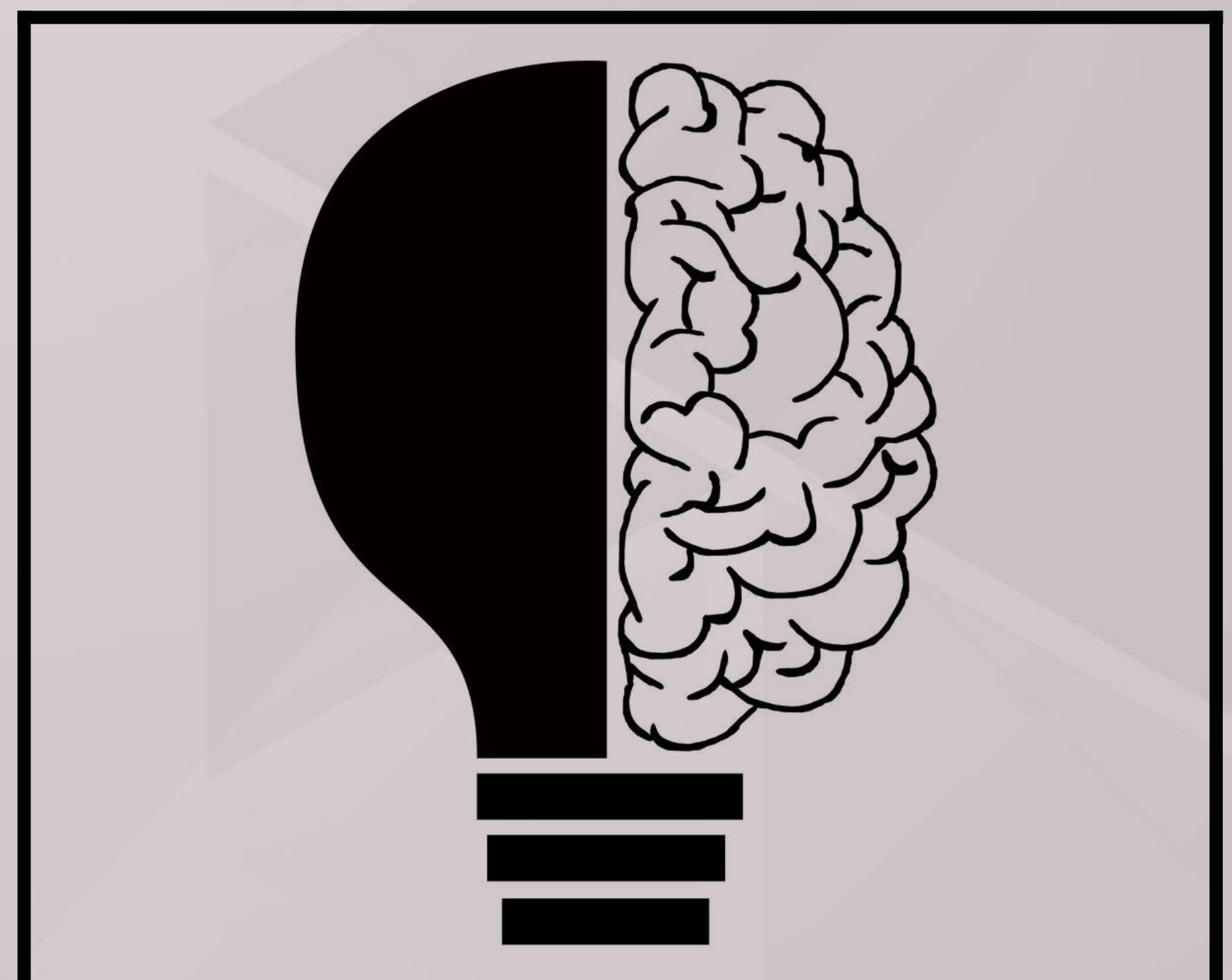
So any naturalistic account of consciousness must explain how a physical system composed of matter is conscious and can experience things. Why is a chair not conscious but a human is? No doubt, it is known as the hard problem of consciousness. A materialist philosopher of mind may argue that the difficulty is overstated, for if we can explain DNA repair or cell division in terms of complex biochemical processes, what stops us from explaining consciousness which certainly arises out of nerve cells. Yet no such materialist explanation has managed to become popular among the common populace despite efforts of philosophers to offer arguments from the fields of evolutionary biology, neuroscience, artificial intelligence and chaos mathematics. Pedagogical difficulties pertaining to explaining this problem are different from explaining mathematical calculations for instance, where a focused student with reasonable intellect more often than not will get it. Why, though? Any explanation of consciousness that assumes that there is no mystical substance or soul tends to give rise to unpleasant nihilistic tendencies. What is the point of anything if our ability to

experience things is just a result of biochemical interactions? What is the purpose of life, if we are just lumps of atoms? People jump to such looming questions when told that there is no soul. Popular religious myths of reincarnation and afterlife only add to the friction.

Spectrum of Consciousness

The problem of consciousness is also semantic. What do we actually mean by a conscious being? More precisely, can we draw clear lines to categorise entities that are not alive, alive but not conscious, and alive and conscious?

Molecules that are stable and have the ability to replicate, when surrounded by lipid layers, get extra protection, stability and a different inner environment called homeostasis to maintain. Protocells if we can call them. These requisites are enough for natural selection to perform its trick and soon enough, more stable structures follow, with greater sophistication. Primitive protocells to prokaryotes (cells without nucleus) to eukaryotes (cells with nucleus and complex organelles), followed by simple and complex symbiotic relationships. All this when coupled with different selection pressures results in different specialisations and a host of complex **living** entities. With this highly simplistic account of life on earth over the past 4 billion years, we can understand what distinguishes a bunch of atoms in a living entity. They are arranged in structures that have the capacity to replicate, extract energy, catalyse proteins and enzymes and perform thousands of complicated cycles to regulate these mechanisms.



The line between living organisms being conscious or not is a bit blurry. Or perhaps there is no such line.

Bacterias expand their pseudopodia when they sense food in their surroundings.

Many plant species have defence mechanisms. When they sense herbivores, they release chemicals through a complex chain of cellular signalling and reactions. How should we make sense of these behaviours? Should we attribute these to their thinking even when we know the exact biochemical mechanisms at play?

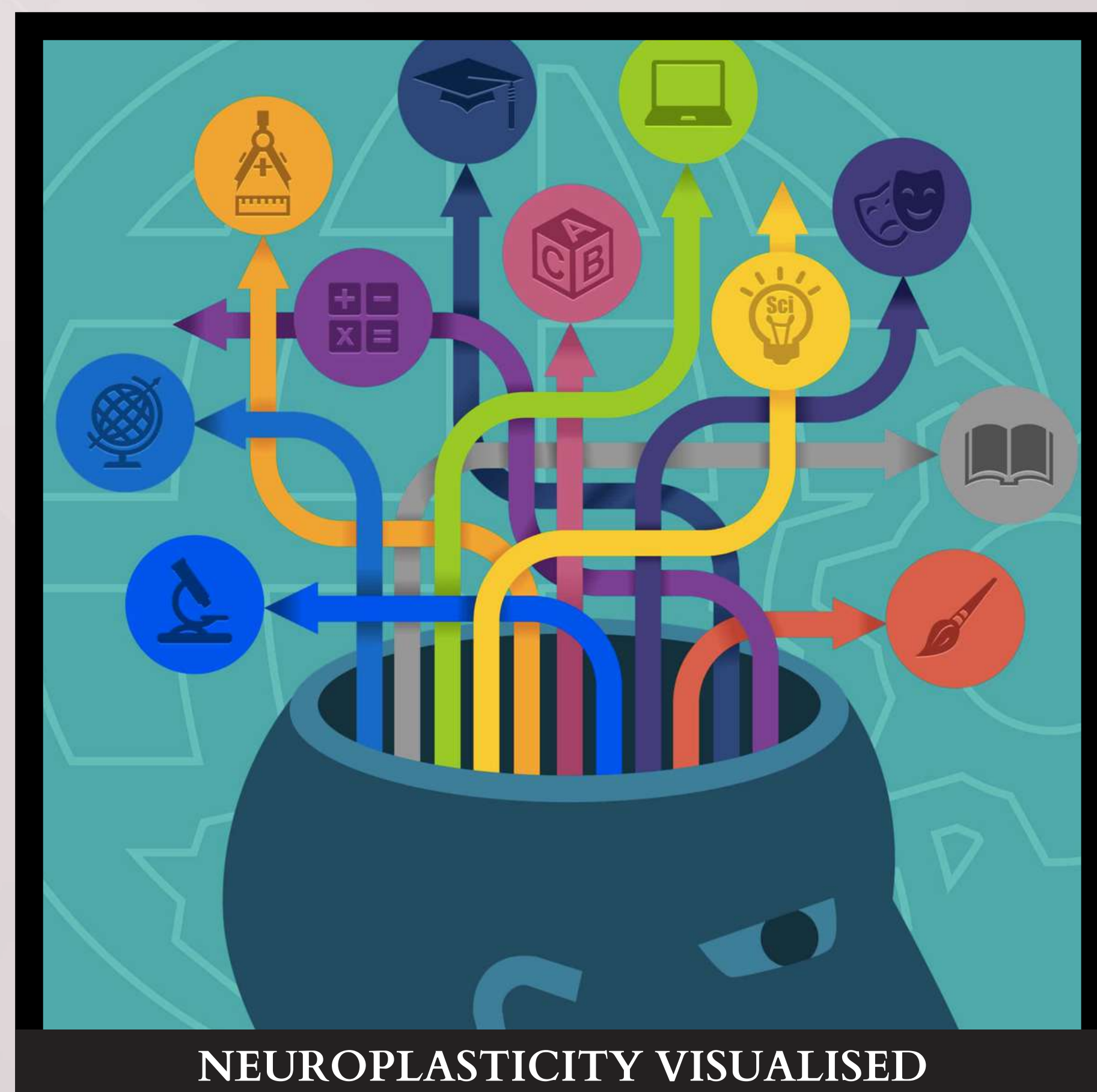
Our intuitions might serve as well here, we think of these organisms as alive but not conscious. No surprise there isn't any mainstream movement to completely move away from plant-based diets.

What about "smarter" animals? Here is a fascinating instance of ingenuity shown in the animal kingdom: Killdeer birds act as if their wings are broken, and fly near the predator to lure it away from their nests. Similarly, many pet owners are amused by how their pets often behave in quite intelligent ways to get the things they want.



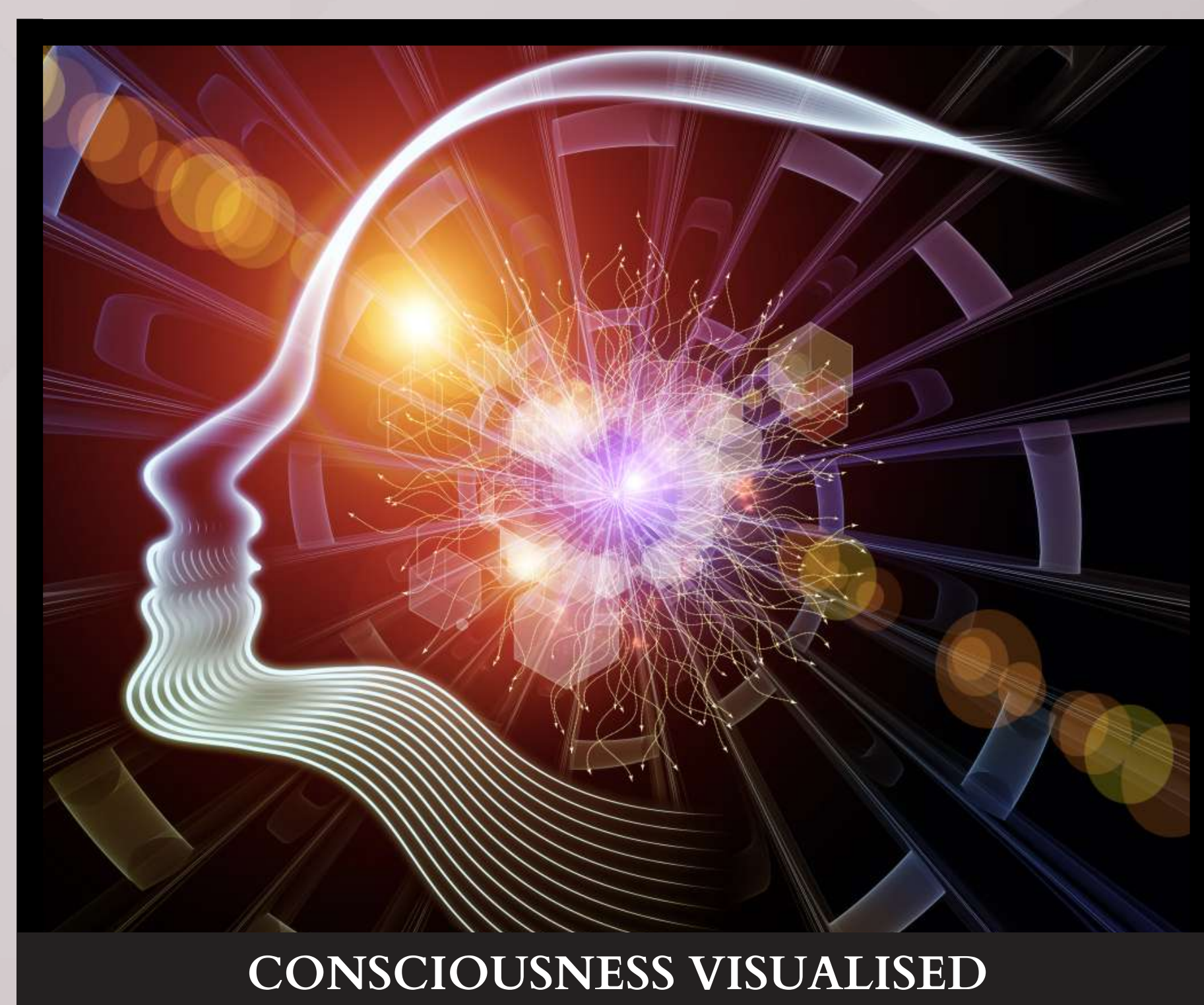
THE KILLERDEER BIRD

Now, we can highlight the muscles, neural pathways, and brain regions involved in these smart behaviours, but we can't make the leap to explain the organism's understanding of these circumstances. It might very well be the case that they comprehend the reasons in ways that suit their minds, or they might just be organic mechanistic robots obeying the biochemistry of the environment, and it's our intuition that is inclined to attribute consciousness to them.



Humans are miles ahead. We not only behave in intelligent ways, but even understand the reasons behind our behaviours to an extent. We can think, but also think about thinking, a rare feat in the animal kingdom.

Mind you, **the biochemical processes in bacteria are every bit as complex as biochemical processes in wild birds, our pets' brains and even inside us.** Yet, the remarkable plasticity of behaviour these latter organisms show even when their comprehension is debatable makes a convincing case that despite very similar biological mechanisms, natural selection creates a spectrum of consciousness across the animal kingdom, unicellular microbes on one end, homo sapiens on the other, with countless species in between.



Vitalism and Emergence

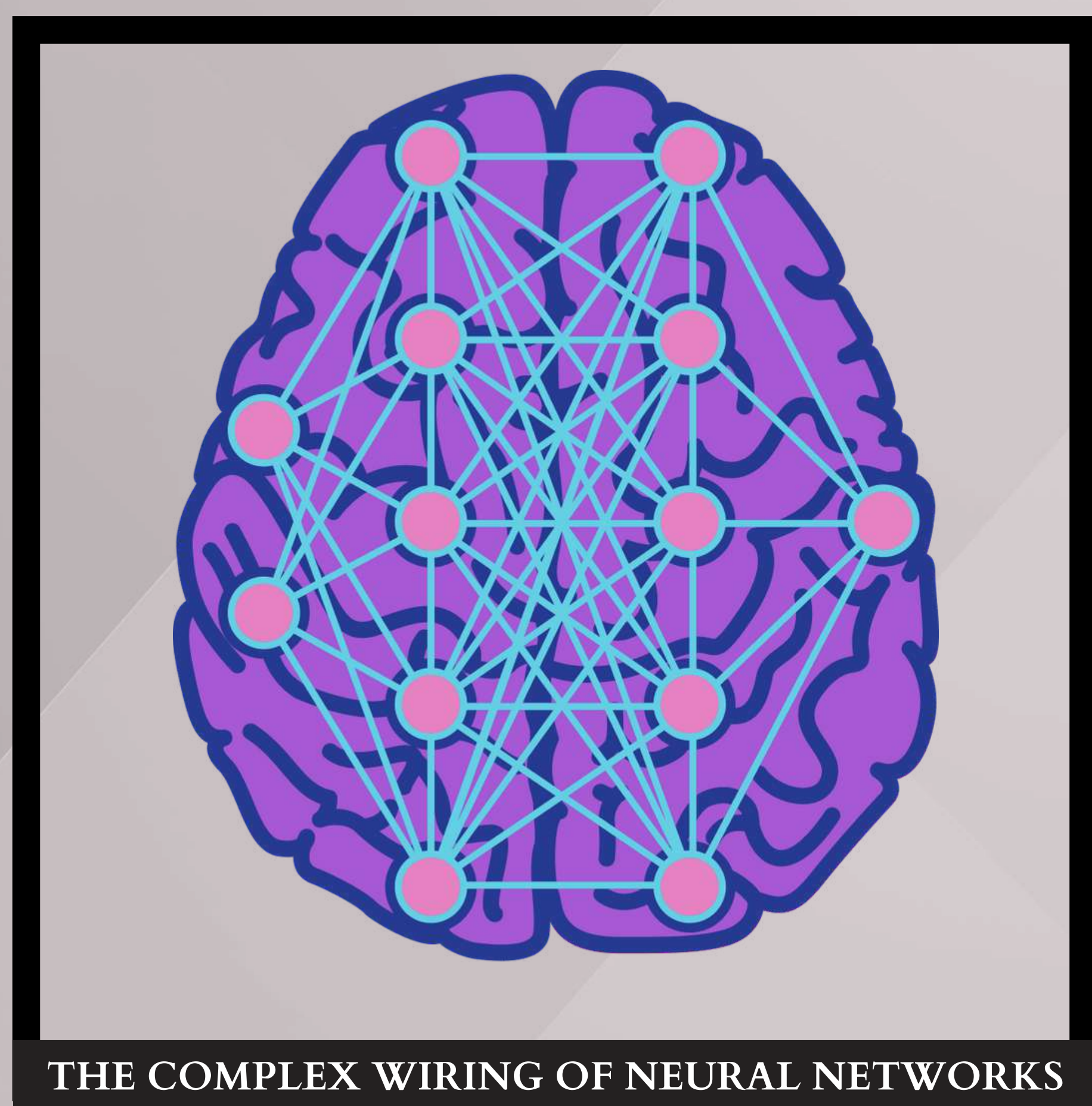
Vitalism is the brand of philosophy that believes that living beings are fundamentally different from non-living entities, that they possess some vital substance Élan Vital. 18th and 19th-century Biologists were obsessed with finding it.

Thankfully, biogenesis research showed that there is no evidence to believe this substance exists and course-corrected the direction of further investigations into the origins of life.

The error here is to think of emergent activities like life and consciousness as separate things in themselves. **There is no part of the body, pointing to which we can say, life resides there, no part of the brain where we can point to say consciousness resides here.** These are emergent processes, they emerge out of the properties of their parts. Life emerges out of complex interrelated processes of sustaining, replicating and extracting energy by molecular structures. Similarly, **consciousness emerges out of intricately connected neurons, electrical activity and coordination between them.**

While the science is settled on the fact that there is no evidence for élan vital, there are many debatable explanations for the emergence of consciousness out of mere neurons. A detailed description of these accounts is a task and beyond the scope of this article, but it is worth exploring the motivations and big ideas behind them.

One hypothesis claims that consciousness is a mere illusion, an illusion that benefited us over the course of our evolution. A parallel could be drawn from how operating systems work. A typical operating system like Windows abstracts the complex binary bits to a graphical interface.

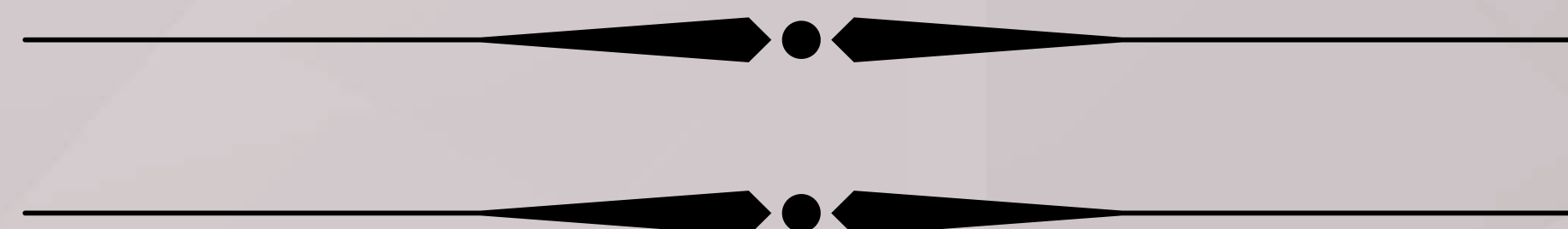


The user doesn't have to know binary or assembly language to move a file, a drag and drop suffices. Similar is the illusion of consciousness, we are only aware of what is in our working memory, the unconscious calculations behind how we sense distance intuitively or prefer certain musical patterns are abstracted away in terms of thoughts and feelings, the electrical activity and neurons firing are never noticed.

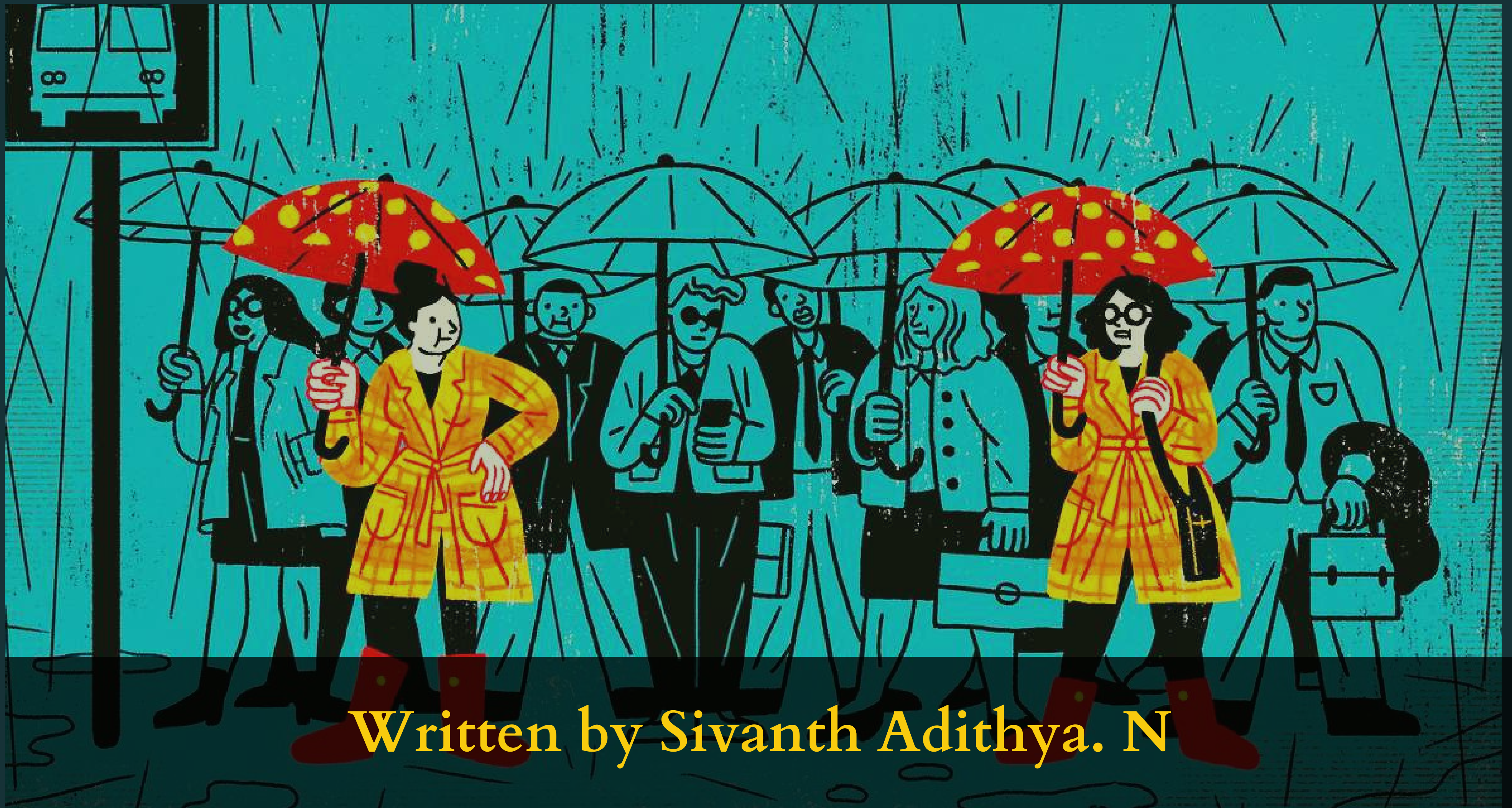
Another hypothesis takes inspiration from artificial intelligence. Large complicated neural networks have shown that they can learn patterns in images, audio files and even languages. They work by trying to mimic the complex wiring of neural pathways in brains, where one neuron sends impulses to many connected neurons. If this complex network of logical bits can learn patterns and even surpass human brain capabilities, why can't a brain evolve comprehension out of vastly more complicated nerve cells that create similar, yet more complicated mesh networks?

It is important to note that these explanations of consciousness come with a disclaimer that they are partly conjectural accounts with little leaps of imagination. However, the state of research in the fields of cognitive sciences gives us good reasons to be optimistic that these little leaps will be replaced with rigorous explanations in years to come.

Interestingly, this also highlights how scientific approaches to uncover truth diverge from unscientific ones. Theologians might be confident in explaining the human condition in terms of miracles and magic. Scientists are not. They take a more humble position. We might not understand the emergence of consciousness completely at the moment, but that just adds it to the list of all other natural phenomena that are yet to be explained completely. Not having a consensus on any one explanation right now doesn't mean we won't have one in the future and, after looking at the wealth of knowledge that has accumulated on the topic in recent years, it is only reasonable to say that we have never been this close to offer a highly plausible explanation of consciousness. The hard problem of consciousness might no longer be that hard.



ON COINCIDENCES



Written by Sivanth Adithya. N

24 beers in a case. 24 hours a day. Coincidence? Or something more sinister? There is an old saying that a coincidence is when God performs a miracle and chooses to remain anonymous. Is there any truth to this? In this article, I explore the phenomenon of coincidence along with citing some of the most incredible coincidences ever to examine what this spooky phenomenon could mean for our lives.

A coincidence is a remarkable sequence of events or circumstances that have no apparent causal connection with one another but seem to have been planned or arranged, usually in a very personal nature. Coincidences are sometimes thought to be beyond the scope of natural explanation.

Let me start with a personal anecdote of mine.

One evening I had a loop dream while sleeping on the top floor of my house. The dream is as follows:

"While sleeping on the top floor, I had a nightmare suddenly waking me up in shock. When I went downstairs carrying the shock of the dream, I saw some of my relatives sitting in the foyer. When I approached them, they cannibalized and killed me.

As soon as I died, I again woke up in shock on the top floor of the house, went downstairs again, saw the same family members there and they approached and killed me predictably again, and the cycle repeated itself." In the end, I finally woke up from the dream for real.

It really frightened and shocked me. I slowly went downstairs and in the foyer, I saw the exact same relatives! I don't know what happened that day.

After that incident, I thought about it a lot. I had even wondered whether my mind had fabricated that I had seen them in a dream just before I saw them in reality! But if my memory serves me right, I undoubtedly saw them in the dream. What a remarkable coincidence! Does this have any grand meaning? Is there any rational explanation for this?

One thing I recalled was that one day prior to that incident, I had seen Jonathan Demme's famous film 'The Silence of the Lambs', in which Sir. Anthony Hopkins played the role of a cannibalistic serial killer by the name Hannibal Lecter.

That film got stuck in my head that whole day. Maybe that had somehow influenced my dream, or perhaps maybe that was an incredible coincidence too!

Talking about Anthony Hopkins, there's an incredible story of coincidence related to Mr Hopkins himself. Hopkins agreed to act in the film 'The Girl From Petrovka, which was based on a book by George Feifer.

He travelled to London to buy a copy of the book some days after signing the contract. Despite searching in many bookshops, he failed to find one.

Disappointed, Hopkins entered the train stop at Leicester Square to board a train back home.

There, to his astonishment, he noticed an apparently discarded copy of 'The Girl From Petrovka' on a bench. This in itself was a remarkable coincidence, but it became even more remarkable two years later.

When George Feifer (the author) visited Hopkins in Vienna while Hopkins was in the middle of filming 'The Girl From Petrovka', Feifer mentioned that he did not have a copy of his own book and that he had lent the last one - complete with annotations - to a friend who had lost it somewhere in London.

The dumbfounded Hopkins showed the book he had found to Feifer and asked him whether that was the book he was looking for.

The equally dumbfounded Feifer confirmed that it was indeed his own personal copy of the book!

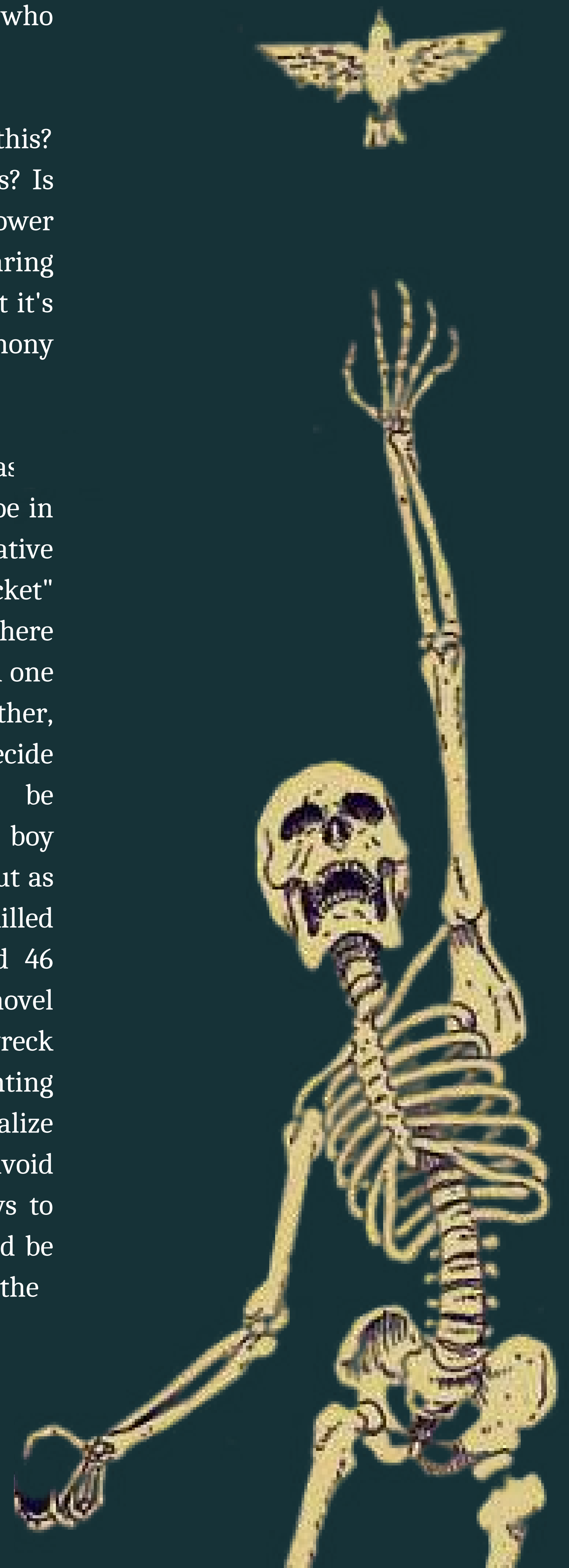
It seems beyond any rational explanation that Hopkins, of all people on the planet, was not only the person who found Feifer's missing book in the middle of a rush underground train station, but also turned out to be the one who returned it to Feifer.

Is there any higher meaning to this? Is there any explanation for this? Is it likely that some divine power influenced all this? (Upon hearing about this someone quipped that it's actually far more likely that Anthony Hopkins is a book thief)

Speaking of cannibalism, the master of gothic writing, Edgar Allan Poe in his 1838 novel titled "The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket" wrote the story of a shipwreck where four survivors decided to feed on one of them in order to survive further, for this they drew straws to decide which one of them would be sacrificed, ultimately the cabin boy named Richard Parker turned out as the cursed one, therefore, was killed and eaten. In 1884, i.e, around 46 years after Poe's cannibalistic novel was published, a real shipwreck happened, and the four men fighting for life aboard decided to cannibalize one of them in order to avoid starvation and they drew straws to decide which one of them should be killed to be eaten and ultimately the

cabin boy named -- wait for it -- Richard Parker was selected and was killed and eaten!

This later led to one of the most famous criminal cases in English history (Regina v Dudley and Stephens 14 QBD 273 DC) in which the remaining men were tried for murder in which the necessity of hunger was provided by the defendants as the justification for the murder



Shipwreck related coincidences are numerous. Perhaps the most incredible coincidence ever is related to a shipwreck; the wreck of the RMS Titanic.

Let me give you a description of a ship. See if you can guess the name of the ship based on the description;

"She was the largest craft afloat and the greatest of the works of men. In her construction and maintenance were involved every science, profession, and trade known to civilization. On her bridge were officers, who, besides being the pick of the Royal Navy, had passed rigid examinations in all studies ... they were not only seamen, but scientists.

Unsinkable - indestructible, she carried as few [life] boats as would satisfy the laws.

In view of her absolute superiority to other craft ... she would steam at full speed in fog, storm, and sunshine, and on the Northern Lane Route, winter and summer..."

If you guessed that it is the description of the famous ship, the Titanic, I'm obliged to forgive you for getting it wrong because I myself thought so too when I read those lines.

They are the lines describing a fictional ship, named the Titan, from a novella written by Morgan Robertson.

In 1898, the American author Morgan Robertson wrote and published a novella titled, 'The Wreck of the Titan:

Or, Futility', which features the voyage of a British luxury liner, HMS Titan, which was touted as 'unsinkable', which hits an iceberg off the coast of Newfoundland on an April night and sinks to the depths of the sea.

Fourteen years later, on the night of April 14, the RMS Titanic which was also touted as 'unsinkable' by its owners hit an iceberg off the coast of Newfoundland and sank to the depths of the sea.

The similarities between the story and the real event are so remarkable that one looks like a retelling of the other.

Both of them were British owned ships, with a triple screw propeller. Both of them were hit on their starboard bow, around midnight.

The length of the Titan was 800 feet, the Titanic was 882. Though both of them had a seating capacity of 3,000, the Titan held 2,500 passengers and the Titanic held 2,200.

They also were similar in their lack of lifeboats. The Titan and the Titanic held 24 and 20 lifeboats respectively. People even attributed supernatural powers to Robertson due to the insane similarities between the two.

Connected to the story of the Titanic is the story of Violet Jessop which is also quite remarkable in its own right. Violet Jessop a.k.a 'Miss Unsinkable' was an Argentine stewardess who survived the sinking of RMS Titanic in 1912.

She was also on board Titanic's sister ship 'The HMHS Britannic' (yes, ships have families) when it hit an underwater mine and sank in 1916. She survived that one too. Also she was onboard when the 'RMS Olympic', which was the other sister of the Titanic, collided with a warship and nearly sank in 1911. Fortunately she, somehow most remarkably, escaped every one of them. Talk about tempting fate! What's even more remarkable to me is that she never thought something along the lines of, "Maybe I should stay the hell out of the water and do a farm job or something like that".



The similarities between the Titan and the Titanic remind me of the story of the Jim twins. Their Similarities are far more astonishing. The Jim twins were a pair of identical twin brothers who were separated at birth and put up for adoption in 1940. Each of their adoptive parents gave them the name James, or Jim for short.

They didn't know each other even though they lived just 40 miles away apart. As students, both of them enjoyed mathematics and woodwork, but had a strong dislike for spelling. Both of them were prone to nail biting. They both married twice.

First each of them got married to and divorced from women named Linda. Then both of them remarried women named Betty. Both of them had dogs named 'Toy'.

One of them named his son James Alan while the other one named his son James Allan.

Both Jims were heavy smokers, they even preferred smoking the same brand of cigarettes and drinking the same brand of beer, they both suffered from migraines and drove the same car (Chevrolet).

Both of them had similar jobs, one worked as a security guard while the other one worked as a deputy sheriff. Neither knew each other until they met each other at the age of 37.

After they met, one of the Jims (Jim Springer) even said he had "always felt an emptiness," until he was reunited with his identical twin (Jim Lewis). 'Incredible' is a weak word to describe the staggering number of coincidences (if they could be called so) in their lives!

The case of similarities has sometimes inspired some hilarious and unexpected stories as well.

One among them goes thusly — An old man goes to heaven, and at the reception desk in heaven, it is Jesus sitting, who calls the old man forward and says, "Old man, welcome to heaven. I have to ask for some details—could you tell me your name?" The old man says, "My name is Joseph."

And Jesus says, "Well there's a coincidence when I was on earth my father's name was Joseph." And the old man says, "Well I had a little boy, you know, he'd be about your age by now."

And Jesus says, "Well how extraordinary ... but I left home when I was quite young." And the old man says, "Yes, my little boy left home when he was young.

He went away with his friends, they got involved in magic and other mystical stuff." And Jesus says, "Another coincidence—how extraordinary, that's exactly what happened to me. Tell me, what was your job back on Earth?" And the old man says, "I was a carpenter." And Jesus says, "That's an amazing coincidence, that was my father's job too ... you don't think that you and I could be..." And the old man says, "No, you see, my little boy was not born like ordinary boys." And Jesus says, "That's how it was with me."

And the old man says, "Look, I would know my little boy anywhere, you see he has these little holes in his hands and feet." And Jesus says "... you mean like THIS." And the old man says, "I can't believe it." And Jesus says, "You must believe it—so many coincidences, you must be my earthly father Joseph." And the old man says, "... and you must be my little boy—Pinocchio!"



As I've previously mentioned, coincidences are generally thought by people to be beyond natural explanation.

The feeling of being special that coincidence creates in humans, creates in us the feeling that fate has somehow singled us out; the feeling that I, of all the billions of people on the planet, experienced that coincidence misleads me into thinking that only divine power could be the explanation for this.

This leads many people to attribute supernatural explanations to coincidences, which, in my view, is wrong, and sometimes disastrous, even though not always so.

The first thing is that coincidences can be rationally explained using the 'law of truly large numbers and the 'Little woods law', in conjunction with certain psychological predilections of humans and the particular nature of our brains.

The law of truly large numbers, attributed to Persi Diaconis and Frederick Mosteller, states that given a large enough number of samples, any outrageous, i.e. no matter how unlikely it may be in any single sample, the thing is likely to be observed.

Littlewood's law, postulated by the eminent British mathematician John Littlewood, states that a person can expect to experience events with odds of one in a million at the rate of about one per month.

The two most pertinent psychological predilections are selection bias and confirmation bias.

Selection bias involves the selection of individuals, groups or data for analysis in such a way that proper randomization is not achieved, thereby ensuring that the sample obtained is not representative of the population intended to be analyzed.

Confirmation bias is the tendency to search for, interpret, favour, and recall information in a way that confirms or strengthens one's prior personal beliefs or hypotheses. These biases are the result of the general tendency of humans to seek pleasure and avoid pain.

We tend to avoid facing ideas that are in contradiction with our general perception of the world because those ideas will feel unpleasant and painful to us. Ideas that confirm our general perception about the world would augment the feeling of the superiority of our egos.

This leads us to make logically untenable rationalizations that we convince ourselves to be justifiable by looking only for evidence that supports our rationalizations.

This creates these biases. As the ability to recognise patterns had an evolutionary advantage, we humans have a pattern-seeking brain. Recognising patterns around us helps us to understand cause and effect, and this, in turn, helps us to understand what's happening around us and to more reliably predict future outcomes and thereby avoid danger. But due to the chaotic and dangerous nature of our ancestors' environment, the brains that we have inherited are tuned to over-find rather than under-find patterns.

So sometimes we tend to impose artificial and usually very convincing and misleading patterns onto situations where such patterns don't exist in reality.

'Apophenia' is the word, coined by psychiatrist Klaus Conrad, which means the tendency to perceive meaningful connections between unrelated things. Seeing shapes on animals, in clouds, finding 'face on Mars', and hearing meaningful lines in a language you know from a song written in a completely foreign language are all the products of apophenia.

Let me illustrate this with the example of Robertson and his seeming prophetic abilities. If you look into Robertson's life and the context in which he wrote the novel, it wouldn't be that surprising after all. Robertson was a much-experienced seaman with great expertise in maritime safety, and he accurately observed that maritime safety laws weren't keeping up with the rapidly growing size of ships.



He wrote the novel as a warning of what could happen if behemoth ships were allowed on the waters. This was also a problem that inspired many debates across the nation at that time. And what better name other than titan for the world's biggest ship?

Also, it is possible that those who made the Titanic had read the novel and liked everything about it except the part where it sinks, and they simply advertised the Titanic taking inspiration from the description of the Titan in the novel. Besides, people generally overlook the great differences between both ships. The Titanic sank on its maiden voyage. The Titan sank on its fifth voyage.

The hero of the novel, at one point, fights a polar bear which lives on the iceberg. Besides, the Titanic sank so slowly that it could have been evacuated with timely intervention and adequate lifeboats. After hitting the iceberg, the Titan capsized so swiftly that the passengers had virtually no chance of survival, even if there were enough lifeboats.

If you still don't believe me, don't take my word for it, take Robertson's words. Robertson himself denied that he had any supernatural abilities. Quoting his own words denying that he had any supernatural powers — "I know what I'm writing about, that's all."

Due to all the biases, laws, and the nature of our brain that I've previously mentioned, many people still believe that Robertson had psychic powers, despite all the evidence available contrary to that.

The case of the similarities between the Jim Twins can be explained using the influence of similar genes. The cases of Anthony Hopkins, Edgar Allan Poe, Violet Jessop...and even mine can be explained the way I've expounded.

After all, I've had even stranger dreams, ranging from fighting the power rangers to getting chased by a T-Rex.

None of them has come to pass, and my psychological predilections and the laws I've mentioned previously have created such a powerful impression on me about that dream that even after writing this analysis, I still cannot shake the feeling off myself that it has to be something more than what I've rationally concluded it to be!

When something doesn't fit the framework through which people view the world, they attribute it to the supernatural. This explains why people give supernatural attributes to coincidences.

A serious peril of this is that as the supernatural is something that cannot be understood by ordinary mortals, it leads to the mushrooming of future-prediction businesses, fake prophets, conspiracy theories and nonsense of such kind. Despite all this, I must admit that an analysis of coincidences doesn't stamp out the powerful effect it creates on human beings.

One valuable thing that coincidences teach us is that each of us is very unique and we have a lot in common at the same time. Coincidences are always personal in nature, they appeal to our subjectivity. And despite all our differences — be it race, nationality, gender, language, and the like — we all experience coincidences, and we cherish connections.

Coincidences connect us to others and to the entire cosmos and thus make us feel that our lives are significant and meaningful.

With its apparent ability to transcend natural laws, and its ability to connect unrelated things, it makes us more creative and helps us to bring a meaningful rhyme, rhythm, and plot to an otherwise nihilistic existence.

Despite having no natural or rational basis, coincidences provide a rational basis for natural beings to live on. What a beautiful coincidence!



FTA WITH UAE AND AUSTRALIA

Written by Vineet Kumar

The article explains the intricacies of the free trade agreement between India and UAE.

India recently signed a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) with an aim to expand bilateral trade between the two countries to USD 100 billion in the next 5 years.

The pact is being viewed as a watershed moment as India has signed a free trade agreement (FTA) with a country almost a decade after entering into an agreement with Japan. With the agreement set to come into effect from May 1, let us dive into the intricacies of this comprehensive document.

The bilateral trade between the Gulf country and India is only eclipsed by the economies of China & USA. This agreement has the potential of propelling the Indian economy into a position of prominence when it comes to trading in the Middle East.

This is the first comprehensive trade agreement that UAE has signed with any country and it marks a significant step towards cementing bilateral relations between the nations.

Why India signed the deal?

It's interesting to note that India entered into negotiations with the Gulf Nations just 88 days before putting pen to paper. The deal allows India preferential access to 97% of UAE's tariff lines (almost all Indian exports) with almost negligible import duties.

This will significantly benefit Indian manufacturers who export goods related to textile, jewellery, engineering goods and most important pharmaceutical products.

The UAE has agreed to grant automatic registration to Indian pharmaceuticals, including market authorization within 90 days. This will enable easy entry for Indian pharmaceuticals into the Arab Market. As manufacturers will now have duty-free access to the Arab market, the exports related to these products will surely shoot up. It is however expected that as manufacturers will now have duty-free access to the UAE market, their export potential will skyrocket, resulting in an increase in production back home.

This increase in production can potentially lead to large scale job creation.

The Indian govt also aspires to create 10 lakh jobs through the CEPA, but the roadmap for this largely remains undefined.



Have we missed a fine detail?

Free trade agreements remove tariff barriers but they also come with a serious disadvantage.

Slashed import duties act as a hindrance for local businesses, particularly small-scale businesses which depend on them for protection from global competition.

Import duties on foreign goods lead to an increase in their market price which acts as a defence mechanism against foreign competition.

For instance, when the USA signed a FTA with Australia & Singapore, its own exports expanded exponentially but local businesses could not compete with the global

competition once the protective shield of import duties was defenestrated. It remains to be seen how local businesses will react to increased bilateral trade between the two nations.

How the deal affects India's economic aspirations in the Gulf?

India's major point of relevance when it comes to trading in the Gulf is Oil, but the deal aims at increasing the value of bilateral trade to USD 100 billion dollars, excluding oil.

The deal can possibly open up the doors for India to sign similar agreements with the Gulf Corporation Council (GCC) countries, i.e., Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain and Qatar.

The GCC, along with the North African region remains an area of interest for India and its stakeholders, particularly the GCC.

For instance, in a country like the UAE where there are large tracts of uncultivable land, agricultural prospects are very bleak.

The Gulf nations in particular depend on agricultural imports in order to ensure food security for their people.

The deal envisages a roadmap whereby logistical support will be developed in order to connect farms with ports in India and finally to locations in the UAE.

What lies ahead?

India has also signed a similar FTA with Australia and is working rigorously to strike a deal with Britain.

The Indian govt seems to have turned its attention towards closing such deals with various countries as they bid to expand the Indian economy's value to a whopping 5 trillion-dollar economy.

Previously, the USA managed to expand its GDP by 2.5 billion dollars by signing an FTA with Colombia and exponentially expanded its foreign trade with countries like Australia, Oman, Israel, Morocco, etc.

The CEPA with UAE will go a long way in establishing the importance of signing FTAs for a country like India and can potentially propel the economy to gallop in the future.



BJP AND THE RISE OF RELIGIOUS NATIONALISM IN INDIAN POLITICS

By Nitin Vrihaspati

Introduction

Religious nationalism has been on the rise worldwide, particularly in the last decade or so. The duality of mixing religion and politics to garner populist appeal has taken prominence in various countries. The analysis of this novel mix of ideology and religion in the context of India is of great interest because of the socio-political landscape, culture of democracy, and diversity in terms of different political thoughts. The resurgence of the Hindu Nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party and its use of political Hindutva, specifically in the 2014-19 period, has fomented a new ideological shift where religion is increasingly becoming the defining feature of a person's social and national identity. The direct correlation between the politicization of religion and the BJP's electoral ideology of Hindutva has altered the concept of secular nationhood and made majoritarian nationalism the cadence for governance. The India of the BJP clashes with the one imagined by its founders but still demands to be analyzed to understand its standing in terms of economic progress, social prosperity, and type of politics on the world scale.

Concept of Religious Nationalism in the context of India

Religious nationalism, as described by political researcher Henrik Berglundis, refers to the mixing of two things-Religion and Nationalism. While the first is a form of social practice, the latter is an ideology(Berglund, June 2004). Religion-driven fundamentalist movements are taking centre stage in various South Asian countries such as Islamic Fundamentalism in Bangladesh and Pakistan evident from disregard and continuous attacks on minorities. However, in the case of diverse socio-political landscapes such as that of India, "it seems that after 50 years of experiment with secular politics, the nation seems to have gone fundamentalist, preferring to be ruled by Religious Nationalists"(Amalendu Misra, International Journal on Minority and Group Rights, Pg 8).

Carnegie Endowment defines several aspects of Indian religious nationalistic tradition. The foremost one is the appeal to economic austerity in the disguise of limiting certain political liberties, evident from the rather unsuccessful decision of Demonetization and its impact on the civil freedom of the Middle and Lower classes. The second is formulating political and social norms based on morality derived from religious literature. The third and perhaps the most critical aspect of religious nationalism is the majoritarian appeal to a single religion and discrimination against the minority. The Indian case study proves various examples of this trend with the ruling party BJP's repeal of Article 370, limiting the status of the only Muslim-majority state of India, or the enactment of CAA-NRC, allegedly stripping Muslims of citizenship. The rise of religious nationalism, as argued by Mark

Juergensmyer, drew its legitimacy from the fact that the secular state of India wasn't able to limit Hindu nationalist religious authority from being the sole or ultimate moral arbiters.

BJP and the transformation of Political Hindutva in Religious Politics

The political evolution of Hindutva or the concept of Hindu religious nationalism has its basis in 19th-century reformist movements by organizations such as the Brahmo Samaj and the Arya Samaj pressuring aggressive Hindu politics to save the distinct tradition from the influence of Christians and Islamists, who they considered to be outsiders. According to these religious groups, reforms were a necessary part of modernizing Hinduism without sacrificing its fundamental religious doctrine. Vinay Damodar Savarkar, considered the father of Hindutva, derived his political writings from such reformist movements. Savarkar argued that an essential Hindu is anyone who regards India as his fatherland (pitrabhumi) as well as Holyland (Punjabhoomi). This exclusive definition categorizes Hindus, Sikhs, and Buddhists as Indians while disregarding Christians and Muslims of their Indian identity. The ruling party BJP adopted Savarkar's ideas and in turn the ideology of Hindutva around the mid-1980s which was evident from the party taking up the issue of the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute. This shift of the Bharatiya Janata Party from Gandhian socialism to politics based on Hindu Nationalism could be attributed to the party's below-par performance in several elections and by-elections when the party used Gandhian politics as its primary ideology. BJP in the modern context has used the Hindutva ideology in coherence with the dual strategy of stigmatization and emulation. BJP's use of religious politics according to Zaheer Babbar relies on making Hinduism more robust and organized such that it could be integrated into the electoral polity (Babbar 1st March 2000). Further BJP's approach to appeal to majoritarian Hindu politics by linking the religion to a form of vulnerability due to alleged forced conversions by Christian and Islamist missionaries has given political authority

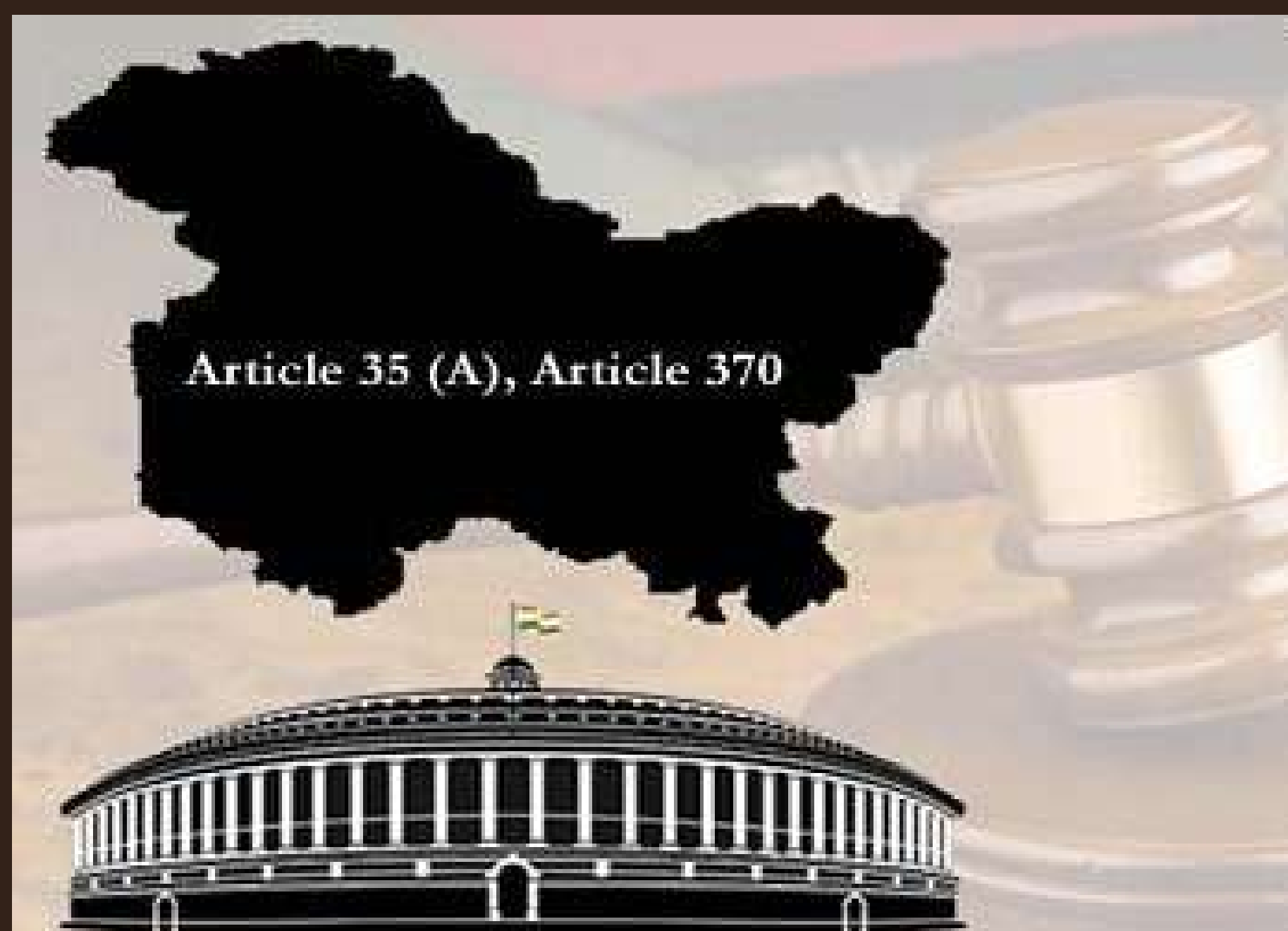
to right-wing Hindu mob pressure groups to physically harm minorities on the suspicion of carrying beef or even performing personal religious duties. BJP, interestingly though, seems to follow a reasonable line. The party seems to acknowledge the civil and political rights of all citizens in ideals, however, in political practice the Hindutva notion clashes with India's secular belief of respect for minority rights.



The resurgence of Religious Nationalism under the BJP

In the context of Indian polity, BJP isn't the only nationalist party to have used the principle of religious fundamentalism in electoral populism. Major national parties such as Congress in their political ideology are more centre-left and have also incited religious fervor on various occasions for populist appeal. However, it could be argued that BJP has extensively used religious polity and thus brought a renaissance period for religious nationalism which had started to dim in the early 2000s. BJP's manifesto of 2019 panders specifically

to the nationalistic fervour of the Indian majority. From the 'no-tolerance policy' to the repeal of Article 370 (August 2019) as well as core citizenship acts such as CAA-NRC, all seem to be in congruence with Savarkar's concept of national sovereignty and cultural Hinduness. The direct correlation between religion and ideology is evident from the chronology that led to the Ram Mandir Judgement. The 1992 demolition of Babri Masjid by 150,000 Karsevaks claiming that a temple existed in the place the Babri Masjid had stood, could be considered the point of genesis of contemporary Hindutva politics. This was because of the charged religious sphere becoming evident after 1980, the starting point of the BJP's use of Hindutva in politics. The next landmark decision came in 2010 when the Allahabad court claimed a three-way division of land among the Sunni Waqf Board, the Nirmohi Akhara, and Ram Lalla. The Supreme Court, however, seeing the potential for another communal rift, decided to put a stay order on the Allahabad High Court's judgment. The BJP since 2014 had put the construction of the Ram temple in accord with the constitutional values as one of its major electoral manifestos and political acts to be achieved. The ruling of land in favour of Ram Lalla on December 12, 2019, signified the zenith of the BJP's brand of religious nationalism and its overall foreshadowing of secularism in India.

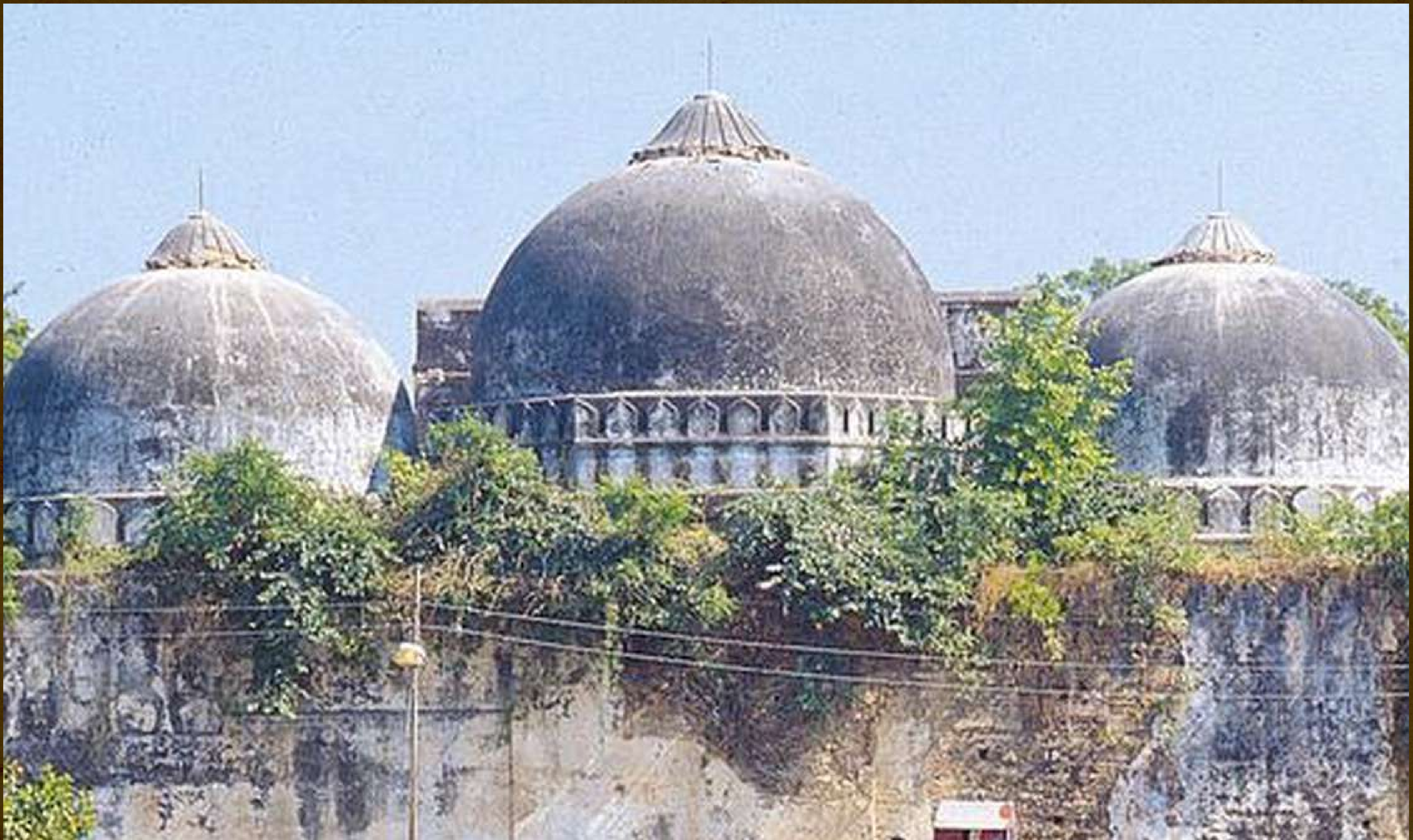


Future of India and the duality of Nationalism

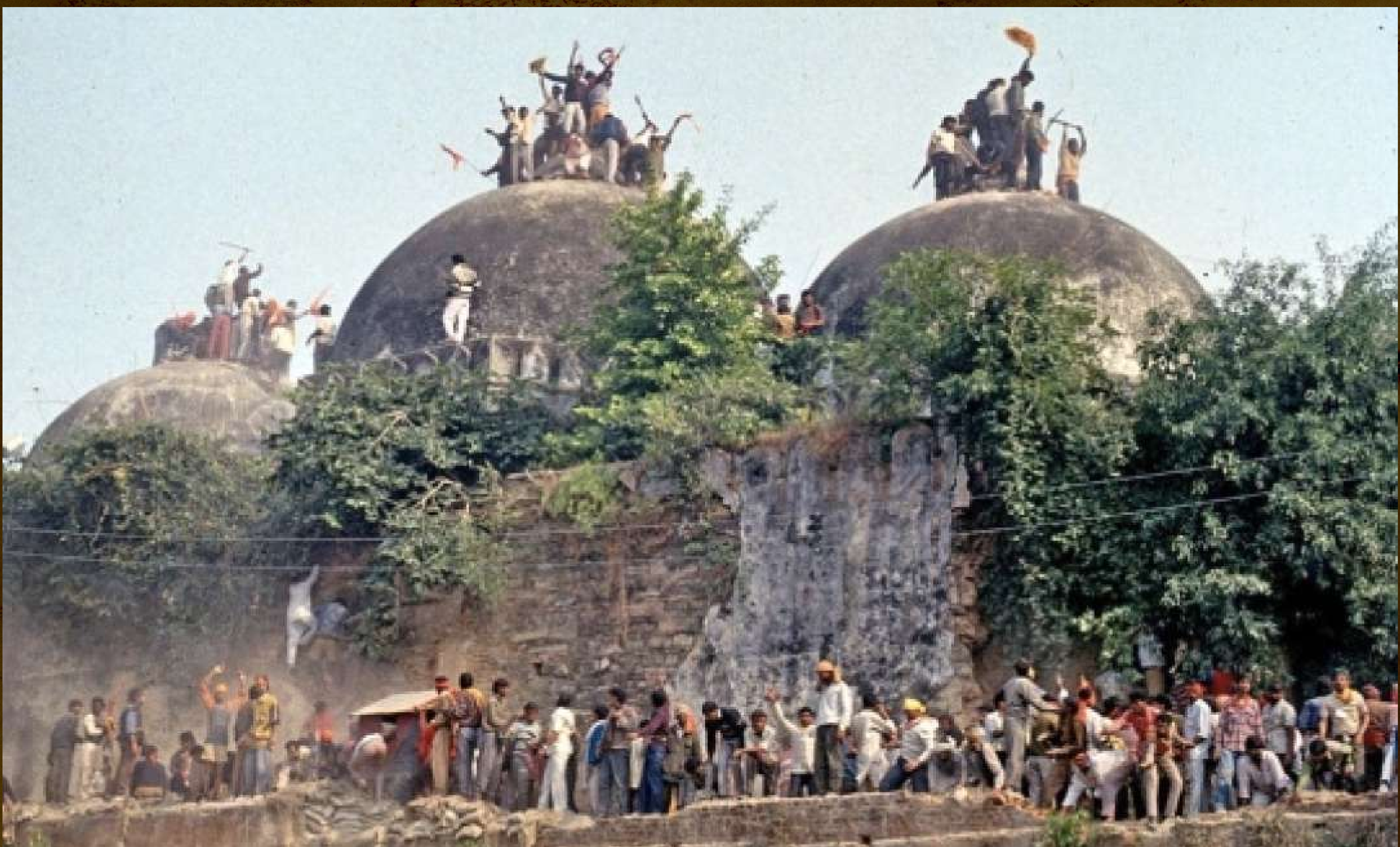
The BJP has brought an alternative nationalism to the central-fore, one based on the majoritarian Hindu appeal in contrast to the secular notions of nationalism imagined by its founders. These two competing ideologies of nationalism have resulted in political and cultural conflicts related to the

competing frameworks of nationalistic vision in the democratic context. Ashutosh Varshney had rightly pointed out that these two themes have been fighting for political authority as well as the guiding force for India's present and future since the emergence of the Indian National Movement (Varshney, December 2010). Thus, BJP's foraying religious nationalism into electoral politics has set the tone for future international relations as well as the government's approach to determining principles in the light of domestic capabilities and bolstering India's socio-economic standing on the world stage. The continuous fusion of making national policies based on civilizational values and Hindu socio-cultural elements has, in certain sense, catered to solidarity among growing economies (specifically Buddhist nation-states). The political intent of using divisive religious nationalism is evident in BJP's governance and enactments. However, this form of Hindu nationalism, according to economists, has been weakening social steadiness and economic growth, something which goes against the fundamental policies of the BJP's foreign policy. The landscape of India will also depend upon the circular relationship between BJP and the Sangh Parivar as both influence each other, the modification of economic policies in the demanding context of capitalism, and duty as a socio-political state also poses a paradoxical political question that BJP's religious nationalism would have to seek an answer to. BJP's dominant politics has always clashed with the concept of minority rights, especially in the political sphere. The proposed solutions on the majority-minority rights have often symbolized a majoritarian approach and are, thus, harmful to minority rights as well as the concept of Secular polity.





Babri Masjid: Before demolition



Babri Masjid: After demolition

THE FLICKERING DEMOCRACY

Written by Kumar Rajneekant

" सरकारें आएंगी, जाएंगी, पार्टियां बनेंगी, बिगड़ेंगी मगर ये देश रहना चाहिए "

"Leaders will come and go, but the nation must go on forever."

– अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी

May 1996, The Indian parliament witnessed the epitome of self-sacrificial leadership of Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee ji. It was a margin of just one vote and without any rebellion, this person handed over his resignation letter to the president of India.

His famous speech has gone viral these days in one of our neighbouring countries, it is being admired in a nation where we don't generally expect an Indian to be praised. Sadly, they have a huge shortage of visionary leaders. Imran Khan, the only world cup winning captain failed this time to lead his country to victory. Instead of becoming the country's first premier to complete his tenure, he became the first to be removed by a no-confidence motion.

The removal of "vazir-e-Azam" was not something new to the Pakistani awam, but the extent to which Imran Khan tried to save his position was something ridiculous. The opposition had a glaring majority, having secured more than 190 votes in motion of the house in the mock parliament.

He tried everything to retain his chair by hook or by crook, but his efforts bore limited fruits that was just a week delay.

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto who was referred to as the people's leader in his starting days as the premier of Pakistan was finally hanged until death on 4th April 1979, in a ruling that is still controversial.

"USA is like an elephant, which doesn't forget or forgive"

– Zulfikar Ali Bhutto

He did great work in his tenure. He worked for the labour class, gave Pakistan its third and final constitution and tried to work on land distribution. But, as in the case of Julius Caesar, he couldn't maintain his relations with the opposition and foreign superpowers which led to his assassination.

Former Prime Minister Imran Khan referred to him during his address to the nation in an attempt to malign the US behind his loss of support in the house. "Attempts are being made to influence our foreign policy from abroad, we have been aware of this conspiracy for months. We also know about those who have assembled these people (the opposition parties) but the time has changed. This is not the time of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto." He said referring to the above-mentioned personality and incident who was allegedly threatened by US secretary of state Henry Kissinger.

The captain went on to say that he was a subject of "foreign conspiracy" aimed at dislodging his government and that "funding was being channelled into Pakistan from abroad" in order to align the opposition. He even added of being threatened in writing without presenting any evidence or details.



Imran Khan had all the knowledge of what was going on around him. He himself knew that he wouldn't be able to survive, but his greed of power led him to such an extent

that he even tried unconstitutional methods to save his government. "Safety, honour and welfare of your country you command comes first", the initial lines of "Chetwode Motto" describe the criteria of a true leader. Kaptaan Sahib failed to come out clean on these criteria.

"He not only led the country into a year of political turmoil instead of preferring a peaceful power shift but also ensured to get on the wrong side of their biggest trade partner.

First of all, it is not going to affect France, but I must tell you how it'll affect Pakistan. Sending back the ambassador and breaking all the bilateral ties with France will imply that we'll be breaking all ties with The European Union. It'll result in a severe decline in our textile exports which will result in extended



pressure on the Pakistani rupee, closure of factories and increased unemployment." said Imran Khan in response to the protests of the Pakistanis regarding the controversy over caricatures of the Prophet.

It was a great statement in a grave situation and reflected that the decisions of the former prime minister were taken for the benefit of the country's economy. But, when it came to choose between the welfare of the people by maintaining cordial relations with their largest importer or paying a heavy price for his position, he chose the latter.

Pakistan exports a heavy amount of \$4.04B against an import of \$2.78B with an export of more than \$900M of House Linen. Any action from the US could have increased problems for the Pakistani awam which is already going through an inflation. After all the political drama and the tactics of Imran Khan, as per the verdict of the Apex court, no confidence motion was introduced in the house which officially terminated the prime ministership of Imran Khan. On the night of 9th of April, the opposition proved its majority and Mian Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif took over as 23rd Prime Minister of Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

"Beggars can't be choosers, we have to feed our people, not fight anyone", he said in an interview when asked about the Pakistani economy being run by America. It shows the difference in ideologies of both leaders. While one was determined to ruin the relations with the US, Mr Sharif accepted the grave reality. He added that he had a tedious job lined up in front of him. From sending lakhs of students to schools and colleges, stabilising the falling currency and building a powerful nation, there are lots of aspects which need to be addressed. The biggest task for the new government is maintaining stability in the country, with general elections approaching in a year and a half, PTI

will try to ensure that they are not able to function properly.

They will also start preparing their base for the next elections and working in such a turmoil environment will be nearly impossible. The way Mr. Sharif manages this time frame will decide the future of his party and will pave the way for the future of the nation. India and Pakistan as of now are like the two poles of magnets, made of the same material they have stood on opposing ends.

Several attempts have been made by various leaders of both the countries but all in vain. The Sharif brothers have had a softer side when talking about relations with India. Our prime minister Narendra Modi had even attended the wedding of Nawaz Sharif's daughter in Pakistan. Shahbaz Sharif has been hopeful regarding the relations, during the historic Singapore summit between Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un, he had expressed a desire of having a similar conversation between the two unfriendly neighbours. In recent times, with Imran Khan in power, the US had an increased dependency on India for checking the movement of China in the Indo-Pacific.

So, some people might ponder that this power change may result in a drop in Indo-US ties, but with heavy ties with China and a diminishing economy, Pakistan doesn't provide a genuine alternative. It'll be better for our neighbours that the flickering bulb of their democracy brightens up and prepares itself to face the storm if it ever arrives.

RUSSIA–UKRAINE WAR: INDIA WALKING A TIGHTROPE

Written by Siddhant Sinha

Description: India's position on the ongoing war in Europe has been questioned on the ground of 'morality'. To what extent can such critique be justified and what is the major determinant in the foreign policy of a State?

On May 4, the Reserve Bank of India hiked the Repo Rate for the first time in 4 years.

With an increase of 40 basis points, the Repo Rate stands at 4.40 per cent now.

On the other side of the globe, the US Federal Reserve has announced its sharpest hike in interest rate in 22 years with half a percentage point increase.

Meanwhile, the Reserve Bank of Australia too has raised its benchmark interest rate for the first time in over 11 years.

This global trend is, of course, not haphazardous in nature. There is a pressing reason for central banks

worldwide raising their interest rates. The retail inflation rate in India currently stands at 6.95%, above the desired limit set by the RBI.

Consumer prices in the US rose 8.5 per cent in March month on month, marking 40-year high inflation.

Inflation is skyrocketing worldwide and the way ahead doesn't look too optimistic either. What is the reason behind this?

Well, for starters, there's a war going on.

In a world increasingly becoming a global village, what does a war in 21st century Europe mean? Moreover, what is India's take on it?

An Invasion Visible From A Mile Away

After months of military build-up, Moscow invaded Ukraine earlier this year. The move was swift and it was expected that Kyiv would soon fall considering the great disparity between the capacities of the two states. However, the war has stretched over 3 months now with little prospect of peace in the short run. Kremlin had provided a host of 'reasons' justifying the invasion, ranging from a Nazi government ruling Ukraine to widespread human rights violations. Mr Putin, therefore, announced that the invasion is to free Ukrainians from the yoke of tyranny. While the claims are contentious, calling a



government Nazi, when its head is a Jew, doesn't do great help to Moscow's stand. Moreover, against the Kremlin's expectation of Ukrainians welcoming the invasion, they have fought vigorously against the mighty power.

The war situation continues to be volatile. While there have been speculations that Russia would not stop at Ukraine and even invade Moldova, the West's stand seems to have evolved as well.

Lloyd Austin, America's defence secretary, has recently commented, "the Ukrainians have the mindset that they want to win; we have the mindset that we want to help them win."

The West seems determined to fight the war by providing ammunition and resources to Kyiv. What is more, he said, "We want to see Russia weakened to the degree that it can't do the kinds of things that it has done in invading Ukraine."

This is where countries like India come into play. **In a market-oriented globalised world, any and everything can have a butterfly effect, let alone a real war. Power is intrinsically intertwined with money.**

Trade and economy, therefore, hold key significance in the war. Mr Austin wants to weaken Russia in the same manner.

India's Case

The Indian Permanent Representative to the UN has constantly abstained from voting on the resolution condemning Russia for the invasion.

India's official stance has been to call for 'dialogue and de-escalation' with a peaceful solution to the conflict.

Meanwhile, India has refused to support an opportunistic Russian resolution.

In the initial weeks of the conflict, it would be safe to say that, the country had to walk a tightrope to evacuate over 20 thousand of its nationals from war-affected regions.

Maintaining close contacts with both Ukraine and Russia was necessary to facilitate the return of Indians stranded there through Operation Ganga. It is no surprise that India's position has come under scrutiny by the West.



The US-Europe bloc wants countries to rally against the Russian invasion.

As can be deciphered from Mr Austin's statements, **the plan is to isolate Russia both economically and strategically to prevent it from continuing the war.**

In such a context, India's stance has, obviously, irked Western countries.

India has been called out for an 'immoral' stand and even warned of a similar fate in the hands of China if she doesn't overtly oppose Russia's actions.

Dutch Ambassador to the UK Karel van Oosterom, in an unsolicited comment, had said that India shouldn't have abstained in the General Assembly.

He went on to say that India should respect the UN Charter.

There is much to unravel and question in this statement to understand India's position more comprehensively.

West- The Flag Bearer of Righteousness?

Before trying to make other countries toe their line on the ground of morality, the West needs to look back at its own history.

From the Iraq invasion to the Afghanistan misadventures, the **US-led transatlantic world doesn't have a great history to back its call for 'morality'.**

The condition in which the US forces left Afghanistan last year has caused severe havoc in the Taliban-ruled state.

Iraq is still a land of turmoil, to say the least, after almost two decades of the invasion. Interestingly, India had maintained a neutral stance even back then in 2003 despite strong pressure from the US to join the war on its side.

Even in the current crisis, the aggression is not from the Russian side alone.

Russia has indeed violated international law by invading a sovereign country. However, the West had a role to play in the conflict too.

The Soviet Union broke apart in 1991, bringing an end to the Cold War.

The alliances formed during the period of hostility, namely the Warsaw Pact and NATO, lost their significance to some extent too because of it.

While the former was disbanded immediately, the latter didn't. In fact, NATO continued to expand throughout this period.

In 1996, US President Bill Clinton called for former Warsaw Pact countries and post-Soviet republics to join NATO and made NATO enlargement a crucial part of his foreign policy.

A number of countries in Central and Eastern Europe joined NATO in this period, including Poland, Hungary, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

Ukraine was offered membership in 2008, which has been a bone of contention among the parties since then. Russia sees the continued expansion of the organisation in Europe as a threat to its security.

While it is not possible to justify Russia's actions on the issue, one can't deny that an issue exists with the continued expansion of the transatlantic organisation.

It seems a great misconception to hold the view that the West is the flag bearer of 'righteousness' and a 'free' world. Accusing India of immortality is, therefore, erroneous when she doesn't cause harm to anyone.

Indo-Russian Ties

India's relationship with Russia goes back a long way. Even during the era of non-alignment, India had closer ties with the USSR as compared to the US. The communist power had come to India's aid on many occasions.



Even at the time of the India-Pakistan war and Bangladesh liberation in 1971, it was The USSR with whom India signed a 'Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation to strengthen itself for the conflict.

notably, the opposition was backed by the US. Pakistan unleashed a reign of terror on its own citizens during the war of liberation under Operation Searchlight.

The call for morality, therefore, is a lot messier and more complicated than one might think.

Apart from the questions of morality and staying on the 'right' side of history, India has a strategic necessity to maintain a particular stance for her own interest.

India has an imperative relationship with the largest country in the world.

It imports defence equipment heavily from Russia. According to a paper published by the Stimson Center in 2020, the breadth of Russian-origin platforms in the Indian military composes 85 per cent of major Indian weapons systems rather than the 60 per cent figure often cited. Russia is the largest arms exporter to India, while India is the largest arms importer to Russia. Of the \$54 billion spent by India in the last two decades, almost \$36 billion has gone to Russia.



Even the nuclear programme of India is dependent on Russia to a great extent.

With India's security and territorial integrity in the question of late, especially from China, India can't afford to sour her relationship with Russia a lot.

In simpler terms, it is a matter of national interest and security which India can't put at stake.

West's Changing Stance

In the course of the last three months, the West's stand on India-Russia relations has evolved as well.

The US has stated on record that it understands India's special military relationship with Russia.

It is also reluctant to impose sanctions for India's importation of Russia's S-400 surface-to-air missile systems despite the fact that it sanctioned Turkey, a NATO member, for the same purchase.



US-India Relations have improved significantly in the last decade or two.

With America's focus shifting towards the Indo-Pacific region for countering China's growing aspirations, India appears to be a key regional power.

It is for the same reason that India has been involved in a number of groups and associations of the West including the Quad.

The 48th G7 summit is going to take place in June 2022 in Bavarian Alps, Germany.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who will host the summit this year, has invited four states as guests for the meeting, namely South Africa, Senegal, Indonesia and most importantly India.

All four of these countries have something in common- none of them has imposed sanctions on Russia.

The message is loud and clear, G7 wants to bring countries into its ambit while rallying against Russia.

Such aspirations can materialise only if backed with real support and incentives.

Germany has pledged to India up to 10 billion Euros in aid to help achieve its sustainable development goals and promote German-Indian research and development.

The West needs to keep its promises and go beyond if it wants India to alter its orientation. India, as it stands today, does not have much room to work around.

National Interest- The Sole Determinant of Foreign Policy

It is an obvious and settled fact that world politics operates on the ground of national interest.

Expecting a country to form its foreign policy on any other consideration would be illogical.

It's a different matter that what is in the interest of a nation is often convoluted and debatable. Nonetheless, the fact remains that national interest is key to any nation's stance.

India needs to constantly monitor and evaluate where its interest lies.

It also needs to keep in mind the fact that the relationship between Russia and China (perhaps India's biggest threat at the moment), in Sergei Lavrov's (Russian foreign minister's) own words, is at its strongest level ever.

What threat it poses to India's security is something that the Indian government needs to figure out soon.

The West, if it wants India by its side, needs to make such a stand feasible for India and within its own interest.

As for the Ukrainians, the future doesn't look bright in this chaos of International politics.



ARTICLE 44–A “DEAD LETTER”

Written by Gaurvi Saluja

Keeping aside the rhetorics attached with the issue of Universal Civil Code, this article tries to explore the nuances and the nature of Article 44 of the Indian Constitution.

The implementation of a Uniform Civil Code has been a part of the BJP's agenda for long, and clearly stated in their election manifesto for Lok Sabha elections 2019. It is still manifested as could be seen in Uttarakhand, where recently elected Chief Minister, Pushkar Singh Dhami is examining the possibility of introducing a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in the state.

Time and again the judiciary has called for the Uniform Civil Code (UCC), expressing their concern on how Article 44, of the Indian constitution, has remained a “dead letter”, whether it is the case of Mohd.

Ahmed Khan v. Shah Bano Begum, 1985 wherein the Supreme Court upheld the right to alimony and set off a political battleground regarding the extent to which courts can interfere in Muslim personal law or in Sarla Mudgal v Union of India 1995 in which the practice of changing one's faith to have a second marriage without dissolving the first one was held to be invalid. However, in Panalal Bansilal Pitti judgement, the supreme court began questioning the feasibility of an all-encompassing law in matters

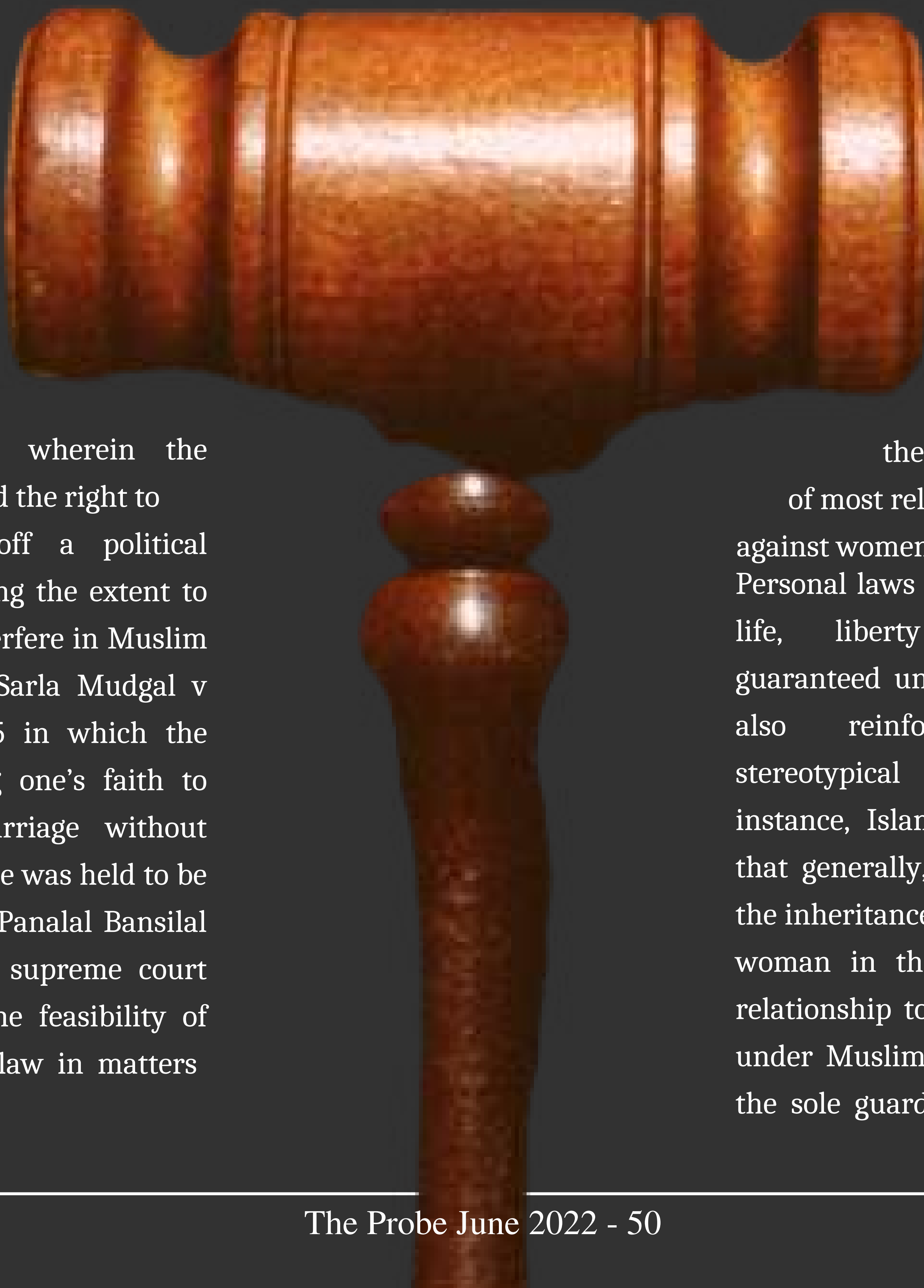
relating to one's faith and upheld that the enactment of the Uniform Civil Code though ‘highly desirable’ may perhaps be “counterproductive to the unity and integrity of the nation”, thus favouring a slow and gradual approach towards standardisation of civil laws.

The framers of the constitution expressed their aspiration for the implementation of the Uniform civil code in the Article 44 of Part IV (Directive Principles of State Policy)

of the Indian constitution and expected that the State shall endeavour to secure for the citizens a Uniform Civil Code throughout the territories of India, however, it is often argued that imposition of common laws for all communities will be in contradiction to Article 25 (freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion to all citizens of India), Article 26(b) (right of each religious denomination to “manage its own affairs

in matters of religion), and Article 29 (right to conserve distinctive culture).

This contradiction is nullified by the fact that the religious practices of most religions discriminate against women in favour of men. Personal laws violate the right to life, liberty and dignity, guaranteed under Article 21 and also reinforce patriarchal stereotypical notions. For instance, Islamic law prescribes that generally, a man's share of the inheritance is double that of a woman in the same degree of relationship to the deceased and under Muslim law, the father is the sole guardian of the person



and property of his minor child. According to the Indian Succession Act of 1925 Christian mothers have no right to the property of their deceased children who have left no will. The property is inherited by the father or by the siblings. Christian Personal Law was also subject to debate as section 10 of the Indian Succession Act stated that while a husband could get divorced only on the ground of adultery, the wife had to prove adultery along with an additional reason for divorce such as cruelty or desertion. This law was amended in the Indian Divorce (Amendment) Bill 2001. The judiciary has reformed many such laws, for example, the Supreme Court of India struck down the practice of instant triple talaq in August 2017, following a petition filed by Shayara Bano, who was divorced through the instant triple talaq.

In *Minerva Mills* (1980) Judgement, the Supreme Court held that the “Indian Constitution is founded on the bedrock of the balance between Parts III (Fundamental Rights) and IV (Directive Principles). To give absolute primacy to one over the other is to disturb the harmony of the Constitution”, thus reiterating the need for giving life to Article 44.

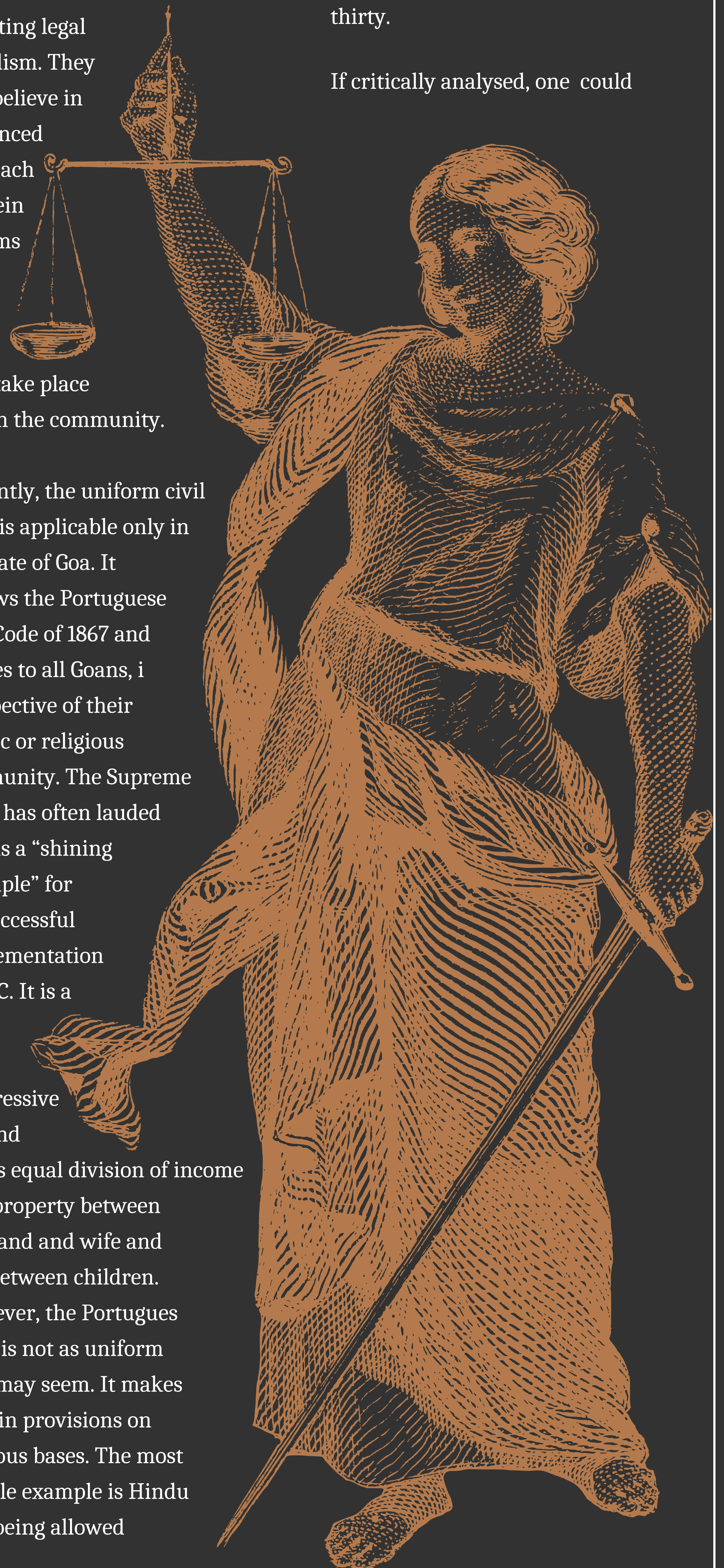
Even the women’s movement considered UCC as a means of securing gender justice, equality and dignity in matters related to marriage, abortion, divorce, alimony and inheritance, however

they are sceptical that a uniform civil code might foster BJP’s alleged project of “Hindu Code” and thus accepting legal pluralism. They now believe in a nuanced approach wherein reforms in personal laws take place within the community.

Presently, the uniform civil code is applicable only in the state of Goa. It follows the Portuguese Civil Code of 1867 and applies to all Goans, irrespective of their ethnic or religious community. The Supreme Court has often lauded Goa as a “shining example” for its successful implementation of UCC. It is a progressive law and allows equal division of income and property between husband and wife and also between children. However, the Portuguese Code is not as uniform as it may seem. It makes certain provisions on religious bases. The most notable example is Hindu men being allowed

bigamy if the wife fails to deliver a child by the age of twenty-five, or a male child by the age of thirty.

If critically analysed, one could



observe that the judiciary pays lip service and has refrained from pushing further action, drawing out the distribution of powers and calling out the parliament to step in and frame a uniform set of laws in civil matters to help the cause of national integration by removing the contradictions based on ideologies. It is also feared that a uniform civil code framed by the Parliament might be subject to amendments by the state legislature similar to what has happened with the secular civil laws like the Indian Contract Act, Code of Civil Procedure, Sale of Goods Act, Transfer of Property Act, Partnership Act, Evidence Act, etc. The challenge of combining a multitude of civil laws into a single, comprehensive UCC is yet another obstacle.



The Law commission appointed in 2018 to analyse the feasibility of UCC and suggest potential legislative actions which would address discriminatory provisions under all family laws, after detailed research and a number of consultations held over the course of two years, concluded that providing a uniform civil code is neither necessary nor desirable at this stage. It recommended that all personal laws must be codified first to the greatest extent possible, and the inequalities that have crept into codified law should be remedied by amendment. It supported the idea of legal pluralism against the Supreme court's belief in finding a panacea in the set of laws which are uniform across the nation.

The step by step activism as recommended by the Law Commission has led to the extension of the right to family property to daughters, increased uniformity in the Indian Succession Act, and the criminalisation of triple talaq is worth appreciating. Recently, a demand to declare 'Talaq-e-Hasan' and all other forms of "unilateral extra-judicial talaq" as void and unconstitutional, claiming they are arbitrary, irrational, and violated fundamental rights has also been raised by a victim of unilateral extra-judicial Talaq-E-Hasan wherein talaq is pronounced over a period of three months.



If cohabitation does not resume during this duration, the divorce is formalised after the third utterance by the husband in the third



month. It must be noted that adopting the step by step/ piecemeal change approach is a slow process on the path toward achieving just/unbiased personal laws. Nonetheless, in the absence of UCC, Article 44 has found a mirror image in these reforms. ■

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A REQUIEM FOR A STUNNING VOICE

Written by Vidhi Sharma



The demise of Krishna Kumar Kunnath, popularly known as KK, has come as an inconsolable shock. He passed away due to a myocardial infarction on May 31 2022. KK is no short of a household name in India. This versatile singer with his breathtaking voice resides in the hearts and souls of millions of music lovers all over the world. Today all of us are gut-wrenched to know that he only exists in our memory. Many of his fans still stay in denial, refusing to accept the loss.

As for his early life, this talented singer was born in a Malayali family and brought up in New Delhi. Having completed his schooling at Delhi's Mount St Mary's School, he went on to graduate from Kirori Mal College, DU. He married Mrs Jyothi Krishna in 1991, with whom he shares two children, a son and a daughter.

It was an Indian singer and composer Lesle Lewis who gave him his first break in the music industry. Having initially started by singing jingles for the advertising sector in multiple languages, his career was spearheaded when popular composer, AR Rahman chose him as the playback singer for singing songs in a few Tamil movies. This was also the time when Sony Music was looking for a young talent launch in India and chose KK leading to the genesis of the album Pal. The album did well but KK remained underrated.

It was the song *Tadap Tadap* from Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam* that earned him his Bollywood stardom in the year 1999. People also started recognising songs like *Pyaar Ke Pal* and *Yaaron* that garnered heavy popularity henceforth and continue to remain popular today.

From then on, he never looked back. Whether it was playback singing in movies or singing for television serials, KK had a knack for all. Romantic songs became his forte and his voice started getting idealised as that of heart-throbs all over the country. His voice was believed to complement Emraan Hashmi so well that the confluence of the two turned into an iconic duo resulting in evergreen melodies.

While songs like Ankhon Mein Teri and Tadap Tadap became increasingly apt for Old is Gold labels, others like Kya Mujhe Pyaar Hai, Beetein Lamhein and Tu Hi Meri Shab Hai ushered as Romantic Golds of guitarists and lovers alike. Songs like Zara Sa, Mere Bina and Dil Ibadat, starring Emraan Hashmi cannot be imagined in any other voice than KK's. Others like Aashayein, Chale Jaise Hawayein and Hai Junoon became energetic everyday motivations for the youth in no time. Zindagi Do Pal Ki and Dil Kyun Yeh Mera from the Hrithik Roshan movie 'Kites' have been soothing reminders of his calming vocalisation. Even the songs he sang in the relatively recent times like Aashiqui 2's Piya Aane Na and Bajrangi Bhaijaan's Tu Jo Mila have been as indicative of his foothold in the world of romance as before. The list is endless. One can go on and on about his musical prowess and would still fall short of expression. After all, all the inexplicable expressions lay in his music.

As KK once said, "Music touches us emotionally, where words alone can't" it makes one wonder about the profound way his music touched us and rendered us free of our apprehensions. His untimely demise has left a grave void in the hearts of millions who found an escape in his songs.

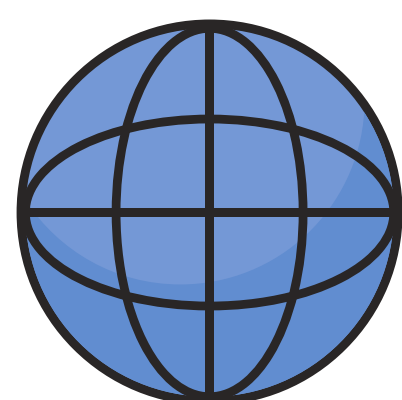
His music is the gift he leaves for the music industry and his fans. We have done it countless times, moving on with the respite we have received through his songs. Today, the appropriate way to do justice to his name would be to lose oneself to the respite of his songs once again, because, in the end;

*"Hum rahein ya na rahein kal
Kal yaad aayenge ye pal
Pal, ye hai pyar ke pal
Chal, aa mere sang chal
Chal, soche kya chhoti si hai zindagi
Kal mil jaaye to hogi khush-naseebi
Hum rahein ya na rahein, yaad aayenge ye pal."*



KK, you will be missed...

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